
The Orange Revolution, 2004

The fifteenth day of Ukraine's orange revolution, I arrived in Kiev. My car got stuck in a traffic jam caused by a demonstration at the parliament. I abandoned the car and joined the rally. The demonstrators' determination was stunning. The sea of people was perfectly orderly and calm. Two slogans predominated: "Yushchenko is our President" and "Do not stop our Freedom!" A third line ran "East and West together!"

This was a call for law and order, freedom, and national unity. Some groups marched under Ukrainian flags, some under the orange flags of opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko emblazoned with the name of their town or village. The demonstration didn't seem to have any class identity at all. Hardly any names of businesses, parties, or organizations were to be seen. No one talked about social or economic issues. This was pure politics. Ukraine's orange revolution is a classical liberal revolution, like 1848, or the Velvet Revolution in Prague in 1989. This rising against lawlessness and repression, for democracy and freedom, is a true bourgeois revolution.

Half in jest, people call it a revolt of the millionaires against the billionaires. (Åslund 2004).

The Orange Revolution was Ukraine's epic moment. For one month from November 22 until December 26, Ukraine dominated world news. People learned that Ukraine was a brave, well-organized, peaceful, and democratic nation of high ideals. The three political leaders—Viktor Yushchenko, Yuliya Tymoshenko, and Viktor Yanukovych—became known globally in spite of their difficult names. Everything worked out peacefully and democratically. It was a moment of national euphoria and pride.¹

1. Overall sources of this chapter are Åslund and McFaul (2006), Wilson (2005), Karatnycky (2005), and Krushelnycky (2006). Stanislawski (2005) offers a useful summary of facts.

Seldom has the coming of a major political event been so evident. For years the presidential election had been scheduled for the end of October 2004, when President Kuchma's second term would end, and the 1996 constitution did not allow a president more than two consecutive terms. Moreover, Kuchma's popularity was in the single-digit doldrums, making his reelection impossible. The old regime was tired, divided, and increasingly authoritarian.

Ukrainian citizens were facing a clear-cut choice. For the foreseeable future, the presidential elections represented their only chance for greater freedom and more rule of law. Russia clarified the alternative with its just-held managed "elections." The choice was democracy or Putin-style authoritarianism. As Askold Krushelnycky (2006, 1) noted: "Ukrainians recognized they were at a historic crossroads: these were the most important elections ever held in their country and the vote would determine whether Ukraine chartered a path westwards towards democracy, or whether it would be subsumed in a putative new authoritarian Russian empire."

When I visited Kyiv in late July 2004, the all-dominant topic was whether Ukraine would have a "chestnut" revolution. The tentative name derived from Kyiv's chestnut-lined streets. Yanukovich's campaign leader Serhiy Tyhypko even had a press conference on that theme in August. The two leading presidential nominees were Yanukovich and Yushchenko. People said three things would happen. First, Yushchenko would win the real election. Second, Yanukovich would steal it through fraud. Third, protesters would take to the streets and repeat the Georgian Rose Revolution of November 2003. The question was whether sufficiently many people would take to the streets fast enough to mount a popular revolution or whether protests would dissipate once again. This scenario played out exactly as predicted, so both sides were well prepared.

The center-right opposition had been making all possible mistakes since 1991. They were tired of their own irrelevance and determined to bring about change. The old regime was also preoccupied with the elections, but even more with its internal struggles. The fast economic growth had bred greater economic diversity and divisions in the government camp. After a long rule, the old regime was complacent and overconfident in its own skills, while contemptuous of the opposition.

The outside world paid new attention to Ukraine. Russia's President Vladimir Putin intervened personally with great vigor, but his endeavors failed miserably. The United States stayed on the sidelines, letting non-governmental organizations act. The new members of the European Union, especially Poland and Lithuania, activated their foreign policies, and the European Union became the international winner of the Orange Revolution.

Options of the Old Regime

Since the March 2002 parliamentary elections, Ukraine's politicians had been thinking of little but the upcoming presidential elections. The main policymakers of the old regime were Leonid Kuchma, his chief of staff Viktor Medvedchuk, and Rada Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn. They were seasoned political foxes, representing Machiavellian politics at its technical best. Democracy was not necessarily their second thought. Facing a problem, they played with several alternative solutions.

As the October 2004 presidential elections approached, the rulers realized they were between a rock and a hard place. Yushchenko looked like the inevitable victor. Three alternative means of stopping him were considered: constitutional reform depriving the president of most of his power, prolonging Kuchma's presidency, and a vigorous popular campaign combined with election fraud.

Constitutional reform has been a persistent theme since Ukraine's independence, and it dominated the Rada's work in the spring of 2004. Until then, Kuchma had wanted to strengthen presidential power, but fearing that Yushchenko would become his successor, he opted for stronger parliamentary powers. Medvedchuk drafted such a constitution, and the oligarchic center joined hands with the communists and socialists, who always favored a parliamentary system. On April 8 the draft constitution received only 294 votes, six votes short of the required two-thirds majority for constitutional change (Wilson 2005, 81). The option of constitutional change was closed.

The constitution stated that "one and the same person shall not be the president for more than two consecutive terms," but it had been adopted in June 1996, two years into Kuchma's first term. The presidential administration argued that his second term was his first term after the adoption of the new constitution, and in December 2003 the obedient constitutional court affirmed this interpretation, allowing Kuchma to run again. But after "Kuchmagate," his popularity stayed in the single digits, and his reelection was not a realistic option. He could stay on only if the presidential elections failed or by declaring a state of emergency (Wilson 2005, 79–80).

The only option left was to select a reasonably popular presidential candidate who could be elected with fraud. However, given the mood in the country, and the remaining freedom, this was difficult. To its credit, the regime was reluctant to pursue more serious repression.

Mobilization of the Opposition and Civil Society

In February 2004 Borys Tarasiuk, former foreign minister and one of seven deputy chairmen of Our Ukraine, organized a big international

conference Ukraine in Europe and the World, which I attended. It made a strong impression, showing how the opposition had set the stage for the Orange Revolution. The opposition was fully mobilized, feeling that it was now or never.

The organizers intended to break through the domestic media blockade and reach out to the international community, and they did. Two hundred people from 24 countries participated. The top foreign speakers were former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt, while Czech President Vaclav Havel addressed the conference via video.

This opposition conference was allowed, but official intervention was extensive. The Ukrainian Ministry for Foreign Affairs dissuaded serving foreign ministers from attending. The day before the conference, the organizers were told they could not use City Hall as planned, so they resorted to Hotel Rus, a Soviet-era relic. The State Tax Administration had just investigated two leading businessmen and Our Ukraine parliamentarians, Petro Poroshenko and Yevhen Chervonenko. Three radio stations had been forced to stop broadcasting Radio Liberty: One was taken over by a friend of Medvedchuk, another's license was revoked, and the owner of a third died in a road accident. Yet our visas were issued in due order, and the conference took place without disturbance. After having failed to avert the conference, the government tried to coopt it. Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and several ministers attended.²

The conference had gathered over 100 Ukrainian journalists. Most were very young, enthusiastic, and worked for regional newspapers. *Ukrainska pravda*, the internet newspaper of the hapless Heorhiy Gongadze, spearheaded the free media, through which Ukrainians could follow daily events minute by minute both in Ukrainian and Russian. Poroshenko was allowed to develop his cable television Channel 5. The government dominated the big media, but the truth could be found with some effort.

International nongovernmental organizations, mainly from the United States were there in force. Characteristically, Freedom House, the German Marshall Fund, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute cosponsored the conference.

Yushchenko was the self-evident center-right candidate, and no other candidate with similar views challenged him. Tymoshenko had indicated that she would not stand against him, and she attended the Our Ukraine conference, displaying her good relationship with Yushchenko.

He had a keen understanding of the real powers in Ukraine. He knew the importance of support from big businessmen and substantial business financing, and his campaign would suffer no shortage of funds. David

2. I had the honor of appearing on a panel with Yushchenko and Yanukovich, and the discussion was perfectly polite.

Zhvania, his chief fundraiser, stated that Yushchenko's presidential campaign and the protests cost more than \$150 million, financed by Ukrainian businessmen. Big and small businessmen were happy to support him against the oligarchs.³

Yushchenko reached out to recent defectors from the old regime and integrated them. Before the 2002 elections, Roman Bezsmertnyi, who had been Kuchma's spokesman, joined him as his campaign manager. In July 2004 he replaced Bezsmertnyi with an even later defector from Medvedchuk, Oleksandr Zinchenko. He was a partner of Medvedchuk in television companies as well as deputy speaker of the Rada for the social democrats. When Zinchenko fell ill with cancer, however, Medvedchuk excluded him from their common corporations, which naturally upset him.⁴

In Ukrainian society with its deep sense of symbols, the choice of campaign color was crucial. Blue and yellow, symbolizing the sky and corn fields, were the traditional colors of Ukrainian nationalists, dating back to the Springtime of Nations in 1848. Yushchenko knew that such colors would alienate most Ukrainians. His campaign wisely chose orange instead. Orange had no traditional meaning, though it was conspicuous and the color of chestnut trees in the fall (Wilson 2005, 72–73).

A final weapon in the Yushchenko armory was the student organization *Pora* formed in April 2004. A model student organization, *Otpor*, had developed in Serbia in opposition to President Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, and a similar organization, *Kmara*, emerged in Georgia before the Rose Revolution. Next, the Belarusian *Zubr* evolved, but no revolution took place in Belarus. *Pora* took two forms, black and yellow, which were both independent organizations. They were highly decentralized to impede infiltration. *Pora* means "it is time," and its symbol was a watch, signifying that it was time for the old regime to go. *Pora* was systematically built with Western technical assistance but little financial assistance. It might have engaged 30,000 activists. When the Orange Revolution began, *Pora* functioned as intended as the revolutionary avant-garde (Demes and Forbrig 2006).

Yushchenko was at his peak. He knew it all, building on his success from the parliamentary elections in 2002. He was not running as a Ukrainian nationalist but as a defender of all good values, from family and Orthodox Christianity to good governance, private property, and European integration. Although he spoke Ukrainian on all occasions, he did not emphasize ethno-nationalism. His campaign focused on universal values, notably freedom and legal justice, directed against oligarchs, repression, and corruption. His key slogans were "I believe in Ukraine!" and "I believe, I know, we can."

3. "Business Bankrolled Orange Revolution," Agence France Presse, Kyiv, February 17, 2005.

4. Interview with Zinchenko in April 2004.

Our Ukraine represented the essential values of successful liberal-conservative European parties: liberal economics, moderate nationalism, and Christianity. Under Ukrainian conditions, Yushchenko could top it up with freedom and democracy. Considering his track record as a successful prime minister and chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine, this was too good an offer to be refused. At long last, the liberal and democratic center-right had matured into a plausible alternative to the eternal government of the oligarchic center.

The Regime: Mobilized but Divided

In 2004, just before its demise, Ukraine's oligarchic regime appeared stronger than ever.⁵ It dominated the parliament, controlled the government, including law enforcement, and ruled the media, but the oligarchs were too strong to be united. They spent more effort on fighting one another than the opposition. They frantically seized as many assets as possible, and the economy boomed with improved enterprise management after privatization.

After Medvedchuk had become Kuchma's chief of staff in June 2002, the regime had become more ruthless in its use of repression, so-called administrative resources. Medvedchuk took control over the Central Election Commission (CEC). Authorities were instructed to prohibit opposition meetings in public premises. Government inspectors, especially the tax administration, harassed businessmen who supported the opposition.

The media control tightened further. Medvedchuk ruled over Ukraine's three most popular channels (1+1, Inter, and UT-1), and other oligarchs owned the rest. As before, the authorities used television for their propaganda, but this media manipulation backfired because it was too crude to be believed.

The regime also mobilized huge campaign funding. According to the Yushchenko campaign, as early as July 2004 the Yanukovich campaign planned to spend \$600 million, half of which was to come from Russian enterprises, mainly Gazprom, and half from Ukrainian oligarchs, primarily Rinat Akhmetov.⁶ This was more than 1 percent of Ukraine's GDP in 2004. Even larger amounts have been alleged. This was by far the most expensive election campaign in Ukraine's history.

5. This section draws on Åslund (2006).

6. I obtained this information from Yushchenko's chief of staff Oleh Rybachuk in September 2004, which he had received from his sources at the Security Services of Ukraine.

As the center-right assembled around Yushchenko, all the oligarchic factions agreed on Yanukovych as their single presidential candidate as early as April 14, 2004.⁷ Many have disputed the wisdom of their choice of Yanukovych, an ex-convict who spoke both Russian and Ukrainian poorly. However, he had delivered more votes than anybody else for the ruling elite in the 2002 elections, and he proved to be an able popular politician with a splendid rags-to-riches story (Kuzio 2006, 32). Nobody was more at ease with the Donbas miners than Yanukovych, and he captured the eastern working class from the communists. He was Akhmetov's candidate, and he could run on a record as successful prime minister.

The regime also attempted to transform the election from a struggle between Yushchenko standing up as a David against a Goliath of corrupt government to a regional competition between east and west. Its propaganda presented Yushchenko as a western nationalist and more crudely as an American agent, although Kuchma had sent Ukrainian troops to Iraq while Yushchenko campaigned for their withdrawal.

But the oligarchs had little in common. Only three of the biggest businessmen supported Yanukovych officially, Akhmetov, Medvedchuk, and Victor Pinchuk. Most big businessmen were afraid that Yanukovych and Akhmetov would wipe them out. In fact, only Akhmetov was truly committed to Yanukovych. In the fall of 2004, Pinchuk's three television channels turned objective. Privat Group stayed out of the campaign, and the Industrial Union of Donbas tacitly supported the Orange Revolution because of its rivalry with Akhmetov.

Nor was Kuchma enamored with Yanukovych, seeming more interested in his own future than the election outcome. Throughout the election campaign, Kuchma was suspected of wanting the elections to fail to be able to stay in power.

Strangely, the Yanukovych campaign had not one but three competing campaign headquarters. Serhiy Tyhytko led the official campaign headquarters. Serhiy Kliuev, a prominent businessman from Donetsk and the brother of Deputy Prime Minister Andriy Kliuev, commanded an unofficial headquarters for dirty tricks beyond the control of Tyhytko. The newly established Russian Club functioned as a third campaign headquarters for the Russian political advisers. With such a lack of top-level coordination, no campaign could succeed.

The Yanukovych campaign was heavy-handed and inept. Its television propaganda was too crude and its messages were mixed. Government interference was too obnoxious, while repression was too limited to make people obey.

7. "Yanukovicha vysunuli yedynym kandydatom?" ["They Presented Yanukovych as the Single Candidate?"], *Ukrainska pravda*, April 14, 2007.

Russia's Role

Rarely has a country played such a prominent role in the election campaign of another country as Russia did in the Ukrainian elections. Nor was Russia ever so engaged in Ukraine. President Putin handled the campaign personally, and his failure was spectacular.⁸ Two independent Russian scholars, Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov (2006, 145), concluded:

Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian presidential election in October and November 2004 is widely viewed as the Kremlin's greatest foreign relations blunder since 1991. The problem is not that the Kremlin gambled on a candidate who lost, but that the Kremlin's involvement was so conspicuous and crude. . . . As the election progressed, the Kremlin's clumsy intrusion drove Russia ever further into a dead end, while raising the stakes. The result was not simply a defeat, but a scandalous humiliation.

In 2003 and 2004 Putin and his chief of staff Aleksandr Voloshin were preoccupied with Ukraine's elections. Putin and Kuchma met almost every month. During his two terms, Putin met Kuchma more than any other head of state. Shrewdly, Kuchma acted as the senior partner. Conversely, Kuchma's chief of staff, Medvedchuk, had a close relationship with Voloshin and his first deputy Dmitri Medvedev. As early as the summer of 2003, the Kremlin decided to support whichever candidate Kuchma proposed. At a meeting with Kuchma in Crimea on July 26, 2004, Putin expressed his public support for Yanukovych. Yushchenko's repeated appeals to Moscow for friendly cooperation fell on deaf ears (Petrov and Ryabov 2006, 146–47).

The Kremlin tried to influence the Ukrainian elections through economic benefits and campaign support. However, Russia's Common Economic Space initiative, launched in February 2003, was more controversial than helpful. On September 15, 2004, at a Common Economic Space summit of the four heads of state, Putin accepted a long-standing Ukrainian demand to change the value-added tax system, transferring an annual revenue stream of \$800 million from the Russian to the Ukrainian treasury. This decision was criticized in Russia as excessively generous (Petrov and Ryabov 2006, 150). The Kremlin also resolved the many bilateral trade disputes in September 2003 by lifting many unilateral Russian protectionist measures against Ukrainian exports to Russia.

The Security Services of Ukraine (SBU) taped the key July 2004 meeting in Crimea between the two chiefs of staff, Voloshin and Medvedchuk and reported to Yushchenko's chief of staff Oleh Rybachuk⁹ that the two

8. This section draws primarily on the outstanding article Petrov and Ryabov (2006). See also Wilson (2005, 86–95).

9. Rybachuk told me this in September 2004.

agreed to mobilize \$600 million for the election campaign. They would share the responsibility 50-50, with the Russian side extracting money for the Yanukovych campaign from Russian businessmen active in Ukraine.

Russia's propaganda in the Ukrainian election was a crude broadside employing Russian television, political campaign advice, and Putin's personal appearances. In the summer of 2004, dozens of Moscow's loud-mouthed, well-paid political technologists descended upon Ukraine. Prominent names were the Kremlin spin doctors Gleb Pavlovsky, Marat Gelman, Vyacheslav Nikonov, and Sergei Markov.

On August 31 Pavlovsky opened a Russian Club in Kyiv as the Russian center for the Yanukovych campaign. These advisers had proven useful in the 1999 presidential elections but failed miserably in the 2002 parliamentary elections, which they blamed on excessive restrictions on their actions. This time they showed no inhibitions, but they disagreed on policy. Gelman wanted to run a positive campaign for Yanukovych; Pavlovsky favored a populist campaign with higher pensions and possible use of violence; while Nikonov preferred criticism of Yushchenko.

The Russian political advisers appeared all the time on Ukrainian and Russian television slandering Yushchenko and praising Yanukovych, as if no Ukrainian wanted to do so. Sergei Markov declared in the *Financial Times* that the Kremlin had hired him "to defend Russia's interests" in Ukraine. He claimed that Yushchenko "is regarded as extremely anti-Russian . . . not as an independent politician but a puppet. I think he is very weak."¹⁰

According to opinion polls, Putin was the most popular politician among Ukrainians. He tried to exploit his popularity by campaigning twice for Yanukovych in Ukraine. Spectacularly, he visited Kyiv for three days just before the elections. On October 26 Putin made a speech praising the successes of the Yanukovych government, which was broadcast on most Ukrainian television channels. He also participated in a long phone-in broadcast. Three days before the elections, Kyiv held an unusual military parade with 8,000 soldiers and veterans to celebrate Ukraine's liberation from Nazi occupation (Stanislawski 2005, 11–13).

Moscow also tried to mobilize the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia for Yanukovych. On October 8 a big congress of its representatives was held in Moscow, adopting an appeal to all Ukrainians to support Yanukovych. The Kremlin adorned Moscow streets with banners ambiguously proclaiming "Yanukovych Is Our President."

The Kremlin demanded that over 400 polling stations be set up in Russia for its alleged 1.5 million Ukrainian nationals, whose voting would no doubt be controlled by the Kremlin. However, because of Yushchenko's

10. Andrew Jack and Tom Warner, "Putin's Move on Ukraine Poll Risks Failure," *Financial Times*, October 20, 2004.

resolute resistance and Kuchma's hesitancy, the Ukrainian Central Election Commission (CEC) decided to open only 41 additional polling stations in Russia, and the Ukrainian Supreme Court reduced the number to four (Petrov and Ryabov 2006, 156–57). The Kremlin also rolled out the Russian Orthodox Church with Patriarch Alexei II endorsing Yanukovich.

The massive Russian intervention could do nothing but undermine Yanukovich, who was patronized by Putin and the rude Russian political advisers. Nor would a Yanukovich victory necessarily have benefited Russia. After having defeated his own oligarchs, Putin supported the most oligarchic party in Ukraine. As governor and prime minister Yanukovich had kept Russian companies out of Donbas, while then—prime minister Yushchenko had allowed Russian corporations to purchase big Ukrainian companies and settled large arrears to Russia for gas imports, while Yanukovich only demanded gifts. Former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who was ambassador to Ukraine, commented sensibly after the first round of the election that “anybody who becomes Ukrainian president will be compelled to develop good-neighborly relations with Russia.”

The Election Campaign: Yushchenko versus Yanukovich

Never had Ukraine experienced such an election campaign. Officially, the candidates were many, but Yushchenko and Yanukovich were all-dominant. On the left, Petro Symonenko, Oleksandr Moroz, and Natalia Vitrenko were of some significance. So was Anatoliy Kinakh in the center.

The election season started ominously. In April 2004 Mukachevo, a town in Transcarpathia, which was Medvedchuk's territory, held mayoral elections. Viktor Baloha, a local business competitor of Medvedchuk who had made a political alliance with Yushchenko, won the election with a solid 57 percent, but Medvedchuk stole the election through blatant falsification, disqualifying more than one-third of the winner's votes (Wilson 2005, 82). Seeing the importance of this vote-rigging, Yushchenko made it the starting point for his campaign.

On July 2 Tymoshenko and Yushchenko signed an agreement to unite and coordinate their campaign, which they named Power of the People. Their understanding was that Yushchenko would make Tymoshenko prime minister if he won. On July 4 Yushchenko formally launched his candidacy and started an election campaign superior to anything Ukraine had seen. He campaigned as a whirlwind, making one major speech and a few local appearances every day in American fashion. He drew enormous crowds wherever he appeared, not least because he could not be seen on national television. In Kyiv and Lviv, he gathered masses of 100,000 people, but even in eastern Kharkiv 20,000 came to listen to him and 15,000 in

the Donbas steel town of Kryvyi Rig. Tymoshenko, who is an outstanding orator, attracted crowds in many parts of the country of 10,000 to 20,000 people.¹¹

Yanukovich had a near monopoly in the official media, so people had seen enough of him. He could not attract a crowd in western and central Ukraine, and even in Kyiv he could barely gather 500 people. He had to make do with official meetings and traditional factory visits, which made him look old-fashioned.

The West was seriously concerned about election fraud. A steady stream of official statements called on the Ukrainian authorities to safeguard free and fair elections. In his congratulatory note to Kuchma on Ukraine's Independence Day on August 24, US President George W. Bush stated: "Ukraine has made great strides in the thirteen years since independence. Nothing can secure that legacy more than the holding of free, fair, and transparent election this fall and turning your high office over to a successor who embodies the democratic choice of the Ukrainian people."¹² The West mobilized multiple election monitoring organizations, notably the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Ukrainian government did not object, and long in advance the largest international election monitoring ever was organized.

The authorities played dirty, disturbing events every day. Airplanes in which Yushchenko was travelling were refused landing rights. More than 350 Pora student activists were temporarily arrested on implausible grounds in September and October. Governors, heads of government agencies, the military, and universities were asked to deliver their subordinates' votes. Often such statements were filmed on mobile phones, and Pora exposed many official transgressions via the internet.

More serious incidents also occurred. On August 12 a big truck (KamAz) mysteriously forced Yushchenko's car off the road and almost hit him near Kherson in southern Ukraine. On August 20 a bomb detonated at a market in Kyiv, killing one person and injuring 11, and a smaller bomb went off a couple of weeks later. Pora and Our Ukraine activists were repeatedly arrested for alleged possession of bombs (Stanislawski 2005, Wilson 2005).

On the night of September 5, Yushchenko was poisoned at a late dinner with three men, the chairman and deputy chairman of the SBU, Ihor Smeshko and Volodymyr Stasiuk, and his financier, David Zhvania. He got terribly sick, but his Ukrainian doctors could not diagnose the cause.

11. Personal report from trip to Kyiv, October 11–16, 2004.

12. "Letter to President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma on the Occasion of the 13th Anniversary of Ukraine's Independence," White House, Washington, August 20, 2004. www.whitehouse.gov (accessed on August 24, 2004).

Fortunately, five days later he flew to a specialized hospital in Vienna, where doctors found that he had suffered from a rare dioxin poisoning. His previously handsome face was inflamed and disfigured, but the official media scorned him.

From the outset, Stasiuk—a Medvedchuk politician with strong Russian connections—was the prime suspect. After the Orange Revolution he fled to Russia, where he stays. The culprits have never been established by court. The dioxin appears to have come from a Russian laboratory, which the Kremlin has never admitted.

Yushchenko was badly sick, but he survived. On September 18 he held his first speech after the poisoning, and it was his greatest speech ever. He spoke on the European Square in Kyiv to a crowd of about 100,000. The speech was broadcast live to squares in almost all regional centers, where half a million people watched him, thus bypassing official television (Diuk 2006, 79; Prytula 2006, 119). The poisoning had radicalized him, and he spoke with new anger on his pock-marked face. This speech was his clearest program declaration, worth quoting at length. It provided few details but plenty of morals and good rhetoric:

I would like to pay a special ‘compliment’ to the government: You won’t poison us! You will lack bullets and KamAZes! Not one or thousands but tens of thousands of new Hiya Gongadzes, Vyacheslav Chornovils, Vadym Hetmans and many other good people will always turn up in Ukraine. . . .¹³

We pledge: there are millions of us and you won’t stop us! We will win. . . . Yes! We are eager for changes! We, Ukrainian citizens are craving for decent living. We, the people of Ukraine, demand what belongs to us by right. . . . People want to discharge a criminal regime that is planting cynicism and lawlessness over our land. The gangster government is striving for only one thing—to preserve its power by all means. . . .

We are one Ukrainian nation either in the West or the East, the North or South; all of us are suffering from poverty and lawlessness. . . . We are of Cossack family. We will get over the difficulties and become free like our glorious forefathers!

I have traveled all over the country and seen. The government is in death agony. Still you cannot watch it on television. They cut off channels and close down newspapers for a single true word. A TV screen has turned into a distorting mirror. We don’t recognize ourselves and our country in it. We are fed up with the lie.

Nevertheless they won’t deceive us. It is our government that is afraid of facing the truth. They are not without reason to be afraid of us. The gangsters in power realize the upcoming elections will be a sentence upon this government passed by the people themselves. The bandits will be imprisoned!

. . . I will do my best to provide a peaceful power transfer, without any upheavals and violence.

. . . We will make the shadow economy transparent. . . . I am not going to revise the results of privatization, but to cease the plundering of our state. . . .

13. Referring to their political murders in 2000, 1999, and 1998, respectively. Hiya is a nickname for Heorhiy.

We will do away with the corruption that spoils our lives. . . . Honest professionals are to replace corrupted officials. Law enforcers are to protect people against criminals. Courts will judge justly but not for the money. . . .

I am running for the Presidency of Ukraine because I believe in Ukraine. . . .
Glory to God and glory to Ukraine! (Yushchenko 2004)

Yushchenko demanded “bandits to prison,” but he also promised a peaceful transfer of power and no revision of privatization. He said virtually nothing about foreign policy, but he had pledged to withdraw the Ukrainian troops from Iraq.¹⁴ Populist or economic slogans were absent. The entire appeal amounted to a call for Ukraine whole and free, although he did not use those terms.

Yushchenko supporters started wearing something orange, a scarf, a tie, or just a little ribbon. In the beginning the display of orange appeared dangerous, an act of defiance. But the number of orange ribbons mushroomed, and by October Kyiv was draped in orange. Political consciousness grew, engaging everybody. A revolutionary fervor had arisen in western and central Ukraine.

Yanukovych competed with a popular groundswell, but his resources were immense. His greatest election appeal was a doubling of public pensions. As a consequence, Ukraine’s already high pension costs skyrocketed to a projected 16 percent of GDP for 2005. This was fiscally irresponsible, causing a sudden budget deficit of 4.5 percent of GDP in 2004 (figure 7.1). This populism contradicted Yanukovych’s claim to economic achievements, displaying the desperation of the old regime.

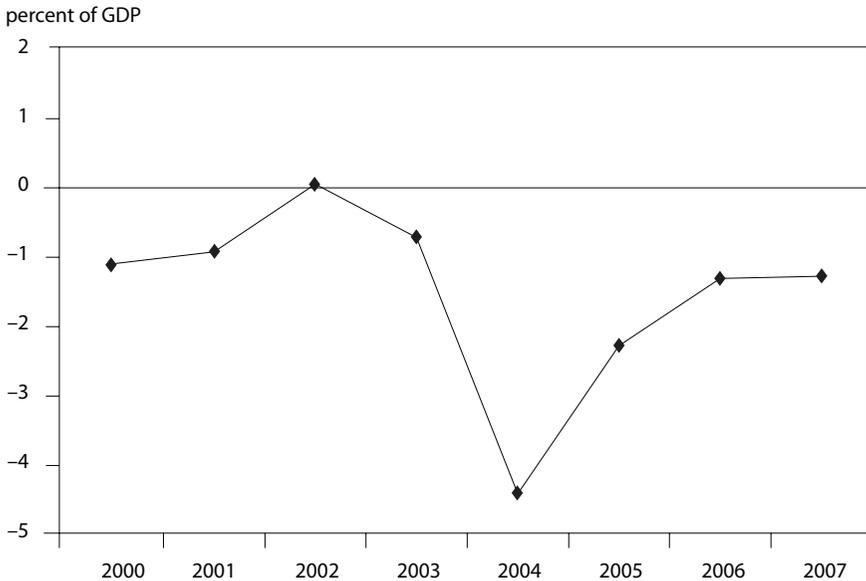
On September 24, as if to show that Yanukovych also suffered from dirty tricks, the regime alleged that several large objects were thrown at him while campaigning in Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine. However, Poroshenko’s Channel 5 had filmed the incident, which showed Yanukovych falling after being hit by a single egg, thus ridiculing this big, strong man (Wilson 2005, 99).

On September 27 Yanukovych played his Russian card with the slogan “Ukraine-Russia: Stronger Together.” He committed himself to making Russian an official language, allowing dual citizenship for Russians and Ukrainians and abandoning all attempts at closer cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Russia reciprocated with a radical liberalization of travel regulations, allowing Ukrainians to stay in Russia for 90 days without visa or registration and to enter Russia with domestic Ukrainian identity cards (Wilson 2005, 89–90, 93).

On October 23 Yushchenko held a last big preelection rally in Kyiv, gathering once again 100,000 people. The theme was to stop election fraud, and the demonstration marched on the CEC, demanding an honest

14. “Yushchenko Will Withdraw Troops from Iraq,” Our Ukraine website, August 10, 2004, www.razom.org.ua (accessed on August 11, 2004).

Figure 7.1 Ukraine's budget balance, 2000–2007



Source: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development online database, www.ebrd.com (accessed on July 1, 2008).

election. The CEC was already guarded by armored personnel carriers (Stanislawski 2005, 10).

In mid-October I spent a week in Kyiv. The mood was tense. Everybody understood the importance of the elections and feared the worst. Ukrainian civil society was fully mobilized, but people did not believe that Yushchenko would be allowed to win. They were shocked by his poisoning and thought that his victory would be stolen or that he would be killed. Members of the regime were afraid that Yanukovych and Akhmetov would purge them after victory. All were waiting for Damocles' sword to fall.

The Presidential Elections

After the first round of the presidential election on October 31, the authorities seemed at a loss. They delayed the publication of the official returns for 10 days, rendering fraud evident. Even so, Yushchenko won 39.9 percent of the votes, narrowly beating Yanukovych, who received 39.3 percent (table 7.1). Independent exit polls gave Yushchenko 44 to 45 percent and Yanukovych 37 to 38 percent (Wilson 2005, 111). As expected, the two leading candidates crowded out the others. Socialist Moroz received only

Table 7.1 Results of presidential election, 2004 (percent of votes)

Candidate	First round, October 31, 2004	Second round, November 21, 2004	Rerun of second round, December 26, 2004
Viktor Yushchenko	39.9	46.6	52.0
Viktor Yanukovych	39.3	49.5	44.2
Oleksandr Moroz	5.8		
Petro Symonenko	5.0		
Natalia Vitrenko	1.5		
Anatoliy Kinakh	0.9		
Others or against all	4.9	2.3	2.3
Total ^a	100	100	100
Voter turnout (percent)	74.6	80.4	77.2

a. Total includes invalid ballots, not counted as votes.

Source: Central Election Commission of Ukraine, www.cvk.gov.ua (accessed on July 18, 2008).

5.8 percent, communist Symonenko 5 percent, progressive socialist Vitrenko 1.5 percent, and centrist Kinakh 0.9 percent.

In spite of the slender margin, the result was an outstanding victory for Yushchenko and the democrats, since the incumbent regime had used all means to bring him down. International observers agreed that fraud was rampant. Undoubtedly, some of the votes cast for Yushchenko and Symonenko had been illicitly reallocated to Yanukovych. The Ukrainians understood the stakes and stood up for their democratic choice with a participation of 75 percent.

Still, most of all, the election was a fight between east and west. The division of the country was nearly total. Yanukovych won with an average of 71 percent in 10 eastern and southern regions, while Yushchenko obtained an average of 78 percent in 17 western and central regions. The Yanukovych campaign had succeeded in dividing the country, but Yushchenko had avoided being caught in the western Ukrainian linguistic box, being victorious in the largely Russian-speaking central Ukraine, including the capital.

Yushchenko stood for Western democracy and a European choice. Yanukovych represented the ruling oligarchic system and the Russian speakers, while opposing NATO. Ideological differences were limited, and economic issues were largely irrelevant. Both candidates favored a free market economy, private enterprise, financial stability, and high growth.

The greatest ideological development was that Yanukovych had obliterated the communist vote. It had fallen precipitously from 20 percent in the 2002 parliamentary elections to 5 percent in these presidential elections, never to recover. Although the communists suffered from fraud, Yanukovych appeared more desirable to pro-Russian forces in Ukraine, and his populism appealed to the eastern working class and pensioners.

Notwithstanding rampant election fraud, Yushchenko did not call for protest actions. After all, he had won, but he had no absolute majority, so a second round was required. Some students demonstrated between the two elections rounds, but the main developments were the losing candidates distributing their sympathies, the journalists' revolt, a surprise televised debate between Yushchenko and Yanukovych, and a change in Russian strategy.

Moroz and Kinakh declared their support for Yushchenko in the run-off on November 21. Both made a coalition agreement with Yushchenko and Tymoshenko, and their four parties negotiated a government program. Yushchenko made significant concessions, notably accepting the socialist demand for a moratorium on private sales of agricultural land until 2008.

Yanukovych found few new sympathizers. Symonenko was so upset over gross falsification in the east that he refused to support Yanukovych and called upon communists to vote against all in the second round. Only Vitrenko, who was considered a fake left-winger paid by oligarchs, expressed her support for Yanukovych.

Journalists on the official television channels had started revolting before the elections, and on October 28, 40 journalists representing five television channels declared that they would no longer obey *temnyky*. Soon, almost all journalists on the official television channels defected to the opposition, and television coverage became normal (Prytula 2006, 118).

Now the candidates could as well debate on television. On November 15 the first televised debate between the two candidates took place. The whole country watched. Yanukovych was mild and cautious, while Yushchenko came out swinging. Speaking to his voters, he repeated his campaign theme: "You are not cattle but citizens who have the right to vote." He claimed 3 million citizens had been blocked from voting because of incorrect voter lists. Once again, he made a moral appeal: "This is not a conflict between two Victors. This is a conflict between two world views, two moralities. Our choice is very simple. Either we live according to the code of ethics of the criminal underworld or we live like free and affluent people." He attacked the privatization of Kryvorizhstal, which he called "theft." Curiously, Yanukovych criticized Yushchenko for having sold off four Ukrainian oil refineries to foreigners, carefully avoiding mentioning that they had been sold to Russian companies. The consensus view was that Yushchenko won this debate overwhelmingly.¹⁵

The Russian strategy changed after the first round. On November 12–13 Putin went to Crimea to meet Kuchma and Yanukovych with limited publicity. He reportedly told Yanukovych to rely more on administrative resources and repression, and he showed that Kuchma had lost

15. "Debaty Yushchenka ta Yanukovycha. Stenograma" ["Debate between Yushchenko and Yanukovych. Stenogram"], *Ukrainska pravda*, November 16, 2004. The four refineries were sold to Lukoil, TNK, Tatneft, and Alliance.

his trust because of his attempt to negotiate with the opposition (Petrov and Ryabov 2006, 157).

The Orange Revolution

After the polling stations closed on November 21, mass falsification was evident. The independent nongovernmental organization Committee of Voters of Ukraine claimed that no less than 85,000 officials were involved in election fraud. They had received most of the election financing (Wilson 2005, 119–20).

The means of deception were many. Voter lists were tampered with, excluding some living people while including many “dead souls,” in the words of classical Ukrainian author Nikolai Gogol. Multiple voting through so called carousels was common. Voters willing to vote several times were transported by bus and train between different polling stations. Home visits with ballot boxes were frequent. Some ballot boxes were stuffed, and results were revised afterwards. Election monitors from the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the European parliament concluded that the elections were neither free nor fair, while the speaker of the Russian Duma, Boris Gryzlov, and observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States stated that the elections had been correct (Stanislowski 2005, 35).

As the opposition foresaw fraud, they had planned their protests. Yushchenko called for protests on Kyiv’s Independence Square, commonly called Maidan, immediately after the polling stations closed at 8 p.m. on Sunday, November 21. Some 30,000 protesters came, and the first tents were set up on Khreshchatyk, Kyiv’s main street that goes through Maidan. The Orange Revolution had erupted.

This time the regime-controlled CEC did not hesitate but delivered well-cooked, though preliminary, numbers by Monday noon, the day after the election. Officially, Yanukovych won by 2.85 percentage points in the second round with 49.5 percent of the votes against 46.6 percent for Yushchenko (table 7.1). By contrast, an independent exit poll based on 28,000 interviews indicated that Yushchenko had won with 53 percent against 44 percent for Yanukovych (Wilson 2005, 2).

Turnout in the second round increased by 5.8 percent, but only by 0.6 percent in the 17 regions where Yushchenko prevailed against a whopping 9.1 percent surge in the 10 regions carried by Yanukovych. In the Donetsk region, turnout increased 18.6 percent to a remarkable 96.7 percent, with 96.2 percent of the voters allegedly supporting Yanukovych.¹⁶ Mass fraud was evident, and Yushchenko emerged the clear winner.

16. See the website of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, www.cvk.gov.ua (accessed on November 23, 2004).

The regime was in disarray. Early on election night, Yanukovych's campaign manager Tyhytko stated that it was possible that Yushchenko had won.¹⁷ His declaration sounded like a protest against his own campaign, and he resigned one week later. Kuchma was uncharacteristically passive, indicating his limited sympathy for Yanukovych. In his book *After Maidan*, Kuchma presented himself as even-handed, clearly thinking of his own standing after the elections (Kuchma 2007).

The opposition mobilized on November 22, Monday morning. Yushchenko called all to Maidan, and his message was spread by mobile phones and the internet but also through the newly liberated media. No less than 200,000 people turned up. The protesters had gathered a critical mass. The following day, November 23, Yushchenko took the presidential oath on Maidan.

The crowds on Maidan expanded daily until they exceeded one million in a photogenic sea of orange in the midst of the freezing winter. Demonstrators occupied the streets and squares in central Kyiv. Tens of thousands of people flooded in from the provinces, mainly from the west. The revolutionary fervor caught on, but so did order. The spontaneous discipline was striking. No drinking or rowdy behavior was allowed, as the revolutionaries were afraid of provocations, as had happened on March 9, 2001. People organized themselves. Almost all wore something orange, an armband, a lapel, a scarf, a hat, or a vest. The slogans were few and simple: "Yushchenko is our president," "Freedom," and "East and West together." Thousands of businessmen donated food and warm clothes because the winter was freezing.

The demonstrators blocked ministries and major public buildings. Kuchma and his staff were thus not able to go to their offices, and the administration was disrupted. On the heights opposite the cabinet of ministers building, a score of people persistently beat on steel barrels, creating an enormous noise so that the government could not work. Police were absent, only guarding major public buildings. Outside the presidential administration, special forces in riot gear stood in double rows night and day, facing serious-looking older, orange guards. Their calm professionalism suggested they were retired special forces. They looked far more fearsome than the nervous young government troops.

The big stage on Maidan was the focal point of the Orange Revolution. The four main revolutionary agitators were Tymoshenko, Zinchenko, the young socialist Yuriy Lutsenko, and Mykola Tomenko (a liberal from Rukh). Yushchenko did not work the crowds but made a daily statement. Tymoshenko, with her hair in plaits, mimicking the national hero Lesia Ukrainka, was the radical leader. She was no longer called the Gas

17. "Tigipko gotov idti v oppozitsiyu" ["Tyhytko Is Ready to Go into Opposition"], *Ukrainskaya pravda*, November 21, 2004.

Princess but the Orange Princess or simply Our Yulka. One of the revolutionaries was the liberal former Russian first deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov, who appeared on Maidan on Ukrainian television wearing an orange scarf.

Ukrainians disproved all the negative stereotypes: They were well organized rather than ambivalent and disorderly; sober rather than drunk; intellectual rather than indifferent. I had heard similar reflections in Poland after Pope John Paul II's first visit in the summer of 1979 and later during the Solidarity period. Someone said: "Ukraine received independence in 1991; now it has earned it."

Putin did not give up. On November 22 he congratulated Yanukovich on his victory. On November 25 he repeated his congratulations with an official letter. The Central Asian presidents followed suit (Stanislowski 2005, 48–49). On November 24 a Russian State Duma resolution expressed "deep concern over the extremist actions by the radical opposition forces in Ukraine, which could lead to tragic consequences."¹⁸ Not very graciously, Pavlovsky turned on his Ukrainian hosts, claiming that "very many Ukrainian politicians and officials have exhibited serious political incompetence which created the pause, the power vacuum, of which the opposition took advantage."¹⁹ His message was that the Ukrainian authorities had not been sufficiently ruthless. Numerous official Russian spokespersons complained colorfully about American interference in Ukraine and disrespect for Ukrainian law.

On November 23 the White House declared that the "United States is deeply disturbed by extensive and credible indications of fraud committed in the Ukrainian presidential election. We strongly support efforts to review the conduct of the election. . . ."²⁰ US Secretary of State Colin L. Powell made a strong statement on November 24:

[T]oday the United States stand with the people of Ukraine and their effort to ensure their democratic choice. Indeed, this is a critical moment. It is time for Ukrainian leaders to decide whether they are on the side of democracy or not. . . . We cannot accept this result as legitimate because it does not meet international standards and because there has not been an investigation of the numerous and credible reports of fraud and abuse. . . . We call for a full review of the conduct of the election and the tallying of the election results.²¹

18. "Rossiiskaya дума nazvala Yushchenko 'ekstremistom'" ["The Russian Duma Called Yushchenko 'Extremist'"], *Ukrainskaya pravda*, November 24, 2004.

19. Federal News Service, NTV, 22:00, November 23, 2004.

20. "Statement on Ukrainian Elections," Office of the Press Secretary, White House, Washington, November 23, 2004, www.whitehouse.gov (accessed on November 23, 2004).

21. "Briefing by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell," US Department of State, Washington, www.state.gov (accessed on November 24, 2004).

Numerous European politicians and newspapers complained about the evident vote fraud in Ukraine. Within Ukraine, one force after the other abandoned the authorities. One early group of official defectors was Ukrainian diplomats. The armed forces split. Two former SBU generals spoke on Maidan on November 25, and the SBU leadership seemed to follow. The same day, the commander of Ukraine's Western Military Command declared that his troops would not be used against the nation, indicating that the military was regionally divided, as were the civilian police. The regime could deploy only select special forces of the Ministry of Interior for a crackdown.

The Settlement

The regime made some threatening maneuvers, but evidently Kuchma would not accept serious use of violence, and he was still in charge.²² On the orange side, Tymoshenko advocated the storming of some official buildings to force a settlement, but Yushchenko overruled her.

The enigma was how to find a peaceful settlement. What would it be and how could it be reached? The orange camp and a united West wanted the falsified results from the runoff disqualified. Kuchma suggested that the elections start all over again with a first round, but the dominant view was that only the runoff between Yushchenko and Yanukovych should be repeated. Three parallel processes evolved. Yushchenko filed complaints at the Supreme Court about the falsifications. Kuchma convened a roundtable, and the Rada confirmed major decisions through legislation.

On November 23 Kuchma appealed to all political forces to start negotiations to prevent a split of the country, and parliamentary speaker Lytvyn summoned the authorities and the opposition to a roundtable discussion. Two days later, Kuchma invited Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski and Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus to participate in the roundtable as mediators. Kwasniewski engaged the reluctant Javier Solana, the EU high representative for common foreign and security policy, and Yanukovych included Russian State Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov. The United States—fearing that any US representation would provoke the Russians to match them—was not represented, happily leaving the mediation to the European Union and Kwasniewski. The Polish president played the leading role because he knew the Ukrainian leaders well, and the Orange Revolution reminded Poles of their own Solidarity movement (though Kwasniewski had been on the communist side). Yushchenko and Yanukovych both participated. Three sessions of the

22. This section draws its facts from Wilson (2005) and Stanislawski (2005) and on my own observations in Kyiv and Donetsk on December 7–14, 2004, documented in my trip report.

roundtable convened in a villa south of Kyiv on November 26, December 1, and 6.

After the first roundtable, the Rada met on November 27. Speaker Lytvyn had started playing an independent role, and with more than 100 centrist deputies, he had become the critical powerbroker. The Rada declared the elections had violated the law and did not reflect the will of the citizens. It censured the CEC and asked Yanukovych and Yushchenko to negotiate a solution. At this stage, Pinchuk and his Labor Ukraine also defected from the regime, leaving Yanukovych's Regions and Medvedchuk's social democrats alone. The first big step toward a solution had been taken.

On November 28, Sunday night, over 10,000 Ministry of Interior special forces were brought to Kyiv from the south, but fortunately nothing happened. SBU Chairman Smeshko claimed to have averted violence, but Kuchma would hardly have allowed military action, which would have become very bloody.

The same day Yanukovych's people organized a big conference in the Donbas mining town of Sevrodonetsk. The conference demanded a referendum on the federalization of Ukraine, an old eastern demand, which aroused new worries about the breakup of Ukraine, but it led nowhere. Yanukovych's main sponsor, Akhmetov, who owned enterprises all over Ukraine, opposed any federalization.²³

Tens of thousands of Yanukovych supporters in his blue-and-white colors were bussed from Donbas to Kyiv. They set up their own tent city in the park outside parliament, but they seemed timid, not quite knowing what to do. The feared confrontation with the orange protesters never occurred.

On December 1 the new Rada majority dismissed Yanukovych as prime minister, but he stayed as caretaker, resigning only on December 31.

For good reasons, Ukraine's courts suffered a poor reputation. The president controlled the constitutional court, but the parallel Supreme Court was more independent. Strangely, both sides let the Supreme Court pronounce on the fairness of the elections. On December 3 it passed a clear verdict: The authorities had carried out massive fraud. It invalidated the election results and dictated its own political decision: The second round of the election would be repeated on December 26. Yanukovych accepted its judgment.

The parliament adopted the final settlement on December 8, when it promulgated constitutional reform, a new election law, and local government reform, as well as approved a new chairman of the CEC. While the decisions on the rerun of the second round of the election suited Yushchenko and Tymoshenko, the constitutional changes did not. The

23. Interview with Akhmetov in Donetsk on December 8, 2004.

main authors were Medvedchuk and Lytvyn, who revived their failed April 2004 attempt to reduce presidential powers through a constitutional change.

Tymoshenko and Yushchenko objected to the reduced presidential powers and the sheer inconsistency of the new constitutional order. Tymoshenko argued it was a halfway house that could not work.²⁴ She did not vote on the package in protest against the constitution, and her faction voted against it. Nor did Yushchenko vote, and one-fifth of his Our Ukraine faction abstained.

The constitutional changes increased the powers of the parliament and the prime minister at the expense of the president. The parliamentarians were supposed to form a coalition and nominate a prime minister, who would appoint all ministers but those of defense and foreign affairs. The president would propose those two ministers and appoint the chairman of the SBU and the prosecutor general. His power to dissolve the parliament would be restricted. The regional governors were to be appointed by the president but carry out the orders of the government. The constitutional amendments were to come into force on January 1, 2006, but this inconsistent constitutional order has not worked well.

The new election law was much better. It introduced fully proportional elections from March 2006, but the threshold for representation would be lowered from 4 to 3 percent of the votes cast. The parliament would serve for five rather than four years. The obsolete parliament would stay on until March 2006. Logically, new parliamentary elections should have been held, but only Tymoshenko and some in Our Ukraine pursued that argument.

In effect, the compromise meant that the orange camp won on the presidential election, but it lost both on the constitutional change and the parliamentary election date, while the transition to proportional elections was approved by consensus. Thus, it was less of a victory for the orange side than it appeared at the time.

The constitutional decisions by parliament on December 8 marked the end of the Orange Revolution, which had lasted for 17 days since November 22. That evening, Lutsenko spoke on Maidan and told the victors they could go home and drink 50 grams of vodka. Euphoria prevailed and people danced on Khreshchatyk. I stopped by one orchestra that was playing national tunes. All of a sudden, the whole street was singing and dancing in lines and circles. I thought of Milan Kundera's line in his *Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, "Also I have danced in ring." Suddenly, three old ladies dragged me off my feet, and off we flew in an extended ring. The revolution had bred its own songs. Everyone was happy. The leading refrain went: "Together we are many. We cannot be

24. Interview with Tymoshenko in March 2005.

defeated!”²⁵ Another was: “We have fun in Ukraine.” Ever so often, the tune switched to the militant chant “Yu-shchen-ko!” as clinched fists rose into the air. The 1,500 tents and their inhabitants stayed until December 26, but the masses dwindled.

On December 20, before the final round of the presidential elections, another televised debate was held between the two candidates. Incredibly, 63 percent of the population watched, but they found the debate rather boring, knowing all the arguments. Once again Yushchenko was perceived as the winner.

On December 26 the Ukrainians voted for the third time in two months, and no less than 77 percent participated. The election took place in good order under the most extensive monitoring possible, which judged it free and fair. Yushchenko won with 52 percent of the votes and Yanukovich obtained 44 percent, reflecting what the exit polls had indicated after the second round (table 7.1). Neither candidate gained nor lost votes, indicating very loyal electorates with as sharp regional division as before. Donbas voters really supported Yanukovich, even if they did not show the same passion as their western compatriots.

Democracy had arrived. With this election, Ukraine had passed the test of a free society and a democracy. For the first time, authoritative Freedom House (2008) raised Ukraine’s ranking to “free.” For Ukrainians, the Orange Revolution was their catharsis. They had finally proven themselves both to themselves and the world.

Assessment of the Orange Revolution

Looking back, the Orange Revolution seemed quite predictable. For years, it had been discussed in detail. Both the opposition and the regime possessed all relevant information. In the end, the regime committed a number of serious mistakes, while the opposition got it right.

The Orange Revolution was not a singular event. In November 2003 the Rose Revolution had overthrown President Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia, and the Orange Revolution was followed by the Tulip Revolution, which toppled President Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. These three post-Soviet “colored” revolutions had seven conditions in common for democratic breakthrough, and the Ukrainians examined the Georgian precedent.²⁶

First, the incumbent regime was neither strong nor united. It was semi-democratic or mildly authoritarian, with a skillful old president dividing and ruling between oligarchic clans. In Ukraine only one oligarchic clan

25. *Razom nas bahato! Nas ne podolaty!*

26. This section draws on McFaul (2006a).

fully supported the old regime's presidential candidate (Yanukovych), while the others were lukewarm or opposed.

Second, a similar fissure ran through law enforcement. Especially the Ministry of Interior and the SBU were rivals. Substantial parts of the SBU sided with Yushchenko early on and fed his campaign with vital intelligence. As the troops were not reliable, the old regime did not know whether it could use them against demonstrators.

Third, the old regime had an unpopular leader, and Kuchma tried to appoint a successor. The old leaders had originally been popular, but corruption or nepotism had eroded their popularity.

Fourth, a strong, well-organized, and legal opposition existed. The opposition was structured in a few major parties, which acted together. It had a popular leader who had substantial executive experience and parliamentary representation. In the Orange Revolution, the billionaires supported the regime, while the multimillionaires opposed it, generously funding the revolution.

Fifth, the opposition had access to independent media. The Orange Revolution marked the breakthrough of the internet era, as *Ukrainskaya pravda* became the foremost news medium. Mobile phones that could take photos transmitted revolutionary news. Strangely, both the Georgian and Ukrainian old regimes permitted the opposition access to a minor TV channel, which proved vital. These countries were sufficiently free so that foreign broadcasting could not keep up with events and lost local attention (Prytula 2006).

A sixth condition was timely, independent, national election monitoring and the instant spreading of the actual election results. This required strong domestic nongovernmental organizations as well as international election monitors. Initially, exit polls were taken, then alternative vote counts, and in the end the actual fraud was revealed.

Finally, the opposition could mobilize the population through strong nongovernmental organizations, especially the student organization Pora, which initiated street demonstrations. The number of people in the streets was vital for the success of the protest, and people were caught by the sense that it was now or never: The election had evidently been stolen and it was unclear whether people would be allowed to protest again.

In all the regime changes, foreign actors were conspicuous. Western nongovernmental organizations assisted with the training of activists, election monitors, and independent journalists. The Orange Revolution was top news throughout the world for one month, and prominent international politicians participated in the roundtable with the Ukrainian leaders on how to end the revolution. The Kremlin and other incumbent dictators labeled the colored revolutions Western conspiracies. That was an exaggeration, but the opposition did enjoy strong Western sympathy (McFaul 2006b). The minimal return on the heavy-handed Russian in-

volvement showed the limited impact of money, media propaganda, and “political technologists.”

The colored revolutions showed that the “captured” regimes were not all that entrenched but harbored seeds of democracy. According to more stringent political science definitions of revolution, the colored revolutions did not quite qualify. They were peaceful, and constitutions were obeyed. The critical decisions were made through compromises around a roundtable, by the Supreme Court, and through legislation in parliament. No major redistribution of property occurred. It might be more appropriate to call them democratic breakthroughs (McFaul 2006a).

The colored revolutions bred counterrevolution in the remaining, more authoritarian, oligarchic regimes. In May 2005 an armed uprising in the Uzbek city of Andijan was quashed, costing hundreds of lives. In Russia the Kremlin decided to become more autocratic, tightening authoritarian controls over all factors that may have contributed to the colored revolutions. Effective one-party rule was imposed. All media of significance were brought under Kremlin control. A new restrictive law on nongovernmental organizations gave the Kremlin arbitrary control over their registration and funding. Independent election monitoring was prohibited by law, as was criticism of public officials. Judicial reform was halted to the benefit of the secret police.

