



Language

Ukrainian politics is influenced by divisions between those who for historical and cultural reasons desire to maximise Ukrainian independence from Russia and others who feel close historic and cultural ties to Russia (including some ethnic Russians). These deep divisions were manifested during the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, both in the polls and in opposing demonstrations, and have marked Ukrainian politics since then, for example in controversy over renewing the contract for a Russian naval base.

After 1991 Ukraine was governed by former Communist leaders who espoused cultural nationalism. Under pressure from opposition parties, parliamentary elections were held in 1994, but the government continued to be dominated by a coalition between Communists and financial oligarchs in a corrupt and semi-authoritarian regime.

Initial protests in the Ukraine focused on corruption and lack of freedom. In 2000 journalists launched the 'Wave of Freedom' protests, starting in the western city of Lvov and developing in Kiev. One of its key organizers, investigative journalist Gyorgy Gongadze, was later found murdered, and secret tape recordings suggested President Leonid Kuchma had been complicit. An opposition member of parliament, who released the tapes, demanded the President's impeachment. Demonstrators representing both right wing and leftist parties marched in Kiev in early February 2001 to demand Kuchma's resignation and set up a protest camp in the centre of the city. The government tore down the camp on March 1 and was able to suppress the relatively small protests in April. Viktor Yushchenko, who had been trying to end corruption and introduce controversial economic reforms, was forced from office, whilst thousands of supporters outside demanded the impeachment of Kuchma.

These issues came to the fore again in November 2004, when Yushchenko, despite an attempt to poison him, stood in the presidential elections against the then prime minister, Viktor Yanukovich (backed by Kuchma who was retiring). In the second round of the elections, Yanukovich was declared the winner, but Yushchenko's supporters and OSCE observers claimed that the poll was marked by intimidation and ballot rigging. Thousands of demonstrators set up a protest camp in Kiev, which they maintained for days despite freezing temperatures. Other similarities with Georgia (and Serbia) was the role of an active youth group (Pora), symbolic branding of protests (using the colour orange), internal electoral monitoring and foreign funding.

Three western Ukrainian cities, where thousands also took to the streets, declared Yushchenko the winner, despite the official results. However counter-demonstrations in favour of Yanukovich were held in Kiev. After prolonged protests, parliamentary debates and top level negotiations (in which President Putin of Russia, who openly backed Yanukovich, was involved), and a referral to the Supreme Court, a re-run ballot was organized. Yushchenko won, although the voting was close. (Yanukovich refused to concede defeat, claiming evidence of fraud, and took his case unsuccessfully to both the Central Election Committee and the Supreme Court.)

Political divisions in the Ukraine have been demonstrated in subsequent elections, when Yanukovich managed to return to power. So the 'Orange Revolution' was never the result of an overwhelming majority rebelling against authoritarianism. The events illustrated the strong involvement (official and semi-official) by both Russia and the USA in funding and advising the opposed parties, media outlets and 'civil society' bodies. Some leftist western commentators suggested that the 'Orange Revolution' was closer to a western-backed coup. (See for example Jonathan Steele, '[Ukraine's postmodern coup d'etat](#) [1]', Guardian, 26 November 2004, and host of letters representing different viewpoints, 27 November 2004, and follow-up article by Steele replying to critics, 31 December 2004.)

Aslund, Anders ; McFaul, Michael, [Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough](#) [2], Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment, 2006, pp. 216

Selection of essays including assessments of the role of civil society and of the youth group Pora, an examination of western influence, and a concluding analysis of the 'revolution' in comparative perspective.



D'Anieri, Paul, [What has changed in Ukrainian politics? Assessing the implications of the Orange Revolution](#) [3], Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 52, issue 3 (September/October), 2005, pp. 82-91

Garton Ash, Timothy, [Orange Revolution in Ukraine](#) [4], In Garton Ash, Timothy, [Facts Are Subversive: Political Writing from a Decade Without a Name](#) [5] London, Atlantic Books, , 2009, pp. 30-45

Places the Orange Revolution in a sequence of 'velvet revolutions' based on strict nonviolence.

Goldstein, Joshua, [The Role of Digital Networked Technologies in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution](#) [6], Research Publication No 2007-14 (Dec. 2007), Cambridge MA, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, 2007, pp. 20

Kurth, Helmut ; Kempe, Iris, [Presidential Election and Orange Revolution: Implications for Ukraine's Transition](#) [7], Kyiv, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2005, pp. 152

Kuzio, Taras, [Special issue 'Kuchmagate Crisis to Orange Revolution: Civil Society, Elections and Democratisation in Ukraine'](#) [8], The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, Vol. 23, issue 1 (March), 2007

Eight contributions analysing various aspects of Ukrainian society from schools to rock 'n' roll, from politics to gender.

Kuzio, Taras ; D'Anieri, Paul, [Special Issue 'Ukraine: Elections and Democratisation'](#) [9], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 38, issue 2 (June), 2005, pp. 131-292

Much of this issue analyses the previous Kuchma regime and parliamentary elections in 1994, 1998 and 2002, but there are two articles on the 2004 presidential elections and impact of the 'Orange Revolution', one by Kuzio, Taras, [From Kuchma to Yushchenko](#) [10] Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 2005, pp. 229-244 .

McFaul, Michael, [Importing Revolution: Internal and External Factors in Ukraine's 2004 Democratic Breakthrough](#) [11], In Bunce; McFaul; Stoner-Weiss, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World](#) [12] ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [13]), New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 189-225

Wilson, Andrew, [Ukraine's Orange Revolution](#) [14], New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 232

Lively analysis by academic expert on the country, stressing the complexity of Ukraine's regional politics and of the 'Orange Revolution' itself. See also Wilson, Andrew, [Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" of 2004: The Paradoxes of Negotiation](#) [15] In Roberts; Garton Ash, [Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present](#) [16] ([A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [17]) New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 335-353 .

See also:

Taras Kuzio, [Civil society, youth and societal mobilization](#) [18], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [19])
Paul D'Anieri, [Explaining the success and failure of post-communist revolutions](#) [20], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [19])

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [21], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [19]), pp. 114-47



Anika Locke Binnendijk; Ivan Marovic, [Power and persuasion: Nonviolent strategies to influence state security forces in Serbia \(2000\) and Ukraine \(2004\)](#) [22], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [19])

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Links

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