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Understanding Values in Uncertain Times

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### Prisoner’s Voice – Oleh Sentsov

“I devoted a larger part of my life to the country’s public life than my creative activities. After the decision made by the State Cinema Council, though, I am again switching to the cinema sphere, and in the next months I will be immersed in it.”

### Prisoner’s Voice – Oleksandr Kolchenko

“In prison I read *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk*. This book is great help for surviving in these kind of conditions.”

### The power of Ukrainian youth
*Natalia Dolgopolova, Kinga Anna Gajda, Alina Mekheda and Hanna Surkova*

Young Ukrainians tend to put the values that are related to their lives first. These include family, health, well-being and love. They also value clear conscious, service to the homeland and having open debates on social issues.

### Syrian refugees, who left their homes because of the war, are risking their lives trying to get into countries neighbouring Syria, as well as to Europe. More than 20,000 went to Armenia – the vast majority as descendants of Armenians who fled the massacres at the beginning of the century in today’s Turkey.

### The fleeting memory of December 1970
*Piotr Leszczyński*

In December 1970 violent riots broke out in the Polish cities of Szczecin and Gdynia, while in Gdask strikers surrounded the seat of the Polish United Workers’ Party.

### The line between politics and friendship
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Ukraine’s “learning” revolutions of 1990, 2004/05 and 2013/14

OSTAP KUSHNIR


The year 2014, in many ways, was unique for Ukraine. The events of the EuroMaidan and the war in Donbas placed the state at the centre of global attention. However, this attention brought a few vexing side-effects. First, Ukraine started getting researched for the sake of getting something published, as opposed to publishing something that was relevant. Scholars and journalists often decided to ride the wave of public interest and build their reputations and fortunes on “quick” inquiries of somewhat dubious quality. Second, former Russian experts and Sovietologists, as well as graduates of “generic” Eastern European or Slavic studies, became protagonists in researching Ukraine. Albeit some of these people produced comparatively well-rounded articles, they sometimes “distorted” Ukraine. The latter was not perceived as a unique state-in-the-making, but one more entity in a basket of post-communist republics lost in the “grey zone” of Russia’s “privileged interests”. Thirdly, the methodologies used to examine Ukraine were often western-originated and western-tuned. Their direct application, so productive in explaining social mobilisation in America and Europe, might have
provided incomplete results in respect to Ukraine.

The upgrade and regional adjustment of these methodologies were often needed, but not always enacted. Western scholars often lacked empirical data to conduct a thorough analysis of Ukraine's events. To collect this data, one should have invested much time and effort, which was not always the case. Therefore, several articles and essays included sweeping generalisations whenever well founded evidence was unavailable.

**Deeper assessment**

Such was the discourse in which the first volume of *Three Revolutions: Mobilization and Change in Contemporary Ukraine* appeared. This volume, thankfully, evaded the above-mentioned criticisms. To begin with, it is not the product of hasty research. The idea came about in 2016 and developed throughout numerous stages of international collaboration. Secondly, the volume's editors are renowned scholars. Georges Mink, a leading researcher of post-communist transformations, Iwona Reichardt, a specialist in regional media, journalism and policy analysis, and Paweł Kowal, a representative of academic and policy-making spheres, combined their efforts to make this volume credible, diverse and balanced.

In turn, the volume's contributors are among the world's best scholars on Ukraine from North America, Western Europe, Poland, Ukraine and Russia. The sheer size, 22 chapters stretched over almost 800 pages, serves as additional evidence of the quality of the research produced. Moreover, the methodologies here were fine-tuned for Ukraine. Its contributors are aware of the local peculiarities and approached Ukraine's revolutions, nation-building and statecraft appropriately. Finally, speaking of collecting data and evidence, the volume's sources illustrate its high value, including unique archival information, specific sociological surveys and interviews with major decision-makers, including former Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, former French President François Hollande, former Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the Archbishop of the Catholic Church of the Byzantine-Ukrainian rite Sviatoslav Shevchuk, and many others.

The value of the volume also draws from the fact that it became an epiphenomenon of a fundamental research project conducted with the framework of the Three Ukrainian Revolutions (3R) Project at the College of Europe in Natolin (Warsaw), led by its European Civilization Chair. One of the major objectives of the 3R Project was to scrutinise the recent Ukrainian revolutions – the
Revolution on Granite (1990), The Orange Revolution (2004/05) and the Euromaidan (2013/14) – as pivotal manifestations of the development of the Ukrainian political nation and not “isolated” events in space-time. This allowed for a deeper assessment of the peculiarities of social mobilisation of Ukrainians. This also helped to “determine what has emerged/is emerging in the continuation of the social protests in modern Ukraine, and which elements of those protests appeared during the new protests as original ones”. Finally, the volume allows for other researchers to better understand the unique logic of Ukraine’s protests, as well as outline the political programme behind each of them.

Themes

The volume consists of three major thematic blocks. The first outlines the methodological backbone for the entire project; it raises and answers the question of how to study the reoccurring protests in Ukraine. The second part scrutinises the recent revolutions, tracing the connections between them, as well as noting some discrepancies in the logic of their development. The last, and the shortest, block examines the impact of religion, collective memory and identity of Ukraine’s revolutions, which is particularly helpful in explaining the unique nature of the latter.

Speaking in more detail, the first block discusses the essence of revolutions in the contemporary world and compares Ukrainian events to that theoretical benchmark. Here we find reflections on the values constituting Ukrainian identity and their fluctuations throughout the past 30 years (such as the chapter by Mykola Riabchuk); the feeling of patriotism and nationhood which moves from West to East (Taras Kuzio); the people’s right to rebel against illegitimate hybrid regimes (Andrew Wilson); Cossack patterns of self-organisation in the Ukrainian revolutions (Adam Balcer); and factors of discontent which fuel Ukraine’s protests and restrain the expansionist Kremlin’s actions (Marcel Van Herpen). The conclusion drawn is that the phenomenon of Ukraine’s social mobilisation can be best defined...
as a “learning” revolution: each subsequent protest utilises the legacies of the previous one, but adjusts to the specific historical context. Moreover, Ukraine’s revolutions are examples of postmodern ones, which are highly improvisational and best manifested online. However, they still require actual rallying on the streets.

The second thematic block on the socio-political uniqueness of each of three revolutions scrutinises their resonance in Ukrainian governance and the behaviour of external actors. In particular, the section addresses the legacies and nature of the Revolution on Granite (Olga Onuch, Paulina Codogni); the Orange Revolution (Jacek Kluczkowski); and the EuroMaidan (Taras Vozniak). It looks at the activities of the EU (Maciej Olchawa); Poland (Andrzej Szeptycki); and Russia (Tomasz Stępniowski, Igor Gretskiy) throughout the past 30 years, as well as discusses the evolution of Ukraine’s foreign policy objectives (Ola Hnatiuk, Kataryna Wolczuk). This part also tracks changes in the modi operandi of Maidan activists and less engaged citizens of Ukraine through 2004–14, which also demonstrated that revolutions were a “learning” process (Nataliia Pohorila, Andriy Bova, Hryhorii Perepelytsia).

The final block touches upon religion and old and new elements of collective memory. The chapters of this block discuss Christian values and spirituality in times of protest (Myroslav Marynovych); religious nationalist narratives of the EuroMaidan (Katarina Novikova); and compares the values of the Maidan to those of a secular Europe (Mychajlo Dymyd). This block also outlines the processes of post-2014 decommunisation in Ukraine (Oleksandr Hrytsenko) and the misused potential of “civic awakening” by both the EU and domestic actors (Jennifer L. Smith).

It is worth noting that the volume contains a lot of illustrations related to Ukraine’s revolutions. These are promotional posters, flyers, communiques, newspaper articles and other elements. The differences in their designs convey the spirit of the epochs and thus make the volume look even more eye-catching. Some of these elements are unique, such as the scan of telegrams to the students’ tent camp in Kyiv, sent on October 13th 1990, by the leaders of the Donetsk Coal Miners’ Strike Commit-
Ukraine’s “learning” revolutions of 1990, 2004/05 and 2013/14, Ostap Kushnir

Eastem Café

The miners then declared support for the students’ hunger strike during the Revolution on Granite.

Overall, the volume gives the impression of being profound in both its content and appearance. Deep academic insights and theories are intertwined with new facts and illustrations, which makes it an interesting read for experts, scholars, and members of the general public. The reader will occasionally encounter the same points reiterated in different parts of the volume. This feeling of *déjà vu* probably illustrates that the chapters are better suited to be read as separate essays rather than as a unified thesis. Also, it is worth noting that some chapters do not neatly fit into the thematic blocks. These weak points, however, make a little impact on the generally positive impression from this 800 pages-long artefact.

This volume opens the series of pivotal publications of the 3R Project. The second volume, which has already been published, includes selected testimonies and entries of oral history, as well as records of the historical workshops conducted during the events of 3R Project. However, to do justice to the contents of the second volume, a separate review would be needed. Finally, the forthcoming third volume will contain unpublished historical and archival documents on contemporary Ukrainian history.

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