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## Why did they join *en masse*? Understanding “ordinary” Ukrainians’ participation in mass-mobilisation in 2004

### Introduction

‘Revolutionary’ moments<sup>1</sup> of mass-mobilisation tend to shock political regimes and academics alike. We watch in wonder as millions of previously disengaged seemingly ‘ordinary’ citizens<sup>2</sup>, take to the streets, *en masse* risking violent retaliation from their regime. During these isolated moments in time, ‘ordinary’ citizens’ participation makes regime change likely and systemic (social, economic or political) transformation (and thus, ‘Revolution’) possible. Analyses forged and fueled by mass-media coverage, tend to focus on the apolitical spontaneity of ‘the crowd’s’ actions. Or discounting their participation wholeheartedly, analyses focus on the co-optation of ‘the masses’ by other political forces, be they national (activists and opposition) or international (foreign NGOs, IGOs, foreign governments, and think-tanks). Such simplifications fail to acknowledge just how rational and political the act of civic protest really is. This article investigates the critical and yet most elusive variable of ‘moments’ of mass-mobilisation: the *en masse* participation of ‘ordinary’ citizens, using the case of the 2004 Ukrainian ‘Orange Revolution’. Even in the presence of key variables such as foreign financing, activist pro-

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘revolutionary’ moments is used interchangeably by the author with ‘moments’ of mass mobilisation. The term comes from the naming of recent Eastern European mass-mobilisations as colour ‘revolutions’. The term implies that while a ‘revolutionary’ moment makes social, political or economic systemic change possible, by no means is there a ‘revolution’ outcome certain.

<sup>2</sup> ‘ordinary’ citizens is a term adapted from ‘ordinary’ people taken from Nancy Bermeo’s book: *‘ordinary’ people in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy* (2003). Rather than using the masses, the public, or average citizens, the term is used by the author to denote the non-activist citizens of a polity, who tend to be disengaged from politics, other than when they vote in elections.

test and activist and opposition cooperation, without the participation of 'ordinary' citizens, at most we can expect to observe a large protest event organised by Social Movement Organisations (SMOs). Individual activists and SMOs represent a smaller portion of the population and are expected to take part in some form of collective action. Protests are generally seen, by analysts and the general public, as irrational or risky endeavours, and their payoffs are difficult to predict. Without adequate information the possibility of regime violence, imprisonment and/or social free-riders is high. In addition, in democracies citizens know they can punish the incumbent with their vote. Voting is a less risky undertaking, the outcome of which they are likely to be able to predict better than that of a protest. 'Ordinary' citizens have also displayed a historic ability to be patient, tolerant and endure different regimes and their policies, even during times of crisis. Thus, when 'ordinary' citizens, who do not generally engage in collective action, join the activists and contribute to the making of a moment of mass-mobilisation, these extraordinary moments are in need of a nuanced explanation. This article attempts to answer two questions based on the case of Ukraine in 2004: What are the triggers, patterns and trajectories of the mass-mobilisation of 'ordinary' citizens? I argue that mass-mobilisation of 'ordinary' citizens is triggered by the breaking of a collective threshold of political patience after the government has infringed upon civic rights *en masse*.

First, the methodology employed in the article is briefly reviewed. Second, the paper revisits how the 'orange revolution has been analysed in recent academic works. Third, I outline the different actors involved in the mobilisation process and review Hirschman's 'exit', 'voice' and 'loyalty' model for interpreting 'ordinary' citizens' participation. I argue that Hirschman's model should be altered to include a parameter for political patience, and a context opportunity trigger variable. Fourth, the case of the 2004 mass-mobilisation in Ukraine is analysed empirically by dividing the analyses into four phases of protest ranging from small activist protests to mass-mobilisation. The paper's primary focus is the moment at which the collective threshold of political patience is broken and 'ordinary' citizens join in the protests. The paper briefly addresses how the actions and cooperation of the activist and political-elite affected the trajectory of the mobilisation of 'ordinary' citizens. Finally, a conclusion and theoretical framework for analysing moments of mass-mobilisation is presented.

The findings of this paper are based in a comparative study of mass mobilization in Argentina in 2001 and Ukraine in 2004 and the Ukrainian case is understood to be an example of how 'ordinary' citizens in 'new' democracies (regardless of region or country) view their political rights and engagement. The argument presented is that [be they Argentines (2001), Georgians (2003), Ukrainians (2004), or most recently Tunisians (2010) or Egyptians (2011)] 'ordinary' citizens are rational political actors, who can articulate their protest participation using a rights based discourse. Based on intensive qualitative research, I conclude that 'ordinary' citizens' protest engagement is a calculated reaction to a long chain of processes including: a severe crisis environment, activist protest, opposition strength and cooperation, a weak and isolated government, and finally a mass infringement of civic rights. These processes take place simultaneously and in a compounding manner lead to a breaking of a collective threshold of political patience, a moment of no return when civic rights are abused *en masse*, making the mass-mobilisation of 'ordinary' citizens very likely.

## Methodology

It is difficult to access adequate data on the participation of ‘ordinary’ citizens in mass-mobilisations, especially three to nine years after the events took place. This is why the author chose to rely predominantly on independent primary data collection. The theoretical and empirical findings presented in this article are based on a primary survey, focus groups, limited interviews, and some secondary survey data. The author conducted on-street surveys based on random sampling in Kyiv. The sample size was 508 in Ukraine. On-line surveys sample size was 253 in Ukraine. Four focus groups of ‘ordinary’ citizens were conducted 3 in Kyiv and 1 in Lviv. Between 5 and 10 participants were chosen for each focus group, the groups have as varied a sample as possible, but the researcher sought to over represent protest participants. Translated samples of all the focus group activities, questionnaires and lists of participants are available upon request.

## How has the 2004 mass-mobilisation in Ukraine been analysed?

What was first called the ‘Kashtanova’ (Chestnut) and is now known, as the ‘Orange’ ‘*Revolution*’, will continue to mean different things to different people. Four current perspectives on the ‘Orange Revolution’ can be identified — these are not mutually exclusive and this is review simplified. The first is the *Color Revolutions Contagion or Diffusion Thesis*, presented notably by Beissinger (2006), Bunce and Wolchik (2008) and McFaul (2007).<sup>3</sup> These arguments maintain that powerful structures/networks of foreign NGOs and SMOs were the main sources of exogenous ‘ideas’ of ‘electoral revolution’ that were diffused or imported into the Ukrainian context. The second is the *Foreign Financiers Thesis*. Overlapping with the above analysis, Åslund and McFaul (2006), McFaul (2007) and Wilson (2006a and 2006b), argue that foreign actors financed and or orchestrated the Ukrainian SMOs, mass-protests and even helped in the co-ordination of opposition party coalitions.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis is on the importance of finance. The third is the *Elite Power Politics and Pacts Thesis*. Åslund and McFaul (2006), D’Anieri (2006), Kuzio (2006), and Way (2008, 2009), with some variation, argue that the ‘Orange Revolution’ was a political game between elites and thus, understand the movements and protests to be entirely managed and even created by the ‘orange’ coalition, or as a product of the failure of regime type and levels of state control.<sup>5</sup> While focusing on endogenous factors, these analyses are ‘elitist’, as they do not place enough emphasis on the agency and participation of SMOs and ‘ordinary’ citizens. Lastly,

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<sup>3</sup> M. Beissinger, *Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer, Rose, Orange and Tulip Revolutions*, in: *Perspectives on Politics*, 2006, (5), pp 259–276; V. Bunce, and S. Wolchik, *Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 2006, (17) 4, pp. 5–18; M. McFaul, *Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution*, in: *International Security*, 2007, (32) 2, pp. 45–83.

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this article, East Europe includes *all* former communist and soviet states.

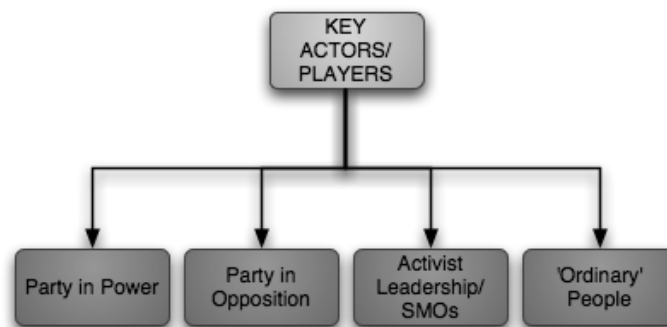
<sup>5</sup> P. D’Anieri, *Understanding Ukrainian Politics: Power, Politics, And Institutional Design*, New York 2006; T. Kuzio, *Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilisation in Democratic Revolutions*, in: *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2006, (39)3, pp. 365–386; L. Way, *The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 2008, (19)3, pp. 55–69; idem, *A Reply to my Critics*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 2009, (20) 1, pp. 90–97.

there are the theses that predominate in the mainstream media,<sup>6</sup> and also in individual papers by Tucker (2007) and Arel (2005). These present the 'Orange Revolution' as either a spontaneous eruption by disenfranchised voters *or* as an exemplary moment of the difficulties of linguistic, regional and ethnic divisions in Ukraine and explain mass-mobilisation as a product of Ukrainian ethnic or civic nationalism. Even if these do take into consideration the role of 'ordinary' citizens or the SMOs, they do not present a holistic or qualitative research based, approach to processes of mass-mobilisation. It is evident that we require more intensive qualitative research into why 'ordinary' Ukrainians joined in. This article seeks to make this contribution, through a political science lens.

### Actors involved in the making of 'revolutionary' moments of mass-mobilisation

This paper identifies four key actors: activists and their SMOs, the party in power (the government), the opposition, and 'ordinary' citizens (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Key Actors in The Mass-Mobilisation Process

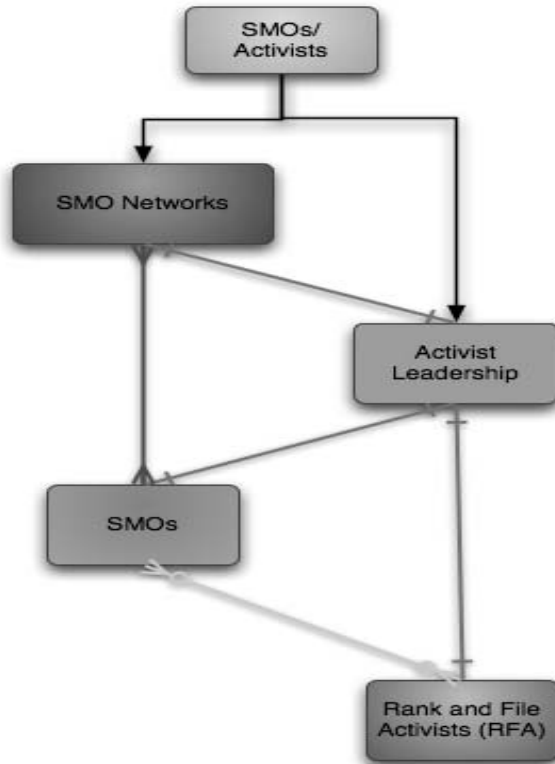


### Social Movement Organisations

Social Movement Organisations (SMOs) are engaged in long-term activism and protest. SMOs are co-ordinated organisationally and have defined claims, agendas and methods. On the individual level SMOs are divided between activist leaders, rank-and-file activists and casual members (see figure 2). On the institutional level SMOs can be organised locally, regionally, nationally, or transnationally. The SMOs and activists are united via diverse networks and together combine to make what we would call a social movement. SMOs closer ties to 'ordinary' citizens within their communities enable SMOs to inform and mobilise individuals to join special protest events and activities.

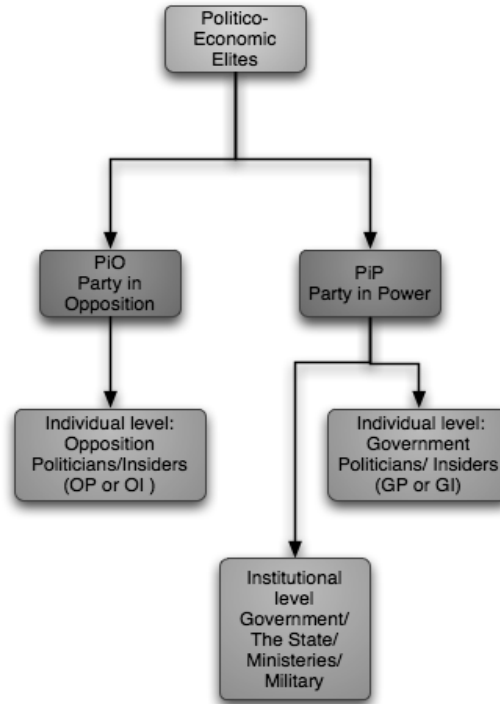
<sup>6</sup> For examples of foreign media coverage: P. Quinn-Judge, and Y. Zarakovich, *The Orange Revolution: Why Russia, the U.S. and Europe care so much about Ukraine's disputed presidential election* (November 6<sup>th</sup> 2004). Time Magazine. Accessed online July 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, from: <http://www.time.com/time/europe/html/041206/story.html>; K. Westcott, *Revolutions: What's in a name?* (November 26<sup>th</sup> 2004). BBC Online. Accessed online July 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4041157.stm>

Figure 2 Activist leaders/SMOs as a Key Actor in the Mass-Mobilisation Process



In 2003-2004 the SMOs in Ukraine could be described as being based on claims to national liberation, human rights and liberal democracy. A core group of activist ‘leaders’ were the initial organisers of multiple civic organisations. Together these organisations formed a network that communicated via formal and informal committees, conferences and meetings. They co-ordinated the initial protests in 2004. Recent academic research has focused on one SMO of the ‘Orange Revolution’ — *Pora*. There were actually two *Poras* (yellow and black). Beyond having different logos and colour schemes the two *Poras*’ organisers were part of two different regional contingents (*tusovkas*) of core Ukrainian activists. The two *Poras*, to a large extent, amalgamated the other organisations or managed a way of co-operating with them. Most importantly there was not only one organisation, but a large cross-Ukrainian network of SMOs active at this time. A sampling of other SMOs active between 2003-2005 are: *Khvyliia Svobody* (precursor to yellow *Pora*), *Studentska Khvyliia*, *Opir Molodi*, *Za Pravdu*, *Sprotyv*, *Chysta Ukraina*, *Znaiu*, *Maidan*, *Molodyi Rukh*, *Ukrainske Bratstvo*, *Sumy* university student activist committee, *NaUKMA* university student activist committee as well as Kharkiv and Odesa-based human rights organisations. These activists and SMOs were composed of ‘middle class’ educated youth, journalists, NGO practitioners, would be-politicians and lawyers. These SMOs had loose but at times formal ties to political parties.

Figure 3 Politico-Economic Elite as a Key Actor in The Mass-Mobilisation Process



### Politico-economic elites

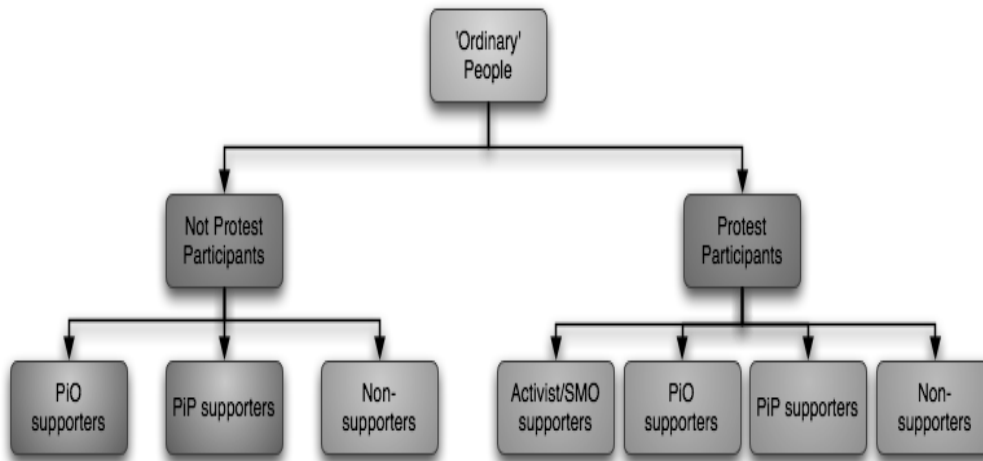
The 'politico-economic elite' (called 'power elite' by Wright Mill) is a group of 'elite' actors who control the political and economic institutions of a polity (see figure 3). The systems of political parties based on clientelism and oligarchic '*clans*' in Ukraine make it difficult to separate some institutions (including economic and judicial ones) from the ruling party in government (local, provincial or national). This actor is further divided into party in power (or the government) and party in opposition.

In Ukraine the government was composed of President Kuchma, his government, the State Administration, the Prime Minister and presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovych and his campaign team, the Party of Regions and the ruling majority in Parliament and governors of the eastern and southern oblasts, the financial backers from the industrial and energy clans, namely Medvechuk, Pinchuk, Akhmetov and Surkis; and finally some elements in the Ukrainian Secret Services (SBU).<sup>7</sup> Their main foreign supporter was Russian President Vladimir Putin. The opposition was composed of: presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko, leader of *Our Ukraine* party and his campaign headquarters; *Yuliia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT)* leader Yuliia Tymoshenko; Oleksandr Moroz, leader of the Socialist Party; and the leaders of several small liberal and nationalist parties, most importantly *Rukh*

<sup>7</sup> Governors of all oblasts, as they were all appointed by President Kuchma.

led by Boris Tarasiuk. The financiers of the opposition came mostly from western and central Ukraine, with the exception of Kuchma deserters such as Kolomoisky and Poroshenko. Yushchenko had the support of liberal elements in the SBU and key Western governments (Canada, the USA, Poland, the UK and the EU).

Figure 4 ‘Ordinary’ citizens as a Key Actor in The Mass-Mobilisation Process



### ‘Ordinary’ citizens

‘Ordinary’ citizens are usually referred to as the masses, the public, the people or the citizenry (see figure 4). They are the residents of a country who are not politicised, not engaged in politics or civic organisations, whose participation in politics is usually restricted to voting. The composition of ‘ordinary’ citizens is cross-class, gender neutral and not discriminatory to particular age groups. It is their *en masse* participation that makes the difference between a *large activist protest event* and a *moment of mass-mobilisation*. According to both a September 2005 poll by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and this author’s own survey data, the majority of the protest participants: were not, prior to 2004, involved in any activist organisations; had not previously participated in protests; were not paid for their participation; and although the broad majority identify as ethnically Ukrainian and state that Ukrainian is their mother tongue — most spoke Russian on a daily basis and did not have strong ethno-‘nationalist’ sentiments or preferences.<sup>8</sup> Thus, these were neither the ethno-linguistic-nationalist constituents of the Halychyna and Volynnia regions, nor were they the Russified eastern Ukrainian constituents. Participants were predominantly residents of Kyiv city or of Kyiv

<sup>8</sup> For more on language use and regional divisions see: G. Sasse, *The Role of Regionalism*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 2010 21, no. 3, pp. 99–106. <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 2, 2011).

Oblast. The 'ordinary' people who were participating in Kyiv were 'central' Ukrainians, who are part of a diverse bi-lingual population, and accordingly value a civic Ukrainian identity over an ethno-linguist or pan-slavist one.

### Bringing 'ordinary' citizens into the equation

Social scientists struggle with the role of 'ordinary' citizens in politics as well as their political engagement. We place 'ordinary' citizens somewhere between two of Habermas' spheres, the private and the public. 'Ordinary' citizens' participation should be isolated and is something different from that of rank-and-file activists, who are in the 'business' of protest.

Those who have attempted to unravel the question behind why an 'ordinary' citizen would decide to join a protest have focused on: social trends<sup>9</sup>, critical mass<sup>10</sup> and tipping point<sup>11</sup> theories. The majority of theoretical endeavours explaining the probability of participation are grounded in rational choice theory. Popkin (1979), states that since an individual is being asked to contribute *directly* to a protest they would make two separate calculations: one of the perceived costs of participation, and the second of the benefits made available upon entry<sup>12</sup>. Because the personal risks of participation are plentiful and success far from guaranteed, in such a dual calculation the dominant incentive is to free-ride. It is assumed that if the protest succeeds it is almost certain that some of the benefits will permeate throughout society as a whole and those who did not participate directly can still benefit from the successful outcome. Of course, one may argue that not all individuals are indeed rational agents, or that even rational agents can see benefits in collective association. It is also possible that under particular circumstances 'ordinary' citizens do not see themselves as individuals but collectively as citizens. By holding an exclusive membership to the citizenship club, they expect a particular set of civic rights to be bestowed upon them. If these rights are abused *en masse*, it is possible that citizens see this event through a collective rather than an individual lens.

Notably Hirschman, who initially intended his model to be used for corporate firms, extended his 'exit', 'voice' and loyalty' model to the mass-mobilisation of 'ordinary' citizens. He incorporated the collective understanding of political oppression as a trigger factor.<sup>13</sup> Accord to Hirschman's model any disgruntled citizen can 'exit' (emigrate); or can 'voice' their disapproval (through protesting or voting). Where there is strong 'loyalty' to the state, such as strong patriotism the option of 'exit' may be reduced. Attempts have been made to alter the model but there are still certain weaknesses. We often see that 'bad' governments, which infringe upon civic or human rights, not only survive, but even thrive for long periods of time without any notable mass-exodus or mass-protest. Furthermore, some countries maintain a continuous flow of 'exit' migration that fail to affect the government's

<sup>9</sup> For social trends and protest see: S. J. Baran, and D. K. Davis, *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future* (5 ed.), Belmont, 2008. For social trends and protest see: J. Lofland, *Protest: Studies of Collective Behavior and Social Movements*, New Brunswick 1985, pp. 42.

<sup>10</sup> For critical mass see: K. Opp, *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis*, New York 2009, pp. 189

<sup>11</sup> A. Shapiro, *Creating Contagious Commitment — Applying the Tipping Point to Organisational Change*, Hillsborough 2004.

<sup>12</sup> S. L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*, Berkeley 1979, pp. 245

<sup>13</sup> A. O. Hirschman, *Exit, 'voice', and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge, MA, 2007.



longevity or choice of policies. Lastly, both in LA and EE, governments have struggled with a different type of ‘exit’ — the informal economy. And even though the informal economy is estimated at 47.3–53.7% of the GDP in Ukraine, it has also failed to produce a response from the government.<sup>14</sup> More than that — sometimes government leaders are themselves heavily involved in the informal economy. Thus, ‘exit’ does not seem to be as important a corrective factor as the model would have us believe.

‘Exit’ is perceived to be costly to a state that wants its citizens to pay taxes. But if it encompasses the emigration of their civic or political opposition, the state can even welcome it. Furthermore, ‘exit’ can be costly to ‘ordinary’ citizens. When new hardships or infringements of rights occur in swift or concurrent succession the case for ‘voice’ grows stronger, and the option of ‘exit’ may be too complicated in such a short span of time. Thus, in an electoral democracy, where the government does not engage in systemic acts of violence against the *majority* of the population, while hardship or the infringement of rights may continue over an extended period of time, when a sudden crisis occurs ‘exit’ is an unlikely option for the vast majority of citizens.

Furthermore, when a ‘moment’ of mass-mobilisation occurs we are not interested in why ‘ordinary’ citizens did not ‘exit’ but rather why they decided to participate and ‘voice’ their grievances. While in the long run non-participation could be interpreted as loyalty to the regime, it could equally be interpreted as political apathy, or political patience/tolerance. If citizens faced with growing hardships, receive signals from the opposition and SMOs as to the weakness or lack of political legitimacy of the government, they can lose their faith in the government and its institutions. When citizens lose their faith in political institutions, a final infringement of civic rights by the regime can break the social threshold of political patience/tolerance. In such a moment ‘ordinary’ citizens, who do not have the option to ‘exit’, are more likely to join protests *en masse*. Thus, as this article will demonstrate, the participation of ‘ordinary’ citizens is predicated on the structural circumstances of a severe crisis, the interaction between activists and the opposition, and a final breaking of collective threshold of political patience/tolerance due the government’s attempt to quell the crisis and/or SMO protests.

### **How is the collective threshold of political patience defined?**

A collective conception of rights is shaped by context as well as historical legacies of mobilisation. Historical events or legacies of how the rights were formed, protected or infringed upon in the past can affect the contemporary social rhetoric of rights (social, political or economic as well as individual and collective). The contemporary context can reproduce or alter a society’s conception of a right. Thus, while affected by historical precedents, the social conception of what constitutes a civic right can also be dynamic. Based on the recollections of interviewees and focus group participants, it is argued that the basic conception of the most fundamental rights, namely the right to vote and the freedom of assembly, was framed by the collective memories of the 1991 transition to democracy, respectively.

In 1991 citizens in both countries reclaimed or acquired basic civic rights. In 1991, after independence and transition to democratic rule and institutions, Ukra-

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<sup>14</sup> C. Williams, J. Round, and P. Rodgers, *Beyond the Formal/Informal Economy Binary Hierarchy*, in: *International Journal of Social Economics*, 2007, 6, pp. 402–414.

inians acquired the most basic freedom of electoral choice. When the first elections were held in 1990 and 1991, each Ukrainian voter acquired new political power through participation. Although activists in each country developed their rights-based rhetoric and broadened their claims, these two basic civic rights, of political reclamation through protests and the vote were ingrained into the collective memory of the 'ordinary' citizens and Ukraine. These rights were understood to be shared by all citizens and as ones that should be applied equally. It did not matter if a person voted or protested, what mattered was that if they wanted to — they had the right to do so. In 2004, the government overstepped this boundary and infringed on these most basic rights, after having already imposed repressive socio-economic hardship on its citizens. Thus, as will be demonstrated below, the threshold of political patience was broken.

### **Phase one: small activist protest and beginnings of political crises**

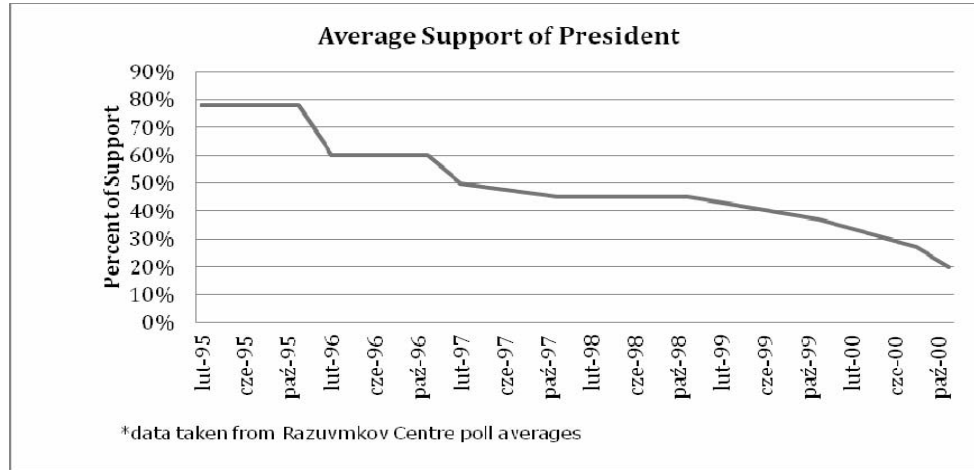
The first phase of mobilisation can be identified as beginning anywhere between one to two years prior to the moments of mass-mobilisation. In Ukraine this period began in September 2003. This first phase of protests was coordinated by and included only experienced activists. The initial protests were grounded in the political context of repression and crisis. The political repression of the Kuchma regime affected a select group of society directly (journalists and activists in Ukraine) and 'ordinary' citizens indirectly. These events, while seen by 'ordinary' citizens through limited media coverage, did not lead to their recruitment or participation in the protest events. As the protest events multiplied, the regime was pushed into taking risks to quell the opposition. These actions increased the levels of hardship or disapproval felt by 'ordinary' citizens. Over time, as the regime in Ukraine repeated the same repressive practice, their actions started to affect a somewhat larger portion of the general population. As reiterated by Oksana, a historian from Lviv, "political life was difficult, you would hear of political deals among politicians and oligarchs and the violence against journalists and academics...this was not the country I wanted to live in".<sup>15</sup> During this period activists gained sympathisers, who may not have been directly affected, but disagreed with or could acknowledge that the government's political practice was harmful to other groups in society. Thus, as the political crisis was increasingly mismanaged, approval ratings of the president fell (see figure 5). Activists began to coordinate small- to medium-size protest campaigns (estimated at 100–5,000 participants), more frequently and/or were diffused to a greater area of the country.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Ordinary' People Focus Group Ukraine 3, Lviv Headquarters of The Canadian Ukrainian Foundation, Lviv, 8/4/2009

<sup>16</sup> Author's own estimates based on interview recollections and newspaper coverage.

Figure 5 Support for President Kuchma



### Phase Two: medium to large protest and the extension of hardships to ‘ordinary’ citizens

In phase two the severe political crisis deepened, preparing the way for ‘ordinary’ citizens to enter the mobilisation equation. While the crisis had lasted for a longer period of time, at this point the effects of the crises were increasingly felt by a larger portion of the population. This involved a three-step process. First, information increased from media and alternative sources about the government’s mismanagement of the crisis. Second, social ties between activists and ‘ordinary’ citizens were strengthened. And third, crisis-related hardship was experienced first hand by ‘ordinary’ citizens. Gradually, local citizens were able to relate to opposition insiders and the SMOs as they increasingly lost support for and faith in the regime and state institutions.

In Ukraine this period can be traced to between the Mukacheve mayoral elections in April and the first round of the presidential elections in October 2004. The dissemination of the Mukacheve fraud was an attempt to bring the political crisis of the regime’s semi-authoritarian practices and their abuse of civic rights to the attention of ‘ordinary’ Ukrainians. It was important to disseminate this information to central Ukraine, where, in contrast to Western Ukraine, locals did not have strong social network ties to either national liberation or ethno-cultural-linguistic organisations. Through their recruitment tactics SMOs were able to increase their presence in rural as well as urban areas. Because the SMOs used local youth and students to disseminate their message they were better received by residents and not seen as outsiders. The September increase of the use of violence against the SMOs and opposition further tried the patience of the citizens. This included the September 5<sup>th</sup> poisoning of Yushchenko and the September arrests and October 15<sup>th</sup> raids on the offices of SMOs. As noted by focus group respondents in Kyiv, by this time ‘ordinary’ citizens already had, “access to sources of alternative information and local campaign headquarters... this is why no-one believed the regime when they tried to tell us that the opposition was linked to terrorists... we already knew bet-

ter”.<sup>17</sup> As mentioned before, in an attempt to stifle the growing support of the opposition the regime organised a fake assassination attempt on Yanukovych and released *temnyky* about the terrorist plans and bombs found in activist headquarters and homes. These events were exposed as fraudulent, publicised widely and disseminated to ‘ordinary’ Ukrainians *via* local news papers and television channels, notably *Ukrains’ka Pravada*, and 5-tyj Kanal. Lesia, a 40 year old teacher in Lviv, referring to the terrorist and assassination rumours, explained that:

these kids were our children, neighbours...our friends [interjects Oleksandr a 22 year old journalist]...we knew that they[activists] were fighting for our rights... did they[government] really think we were so stupid that we would not find out about the egg (*pro yayechnytsyu*<sup>18</sup>)? [interjects Iryna a 46 year old instructor — laughter erupts ].<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned by several people in focus group discussions, because of the fact they knew ‘the truth’ and experienced first hand how the regime “*insisted on spreading lies*” they could see that the regime was reaching new limits and delegitimising itself in their eyes.<sup>20</sup> ‘Ordinary’ Ukrainians living in central, western oblasts, benefited from denser social networks and access to liberal or alternative media sources (although still limited). They had better information about the SMOs and opposition, than Ukrainians living in southern and eastern oblasts. During a focus group mapping exercise in Kyiv, Andrii, an executive assistant from Donetsk, a Yanukovych stronghold in Eastern Ukraine, explained that the media coverage in his oblast was even more controlled than in Kyiv.<sup>21</sup> The lack of SMO and opposition access to the ‘ordinary’ citizens in eastern oblasts and the control over the local media made it more difficult to expose the regime’s infringements.

Not only did the regime unsuccessfully attempt to stifle ‘ordinary’ citizens’ access to information, they increasingly used their clientelistic networks to extend the violence and intimidation to ‘ordinary’ citizens, in particular in the central and western regions. Directly prior to the first round, ‘ordinary’ citizens noticed that their colleagues at work were being intimidated. Many individuals have recounted in interviews and focus group discussions, that they heard about or knew of, people losing their jobs for openly supporting Yushchenko’s candidacy. An exchange between Oksana, a 40 year old historian, and Dzvinka, a 50 year old NGO worker, illustrates the fear ‘ordinary’ citizens felt:

- bosses would tell people that there would be layoffs... in some cases bosses would come with people to vote... anyone that would voice apolitical opinion favouring the opposition could expect difficulties with their job...
- ...their children’s place in school... or university... we all felt the pressure,
- ...even if we were lucky enough not to personally live through the repercussions.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in their mismanagement of the crisis, the party in power extended the level of hardship to a broader portion of the *general population* in central and

<sup>17</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 1, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/28/2009.

<sup>18</sup> Literally translated as fried eggs.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 3, Lviv Headquarters of The Canadian Ukrainian Foundation, Lviv, 8/4/2009

<sup>20</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 1, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/28/2009.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 4, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 12/8/2009.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 3, Lviv Headquarters of The Canadian Ukrainian Foundation, Lviv, 8/4/2009

western Ukraine, as well as, and even possibly more severely, to specific *opposition supporters* in eastern and southern Ukraine. Medium and large-sized activist protests (estimated at 2,000–40,000) spread in both countries, as did information about the failures of the regime.<sup>23</sup> The approval ratings of both regimes continued to fall from low double digits to single digits, causing further division within the regime. As defectors joined the opposition and this information was disseminated to the general public, the protests became larger and better coordinated.

### **Phase three: large protests and the loss of political faith by ‘ordinary’ citizens**

The third and final phase before the *en masse* mobilisation of ‘ordinary’ citizens was marked by the intensification of protests (estimated at 10,000–50,000) and the total isolation of the party in power. In this compounding crisis context the government made a last-ditch attempt to stay in power. The activists also expanded their direct action repertoires and used more visible (even violent) means of communicating with the citizens. In Ukraine this phase lasted from the first (October 31<sup>st</sup>) to the second (November 21<sup>st</sup>) round elections. The regime resorted to drastic measures to tame or control the crisis, and did so unsuccessfully. These events propelled the loss of faith in political institutions and distrust of politicians.

The Kuchma and Yanukovich administration continued to use its clientelistic networks to intimidate voters during and directly after the first round of elections. This led to a complete loss of people’s faith in the regime. In an emotional exchange during the mapping exercise, three focus group participants from Kyiv, tried to pinpoint the most important moments leading up to the mass-mobilisation of the 24<sup>th</sup> of November:

- ...the fraud and manipulation was obvious
- ...the media coverage was biased... they were throwing it in our faces
- ...laughing at us
- ...local state agencies and police pressured and intimidated people... we did not even need to talk about it with our neighbours and friends because we all knew what was happening... but at home in my family no one could stop talking about it...
- ...after seeing the first round’s intimidation of voters people lived in fear...
- ...people were getting fed up.<sup>24</sup>

Participants in other focus group conversations agreed that the shift in people’s support of the regime, or a “conscious awakening to how bad things really were”, came after the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the elections.<sup>25</sup> One participant, Zorian, a 28 year old NGO worker in Kyiv, explained privately that in 2004 Ukrainians were, playing their best game of cards, they were almost daring the regime [*vlada*] ‘go ahead show us your hand’, we hoped they were bluffing, they were convinced we did not know how bluff... in the end the people turned out to be better players than the regime

<sup>23</sup> Author’s estimates based on interviewee recollections and newspaper coverage.

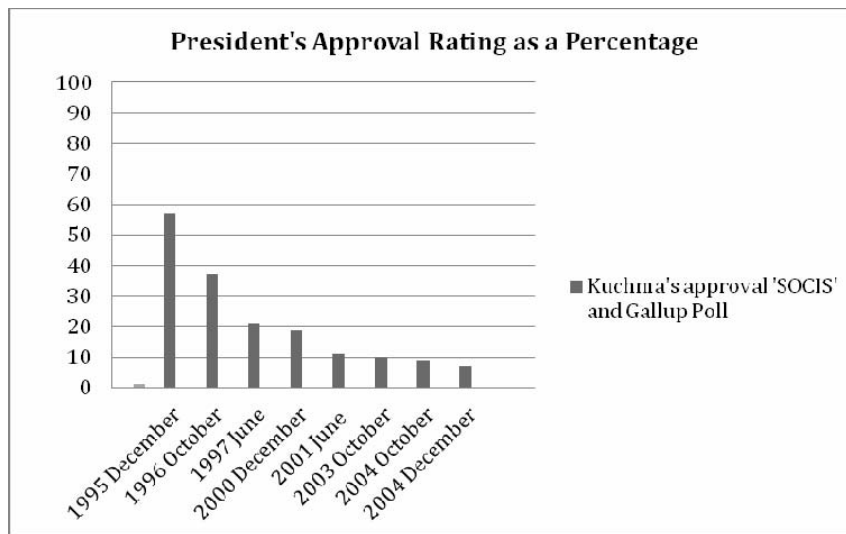
<sup>24</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 2, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/29/2009.

<sup>25</sup> Comment made by Kateryna a 50 year teacher during a ‘ordinary’ people Focus Group Ukraine 3, Lviv Headquarters of The Canadian Ukrainian Foundation, Lviv, 8/4/2009.

[*vlada*]",<sup>26</sup>

After 2001 'ordinary' citizens already had low levels of trust in the regime, but as explained in discussions, Ukrainians could not have imagined that the Kuchma and Yanukovych teams would go as far as they did on November 21<sup>st</sup>. The government effectively disenfranchised millions of voters. The approval ratings for Kuchma fell dramatically during this phase. President Kuchma's support had declined notably throughout his second term. According to the 'SOCIS' and Gallup, his public approval fell to approximately 9% in December 2004 (see figure 6).

Figure 6 Kuchma's Approval Ratings



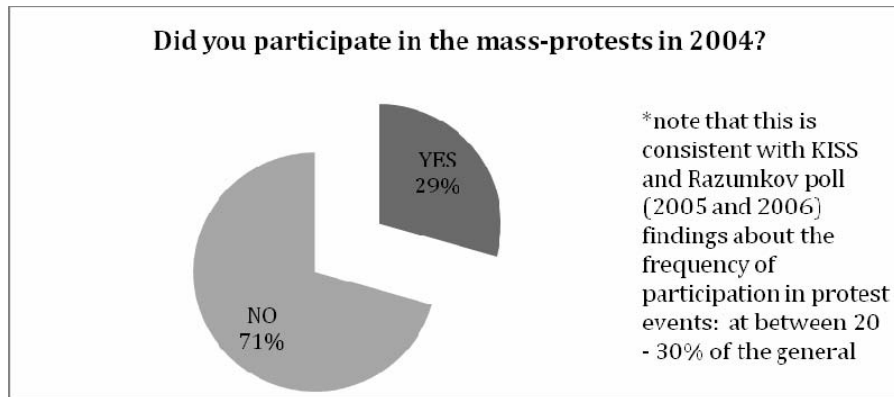
#### Phase four: moment of mass-mobilisation

The fourth phase began with the moment when the government overstepped the threshold of what was acceptable or tolerated by 'ordinary' citizens. This moment was not just about the hardships of the crisis but the actions of the Central Electoral Commission's (CEC) formalisation of the fraudulent second round election result on November 24<sup>th</sup> in Ukraine. During the days prior to these two events (November 21<sup>st</sup>–23<sup>rd</sup>), activist and youth participation in protests was extremely high (estimated at 100,000–500,000).<sup>27</sup> The governments in Kyiv failed to see that 'ordinary' citizens, were already standing on the side of the activists before they took away their basic civic rights. The CEC's official announcement was perceived and then quickly articulated as an 'official' and publicised abuse of rights. In Ukraine the images were dramatic because of the presence of nearly a million people standing in the Maidan in subzero temperatures. The threshold of patience was broken.

<sup>26</sup> Comment made during the 'Ordinary' People Focus Group Ukraine 2, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/29/2009. The word [*vlada*] literally means power. One can be the [*vlada*] and have [*vlada*].

<sup>27</sup> Based on activist protest counts, people's own recollection and video archives of protests.

Figure 7 Respondents Participation in Protest



### What were the ‘ordinary’ citizens’ motivations and reasons for participation?

It is difficult to investigate why ‘ordinary’ citizens protest, when we study protest events retroactively and are not privy to the decision process as it unfolds. Participants’ personal recollections are the main source of evidence, to which interviews, surveys and focus groups try to gain access, but memories of events can change over time. Most of the interview and focus group participants who *did* join the protest in their respective countries, described having a ‘gut feeling’ when they saw that the fraud was ‘official’. They felt they *needed* to protest, that if *they* did not protest the situations would get exponentially worse.

In reply to the question, ‘In your opinion why did people protest? (choose all that apply)’; 87.1% of Ukrainian respondents agreed that they did so because they wanted to protect their future in a free and democratic Ukraine, 85.6% agreed that those who protested were defending their civic rights as citizens of Ukraine. 80% agreed that those who protested did not want Yanukovich to be president, but only 67.6% said that those who protested wanted Yushchenko to be president. 56% of respondents believed that some portion of the protesters were paid for their participation. In focus group discussions only one group, in Kyiv, had a heated debate about the reasons behind the act of protesting. One respondent insisted that he believed the protesters were paid. He was severely attacked by the other members of the group, who insisted he prove or explain why he thought so. Interestingly, when asked if he joined the protests — he said he did. When asked: did you get paid? — he objected that he had not been paid because *he was only* observing.<sup>28</sup> The great majority of participants saw the ‘Orange Revolution’ as a culmination of a multi-year political crisis, the failure of a corrupt elite to improve people’s daily lives, and most importantly, as a defence of democracy and their civic right to vote. As noted by Lesia in Lviv “it became clear that if we would not stand up for democracy — we were no longer going to live in [a democracy] ...and no one but us could defend our

<sup>28</sup> Oleksandr in Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 1, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/28/2009.

rights”.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, Ukrainian respondents focused on their individual rights and on the ‘elite’ that was taking these rights from them. Respondents agreed that protest by people was a signal to the “politicians that they had gone too far”, and thus, that ‘the people’ would, “defend democracy”.<sup>30</sup> The discussion was framed by their understanding that the politicians needed to be taught a lesson for acting outside the bounds of what was acceptable practice in a democracy, even in the context of a severe crisis. People viewed their participation in protests as response to the taking away of rights by an illegitimate government.

### **‘Ordinary’ citizens’s perceptions of the moment of mass-mobilisation**

Survey respondents in Ukraine were divided and found it difficult to answer questions about what happened in November-December 2004. They were asked: ‘How would you describe the ‘Orange Revolution’? (choose all that apply)’. They ranked the responses in the following manner: 37.9% of respondents agreed that the protests were “a Ukrainian response to the political corruption and abuse of power by politicians and oligarchs”; 37.7% saw the events as “a series of planned mass-protests”; almost the same percentage of respondents (30%) thought the protests were spontaneous. 29% said they thought that the events were a revolution; 29.3% agreed that the events were part of “politically motivated actions by the opposition”; 28.8% saw the events as “political games: one of the typical moments of the country’s political life”; 25.4% saw it as the beginning of a political coup, and 21.4% thought it was a coup co-ordinated by the Americans. Surprisingly, only 17.6% thought it was series of coordinated by activists (see figure 8).

It is important to note that focus group respondents sharply disagreed with this outcome, 52.2% percent thought that the protests were “authentically Ukrainian and coordinated by activists”.<sup>31</sup> This anomaly can be explained by the fact that the focus groups targeted more actual protest participants rather than a random sample of citizens. Nonetheless, while the survey respondents were divided regarding the spontaneity of the protests, the majority agreed that the protests were organised by Ukrainians. Focus group participants initially described the events as spontaneous, but after some debate they generally came to an agreement that the protest were ‘spontaneous with some planning’. As noted by a defiant Valentina from Kyiv, in response to another participant who was distrustful of the authenticity of the protest: “the activists planned...the opposition planned...but people — they did not plan, they just got up and went to the Maidan...you could not plan that...they brought thermoses, they offered their homes...no one could have planned that”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 3, Lviv Headquarters of The Canadian Ukrainian Foundation, Lviv, 8/4/2009

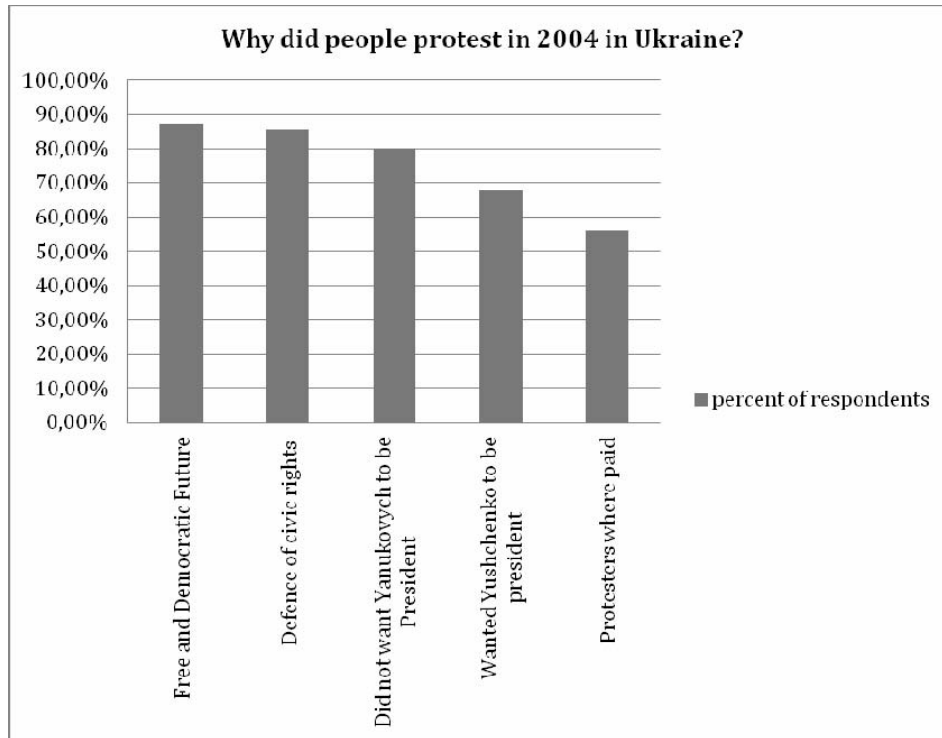
<sup>30</sup> Comment made by a respondent in Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 1, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/28/2009.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 1, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/28/2009.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



Figure 8 Perceived Causes of Protests Ukraine



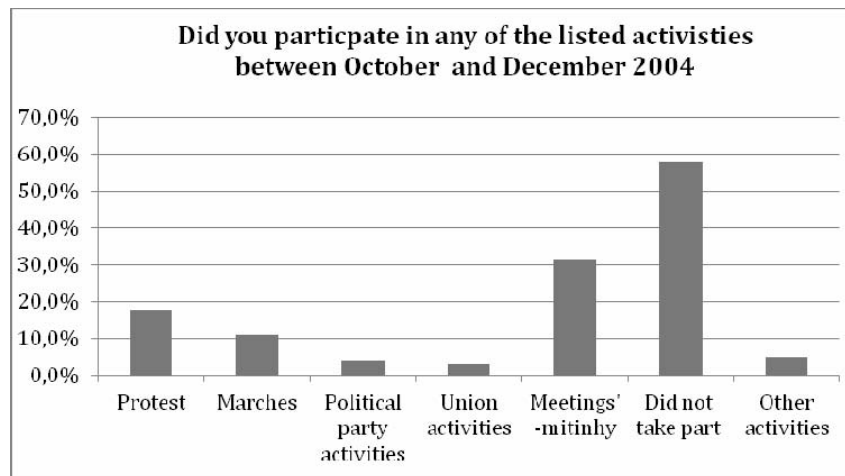
Ukrainian respondents felt the word ‘spontaneous’ did not encapsulate the essence of the events. Spontaneity was momentary and emotional, and thus participants stressed that theirs were “the rational actions of citizens” motivated by the desire to “defend their rights”.<sup>33</sup> The concept of rights was very important to focus group discussions. The participants in both countries did not want their actions to be seen as unprovoked. The participants wanted to convey that they made a conscious decision to stand up to a repressive and/or corrupt regime which had crossed a political boundary unacceptable in a democracy. It can be argued that all participants would prefer to frame their participation as ‘rational’ and rights driven in hindsight. Based on materials collected, I would have to dispute this assumption, for two reasons. a) The focus group participants described the long-term process of their loss of faith in the government, an incremental increase in hardships experienced and loss of political legitimacy. They saw their participation in this longer context and not sudden or surprising, they explained that they reach a limit of what they could tolerate in 2004. b) Individuals came to focus groups and interviews prepared with materials (including personal exchanges) from the time of their protest participation. Two women in particular stand out in this respect: Alevtyna, from Donetsk oblast and Lida, from Lviv. These two women came prepared with large boxes full of notes, e-mails, posters from protests, letters from loved ones and news clippings. I had a chance to photocopy the entirety of Alevtyna’s e-mail exchanges between her friends who were in Kyiv and Donetsk oblast and scan some of Lida’s materials. In these exchanges and protest paraphernalia the clear rationale for pro-

<sup>33</sup> Ordinary’ People Focus Group Ukraine 1, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/28/2009.

test is evident — the mass abuse of civic rights by the regime. Conceptually, spontaneity does not do justice to the participation of ‘ordinary’ citizens, as it downplays their politically valid motivation.

The participants of focus groups explicitly referred to ‘the people’ as a united group when discussing the protest after the November 24<sup>th</sup> in Ukraine. Interestingly, most Ukrainian respondents distinguished between ‘the people’ [liudy] in the Maidan and ‘the youth’ [molod] in the tent cities, from the orange elite [pomarachevi/pomarancheva elita] on ‘the stage’.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that the respondents saw these three groups as separate but interacting in a shared protest space. In some debates the ‘blue’ [syni] Yanukovych supporters were also considered ‘the people’ but more often they were referred to as paid-for bandits or thugs [bandyty, piiani] brought in by the regime — even by respondents who claimed they voted for Yanukovych. They also explained that buildings of the administration and parliament/congress were targets of violent attacks but few respondents said they participated in these more direct action protest events. Thus, like the level of participation in the above three phases ‘ordinary’ citizens saw their participation as different if not separate from activists. The participants on the whole responded negatively to and were reluctant to identify themselves as ‘protesters’. This was the case for both focus group and survey respondents. Only 29.4% (Ukraine) of survey respondents stated that they participated in protests. In Ukraine a portion of people who did not feel they protested said they wore orange colours or made donations to those living in the tents cities. This response is curious, as orange was the colour of protest.

Figure 9 People’s participation in Protest events and other political activity



In Ukraine 31.2% said they participated in ‘meetings’ [*mitynhy*], a term used to describe public political gatherings, but only 17.6% said that they took part in protests, and 10.9% percent said they took part in marches (see figure 9). In both cases people were more likely to say that they participated in activities seen as less ‘activist’, unlike protest. In focus group discussions people vaguely differentiated

<sup>34</sup> There was an actual stage from which the ‘orange’ politicians and famous personalities spoke to the crowd.

between different degrees of participation and did not see contradictions in stating ‘no I did not participate’ and following up the assertion with ‘when we were walking around banging pots’. Thus, ‘ordinary’ citizens tend not to see or present themselves as activists or protesters. In their view, ‘the people’ are separate from politics and activism but can be provoked by the actions of either. The fact that the groups coming together during a moment of mass-mobilisation retain their distinctive perspectives of their actions and motivations is something that previous studies failed to capture, and only this kind of empirical research can demonstrate. Like the processes of the phases leading up to mass-protest, the distinct groups are involved in various aspects of protest activities which together make a moment of mass-mobilisation.

While the survey respondents made clear distinctions between what they called activist protests predating November 24<sup>th</sup>, and people’s protests, focus group participants who never participated in protests prior to the 2004 events, described that they joined in the protests after there were already large amounts of protesters in the streets. They explained that they felt safe to ‘join a large crowd’. Furthermore, people living outside the capital cities, in Lviv, said that when they saw protesters already in the streets in Kyiv it was easier for them to make the trip to these city centres (or continue to mobilise in the regional cities). The size and geographic diffusion of protests gave them a feeling of confidence. Watching the protests unfold, they were more convinced that their effort to protest could potentially succeed in defending their rights or deposing the regime. Thus, activist protests set the stage for the mass-mobilisation of ‘ordinary’ citizens even if the two groups continued to see themselves as separate actors.

### **The role of territoriality and conceptions of private and public protest among ‘ordinary’ citizens**

While focus group participants found it difficult at times to put into words what happened, they found it much easier to describe the territoriality and spread of political contention. Focus group participants decidedly chose three key protest locations during the mapping exercise: the central squares (Maidan), the buildings associated with the politico-economic elite (the Presidential Administrations, parliament/congress), and the private homes/work places of ‘ordinary’ citizens. When drawing the events in the main city squares, they did not focus on the presence of activists or politicians but used a variety of symbols (one stick man or a sea of circles and faces) to denote where ‘the people’ were protesting. One group in Kyiv chose to draw a ballot box and on the ballots they drew the many faces of the ‘candidates’ representing in this case the people of Ukraine. They explained that the citizens were the real ‘candidates’ and that the election was a moment when they voted for themselves, for their political futures, a political identity that someone else tried to take away from them. Even if they could not explain the events in their totality, the participants were able to visualise the territorial dimensions and the type and meaning of their participation with ease.

One of the main differences between the activist respondents and ‘ordinary’ citizens is that ‘ordinary’ citizens also saw the home and neighbourhoods, as opposed to just the streets, as spaces of contention. In Ukraine the respondents were proud to say that they let activists or out-of-town visitors sleep on their floors, that they prepared meals for the protesters and that they co-ordinated with their neighbours and co-workers to “march down to the Maidan together... every day... in

shifts".<sup>35</sup> Thus, the home was no longer a private space but was interpreted as site of political engagement. In Ukraine 'ordinary' citizens described how they drove from their regions to Kyiv, or joined the protests in groups, with family, friends and neighbours by their sides. As the events became a social and communal phenomenon, more 'ordinary' citizens joined the *Maidan* protests in Kyiv.

### Slogans and claims of 'ordinary' citizens's protests

It is equally difficult to systematically analyse the claims of the broad range of 'ordinary' citizens who participated in protests. Slogans can help us understand claims, but they are usually 'produced' by activists or a political elite (see figures 10-12). The majority of survey respondents in Ukraine (51.5% and 42.8% respectively) chose 'Yushchenko-Yes' (*Yushchenko-Tak*) and 'together we are many, we cannot be defeated' (*razom nas bahato nas ne podehaty*) as the main slogans summing up their motivations. Although 57.1% percent said they agreed with 'Yushchenko-Yes', only 37.4% said they used it. While, 68.3% said they agreed with the non-partisan 'together we are many we cannot be defeated', only 46% percent said they actively used the slogan in November-December 2004.

Figure 10 Slogans Non Political

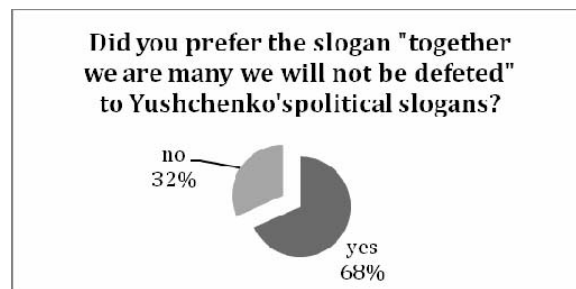
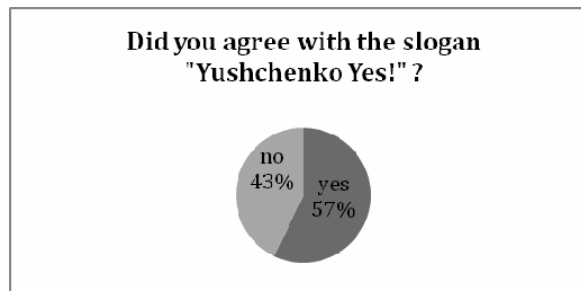
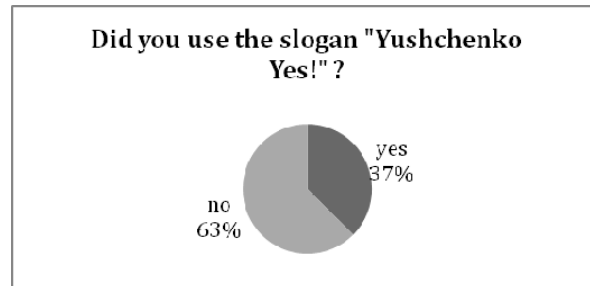


Figure 11 Slogans Political



<sup>35</sup> Comment made by Viktoriia a 42 year NGO worker during 'Ordinary' People Focus Group, Ukraine 2, Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, 7/29/2009.

Figure 12 Slogans Political-Usage



Focus group respondents reiterated that the partisan slogan 'Yushchenko–Tak' was not the most important or representative one. Participants explained that the slogan could have been '*hurrah!*' (yay) and it would have united the people in the Maidan. Respondents saw Yushchenko as an alternative to Kuchma or Yanukovych and their semi-authoritarian style of running the country, so the slogans could have just as easily been 'Kuchma/Yanukovych-No!'. Because the Yushchenko team and SMO leaders were literally on stage leading the speeches and chants, many people admitted that once they arrived at the Maidan they just 'went along with the program'. Thus, the most important step was to join the protests in the first place and the degree of passivity (being guided during the protests) or being swept away by the unfolding events thereafter was seen as less important.

In Ukraine the slogans were positive, in favour of a partisan group and supportive of the strength of united citizens. The findings presented here demonstrate that while slogans temporarily unite 'ordinary' citizens, they can be misleading if used alone to explain protest participation of 'ordinary' citizens. Nonetheless, even if the slogans cannot be taken literally, they point to the political nature of the claims in Ukraine.

### How did politicians, activists and the media affect the participation of 'ordinary' citizens

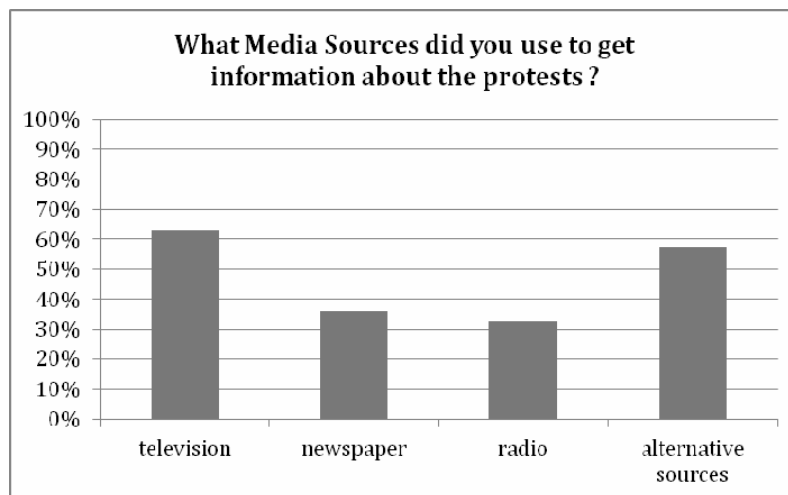
The actions and interaction of the political elite, activists and even media, had a facilitating effect on mass-mobilisation. This was confirmed in focus group discussions and survey results. Again the perceptions of the participants themselves are valuable in that they aid our understanding of why 'ordinary' citizens sometimes join protests within the context of crisis and activists protests and at other times they do not. The preceding activist protests gave 'ordinary' citizens a sense of security. Moreover activists may have been the most important transmitters of information via informal networks in Ukraine specifically. Nonetheless, 'ordinary' citizens had to be convinced that their rights were being abused before they would join the protests.

The sentiment about the importance of activist protests was similar, specifically when the discussion turned to whether or not the Ukrainian activists were trained and paid by foreign/western NGOs and experts. While they tended to have mixed opinions on the matter, most respondents did not care if these allegations were true. They referred to their own personal participation, and would say things like 'no one paid me', 'no one paid that babushka who made soup to give to those kids'.

Respondents also defended the activists, saying that the people in the Maidan in 2004 were different from those who have come out to support, the political parties since then. They argued that while everyone is paid to protest now, it is visible to them as fake (even if they support the candidate on whose behalf the protests take place). When asked to elaborate, they could not always specify why or how they knew this but stated that it is simply not comparable to what happened in 2004 and that one would have to live through it to understand. Thus, while the activists set the scene for the protests, the 'ordinary' citizens interviewed saw their participation as a sequence of personal decisions based on their desire to defend their rights and their country's democracy.

Most participants mentioned that media coverage was important in their decision to protest. 81.5% of respondents in Ukraine respectively, used the media to obtain information about the protests. In Ukraine when asked which sources they used (they were allowed to choose all that applied), 63% chose television, and 57.5% chose alternative sources (activist, internet, local), while 32.7% and 36% of respondents chose radio and newspaper respectively (see figure 13). Thus, Ukrainian respondents used alternative resources second only to television while Argentine respondents were more likely to rely on mass-media sources. And the majority said they relied on television. The media coverage was important as it described to their audience where the protests were taking place, how large they were, and who was already taking part. In both countries, Kuchma & Yanukovich used the media to personally send messages to their citizens, as did the opposition. This direct channel of information dissemination and reception was seen as highly valuable by the politico-economic elites, the activists and 'ordinary' citizens. Factors, such as activist engagement and media coverage facilitated but did not have a direct causal effect on the participation of 'ordinary' citizens.

Figure 13 Media Sources for Protest Information



\* alternative sources were described as pamphlets and independent newspapers from activists and NGOs as well as 'word of mouth'

The individuals interviewed were reluctant to give credit to the opposition as the masterminds behind the protests. Although several focus group participants explained that while they knew or believed that the ‘orange team’ were responsible for some of the coordination, instigation or planning of the protest, they agreed that the opposition was not in control of the *en masse* mobilisation of ‘ordinary’ citizens. Participants wanted to make clear that ‘the people’ came out to protest against the regime or the politicians in general and their abuses and not to support a partisan project. Furthermore, the great majority of Ukrainian focus group participants agreed that there was coordination between the activists and the political opposition and that the politicians benefited from this cooperation because it made their claim to power seem more legitimate. Yet, both the respondents in Ukraine, thought that the opposition (prior to, during or after the protests) co-opted the activists and the protests. The Ukrainians could not distinguish between ‘autonomous’ and ‘Yushchenko’ activist SMOs. The Ukrainian respondents also felt betrayed by the activists who failed to continue to monitor politics and hold the ‘orange’ leaders accountable from 2005 onwards. The feeling of having been distinct from activists and elites in protests enables ‘ordinary’ citizens to separate their actions and accountability of ‘what went wrong’ and ‘how politicians and activists didn’t live up to people’s expectations’. Thus, while affected by the activists, media and the opposition as facilitators, ‘ordinary’ citizens see their participation and motivations as exceptional and separate from these other actors and focused on the abuse of their rights.

### Trajectories and aftermath of mass-mobilisation

The trajectories of the mass-mobilisation and their aftermath were closely related to the level of the SMO and opposition cooperation, the degree of connectivity between the ‘ordinary’ citizens and the activists, and the level of their support for the opposition. In Ukraine the activists had closer ties to the ‘ordinary’ citizens and after spending days together in the Maidan, the activists tried to blend into the crowd. Secondly, even if not all Ukrainian respondents agreed, the majority of the protesters were at least sympathetic towards if not actively supporting the Yushchenko team. Because of the election context, it was logical that the protest would subside once the rights of the voters were upheld, which hinged on a Yushchenko victory as a marker of a fair election). As noted by most focus group participants, the opposition was also seen as part of the problem in both economic and political terms. The ability of the opposition to declare that they had the ‘ordinary’ citizens support aids in their claim to political legitimacy. The activists can gain more political clout if they manage to co-opt or assert close ties to ‘ordinary’ citizens. Both were key factors affecting the style and trajectory of the protests. The protests stopped when people felt their rights had been defended. In Ukraine, when the election results were compatible with exit polls, the rights were deemed to have been returned to the electorate.

Unlike activists, who wanted to play down the exceptionality of the event in Ukraine in 2004, repeatedly referring to them as the continuation of activism or of ‘revolutions’ in their respective countries<sup>36</sup>, focus group respondents thought of these moments as exceptional, even revolutionary, ‘moments’ in the lives of ‘ordinary’ citizens. This confirms a theoretical and empirical distinction between ‘revolutionary’ movements and moments. In Ukraine, participants agreed that the size

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<sup>36</sup> Yevhen Zolotariov, *yellow Pora* Leader and Human Rights activist from Kharkiv, author’s interview, July 9th 2008, Kyiv.

of the protests was unprecedented (72.4%) and the results of the protests (41.6%) were the most important factors that made the 'Orange Revolution' exceptional. Equally large numbers felt they were disappointed with the long-term aftermath. While they expected to see dramatic changes, they were disenchanted by how quickly politics returned to 'normal'. Respondents described that they now believed 'the people' were overly naïve in 2004. While the historical legacies and continuity of mobilisation (in movements) matter to activists, 'ordinary' citizens see these events as separate moments in time. Legacies are not as important to 'ordinary' citizens and their participation. 'ordinary' citizens saw the events as highly important moments in their own (political) lives. The moments brought unlikely groups of people together and formed new social and civic networks at the local level. In Ukraine the protestors they still keep in touch with people alongside whom they 'protested' in 2004 respectively. Furthermore, focus group participants in both countries agreed that they would protest again if they felt it was necessary, in order to defend their rights as citizens. The protesters and their observers gained political experience and are now confident that if required 'ordinary' citizens would protest once again.

### **Conclusion: a theoretical framework for the study of mass-mobilisation**

'Ordinary' citizens do view their actions as political but not as activist and can articulate their experiences within a rights-based framework. Even though they view their actions as political and facilitated by activist protests and the political context, they see their actions as separate from those of politicians and activists. 'ordinary' citizens are far more likely to join pre-existing activist protests and have highlighted the role of SMOs as important structures for support and communication. While 'ordinary' citizens united under the banner of being citizens, they viewed their experiences through a personal lens, valuing the specific exchanges they had with other individuals. Their protest engagement fused the political and the personal. At the same time they found security in the communal nature of the protest, making it easier for them to march to the protest site with their neighbours, knowing that other neighbourhoods were doing the same.

This article explored the final piece of the puzzle, namely the concept of mass-mobilisation tied to the collective threshold of political patience. A theoretical framework can be developed based on the empirical analysis above. As demonstrated, a political and/or economic crisis can provide opportunities for activist protests, the government's weakness and isolation, the strengthening of the opposition — if it is united, and finally actor interaction and informational exchange. Together, these four variables exacerbated the crisis; they are all necessary for mass-mobilisation to occur. Thus, as the crisis becomes acute it is more likely that the government will not be able to manage the crisis and in their failed attempts will impose greater hardships on the citizens. Accordingly, as political mismanagement of a crisis and socio-politico-economic hardships increase, the faith in democratic institutions declines reciprocally. As faith in democratic institutions declines the people are less and less patient or tolerant of further increases of mismanagement and hardships. The use of political violence and repression matters, in that it can prevent 'ordinary' citizens from participating; this is why the combination of activist protests and SMO leader and opposition interaction are so important. When these two groups cooperate they tend to isolate the regime, empower their networks and provoke defections; this would signal that the opposition is stronger than the party



in power. This shift in the power dynamic makes it less likely that the regime will be able to use violence effectively. Finally, because the crisis is acute, the government oversteps and acts in a manner that completely infringes upon or takes away collective civic rights of ‘ordinary’ citizens, when patience is low. At this point, there is no more faith in the political institutions and people view their hardships collectively as citizens and not as individuals and thus, the collective threshold of political patience is broken. If the collective threshold of political patience is broken the probability of ‘voice’ increases exponentially. If all the above occurs then it is highly probable that mass-mobilisation will occur. Thus, mass-protest is a response to the breaking of a political contract between the government and its citizens. Mass-mobilisation occurs at the moment when the government’s actions are seen as illegitimate and directly affect a broad majority of ‘ordinary’ citizens’s rights.

Based on the evidence presented, while ‘ordinary’ citizens were predominantly observers of the protests leading up to the moment of mass-mobilisation in November 2004, they were increasingly negatively affected by the same economic and or political hardships as the activists. Long-term processes of an on-going crisis had a cumulative effect on ‘ordinary’ citizens’ faith in their political elite. Even if the triggers of their hardships were felt by a broader section of the population, as in the case of the Kuchma regime, the ‘ordinary’ citizens felt that their politicians were breaking their contract with the citizens. As the protests intensified and the party in power seemed unable or unwilling to change their political practice, the willingness of the ‘ordinary’ citizens to endure the crisis and its effects faded. And finally when the regime, in an attempt to hold on to political power took away or infringed upon the rights of ‘ordinary’ citizens, these actions broke the collective threshold of political patience and they felt the need to protest in order to defend their rights and their young democracies. Not all the citizens protested or agreed with the protesters but the mobilisation was mass-based and up to 2 million people in each country were engaged in some level of protest throughout the days and months in winter 2004.