

YOUTH AS AN AGENT FOR CHANGE: THE NEXT GENERATION IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: Young people played important roles in the Ukrainian protest movements of 1990 and 2004. However, they were not able to institutionalize their participation in the political process. While Ukrainian youth have less trust in their country's institutions than do young people in Russia and Azerbaijan, they are more active in non-governmental organizations than their peers in other post-Soviet countries, providing hope that they will once again play a role in politics. However, the current obstacles to entering the formal political system suggest that this participation may ultimately be directed toward further involvement in street protests.

“Nothing is more false than the usual assumption uncritically shared by most students of generations that the younger generation is ‘progressive’ and the older generation eo ipso conservative... Whether youth will be conservative, reactionary, or progressive, depends (if not entirely, at least primarily) on whether or not the existing social structure and the position they occupy in it provide opportunities for the promotion of their own social and intellectual ends.”

– Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations”¹

Two decades have passed since the Soviet Union dissolved and fifteen new states emerged out of its ashes. Each of these states has a new

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¹ Karl Mannheim. 1952. “The Problem of Generations,” in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti, New York: Oxford University Press.

generation of young people who have no knowledge or memory of the old order: young people born in 1994 could have been first time voters in 2012. Many questions surround the appearance of this new cohort of citizens. Are they indeed the first free generation that has slipped the surly bonds of the Soviet system and mentality? Are they the generation that will bring the new independent states to peace, democracy, and prosperity? Will they reverse the tide of corruption that has soaked through the fabric of society and move toward creating states based on rule of law? Will they complete the transition from authoritarianism to democracy? We can add questions about how far their national identity has diverged from the policy ideal of the “Soviet man” imposed on previous generations. But the most interesting area for speculation and study is what should we expect from members of this next generation as they rise to positions of leadership in their countries—how can we prepare for those future relationships?

Given the importance of rising generations and youth, it is surprising that this subject is not better studied in academic and political science circles. The study of youth is often looked at as an ancillary subject to be considered after political systems and ideologies, constitutional norms, leadership elites, social movements, civil society and other elements that support political change have been investigated. The study of youth is sometimes consigned to the realm of cultural anthropologists who delve into subcultures and behaviors, which are interesting, but which detract from using the study of youth as an important way to understand politics and political change.

The profile of youth within a political system and how they are treated by the political elite of a given state can tell us a lot about the nature of the political system and prospects for change. Youth in the Soviet Union were an object of policy and not expected to participate in politics or in the running of the country. Despite the fact that Soviet ideology raised up the notion of youth as the leading cultural paradigm for all things Soviet—young workers and young agricultural laborers abound in stylistic depictions of the Soviet ideal—youth had a definite place within the administrative structure. Promising young people joined the *Komsomol*, where they served their time and if they were considered suitable, were allowed to join the adult party—the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Policy on youth was usually dealt with in the same offices as sports, culture, and sometimes tourism. Despite the focus on youth in terms of ideology, the Soviet system ultimately failed to integrate young people into the authoritarian structures of the USSR and ended as a failing gerontocracy. Indeed, the appointment of a youngish Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 came only after a series of deaths of Soviet leaders who had all been much older.

Another set of reasons for more intensive study of youth relates to the insights such work gives us about political change. In authoritarian

systems, political change usually comes about by the leader appointing his successor. Occasionally, change occurs through a “palace coup” or military takeover. On rare occasions there will be a genuine uprising of citizens that ousts the leader. But the only sure and inevitable element that leads to change of leadership is generational change.

In bringing youth under scrutiny, another set of questions arises: What kind of changes should we expect from young people? Are they indeed the positive agents for change of conventional wisdom? In the face of transitions that are not going well in the post-Soviet states, can we sit back and assume that the next generation will set everything onto the right track?

Looking at Ukraine’s youth as a case study reveals some interesting trends and challenges some assumptions. Two times in just over two decades, Ukraine’s youth acted as a catalyst for mass street protests: in 1990, a student hunger strike, the “Revolution on Granite” mobilized thousands of Ukrainians on the eve of the breakup of the Soviet Union and in 2004, the youth of Ukraine played an important role in launching the Orange Revolution, thereby ensuring that the phrase “color revolution” would become a part of the lexicon of policymakers and political scientists around the world. On both occasions it certainly looked as if Ukrainian youth were acting as “agents for change”: in 1990, their demand for the resignation of the prime minister was achieved and they may well have speeded along the final disintegration of the USSR. In 2004, the regime did change; Viktor Yushchenko replaced Leonid Kuchma and the administration that had implemented a repressive and increasingly authoritarian system. A closer examination of the events and especially of the period immediately after yields a more complex picture. In both instances, the youth who led the protests were either excluded from the post-protest political arrangements (1990), or else their ideals and aspirations were ignored and they were not invited to take up any important government positions (2004).

In an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of these events and to probe the motivation and attitudes of this first post-Soviet generation, a unique set of polling data was used to construct a portrait of the generation.² In many ways Ukrainian youth hold values and beliefs similar to their fellow youth from other post-Soviet states. There is one area where they diverge dramatically, however, and that is in their low level of trust and confidence in institutions of government and the state. They also differ in their lack of enthusiasm for citizenship and pride in their country.

The study will show that being a successful “agent for change” is

² Polling data is taken from the author’s book: Nadia M. Diuk. 2012. *The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan: Youth, Politics, Identity, and Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

not a straightforward proposition and will examine several unique characteristics of Ukrainian youth that should be of interest to policymakers and political scientists as they gauge the prospects for the transition and consolidation of democracy in this important, strategic state.

The Revolution on Granite

In 1990, Ukraine's youth was well advanced compared with similar movements in the other national republics of the USSR. At that time, they were following their Central and East European colleagues in Hungary and Poland and were leading and participating in mass protests. Many of them had been high school students at the time of the Chornobyl nuclear accident of 1986, and had shared in the experience of helplessness once the full extent of the disaster had emerged, in addition to having been forced to take part in May 1 festivities on the streets of Kyiv with the potentially lethal radiation raining down upon them just five days after the reactor blew up. Many in Ukraine saw their lack of ability to control or assist in their own fate at that crucial time as an issue of sovereignty. In the summer of 1990, when the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet took the bold step of voting for the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Ukraine on July 16, just four days after Boris Yeltsin's dramatic exit from the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian youth were in the midst of a series of protests, hunger strikes, and demonstrations throughout the country.

The youth protests were led by student organizations such as the *Students'ke Bratstvo* in western Ukraine and the *Ukrains'ka Students'ka Spilka* in Kyiv.³ The students' demands were political as well as economic: to abolish the compulsory courses in Marxism-Leninism, give students an equal role in the governing bodies of the institutions of higher education, ban the operation of the KGB and the CPSU within institutions of higher education, protect students from persecution for political activities, and some specific economic demands. Some of the organizers were arrested and news of the youth protest spread. The Ukrainian students sympathized with and were dismayed by the fate of the Chinese students on Tiananmen Square the year before and consciously joined in the worldwide student show of solidarity to commemorate May 13 as the day the Chinese students had launched their hunger strike.

Overcoming their fears of a violent crackdown as had happened in China, the Ukrainian student protesters deliberately emulated the peaceful tactics of their fellow students in Beijing. One 22-year old student remarked, "We went in with cold minds, prepared for any kind of conflict,

³ For details on the protest movement see Ihor Ostrovs'kyi and Serhii Chernenko. 2000. *Velykyi Zlam: Khronika "Revoliutsii na hraniti 2-17 zhovtnia 1990 roku."* Kyiv: Ahentstvo "Ukraina"; also, Oles' Doniy and Oleh Synel'nykov. 1999. *Istoriia USS movoiu dokumentiv i faktiv 1989-1999.* Kyiv: Smoloskyp.

but with the conviction that the only real path open to the government was peaceful.”⁴ On September 30, 1990 one hundred thousand people gathered in Kyiv to protest against the government; this was the largest demonstration the city had seen in many years. The students’ hunger strike began on October 2, 1990 with students putting up tents on the popularly renamed Freedom Square (*Maidan Nezalezhnosti*) even though its official name was still Lenin Square with the huge steel reinforced concrete statue of its namesake looming over the tent city. The students’ demands by this point had been boiled down into a simple list: the resignation of Prime Minister Vitaliy Masol, a law to ensure that military conscripts did their military service on the territory of Ukraine, no to any new Union Treaty that was being planned by the Kremlin to strengthen ties among the republics of the USSR, the nationalization of the Communist Party’s property, and preterm multiparty elections for the parliament early in the following year. The student protest, “Revolution on Granite” as it came to be called because of the venue on the square, gathered a core group of around 200 who took part in the hunger strike and an additional 2,000 or so young people who participated in the tent city encampment. Several opposition members of parliament, including former dissidents who had served time in the Gulag, joined them and every day the crowds swelled to include ten to fifteen thousand additional protesters, sympathizers, and onlookers.

As the protests grew and the universities were paralyzed by student strikes, one of the student leaders, Oles’ Doniy, was invited to put the students’ demands to the parliament. Live TV coverage publicized their demands and activities in Kyiv throughout the country. Within two weeks the prime minister was dismissed and an uneasy coexistence struck up between the students and the ruling elites for the rest of the year. In January 1991, Doniy was arrested and held for two weeks and the youth movement lost its momentum through mounting repressions and internal discord among the student leaders. No Ukrainian *Fidesz* party was formed as happened in Hungary, even though some of the student leaders had pushed to go in this direction. And the youth movement was soon absorbed into the general surge toward the dissolution of the Soviet Union that reached its culmination by the end of that year.

Although Leonid Kravchuk was one of the triumvirate that signed away the existence of the Soviet Union in December 1991, Ukraine did not start its existence as an independent state with a reformist government, unlike Russia where Yeltsin brought in reformers including Yegor Gaidar, Galina Starovoitova, Sergei Stankevich, Boris Nemtsov and others of a

⁴ Alan Cooperman, “Ukrainian Students Risked Another Tiananmen – And Won,” *AP News*, October 22, 1990. <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1990/Ukrainian-Students-Risked-Another-Tiananmen-and-Won/id-6abc6d7f9b09ed7fb22c0dfcd4962b4c>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

younger generation. Ukraine's distinct youth movement did not propel young people into government; on the contrary, the old Communist elite who swiftly acquired the characteristics of newly minted national patriots in order to hang on to power may have seen any involvement of youth in politics as a threat. There was also a group of dissidents, who had returned from political imprisonment just a few years earlier and had entered politics, who undoubtedly also believed that they deserved their turn to lead. In fact, the candidate from the leading national democratic party the *Rukh*, Vyacheslav Chornovil, who ran for president in December 1991 was supported by many young people who believed that he would be the candidate for change—Ukraine's Vaclav Havel, its Lech Walesa. As it turned out, he gained 26 percent of the vote to Leonid Kravchuk's 54 percent, thus ensuring that the former Communist *nomenklatura* would continue to rule Ukraine.⁵

The opportunity for young people to gain an entrance into national politics came in 1994 when parliamentary and presidential elections were held in the same year. But even then, most of the student leaders were kept out because of newly imposed age limits and the difficulty of running campaigns in a 100 percent majoritarian system. Looking back a decade later, Oles' Doniy assessed the youth protests as a missed opportunity, "At that time young political leaders had the possibility to realize their ideas, just as there was also the possibility for the state to incorporate them. Unfortunately, the state squandered the opportunity... in fact, ideas about the complex social and political reforms in Ukraine were to be found exclusively within the young political elite, in the student organizations."⁶ Doniy regretted that, despite all the signs that a "new generation" had been formed, it had failed to gain political power. He drew some differences between this generation and the dissidents of the "sixties generation," whom he described as being interested only in "opposition."

After the "Revolution on Granite" the student leaders either left student activism, as did Doniy, for the best part of a decade, or joined up with existing political parties, sometimes heading up the "youth wing" of the major political parties, for example Oleksandr Kyrylenko. Some of the student leaders from Western Ukraine returned to Lviv and became successful, small businessmen and entrepreneurs, ultimately providing useful funding for the next generation of student protesters in 2004.

⁵ Chrystyna Lapychak, "Independence: Over 90% Vote Yes in Referendum; Kravchuk Elected President of Ukraine," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 8 December 1991, No. 49, Vol. LIX. <http://www.ukrweekly.com/old/archive/1991/499101.shtml>. Accessed 27 February 2013.

⁶ Oles' Doniy. 1999. *Pokolinnya oksamytovoyi revolyutsii (yak nam dozhyty do 2009 roku)?* Kyiv: Smoloskyp.

Orange Youth

The next time youth in Ukraine came forward was in the early 2000's, in the prelude to the Orange Revolution. By 2004, young people in Ukraine were on the move again. Youth activism had been spurred by opposition to the regime and President Leonid Kuchma in particular, because of strong implications that he had been involved in the grisly murder of the young investigative journalist Georgiy Gongadze. The protests had coalesced around groups such as "For Truth" (*Za Pravdu*) and the broader "Ukraine Without Kuchma" movement, which were not explicitly youth groups but were primarily made up of young people.⁷

Throughout 2004, as opposition to the regime mounted, all of the elements that finally came together in the massive protest at the end of the year were present. The Internet was becoming an important tool for conveying information and for organizing. Gongadze had been a pioneer in establishing the flagship Internet publication *Ukrains'ka Pravda* in response to tight government control over the media. Several other Internet initiatives had joined it to serve the growing community of tech-savvy youth. An opposition party, "Our Ukraine" (*Nasha Ukraina*) had coalesced around Viktor Yushchenko and had already won some creditable victories in the 2002 parliamentary elections; he became the prime candidate for the opposition in the 2004 presidential elections. And some student groups had once more been formed to oppose the regime. One of these, *Pora*, had already gone through internal divisions and attempts to emulate its activism by mid-2004.⁸ Young people were the leading force in election monitoring groups such as the Committee of Voters and exit polling efforts organized by independent analytical centers such as the Democratic Initiatives Foundation. These were the groups, along with some others, that provided the information showing that fraud had taken place in the presidential race and that the election had been stolen, which sparked the Orange Revolution.

Interestingly, the only political party focused explicitly on youth that emerged during that period was the oddly named Winter Crop Generation Party (*Partiya ozymoho pokolinnya*). This well-funded initiative was clearly an effort to siphon away young people from Yushchenko's Our Ukraine in the run-up to the 2002 parliamentary elections. None of its leaders had ever been involved in student activism or political protest and

⁷ See Myroslava Gongadze and Serhiy Kudelia. 2004. *Rozirvaniy nerv, khronolohiia hromad-s'koho protestu*. Kyiv: Fundatsiia "Vidkryte suspil'stvo."

⁸ For more information on these movements, please see Nadia Diuk. 2006. "The Triumph of Civil Society," and Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbrig, "Pora – 'It's Time' for Democracy in Ukraine," both in Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul, ed., *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington DC.

its pro-government purpose soon became obvious. Nonetheless, this was perhaps the only overtly political party formation for youth that articulated a theme of changing generations in Ukraine at that time. Its leader and spokesman then was Valeriy Khoroshkovsky, who went on to become a major player in Ukrainian politics.

The course of events that became the Orange Revolution is well known and the role of youth groups has been well documented. At the crucial moment on the evening of November 21, 2004, after the second round runoff between Yushchenko and Yanukovych, when it became known that the election results were in the process of being falsified, a group of activists from the youth group *Pora* pitched twenty-five tents at one end of the Maidan, one for each of the administrative regions of Ukraine. Even at that stage, the hearsay was that neither Yushchenko nor his campaign team knew how many people would turn out to protest, despite the months of preparation that had gone into planning for such an outcome.⁹ When Yushchenko issued his plea to the nation on Monday morning, to come to the Maidan on whatever transport was available—cars, trucks, bicycles or donkeys—there were around five thousand people on the Maidan, mainly youth and *Pora* activists, but no guarantee at that time how many more would join them. By week's end, as people from Kyiv came out and others from cities across Ukraine arrived, estimates ranged from hundreds of thousands to up to a million or more on the streets in and around the Maidan, with young people forming the core of the tent city.

After seventeen days of massive protests in the frigid temperatures of Kyiv's winter, Ukraine's Supreme Court overturned the second round results and ordered a third round rerun of the election, which Viktor Yushchenko won, to become president of Ukraine. The mass protests that had toppled an authoritarian government went into the annals of history and gave the term "color revolution" a solid place in the lexicon of political scientists and authoritarian dictators (for different reasons, of course) as a youth-led protest movement that engages NGOs and civil society groups (authoritarians would add—those funded by foreign donors) to bring people out onto the streets to challenge the results of a falsified election and bring down an authoritarian government.

At the beginning of Yushchenko's presidency it looked as if the years of authoritarian rule were over and Ukraine would finally move decisively along the path toward democracy, prosperity, and justice for all its citizens. The youth groups that had been at the forefront of the street protests did indeed wear the mantle of "agents of change" for a while. *Pora* (It's Time) reexamined its mission and transformed into *Opora* (Support), thus marking the transition from radicalism focused on opposition to a civic

⁹ Author's interview with Taras Stetskiy, leader of the Maidan organization effort, March 11, 2005.

group aiming to build civil society and promote accountability and good governance. The part of *Pora* that became a political party participated in the March 2006 parliamentary elections but gained only 1.47 percent of the vote;¹⁰ not enough to enter the parliament, thus demonstrating, as had happened in the case of the youth group *Otpor* in Serbia, that the techniques and ethos of a protest movement are not necessarily useful in party politics and that the popularity gained through street protests does not transfer easily into the realm of politics.

As the euphoria around the “Orange” triumph died down, the Yushchenko presidency itself began to degenerate through lack of clear division of authority between the president and the prime minister and without having introduced many truly reformist initiatives. The young people who had been at the forefront of change and whose youthful idealism had underwritten the ethos of protest, found themselves once more, as in 1991, without an identifiable role to play in the post-protest arrangements and with their aspirations and ideals overtaken by political developments.

Portrait of a Generation

Why did young Ukrainians rally to create and join these protest movements, more often than other post-Soviet youth? Is there something particular about Ukraine’s youth that makes them different? To provide insights into prevailing trends among young people in Ukraine, this author has been able to compile a unique set of public opinion polling data: two sets of polling of 18 to 34 year olds, were conducted either side of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, as well as in Russia and Azerbaijan to enable comparative analysis.¹¹ The first poll conducted in 2003 included those born in 1968 as the oldest group. These were the young people who had just completed their high school studies as the ground-breaking policies of glasnost and perestroika were being introduced throughout the Soviet Union in 1986. This was the cohort that produced the student leaders of 1990.

¹⁰ “Ukraine: Parliamentary Elections, 26 March 2006,” OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report. Warsaw, June 23, 2006, 31-32. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/ukraine/19595>. Accessed February 27, 2013.

¹¹ Polling results in this article are taken from the author’s recent book: Nadia M. Diuk. 2012. *The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan: Youth, Politics, Identity, and Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Polling was conducted among 16/18 to 34 years olds in 2002-3 and 2009-10 in Russia by the All-Russian Center for the Research into Public Opinion VTsIOM, known as the Levada Center from 2004; in Ukraine by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation; and in Azerbaijan by Georgian Research Business International in 2003 and by the FAR Center in 2010. All sample sizes were around 500, except for the 2003 poll in Russia which was 1,264, and all were representative according to age, sex, level of education, region, and size of settlement. Unless specified differently by a footnote, all statistics in this article are from these data sets and are fully reprinted in the book.

The youngest group, born in 1992, was just 18 years old when the second set of polling was conducted in 2010. As first time voters in 2010, they had no personal memory of the Soviet Union and could only have been vaguely aware of the Orange Revolution as pre-teens. But this is the first group to have gone through a high school education when the press was mostly free and many subjects of Ukrainian history that had been avoided or prohibited until then were introduced into the curriculum.

Despite the broad range of ages, some clear trends can be seen. On several issues, young Ukrainians are not much different from the first free generation in other post-Soviet states. Although not as wealthy in general as their Russian neighbors, young Ukrainians' income has risen steadily over the past decade to the point where many are making as much and some considerably more income than their parents, which is a distinct departure from Soviet times. Whereas in 2003, the majority of young Ukrainians had an income of less than \$100 per month (68.5 percent), by 2010 most had edged up to between \$100-\$200 (59 percent) and \$200-\$300 (25.3 percent).¹² Over the seven years when the polling took place, the standard of living went up so that the percentage of young people who claimed to have enough for food and clothing but found purchasing a major item such as a refrigerator or television difficult dropped, and the percentage of those who could purchase major items without difficulty went up. Even so, this rise has not pushed young people up into Ukraine's middle class in the same way as the more wealthy young Russians who now make up the backbone of Russia's rising middle class. Just over a fifth of the young Ukrainians in 2010 were employed as "workers," and 16.4 percent as "specialists without management duties," 14.8 percent as students and 10.8 percent unemployed.¹³

Some of the most dramatic changes for all post-Soviet youth have come about in the increasing use of the Internet. It has penetrated many areas of lifestyle and leisure activities. While detailed questions about the use of the Internet were not even posed in 2003, the dramatic increase over seven years in Ukraine is striking, going up from 18.4 percent to 51.5 percent, and has undoubtedly grown since then.¹⁴ The increase in use of the Internet has meant a decline in more traditional forms of leisure activity such as going out, hosting guests at home, do-it-yourself activities, sewing and knitting and so on. But the increase in Internet use has not led to a wholesale switch over to that medium. When asked where they learn about the news in their own country and around the world, young Ukrainians are not unusual in their primary reliance on television (over 90 percent in 2010).¹⁵

¹² Diuk, Appendix G7, 179.

¹³ Ibid, Appendix G1, 176.

¹⁴ Ibid, Appendices G4 and G5, 177.

¹⁵ Ibid, Appendix G6, 177.

One of the major differences between Ukraine's post-Soviet youth and the previous generation is their ability to travel freely and receive information about other countries. Posing questions about travel and the reason for leaving the country offer insight into whether young people are content and whether they feel they have good prospects in their own country. The number of young Ukrainians who wanted to emigrate for good went up from 10.6 percent to 13.8 percent.¹⁶ Among those who were interested in leaving the country for a short while (37.6 percent in 2003 dropping to 29.9 percent in 2010),¹⁷ the main purpose of the travel would be to work. In 2003, Young Ukrainians were choosing Germany first as the primary preference of the country they wished to travel to; by 2010 they had switched to Russia as the first.¹⁸ Interestingly, compared with young Russians over the same time period, the motive for travel differs; more young Russians stated a desire to see different countries as their main reason for leaving Russia, not the desire to work.

After twenty years of independence, how far have young Ukrainians developed a distinct sense of national identity? The growing self-identification of young people consists of many elements, but the first to consider as a major element in the sense of nationality is the use of language. In Ukraine, language use has always been an issue fraught with political connotations. Polling over the past ten years shows some interesting trends. Between 2003 and 2010 the use of Ukrainian among young people dropped in all categories: use at home dropped from 41.4 percent to 29.9 percent; at work from 35.8 percent to 22.9 percent, and among friends from 34.3 percent to 22.2 percent.¹⁹ The use of Russian, however, did not increase at the expense of Ukrainian—in fact it decreased. Polling data from 2005 showed 29.2 percent of young Ukrainians using the Ukrainian language at work and 30.3 percent among friends.²⁰ This poll also showed that young people spoke more Russian than the general population of Ukraine.²¹

The category that increased was the bilingual category—those using both Russian and Ukrainian—up from 20 percent to 34.7 percent in the home and at work, large and surprising increases from 18.9 percent in 2003, to 24.4 percent in 2005, up to 40.3 percent in 2010.²² Bilingual language use among friends rose from 23.3 percent in 2003, 24.5 percent in 2005 up to 39.7 percent in 2010.²³ This shows that Russian speakers are

¹⁶ Ibid, Appendix B1, 151.

¹⁷ Ibid, Appendix B2, 151.

¹⁸ Ibid, Appendix B4, 152.

¹⁹ Ibid., Appendix A3, 147.

²⁰ Ibid, Appendices A4 and A5, 147-148.

²¹ Polling in 2005 was conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation.

²² Diuk, Appendix A4, 147.

²³ Ibid, Appendix A5, 148.

not learning Ukrainian, taking advantage of the practice among bilingual speakers to fall into speaking whichever language starts off the conversation. What effect this emerging bilingual identity may have, remains to be seen. At the very least, because the use of language is a very political issue in Ukraine, it perpetuates the lack of consolidation of a clear direction for Ukraine's national identity. Even though it could also be argued that this trend is a sign of an increasingly multi-cultural outlook or an indication that a "civic nation" is emerging, the data on young Ukrainians' attitudes toward their country and citizenship suggest otherwise. When asked about pride in their country, only 27 percent of young Ukrainians admitted to being proud of their country with 40.8 percent "proud to be a citizen."²⁴ The same questions drew a 62.8 positive response from young Russians on pride in their country and 74.5 percent on citizenship. Among young Azerbaijanis the response was 83.4 percent and 83.6 percent for the two questions, respectively.

Young Ukrainians are similar to other post-Soviet youth in their pragmatic approach to values and beliefs. When asked which rights and freedoms they considered most important: the right to work was the top choice, followed by the right to a home, the right to education, with freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of conscience as less important in that order. In holding these values, they are not much different from Russians and other post-Soviet youth. The one stand out in this group of questions was the high level of support by Azerbaijani youth for freedom of speech as very important (62.6 percent) in contrast to Russians (37.2 percent) and Ukrainians (35.6 percent).²⁵ Young Ukrainians are not much different from other post-Soviet youth also in their opinion that democracy is the most desirable system of government for their country. But just as with the others, young Ukrainians have an incomplete understanding of the way a democracy works, with most stating that democracy means "prosperity and stable economic growth" (31.8 percent) closely followed by "the conducting of free and fair elections" (30.7 percent) and "safety for my family" (23.5 percent).²⁶

When it came to considering a choice between prosperity and freedom, young Ukrainians were rather more inclined to favor giving up rights and civic freedoms to the state in exchange for personal prosperity (39 percent) with fewer in support of the notion that for the sake of personal freedom and as a guarantee of keeping all civil rights, they would be ready to tolerate some material difficulties (33.6 percent).²⁷ On this question, young Azerbaijanis and Russians differed from the Ukrainians in being

²⁴ Ibid, Appendix A11, 150.

²⁵ Ibid. Appendix, F3, 171.

²⁶ Ibid., Appendix F7, 175.

²⁷ Ibid, Appendix F8, 175.

more inclined to tolerate some material difficulties for the sake of personal freedom (62.4 and 42.2 percent respectively).

It is worth noting that within the Ukrainian group, the younger cohort of eighteen to twenty-four year olds were the biggest supporters of giving up civic freedoms in favor of material well-being, 42.8 percent of this group while the older twenty-five to thirty-four year old group registered 36.2 percent for that opinion. These statistics seem to suggest that young Ukrainians have become averse to the notion that civil rights are worth sacrificing for. But it remains a question as to why the youngest group, some of whom would have barely been teenagers at the time of the Orange Revolution, would also have this view.

This data on willingness to give up freedoms in exchange for material security seems to go against broadly accepted political science theories on the democratizing power of the growing middle class. Perhaps such concepts should be more rigorously tested, especially when considering societies in early stages of transition. This data shows that young people appear to crave most what they do not have, namely job prospects and housing in the case of Ukrainians and Russians, and freedom of speech in the case of the Azerbaijanis.

Out of the three national groups, the Ukrainians nonetheless had the least expectations of the state; even though most young Ukrainians believed that “the state should look after all of its citizens and ensure them a decent, even standard of living” (48.8 percent), there were more who believed this among Russians (62.2 percent) and Azerbaijanis (58.6 percent).²⁸

Defining a national identity also includes a political dimension. Although many people do not subscribe to a clear political identity, their attitudes and confidence in social and political institutions help to shape their political expectations and views. Polling has shown that young Ukrainians consistently express low levels of confidence and trust in most government institutions and particularly in the office of the president. It seemed understandable in 2003 when President Leonid Kuchma’s ratings were falling that young people should express these views. Polling showed that 72.5 percent of young Ukrainians moderately or completely lacked confidence in their president, while the same question posed to Russians and Azerbaijanis yielded a result of 12.6 percent and 17.4 percent respectively.²⁹ President Heydar Aliyev was rated positively by 72.8 percent of young Azerbaijanis and President Vladimir Putin received a stunning 82.1 percent positive rating from young Russians, compared with Kuchma’s 21.4 percent on the positive side of the ledger.

At that time, these polling results could have been explained by the

²⁸ Ibid. Appendix F5, 174.

²⁹ Ibid. Appendix D1 (D1.15), 160.

particular political circumstances in Ukraine. The scandals around the murder of the journalist Georgiy Gongadze and the generally deteriorating conditions for human rights and freedoms in the country were fueling a wave of discontent and opposition. After the Orange Revolution set a precedent in the region that an unpopular president could be “brought down” by street protesters, many of whom were young, it would have been logical to anticipate that the next president would enjoy a higher level of support and trust from the younger generation. Surprisingly, polling for 2010 shows that even with different incumbents in each president’s seat (Viktor Yushchenko,³⁰ Dmitry Medvedev, and Ilham Aliyev) attitudes stayed the same. Ukrainian youth distinguished themselves again by their lack of confidence in their president even though this time it was the person who had just five years earlier led the mass protest movement in the Orange Revolution. Ukrainian youth registered 78.4 percent with little or no confidence in the president and an astonishingly low 7 percent with some or full confidence.³¹ With the election of President Yanukovich in February 2010 these attitudes soon extended to him and his office. A June 2010 opinion poll conducted 100 days into his administration showed that 51.6 percent of eighteen to twenty-four year olds expressed some or total confidence in the president and 31.3 percent with some or a complete lack of confidence. By April 2011, the same question brought a response of 25.6 percent of young Ukrainians on the positive side of the question and 60 percent with some or complete lack of confidence, with the “complete lack of confidence” sub-set the largest at 42.6 percent. These youth responses tracked fairly closely with the overall population and attitudes of older people to the same question.³²

These low ratings suggest that there is more going on here than responses to individual politicians and that these attitudes may now be enduring features within the nascent political culture. In comparing the level of trust and confidence in various government institutions, the divergence of Ukrainian youth attitudes from responses by Russians and Azerbaijanis is striking. The lack of trust in government and other official institutions is seen throughout the polling. By allowing responses in one of five categories—“fully trust,” “somewhat trust,” “somewhat do not trust,” “completely do not trust,” and the standard “difficult to respond”—it was possible to put together an aggregate number to make some comparisons. Deep differences emerge in the level of trust toward government (Yulia Tymoshenko’s at the time of polling): young Ukrainians rated it at -71 percent, while young Russians gave their government a +34 percent rating

³⁰ Polling was conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation at the end of 2009.

³¹ Diuk, Appendix D1 (D1.15), 160.

³² Polling conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation.

and young Azerbaijanis +53 percent.³³ Young Ukrainians also gave a firm vote of no confidence in the secretariat of then President Yushchenko with -68 percent. Similarly, institutions for administering justice came in for the lowest rating from Ukrainians at -44 percent for the public prosecutor's office and -46 percent for the courts.³⁴ It might be expected that young people might mistrust these institutions, but nonetheless, young Russians and Azerbaijanis expressed much more confidence in their institutions in 2010.

An even more dismal picture emerges when we look at the institutions that are supposed to connect to politics: by 2010 young Ukrainians had deepened their disaffection with the parliament, the *Verkhovna Rada*, with an aggregate of -72.4 percent lack of trust, which had dropped from -55.6 percent seven years earlier.³⁵ It is worth pointing out that while Ukrainians' trust in the parliament decreased, among young Azerbaijanis and Russians it increased, even though not to the high numbers enjoyed by the respective presidents. Russians' trust in their own Duma may have gone down after the mass demonstrations of 2011-12, but it is unlikely that the level for Ukrainians has improved, especially after the election of 2012, when the winners in so many seats were disputed and the parliament itself started out with some violent confrontations between pro-government and opposition members on the floor of the chamber.

Ratings for political parties are low in all countries polled, but young Ukrainians, nonetheless, still rate their political parties lower than the rest. Young Ukrainians were the most skeptical, giving political parties a -63.7 rating in 2010 although this was up from seven years earlier when their trust in political parties hit a dramatic low of -72.4 percent.³⁶

Turning to the third sector, measuring the level of confidence in non-governmental organizations gives slight cause for optimism. With the Ukrainians still polling the lowest at -11 percent in 2010 compared with Russians and Azerbaijanis, the figures were trending upward from seven years earlier.³⁷

Looking at these trends overall could lead to some troubling conclusions. If Ukrainian youth are to be considered an agent for change, then how will their activism be manifested if they hold most institutions of government in such low regard? Looking back in history offers some feasible explanations for the pronounced anti-establishment attitude of Ukrainian youth. One view which has become conventional wisdom is the claim that Ukrainians throughout history have always flouted attempts

³³ Diuk, Appendix D1 (D1.17), 161.

³⁴ Ibid, Appendix D1 (D1.4, D1.5, D1.6), 158-9.

³⁵ Ibid, Appendix D1 (D1.16), 161.

³⁶ Ibid, Appendix D1 (D1.2), 158.

³⁷ Ibid, Appendix D1 (D1.8), 159.

to impose government and state structures on their social arrangements. Another interpretation is that Ukrainians have been a subjugated and captive nation repressed by foreign occupiers; while the Russians developed an overwhelming veneration for the state and the tsar as head of state, Ukrainians always behaved as primordial anarchists at their worst and as proponents and upholders of decentralization of power and proto-constitutional arrangements at their best. This popular interpretation of Ukrainian history may be borne out to some degree when looking at the power sharing arrangements of the medieval rulers of Kyiv-Rus' and the freewheeling institutions of leadership of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. The absence of a Ukrainian state for over three and a half centuries may well have served to diminish the importance of such institutional arrangements in the national psyche. Even the writing of Ukrainian history grew out of a tradition shaped by the preeminent scholar and historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who stressed the role of the native common people and maintained a mistrust of state throughout his works.

It could be, of course, that the trends shown in this polling data are transitory and that greater trust may evolve, but looking at the way Ukraine's political landscape presents itself in early 2013 there are few elements that would suggest measures being undertaken to build confidence in Ukraine's government for the population in general, let alone the young people who will be responsible for the country's future. The revelation that Ukrainians have a low regard for institutions of government has been confirmed by other sociological studies.³⁸

Next Generation Rising

These statistics may lead to some pessimism about young Ukrainians, but any brief look at or acquaintance with civic groups in Ukraine suggests another view. The high level of dissatisfaction with political institutions has not resulted in wholesale apathy; Ukraine's young people are, in fact, more active in civic groups and associations, in the non-governmental sector, than many of their post-Soviet colleagues, whereas the obstacles for young people to enter politics have been quite severe. For at least a decade, it has been difficult to enter politics in Ukraine as an independent actor and particularly as an independent young person because of the funding and institutional support needed. By joining existing political formations it is usually necessary to sign on to that party's program or at least fall in with the leadership's line. This may be one explanation why an independent

³⁸ See "Таких низьких показників довіри до влади, які має Україна, в Європі просто не спостерігається," http://dif.org.ua/ua/commentaries/sociologist_view/djowjdgowopgipw-ergprihgp.htm, accessed March 6, 2013; Sociologist Evhen Holovakha reports on the findings of a Europe-wide public opinion poll in 2011, which showed Ukrainians close to last or last in their level of trust in government institutions out of twenty-six European countries surveyed.

youth party was never able to take off. The oligarchs and financial groups who fund Ukraine's political parties have agendas of their own that do not usually include taking a chance with youthful exuberance or the programs of the next generation.

Politics and a career in government became less appealing for idealistic young activists because of the prevailing culture of corruption and graft. Over the years, the state and institutions of government have become instruments that ensure access to state benefits and personal enrichment for Ukraine's ruling elite. The notion of political office as a form of public service is not broadly understood or accepted and the power that accompanies public office is not always used to promote the welfare of the people and to represent their wishes and aspirations. It may well be that Ukrainians simply do not have a vision of the state as an entity that serves their interests, and just as in Soviet times, they do not feel empowered to play a role in its routine operations, whether to advance reforms or otherwise. In some cases young people have entered politics precisely for the more mercenary purpose of enriching themselves just as the older generation has done. Just because a politician is young does not mean that he or she is more democratic—as many examples in Ukraine's current political landscape show.

Despite all these difficulties, there are some signs of young people trying to enter politics. Running for office on a local level is often easier and more young people are to be found there. There are indications that some young civic activists are crossing over to run for political office at the national level.³⁹ Around 10 percent of the deputies in the current parliament elected in 2012 have roots in the civic sector, showing a precedent for this type of transition.⁴⁰ However, the average age of a deputy is 47.6 years old. The “oldest” parties are the Party of Regions and the Communist Party with an average of 50 years old; the Bat’kivshchyna Party has an average age of 47; the independents, 43; and the “youngest” parties are the two newcomers in the Ukrainian parliament, Vitaly Klychko's UDAR and Svoboda, both with an average age of 43.⁴¹ The appearance of these two new parties in the new 2012 parliament may well serve to bring more young people into politics. The UDAR party gained the largest portion of the youth vote: 26 percent of the under-30 year olds, with their support diminishing in the older age groups. It should be noted, however, that Party

³⁹ Roman Kabachiy, “Ukrainian Election: The Young Hopefuls,” October 4, 2012 <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/roman-kabachiy/ukrainian-election-young-hopefuls>, accessed March 6, 2013.

⁴⁰ See OPORA's report “Портрет Ради: чоловіки, гроші, політика” February 8, 2013, <http://opora.ua/news/3644-portret-rady-choloviky-groshi-polityka>, accessed March 6, 2013.

⁴¹ See OPORA's report “Портрет Ради: чоловіки, гроші, політика,” February 8, 2013, <http://opora.ua/news/3644-portret-rady-choloviky-groshi-polityka>.

of Regions also gained a comparable 24 percent of the under-30's vote. The Bat'kivshchyna Party did less well with the under-30's gaining 22 percent; Svoboda gained 11-13 percent, which was roughly the same proportion as they won in other age groups. The Communist Party received 6 percent of the under-30's vote; not surprisingly, their support went up progressively in each older age group.⁴²

The majority of active young people are not in politics, however, although many civic groups do conduct activities that engage on some level with political life: election monitoring, tracking politicians and their promises, promoting accountability on the local level, participating in other "watchdog" type of organizations, various investigative journalism and blogging initiatives, and other efforts. Organizations such as the Committee or Voters, Opora, Chesno and others have mobilized thousands of young people around elections, which always become a passionate affair in Ukraine. In the past two years, the selective prosecution of opposition politicians such as Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko has also served to bring young people out onto the streets.

Although these recent activities may not have earned young Ukrainians a firm right to the moniker of "agents for change," they are an indication that each generation of Ukrainian youth has followed in the tradition of activism, usually independent of and sometimes in opposition to the government. Political events in Ukraine over the past two decades have swung between conformist orthodoxy and revolutionary protest and have produced two major youth-led popular protest movements that were unique in the region, when Ukraine's youth truly could have been considered "agents for change." These events have left their mark on Ukraine's nascent political culture.

The conclusion could be drawn that Ukraine's political culture expresses itself as conformity in government and radicalism in protest. While the protest movements have been vigorous and enhanced by the ideas and demands of youth, the dynamism and ideals of these movements have not been carried into government to promote reforms, advances in social policy, or deepening of democracy. This suggests that the more Yanukovich retreats from democratic norms in order to shore up his power as he prepares for reelection in 2015, the more likely it is that young people might once more lead people out onto the streets in protest finally to fulfill their destiny as agents for change.

⁴² See Democratic Initiatives Foundation report, "Результати екзит-полу: хто і як голосував – розподіл електоратів за демографічними показниками. Вибори 2012: сподіване і несподіване. Думки експертів," http://dif.org.ua/ua/publications/press-relizy/rezultativazivaspertiv_.htm.