

Bimonthly January-February No 1 (XXV)/2017

20 PLN (w tym 5% vat) | 10 EUR | 12 USD | 7 GBP

www.neweasterneurope.eu



New Eastern Europe




THE ART OF REVOLUTION

Three Revolutions

A research project

GEORGES MINK, PAWEŁ KOWAL



System transformation of post-Soviet Ukraine is one of the most interesting topics for researchers around the world. Understanding this process requires a deeper look into social developments that took place in this country over the last 25 years. They have led to at least **three mass protests** organised in Kyiv: the Revolution on Granite, the Orange Revolution and the EuroMaidan.



The research project, titled Three Revolutions (3R), which is being carried out at the College of Europe Natolin*, refers to three social and political upheavals which have taken place in Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union. We have decided to call these three breakthrough moments “revolutions”, fully aware that recognising them as revolutionary is a research hypothesis, not a given. The hypothesis should be further investigated, and such is one of the goals of the research team. Another thorny issue is settling on the actual number of protests that have taken place at the Maidan Square. Some commentators claim that “there might be a third Maidan”, which suggests that, as far as the protest events in Ukraine are concerned, the only ones that should be recognised as “revolutions” are the

* Partner institutions for this project include: Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Center for Eastern European Studies at the University of Warsaw, University College London (School of Slavonic and East European Studies), University of Alberta Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, the Centre d'études des mondes Russe Caucasiens et Centre Européen (CNRS-EHESS), Paris.

2004/2005 Orange Revolution and the 2013/2014 EuroMaidan. Social activist, Nataliya Zubar, however, speaks about seven Maidans in the history of post-Soviet Ukraine. These include: the Revolution on the Granite, the 2000–2001 “Ukraine without Kuchma” protests, the Orange Revolution, the “Against Corruption” protest (July 2006–March 2007), the Tax Maidan (November–December 2010), the Language Maidan (July–August 2012), and the EuroMaidan.

Significant meaning

Although a lot still remains unknown, one thing is certain: the phenomenon of system transformation in post-Soviet Ukraine is one of the most interesting topics for researchers around the world. There is no doubt that contemporary Ukraine has had at least three mass protests organised at the Independence Square in Kyiv. These are: the 1990 Revolution on Granite, the 2004/2005 Orange Revolution and the 2013/2014 EuroMaidan (often referred to as the Revolution of Dignity).

The Revolution on Granite was the first wave of Maidan protests in the history of contemporary Ukraine. It led to the departure of a high-level official, the first in the USSR’s history, and it was a kind of prefiguration, a model for the revolutionary events that took place in Ukraine in the subsequent years. It also entered the canon of non-violent revolutions.

The 2004/2005 and 2013/2014 revolutions had a wider reach and mobilised Ukrainian society at an unprecedented level. They also had an impact on contemporary Europe and the European Union and United States’ policies towards the region. These, in turn, influenced both Ukraine’s internal and external affairs. Thus, Western reception of the revolutionary events in Ukraine is one of the most interesting phenomena that we have been examining, especially in the context of the EuroMaidan.


Our analysis of the Maidan protests involves various research perspectives, including a comparative analysis. For example: we try to determine to what extent these 20th and 21st century revolutions are rooted in Ukrainian political culture, what are the influences of the Cossack tradition, and what role is played by Western values such as: liberal democracy or nationalism. We are also looking at Ukraine’s protests and revolutions through the prism theories on revolutionary movements which are put forward by researchers around the world. We are particularly interested in understanding to what extent the protest actions we focus on have been revolutions or “refolu-

Western reception
of the revolutionary
events in Ukraine
is one of the
most interesting
phenomena.

tions” to use Timothy Garton Ash’s term. In other words: to what extent they have introduced real change to the power system. Our research includes an inquiry into how we can compare the Ukrainian experience with revolutionary processes that took place in Poland (especially after the establishment of Solidarity in 1980) and the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. We also examine whether we should subordinate them to Samuel Huntington’s third wave.

Internal logic of revolutions

Our goal is to analyse sources on the Ukrainian revolutions, compare them, and search for more universal mechanisms of revolutions. Among other things, we are examining collective actions and individual strategies, in order to better understand the internal logic of the revolutionary processes in the Ukrainian and international context. Our analysis focuses on the relationship between the old and new (revolutionary) elite and the “ordinary” actors. In addition, we are interested in the behaviour of the new authorities and the building of new social ties and national identities, as well as the disappearance of old authorities. We compare the impact of revolutionary models borrowed from history and the creation of new models.

The project methodology mainly relies on collecting testimonies of direct participants of Ukraine’s protests. Oral history is regarded as one of the most adequate methods for researching such social phenomena. In addition, a literature review is being carried out. We envision that the collected material will serve future researchers of Ukrainian affairs who will be further able to analyse different aspects of the three Kyiv-based revolutions. Thus, our hope is to inspire academics around the world to benefit from our findings and gathered primary sources and use them in their own research endeavours. 

Georges Mink is a sociologist and political scientist. He is a profesor at the College of Europe, Campus Natolin, a senior researcher emeritus with the Institute for Social Sciences of Politics (ISP) at the French Academy of Sciences (CNRS) and the president of International Council for Central and East European Studies (2015–2020). He is a member of *New Eastern Europe’s* editorial board.

Paweł Kowal is a post-doctoral fellow at the College of Europe’s Natolin campus. He is a political scientist, historian, essayist and political commentator. Among other things, he works for the Polish Academy of Sciences and the University of Warsaw. In the years 2002–2014, he held numerous public offices, was a member of the Polish Parliament and European Parliament, and was Secretary of State at Poland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is a member of *New Eastern Europe’s* editorial board.