

**DEMOCRACY AND
TRANSITION PERIOD****REVOLUTIONARY WAVES
IN THE POST-SOVIET EXPANSE**

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The tempestuous events over the past two years in several CIS countries have led to the formation of a qualitatively new geopolitical, economic, and political situation in the post-Soviet expanse. Although the assessments of these events are largely emotional (some call the changes in power in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan revolutions, others refer to them as coups), the general conclusion drawn is that all the former U.S.S.R. republics have entered a qualitatively new stage in their development. This new stage could end in the formation of an essentially different geopolitical reality and new political plots in each of the countries indicated.

The situation which has developed in the Commonwealth states is, first, the result of the geopolitical rivalry among Russia, Europe, and the U.S. for domination throughout the expanses of the former Soviet Union, second, is caused by the economic struggle between competing groups within each country, and, third, is generated by the people's discontent with the authorities' policy during the almost 15 years of their independence. Here it is important not to roll everything into one lump, but to look at the main causes of what happened, identify the laws governing them, and determine what awaits these republics in the future.

Revenge of the Post-Soviet Elites

The changes in the breakdown of forces in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan show that the so-called revolutions were a form of opposition by the local elites. The leaders of the new independent

states created after the U.S.S.R. collapsed almost always succeeded in putting the clamps on the political and financial opportunities of their opponents. The absence of democratic procedures to procure a change in power in these countries and the fact that elections turned into a struggle for survival gave rise to a certain type of political culture which does not envisage rotation of the elites, at least not on the basis of elections and transfer of power.

The events in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan showed that this situation is changing and the old elites are beginning to yield their ground. Shielded by such definitions as the Rose Revolution, Orange Revolution, and Tulip Revolution, the forces removed from power had the opportunity to take revenge, in so doing adhering if not to the law, at least to the semblance of objectivity of the political processes. What is more, the events in these countries demonstrated the weakness of their state power institutions, while presidential and parliamentary elections became an excuse to consolidate the political opposition, mobilize its supporters, and attract the attention of third countries. And last but not least, in actual fact, the opposition leaders did not want serious changes, presenting their demonstration against the authorities as a revolution only to mobilize the population, which was promised radical changes, including the rejuvenation of power, and the arrival of new, honest, and uncorrupted people at the helm. But it ended up with those people returning to the ruling structures who just yesterday occupied the highest posts in them and then, for various reasons, found themselves by the wayside. For example, in Ukraine, new “old” Viktor Iushchenko run with the country’s political elite for the past 10 years and used to occupy a key position in its developed oligarchic system. In particular, he was chairman of the National Bank, and then even held the post of prime minister.

In order to better understand Iushchenko as a politician, let’s take a look at the people who officially made up his team (which scandalously collapsed in September 2005) at the peak of the Orange Revolution. Without doubt, a symbolic figure and vivid emblem of oligarchic capitalism was now ex-prime minister Iulia Tymoshenko. In order to resolve her own personal problems, she was ready to stand under any banner which could later be converted into financial resources and power, or, vice versa, into power and financial resources. Along with her, three former vice premiers were members of Iushchenko’s entourage (Viktor Pinzenik, Yuri Ekhanurov, and Igor Iukhnovsky), as well as several politicians who at one time occupied ministerial posts (Ivan Zaets, Yuri Kostenko, Sergey Golovaty, Gennadi Udovenko, and Boris Tarasiuk).

Les Taniuk, Ivan Pliushch, Evgeni Chervonenko, and Pyotr Poroshenko can also be said to belong to this team. A total of four former vice premiers and ten ministers gathered around Iushchenko. On the whole, they comprised a full compliment of retired parliamentary members. These people received state posts, decorations, and other awards courtesy of Leonid Kuchma himself (when he was prime minister, and then president).

A similar picture developed in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. It resulted not in a qualitative renewal of power (which was one of the main theses of the opposition), but rotation within one circle of officials. However, the change in leaders is increasingly going beyond legal bounds, causing instability in the political situation and turning the economy into a victim of populist promises.

While the United States managed to achieve progress in advancing its interests in many republics which used to belong to the U.S.S.R., in Ukraine this was more difficult due to its geographical dimensions, size of population, and a few other reasons.

The answer to the question of why the West nevertheless supported Viktor Iushchenko should be sought in the economy. Financial flows and business in Ukraine, as in any other country, go in different directions. The paradox of the situation lies in the fact that the business structures (coal, metal, and so on) related to Viktor Ianukovich, Iushchenko’s main opponent at the 2004 presidential election, can successfully develop only if aimed at the West, thus creating competition for analogous Western structures, which naturally does not interest the latter. While the business structures

close to Viktor Iushchenko (confectionary goods, and so on) are capable of competing with their Russian “colleagues.” This is why the East and West are financing opposing business groups: Russia wants to curb the expansion of Viktor Iushchenko’s business groups, while the West is striving to stymie Viktor Ianukovich’s (many representatives of big business have their own interests in different regions).

In turn, the European Union, first, does not want Ukraine to interfere with its absorption of new territories and, second, is trying to protect itself from Ukraine’s export of metal and agricultural produce. What is more, the European countries are interested in the unhindered transit of Russian energy resources, as well as in Kiev maintaining an equal distance in its political relations between Moscow and Washington. Finally, the EU is trying to conquer Ukrainian sales markets and wants Ukraine to buy European products and technologies, while selling the Europeans its industrial enterprises and land. The U.S. also wants the same things from Ukraine, whereby it is mainly bent on protecting its economic interests here. After all, in this former Soviet republic, labor is cheaper than in China, while it is rich in natural resources, particularly those needed for metallurgy and agriculture, and the price of energy resources is half what it is in Central Europe.

In light of the possible stronger foothold being gained by the countries of the Single Economic Space (SES), to which Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan belong (with Ukraine likely to join them), the West is justifiably beginning to worry about an Eastern analogue to the EU, which in terms of its political and economic influence could become a serious rival not only to the European Union, but also to the U.S.

European politicians have stated, without beating around the bush, that Ukraine is a kind of buffer with its population of 48 million people for protecting Europe in the event of a conflict with the East. This point of view was confirmed in particular by German political scientist Alexander Rahr, who said that while official Kiev is striving to join the EU and NATO, Europe can sleep in peace, the East-West conflict will not be revived. What is more, Western circles see Iushchenko as that reformer who will turn Ukraine into another Poland.

For this reason, we should put an end to all the discussions about post-Soviet revolutions and set off in search of money. The creation of myths about the “democratic” opposition in post-Soviet countries served and still serves the economic interests of the West, which is exerting enormous efforts to build oil pipelines for transporting Caspian oil to the Western market, including via the Ukrainian Odessa-Brody route. This pipeline was intended for pumping Caspian oil controlled by the Americans to the Western markets, but now it is pumping Russian oil, which cannot please the U.S., whose interest in the CIS countries is explained by the problems of producing and transporting energy resources. Given the instable conditions of the American economy, it is Washington’s main strategic goal to seize or take firm control over the world’s main sources of energy. In keeping with this logic, the United States must (in addition to other goals) deprive its main rivals, primarily Western European states, of guaranteed sources of oil and gas.

To a Market Economy through the Dictates of Power

From the economic viewpoint, the events in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan have similar features. And we are not talking about the names of the financial-industrial groups close to the authorities, or, vice versa, far away from them. These countries are united by systemic socioeconomic problems which not only have long been awaiting a solution, but have even frequently become more aggravated. It is the contradictions in the economy which are one of the main reasons for the current

upheavals in the above-mentioned countries. Other factors, political, ideological, socio-psychological, etc., are actively being manifested only as catalysts and tools facilitating the processes going on.

At the foundation of the above-mentioned contradictions lies the fragmentary nature of the post-Soviet economies, which was caused by a breakdown (after the collapse of the Soviet Union) in interrelations at the regional and branch level. This gave rise to a divergence in national and regional interests, as well as in the preferences of the main clans and financial-industrial groups, and alienation of some of them from the government decision-making process. For example, one of the special features of the current political process in Ukraine is the huge role played by big capital and business-political groups (BPG), which clashed in the struggle for control over the economy. Whereby these groups have still not drawn up civilized rules of the game, fair competition, civilized redistribution of property rights, and their mutual guarantee.

Despite the declared priority on developing small businesses, the de-facto government policy is promoting not only its conservation in semi-primitive and rudimentary forms, but is also pushing it into the shadows, prompting it to cooperate with the local authorities, local elites, and law enforcement bodies. Whereas big business prefers to resolve its problems largely by means of contacts with the central authorities, including through its people in the government.

For example, until recently, economic growth in Ukraine was speculative in nature and ensured mainly by export of the lion's share of manufactured production, whereby most of the profit stayed abroad. And the part of it that nevertheless returned to the country mainly was not invested in production, due to the high level of political risk, but used to purchase luxury items.

The concentration of capital and financial expansion of industries and companies which for one reason or another have undergone steadier development was frequently expressed in conflicts between the central and regional elites. In so doing, the Center was using all the influence available to it for inflating the headstrong "regionals" and setting the fiscal, law enforcement, and judicial bodies on them. And the regional elites have been creating their own parties, public structures, and even semi-criminal and semi-legal formations for resolving their problems. The events in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan demonstrated regional differences and a huge number of extremely urgent social problems, which have led to a conflict between the prosperous and depressed regions. What is more, the fact that one of the main drug transit routes passes through the south of country had an impact on the situation in Kyrgyzstan. It is believed, and apparently not without justification, that it was the drug barons who brought about the changes in the political situation in the republic.

The "insulted" elites not only did not see a place for themselves in the new economic system, they did not see the possibility either of opposing (economically) the powerful financial-industrial groups close to the authorities who had created their own capital on the export markets. The consequences of this policy had a negative effect on the state of affairs throughout the economy. Significant financial flows have been draining from the domestic market, which placed exporters in a no-lose position. The distortions in the economy have aroused great doubts among the ordinary citizens of these countries in the authenticity of the indices declared by the government of its growth and suspicion that certain members of financial-industrial groups (FIG) are appropriating its fruits. For the population of the post-Soviet states placed great hopes on the economic reforms. For example, it was expected that a socially-oriented market economy could be created in the country as a foundation for contemporary Ukrainian society. But this did not happen. Despite the propagandistic rhetoric about the achievements in this sphere and overall stability, people have been assessing the processes going on rather skeptically. The main reason for this is the enormous gap between the intentions declared at the beginning of the 1990s and the real results of the authorities' activity.

Despite the annual upswing in the economy and growth of the GDP, the situation has not changed. The increase in wages and pensions was immediately devoured by the increase in cost of

utility and transportation services, energy resources, basic necessities, and the gap between the richest and the poorest widened. As a result, the achievements in the economy yielded a minimum social effect.

“Seizure of Bridges, Telegraph Stations, and Banks”

The events occurring in the post-Soviet countries are a continuation of the war among the oligarchic clans, but using different, more up-to-date, methods. Glaring confirmation of this is the tactic of revolution organization in Ukraine, in which Georgia’s recent experience was used, but it did not lead to such harsh collisions as occurred in Kyrgyzstan.

One of the main components of the moral victory of the supporters of the Orange Revolution was music. The team in Iushchenko’s headquarters responsible for public relations did not create anything new—art has always been a vital tool of protest and emotional driver of struggle. But the way in which it achieved this indicated its high level of professionalism. The center of the campaign was a stage, which in size met the requirements of a rock concert, set up in the main square of the Ukrainian capital. It was equipped with a compact mobile television station, which provided round-the-clock transmissions of everything that went on, not only live, but also via satellite. This meant that the events on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) could be seen in real time everywhere around the world. What is more, the stage was placed in such a way that Independence Monument lit up in keeping with all the laws of a state-of-the-art laser show was always in the background of the meeting as seen on the television screen.

Even without detailed excursions into the history of national protests, this example could be called unique: Independence Square was more reminiscent of an auditorium where people came to socialize. Essentially all the television screens showed political masters of ceremony taking turns to warm up the audience during the breaks between concert programs, or individual orators making speeches which rallied together the masses of people by means of standard slogans. What is more, for the sake of exotics, interviews were broadcast with people dress-rehearsed in advance who were to show that the whole of Ukraine had gathered in the center of Kiev. The promotion of Orange music on TV was based on the simple idea of staging the chronology of events on Maidan to the accompaniment of a string of songs, particularly since there was a lot of video material.

The meeting and its organization were maintained not so much by administrative methods, as by psychological brainwashing. Two techniques were used for this. The first, bringing people into a state of narcotic intoxication. This has nothing to do with taking drugs internally—it is merely a common brainwashing technique. The goal here is achieved by external mechanical effects, for example, rhythmic music with a predomination of percussion instruments. The endless music programs and performances of singers intermingled with the chanting (even singing) of slogans, such as “Iushchenko! Iushchenko! Iushchenko!,” “Get’! Get’! Get’!” (which means “Out!” for Kuchma and Ianukovich), as well as drumbeat, held the people on the square.

And when there was a break in the music, the percussion instruments were replaced by voices (the second brainwashing technique was used). By chanting words and phrases by syllable (“shoot-ing” them out from the throat), rhythmic infrasonic fluctuations were created. Their shortcoming was their low power level, to reach the level of the percussion instruments, a huge crowd was needed and coordinated repetition of the slogans to create the desired effect.

As a result, there was too much of one color (orange), loud music, and standing all day long on Independence Square. Reinforced by universal verbal stamps and abstract slogans, the intensive color information had an impact on the subconscious. Whereby the brain perceived it without re-processing it, it did not pass through the logical apparatus, and people lost their ability to critically perceive everything related to the color orange. As a result, the participants in the meeting, particularly those living in the camp on Kreshchatik, the central street in the Ukrainian capital, were sure that when Viktor Iushchenko became president their lives would dramatically and rapidly change for the better.

A so-called field headquarters of Iushchenko's team was set up on Maidan for counting the votes. It became the base camp for organizing the ongoing meeting, the nucleus of which was formed by the same team. And transportation supplied by the business structures associated with several deputies from the opposition was used to bring meeting participants from other regions of the country. These same structures supported the vital activity of the active meeting nucleus. The main acts of protest initiated by the People's Power coalition on Independence Square and taken up by the mass media made it possible to create the myth within the shortest time of Viktor Iushchenko's national support. The mass psychosis which infected Kiev graphically demonstrated how the promotion of a commodity, the Orange Revolution, was imposed on the voters, who found themselves in the role of buyers.

In this way, Iushchenko and his entourage succeeded in bringing people out into the streets who were disillusioned by the authorities (central and local), on whom they placed the blame for all their problems. Only this time, in contrast to the confused staggering of the multi-thousand crowd in 2001 and 2002, the people on Maidan deployed their forces quickly, concentrating them in the necessary place. This says that the leaders of the opposition to Kuchma and the invisible organizers of the national uprising underwent good training on the eve of November-December 2004.

What Next?

The political situation in the post-Soviet countries in which the Color Revolutions took place will be determined by the ability of the new leadership to resolve the problems of socioeconomic development and by the possibilities of the current authorities to consolidate society. If these issues are not resolved, the change in political elites in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan will create conditions for repetition of the revolutionary situation.

Regardless of who takes the helm in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, Russia will develop relations with these countries. The Russian president spoke about the need to develop cooperation with the post-Soviet states at a meeting of the Russian Federation Security Council, at which the question of relations between official Moscow and NATO was discussed. "Cooperation within the CIS will remain Russia's foreign policy priority. I have said repeatedly that work in the Commonwealth is a priority area in our foreign policy doctrine. And this approach should become a principle of the activity aimed at maintaining regional stability within the Commonwealth." The question is only of how to work, with whom, and what goals to set.

Under the new conditions which have developed in several CIS countries, it will be much more difficult to develop bilateral cooperation. In many post-Soviet states, a new elite is coming to power which is more hard-line and pragmatic, less influenced by the stereotypes characteristic of political relations during the Soviet era, and relies on Western political support and (partially) resources.

Attempts to divide power (and following it property too) will be seen in all the post-Soviet countries. This process will likely take quite a long time. What is more, taking the helm does not mean the

problem is solved. Most important is the policy the new authorities begin to conduct, and whether it will be different from the actions of the former leadership. Whether the former Soviet republics are able to become full-fledged states, or whether they continue to be tossed about on the waves of world politics will depend on this.