
Ukrainians protest for regime change (Ukraine Without Kuchma), 2000-2003

- [Colour Revolutions \(2000s\)](#) [1]
- [\(mainly or initiated by\) student participants](#) [2]
- [included participation by more than one social class](#) [3]

- [Colour Revolutions \(2000s\)](#)

Timing

15 December

2000

to:

April

2003

Location and Goals

Country:

Ukraine

Location City/State/Province:

Kiev

Location Description:

Protests took place across Ukraine, but were centered in the capital city Kiev

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

To depose President Kuchma and his senior cabinet, to establish a parliamentary republic, and to complete investigations of the deaths and disappearances of politically controversial journalists and prisoners.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications

- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols

Methods in 4th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 5th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols

Methods in 6th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches
- 124. Boycott of elections

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 017. Mock elections
- 019. Wearing of symbols

Segment Length:

Approximately 5 months

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- Ukrainian students
- opposition politicians

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Yulia Tymoshenko, Yuriy Lutsenko, Volodymyr Chemerys, Viktor Yushchenko

Partners:

Ukrainian Socialist Party, Ukrainian National Assembly-Ukrainian National Self Defence (UNA-UNSD), People's movement of Ukraine, Our Ukraine Party, student groups

External allies:

Ukrainian Communist Party

Involvement of social elites:
Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Oleksandr Moroz
- Students
- Volodymyr Chemerys
- Yulia Tymoshenko

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Viktor Yushchenko

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Ukrainian Communist Party

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

Approximately 5 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Leonid Kuchma and his government

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Several protests turned into riots in which participants used rocks, broken bottles and pieces of scaffolding. In one incident, protesters launched a petrol bomb into the police force.

Repressive Violence:

Police forces killed several and injured dozens in riots with guns and batons. Protest encampments were also violently destroyed. Constructed Fencing around Independence Square, the center of the protests, with the threat of violence if the fence was crossed.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

0 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Total points:

4 out of 10 points

On 17 September 2000, the Ukrainian government under President Leonid Kuchma kidnapped a journalist, Georgiy Gongadze. Gongadze was known for speaking out openly against the government, using his popular radio show and website to expose the widespread corruption in Kuchma's cabinet. His decapitated body was found two weeks later. In November, Socialist Party leader Oleksander Moroz released recordings of conversations between members of Kuchma's party planning the execution.

On 15 December 2000, student protesters under the Pora Youth Group gathered in Kiev's Independence Square to demand accountability from their government, calling on Kuchma to step down. By February 2001, opposition parties that had run in the 1999 election joined the protesters, and the European Union began an inquiry into the murder case.

Yulia Tymoshenko, former Ukrainian prime minister, joined the campaign in early 2001 after being released from political incarceration and ensuing hospitalization after two hunger strikes. The movement also gained support from the Ukrainian Socialist party, represented by Oleksandr Moroz, and a selection of other marginalized political groups in Ukraine such as the Ukrainian National Assembly-Ukrainian National Self Defence (UNA-UNSD) and the People's Movement of Ukraine. The politicians helped the mainly youth and student protesters organize an occupation of Kiev's Independence Square. Protesters wore armbands, carried signs and created slogans to protest the corruption and oppression of their government, calling their movement *Ukrayina bez Kuchmy*, or Ukraine Without Kuchma. The protesters sought the impeachment of President Kuchma and a change to Parliamentary Republican government.

The protesters camped in Independence Square in tents. Liberal musicians rallied the protesters with concerts, showing popular support for the movement. On 9 March 2001, the government was attempting to forcibly remove the campaigners. While the movement officially preached nonviolence, the campaigners occupying Independence Square succumbed to using violence for self defense. The police struck campaigners through their tents with their batons, and the protesters fought with broken bottles, rocks, and pieces of scaffolding. Several campaigners were killed and dozens were injured.

Political support for the movement was divided, because many liberals in Parliament supported Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko. On 26 April 2001, Yushchenko was dismissed from the largely Communist Parliament by popular vote on the basis of his economic policies. After his dismissal, he formed the *Nasha Ukrayina* (Our Ukraine) party, which he immediately allied with the opposition movement.

In November 2001, the police evicted the protesters and fenced off the square as a "construction site". The bad publicity slowed the movement's momentum greatly.

Early in 2002, Kuchma's cabinet blocked several prominent politicians, including Tymoshenko, from running for Parliamentary office. By February, Tymoshenko was hospitalized after a mysterious car accident. International pressure forced a lift on the electoral ban within the month. Later in 2002, the Ukrainian Communist Party joined the opposition movement against Parliament and President Kuchma, although it held a substantial number of seats. In that year's elections, the opposition won a substantial number—but not a majority—of Parliamentary seats. The dominance of Kuchma's party allowed further persecution of opposition leaders, including another politically motivated lawsuit against Tymoshenko. Parliament also outlawed further protests against President Kuchma.

On 17 September 2002, the two year anniversary of Georgiy Gongadze's assassination, twenty thousand protesters marched through Kiev and other cities, demanding that President Kuchma step down. The state shut down all television programming that day. The Ukraine Without Kuchma campaign set up 150 tents outside the

president's office, blocking traffic. By morning, the camps had been ransacked by police and sixty protesters had been arrested on criminal charges.

On 16 November 2002, a week before elections, President Kuchma dismissed his entire government. On November 22, Kuchma's hand-selected successor took charge of Parliament, despite the opposition members of Parliament boycotting the vote.

On 10 March 2003, protesters from Ukraine Without Kuchma marched again through Kiev, demanding the removal of President Kuchma and his most immediate allies. However, the Ukraine Without Kuchma campaign gradually lost momentum. Kuchma's regime continued to ignore the scattered protests for the next two years until the beginning of the Orange Revolution (see Ukrainians overthrow dictatorship (Orange Revolution), 2004).

Research Notes

Influences:

The Ukraine Without Kuchma had a crucial impact on the Orange Revolution, which followed several years after the end of the campaign (Ukrainians overthrow dictatorship (Orange Revolution), 2004). (2)

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Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Lydia Bailey, 09/02/2013

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