

Disjointed Action: Conflicting Collective Action in Ukraine's 2014 Euromaidan Revolution

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Abstract

Though the motivations for unrest were similar across Ukraine during the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution, the means of expressing unhappiness contrasted dramatically between eastern and western Ukraine. In the west of the country protests were centered in the nation's capital, Kiev, and barring a few violent outbursts, were generally peaceful. They consisted of demonstrations, the occupation of public spaces, and innovative uses of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). In the east, on the other hand, conditions were more violent. While these protesters did employ blockages and occupation as tools of their cause, they did so armed and with more aggressive intentions. After driving the previous government officials out of power, these groups took control of the local governments. Using the theories of political scientist Fox Piven and sociologist Richard Fields to analyze the case study of Ukraine, the author seeks in this essay to examine how and why the methods of collective action varied between eastern and western Ukraine during the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution and how these variations may have influenced the eventual outcomes of the each region.

Introduction

In 1978 political scientist Frances Fox Piven and sociologist Richard Cloward wrote that “there is general agreement that extraordinary disturbances in the larger society are required to transform the poor from apathy to hope, from acquiescence to indignation.”¹ The Euromaidan Revolution—the massive public protests that shook Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014—did just that, fundamentally transforming the country's political and cultural landscapes.² In just a few short months, over two decades of political and economic discontent were released, and the aftershocks are still being felt today. Frustration with corruption, unhappiness with the economic state of the country, and general fear of the unknown catalyzed the citizens of Ukraine to rise up and force a tumultuous regime change. Unfortunately, the process was not smooth, and the clean up afterwards has been contentious. Nevertheless, thanks to the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in western Ukraine, aggressive Russian-backed tactics in the east of the country, and widespread allusions to historical ideals across the state, the oppressive government of Viktor Yanukovich was driven from power as a direct result of the collective action of the Ukrainian people.

Background

¹ Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Random House, 1978), 14.

² Andriy Liubarets, “The Politics of Memory in Ukraine in 2014: Removal of the Soviet Cultural Legacy and Euromaidan Commemorations,” *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* (2016): 199.

The land of modern-day Ukraine has been under the rule of various empires and states since the late ninth century. Kievan Rus, the Ottoman Empire, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, the Golden Horde, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union have all laid claim to different parts of the country for various lengths of time. It was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 that Ukraine gained full sovereignty over its territory. Since that point, enormous debate has occurred over how the state should be organized politically and economically, what the relationship between the citizen and the state should look like, and how the government should deal with internal problems.

Upon gaining its independence in 1991, Ukraine was not prepared economically or politically to deal with the transformations ahead, especially considering the proposed pace of the coming reform. Although the country did transition from a socialist command economy to a capitalist market economy in under a decade, the process did not go smoothly. The difficulty Ukraine experienced in the transition period was caused primarily by widespread and systematic corruption and by disagreements over state organization. As the state relinquished control of its businesses and enterprises, Soviet-era politicians and criminals colluded to use their wealth, power, and influence to gain control of these newly privatized entities. Known as oligarchs, these individuals accumulated both wealth and political power through the transition. According to political scientists Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, "The political evolution of Ukraine after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 reflected the continued influence of communist-era politicians as well as of the newly empowered but often severely divided opposition."³ Ukraine did not experience a clean break from its communist past. On the contrary, many of the political figures from the Soviet Union maintained power throughout the transition.

Indeed, throughout the 1990s, political representation was scattered and convoluted. Bunce and Wolchik argue that "as in many other post-communist states, strong political parties were slow to develop in Ukraine. Parties tended to be centered around powerful individuals and served more to protect the fortunes of their founders than to advance any consistent ideology or political platform."⁴ Citizens of the new Ukraine identified themselves in myriad ways (e.g. Ukrainian, Russian, Soviet, Capitalist, Socialist, or with a number of other terms), and it was not clear which party represented which interests and how. To make matters more complicated, whereas many post-Soviet states organized themselves around ethnic or national identities, the heavy manipulation of the Ukrainian population during the Soviet years made this impossible. As political scientists Makeyev and Oksamytna point out, "Ukraine's social and cultural heterogeneity is the result of the capricious and free-ranging play of historical circumstances" and has had an enormous impact on the politics and society of the country.⁵ The combination of the country's uncertain transition, poor political representation, and dramatic economic upheaval created the conditions for collective action and social uprising.

The first major manifestation of this accumulated tension came in 2004 with the Orange Revolution. By 2004 the economic and political transformations were, at least on the surface, largely complete. The majority of the privatization had come to pass, and most of the laws designed to ease the country into its new systems had been implemented, with many having even expired. Along with the economic and political

³ Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 115.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁵ Serhiy Makeyev and Svitlana Oksamytna, "Problems of Internal Political Geography: The Ukrainian Example," in *The Political Analysis of Postcommunism: Understanding Postcommunist Ukraine*, ed. Volodymyr Polokhalo (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 205.

stabilization came the stabilization of corruption. When the 2004 presidential election occurred, however, international observers recognized and strongly criticized this corruption. Frustration and discontent welled up, and the second-place candidate Viktor Yushchenko organized a political uprising with the help of his political allies and the disenfranchised public. This largely peaceful movement was dubbed “the Orange Revolution,” and in the end, the fraudulently elected candidate, Viktor Yanukovych, was driven from power and a new regime put in place.

Unfortunately, this new government, though ambitious in its declarations, was ultimately unable to placate the public and solve the structural issues that plagued the country. During the next presidential election in Ukraine in 2010, voters ejected Yushchenko’s administration from office and elected the formerly-deposed Yanukovych, along with his allies, to replace it. Yanukovych’s term was far from uneventful, however, and after another popular uprising in late 2013 and early 2014, he was driven from office a second time. Dubbed by many as the Euromaidan Revolution, this series of protests led to considerable change in the country. Notably, during this period, protests drove Yanukovych from power, Russia annexed Crimea, and a number of oppositional groups arose in the east of the country to counter the protesters in the west and to fight for closer ties with Russia.

The Euromaidan Revolution

The protests of 2014 came as a surprise to nearly everyone, pro-government parties and dissenters alike. Indeed, according to Ukraine expert Tetyana Bohdanova, “Only five months earlier, the leading opposition parties—including the All-Ukrainian Union ‘Fatherland’ (‘Batkivshchyna’), the All-Ukrainian Union ‘Freedom’ (‘Svoboda’) and Klitschko’s Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR)—had attempted to organize a series of regional protests against the Yanukovych government.”⁶ Despite a strong push from anti-government groups, these efforts were defeated decisively. The boldly named “Rise Up, Ukraine!” aimed to gather as many as 100,000 participants, but failing to incite the outrage seen in 2004 during the Orange Revolution, the rallies proved ineffectual, drawing only 20,000–30,000 supporters in opposition strongholds and even smaller numbers across the rest of Ukraine. In the end, they failed to pressure the government into making any significant changes.⁷ The reasons these attempts fell short are still debated among political scientists, but it is commonly agreed that these efforts lacked an effective catalyst to compel citizens to take to the streets with their frustrations.

According to most academic writing on the Euromaidan Revolution, the catalyst that finally drove disgruntled citizens to the street was combined frustration with the poor economic state of the country and the continued corruption of the government. Yanukovych’s regime abandoned its economic and political reforms shortly after gaining power, choosing instead to focus on amassing personal wealth. One of the major political changes they did push through, however, was the removal of the 2004 political reforms produced from the Orange Revolution and the rollback of the constitution to its pre-2004 form. Most of the politicians appointed between 2004 and 2010 were also replaced. While many point to the sudden reversal of the Yanukovych’s policy on the European Union, particularly his administration’s refusal to sign a planned Association Agreement with the EU, “popular dissatisfaction with the corrupt regime had been mounting for years, and the sudden diplomatic turn from Europe to Russia was simply the last straw.”⁸

⁶ Tetyana Bohdanova, “Unexpected Revolution: the Role of Social Media in Ukraine’s Euromaidan Uprising,” *European View* (Jun 2014): 134, doi:10.1007/s12290-014-0296-4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Serhy Yekelchuk, *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 102.

In retrospect, given the political and social conditions of the time, the sudden popular uprising appears to have been almost inevitable. Despite this, even a few months before it occurred, almost nobody predicted the revolution and absolutely no one knew what to expect after it began.

One of the most shocking byproducts of the political upheaval was Russia's intense aggression against the protests and its seizure of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Despite the fact that the peninsula is primarily populated by ethnic Russians who voted in support of a popular referendum for the territory transfer, the process of the referendum was questionable. The day before the passage of legislation that initiated the referendum, sixty armed men wearing unmarked uniforms and carrying Russian military equipment seized parliament.⁹ Men with the same unmarked uniforms and Russian weaponry then began to appear across eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donbass Basin, where pro-Russian sentiment was strong.

Much of the frustration that led to protests on Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev was felt in the east of Ukraine as well, but popular conceptions of how these problems should have been handled varied greatly. While the western region clamored for further integration into the rest of Europe, citizens of the eastern oblasts preferred to build closer ties with Russia. When Russian-backed President Yanukovich was driven from power, many in the east were upset with the government that replaced him, expressing fears that their culture and language, which were inextricably linked to Russia, would be subsumed by aggressive Ukrainian nationalism. As a result, an anti-Maidan movement arose in opposition to the changes that occurred in the east. Although the new government quelled the unrest in many places, the provinces of Donetsk, home to Yanukovich, and Luhansk, remained contested and in the hand of Russian-backed rebels.

Before discussing the specifics of the revolution's collective action, it is important to note that, while drawing connections between the revolutions of 2004 and 2014 is tempting, the comparison is largely fruitless. According to Bohdanova: "While some observers have pointed out that Euromaidan began as Ukraine approached the ninth anniversary of the Orange Revolution, this was perhaps the only link to 2004. This time there were no election results to contest, no clear organisational structure behind the protesters and popularly recognised political leaders."¹⁰ On the whole, the two revolutions were compelled by different actors, unfolded along different lines, and, though they were founded on similar frustrations, were fought over different issues.

Methods of Collective Action

Naturally, the forms of collective action in the Euromaidan Revolution and their intensity varied greatly. Three dimensions in particular, however, deserve special attention as particularly prominent: the use of social media, utilized more strongly in the western and central oblasts; the application of violence and physical coercion, more prominent in the eastern and southern oblasts; and the reliance on historical allusions, prevalent in demonstrations across the country.

Continued improvements in communication technologies have increased the capacity of citizens to organize political demonstrations throughout human history. While the Euromaidan Revolution and the Orange Revolution differed significantly, according to Bohdanova, "perhaps the main difference between 2004 and 2013, however, was the availability of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), which activists used for organising and sustaining Euromaidan."¹¹ Across Ukraine, the Internet and specifically social media usage was higher in 2014 than in 2004, and participants in the Euromaidan demonstrations took advantage of this expanded audience and increase in

⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰ Bohdanova, "Unexpected Revolution," 134.

¹¹ Ibid., 134.

tools. Indeed, for Ukrainian social media, the 2014 revolution was a record-setting affair. “Euromaidan’s newly established Facebook page set a record in Ukraine by having attracted more than 76,000 followers in just 8 days, and reaching more than 200,000 followers within the first 10 weeks of the protests.”¹² However, this successful mobilization cannot be attributed to social media alone.

Traditional media, utilizing new ICTs, played a significant role in amplifying the online presence of protesters. While it was then a common practice for media outlets to self-censor and follow government orders to refrain from reporting on certain events, these conventions were abandoned as the revolution unfolded, and reports of the protest were common both within Ukraine and internationally. *Ukrainska Pravda* served as one of the most-used sites for updates and analysis on Euromaidan, while *Radio Svoboda*, *Hromadske.TV*, and several other outlets live-streamed large segments of the protests.¹³ This reporting further allowed citizens not present in the capital city of Kiev to closely track the progress of events and at the outset encouraged many to examine the protests more closely, often driving traffic to the protest’s social media page as a result.

Though social media strategies were employed by pro-Russian demonstrators in the east, their use was much more pronounced in the demonstrations in Kiev and in the west. Pro-EU activists employed social media strategies for most aspects of organizing. For instance, to generate foreign press coverage of the protests, participants organized “‘Twitter storms,’ the use of a single hashtag by large numbers of Twitter users in a short timeframe in order to make that hashtag trend globally on Twitter and thereby draw attention to events,” and crowdsourced English-language translations of Ukrainian and Russian websites and reports, thus making that information available to Western observers. Protesters also used ICTs to provide legal support to other participants, creating the initiative *Euromaydan SOS*, which “filled the continuous need for legal assistance and accumulated information about victims of government repression.”¹⁴ According to the group’s website, which is published in Ukrainian, Russian, and English: “the main purpose of Initiative group *Euromaydan SOS* is to provide operative and legal assistance to Euromaidan victims not only in Kyiv, but also in [other] Ukrainian regions. The Initiative group collects and analyzes information to protect peaceful protesters and to provide temporary assessments of the situation.”¹⁵ This initiative spurred a number of other efforts to organize and catalogue information online. “Following *Euromaidan SOS*, a number of other pages and websites have been set up to track the detained, find those [who have] gone missing during the protests, or offer legal advice.”¹⁶ In addition to legal aid, ICTs were used to organize medical brigades which evolved over the course of the protests and saved lives on both sides of the conflicts.

The use of ICTs was eventually self-propelling, as seen through the creation of the *IT Tent*, “a physical tent originally set up to offer free Internet access and computer equipment to protesters, which later evolved into a space where technology specialists met and collaborated with professional activists on a number of ICT-enabled social projects.”¹⁷ Thus, a virtuous loop was created in which the protesters used technology to organize and call for support, which in turn allowed them to gather more technologically-savvy supporters who then used their own knowledge and equipment to help the movement more effectively organize.

ICTs provided enormous benefits to protesters. Thanks to the widespread availability of the technology, the cost of communicating and organizing was dramatically reduced compared to those during the Orange Revolution, and

¹² *Ibid.*, 136.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁵ As noted on <http://euromaidansos.org/en/who-we-are>.

¹⁶ Bohdanova, “Unexpected Revolution,” 137–138.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

underrepresented groups were better able to participate in the movement. To be sure, social media alone is not sufficient to drive a protest. In fact, “when it comes to protests, online social networks mobilise people in the same way that offline social networks do: users are most motivated to join when someone from their own circle of friends decides to participate.”¹⁸ As such, the existence of strong offline social circles was a requirement for the movement’s success. When the first protesters began to emerge during the Euromaidan protests, their friends and family were the first to hear. Thanks to social media, everyone in Ukraine was able to inform those close to them of their intentions and motivations. This personal connection led to a greater turnout than the previous opposition efforts to mobilize less than half a year earlier.

Whereas innovative usage of ICTs was a major hallmark of the western protests, eastern efforts were marred by more physical and violent tactics. Fearing a crackdown from the new pro-Western government after the ousting of Yanukovich, pro-Russian protesters in the east took up arms to defend themselves. They began by seizing key government buildings and driving the politicians from power, replacing them at gunpoint with their own supporters. Then, using Russian-supplied weaponry and with the help of Russian “volunteers,” the protesters began to set up roadblocks, organize militias, and enforce newly instituted laws. In one of the most dramatic displays of aggression, Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) was shot down, killing all 283 passengers and fifteen crew members on board.¹⁹ Though Russia and protesters in the east contest its findings, a Joint Investigation Team with members from Denmark, Belgium, Ukraine, Australia, and Malaysia found that the aircraft was shot down with a Russian missile that was transported across the border from the Russian Federation and was fired from rebel-controlled territory.²⁰

Protesters in eastern Ukraine employed such extreme means of collective organizing because they simply felt they had no choice. The uprising in the western half of the country was largely peaceful and succeeded in installing an administration that the eastern protesters largely opposed. Feeling disenfranchised and fearing for the future of their cultures, these protesters happily accepted Russian support in the form of money, equipment, personnel, information, and propaganda. As the movement grew, eastern protesters dug their heels in deeper. With the destruction of MH17, there was no turning back. The protesters were by that point labeled as terrorists and faced imprisonment if they were to lay down their arms. As such, their resistance continued, leading to the continued stalemate in Ukraine today.

While ICT use prevailed in the west and more aggressive tactics dominated the east, appeals to history were employed across the country. In his article “The Politics of Memory in Ukraine in 2014,” Political scientist Andriy Liubarets asserts, “Public appeals to history accompanied most political processes in 2014 and were always used for self-legitimization by both sides of the conflict.”²¹ The divergence in tactics came in which aspects of history were cited. Overall, the western protesters spoke about European and Ukrainian history, while the eastern protesters relied on references to the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire.

Though major cultural shifts did occur throughout Ukraine in the two decades following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the cultural divide between the east and west has largely persisted. “The historically conditioned ‘nationalization’ of the western part and ‘internationalization’ of the eastern part have been important, yet distinct, trends. They have formed mutually different ‘ways to feel, to think, and to act.’”²² These

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁹ “MH17 Missile ‘Came from Russia,’ Dutch-led Investigators Say,” *BBC News*, September 28, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37495067>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Liubarets, “The Politics of Memory,” 197.

²² Makeyev, “Problems of Internal Political Geography,” 206.

variations are shown through the ways in which each side of the country characterizes the other: “The Galicians of Western Ukraine see themselves as the only ‘real’ Ukrainians and look upon their compatriots of the Dnipro basin as denationalized ‘Little Russians.’ Ukrainians of Central and Eastern Ukraine view Galatians as ultra-nationalistic ‘Banderites,’ ‘Westerners,’ and in the East one often hears that even the Ukrainian language and national symbols are not ‘ours’ but ‘Galician’ and thus somehow ‘foreign.’”²³ This negative stereotyping has led to increased animosity and stoked fears that both sides want to wipe out the cultural presence of the other.

Despite these cultural divisions, prior to the Euromaidan Revolution support for Soviet imagery and history was rarely called into question. Even as recently as 2013, the Communist Party of Ukraine received 13% of the parliamentary election vote. At the time “passage of anti-Communist laws was not seen as a near-future possibility.”²⁴ With over a tenth of the country voting for the Communist Party two years prior to the revolution, it came as a great surprise to many when the newly installed post-revolution government began to legislate against Soviet imagery. The Law “On Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of Their Propaganda and Symbols,” passed by the Ukrainian parliament on April 9, 2015, “prohibited the use of Soviet symbols, monuments and street names, and made denial of the criminal nature of the Soviet and Nazi regimes a crime.”²⁵ This change came about mainly through the western protesters who backed the new government and largely opposed glorifying their country’s Soviet past in favor of emphasizing the country’s potential ties to the European Union. Many scholars agree that the “cultural and political changes brought to Ukrainian society by Euromaidan (including the emergence of Euromaidan commemorations) acted as decisive factors in changing the attitude towards the Soviet cultural legacy’s objects in Ukraine.”²⁶

The most dramatic manifestation of this opposition came in the destruction of physical monuments constructed during the Soviet Union. Of these, monuments to Lenin were the most common targets., with 504 being destroyed in 2014 alone, according to the Ukraine Institute of National Remembrance.²⁷ Despite this destruction, eastern support for continued memorialization of Soviet-era figures is prevalent in their evocation of figures, events, and folk tales commonly promoted by the Soviet government. Liubarets notes this point, writing that “the war in eastern Ukraine also influenced changes in the politics of memory in Ukraine. Pro-Russian separatists actively relied on the Soviet cultural legacy (especially the memory of World War II) for legitimization of their actions.”²⁸ Western protesters consistently appealed to positive images of the Soviet Union, framing all of the corruption, unrest, and discontentment experienced in the last twenty-five years against the ‘glory days’ of the Soviet Union.

Most scholars explain this divergence between the eastern and western protesters’ uses of historic allusions by citing history itself and the ethnic composition of Ukraine. As the territory of Ukraine passed between empires over the last 1,200 years, the western half most often belonged to Central European empires, while the eastern half of the country typically fell under control of the various forms of the Russian empire. This division only intensified during the Soviet Union, when dramatic death tolls and massive population resettlement programs heavily manipulated the ethnic distribution of the country and led the eastern half to be primarily populated by ethnic Russians.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, many of these ethnic Russians found their identities challenged. No longer Soviet citizens, many were conflicted as to whether they

²³ *Ibid.*, 206.

²⁴ Liubarets, “The Politics of Memory,” 197.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 197–198.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

should now identify as Russian or Ukrainian. In her article “Changing Fields, Changing Habituses,” political scientist Anastasiya Ryabchuk discusses this phenomenon, noting that in academic literature “very little is said about the symbolic (discursive or ideological) transformations in the context of structural changes.”²⁹ She goes on to note that “in post-socialist societies symbolic transformations accompany structural ones, causing a great deal of social suffering for the people who struggle to affirm their social positions in a changing society but are unable to construct a satisfactory life narrative.”³⁰ While many ethnic Ukrainians in the western Ukraine were able to easily transition into identifying as national Ukrainians instead of Soviet citizens, this was not so easy in the east and led to a much stronger identification with the country’s Soviet past among many individuals. This in turn led to the great schism of identification between the two primary groups of protesters, and heavily influenced how they employed historical allusions in their efforts. This is not to say, however, that this is simply a case of one culture subsuming another in the creation of a state. Anthropologist Anna Fournier argues quite the opposite, saying, “We may wish to view change in the region not as the gradual replacement of Soviet by Western modernity, but rather as a constant engagement between Western and Soviet modernities.”³¹ Rather than one culture replacing another, it is more useful to view these cultural clashes as the process of reconciling and repairing clashing values and identities.

Theories of Collective Action

In examining the different tools of collective action employed in the Euromaidan Revolution, it pays to examine the scholarly work which has been conducted on theories of collective action. By definition, collective action occurs within civil society and entirely outside of the framework of the government. Civil society cannot be defined by the government or the economy, but rather only by the nation and people within it. On this, political scientist Kothari argues that “as the State in effect withdraws from its responsibility and surrenders its autonomy, civil society in these lands is thrown on its own resources,” and collective action is needed to express political, social, or economic discontent.³²

Collective action generally occurs when traditional means of expressing political discontent, such as when elections fail, as they did in Ukraine in both 2004 and in 2014. The effects of the protests are different depending on which side of the country one examines. In the west, protesters used ICTs and sustained pressure to bring about changes in political power structures, policy, and the distribution of privilege. In the east, the opposing protesters employed more violent tactics in response to the changes in western Ukraine with the hope of forcing similar localized changes which conformed with their ideology. At the time of publishing, however, their efforts have stagnated into a ceasefire, while the western protesters succeeded in installing a new government into power.

The ideas of Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward expressed in *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* can be usefully applied to the case of Ukraine. In their book, Piven and Cloward lay out a comprehensive analysis of movements based on collective action that still holds relevance today, beginning by

²⁹ Anastasiya Ryabchuk, “Changing Fields, Changing Habituses: Symbolic Transformations in the Field of Public Service in Post-Soviet Ukraine,” in *Culture & Social Change*, ed. Brady Wagoner et al. (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2012), 277.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Anna Fournier, *Forging Rights in a New Democracy: Ukrainian Students between Freedom and Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 22.

³² Rajni Kothari, “Masses, Classes, and the State,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 21, no. 5 (Feb 1986): 211.

identifying the three dimensions of the transformation of consciousness and behavior that spur protest movements.³³ In Ukraine this was the loss of faith in the political system, the assertion of political rights of the exploited Ukrainian populace, and a belief, inspired in part from the Orange Revolution, that change was possible through protest. Some aspects of Piven and Cloward's arguments have become even more relevant today. For instance, they assert that even individual acts of defiance can be connected to collective action because the perpetrators of this defiance may view themselves as part of a larger cause. In Ukraine, this happened frequently as citizens took to social media to express their discontent.

The authors also highlight the differences between organized social movements and mass movements, stating that "formalized organizations do put forward articulated and agreed-upon social change goals, as suggested by these definitions, but such goals may not be apparent in mass uprisings (although others, including ourselves as observers and analysts, may well impute goals to uprisings)."³⁴ Though scholars have already dedicated reams of paper to explaining the reasons for the Euromaidan Revolution, such explanations remain contested because there was no formal organization of the revolution and thus no clear agreed-upon goals, as seen clearly through the clash of ideals of eastern and western protesters. According to Piven and Cloward's theories, this lack of formal structure actually aided the movement. They criticize resource mobilization theory as too reliant on current systems and bureaucracy, arguing instead that decentralized protest movements, like that of the Euromaidan Revolution, are better at disrupting social structures and achieving meaningful change. This fits with political scientist Rajni Kothari's argument that the transformation of the state cannot occur through traditional channels, but rather requires the fundamental transformation of civil society.³⁵ Piven and Cloward also note collective defiance as a key component of collective action. In Ukraine this was seen in myriad ways, from the initial occupation of Maidan Nezalezhnosti to the refusal of the media to conform to the government's demands and the violence that occurred in eastern Ukraine.

Though the specific causes of the Euromaidan Revolution are debated, the general consensus fits with Piven and Cloward's belief that collective action stems from a welling-up of dissatisfaction:

For a protest movement to arise out of these traumas of daily life, people have to perceive the deprivation and disorganization they experience as both wrong and subject to redress. The social arrangements that are ordinarily perceived as just and immutable must come to seem both unjust and mutable [...] at times when the dominant institutional arrangements of the society, as people understand them, are self-evidently not functioning.³⁶

More than twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, faith in the political system of Ukraine had not yet been restored, and continued examples of blatant corruption in government stoked discontent in Ukraine's citizens until the citizenry's collective patience finally broke. Thanks to the help of ICTs in the west of the country, aggressive tactics in the east, and the use of historical allusions in both areas, this discontent morphed into a revolution that changed the nature of Ukraine's politics and society forever.

³³ Piven, *Poor People's Movements*, 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵ Kothari, "Masses, Classes, and the State," 216.

³⁶ Piven, *Poor People's Movements*, 12.

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