

# **The Factors Behind Electoral Revolutions In The Postcommunist World**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an attempt to address the question why rigged elections lead to electoral revolutions only in some postcommunist countries. This regime transition took place in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, but not in other countries with a similar context. The main assumption of the research is that there is a set of factors that are responsible for this variation of outcomes. My approach in identifying these factors is twofold. First, I develop a theoretical framework based on three theories, related to the subject matter of electoral revolution phenomena: modernization, regime breakdown, and collective action theories. This framework suggests ten factors that make rigged elections in a given postcommunist country convert into an electoral revolution. Second, I conduct a comparative case study of presidential elections in Ukraine in 2004 and in Belarus in 2006 to test these factors. The elections in both countries were rigged, but consequent protests were successful only in Ukraine. Comparing the two countries shows that two theoretically derived factors appear not to be significant, while other eight are good antecedents of successful electoral revolutions in the postcommunist world.

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## Introduction

The fourth presidential election in the history of independent Ukraine was held in November 2004 in a highly charged political atmosphere. The incumbent president Leonid Kuchma had already served two terms in office and was unable to participate in the elections due to constitutional limits. Thus, the second round of electoral race was characterized by contestation between the Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich (explicitly supported by the outgoing president) and opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko. The official count declared the victory of Yanukovich by 3%, but differed considerably from exit poll results, which gave Yushchenko an almost 11% lead. Many Ukrainians began to participate in mass demonstrations on the day to follow the rigged elections. More than thirty days of protests, which by different estimates attracted hundreds of thousands up to one million individuals (Kuzio 2005), resulted in the re-run of the second round. It was held under intensified scrutiny of both local and international observers, and showed Yushchenko's victory over Yanukovich by 8%. Kuchma's illiberal regime was overthrown, as the opposition leader became the third president of independent Ukraine.

Even though details may vary, the general course of events presented above was rather similar to what happened after elections in Serbia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan in 2000, 2003, and 2005 respectively. Striking similarity of these cases allowed scholars to distinguish a separate phenomenon to describe them—an electoral revolution. However, people in many countries in the postcommunist region—where incumbents traditionally are more able to manipulate electoral outcomes in their favor (Bunce and Wolchik, *Bringing Down Dictators: The Diffusion of Democratic Change in Communist and Postcommunist Europe and Eurasia* 2007)—did not manage to overthrow their illiberal governments this way, even though they made courageous attempts to mobilize and protect their political choice. Moreover, in some states no protests followed fraudulent elections at all. Such variation of cases in the postcommunist region

suggests that there is a set of factors that determine whether rigged elections in a given country would lead to an electoral revolution. Identifying these factors is what this thesis is dedicated to.

Existing literature on electoral revolutions concentrates on various aspects of the phenomenon, e.g. why this type of transition is especially common among the postcommunist countries, the ‘diffusion’ of electoral revolutions, their long-term consequences, the role of international actors in electoral revolutions etc. However, as of now no coherent theoretical framework of the causes of electoral revolutions exists. My research is an attempt to address this gap. It would be unjust, however, to claim that no efforts to conceptualize the factors that contribute to the success of postcommunist electoral revolutions have been made. A number of scholars addressed the puzzle of variation of outcomes in the countries that seem similar, and they are unanimous in the verdict that the analysts failed to predicted these democratic breakthroughs. Approaches aimed to address this problem have been quite different, as I will show below.

D’Anieri (2006) seeks to explain the variation in outcomes of fraudulent elections with the role of elites in the electoral protests, building mainly on the protest theory. The pivotal actions of elites, he argues, determine whether mass protests grow larger until success is inevitable. The problem is that while elite’s role may be well accountable for the size of the protests, it does not explain why electoral fraud in some countries did not lead to any demonstrations altogether. Beissinger (2007) emphasizes the role of modularity, which refers to “the borrowing of mobilization frames, repertoires, or modes of contention across cases” (Beissinger 2007, 261). According to him, a remarkable thing about electoral revolutions that happened in the postcommunist region is that prior examples affected the likelihood of success in subsequent cases. Revolutionary modes of confrontation diffused through national borders and incited action where it otherwise would have not been likely. Since this approach alone does not explain why some countries were more successful in following prior examples, Beissinger proposes a

set of structural conditions that facilitate democratic electoral revolutions. Another attempt to identify and conceptualize a set of factors behind the success of electoral revolutions belongs to McFaul (2005). Using the method of similarity to assemble the list of commonalities that unite Serbian, Georgian, and Ukrainian cases, he proposes seven factors which arguably determine successful electoral revolutions. This set includes a semi-autocratic rather than fully autocratic regime; an unpopular incumbent; a united opposition; independent electoral-monitoring capabilities; enough independent media to inform citizens about the falsified vote; a political opposition capable of mobilizing large demonstrations to protests electoral fraud; and splits among the regime's coercive forces. However, the apparent problem with McFaul's study is that he selects the cases on the dependent variable, that is, the ones that have achieved the outcome of his interest. We cannot be sure that the factors he identified this way are strong antecedents of successful electoral revolutions, as unsuccessful cases could have featured these factors as well. Thus, McFaul's conclusions are not as robust as they could have been. Another study which must not be overlooked belongs to Bunce and Wolchik (2006a, 2006b), who have specifically highlighted the importance of diffusional dynamics and international donor support for electoral revolutions.

This thesis does not seek to neglect the importance of previous research, but rather to propose and provide preliminary empirical testing of a theoretically clear explanation of the phenomena of electoral revolutions, and simultaneously back up existing explanations with theoretical justification. Formulating a theoretically justified account for electoral revolutions is especially important, since, as Kuhn (2010) argues, those studies that sought to establish causal relationships were based on a small number of cases and provided a list of explanatory variables that lacked clarity on how various factors determine the occurrence and success of postelectoral protests.

The first chapter of the thesis is aimed to give a precise definition of the phenomenon of electoral revolutions, as scholars define it in different ways. The factors assumed to affect the likelihood of electoral revolutions are presented in the second chapter. Despite the peculiarity of this phenomenon, many of its aspects fall into the subject of existing theories in political science, such as theory of non-democratic regimes' breakdown, theories of collective action, and those of modernization. Studying these theories through the prism of electoral revolutions can suggest a set factors that explain why electoral revolutions happen in some countries but not in the others.

The third chapter is dedicated to scrutinizing two case studies of postcommunist countries: Belarus and Ukraine. These countries were selected for a number of reasons. The main point is to compare two cases—a positive and a negative—in order to spot the differences that would explain the variation of outcomes. There are certainly other successful examples of electoral revolutions besides Ukraine (Serbia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan), but they lack a clear negative counterpart. From this point of view, Ukraine and Belarus constitute a good pair of cases, as the two countries not only were similar in many respects, but also experienced obviously rigged presidential elections, which led, however, to different outcomes: unsuccessful postelectoral protests in one, and a full-scale electoral revolution in the other. Also, events in Belarus in 2006 have not attracted much scholarly attention, unlike the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, that has been scrutinized well, so this case study may be of additional value to the subject matter of regime change and stability in the postcommunist world.

Using comparative case study as one of the key scientific methods of the thesis, I limit myself to just two examples. Such a small number is definitely not enough to make strong claims, and I do not expect that my results would necessarily hold their robustness if tested against a greater number of cases. However, this method allows me to preliminary check theoretically derived factors, whereas further studies can use my findings to conduct a research based on more cases.

Also, I believe that a qualitative method in this thesis is preferable to a quantitative one. First, there is only a few empirical examples of electoral revolutions (according to the definition I use), so it is not possible to conduct a full statistical test and either prove or disprove significance of identified factors this way. Second, a comparative qualitative case study allows to trace how the protests unfolded, looking beyond simple variables and superficial indexes.

The main findings of the thesis are presented in the third chapter, where I explain how the differences between Ukraine and Belarus lead to different outcomes. Looking ahead, almost all theoretically derived factors appear to be meaningful explanatory variables of successful electoral revolutions (at least based on this pair of cases). The last part is dedicated to a short summary of the research and a conclusion.

## Chapter 1. Defining Electoral Revolutions

It seems rather difficult to provide an accurate definition of what a revolution is, as events claimed to be examples of this phenomena are numerous and diverse. Early studies tended to focus mainly on the ‘great revolutions’ of England (1640), France (1789), Russia (1917), and China (1949) (Goldstone 2001, 140), but the scope of scholarly attention has quickly expanded. Now, the list of events regarded as revolutionary includes hundreds of cases (Tilly 1993), from proletarian revolutions and military coups to violent and relatively peaceful regime transitions. Despite an apparent variety of these patterns, certain key features can be found in all of them: (a) effort to change an existing political regime; (b) broad formal and informal mass mobilization; and (c) bringing about change through non-institutional means, such as violence, protests, demonstrations, and strikes (Goldstone 2001, 142). In order to be called ‘revolution’ per se, postcommunist electoral protests must satisfy these requirements as well.

The term ‘electoral revolution’ is usually used to refer to events that happened in such postcommunist countries as Serbia in 2000 (Bulldozer Revolution), Georgia in 2003 (Rose Revolution), Ukraine in 2004 (Orange Revolution), and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (Tulip Revolution) (McFaul 2005, 5-6). Alternatively, these events sometimes are referred to as color (or colored) revolutions, as opposition often used a specific color as their symbol for easy identification. These cases followed a surprisingly similar scenario, although the size of the protest varied significantly across the countries.

A notable feature present in all electoral revolutions (and which the phenomenon itself owes its name to) is the fact that the political turning point is an election. In particular, illiberal incumbents manipulate the electoral outcome in their favor, which becomes the de facto reason for mass protests. Consequent revolutionary events follow a similar pattern and share a set of common traits: (a) the opposition deploys extralegal means to ensure that the formal rules of the political game (i.e. free and fair elections) are followed; (b) incumbents and challengers

claim to possess a sovereign authority over the same territory; (c) all of these revolutionary situations ended without the massive use of violence by either the state or the opposition; and (d) these electoral revolutions caused a significant boost in the consolidation of democracy in the respective countries (McFaul 2007, 50). A common definition of electoral revolutions seeks to include these traits and thus goes as follows: “attempts by opposition leaders and citizens to use elections, sometimes in combination with political protests, to defeat illiberal incumbents or their anointed successors; to bring liberal oppositions to power; and to shift their regimes in a decidedly more democratic direction” (Bunce and Wolchik 2006b, 284). However, some points in the definition above need clarification and rectification.

First, political protest is an inherent feature of all electoral revolutions, so its combination with elections is not optional but essential. Second, even though the consequent regime shift in a more democratic direction is an important feature of electoral revolutions, it does not need to be maintained over a prolonged period of time for a transition to be regarded as electoral revolution. Some scholars argued that, for example, it is not clear whether events in Kyrgyzstan in 2003 can be called an electoral revolution, because their impact on the democratic prospective of the country was unclear (Radnitz 2006). However, even though not all countries enjoyed long lasting results (e.g. Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan), there is no reason to exclude their cases from the list of successful electoral revolutions. The use of the word ‘revolution’ is not meant to imply long-term consequences of these events (Tucker 2007, 536). But having brought about at least temporal change in the state’s democratic performance, they satisfy the requirements of the definition of a political revolution outlined above. The fact of successful overthrowing of the current non-democratic regime by anti-regime forces in such cases is present, and consequent fallbacks to authoritarianism could have happened due to the reasons not connected to the electoral revolution itself (for instance, imperfections of institutions, underdeveloped political culture, and structural economic challenges).

Finally, the definition of electoral revolution above seems to include even attempts to defeat illiberal incumbents, irrespective of their outcome. This approach seems rather vague, so I find it useful to separate between an unsuccessful attempt, and a successful case of electoral revolution. Empirically, two stages of mass protests against electoral fraud exist: (1) when the people go out to the streets to defend the political choice they made; and (2) when the incumbent is actually overthrown as a result of the popular protests. In my understanding, only the case that successfully passed both stages can be regarded as an electoral revolution. If the protests, for any reason, discontinue during the first stage, such case can be referred to as an unsuccessful postelectoral protest. For instance, Armenian opposition demonstrations of 150,000 people following a stolen election in 1996 did not manage to overthrow the government (Way 2005a, 261), and thus cannot be recognized as an electoral revolution.

A slightly modified operational definition I am going to use in this paper thus goes as follows: an electoral revolution is a successful attempt by opposition and citizens to use elections in combination with political protests to defeat fraudulent incumbents (or their anointed successors) and shift their regimes in a more democratic direction.

## Chapter 2. Building the Theoretical Framework

It is sometimes argued that the states of the postcommunist region were similar in many respects in the late 1980s through the early 1990s, that is, the period when they abandoned communism as an official doctrine and started large-scale transformations. However, the region is obviously far from being homogenous. The differences between the countries come from both structural legacies at the outset of transitions and the variation in their process of postcommunist transformation itself. Political development of the last decades has produced a variety of outcomes in the region, from highly authoritarian regimes in Belarus and Middle Asia to relatively successful consolidated democracies in Central Europe (Pop-Eleches 2007, 908). Electoral revolutions as a means of democratization played an important role in this political development. Countries that did not emerge as full-scale democracies in the early 1990s and have not experienced dramatic electoral shifts have generally performed worse in terms of democratic consolidation than the ones that went through successful post-electoral breakdowns (Bunce and Wolchik 2006a, 6). Having experienced an electoral revolution, Kyrgyzstan seems to be an ‘island of democracy’ surrounded by dictatorships of other Central Asian countries<sup>1</sup>. Just as various regime trajectories in the postcommunist region suggest that there are certain factors that cause the differences in democratic performance, there have to be factors that are responsible for electoral revolutions as well. Differences in these factors determine why electoral transformations have happened in otherwise similar countries: Ukraine, but not in Russia or Belarus; in Georgia, but not in Armenia or Azerbaijan; in Kyrgyzstan, but not in Tajikistan or Uzbekistan.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Partly Free’ Kyrgyzstan received a score of 5 in the Freedom in the World 2014 index, while the average score of neighboring ‘Not Free’ Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan is 6.4 (1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating)

No existing single theory can explain why rigged elections lead to regime overthrow, so a framework based on multiple theories needs to be created in order to theoretically identify the factors that presumably influence the likelihood of an electoral revolution. This phenomenon is complex, and different theories can explain its different aspects. First, electoral revolutions are examples of collective action. Therefore, theories dealing with collective action problems can suggest some factors that cause electoral fraud to convert into mass mobilization. Second, electoral revolutions by definition are examples of regime breakdown, in particular breakdown of non-democratic regimes. Thus, various theories that identify the conditions under which authoritarian regimes are likely to fall can contribute to explaining the causes of successful electoral revolutions. Third, some light on the causes of the phenomenon can be shed by the modernization theory, which seeks to explain political transformations through the prism of economic development. From this point of view, certain economic factors may be responsible for electoral transformations.

There are obviously more than three theories that can be used to explain the phenomenon of electoral revolutions. The list above is not exhaustive, but I see these three theories as being the most closely related to the subject matter of electoral revolutions. Examples of alternative theories may include social movement, revolutionary, agenda-setting, and diffusion theories, to name a few. While they are definitely related to postelectoral protests, I believe that the factors they would produce are identical to those that the theories I actually used suggested. Social movement theories, for instance, are highly complex and ramified, but on the general level go in line with the collective action theory in regards to successful postelectoral protests. Also, there are many directions within the school of social movements, so they can deliver rather inconsistent explanatory factors, if studied in detail. An obvious factor behind successful electoral revolutions is the role of the media. This factor can be explained with agenda-setting theory, which emphasizes media's "ability to influence the salience of topics on the public

agenda” (McCombs and Reynolds 2002, 1). But the same factor can also be derived from the collective action theory, as presented in one of the next sections. In the same way, theories dealing with the role of international actors in the process of regime change would not add significantly more to what is already suggested by regime breakdown theory: external actors can impact regime transition in a number of ways. The bottom line is that covering all other theories which are in one way or another related to the phenomenon of electoral revolutions exceeds the scope of this thesis. It seems both unreasonable, as they would simply suggest the factors that can be derived from other theories, and implausible due to the lack of time and space. Also, my point is not to get into over overspecific details of narrow theories, but use general paradigms to build the framework.

Finally, it should be noted that the three theories I use are not completely isolated from each other as well. Just as the subjects of different theories may overlap, the factors suggested by them may well be similar or even identical. If a factor turns out to be supported by multiple theories (including the ones outline above), this fact additionally increases our certainty that it is likely to be a strong explanatory variable of successful electoral revolutions.

### ***2.1. Modernization Theory***

The first theory that can be applied to the phenomena of electoral revolutions and provide some explanation as to why some countries succeed in such democratic transitions while other do not is modernization theory. Electoral protests in the postcommunist world explicitly sought to overthrow illiberal incumbents and bring about more democratic regimes. This feature allows to study the phenomena through the prism of modernization theory, as it aims to identify the prerequisites of democratization of authoritarian states.

Strictly speaking, modernization theory is so broad that it can barely be called a theory per se. Rather, it is a paradigm, or a family of theories that unites most economic explanations to democratization. It was first introduced by economic historians, who stated that countries in

Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century were primitive versions of developed Western societies. They were expected to eventually develop and become mature nations with small agricultural sector, large service and industrial sectors, and big share of urban population (Clark 2008).

These ideas were introduced to political science by Lipset. As he puts it, “all the various aspects of economic development—industrialization, urbanization, wealth and education—are so closely interrelated as to form one major factor which has the political correlate of democracy” (Lipset 1963, 41). Classic modernization theory claims that societies are more likely to become democratic and stay democratic as they develop economically. Lipset and his adherents argue that as societies move from the traditional state to being more modern, they tend to change to more ‘mature’ types of government as well. Dictatorship may be an appropriate and sustainable form of government in traditional, poor, and ill-developed societies, but as a country develops and its social structure becomes more sophisticated, it can no longer be run in an authoritarian command way. Changes in labor and manufacturing processes lead to active participation of new groups in political life and development of civil society. For these reasons, dictatorial regimes tend to collapse and transit to democracies (Przeworski, et al. 2000, 88).

The debate on regime transitions in the postcommunist world has been dominated by approaches that presuppose convergence of postcommunist countries with Western Europe, rather than divergence of existing differences. Such teleological view of political transformations through the prism of social and economic changes (e.g. liberal market economy, civil culture) shows a strong connection with assumptions of the modernization theory (Blokker 2005, 504). The classic convergence hypothesis promised a relatively fast development of the postcommunist countries according to the Western example, but obviously failed to provide an explanation for the variation of political outcomes in the region. However, this fact does not necessarily undermine the whole modernization paradigm, but rather signals

a need for establishing a more precise causal explanation and developing a more sophisticated framework. For the purposes of this work, there is no need in examining the whole variety of models and explanations based on the paradigm. Ultimately, general political tendencies of the postcommunist region do go in accord with the modernization theory: those countries that have relatively succeeded in developing economically (Balkans, Central and East-Central Europe) have also performed relatively well in terms of democratic consolidation.

I identify two main factors that explain successful electoral revolutions from the point of view of modernization theory. First, citizens of a country with favorable structural socio-economic conditions (which should not be confused with short-run economic performance of a specific government, considered by regime breakdown theory) are more likely to engage in postelectoral protests than the citizens of less developed states. The notion of structural conditions should be explained: it stands for relatively high level of urbanization and economic development, a high rate of educated people, developed civil society etc., as predicted by Lipset. For the purposes of this thesis, such variables are represented by the factor of the level of socio-economic development, which can be estimated using such indexes as the Human Development index, corruption level, urban population share, gross national income per capita (purchasing power parity adjusted), life expectancy, and public spending on education.

The second factor that is important to consider is the degree of market liberalization and privatization. Countries that have managed to build relatively free market economies and privatized their state enterprises have consequently experienced the emergence of new business elites. These groups are expected to defend their economic interest in the first place, and, if need be, oppose respective authoritarian governments. The ways business elites can undermine the rule of an illiberal incumbent include funding the opposition, investing into NGOs, and directly participating in the political game.

In sum, modernization theory can suggest two factors that might explain why postelectoral protests happen and succeed in some states of the region but not in the others. The first factor is the level of socio-economic development: I expect that the more developed a country is, the more likely it is to experience an electoral revolution as a result of voting fraud. The second factor is degree of privatization and market liberalization. Business elites capable of opposing political regimes in order to defend their interests are expected to be found in the countries that have relatively free economic conditions and privately owned enterprises.

## ***2.2. Regime Breakdown Theory***

An important feature of electoral revolutions is that they are successful attempts to overthrow a manipulative (i.e. non-democratic) government and establish a new regime. Thus, the existing theoretical framework on the breakdown of authoritarian governments can be applied to electoral revolutions. The literature on regimes' breakdown is broad and versatile. There is a plenty of separate studies on the subject, each focusing on a different aspect of authoritarian regimes' transitions. Considering all of them in order to build a complete and complex theoretical framework would obviously exceed the scope and the limit of this thesis. Thus, I am going to concentrate on general patterns and causal explanations and leave out overspecific details.

It should also be noted that theories of breakdown of authoritarian regimes constitute a theoretical branch in political science separate from the family of democratization theories (one of which is already mentioned modernization theory). Even though their subjects may overlap, theories of non-democratic regimes' breakdown are only partially related to democratization theories. The former tend to focus on reasons why concrete governments fall, and usually do not consider what kinds of regimes emerge afterwards.

Many studies on transitions have been made, but few generalizing explanations have been able to empirically hold their robustness across a range of many different cases. The reason for that,

as Remmer argues, is that variations within the forms of authoritarianism produce different political outcomes (Remmer 1986, 64-68). In fact, various kinds of authoritarianism can differ from each other just as much as they differ from democracy (Geddes 1999, 6). Dissimilarities in nature, structure, and behavior of authoritarian regimes have important systematic implications on the causes and the process of their fall. From this point of view, a theoretical framework which seeks to explain the causes of non-democratic regimes' breakdown should be based on various types of authoritarianism.

There are different approaches to classifying authoritarian regimes, which can use such factors as the peculiarities of decision-making process, regime's relation with the opposition and the masses, an actor who de facto forms the executive branch etc. However, not all typologies are relevant for the postcommunist world; many types, e.g. military dictatorship, are virtually absent here. Therefore, only those kinds of authoritarianism that can be found in the region should be taken into account and included into the framework. I will consider two theoretical types: personal and neopatrimonial dictatorships.

The former one is a diverse type of non-democratic systems, the distinguishing character of which is that the individual leader is the single source of authority, and that power depends on access to, closeness to, and support from the leader (Huntington 1991). The leader dominates the government, the military, and the ruling party (as long as it exists). During and after a seizure of power, a dictator usually surrounds himself with a personalist clique, often formed from a network of friends, relatives, and allies. Some factions may form around potential rivals to the leader, but because so much power is concentrated in the hands of one individual, he generally controls the coalition-building agenda, distributing rewards to promote loyalty. Both the clique and rival faction continue to cooperate as long as they have an access to the benefits distribution, which makes the system very stable (Geddes 1999, 17-18). Belarus under Lukashenka is an example of this type of authoritarianism (Matsuzato 2004, Bennett 2011).

Given such nature of personal dictatorships, they tend to be one of the most long-lasting types of authoritarianism. Aside from the death of the dictator and foreign intervention, the only threat to the stability of the regime can come from the members of the elite (Geddes 1999). However, their interests normally coincide with the interests of the incumbent, as their well-being and very life directly depends on his power. The only condition that may thus lead to regime's breakdown from the above is when the elites have a strong incentive to defect the ruler. The strength of the opposition appears to be a meaningful factor for predicting a regime's fall from this point of view. If regime's competitors seem strong enough to be able to successfully eliminate the dictator, some members of the clique may decide to support the opposition and engage in a risky coup, for example in exchange for more benefits under the new regime.

The second type—neopatrimonial dictatorships—is characterized by a chief executive's maintenance of state authority through an extensive network of personal patronage, rather than through ideology or impersonal law (Snyder 1992, 379). The phenomenon of neopatrimonialism emerged as a fusion of modern institutions and patrimonialism—traditional form of authority and source of legitimacy (Pitcher, Moran and Johnston 2009, 126). Neopatrimonialism is particularly common in Central Asia, e.g. Tajikistan under Rahmon can serve as an example of regime with a strong neopatrimonial character (Nourzhanov 2005, Dagiev 2013).

Neopatrimonial authoritarianism largely overlaps with personal dictatorship, so it is important to highlight some distinctive traits of the former concept. First, the fact that a political leader relies on matters other than simply legal-rational does not make him a neopatrimonial ruler. Ukraine under Kuchma was surely not a pure personal dictatorship, but resembled this type of authoritarianism much more than a classic neopatrimonial regime. For that matter, as Roth argues, even American presidents in order to be effective cannot rely merely on his constitutional powers, but also build their own apparatus using personal relations, ties, and

loyalty (Roth 1968, 198). This certainly does not make the United States a neopatrimonial regime. Neopatrimonialism is characterized by the dominance of patronage networks in politics, with modern institutional frameworks being embedded into them. This feature is not necessarily present in personal dictatorships.

Two other distinctive features of neopatrimonialism are clientelism and political legitimization through the illegitimate use of state resources (Ishikawa 2008). The rulers of neopatrimonial regimes derive their authority from the provision of personal benefits to the clients. Within the government, personal benefits can take the form of jobs, control over monopolistic rents, and the possibility to create their own clientelist networks. At the lower levels, the benefits may exist in the form of public resources distributed through licenses, contracts, projects etc. (Bratton and Van de Walle 1994, 458). Finally, neopatrimonial leaders hardly distinguish between the public and private treasuries, arbitrarily using the state budget for their own political needs. Therefore, neopatrimonial states cannot develop effectively; as constant kleptocracy of state resources leads to chronic financial crises and reduced prospects for investments and sustainable economic growth (Ishikawa 2008, 10).

Snyder (1992) provides an excellent framework for explaining the peculiarities of transitions from neopatrimonial authoritarianism. He identifies three critical relationships that affect the mode and the likelihood of breakdown: the relationship of the ruler to the military; the relationship of the ruler to domestic elites; and the relationship of domestic actors to foreign powers.

The first factor affecting the transition is the degree to which the ruler has undermined the autonomy of the armed forces: the less autonomous is the military, the more stable is the regime. “The control of the armed forces over the supply of their *matériel*, the ability of officers to predict their career paths and to communicate discontent with one another, the degree to which the officer corps is divided along ethnic lines, and the dictator’s capacity to purge elements of

the armed forces whose loyalty he questions” are indicators that can help assess the degree of military autonomy (Snyder 1992, 380-382). The second factor is the degree to which the dictator excludes elites from political and economic perks. Neopatrimonial regimes that effectively coopt elite factions can inhibit the growth of both radical and moderate opposition. Such regimes, consequently, tend to be relatively stable and long-lived. On the other hand, neopatrimonial dictatorships that exclude elites from patronage or limit it to a narrow clique encourage growth and discontent of the opposition, and are rather unstable (Snyder 1992, 383-384). Finally, the third factor is the role of foreign powers. The first way of influencing domestic political game and affecting the likelihood of breakdown is to put pressure on the regime. When foreign actors have limited leverage over the dictator, their influence is restricted to supporting the opposition. The degree to which they support regime’s competitors can strongly affect its surviving capacity (Snyder 1992, 384-385).

Personal rulership and neopatrimonial dictatorship are similar regime types and are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as some countries may have features of both simultaneously. Moreover, many authoritarian regimes go through changes that can affect their classification (Geddes 1999, 9). Thus, it is sometimes impossible to identify a regime as fitting neatly into one theoretical clear-cut category (Huntington 1991, 581). However, the features of neopatrimonialism and personal rulership are widespread particularly in the postcommunist region (which is the main point of interest of my thesis), so the peculiarities of their transitions must be included into the model.

In addition to subtypes of authoritarianism, some scholars prefer extended political regime typologies, which feature more options than simple trichotomous variable (democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism). In particular, it is often argued that many regimes are hybrid, as they are neither democracies, nor full-scale autocracies. It is important to consider such regimes too, as, mixing authoritarian and democratic features, they can have different prospects

for breakdown than pure forms of authoritarianism. Moreover, hybrid regimes are also very common in the postcommunist world, where countries have not managed to establish well-functioning democracies. Levitsky and Way recognize, for example, Serbia under Slobodan Milošević and Ukraine under Leonid Kuchma (both countries experienced electoral revolutions during their rules) as examples of competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2002, 52). In general, hybrid regimes in the postcommunist region share such traits as continued dominance of old regime incumbents, weak civic society, weak rule of law, and lack of democratic history (Way 2005a, 231), but still have some kind of political competition.

Hybrid regimes also feature some peculiarities in regards to their transition. According to Diamond (2002), “the defining feature of competitive authoritarian regimes is significant parliamentary opposition” (Diamond 2002, 29). The feature that defines the very phenomenon of hybrid regimes can serve as a factor of classifying them and to a certain extent determining their future political trajectories. Way (2005a) identifies factors that undermine autocratic consolidation and facilitate regime competitiveness in the postcommunist region. First, elite contestation can contribute to a higher degree of political competition. The consolidation of authoritarianism is always endangered by elite disunity. Such organizations as “political parties, well-established patron-client relationships, or large quasi-familial networks” have been used to reduce elite defection, while “the absence or weakness if these increases opportunism among elites, who are more likely to change sides when they perceive the incumbent to be vulnerable” (Way 2005a, 236). Second, authoritarian regimes’ surviving capacity is affected by international pressure to democratize, as incumbents that enjoy the absence of such pressure are more likely to undertake antidemocratic measure to stay in power. The third source of regime competitiveness, according to Way, is the strength of a national identity, which can be framed in anti-incumbent terms. Groups that are able to frame regime opposition in national

terms that have broad resonance in the society normally have an easier time mobilizing popular support.

Finally, a factor that is recognized to affect the likelihood of all authoritarian regimes' breakdown is economic performance. Dix (1982) acknowledges that poor economic performance is not by itself a sufficient condition for breakdown, but it does increase its likelihood. After reviewing existing research on regime change (in particular, by O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead) Bermeo comes to a conclusion that "authoritarian regimes do not seem to collapse during periods of relative prosperity" (Bermeo 1990, 367). Haggard and Kaufman (1995) also emphasize the role of economic crisis in regime transitions. Geddes (1999) finds statistical evidence that all types of authoritarian regimes are more vulnerable during the times of economic decline. In other words, scholars seem unanimous in arguing that during economic declines any regime (democratic, any type of authoritarian, or hybrid) is more likely to fall. Inflation, unemployment, declines in rates of growth or personal income seem to have always been associated with unscheduled changes of government (Dix 1982). And dictatorships are no exception. Authoritarian governments may be insulated from the distress of ordinary citizens to some extent, but they still must deliver benefits to their own group of supporters in order to survive in power (Geddes 1999, 4). Lack of support from ordinary citizens due to economic decline does not contribute to the longevity of authoritarian rules either.

Therefore, theories of regime breakdown suggest a number of factors that facilitate instability of dictatorships and can explain their fall. Summarizing all of the above, six factors can be identified. The first is elite disunity/defection: "there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence—direct or indirect—of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself" (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 19). The second factor is the strength of opposition. The third factor is autonomy of regime's coercive forces. Foreign influence, in forms of pressure on the dictator and support for the opposition, can also contribute to regime collapse. The fifth factor

is existence of national identity, different from the personal cult of the leader, which paves the way for relatively easy mobilization. Finally, the sixth factor is poor economic performance, which is argued to undermine stability of all types of political regimes.

### **2.3. Collective Action Theory**

Electoral revolution is an action taken together by a group of people whose goal is to achieve a certain common objective. Thus, this phenomenon falls into the subject of collective action theories, which can provide some explanation of why some countries were able to mobilize enough people to put pressure on illiberal regimes as a response to rigged elections (that is, to overcome the collective action problem), while others did not. The literature on collective action is broad and developed; examining it all exceeds the scope of this thesis. Thus, my goal is to identify the general factors that can explain overcoming general collective action problems, and link them to the subject matter of social movements, in particular, postelectoral protests.

The concept of collective action problem was introduced to political science by such scholars as Olson and Schelling. Further, such scholars as Chong and Kuran have applied the concept to study social movements and revolutions (Tucker 2007). In general, collective action problem characterizes a situation in which a group would benefit from certain cooperation, but the lack of individual incentives to participate in actions necessary to cooperate and achieve the common goal does not allow it to be attained. Social movements (which electoral revolutions are examples of) follow the same problem. The public goods sought by such movements require participation of a large number of citizens. When individuals are unable to coordinate their efforts to produce and enjoy a common good, the likelihood of a collective action taking place is decreased (Chong 1991). Such problem occurs due to high cost of participating in the action, uncertain benefit from cooperation, and a belief that likelihood of the group successfully attaining the goal is low. Therefore, solving a collective action problem for any movement depends on three factors: cost of participation, expected benefits of attaining the goal, and

perceived likelihood of success (Tucker 2007, 540). In order to apply collective action theory to electoral revolutions, these general factors need to be translated into the factors meaningful for the subject matter of electoral revolutions.

The common goal sought by protests following fraudulent elections is not only overthrowing the illiberal regime (as all citizens would benefit from getting rid of the government that is not restrained by the people), but also establishing a new democratic regime (which is hoped to promote rule of law, fight corruption, have transparent budget policies etc.). If the opposition is not united, if political competitors of the regime are not viewed by people as strong leaders and good rulers, the likelihood of solving the collective action is low. In other words, people do not want to risk and engage in political protests for the sake of weak and unpopular opposition.

The cost of participation in political demonstrations varies from one's mere loss of time, to an arrests, possible repressions (e.g. loss of job because of certain political preferences), imprisonment and even the loss of life. If the citizens are aware of the regime's violent and repressive character, they may find the cost of participation too high to engage in electoral protests. In turn, regimes that are less violent and do not usually use force against protestors are more vulnerable in that respect, as people in such regimes are more likely to take to the streets to defend their political choice. Thus, regime propensity to use violence against demonstrations can be taken as a cost of participation in collective action (postelectoral protest), affecting each individual's decision.

Finally, the perceived likelihood of success of the protests depends on the magnitude of electoral manipulations that the regime engaged in. If manipulations were marginal and citizens understand that even a re-run of elections under increased scrutiny would not change the results (i.e. the benefits of attaining the goal are uncertain), they obviously have little to no incentive to participate in a protest movement. But if the regime used major electoral fraud that is

suspected to have influenced the final outcome, the situation changes radically. Explicit large-scale manipulation helps people to solve collective action problem by raising the stakes of the game.

It is important to note that citizens in authoritarian regimes usually have no objective information on the extent of the fraud and the scope of existing mobilization (if it has already started). What affects their individual choice whether to engage or not is perceived likelihood of successful outcome of the protests. From this point of view, what matters is not only the real magnitude of fraud, but also the ability of mass media to expose and transfer this information to the people. Aiming to reach a large audience (including citizens from different regions) radio, television, and newspapers can be used to quickly transmit information and increase the scope of popular dissatisfaction with the regime. A successful outcome of postelectoral protests also depends on individuals' awareness of existing protests. Once anti-governmental mobilization has started, the regime is interested in putting the media under censorship, either completely ignoring the protests, or understating the number of participants. The role of independent media in an objective coverage of such events and bringing up-to-date information to the people is crucial as well. From this point of view, media sources need to be available to the opposition and accessible to the public.

The collective action premise of electoral revolutions has been studied relatively well, as some scholars have used it to explain the occurrence of postelectoral protests. Tucker (2007) applies collective action framework specifically to the question why people choose to go to the streets following electoral fraud. His argument is that strong grievances against the regime are not a sufficient condition for an illiberal regime to be overthrown, as the costs associated with participating in demonstrations are usually high, and the chances of success are very uncertain. Fraudulent election can change an individual's calculus whether to engage in mobilization, and therefore serve as a perfect moment for collective anti-governmental movement. Fearon (2011)

argues that fraudulent elections are likely to result in successful protests because exposure of massive manipulation serves as a public signal to the voters that the ruler infringes on their rights, which helps them overcome the coordination problem.

Kuhn (2010) uses the framework of collective action to explain the action of the opposition leaders during postelectoral protests. Drawing on the ‘global games’ approach to coordination games with imperfect information, he shows that “if each opposition leader through the election process learns individually about the incumbent’s popular support, they are able to coordinate their actions based on their beliefs about each other’s best response given their own belief and their knowledge about the distribution from which it accrued” (Kuhn 2010, 6). His study also points out to such factors as incumbent’s unpopularity, low costs and high benefits of protesting as factors that help opposition leaders to overcome coordination problems and contribute to successful outcome of the anti-government campaign. Ultimately, the level of incumbent’s popular support has direct implication on the magnitude of fraud: the less popular incumbent is, the more fraud is required to secure a needed elections result.

From all the theories and schools of social movement and collective action, relative deprivation theory appears to be the closest one to explaining electoral revolutions. Its basic idea is straightforward: people rebel in response to perceived injustice (Klandermans 1997, 202). Relative deprivation theory can be applied as a framework to studying electoral revolutions because perceived injustice is indeed one of their defining features. In particular, the starting point of each of these revolutionary breakdowns is rigged elections. Anti-governmental protests could have happened during regular times as well, but they were not able to grow large enough to overthrow the regime. Structural conditions during normal times and the times of elections are not likely to differ much, so apparently it is the sense of large-scale voting manipulation that has an effect on society similar to that of a red flag on a bull.

The degree of perceived injustice as a cause of collective action in the case of electoral revolutions is the magnitude of fraud. The more people feel that their vote has been stolen, the more deprived they tend to be. In cases of major manipulation, when people believe that a different political actors would come to power should the fraud be corrected, the likelihood of successful overcoming of the collective action problem increases dramatically. Therefore, using the magnitude of fraud as a factor accounting for size differences of electoral protests, as derived from the general collective action concept, goes in line with the relative deprivation theory as well.

In sum, the above presented theories of collective action point to the same set of factors that help the citizens overcome their coordination problems. This set includes four factors. First, the popularity of opposition, as opposed to that of the incumbent, represents the perceived benefit of achieving the common goal. The more popular and strong is the opposition, the more likely collective action problem is to be solved. The second factor is regime's propensity to use violence, which affects the possible cost of participation. The more dangerous participation is, the higher are the costs, and consequently the fewer people will be willing to engage in revolutionary events. The third factor is the magnitude of voting result manipulation. Elections that have been massively rigged are more likely to end up with popular protests, because they increase both citizens' sense of injustice and perceived benefit of attaining the goal. The fourth factor is opposition's access to popular media, which can expose fraud to a large audience. This factor is expected to help the people to be more informed and better coordinated, which would increase the scope of popular mobilization.

To make a preliminary summary, the theoretical framework presented above consists of three broad blocks: modernization, regime breakdown, and collective action theories. Each of these, arguably, can contribute to understanding the factors facilitating the likelihood of electoral revolutions. Some of the suggested explanatory factors appear similar, which increases our

certainty that these factors can be robust variables for explaining electoral revolutions in the postcommunist region. The factor of the opposition's strength (derived from the theories of regime breakdown) and the factor of opposition's level of support (derived from the collective action theories) are similar, so they can be merged into one single factor. In the same way, autonomous law-enforcing bodies are usually less violent towards citizens, whereas the ones that depend completely on the ruler tend to be used more against the demonstrations. Thus, the factors of regime's coercive forces' autonomy and its propensity to use violence can be merged into a single one as well.

Based on theoretical investigation, a list of ten factors related to electoral revolutions can be formed:

1. level of socio-economic development;
2. degree of privatization and market liberalization;
3. disunity/defection of the regime's elite;
4. strength and popularity of the opposition;
5. foreign influence;
6. strong national identity;
7. poor short-term economic performance of the regime;
8. regime's propensity to use violence;
9. magnitude of fraud;
10. access to independent mass media.

These factors can be grouped into several categories:

1. socio-economic conditions (level of socio-economic development, degree of privatization and market liberalization, regime's short-term economic performance);

2. regime's character (disunity/defection of regime's elites, propensity to use violence, strength and popularity of the opposition);
3. magnitude of fraud;
4. additional factors (access to media, national identity, foreign influence).

Some of the factors within a category may be proportional (e.g. socio-economic development) while the others inversely proportional (e.g. short-term economic performance) to the likelihood of successful electoral revolution, but they are still closely related to each other. The second category—regime's character—consists of the factors that define the nature of the illiberal regime. Magnitude of fraud at elections is defining feature of the very concept of electoral revolutions, so it forms a separate category. Finally, the last group unites additional factors that I expect to explain success of electoral revolutions as well.

The next step is to test these theoretical factors against the empirical examples: Ukraine and Belarus. As it was mentioned above, I selected two extreme cases with a similar independent variable (rigged elections), which produced different outcomes: electoral revolution and regime change in one, and unsuccessful protests in the other. In the chapter below, the two countries will be scrutinized according to these categories, in order to understand how the presence/absence of the ten factors influenced the prospects of an electoral revolution.

## Chapter 3. Case Studies

### ***3.1. 2004 Presidential Elections in Ukraine and the Orange Revolution***

One needs to start examining Ukraine's socio-economic conditions at the outset of the revolution with the Soviet Union breakdown in 1991, which had a strong impact on the country's consequent development. During the first years of independence, Ukraine went through a depressing economic and social situation, characterized by the breakup of integrated connections with fellow Soviet industrial partners, hyperinflation, and economic stagnation. Many small economic units and large-scale Soviet industries were privatized during the first decade of independence (Sutela 2012, 4), but state regulation and ownership dominated the economic environment longer than in many other postcommunist countries of East-Central Europe. A number of emerging business-elites (i.e. oligarchs) figured out how to exploit the distortions of the economic system, reaping enormous benefits from rent seeking (Åslund 2005, 328). Their economic activity was based on a simple formula of converting cheap energy and raw materials into metals and manufactured goods (Sutela 2012, 5).

In 2004, Ukraine was still far behind developed Western and even Central European states, even though the country's socio-economic conditions had certainly improved when compared to the crisis of 1990s. Some conventional indexes can provide an understanding of the status of Ukraine: urban population constituted 68% of the whole population<sup>2</sup>; public expenditure on education was equal to 5.3% of GDP; life expectancy at birth was equal to 68 years. According to the Human Development Index, Ukraine ranked 78 in the world (far below Central European countries and just above Peru and Kazakhstan) with a score of 0.766 in 2003 (United Nations Development Programme 2005). In 2004, Ukraine shared the 122<sup>nd</sup> place (out of 144 countries)

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<sup>2</sup> Here and further World Bank data is used, if not specified otherwise

with Bolivia, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan, and Niger, according to the Corruption Perception Index<sup>3</sup>. Finally, the country got a score of 53.7 in the Index of Economic Freedom<sup>4</sup>.

Speaking of regime's short-term economic performance, the Orange Revolution actually took place at the time of significant economic boost. Ukraine's economy finally started to grow during Viktor Yushchenko's cabinet service in 1999-2001, with the rate of 5.9% in 2000. For the last five years preceding the revolution, Ukraine's GDP has risen by an annual average of 9%. The country was the fastest growing economy in Europe in 2004, with the growth rate of 12.1%. This economic improvement was primarily driven by industry, notably by steel production, food processing, and machine building. It was also export-driven, as in 2004 exports surged by 42%. Gross investment in fixed assets increased by more than 30% in both 2003 and 2004. Agriculture made an impressive recovery as well. In 2004, Ukraine's GNI per capita based on purchasing power parity was equal to \$6,000. In sum, Ukraine enjoyed an extraordinary economic upswing when the Orange Revolution took place (Åslund 2005, 329).

Leonid Kuchma became the president of Ukraine in 1994, and was re-elected in 1999 to his second term. In regards to the character of the regime, Kuchma heavily relied on oligarchic support during his stay in power. In 2000, it was reported that 386 of 450 deputies in the parliament were founders of 3,954 businesses, controlling 25% of the country's import and 10% of the export. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, in exchange for access to state resources, oligarchs helped Kuchma to mobilize political support. One of such tools was mass media: oligarch-controlled television networks and newspapers (Way 2005b, 136). Two major news networks, which had about 50% of market share, were under control of the close to the president Oleksandr Zinchenko and Viktor Medvedchuk. Kuchma's son-in-law, Viktor Pinchuk, owned

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<sup>3</sup> Transparency International data

<sup>4</sup> Index of Economic Freedom data

three other big television channels, together representing another 15 to 25% of the news market. This allowed Kuchma to establish direct widespread censorship over the content of the news programs (Way 2005b, 132). Also, Kuchma's team used blackmail as a mechanism of state control to ensure key elites' loyalty (Darden 2001).

However, being a semi-autocratic president (Bunce, McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2010, 191), Kuchma never managed to rally all of Ukraine's economic and political elites behind his rule (McFaul 2005, 8). When Ukraine was on the verge of external default with minimal external reserves in the late 1990s (Åslund, *Why Has Ukraine Failed to Achieve Economic Growth?* 2000), local oligarchs, seeking to restore the country's creditworthiness and secure their possessions, "came together to promote Yushchenko, the only credible senior economic politician who had skillfully run the Central Bank for seven years, to the post of prime minister" (Åslund 2005). This fact demonstrates that they were capable of acting independently of Kuchma's will, caring solely about their financial interests. Also, Kuchma did not have a strong pro-presidential political party (which could serve as a means of elite subordination) and an attempt to create one in 2002 failed. Moreover, he did not rely on one single oligarchic clan (regional affiliations have played an important role in the relationship between Ukrainian business elites), but preferred to distribute access to economic and political resources to multiple competing groups (Bunce, McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2010, 237). In other words, the oligarchs and the members of the parliament, despite being heavily influenced by Kuchma, were not his puppets and enjoyed some degree of arbitrariness. As a result, they failed him in the most crucial moment.

Kuchma's reservoir of elite support was blurry and vague, and was based solely on short-term economic interest (Way 2005b, 136). But Yanukovych—Kuchma's tapped successor for the 2004 presidential elections—was the 'godfather' of one particular regional faction—Donetsk-based oligarchic clan, which included such individuals as Rinat Akhmetov (Ukraine's richest

man), Andriy Klyuyev, Borys Kolesnikov, and Yuriy Ivanyushchenko. As Hale notes, “some elites who had long supported Kuchma but had competed with Donetsk group for influence thus began to support Yushchenko [Yanukovych’s future opponent at the 2004 presidential elections], supplying him with resources that would prove critical to his victory” (Hale 2005, 151). Some of these oligarchs, like Petro Poroshenko, supported Yushchenko from the very beginning of his presidential campaign. Among the crucial resources that their business groups brought was media coverage: Poroshenko controlled a small opposition-oriented 5<sup>th</sup> Channel network; Andriy Derkach also openly supported Yushchenko by providing him with air time on ERA television and some radio channels (Kuzio, *From Kuchma to Yushchenko: Ukraine’s 2004 Presidential Elections and the Orange Revolution* 2005).

In regards to repressive character factor, Kuchma’s rule was never perceived as violent, especially compared to his counterparts in some other postcommunist countries, such as Russia, Belarus, and Central Asian states. The 2001 ‘Ukraine without Kuchma’ campaign brought the first serious clashes between the police and demonstrators. It was triggered by the infamous scandal with Georgiy Gongadze—a Ukrainian journalist of Georgian origin, who was kidnapped and brutally murdered in 2000—a scandal in which the president was reasonably believed to be involved (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 119). ‘Ukraine without Kuchma’ lasted four month and was non-violent up to its last day, when a few clashes between protesters and riot police happened, and dozens of individuals were injured. Around 300 protestors were charged at first, but most of them were released in a few days time. Nineteen active participants of the clashes were convicted and imprisoned. This was the most violent struggle between the regime and the people at that time, and was rather the exception, not the rule. Thus, such generally non-violent character of Kuchma’s regime was good for the prospects of popular mobilization.

Having provided some picture of Ukraine’s conditions at that time, let me now turn to the 2004 presidential election itself. The campaign was revolving mainly around the contestation

between two main candidates: then-Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych and the opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko. The former was both openly anointed as an heir by the incumbent president Kuchma (Kuzio, *From Kuchma to Yushchenko: Ukraine's 2004 Presidential Elections and the Orange Revolution 2005*, 30) and explicitly supported by Russia. Yushchenko, in turn, was positioned as a pro-Western candidate, supported by the U.S. and Western European countries. Yanukovych's electorate consisted mainly of the citizens from Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine, whereas Yushchenko enjoyed support from the people in the West and Center of the country.

Besides Yushchenko, the opposition that would later lead the Orange Revolution included such experienced and popular politicians as Yulia Tymoshenko, Oleksander Zinchenko, and Yuriy Lutsenko, to name but a few. The coalition also consisted of influential businessmen, including already mentioned Petro Poroshenko, Roman Bezsmertnyi (who later became Yushchenko's campaign chief), Yuriy Yekhanurov, and Anatoliy Kinakh. In addition to being numerous, members the opposition camp were united, and capable of negotiating and acting as a team. This fact sent a strong signal to the people and was very important for future mobilization. Tymoshenko agreed not to participate in the elections in Yushchenko's favor, and her whole bloc agreed to support his presidential campaign. Oleksander Moroz (Socialist Party) ran for president in the first round, but agreed to support Yushchenko in the second. Yushchenko's campaign staff also initiated contact with the police, intelligence, military, and security forces to lay the groundwork for future cooperation, should the regime try, as was widely expected, to manipulate the election results (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 122-125). The opposition's electoral campaign itself was also planned wisely. Polls showed that around 70% of Ukrainians would favor change as a course, and Yushchenko portrayed the election as a choice between a change, and continuation of Kuchma's status quo, represented by Yanukovych (Kuzio 2005, 30).

While Kuchma was unable to participate in the elections due to constitutional constraints, he seems to have done everything to ensure the victory of his ally Yanukovich. As Kuzio (2005) argues, the regime planned and prepared two options of securing the needed result: moderate manipulation and blatant electoral fraud. The first one was used in the first round of elections. The Central Election Commission lingered ten days before declaring the final results—the maximum term allowed by the law. During this time, they decreased Yushchenko's and increased Yanukovich's vote count. A slight Yushchenko's victory was 'permitted' to camouflage this and other fraud (Kuzio, *From Kuchma to Yushchenko: Ukraine's 2004 Presidential Elections and the Orange Revolution 2005*, 32): he received 39.9%, while the vote share of Yanukovich was 39.26%. No candidate managed to obtain the necessary half of the votes in the first round, so the second round of contestation between the two leaders was held. And this is where the regime fell to full-scale electoral fraud.

Bunce and Wolchik (2011, 121) conclude that the regime had well-elaborated plans to steal the 2004 elections. Yanukovich had planned to win at least by 3% in the second round, intending to use administrative resources to falsify the vote. Kuchma packed the Central Election Commission with his supporters. Way also presents evidence that local polling stations' workers were paid cash depending on how high Yanukovich's result in their station was: "every polling station received roughly US\$5,000 in the election's first round" (2005b, 136). Some were forced to comply with government directives out of harassment and fear of losing their jobs. After the first round of the election, fourteen district-level state officials were fired in areas where Yanukovich had done poorly (Way 2005b, 135). Individual voters were bribed and harassed as well. For instance, the regime pressured certain categories of citizens (e.g. in prisons, hospitals, and military bases) to support the candidacy of Yanukovich.

These are only a few ways in which, as the OSCE report concludes, Kuchma's regime "displayed a lack of will to conduct a genuine democratic election process" (OSCE/ODIHR

2004). Soon after the elections day, the Central Election Commission announced that Yanukovych obtained 49.42%, Yushchenko—46.69% of the votes. The NGO ‘Committee of Voters’ calculated that 2.8 million votes (around 9.3% of the total numbers of those who voted) has been falsified in Yanukovych’s favor (Kuzio, *From Kuchma to Yushchenko: Ukraine’s 2004 Presidential Elections and the Orange Revolution 2005*, 42). Way (2005b) estimates that authorities’ efforts resulted in no more than 10% vote theft. Given that it was a neck-and-neck competition, these numbers seem more than significant. The bottom line is that the manipulation directly influenced the elections results: had the fraud not been used, Yushchenko would have clearly won the second round and become the president.

The factor of explicit large-scale manipulation—one of the decisive features of the electoral revolution phenomena—was well present in Ukraine, which was a factor that helped people to overcome their collective action problems. They sensed that Yanukovych stole their choice and became a winner in an unfair manner, which has a lot to do with the feeling of deprivation. The stakes of the protests thus were clear and high: either people defend their choice, or the regime gets away with manipulation.

Anticipating the regime to steal the elections, many Ukrainian citizens ignored calculations of the Central Election Commission. Instead, they were more trustful to exit polls’ data, announced in the evening of the election day. (It is important that they did, in fact, have an access to this independent data.) The exit polls gave Yushchenko an 8% lead and differed dramatically from the official results, which triggered the feeling of injustice and deprivation. People started to gather on the Independence Square in Kyiv even before the official results of the second round were announced. Hundreds of thousands upwards to a million individuals responded to opposition leaders’ call to challenge election results (Kuzio, *From Kuchma to Yushchenko: Ukraine’s 2004 Presidential Elections and the Orange Revolution 2005*, 41).

Turning to additional factors that can explain success and failure of postcommunist electoral revolutions, existence of a strong national identity, different from the personal cult of the leader, was also an important factor behind the massive post-electoral protests in 2004. First, the cult of the president Kuchma never really existed. Second, the feeling of national affiliation of Ukrainians, especially in the Western and Central regions, contributed to their proactive position and political consciousness. Pogrebynsky (2005, 113) cites one of the Orange Revolution activists, who says that “[the protestors] wanted to see Ukraine as Ukrainian, as opposed to how [some other citizens] wanted to see it as an appendage of Russia”. National identity obviously helped Ukrainians to overcome their coordination problem, and contributed to relatively rapid and widespread popular mobilization. As Kuzio concludes, “[c]ivil society mobilization in the Orange Revolution proved possible due to the strength of its nationalism” (Kuzio 2010, 292). Stepanenko (2006, 575) adds that one of the primary reasons of such public activism was “the widespread emotional feelings of many individuals for their personal engagement in the complex choice for their [...] destinies and, not last, their feelings of being personally assaulted by the authorities, who, as many believed, had stolen their voices in the elections”.

On the fifth day after the runoff, governmental newspapers were supposed to publish the official results and Yanukovich was supposed to be inaugurated, but none of this happened. By that time, many state institutions and key officials already defected and took Yushchenko’s side. “Local governments, television channels, [Ministry of Internal Affairs], and military personnel were just some of the numerous defectors” (Kuzio, *From Kuchma to Yushchenko: Ukraine’s 2004 Presidential Elections and the Orange Revolution* 2005, 40). The defection or neutrality of the coercive forces made the option of a violent crackdown, favored by Yanukovich, impossible. The opposition leaders had made contacts with the law-enforcing organs beforehand, which indeed helped to avoid a violent scenario (McFaul 2005, 15).

Yushchenko's victory might not have been possible without the independent mass media, which played a crucial role of exposing the fraud and updating the citizens on the latest events. Despite regime's informal control over almost all the major television networks and newspapers, the opposition continued to have access to media broadcasting. Opposition-controlled 5th Channel was available in many cities throughout Ukraine and "began running round-the-clock coverage of the protests in downtown Kyiv after the false official results came out" (McFaul 2005, 13). While ERA Channel did not support Yushchenko as blatantly, it did provide relatively objective information during the course of events. Most importantly, ERA was able to transmit information to a much larger audience than the 5<sup>th</sup> Channel did (Hale 2005, 153). The opposition also had access to a popular newspaper *Silski Visti* and dominated the Internet as another arena of political contestation (Way 2005b). In sum, opposition was certainly disadvantaged compared to the regime (no wonder Ukraine was placed on the 138<sup>th</sup> place in Press Freedom Index in 2004<sup>5</sup>), but it could not have been silenced.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the protests, the Supreme Court of Ukraine finally declared that due to large-scale manipulations, it was impossible to determine the results of the elections. The court ordered a rerun of the second round (also known as the 'third round'), which was held under intensified supervision of international and local observers. The results showed that Yushchenko and Yanukovych obtained 51.99% and 44.20% of the vote respectively. Compared to the results of the second round, this represented a change by +5.39% to Yushchenko and -5.27% to Yanukovych. Two weeks later, the Central Election Commission declared that Yushchenko was the winner of the 2004 presidential elections. Official inauguration ceremony took place on the legendary Independence Square in front of thousands of people, which signalized the peaceful conclusion of the Orange Revolution.

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<sup>5</sup> Reporters Without Borders data

The loser, Viktor Yanukovych, always believed that Ukrainian events of 2004 as well as similar democratic breakthroughs in Serbia, Georgia, and Arab countries were products of foreign conspiracies. As revealed by WikiLeaks, in November 2006 then-Prime Minister Yanukovych told US Ambassador William Taylor that President Yushchenko “is obligated to the Americans for his position”<sup>6</sup>. Similar claims were also generally accepted in Russia (Kuzio 2005, 40). The actual external influence on the Orange Revolution, however, is not that simple to assess. The U.S. government reportedly “spent more than \$18 million in election-related assistance efforts in Ukraine in the two years leading up to the 2004 presidential vote” (McFaul 2007, 48). Western aid throughout the years supported secure political competition in Ukraine and helped it not to become a full dictatorship. Foreign aid existed not only in the form of financial resources, but also in the form of ideas and declarations. Western criticism of Kuchma’s regime, for instance, contributed to his domestic unpopularity. External sources also played a direct role in exposing the fraud, e.g. through assisting with parallel vote calculation, running international election monitoring missions, and funding the independent mass media (McFaul 2007).

However, Russia gave Yanukovych far more money than the U.S. did. This funding, moreover, was not transparent and accountable, and could have counterbalanced the Western influence (Kuzio 2005). Also, the West played no role in facilitating the splits in the coercive forces, which is believed to be one of the most important factors behind the peaceful conclusion of the protests (McFaul 2007). It is important to note that Ukraine’s officials since the first years of independence had repeatedly declared their course for integration into Western supranational structures. Even Yanukovych, then-prime minister of Ukraine, told Washington Times in 2004 that “Ukraine is building a state that is based on European values and will ensure it conducts its life and laws in line with Europe” (Kuzio 2005, 30). Using regime’s declarations and formal

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.wikileaks.org/cable/2006/11/06KYIV4187.html>

adherence to democratic values, the West had a leverage over Ukraine's domestic politics. McFaul (2007) concludes that external factors were indeed important for the Orange Revolution, but were not crucial. They might have additionally tipped the balance in favor of the opposition, but it is difficult to argue that their role was decisive.

### ***3.2. 2006 Presidential Elections in Belarus***

Unlike in the case of Ukraine, fraudulent presidential elections did not lead to a revolutionary regime change in Belarus in 2006. Let me examine what were the conditions of the country at that time, and what impact they had on the final outcome.

Belarus faced a deep economic crisis after the fall of the USSR, even though it was the richest of the twelve republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (World Bank 1997). Overall, Belarus' socio-economic conditions in 1990s were similar to those of other ex-Soviet republics. The first decade of independence was characterized by significant economic distress, which included hyperinflation, a decline in trade with the former Soviet republics, and overall deterioration of the balance of payments (World Bank 2007). The rapid growth in prices for raw materials and energy resources (which were the basis of the country's economy) combined with weak competitiveness of the local products and absence of marketing and financial management skills did not allow Belarus to become a successful member of the world economic market. In 2000, as many as 41.9% of Belarusians were living below the poverty line (United Nations Development Programme 2013).

By 2005, the situation had definitely improved. The following indexes can help to compare Belarus' level of socio-economic development with that of Ukraine. In the year preceding the infamous presidential election (the campaign was held in March 2005, so I use the 2004 indexes), urban population constituted 72% of the whole Belarusian population; public spending on education was equal to 5.9% of GDP; life expectancy at birth was equal to 69 years. Belarus scored 0.804 in the Human Development Index and ranked 64 in the world

(United Nations Development Programme 2007). It also ranked 107 out of 157 countries according to the Corruption Perception Index<sup>7</sup>. Finally, Belarus got a score of 46.7 in the Index of Economic Freedom<sup>8</sup>. As we can see, Belarus was even ahead of Ukraine in many respects, so, according to the modernization paradigm, should have had better prospects for democratization.

After being elected as the first (and so far the only) president of Belarus in 1994, Alyaksandr Lukashenka launched the country on the path of ‘market socialism’, as opposed to what he considered ‘wild capitalism’, arguably chosen by Russia (Global Tenders 2012). Between the years of 2001 and 2006, Belarus finally showed steady and dynamic economic growth. The GDP grew at an average rate of 7.4%, and reached a maximum of 9.9% in 2006. This growth was mainly a result of industrial sector’s performance, which on average grew more than 8.7% a year. In 2005, PPP-adjusted GNI per capita of Belarus was equal to \$9,680. In sum, 2006 presidential elections were held in the situation of unprecedented economic progress, which definitely contributed to the popularity of Lukashenka’s regime.

Following the break-up of the USSR, Belarus retained a relatively well-developed industrial base, but did not initiate basic economic reforms necessary to create a market-based economy, and did not conduct a large-scale privatization of its state-owned enterprises (U.S. Department of State 2014). In 2006, most of the Belarusian economy remained under government control, as state-owned companies accounted for at least 75% of GDP (Naūrodski 2007). According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in 2005—the year preceding the presidential elections—the private sector share in Belarus GNI was the lowest of all the postcommunist countries (Freedom House 2006). Under such conditions, real business elites

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<sup>7</sup> Transparency International data

<sup>8</sup> Index of Economic Freedom data

had little chance to emerge. Certain ‘oligarchs’ still exist in Belarus (such individuals as Uladzimir Peftiev, Yury Czyzh and Alexander Shakucin can be named), but are of completely different kind than their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts. Lukashenka’s regime has managed to put these elites completely under personal control, to the point where they have no influence in the national politics. They run some enterprises on behalf of the regime and for their own profits, but are just replaceable managers, rather than independent actors (Bohdan 2012). Thus, Belarusian business elites clearly lacked incentives to defect and try to support the opposition in the upcoming 2006 elections.

Moreover, Lukashenka used all available means to prepare for the electoral race. In 2005, many opposition leaders were effectively eliminated from the national political arena. This includes Mikhail Marynich, former government minister and a potential candidate for presidency, Siarhiej Skrabets, leader of the previous parliamentary opposition of the previous convocation, Mikalaj Statkievich, chairman of the Belarusian Social-Democrat Party Narodnaya Gromada, Pavel Seviarynec, leader of the Young Front movement, who were arrested on highly controversial charges (Freedom House 2006). This is only a minor fraction of other civil leaders, independent journalists, and anti-government activists who went through arbitrary persecution, arrest, and imprisonment (Freedom House 2007).

Moreover, those few opposition leaders that managed to participate in the presidential elections did not agree on a single candidate. Such disunity of the opposition caused anti-Lukashenka votes to be dispersed. Alyaksandr Milinkievich (United Democratic Forces of Belarus), Sergei Gaidukevich (Liberal Democratic Party), and Alyaksandr Kazulin (Belarusian Social Democratic Party) obtained 6.2%, 3.5%, and 2.3% of the vote respectively. Had the opposition leaders agreed on just one candidate, their aggregated result could have sent a much stronger coordination signal to the society. Overall, factional splits within the opposition movement have always contributed to the weakness and disarray of democratic forces in the country (Polity IV

2010). What is most important for the future postelectoral protests, the weakness and disunity of the opposition was an apparent problem for popular mobilization.

Speaking of the regime's character, Belarus was by far the most repressive and violent state in Europe in 2006. When Lukashenka came to power in 1994, he already had close links with the country's security services (Freedom House 2006), which later might have helped him to subordinate the entire Belarusian coercive apparatus. His dictatorial and repressive rule grew increasingly hardline throughout the years. In 2005, Lukashenka boosted law enforcement agencies and purged their ranks of potential dissenters. Newly introduced amendments to the Law on Interior Troops allowed for the discretionary use of firearms against protestors on orders from the president. Introduction of new police tactics were also an indicator that the state security forces had been trained specifically to stop street demonstrations. Any protests required authorization from local authorities, who usually withheld or revoked such permissions. When public demonstrations did happen, police would typically break them up and arrest participants (Freedom House 2007).

As of 2006, human rights groups continuously documented instances of beating of the democratic opposition leaders (Freedom House 2006). Commenting on the possibility of demonstrations to follow 2006 elections, Sarah Mendelson, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said that "there are many [...] obstacles to overcome, because the security services are quite opaque, and we don't know [at] what degree the government stands behind the president". Overall, a brutal crackdown was highly anticipated (Sector 2006). In the weeks before the election, Belarusian security agencies created a cloud of intimidation by accusing the opposition of preparing a violent coup and warning that even peaceful protesters could face charges of terrorism (Freedom House 2007). All these facts clearly demonstrate that Lukashenka's regime would not refrain from using violence. Under

such conditions, the citizens faced serious discouragement from participating in any demonstrations.

Notwithstanding this, the 2006 fraudulent elections still caused the biggest public protest of independent Belarus. As soon as the polls closed, people went to the streets stating their dissatisfaction with the election outcome. Around 10,000 individuals, according to various estimates (Myers and Chivers 2006), gathered on October Square in Minsk on Sunday night. These events were sometimes named the Jeans Revolution, where the word 'jeans' was used in reference to the blue color, to follow the tradition of other color revolutions. However, the demonstrations in Belarus quickly dwindled. Each evening saw a smaller gathering—5,000 people on Monday, around 3,000 on Tuesday. Only about 200 protesters remained concentrated around the square by the fourth day to follow the elections. On early Thursday morning police broke up the demonstration and arrested remaining participants.

These demonstrations were a response to governmental voting manipulation, as there is no doubt that the presidential elections were indeed rigged. Serious shortcomings noted by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission included violations of vote secrecy; pressure on voters; group voting; unauthorized people inside polling stations; seemingly identical signatures on voter lists and signs of multiple voting. The situation got even worse during the vote count, which often lacked even minimum transparency. Observers documented such violations as disregards of the official procedure; presence of unauthorized persons; inappropriate handling of complaints and tampering with results protocols. Almost half of observation reports assessed the transparency of the tabulation as either 'bad' or 'very bad' (OSCE/ODIHR 2006). However, the objective magnitude of electoral fraud that took place during the elections is difficult to estimate.

The 2006 elections were by far not the first example of Lukashenka's large-scale manipulation of popular will. The previous presidential elections in 2001 were recognized by Western

observers as neither free nor fair as well. According to official results, Lukashenka received 75% of the vote, while the opposition leader Uladzimir Hancharyk only 15%. However, independent nongovernmental exit polls reported strikingly different figures: 47% and 41% for Lukashenka and Hancharyk respectively. Similar manipulation occurred during the 2004 referendum. The Central Election Commission stated that 86% of the voters supported government's initiative that allowed Lukashenka to run for his third term in 2006. Contrary to the official results, an exit poll conducted by The Gallup Organization/Baltic Surveys reported that only 54.4% of the voters gave a positive answer at the plebiscite (Freedom House 2006).

The problem with 2006 elections is that no independent polls were allowed, which makes it impossible to evaluate the magnitude of fraud. However, based on Lukashenka's propensity to manipulate previous elections and referendums, as demonstrated above, and the scale of violations reported by international observers, electoral manipulation at the 2006 elections was probably quite significant. However, the huge gap between the official results of the opposition candidate Milinkievich (6.2%) and Lukashenka (84.4%) probably discouraged many people, and thus could have been a barrier for a more numerous protest.

It is not less important that the opposition did not have media resources to expose the fraud and coordinate the citizens to run a protest that would put pressure on the regime. In 2006, the Committee to Protect Journalists named Belarus as one of the ten most censored countries in the world (Mahoney 2006). Reporters Without Borders placed Belarus on the 152<sup>nd</sup> place (out of 167 countries) in their 2005 Press Freedom Index<sup>9</sup>. In the months surrounding the election, Lukashenka's regime made it nearly impossible for independent and opposition media to deliver news and alternative opinions. The postal service refused to deliver newspapers that criticized the government; the state distribution agency made it illegal to sell such papers on

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<sup>9</sup> Reporters Without Borders data

newsstands; printing houses refused to print them under government pressure (Committee to Protect Journalists 2007). A 2005 presidential decree banned private media from including the words ‘Belarusian’ and ‘national’ in their titles, which strongly affected three prominent independent newspapers. Broadcasting media was in even more difficult situation, as Belarusian national television was completely under control of the state and did not provide for opposition views, and all FM radio stations were censored (Freedom House 2006).

The impact of Internet as a media tool was also very limited. As of 2006, web sites were under control of the State Center on Information Security. Moreover, not many Belarusian could have used Internet then: the International Telecommunications Union reported that less than 10% of the population had access to the world wide web, while other estimates suggested that as few as 2% of the population had regular Internet access (Freedom House 2006).

Another factor that made it difficult for the Belarusian society to mobilize is the absence of a strong national identity that could exist separately from the incumbent’s personal cult. National ideology does, however, exist in the country, but it is strongly fused with the person of Lukashenka. It is not a cult of the leader per se<sup>10</sup>, but resulted from the president’s intentional policies and was formed solely in pro-Lukashenka terms. Leshchenko (2008) notices that Belarusian national mobilization went hand in hand with to the process of authoritarian consolidation since 1994. This mobilization officially became an indispensable part of Belarusian political life in March 2003, when the president formally recognized the National Ideology as the state’s corner stone.

This national identity is peculiar in many ways: for instance, it discarded Belarusian ethnic features, such as language, and is based on Soviet collectivist principles applied to Belarusian

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<sup>10</sup> although he is often referred to as Father—‘Batska’ of the nation

national sovereignty and statehood. The founding myth relies primarily on the partisan struggle during the Second World War, where partisans are portrayed as people who make a noble effort of defending the state from an external aggressor (Leshchenko 2008, 1420). The bottom line is that participating in anti-Lukashenka protests would be contrary to the national Belarus identity cultivated by the state. Under such conditions, Belarus opposition had hard times framing a protest in simple national terms that could have broad resonance in the society.

Yet another reason why Lukashenka's regime has been so stable and did not show even a sign of cracking at the 2006 elections is its disengagement with the West. According to Leshchenko (2008), the Belarusian president conducted foreign policy in such a way that it enabled the country to opt out of the European developmental framework. Since his first years of presidency, Lukashenka always declared that European integration is not a part of Belarus' agenda, as it is a threat to the country's sovereignty and uniqueness. Lukashenka once argued that the West was in fact intolerant and jealous of Belarusian model of economic development (Leshchenko 2008). International isolation allowed him to completely disregard Western democratic requirements. In the words of the Foreign Minister of Belarus Syarhei Martynau, "no engagement—no influence" (Martynov 2002). The West, therefore, lost any effective leverage on Belarusian domestic policy. Western states and organization attempted to find another means of influencing the political game in Belarus, in particular though supporting the country's democratic opposition forces. Such attempts, however, did not lead to any meaningful results and allowed Lukashenka to further delegitimize the opposition in the eyes of the population.

## Chapter 4. Findings

Ukraine and Belarus were in different conditions at the outset of respective fraudulent presidential elections in 2004 and 2006. The factors identified in the theoretical part differed considerably in the two postcommunist countries, and I argue that it is the difference in these factors that accounts for the variation of their outcomes: a successful electoral revolution in one case, and an unsuccessful electoral protest in the other.

Let me start from the factors that, at least based on these two case studies, did not turn out to be significant. In terms of the level of socio-economic development, Ukraine and Belarus were quite similar. Both countries faced a severe economic crisis after the collapse of the USSR; both had hard times trying to fix their economies in the 90s; and both finally managed to start a process of stable economic growth in 2001. In terms of such indicators of socio-economic development as Human Development Index, share of urban population, governmental expenditure on education, life expectancy, and level of corruption the two countries were in very similar positions. In fact, Belarus was even slightly ahead of its southern neighbor in some respects. Therefore, my expectation based on modernization theory that socio-economically advanced countries are more likely to experience an electoral revolution was not met.

Speaking of regime's economic performance specifically at the time of the presidential elections, the citizens of Ukraine and Belarus had little to complaint about. Both countries were in the midst of a remarkable economic progress, and there were no signs of possible decline. In 2004, Ukraine was the fastest growing economy in Europe with the growth rate of 12.1%. Belarus, with 9.9% growth rate in 2006, did not drag much behind. All of this allows to conclude that the countries were very similar in terms of their regimes' short-term economic performance. Thus, this factors does not seem to be able explain why electoral fraud converts to regime overthrow in some postcommunist countries but not in the others.

The theories of regime breakdown assume that authoritarian regimes are more likely to fall when they perform badly economically, whereas during the times of good economic performance they are relatively secure. While just two case studies cannot prove this assertion wrong, it seems that the reason why Ukrainian case does not go in accord with the theory is that a regime's popularity is not based solely on its economic performance. There were other reasons why Ukrainian society became so dissatisfied with Kuchma's rule, and the case of journalist Georgiy Gongadze's murder was perhaps the most prominent of them. One might argue that Lukashenka's regime was no less repressive, and thus should have been unpopular too, consequently following Kuchma's example. The reason why it did not, in my opinion, has to do with the presence of other factors. While Lukashenka's regime was more repressive than Kuchma's, it was backed by severe media censorship. The number of media sources that were critical of the government was very limited in Belarus in 2005, and existing ones were not accessible to a large audience. Thus, very few people were actually aware of regime's crimes and shortcomings, and so the overall popularity of the regime did not suffer as significantly as it did in Ukraine.

Besides the level of socio-economic development and short-term economic performance, Ukraine and Belarus were two completely different cases. The former was much more advanced concerning market liberalization and privatization—the factor derived from modernization theory. The degree of market liberalization and privatization turned out to be closely related to the factor of unity/defection of regime's political elites. Ukraine's oligarchs emerged as owners of the country's large economic enterprises, which were privatized during the 1990s, and further became prominent figures in the domestic political game. These oligarchs and other members of political elite were not completely subordinated to Kuchma, and were capable of acting independently of his will. When they realized that Yanukovych's presidency could harm their business interest, many of them chose to defect and support Yushchenko, as it was indeed

suggested by the theory. Such individuals backed the opposition financially, provided media coverage for it, and even took direct part in the postelectoral protest.

Belarus, in turn, did not privatize its enterprises, so economic elites had little chance to emerge. Those few that do exist are very different from their Ukrainian counterparts. Big businessmen in Belarus are, in fact, no more than appointed managers, completely dependent on Lukashenka's administration. As a result, they neither were capable of supporting the opposition, nor probably even wanted to defect. This goes in a perfect accord with the theory, which states that personal dictatorships (which Belarus is an example of) are safe as long as they manage to coopt and keep their elites under control. Thus, as we can see, the factors of privatization/market liberalization and disunity/defection of regime's elites indeed are important for understanding the success of electoral revolutions.

A factor that was derived from both theories of regime breakdown and the collective action theory is the strength and popularity of the opposition. The case studies of Ukraine and Belarus showed this factor to be very significant for the outcome of the postcommunist electoral protests, as illiberal regimes in Ukraine and Belarus faced different challenges during the presidential race. The opposition in Belarus was disunited and weak. During the years preceding 2006 elections, Lukashenka's regime persecuted and arrested many individuals that posed a threat to its continuity. Those opposition leaders that managed to participate in the elections acted selfishly and did not agree on a single candidate, which caused anti-regime votes to be dispersed. Under such conditions, many citizens had no incentive to overcome the collective action problem to join the protests. The weakness of opposition candidates did not inspire much confidence in the people, who thus were not willing to engage in risky protests in their behalf. Even though around 10,000 individuals participated in the demonstrations, this was not enough to pose enough pressure on the regime. In turn, the opposition in Ukraine acted much more wisely and was one of the reasons why the regime's surviving capacity was undermined. First,

Yushchenko enjoyed a much higher degree of public support than his Belarusian counterparts. Second, the opposition camp included many prominent politicians, who increased people's confidence in the final victory. As a result, the perceived cost of participation for them was lower than for the people in Belarus, and up to a million Ukrainians successfully overcame the collective action problem of joining the protests. The overall strength of the opposition also assured already mentioned business elites that defection, in fact, was a reasonable decision. Therefore, they had a strong incentive to support the opposition, which they eventually did.

As predicted by the theory of regime breakdown, elites' defection and strength of the opposition played important role in the fall of Kuchma's rule. Based on the two case studies, I would go even further to argue that these were the most crucial factors out of the ten I identified theoretically. The reason why Kuchma's regime had to engage in large-scale fraud in the first place is the level of Yushchenko's popular support. If he had been significantly less popular, Yanukovych would have won even free and fair elections (as Kuchma did in 1994 and 1999, not facing a strong opponent). Ultimately, the strength and popularity of the opposition facilitated some other factors behind the success of the revolution. Strong opposition played a key role in elite's decision to defect the regime. The elites truly perceived Yushchenko as a possible winner, otherwise they would not engage in a risky campaign of explicitly supporting him. In Belarus, we do not see such strong and decisive opposition, which did not allow other factors to unleash. Lukashenka's regime did, in fact, have some cracks, otherwise ten thousand of people would not participate in a protest. But there was no strong opposition to make use of such cracks and lead the protests to a successful conclusion.

Another factor which played a crucial role is an access to independent mass media, as derived from the collective action theory. Ultimately, it is not the opposition leaders or members of economic elites that can put pressure on the regime up to the point where it collapses, but hundreds of thousands of individuals participating in a protest. If there is no media to inform

and gather these people, all other factors (international influence, magnitude of fraud, national identity etc.) are in vain. The reason why similar fraud led to different outcomes is that Belarusian opposition had very limited mechanisms of transmitting this information to the people. All broadcasting media was under strict control of the regime; Internet was not accessible to the masses and could not serve as a tool of communication; independent newspapers were either banned or circulated in very limited copies. The bottom line is that the opposition did not have enough media sources to expose the fraud and trigger the popular sense of deprivation and injustice, associated with stolen elections.

Beyond any doubt, the opposition in Ukraine was also disadvantaged compared to the regime, but it could not have been silenced the way it was in Belarus. Yushchenko's team used two television channels as well as some radio stations and print media to expose the fraud and coordinate the masses. Yet, even though access to the media sources was obviously an important factor behind the electoral revolution, I believe media's role still inferior to that of strong and popular opposition. Ultimately, there is not much use of independent media if there is no real alternative to the incumbent. Only a strong and united opposition can use independent media to effectively undermine regime's stability and produce political change.

The theory of collective action also points to the magnitude of fraud and regime's repressive character as other factors that could explain why electoral fraud converts into regime change in some countries but not in the others. The objective magnitude of fraud is not easy to determine, but, based on exist poll results, regime's previous propensity to manipulate, and reports of international observers, we can conclude that in both cases incumbents engaged in massive voting falsification. In Ukraine exit polls testified that Yushchenko was a legitimate winner of the race; in Belarus exist polls were not allowed, but indirect evidence suggests that if election had been free and fair, Lukashenka could have obtained less than 50% of the vote—a result which would have led to the second round and could have produced a different result. However,

people in Belarus, unlike in Ukraine, did not have an access to the figures. This is the reason why major electoral manipulation did not lead to large protests in Belarus in 2006.

Lukashenka's and Kuchma's regimes differed considerably with regards to the use of violence and their repressive characters. People in Ukraine were not used to clashes with police, and so the perceived cost of participation in the protests was rather low. Also, the opposition managed to negotiate with coercive forces and enlisted their support or neutrality, which additionally assured the people that force was not going to be used against them. Elections in Belarus were held in a completely different atmosphere. Lukashenka's regime had a long record of using force against demonstrations. Moreover, the coercive apparatus was completely under his control, which excluded the option of defection of 'men with guns'. Overall, a violent crackdown of a possible protest was highly anticipated, which dramatically increased the cost of participation. This possibly prevented many people from taking to the streets to put pressure on the regime.

Another major difference between the two countries has to do with their national identities. This theoretical factor, proposed by Way, suggests that countries with a strong national consciousness that exists independently of the incumbent normally have easier time mobilizing popular support than the ones with weak or incumbent-oriented national identity. Postelectoral protests in Ukraine and Belarus appear to be good examples to illustrate this assertion. The citizens of Ukraine had a set of common values and symbols that resonated throughout the entire society. By appealing to them, the opposition managed to gather a great number of people from different classes, occupations, religious and other backgrounds, that spoke different languages and lived in different regions. In turn, the national ideology in Belarus was constructed so as to not allow anti-Lukashenka movements. As a result, the opposition leaders were not able to frame a protest in anti-Lukashenka terms that would be understandable to all Belarusians.

Finally, regime breakdown theory suggested that foreign actors could play an important role in undermining regime's stability, either by putting pressure on the incumbent, or supporting the opposition. This assertion was indeed supported by the comparative case study of Ukraine and Belarus, as the two countries experienced a different degree of external influence. Lukashenka made it clear that European integration was not a part of Belarus' agenda, which allowed him to completely disregard Western democratic requirements. Due to regime's closeness, external actors also did not manage to help Belarusian opposition forces. The situation in Ukraine was completely different. The West used Kuchma's and Yanukovich's declarations and adherence to democratic values to put pressure on the regime. External sources also supported political competition in Ukraine throughout the years, assisted with parallel vote calculations and exposing the fraud, funded the opposition and independent mass media. Thus, the way Ukraine and Belarus differed in this respect allows to conclude that foreign influence is also an important factor of explaining success of electoral revolutions.

## Conclusion

The defining feature of an electoral revolution is stolen elections. It was a beginning of the protests in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, that further lead to breakdown of illiberal regimes in these countries. However, vote manipulation has taken place in many other postcommunist states, but not all of them experienced an electoral revolution. In some of them, no protest followed electoral manipulation altogether; in others, postelectoral protests took place but were not successful; and only in a few countries did electoral fraud convert into regime overthrow. Given that the defining feature (rigged election) in these countries was similar, there must be other variables that explain such variation of the outcomes.

My approach to addressing this puzzle was twofold. First, I selected three theories that are most relevant to the subject matter of electoral revolutions: modernization, regime breakdown, and collective action theory. I believe that only a theory-based framework can provide a coherent a clear explanation of how different factors determine occurrence and successful conclusion of postelectoral protests. Scrutinized through the prism of successful postelectoral protests, the theories suggested ten factors which could be accountable for different outcomes in otherwise similar contexts: level of socio-economic development; degree of privatization and market liberalization; disunity/defection of the regime's elite; strength and popularity of the opposition; foreign influence; strong national identity; poor short-term economic performance of the regime; regime's propensity to use violence; magnitude of fraud; and access to independent mass media.

Next, I wanted to check significance of these ten factors, which could be done only empirically. For this reason, I took the second step and conducted a case study of rigged presidential elections in Ukraine in 2004 and in Belarus in 2006. This pair of countries features both a positive and a negative example, as Ukraine experienced a full-scale electoral revolution, whereas the protests in Belarus failed to bring about change.

Comparing these cases showed that not all of the theoretical factors are, in fact, strong antecedents of electoral revolutions. In particular, I expected the level of socio-economic development to be proportional to the likelihood of electoral revolution in a given country, but my expectations were not met. The two countries were very similar in this respect (Belarus was even slightly ahead of Ukraine in some respects), which allows to conclude that the factor of socio-economic development was not important. In the same way, regime's short-term economic performance failed to explain why rigged elections lead to regime breakdown in some countries but not in the others. The other eight factors, however, appeared to be meaningful explanatory variables of successful postelectoral protests.

The comparative case study I conducted is obviously not sufficient basis to make final and peremptory conclusions. However, it did indeed serve the purpose. It allowed me to preliminarily test theoretically derived factors against empirical cases, and demonstrate how they matter in the real world. Ultimately, the constraint of space and depth of the thesis did not allow to conduct a more thorough analysis, and I do not expect my results to necessarily hold their robustness if tested against a larger number of cases.

Another limitation of the thesis is a small number of theories I used to derive the factors of successful postelectoral protests. Alternative theories may include social movement, revolutionary, agenda-setting, and diffusion theories, to name a few. Even though I believe that the factors they would produce are the same as the three theories I actually used, future research could well take them into consideration. A more sophisticated theoretical framework could provide a more clear picture of the causes of electoral revolutions in the postcommunist world.

Even though further research could well address this and some limitations of this thesis, I believe that the preliminary findings I obtained are important and contributive to the field. First, the explanatory factors I identified were based on theoretical investigation, unlike most of the previous research (e.g. by McFaul, D'Anieri, Beissinger) that lacked theoretical foundation.

Theoretical results I obtained were also submitted to empirical investigation to test their relevance in understanding electoral revolutions in the postcommunist world, and results of this preliminary testing can well be used for the future research. Finally, the factors I identified can be used not only to retrospectively explain success of past postelectoral protests, but also to scientifically predict the likelihood of electoral revolution in a given postcommunist country.

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