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Olga Onuch *is a Newton Fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford, and a fellow at the Harvard University Ukrainian Research Institute. She is the principal investigator for the Ukrainian Protest Project and the author of* Mapping Mass Mobilizations: Understanding Revolutionary Moments in Argentina and Ukraine *(2014).*

The protests that began in Ukraine's capital of Kyiv on 21 November 2013 and became known as the EuroMaidan took even seasoned observers of East European politics by surprise. By December, around 800,000 "ordinary" Ukrainians were demonstrating in Kyiv and other cities across the country. The rapid rise of mass protests, especially at a time when the world's established democracies are struggling with growing political apathy and declining voter turnout, appears as what Timur Kuran has called one of those moments "when out of never you have a revolution."[1] These episodes may help the cause of democracy, but they can also destabilize countries by polarizing citizens and boosting extremists. In order to gauge what a protest outbreak will mean for a country's democratic prospects, it is crucial to understand who the bulk of the protesters are and what goals they hope to achieve. Here follows original survey data that may help to shed light on Euro-Maidan protest participation and its implications for democratic hopes in Ukraine.[2]

The events of late 2013 naturally evoked memories of the Orange Revolution nine years earlier. On that occasion, somewhere around a quarter to a third of Ukraine's then–46 million people emerged from their postcommunist atomization and disengagement in order to protest against a suspect result in the 2004 presidential election. As it would be in 2013, the 2004 change in public attitudes was as unexpected as it was sudden. Most of the action in 2004 took place in Kyiv and cities to its west. Students and activists were the first movers, setting up tent cities and mobilizing other citizens. The demands were for civic rights

and electoral integrity—things that were easy to grasp and to monitor. Outgoing president Leonid Kuchma kept the media under tight control, which limited information flows. Nonetheless, the opposition rallied behind former premier Viktor Yushchenko, whom protesters believed had actually beaten Kuchma's handpicked successor, Viktor Yanukovych, in the 21 November 2004 runoff. The Kuchma regime, afraid to use force against vast crowds of peaceful protesters, allowed a fair vote on December 26. Yushchenko won it with 52 percent.

Over the last decade, this outbreak of mass mobilization in the ex-USSR has continued to present a puzzle. Most observers have seen it as a one-off event, and some have raised doubts about its democratizing effect. In these pages, some analysts stressed the actions of Western NGOs in sponsoring and training activist organizations,[3] while others focused on the roles played by Ukrainian elites and endogenous structural variables.[4] Only a few examined the identity and goals of the protesters.[5] Most analyses dwelt on what they took to be the protests' partisan nature, but this is a mistake. In surveys, most protesters claimed that they had come out not to back Yushchenko, but rather to stop the rise of what they saw as competitive authoritarianism.[6] In focus groups, some cited as their motive the belief that they had a "duty to defend democracy."[7] Sadly, a lack of data has left us unsure whether such people were close to the median of Ukrainians' political preferences or were liberal "outliers."

When Viktor Yanukovych won the 2010 election and set about adding to the presidency's powers via constitutional amendments, extending by thirty years the Russian Black Sea Fleet's rights to bases on Ukrainian soil, and imprisoning Yulia Tymoshenko, the Ukrainian public seemed to passively accept it all. Thus when Yanukovych announced in November 2013 that Ukraine would seek closer ties to Russia rather than sign a painstakingly negotiated free-trade deal with the EU, few either within or outside Ukraine foresaw what would come next.

That was the protest phenomenon known as the EuroMaidan—the word, which began as a Twitter hashtag, is a portmanteau neologism compounded from the name of Kyiv's Independence Square ("maidan" means a city square), the main protest site in both 2004 and 2013, and the adjectival prefix that signifies alignment with Europe. Events did not follow a linear course. On 24 November 2013, in several cities across the country, came demonstrations involving in total perhaps 300,000 citizens. Yet as the final week of November wore on, the numbers were dwindling. Then the Yanukovych regime miscalculated. On November 30, it sent riot police in to disperse the Kyiv protesters by force. The next day, the number of protesters exploded to an estimated 800,000 across Ukraine, as furious citizens turned out in a show of solidarity with those whom the regime had assaulted. The largest protests occurred in Kyiv and the western city of Lviv, but there were

demonstrations in Kharkiv and Odessa (in the east and south, respectively) as well.

Democratic Revolution 2.0

This EuroMaidan mobilization differed significantly from the Orange Revolution in five ways. First, the 2013 protests were more widely distributed across Ukraine than those of 2004. The largest turnouts both years were in central and western Ukraine, but in 2013 protests with up to two-thousand participants also occurred in the east and south. Second, student and activist groups were strong and prepared in 2004, but not so in 2013. The latter year featured civic self-organization aided by the use of Internet-based social media, neighborhood initiatives, and online news sites. Third, unlike in 2004, in 2013 no one leader emerged to serve as the opposition's standard-bearer. Instead, the EuroMaidan took the shape of a "coalition of inconvenience" formed by liberal, social-democratic, and right-of-center opposition parties. Fourth, the Yanukovych regime, unlike the Kuchma regime nine years before, did not shy away from using violence to squelch the protests. Fifth, foreign governments and organizations found it hard to broker any deals between the two sides.

The upshot of all this was that in 2013, the party in power seemed better able—at first, anyway—to hold its ground. Up to two-million people protested for nearly three months. Demonstrators focused first on foreign relations, advocating a "European future" for Ukraine—a goal not as widely supported by citizens in 2013 as clean elections had been nine years earlier. Protest rhetoric then moved on to attack the regime for corruption, repressiveness, and rights violations. Much like the protesters themselves, the protests' claims and aims came across as diverse, wide-ranging, and subect to change. The use of violence by both sides escalated. More than a hundred people had died before Yanukovych fled Kyiv after dark on February 21, headed for eventual exile in Russia.

Between 26 November 2013 and 10 January 2014, my research team and I surveyed a random sample (N=1,304) of protesters at Kyiv demonstration sites as part of our work on the Ukrainian Protest Project. Ours is the only multiday survey of protest participants. What we found surprised us. The EuroMaidan drew many middle-class, middle-aged participants who had been staying informed via news websites and social media, but who joined the protests personally only after getting private messages from friends and relatives who were taking part. We also photographed signs and posters displayed by protesters and recorded quick interviews, asking participants to describe their motives and goals in their own words. The data reveal that the "median protester" was middle class, with a new level of linguistic cosmopolitanism and a rela-

tive lack of partisanship. Such commonalities did not mean that protesters all professed the same motives, however. In fact, we found that these were quite diverse.

Early reports cited students as key protest organizers. However that may be, fully two-thirds (67 percent) of our Kyiv survey's respondents were in fact older than 30, with an average age of almost 36. Nearly a quarter of all Kyiv respondents were older than 55. When we take into account the day (and time of day) when people joined the protests, it is clear that students, journalists, and self-identified members of civic organizations and social movements were "early joiners" and "stalwarts."[8] They showed up at earlier hours of the day and stayed later (some people camped out in the Maidan, of course) and were just as likely to demonstrate on a weekday as during a weekend. Most protesters, however, were middle-aged or older, and had full-time jobs as well as an above-average amount of formal schooling. They were less likely to protest on weekdays, and were more likely to join protests in the afternoon or later, but less likely to stay late into the night. Men, who made up 59 percent of all protesters, were more likely to protest more often and later at night. Data collection suffered after things turned violent on November 30, but rapid interviews and participant observation in Kyiv suggest that protester ranks became more heavily male as violence rose, and that males predominated in those zones where violence clustered.

Analysis of signs and slogans reveals that early joiners focused solely on supporting closer EU ties. After November 30, calls to defend rights and to protect Ukraine's democratic future came to the fore, often with denunciations of Yanukovych by name. As protests continued throughout December and January, more posters and banners attacked a corrupt regime that steals from its people. As violent repression peaked and protest radicalized during the week of January 18 to 25, the messages dwelt on demonstrators' sense of desperation as well as their desire to see Yanukovych impeached and Ukraine's independence safeguarded. The use of nationalist slogans increased from mid-January onward, but they never became the main type of claim made by the average protest participant.

Our survey data show that the median protester was a male between 34 and 45 with a full-time job (56 percent were thus employed). He was well-educated, voted regularly, had experienced very little contact with civic or social-movement groups, wanted a better political future for Ukraine, and was more worried about violent state repression (and infringements on basic rights) than about forming closer EU ties, working in an EU country, or being able to travel around Europe without a visa. Most importantly, the median protester does *not* seem to have been motivated by opposition to the Ukrainian government's desire to seek stronger ties with Russia, but instead cared more about the economic and political direction of the government's *domestic* policies.

The content of the rapid interviews that we conducted with protest participants was mostly in line with these statistical findings about the median protester. Most of the demonstrators with whom we spoke told us that in their minds the slogan "Ukraine is Europe" was less about any particular formal relationship between Brussels and Kyiv and more about the desire to see Ukraine embrace "European values." These values were understood to include rights safeguards, political stability, and the pursuit of a certain "quality of life" (or in other words, economic prosperity). Many analyses of the EuroMaidan have focused on extremist groups, although these did not even come close to forming a majority of protest participants. This is unfortunate, since it has cast into shadow the more moderate opinions of the median protester.

The Median Protester and Linguistic Diversity

How representative of the larger Ukrainian populace was the median EuroMaidan protester? Ukrainian civic, ethnic, and linguistic identities are complex, and so is their relationship to political preferences and behavior. Media coverage, however, has dwelt on oversimplified dichotomies of "west" versus "east" and Ukrainian-speakers versus Russophones, obscuring the messier and more complicated reality on the ground.

Students of elections in Ukraine discern not two (east and west) but four electoral regions (those two plus a central and a southern region, the latter of which contained Crimea). The largest EuroMaidan protests did indeed take place in central and western Ukraine (in Kyiv and Lviv, respectively), but there were smaller protests in the eastern cities of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Donetsk, and also in such southern locales as Odessa, Kherson, and even parts of Crimea. Of the 1,040 respondents to our Kyiv survey who said where they resided, fully 42 percent were from places other than Kyiv city or its surrounding oblast. Most of this non-Kyiv group came from western or central oblasts, but a fifth (or about 8 percent of the 1,040 residence-listing respondents) came from eastern or southern oblasts.

What about the EuroMaidan's ethnic makeup? According to the latest available statistics (based on the 2001 census), ethnic Ukrainians account for 77.8 percent of Ukraine's people, while ethnic Russians total 17.3 percent. In our survey, 92 percent of protesters identified themselves as ethnic Ukrainians, while 4 percent self-identified as Russian. This mirrors the 2001 census figure for Kyiv Oblast, where 92.5 percent of the residents were ethnic Ukrainians. So the protesters in Kyiv at least were ethnically representative of the protests' locale.

Trying to sort Ukrainian voters into Russophones or Ukrainophones is tricky since the native tongue that someone self-reports may not be the language that he or she actually uses most often in daily life. Across

most of the country, native speakers of Ukrainian make up close to 80 percent of the population. In line with this, 83 percent of the protesters who listed a mother tongue cited Ukrainian as that language. Self-identified native speakers of Russian were 12 percent. Yet a smaller share of our respondents (a bit under 70 percent) said that Ukrainian was what they spoke at work or in private life, while slightly more than a fifth said that Russian was their professional or private language.

> *Politicians and civic organizers should pay close attention to what the protesters themselves have said they wanted: not language policies, but economic and political stability; not just EU accession, but safeguards for basic rights and an end to systemic elite corruption.*

Going by this last finding, one could say that 22 percent of the EuroMaidan protesters whom we sampled were Russophones. Cross-tabulating everyday use of Russian with self-reported motives for protesting, we see that the EuroMaidan participants who were daily speakers of Russian were just as likely to be moved by their support for democratic rights and opposition to unjust uses of state repression as they were to be impelled by a wish for closer Ukraine-EU ties. In other words, the substantial Russian-speaking subgroup within the EuroMaidan may have been distinct linguistically, but politically it embraced the same democratic goals and preferences as the median protester.

Another noteworthy finding has to do with voting behavior and partisanship. As a group, the EuroMaidan protesters had been, by their own report, mostly regular voters. Far from being hard-core oppositionists, about 26 percent of respondents who were able to recall their past voting choices said that they had cast ballots for a candidate or party associated with Yanukovych in 2004, 2010, or 2012. Yet there they were, protesting against the Yanukovych government in 2013.

Those who reported having voted for Yanukovych were not more likely to be ethnic Russians, but they were more likely to speak Russian at work and to choose "illegitimate use of militia violence" and "violation of civic rights" as their reasons for protesting. Civic identity and arguments based on rights—not claims hinging on language or ethnicity—were the stated motives of the median protester. As postcommunist political phenomena go, the EuroMaidan was decidedly more civic than ethnic.

The main cleavage identifiable among survey respondents was age. We did rapid interviews of, respectively, respondents between 17 and 29, those between 30 and 55, and those over 55. We posed three questions: Why are you here today? Why did you decide to protest? Why is

your protesting important? The answers revealed three dominant trends, divided by age group.

Respondents under 30 were able to express themselves using a media- and NGO-savvy lexicon of "EU accession" and "global human rights." They identified themselves as those who must "fight for democracy, because the older Soviet generations will not." In the survey, this group was more likely to choose as its key motives support for closer EU ties, a desire to seek jobs within EU countries, and the securing of visa-free European travel for Ukrainians.

Those aged 30 to 55 (the largest group), focused more on their desire for "economic security" and the chance to live in a Ukraine that is a "normal, European democracy." These respondents tended repeatedly to mention their sense of themselves as representing an important and active sector of the electorate, insisting that their presence told the regime and Western observers that "the voters are here." In the survey, this group was most concerned with opposing the illegitimate use of violent repression and defending democratic rights for all Ukrainians.

The last and smallest group of demonstrators, those over 55, saw themselves as the protest's guardians, retirees able to spend time out in the Maidan while younger protest sympathizers saw to work and family commitments. These older participants described their main motive as concern for Ukraine's future rather than worry about their personal economic prospects or individual rights. Such differences among protester age cohorts suggest that a unifying government for Ukraine must be one that can cope with varying generational expectations as well as bring Ukrainians together across class, ethnic, and regional lines.

Our research suggests that a significant share of respondents who were Ukrainian speakers with a record of voting for Yanukovych's opponents nonetheless felt no impulsion to join protest ranks until the regime unleashed violence. More than party-political preferences, ethnolinguistic concerns, or the government's foreign-policy shift, what roused them to come out into the streets was their conviction that democratic rights were on the line and needed defending. The conundrum that political scientists will certainly have to unravel is that these individuals joined in the risky business of protest when it became more dangerous to do so. Further focus-group research will be needed to better understand how and why they decided to join.

To say that the middle-class median protester is a force for democracy in Ukraine is not to say that a single policy aim or party agenda can represent this group. It is clear, however, that pandering to the minority that harbors intense ethnolinguistic or ethnonational preferences, as the new government that arose after Yanukovych's flight did at first, will not appeal to the median protester. Politicians and civic organizers (as well as foreign governments, organizations, and advisors) should pay close attention to what the protesters themselves have said they wanted: not language

policies, but economic and political stability; not just EU accession, but safeguards for basic rights and an end to systemic elite corruption.

Finally, no government should discount the possibility that some chunk of the "median protesters," if they feel they are not being listened to, could lend their ears to radical voices. The bulk of the EuroMaidan's participants displayed a democratizing and cosmopolitan tendency and a capacity to come together despite partisan and other cleavages. But can the same be said about their country's political elites? Without politicians who are worthy of the better angels of its people's nature, can Ukraine find the democratic unity to resolve its crisis?

NOTES

1. Timur Kuran, "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989," *World Politics* 44 (January 1991): 7–48.

2. A number of graphics illustrating the Ukraine Protest Project's findings are available at *http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/supplemental-material*.

3. Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions," *Journal of Democracy* 17 (October 2006): 5–18.

4. Lucan Way, "The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions," *Journal of Democracy* 19 (October 2008): 55–69; Lucan Way, "Debating the Color Revolutions: A Reply to My Critics," *Journal of Democracy* 20 (January 2009): 90–97.

5. Mark R. Beissinger, "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *American Political Science Review* 107 (August 2013): 1–19; David Lane, "The Orange Revolution: 'People's Revolution' or Revolutionary Coup?" *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 10 (November 2008): 525–49; Olga Onuch, "Why Did They Join En Masse? Understanding 'Ordinary' Ukrainians' Participation in Mass-Mobilisation in 2004," *New Ukraine/Nowa Ukraina* 11 (2011): 89–113.

6. See the 2005 and 2006 surveys carried out by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (*http://www.kiis.com.ua*), and the Ukrainian Protest Project's 2008 and 2009 surveys on Orange Revolution protest participation (*http://ukrainianprotestproject.com*).

7. Data from author's focus group with ordinary citizens, Kyiv, 27 July 2009.

8. Clare Saunders et al., "Explaining Differential Protest Participation: Novices, Returners, Repeaters, and Stalwarts," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 17 (September 2012): 263–80.

9. An oblast is a province, though not exactly a federal unit, since Ukraine has a unitary rather than a federal form of government. There are 24 oblasts (including Crimea), plus Kyiv city, which functions as its own administrative region.