Marta Dyczok

Breaking Through the Information Blockade: Election and Revolution in Ukraine 2004

ABSTRACT: The mass media are an important part of modern elections and revolutions. This was certainly the case in Ukraine in 2004 when a key Presidential election erupted into the Orange Revolution and resulted in a change in the country’s ruling political elite. This paper looks at the impact of the mass media on political events in Ukraine during the 2004 presidential election campaign, and suggests that television in particular played a central role in the events which led to the Orange Revolution and its aftermath. It looks at how both the establishment and the opposition used the media to try and achieve their political goals, whether they were successful, and what the implications are.

INTRODUCTION

Ukraine caught the world’s attention in the autumn of 2004. A corrupt establishment tried to steal a presidential election and hundreds of thousands of people protested by taking to the streets. This became known as the Orange Revolution—it caused the fraudulent election to be overturned and a new vote to be called. The re-vote was reasonably fair and the opposition candidate, Victor Yushchenko, was elected President. This paper suggests that the mass media, and specifically television, played an important role in these dramatic events.1

To examine the media’s role, this paper looks at the two main groups that were competing for power: the vlada (establishment)2 and the opposition. It explores how they tried to use the media, what their goals were and what strategies they used to achieve their objectives, and other factors. It then assesses the degree to which each group was successful in achieving those goals.

The paper argues that Yushchenko’s ultimate victory was due in part to his success in breaking through the establishment’s information blockade. In other words, the fact that Ukrainians were shown the details of the establishment’s wrongdoing, including electoral falsifications, provided them with the grounds

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1 This paper is part of a larger study based at the University of Western Ontario which examines the evolution of mass media in post-communist Ukraine. My thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for their financial support, to Oksana Hasiuk (Kyiv), Olena Nikolayenko and Olga Kesarchuk (University of Toronto) for their research assistance; also to Volodymyr Kulyk, Natalie Mychajlyczyn, Mykola Ryabchuk and Susan Viets for their comments.

2 In Ukrainian, the term vlada can mean political authorities, government. In this paper it is translated as establishment and used in a broader sense, which includes political and economic elites—in other words, government officials, oligarchs and their associates, since until Yushchenko came to power there was little separation of these groups.
and motivation to go out to the main square, the maidan, and protest. This analysis is based on research and observations conducted in Ukraine during the autumn of 2004, primarily from interviews with journalists, media experts, and government officials, public opinion polls, vote results and media monitoring projects.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

ANALYTICAL CHALLENGES

Any analysis of Ukraine’s media is challenging for a number of reasons. For a start, the situation is constantly changing, in some ways reflecting the situation in which Ukraine as a country finds itself, moving between the past and the future, no longer a communist state but also not yet a democracy. In the late Kuchma years it had been called many things from a “blackmail state” to a “pseudo-democracy,” and most analysts believed that Ukraine’s transformation was stuck in the “grey zone” where economic growth occurs but corruption is rampant.

In the period leading up to the election campaign, the media were no longer fulfilling the role they had during the communist era, but were not yet functioning as they would in a consolidated democracy. Rather, they contained elements evident in both political systems as well as unique characteristics of their own, specifically an information vacuum or information blockade which will be described below.

A second set of difficulties arises with theoretical and methodological issues which all media studies face. The scholarly literature is diverse and lacks consensus on many fundamental issues, as stated by well known media scholar Denis McQuail, who says that “the entire study of mass communications is based on the assumption that the media have significant effects, yet there is little

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3 This argument was presented by Ihor Kulias during an interview in Kyiv on 18 December 2004. Kulias was the news editor for Novyi Kanal, owned by oligarch Victor Pinchuk, and quit his position as a sign of protest against censorship in 2002. He then went to work for an NGO called INTERNEWS where he has been training young TV journalists and actively involved in journalistic opposition activities. He is considered one of the top TV journalists in Ukraine.

4 The author spent the months of August-December 2004 in Ukraine conducting research and became an eye witness to all these events. This article was written after returning to Canada, in spring 2005.

5 Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu aptly used the famous Hanna Arendt phrase to title their collection: Between Past and Future. The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath (Budapest: Central University Press, 2000).

agreement on the nature and extent of these presumed effects.”

When trying to assess the role of media, in this case on an election campaign, difficulties arise since few quantitative indicators exist which could prove decisively the degree to which the mass media influence public opinion intentionally or unintentionally, in the short term or over a period of time. Similarly there is a lack of consensus on the role of the media in advertising and the impact of negative political advertising or other impact on public opinion.

Most media and communication studies examine the role of the media in consolidated democracies and are therefore of limited use for studying countries undergoing a transformation. One illustration is the challenge of using public opinion polls, which are regularly conducted in Ukraine and methodologically sound, but live in the shadow communist legacies where it is difficult to be certain that all Ukrainians answer pollsters completely honestly. Therefore, results from public opinion polls in Ukraine should be treated as useful resources but caution has to be exercised and other sources should also be consulted.

These challenges draw attention to the complexity of the issues which exist in any media analysis, and which are compounded in Ukraine’s post-communist context. Nonetheless, the mass media are a key feature of the political landscape

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and need to be included in any larger analysis to provide insight into society, politics, and relations between elites and society.\textsuperscript{11}

A branch of media studies which may be useful in examining the situation in Ukraine in 2004 is the media effects scholarship. An early theory which is still popular with authoritarian regimes and some advertising companies is the all powerful media effects model, which suggests that the media have a direct impact on public opinion and can be used as a propaganda tool to shape opinions and therefore behaviour.\textsuperscript{12} These ideas were developed in the 1920s and 1930s and were useful for explaining use of media as a propaganda tool in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, but are not terribly helpful for looking at Ukraine’s recent election, since the model would suggest that incumbent Prime Minister Yanukovych should have won the election because he received more media attention than any other candidate.

The second main analytical approach, the limited effects model, was developed between the 1930s and 1960s. This model makes the case that there is no simple, direct link between media stimulus and audience response. Instead it suggests that social and cultural context plays an important role in how messages are interpreted.\textsuperscript{13} This model is interesting but by the 1960s also fell out of vogue because it was unable to fully explain the complex relationship between public opinion and the mass media, and perhaps more importantly because empirical evidence challenged its validity. Events in Ukraine in 2004 also do not support the main premises of this model, since TV did play an important role.

In the 1960s the limited effects model was challenged, in part because of the arrival of television as a new medium. Media research went off in a variety of theoretical directions and scholars disbursed themselves along the “effects continuum.” One of the theories developed at this time was the cumulative effects model, which suggests that the mass media have an impact on public opinion (and consequently human behaviour) through prolonged exposure. Human beings do not tend to respond immediately to information or opinions presented through the media, but will do so over time: the impact is

\textsuperscript{11} In this paper, the mass media are analyzed through the lens of “media as politics” rather than “media as culture,” mainly because political developments in Ukraine have been so dramatic.


cumulative.\textsuperscript{14} The cumulative effects model seems to explain, at least in part, how the mass media were used effectively by both the old establishment in Ukraine to stop Yushchenko and promote their candidate, and by the opposition in using information as a means to motivate Ukrainians. This model has a few dimensions, including cultivation research, agenda setting, priming and others, and although not entirely applicable to Ukraine in 2004, can perhaps explain some of the behaviour of Ukrainians, although further research is warranted.

\textit{The Media Situation Before the 2004 Election Campaign, or the Information Blockade}

Elites own and control all the main media outlets in Ukraine, including national television. In fact, this is the norm in most countries, and an entire branch of media studies suggests that elites always use the media as a tool of social management.\textsuperscript{15} In Ukraine during the late Kuchma era, however, elite control of information became not just manipulation to produce consensus, but overt media censorship. The establishment perceived the mass media as an instrument which could be used to curtail the free flow of information. Their goal was to contain public criticism of their often corrupt activities, to manipulate public opinion, and occasionally to win elections. The establishment was not trying to promote an ideology, since it had none, but rather was limiting the amount of information circulating so that people would not really know what was going on, creating an \textit{information vacuum}.\textsuperscript{16} Serious political and economic content which contradicted pro-establishment views was removed from the diverse, Western-looking and glossy media landscape, creating a virtual reality, the aim of which was to disempower society. Many in Ukraine called this “zombuvannia liudei”—making people into zombies.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{16} These phrases were suggested by Ukrainian journalists Iryna Pohorelova (interview, Kyiv, 20 June 2003) and Natalia Ligacheva (interview, Kyiv 22 July 2003). Pohorelova is a journalist from the glasnost era, widely respected for the fact that she has never submitted to censorship. Currently she freelances for a variety of media including \textit{Ukrains'ka Pravda}. Ligacheva is founder and editor of the Telekritika website. These ideas are elaborated in my paper, “Does Mass Media Influence Public Opinion?” presented at the 9\textsuperscript{th} Annual ASN World Convention at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, 15-17 April 2004.

\textsuperscript{17} This phrase was widely used, but was particularly poignant during an interview with
This was seen as further evidence of Ukraine’s democratic backsliding. After the collapse of communism, Ukraine had experienced a period of relative media freedom. State censorship was lifted, private ownership was introduced and new technologies appeared, which resulted in approximately 90 per cent of Ukraine’s media becoming privately owned. Also, new media such as satellite and cable television, and perhaps most importantly, the internet, appeared.

However, by the mid 1990s consolidation of power began, various oligarch groups/clans began emerging and gradually freedom of speech became curtailed. As political and economic elites became increasingly intertwined, media ownership was increasingly concentrated and large media holdings appeared—the establishment realized the importance of controlling information. By 1998, all six TV stations with national broadcast reach were in the hands of two oligarch clans and the state. Channel, UT1 remained state owned; INTER and 1+1 were reportedly under the influence of the Victor Medvedchuk-led SDPU(o) Kyiv clan; and STB, ICTV and New Channel were owned by President Kuchma’s son-in-law, Victor Pinchuk. The media holdings also included newspapers, internet sites and regional media outlets. In 1999 Kuchma was re-elected President despite low popularity ratings and a year later the growing censorship in Ukraine’s media gained international attention after journalist Heorhii Gongadze disappeared and Kuchma was implicated in his death. It should be noted that the establishment was not a monolithic elite, that various clans competed with each other and maintained links with their counterparts in Russia. Media watchers in Ukraine commented on the differences between the TV channels owned by Pinchuk and those controlled by SDPU(o).

When the Parliamentary election unfolded in 2002, the establishment was united in its effort to use the mass media as one of the instruments to win seats in the legislature. Although following the letter of the Law on Elections which allows all parties a specified amount of airtime on state owned media outlets, the establishment manipulated the system by creating pseudo parties to appeal to certain parts of the electorate, overspending on advertising, manipulating news coverage to its advantage and largely preventing opposition parties from appearing in the mainstream media. The SDPU(o) oligarch party also hired

Victor Yushchenko’s Donets’k oblast’ headquarters press secretary, Oleksandr Mishchenko, during an interview in Donets’k, 12 October 2004.


19 For a comprehensive discussion see J. Koshiw, Beheaded: the Killing of a Journalist (Reading: Artemia Press, 2003).
Russian PR experts who introduced temnyky to Ukraine.\(^{20}\) Despite all these efforts, the pro-presidential and oligarch parties received only 18.04 per cent of the popular vote, as compared to 57.68 per cent given to the four main opposition parties. The establishment was, nonetheless, able to form a majority in Parliament by drawing on MPs elected through the majoritarian system.\(^{21}\)

Throughout this period, alternative information and perspectives were available to Ukrainians through non-oligarch owned newspapers and the internet; these media outlets, however, were not considered highly influential since in 2004 only 12 per cent of Ukraine’s population used the internet on a regular basis,\(^{22}\) and polls show that fewer than 20 per cent of the population considered newspapers their main source of information. Both the establishment and the opposition learned lessons from the 2002 parliamentary election campaign and revised their media strategies accordingly for the 2004 Presidential campaign.

**ELECTION 2004**

The 2004 presidential election was crucially important for Ukraine because there was a realistic possibility for elite change—Kuchma was not eligible to run for a third term and the opposition bloc Nasha Ukraina had a strong candidate. The establishment and the opposition\(^{23}\) had very different media policies, yet both focused heavily on television because of its influential role. Television is widely recognized as the most potent medium because of the power of the moving image.\(^{24}\)

The establishment’s main objective was to preserve the status quo, and its greatest dilemma was the fact that the most popular politician in the country, Victor Yushchenko, was an opposition leader, and would likely win in a fair contest. Therefore the establishment embarked on a multi-dimensional “stop

\(^{20}\) These first appeared on 1+1, INTER and UT1. Temnyky are censorship documents which instructed news editors how to present the news, what to highlight, what to ignore, and so on, and were reportedly first used in Russia during the 1996 Presidential election campaign.


\(^{23}\) Neither the establishment nor the opposition was united during this campaign, but a discussion of the disagreements within each group is outside the scope of this paper.

Yushchenko” project, which included creating an uneven playing field through its abuse of state (administrative) resources, distortion of the electoral process (exposed later), and manipulation of public opinion through the mass media. Since members of the establishment owned and controlled all the mainstream media outlets in the country they were able to continue the information blockade against Yushchenko while pursuing a variety of strategies described below.

The opposition’s challenge was to enable its candidate to get his message out to voters and do what it could to ensure a fair electoral process. The opposition’s media strategy was relatively simple—to break through the establishment’s information blockade, since as journalist Mykola Veresen’ put it, “the free flow of information would help Yushchenko and hurt his enemies.”

The opposition’s main success in this was in setting up its own TV station well before the election, which, despite its limited broadcast reach, broke through the establishment’s information blockade.

**MEDIA STRATEGIES: THE ESTABLISHMENT**

The “Stop Yushchenko” media project used three tactics to influence public opinion against Yushchenko: 1) continued and expanded news censorship including denying Yushchenko access to media outlets; 2) discrediting Yushchenko in analysis and current affairs shows; and 3) use and abuse of advertising. Parallel to this was a campaign promoting Yanukovych by focusing on his record as a successful Prime Minister.

From the 2002 experience it was clear that control of the mainstream media outlets was a useful technique for preventing the opposition from getting its message to the voters. Therefore, in the summer of 2002 censorship was intensified further. Positive advertising was seen as not effective in and of itself, therefore it was combined with a series of negative ads which specifically targeted the regions of Ukraine where Yushchenko’s popularity was low, namely the east and south east, and combined with other strategies such as raising pensions and focusing media attention on that.

Interestingly, once again the Russian political technologists who helped Putin win elections, Marat Gelman and Gleb Pavlovsky from the Moscow-based Effective Politics Fund, were hired to formulate media policy and strategies for the Ukrainian establishment, despite the fact that some Ukrainian commentators noted their lack of success in the 2002 election. Informed

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25 Mykola Veresen’, interview, Kyiv, 13 December 2004. Veresen’ was the first Ukrainian journalist to work for a Western media outlet, BBC in 1991, then moved to television in the 1990s and after quitting Channel 1+1 in protest against censorship, worked for Channel 5.

26 Marat Gelman described these aims and his colleague Ihor Shuvalov admitted that he was working as a political technologist for the Presidential Administration and SDPU(o), interview conducted by Mykola Veresen’ on Hromads’ke Radio, Kyiv 19 May 2004. The text of the interview is posted on <www.telekritika.kiev.ua>. 
journalists were talking about the Russian political technologists and the “Stop Yushchenko” well before the presidential election campaign began or the establishment candidate was even selected. In the words of Channel 5 host Roman Chaika, “the aim was to make everything bad Yushchenko’s fault. If the sewer system backed up, people were told that Yushchenko was responsible.”

The information blockade was maintained on all national, regional and local TV stations, as well as in the print media outlets, yet was incomplete since the opposition minded Channel 5 was not taken off the air.

**DISTORTED AND BIASED NEWS**

Censorship and the use of temnyky were intensified during the period between the parliamentary and presidential elections, especially when SDPU(o) leader Victor Medvedchuk was appointed Head of the Presidential Administration in July 2002. The censorship effectively removed Yushchenko from the mainstream media, as journalists were instructed to either ignore him or portray him in a negative light, and he was not allowed to respond. After the Orange Revolution former news editor of Ukraine’s second most popular TV Channel 1+1, Viacheslav Pikhovshek, admitted, “Yushchenko was not on the air in TSN News for 149 days in a row, and I am now embarrassed for having taken that decision.”

Numerous media monitoring projects were launched during the election campaign and they all report systematic bias, one-sided reporting of political events in favour of Yanukovych, and lack of equal access for all candidates. The most comprehensive data set was collected by the Ukrainian Monitor Project, based at Kyiv Taras Shevchenko University, who report that:

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27 For a sample of these discussions see the website of Telekritika from 2003 onwards, <http://www.telekritika.kiev.ua>.

28 “5 Kopiook” Show on Channel 5, 16 October 2004, when the guests were Ira Pohorelova and Dmytro Dzhangirov. Pohorelova also commented on this. Chaika was one of the founding members of Channel 5.


30 See Appendix 2.


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The information presented on most national television channels from the beginning of March through 21 November [2004] was biased (not balanced). The various candidates did not have equal access to mass media, information programs presented events in a biased manner and numerous tactics were used to manipulate public opinion. This situation changed only during the last 3-4 weeks of the campaign when things changed radically and the process gained democratic attributes.\(^{33}\)

**ANALYTICAL PROGRAMS AND TALK SHOWS ATTACK**

Another media dimension of the “Stop Yushchenko” project was using TV news analysis shows to target Yushchenko, with the aim of discrediting him. Perhaps the best example of this was a short, five-minute commentary show called, “Prote” (However) which followed the 1+1 evening news program at 7:30. The first show aired on 21 January 2003 and every evening until the election in October 2004, Ukrainian viewers watched either Dmytro Korchyn's'kyi or Dmytro Dzhangirov spend five minutes attacking Yushchenko and his political allies.\(^{34}\) On the eve of the Presidential vote Dzhangirov openly stated on a live Channel 5 talk show, “We have accomplished our goal, since Yushchenko is losing the election.”\(^{35}\)

Two other programs which gained notoriety for Yushchenko-bashing were the weekly Ukrainian language “Epicentre” show hosted by V"iacheslav Pikhovshek on channel 1+1, and the daily, Russian language show “Podrobno s Dmitriem Kiselevym” (Details with Dmitri Kiselev) on the Pinchuk-owned ICTV channel, which came on just before the evening news. Pikhovshek and Kiselev were also the news editors for their stations and therefore directly responsible for censorship and creating a distorted image of Yushchenko. Neither of these shows is on the air any longer, and their archives have been removed from the TV channels’ websites.

**ADVERTISING**

Although the letter of the law was followed in that Yushchenko received his legally mandated time on state owned television and radio,\(^{36}\) he experienced

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\(^{34}\) See interview by Telekritika with Korchyn's'kyi on 15 January 2003 just as the program was about to be launched: <http://www.telekritika.kiev.ua/interview/?id=6575>; and announcement by Korchyn's'kyi that he is quitting the show to run for president, <http://ua.proua.com/news/2004/07/17/135519.html>.

\(^{35}\) Roman Chaika’s “5 Kopiiok,” a program on Channel 5, 16 October 2004.

\(^{36}\) According to Article 61.4 of the Law on the Election of the President of Ukraine, adopted 18 March 2004, each candidate is entitled to unpaid advertising on state owned broadcast media outlets: 30 minutes on a national TV station, 45 minutes on a national radio station, also 30 minutes on each regional TV station and 20 minutes on regional radio stations. For details see <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi>.
difficulties selling advertising to private media outlets\textsuperscript{37} and was the target of a massive negative advertising campaign. The anti-ads usually contained messages which seemed to target Ukrainians in the south and south-eastern oblasts where Yushchenko’s support was already low. Yushchenko was portrayed as a Russophobic fascist and American puppet, thus playing on fears of forcible Ukrainianization, and lingering anti-American feelings left over from the Cold War characteristic of certain oblasts.\textsuperscript{38}

There were various genres of these anti-ads. One used the so-called “technical” candidates with a memorable example being Roman Kozak, the head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, who received the second lowest number of votes in the first round,\textsuperscript{39} yet during the campaign he had the funding to run continuous ads on all the national networks. Kozak spoke in Ukrainian, identified himself as a nationalist who was supporting Yushchenko and said that Ukraine needs foreign help. He then went on to inform viewers that “when Mr. Yushchenko wins I will advise him to ban usage of the Russian language and introduce mandatory visas for travel to Russia.” Images from World War II were used in the ads, the implication being that the nationalists had collaborated with the fascists and Yushchenko was painted with the same brush. The frequency of these negative ads appearing during prime time on the national TV stations varied during different phases of the campaign.\textsuperscript{40}

Another genre made use of maps, for example, an infamous ad (which also had print versions) was a map of Ukraine. It was divided into three geographic sections, with western Ukraine labeled 1\textsuperscript{st} class, central Ukraine labeled 2\textsuperscript{nd} class and south/south-east Ukraine labeled 3\textsuperscript{rd} class. The map used colours and logos from the Yushchenko campaign and said simply, “This is their Ukraine. Open your eyes.”\textsuperscript{41} A softer genre of anti-ads contained Yanukovych campaign colours and although these did not directly mention any candidate, it was clear who the right choice was. A popular example was a young student on graduation

\textsuperscript{37} A formal complaint was lodged in Parliament on October 2004; interview with Volodymyr Kurinnyi, head of Yushchenko’s campaign headquarters, Odesa, 22 September 2004. Evidence of systematic refusal to purchase advertising in regional broadcast media is also available in the data of the Ukrainian Monitor, Media Monitoring Project, Final Report Summary, <http://prostir-monitor.org>.


\textsuperscript{39} He received a total of 8,410 votes, according to <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/elect/wp0011>.

\textsuperscript{40} For details see AUP, Political Advertising on Television, October 2004 <http://www.aup.com.ua>.

\textsuperscript{41} See Appendix 3.

\textsuperscript{251} Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes
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day saying that he did not want to be treated as a second-class citizen just because he speaks Russian, and on Election Day he knew whom to vote for.\footnote{Samples of these ads can be viewed in the AUP reports \textit{Political Advertising on Television}, <http://www.aup.com.ua>}

Positive advertising promoting Yanukovych was also part of the strategy. Images used were intended to create a positive image for Yanukovych—linking stability, the establishment, and social benefits. Endorsements were widely used, including Olympic gold medalists (the 2004 summer Olympics were fresh in people’s minds), Ukraine’s first President Leonid Kravchuk who stressed continuity and strength, and pop stars, as well as ordinary people.

Since it was impossible to fully block Yushchenko’s ads on national television because of the Electoral Law, the ad sandwich was used to minimize their effect. Election adverts were typically shown in blocs, which would lead with a positive Yanukovych ad, followed by some neutral ones, then a Yushchenko ad and a few negative, anti-Yushchenko ads to end the sequence.

\textbf{MEDIA STRATEGIES: THE OPPOSITION}

Opposition strategies included: (1) repeating the successful technique of traveling throughout the country and meeting with voters directly; (2) use of advertising; and (3) gaining TV access by purchasing their own station. One lesson learned in 2002 was that without access to television it would be difficult to expand Yushchenko’s support sufficiently to win the election. The establishment was once again expected to manipulate the electoral process and use the mass media to silence Yushchenko and distort his image. The information blockade would work against Yushchenko so he needed to break through. The opposition’s aims were to get their message out and to empower people to stand up to corruption and abuses, or as Yushchenko liked to put it, “get up off their knees.”

In some ways the third strategy was the most important, since having control of a TV station enabled them to break through the establishment’s information blockade. They managed to secure a broadcast license for a TV station in mid-2003 by combining two small regional media companies, TRK NBM and TRK Express Inform, but not advertising their connection to Nasha Ukraina and following the letter of the law. To publicly demonstrate that they were not like the establishment, that they were not planning to use the TV station as an instrument to manipulate, the TV station’s management and owners, Vladyslav Liasovs’kyi, Ivan Adamchuk, and Petro Poroshenko, signed a public agreement with the news team, led by opposition journalists Andrii Shevchenko and Roman Skrypin,\footnote{In 2002 both journalists had quit prestigious, high paying TV jobs in protest against censorship, see Grigorii Rudenko, “Rebellion within Ukraine’s Media Sector,” \textit{Kommersant} 4 October 2002.} guaranteeing that the management would not interfere
with editorial policy. The new Channel 5 was a “merezhevyi kanal,” (network station) and is best described as semi-mainstream since it broadcast nationally, but had only 37 per cent audience reach, connecting mainly in urban centres. It also had difficulties broadcasting in certain parts of the country, specifically Donets’k and Dnipropetrovs’k. It did not follow temnyky, and re-introduced live talk shows and investigative journalism to Ukrainian television.

In July 2004, the opposition received a boost in the information sphere—ERA TV also began moving away from the censor’s guidelines and by the autumn they were also quite oppositional. This was a huge support for Yushchenko, since ERA TV broadcasts on the state owned UT1 and reaches 97 per cent of Ukrainian households, albeit in off peak hours.

**REACHING OUT TO VOTERS IN PERSON**

One strategy used effectively by the Nasha Ukraina bloc, one which had worked in 2002, was to circumvent the establishment’s information blockade by traveling around the country and having Yushchenko speak to voters directly at mass meetings. From the start of the campaign until he was hospitalized in early September, he traveled around the country to meet with people, and the mass meetings were filmed and used in the advertising which was then shown on television to magnify their impact. He resumed his travels on 18 September 2004.

**ADVERTISING**

The Yushchenko campaign also relied on advertising, but not the negative variety. His strategy instead was to portray himself as the moral alternative to the current corrupt establishment; this message was incorporated into the ads in which he promoted himself as the candidate for change. He was often shown in large crowds of supporters, filmed during his travels. The messages were aimed to show the extent of his support, to encourage people not to be afraid or intimidated by the establishment—that they were not alone—and included promises of accountability upon his election. A memorable slogan was, “Bandits will go to jail.” Svitlana Riaboshapka’s show on Channel 5 called “Cabinet”

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45 See Appendix 1 below and <http://www.5tv.com.ua>.
46 For example: “5 Kopiyok” hosted by Roman Chaika; and “Zakryta Zona” by Volodymyr Ariiev.
48 ERA TV airs between 11:00 PM and 8:00 AM, is owned by Andrii Derkach, the son of Leonid Derkach, the former head of the SBU. Derkach Jr. also owns ERA radio and the newspaper Kievskii Telegraf.
(The Office), which followed the daily evening news and was often quite critical of the authorities and Yanukovych, could be considered negative advertising.  

The Law on Presidential Elections guaranteed that Yushchenko had access to 30 minutes of free advertising on the state TV channel and his TV ads did appear quite often on the national TV stations. Their impact was mitigated by context since they always appeared in an “advert sandwich” described above. His campaign team also reported difficulties in selling advertising on the regional level.

**THE POWER OF TELEVISION: CHANNEL 5 BREAKS THROUGH THE INFORMATION VACUUM**

Channel 5 was different from other Ukrainian TV stations broadcasting nationally in that it was not subjected to censorship, either by the establishment or its owners. Journalists who went to work there tended to be opposition minded Yushchenko supporters, which meant that the opposition received a lot of coverage for their candidate (mainly positive) and perhaps more importantly, alternative, non-censored information was made available on national TV. This included plenty of detailed information about wrongdoings of the establishment. In early September of 2004, the editor of Ukraine’s most respected newspaper, Volodymyr Mostovyi, described the situation as follows, “most TV stations in Ukraine are like apartments with windows facing only in one direction, to the part of the street which is neat and clean. Channel 5 is the only TV station that has windows going out in two directions.”

To dispel the idea of an omnipotent establishment and encourage people to stand up for themselves, Channel 5 used the power of images, humour and support for opposition activities. The Egg Incident, on 24 September 2004, a few weeks after Yushchenko had been poisoned, was a good example. Wanting to gain sympathy for its candidate, the establishment put a particular spin on the incident and Channel 5 exposed it. On the Friday in question, the establishment-controlled media reported that during a campaign visit to Ivano-Frankivs’k, Prime Minister Yanukovych had been attacked by a number of unidentified, blunt, heavy objects and that he was recovering from the attack in hospital. This was the version reported to the author by a taxi driver in Kherson on the day of the incident. All of the controlled TV stations showed footage of the collapse followed by interviews with members of the Yanukovych campaign team, investigators at the scene, and an interview from the hospital next day. Channel 5 was broadcasting footage from the incident, but it was showing the entire

49 For an archive of the show see <http://www.5tv.com.ua/pr_archiv/133/>.  
50 See fn. 35.  
51 Interview with Volodymyr Mostovyi, editor, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* newspaper, Kyiv, 8 September 2004.  
52 On 24 September 2004 the author was on a research trip in Kherson conducting interviews and did not have access to a TV until the following day.
incident. The clip started with images of students who had been forced to attend the Yanukovych rally chanting Yushchenko, then showed the Yanukovych campaign bus arriving. Victor Yanukovych stepping off the bus smiling, a fast moving object hitting him in the chest, him touching his chest and then dramatically collapsing and being taken away. The announcer informed viewers that the object had been a raw egg.

It seems that the establishment did not realize that Channel 5 had footage from the scene, since opposition reporters and cameramen were not allowed to travel in Yanukovych’s press pool and his press secretary had confiscated all the video cassettes from the TV reporters on the bus. As it turned out, Channel 5 received a copy, according to them from a cameraperson from Channel 1+1, and they lost no time in broadcasting it over and over, in slow motion, and posting it on their website. When reporting on the story they ran another short visual report of Yulia Tymoshenko, a petite woman, who was also attacked by an egg the same week while she was speaking at a rally in Zaporizhzhia, and she just continued speaking, making a little comment, that “you will not be able to stop us with a few eggs.”

As a result, Yanukovych became a laughing stock rather than gaining sympathy for allegedly being attacked by blunt, heavy objects. This spawned an entire genre of egg jokes, video games and songs. The egg incident also illustrates well how Channel 5 used humour to combat the seemingly all powerful establishment, and introduced elements of political satire and irreverence to Ukraine’s political culture. This is how the opposition broke through the establishment’s information blockade; without Channel 5 Ukrainians would likely have believed the establishment’s version of events.

Another technique used quite successfully by Channel 5 was to devote airtime during the news to opposition stories. This had the effect of not only spreading information about protests, but also fostering a feeling within society that “you are not alone,” that if you stand up for yourself, Channel 5 will be there to back you up. A good example was the summer student protest in Sumy, which, despite the violence which the state used to try and quell the uprising, ended in student victory. Channel 5 had daily, lengthy reports on this story until it was resolved, and during the author’s visit to Sumy as an international elections observer for the repeat vote on 26 December 2004, a number of Sumy residents mentioned that they became politicized and decided to actively join the opposition as a result of these events.


54 For example, see <http://www.eggs.net.ua/>.

55 My thanks to Kyiv Post journalist Roman Olearchyk who developed this point for me in a discussion during the Orange Revolution, November 2004, Kyiv.
Lastly, Channel 5 politicized society and encouraged oppositional attitudes by providing examples of success in standing up to the *vlada* through its own actions. Shortly before the first round of the election there was an attempt to take Channel 5 off the air. Its bank accounts were frozen, its license was taken under review by the *Natsional'na Rada Ukrainy z Pytan' Telebachennia i Radiomovlennia* (the National Television and Broadcasting Council of Ukraine—the state agency which allocates broadcast licenses).\(^56\) The channel fought back by starting a hunger strike which it broadcast on its station starting on 25 October 2004. This continued through the first election round until 2 November when the channel’s accounts were unfrozen and its license was deemed fine. There was a ceremonial announcement “We Won” on the news that evening, and the banner is still posted on the home page of its web site.

All these techniques were effective in countering the establishment’s efforts to turn people into passive zombies who would accept electoral falsifications without protest. Once a critical event occurred, people responded to the call for protest, and when they saw on Channel 5 how many people were streaming down to the main square, they too headed there to join in. The fact that alternative information was available for a year and a half before the election was also significant, since public opinion does not change instantly, as was seen after the lifting of censorship during the Orange Revolution.

**OTHER FACTORS**

Journalists played an active role in these events and arguably had an influence on the events and their outcome. The state and oligarch media owners thought of journalists and editors as their instruments (or servants) and they could not have maintained censorship if journalists and editors refused to participate in it. Some journalists were part of the oligarchic clans, played an active role in formulating and executing censorship policies, and were popularly referred to as “information killers.” Others opposed censorship, usually at great personal and professional cost, and worked to build solidarity among journalists and maintain professional and ethical standards. The overwhelming majority was simply trying to survive in difficult circumstances. Once Channel 5 appeared, it became a magnet for opposition-minded journalists where they began to create a critical mass. Their opposition to censorship emboldened others and when the Orange Revolution began large numbers of other TV journalists rebelled causing an information revolution.

The first massive mutiny happened on Channel 1+1, the station with the second largest broadcast reach in the country. On the first day of the revolution it stopped having news since *all* the journalists except the news editor and chief censor, V"iacheslav Pikhovshek, refused to work.\(^57\) Two days later a group of

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\(^56\) See <http://www.nradatvr.kiev.ua/>.

\(^57\) See “TSN News Anchor Refused to Go on Air on Channel 1+1” *Telekritika*, 22
news journalists on the state-owned UT1 announced a strike as well.\textsuperscript{58} In a move which captured the imagination of the world, Natalia Dmytruk, who signed the news for deaf viewers of UT1, made the courageous move of ignoring her script and signing to her 100,000 viewers: “The results of the Central Electoral Commission are falsified. Do not believe them. Our President is Yushchenko. I am very sorry that I have been telling you lies but I will not do this anymore. I am not sure whether you will see me again.”\textsuperscript{59} These actions were arguably instrumental in the lifting of censorship, which occurred on 25 November 2005, four days into the revolution.\textsuperscript{60}

Russian television was an important external factor which needs to be considered. In Russian speaking areas of Ukraine viewers prefer to tune into Russian television, and survey data compiled by the KIIS shows that the regions which watched either the Russian language INTER channel or Russian TV overwhelmingly voted for Yanukovych.\textsuperscript{61} The tone and content of Russian television programming on the Ukrainian election was similar if not more biased and anti-Yushchenko than the Ukrainian establishment channels.

Another important external factor was the presence of international media in Ukraine once the Orange Revolution erupted, which broadcast events from the maidan and other parts of Ukraine around the world. This arguably had an influence on the revolution’s outcome since the eyes of the world made it less likely that the establishment would use force against the protesters,\textsuperscript{62} and the prominence of the story likely played a role in the fact that international mediators arrived in Ukraine quickly. Also, media within Ukraine, especially Channel 5, kept Ukrainians informed about the international response to the Orange Revolution, the various statements being made by foreign leaders and institutions like the European Union. This boosted the morale of the people protesting, as well, reassuring them that they were not isolated internationally.

\textsuperscript{61} Valerii Khmel’ko presented these results from a poll at meeting at the NaUKMA Media Club on 24 December 2004.
\textsuperscript{62} Another important factor was the fact that men in uniform had started coming over to the “Orange” side.
CONCLUSION

Looking back, the key question is what role did the media play, and what, if any, impact did they have on the election and revolution? What analytical tools can be used in this analysis? Answers are complex, since few quantitative indicators exist which would make irrefutable arguments and existing theoretical frameworks in media studies are only somewhat useful. A few conclusions can, nonetheless, be drawn.

The impact of the media was contradictory: it contributed to both Yanukovych’s and to Yushchenko’s support, as well as to the Orange Revolution’s success. Media campaigns of both the establishment and opposition were successful, but only in part. The seeming paradox is that Ukrainians both believed and disbelieved the media.63

On the one hand, the establishment’s media manipulation contributed to Yanukovych’s growth in popularity in 2004. Public opinion polls show that as his positive media exposure increased, his popularity grew sharply and rapidly, from 9 per cent support in January 2004, to 27 per cent in September; decreasing to 15 per cent by March 2005 once he was no longer in the spotlight.64 A consequence of the negative advertising dimension of the “Stop Yushchenko” project, which drew distinctions between ethnic groups and regions, contributed to an increase in regional divisions and inflated ethnic tensions.65

It is more difficult to make a direct correlation between censorship, negative advertising and electoral results; if one compares two maps; however, the impact is striking. The areas designated 3rd class in the widely circulated anti-Yushchenko map dividing Ukraine into 3 classes corresponds to the areas which voted for Yanukovych.66 There were clearly many complex dynamics at play which influenced the electoral results, nonetheless the fact that the south eastern areas of Ukraine were specifically targeted in the “Stop Yushchenko” project and that local media were more tightly controlled in those oblasts67 undoubtedly contributed to many people in the region not voting for him.

63 Interviews with Pohorelova, Kyiv, 3 September 2004; Kulias, Kyiv, 18 December 2004, and others.
66 See Appendix 3.
On the other hand, the media were a contributing factor in the revolution. The opposition’s success in breaking through the establishment’s information blockade played a role in mobilizing people to oppose electoral violations by participating in the organized protest. A combination of two media factors contributed to motivating large numbers of people to join the Orange Revolution: (1) heavy handed manipulation of the establishment-controlled media; and (2) access to alternative information on Channel 5, (supported by other new media such as the internet, cell phones and access to international reporting on satellite television). In the words of TV expert Ihor Kulias,

An information blockade is only effective if it is complete. Channel 5 provided alternative information and this played an important role for people to stand up for themselves. If people did not have this alternative information they would not have had the grounds (pidstavy) to go to the maidan. They would have been told that Yanukovych had won and that would have been it.

This argument seems convincing when the 2004 successful revolution is placed in perspective. Previous protests were not successful, and although many factors contributed to their failure, the opposition previously did not have access to mainstream (or semi-mainstream) television. In 1990, during the student hunger strike, one of the first student actions was to march to the main TV station on the Khreshchatyk to get their message out, but this was unsuccessful. The same was true during the 2000-01 “Ukraine without Kuchma” protest and the September 2002 “Rise up Ukraine” action. In fact, in September 2002 when the protests began, the establishment took all the national TV stations off the air until it was able to verify full control of all the news rooms. This was all a sharp contrast to 2004, when the opposition had Channel 5, which despite its limited broadcast reach nationwide, was available in the capital where the protests were always centered. An indicator of how important Channel 5 became during the revolution was that its ratings grew to the number three slot, surpassing four other channels which had more than double their broadcast reach. Channel 5 was used during the revolution to keep information circulating—large TV screens were set up in all the main revolutionary spots which broadcast Yushchenko’s speeches, news updates and music to keep the protesters entertained. Although a thorough analysis requires further research, it

68 Interviews with Valery Ivanov, President, Academy of Ukrainian Press, Kyiv, 14 December 2004; M. Veresen’, 13 December 2004; Olena Prytula, Editor, Ukrains’ka Pravda Internet Newspaper, Kyiv, 16 December 2004; Ievhen Fedchenko, Professor, University of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy School of Journalism, Kyiv, 21 December 2004 and others.

69 Interview with Ihor Kulias, Kyiv, 18 December 2004.

seems that the cumulative effect of both the “Stop Yushchenko” campaign and
the alternative information provided by Channel 5 and other non-establishment
media is a starting point for explaining these events.

In the relationship between media and democracy, two points are worth
noting: the nature of the Kuchma regime and the behaviour of the opposition.
Although Kuchma was far from being democratic, his regime was only semi-
authoritarian, which meant that it allowed for a degree of opposition activities
and remained open to international contact. Channel 5 was harassed but not
taken off the air, and although the establishment tried to control information it
never closed off access to foreign media. Both of these factors contributed to the
success of the Orange Revolution, and stand in sharp contrast to the behaviour
of the Uzbek authorities in May 2005 when they closed the borders and tried to
contain the information on protests which had erupted in the Ferghana Valley.71

The opposition did not use the media as an instrument of control the way
the establishment did. Rather, its behaviour is more in line with political elites in
democratic countries, who want positive coverage but do not manipulate media
outright. Although many journalists expressed scepticism whether the new elite
really perceives the role of the media in democratic terms, until now (spring
2005) there has been little evidence that they do not behave in keeping with
democratic norms.72

71 See “Uzbek Troops Shut off Second Town,” BBC Front Page News, 16 May 2005,
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4549873.stm>.
72 See Judith Lichtenberg, ed., Democracy and the Mass Media (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1990); Margaret Scammell and Holli Semetko, eds., The Media,
Journalism and Democracy (Dartmouth: Ashgate, 2000); See Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo
Mancini, Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics (Cambridge
APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL TV STATIONS: BROADCAST REACH AND AUDIENCE SHARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TV Channel</th>
<th>Broadcast Reach (per cent)</th>
<th>Audience Share 2004 (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UT1</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTER</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+1</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novyi Kanal</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICTV</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STB</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Less than 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GfK USM, 2004 as cited by Oleksandr Tkachenko on <http://www.telekritika.kiev.ua/comments/?id=20539>

APPENDIX 2: CENSORSHIP BY TEMNYKY

This is an excerpt from an article by Vakhtang Kipiani (“Victor Yushchenko: “Please Ignore,” published on Ukrain's'ka Pravda 21 May 2004, available on www.telekritika.kiev.ua, May 21, 2004). Kipiani illustrates how temnyky worked by describing an event and the instructions on how it was to be reported. Please note that this article appeared at the height of censorship, the spring of 2004.

30 March 2004. “The press conference of “Our Ukraine” leader Victor Yushchenko on the topic “How to return the Ukrainians” 10 billion hryvnias that have been concealed by the government will start at 2 pm” (Jaroslavsky'ska street, 1/3b).
Commentary (Instruction in Temnyk): No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

Commentary: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”
“On 31 March people’s deputy V. Yushchenko met with the President of Poland A. Kwasniewski.
Commentary: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

Commentary: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

19 April 2004. “Today from 6 to 10 pm Channel 5 will have a live broadcast of a TV marathon on the current events connected to yesterday’s elections of the Mukachevo city head. “Our Ukraine” leader Victor Yushchenko is scheduled to take part in the TV marathon.
Commentary: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

“The leader of “Our Ukraine” bloc Victor Yushchenko had a meeting with the prime minister of the Netherlands Ya. P. Balkenende.
Commentary: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

It is interesting that the same temnyk (from 19 April 2004) presents the meeting of Kuchma with the Dutch guest as an “important and topical issue”: “The analysts think that mass media will certainly include the demonstration of drawings from Frantz Kenings’ collection into the corresponding reports.”

“On Saturday, 24 April an extended meeting of the National Council of Ukrainian intelligentsia took place, during which its participants made a decision to nominate Victor Yushchenko for President of Ukraine.
Commentary: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

In one day the SDPU(o)-sponsored temnyky mentioned Victor Yushchenko at least three times. The TV mentioned him only once. However, let’s look at the context!

“Today, on 28 April, the president of Georgia Mikhail Saakashwilli who is currently on an official visit to Ukraine will have a meeting with the leader of the Ukrainian opposition, the head of “Our Ukraine” bloc Victor Yushchenko.
Commentary: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

Also on that same day, “A teacher from the village of Moryntsi has refuted the words of people’s deputy Victor Yushchenko that the Ukrainian language had not been taught in the countryside because the teacher of this subject had left for Portugal in search of a job.
**Commentary**: The issue is important and topical (29 April). The analysts suggest that in between the quotes of Victor Yushchenko and the teacher the presenter clearly characterizes Yushchenko’s words as “lies.”

“On 5 May a number of declarations by the people’s deputy Victor Yushchenko was announced, in particular, the statements he made in his interview to *Ukrains’ka Pravda* website.

*Commentary*: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

“On 7 May, the Chernivtsi museum named after V. Ivasiuk will display the exhibits that have been presented by Victor Yushchenko.

*Commentary*: No comment on any of the information on this topic.”

**APPENDIX 3: ANTI-ADVERTISING AND VOTING PATTERNS COMPARED**

In the original, “I sort” was in orange, “II sort” was in blue and “III sort” was in yellow.
Source: Serhij Vasylenko, Europe XXI Foundation, serhij@europexxi.kiev.ua