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Visual Symbols in Civil Resistance Movements – Three Revolutions in Ukraine

Since 1990 in Ukraine there have been three significant outbreaks of opposition to the rulers. Each time the protest took the form of civil resistance, also called a non-violent struggle. Its basic assumption is not to resort to violence, but to use many methods of pressure of a social, political, economic or psychological nature. This form of struggle compared to the armed struggle is more effective, and the main reason for this is greater participation, which in turn results from lower entry barriers. Another basic factor of success is related to protest sustainability, in which the cultural zone and symbolism play a fundamental role. The aim of the paper is to analyze the symbolism and cultural environment of the protests that took place in Ukraine in 1990, 2004, and 2013-2014. They differed in their aims and methods but some of their symbols were very similar, whereas some noticeably evolved. The first of them - the Granite Revolution set a certain framework for the future ones. Each protest was associated with gaining new experiences, but also with the participation of younger activists who wanted to influence the cultural shape of the protest. I consider the symbols and culture especially in the case of Ukraine as the basic tools used to sustain protests. They were supposed to strengthen the sense of power and unity, suppress too hot emotions and a sense of fear. Without their skillful use, referring to the Ukrainian tradition, but also to pop culture, upholding the protests could fail.