

**Charles University of Prague**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**Department of Civil Society**

**Master Thesis**

**Happy Recipients?**  
**(Ukrainian Advocacy NGOs, Western Democracy**  
**Assistance, Two Years after the Orange Revolution)**

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Olga Smirnova

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## Introduction

Armed with groovy logos and sarcastic slogans young democratic activists led thousands of Ukrainians to the streets and unseated the long-time unpopular president Kuchma in November 2004. Wrapped in orange and yellow scarves, with the steel determination to fight the evil, the demonstrators bravely staged the most grandiose socio-political play since the country's independence – the Orange revolution. Being so unexpectedly bright and exciting, these events caught a genuine interest throughout West and East. The West burst into applause: Ukraine seemed to turn her face to the family of liberal democracies, asking for an embrace. The East condemned: Ukraine has betrayed their interests by putting under question the sanctity of the traditional historical ties.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, the large bulk of the protest tactics and style that Ukrainian civic pro-democracy groups applied was clearly borrowed from their Georgian and Serbian “colleagues”. In 2003, Georgian students and civil activists became the backbone of the protest movement that toppled the country's Soviet-type president in favor of a cultured, US-educated young nationalist. The Georgian activists were in turn inspired by the Serbian democratic opposition movement that successfully led the rebellion against the Milosevic regime in the year 2000. And, interestingly, a common fact of these three movements was the financial and diplomatic backing coming from the United States and the EU. The West viewed the young Eastern-European democratic activists as the adherents capable of bringing liberal values to their societies and therefore offered them a friendly hand. Yet, this support proved tricky: On the one hand it increased the activists' scope of abilities, on the other it made them vulnerable to the accusation of being bought by the West.

The political events after the Ukrainian revolution were unfolding in a somewhat different direction from what was initially hoped for by the enthusiastic democratic activists. The orange opposition leaders delivered futile speeches, quarreled, and generally performed poorly; at the same time the main rivals of the democratic activists took their political revanche. The Western well-wishers meanwhile adopted a “wait and see” stand, being generally optimistic about the emergence of a strong civil society in Ukraine. The Eastern neighbor cast sarcastic “haven't-we-told-you” glances and attempted to renew her Big brother position. The average Ukrainians, on the whole

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this paper I use the term “The West” in the sense of Western Europe and the United States, while by “The East” I mean the Eastern European states of the former USSR, mainly Russia.

disappointed and disillusioned, tucked away their orange scarves and T-shirts as odd, out of fashion artifacts. Many of them questioned the activists - why had they brought this new corrupt elite to power? – and thus shifted all the responsibility to the shoulders of those who once gave them hope and encouragement. And what about the democratic activists – those students and NGO leaders - who so boldly waved the orange flags above the innumerable crowd, eager to storm the Presidential administration building two years ago? How do they assess the outcomes of the revolution today? What views do they hold towards the Western donors?

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### **Defining Research Question**

Of course, there is far more to national revolutions than the local U.S. consulate sponsoring activists with the tents, TV screens and sound systems to keep the protests alive. And there is more to them, than just financing seminars and trainings in the tactics of resistance. In each of the above-mentioned three cases the regimes were already indubitably hated by large sections of the population. And in all of three countries the pro-democratic activists succeeded in mobilizing various population groups into strong social movements. They invested a lot of effort in stirring the people's massive anger against the corrupt regimes and the desired political results were ultimately achieved – Western-orientated forces came to power, which initially enjoyed a broad public support. Whether the average citizens will retreat from the stage to never ever engage in political life again or, once aroused from apathy, empowered strong civil force will never fade away, is an interesting and vast topic for research. So vast and complex that I do not dare to unfold it here due to the time and space limits. Instead, what I want to focus on in this thesis are the actors that were prominent in the revolutionary movements, that is the democratic activists on the grass roots level. Those young men and women one can meet in everyday life, at the university, at NGOs or during street protest.

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In this respect the “West vs. East”, or to be more specific, the “Western-bought-activist”, arguments are often rather superficial; yet the adherents of the conspiracy theories are zealously trying to reveal the wizard behind the curtain. While some of their claims are not ungrounded – indeed, millions of U.S. dollars were spent to support civil society initiatives across Eastern Europe, other claims are simply products of their bright imagination (or political manipulation) - yet they nevertheless do find their reflection in public opinion, which in turn shapes the individual attitudes.

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It appears, hence, that in these cases the donors' funds to promote liberal democratic values were not spent in vain. Taking the three outlines cases as a starting point, in this paper I hence want to focus on the relation between Eastern aid recipients and their Western donors. My personal experience of being relatively closely attached to the protest movement in Ukraine inspired me to focus more attentively on the recipients' side of the democracy assistance. Taking this into consideration, I found the following points especially interesting:

1. The Serbian revolution in 2000 took place against a background of ongoing mass anti-globalization demonstrations around the world (the largest one was against the WTO summit in Seattle in 1999). Still, the Serbian public supported the revolutionary leaders, who advocated the joining of Western supranational institutions.<sup>2</sup>
2. The overall atmosphere in Yugoslavia was rather xenophobic and decidedly anti-West after the NATO bombings.<sup>3</sup> Yet the Serbian student movement supported by Western assistance was nevertheless successful in mobilizing people behind pro-Western slogans and aspirations.
3. In 2003, Georgia was one of the poorest countries of the former Soviet Union; the scarce job opportunities produced hundreds of thousands of labor migrants to more economically successful Russia. Yet democratic activists managed to lead the masses to oust Shevarnadze, who maintained close ties with Moscow.
4. In March 2003, the U.S. attacked Iraq exploiting the neo-conservative rhetoric of "democracy promotion" without UN approval and provoked mass anti-war protests around the world. Yet the protest leaders, who once shouted anti-American slogans under the windows of the U.S. embassy in Kyiv, soon gladly accepted the financial and logistic support from 'the world hegemon' and drew the Ukrainian people on the streets in the name of democracy.

In this paper I do not intend to analyze neither the mobilizing structures of the pro-democratic social movements in any of these states, nor the frames their activists used to

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<sup>2</sup> Moreover, many activists of the Serbian Otpor ('Resistance') movement said that they had been inspired by the Teamsters and Turtles of Seattle, adopted their tactics and organizational structure. Victor S. (2004): „Otpor, Zubr, Kmara, Pora, Mjaft: Eastern Europe's children of the revolution or front groups for the CIA?“ available at: <http://apostatewindbag.blogspot.com/2004/12/otpor-zubr-kmara-pora-mjaft-eastern.html> Access date: 08.08.2006

<sup>3</sup> Sarah E. Mendelson (2001): "Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Russia", *International Security*, Vol.25, No.4, p. 76



make their messages more resonant.<sup>4</sup> Neither am I going to present the post-revolutionary socio-political development, measure the strength of civil society, nor make a cross-country comparison on these issues. The task is complex, besides there is enough relevant information - scholarly inquiry as well as statistic data available. Instead, I want to focus on the civil society activists' personal attitude towards the Western democracy assistance – and the direct financial assistance in particular.

What I found interesting was the lack of consistent views the Ukrainian student leaders or civic activists, who were on the vanguard of the Orange revolution, displayed regarding their Western supporters.<sup>5</sup> It was obvious that many of them were at least once accused by their fellow countrymen of representing foreign (Western or American) interests, besides during the presidential election campaign the Ukrainian society was highly polarized: The Eastern and Southern electorate was dominated by pro-Russian sentiments, whereas the Western and Central was correspondingly leaning towards Western Europe. Some of them made no secret of the fact that their activities were backed up – and still are - by the Western donors. Others tried to avoid this ticklish issue. Based on the above, I came up with several assumptions:

1. The democratic activists are aware that direct and indirect financial aid creates some type of dependency. On the background of the rising anti-Americanism and the current political trends in Ukraine they find the accusations directed at them to some degree relevant.
2. Many of them represent or are involved in the domestic advocacy networks of NGOs or civil groups. Their organization(s) (their activity) have encountered – or expect to be confronted with - some problems/hostility among ordinary people or in public discourses.
3. Consequently many of them tend to somehow defend their foreign funding in the eyes of the broader public or they deem it necessary to not mention it too publicly.

At this point it is necessary to mention that most of the Western donors nowadays have agreed upon the views that the most efficient way to foster democratic changes in the post-communist competitive-authoritarian states is to support the local advocacy NGOs and anti-regime social movements. In countries like Ukraine these two are often closely

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<sup>4</sup> More on mobilizing structures see McCarthy, John M. – Zald, N. Mayer (1997): "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 6, pp. 1212-1241; and on framing see Benford, Robert D. – Snow, David A (2000): "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26, p.611-639

<sup>5</sup> This is based on my personal observation since I have not found this question discussed in the literature

interconnected: both are aiming at establishing the rule of law and government accountability, and many are dominated by reform-minded civil activists. It is logical that Western supporters view these people – and most of them are young, ambitious and relatively altruistic – as mediators between themselves and local communities. However, if the socio-political situation in the recipient country is not favorable (that is, if the majority of people is apathetic, skeptical or openly hostile to the democratic reforms), the activists are not only unsupported by their countrymen but also often condemned or even suspected as dangerous elements<sup>6</sup>.

Based on the above, the general questions I want to address in my research are: How do Ukrainian democratic civil groups perceive the Western democracy assistance they are receiving? Is their attitude sensitive to the changes in the broader socio-political context (in Ukraine after the Orange revolution)? Do they think that Ukraine needs civil society assistance from the West and if yes, what kind of assistance they find the most suitable and efficient? Has, according to them, Ukrainian society two years after the Orange revolution become more democratic and if yes, in which way?

I am also interested in their personal attitudes towards Western help: In a situation when Ukrainian democratic political forces have discredited themselves, and when Russian imperialistic ambitions are growing stronger, whether they deem not to mention too publicly the fact that they receive Western financial support. Whether they feel the need to defend their activity in the eyes of the broader public and what are, according to them, the main sources of the antidemocratic attitudes in Ukraine.

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### **Case Selection Justification**

Democracy assistance is one of the major variables responsible for shaping post-communist political change in the international environment; it includes geo-political, institutional-normative, and cultural elements.<sup>7</sup> An effort to promote the development of civil societies in Eastern Europe was part of the broader western effort to facilitate transitions to democracy in the region. The question about how this assistance is perceived by the recipients (especially the pro-democratic NGOs which are the part of the growing third sector in the transitional states) still lacks an analytical explanation.

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<sup>6</sup> Accusations, from a ridiculous one such as “they are zombied” to more sophisticated “they are bought by the West” are still popular among the broad Ukrainian public

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Parrott (1997): “Perspectives on Post-Communist Democratization” in *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 8

It seems to me that this kind of “soft” – indirect – democracy promotion produces a much broader spectrum of attitudes towards it, in contrast to the military intervention or economic sanctions imposed on a certain country which may be more straightforwardly condemned or approved. I suspect that in the countries in transition, which are receiving support from the more economically and politically stable western states, the attitude to such an aid is quite ambiguous.

In this respect I find Ukraine an interesting case for several particular reasons. First, its vast territory, numerous population<sup>8</sup> and sufficient natural resources made it the most important state in the former Soviet Union next to Russia. Although the country gained independence in 1991, it neither reached economic prosperity nor political stability, maintaining strong ties with the eastern neighbor. It did not develop a strong national identity, with the western regions leaning traditionally towards Central Europe, whereas the eastern parts are mostly dominated by strong pro-Russian sentiments.

Second, the influential political scientist Samuel Huntington refers to Ukraine as a divided land with two different cultures. According to him, in the heart of the land lies the border between two civilizations – the West and the Orthodox East.<sup>9</sup> He claims, that this observation is as valid today as it was for the last several centuries. If one credits some truth to Huntington’s assertion, this means that the “West vs. East” discourse seems to be radically more relevant in Ukraine than, for example, in any other post-socialist country in Central Europe.

Over the 1990s as well as in the wake of the new millennium much of the long-standing attitudes from the Soviet era remained alive in Ukraine, moreover the traditional skepticism towards politics prevailed. Political corruption and the distrust in the political institutions bred widespread apathy and despair, while the previous – president Kuchma’s – regime grew increasingly authoritarian. In this respect many authors recognize the Orange revolution as a turning point in Ukraine’s recent development. Time and again it is heard that one of the results was the strengthened sense of citizenship among Ukrainians and an increased civic activism. It is emphasized that the leaders of the democratic movement played the leading role in a mass public disobedience campaign, producing enthusiasm and hope for progressive reforms and a better economic future for the country.

My interest in NGOs, those in Ukraine in particular, engaged in political activism has several reasons:

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<sup>8</sup> 47,732,079 square kilometers / 46,6 millions correspondingly

<sup>9</sup> Samuel P. Huntington (1996): *Střet civilizací. Boj kultur a proměna světového řádu*, Rybka Publishers, 2001, p. 192

1. They can have a great potential in fostering political change, pose real threats to the authoritarian regimes, stimulate peoples' self-determination and help them to assert their rights.<sup>10</sup>
2. It has been widely agreed upon by western donors that the most effective means of influencing a transitional country's political development towards a liberal democracy is to support the country's advocacy NGOs: those concerned with freedom of speech, human rights, transparency, etc.<sup>11</sup>
3. These NGOs claim to be non-partisan but in the time of elections these groups are widely engaged on the side of democratic forces (as it was in the case of the Orange revolution). This, however, then becomes the most visible moment of indirect foreign intervention into the domestic affairs of another sovereign country, since many of the NGOs receive direct and indirect support from the West.
4. In contrast to interest groups or service providing NGOs, such politically orientated organizations often deal with abstract ideas and rhetoric (such as "freedom", "democracy", "terrorism") that can have a great impact on the society as a whole, but also they can often become an instrument of manipulation.

## **Research Literature and Methodology**

Much has been written on the problem of democratization in general, and on the democratization process in the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe in particular. Many authors agree that global affairs are shaped by the hegemony of democratic ideas and values, the acceptance of which has grown dramatically around the globe.<sup>12</sup> They often refer to "the third wave" of democratization in the world and stress the continuing need to promote human rights, rule of law, freedom of speech and the free market in the non-liberal or transitional societies. It is agreed upon the fact, that in this effort the U.S. government has played a central role.

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<sup>10</sup> Herd P. Graeme (2005): "Colorful Revolutions and the CIS – 'Manufactured' versus 'Managed' Democracy?" *Problems of Post Communism*, Vol. 52, No. 2, p. 14

<sup>11</sup> See Karatnychky, Adrian (2004): "The Democratic Imperative", *The National Interest*, pp. 107-116; Carothers, Thomas (1999): *Aiding Democracy Abroad, The Learning Curve*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; D'Anieri, Paul (2005): "What Has Changed in Ukrainian Politics? Assessing the Implications of the Orange Revolution", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 52, No. 5, pp. 82-91; Nelson C. Ledsky (2005): "Ukraine - Developments in the Aftermath of the Orange Revolution", Statement by Ambassador Nelson C. Ledsky, Regional Director, Eurasia, National Democratic Institute, pp. 1-4, and many others

<sup>12</sup> See the works of Carothers, Thomas (1999): *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, ed: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Diamond, Larry (2003): "A Universal Democracy?" *Policy Review Online*, No.119, available at: <http://www.policyreview.org/jun03/diamond.html> ; Fukuyama, Francis (1992): *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press

However, other authors focus on criticizing the process of “democratization”, claiming that the cultural, political, military and economic expansion of democracies is nothing else but the expression of a new form of colonialism or imperialism.<sup>13</sup> In this view democracy assistance is perceived as straightforward U.S. political interventionism.

On the phenomenon, history and methods of democracy assistance I will refer to Thomas Carothers’ works on the topic, specifically to his landmark book *Aiding Democracy Abroad*. Regarding the more specific cases of civil society assistance to Eastern Europe, the donors’ preferences, as well as its critics, I mostly rely on the material published in several scholarly journals, such as *Journal of Democracy*, *Problems of Post Communism*, *Foreign Policy*, *Democratization*, *World Policy Journal* and alike. For illustrating the current situation in Ukraine, I will rely on to secondary data analysis such as foreign and domestic Ukrainian mass media, statements made by democratic activists and public figures, as well as critique coming from the scholarly articles in the above-mentioned journals.

Much of the data presented in the fifth part are derived from the ten qualitative interviews with selected civic group activists. All of them represented either a particular Ukrainian advocacy NGO or a certain group of civic activists. Many of them received some kind of western support for their activities. The interviews were conducted in Kyiv in January 2007. Half-standardized interviews helped me to get deeper insights into the personal motivations and attitudes of the individual actors.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

To ensure the reader’s better understanding of the nature of the claims I will gradually unfold the story “from afar”. First, one needs to understand what interests the Western world has in advancing democracy around the globe. Thus, in the *first part* of the paper I will start with the general issue of “the democracy promotion industry”. I will be doing so by giving a brief overlook of the history, types and methods, focus specifically on civil society assistance, and present the overall critics coming from different sources. Since democracy assistance, especially the aid in civil society development, is closely related to the support of advocacy NGOs, in the *second part* I will discuss the role this type of NGOs plays in fostering democratic changes in transition states as well as the reason for western donors’ interest in them. By focusing more specifically on the Eastern European

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<sup>13</sup> See the works of Chomsky, Noam (2003): *Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance*, New York: Henry Holt and Company; Robinson I. William (1996): *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, New York: Cambridge University Press

ex-Soviet states, namely Russia and Ukraine, in the *third part* I will firstly present the Ukrainian socio-political division into West and East. Secondly, I will briefly assess the situation of civic liberties in Russia in order to show how Russian anti-democratic trends may affect its western neighbor Ukraine. In the *fourth part* I will then focus on Ukraine: I will present those western donors providing assistance to the Ukrainian grass-root civil groups. I will briefly outline the most important aspects of the Orange revolution and mobilizing efforts the activists took to “wake up” the people. Then, in turn, I will present Ukrainian democracy activist groups, NGOs and initiatives, as well as outline the range of their activities. And consequently, in the concluding *fifth part* - based on my empirical findings – I will discuss the attitudes the Ukrainian pro-democratic activists have regarding the Western democracy assistance they are/were receiving.

## **PART I**

### **Democracy Assistance and its Critics**

“The art of democracy promotion”, “the industry of democracy promotion”, “the defining challenge of our times” – these quotes suggest that the matter at stake is not merely a short-time campaign, but rather a global phenomenon with a tendency to intensify.<sup>14</sup> There is little doubt that with the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the bi-polar world, democracy promotion stormed to the top of the wealthy Western countries’ international policy agenda. Both: writers and politicians take a different position on the matter. Some greets it with open arms, others condemn it, some fight against “the new imperialism”, yet others would critically question the right to impose some societies’ values on the rest of the world. To present the essence of democracy assistance and the specific interests behind it is the purpose of this chapter.

First, I will present a short summary of what democracy assistance is and what specific role the United States, as main actor plays in it, what it has been during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and what types of methods the U.S. democracy assistance portfolio includes. Then, for the specific interest of my thesis, I will take a closer look at the electoral assistance (specifically on the observation missions) and on the civil society assistance to the countries in transition. Finally, I will present critical positions on the account of democracy promotion in general and these two specific types of assistance in particular.

#### **1. Democracy Assistance**

First and foremost, a distinction needs to be made between democracy promotion and democracy assistance. The first is generally understood as the broader term, embracing various methods to spur countries towards democracy: through diplomatic persuasion, economic sanctions, and even the use of force. The later entails “softer” methods. In his renowned book – widely recognized as an ideal guide into the issue of democracy promotion – the Vice President for Global Policy at the Carnegie Endowment, Thomas Carothers, defines such an assistance as a most common tool, an “aid specifically designed

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that these quotes imply a different view of the matter: “Art of promotion” is decidedly positive whereas “industry” as a word has rather negative connotations

to foster a democratic opening in a nondemocratic country or to further a democratic transition in a country that has experienced a democratic opening”.<sup>15</sup>

The United States is by no means the only actor in this field. Almost every major country that gives foreign assistance nowadays includes democracy programs in its aid portfolio. The only difference is that, for example, under the Bush administration, the United States tends to emphasize security arguments on behalf of democratic hegemony, while the European Union emphasizes the humanitarian argument to support interventions.<sup>16</sup>

At the core of U.S. democracy promotion lies the assumption that democratic governments do not go to war with each other, produce no refugees, and do not engage in terrorism. They make better trade partners, and pragmatically serve the countries’ interests in other ways. Nevertheless, this assumption has lately been critically reconsidered: “It is indeed true that established democracies don’t fight each other, but only if other very important factors are either added to the equation or removed from it—which means this is not true as far as much of the world is concerned and for the foreseeable future.”<sup>17</sup> So, in order for democracy to function in the desired way, two elements must be present. First, there must be the legal and civil institutions accompanying democracy, and that are, in fact, absent in most quasi-democracies around the world. Second, a nation must have that level of material prosperity, which creates a middle class with a real commitment to democracy. Considering this, the question of how the assistance programs should be implemented in order not to damage but to help is still the question without a clear answer.

In *Aiding Democracy Abroad* Carothers presents several main types of democracy assistance<sup>18</sup>:

1. elections assistance and assistance to political parties aim at:
  - helping to design the electoral system
  - ensuring good administration of elections
  - educating voters
  - observing elections
  - mediating elections
2. help in reforming the state institutions (from the top down) targeting:

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<sup>15</sup> Carothers: *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, p. 6

<sup>16</sup> Karatnycky: “The Democratic Imperative”, p. 115

<sup>17</sup> Anatol Lieven– Hulsman, John (2006): “The Folly of Exporting Democracy”, September 12, 2006, available at: [http://www.tompaine.com/articles/2006/09/12/the\\_folly\\_of\\_exporting\\_democracy.php](http://www.tompaine.com/articles/2006/09/12/the_folly_of_exporting_democracy.php) Access date: 6.01.2007

<sup>18</sup> Ibid



- constitutions
  - judiciaries
  - legislature
  - local governments
  - civil-military relations
3. assistance in building stronger civil society (from the bottom up) aims at:
- support of advocacy NGOs
  - civil education
  - assistance to mass media
  - support of the labor unions

Summing up, one can say that democracy assistance remains a rather understudied and poorly understood field. A great deal of literature has been written on democratization, especially in respect to transition processes in Central and East Europe, while at the same time there has been relatively little interest in studying the impact of and the attitudes towards democracy assistance nowadays.

### **1.1 The History of the Democracy Promotion**

Throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century tons of impressive rhetoric were created by U.S. presidents about the “messianic” role of the United States in promoting democracy around the globe. What the U.S. understood as such, has thus always been an important, if not integral part of America’s foreign policy tradition. With “the third wave” of democratization unfolding in the world after 1989, an increasingly optimistic U.S. rhetoric even lead to such utopian declarations as Clinton’s prediction in his second inaugural address that “the world’s greatest democracy will lead a whole world of democracies.”<sup>19</sup> Briefly, the history of U.S. democracy assistance through the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be divided in the following several periods:

1. The 50s: U.S. foreign policy did not put democracy promotion on top of its priority list. At that time U.S. assistance was related to economy and security. Fighting an ideological war with the Soviet Union, the U.S. used aid as a straightforward security rationale, aiming at bolstering friendly governments around the world, regardless of the political system, thus also supporting dictators and autocrats

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<sup>19</sup> Carothers: *Aiding Democracy*, p. 5

2. The 60s: Anticommunism clearly dominated the U.S. policy towards the third world. The Central Intelligence Agency engaged in numerous efforts that targeted at supporting selected political forces and influenced the outcomes of elections in order to ensure that friendly governments will stay in power. Yet, “the CIA’s methods, particularly the covert schemes to manipulate elections, were patently antidemocratic.”<sup>20</sup> This fact is exactly what contemporary leftists and critics of Americanization use when rightly pointing at the historical roots of double standards of the U.S. international democracy programs.
3. The 70s: The centre of foreign aid shifted towards humanitarian aid after the general disillusionment in the U.S. ability to assist the third world with economic and political modernization. It seemed that the moral mission of democratization was put off during the Nixon presidency to be brought back into light one decade later.
4. The 80s: President Reagan took office with two issues on the agenda: to fight communism and to strengthen the U.S. geo-strategic position. It was under his rule that democracy began to be seriously re-emphasized as an ideology, opposed to communism.
5. The 90s: With the end of the cold war, the fall of the Berlin wall, and the breakup of the Soviet Union democracy aid extended rapidly into Eastern Europe and the former USSR. A strong emphasis has been put on building and fostering civil society in the recipient states.

## 1.2 Electoral Assistance

Among the various attributes of democracy, competitive elections are *the* feature that is used by many scholars and policymakers to identify whether a certain country is democratic or not. Competitive elections are seen as a precondition for the other political benefits that a democratic system may offer its citizens. Their introduction is hence understood as a watershed in the transition of a country to democracy. That is why in the first phase of democracy assistance, which unfolded primarily from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, donors concentrated on elections.

For our particular case it is important to notice that Carothers recognizes elections assistance as the most visible program of democracy assistance<sup>21</sup> - a sensitive spot, where the foreign intervention is most likely to come to the light and become the subject of various speculations.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 25

<sup>21</sup> Carothers: *Aiding Democracy*, p. 123

The strategies used include the training of activists in campaign techniques (such as focus groups, direct mail, polling, and advertising). Another one, which is also important for us, is assistance in elections observation, including the training of domestic observers. Those are often recruited from the ranks of the active local civic activists, and consist mostly of young people: students or members of the advocacy NGOs.

### 1.3 Elections Observation

A basic function of international election observation is detecting - and possibly deterring- electoral fraud. It is also the best-established, most visible, and often best-funded type of democracy-related assistance. The United States are a major source of election observers.<sup>22</sup>

Attempts to level the playing field for elections included organizing or assisting domestic election observers and organizing civil or voters' education programs. U.S.-based organizations like the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) provide technical and financial assistance for civil groups that are working on behalf of a free and fair electoral process. In the post-Soviet states they also try to increase the transparency of elections through the development of domestic election monitoring. For this purpose, for example, the mentioned organizations cooperate with activists from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). For this reason the domestic observers are generally also associated with western observation missions.

NDI and IRI have also been key players in helping to train domestic election observers and set up parallel vote counts around the world.<sup>23</sup> Domestic election monitoring in transitional countries, consisting of efforts of nonpartisan civic groups as well as local political parties, has gained considerable ground in recent years. Domestic monitors, if properly organized and prepared, have important advantages over foreign observers. That is primarily because they know the political culture, the language, and the territory in question and consequently are capable of seeing many things that short-term foreign observers cannot. Many of the civil activists join the domestic election monitoring teams. That is why assistance provided to them is closely related to civil society assistance and part of the general democracy aid kit.

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Carothers (1997): "The Observers Observed", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No.3, p.18

<sup>23</sup> In the words of Sarah Mendelson, "without parallel counts, the phrase "free and fair" means little". See Mendelson: "Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Russia", p.88

## **1.4 Civil Society Assistance**

The concept of civil society was re-discovered by western political scientists in the late 1980's and after the triumph of the dissident movements in Central Europe it became a fashionable concept among U.S. aid providers and policy makers. The concept of civil society encloses the appealing idea of being nonviolent but powerful, nonpartisan yet pro-democratic, emerging from the essence of particular societies, yet nonetheless being universal. Conservatives in the Reagan and Bush administrations had been friendly to the concept of civil society only in the context of anti-communist struggle in Eastern Europe. In the Clinton years, however, many foreign policy bureaucrats themselves came from the NGO community and were more inclined to support NGOs for democracy assistance around the globe.<sup>24</sup>

Carothers also points out that another factor contributing to the rise of civil society assistance was the major reduction in the overall U.S. foreign aid budget in the early 1990s. And with civil society aid, aid officials believed they could achieve large-scale effects in a low-cost way. Of course, civil society is a very large domain, which includes numerous groups, networks, associations and organizations independent from the formal political and private business sectors. This suggests that western aid officials were facing a complex task: to discern which of these groups in their eyes deserved to be supported most. Generally, U.S. civil society programs have focused on a limited part of organizations in the most recipient countries: on nongovernmental organizations that were advocating sociopolitical issues touching the public interest. As I will show in the following, this fact also became the source of criticism of such aid programs.

## **2. Criticism of Democracy Assistance**

The ideological ground behind democracy assistance is based on Western broad heritage of social norms, ethical values and traditional customs, being thus quite often accused of ethnocentrism. For many, the scope of interventions carried out by liberal democracies into the affairs of other states and societies is breathtaking. Often democracy assistance, especially towards Russia, is viewed as a U.S. security strategy. Whether it is or it is not, the drawbacks in providing democratic assistance undoubtedly contribute to these negative views.

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<sup>24</sup> Carothers: *Aiding Democracy*, p.207

William I. Robinson – professor of sociology at the University of California and one of the leading critical analysts of capitalist globalization - sees U.S. activities in the field as “inherently imperialist” and “meant specifically to challenge, undermine, limit, and control the extent of social and political changes in countries where masses of people – including the elite – are struggling for democracy.”<sup>25</sup> With the rhetorical banner of promoting democracy and through sophisticated new instruments and modalities of political intervention the U.S. seek to destabilize the disagreeable regimes.

Fareed Zakharia – a renowned political scientist - is skeptical about democracy assistance to countries in transition. While in the early 90s the view has been prevailing that these countries’ transitions were generally moving along the path towards an embrace of democratic ideas, “Western liberal democracy might prove to be not the final destination on the democratic road, but just one of the many possible exits”.<sup>26</sup> According to him, the introduction of democracy in divided societies, which do not have the background of constitutional liberalism, has actually fomented nationalism, ethnic conflicts and even war. In this respect, democracy assistance is not just a waste of money but can also be dangerous. Gideon Rose, the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, holds the same view. He says that “in much of the world the conditions most favorable to the development and maintenance for democracy are nonexistent, or at best only weakly present”.<sup>27</sup> Skeptics also point out that it was economic liberalism rather than democracy that produced many of the benefits that the United States really were looking for.

Moreover, as it is noticed, most democracy assistance was planned and offered without asking recipient governments whether they wanted such aid.<sup>28</sup> Noam Chomsky, known as the key intellectual figure within the left wing of United States politics, and one of the hardest critics of the U.S. foreign policy, denounces what he considers to be the “double standards” of the U.S. government.

So far it can be summed up that, many scientists recognize the shortcomings of such assistance are numerous and serious. Several of them are discussed below.

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<sup>25</sup> William I. Robinson - Jonah Gindin (2005): “The United States, Venezuela, and “democracy promotion”: William I. Robinson interviewed”, *Open Democracy*, 04 August 2005, available at: [www.openDemocracy.net](http://www.openDemocracy.net) Access date: 10.09.2006

<sup>26</sup> Fareed Zakharia (1997): “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 6, p. 24

<sup>27</sup> Gideon Rose (2000/01): “Democracy Promotion and American Foreign Policy: A Review Essay,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3, p. 192

<sup>28</sup> Paula Newberg – Thomas Carothers (1996): “Aiding – and Defining – Democracy”, *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 13, No.1, p. 98

## 2.1 Criticism of Electoral Assistance (Elections Monitoring)

Analyzing elections assistance, the critics refer to the fact pointed out by William I. Robinson, that “in the U.S. no candidate or party can accept foreign funding, and no foreign government can make any donations at all to groups that are involved in electoral processes.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, the United States do allow themselves to get actively involved into the political affairs of other independent states. Many scholars warn from adopting such a minimalist definition of democracy such as viewing competitive elections as its first and foremost pillar. Fareed Zakharia writes, “democratically elected regimes (elections declared “free and fair”) are more often ignoring constitutional limits of their power and depriving citizens of their rights and freedoms”.<sup>30</sup> Elections in these cases are only a façade behind which citizens are deprived of their rights to free speech, association, and so on, as it was in Ukraine under the previous Kuchma regime and as it is now, for example, in Russia. Under certain conditions, a competitively elected government is capable of behaving in a despotic fashion toward large number of its citizens or inhabitants.

Indeed, elections are an important virtue of government legitimacy but they are not the only virtue. They are only one step in the process of genuine liberalization and democratization, which is gradual and long.

In the 1990s, donors began to push countries to hold elections very early in the transition process, even though historically processes of democratization did not start in such a fashion. In their critical assessment of election assistance to the post-soviet states, Marina Ottaway and Theresa Chung reveal that many of these early donor-driven elections have proven to be enormously expensive. They have, moreover, established an unsustainable model of how elections must be conducted, completed with sophisticated voter-registration systems, transparent ballot boxes, and ballots printed abroad. Donors usually support first elections generously, but the responsibility for future ones falls on governments with small, already overstretched budgets.<sup>31</sup>

Besides, as it was in the case of Russia, domestic election monitoring efforts as part of a larger effort to increase transparency in elections, have been poorly organized, undersubsidized, and only marginally effective.<sup>32</sup> Many of the foreign observers are motivated as much by vanity and a tourist's taste for the exotic as by a serious commitment

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<sup>29</sup> Robinson: “The United States, Venezuela, and “democracy promotion”

<sup>30</sup> Zakharia: “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”, p. 22

<sup>31</sup> Marina Ottaway – Theresa Chung (1999): “Toward a New Paradigm”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.10, No.4, p.101

<sup>32</sup> Mendelson: “Democracy Assistance ...”, p.89

to supporting democracy abroad.<sup>33</sup> Quite often alone with a small core of organizations with a serious commitment to high-quality election observation came many other groups, many of whom do amateurish work. These “electoral tourists” make hasty postelection statements that divert attention from the more important reports issued by the organizations with more experience and a longer-term presence.

In many cases the mechanical aspect of the voting is reasonably fair but the pre-election period is plagued by numerous problems, such as obstacles to the registration of certain candidates, unequal access to the media, and the governing party's use of state resources to finance its campaign. Those observers' comments that focused mainly on the election day often miss out on the whole story.

Elusive standards such as “free and fair” can be applied according to the personal subjective view of those observing and can be easily manipulated. Besides, some groups find it difficult to criticize governments that have extended the courtesy of opening their doors to the observers in the first place.

## 2.2 Criticism of Civil Society (and NGOs) Assistance

Harry Blair examines the ways in which donors have sought to strengthen civil society in developing countries. Blair's contribution stands in stark contrast to the simple assumption that underlies most donor action – working with southern NGOs automatically strengthens civil society.<sup>34</sup> Democracy promoters are starting to learn more about what they are “doing in this complex domain (civil society), but a central element of their self-education is realizing just how inflated their expectations have been and how limited their capabilities to produce broad-scale change really are”.<sup>35</sup> One of the fundamental problems in the implementation of civil society assistance is a clash between the donor country's interests in promoting democracy and its other foreign policy interests. This problem cannot be easily solved or even ameliorated.<sup>36</sup>

Morales and Serrano point at the duplicity of donors (such as the U.K. and U.S. governments) who link aid to democracy in their policy statements but treat countries on a

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<sup>33</sup> Carothers: “The Observers Observed”, p. 20

<sup>34</sup> Harry Blair (1997): “Donors, Democratization and Civil Society: Relating Theory to Practice”, in Hulme, David, and Michael Edwards, eds. *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?* New York: St. Martin's Press, p.33

<sup>35</sup> Carothers, *Aiding democracy*, pp. 250-251

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Carothers (2000): *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p. 307

differential basis when it comes to practice.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, a criticism made by commentators from the South is that the whole debate on NGO performance, accountability, legitimacy and cost-effectiveness is framed exclusively in Western terms.<sup>38</sup>

The criticism concerning aid to developing countries in the South can also be expanded to practices concerning other states. An expert on democracy assistance to Russia, Sarah Mendelson, is highly critical of these practices. She points out that, “U.S. NGOs receiving funding from USAID had financial motivations to support the gathering of success stories for show on Capitol Hill.”<sup>39</sup> Quite often they tend to recount success stories in quantitative terms avoiding the quality issues.

In general, the programs attempted to re-create Eastern European civil society very much follow the American image – another example of the “be-like-us” syndrome. This undoubtedly affects the U.S. approach in the other parts of the world and becomes a source of much criticism.<sup>40</sup> And when pursuing a “be-like-us” approach any working method is welcomed – whether democratic or not. After all, even Carothers does not exclude the possibility that the CIA practices may still continue today.

## **Conclusion No 1**

Democracy promotion has for a long time been at the top priority list of the American foreign policy, reflecting the country’s messianic role that has been ideologically reconsidered in the context of the anti-communist fight during the cold war (although the messianic self image is much older than the fight against communism and hence not exclusively connected to it). It included military attacks, economic embargos and CIA intervention into states with regimes disagreeable to the United States. Democracy assistance as a relatively new, “softer” instrument has a shorter history. It has penetrated Central/Eastern Europe following the collapse of the communist ideology and the emergence of the new independent states in Central Europe and on the terrain of the former USSR. The portfolio of donors is wide, ranging from electoral assistance to supporting local NGOs.

It is recognized that elections assistance in the form of observation missions has lowered the political threshold for intervention, not only for the multilateral actors but for

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<sup>37</sup> Horacio Morales - Isagani Serrano (1997): “Finding Common Ground in Asia-Pacific Development”, in Hulme, David, and Michael Edwards, eds. *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?* New York: St. Martin’s Press, p. 93-107

<sup>38</sup> Hulme, Edwards: *NGOs, States and Donors...*, p. 17

<sup>39</sup> Mendelson: “Democracy Assistance..”, p.83

<sup>40</sup> Carothers: *Funding virtue*, p. 149



states and NGOs as well. International election observation has become one of the most common means by which international actors – the United Nations, regional organizations, other governments, and NGOs – intrude, often by invitation, in the internal politics of sovereign states. These kinds of political intrusions are reshaping the very idea of sovereignty, negating the longstanding presumption that states are free to do what they like within their own borders.<sup>41</sup>

The proclaimed goal behind these activities is to help building the key democratic institutions and to introduce liberal values; it is resting on the principle “we are helping the recipients to do what they already want to do for themselves”.

No matter how good democracy assistance intentions may seem, they could not but attract criticism. Ethnocentrism, pursuit of purely economical goals, double standards, the lack of critical thinking and knowledge about the region in focus, to mention a few – these are issues provoking a wide range of criticism. The numerous drawbacks of democracy assistance programs, such as a detachment from the local socio-political conditions, a failure to recognize the local national peculiarities of the recipient states, too much concentration on the election day while ignoring the prehistory, cannot but contribute to its negative perception.

With the fall of the iron curtain a large number of democracy programs started to operate in Central and Eastern Europe. With the passing of time, these programs are gradually shifting to the East, namely to the ex-Soviet states. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, analysts and donors increasingly emphasize the civil society assistance approach as the most effective and coherent way of aiding the Eastern European societies.

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<sup>41</sup> Larry Diamond (2003): “A Universal Democracy?”, *Policy Review Online*, No.119, available at: <http://www.policyreview.org/jun03/diamond.html> Access date: 19.09.2006

## PART II

### Supporting Democratic Initiatives in Eastern Europe

Since an important part of civil society assistance lies in providing support for local NGOs, I devote this chapter to the discussion of the role the NGOs play in fostering democratic changes in Eastern Europe as well as to those who recognize their importance in this respect. Firstly, I will talk about the relationship between a vibrant civil society and democratization in the countries in transition. Secondly, I will specifically focus on the advocacy NGOs and their potential importance. Then, I describe briefly the main western donors' activities of democracy assistance in post-communist Russia and Ukraine, especially those that support advocacy NGOs and those groups involved in the civic activism during the time of elections. Finally, I will present what in my opinion can be a moral dilemma for some NGOs in the post-Soviet states related to the foreign funding behind their activities.

#### 1. More NGOs – More Civil Society?

Since the early 1990s it has been increasingly stressed among the donor countries that nongovernmental organizations in the recipient states are better vehicles to tackle social and economic problems than government agencies. What is the nature of the donor's enthusiasm for NGOs as agents of economic and political change? Why do they believe that "softer" projects such as cultural co-operation, the promotion of social and economic rights and civil society training programs, are more effective in fostering democratic changes in the post-Soviet states?

Many of the discussions reveal the underlying idea that there is a strong causal relationship between civil society and democracy. Civil society is viewed as "an intermediate associational realm between state and family populated by organizations which are separated from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of the society to protect or extend their interest or values."<sup>42</sup> Organizations that inhabit this third sector – opposite to the state and the market – are believed to be capable to provide the citizens with what the first cannot and the second

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<sup>42</sup> Gordon White (1994): "Civil Society, Democratization and Development: Clearing the Analytical Ground", *Democratization*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 379

does not want to or cannot to. Following, I adopt the maximalist<sup>43</sup> view on civil society, which alone with the nongovernmental organizations involves the market, since for the post-Soviet states for the sake of economic decentralization liberal market reforms were essential.

Thus, increasingly, NGOs are recognized as a significant component of civil society and as providing valuable support for a democratic system of government. Domestic and foreign governments and international organizations are taking more notice of them and involve them in the broader policy- and decision-making process. According to Carothers' suggestion aid officials believed that a robust, highly independent NGO sector is a prerequisite for civil society which in turn is essential for a working democracy.<sup>44</sup> The majority of authors holds the view that NGOs are channels of communication and participation; with their great mobilizing capabilities, their ability to organize support and protest campaigns they give people the possibility to express their views also in the time between elections.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, they also provide training grounds for activists promoting pluralism, transparency, the rule of law and human rights. This view is reinforced by political practice: in such post-Soviet states as Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine (at least two years ago) governments often enacted restrictive NGO legislation before elections, recognizing the critical role that civil society groups that are mobilized around the electoral process can play in advancing democratic change. By imposing restrictions on NGO operations and by chasing the activists down the autocratic rulers recognize their importance for the possible political change in the country.

Generally speaking, there are two types of NGOs: policy-oriented ones and service-delivering ones. The former seek to affect government policy, usually through advocacy methods, and can operate at various levels – internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally. The United States decided to focus her programs in the region on public policy-oriented NGOs advocating constructive change in a small number of substantive areas.<sup>46</sup> In its effort to strengthen NGOs, USAID employed two basic approaches: technical assistance and other forms of training, and grants to policy-oriented NGOs.

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<sup>43</sup> Victor Pérez-Díaz (1998): „The Public Sphere and a European Civil Society“, in Jeffrey C. Alexander (ed.). *Real Civil Societies. Dilemmas of Institutionalization*, London: Sage

<sup>44</sup> Ottaway - Carothers: *Finding virtue*, p. 149

<sup>45</sup> Marie Dohnalová (2002): „Sociálně-ekonomické souvislosti občanské společnosti“, in *Občanský sektor. Studie a souvislosti*. 1. vyd. Moravský Beroun : Moravská expedice, p.128; Hulme, David – Edwards, Michael (1997): “NGOs, States and Donors: And Overview,” in Hulme, David, and Michael Edwards, eds. *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997 p. 6; and others

<sup>46</sup> Kevin F.F. Quigley (2000): “Lofty Goals, Modest Results: Assisting Civil Society in Eastern Europe,” in Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, eds, *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p.198

## 1.1 Advocacy NGOs and their Role in Democratization of the Post-Communist Societies

Speaking about the condition of civil society in post-communist states, it can be noted that the very basic notion of it - that is common goals, common values, trust in the government, and the realization that the government serves the populace – is not understood. In a society in which the majority is trying to avoid following the law, paying taxes, and trying to avoid the authorities in general it is a tough - if not impossible - task to form a civil political nation. On this background, Claus Offe rightly claims that “the rise of a robust ‘civil society’ cannot be initiated from the outside” and while the democratic institutions can be “transplanted” from the outside world, “the civic ‘spirit’ or ‘mental software’ that is needed to drive the hardware of the new institutions is less easily influenced by external intervention.”<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, many donors remain optimistic.

Domestic NGOs, as products of civil society, are to a large extent defined by their socio-economic environment. Under the period of non-democratic rule the role of NGOs was almost non-existent, with state institutions monopolizing and dominating the sphere of politics and societal development. And those that came into existence in the early 1990s were often regarded as acting on behalf of different western foundations trying to build democratic society and introduce market reforms. Often they were accused of being under western control, and their strategic goals were criticized.

This said, it is time to address the question: What are the advocacy NGOs and why are they so much favored by the Western donors? Ottaway and Carothers define them as:

non-governmental organizations dedicated to advocacy of socio-political issues touching the public interest – election monitoring, civil education, parliamentary transparency, human rights, anticorruption, the environment, women’s rights, and indigenous people’s rights. They are often channels for talented young people who wanted to be involved in public affairs. They are expected to be *engaged* in the sense of tackling issues that concern government policies, but *nonpartisan* – not affiliated with or working to advance any particular political camp.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Claus Offe, quoted in Sarah E. Mendelson - Glenn, John K. (2002): “Transnational Networks and NGOs in Postcommunist Societies”, pp. 1-29, in *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia* edited by Sarah Elizabeth Mendelson, John K Glenn, Columbia University Press, p.8

<sup>48</sup> Carothers: *Aiding democracy abroad*, p.210 - 221

According to Keck and Sikkink, transnational advocacy networks are “a number of international and domestic NGOs...usually initiating actions and pressing more powerful actors to take positions.”<sup>49</sup>

As already mentioned here, the idea of democracy assistance rests on the concept of a globally linked intelligencia, connected by global media and the Internet, and on like-minded non-governmental democracy activists united in cross-border networks of mutual support. Through such networks techniques of civil mobilization are also taught to the activists in “closed societies” with the aim of achieving democratic openings. Like the advocacy networks that political scientists Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink examine, western NGOs work closely together with domestic pro-democratic civil groups and grassroots organizations. These NGOs are motivated mainly by ideals, not profits; they are usually composed of young people willing to work hard for little pay on projects that are transparent to the public.

Donors prefer professionalized NGOs for several reasons:

1. Advocacy and civic education are activities that seek to have a direct impact on political development, which corresponds directly to the donors’ goals.
2. Democracy promoters are attracted by the idea of nonpartisan civic engagement as a means of producing political change. They seek influence on the political life of other countries without explicitly “playing politics”.
3. These groups have, or can be trained to have, the administrative capabilities donors need for their own bureaucratic requirements. They can produce grant proposals (usually in English), budgets, accounting reports, project reports, etc.<sup>50</sup>

They are “democratic intergroups” with “unmatched efficiency as a result of the combination of non-violent actions, marketing methods and smartly organized fundraising campaigns”. They are on the edge of two cultures: a dissident one, which is more peculiar to Eastern Europe and the western, more consumerist one. They simultaneously plant delight and fear. According to the head of Russian FSB service Nikolaj Patrushev, foreign NGOs are nothing but the cover for foreign spies and are busy with preparing the revolution in Belarus and other CIS. Their activities should be strictly controlled.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Margaret E. Keck - Kathryn Sikkink (1998): *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 8

<sup>50</sup> Ottaway - Carothers: *Funding virtue*, p.13

<sup>51</sup> Викен Четерян (2005): “Когда одна старая элита сменяет другую. Революционные миражи к востоку от Европы”, *Политнаука*, available at: <http://www.politnauka.org/library/dem/cheterian.php>  
Access date: 01.12.2006

It is interesting to note, that in the view of one of the leading Russian political strategists (“political technologists” as they are called), Sergei Markov, the revolutions of the 21st century will be NGO revolutions. They do not have a coordination centre or a single ideology; they are planned and launched in a most public way. “NGO revolutions are revolutions in the age of globalization and information. It is meaningless to protest against this reality”, Markov writes; “everybody who wants to take part in the politics of the 21st century has to create his own networks of NGOs and supply them with ideology, money and people”.<sup>52</sup>

To sum up: it is clear then, that many NGO communities play a significant political role. Donors see that the advocacy NGOs are a critical segment, perhaps *the* critical segment, of civil society, at least with regard to democratization.<sup>53</sup> Despite of above-mentioned claims for nonpartizanship, the NGO sector of transitional countries – and, by extension, the aid programs that support them – are often directly involved in partisan politics and open political struggle. The fact that some donors believe that civil society promotion allows them to foster democratization without actually being political, or partisan, is an illusion.

## 2. Funding Opposition, NGOs and Activists

Since the early 1990s many ideas and practices in Eastern Europe aimed at establishing an efficient multi-party system. Competitive elections, and other democratic institutions have developed partly as a result of western democracy assistance. Such western organizations as NDI, IFES, Open Society Institute as well as many others have undoubtedly influenced the initial shift away from the communist system right after the year 1991. After establishing their branch offices in the newly independent states, western NGOs have launched civil society assistance programs, student exchange programs, free media assistance programs, to mention only a few. When the local initiatives were still weak and few, donor agencies have channeled a great deal of support to associations and groups, and have encouraged them to believe in the importance of their work.

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<sup>52</sup> Ivan Krastev (2005): „Russia’s Post-Orange Empire“, available at: [http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-europe\\_constitution/postorange\\_2947.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-europe_constitution/postorange_2947.jsp) Access date: 01.12.2006

<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the Western assistance to advocacy NGOs is criticized by Christopher Landsberg and Marina Ottaway. They emphasize that a social movement, rather than advocacy NGOs, brought down apartheid. See Carothers, *Funding virtue*, p. 295

## 2.1 Who is Funding (Donors)

Cumulative international democracy assistance amounts to several billion dollars each year.<sup>54</sup> By the end of the 1990s “the U.S. government was spending more than \$700 million a year on democracy aid in approximately 100 countries, with five U.S. government agencies, three major quasi-governmental organizations, and dozens of government-funded American NGOs actively involved.”<sup>55</sup> Many western NGOs receive government funding, but their strategies for pursuing their goals, with a few exceptions, are derived and implemented with minimal interference or supervision from government bureaucracies (or market interests), making them a “third force”.<sup>56</sup>

American NGOs interested in the field of democratic assistance in Eastern Europe include the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Eurasia Foundation, the Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, World Learning, the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), and Internews. The European Union and the German and British governments have also supported democratic activities. Private foundations such as George Soros’ Open Society Institute, the Ford Foundation, and many others have additionally spent millions of dollars in the region.<sup>57</sup>

With regard to Eastern Europe, the most important democracy-related program in the region was sponsored by the U.S. government as one part of the overall U.S. aid program for the region and administrated by the Agency for International Development (USAID). It was authorized by the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act of 1989. The U.S. aid program had three broad goals: development of a market economy, improvement of the basic quality of life and support for democratic development.<sup>58</sup>

Western NGOs have worked closely with political activists and the political parties themselves in many post-Soviet states. On the Western side, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) have been two of the most important organizations based in Russia that were doing large-scale political party training. Other American groups receiving funding from USAID in order to help to increase citizen participation in politics include IFES, which has worked

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<sup>54</sup> Karatnycky: “The Democratic Imperative”, p. 111

<sup>55</sup> Carothers: *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, p. 332

<sup>56</sup> See Mendelson: „Democratic Assistance in Russia“, p. 77; Karatnycky: “The Democratic Imperative”, p. 111

<sup>57</sup> For a more complete list, see Holt M. Ruffin, Alyssa Deutschler, Catriona Logan, and Richard Upjohn (1999): *The Post-Soviet Handbook: A Guide to Grassroots Organizations and Internet Resources*, rev. ed., Seattle: Center for Civil Society International in association with the University of Washington Press

<sup>58</sup> Quigley: “Lofty Goals, Modest Results...”, p.197

with Russian election officials, and the Moscow School of Political Studies – a Russian NGO which has sought to develop democratic culture among young, regional leaders.

The U.S. government is not the only one who is actively engaged in funding indigenous local democratic initiatives. There are also Australia's Center for Democratic institutions, Britain's Westminster Foundation, Canada's International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, German political foundations, Poland's Freedom Foundation, the Swedish-based Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, as minimum. The European Commission today funds a broad array of global democracy initiatives, often implemented by non-governmental organizations. Actually Western Europe's established powerful democracies have exerted their hegemonic influence on Eastern and Central Europe by linking EU integration to democratic reforms and the rule of law. Partnerships with local NGOs in the transitional countries are particularly significant in this context.

Skeptics and critics like to refer to numbers to present the great amounts of money that is being given by western donors to the democratic opposition movements in the countries with the low GDP. Sometimes the criticism is aimed at stirring up the public against what the critics call "the American henchmen". An especially great portion of criticism peppered with some additional disregard falls on the young activists in the countries that experienced either successful or unsuccessful revolutionary attempt. Since they are always on the vanguard of the protests, it is assumed that they are the ones in whose hands most of the Western financial and logistic assistance is concentrated. For example, Albanian young oppositionists in "Mjaft" (a civil campaign, which like the Georgian "Kmara!" also means 'Enough!') are claimed to receive enormous financial support from the U.S. embassy in Tirana, the German embassy, the UK Foreign Office, OSCE and the Soros Foundation. *The Guardian* has also reported that the U.S. spent some \$41 millions on civil society activities organizing protests against Milosevic, and has so far spent \$14 millions on the Ukraine operation.<sup>59</sup>

## 2.2 Why Donors are Criticized

As I have presented in Part 1 of this paper, democracy assistance programs face criticism from many sides and for many reasons. Donors and western NGOs actively providing

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<sup>59</sup> Victor S. (2004): „Otpor, Zubr, Kmara, Pora, Mjaft: Eastern Europe's children of the revolution or front groups for the CIA?“, available at: <http://apostatewindbag.blogspot.com/2004/12/otpor-zubr-kmara-pora-mjaft-eastern.html> Access date: 08.08.2006



support to the local activists in the transitional societies are accused of being guilty of several points:

### **1. *Lack of consistency***

Donors are often criticized for not being consistent with their views on democracy. Every donor programming choice reflects different views on what the concept of democracy is, could be, or should become.<sup>60</sup>

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### **2. *Who are the genuine reformers?***

The European Parliament has routinely admonished the EU for having failed to orientate its political aid sufficiently towards “genuine reformers” in the transitional countries. A vast majority of projects providing for NGOs to train civil society actors have fallen short of expectations.

### **3. *Where there are funds –there are NGOs?***

A large number of new organizations are being formed on the back of readily available donor funds, with weak social roots and no independent supporter base. This may be particularly problematic in countries in transition from a centrally planned economy, where NGOs are very new and huge areas of state-society relations are being rapidly redefined, under great pressure from outside interests to conform to Western models.<sup>61</sup>

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### **4. *Accountability***

Increased prominence and greater influence expose NGOs to closer scrutiny and sharper demands for accountability. Donors demand that NGOs are accountable for the integrity, efficiency, and impacts of programs that they have funded. They also should be accountable to donors for the proper handling of donated resources.<sup>62</sup> A NGO may face the difficult ethical, legal, and strategic question of to whom it should make itself most accountable: to the public, to the state, or to the donor. Indeed, it might not be easy for NGOs to challenge the power of those who provide the funds they need for operation. In doing so, NGOs run the risk that they will alienate important sources of support and lose their capacities to help the clients and beneficiaries they seek to aid.

### **5. *The illusion of non-partisanship***

Donors have chosen to consider civil and political society as separate realms because doing so helps to defend the claim that it is possible to support democracy without

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<sup>60</sup> Newberg - Carothers: “Aiding – and defining – democracy”, p. 99

<sup>61</sup> Davide Hulme - Michael Edwards (1997): „Too Close to the Powerful, Too Far from the Powerless?”, p. 277, in Davide Hulme and Michael Edwards, in *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?*, New York: St. Martin’s Press

<sup>62</sup> For more discussion on the accountability see David L. Brown - Mark H. Moore (2001): “Accountability, Strategy and International Non-Governmental Organizations”, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 570

becoming involved in partisan politics or otherwise interfering unduly in the domestic politics of another country.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile financing the NGOs that operate around the elections is a visible domain of partisan involvement.

The authors of *Aiding Democracy* and *Finding Virtue* thus raise an important question: to what extent, then, can advocacy NGOs still be considered to represent genuine needs and demands rather than just some outsiders' view of what is good for the society? They also point out that the more successful some training programs are from the donors' point of view, the more they risk creating a barrier between NGOs and society.<sup>64</sup>

### 3. Funding and Moral Dilemma?

Hulme and Edwards recognize that NGOs are often regarded with suspicion because of their foreign ties.<sup>65</sup> Because assistance programs were effectively under embassy control the perception has been created that the democracy building grants for NGOs were politically motivated, their primary purpose being to promote specific U.S. political objectives.<sup>66</sup> Recently, not only donors but also the recipient states are taking much greater interest in NGO activity, and are making greater efforts to influence it directly and indirectly. Civil society assistance risks undermining the legitimacy of the very organizations it seeks to promote. Al-Sayyid, Christopher Landsberg, Marina Ottaway, and Carlos Basombrio point out that those civil society organizations that accept donor support often come under suspicion or are seen as less legitimate and authentic than organizations that receive no external support.<sup>67</sup>

It is interesting to examine the moral integrity of activists or NGO leaders when it comes to the question of using particular financial sources. It is not without exception that some domestic NGOs, civil groups and campaigns may themselves see the granted aid as psychologically, politically, and economically patronizing, and only minimally useful. For example, some organizations do not accept any donations from any governments or governmental organizations. As Radim Marada, who recognizes the existence of the moral connotation in the method of fundraising a particular organization chooses, points out, for

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<sup>63</sup> Ottaway – Carothers: *Finding virtue*, p. 11

<sup>64</sup> Although in their study Ottaway and Carothers conclude that aiding advocacy NGOs in the countries in transition do not directly imply the development of civil society, their suggestions about aiding a broader base of NGOs and civil initiatives are normative and at present much of the Western assistance is anyhow concentrated on the advocacy NGOs. Ottaway – Carothers: *Funding virtue*, p.308

<sup>65</sup> Hulme - Edwards: „Too Close to the Powerful, Too Far from the Powerless?“ p. 277

<sup>66</sup> Carothers: *Funding virtue*, p.203

<sup>67</sup> Ottaway - Carothers: *Funding virtue*, p.16

some kind of NGOs and their members the question of nature of the financial and material resources used is the question of their moral integrity. Mainly these are environmental NGOs and those active in the sphere of human rights. “Civil society activists to a greater extent agree upon the idea that the question of financial support for their activities is not morally neutral but disagree with the strength of emphasis that should be put on this or that strategy chosen for sustaining the reputation of their organizations or their personal moral integrity.”<sup>68</sup> Some of them formulate more or less explicit rules regarding organization-donors/sponsors relations (for example, not accepting aid from supporters of authoritarian regimes, weapon traffickers, supranational financial institutions in general, occasionally some foundations or banks, etc), while for others these questions come into light only after practical dilemma arises. “This dilemma, however,” - says Marada – “can occur only under the condition that the particular socio-cultural environment is sensitive to this particular moral challenge”.<sup>69</sup>

As pointed out, the socio-cultural environment in the post-Soviet states can be claimed to be suspicious towards NGOs, and thus, sensitive towards the questions concerning their sources of financing. This is especially true, since the moment that democratic revolutions started to take place in the region.

Much of the criticism concerning democratic assistance to Eastern Europe (and not only there) is based on what in Bruce Parrott’s words is “an unconscious tendency to view post-communist political developments through interpretive lenses derived from the experiences of countries that have not undergone the historical transformations and traumas associated with communism”.<sup>70</sup> Besides, as it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, the transition path from communism does not necessarily terminate in a consolidated liberal democracy. Although virtually all post-communist leaders proclaimed their commitment to democratization, on the terrain of the ex-USSR a large spectrum of possible hybrid regime variants can be observed.<sup>71</sup> Certainly, the autocrats would not appreciate the fact that American and European grant money is flowing to an array of pro-democracy and civil society groups, newspapers, and political awareness campaigns. On the pages and web-pages of recent Belarusian, Russian, and Latin

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<sup>68</sup> Radim Marada (2003): „Občanský sektor a organizační identita: Utváření občanských identit po roce 1989“, s. 171, in Csaba Szaló, Igor Nosál (eds.). *Mozaika v rekonstrukci*. Brno: Mezinárodní politologický ústav

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p.171

<sup>70</sup> Parrott: “Perspectives on Postcommunist democratization”, p. 2

<sup>71</sup> For more discussion see Michael McFaul (2002): “The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World,” *World Politics*, No. 54 Available at: [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/world\\_politics/v054/54.2mcfaul.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/world_politics/v054/54.2mcfaul.html); Zakaria, Fareed (1997): “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 6, pp. 22-43

American mass media on this topic one can find a lot of accusation in meddling, spying, betraying and so on. Too overtly visible democracy assistance can hence create discontents and lead to “foreign espionage” frames the pro-government forces use to stir the public against the democratic civil activists. The following are just some few examples to illustrate the reactions that are provoked by western assistance to oppositional movements and civil initiatives in three post-Soviet states.

### **Belarus:**

Critics say that even if the oppositional candidate had won the March 19<sup>th</sup> 2006 Presidential vote, the opposition could have had a hard time shaking off a "Made in the USA" label. Others argue that the U.S. has overplayed its hand, and that the opposition may see more profit in staying out of power. "[The US] really helped the opposition financially so much, that the opposition has gone crazy," says Alexander Feduta, an independent journalist and former Lukashenko insider, who is a fierce critic of the regime. "Name me any other country where you get paid for being in the opposition." Portions of grant money have been stolen and are often misused, he says, and have had little real impact: "Revolution is not done that way." "Lukashenko is right that [outside money] flows into politics," says Paulyuk Bykowski, a political writer for the weekly *Belarusian Market* newspaper. Of the 19 or so registered opposition parties, "almost every one has 10 to 20 non-governmental organizations [eligible for outside cash]."<sup>72</sup>

### **Ukraine:**

The Orange revolution is claimed to be planned far beforehand. “The Bush Administration has spent 65 millions dollars on Victor Yushchenko support. The signal for the revolutionary beginning was given on the 17 of February 2002 in Kyiv by the former U.S. secretary general Madeleine Albright who called upon 280 Ukrainian NGOs to oppose the local governments and monitor the March 2002 Parliamentary elections.”<sup>73</sup> The Ukrainian civil campaign “Pora!” was announced to be recipient of organizing advice from the Serbian “Otpor” and the Georgian “Kmara” (who received money from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for

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<sup>72</sup> Scott Peterson (2001): “U.S. Spends Millions to Bolster Belarus Opposition”, *Christian Science Monitor*, Vol. 93, Issue 200, p.5

<sup>73</sup> Венсан Жовер (2005): “Творцы революций. Проамериканские Че Гевара”, available at: <http://www.inosmi.ru/translation/219938.html> Access date: 11.10.2006

Democracy) activists and funding from the US-Democratic-Party-linked National Democratic Institute and Freedom House and Open Society fund.

### **Russia:**

The Russian president Vladimir Putin recently announced an upcoming ban on civil society assistance from abroad. "We are against overseas funding for the political activities [of NGOs] in Russia," he said in a July 2005 meeting with human rights activists.<sup>74</sup> Putin wants to ensure that Russian-based NGOs will not become the focus of an opposition movement similar to those in Ukraine or Georgia. In December 2005, FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev warned that "foreign espionage is on the increase" in Russia, and promised that "opposing foreign espionage remains one of our main priorities."<sup>75</sup>

It seems somewhat logical that just as the trend of democracy assistance has taken root in the international system a counter-trend has emerged of resistance towards democracy programs, especially against those that seek to empower civil society, promote free media, and strengthen democratic political parties, institutions, and processes. Graeme P. Herd argues that the idea of western backed revolutions is so powerful that it "has created the reality of its own" and begun to shape foreign and security policy responses within the CIS. In this respect the democratic revolutions will not promote honest elections, greater transparency and accountability, or a peaceful transition of power, but rather the opposite. To the contrary of what the western donors hope for, he goes on, it will lead to "tightening the screws" across the region.<sup>76</sup> Advocacy NGOs are likely to be the victims of the "espionage" rhetoric coming from the increasingly autocratic rulers like Russian president Putin or Belarusian president Lukashenka.

### **Conclusion No 2**

NGOs are increasingly recognized as an important component of the civil society as they are perceived to be able to solve some social and economic problems better than the state and/or the market. In Eastern Europe, one particular group of NGOs has attracted the

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<sup>74</sup> Carl Gershman - Michael Allen (2006): "The Assault on Democracy Assistance", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17, No. 2, p.41

<sup>75</sup> Matthews Owen - Anna Nemtsova (2006): „A Chill In The Moscow Air: taking a cue from their boss, the Russian secret service is acting more and more like the old KGB”, *Newsweek International*, available at: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11081430/site/newsweek/> Access date: 10.08.2006

<sup>76</sup> Greame P. Herd (2005): "The Orange Revolution: Implication for Stability in the CIS", *Central and Eastern Europe Series*, by Defense Academy of the United Kingdom Conflict Studies Research Center, p.1

Western donors' attention and is believed to be able to facilitate the democratic changes in the region – the policy-oriented NGOs. With their focus on socio-political issues, such as free and fair elections, human rights, and government transparency, these advocacy organizations are favored by Western democracy promoters for being flexible, non-partisan and reform-minded.

A great number of western groups, American in particular, have been working with the democratic activists across the region since the early 1990s – prominent examples are the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, Soros' Open Society Fund, etc. Operating in an environment with strong remaining Soviet legacies, these organizations - as well as the recipients of their help - face all kinds of criticism. After several democratic revolutions have taken place in several former Soviet republics in the wake of the new millennium, increasingly authoritarian rulers started to chase the NGOs down, accusing them of being the cover for foreign spies. To stir the public opinion against them, cold war memories have been revived. The more the broader public perceives the democratic activists as traitors or foreign spies, for many of these organizations the question of financial (and not just financial) support behind their activities ceases to be morally neutral.

## PART III

### Ukraine: Between “East” and “West”

The West and especially the USA live with the persuasion that the rest of the world should accept the western values such as representative democracy, a free market economy, the rule of law, individualism, human rights, etc. Though some of these values sometimes become accepted elsewhere, nevertheless, in the non-western societies oppositional attitudes remain strong, ranging from general skepticism to strong deprecation. What the West perceives as universality, the rest of the world perceives as imperialism. Apparently, those who take a major interest in promoting western liberal values meet the resistance from the side of those who for many reasons want to preserve the status quo. One of the major variables that is responsible for shaping post-communist political change in a country like Ukraine is its international environment. It includes geo-political, institutional-normative, and cultural elements<sup>77</sup> and can cause effects that range from highly beneficial to extremely harmful.

In this chapter I will argue that one of the major obstacles to the consolidation of Ukrainian democracy has been and is coming from its Eastern neighbor - Russia. First, I will briefly present the domestic Ukrainian socio-political environment and the historically preconditioned ties - either with the West or with the East - within the territory of the state. Since I consider Russia the major source of anti-democratic international influence on Ukraine, for the reader's better understanding of its nature I will then present the current situation of civil society in Russia as well as anti-West arguments that might have their resonance in Ukraine. Then I will conclude with the assumption that the current authoritarian tendencies in Russia together with its ambition to influence the “near abroad” may hinder the Ukrainian advance along the democratic path.

#### 1. Is Ukraine a Divided Land?

In the *Clash of Civilizations* Samuel Huntington refers to Ukraine as one of the lands on the border of the two civilizations - the Christian West and the Orthodox East.<sup>78</sup> Although his concept of civilizations defined in terms of cultural and religious identity provoked criticism from different sides, it indeed seems that in the middle of Ukraine from north to south there stretches a crack line between two different worlds making it a land of two

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<sup>77</sup> Parrott: “Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization”, p.8

<sup>78</sup> Huntington: *Střet civilizací*, p.214

different cultures. Today, in these two parts of Ukraine – that is between the Eastern/Southern and Western/Central Ukrainian regions - there seems to exist an almost polar difference in the attitudes towards a wide range of issues – from language and religion to attitudes towards the EU, NATO or CIS.

The immediate proximity to Russia - the central state of the Christian Orthodox civilization block and the heir of the czarist and communist imperia – has not been but influencing Ukrainian cultural and social spheres through the centuries. In different historical epochs it was an independent state; nevertheless, during the largest part of the modern history it has been under Moscow's supervision. Starting in 1645 until the year of 1991, with the exception of the short period of independence between 1917-1921, the territory of the present-day Ukraine was under Russian political control. Moreover: Ukraine was the most important and the most populated state next to Russia in the Union of Soviet Republics since 1922.

Ukraine regained its independence in August 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The historical Soviet legacies along with Russian influence are rather strong in Ukraine. At the beginning of the 1990s important obstacles such as a continued dominance of old regime incumbents, a lack of democratic history, a weak civil society, a weak enforcement of the rule of law, and relative international isolation precluded this former communist state to proceed quickly along the path of democratic transformations.<sup>79</sup> Ukrainian transition to democracy and market reform was complicated, given the fact that the USSR disintegrated during a time of socio-economic crisis and after a decade of stagnation. In addition to that, civic elements were weak because of seven decades of totalitarianism. Nowadays Ukraine remains an economically impoverished and excessively corrupt country. And although “it is anything but an authoritarian state with a dictatorial leader and a passive population, as in Russia”<sup>80</sup> it could have done better without the continuous influence coming from the Northeast since the Orange revolution took place.

To understand the scale of influence Russia has on Ukraine nowadays it might be interesting to look at the regional division into West/Central and East/Southern Ukraine. I do not intend to deeply analyze the historical preconditions that led to this division, nor will I discuss the issues of national identity of the Eastern or the Western Ukrainians. I

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<sup>79</sup> For more on the competitive-authoritarian regimes in the Eastern European states see Way, Lucan A. (2005): “Authoritarian state building and the sources of regime competitiveness in the fourth wave the cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine,” *World Politics*, p. 231–61

<sup>80</sup> Alexander Motyl (2005): “Democracy is Alive in Ukraine”, available at:

[http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-ukraine/alive\\_2822.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-ukraine/alive_2822.jsp) Access date: 01.12.2006



merely want to support the argument that one part of the country remains very much under foreign (Russian) influence – and that this, ultimately, has also consequences for the perception of western oriented political activists.

In the year 2005 Ukraine's estimate population is 46.5 million inhabitants with ethnic Ukrainians making up about 73% of the total; ethnic Russians number about 22%. Although Ukrainian is the only official state language, the republic's constitution specifically recognizes Russian as the language of the large part of its population and guarantees its usage 'in all spheres of public life'. According to the census, 67.5% of the population declared Ukrainian as their native language and 29.6% declared Russian. Substantial ethnic Russian minorities can be mostly found in the Crimea and some parts of the Eastern Ukraine.

### **1.1 The Central-Western Regions**

Until the year of 1917 ethnic Ukrainians were divided between two empires – Austria-Hungary and tsarist Russia. In the western territory of today's Ukraine, part of which was under Austrian-Hungarian rule, the environment for national development was much more liberal, hence making the inhabitants more conscious of themselves as members of a larger Ukrainian nation. After the Nazi and Soviet invasions of Poland in 1939, the western Ukrainian regions were incorporated into the Soviet Union. Here, armed resistance against Soviet authority continued as late as the 1950s. During the Gorbachev era Ukrainian communists pursued nationalist objectives which gained more support in the western and central parts of the country. It is interesting to note that many of the democratic activists – overly Ukrainian-speaking - during the times of the pro-independence movement in the late 1980s as well as those more contemporary ones involved in the events of the Orange revolution are mainly coming from the western Ukrainian regions.

Those studying Ukrainian socio-political development at any historical point of the last four centuries often refer to one important factor – Ukrainian nationalism. It played *the* major role at the break of the 1980's when the country finally regained its long-awaited sovereignty and than independence. Unlike in Belarus, since independence Ukrainian politics was colored by intellectually vibrant and popularly widespread nationalist sentiment. There are two major sources of Ukrainian nationalism: the centuries-old legends about the heroic warriors – Cossacks – that settled independently in the southern steps, protected the Eastern Christendom and kept the idea of Ukrainian independence alive, and the historical relations with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The

Austrians, known for their liberal national policy, did not prohibit the emergence of a nationally-minded Ukrainian intelligentsia. A strong tradition of intellectual nationalism survived the fifty years of Soviet occupation and emerged again after Ukraine gained independence.

At this point it would be unwise not to mention the relationship between nationalism and the support for democracy in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. Because of the troublesome consequences of extreme nationalism in the twentieth century, in the new millennium national sentiment in Europe is widely regarded as a dangerous anachronism, no longer acceptable by enlightened and peaceful people. Although within the borders of the EU, nationalism is no longer associated with democracy, “on the fringes of European civilization, nationalism can still inspire, mobilize and lead in the struggle for new democratic societies.”<sup>81</sup> According to Lieven and Hulsman, in Eastern Europe nationalism was mobilized behind political and economic reform in a way that cannot be replicated elsewhere—least of all in the Middle East, where much of Arab and Iranian nationalism is bitterly anti-American.<sup>82</sup> Unlike the rest of the world, East Europeans in the Baltic states, nationalist intellectuals in Belarus or Ukraine, committed themselves to democracy and reform as a way of escaping the hated influence of Moscow. The importance of nationalism as a mobilizing force became apparent during the dramatic events of the Ukrainian presidential campaign 2004. In this respect it is possible to say that nationalism serves as a vehicle for democracy in Ukraine.

Thus, Ukrainian national identity and nationalism is a positive force in support of promoting political and economic reforms in order to "return to Europe." The Western and Central Ukraine reflects the region's role as Ukraine's main engine for reforms and a bastion of opposition to the Communist Party and oligarchs. It is also necessary to note here that Ukrainian nationalists are different from those in Russia as they are reformist and pro-Western (that is, national democrats).<sup>83</sup> They are basically opposing to the anti-Western and anti-reform nationalists allied to Putin in Russia. Democratically minded nationalists played a decisive role in the Orange revolution, they support the idea of Ukraine joining the EU, WTO and NATO. In Eastern Europe outside Russia, therefore, nationalism, a pro-American outlook and support for democracy may all go together.

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<sup>81</sup> Andrew Savchenko (2006): “Nationalism and Democracy in Eastern Europe: Presidential Elections in Ukraine and Belarus”, available at: <http://belaruselectionwatch.blogspot.com/2006/03/nationalism-and-democracy-in-eastern.html> Access date: 05.01.2007

<sup>82</sup> Lieven – Hulsman: “The Folly of Exporting Democracy”

<sup>83</sup> Taras Kuzio (2005): “Regime Type and Politics in Ukraine under Kuchma”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 38, p. 180

## 1.2 The Eastern-Southern Regions

For centuries Russia's brotherly embrace smothered national independence movements in Belarus and much of Eastern Ukraine. In the part lying east of the Dnipro River, which divides the territory of the present day Ukraine almost perfectly in two, Russian tsars had always attempted to eradicate any separate Ukrainian identity. Here the intensity of russification was the greatest and hence a Ukrainian national identity is weaker. During the Soviet rule Russian language and culture became associated with modernity, urbanization and technological progress around the USSR. This region is overly supportive of the Communists and dominated by nostalgia for a return to the past since the impact of totalitarianism and imperial rule has been the most profound here. Ukrainian elites who came to power after independence and showed increasingly authoritarian tendencies since the mid 1990s, came from the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk where due to the strong clientalism and weak civil initiatives the largest Ukrainian industrial region of Donbas is dominated by oligarchic clans.

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea – mostly populated with native Russian-speakers – was transferred to Ukraine in 1954. Ethnic tensions in the Crimea during 1992 prompted a number of pro-Russian political organizations to advocate secession of Crimea and annexation by Russia. In July 1992, the Crimean and Ukrainian parliaments decided that the Crimea would remain under Ukrainian jurisdiction while retaining significant cultural and economic autonomy.

Concerning recent discussions about Ukraine's membership in international alliances such as NATO, most of the eastern and southern Ukrainian citizens possess extremely negative attitudes towards it. Even former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, herself coming from the Eastern Ukraine, but being notorious for her anti-Russian proclamations, said in January 2006 that Ukraine and Russia should join NATO together and "can never be members of different, let alone hostile, military blocs because that would tear Ukraine apart".<sup>84</sup>

Under the former president Kuchma's rule and with his centrist political forces in power Ukraine maintained within the multi-vector foreign policy close relations with Russia. But it was the Orange revolution at the end of 2004 that "raised alarms in neighboring Russia and Belarus and sent out shockwaves that were felt as far away as China, the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia, and even Venezuela — all countries in

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<sup>84</sup> Askold Krushelnycky (2005): "Ukraine: Interview -- Yuliya Tymoshenko Marks First 100 Days as PM", Friday, May 13, 2005, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/5/1B43DBEE-8E26-4F23-AD9D-CA15ACAA0D82.html> Access date: 13.11.2006

which international democracy-assistance organizations had established a presence”.<sup>85</sup> Two years after the revolution, however, the democrats, who mainly drew their support from the western and central Ukraine, have not managed to keep the country united - despite the slogans “East and West together!” Today, with the power of the President is limited due to the constitutional reform the transformed Ukraine into a parliamentary republic, and with Prime Minister Yanukovich who is considered anti-Western, pro-Russian, and with his support mainly coming from the eastern and southern Ukraine, many agree that Ukrainian government is at risk of getting torn both ways internationally. While Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko is more anxious than ever for validation of his western course by an EU membership offer - which is nowhere in sight anyways since the EU is drawing a hard line along its eastern borders – the Prime Minister is hindering Ukraine’s access to NATO and remains hesitant about a western integration course.

Feeling that its influence on the most important neighbor may significantly decrease, Russia is trying to weaken Ukraine by the same means that have proved efficient in Georgia and Moldova – the virus of separatism. While in the Crimea the pro-Russian sentiments have always been strong, at the end of November 2006 in the city of Donetsk – the financial capital of Eastern Ukraine – the leaders of separatists initiated the gathering of six million signatures necessary to hold a referendum on creating an independent state.<sup>86</sup> The separatist regions of Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia are recognized only by Moscow, making it not hard to imagine who is backing up the Ukrainian initiators of the Southern-Eastern Ukrainian Autonomous Republic.

It is evident that Russia is concerned about the political development in the “near abroad”. In the light of the ongoing political crisis in Ukraine and the continuous falling of the rating of western-oriented democrats, it is obvious that Russia’s meddling in the affairs of the neighboring country will have its negative influence on the democratization process in terms of inclining a significant number of Ukrainians against it.

## **2. Russia’s (Un)civil Society?**

To understand why the strong impediment to the democratic progress in Ukraine is coming from the side of Russia and why the Ukrainian democratic civic activists may have difficulties in pursuing their goals within their own sovereign state, it is necessary to look at the current situation of civil society in the heir of the tsarist and Soviet empires.

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<sup>85</sup> Gershman - Allen: “The Assault on Democracy Assistance”, p. 37

<sup>86</sup> Дмитрий Тузов (2006): “Вирус сепаратизма”, 01 Декабря 2006, <http://www.korrespondent.net/main/172020/> Access date: 01.12.2006

In the mid-1990s, significant retrenchment and backsliding from initially promising democratic transitions began to take place in Russia. Many of the former Soviet republics are now dominated by semi-authoritarian or outright authoritarian leaders. The oligarch's 'capture' of the Russian state in president Yeltsin times has been replaced by that of Putin's allies in the security forces in what is now described as either a 'managed democracy' or, according to Russian political scientists, as a 'militocracy'.<sup>87</sup> February 2006 marks the first anniversary of Russia's clear turn away from democracy. Since president Putin holds office there have been four years of steady growing limitations on democracy: the narrowing of the freedom to speak and to publish, to associate and to be immune from arbitrary searches. In early 2005, the abolishment of the popular elections of governors of Russia's 89 provinces was a "definitive step off the path of democratic consolidation"<sup>88</sup>

Neither a strong civil society nor a high level of interpersonal trust – the essential attributes of a democracy - seem to characterize contemporary Russia. In spite of the propaganda slogans of the rule of law and prosperity, the loyalty to democratic principles of many of the most influential Russian political parties and social groups remains highly questionable. In the post-Soviet period, independent organizations usually considered to be the bastions of civil society in the traditional sense, such as churches and political parties, have increasingly become linked to the state.<sup>89</sup>

Since the late 1990s, the harassment of political and social activists has expanded in Russia, threatening its fragile democratic institutions. Russian federal authorities have increasingly pushed back advances in civil liberties and human rights. The state has targeted independent media outlets in particular, but there have been numerous cases of environmentalists, human rights activists, and even students and academics—Russians but also Americans and Europeans—being intimidated, interrogated, trailed, jailed, robbed, accused of treason, beaten, and run out of the country, all by the federal authorities.<sup>90</sup>

Earlier in 2006, Putin announced an upcoming ban on civil society assistance from abroad. Russia's new NGO law has established serious constraints on their operation. The law sets up a new agency to oversee the activities and finances of NGOs that aims at establishing a firm control over all money received from foreign organizations requiring

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<sup>87</sup> Taras Kuzio (2005): "Regime Type and Politics in Ukraine Under Kuchma", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, No. 38, p. 180, pp. 167 - 190

<sup>88</sup> Kathryn Stoner-Weiss (2006): "Russia: Authoritarianism Without Authority", *Journal of Democracy*; Vol. 17, No.1, p. 104

<sup>89</sup> Zoe Knox (with Pete Lentini and Brad Williams) (2006): "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 1, p.4

<sup>90</sup> Mendelson: "Democracy Assistance in Russia", p. 93

also the accounting for how it is spent. The law expands the grounds on which this newly established governmental agency can deny registration to organizations.

The provisions applying to denial of registration for branches of foreign NGOs raise particular concerns since they permit the authorities to deny approval if a foreign NGO's "goals and objectives . . . create a threat to the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, national unity, unique character, cultural heritage and national interests of the Russian Federation."<sup>91</sup> Thus they undermine NGOs not just by cutting them off from their significant financial sources, but also by discrediting them in the eyes of the public by suggesting that they represent alien interests.

"We know how easy it would be for the tax police and fire inspectors to find something wrong and shut down unwanted organizations," said independent deputy Vladimir Ryzhkov, as reported by *The Moscow Times*. The bill, Ryzhkov said, "will put an end to civil society in Russia."<sup>92</sup> In another interview Irina Yasina, the program director of Open Russia Fund, said that the biggest problems would of course "face the human-rights groups, since they are connected with politics. In Russian new law, there is a very vague definition -- actually, there is no definition -- about what is political activity".<sup>93</sup> Over the past two years, democratic revolutions have overturned Moscow-friendly regimes in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, all with the help of civil society NGOs, many of them foreign-funded. It seems quite clear, that Putin wants to ensure that Russian-based NGOs will not become the focus of a similar opposition movement and not interfere in the 2008 presidential elections.

Nevertheless, as it is rightly pointed out by political scientist Larry Diamond, authoritarian rulers – and Putin is one of those – will for the sake of power preservation wrap themselves "in the moral purpose of democratic restoration and insisting that the suspension of democracy would be temporary" in the coming years.<sup>94</sup> This means that a rhetoric commitment to the principles of liberal democracy will still be considered a necessity - a fact which, however, does not preclude the Putin-type autocrats from indirectly supporting the anti-democratic public moods in the neighboring post-Soviet states.

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<sup>91</sup> Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 18-FZ, "On Introducing Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation," 10 January 2006

<sup>92</sup> "Vertical Rules. NGOs to Face Tougher Scrutiny", *Russian Life*, p. 8, available at: [www.russianlife.net](http://www.russianlife.net)  
Access date: 01.12.2006

<sup>93</sup> Suzanne Perry (2006): "Advocate Fears Backlash Against Pro-Democracy Groups in Russia", *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Vol. 18, Issue 8, p. 2

<sup>94</sup> Diamond: "A Universal Democracy?"

### 3. Anti-West Arguments Coming from Russia

In the first part of this paper I presented some critics of democracy assistance that came from the side of social scientists. Now it is time to look more attentively at what the U.S. is being accused of from the side of Russian authorities, which have increasing influence on mass media. What exactly does this anti-Western rhetoric, that is capable of influencing the public opinion in the “near abroad” states including Ukraine, look like? Is it completely ungrounded? And if it is not, what are the most visible flaws in Western (U.S. and wealthy European states’) foreign policy that Russian authorities have added to their arsenal of anti-West (and anti-American in particular) rhetoric?

The level of Western concern about the liberalization processes in the post-communist states is regarded with suspicion not only in Russia, but also in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and other states with strong remaining Soviet legacies. Perhaps, this deals with the Western tendency to show less concern about the internal liberalization of some of these states than about their potential as sources of energy and raw materials. The approach in democracy assistance towards different post-communist states from the side of the U.S. is indeed not even, which creates a reason for questioning the intentions and bring to the light the double standards discussion.

Analyzing the contemporary anti-Americanism in Russia, it seems there are several sources of its origin:

1. It is initiated by the authorities. The political groups behind president Putin are playing their own games with the people of Russia in order to distract their attention from serious Russian economic and social problems. Another motive might be to revitalize the idea of the Great Russian Empire, creating for this purpose the image of the external enemy, which is bent on weakening the motherland. Then there are also speculations with the still-fresh memories of the cold war and the uncontrollable crisis after the immediate break-up of the Soviet Union. It is believed that Russians generally prefer stability to discredited liberal values.
2. It is based on the objective critics of the U.S. foreign policy around the world, such as the widely condemned illegitimate and illegal war against Iraq, but not just this. Russian authorities with the help of state-controlled media manipulate the facts to the extent that they will serve their needs. In Russia, opponents of democracy promotion have even tried to associate it with the forced removal of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, claiming that democracy promotion is simply the pursuit of regime change by other means.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Gershman – Allen: “The Assault on Democracy Assistance”, p.49

The second point is closely related to the accusation that the U.S. are following double standards. Since this argument, as shown, is not entirely ungrounded, it seriously damages the image of democratic activists in the non-democratic societies, taking also into account the other flaws of the assistance mentioned in the first chapter.

### 3.1 Double Standards and the Civil Society Assistance

First of all, I want to point out that, in spite of the fact that the United States have been bankrolling activists in Eastern Europe this does not diminish the real crimes of Milosevic, Lukashenka, Shevardnadze and Kuchma. I do agree, though, that the U.S. interests - from oil to air-force bases - have let the United States to support many less than democratic regimes in different times throughout the world. For many the idea that the U.S. – even if it does not seek out dictators - seek out client states does not seem to be comfortable at all. The good intentions of the democracy assistance programs thus naturally fall under question also within the scholarly communities:

Part of the problem has been the conflicting priorities of bilateral donors (including the United States) that still want to maintain friendly client states around the world. Some thought this dualism – a polite word for hypocrisy – would come to an end with the demise of the Cold War. And indeed, it did subside for a time. But with the inception of the new war on terrorism since Sept. 11, the problem of selling short out principles in order to nurture authoritarian clients has been reborn with a vengeance.<sup>96</sup>

Concerning the support for NGOs, the analyst of democracy assistance Carothers points out that the U.S. government supports the principle of civil society development, but avoids aiding groups in civil society whose leaders may not be sympathetic to Washington's policies in the Middle East.<sup>97</sup> Those NGOs struggling for a completely different vision, one contrary to the U.S. and global capital's interests are going to be marginalized if they cannot be bought. In Latin American countries, Washington funds many projects in intensely politicized NGO communities, often supporting progressive groups that a decade before it would have shunned. "Many political parties and partisan NGOs receive grants from these and other channels as part of a multi-faceted U.S. attempt to unseat Hugo Chavez and destroy his "Bolivarian revolution", says professor of sociology at the University of California William I. Robinson.<sup>98</sup> Unlike in Latin America,

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<sup>96</sup> Diamond: "A Universal Democracy?"

<sup>97</sup> Ottaway – Carothers: *Funding virtue..* p. 296

<sup>98</sup> Robinson: "The United States, Venezuela, and "democracy promotion"



in Venezuela in particular, where the large part of civil initiatives is pro-socialist in character and does not coincide with the U.S. idea of liberal democracy, on the terrain of the former USSR aid to NGOs in the first half of the 1990s was one of the principal channels through which Washington supported people and groups it hoped would oppose the former communists in government and help the opposition to victory.

Of course, this civil society support coming from the West does not correspond with the restoration of the Great Russian Empire plans of a former KGB agent who, nevertheless, carves out an independent and often uncompromising foreign policy for the country and enjoys massive support from the Russian population. This makes me conclude that his influence nowadays reaches beyond the borders of the world's largest country. (After all, if the U.S. can influence politics abroad, than Russia certainly can do so as well.)

#### **4. Is the Threat for Ukrainian Democracy Coming from the East?**

As I have stated earlier in this chapter, the Eastern and Southern Ukraine, which has for centuries been dominated by Russian imperialistic power, and holds a mainly Russian-speaking population with a weak Ukrainian identity, is particularly vulnerable to the anti-Western rhetoric that is becoming more resonant east of its borders. Here its seeds may fall into the fertile ground of socio-political discontent, overall dissatisfaction in politics and, consequently, reborn apathy.

As it was mentioned before, the (geo)political concept of the “near abroad” rests in keeping the former republics of the USSR in the sphere of Moscow's political influence. During the 1990s, Russia was unable to offer a political and economic alternative capable of competing with the pro-Western ambitions of the former Soviet states. In the wake of the new millennium, however, Russia is strengthening its positions and reinforcing its influence on the neighbors. Ukrainian political scientist Igor Burkut also points out that Moscow is trying to dictate its will upon Ukraine and “so far it succeeds relying on the Moscow-dependent politicians and businessmen.”<sup>99</sup>

The creation of Russian-dominated NGO networks – think-tanks, media organizations, development centers – is indeed at the heart of the country's new policy in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, as a counterbalance, Russia is positioning herself as an “exporter of democracy” (a special “Russian-type democracy” based on preserving the

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<sup>99</sup> Ігор Буркут, <http://www.chas.cv.ua/> access date: 12.10.2006

order and a strong centralized rule). Moscow's policy-makers are making sure that the next revolution – the one to revolt against the present Ukrainian and Georgian presidents (who are, in turn, loosing the public support in their states) Viktor Yushchenko and Mikhail Saakashvili – will be Moscow-colored. And their hopes are not utopian. “The prospect of Putin's Russia turning into the greatest medium-term beneficiary of the wave of the anti-Russian color revolutions in Tbilisi and Kiev is not a fantastic option. It is the new reality”, thinks chair of the Bulgarian Centre for Liberal Strategies Ivan Krastev.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to many levers of influence that Russia uses to alter the development of the “near abroad”, the socio-political situation within the country itself provokes concern among other international actors. The problem of Russia's integration into—or alienation from—multi-lateral alliances such as NATO and the European Union continues to be the key geopolitical factor affecting Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and the Baltic states. Russian energy policy has become a crucial tool with which Moscow can exert political influence over its European neighbors, for much of the European continent remains highly dependent on Russian oil and gas exports.<sup>101</sup>

In Ukraine, of course, one of the most visible examples of Russian meddling was seen during the Ukrainian presidential election of 2004. Gleb Pavlovsky's Russian Press Club, posing as a nongovernmental forum, served as a conduit for Russian interference in the election. Through his Foundation for Effective Policy, Pavlovsky serves as a consultant to President Putin and has been closely associated with electoral abuses and violations in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine.<sup>102</sup> Of course, he backed the anti-West, pro-Russian political forces on various occasions.

In post-Soviet states those forces not favored by the U.S. assistance justify their actions such as restricting NGO policies, harassing oppositional media, etc by saying that they are only counteracting the meddling by the U.S. They assume that all the elements of the democracy aid portfolio have the same partisan purpose. If such forces unite and manage to win the wide legitimacy, they may change the vector of a foreign policy, hamper democratic reforms as well as manipulate the public opinion. This can be done by making citizens in many transitional countries believe that their political system is controlled by powerful outside forces and thus put in doubt their own ability to choose or influence their government. It seems that the reason behind it is to spread mass apathy and

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<sup>100</sup> Ivan Krastev (2005): “Russia's Post-Orange Empire”, available at: [http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-europe\\_constitution/postorange\\_2947.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-europe_constitution/postorange_2947.jsp) Access date: 9.11.2006

<sup>101</sup> Stephen E. Hanson - Blair A. Ruble (2005): “Rebuilding Russian Studies”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.25, No.3, p. 52

<sup>102</sup> Gershman - Allen: “The Assault on Democracy Assistance”, p.45

keep the population away from taking part in the political life of the country. Or to assure them that the foreign intervention is strictly controlled by the strong leader's hand (like in neighboring Russia and Belarus).

### **Conclusion No 3**

There are two Ukraines – the East and the West – which are very different in their culture and political preferences. The latter is historically more pro-democratic, nationalistic, and active, while the former is Russian-oriented, more apathetic and skeptical towards participation in political life. The Ukrainian democratic revolution of 2004 provoked great expectations for quick economic-political reforms as well as the country's integration into the Western alliances. Two years after, however, little of these expectations have been met: with the exception of the freedom of speech, where the situation has improved, not much progress has been made, discrediting the democratic leaders in the eyes of the public. Separatist trends re-emerged in the east of the country and anti-NATO protests rocked through the Crimea. In the situation of disorientation and disillusionment the alternative offered by the more powerful Eastern neighbor may seem more attractive in the eyes of more Ukrainians (anyhow, Russia's influence on Ukraine, with the exception of the Western parts, has always been strong).

In the increasingly authoritarian Russia, however, Putin has brought much of the media under the Kremlin's control; loyalists dominate the Duma. The elements of civil society, which could oppose a further strengthening of the secret service's power, are being dismantled. To keep the necessary level of fear among the population, to strengthen their support and to eliminate the oppositional forces, Russian authorities fuel the foreign intervention myths painting the West with predominantly dark colors.

The favorable social attitudes the democratic civil activists have enjoyed prior, during or just after the Orange revolution, may not be that favorable anymore. It might be not an easy task to analyze whether the nascent Ukrainian civil society is resistant to the trends coming from Russia. It is possible, however, to see who and what can play the role of the ultimate restraining force to Russification, what the main Ukrainian civil democratic initiatives are and what public support they enjoy (if any).

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## PART IV

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### **Building Civil Society in Ukraine**

The fourth chapter I want to dedicate to the most visible and known Ukrainian civil democratic initiatives. After the discussion on the Western assistance to the Eastern European civil society, I will now present the main actors, Western and Ukrainian: who they are, how they have contributed to the Ukrainian democratization and what role they play today.

Due to time and space limits, I am not able to give a comprehensive assessment of the Western democracy assistance Ukraine has received since its independence. Nevertheless, to present the most well known Western organizations operating there, the support they provided to the advocacy NGOs and civil society initiatives, seems to be necessary for the further understanding of the attitudes the Ukrainian public may have towards the aid recipients. Based on the literature and personal interviews with the Ukrainian democratic activists I will attempt to assess the activities of the Western donors.

Then, for the reader's better understanding of the current social trends in Ukraine I will give a short historical overview of civic activism since the early 1990s with special attention to the Orange revolution. I will briefly talk about the issue of resource mobilization in order to show how the activists managed to attract the large masses of Ukrainians to their side and give them hope for better future. Then - one by one - I will present the main Ukrainian civic initiatives, focusing on those that were on the vanguard of the revolution and on their activities since. Based on the personal interviews with representatives of the advocacy NGOs I will show the projects they are currently working on and that are supported (or not supported) by some of the Western donors mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.

#### **1. A Helpful Hand from the West? (Democracy Assistance to Ukraine)**

In the previous chapter I have shown that from the Russian perspective the U.S. support for democratic institutions, free elections and civil society has more to do with expansion of Washington's geopolitical interests than with the noble goal of expanding liberty. Nevertheless, it is true that Ukraine as a country remains critical to United States' foreign policy objectives due to its strategic position between European Union and Russia and its

importance for regional stability. Since the end of the cold war, Eastern Europe has been host to a large army of Western NGOs - from the United States, Britain, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe. All of them have been working on various aspects of institutional development, such as helping to establish competitive political parties and elections, independent media, and civic advocacy groups, as well as trying to reduce ethnic conflict. In the early 1990s donors were generally optimistic about the democratic transitions in the region, but by the year 2001 the prospect of western type democratization of the Soviet Union successor states (outside the Baltic) seemed increasingly bleak. Ukraine that had begun its independence from the USSR in a relatively promising fashion seemed to be sliding back towards autocracy. In this respect it looked like the Western assistance indirectly contributed to the rise of the strong authority and had negative results. But then things suddenly seemed to change. The Ukrainian 2004 Orange revolution not only created a very different set of expectations – overly positive, but was simultaneously denounced by skeptics as the most visible example of the power of Western money. “It is no secret,” writes Herd P. Graeme “that funding and organizational support for [Viktor] Yushchenko’s election campaign and subsequent events were provided via a complex network of various kinds of non-governmental, public, and human-rights organizations financed by numerous Western foundations or philanthropic outfits.”<sup>103</sup> In a further step to understand the problems this foreign western influence has on current Ukrainian perception of the events and the revolution itself, I will now present the most well known organizations that have been operating in Ukraine since the early 1990s as well as shortly assess the positive contributions and drawbacks of their activities.

## **1.1 The Western Organizations/NGOs**

### **USAID**

U.S. assistance to Ukraine is targeted to promote political and economic reform and to address urgent humanitarian needs. The U.S. has consistently encouraged Ukraine's transition to a democratic society with a prosperous market-based economy. Since 1992, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)<sup>104</sup> mission to Ukraine has been working to assist the region in its transition to a broad-based, market-oriented democracy. A cornerstone for the continuing U.S. partnership with Ukraine and the other

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<sup>103</sup> Herd P. Greame (2005): “Colorful revolutions and the CIS – ‘Manufactured’ versus ‘Managed’ Democracy?” *Problems of Post Communism*, Vol. 52, No.2, p. 8

<sup>104</sup> [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

Newly Independent States (NIS) has been the Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act (FSA). Ukraine has been a primary recipient of FSA assistance. Total U.S. assistance since independence has been more than \$3 billion.

In the fiscal year 2005, the U.S. assistance programs in Ukraine were designed to promote continued economic reforms and to help cement democratic advances after the Orange revolution. U.S. assistance supports Ukraine’s expressed interest in integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, and supposedly helps in creating a market economy characterized by a growing middle class, a civilian-controlled military, internationally accepted law enforcement practices, and a vibrant civil society. The estimated \$174 million budgeted by all U.S. Government agencies for assistance programs in Ukraine in the year 2005 is allocated roughly as follows (Table 1):

Table 1: U.S. assistance to Ukraine – fiscal year 2005

Democracy Programs	\$46.54 million
Economic & Social Reform	\$53.3 million
Security & Law Enforcement	\$64.55 million
Humanitarian Assistance	\$1.84 million
Cross Sectoral Initiatives	\$7.96 million <sup>105</sup>

With contributions totaling more than \$1.2 million, the U.S. worked through the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to help promote free and fair presidential elections in Ukraine. Among other things, the OSCE field office in Ukraine provided training for domestic observer groups, journalists and judges, conducted voter awareness campaigns and provided free legal advice to voters, and printed and distributed copies of Ukrainian electoral law and regulations among the judicial, media, and other interested communities.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> The above figures include a supplemental \$60 million FREEDOM Support Act appropriation to support the new reform-oriented government of Ukraine after the Orange revolution.) Fact Sheet, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Assistance to Ukraine -- Fiscal Year 2005, Washington, DC, July 25, 2005, available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/50839.htm> Access date: 02.12.2006

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia - FY 2005, Released by the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, January 2006, available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/63183.htm> Access date: 02.12.2006

## **Freedom House**

This American based NGO monitors and rates democratic and human rights compliance worldwide. It was founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Wilkie, and other Americans concerned with threats to peace and democracy. It claims to be a non-partisan organization with a broad base, but presents itself as “a leading advocate of the world’s young democracies”.<sup>107</sup> It conducts an array of U.S. and international research, advocacy, education, and training initiatives promoting human rights, democracy, free market economics, the rule of law, independent media, and U.S. engagement in international affairs.

In the year 2006, Freedom House has supported ten organizations throughout Ukraine whose activities were targeted at monitoring political parties’ programs at the local level. Quite often, as it turned out, not only the average citizens did not know the program of the future deputy, but even the candidate himself/herself had never seen the program of their party. According to the coordinator of the regional programs working for Freedom House in Kyiv, local governments are still very much dominated by a Soviet-time approach. The public requests for the de jure open information is often turned down, the access to data is denied.

Additionally, another important set of projects was supported by Freedom House during the last two years in Ukraine. These are initiatives targeted at increasing the transparency of the local governments. According to one of the members of Freedom House in Kyiv, due to their support and the hard work of local civic activists governments of several Eastern-Ukrainian regions became more open to public and to mass media.

## **U.S. Embassy in Kyiv**

The United States can also back her civil democratic initiatives through their embassies in the post-Soviet countries. The U.S. Democracy Grants Program enables the Embassy community in Kyiv to support key projects that are aimed at fostering the development and education of civil society. The program provides seed money for unique and sustainable projects, particularly projects that help develop the capacity and sustainability of non-governmental organizations in Ukraine.

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<sup>107</sup> [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

## **The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace<sup>108</sup>**

This is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the cooperation between nations and promoting active international engagement by the United States. Through its Carnegie Moscow Center, the Endowment helps to introduce the concept of public policy analysis in the states of the former Soviet Union and to improve relations between Russia and the United States.

### **George Soros**

From the very beginning of the new post-Soviet era there was George Soros and his philanthropic creation, the Soros foundations. The Soros foundations form a network of national foundations in twenty-one countries of the region (and in South Africa and Haiti), together with two regionally operating foundations in New York and Budapest. The common purpose of the Soros foundations is to promote societies that are “open” both in terms of domestic matters, as well as towards the international community of states. The emphasis on open societies reflects George Soros' belief that "we need a form of social organization which allows people with different opinions and different interests to live together in peace.”<sup>109</sup>

A major emphasis of the Soros foundations is educational assistance, supporting the revamping of post-communist primary, secondary, and university educational systems, and helping tens of thousands of persons in post-communist societies to travel to the West for short to medium periods to study or to participate in international conferences or other forms of professional development and foreign exposure. Soros' assistance goes directly to individuals and small groups. Carothers, who in a number of his works has in detail criticized strategies of democracy assistance, refers to Soros' approach as a positive example for a different way of giving aid to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It is said to be more sensitive to the local environment of the recipient country.<sup>110</sup>

In Ukraine the Soros foundation works under the name of International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) and was founded in 1990. IRF issues annual reports that list every grant, down to the smallest micro-grants, allowed during the past year, including the amount, the name of the grantee, and the purpose of the grant. According to the 2004

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<sup>108</sup> [www.carnegieendowment.org](http://www.carnegieendowment.org)

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.irf.kiev.ua/old-site/eng/> Access date: 05.12.2006

<sup>110</sup> More on how the Soros' methods differ from those of the official U.S. foreign aid see Carothers, Thomas (2006): “Aiding Post-Communist Societies: A Better Way? , *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 43, Issue 5



annual report, 818 projects were supported around Ukraine with the total sum of \$ 6 186 284. (It is important to remind that presidential elections were scheduled at October 31<sup>st</sup> 2004). The largest sums went to the projects targeted at civil society and free media development, for example: openness of election process, support for Internet technologies, public monitoring of freedom of speech, balanced representation of candidates in the national mass media during the election campaign, etc. In the year 2005 IRF targeted its support at NGOs which came into the light during the Orange revolution: those attempting to establish firm public control over the government, or those working with public opinion before the parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2006.<sup>111</sup>

## **TACIS**

The European Union's relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were underpinned in 1991 through the Program of Technical Assistance called TACIS<sup>112</sup>. Through this program the EU provides grant-financed technical assistance to support the process of transition to market economies and democratic societies in the partner countries including Ukraine. TACIS projects in Ukraine are mainly focused on trade- and investment-related issues, public service reform, but in addition – and that is of particular interest for my work - on civil society development through partnership and exchange programs with EU institutions.

## **Westminster Foundation for Democracy**

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy<sup>113</sup> (WFD) is the UK's democracy-building foundation. It provides funding assistance to countries managing the transition to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. In the Eastern and Southern Ukrainian regions WFD supported a six-month project, which sought to prepare civil society organizations for the 2004 presidential elections. Participants received training on how to mobilize different social groups for the protests, how to campaign and to create networks of activists across this part of Ukraine.

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<sup>111</sup> Annual IRF reports for the years 2004 and 2005. Available at: [www.irf.kiev.ua](http://www.irf.kiev.ua) Access date: 05.01.2007

<sup>112</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/ceeca/tacis/](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/ceeca/tacis/)

<sup>113</sup> [www.wfd.org](http://www.wfd.org)

## 1.2 Assessment of the Activities: Positive Points and Flaws

Unfortunately, so far little is known—although much good and bad is believed—about the impact of the assistance the above-mentioned organizations have had in cooperation with local Ukrainian political and social activists. Nevertheless, there are common views presented in the recent few critical scholarly assessments of assistance programs to the post-Soviet states. Many of them were also confirmed by my respondents from the ranks of civic activists. These critical insights allow distinguishing strong, positive effects as well as flaws and weak spots of civil society assistance. They can be summed up in the following two paragraphs.

### Positive and Strong Points

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Western donor and exchange organizations, both official and non-governmental ones have invested large sums and efforts to bolster civil society in the newly independent states. Their aim is to enhance fairness, openness, accountability and popular participation in government. They have, undoubtedly, helped in democratic institutional development, such as helping to establish competitive political parties and elections, independent media, civic advocacy groups, free trade unions, and independent judiciaries.

The “bottom-up” development projects embrace educating impoverished communities regarding their social, economic, civil, and political rights, and helping them to realize those rights. Many of the local NGO leaders were taught how to lobby legislators, government agencies, and even multilateral lending bodies concerning policy matters.<sup>114</sup>

With relatively small amounts of money, Western donors and NGOs have helped specific groups of local activists to build institutions associated with democracy. Western assistance has contributed to the ways in which political parties campaign and citizens monitor elections. Thus, for example, in Russia and Ukraine, Western NGOs have had at least some impact in presenting practical menus of problem-solving skills for elections (such as, for example, how to use research in designing a campaign). Besides, in Russia and Ukraine, Western NGOs have influenced the electoral activities of new political parties and the organization of media watch groups.

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<sup>114</sup> For more assessment see Stephen Golub (1993): “Assessing and Enhancing the Impact of Democratic Development Projects: A Practitioner’s Perspective,” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 54-70, Mendelson: “Democracy Assistance in Russia”, p. 68-106

## Flaws

Regardless the undoubtedly positive effects of assistance, those scientists that after several decades of democracy assistance to the transitional states around the world attempt to analyze its impact often do not reach very optimistic conclusions – as already mentioned in Part 1. Almost in every case examined such newly established institutions as free and fair elections, self-government, transparency and alike function poorly and with weak links to their own societies. Western NGOs operating there as well as local advocacy NGOs established with their help “have done little to help make parties responsive to constituents or major media outlets in any way independent from the narrow political interests of owners.”<sup>115</sup>

In Part 2 I have summed up the most widespread accusations that donors face regarding their democracy assistance programs. One of the issues was their frequent inability to provide help to the “genuine reformers”. In other words, to distinguish between those who are indeed devoted to advancing democratic reforms from those who have established a NGO as an easy tool to fill up their pockets. And although it is clear as noonday that all the aid recipients would represent themselves in a favorable light in front of their donors, mass media and researchers, many of my respondents pointed out that the foreign aid would be more useful if it goes to the activists at the very basic local level.

In spite of this, publications and reports concerning Ukraine abound in praises of the level of civil society development. Alexander Motyl for instance reports that “civil society and the media in today’s Ukraine are robust, open political debate has become the order of the day, transparency has increased, democratic institutions are functioning, the rule of law has improved marginally, and investigations into past misdeeds are proceeding.”<sup>116</sup> Although, I have not come across any comprehensive account of the contemporary (post-Orange revolution) state of civil society in Ukraine, it is, nevertheless, useful to look at the overall situation of civil liberties based on the assessment provided by my Ukrainian respondents. I will return to this issue in the fifth part.

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<sup>115</sup> John Glenn (2000): “Democracy Assistance and NGO Strategies in Post-Communist Societies,” *Carnegie paper* No. 8, available at: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=188> Access date: 03.12.2006

<sup>116</sup> Alexander Motyl (2005): “Democracy is Alive in Ukraine”, available at: [http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-ukraine/alive\\_2822.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-ukraine/alive_2822.jsp) Access date: 9.11.2006

## **2. Historical Overview of Ukrainian Democratic Initiatives**

As I have mentioned before, many authors recognize that one of the most positive developments in Ukraine's democratic transformation throughout the 1990s has been the slow but stable growth of its civil society. Unlike in Russia and Belarus, in Ukraine relatively active civic initiatives have been a consistent bright spot in the country's political landscape.

The human rights activists from the Soviet-era have made themselves known around the ex-USSR, many of them ended up in Siberia. Their efforts gained new momentum in the late 1980/early 1990s and their efforts succeeded with the proclamation of the Ukrainian independence. Ten years after, in the year 2000, a large anti-presidential civil campaign was launched by the oppositional politicians as a response to harassments of free media coming from the ruling elite. Oppositional fronts did not, however, enjoy massive support and were defeated by the pro-governmental forces, but they served as a training ground for activists and inspired them for future actions. The young people who called for President Kuchma's ouster in November 2004 have in turn demonstrated to their counterparts in other former Soviet republics, such as Belarus, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan the "power of people". Although the United States are broadly believed to have been backing up these social movements, "it was not the leading force in several of the recent transitions", says a counselor and senior scholar at Freedom House, Karatnycky.<sup>117</sup> Public participation in civil society grew significantly during and immediately after the Orange revolution. Since I focus on the civil groups that were the most active especially during the presidential election campaign in 2004 and later on were the driving force behind the Orange revolution, I believe it necessary now to briefly explain the nature of this important historical event.

### **2.1 The 2004 Elections and the Orange Revolution**

At the beginning of the new millennium it became clear that early hopes for democratization in most of the former Soviet Union republics - Ukraine including - were overly optimistic. Since Ukraine's second president Leonid Kuchma was re-elected for a second term in November 1999, he exhibited increasingly authoritarian tendencies. In 1999-2003, he strengthened central and direct control over both state and private television

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<sup>117</sup> Karatnycky: "The Democratic Imperative", p. 107

and established firm central control over regional governments. This period became known as Kuchma regime, or Kuchmizm. Power was being steadily concentrated in the hands of the presidential “inner-circle” - oligarchs and corrupt politicians.

In the November 2004 presidential elections the long-hated president Kuchma wanted to pass on the power to his loyal successor, first by creating an uneven playground for the opposition, and later by stealing the popular vote when the opposition won. These maneuvers led to a massive outbreak of popular anger that almost resulted in the storming of the governmental buildings. After prolonged street protests a re-run of the second electoral round was conducted in which the democratic forces won and their victory was officially recognized.

The events surrounding the Presidential elections in Ukraine in November/December 2004 caught an intense and prolonged interest throughout the world and became known as the Orange Revolution, named after the symbolic color of the regime opposition. This unexpected demand of Ukrainians for democratization was the strongest since the country gained its independence from the Soviet Union and was compared to the velvet revolutions of the late 1980s in Central and Eastern Europe.

Throughout the 13 years of independence there were a number of precedents for the emergence of such a strong movement against the abuses made by the regime, but the state of apathy and pessimism always outweighed the dissatisfaction and anger. This time, however, there were hundreds of ardent activists committed to democratic changes who started the mobilization way before the elections took place and apparently succeeded.

## **2.2 Mass Mobilization**

Resource mobilization theory focuses on mobilization process and the formal organizational manifestations of the protest as well as on the organizational dynamics of social movements. Many followers of this theoretical approach agree<sup>118</sup> on the need to emphasize the variety and source of resources; the relationship of social movement to the media, authorities, and other parties and the interaction among movement organizations. The success of each social movement lays in the effectiveness of its mobilizing structures. According to John McCarthy they are “those agreed upon ways of engaging in collective action which include particular “tactic repertoires”, particular social movement

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<sup>118</sup> John M. McCarthy - Mayer N Zald (1977): “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 6, pp. 1212-1241

organizational forms, and modular social movement repertoires”.<sup>119</sup> Mass discontent and moral outrage are able to lead people into collective action but there is no straight dependency between the strength of discontent and the success of the movement. First, they require activists who will stream popular outrage onto the target. Second, there should be a clear goal set ahead to guide the movement. Third, a strong net of social connections, both, formal and informal, should be created to provide the movement with information, resources, support and new members. Besides, the more solid and expanded the network is, the better will be the communication process within the movement.

Strong leadership is one of the most important aspects of movement organization. Leaders organize the expression of mass discontent; they determine the goal of the movement, establish the contacts with supportive organizations, and decide how the resources available to the movement should be used. In the case of the Ukrainian revolution it is possible to say that its successful outcome depended much on the leaders’ capability to mobilize people for collective action and carry on the protest in a peaceful manner.

In the cases of the recent democratic revolutions the most successful civic leaders turned out to be young people. They did not have nostalgia for the Soviet times, many of them had at least once traveled abroad, to the EU or to the USA, they were, in fact, “the most concerned social element” who wanted to enjoy all kinds of freedom in their homeland. In Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) the youth led the way in organizing democratic coalitions among hitherto warring opposition parties that the authorities had successfully divided and ruled over. In the three countries used as case studies by political scientist Taras Kuzio, in the culminating time of the civic unrest youth dominated the protest campaigns and election monitoring NGOs.<sup>120</sup>

### **2.3 The Key Civic Initiatives/Activities/Activists**

Ukrainian oppositional civic activists worked with a close connection to international like-minded partners and were thus operating within advocacy networks. Firstly, Western observers had announced that elections fell far short of international standards. When the regime failed to acknowledge the opposition’s victory, the supporters stepped in and

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<sup>119</sup> John McCarthy (1996): “Constraints and Opportunities in Adopting, Adapting, and Inventing”, in McAdam et al. (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 141

<sup>120</sup> More on the role of youth in the democratic revolutions see Taras Kuzio (2006): “Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Issue 39, pp. 365-386

greatly increased the protesters' expectations for success. The former Poland's president Aleksander Kwasniewski (who represented the Council of Europe), Lithuania's President Vladas Adamkus, and European Union's Foreign Affairs Commissioner Javier Solana urged Kyiv to negotiate a democratic solution to the situation. Before that in some countries local student movements such as, for example, Polish "Free Ukraine" expressed their solidarity with the Ukrainian protesters.

The advocacy networks would be hard to imagine without activists. According to the same authors "activists are people who care enough about some issue that they are prepared to incur significant costs and act to achieve their goals."<sup>121</sup> Several of the most influential Ukrainian civic initiatives will be presented on the next several pages.

### **2.3.1 "Ukraine without Kuchma" Movement**

The first mass protest campaign in the history of independent Ukraine was directed against the free media harassment taking place under the rule of former president Kuchma and took place in 2000–2001. It was organized by the political opposition, but students constituted the majority of participants. Although the opposition was able to launch a rather large-scale anti-presidential campaign at that time, it failed to emerge as a strong unified force and to promote the former president's impeachment. Apart from the clearly oppositional political parties, two of the most visible civil movements were founded: "The Forum of National Salvation" (Форум національного порятунку) and the "For Truth!" movement (За правду!). While behind the creation of the former there stood mainly oppositional politicians who wanted to attract on their side as much citizens indifferent to politics as possible, the initiators of the later were mainly students' associations such as "Youth Movement". Many of the Orange revolution activists as well as many of my respondents referred to the "Ukraine without Kuchma" movement as to their training ground and the grand rehearsal for the future civic campaigns.

### **2.3.2 Civic Campaign "Pora!"**

The civic organization "Pora!" (It's time!), that became the driving force behind the powerful mass mobilization in late November 2004 was mainly a youth-based movement. Espousing nonviolent resistance and advocating increased national democracy, the group

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. 14

was established in 2004 to coordinate young people's opposition to the Kuchma government.

Since the success of the Orange revolution in defeating election fraud, "Pora!" has formally split into two branches – the "yellow" and the "black" wing, named after the color of their symbols - with different goals for the future. The difference in positions that became obvious in the split up, however, always existed without being publicly known. "Black Pora!" was associated with more grass-root civic resistance and local anti-Kuchma campaigns. "Yellow Pora!" was considered to be better organized, better supported from the West, and closely connected to oppositional parties. At the end of 2005, "Yellow Pora!" turned into an Ukrainian political party which tried to get into Parliament in the March 2006 elections. According to some active members the reason for this was the preference of methods of parliamentary work. They „became more adequate nowadays in comparison to the methods used by civic campaign“. The main credo of the newly established party is to strengthen civic patriotism and encourage self-organization of local communities. Being represented in each of Ukrainian regions it is focused on local problems, and, according to one of the members, "it leads almost an open fight with the local authorities against governmental misdeeds like an unjustified rise of communal tariffs, etc".

According to some "Pora!" coordinators even before receiving political party status their organization has never received any U.S. funding. (Now, being a party it is even formally impossible). On the other hand some active members of the movement claimed that they did. T. Kuzio also states that "they were able to tap into Western funds sent to the Freedom of Choice Coalition, a bloc of NGOs created to combat election fraud."<sup>122</sup> This suggests that the issue of financial sustainability requires a cautious approach from the members of the party. To clarify the seemingly contradictory moments I referred to several members who have a long history of civic activism.

During the first three months of "Pora's" existence – in spring 2004 - it received financial support from such organizations as Freedom House, the British embassy and so on, but, as it was mentioned by one of my respondents this support was relatively weak. Later on civic campaign "Pora!" was followed by more than 300 Ukrainian NGOs, and some of these NGOs received various support from the West. Everyone stated that the Western assistance was crucial in breaking through the informational blockade of totally government-dominated mass media, that is "foreign help was used to publicize the existence of the organization".

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<sup>122</sup> Kuzio: "Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization..", p. 371



### **2.3.3 Civic Network “Opora”**

“Black Pora!” was led by western Ukrainian students, who had played a role in the anti-Kuchma protests of 2000-2001. From the very beginning it adopted a status of a pro-democracy watchdog. Until now it remains a non-partisan movement. Since spring 2006 it is formally registered as an NGO under the name of Civic Network “Opora”. According to one of the coordinators of the Network the main focus of their organizational activity is local and regional development. Their programs are targeted at advocating and lobbying of civil interests varying from one region to another: from historical monuments preservation and ecological issues to unlawful land privatization and redefining property rights legislature. It poses itself as the core Ukrainian network of civic activism but at the moment is still working on a strategic plan for the future.

According to the regional coordinator of the Network, they have a lot of partners abroad, namely in Russia, Belarus, Poland, and Georgia. This is, in words of one of the member "the informal net of partners"<sup>123</sup>. Speaking about the financial sources, they openly declare that the main financial support comes from domestic sources and West European foundations. The latter appears mainly in form of educational seminars on managing NGOs, experience sharing, the ability to cooperate with activists from Georgia and Belarus, etc.

### **2.3.4 Alliance “Maidan”**

The “Maidan” (“The Square”) Alliance is an informal association of individuals and civic organizations who are seeking to coordinate their efforts on fully developing civil society in Ukraine, as well as strive for the rule of law and government accountable to the public. It has its representatives basically in every big Ukrainian city. It is an association that had also grown out of the “Ukraine without Kuchma” movement. Nowadays it is a group of about 100 "base activists", 50 of whom are permanently active in different regions simultaneously working on various civic projects.

In 2002-2003, it organized and coordinated seminars on anti-regime movement tactics in 23 regions; the assistance for training was provided by Dutch, British and Polish foundations. During the election campaigns the alliance organized mobile election-monitoring groups composed of politically active youth.

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<sup>123</sup> Personal interview. 09.01.2007

It also provides one of the most frequently visited Ukrainian web-pages holding on-line live discussions on politics. It was started as a reaction to government's efforts to block information distribution about the political opposition activities and discredit its leaders as well as protesters. It has a tradition of direct interactive communication of members with politicians and civil activists online and is available in several European languages.<sup>124</sup>

According to the active member of the alliance, the Maidan web-page is their main ground for ideas to be born. After the ideas are presented and discussed on the Internet forum, with mutual effort of Kyiv's and local activists they are implemented in the Ukrainian regions. Their last project was a public opinion survey (supported by Soros "Renaissance foundation") on the local level dealing with the openness of regional politicians to the public as well as the comprehensibility of their political programs. The main goal was to find out to what extent their programs correspond with the will of people. And whether the local officials know the political programs of their own parties. In the words of one of the members the recent main achievement of the alliance was to lobby Yevhen Zaharov<sup>125</sup> on the position of ombudsman from the civil sector – the first time when the network of civic organizations was able to lobby an official figure on this scale.

From the West they have been receiving purely informational support. Recently they started to apply for grant money after 5 years of completely "underground" existence which was fueled by the enthusiasm and patriotism of a small group of young people.

### **2.3.5 Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU)**

The Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU) is the country's largest non-partisan politically active NGO which provides independent electoral assessment in Ukraine. It was established as early as 1994 before the second independent presidential elections. With more than 130 branches throughout the country, CVU has attracted tens of thousands of young people into Ukrainian political life through the experience of monitoring elections, promoting linkages between citizens and government bodies, and citizen education programs. In the end of 2004 on each electoral round they provided 20 000 Ukrainian observers, that means that it had covered 2/3 of all polling stations. With their

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<sup>124</sup> "Maidan" – An Internet Hub of Civil Resistance of Ukraine", *Maidan*. Online posting, 26 Oct. 2004. Available at: <http://maidan.org.ua/static/enews/1098814787.html> Access date: 30.10.2004

<sup>125</sup> Chairperson of the Board of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union

help the major electoral falsifications were revealed and the information was passed to the courts.

Between elections, the young activists leading CVU's grassroots campaigns have created regional and national programs to monitor government responsiveness to citizens and to involve Ukrainians in political life in their communities. The ongoing projects between elections include juridical education of citizens, monitoring of local governments, democratization of the local communities in the Eastern Ukraine, revealing the "hot spots" on the local levels where there are conflicts going on. According to the speaker of CVU, they are planning to start a series of educational seminars on various actual political issues such as NATO and EU accession.

Being a member of ENEMO (European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations), CVU works together with foreign observers. It has been the main local partner for the American organization National Democratic Institute (NDI). With its funding, training, and consulting, for the elections, the CVU participated in voter education programs, and sent thousands of election monitors across the country. My respondent mentioned that the foreign assistance covers not more than 10-15 % of the organization's budget.

### **2.3.6 Other Initiatives**

There were a number of civic initiatives of temporal character mainly connected to the 2004 electoral campaign. One of them was initiating youth election-monitoring groups that in 2004 were organized in two coalitions. "The New Choice" coalition brought together election monitoring NGOs and was supported by the Europe XXI Foundation – an Ukrainian-British non-partisan NGO that was created for the purpose of supporting Ukraine's integration in the European Union. "New Choice" grew out of the Civic Monitoring Committee that was active in the 2002 elections, and was one of the first examples of re-energized young activism after the anti-Soviet protests of 1991. "The Freedom of Choice" coalition brought together 300 NGOs active in civil society and election monitoring and published a news web site. Youth election-monitoring groups were involved in a wide range of activities in an attempt to counter violations and to persuade the youth to go and vote.

The other initiative was "Znaju!" ("I know!") - a positive campaign encouraging people to vote, to take an action, to assess their rights. Within this campaign a number of training projects for the politically active youth around Ukraine was organized. Financed

directly from Western funds – British Westminster Foundation for democracy and Netherlands’ Alfred Moses Foundation - Ukrainian 18 years olds were taught the technology of non-violent resistance and mass mobilization in 2003.

#### **Conclusion No 4**

Ukraine has a long and bright history of civic activism. In 1991, due to many circumstances such as low public support and strong influence of Moscow, Ukrainian nationalist-oriented dissidents did not manage to come to power as it happened in several of the Central European states. Since the proclamation of independence, however, a number of civic campaigns were launched throughout the country in support of free media, transparency, and fair elections. Still, for a decade and a half the democratically oriented opposition did not succeed in winning support among the large portions of Ukrainian population in their efforts against the country’s elite dominated by corrupt oligarchs and communists. At the end of 2004, in response to the stolen elections<sup>126</sup> the massive protests around the country resulted in a change of the elites bringing overly reform-minded Western-oriented political forces to power. Civic activists, mostly young people coming from the ranks of students or advocacy NGOs, managed to mobilize millions of Ukrainians throughout the country, enlist the international support, and keep the protests peaceful.

In this part I looked at several prominent Ukrainian advocacy NGOs united behind the idea of democratic reforms, clean and clear elections, government transparency, etc. Many Ukrainian civic democratic initiatives in this or that manner enjoyed support coming from the West. Such NGOs as Committee of Ukrainian Voters, Alliance “Maidan”, Civic Network “Opora”– referred to the foreign sources of financing in the form of grants or moral support. At the same time a number of Western NGOs has been pursuing their goals building civil society in Ukraine for the last 15 years. Through USAID at the core of democracy assistance to private philanthropist organizations, since 1991 Ukraine has been receiving Western help in building civil society. Now it is time to take a closer look at the individuals behind the recipient side of the aid chain.

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<sup>126</sup> More on the stolen elections see Mark R. Thompson – Kuntz, Philipp (2004): “Stolen Elections: the Case of the Serbian October”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 159-173

## **PART V**

### **Western Democratic Assistance and the Ukrainian Activists**

Initially, I intended to dedicate this last chapter to the personal attitudes that the Ukrainian democratic activists had exclusively regarding the received Western democracy assistance. The questions I posed in the beginning of my work were aimed to find out whether today's Ukrainian socio-political climate influences these attitudes to the extent that they face the need to be veiled or not to be mentioned publicly at all. I supposed that two years after the Orange revolution when the average Ukrainians became disappointed with the democratic ruling coalition they have also retreated from the civic activists. I was also interested in what kind of democracy assistance to Ukraine, according to the activists, would be the most suitable and efficient in the nearest future. However, while making interviews with the civic activists during my trip to Kyiv in December 2006, many other important issues were touched upon. They are directly related to the emergence of a strong civil society in Ukraine and, according to me, deserve to be discussed in this work.

Since, as shown, most of the civic Ukrainian initiatives are receiving some kind of Western support (whether financial or moral), I will firstly discuss the activists' attitudes towards the direct or indirect assistance coming from the West. I will also talk about the accusations of representing alien political interests coming from the broader public and the general reaction my respondents had towards these claims.

I will, however, not stop there, since, as I have mentioned above, many other important questions were discussed during my visit to Ukraine. Apart from giving me deeper insights in the contemporary socio-political situation and local democratic initiatives, my respondents drew my attention to other issues that deserve critical assessment and would be useful for those attempting to research the Ukrainian civil society development.

Thus, secondly, I will talk about the present state of civic activism two years after the Orange revolution, the situation within the free media and NGO sector, what positive and negative changes have taken place. Then, thirdly, I will refer to the major sources of the antidemocratic attitudes in Ukraine, which, according to my respondents preclude the society from quickly advancing along a democratic path.

## **1. Interviewees**

Before proceeding, several words should be said about the methodology. The data presented in this part was derived from the ten qualitative interviews with selected civic group activists. They were chosen in the autumn of 2006 from the ranks of those who were active during the 2004 Presidential elections campaign and remain active nowadays in building civil society in Ukraine. Initially, all of them were expected to receive some kind of western support for their activities. The interviews were conducted in Kyiv in December 2006/January 2007. All of my respondents were men approximately in their late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 30s with the high educational level. The guideline for the interview is attached at the end of this work in two versions: English and Ukrainian.

There are several central limitations to the research that I am aware of. First, the limited financial capabilities and time for carrying out the research prevented me from conducting a greater number of interviews. The interviews were made mainly in Kyiv, which is also due to the above-mentioned constraints. Yet I am positive that, since there has no similar research been made yet, this paper hopefully turns out to be a contribution to our overall comprehension of the impact of democracy assistance in recipient states, namely Ukraine. Second, due to the possible moral issues involved, there might have been refusals to grant an interview from the side of potential interviewees. In order to lower this possibility, the full anonymity of respondents was guaranteed.

## **2. Attitudes towards the Western Democracy Assistance**

In her attempt to reveal the nature of the discrepancy between how aid projects look in the field and the "success stories" conveyed in donor reports, Wedel from the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at The George Washington University claims that "aid is a story not just of economics, but of political, social, and cultural impact....Yet the technical assistance that makes up much of the Western aid packages is as much about relationships among people as it is about goods and money."<sup>127</sup> For the sake of analyzing the attitude the Ukrainian civic activists have towards Western democracy assistance I focused at three different moments: the availability of the Western partners, attitudes towards "Western-bought-activist" claims, and Ukraine's need for democracy assistance.

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<sup>127</sup> Janine R. Wedel (1995): "U.S. aid to Central and Eastern Europe," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 42, Issue 3, p. 45

## **2.1 Ukrainian Advocacy NGOs and their Supporters in the West**

Since I assumed that the Western contacts Ukrainian advocacy NGOs have, may repel the broader public it was important to look briefly at the nature of these ties. As shown, the kind of support that the organizations represented by my respondents were receiving from the West ranges from relatively minor to crucial.

It turned out that almost all representatives of advocacy NGOs whom I interviewed strictly drew the line between “informal” friends and supporters abroad and “formal” donors.

The former, being within "the informal net of partners" provided moral and informational support. These connections on the individual level with the like-minded partners West and East to the Ukrainian borders were regarded as being trustworthy, useful and efficient. „We have strong ties with the European parliament deputies but on the personal level, - says the member of “Maidan” Alliance. “Of course, they never gave us any money, but we have a possibility to make, for example, an Internet conference with them, or to receive their comment on this or that issue. These comments are very useful for us.”

With a few exceptions the “formal” donors were treated with respect, but, nevertheless, were often criticized as well. Still, two aspects of “formal” Western civil society assistance were regarded as being extremely useful, if not crucial for their existence. Firstly, the number of educational seminars on managing NGOs and mobilizing the public for the protest campaigns (within which the activists from Georgia and Belarus had also the possibility to find partners in Ukraine). Secondly, the help in breaking through the informational blockade in the environment of state-monopolized media outlets. While speaking about Western donors, Ukrainian activists often stressed that their ties are strictly formal and that they are working together only to the extent in which their goals and values coincide. Besides, many of my respondents remarked that the financial assistance they received was low and composed only a small share of the organization’s budget.

## **2.2 Attitudes towards “Western-Bought-Activist” Claims**

As shown in the second part there can be moral issues involved regarding the source of support (especially financial) to a particular NGO. Many civil society activists recognize that the question of fundraising methods can influence their moral integrity. As one of my

hypotheses suggests that civic activists in Ukraine tend to somehow defend their ties with their foreign partners in the eyes of the broader public, I posed several questions related to that issue to my respondents. After getting to know about the presence of foreign partners and the way they provide help for the organizations I have asked if the activists have ever encountered claims that they represent alien political interests. I was interested in the sources of these claims and, in particular, in the approach my respondents had dealing with these claims, or, to put it differently, how they did react.

As it was expected, all my respondents in some way encountered such claims. That was unavoidable during the time of the Orange revolution, but some of them said that until today they regularly face “American henchman” accusations. The sources of these claims as well as the occasions vary. The main ‘admirers’ of the West espionage rhetoric are generally leftist-oriented political forces, the supporters of Great Russian empire ideas, as well as some Ukrainian nationalist groups. From the common people on the personal level of everyday life practices, according to my respondents, these claims turned out to be rather rare.

For better understanding of the reaction Ukrainian advocacy NGOs have towards “American-bought-activist” accusations I attempted to sum up the range of attitudes in the next several points:

- Neglect. One of the frequent reactions was not to pay any attention to them. Of course, it is irritating having someone constantly disseminating the “American-bought” claims about the organization, but my respondents stated it is not that much important. "...just ignore. Of course, it is possible to persuade we are not American spies, but it requires enormous effort and time, and besides, if the claimer has an ideological base, it's almost impossible, it's just the waste of time" – says a member of the “Opora” Network. "If we use American money to make small but still positive difference here, what is wrong with that?" – was a common response.

- Humor. “From the very first days of our existence we have faced the accusations of being backed up by such a variety of organizations that we even dedicated some space on our webpage to this, called ‘the Legends of Maidan’”, - laughs one of the active members of the Alliance. "When we criticize 'Our Ukraine' they accuse us in supporting Tymoshenko, when we criticize Tymoshenko, they tell us we support 'Our Ukraine', when we criticize 'Party of Regions' they say we are representatives of the 'orange Sabbath'<sup>128</sup>". The members’ reactions to the attempts of “revealing of the great master” behind the

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<sup>128</sup> Frequent verbal insult towards the democratic forces during the Orange revolution coming from the side of pro-Kuchma former elite. Was often regarded with humor.



activities of the Alliance is always the same. “We tell them: yes, we are the representatives of the Zionist-Martian-CIA conspiracy”. Humor is their weapon.

- Explanation. Many agree that these accusations are coming from marginal elements that have little influence on the socio-political climate in Ukraine. Nevertheless, they take time and effort to explain step by step the situation with the foreign funding, Western supporters and goals of the organization. “We understand them, – explains a young democratic activist from Kyiv his attitude towards the accusers, - If they play against us, so let it be...as long as it is a fair play”. Of course, when it is an obvious slander that may hurt the image of the NGO, its members demanded official refutation and “ask them to point us at the concrete example of the American meddling in our activity.” “When an Ukrainian explains another Ukrainian in Ukrainian language how Ukrainian laws function – where is something American in here?”

### **2.3 The Need for Democracy Assistance**

Most of my respondents agreed that Ukraine needs Western democracy assistance. Their views on what kind of assistance would be the most effective, however, differ.

They agree that Western support in general has increased their abilities: from the adoption of instruments of self-government to self-organization, previously not known to them. At the same time, they agree upon that much of the assistance was used inefficiently. Below are presented several ideas about the way that, according to my respondents, the West might help in building civil society in Ukraine:

- To increase the number of exchange visits between the EU states and Ukraine. “According to me, - says one of the activists, - “those people who were ‘there’ and came back have contributed to the democratization of Ukraine in the most.” Foreign visits to Ukraine, on the other hand, should not be paid to “the demonstrative well-established offices with booklets, Wi-Fi, and power-point presentations”. The communication should instead run on the very grass-roots level, in the field, “in the village bar”.

- Know-how sharing. There is an urgent need for a better understanding of each other: the EU and Ukraine. This can be achieved through mutual visits, internships, experience sharing. This means not only educational support in the forms of seminars, but also the spreading of information about new ideas, new social projects that are going on in the West. For example, passing on of the know-how about the most effective ways for NGOs to cooperate with the government.

- More mutual projects targeted at corruption, popularization of EU integration in Ukraine, educational campaigns about NATO, support for independent Ukrainian mass media.

- Integration to the European informational space. This means the broadcasting of European media to Ukraine translated into Ukrainian in order to override the Russian-oriented dominance in Ukrainian mass media.

- Opening the borders. Various complicated visa regulations the European Union states have with Ukraine preclude the majority of the Ukrainians from freely traveling to the West. “Assistance is needed but in a form the West is not yet ready to provide, - points out one of the “Pora!” members, - this means to open the borders!” “We are not any longer in a situation where a group of activists should be invited to educational seminars like in the early 90s. They should open themselves to us – that is what might for sure save us.”

### **3. Civil Society Two Years after the Orange Revolution**

Although Ukraine is hardly a mature and consolidated democracy, it is a different country today compared to what it was two years ago. The Orange revolution was not merely the replacement of one regime by a successor of the same kind, as some analysts have argued, but a real turning point. It shifted Ukraine’s systemic trajectory – from an increasingly authoritarian direction to a substantially (if still imperfectly) democratic one. Indeed, this unprecedented event in the contemporary Ukrainian history made many to believe in the long-awaited and definitive “awakening” of Ukrainians from passivity and apathy. Today many indicators in Ukraine point to general advances in democracy, such as steadily increasing rates of confidence in the media, the advancement of human rights and the decline of politically motivated violence.<sup>129</sup>

One of the goals of this research was to find out in what respect the Ukrainian society become more civil two years after the Orange revolution. With this question I addressed the Ukrainian activists in the attempt to detect what, according to them, was the positive achievement of the revolution, and what negative moments should still be overcome.

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<sup>129</sup> See, for example, the recent works of Taras Kuzio or Paul D’Anieri, such as Kuzio, Taras (2005): “From Kuchma to Yushchenko – Ukraine’s 2004 Presidential Elections and the Orange Revolution”, *Problems of Post-Communism* Vol. 52, No. 2, pp.29-44; D’Anieri, Paul (2005): “What Has Changed in Ukrainian Politics? Assessing the Implications of the Orange Revolution”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 52, No. 5, pp.82-91.

### **3.1 Positive Changes**

#### **3.1.1 Desacralization of Authority**

The major positive change that took place and, in the words of the majority of the democratic activists I communicated with during my short visit to Ukraine, can be equated with “the revolution of mind”, was the desacralization of authority. In this respect “Ukraine within the last two years indeed had proceeded ten steps ahead”. The realization among Ukrainian population that the government is not an icon but just a mere instrument of executive power that needs to be controlled all the time, is “a major breakthrough”, according to one of the “Pora!” coordinators. The Ukrainian political scene has no more untouchable icons. One member of “Pora!” remarks that “the disappointment after the Orange revolution has one positive moment and one negative: negative in the short run,” – 5-10 years, according to him - “the step back from democratic path, reborn skepticism.” But positive is in the long run – “desacralization of the government itself.”<sup>130</sup> Although disappointed, people, however, stopped to associate the changes in life exclusively with the government.

There are no strong domestic openly anti-democratic forces in Ukraine today. And those that can be counted as such do not enjoy massive support and remain on the margins of the socio-political scene. According to the speaker of the Committee of Voters of Ukraine those political forces that were anti-democratic, have derived their own lessons from the Orange revolution, realizing that their authoritarian methods should be given up, and hence, they try to play according to the democratic rules. My respondents also point out at the fact that the level of communication between the authorities and the public has changed in a positive direction, that is, it became more transparent, more open.

#### **3.1.2 Mass Media Openness and the Freedom of Speech**

Independent mass media is one of the main pillars of democratization in post-communist states: it is both a watchdog of potential abuses in political life and a forum in which informed debate can take place among citizens. During the last ten years the old Ukrainian government had a justified label of being the enemy of the press. It enforced censorship, persecuting and killing journalists. It is widely believed that one of the greatest achievements of the Orange revolution was the cooperation between the country's media and new government in the process of establishing a free speech environment. Indeed, the

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<sup>130</sup> Personal interview. 12.01.2007

very fact that severe, ongoing criticism of Ukrainian leaders is itself being freely expressed in the media, and by civil society groups, students, and political activists today attest to the consolidation of democratic norms and behavior.

One of my respondents explained that “it become very easy to make any social street action without money, without bribing the authorities. If we want to publicize it, it is just the matter of wise planning and sending invitations to the press.” Besides, the legislature became more loyal, friendlier to the protesters, who intend to strike or launch a mass campaign. In comparison to the past, nowadays they do not need the permission; all they need from the local authorities is just sending them a notification several days in advance.

### **3.1.3 Civic Activism and the Third Sector**

"The major positive change is one: we saw that the changes are possible" – states the regional coordinator of “Opora” Network. “We don't have a strictly defined future now” he proceeds, and in response to my wondering look, explains – “Before the end of 2004 everyone knew what to expect from the future and this future was not a bright future at all.”

The Orange revolution produced a wave of tremendous civil energy. Many blame the president Yushchenko and his team for the inability to take advantage of the popular trust they enjoyed for more than half a year after the revolution and to make a leap along the path for democracy. Of course, civic activism decreased after the year 2004, but the realization of people that they can influence the course of politics remained. This is, in words of Ukrainian democratic activists, “the evolution towards civil society.”

“Not just the level of freedom, but also the level of activity increased,” - says a member of “Maidan” Alliance. “Yes, people become more cynical on one hand, but they are more informed now.” Although the precise statistical data is not available yet, according to the witnesses the number of local initiatives grew, many protests against misdeeds of local authorities finally enjoyed success. Another positive tendency is that many people in recent years joined the political parties.<sup>131</sup>

The number of civil initiatives in the Eastern Ukrainian regions grew as well. According to the regional coordinator of “Opora there is still a greater variety of NGOs in

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<sup>131</sup> View based on the personal interviews with Ukrainian civic activists. December 2006/January 2007

Lviv than in Donetsk but it does not mean that in the East people do not have the potential for civic activism. For a long time they just did not believe that they could change something with their own hands. The last two years have shown them that it is possible. There is no statistical data available, but it is believed that the overall number of NGOs increased around the country. It suggests that the Ukrainians became more aware of the fact that their interests would be better represented if they unite in non-governmental, non-profit organizations.

### **3.2 Negative Moments**

Much of the expected and long-awaited changes have not happened. Why? The overall disillusionment of Ukrainians as well as the disappointment with the democratic coalition, which had not launched the promised reforms immediately after the revolution is understandable and was predictable. The public support for civic initiatives is nowadays less strong than what it was initially hoped for. The fact that within two years after the Orange revolution it did not continue on the same level like it was in the year 2004 – and thus did not meet the activists' expectations - deserves an explanation. According to some of the activists this is partly because of the confusion that began to dominate the realm of newly established civil society organizations. They reached their goal but did not have a plan for the future. "The good guys won, so everything is going to be fine from now on" – was the common attitude after the last tents of the Kyiv's famous tent-city were packed down. And this happened at a time when the post-revolutionary deeds of the "good guys" should have been continued to be strictly controlled by the people. "There was a common goal – to topple the authoritarian regime – and it required all the efforts and abilities of civil activists," – explains the member of "Znaju!" campaign. "But then, in the year 2005 we could not strictly define: against who are we and what are we for now." This situation still remains unresolved and a common guiding vision for the politically active NGOs is yet not found.

The public in turn does not hurry up to control the government. This is mainly, in the view of some activists, because of the lack of information about the final goal of the civic initiatives and the comprehensible strategy of how to reach this goal.

The other negative moment is the absence of a political force that would truly represent the majority of the population. In the words of an alliance "Maidan" member "parties that are in power now are all the same, because none of them represents the majority of Ukrainian people. They represent 1-5 % or people connected to the big financial capital. There is no party of the middle class whom we would gladly support."

#### 4. The Sources of Anti-democratic Attitudes in Ukraine

Having discussed the current trends in civic activism with my respondents I suggested them to elaborate on the question of the major sources of antidemocratic attitudes in the contemporary Ukrainian society. Since in the third part I assumed that the threat to the Ukrainian democratization is coming from Russia, for the support or disproof of this statement I referred to the Ukrainian civic activists.

Based on the interview findings three major sources of anti-democratic attitudes within contemporary Ukrainian society can be defined:

- Inertia of Soviet mentality. A majority of the population still cannot imagine other relations between the society and the state but the relations of paternalism. In the words of my respondents, these are “rudiments of the Soviet and post-Soviet epoch”. “Attitudes like ‘I don't need to solve anything, the state will provide me with all I need’, is the major obstacle, - points out a member of “Opora”, - “Russia, in turn, is making profit of cultivating this Soviet nostalgia.”

- Clicks of the former political elite. As a major obstacle to the Ukrainian democratization the current government with the Prime Minister Yanukovich at the head was frequently mentioned. His Party of Regions had very close ties with the former Kuchma government, widely associated with corruption, and unduly accumulated financial capital. "Politico-financial clans are still very active in Ukraine, these elements can be found among other political forces", - concludes one of Kyiv activists, - "they are those, who profit from limited civic liberties." The other sources mentioned were leftist socio-political groups as well as few openly anti-Ukrainian pro-Russian forces, mainly backed up by Russian elites.

- Russian political elite. In comparison to the years before 2004 Ukraine became more independent from Russia. "Russia's influence certainly decreased within the last two years," – all my respondents from the ranks of civic activists agreed upon. Nevertheless, according to them, Russia is interested in destabilizing the situation in Ukraine.

It is worth noting, that despite the wide range of opinions on whether Russia has a certain influence on civil society formation in Ukraine – from "the minor" to the "open Russian counteraction to development of civil society in Ukraine" – all of my respondents named the Russian political elite as one of the largest obstacles on Ukraine's path to democratic reforms. "Russia exercises its power – also with the help of monopoly over

energy supplies - on certain Ukrainian political and business groups," - remarked the member of CVU on my question about the possible existing levers of influence.

"In the end of 2004/beginning of 2005 the Russian government lost their major election campaign in the 'near abroad' – the Ukrainian presidential elections," – says a student of international relations and Kyiv democratic activist about the results of his research on Russia's methods of meddling in the inner affairs of ex-Soviet states. . "In 2005 they had to define anew the methods of influencing Ukraine since the old levers were broken." According to him, in the beginning of 2005 a new department in the Russian presidential administration was established there on the issues of cultural and international cooperation with the foreign states (unofficially targeted exclusively at the 'near abroad' states). The purpose was to launch pro-Russian civic campaigns in the Baltic States, Caucasus states, Central Asian states and to back them. Thus, in Ukraine in summer 2005 the Union of Euro-Asian Youth and the pro-Russian separatist youth movements “Proryv” (“Break-through”) were established. "They are not successful, - he concludes, - They are in a state of 'stand-by', which means that they do not hurt much."

"It is clear, - develops the subject the active member of "Maidan" Alliance, - "that from the side of Russia all the myths are coming that are precluding the formation of an united Ukrainian political nation." These myths involve the artificially created "West vs. East Ukrainian regions" discourse, according to the "divide and conquer rule". "This all is drawing the attention of Ukrainian political elite away from the more important issues nowadays such as reforms and foreign policy and hurting the image of Ukraine abroad," - reveals his concern one civic activist from Kyiv.

## **Conclusion No 5**

All Ukrainian advocacy NGOs and civic initiatives whose representatives I met in Kyiv had some kind of support for their activities coming form the West. Many of them have friendly relations with like-minded people in the "near" and "far" abroad, ranging from politicians to NGO volunteers. Western support was in most cases regarded as extremely useful, although, according to my respondents, it could have been provided in a more efficient form. The range of views on the most appropriate ways for democracy assistance to Ukraine was wide: from exchange visits to opening the borders with the EU, but mainly they concentrated on experience sharing and mutual projects in the field of government's transparency and free media.

As it was expected, almost all of my respondents have encountered claims about representing alien political interests, although it seems that there is no track of moral dilemma in this respect. Most of these claims come from the side of socio-political forces, that my respondents considered being their "political enemies", besides, as I got to know, they have rather low or decreasing public support. This also explains the activists' attitude towards the claimers as well as their reaction towards the claims. In most cases it is either humor or open unwillingness to pay any significant attention to them.

Speaking about the trends in building civil society within the passed two years after the Orange revolution, there is a number of major positive achievements, such as the desacralization of the political elite, almost complete freedom of speech, and the increase – although not as great as many hoped for – in public activism. The public reluctance in supporting civic initiatives mainly lies in the "remains" of the Soviet system, like passivity and dominance of politico-financial oligarchs in the government. The other reason is the absence of an overall comprehensive vision for their activity and a strategic plan for its achievement the Ukrainian advocacy NGOs can present to the public.

Beside many influential domestic factors Ukrainian civic activists consider Russian political elite to be the major force behind the anti-democratic attitudes in Ukraine. In this respect the very geographical proximity of Russia with its vertical political system and imperialistic ambitions precludes Ukraine from advancing entirely independent the democratic reforms path. Its influence, however, has significantly decreased during the last two years.



## Final Conclusion

In this work I undertook an attempt to look at the Western democracy assistance through the eyes of those who are building civil society in the countries with little history of democracy. Being one of such states, Ukraine deserves this attention for both: being a strategically important region and for being a long-term Western civil society aid recipient.

This paper provides an overview of Western organizations and projects concerned with democratization, sums up its critiques, and identifies several significant shortcomings of civil society assistance projects in the post-Soviet states. It also presents the most visible and active Ukrainian advocacy NGOs and civic initiatives working at the grass-root level and capable of advancing Ukraine along a democratic path.

Little is known, although much good and bad is believed, about the impact of this assistance, carried out on a transnational level in cooperation with local political and social activists. In Ukraine within the two years after the democratic revolution no scholarly research project has yet been undertaken to assess the trends in the development of civil society in connection with the Western democracy assistance. Many Ukrainian democratic activists work together with American and European funds, have like-minded friends and partners abroad. Apart from occasional interviews once in a while appearing on Ukrainian news pages, little is known about their attitudes neither towards their Western supporters, nor the public opinion about them. This work is a modest attempt to address this gap.

Contrary to my initial assumptions many of the young Ukrainian democrats do not encounter any hostility or strong distrust from the side of the broader public when it comes to either the sources of their finances or their goals for the future. The accusations about representing alien (American) political interests have marginalized from the time of the Orange revolution, which means that nowadays they are coming mainly from the openly pro-Russian or extremely nationalistic socio-political groups which only play a marginal role in the country's domestic political discourse. (Those, in turn, do not enjoy strong public support and have little influence in Ukraine.) On the individual level according to the activists, there is no moral dilemma in the question of accepting help from the West - this is the mere coincidence of values of those working in Ukrainian NGOs with values of those abroad financing these NGOs.

Unlike Russia, who had a long history of a strong state, Ukraine possesses more democratic potential, namely in its Western and Central parts. While the Ukrainian civil

society may be considered to be „healthier“ than that in Russia, many negative trends still need to be overcome. Indeed, the increase in the freedom of speech, desacralization of authority, the decrease in public fear of prosecution for engaging in civic protest are definitely among the positive achievements and in the long run seem to override today’s skepticism and overall disillusionment in the new political elite.

While the most active of the country’s youth appear confident that democratization will continue, there are major political forces that wish to return Ukraine to the old days. Among the main obstacles on the country’s path for democracy are the remains of the “Soviet mentality” with the paternalistic expectations from the state, the strong oligarchic clans rooted in the post-Soviet political elite, close historical ties with Russia which is, in turn, trying to rebuild its power and to pursue the national geopolitical interests. These often is done at the expense of the “near abroad” states, including Ukraine.

Russian influence over Ukraine has weakened during the past two years. Nevertheless, its strong political elite profits from Ukraine’s inability to launch democratic reforms and consolidate the functional civil society. In her attempt to destabilize socio-political situation in the neighboring state, Russia often imposes and supports the artificially created myths, such as “West Ukraine vs. East Ukraine animosity”, “American-bought activists”, or “NATO invasion”. Luckily for Ukraine, the pro-Russian separatist movements do not enjoy strong support and the attempt to revitalize the Soviet nostalgia finds response only among some parts of the older population.

Indeed, historical legacies left by decades of communist rule account only in part for the poor functioning of democratic institutions in Ukraine. This study also confirms that these results are, in part, a consequence of the strategies of Western NGOs in their effort to bolster civil society in the region. These are mainly the inability to concentrate on the local peculiarities and to detect the “genuine reformers” at the grass-root level. Besides, much of the civil society aid to Ukraine should be revised: there is an urgent need for more experience-sharing visits, internship and international student exchange programs.

In the months to follow the Orange revolution, democratic activists seemed to gain a momentum. In 2004 their success in mobilizing the massive wave of civic activism was the greatest ever, no wonder that much expectation was put into it. However, the public reluctance to support their later projects and campaigns aiming, for example, to increase the transparency of the local governments, is also accounted partly to the absence of the overall vision the Ukrainian politically active NGOs wish to achieve as well as a strategic plan comprehensible for the public. Based on the common view of Ukrainian civic

democratic activists, there are several steps that should be undertaken in the nearest future, and that possibly with the help of Western supporters:

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- to activate people in the regions by showing them the good example of how to make a positive change
  - to create strategic plans for civic development, to set goals, not too ambitious, but comprehensive and concrete
  - to pass on the international experience on how to keep the civic initiatives alive
  - to establish a political party representing the interests of the middle class

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The findings and conclusions offered in this paper are by no means final. Instead, they suggest to inspire further discussion among concerned international development practitioners and scholars interested in the East European region and in Ukraine, in particular.

I would like to conclude with the words of a known analytic of democracy assistance and that mainly because his quote very much corresponds with that of the Ukrainian civic activists I met during my visit to Ukraine in the beginning of 2007. “Using American money to help put down democratic roots here should not be tainted by Cold war memories of superpower meddling,” says Thomas Carothers.

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[www.wfd.org](http://www.wfd.org)

[www.irf.kiev.ua](http://www.irf.kiev.ua)

[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

[www.soros.org](http://www.soros.org)

[www.enemo.org.ua](http://www.enemo.org.ua)

[www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org)

[www.maidan.org.ua](http://www.maidan.org.ua)

[www.pora.org.ua](http://www.pora.org.ua)

[www.pravda.com.ua](http://www.pravda.com.ua)

## **List of Key Terms**

**Democracy assistance** - aid specifically designed to foster a democratic opening in a nondemocratic country or to further a democratic transition in a country that has experienced a democratic opening.

**Civil society assistance** – aid programs specifically designed to promote civic education, independent mass media, strengthen labor unions, foster participatory development, community development, and local development providing the aid through international and local NGOs.

**Advocacy NGOs** - non-governmental organizations dedicated to advocacy of socio-political issues touching the public interest – election monitoring, civic education, parliamentary transparency, human rights, anticorruption, the environment, women's rights, and indigenous people's rights.

**Double standards** - the stated or presumed acceptance of a single standard, but which in practice may be disregarded.

## ABSTRACT

Two years after Ukraine's Orange revolution, the reforms have fallen short of initial expectations. At the same time, Russia's interest in influencing political developments in the Ukrainian "near abroad" may exploit existing *status quo ante* sentiments by continuing to denounce the revolution as "Western bought and foreign made".

In that specific context, the paper focuses on the relation between Western donors of democracy aid and their Ukrainian recipients - those activists of advocacy NGOs who have played a major role as actors during the period of the revolution. How do the activists view Western aid? How do they respond to claims of being "backed by foreign interests"? How do they assess the political situation in Ukraine today, and do they perceive these claims as serious threats to the development of an open civil society in Ukraine?

This study finds that despite a widespread discontent with the outcomes of the revolution, the "foreign bought revolution" argument does not play a significant role in the contemporary Ukrainian political discourse. It also shows, that Western aid has helped the democratic activists in many ways. In the eyes of the Ukrainian activists, this aid had nevertheless many shortcomings: Mainly the inability to concentrate on the local peculiarities and to detect the "genuine reformers" at the grass-root level. Besides, much of the civil society aid to Ukraine should be revised: there is an urgent need for more experience-sharing visits, internship and international student exchange programs.

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## About the Author



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### Education and Qualifications:

1. From 1998 till 2002 studied social work and social policy at the National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academie” in Kyiv, Ukraine. Graduated in May 2002 with B.A.
2. In 2004 entered the Master program Civil Society at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic.
3. In 2004-2005 studied the Master program European Political Sociology at Högskolan Dalarna in Falun, Sweden. Graduated in August 2005 with M.A.

## **Interview Guideline**

**(English Version)**

### **The NGO**

1. What is your NGO doing and what are its major activities targeted on?
2. How active was your organization during the Orange revolution?
3. What has it been doing since?

### **The NGO and the West**

4. Is your NGO a part of a cross-border network? Do you have international partners?  
If yes, who are they?
5. Has your organization received support from the Western donors?  
If yes, what kind of support? From whom?
6. To what degree was (is) foreign aid important for your organization?
7. Have you encountered claims that you represent alien political interests?  
If yes, from what side? What was your reply?

### **Ukraine and Russia**

8. Do you think Ukraine is divided in two?
9. How do you view the relationship between Ukrainian nationalism and support for democracy? Do you think that Western/Central Ukraine has more democratic potential than Eastern/Central Ukraine?
10. According to you, what is the major source of antidemocratic attitudes in Ukraine?
11. How strong do you think is Russian influence on the formation of Ukrainian civil society? How would you describe this influence?
12. Do you think a danger to Ukrainian democratization is coming from Russia?

### **Ukraine and Democratization**

13. According to you, has Ukrainian society become more civil two years after the Orange revolution?  
If yes, in what way? If not, why?
14. Do you think Ukraine needs Western democratic assistance?  
If yes, what kind of assistance would be the most effective? If not, why?

## **Interview Guideline**

### **(Ukrainian version)**

#### **НПО:**

1. Чим займається Ваша організація, на що направлена її основна діяльність?
2. На скільки активною була Ваша організація під час Помаранчевої революції?
3. Що робила Ваша організація після Помаранчевої революції?

#### **НПО і Західна підтримка:**

4. Чи являється Ваша організація частиною інтернаціональної мережі? Чи маєте партнерів за кордоном? Якщо так, хто вони?
5. Чи отримувала Ваша організація допомогу від Західних донорів? Якщо так, то яку і від кого?
6. Як Ви вважаєте, до якої міри є Західна допомога необхідна для Вашої організації?
7. Чи стикалися Ви з претензіями, що Ваша організація репрезентує чужоземні інтереси? Якщо так, то з чийого боку? Якою була Ваша відповідь?

#### **Україна та Росія**

8. Чи вважаєте Ви, що країна розділена на дві частини?
9. Який, на Вашу думку, існує взаємозв'язок між українським націоналізмом та демократичними прагненнями? Чи вважаєте Ви, що Західно/центральна Україна має більш демократичний потенціал ніж Східно/південна Україна?
10. Як на Вас, що є найбільшим джерелом антидемократичних настроїв в Україні?
11. Наскільки сильний вплив має Росія на формування громадянського суспільства в Україні? В чому полягає цей вплив?
12. Чи вважаєте Ви, що загроза демократизації в Україні надходить з боку Росії?

#### **Україна та демократизація**

13. На Вашу думку, чи стало українське суспільство більш громадянським протягом минулих двох років після Помаранчевої революції? Якщо так, то яким чином? Якщо ні, то чому?
14. Як Ви вважаєте, чи потрібна Україні західна демократична допомога? Якщо так, який вид допомоги є найбільш ефективним? Якщо ні, то чому?