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U.S. Security Interests and Democracy Assistance Programs in Georgia and Ukraine

Despite the high expectations associated with the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the persistence of the two democratic regimes remains far from certain. It is hypothesized in this article that U.S.-funded democracy assistance programs implemented in Georgia and Ukraine in the post-revolution period have been burdened by U.S. security interests in the region and partly accounted for disappointing outcomes of the color revolutions. To test the hypothesis, four types of democracy assistance programs – electoral aid, political party development, NGO development and independent media strengthening – are analyzed in a comparative manner. The findings confirm the retarding impact of some U.S.-funded programs but they reveal reasons other than U.S. security interests.

Introduction

The 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine were applauded in the West as forceful democratic breakthroughs. However, their aftermath cooled down the initial euphoria. In Georgia, President Mikheil Saakashvili and his team focused their post-revolution reforms on strengthening the state as opposed to consolidating democracy. They passed constitutional amendments subordinating the parliament and judiciary to the executive and producing a superpresidential regime.¹ In Ukraine, President Viktor Yushchenko and his team engaged in a personnel purge rather than in meaningful institutional reforms.² Moreover, both the “orange” political forces

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¹ Miriam Lansky and Giorgi Areshidze, “Georgia’s Year of Turmoil”. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 19, no 4, October 2008, 160–162.

² Alexander Bogomolov and Alexander Lytvynenko, “Ukraine’s Bottom-up Democracy”. In: Michael Emerson and Richard Youngs (eds.), *Democracy’s Plight in the European Neighbourhood: Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties*. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2009, 78; Dominique Arél, “Is the Orange Revolution Fading?” *Current History*, vol. 104, issue 684, October 2005, 325–330.

and the opposition continued to show a total disrespect for the rule of law by bribing and arbitrarily sacking judges.³

The academic community has widely discussed possible reasons that could account for the disappointing outcomes of the color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. Most scholars have focused their attention on various internal factors, including personal traits of political leaders⁴, performance of government⁵ and opposition⁶, role of civil society⁷ and institutional legacies⁸. Slightly less research has been devoted to the impact of external actors, such as the European Union (EU) and Russia.⁹

Several studies have examined post-revolution policies of the United States, but those are limited to the Georgian case. Mitchell argued that the George W. Bush administration made a mistake by putting too much trust in democratic intentions of the Saakashvili government and redirecting U.S. assistance from “nongovernmental aspects of democracy” (elections, political parties and media) to Georgian state institutions.¹⁰ This argument was echoed

³ Alexei Trochev, “Meddling with Justice: Competitive Politics, Impunity, and Distrusted Courts in Post-Orange Ukraine”. *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 18, no. 2, spring 2010, 130–140.

⁴ Thomas O’Brien, “Problems of Political Transition in Ukraine: Leadership Failure and Democratic Consolidation”. *Contemporary Politics*, vol. 16, no. 4, December 2010, 355–367.

⁵ Vicken Cheterian, “Georgia’s Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects”. *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 36, no. 4, September 2008, 689–712; Katya Kalandadze and Mitchell A. Orenstein, “Electoral Protests and Democratization: Beyond the Color Revolutions”. *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 42, no. 11, November 2009, 1403–1425.

⁶ Jesse D. Tatum, “Democratic Transition in Georgia: Post-Rose Revolution Internal Pressures on Leadership”. *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 2, spring 2009, 156–171.

⁷ Theodor Tudoroiu, “Rose, Orange, and Tulip: The Failed Post-Soviet Revolutions”. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 40, issue 3, September 2007, 315–342; Nicklaus Laverty, “The Problem of Lasting Change: Civil Society and the Colored Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine”. *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 16, no. 2, spring 2008, 143–162.

⁸ Stephen F. Jones, “The Rose Revolution: A Revolution without Revolutionaries?”. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 1, March 2006, 33–48; Paul Kubicek, “Problems of Post-Post-Communism: Ukraine after the Orange Revolution”. *Democratization*, vol. 16, no. 2, April 2009, 323–343.

⁹ Thomas Ambrosio, “Insulating Russia from a Colour Revolution: How the Kremlin Resists Regional Democratic Trends”. *Democratization*, vol. 14, no. 2, April 2007, 232–252; Laurynas Jonavicius, “Why Ukraine and Georgia Have Not Used the ‘Window of Opportunity’? Neo-institutional Analysis of Transformational Stagnation in Georgia and Ukraine”. *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no. 19, January 2009, 12–37; Roman Petrov and Oleksander Serdyuk, “Ukraine: The Quest for Democratization between Europe and Russia”. In Amichai Magen and Leonardo Morlino (eds.), *International Actors, Democratization and the Rule of Law: Anchoring Democracy?* London and New York: Routledge, 2009, 189–224; Iryna Solonenko, “External Democracy Promotion in Ukraine: the Role of the European Union”. *Democratization*, vol. 16, no. 4, August 2009, pp. 709–731; Jakob Tolstrup, “Studying a Negative External Actor: Russia’s Management of Stability and Instability in the ‘Near Abroad’”. *Democratization*, vol. 16, no. 5, October 2009, 922–944; Tom Casier, “The EU’s Two-track Approach to Democracy Promotion: The Case of Ukraine”. *Democratization*, vol. 18, no. 4, August 2011, 956–977.

¹⁰ Lincoln A. Mitchell, *Uncertain Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy and Georgia’s Rose Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

by Omelicheva, who blamed the U.S. for turning a blind eye to human rights violations in Georgia and supporting the Saakashvili government in its goal of rebuilding the state prior to democratizing it.¹¹ Muskhelishvili and Jorjoliani added to the picture their observation that, after the Rose Revolution, the U.S. stripped funding for watchdog organizations although previously they had been the best funded NGOs.¹² Finally, Lazarus also criticized U.S. unconditional political support for the Saakashvili government and its implicit preference for pro-government NGOs. According to him, such “unprincipled democracy promotion” undermined democratic prospects in Georgia by instilling a sense of impunity within the government and provoking anti-Western resentment amongst the non-parliamentary opposition.¹³

All mentioned scholars assumed that flaws and inconsistencies in U.S. democracy assistance to Georgia could be explained by the close alignment of the Saakashvili government with U.S. security interests. This assumption serves as a basis for the research design of this article too. The first section discusses the theoretical link between security interests of a donor country and its democracy assistance strategies. It is hypothesized that U.S.-funded democracy assistance programs can be burdened by its security interests and biased in favor of U.S.-friendly political groups in recipient countries. To test this hypothesis, two similar cases – Georgia and Ukraine – are selected. Both countries underwent democratic breakthroughs, became valuable U.S. allies in the post-Soviet area and continued to receive U.S. democracy aid. In the second section, the hypothesis is tested by examining four types of democracy assistance programs funded by U.S. governmental donors: electoral aid, political party development, NGO development and independent media strengthening. The article concludes by discussing the impact of U.S. security interests and other factors related to the effectiveness of U.S.-funded democracy assistance programs in post-revolution Georgia and Ukraine.

The empirical part of the article draws on a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews with U.S. aid providers and recipients conducted in Georgia and Ukraine in 2010 and 2011 respectively.¹⁴ Typically, each interview

¹¹ Mariya Y. Omelicheva, “Between Commitment and Pragmatism: Assessing International Influence on Human Rights Practices in Georgia”. *Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2010, 445–466.

¹² Marina Muskhelishvili and Gia Jorjoliani, “Georgia’s Ongoing Struggle for a Better Future Continued: Democracy Promotion through Civil Society Development”. *Democratization*, vol. 16, no. 4, August 2009, 682–708.

¹³ Joel Lazarus, “Neo-liberal State Building and Western ‘democracy promotion’: The Case of Georgia”. Paper presented at the SGIR 7th Pan-European Conference, Stockholm, 9-11 September 2010.

¹⁴ In Tbilisi, all interviews were conducted by the author of this article. In Kyiv, the interviews were conducted by Rūta Rudinskaitė, to whom the author is particularly grateful.

contained several open-ended questions on the dynamics of U.S. democracy assistance volumes and priorities before and after the color revolutions. For these expert interviews, representatives of Georgian and Ukrainian branch offices of U.S. donor organizations, as well as representatives of local U.S.-funded NGOs, were selected.

1. Democratization Goals and Security Interests

It should be admitted that democratization can never be the sole foreign policy objective of any donor country. Even in the U.S., which tends to promote democracy with a missionary zeal, democratization must coexist with other objectives and interests: curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, combating terrorism, dampening regional rivalries and developing better economic relations.¹⁵ Unavoidably, all these foreign policy goals not only coexist but also conflict with each other.

Most situations in which the democratization goal conflicts with other security interests can be described as one of the two interrelated dilemmas. The first dilemma occurs if a donor's efforts to promote democracy may lead to destabilization in the recipient country. In this case, the donor country must choose between promoting more democratic more efficient governance.¹⁶ Consequently, the donor country may prefer a stronger executive branch at the expense of political competition. The second dilemma occurs if the democratic process in the recipient country may bring to power political groups that are perceived by the donor country as hostile to its interests. In this case, the donor country may intervene to assist particular democratic forces into office, or to inhibit the ascent of those regarded as democracy's enemies.¹⁷ Consequently, democracy assistance programs funded by the donor country may become politically biased.

In the wake of the color revolutions, U.S.-favored pro-democratic and pro-Western leaders – Saakashvili and Yushchenko – rose to power in Georgia and Ukraine respectively. They declared strong support for the U.S. war on terror, endorsed U.S. energy policy in the region and upheld NATO membership

¹⁵ Barry F. Lowenkron, "Realism: Why Democracy Promotion Matters?". *American Foreign Policy Interests*, vol. 29, issue 3, 2007, 202.

¹⁶ Hans-Joachim Spanger and Jonas Wolff, "Complementary Objectives, Conflicting Actions? Democracy Promotion as Risk Management". Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Honolulu, 5 March 2005.

¹⁷ Vincent Boudreau, "Security and Democracy: Process and Outcome in a New Policy Context?". *Democratization*, vol. 14, no. 2, April 2007, 314.

as a priority goal. Last but not least, both leaders presented themselves as fierce opponents of Russian influence. Due to such a perfect alignment with U.S. security interests, the Bush administration strongly supported the new Georgian and Ukrainian governments and shied away from any interference which could have weakened those governments.¹⁸ At the same time, the U.S. government remained genuinely interested in democratic progress in the two post-Soviet countries. The failed democracy building efforts in the Middle East had compromised the very concept of U.S. democracy promotion and, therefore, the Bush administration desperately needed some “success stories” to counter the criticism. In his last State of the Union address, President Bush listed Georgia, Ukraine, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq as the countries that experienced “stirring moments in the history of liberty” during his two terms.¹⁹ Obviously, the two post-Soviet countries were clear frontrunners of that list.

The link between the democratization goal (consolidating gains of the color revolutions) and security interests (preserving the U.S.-friendly executives) was not an easy one, as it often produced dilemmas for U.S. decision makers. For example, the concentration of executive power in Georgia could be seen as both instrumental for improving governance and detrimental to democracy. The free and fair elections in Ukraine could be seen as both perpetuating democracy and posing a threat of the ascent of anti-American political groups. Theoretically, such dilemma situations could lead to a political bias in U.S.-funded democracy assistance programs in Georgia and Ukraine. Compared to European donor organizations, U.S. donors are more likely to perceive democratization as a political struggle between democratic and nondemocratic actors and to take sides in this struggle.²⁰ This article offers the hypothesis that U.S. democracy assistance programs were burdened by American security interests, and were discriminatory and counterproductive.

Democracy assistance can be broken down into two types of donor state's activity. One can look into the diplomatic level of democracy assistance, e.g. U.S. efforts to dissuade the Georgian/Ukrainian government from non-democratic actions by means of public criticism, backstage diplomatic pressure or economic sanctions. Alternatively, one can examine the programmatic

¹⁸ Povilas Žielys, “New Version of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine in the Post-Soviet Space”. *Democratization*, vol. 17, no. 5, October 2010, 878–898.

¹⁹ The White House, “President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address”. Press Release, 28 January 2008, <<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080128-13.html>> [last accessed 22 November 2012].

²⁰ Thomas Carothers, “Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 20, no. 1, January 2009, 5–19.

level, e.g. U.S.-funded democracy assistance programs aimed at leveling the playing field for political competition and enabling civil society to control government's activities. This analytical distinction is of utmost importance. For the diplomatic level, the hypothesis of security-burdened democracy assistance is almost obvious because diplomacy reflects the changing priority order of foreign policy goals. By contrast, this hypothesis sounds much more controversial if applied to the programmatic level. Democracy assistance programs are designed to serve the specific goal of democratization and are implemented by governmental and nongovernmental organizations (agencies, foundations, institutes, etc.) that are regarded as autonomous and immune to political bias.

Contrary to previous research, this article deals exclusively with the programmatic level of democracy assistance. It looks into U.S. democracy assistance programs implemented in Georgia and Ukraine in the post-revolution period (in 2004-2008 and 2005-2009 respectively). The article focuses on four sectors that were prioritized by U.S. donors before the color revolutions: electoral aid, political party development, NGO development and independent media strengthening. The hypothesis here is that the U.S. attention to a free and fair electoral process in Georgia and Ukraine should have decreased as it already had its favorite leaders in power. It is further assumed that U.S.-funded organizations should have discriminated against Saakashvili's and Yushchenko's political rivals when providing training for local political parties. Finally, the article also suggests that U.S. donors should have cut funding for watchdog NGOs and independent media as the U.S. was no longer interested in discrediting the incumbent Georgian and Ukrainian governments. It is important to note that only programs funded by U.S. governmental donors are considered because privately funded democracy assistance programs cannot be analyzed as part of state-implemented foreign policy.

2. U.S. Democracy Assistance Programs in Georgia and Ukraine

2.1. Electoral Aid

The color revolutions are sometimes referred to as electoral revolutions because they have been triggered by election fraud. U.S. electoral aid was instrumental in exposing that fraud. However, the continuation of U.S. electoral aid programs in Georgia and Ukraine could not be taken for granted as the

revolutions brought to power U.S.-favored leaders. This section examines the hypothesis that, after the revolutions, U.S. governmental donors either abandoned election-related programs or pursued programs that were biased in favor of U.S.-supported leaders Saakashvili and Yushchenko.

The assumption of a possible U.S. donors' retreat from the sector of electoral aid was rejected by all interviewed U.S. donor organizations. According to the representatives of the Georgian branch of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID/Georgia), the level of electoral aid to Georgia remained high after the Rose Revolution. USAID used to increase support for watchdog organizations and allocate more funds to election monitoring in every pre-election period.²¹ The USAID/Ukraine representative claimed that electoral aid continued to be provided on demand after the Orange Revolution: "the US government often makes additional resources available to support election activities, especially when election-related needs could not be foreseen".²² Similarly, the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, according to its employee Sergey Reshetov, used to respond to electoral aid demand by announcing additional competitions for funding before every parliamentary and presidential elections.²³

The representatives of two major Georgian election monitoring NGOs – Society for Elections and Democracy (ISFED) and Union 'new Generation-new Initiative (nGnI) – confirmed that there was no dramatic decrease in U.S. funding after the Rose Revolution. The ISFED representative said that it was always relatively easy to find election-related funding.²⁴ The nGnI representatives admitted that nGnI budget was always bigger in a year of national elections.²⁵ As for Ukraine, this finding was corroborated by the analysis of the U.S. support for election monitoring activities before and after the Orange Revolution. During the 2004 parliamentary elections, the most active U.S. donor in the election sector – National Democratic Institute (NDI) – deployed 1,274 own observers.²⁶ Later, this number plummeted to 15 observers for the 2006 parliamentary elections and 41 for the 2007 early parliamentary elections. However, this change did not represent a drawdown of NDI's support. Instead of sending its own observers, NDI chose to fund major election monitoring missions of other organizations, including the Committee of Voters of Ukraine,

²¹ USAID/Georgia representatives, personal interview, Tbilisi, 13 October 2010.

²² USAID/Ukraine representative, personal interview, Kyiv, 10 March 2011.

²³ Sergey Reshetov, personal interview, Kyiv, 28 February 2011.

²⁴ ISFED representative, personal interview, Tbilisi, 15 October 2010.

²⁵ nGnI representatives, personal interview, Tbilisi, 20 October 2010.

²⁶ Here and henceforth cited numbers of officially registered election monitors have been obtained from the website of the Ukrainian Central Election Commission: <<http://www.cvk.gov.ua>>.

the Civil Network OPORA and the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations.

One more hypothesis which needs to be tested in this section assumes that U.S. electoral aid programs may have been biased in favor of the “rose” and “orange” political forces. One could expect that, compared to other election monitoring missions, U.S.-funded missions produced less critical reports in cases of the electoral victory of US-favored “rose” and “orange” political forces and more critical assessments in cases of their defeat. To test this hypothesis, reports published by the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were compared with those of U.S. donor organizations – the International Republican Institute (IRI) and NDI.

The comparative analysis of the reports in question did not verify the hypothesis of U.S. donors’ bias. Following the 2008 Georgian presidential and parliamentary elections that prolonged the reign of President Saakashvili and his party United National Movement (UNM), OSCE and NDI published fairly similar election monitoring reports. Following the January 2008 early presidential elections, both OSCE and NDI reports contained the same critical remarks on the use of state resources to Saakashvili’s benefit; intimidation and pressure on opposition activists, state employees and local observers; unbalanced media coverage; and slow and chaotic vote counting.²⁷ Following the May 2008 parliamentary elections, the findings of OSCE and NDI missions were very similar again, both referring to the late amendments of electoral code; use of state resources to UNM’s advantage; intimidation and pressure on opposition candidates, state employees and local observers; unbalanced media coverage; domination of UNM representatives at all levels of election commissions; and post-election assaults on opposition activists.²⁸

In Ukraine, the 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections brought to power the Party of Regions which opposed U.S.-favored President Yushchenko and was allegedly pro-Russian. However, the assessment provided by U.S.-funded election monitors was no more critical than that of other internatio-

²⁷ OSCE, “Georgia. Extraordinary Presidential Election”. Election Observation Mission Final Report, 4 March 2008, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/30959>> [last accessed 16 August 2012]; NDI, “Statement of the NDI Election Observer Delegation to Georgia’s 2008 Presidential Election”, 7 January 2008, <http://www.ndi.org/files/2258_ge_statement_elections_010708.pdf> [last accessed 16 August 2012].

²⁸ OSCE, “Georgia. Parliamentary Election, 21 May 2008”. Election Observation Mission Final Report, 9 September 2008, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/33301>> [last accessed 16 August 2012]; NDI, “NDI Long-term Observation Mission Report Concerning Georgia’s 2008 Parliamentary Elections”, 4 June 2008, <http://www.ndi.org/files/Georgia_LTO_Statement_060408_ENG.pdf> [last accessed 16 August 2012].

nal election monitors. Both OSCE and IRI reports on the 2006 parliamentary elections criticized only some organizational aspects, such as incorrect voter lists, overcrowded polling stations and lengthy vote counting process. The OSCE report additionally noted the insufficient transparency of campaign financing.²⁹ Following the 2007 early parliamentary elections, OSCE and IRI missions again published very similar reports. Both documents criticized last-minute amendments to election law with regard to home voting and compiling voter lists. IRI observers additionally reported a few cases when Ukrainian political party observers assisted voters into the voting booths and possibly influenced their votes.³⁰

2.2. Political Party Development

Post-revolution Georgia and Ukraine were quite different with regard to their party systems. In Georgia, propresident UNM secured a strong majority in the parliament and the role of other parties was only marginal. In Ukraine, the “orange” camp – the propresident bloc Our Ukraine and the Yulia Tymoshenko bloc – competed and were eventually outperformed by the party of Regions (PoR) and the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) that opposed President Yushchenko. It is hypothesized in this section that U.S. donors took sides in both cases by giving preferential treatment to “rose” and “orange” political forces and discriminating against their political rivals.

In post-revolution Georgia, U.S. donors changed their party assistance strategy and those changes mainly favored the ruling UNM. Before the Rose Revolution, both NDI and IRI were working with all relevant Georgian political parties. After the revolution, NDI signed a new contract with USAID and shifted its focus almost entirely towards legislative strengthening, while IRI continued to assist parties inside and outside the parliament. This shift reflected the heightened interest that the U.S. government took in supporting

²⁹ OSCE, “Ukraine. Parliamentary Elections”. Election Observation Mission Report, 23 June 2006, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/ukraine/19595>> [last accessed 16 August 2012]; IRI, “Ukraine Parliamentary and Local Elections”. Election Observation Mission Final Report, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/Ukraine%27s%202006%20Parliamentary%20and%20Local%20Elections_0.pdf> [last accessed 15 August 2012].

³⁰ OSCE, “Ukraine Pre-term Parliamentary Elections”. Election Observation Mission Report, 20 December 2007, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/ukraine/29970>> [last accessed 16 August 2012]; IRI, “Ukraine Parliamentary Elections”. Election Observation Mission Final Report, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/Ukraine%27s%202007%20Parliamentary%20Elections_0.pdf> [last accessed 15 August 2012].

Georgian state institutions as opposed to civil society organizations.³¹ The Georgian opposition criticized NDI's post-2004 focus on only parties with parliamentary representation claiming that NDI's assistance to parliament, which is controlled by UNM, merely strengthens UNM's political monopoly. The then Senior Resident Representative of NDI/Georgia Mary O'Hagen accepted the criticism. She said that NDI/Georgia did not want to be engaged exclusively with parliament but its cooperation with parties outside the parliament was restricted by a contract with USAID.³²

While NDI was locked in cooperation with the ruling UNM in parliament, IRI continued to offer training to all interested Georgian parties. Nonetheless, the ruling UNM received a disproportionate share of IRI assistance too because it was more advanced and better coordinated than all other parties.³³ In general, IRI assistance was demand-driven so it was up to the parties themselves to come to IRI and name the issues they want help on.³⁴ Therefore, it is no wonder that the best organized party – in this case, UNM – was able to take the most of assistance. IRI claimed it had never refused assistance to any Georgian party. The only relevant Georgian party which did not cooperate with IRI was Shalva Natelashvili's Labour Party. According to IRI/Georgia representative, Labour Party avoided cooperation with IRI because ideologically Natelashvili was "less engaged with the American crowd than the other people".³⁵

In Ukraine, at least two parties could be considered hostile to U.S. security interests. The first is CPU, which has undergone little reform since the fall of the Soviet Union. The second is PoR, whose leader Viktor Yanukovych slowed down Ukraine's rapprochement with NATO after becoming prime minister in 2006. However, there is no evidence indicating that U.S. donors would have discriminated those two Ukrainian parties. The Resident Country Director of IRI/Ukraine Chris Holzen claimed that his organization did a lot of work with PoR. He illustrated his argument by mentioning that, in 2009, the highest percentage (around 20 percent) of participants in IRI-organized seminars came from PoR. Holzen also disagreed with allegations that U.S. donors ignored CPU. According to him, IRI/Ukraine invited the communists to its programs but, with the exception of the city of Kharkiv and occasionally some

³¹ Max Bader, *Against All Odds: Aiding Political Parties in Georgia and Ukraine*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 111.

³² Eric McGlinchey, "Foreign Assistance and Domestic Power: Aiding Political Parties in Central Asia and the Caucasus". Paper presented at the 48th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Chicago, 28 February–3 March 2007.

³³ Bader, 129.

³⁴ IRI/Georgia representative, personal interview, Tbilisi, 18 October 2010.

³⁵ IRI/Georgia representative, personal interview.

people in the Luhansk region, the CPU was not interested in attending these programs.³⁶

The interviewed NDI/Ukraine representative gave assurance that NDI/Ukraine worked with all parties represented in the parliament and with some non-parliamentary parties as well. He stated that none of the Ukrainian parties had absolutely refused assistance from NDI/Ukraine. PoR members participated in various NDI programs, although mostly at the local level. According to the NDI/Ukraine representative, they had worked with the communists as well. As an example, he mentioned that CPU had participated in the training for party poll watchers.³⁷

In its turn, the CPU leadership tends to deny party's involvement in any U.S.-funded training. The communist Member of Parliament stated that he personally had not seen any invitations for CPU to participate in IRI or NDI trainings either at the level of the party's Central Committee, or at the level of regional and district committees. Therefore, the question of CPU's participation in such trainings has not been discussed by any collegial body of the party.³⁸ The reasoning of IRI, NDI and CPU interviewees suggested that the cooperation was precluded by the lack of interest on both sides rather than any kind of discrimination.

2.3. NGO Development

Before and during the color revolutions, Georgian and Ukrainian NGOs were well funded by U.S. donors and actually performed the role of political opposition to corrupt authoritarian regimes. The hypothesis tested in this section is that, after the revolutions, the U.S. government was happy with the new leaders in power and so it deprived watchdog NGOs of previously generous funding and supported only pro-government NGOs.

Both in post-revolution Georgia and Ukraine, the NGO community felt a sudden drop in U.S. funding. According to the representative of the Civil Society Institute, many Georgian NGOs were almost exclusively reliant on foreign grants so they had to suspend or even terminate their activities.³⁹ The Executive Director of Human Rights Center Ucha Nanuashvili added that post-2004 cuts in U.S. funding most severely affected NGOs outside the largest cities and left some

³⁶ Chris Holzen, personal interview, Kyiv, 2 March 2011.

³⁷ NDI/Ukraine representative, personal interview, Kyiv, 9 March 2011.

³⁸ Communist Member of the Verkhovna Rada, personal interview, Kyiv, 2 March 2011.

³⁹ Civil Society Institute representative, personal interview, Tbilisi, 18 October 2010.

regions of Georgia without NGO presence at all.⁴⁰ Speaking of Ukraine's experience, the Chair of Laboratory of Legislative Initiatives Ihor Kohut noted that many democracy assistance programs, which were previously financed by U.S. donors, ceased to exist after the Orange Revolution.⁴¹ The Executive Director of Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union Volodymyr Yavorsky echoed the argument. According to him, the post-revolution external funding was "very limited" and many Ukrainian NGOs simply ceased to exist.⁴² The representative of Democratic Initiatives Foundation added that Ukrainian NGOs could find local funding for the work with poor or disabled people relatively easily, but local donors were reluctant to finance democracy-oriented activities.⁴³ Among possible reasons for cuts in U.S. funding, the interviewed NGO representatives mentioned too rosy assessments of democratic achievements in Georgia and Ukraine, as well as the optimizing of funds by means of task sharing among U.S. and other foreign donors.

Following the color revolutions, U.S. donors introduced a new assistance strategy which may have strengthened the feeling among Georgian and Ukrainian NGOs that they were abandoned. According to USAID/Georgia, the old approach of supporting the organizational development of many NGOs ("thousand flowers blooming throughout the country") was replaced by the new approach of focusing funds on few NGOs and implementation of specific projects.⁴⁴ Likewise, USAID and other foreign donors operating in Ukraine shifted their focus from institutional development of many NGOs to implementation of particular projects by the strongest ones. Recipient organizations in Ukraine have been told that donors are not willing to cover administrative costs and expect NGOs to make their own contributions to the projects.⁴⁵ As noted by Ukrainian NGO sector researchers Lyubov Palyvoda and Volodymyr Kupriy, not all NGOs were able to adapt to a new post-revolution environment. The point is that the topics of externally funded projects narrowed and, as a result, required NGOs to possess certain professional skills.⁴⁶

In the post-revolution period, U.S. donors redistributed their funding in favor of state institutions as opposed to civil society. The representatives of USAID/Georgia admitted there was a shift in assistance priorities of the 'Democracy & Governance' program after of the Rose Revolution. USAID increa-

⁴⁰ Ucha Nanuashvili, personal interview, Tbilisi, 15 October 2010.

⁴¹ Ihor Kohut, personal interview, Kyiv, 9 March 2011.

⁴² Volodymyr Yavorsky, personal interview, Kyiv, 4 March 2011.

⁴³ Democratic Initiatives Foundation representative, personal interview, Kyiv, 9 March 2011.

⁴⁴ USAID/Georgia representatives, personal interview.

⁴⁵ Natalia Shapovalova, "Assessing Democracy Assistance: Ukraine". FRIDE Project Report, May 2010, 7, <http://www.fride.org/download/IP_WMD_Ucrania_ENG_jul10.pdf> [last accessed 16 August 2012].

⁴⁶ Lyubov Palyvoda and Volodymyr Kupriy, personal interview, Kyiv, 11 March 2011.

sed its support for Georgian state institutions ('governance') partly at the expense of the support for civil society ('democracy'). This shift took place because many former NGO leaders joined the new government and the government seemed to be result-oriented and eager to act.⁴⁷ By contrast, the interviewed USAID/Ukraine representative claimed that all programs under the heading of "Democracy & Governance" were equally important and USAID's attention to each of them remained unchanged after the Orange Revolution.⁴⁸ However, available statistical data clearly contradicts this claim. According to data published on the USAID website, the 2004-2007 period saw a 71 percent decrease in the budget of the program "Strengthening Citizen Participation" and a simultaneous 59 percent increase in funds for the "Good Governance" program in Ukraine.⁴⁹

Along with the redistribution of funds, U.S. donors started promoting the cooperation between NGOs and state institutions. In Georgia, this produced a conceptual divide between independent watchdogs and pro-government NGOs (so-called GONGOs). According to the Executive Director of Georgian Young Lawyers' Association Giorgi Chkheidze, U.S. donors continued to refer to the involvement of civil society in the reform process but now it became a duty of the Georgian government to involve NGOs.⁵⁰ This opened a way for Georgian authorities to select which NGOs they want to work with while excluding others. As a result, the selected NGOs were labeled as GONGOs. Unlike in Georgia, the Ukrainian NGO community did not split into two antagonistic camps. The divergent outcome can be explained by the fact that various political forces were represented in the Ukrainian government and they would not have been able to agree on a single group of preferred NGOs.

It should be also noted that, while promoting the cooperation between NGOs and state institutions, U.S. donors have never stopped funding the watchdog activities. The proportion of U.S. funds allocated to joint government and NGO projects had increased but U.S. donors did not finance exclusively pro-government NGOs.⁵¹ In fact, some U.S.-funded programs, like the Democracy Small Grants Program administered by the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, had reserved its funds exclusively for NGOs and had never worked with state institutions.⁵²

⁴⁷ USAID/Georgia representatives, personal interview.

⁴⁸ USAID/Ukraine representative, personal interview.

⁴⁹ USAID, "Budget Justification to the Congress. Fiscal Year 2007", 2006, <<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2007/ee/ua.html>> [last accessed 27 July 2011].

⁵⁰ Giorgi Chkheidze, personal interview, Tbilisi, 15 October 2010.

⁵¹ Civil Society Institute representative, personal interview.

⁵² Reshetov, personal interview.

2.4. Independent Media Strengthening

On the eve of the color revolutions, external media assistance was crucial to preserving a critical coverage of Georgian and Ukrainian government activities. This section examines the following hypothesis: after the revolutions, U.S. governmental donors became reluctant to finance media strengthening programs as the U.S. administration wanted to shield its favored new governments in Georgia and Ukraine from public scrutiny.

Both in Georgia and Ukraine, the U.S. channeled most of its media assistance through the USAID-funded flagship media programs. In Georgia, it was the four-year (2002-2006) Media Innovations Program implemented by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX). In Ukraine, it was the five-year (2003-2008) program Strengthening Independent Media in Ukraine (U-Media) implemented by Internews. The Orange Revolution had virtually no impact on U-Media. In 2008, when the initial five-year term expired, USAID extended the program for another three years signing a new contract with Internews and pledging the same level of funding (\$2 million per year). In post-revolution Georgia, on the contrary, USAID refused to extend its flagship media program. What was the reason for shutting it down?

Bob Evans, the then IREX Chief of Party in Georgia, has provided a very blunt comment about that: “We were told many times to fully support the new regime and not point out the shortcomings of the new government. “Watchdog” became “bad dog” in anticipation of some sort of counter-revolution. USAID seemed to almost simultaneously announce that we ran the best media program they had ever seen and that they had no intention of offering a media program again”.⁵³ The interviewed Georgian media expert who was contracted by IREX to work in the Media Innovations Program provided a more moderate assessment. According to this expert, USAID and other U.S. donors suspended the direct assistance to independent media because they “assumed prematurely that the Georgian government was so interested in developing democracy that there would be not that much need for outside support”.⁵⁴ If that was the case, the post-revolution euphoria of U.S. governmental donors must have been particularly overwhelming. It should be noted that USAID dismissed the advice of its own experts. In the joint IREX and USAID mid-term assessment published in September 2004, it was highlighted in capital

⁵³ Mitchell, 130.

⁵⁴ Georgian media expert, personal interview, Tbilisi, 13 October 2010.

letters that the authors of the assessment did not recommend USAID to close its media assistance program in Georgia.⁵⁵

Although in Ukraine the flagship media program stayed intact after the Orange revolution, some decline in U.S. funding for independent media could also be observed. For example, the Media Development Fund (MDF) administered by the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine faced significant funding cuts in the post-revolution period. The MDF budget fell from \$882 thousand in 2006 to \$424 thousand in 2007. The number of projects financed by MDF decreased from 117 to 54 during the same period. In spite of the slight recovery (\$540 thousand) in 2008, the MDF budget further shrank to \$392 thousand in 2009.⁵⁶ The expert for MDF at the U.S. Embassy Olha Zhyryachenkova explained the funding cuts by the fact that freedom of speech was considered to be one of the biggest achievements of the Orange Revolution.⁵⁷ This argument was echoed by Natalya Ligacheva, the founder of Ukrainian media monitoring website Telekritika. She noted that, in 2005-2006, Western grant givers significantly reduced their support for media NGOs as they concluded that “everything is now fine in Ukraine and freedom of speech has been established.”⁵⁸

SGM Jan HECHT Ukrainian media outlets survived the cuts in U.S. funding easier than their Georgian counterparts because they could resort to various local business groups, including those opposing the government. At the same time, Ukrainian media still could count on external assistance. For example, the website Telekritika, which advocates independent and impartial media, merged with Ukrainian business holding Glavred, beginning in December 2006. The holding financed as much as 75 percent of Telekritika’s annual budget. However, the remaining 25 percent continued to be obtained from Western donors (mostly, American) and this share was crucial to preserving the independence of Telekritika’s editorial policy.⁵⁹ This balanced mix of funding sources was made possible by U.S. donors’ decision to devote their full attention to a quality of Ukrainian media reports. The representative of the Institute of Mass Information recalled that U.S. donors responded to the appeal of Ukrainian NGOs and postponed their withdrawal from the media sector for another 5-7 years committing themselves to focus on journalist training and pursue media standards.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Rich McClear and Mark Koenig, “Mid-Term Assessment of IREX Media Innovations Program”, 2004, 8, <http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacf799.pdf> [last accessed on 1 August 2012].

⁵⁶ Data obtained by author from the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine.

⁵⁷ Olha Zhyryachenkova, personal interview, Kyiv, 28 February 2011.

⁵⁸ Natalia Ligacheva, personal interview, Kyiv, 1 March 2011.

⁵⁹ Ligacheva, personal interview.

⁶⁰ Mass Information Institute representative, personal interview, Kyiv, 10 March 2011.

Conclusion

This article aimed to test the hypothesis that U.S. democracy assistance programs in post-revolution Georgia and Ukraine were subordinated to U.S. security interests and, as a result, did not facilitate the consolidation of the two nascent democracies. The research indeed revealed various inconsistencies in U.S.-funded programs that may have undermined their effectiveness. However, U.S. security interests did not prove to be the primary reason for the inconsistent U.S. democracy assistance in Georgia and Ukraine.

In the sector of electoral aid, the hypothesis was falsified altogether. U.S. governmental donors implemented a coherent assistance strategy by committing necessary funds to election monitoring activities and producing impartial post-election assessments. In the sector of party assistance, the U.S. assistance strategy was less consistent, particularly in Georgia. After the Rose Revolution, U.S. donors redirected a significant share of their resources from party assistance to legislative strengthening. As a consequence, the government party UNM secured an exclusive access to this kind of assistance as it commanded a strong majority in the parliament. Instead of leveling the playing field for all Georgian parties, the U.S. assistance actually strengthened the already dominant player. However, the research revealed no link between the inconsistencies in U.S.-funded party assistance and U.S. security interests. The preferential treatment of UNM likely was a side effect of the more general shift of U.S. assistance strategy toward the strengthening of state institutions.

In the sector of NGO assistance, a decline in U.S. funding was common both in Georgia and Ukraine. In both cases, U.S. donors diverted their money to state institutions in a hope for a synergy of government and NGO activities. It turned out that such strategy change was premature. It stripped Georgian and Ukrainian civil society of its watchdog function although the respect of Georgian and Ukrainian governments for human rights and rule of law still required a continuous monitoring. This inconsistency in U.S. democracy assistance can be explained by miscalculation rather than intentional bias in favor of incumbent “rose” and “orange” leaders. The findings confirmed that U.S. donors have never given preferential treatment to GONGOs and they have never terminated their support for watchdog activities. Finally, in the sector of media assistance, the U.S. strategy was also inconsistent. U.S. donors reduced funding for media-related projects pushing Georgian and Ukrainian media outlets prematurely to become dependent on local political and business elite. Again, this should have been a

miscalculation stemming from too rosy assessments of the pace and depth of democratic changes in post-revolution Georgia and Ukraine.

To summarize, the general hypothesis of security-burdened U.S. democracy assistance programs was falsified. The research presented in this article failed to prove a direct link between security interests of a donor country and democracy assistance programs implemented by this country. If foreign donors reduce funding for nongovernmental aspects of democracy (such as political parties, NGOs and media) this can reflect not only a donors' bow to their favored government but also a routine revision of their assistance strategies. The research highlights the importance of the analytical distinction between diplomatic and programmatic levels of democracy assistance. The results of this research make clear that diplomatic-level regularities are not necessary relevant for the programmatic level.

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