

Winter 2009

The Rise of 'People Power': Role of Civil Society in the "Color Revolutions"

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THE RISE OF 'PEOPLE POWER': ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE
"COLOR REVOLUTIONS"

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
December 2009

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ABSTRACT

THE RISE OF 'PEOPLE POWER': ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE "COLOR REVOLUTIONS"

Vladyslav Galushko
Old Dominion University, 2009
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This dissertation has been spurred by the surprising turn of events that took place in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004 respectively. Both countries were scheduled to have elections - parliamentary in Georgia and presidential in Ukraine. Though fraud, voter intimidation and opposition harassment were widely expected, few predicted the magnitude of popular response that swept away the regimes of Leonid Kuchma and Eduard Shevarnadze. Grappling with the unexpected, many heaped praise on the so-called "people power" that was able to bring masses to the streets and sustain their involvement in what were quickly labeled "color revolutions." Civil society groups like *Pora* in Ukraine and *Kmara* in Georgia became the cause célèbre for Western media.

Few questions were asked as to what made the civic organizations in Ukraine and Georgia so effective. This neglect of deeper investigation is especially puzzling, given the vast array of past assessments that decried the civil societies in those and other post-Soviet states as weak, overly dependent on Western aid and unable to relate to the local populace.

The analysis that this dissertation will perform is critical not only for our understanding of contemporary political events in transitioning societies, but also for the evolution of major theoretical debates in the field. By stressing the primacy of civil society's involvement in "color revolutions," it lends substantive support to the participatory approach, confirming the leading role of ordinary citizens over domestic

elites in democratic transformations. At the same time, because the research is focused on the specific features which enhance the effectiveness of civic groups, it contributes to the scholarly discussion (often dating to the times of Locke, Kant and the Scottish Enlightenment) on the merits and weaknesses of civil society as well as its connections to the political and societal realms. Finally, the research suggests how the particular circumstances of “color revolutions” can enhance our general appreciation of democratic transitions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Regina Karp for her guidance and support and my committee members, Dr. David Earnest and Dr. Dana Heller, for their valuable feedback. A special thanks goes to my parents, Anna and Anatoliy, for their unconditional belief in me, and my brother, Artem, who became so interested in my work that he decided to accompany me on the fieldtrip to Georgia. Finally, I am deeply grateful to Curt and Marina whose close friendship, patience, and encouragement helped me succeed in this endeavour.

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CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research for this dissertation has been spurred by the peaceful democratic transitions, more commonly known as the “color revolutions,” that occurred in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004 respectively. Although many actors have contributed to the successful fall of the Shevardnadze and Kuchma semi-authoritarian regimes, the public attention has been fixated on civil society. Many credited civic groups, like Kmara and Pora, for starting the snowball of public protests and helping sustain them for several days, sometimes in harsh weather conditions. Others, refusing to believe that apathetic post-Soviet masses can do anything on their own, saw foreign-funded non-government organizations as pawns in the geopolitical game between the West and Russia to delineate and control the spheres of influence. As a result, one is still left with the question whether, regardless of their influence, non-governmental organizations were an independent or a controlled player in that process.

For all the research generated by the interest in those events, there is no answer what made specific civil groups, not an amorphous civil society, effective in those days. Most research pieces look at the domestic civil societies comprehensively, asserting that by 2003 or 2004 they were strong enough to be an independent actor. However, during the revolutions it was not the whole civil society, but specific organizations that proved critical in mounting and sustaining the protests. Furthermore, the abysmal performance of civil societies in Ukraine and Georgia in the post-revolutionary period rejects the

argument that they were uniformly strong. This work seeks to fill this gap in research by analyzing four civic groups in the two countries - their founding, growth and, finally, involvement in the “color revolutions.” It posits that a high degree of their connection to the host society helped them play a critical role in those events. Such connections, known as organizational embeddedness, included their ability to relate to ordinary people, interact with and be respected by relevant political actors, and use any foreign financial and methodological assistance effectively.

The primary focus of my dissertation lies at the intersection of two distinct issues – civil society and democratization. On one hand, the research seeks to determine the role of civil society organizations in the process of democratic transitions, more specifically peaceful “color revolutions.” This task necessitates a closer evaluation of the available studies within the democratization literature. On the other, the dissertation’s key hypothesis asserts that the influence of civic organizations will be dependent on the extent of their embeddedness in the fabric of respective domestic societies. In order to select valid indicators for empirical testing, it is important to review the extant literature on civil society, too. Therefore, the main goal of this chapter is to provide a critical overview of scholarly research in both fields with a specific attention to how features of the internal organization of civil society groups impact their wider relevance in emerging democracies.

To this end, the chapter will begin by reviewing the general aspects of civil society – the available scholarly definitions and debates on the concept, the purported external and internal reasons for its emergence and development, the benefits and challenges that civil society often generates. The second part will concentrate on the role of civil society in democratization. The discussion will include an assessment of

relations between civil society on one hand and democratization and foreign aid on the other. To illuminate several theoretical propositions, this part will draw on a number of available case studies from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as the dissertation's main region of interest.

As seen from the structure of the chapter, the research intends to pursue a number of tasks. First, it seeks to show how the phenomenon of civil society has evolved historically from general philosophical concepts to contemporary civic organizations. Second, it describes how civil society has become linked to democratization and turned into a major component of Western foreign aid. Third, the review considers the available case studies on the former Soviet Union to underscore the impact of internal elements of NGOs on their overall performance and their specific influence in "color revolutions."

GENERAL ASPECTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Definitions and scholarly views on civil society

From Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment to Hegel and Durkheim, the notion of civil society has undergone a lengthy historical evolution in the writings of classical philosophers. The continuing recurrence of debates on its key attributes attests to virility of the phenomenon.

In the "Second Treatise" Locke was the first to devote considerable attention to civil society, which he defined as "the realm of political association instituted among men when they take leave of the "state of nature" and enter in a commonwealth."¹ His interpretations were built on the writings of ancient Greek philosophers, like Grotius, and some political theorists of the Middle Age. Because of the heavy influence of the

¹ Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1992), 22.

latter, Locke's approach did not differentiate between civil and political societies. As we will soon see, this understanding of their unity was not uncontroversial. On the theoretical level, numerous authors grappled with the issue whether, and if so, then to what extent, civil society is both separate and distinct from the state's political life. The debate has had obvious practical ramifications for democracy-promoters in the field, who were left with the formidable challenge of drawing more precise boundaries between civil and political organizations that they choose to support. Locke postulated that the roots of civil society lied in Natural Law and Christian traditions, and its attributes "were derived from the nature of man himself."² To him, it was a unique model for social order set out to overcome competing challenges between the individual and social, public and private (the theme that would be recurring in almost all future works). Therefore, the freedoms and equality that civil society brought with it were ontological, not historical in nature. Yet again, the points raised by Locke so casually became among the most contested issues in the discourse and practice of civil society. Since his rhetoric is so steeped in the tradition of Christianity, one may wonder whether the notion of civil society may not be applicable to those who are not Christian. This, in turn, spurs a larger debate about the ethnocentricity of such Western concepts as civil society, nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, etc. To rephrase a set of familiar questions, can Western assistance produce a Chinese or an Arab civil society that, while being distinct, would have the same normative essence as civil societies in Canada, Great Britain or the United States? His other assertion also posits problems for democracy promoters. If, as Locke suggests, civil society is ontological in nature, is it possible to inculcate the habits of civiness and ultimately build a civil society in other countries? A

² Ibid., 3.

positive answer raises only further questions. For instance, in their civil society building efforts, should donor states tap into the dormant civic potential of a host country or begin their efforts from scratch?

Theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment deepened the problematic of the individual within society, and clashes between individual and public interests that are bound to occur as a result of these interactions. For many of them, civil society was “primarily a realm of solidarity held together by the force of moral sentiments and natural affections.”³ It was therefore not a neutral arena of exchange. Instead, all exchanges were derived from the nature of man himself. The finding is significant when we consider an ongoing debate on the impacts of civil society. Putnam describes its mostly positive influences (such as increased civiness, efficacy, tolerance and higher participatory attitudes and behaviors) on individuals and states.⁴ Sheri Berman in her analysis of Weimar Germany challenges the assumption about the inherent goodness of civil society. At the time, German civic organizations fell victim to the same social divisiveness that permeated the country. Because they tended to get members along the lines of social cleavages, their activities furthered, rather than ameliorated, a general societal fragmentation.⁵ Regardless of the seeming difference, the major points elaborated by Putnam and Berman hark back to the philosophical proposition of Ferguson and the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment. Because exchanges within civil society are not content-neutral, its specific impacts depend on the meaning (good or bad) that actors put into their interactions within civic organizations.

³ Seligman, 33.

⁴ Robert D. Putnam, ed., *Democracies in Flux* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 167-176.

⁵ Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* 49 (April 1997): 401-429.

At the same time, theorists within this school (like Adam Ferguson in “An Essay on the History of Civil Society”) make a substantial departure from Locke in one point. While for the latter the roots of civil society were ontological, for the former they became epistemological. In other words, Ferguson regarded civil society more as a natural inwardly and ultimately human source of social power. Though he did not move far enough to cast off completely civil society’s connections to God, the departure was nonetheless crucial. It opened a path to closer examination of human interactions within the realm of civil society with the purpose of their improvement. Moreover, for the first time it was implied that people had a share in controlling their civic destiny.

Kant further distances from the ontological premise behind the workings of civil society. Being a chief proponent of Reason, he attempts to establish a connection between it and the moral sphere. Thus, civil society is presented as a shared public arena, which validates critical discourses on Reason and equality. He asserts that “through participation in the civil structure of political activity that man’s autonomy, and with that of reason, were guaranteed.”⁶ For the first time in political theory and in a sharp split from Locke, Kant separates civil from political society, by pointing to its uniqueness as the natural province for public rational debate and critique. To summarize, his contribution to the discourses on civil society is critical for a number of viewpoints. First, Kant’s writing places civil society deeper into the epistemological realm, thus opening it to empirical examination and research. Second, his notion of a shared public area elevates the stature of civil society as one of the core components in a state’s existence and orderly functioning. Third, Kant makes the very first distinction between civic and political lives. It is important to know where one starts and the other begins in

⁶ Seligman, 43.

order to achieve a desired outcome. At the same time, he points to an important aspect in the operation of civil society that would become later magnified in the notion of service NGOs. Specifically, not all civil society organizations have to be inherently political or linked to politics. But all civic groups must have a link to their domestic societies (the notion of embeddedness, which this dissertation advances) before they establish their political aspirations.

Though Hegel echoes parts of Kant's definition by emphasizing mutuality and reciprocal recognition as the key features of civil society, he points to one significant flaw in his line of arguments. Specifically, for Kant the public sphere (within which civil society is located) is highly judicial, but not ethical in nature. It is divorced from the private sphere of morality and ethics. Hegel asserted that this constriction forecloses the complete realization of Reason, which seems to be one of the major preoccupations of Kant. Hegel (as Marx after him) sought to overcome the distinction between legality and morality and bring the two together. He believed both notions had been at the core of the original idea of civil society. In order to show that, Hegel developed the idea of ethical solidarity based on the unity of public right with private ethics. The concept asserts that the individual need for recognition is attained through the recognition of property. Because the essence of civil society lies in mutuality and reciprocity, it inadvertently helps humans fulfill their basic need for recognition. By doing this, it acquires a certain normative status.

In the "Philosophy of Right" Hegel deepens the analysis of civil society in a number of important ways. First, the norm of mutuality contains not only an element of participation, but also of conflict. His observation was built on the writings dated as early as the Scottish Enlightenment, which claimed that exchanges within the realm of

civil society are not neutral. Second, Hegel makes a final break-away from the ontological basis of civil society, by noting that it is an object of historical development rather than a natural state. This has profound theoretical and practical implications. In the first dimension, it completely negates Locke's rather theological perception of civil society. From the practical standpoint, this means that forms of civil society do not emerge on their own or exist naturally, but need a conscious human effort. One may insist that Hegel's proposition provided a critical groundwork for the emergence of a future democracy promotion paradigm. It comes as no surprise that he was the first to emphasize the educative nature of civil society "where the individual learns the value of group actions, social solidarity and the dependence of his welfare on others."⁷ Third, Hegel purports that the realization of ethical life begins, but does not end with the sphere of civil society. His understanding of the bridge between civil and political spheres is close to the contemporary one. Hegel believes that civic participation prepares individuals for the participation in the public arena of the state, which is a true space of reason and universality. He further suggests the state ought to exploit civil society by nurturing the cooperation it is capable to produce.⁸ His contribution is illustrative of the evolution in thinking about the relationship between political and civil spheres that had occurred over time. It began with Locke and theorists within the Scottish Enlightenment who did not separate the two realms. Then, Kant was the first to distinguish them, but did not draw any sort of relationship. For Hegel, the feedback mechanism seems to be clearer, as civil society finds its final embodiment in political one.

⁷ S. Reichardt, "Civil Society – A Concept for Comparative Historical Research," in *Future of Civil Society: Making Central European Nonprofit-Organizations Work*, ed. Annette Zimmer, Eckhard Priller, and Matthias Freise (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 37.

⁸ Jon Van Til, *Growing Civil Society: From Nonprofit Sector to Third Space* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 14-15.

Marx elaborates on the nature of interactions within civil society. Taking one part of Hegel's observation, which noted of a possibly conflictual side to civil society, he places it within his own theoretical framework of class struggle. For Marx, civil society is a mechanism exploited by the state to enforce invisible, intangible and subtle forms of power.⁹ Like others before him, Marx supports the separation of civil and political societies in his famous piece "On the Jewish Question."¹⁰ However, in unison with his other theoretical propositions, civil society (*Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) is firmly connected to the economic aspects of social life, more specifically the needs of labor.¹¹ In the end, he recognizes that conflicts, which civil society may potentially harbor, will not be resolved either within it or in the sphere of politics, as both are manipulated by the ruling class for the purpose of securing, maintaining and expanding its power. Therefore, such struggles must be overcome in a different political body that will emerge in the future and unify both civil and political realms.¹²

When looking at the timeframe of major theoretical debates on the concept of civil society, it becomes apparent that philosophical explorations of the phenomenon intensified especially between the 17th and the mid-19th centuries. The chief interest in civil society stemmed from the social crises of the 17th century and the sense of uprootedness that they created. European societies had to deal with the issues of land commercialization, labor and capital growth in market economies and consequences of the English and North American Revolutions. By the middle of the 18th century, the European civil society failed to incorporate the demands of its participants into the political life, which gave rise to social movements and, ultimately, powerful trade

⁹ Van Til, 14-15.

¹⁰ Seligman, 48-50.

¹¹ Reichardt, 38.

¹² Seligman, 52-55.

unions.¹³ At the same time, political philosophers had to look elsewhere to find real-life models of the civil society, about which they were so tirelessly theorizing. That place became the United States. The richness and vibrancy of American civic arena astounded such outside observers as de Tocqueville. His writings are significant for two primary reasons. They provide a rare empirical application of the previous philosophical conceptualizations as well as illuminate most significant theoretical debates on the merits and role of civil society and its place within the political life of a country. Our review will deal with de Tocqueville's practical observations on American civil society in the later sections. At this juncture, it is pertinent to elaborate on those experiences of his journey in America that relate to broader theoretical disputes.

Similar with other European authors of his time, de Tocqueville takes the distinctness of civil society as a realm of social life for granted. However, his analysis goes one step further. While most of the previous writers saw the final resolution for numerous disputes of the civic arena in political society, de Tocqueville (thanks in a large part to what he saw in America) came to believe that civil society would be able to stand on its own. Indeed, his analysis was one of the first pieces that considered civic associations as an alternative to the growing statist movement. At several points, the French political scientist speaks of civic organizations as a powerful instrument of interest representation that can provide an answer to increasingly complex problems through people, not the government. Furthermore, when civil society limits itself to mere debates and delegates problem-solving to purely political institutions, it inadvertently increases the potential for abuse and tyranny.¹⁴ His voluminous book "Democracy in America" addresses

¹³ Seligman, 103, 105.

¹⁴ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 226-228, 598-599.

another contentious issue in the civil society discourse – the relationship between the individual and civil society. More specifically, there is a perennial two-fold question of how the person decides to get involved in civic activities (thus sacrificing part of her autonomy) and, once engaged, how she balances the achievement of her personal interests with the good of a larger group of which she is a member. The viewpoint that de Tocqueville provides is different not only because it is country-specific, but also because it is rooted in a particular form of governance – democracy. He proceeds to explain that in democracies all individuals are fairly independent as none commands the absolute power over others akin to traditional monarchies. At the same time, they are also weak in pursuing their particularistic agendas, because they deal with others whose cooperation they cannot order by force. This creates a certain pull-push effect. On one hand, people are pulled together by their own inability to achieve anything without external assistance. On the other, any emerging cooperation always has a potential for members' pull-out if they believe they have ceded too much of their autonomy and independence. As de Tocqueville aptly observed, “the same conditions which make associations so vital for democratic nations also make them more difficult to achieve there than elsewhere.”¹⁵ Finally, his work also touches upon the interactions between civil and political societies. He posits that there is a direct relationship between the two – where political associations are banned, civic organizations are also rare, as citizens are no longer sure which forms of association are permissible.¹⁶ Furthermore, even those few civic associations that manage to function are “small in number, feebly conceived, incompetently run, and will never engage in plans on a vast scale or will fail in

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 596.

¹⁶ In the contemporary language, such associations would be advocacy groups.

attempting to execute them.”¹⁷ De Tocqueville’s addition on this question is critical for two reasons. First, it re-iterates a previously forgotten point that civic associations pave a way for political ones as free schools of teaching the general theory of associations. In a democracy, the learning is not limited to purely political aspects of participation. It helps citizens take their freedoms more responsibly and avoid the dangers that many freedoms may pose if abused. Second, it implicitly cautions of the efforts to build a vibrant civil society in a setting with stifled political competition.¹⁸ In such conditions the established civic associations stay weak, because they are unable to embed themselves into the fabric of the domestic political landscape that is inherently set up to reject open competition. In other words, such civic organizations became a foreign (and inevitably temporary) body in a society where all other forms of participation are discouraged. The remark (as we will later see¹⁹) was somewhat lost on democracy-promoters in the 1990s, who sought to draw an artificial line between civil and political spheres and proceed with the development of the former irrespective of the circumstances in the latter.

The concept of civil society fell out of vogue in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries.²⁰ Among the most notable writings of that period, one ought to mention Emile Durkheim and Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci’s approach espouses a dual vision of civil society. On one hand, he concurs with Marx in seeing civil society as one of the venues where the present social order (with all its oppressive class hierarchies) is grounded. In this first capacity, civil society is the shaped object that helps support the capitalist status quo. On the other hand, civil society is simultaneously the realm in which a new social order can be founded. Because the process of transformation deals with social change

¹⁷ De Tocqueville, 607.

¹⁸ Ibid., 604-605, 608.

¹⁹ See the discussion on democracy promotion efforts in Central Asia.

²⁰ Reichardt, 41; Thomas Carothers and William Brandt, “Civil Society,” *Foreign Policy* 117 (Winter, 1999-2000): 19.

and (as seen later) with revolutions, it is worth elaborating on it in more detail. The change would begin with the formation of class alliances into a counter-hegemonic bloc that would ultimately displace the bourgeoisie (whose interests the present civil society is serving). Unsurprisingly for a Marxist, Gramsci envisions the bloc including peasantry, working class and, to increase its strength, petty bourgeois elements.²¹

Mobilization of this force would not be spontaneous. Instead, it will occur as a result of a combination of leadership and pressures from the below. Within the ranks of leadership, the intellectual plays a critical role in raising the consciousness of social groups on the local, regional and world levels.²² This individual would be able to transcend immediate corporate interests of his group in order to achieve a commonly shared vision of a desirable and feasible alternative future. It should be assumed that the contribution of intellectuals would become the basis of what Gramsci called the war position – a strategy for a long-term construction of self-consciousness of the social classes into an emancipatory bloc within the society. The author finds his own answers to the question on the relationship between civil and political societies. Under normal circumstances, the former supports the power structure of the latter. However, during the times of change a revolution would first occur on the level of civil society (making it the leading agent of transformation) and only then spill into the state. At the same time, Gramsci realizes that the change, which civil society has a potential to bring about, may not be definitive or final. His further qualification talks of a passive revolution, which is an abortive or incomplete transformation of society. In this case, changes, which are introduced by external actors, attract some internal support, but do not overcome the opposition of

²¹ Robert W. Cox, "Civil Society at the Turn of Millennium: Prospects for an Alternative World Order," *Review of International Studies* 25 (1995): 9

²² *Ibid.*, 7, 15-16.

other entrenched domestic forces, resulting in the revolution-restoration cycle. Another subcategory of a passive revolution is a stalled war where oppositional forces are strong enough to mount a challenge, but not sufficiently powerful to overcome it. The third variation may lie in *transformismo* – an Italian term for the cooptation of oppositional elements by the dominant power. The categorization offered by Gramsci carries some contemporary validity, especially when applied to post-revolutionary situations in Ukraine, Serbia and Georgia. For instance, Ukraine may be experiencing the beginning of a revolution-restoration pattern after in 2006 the Orange coalition proved unable to form a government, which returned to power the forces of the ancien regime. Serbia is displaying increasing features of the *transformismo* model as the country is struggling to come to grips with its past and fully embrace European demands for the independence of Kosovo.

Emile Durkheim was another prominent theorist who turned his attention to the concept of civil society. His research agenda both echoes and expands a number of discourses that were previously so central in the field. The first among them is the question of positioning civil society. In this regard, Durkheim places it firmly in-between the modern state and capitalism.²³ However, this positioning is not entirely new and falls in line with de Tocqueville's vision of civil society as the public sphere. What distinguishes Durkheim from others is the inclusion of such intimate structures as family. To him, "the conjugal-nuclear family ... remains a focal point for group norms and attachments, and a key matrix for individual moral development."²⁴ In "The Evolution of Educational Thought" the reader could witness how the two terms – education and

²³ Mustafa Emirbayer, "Useful Durkheim," *Sociological Theory* 14, no. 2 (July 1996): 112.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

family – come together to explain the vibrancy of civil society. Education connects “two kinds of moralities, the affective morality of family life and the more rigorous, impersonal faith that controls civic society.”²⁵ In other words, family plays two roles. First, it helps build personal trust that family members show toward each other. Second, by acquiring this trust, an individual is getting simultaneously socialized into certain norms of civiness and attitudes of participatory behavior. But without any education, such mechanisms will be extended only to those with whom the person is familiar through face-to-face interactions. In this sense, education becomes a bridge that assists the individual with learning about interpersonal trust and practicing it toward people who are not his family members. Attesting to the importance of Durkheim’s insight, the link between personal and interpersonal trust and the role of education in enhancing the latter is now taken for granted. Numerous studies on civic participation conventionally measure the educational level of their participants with an automatic assumption that those with more education will display higher civic and participatory behaviors.²⁶ The other important addition of Durkheim is his attention to the emotional dimension of social life. In his work “Professional Ethics and Civic Morals,” he stresses that interpersonal interactions, which occur with or without institutions, have an emotional foundation. This theme was developed by other authors, who assert that in order to flourish, democratic structure and processes need to have not only cultural ideas, but also

²⁵ Alexander Jeffrey, *Theoretical Local in Sociology, vol. 2: The Antinomies of Classical Thought: Marx and Durkheim* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

²⁶ For examples see Gabriel Badescu, Paul E. Sum and Eric M Uslaner, “Civil Society Development and Democratic Values in Romania and Moldova,” *Eastern European Politics and Society* 18, no.2 (2004); William Mishler and Richard Rose, “Trust, Distrust and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Societies,” *Journal of Politics* 59, no.2 (May 1997); Eric M. Uslaner, *Moral Foundations of Trust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ronald Inglehard, “How Solid is Mass Support for Democracy – And How Can We Measure It?” *Political Science and Politics* 36, no.1 (January 2003): 51-57.

patterns of emotional commitment.²⁷ Thus, like many before him, Durkheim was subtly pointing toward the duality of civil society that could encompass not only conflict and contention, but also interpersonal trust and resultant affection. He also saw a clear link between civil society and the state. But his perspective was somewhat different from the previous authors. While others before him considered civil society as a path that helps citizens to connect with or get educated about political life, Durkheim placed a higher emphasis on the benefits of civil society for the individual. In particular, he advocated that intermediary bodies, such as occupational and professional groups, were the venues through which the moral authority of the state enters into individual life. Without them, such authority would be too distant from ordinary people. His point is interesting for two reasons. First, it re-states the usefulness of civil society as another mechanism, which can be used by the state to get through to its citizens. Second, it underscores (though rather implicitly) the benefits of participation for the individual. One of them is an increased sense of familiarity with the state where a person resides. Durkheim's observation was a precursor to more explicit theoretical and empirical assertions²⁸ in the future that civic participation fosters a feeling of empowerment that the individual gains in the process of engaging with governmental structures.

After WWII, academic attention toward civil society continued to be on the wane. The concept was rescued from the dustbin of history by the transformations in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s, most prominently the Solidarnosc movement in Poland.²⁹ Since then, Zimmer points to the emergence of four distinct (but we may add,

²⁷ Eli Sagan, *The Honey and the Hemlock: Democracy and Paranoia in Ancient Athens and Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

²⁸ For example see Mark E. Warren, *Democracy and Association* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Giovanni Sartori, *Theory of Democracy Revisited* (London: Chatham House Publishers, 1987); Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Volunteerism in American Politics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995).

²⁹ Van Til, 14-15.

rather intertwined) approaches. The first is the so-called communitarian model that emphasizes the benefits of civil society that lie in socializing, building solidarity and enjoying “good life” anchored in networks. The works by Putnam and Etzioni are most prominent examples of this viewpoint. Putnam’s comparison of the civil societies of northern and southern Italy offers a remarkable illustration of how a vibrant civil society helps advance other aspects of the social and political life in the north of the country, whereas the prevalence of patronage networks retards economic development and engenders corruption in the south.³⁰ Putnam sees a very intimate connection between civil and political societies. Like de Tocqueville in his assessments of the U.S. civic life, Putnam clearly links the health of civic society to the virility of political life. He comes to the similar conclusions – the patterns of interactions in one will be utilized in the other. Therefore, political life may be stymied by the same challenges (e.g. corruption, patronage, lack of trust) that permeate the civil realm of activities. The second model, which emerged in many post-WWII writings, is a differentiation on the democratic theory. It states that civil society provides a means of active participation in a grass-root democracy and helps ameliorate an existing democratic and representative deficit. Because every society has a minority group whose interests cannot be represented through the regular channels of election and voting (as such interests are always trumped by the majority), civic organizations become a natural outlet where minority members can get together and ensure that their interests are not completely obliterated by the electoral will of the majority. Schmalz-Burns is one of the most prominent adherents of this position. The next model stems from the liberal version of civil society. It stresses individual competence and empowerment over state’s coercive mechanisms. Similar to

³⁰ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 99-106, 181-185.

the idea presented long ago by Kant, the approach presents civil society as a venue for upbringing and education of citizens in the provision of public goods and interests. The final approach comes from Habermas' discourse theory³¹ that regards civil society as the social space where communicative action takes its most distinct shape in the form of a non-coercive discourse and open debate. In this capacity, it serves the role of a pluralist, free community for communication that is not power-ridden, but operated through observation and reflection. Habermas' interpretation combines a liberal view of the legal protection for free citizens with a republican view of active participation in mediating laws and institutions.

As noted before, the presented approaches share a wide range of similarities. One has to do with the role of civil society as an educational means to create solidarity among people (communitarian approach), to teach them about active participation and defense of their interests (democratic theory) or to provide information on how their interests can be defended (liberal approach). Many of these approaches assume the connection between civil society and the state. It can either mitigate the democratic deficit (democratic theory) or enhance the quality and practices of political life (communitarian approach), or offer an alternative and more secure route for the freedom of expression and debate (Habermas' discourse theory). In the end, these latest views on the role of civil society highlight the continuity of the theoretical debates on the concept.

³¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

Emergence of civil society

It is usually much easier to describe an existing civil society than to pinpoint the mechanisms, processes and historical circumstances that facilitated its formation. This section will review and evaluate the existing approaches on how a civil society emerges and evolves.

Most of the literature acknowledges (implicitly or explicitly) two broad ways of how civil society in general and civic organizations in particular appear on the domestic arena. The major distinction between them lies in whether the process is driven by domestic or external factors.

Domestic sources of civil society development

If the formation of a domestic civil society is primarily influenced by internal actors, it starts at the informal level and is spontaneous in its character. In that case, civil society derives its beginnings from individuals and their private life.³² The point is not entirely new, as it was Durkheim who first paid attention to the role of family in civil society. However, O'Connell is quick to mention that civil society usually moves toward other levels – the level of a community (which has the most immediate impact on our lives) and the level of government (where the participation of citizenry is essential).³³ In this sense, he echoes the thoughts similar to de Tocqueville. The French political scientist asserted that individuals, who are independent, but weak in a democracy, band together to enhance their separate voices for a common concern.

³² Brian O'Connell, "Civil Society: Definitions and Descriptions," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 29, no.3 (September 2000): 472-475.

³³ *Ibid.*

The discussion raises a critical question as to what factors influence the rapidity with which civic action (and civil society itself) expands from the individual to the community and later societal levels. De Tocqueville provides a part of the answer, by considering the impact of political culture. His analysis underscores that one of the key components of a highly participatory culture is an inherent suspicion toward government. For instance, American culture advocates self-reliance and views the authority of state with distrust.³⁴ One of their key conclusions states that civil society organizations are more likely to emerge in states with a participatory culture where public input has a greater chance of influencing systemic outcomes.³⁵ This takes us back to the previously described theoretical discussion on the link between the civil and political societies. Understandably, political culture is not the only domestic ingredient that shapes a civil society.

In his comparison of the differences between Western and Eastern European civil society, Zimmer (albeit implicitly) points to a number of other factors that have the potential of modifying the contours of a domestically-formed civil society. In particular, the scholar notes that Western European civil societies grew out primarily of the middle class, while those in Central and Eastern Europe – from nobility (like *szlachta* in Poland).³⁶ If his observation is true, it then has a direct impact on the notion of embeddedness with which this dissertation is concerned. It can be speculated that civic groups that grow out of the middle class will generally be more aware of the needs of ordinary people (thus more implanted into the domestic fabric of their societies) than

³⁴ De Tocqueville, 220.

³⁵ Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

³⁶ Annette Zimmer, "Civil Society Organizations in Central and Eastern European Countries," in *Future of Civil Society*, ed. Zimmer, Priller, and Freise, 38-39.

those that originated within the nobility. The failure of Russian Decembrists in 1825 is an empirical piece of evidence that lends additional proof to this speculation. The informal civic group whose members hailed from Russia's most aristocratic families had no support of the local population and saw no need to secure such support in the first place. To summarize the point, civil society may become more or less embedded in the domestic scenery depending on the social class of its members.

The second difference between Western and Eastern European civil societies lies in the sequence of their formation. In Western Europe, civil society predated the political one, while in Eastern Europe (and most notably in Russia) the political society existed long before a civil society emerged.³⁷ Therefore, in the case of many Eastern European countries, the state had an opportunity to construct a political setting and a framework of rules within which its civic society would operate. It should come as no surprise that an inherently strong hold of the state over the realm of public life had a chilling effect on the emergence and development of genuine civic organizations. As de Tocqueville predicted, where a state heavily regulates political activity, it also generates intrinsic uncertainty as to what forms of associations are acceptable.³⁸ The overall point that follows from Zimmer's comparison is as follows – in those states where the political society preceded the civil one, the state, not the society, would define the space and set the limits on civic organizations. This, in turn, impacts how well such entities would be able to anchor themselves on the domestic landscape.

Finally, his analysis notes that the development of civil society in Eastern Europe was fueled by ethnic and religious sentiments as the mechanisms to preserve a local

³⁷ Zimmer, 38-39.

³⁸ De Tocqueville, 607.

identity under the foreign yoke. Thus, established civic organizations may be more exclusive, limiting their membership (either purposefully or through the agendas that they pursue) to certain national and/or religious groups. When carried to the extreme, such membership tactics may bring about the negative effects of civil society, which were so vividly described by Sheri Berman in her analysis of the civic life in Weimar Germany.³⁹ More specifically, instead of promoting a wider public discourse, German civic groups hindered it by encouraging parochialism and reinforcing existing societal cleavages. In the end, the civil society becomes only partially embedded in the domestic landscape and remains at the constant risk of decline. When religious and ethnic issues that rally its members can be resolved only through the political process, it has little else to offer. To sum up the point, it is important to consider the external circumstances (such as historical, national and religious factors) that shape the public platforms of emerging civic groups.

Along with the influence of the abovementioned variables (i.e. as social class, role of the state and historical conditions), civic organizations go through two critical stages in their internal development. It is important to review both, as they shed some light on the notion of embeddedness, which is central in my work.

In the first stage, civic organizations represent loose organizational structures that came to being in a spontaneous manner. Here one can see the cherished ideal of civil society in action – a group of individuals getting together to resolve a certain issue. At this point, the organization remains highly horizontal with minimal distinctions between

³⁹ Berman.

leaders and followers. As it is trying to form the base of followers, the new organization advances diffuse, value-laden and frequently non-negotiable demands.⁴⁰

At the second phase of their organizational evolution, civic associations become more institutionalized, shifting in their activities from the expressive (making one's voice heard) to the instrumental and strategic (influencing relevant policies). A formal organization replaces loose networks. With further formalization comes a separation between members and leaders. The nature of participation in organizational activities begins to change. Whereas at the beginning all members take part in the activities of their association, at later phases direct forms of participation are combined with representation. In reality, it means that some members choose to contribute to the organization indirectly (most frequently, financially), leaving the burden of programmatic activities (like designing public campaigns, conducting legislative lobbying) to the professional core of the group.

It is important to note that the transition from the first to the second stage is not preordained. A host of factors influence whether a group will be able to shape itself into a more formal entity with wider impact. Two of them are the capacity of a group and the influence of the state. Unfortunately, little has been written on the organizational changes that ought to occur in order for a loose network to become a civic association. However, it is possible to extrapolate from the research done on the evolution of interest groups.⁴¹ The literature makes it clear that in order to get to a more organized stage, the group has to abandon the peripheral areas of concern and pursue a set of few, but major issues that would be of paramount interest to the majority of its members. Doing so will

⁴⁰ De Tocqueville, 596; Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995), 556.

⁴¹ Jeffrey M. Berry, *The Interest Group Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984).

enable not only to weed out participants with disparate demands, but also to establish an intra-organizational consensus on what exactly it wants to accomplish. At this point, the input from the state also becomes crucial. Such factors as the respect for individual rights (in institutional and social spheres), the ability of institutions to incorporate demands generated within civil society determine the establishment and evolution of organizational capacities.⁴² To put it differently, if a state's support for civil society does not extend beyond declarations in domestic and international documents, associations will not have sufficient space to evolve and assume advocacy functions. Their development may thus be retarded by a state that is more comfortable with unorganized public disgruntlement (which is much easier to quell or ignore) than with well-articulated demands backed by specific constituencies. In this situation, two outcomes are plausible. Civil society groups may remain at the level of loose networks or be eviscerated altogether if a government begins to perceive them as a threat/competitor to its authority. In case of the former, further radicalization of their demands and tactics can be expected, as groups do not have a public outlet where the reasonableness and soundness of their agenda can be tested and moderated through open debate.

If, however, a state is receptive to the inclusion of civil society, the latter becomes an important societal player and gains the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor the state and the government. For that to happen, its autonomy from the interference of a state has to be supported by the rule of law.⁴³

⁴² Ariel C. Armony, *The Dubious Link: Civic Engagement and Democratization* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 39.

⁴³ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, "The Global Divergence of Democracies," in *Toward Consolidated Democracies*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1995), 97.

External sources of civil society development

The other path for civic groups to emerge on the domestic arena lies through external international influences, which can be grouped in two broad categories. The first includes impacts and interactions with foreign and international civic associations and/or movements. The other has to do with the efforts of other governments to promote the growth of civil society as a component of the larger democratization agenda. Since the dissertation devotes a separate section⁴⁴ to the latter issue, at this point I will elaborate how external civic groups spur the growth of a domestic civil society.

One of the ways that foreign associations, especially advocacy networks, extend their influence abroad is through a so-called “boomerang pattern.”⁴⁵ According to its logic, because the feedback loop between the society and the state is blocked for various reasons, domestic organizations get stuck at the first (loose) level of formation and begin searching for allies elsewhere in the international arena. Having found their counterparts abroad, they get an opportunity to exchange ideas and hone their strategies and tactics. The process of weeding out disparate and often radical demands, creating a coherent agenda and setting up an internal structure occurs not on the domestic, but on the international level. Different types of transnational actors provide different kinds of expertise. Transnational advocacy networks serve as a conduit for information exchange, coalitions enhance coordination and social movements contribute to mobilization.⁴⁶ More broadly, each of these actors transmits broad ideas and forms of public action, symbols and general cultural models. One of their central goals is to make the process of

⁴⁴ For more, see the discussion of the role of civil society in the democratization agenda.

⁴⁵ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁴⁶ Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker and Kathryn Sikkink, *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks and Norms* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 4-11.

democratic diffusion successful by replicating social structural circumstances that worked elsewhere.⁴⁷ In the end, the “boomerang” comes back to hit a government that was initially dismissive of a civic association, which is now not only better organized (no longer just a mob of enthusiasts), but also has powerful backers on the international arena that can exert additional pressure on that government.

Political entrepreneurs (sometimes labeled as external promoters⁴⁸) often become the second source of growth for domestic civil society groups. Such individuals and groups have previous transnational experiences and promote the establishment of civic organizations in the issue areas where the growth in international contacts is the driving force of the movement.⁴⁹ In the past, such issues included environmental, human rights, gender concerns, etc.

The suggested patterns of external influence on the growth of domestic civil society pose an interesting question – to what extent is the level of embeddedness of those civic groups altered as a result of their cooperation with other foreign advocacy networks and/or political entrepreneurs? Stark, Vedres and Bruszt believe that organizations with international roots are more likely to have deeper domestic connections than NGOs without them. In turn, greater rootedness of such groups is critical for their ability to mobilize and their capacity to defend civic values against state encroachment.⁵⁰ While Keck and Sikkink do not address the issue of embeddedness directly, they look at the conditions that may increase or hinder the influence of external

⁴⁷ John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy – Social Movements and Political Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 27-36.

⁴⁸ John O’Loughlin et large, “The Diffusion of Democracy, 1946-1994,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographer* 88, no. 4 (1998): 552.

⁴⁹ Kim D. Reimann, “A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs,” *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (March 2006): 45-68.

⁵⁰ David Stark, Balazs Vedres, and Laszo Bruszt, “Global Links, Local Roots: Varieties of Transnationalization and Forms of Civic Integration,” *Center on Organization and Innovation Working Paper* (New York, NY: Columbia University, April 2005).

advocacy networks. Such include the characteristics of a chosen issue (its universality, causality/marketability) and characteristics of involved actors. The latter category represents a particular interest to this dissertation as it indirectly touches upon the concept of embeddedness. In particular, the authors speak of network density as an indicator of its influence. Strong connections between an international advocacy network and its domestic counterpart produce regularity in the diffusion of information and, in the end, create reciprocal exchanges.⁵¹ These conditions will increase the likelihood of success in anchoring international values into the domestic context, leading to a higher level of domestic embeddedness of a foreign advocacy network. Though Keck and Sikkink do not analyze the features of a domestic setting needed for a civic group to be effective,⁵² their criteria of network density can be extrapolated to associations operating purely in the local (regional or national) environment with or without cooperation from foreign entities in order to assess their domestic embeddedness. In this case, the notion of density would mean the nature of interactions among group members. Thus applying their criteria, a civic group will be denser (or more embedded) if it has strong connections among its members with regular and reciprocal exchanges of information. It also means that information must flow both upward (from organization's leadership to its base) and downward (in the form of feedback and criticism of the base to the leaders).

To summarize the gist of the section, the emergence and development of civil society may be influenced by domestic and external factors. As every theoretical construct, the division presents itself neatly in theory, but not always in practice. In reality, such factors are intermingled. Therefore, it is worth speaking of one or the other

⁵¹ For the elaboration of these ideas, see Khagram, Riker and Sikkink, 312-315. The authors put forward a set of prerequisites that help transnational NGOs sustain their moral authority. One of those include being representative.

⁵² I do not mean to imply that this is a drawback in their work, but rather the issue is outside of the scope of their study.

being the primary (rather than the sole) force behind such processes. With that in mind, on the domestic level civil society groups go through two stages – the initial (where they represent loose networks with multiple vaguely defined interests) and the formative (where they find their issue niche and pursue specific tasks of advocacy and/or service delivery). Their evolution is shaped by a host of critical factors, such as social class, historical circumstances, strength of the state. In terms of the international factors that influence the development of civic groups, international advocacy networks and policy entrepreneurs are said to play a prominent role. Finally, the review of the existing literature has pointed to several critical implications on the extent of embeddedness of domestic civic organizations that depend on the trajectory of civil society development. Specifically, their embeddedness may be impacted if a transition from the first to the second stage does not occur or is incomplete. It may also be influenced by the degree of external involvement in building associations' domestic structure and capacity. Extrapolating from the available research, it can be asserted that organizational density (and inevitably higher embeddedness) in the domestic context means the viability and strength of its membership base and strategies.

Benefits and weaknesses of civil society

As Van Til aptly observes, since its latest revival the concept of civil society became somewhat of playdough.⁵³ The shallow infatuation makes it even more important to look at the supposed benefits and harms of a developed civil society. The literature review on this subject matter will enable not only to balance a widely spread

⁵³ Van Til, 14-15.

and overly positive perception about it, but also to understand the inherent attractiveness of civil society as a key component in democracy-building programs.

Benefits

Social capital is often cited as the most overarching benefit of civil society that encompasses a range of positive attitudes and behaviors.⁵⁴ Before proceeding further, it is important to define the concept. “The basic idea of social capital is that a person’s family, friends and associates constitute an important asset... Those communities endowed with a diverse stock of social networks and civic associations are in a stronger position to confront poverty and vulnerability, resolve disputes and take advantage of new opportunities.”⁵⁵ Social capital is created by civil society (among other actors) as a result of spontaneous cooperation and increased interconnectedness. It can be broadly subdivided into four categories: a) informal (like civil associations at the first stage of formation) or formal (officially registered NGOs); b) thick (where social contacts are deeply embedded) or thin (where they are sporadic, irregular and shallow); c) inward- or outward-looking, depending on whether and to what extent civil society organizations are open to outside influences; d) bridging (by enabling different audiences to come together) or bonding (by conducting interactions within groups of same interests).⁵⁶ However, not all civil associations make the same impact on social capital. The tendency seems to be that the more political is an organization, the better it is able to generate social capital.⁵⁷ The correlation begins to make more sense if we remind ourselves of the

⁵⁴ For the review of perspectives on the issue, see Dietlind Stolle and Thomas R. Rochon, “Are All Associations Alike?” in *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Bob Edwards, Michael W. Foley and Mario Diani (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001), 143-157; Armony, 23-29.

⁵⁵ Putnam, *Democracies in Flux*, 6

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-12.

⁵⁷ Stolle and Rochon.

process that civic groups undergo in transforming from loose activist networks to coherent organizations. As elaborated in the previous section, when organizations enter the latter stage, they ought to have more specific demands as well as be able to search for a compromise. Because politics in a democracy is inherently about finding a consensus among disparate interests, civic groups of political nature tend to generate more social capital because the major bulk of their activities lies in engaging with various societal actors to achieve their interests. Therefore, they are more exposed to the diversity of opinions than, for instance, non-political service organizations that tend to attract and interact with only certain actors with the passion for one issue.

The second most important benefit of civil society lies in its impact on individual trust. As we grow up, we exhibit high levels of trust to a relatively narrow circle of people that encompasses our family members and close friends. What civic groups help do is expand this circle to others with whom we may not be intimately familiar. When individuals interact with each other in civic associations, they develop a high level of personal trust toward their fellow members. These positive experiences are likely to make a larger contribution, by increasing their overall trust in people whether they know them or not. The research findings by Eric Uslaner re-iterate the point - civic engagement extends a link between the people we know (particularized trust) and the people we come to trust as a result of experiences with them (strategic trust) to the people that we do not know (generalized trust).⁵⁸ As it can be expected, not all civic groups equally contribute to generalized trust of their members. The available research has confirmed that the more diverse is an organization, the higher is the level of general

⁵⁸ Uslaner, 14-21.

trust among its supporters.⁵⁹ In other words, members of those civic groups that are more inclusive will have an opportunity to meet people from a lot of different backgrounds. Consequently, their positive experiences of working with such individuals on a common cause contribute to a perception that people in general can be trusted. This finding inadvertently brings us back to the central theme of the dissertation that has to deal with organizational embeddedness. If more diverse civic groups produce higher levels of generalized trust, then one can speculate that more diverse civic groups are also better embedded in the domestic fabric of their societies. In the end, trust is not only a byproduct of civil society, but also a necessary mechanism for its own development. As Lovell correctly notes, while trust is not necessary for establishing civil society, its development and deepening are critical to get the most out of civic interactions.⁶⁰

High levels of generalized trust leads subsequently to increased tolerance. It is frequently referred in the literature as the virtue of civility or civicness which “as a feature of civil society considers others as fellow-citizens of equal dignity in their rights and obligations as members of civil society.”⁶¹ When citizens take part in larger societal processes and are exposed to various viewpoints and individuals of diverse backgrounds, their participation and attitudes become more ideologically moderate and considerate of others.⁶² It is important to note that civicness does not eliminate conflict. Civil society will remain an arena where issues are hotly and vigorously contested. But civility and tolerance help produce a belief in a democracy, which functions through increased horizontal interactions and robust self-enforcement of norms.⁶³ Under these conditions,

⁵⁹ Stolle and Rochon, 148-154.

⁶⁰ David W. Lovell, “Trust and the Politics of Post-communism,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34 (2001): 30.

⁶¹ Edward Shils, “The Virtue of Civil Society,” in *The Civil Society Reader*, ed. Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Michael W. Foley (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2003), 303.

⁶² Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 105; Shils, 297; Uslaner, 251.

⁶³ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 171-173.

citizens do not perceive any dispute (and for that matter, their occasional losing an argument) in zero-sum terms.

The resultant levels of high trust extend not only to individuals, but also to institutions. Because many civic activities provide additional checks on the legislative and executive branches of the government, activists feel not only empowered, but also more trusting toward public institutions whose daily routines they are able to monitor and with whom they interact on a more regular basis.⁶⁴ However, a higher level of institutional trust that members of civil society groups feel is not by any means blind or permissive, in terms of providing state institutions with a blank check on governance. The remark by Eric Uslaner draws a fine, but important distinction, “Trust in people will not lead to trust in government, but it may lead to a better government.”⁶⁵ In other words, civic activists with high institutional trust will be better equipped to understand complex institutional dynamics and will be more willing to engage into a long and convoluted process of reforming some institutions, because (as a result of previous interactions) they believe in their general utility. Therefore, in the case of civil society organizations, numerous disappointments and criticisms of institutional processes, outcomes or leaders do not lead to disenchantment or even resentment of institutions per se.

Their willingness to improve state and societal institutions and processes is driven by increased personal autonomy and efficacy. In his analysis of associations’ impact on efficacy and institutional empowerment, Warren indicates that membership in associations contributes to personal autonomy by honing the skills of rational decision-making. Because these organizations serve as an important social forum and conduit of

⁶⁴ Stuart E. Eizenstat, “Nongovernmental Organizations as the Fifth Estate,” *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 5, no.2 (Summer-Fall 2004): 15.

⁶⁵ Uslaner.

information at the lowest level, participation in their processes allows an individual to recognize his potential in impacting the situation. Through this feeling, a person comes to understand the egalitarian and representative nature of power. Participation also assures that various viewpoints on an issue are heard and, consequently, contributes to the legitimation of the decision through the legitimation of the process.⁶⁶

The last, but not the least, benefit of civil society lies in its capacity to induce reciprocal engagement where no monitoring of the third party is required. When individuals interact with each other in civic groups, they come to expect that others will fulfill their end of the bargain. Otherwise, as de Tocqueville pointed out, their cooperation in a democracy, where individuals cannot be coerced into participation, would halt. In this regard, civic participation makes a wider societal contribution, because the habit of reciprocal engagement spreads beyond the realm of associational activity. Citizens adhere to laws, rules and regulations on a daily basis, because such adherence has become a mutually expected societal norm. As a result of that, societies with substantial social capital and developed civil societies have less reliance upon the forces of police and army, as monitoring and coercion are not needed to such a great extent. Robert Putnam emphasizes the importance of civil society and social capital at the current stage of global development where impersonal communication is more prevalent in industrial societies.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Warren.

⁶⁷ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 182-184.

Weaknesses

At the same time, civil society can have its downsides. Though not commonly mentioned, they include two possible dangers. The first lies in contributing to further radicalization and internal societal divisions. The second has to do with the ability of civil society to push the state's political system to the breaking point by overloading with the amount and diversity of demands that result from wide public participation.

Sheri Berman touched upon the two features in her seminal analysis of the civil society in Weimar Germany. The first one (polarization) has already been mentioned in this dissertation,⁶⁸ so I will elaborate on it just briefly. Because the Weimar political system widened the existing cleavages between social classes, political parties organized around discrete and particularistic social groups. Disillusioned with parties, citizens turned to civic groups to air their grievances. Unfortunately, those proved similarly unable to overcome systemic constraints by attracting diverse audiences as their members. In the end, associations not only reinforced the existing divisions, but also tapped into nationalist and populist sentiments to increase their base. Berman observes that by 1920, Germany had a highly organized, yet vertically fragmented and discontented civil society. It soon became infiltrated by Nazis or Nazi-sympathizers, who used communal civic organizations to tailor their messages, eliminate their opponents and gain new supporters. It is during this period of time that the National Socialist Party switched from its traditional electorate (urban and working-class voters) to the middle class and rural groups. In essence, through a highly compartmentalized civil society Hitler's party was successful in bridging the existing gap between the German bourgeois society and party politics.

⁶⁸ Berman, 412-413.

This might not have happened if the country's political system had been different, meaning more mature in its development and more inclusive in its workings. The observation brings us to the second danger of a civil society – its contribution to the collapse of a political system through overloading. The most recent debate in this field concentrated on what should come first – democratization or institution- and state-building.⁶⁹ Though little has been written directly on this matter, some useful insights can be deduced from the literature on democracy-building and promotion. Specifically, many authors noted a lukewarm attitude of American policy-makers toward building civil societies in nascent democracies during the Cold War period.⁷⁰ Their reluctance stemmed from the fear that an immature civil society would become a safe haven for leftist extremists (such as Maoists and Marxists). As a result, it would have the potential not only to further societal radicalization (as it happened in Weimar Germany), but also to lead to the crumbling of weak post-colonial governments that may not be able to withstand the pressures exerted by organized (and possibly well financed) leftist groups against the backdrop of feeble state institutions and polarized domestic societies.

The lack of accountability is the third danger that runs concurrent to a functioning civil society.⁷¹ Unlike politicians, who are periodically elected, or even bureaucrats who can be fired by those politicians fearing for their election prospects, civil society groups have to please only a narrow audience that has propelled them into existence and/or supports their activities. This means that projects and initiatives, which

⁶⁹ For specific arguments, see Sheri Berman, "Lessons from Europe," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no.1 (January 2007): 28-41; Thomas Carothers, "The 'Sequencing' Fallacy," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no.1 (January 2007): 12-27; Francis Fukuyama, "Liberalism Versus State-building," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no.3 (July 2007): 11-13; Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "The Sequencing 'Fallacy'," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no.3 (July 2007): 5-9.

⁷⁰ Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), 7-9. For a larger debate on the issue of democracy promotion in foreign policy, see Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, ed., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷¹ Markoff, 16.

might have otherwise been dropped by the government or, through elections, by people, may continue to live on irrespective of their effect. In the context of democratization, the issue of accountability also deals with whether NGO leadership is responsive to grass-root activists. As much of my research will show, bottom-up mechanisms of control are especially hard to establish in the situations when NGO leaders come from urban, well-educated and socially advanced classes. In the end, low accountability may provoke a crisis of legitimacy when civic associations are no longer perceived to represent the interests of ordinary people.⁷² The public begins to treat them with contempt as a social group in itself – no different from corrupt authorities, nepotistic political parties and profit-hungry businesses.

To summarize, civil society brings a vast array of benefits and a much smaller (though not less potent) set of weaknesses to the host society. At its best, civil society helps increase the society's social capital, which, in turn, brings the citizenry together to address common challenges. Civic activists are able to translate their personal trust toward fellow members into a higher level of confidence in all people and societal institutions. They become more empowered and tolerant. Countries with robust civil societies can rely less on the coercive mechanisms of governance because a conscious citizenry is able to monitor itself and enforce existing rules without a specter of available punishments. However, the perils that a civil society may bring with it are no less spectacular in their magnitude. In societies where the political system is not set to accommodate external demands in an expedient manner, civic groups can foster internal discord and division. They can deepen a general crisis of legitimacy, because they are not directly accountable to the public (or sometimes even their own members) through

⁷² Ibid.

elections. In the worst-case scenario, NGOs are capable of becoming an instigating force that would overwhelm and bring down a state's political system to the full-scale collapse.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Civil society in democratic transitions

In the late 1970s-early 1980s, three distinct occurrences highlighted the renewed viability of civil society. The first was the Solidarnost in Poland. The success and visibility of the movement proved the central argument of Adam Micnik - the challenge to the Soviet regime was not going to emerge from the above, initiated by liberal segments of the Communist nomenclature (the Prague Spring of 1968), or from the below through public riots (the Hungarian protests in 1956), but from the within.⁷³ The agent of reforms would be a domestic civil society that Communist governments are never able to eviscerate completely. The second event was the transition of Latin American states from authoritarian regimes to democracy and the role played by civil society organizations. Finally, the third occurrence was widespread dissatisfaction with a growing crisis of the Western welfare state and a neoconservative critique of "social statism."⁷⁴ In this regard, civil society began to embody an alternative to the overly protective state.

Predictably, all of these events ignited scholarly discussions on the importance of civil society. One of the most contentious debates in the literature on democratic transitions is between supporters of elite and participatory approaches. The former

⁷³ Irena Grudzinska Gross, ed., *Adam Micnik: Letters from Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁷⁴ Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995), 42; Gordon White, "Civil Society, Democratization and Development: Clearing the Analytical Framework," in *Civil Society in Democratization*, ed. Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 2004), 7.

emphasizes the primacy of a country's ruling class. The process of transition occurs smoothly "so long... as the alteration in power ... and decision-making involves compromises among elites and acceptance by the population."⁷⁵ Thus, under the normal conditions of power transfer civil society is accorded little role. If the compromise cannot be reached, a struggle between the government and the opposition begins. Therefore, the transitions in Poland and Latin America are qualitatively different, regardless of their chronological proximity. Whereas Solidarnost represented the "people power" of trade unions (thus confirming the assertions of the participatory approach), civic groups in Latin America were more public rather than mass in their membership.⁷⁶ The fact that artists and intellectuals in those states were the first to oppose a dictatorial rule to be joined only later by the middle class lends more proof to the elite-driven approach of transition.⁷⁷

The case for elite-driven transitions was eloquently developed by Samuel Huntington in his "Third Way of Democratization." Unsurprisingly, most of Huntington's analysis is focused on the role and interactions between and within the government and the opposition. The notion of civil society does not figure prominently in the transformation, except for massive protests that erupt at the later stages of a stand-off between the rulers and the ruled.⁷⁸

Contrary to this viewpoint, the participatory approach posits that what makes for good leaders are good citizens. That is why, civil society, which fosters popular

⁷⁵ Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato in *The Civil Society Reader*, 273.

⁷⁶ Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 50-52.

⁷⁷ Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, "Resurrecting Civil Society," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 52-53.

⁷⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 142-150. For other adherents of the elite approach, please see John Higley and Richard Gunther, ed., *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Judith Kullberg and William Zimmerman, "Liberal Elites, Socialist Masses, and Problems in Russian Democratization," *World Politics* 51, no. 3 (1999): 323-358.

participation, is vital in democratic transitions. For example, while recognizing the influence of elites,⁷⁹ McFaul underscores that masses played one of the leading roles in the fourth wave of democratization after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Civil society helped skew the domestic balance of power toward challengers of the ancien regime and ensured that democratization and its societal gains could not be reversed. However, McFaul ascribes the increased stature of civil society and its greater potency as a societal force to the altered nature of the international system. The unipolar system created permissive conditions that among many other things (e.g. normative preponderance of market economy and democracy) enhanced the profile of civil society.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the successful performance of many Central European civil societies undermined a key assertion of the elite-driven approach that in the transitions from Communism greater participation would produce more non-negotiable demands and overwhelm the political system.⁸¹

The debate between the two viewpoints has surfaced again after the “color revolutions.” The adherents of the elite approach stress that such revolutions were successful primarily because of the split within domestic elites, which prevented the use of force against demonstrators.⁸² Those on the other side point to the exceptional role of

⁷⁹ In particular, McFaul emphasizes that the success of transitions depended on the balance between ancien regime and challengers. See Michael McFaul, “The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship – Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World,” *World Politics* 54, no.2 (January 2002): 212-244

⁸⁰ Michael McFaul, “The Missing Variable: the “International System” as the Link between Third and Fourth Wave Models of Democratization,” *CDDRL Working Paper # 58* (May 2006).

⁸¹ Steven M. Fish, “Postcommunist Subversion: Social Science and Democratization in Eastern Europe and Eurasia,” *Slavic Review* 58, (Winter 1999): 21-23. Also see Thomas Carothers, who rejects sequentialism in democratization in favor of gradualism, in “How Democracies Emerge,” *Journal of Democracy* 18, no.1 (January 2007): 12-27.

⁸² Paul D’Anieri, “Explaining the Success and Failure of Post-Communist Revolutions,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39 (2006): 331-350 and “The Last Hurrah: the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Elections and the Limits of Machine Politics,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38 (2005): 231-249.

mass movements and civil society groups that forced the rulers in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan to acknowledge the results of fraudulent elections and step down.⁸³

At the same time, a middle-of-the-road position begins to emerge within the literature. It acknowledges the impact of civil society, but assigns its contribution to the specific stages of a democratic transition. For instance, in his analysis of the “color revolutions,” McFaul puts a robust civil society along with many other indicators, like an unpopular incumbent, united opposition, a modicum of independent media, divisions within internal military forces, etc. All of them contributed to the success of democratic post-communist transformations in Georgia, Ukraine and Serbia, but to a different extent and at different points.⁸⁴ The likelihood of civil society’s participation varies with the nature of a democratic transition – “the shorter and the more unexpected the transition from authoritarian rule, the greater the likelihood of popular upsurge and of its producing a lasting impact on the outcome of the transition.”⁸⁵ Schmitter and Whitehead consider past experiences and the general wealth of a domestic civil society as two indicators that may increase the probability of a popular, mass-driven revolution.⁸⁶ Their observation has a two-fold importance for the theoretical and empirical parts of my work. First, it touches upon the notion of embeddedness, because civil society needs to be mature enough and sufficiently implanted into the domestic landscape to respond to unfolding transformations in a fairly rapid manner. Second, from the empirical standpoint both Ukraine and Georgia had revolution-like events (the student hunger strike of 1991 in Ukraine and the student protests of 1978 in Georgia).

⁸³ Taras Kuzio, “The Opposition’s Road to Success,” *Journal of Democracy* 16, no.2 (April 2005): 117-130; Mark R. Beissinger, “Promoting Democracy: Is Exporting Revolution a Constructive Strategy?” *Dissent* (Winter 2006), <http://dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=155>.

⁸⁴ Michael McFaul, “Transitions from Postcommunism,” *Journal of Democracy* 16, no.3 (July 2005): 5-19.

⁸⁵ Schmitter and Whitehead, “Resurrecting Civil Society,” 54.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 55

Others pay more attention to the importance of civil society in the subsequent steps of democratization, such as the completion of transition and the consolidation of democratic governance. Cohen and Arato note that “a highly articulated civil society with cross-cutting cleavages, overlapping memberships of groups, and social mobility is the presupposition for a stable democratic polity, a guarantee against permanent domination by anyone group and against the emergence of fundamentalist mass movements and anti-democratic ideologies.”⁸⁷ If public engagement is low, a new democracy may assume hollow, procedural and formalistic forms and encounter a persistent problem of consolidation.⁸⁸ Ideally, civil society is expected to perform a number of roles in a democratizing state. First, it helps alter the balance between the state and society toward the latter. This is critical, given overwhelming state power during totalitarian times. Second, it serves as a transmission belt between the state and society, making sure that public demands are accorded proper attention. Third, it plays an important disciplinary role by setting and promoting the standards of morality that apply to the state as well as to regular citizens. Finally, civil society performs a consultative function by observing compliance with the rules of a democratic game.⁸⁹

In the end, it should be noted that the debate between elite and participatory approaches on democratization may never be definitively resolved, as many other theoretical battles in political science. In this case, the major reason lies in the divergent understanding of what constitutes an event of democratic transformation. The elite approach looks at a long-term picture, which naturally suits its position, because it is the political cream of the crop, not ordinary people, who performs day-to-day governance.

⁸⁷ Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 285.

⁸⁸ Marc Morje Howard, “The Weakness of Post-communist Civil Society,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (January 2002): 157-169; O’Donnell and Schmitter, “Resurrecting Civil Society,” 56.

⁸⁹ Gordon, “Civil Society, Democratization and Development,” in *Civil Society in Democratization*, ed. Burnell and Calvert, 13-16.

The participatory school emphasizes the “here-and-now” perspective that zooms on the role of civil society in specific events, which mark a turning point to democratization.⁹⁰

To summarize, democratic transformations in Eastern Europe and Latin America and the malaise about the ever-expanding welfare state not only re-launched the concept of civil society in the late 1970s – early 1980s, but also sparked a contentious debate on what is (or, in the case of state-related reforms, should be) the primary driving force behind such changes, how and where civil society generally fits into the process.

Because this research is preoccupied with the role of civic groups in the “color revolutions,” it naturally sides with adherents of the participatory approach in asserting the power of masses. However, it attempts to step forward and fill in the gap by showing that it is organizational embeddedness that helps civic groups rise to the occasion and be an effective player during various stages of a democratic transition.

Civil society and foreign aid

Scholars’ assessments on U.S. democracy promotion efforts during the Cold War present a rather consistent picture – democratization was fairly low on the American totem poll of priorities. Kegley and Hermann explain that by pointing to the realist nature of American policies, which used democracy promotion as a vehicle for the projection of U.S. political ideas and for the pursuit of the country’s material self-interests.⁹¹ Under those circumstances, the ideological stance of a recipient country constituted an important factor in determining U.S. foreign aid policies.⁹²

⁹⁰ Valerie Bunce, “Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations,” *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 6/7 (August-September 2000): 703-734.

⁹¹ Charles W. Kegley and Margaret G. Hermann, “In Pursuit of a Peaceful International System,” in *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric v. Reality*, ed. Peter J. Schraeder (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 113.

⁹² Peter J. Schraeder, “Clarifying the Foreign Aid Puzzle: A Comparison of American, Japanese, French, and Swedish Aid Flows,” *World Politics* 50, no.2 (January 1998): 294-323; Steven W. Hook, “Inconsistent U.S. Efforts to Promote Democracy Abroad,”

Reagan administration

When the concept of civil society and its benefits became popularized in the middle of the 1980s, the United States and other Western providers of foreign aid were about to reverse their stance on supporting NGOs. Before that, civic organizations were viewed with a great deal of suspicion in the West. Fearing that bottom-up developments would enhance the strength of leftist and radical Marxist movements, American policy-makers preferred working through governmental channels to promote democracy.⁹³ In the mid-1980s, the U.S. government was growing increasingly disappointed with the experiences and outcomes that emerged out of providing aid directly to governments.⁹⁴ Instead of bringing long-awaited change, the funds given to some regimes in Africa and Latin America encouraged corruption and helped undemocratic leaders hold on to power without undertaking deep reforms. The first signs of a possible policy shift became obvious during the ouster of the Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos. Faced with large-scale public protests in that country and heightened international scrutiny, the U.S. government and President Ronald Reagan (in what was described by James Mann as a rather dramatic decision⁹⁵) had to withdraw their support and acknowledge the victory of Corazon Aquino. It was one of the first instances where a large-scale public movement played such a fundamental role in bringing down an authoritarian regime. More change was yet to follow. The Reagan administration quietly abandoned the Kirkpatrick doctrine, which suggested maintaining friendships with pro-American dictatorial

Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric v. Reality, ed. Peter J. Schraeder (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Randal Schweller, "U.S. Democracy Promotion: Realist Reflections," in *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts*, ed. Michael Cox, John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Ottaway and Carothers, *Funding Virtue*.

⁹⁵ Jim Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004).

regimes,⁹⁶ and pulled out its support from General Chun of South Korea and General Augusto Pinochet of Chile.⁹⁷ Soon, domestic civic movements, like Solidarnost in Poland, National Fronts in then Baltic republics and Rukh in Ukraine, challenged the dominance of the Communist party in the first allowed multi-party elections. The step precipitated a chain of events, leading first to the Soviet retreat from Central and Eastern Europe and then ultimately to the country's collapse. The latter created an urgency to help newly independent countries move along the transitional paradigm by installing democratic procedures in order to prevent the spread of radical nationalism (so widely predicted by such neorealists as John Mearsheimer).⁹⁸ It was also seen as important for the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to see some positive signs of democratization, before tangible benefits of economic liberalization and the free market materialize.⁹⁹

George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations

By the end of the 1980s, President George H.W. Bush identified democratization as a key element of the “new world order.” Unfortunately, busy with the management of rapidly unfolding events (the dissolution of the Soviet Union, unification of Germany, the first Gulf War, to name a few) Bush senior never got a chance to spell out or implement his “new world” agenda.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

⁹⁷ For more detailed description of that process, please consult David Adesnik and Michael McFaul, “Engaging Autocratic Allies to Promote Democracy,” *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no.2 (Spring 2006): 15-19.

⁹⁸ John Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security* 15, no.1 (Summer 1990): 5-56.

⁹⁹ Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 442.

¹⁰⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower* (New York: Basic Books), 2007.

With the party switch in the White House (from Reagan-Bush to Clinton) the support for democratization, and civil society as a part of the process, finally got some traction. President Bill Clinton embraced the enlargement of the democratic community that served four concurrent goals: a) it reflected the reality of world politics after the Soviet demise; b) it promoted U.S. economic growth; c) it led to the alignment of U.S. policies with other international organizations; and d) it accepted the Kantian view behind democracy promotion.¹⁰¹ It was therefore during the Clinton years when the normative change has been completed. NGOs and their support have become a staple of democratization programs.¹⁰² Democracy and good governance have emerged as the new priorities for aid organizations previously focused on economic development.¹⁰³ The normative shift has permitted advanced democracies to strengthen non-state actors (like NGOs) with increased legitimacy and important resources – the actions deemed previously unseemly under the requirements of sovereignty.¹⁰⁴

The Evolution of foreign aid for democratization

However, giving aid to civic organizations was a challenging endeavor from the very beginning. First, donors had to identify how and where precisely to draw a line between “civil” and “political” spheres of the society.¹⁰⁵ As we discussed, the two are very intertwined from the theoretical and philosophical viewpoints, but have to be separated in order to establish a sense of impartiality behind direct foreign assistance to

¹⁰¹ Kegley and Hermann, 114-116; Michael Cox, “Wilsonianism Resurgent: The Clinton Administration and the Promotion of Democracy,” in *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts*, ed. Michael Cox, John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁰² Peter Burnell, “Political Strategies of External Support for Democratization,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no.3 (2005): 361-384.

¹⁰³ Michael McFaul, “Democracy Promotion as a World Value,” *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no.1 (Winter 2004-2005): 147-163.

¹⁰⁴ James M. Scott, “Transnationalizing Democracy Promotion: the Role of Western Political Foundations and Think-Tanks,” *Democratization* 6, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 164-165.

¹⁰⁵ Carothers and Ottaway, *Funding Virtue*, 10.

the former, but not the latter.¹⁰⁶ Because civil society is such an encompassing concept, donor countries also had to decide what exactly within the realm of civil society they would like to finance. Based on their domestic experiences,¹⁰⁷ the natural choice seemed to be the support to the so-called “third sector.”

Civic associations of the third sector are commonly referred to as NGOs (non-governmental organizations). They are self-organized, self-governing, private, and (an important differentiation from businesses) non-profit entities.¹⁰⁸

There are two contending opinions on the role of nonprofits. The first views them mostly as the product of government, market and contract failures that serve as alternative providers of goods and services.¹⁰⁹ Supporters of this view acknowledge that nonprofits may have some advocacy functions, but those come somewhat secondary to service provision. The other view ascribes to nonprofits a broader and deeper role as assets of social capital. In this regard, Bryce’s analysis offers interesting insights for this work, because it touches upon the concept of embeddedness. He asserts that strong nonprofits possess embedded social capital with a certain marketing value.¹¹⁰ That allows nonprofits to differentiate their products and services among others and even create brands that can be patented.¹¹¹ Two benefits of embeddedness can thus be deduced – more generated social capital and higher public visibility. These benefits produce a number of contributions that encompass increased goodwill of public

¹⁰⁶ Though donor organizations (like IRI or NDI) provide training to political parties, they never finance them. This is not the case with NGOs that were allowed to receive direct grants from American organizations.

¹⁰⁷ Shepard Forman and Abby Stoddard, “International Assistance,” in *The State of Nonprofit America*, ed. Lester Salamon (Washington, DC: Brookings Institutions Press, 2002), 240.

¹⁰⁸ Armony, 30.

¹⁰⁹ Walter W. Powell, *The Nonprofit Sector: a Research Handbook* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 3.

¹¹⁰ Herrington J. Bryce, “Nonprofits as Social Capital and Agents in the Public Policy Process: Toward a New Paradigm,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 35, no.2 (June 2006): 315.

¹¹¹ Ukraine’s Pora provides a good empirical example of an organization’s marketing value gone awry. In 2005 Vlad Kaskiv, who patented the brand of Pora, decided to turn it into a political party that a year later gained slightly more than one percent of votes. In 2007, the party imploded into two pieces over whether it should join a pro-Yushchenko election bloc as a very junior partner. Both parts insisted on retaining Pora as their name.

involvement, a reduced risk of project failure (because NGO members have a shared mission) and an ability to attract additional resources.¹¹² In their second role, NGOs monitor public expenditures, articulate and channel citizens' demands.¹¹³

The available literature draws an important distinction between civil society and the third sector. As Zimmer points out, civil society is a normative concept, shaped by citizens' voluntary engagement, civic responsibility and participation, whereas a nonprofit sector refers to the so-called non-distributional constraints that are attached to operational activities of civic groups.¹¹⁴ In other words, nonprofits represent a more narrow manifestation of civil society.¹¹⁵

Before proceeding further, it is worth specifying what we mean under Western donors. The group includes not only foreign governments and government departments, but also so-called political foundations and quasi-governmental actors. In many cases, Western governments are simply unable to administer directly vast amounts of assistance on the ground. This is when they turn to political foundations and quasi-governmental entities that are created to promote liberal democracy and support organizations and/or individuals that fall in line with this broad image. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) awards a large number of its grants to the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) that implement USAID projects on working with civic groups or training political parties. Though the nature of relations between political foundations and their host government is mutually reinforcing and generally cooperative, occasional rivalries and tensions

¹¹² Bryce.

¹¹³ Armony; Eizenstat

¹¹⁴ Zimmer, 15.

¹¹⁵ Carothers and Brandt.

emerge as a result of altered domestic circumstances and colliding agendas.¹¹⁶ For instance, many American nonprofits that provide HIV education and prevention were forced to adjust their strategies because of the Bush administration ABC policy that placed a higher premium on promoting abstinence.¹¹⁷ In the end, though such organizations are afforded some space to operate more independently, most of their programs serve a purpose corresponding with national interests.

The decision to assist new democracies with the establishment of professional NGOs was motivated not only by the desire for impartiality and the need to contextualize the meaning of civil society, but also by the preference to work with organizations that would ease donors' administration of and accountability for funds. Though usually NGOs' activities are centered on advocacy and/or service provision, international donors gave attention to the former, hoping that trickle-down effects would someday enable the latter. It is thus not surprising that supported nonprofit organizations did not include such traditional groups (in the American understanding of civil society) as sports clubs, religious charities, trade unions, etc.

Most of the foreign aid was given for institutional and administrative capacity building of newly established nonprofits. Western donors provided funding, technical advice, training and assistance with a general legal framework.¹¹⁸ Their strategies were a combination of imported programs, which succeeded elsewhere, with initiatives to fill in the gaps and needs on the ground.¹¹⁹ Many projects attempted to create partnerships

¹¹⁶ Scott, 161-163.

¹¹⁷ Haider Rizvi, "Activists, Congressmen Urge Change in U.S. AIDS Policy," *OneWorld.Net*, 4 December 2007, <http://us.oneworld.net/article/view/155819/1/>.

¹¹⁸ For example, see regional case studies in Carothers and Ottaway, *Funding Virtue*; Thomas Carothers, *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 107-121, 229-251; Dinorah Azpuru, Steven E. Finkel, Anibal Perez-Linan, and Mitchell Al Seligson, "What has the United States Been Doing?" *Journal of Democracy* 19, no.2 (April 2008): 150-159.

¹¹⁹ Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 89-123; Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, "Introduction: Transnational Networks and NGOs in Postcommunist Societies," in *The Power and*

among four major societal actors – the state, market forces, civil society and donors. Some sought to put local NGOs in touch with their likely international counterparts that have a similar cause. As a result, a number of domestic civic organizations learned various transnational strategies of persuasion and socialization, such as “frame alignment” to render disparate events more meaningful, “frame resonance” to connect those events with broader societal repercussions, etc.¹²⁰

The results of donor assistance are mixed at best. On one hand, their programs were helpful in starting civil society organizations in the countries that had little financial resources for anything else, but bare necessities. In most successful scenarios, Western assistance provided tangible equipment and trainings for nonprofits, increasing their organizational capacity and ultimately their ability to survive independently once the funding stopped.¹²¹ As discussed in the next chapter, Western funding priorities were beneficial in terms of raising certain issues (e.g. domestic violence, treatment of the Roma minority), which domestic government would have preferred avoiding.

On the other hand, foreign aid brought a host of its own problems. The first among them lies in its restrictiveness. Donors operate with a thin slice of civil society organizations. As a result, they create entities consisting of non-embedded elites with strong knowledge and weak membership.¹²² The second closely-related issue is that of funding. Because the economies of emerging democracies remain weak, domestic NGOs are heavily reliant on international support, which in the end becomes a fundamental

Limits of NGOs - a Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, ed. Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 1-10.

¹²⁰ Keck and Sikkink, 16, 20.

¹²¹ Sarah H. Henderson, “Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and the Nongovernmental Organization Sector in Russia,” *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 2 (2002): 140.

¹²² Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 195-225; Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development*, 89-123; Sarah E. Mendelson, “The Power and Limits of Transnational Democracy Networks in Postcommunist Societies,” in *The Power and Limits of NGOs - a Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, ed. Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

handicap. Such organizations are usually preoccupied with donors' priorities and discouraged to look for domestic constituencies. It should be noted that money is an issue not only for NGOs abroad, but also for their funders in the West. Consistency and coherence of their activities are often hindered by changing political winds in Western capitals and fleeting policy fads in Western democracy promotion communities. In essence, many international and Western democracy promotion organizations also lack a stable financial base, aside from their governments or international bodies.¹²³ The third factor has to deal with the content of foreign assistance. Quite often, the emphasis on certain Western practices (as we will see in the next section) ends up isolating NGOs from their natural communities, because such practices and campaigns to promote them clash with local customs and beliefs.¹²⁴ Fourth, in many cases when promoting partnerships between nonprofit organizations and other societal actors, Western aid structures erroneously assumed that all sides would enter such partnerships on equal terms and the removal of political aspects in their relations would in fact become a mechanism for reconciliation.¹²⁵ Fourth, from the theoretical perspective the framework of assistance relied on the assumptions of the transitional paradigm.¹²⁶ In relation to civil society, it purports that as democracy gets more consolidated, the domestic civil society becomes more domestically embedded and less reliant on external help. Because of that, the proposed methods of support were often inadequate and inapplicable as some democracies got stuck in the gray zone of semi-authoritarianism. Many semi-authoritarian regimes have taken advantage of lacking embeddedness by portraying their

¹²³ Steven W. Hook, 232.

¹²⁴ James Richter, "Evaluating Western Assistance to Russian Women's Organizations," in *The Power and Limits of NGOs*, 70-73; Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, "Foreign Assistance, International Norms, and NGO Development: Lessons from the Russian Campaign," *International Organization* 59, no.2 (Spring 2005): 419-449.

¹²⁵ Howell and Pearce, 120-123.

¹²⁶ Carothers, *Critical Mission*, 167-185.

civil societies as elite-driven, detached from regular citizens and unable to speak their language.¹²⁷ Fifth, American strategies of democracy promotion (including those for civil society) became the dominant discourse because of substantial funding levels, but turned out to be rather ethnocentric. Hook asserts that the U.S. was trying to replicate its own system of democratic governance, which has too much emphasis on political liberty at the expense of socioeconomic equality.¹²⁸ As the following section reveals, NGOs were often prompted to adopt strategies and concentrate on the issues that were more relevant in the American rather than foreign setting. In another assessment, American governmental bodies applied a “cookie-cutter” approach in pushing the same compilation of best practices in entirely different environments.¹²⁹

To be fair, the learning curve has been both steep and fairly quick with the middle road in promoting democracy and civil society evolving by the end of the 1990s. Emerging analyses managed to escape the two extremes of being either naively exuberant¹³⁰ or gloomily fatalist about the prospects of democratization. For instance, in their suggestions for the future, Carothers and Ottaway call for civil society realism. They suggest the need to abandon the assumption of NGOs being the central representation of civil society and encourage its other manifestations. Democracy promoters should also discard the illusion that NGOs are inherently nonpartisan or impartial and take into account the political choices that they have to make on a regular basis. More attention ought to be paid to the issues of NGO sustainability as well as to the simplification of currently cumbersome and rigid implementation strategies.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged*, 178, 183-184.

¹²⁸ Hook, 125.

¹²⁹ Carothers and Ottaway, *Funding Virtue*, 15-16.

¹³⁰ For instance, Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy* (American Enterprise Institute: Washington, DC, 1999).

¹³¹ Carothers and Ottaway, *Funding Virtue*, 294-310.

Looking beyond the conventional assumptions of the transitional paradigm (which envisions democratization as a sequence of steps) would provide insights on how to offer more effective assistance to civil societies in semi-authoritarian states.¹³² So would the utilization of complimentary mechanisms, like diplomacy, especially when dealing with deeply autocratic regimes.¹³³

To sum up, U.S. foreign assistance for democratization in general and civil society in particular has gone through a period of rapid transformation since the 1980s when it was brought to the forefront of American policy agenda by democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, Latin America and the former Soviet Union. The official American position has also evolved – from recognizing the need for change to becoming the driver behind the normative shift that legitimized external assistance to domestic civic groups. Western governments and Western political foundations that acted on their behalf poured their funds to build civil societies around the globe, based on American historical experiences and recently acquired practical lessons on the ground. Though a more moderate and realistic approach toward democratization and civil society building seems to be developing, it is unclear to what extent it pays attention to the notion of embeddedness that is central to making externally implanted NGOs successful on the local ground. The analysis of the available literature reveals that if present at all, the emphasis on embeddedness is either indirect/implicit or peripheral at best.

¹³² Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged*, 226-255.

¹³³ Adesnik and McFaul, 7-26.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

After describing general benefits and ills of foreign assistance to civil society organizations, it is important to take a look at a number of available case studies to see emerging commonalities and the extent of divergence. Because the dissertation is primarily concerned with the countries of the former Soviet Union, the chapter will give them a primary consideration and provide a brief overview of the civil society development in Central and Eastern Europe (as a baseline for comparison).

In Russia civil society “is weak, atomized, and heavily dependent on Western assistance for support.”¹³⁴ Its development has been impeded by domestic political factors as well as the methods of Western foreign assistance. In terms of the former, the Soviet legacy, the super-presidential institutional design, localism and Putin’s politics have retarded the development of a mature civil society. In addition, for the most part of the 1990s, the economic climate was inimical to a functioning civil society. Thus NGO leaders were more interested in political careers and making a living.¹³⁵ As for the latter, Western support is partly to blame for Russian nonprofits not being able to find their natural constituency, because they “...targeted Western funders rather than the Russian population as the voice that mattered.”¹³⁶ Foreign grants developed a cohort of NGO elites who are located in major cities (mostly Moscow and Saint Petersburg) and are not interested in fostering “civicness.” Instead they hoard information from other nonprofit “competitors” and prefer smaller memberships to avoid sharing grant benefits.¹³⁷

Failures of many Russian civil society groups stem from the disconnect between their

¹³⁴ Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 135-136.

¹³⁵ Peter Rutland, “Russian: Limping Along Toward American Democracy,” in *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts*, ed. Michael Cox, John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹³⁶ Henderson, 142.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

Westernized campaigns and the normative context of the Russian society. As McIntosh Sundstrom and Mendelson and Glenn show, where nonprofits pursue issues (like environmental protection or domestic violence) that are in vogue abroad, but do not “click” with the culture at home, their impact is fleeting and uncertain.¹³⁸ In the end, Russian civil society seems unable to find reason d’etre after the collapse of Communism.

Stepanenko’s analysis points that Ukraine’s civil society suffers similar problems. Ukrainians are more likely to trust personal connections and networks. Especially under the Kuchma regime, the spread and persistence of clientelist political culture¹³⁹ undermined already weak civic foundations. It fed into the Soviet stereotype that organizational activity was the purview of the state and should be done at its behest.¹⁴⁰ Ukraine’s civic groups continue to face the challenge of institutionalizing the norms and values of civil society by building bridges between them and the larger population to convert the quantity of NGOs into the quality of their impact.¹⁴¹ It is unclear whether the country’s nationalist intelligencia (that was the driving force behind its independence) is capable of fostering basic values that underlie the respect for law and are so crucial for enhancing the spirit of civicness. As a result, Ukraine continues to witness a slow pace of self-organization, with high levels of mistrust remaining the greatest single impediment to developing a robust civil society.

¹³⁸ McIntosh Sundstrom; Richter and Powell in *The Power and Limits of NGOs*.

¹³⁹ For more on Ukrainian political culture, see Lucan A. Way, “Rapacious Individualism and Political Competition in Ukraine, 1992-2004,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38, no.2 (2005): 191-205.

¹⁴⁰ Victor Stepanenko, “Civil Society in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Civic Ethos in the Framework of Corrupted Sociality,” *East European Politics and Societies* 20, no.4 (2006): 584; Wsevolod W. Isajw, “Civil Society in Ukraine: Toward a Systematic Sociological Research Agenda” (paper presented at the World “Understanding the Transformation of Ukraine,” 15-16 October 2004); Ilya Prizel, “Ukraine’s Hollow Decade,” *East European Politics and Societies* 16, no.2 (2002): 363-385.

¹⁴¹ Stepanenko, 592.

In Moldova, the functioning of the domestic civil society has been influenced by tensions between the legislature and the executive, which both vie to consolidate control and undermine competing sources of power.¹⁴² The country's civic organizations have a hard time attracting younger populations, as economic hardships have created disincentives for youth participation. Moldovan NGOs achieved little success in civic education and human rights due to general passivity of the populace coupled with governmental pressures and intimidation. Based on the available analyses, the key task for Moldovan NGOs is to overcome internal divisions and pursue common projects through broad-based coalitions.¹⁴³

On the post-Soviet space it is in Central Asia where NGOs face most formidable challenges from the state, foreign donors, their domestic societies and internal organizational deficiencies. On the first count, local civil society groups are hamstrung by the countries' legal framework that views them as an anti-government element.¹⁴⁴ In terms of the second, Central Asia was never high on the list of American priorities for foreign aid. As Brill Olcott rightly remarked, "Whatever money and imagination is left over is being applied to the Middle East rather than Central Asia."¹⁴⁵ Geopolitical considerations often led the United States to tone down its democratic rhetoric and zeal, which did not go unnoticed by Central Asian authoritarian rulers.¹⁴⁶ The peripheral principle that guided Western funding and attention was exacerbated by the initial focus

¹⁴² Lucan A. Way, "Weak States and Pluralism: the Case of Moldova," *East European Politics and Societies* 17, no. 3 (2003): 454-482.

¹⁴³ Jacek Cukrowski, Radzislawa Gortat and Piotr Kazmierkiewicz, "Moldova: Assessment of Civil Society and Democratic institutions," *Center for Social and Economic Research Paper* no. 255 (November 2003): 19-27.

¹⁴⁴ Daniel Stevens, "NGO-Mahalla Partnerships: Exploring the Potential for State-Society Synergy in Uzbekistan," *Central Asia Survey* 24, no.3 (September 2005): 281; Alisher Ilkhamov, "The Thorny Path of Civil Society in Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey* 24, no.3 (September 2005).

¹⁴⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 206.

¹⁴⁶ For more analysis of geopolitical dilemmas, see Martha Brill Olcott, "U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities" (testimony Prepared for the House Committee on International Relations Heading on the Middle East and Central Asia, 22 April 2006), <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18277&prog=zru>.

of donors on the formal registration of NGOs and resulted in their inability to attract more moderate, reformist elements within religious groups and the societies at large. "By assuming that civil society can be neatly added to a transitional society... donors underplay the historical processes that give shape to particular forms of civil society, some of which may be permeated with apparently contradictory modernist and traditionalist tendencies."¹⁴⁷ Third, funders did not foresee the impact of societal dynamics on the distribution and utilization of grants. In fact, having access to Western money in the times of severe economic hardships only worsened the situation with corruption and clanism in local communities. Domestic NGO leaders feel unabashed about using grants for their personal benefit or that of their close relatives and family members. American-sponsored NGOs have also attracted the intellectual elites within those societies, leaving the governmental sphere drained of talent and capacity. Thus, an internationally funded "democracy sector" has placed itself in a precarious position in many Central Asian states. Without deep roots in local society and with little interaction with indigenous institutions, it "is in danger of exacerbating tensions between the small elite and the majority of population."¹⁴⁸ Only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have more or less viable, though struggling, civil societies. In the rest of the countries, it is either nonexistent (Turkmenistan) or harshly eviscerated (Uzbekistan) or too feeble to notice (Tajikistan). It is unsurprising that so far the best projects in Central Asia have been those done on a small scale and with the involvement of local communities.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Howell and Pearce, 202

¹⁴⁸ Fiona B. Adamson, "International Democracy Assistance in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan: Building Civil Society from the Outside?" in *The Power and Limits of NGOs*, 200.

¹⁴⁹ For the examples of strategies, see Martha Brill Olcott, "Preventing New Afghanistans: a Regional Strategy for Reconstruction," *Carnegie Endowment for international Peace Policy Brief no. 11* (January 2002); Vitaly Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no.3 (Summer 2006): 127-140.

The situation is qualitatively different in Central and Eastern European states that were formerly members of the Warsaw Pact. In Poland, Ukraine's neighbor to the West, the Association Law of 1989 did away with the Communist restrictions on freedom, but (unfortunately) excluded NGOs from the systematic assistance of the state, which precluded them from providing a wide array of welfare services. Foreign assistance was instrumental in helping the Polish civil society get on its feet. By the end of the 1990s, 25 percent of people were active in nonprofits, half of the population acknowledged their donations to NGOs and 43 percent of NGOs reported using volunteers. At the same time, Poland could not escape some of the post-communist problems. Its civil society remains small (employing only 1.2 percent of the population) and woefully oligarchic (with 40 percent of NGOs having an annual budget less than \$2,500). Though many NGOs use volunteers, about 4 percent of people out of the whole population take part in such activities.¹⁵⁰

In his analysis of Romania, Dan Petrescu points that the domestic civil society has yet to move from being driven by donor supply to citizens' demands. In the mid-1990s, Western funders stepped in to establish nonprofit organizations at a fast speed with little scrutiny, but with a lot of willingness to disburse money. Most of it went to advocacy groups, neglecting religious and non-political organizations as well as unions. By the end of the decade, it was clear that a number of American assumptions about NGO development in Romania did not hold. Advocacy nonprofits have not become a guiding light for all others to follow. Furthermore, it turned out that a group's official registration status does not make it more or less potent in influencing societal and

¹⁵⁰ A. Juros, E. Les, S. Nalecz, I. Rybka, M. Rymysza, "From Solidarity to Subsidiarity: The Nonprofit Sector in Poland," in *Future of Civil Society: Making Central European Nonprofit-Organizations Work*, ed. Annette Zimmer, Eckhard Priller, and Matthias Freise (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 564, 575, 556-558, 580.

political change. To the disappointment of many in the West, NGOs that preached democracy were not democratic in their internal organizational arrangements. In the end, many failed to establish firm links with domestic communities or achieve long-term sustainability.¹⁵¹

In Hungary, civil society faces many similar challenges. Its nonprofits are plagued by the lack of and financial capacity, low credibility among publics and a lack of effective access to policy-makers.¹⁵²

A number of works conduct a comparative analysis of civil society developments in CEE and the former Soviet Union. For instance, Patrice McMahon considers the impact of American assistance on the development of women's groups in Hungary, Poland and Russia. Though their biggest success lies in attracting attention to women's issues (that would not have been otherwise possible), NGOs in these three states share the same set of problems. In particular, they are too professionalized and lack domestic grass-root support. Most of them have also become too de-politicized to their own peril as well as too enmeshed in promoting a purely Western agenda.¹⁵³ In a separate piece, Badescu, Sum and Uslaner look at the civil societies in Romania and Moldova in order to measure how participation impacts trust. The article concludes that in both countries, activists are more trusting than the general public, thus affirming the classical theoretical proposition on the benefits of civil society. However, the authors also note that members of voluntary associations are not significantly predisposed to democratic attitudes than

¹⁵¹ Dan Petrescu, "Civil Society in Romania: From Donor Supply to Citizen Demand" in *Funding Virtue*, ed. Carothers and Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), 217-243.

¹⁵² Susan Rose-Ackerman, "From Elections to Democracy in Central Europe: Public Participation and the Role of Civil Society," *East European Politics and Societies* 21, no.1 (January 2006): 31-47.

¹⁵³ Patrice McMahon, "Building Civil Societies in East Central Europe: The Effects of American NGOs on Women's Groups," in *Civil Society in Democratization*, ed. Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 2004).

nonmembers. The latter is not surprising, given Petrescu's earlier observations on the internal anti-democratic and non-pluralist nature of many NGOs.¹⁵⁴

By the way of summarizing, it is now possible to take the stock of civil society developments in the region. The available literature reveals that regardless of their shared Communist past, civil societies in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have taken different developmental paths. Though some are more vibrant and mature than others,¹⁵⁵ they all seem to face three major challenges that threaten their long-term survival. First, NGOs need to broaden public participation in their activities.¹⁵⁶ In all of the case studies, the nonprofit sector comes out too elitist,¹⁵⁷ too urban, too narrow in terms of the types of pursued activities (mostly advocacy) and too grandiose in regard to desirable achievements.¹⁵⁸ Second, scholars frequently complain that U.S.-funded NGOs are not sustainable.¹⁵⁹ They are passive and lack entrepreneurial spirit with respect to civic engagement.¹⁶⁰ They shop around for foreign funds, but do not attempt to engage possible local sources of support. Third, the majority of the covered scholarly works have concluded that, due to the parameters and nature of U.S. foreign assistance, a lot nonprofit organizations in the region have become too detached from politics in their drive to be "neutral" and too unwilling to engage with political actors or other representatives of the domestic civil society that are not normally covered by Western

¹⁵⁴ Badescu, Sum and Uslaner.

¹⁵⁵ Based on the evidence, it would be plausible to characterize the nonprofit sectors in Central and Eastern Europe (including the Baltic states) as most developed out of all, with Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Moldova as more developed, and Central Asia, along with Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Caucasus, as the least developed.

¹⁵⁶ McMahon.

¹⁵⁷ Freise.

¹⁵⁸ For more analysis of the two last points, see Kevin Quigley, "Lofty goals, modest results" in *Funding Virtue*, ed. Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), 191-217.

¹⁵⁹ More complete elaboration of the general point in Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway, "Toward Civil Society realism" in *Funding Virtue*, ed. Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), 293-311.

¹⁶⁰ Z. Mansfeldova, S. Nalecz, E. Priller and A. Zimmer, "Civil Society in Transition: Civic Engagement and Nonprofit Organizations in central and Eastern European after 1989," in *Future of Civil Society: Making Central European Nonprofit-Organizations Work*, ed. Annette Zimmer, Eckhard Priller, and Matthias Freise (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 117.

democratization programs. This detachment continues to sap efforts to institutionalize the political representation of civil society.¹⁶¹

Unfortunately, almost no attention has been devoted in the literature to exploring explicit linkages between the three problems. The existing gap brings us back to the notion of embeddedness. As the case studies show (though not tell), a low level of NGOs' embeddedness in the domestic landscape is the root cause of many subsequent problems. Insufficiently implanted NGOs are less likely to look for domestic support, precisely because their constituency lies elsewhere. They recognize (either openly or in private) that their organizations do not have an appeal (or a marketing value) strong enough to attract whatever meager financial resources are available in their countries. In the end, they become an isolated and foreign body within their domestic societies. If embeddedness is so critical, then the next question should be about the variables that help to enhance it. What is the difference between successful NGOs that manage to make a difference and the rest? Searching for an answer brings us to the "color revolutions" – the events that are said to have shown regional NGOs at their best.

CONCLUSIONS

Before proceeding to the next chapter that will deal with the issues of methodology and research design used to collect the data for this study, it is paramount to take a step back and assess the critical findings that have emerged as a result of reviewing the extant literature as well as their impact on the concept of organizational embeddedness.

¹⁶¹ Freise.

Though the concept of civil society has been part of the scholarly discourse for a long while, numerous theoretical disputes are centered primarily on four key issues. The first has to deal with the differentiation between civil and political societies. It began with Locke's interpretation, which did not separate the two, and proceeded to Kant who distinguished the role of civil society as a province of rational debate and critique. Those who followed not only took this distinctiveness for granted, but also attempted to refine the relationship. Hegel saw civil society as a vehicle to prepare citizens for political participation. Marx and Gramsci considered it to be a supporting mechanism for the existing power/class structure. Durkheim put it in the intermediary position between the state and economy. De Tocqueville asserted its ability to counter statist tendencies and (along with Putnam) to serve as a feedback loop between the civic life and politics. The second dispute is about the origins of civil society. Here the progression has been from ontological (Locke) to human/epistemological (Ferguson) and finally historical (Hegel) explanations. A lot has been said and written about the nature of exchanges that occur in the civic realm. Authors of the Scottish Enlightenment were the first to note that civic interactions are not neutral. In fact, they help validate critical discourses (Kant) or blend together morality and legality (Hegel). The outcome of such interactions can bring mutuality by building upon the emotional nature of cooperation and tapping into the existing reserves of trust (Durkheim) as well as conflict by relying on the existing class structure (Marx) and deepening the patterns of social exclusion (Berman). Finally, the fourth theoretical discussion addresses the relationship between the individual and civil society. According to it, civil society may serve as an intermediary body through which states' authority enters one's individual life (Durkheim). Or it may become a venue

where an individual sacrifices a part of her autonomy to gain greater decision-making influence in democratic conditions (de Tocqueville).

After reviewing the breadth and depth of theoretical developments, two implications on the notion of embeddedness are in order. First, because civil society is both distinct and connected to the political realm, the degree of organizational embeddedness depends on how well the civil society is able to strike a golden middle by being sufficiently open for cooperation with political parties and governmental bodies, yet avoiding the danger of turning into a party or state supplicant. Second, to assess the degree of embeddedness, it is important to pay attention to the nature of exchanges within civil society, more specifically whether they have a robust moral and legal basis that enables its special place in the society. As the review makes it clear, the moral standing can be achieved only if civic organizations have inclusive memberships and a high level of internal and external openness. The legal basis stems from pertinent laws that are put in place by the state.

Our analysis of the literature on the emergence of civil society has concentrated on two critical dimensions. The first deals with domestic-level processes through which a loose web of activists is transformed into a structured civic organization with coherent positions and demands. The success of such a transformation is impacted by a host of variables that include country's political culture, role of the state on the domestic scene, prevalence of certain social classes as civil society members, and historical circumstances. The second dimension pays attention to the two kinds of external sources – political entrepreneurs and international cooperation between civic groups known as the “boomerang pattern” - that help foster domestic civil societies. The ability of political entrepreneurs to influence internal processes depends on the characteristics of

an issue that a foreign civic group tries to pursue in a recipient country as well as on the nature of relationship they have with domestic partners. In the case of the former, international input will produce better results if an issue at hand resonates with a local society. As for the latter, the denser the relationship between an international organization and its local partner - the better the results of their cooperation.

Therefore, in assessing the level of embeddedness of a certain civil society or a particular group within it, a set of factors ought to be taken into account. First, external involvement will be more effective in helping a civil society find its place on the domestic scene (i.e. become more embedded) if it deals with relevant issues and capable (in terms of their membership density) actors. Second, the degree of embeddedness may be lowered by a strong state that either exhibits increasing autocratic tendencies or has existed long before a civil society. Third, civic groups may undercut their own implantedness if they do not become institutionalized into more formal organizations. However, even if their institutionalization does take place, civil society at large can remain weakly embedded into the domestic landscape. The reasons for that may lie either in its social composition that emphasizes members' exclusive, elite status or in the ethnic, religious and historical factors that accompanied the formation of civil society.

One of the most voluminous parts of the literature deals with the description and analysis of benefits and (less commonly) weaknesses that civil society may bring to the domestic political and social life. Among the benefits, higher social capital, increased individual and institutional trust, better reciprocal engagement and the feeling of civicness figure most prominently. The rare, but quite malign, weaknesses include possible polarization and systemic overloading.

It is interesting to note a relationship that both benefits and weaknesses have with organizational embeddedness. In the case of the former, benefits materialize precisely because an organization is sufficiently embedded. For instance, the available research stresses that NGOs, which are engaged in political/advocacy activities, will generate more social capital than those, which are not. However, one of the major reasons for that (i.e. embeddedness) is omitted, although the theoretical literature makes it abundantly clear that nonprofits, which are distinct, yet connected to the political sphere, tend to do better. Their tighter connections with political organizations produce closer links to the society in general. In a different example, many authors assert that the level of individual trust will be higher in those NGOs with a diverse pool of members. Again, the observation does not link individual trust (indirectly) and diversity (directly) to higher embeddedness. Nonprofits, which have diverse memberships, are better connected to the society, since they simply “cover” more existing societal groups and viewpoints. Therefore, the relationship ought to be described as follows – higher embeddedness generates more diversity that, in turn, increases members’ individual trust. As for the weaknesses of civil society, they come to being due to the lack (or complete absence) of embeddedness. For example, the polarization of organizational membership occurs with a low level of broad embeddedness. In this case, a civic group does not seek to expand horizontally in order to encompass other segments of the society. Systemic overloading happens when an NGO is only partially embedded into the domestic landscape because its links with the political society are either cut off completely or severally strained. In effect, this confirms the previously stated theoretical proposition that an NGO should be distinct, but connected to the political system.

As we see, the notion of embeddedness plays a key role in bringing the benefits and ameliorating the weaknesses of civil society. Unfortunately, those who talk of the benefits take embeddedness for granted, while the ones writing about the weaknesses do not consider the phenomenon at all (instead concentrating on the consequences of those weaknesses). That is why, our research will seek to assert that in order to generate more benefits and avoid possible flaws, civic organizations ought to be sufficiently embedded.

Finally, our assessment of the studies that address the role of civil society and foreign funders in democratic transitions has pointed to a number of observations. First, those who believe that civic groups play a leading role in ensuring that a democratic transformation occurs through the power of masses subscribe mostly to the participatory approach on democratization. Second, the need for Western assistance in building domestic civil societies in CEE and the former Soviet Union has become both a blessing and a curse for many newly established civic groups as well as for those societies in general. On one hand, such NGOs helped raise issues that would have otherwise been avoided or substantially under-funded. On the other, Western aid created a set of problems of its own. To list the most common, foreign funders have provided restrictive funding, covering only formally registered (and mostly advocacy) NGOs and excluding everyone else. In many cases, the content proved either incompatible with local practices or irrelevant to local realities. By attempting to remove the political aspect in NGOs' functioning, donors have often severed vital connections between those organizations and the political realm of their societies and left the former with diminished societal influence. There was a general failure on the part of funders to see that the transitional paradigm (which envisions sequential democratic transition) may not apply to those states stuck in the gray zone of semi-authoritarianism, thus necessitating new approaches

to working with their domestic civil societies. Third, NGOs face a number of challenges as well. They need to broaden public participation, assure their financial sustainability (once donors have left or decreased support) and become less detached and disdainful of the inherently political element in their functioning.

The challenges that both Western aid structures and local NGOs are facing highlight the importance of embeddedness in tackling many of the enumerated problems. As the review has noted, in the field of democratization a middle ground (so-called civil society realism) has begun to emerge. However, it is not clear whether and to what extent the approach considers embeddedness as one of the key components for civil society development. What is certain that if the challenge of organizational embeddedness is not addressed by Western donors, any proposed solutions will treat the symptoms rather than the cause of the disease. For instance, foreign grant-giving organizations will not be able to determine what works and what does not, unless their grant recipients are sufficiently embedded into the domestic landscape to possess some "issue sensitivity." If it is absent, donors are likely to learn about the ethnocentrism of their programs only post-fact. The same applies to local NGOs. None of the objectives (be it sustainability, broader participation or cooperation with political parties) can be achieved if they are not willing to assess their implantedness on the domestic scene. To sum it up, assuring a higher level of embeddedness represents one (by no means the sole) of the major solutions to the dilemmas of grant-giving faced by Western donors and the challenges of internal development encountered by NGOs in CEE and the former Soviet Union.

The dissertation has begun with the general hypothesis that a greater level of domestic embeddedness made NGOs more effective during the "color revolutions." It

has been clear from the beginning that the concept of embeddedness is vague and may be hard to measure. The issue is further complicated, because my research seeks a more nuanced approach, by asserting that NGOs should have a certain degree (not the maximum or the ideal level) of embeddedness. This is why, the literature review has become helpful in delineating the notion of embeddedness more precisely. Based on the available findings, three propositions that refine my key concept should be put forward. First, the better an NGO is able to relate itself to the political society, the more embedded it becomes in the domestic landscape. To forestall a possible criticism, it is critical to emphasize that this work does not advocate for NGOs to become an arm (hidden or visible) of the state and political parties. However, the literature also makes it abundantly obvious that civic groups must set up mechanisms for regular interactions and viable cooperation with political actors. Second, the more connections an NGO establishes with the society at large and its members, the more embedded it becomes. As noted before, such connections may take a variety of forms – from pursuing inclusive membership strategies to raising general public awareness of the “third sector.” Third, the more domestically tailored is the external involvement, the more it helps NGOs become embedded. In the end, it should be noted that though these hypotheses provide better ways to define embeddedness, they continue to require much more specific indicators as well as the general framework to be placed within in order to yield meaningful results. Coming up with these is the task of the following chapter.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of this chapter is to elaborate the research methodology that will be used to test our key hypotheses, gather the necessary data, establish proper causal relationships, and, ultimately, provide insights into the main research question. To this end, it will begin by outlining the major parameters of our research design that include a research question, key hypotheses and definitions, a number of leading sub-hypotheses, the indicators to measure them, and the benchmarks to evaluate their performance. The second part of this chapter will describe how the accumulated information will be presented and analyzed. Drawing heavily on the theoretical recommendations by King, Keohane and Verba in “Designing Social Inquiry,”¹ the work aims to address the methodological advantages of case studies as a research tool as well as the issues of descriptive and causal inference.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This dissertation has been spurred by the unexpected turn of events that took place in Ukraine and Georgia in 2003 and 2004. Both countries were scheduled to have elections - parliamentary in Georgia and presidential in Ukraine. Both were becoming progressively semi-authoritarian with the aging presidents willing to resort to any measures to maintain their hold on to power. Though fraud, voter intimidation and

¹ Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

opposition harassment² were widely expected, few predicted the magnitude of a popular response that swept away the regimes of Leonid Kuchma and Eduard Shevardnadze.

Grappling with the surprising nature of these events, many heaped praise on the so-called “people’s power” that was able to bring masses to the streets and sustain their involvement in what were quickly labeled as the “color revolutions.” Civil society groups like Pora in Ukraine and Kmara in Georgia became the cause célèbre for Western media and academics. The more positive were the assessments of such groups, the more alarmed were authoritarian rulers elsewhere in the former Soviet Union and around the world.

It seems that by the middle of 2005 (after the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the bloody riots in Uzbekistan’s Andijon region), the argument that civic groups are the driving force behind peaceful “color revolutions” has become a widely accepted fact by Western democracy promoters and post-Soviet domestic elites alike. The former concentrated on how “color” experiences can be replicated in other corners of the world, while the latter got serious about suffocating any existing civic groups that were even remotely reminiscent of Kmara, Pora or Otpor. As indirect recognition of the influence exerted by youth organizations, the Russian government sought to preempt any brewing dissent by establishing a fiercely statist and anti-Western nationalist movement “Nashi” (Ours).³ The efforts took such a systematic, cross-country character that in a year the

² For examples see the following: Jeremy Durker and Dean Cox, *Under Assault: Ukrainian News Media and the 2004 Presidential Elections* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2003); Carlos Pascual and Steven Pifer, “Ukraine’s Bid for a Decisive Place in History,” *Washington Quarterly* 25, no.2 (Winter 2002): 175-192; Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, “Needs Assessment Report for the Presidential Elections in Ukraine” (Kyiv: ODIHR, 31 October 2004), http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2004/06/3248_en.pdf.

³ The name itself hints that contrary to Kmara and Pora, “Nashi” [translated as Ours] was a true domestic force.

American National Endowment for Democracy (NED) spoke of a worldwide backlash against democracy promotion.⁴

At the same time, few questions were asked as to what made the civic groups in Ukraine and Georgia so effective. This neglect of deeper investigation is especially puzzling, given a vast array of the past assessments,⁵ which decried the civil societies in those and other post-Soviet states as weak, overly dependent on Western aid and unable to relate to the local populace.

The analysis that this dissertation will perform is critical not only for our understanding of contemporary political events in transitioning societies, but also for the evolution of major theoretical debates in the field. By stressing the primacy of civil society's involvement in "color revolutions," it lends substantive support to the participatory approach,⁶ confirming the leading role of ordinary citizens over domestic elites in democratic transformations. At the same time, because the research is focused on the specific features, which enhance the effectiveness of civic groups, it contributes to the scholarly discussion⁷ on the merits and weaknesses of civil society as well as its connections to the political and societal realms.⁸ Finally, the research suggests how the particular circumstances of "color revolutions" can enhance our general appreciation of democratic transitions.

⁴ The National Endowment for Democracy, "The Backlash Against Democracy Assistance," A Report Prepared for Senator Richard G. Lugar, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (8 June 2006), <http://www.ned.org/publications/reports/backlash06.pdf>.

⁵ For critical assessments, please see: Sarah Mendelson and John K. Glenn, ed., *The Power and Limits of NGOs*; Stepanenko, "Civil Society in Post-Soviet Ukraine"; McFaul, Petrov, and Riabov, ed., *Between Dictatorship and Democracy*.

⁶ Burnell and Calvert, 7.

⁷ Seligman, 20-55.

⁸ Carothers and Brandt, 18-24, 26-29.

Research question and content choices

To rectify the discrepancy between previous assessments of post-Soviet civil societies and their actual performance during the “color revolutions,” my dissertation asks a basic research question: What made the NGOs under consideration effective during those events? I hypothesize that the more embedded an NGO was in the domestic social and political landscape, the more successful it was during those events. My work refines the existing arguments on the impact of civic groups in peaceful democratic transitions, by pointing to embeddedness as one of the core ingredients in their success. If this hypothesis holds true, it will have significant ramifications on how the external and internal promotion of civil society ought to be pursued. The criteria that measure nascent civil societies by the number and variety of established NGOs may need to be abandoned in favor of assessing how many of them possess the precise characteristics that make nonprofits more “native” (i.e. better embedded) in their host countries.⁹

Before proceeding further, it is important to explain a set of five major choices that the study had to make at the very beginning. The first deals with organizational embeddedness, as opposed to other characteristics of NGO functioning. Because advanced democracies have a long tradition of accepting civil society in its own right, the notion of embeddedness is often taken for granted. It is natural to think that those NGOs, which exist, are an integral part of their societies. Otherwise, they would simply disappear or be replaced by others. Unfortunately, this may not be the case in those countries where the state had been historically powerful, and citizen activism and initiative were greatly discouraged, if not suppressed at all. Thus, embeddedness from

⁹ For more information about the new paradigm on promoting civil society (so-called civil society realism), see Ottaway and Carothers, *Funding Virtue*.

being a moot point in Western democracies turns into a paramount concern for emerging civil societies.

The second choice, to look specifically at the color revolutions, was dictated by two reasons. One was an obvious discrepancy between the theoretical analyses and the empirical evidence mentioned in the other paragraph – the civil societies that have been described as feeble and detached performed so well during the revolutions. The other lies in the fact that “color revolutions,” as a rapid democratization event, represent a critical instance where the role and utility of civil society were put to the ultimate test of viability and can thus be assessed more precisely.

The third choice revolved around selecting particular cases to review. By early 2007, what can be described as a “color revolution” has occurred in at least 4 countries – Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. The decision to focus on Georgia and Ukraine was based on their geographical proximity, shared Soviet past, chronological closeness of the revolutions and developmental similarities of their civil societies. On the first two counts, the two countries are neighbors, sharing the Black Sea border. This and their Soviet legacy mean that they are facing similar sets of economic and political challenges.¹⁰ The Rose and the Orange revolutions also occurred within a year from each other – November 2003 in Georgia and December 2004 in Ukraine. Based on the extant observations,¹¹ it is more likely that these transitions will have more in common than, for instance, the events in Serbia and Kyrgyzstan. Hence, by studying these similar cases, my research will be able to test whether embeddedness was a critical variable in the success of civil society groups during the “color revolutions.” The dissertation does not

¹⁰ Note that the paper asserts the similarity in the nature of their problems, but not their magnitude.

¹¹ John O'Loughlin, Michael D. Ward, Corey L. Lofdahl, Jordin S. Cohen, David S. Brown, David Reilly, Kristian S. Gleditsch, and Michael Shin, “The Diffusion of Democracy, 1946-1994,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 4 (1998): 545-574.

consider intentionally the instances where a “color revolution” was predicted, but either did not occur or would have otherwise failed. As the existing studies indicate, other factors that are not related to civil society development might be at play in those situations.¹²

The fourth dilemma pertained to the type of NGOs that ought to be researched. The review¹³ of the existing works on the Orange and Rose revolutions pointed to the three types of organizations that were present in both states – those that organized public protests (Pora in Ukraine and Kmara in Georgia), those that performed election monitoring (CVU in Ukraine and ISFED in Georgia) and those that conducted exit polls (the Democratic Initiatives Foundation in Ukraine and Gorby Polling Services, among many others, in Georgia). Given the inherent limitations of any research, it was decided to concentrate on the first two groups and exclude the last one. The choice is also theoretically supported, because Pora, Kmara, CVU and ISFED can be viewed as classic civic groups, whereas DiF and Gorby are closer to think tanks than pure NGOs and have a host of problems pertinent only to that type of organizations.

The final choice was made in regard to the timeframe of my study, which would be 1991-2003 for Georgia and 1991-2004 for Ukraine. It begins in the year when the Soviet Union collapsed and both states gained their independence and ends with the

¹² David R. Marples, “Color Revolutions: the Belarus Case,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39, no.3 (September 2006): 351-364; Graeme P. Herd, “Colorful Revolutions and the CIS,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, no. 2 (March-April 2005): 3-18.

¹³ For more information, please see Taras Kuzio, “Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39, no.3 (September 2006): 365-386; Michael McFaul, “Transitions from Post-communism”; Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia: From National Awakening to Rose Revolution* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Nadia Diuk, “The Triumph of Civil Society” in *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*, ed. Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006); Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2005); Cory Welt, “Regime Vulnerability and Popular Mobilization in Georgia's Rose Revolution,” *Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law Working Paper* no.67 (September 2006); Andrew Wilson, “Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19, no.1 (March 2006): 21-32.

eruption of the “color revolutions” – November 2003 in Georgia and December 2004 in Ukraine.

Alternative hypotheses

At this point, it would also be useful to suggest a couple of alternative hypotheses. The first posits that the more financial support an NGO received from the West, the better it performed during a “color revolution.” It merely tests the prevalent assumption of the post-Soviet elites that without Western assistance, domestic groups in Ukraine and Georgia would either not be able to emerge or simply die out. It is important to draw a difference between the understanding of embeddedness that this dissertation embraces and the relationship that the rival hypothesis asserts. As seen later, one of our indicators for embeddedness indeed includes external involvement (and external financial support in particular). However, this work believes that there is more to NGOs’ strength than just Western funding, and other measurements of embeddedness (e.g. constituency, leadership, internal normative transfers) clearly emphasize this point. To sum it up, the first alternative hypotheses assumes that the major thing NGOs need to be effective on the post-Soviet space is a continuous and rather generous supply of foreign funds.

The second rival hypothesis suggests that the tighter an NGO was allied to the political force that fought against the ancien regime, the better it performed during a “color revolution.” As in the previous case, a distinction should be pinpointed between this assertion and the viewpoint promulgated by the dissertation. What the former does is lends support to the elite-driven approach on democratization, which believes that societal elites assume the primary role in ensuring a democratic transition, whereas

domestic civil society is given a supportive role.¹⁴ According to it, Pora and Kmara attached themselves to “Our Ukraine” and the National Movement respectively, becoming their youth wings. Contrary to that, the dissertation recognizes and appreciates the relationship between NGOs and political parties as a means to increase their embeddedness within the society’s political landscape. However, in their relations with political parties embedded NGOs figure as independent (if not always equal) partners.

Major definitions

Because the research frequently evokes such terms as civil society, “color revolution,” embeddedness and an NGO, it is worth to define their more precise meaning.

Civil society is “an intermediate associational realm between state and family, populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values.”¹⁵ At the same time, an *NGO* is a non-governmental organization that channels citizens’ demands (interest articulation), serves as an alternative provider of public services and/or performs the functions of a government watchdog. NGOs possess five common characteristics.¹⁶ First, they are an organized entity, meaning that groups need to have a certain organizational structure (leadership and membership) and a statute (whether formal or informal) that guides their activities. Second, because NGOs are not an arm of the government, they are considered a private entity. However, (and this is

¹⁴ Paul D’Anieri and Theodor Tudoroiu, “Rose, Orange, and Tulip: The Failed Post-Soviet Revolutions,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no.3 (September 2007): 315-342; Paul D’Anieri, “Explaining the Success and Failure of Post-Communist Revolutions,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39, no.3 (September 2006): 331-350; John Higley and Michael G. Burton, “The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns,” *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 1 (February 1989): 17-32.

¹⁵ White, “Civil Society, Democratization and Development: Clearing the Analytical Ground.”

¹⁶ The characteristics are derived from Armony, *The Dubious Link*, 30.

where the third feature becomes important) they cannot be equated with businesses because of their not-for-profit status. All the revenues collected by NGOs from the public or received through charitable grants must be used to fulfill their main mission by supporting the issues or providing the services it was set up to do. Fourth, nongovernmental organizations are expected to be self-governing, which implies the presence of a governing or executive board that oversees a bigger picture of organizational activities and makes sure an NGO stays on track. Finally, membership in NGOs is voluntary. This substantially differentiates them from the government (where the right for participation is legally regulated and can be accorded or mandated based on certain pre-requisites, like citizenship) or the business sector (where involvement is often determined by contractual obligations).

Though the provided definitions of civil society and NGOs closely mirror each other, a difference between the two should be illuminated. As the previous section – the literature review – has noted, civil society represents a broader philosophical concept that includes not only NGOs, but also other numerous other entities that do not have to possess the five NGO features outlined above. In other words, civil society in general may be much less formal, but much more loose and spontaneous in its structure and nature. On the contrary to that, NGOs are a fairly specific manifestation of civil society that has reached sufficient maturity to yearn for formalization. As a result, it is much harder to assess the vibrancy and level of development of a civil society because of its all-encompassing and resistant to the precise definition nature. To paraphrase the famous saying, you often know a vibrant civil society when you see it or when you engage in extensive research on its indirect indicators, such as people's attitudes that determine their civic participation. With NGOs, the measurement is less tricky (which is why they

became the preference of many donors). Mere numerical indicators can highlight developmental trends, if not the potential strength, of existing non-governmental organizations.

An NGO is embedded¹⁷ when it is regarded by other major political, civic actors and target groups within the population as a legitimate element of the internal social and political landscape. Based on this definition, an NGO should meet three significant and inter-related standards. First, it needs to represent a specific domestic constituency. A group that speaks for everyone ends up speaking for nobody, because it is unable to fulfill one of the key NGO functions – interest articulation. Second, an embedded nonprofit must possess some domestic authority among influential societal actors – politicians, fellow civil society members and, more importantly, its own supporters. Its level of expertise and the depth and breadth of practical experiences in a particular field must command respect. Lastly, a civic group should have specific mechanisms to exert influence. A civic organization that has members and knows its issue, but lacks the muscle in making a difference, will eventually lose its supporters and the clout among other actors.

Finally, a “color revolution” is a peaceful experience of democratic transition that occurs as a result of large-scale public protests against fraudulent elections, conducted by a semi-authoritarian regime and resulting in its ultimate collapse. It is critical to point to the distinction between “color” and regular revolutions. The former are self-limiting in their radicalism. Though they ensure that no return to the past is possible, they (unlike the French or Bolshevik revolution) do not entail a complete destruction of societal

¹⁷ Note that the dissertation uses interchangeably such terms as embeddedness, implantedness and rootedness.

foundations or undertake a total elimination of the ancien elite and its supporters.¹⁸ The color revolutions under our consideration also share several common characteristics. They took place in states with a semi-autocratic regime whose leader was not only unpopular, but also unable to consolidate the power and command complete authority of the government's coercive apparatus. The opposition was united and capable of mobilizing the citizenry, by conducting ambitious campaigns to register voters and ensure their participation on the Election Day. A modicum of freedom was given to the media, which made it possible to inform people about the fraud through election monitoring and exit poll results.¹⁹

Sub-hypotheses and their indicators

Because our major hypothesis talks about embeddedness in rather general terms, further specifications are needed to ensure adequate empirical testing. That is why, the dissertation is advancing three sub-hypotheses, which touch directly upon the key components of organizational implantedness, as well as the indicators to measure them.

First, the better an NGO is able to relate itself to the political society, the more embedded it becomes in the domestic landscape. To specify political embeddedness, it is important to consider both its formal and informal components. The formal legitimacy of NGOs is based on laws and legal guarantees that recognize the distinctiveness of the nonprofit sector, ensure non-interference by the state, provide balanced mechanisms of state control and create a propitious environment for nonprofit development. The other side of political embeddedness lies in informal legitimacy whose nebulous nature is

¹⁸ Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 74.

¹⁹ McFaul, "Transitions from Postcommunism": 5-19; Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, "International diffusion and Post-communist Electoral Revolutions," *Communist and Postcommunist Studies* 39, no.3 (September 2006): 289-291.

harder to measure. In that regard, the study will evaluate the effectiveness of joint NGO-party and NGO-government projects. On the basis of that indicators, it will seek to classify the nature of cooperation between an NGO and political actors as subservient (NGOs function as mere attachments to a party or a state), independent (NGOs cooperate with parties on relatively equal terms) and epiphenomenal (NGOs' cooperation with parties is insignificant or meaningless).

Second, the more connections an NGO establishes to the society at large and its members in particular, the more embedded it becomes. For the second sub-hypothesis, it is important to look at the set of four indicators on social embeddedness – constituency, internal normative transfers, societal influence and financial sustainability. To evaluate the constituency of a group, the research considers the characteristics (such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity and residence) of its members and leaders. It also evaluates NGOs' recruitment strategies, mobilization and communication capacities. Internal normative transfers have to deal with how an organization handles the issues of competency acquisition for its members. Our work reviews whether members have initial expertise in the field and, if not, how they are provided with in-house training and retraining services. The analysis will also assess the relevance of internal normative transfers by considering whether certain training practices and methodologies have been adopted, adapted or rejected. The third indicator for social embeddedness measures NGO's societal influence. It first looks at an organization's general relevance that encompasses the reasons for its emergence, the length of its operation and external/internal assessments of its effectiveness. Then, the inquiry proceeds to analyze the relevance of NGOs' goals, in particular a relationship between goals and external events, and their possible adjustment as a result of the latter. Appropriateness of

activities is the next component of societal influence, which considers a relationship between goals and activities, between activities and external events, and possible adjustments of activities due to unfolding events or a change in goals. Attempting to capture the larger picture of an NGO within a domestic society, the study moves to focus on its relations with other fellow groups through joint projects. Based on their quantity and effectiveness, it should be possible to determine the nature of NGO-NGO interactions as subservient, independent or epiphenomenal. Finally, wider public involvement is considered by summarizing nonprofits' volunteering practices, interactions with the media and general public relations. The last in the set of indicators on social embeddedness addresses a group's financial sustainability. It employs such metrics as diversity, extent, longevity and regularity of domestic financial support (both monetary and in-kind), by identifying the number of sources, the percentage of total funds that they contribute and the chronological length of their availability. In the end, it should be possible to determine whether the nature of relationship between an NGO and its domestic supporters is deeply dependent, cooperative, independent or non-essential.

Third, the more domestically-tailored the external involvement, the more it helps an NGO become embedded. For this sub-hypothesis on external influence, two indicators are reviewed. The first has to do with external normative transfers, which are attempts by foreign actors to transmit their methodology to NGO members in other states. Here we consider the extent of cooperation with foreign NGOs and INGOs, whether such organizations offer training and re-training services, how often they do so and what issues they cover. A step further is then taken by evaluating the relevance of such normative exchanges, in particular whether proposed methodologies and programs were adopted, adapted or rejected. The other indicator assesses the external mechanisms

of influence that include the diversity, extent and longevity of foreign financial support and its impacts on the nature of interactions between a donor and a domestic civic group. To specify those, the dissertation will employ the same types of measurements it uses for an NGO's domestic financial sustainability.

Index of embeddedness

As this work has noted numerous times, embeddedness is a rather ambiguous concept. Seeking to address this challenge, we have so far come up with the three sets of categories that assess embeddedness along several dimensions – societal and political as well as the influence of external involvement. However, the composite picture of organizational implantedness will be impossible to obtain without bringing all the utilized indicators (and the outcomes they produce) together in a meaningful and comprehensive fashion. To do so, the research will develop an index of embeddedness that provides numerical measurements for each category and, in the end, strives to classify NGOs as strongly, moderately, insufficiently or marginally embedded.

Our index will consist of three broad categories that correspond with the major sub-hypotheses of the study. They deal respectively with societal embeddedness, political embeddedness and external involvement. Within every category, there will be a cluster of particular indicators used by the dissertation for its further specification. As a result of this structure, the research has to address two concurrent challenges – how to determine the order of the categories and how to assign weight to individual indicators.

When beginning to decide on the placement of the categories, the question of prioritization immediately arises. According to the index,²⁰ societal embeddedness comes prior to political one and is accorded the highest number of points. The ranking decision was based on numerous theoretical definitions, which suggest that civil society occupies a space distinct from the state and the family. It is precisely because of its location within the domestic society and apart from the state apparatus that the societal aspect of implantedness assumes the primary role. Arguing from the reverse, political embeddedness cannot come ahead of societal one, as it will imply a certain degree of secondarity that civil society has in relation to the state. To change the order by putting political implantedness first is not only theoretically flawed, but also empirically dangerous. NGOs that place the state first inevitably turn into its informal extension (like GNGOs in China and Russia).²¹

Among the three categories, external involvement ranks last, because it plays an assisting, not determining, function in anchoring NGOs in the societal and political contexts. Under normal circumstances, foreign advocacy groups and donor organizations design their involvement in a way that strengthens the domestic standing of a civic group, by providing it with additional normative and/or financial clout. If nonprofits feel more at home with external partners than their societal constituencies and domestic political structures, they run the risk of turning into local branches of the former.

The second step in creating our index is to assign relative weight to the specific indicators that compose each of the three broad categories. The challenge is compounded by the requirement that a total amount of points assigned to separate indicators cannot

²⁰ See Appendix I

²¹ Moises Naim, "What is a Gongo?" *Foreign Policy* (May-June 2007).

alter the overall ranking of a category within which they are located. In other words, after all points assigned and added up, societal embeddedness should come first, followed by political embeddedness and then external influence.

Among the indicators, constituency will be given the highest number of points (16). Multiple sources in the literature review note that a group will not be able to advance from a loose to more formal stage unless it has a clearly identified pool of members and leaders able to guide it. Therefore, the presence and strength of constituency are the backbone without which further embeddedness is unimaginable in any shape or form.

Societal influence and informal legitimacy rank second and are equal in importance, which accords each of them with 14 points. Both indicators represent the pillars of different contextual dimensions when it comes to embeddedness. The first (societal influence) reflects the relationship between an NGO and people at large. The second (informal legitimacy) relates the organization to the political structure of a host society. To put it differently, their position is determined by the classical understanding of civil society, as being distinct (i.e. a part of the non-political²² sphere), yet connected to the political realm (thus the link to informal legitimacy).

Formal legitimacy is next, because it sets up a legal framework, which, in turn, demarcates an allowable space for NGOs to function. In the index, it is worth 13 points. Given the importance of the rule of law in building nascent democracies, it would be logical to wonder why formal legitimacy has not been placed ahead of societal influence and informal legitimacy in terms of its vitality for civil society development. The answer

²² Non-political is used in a very narrow understanding of the term here – as not being a part of state political institutions and governmental structures.

to this justified concern is two-fold. First, NGOs and other types of civil groups may have substantial influence within their host society and among its political actors even if there is no sufficient legal framework for their activities. For instance, the Ukrainian Rukh or Baltic National Fronts emerged in the Soviet society, which viewed public organizations as a mere informal attachment to the Communist Party, and flourished before the infamous “6th Article”²³ of the Soviet Constitution was abolished. The opposite seems also true – many post-Communist states have strong legal frameworks with NGOs that do not command any public influence or political respect, because they are inherently weak on their own or are purposefully weakened by the state from behind the scenes. As our literature review points out, many NGOs in Central Asia were epiphenomenal, even preceding the legal crackdown on civil liberties by the executive branch.²⁴ To sum up the point, formal legitimacy is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for embeddedness.

Domestic financial sustainability comes fourth with the total of 12 points. The indicator sheds light on the NGOs’ ability to harness financial resources that assure their ultimate capacity to survive. It is located after formal legitimacy, as the latter is a prerequisite for a civic group to be able to raise funds legally and over a long period of time. However, it is also ahead of such two critical measurements as internal and external normative transfers. The placement thus begs a question of whether this work puts money before ideas, by rating funding as the issue of a greater magnitude than the normative ends it is used to serve. Though the research acknowledges the importance of

²³ According to Article VI of the Brezhnev Constitution, the Communist Party was recognized as “the directing and leading force” of the Soviet society, relegating others to the status of mere attachments to the party.

²⁴ For more see, Olcot, *Central Asia's Second Chance*; Stevens, “NGO-Mahalla Partnerships”; Ilkhamov, “The Thorny Path of Civil Society in Uzbekistan.”

ideas,²⁵ it continues to press forward with a more pragmatic approach, which posits that without sufficient funds NGO's ideas – no matter how powerful – will never get sufficient traction. Furthermore, regardless of how effective and innovative an organization is in processing internal and external normative transfers, it will be helpless without funds to implement them through in-house trainings or inter-NGO exchanges.

As already mentioned, in the index of embeddedness internal and external normative transfers weigh less (11 points each) than financial sustainability. Their primary importance is to indicate the capacity of NGOs to be normatively open and flexible. External mechanisms of influence (which deal with donors' financial support) are accorded the least weight on our index (9 points), since they mostly play a financially supportive role in NGO's existence. One can challenge our ranking by pointing to the discrepancy between theory and reality in this particular case. In the real life, NGOs in emerging democracies are far more dependent on the Western sources of funding and should be arguably assigned a greater number of points to reflect that fact. To respond to this suggestion, it is important to note that this work intends to analyze what kind of external involvement would help NGOs to be more embedded, not what kind of foreign aid and dependency patterns exist right now. Therefore, the natural attention is on how external mechanisms of influence should work, not how they are working. It is perhaps because the presently big footprint of foreign donors seems so problematic in terms of long-term maintenance and so troublesome in regard to its detrimental impacts on NGO development that we downplay foreign assistance in the index of embeddedness.

²⁵ That is why, so many of our sub-indicators touch directly or indirectly upon the impact of influence. For instance, the indicator on societal influence looks into the goals for an NGO's existence, their relevance and their adjustment based on external events.

The final task in putting together any index is to determine how to match numeric measurements with their qualitative equivalents. In the process of doing so, the dissertation bases its assessments on the expectations of performance, as outlined in the section below. NGOs that are close to the end or ideal state of embeddedness will score 90 percent or above and be considered highly embedded. Those organizations that meet the expected outcomes will get 65-89% and be classified as moderately embedded. Civic groups that fail one or more of the outlined expectations will receive between 40-64 percent and should be viewed as insufficiently embedded. Finally, nonprofits with large-scale failures will obtain below 39 percent and be categorized as weakly or marginally embedded.

Both success and failure are easy to spot. What is harder to do is to estimate their extent and magnitude. The description of expected outcomes that is to follow will try to do just that through a sequence of three steps. It will portray how NGOs are expected to perform (something that would earn them a moderate level of rootedness). It will then tell what an ideal state of things would be – the situation that will make nonprofits highly embedded. And it will conclude by describing the process of disembeddedness, which catalogues the flaws and failures that, depending on their gravity, would make an organization moderately, insufficiently or marginally implanted.

Expected outcomes

Before the actual process of data gathering begins, it is necessary to elaborate what outcomes can be expected for each of the given sub-hypotheses and within the suggested indicators. Undertaking this task has a three-fold advantage. First, it will enable us to recognize a success when we see it. The avalanche of information, which

large-scale research projects like this tend to generate, brings the danger of inadvertently omitting serious observations. Second, the specifications of outcomes will pre-set a level of performance anticipated from our indicators in advance. This will diminish a possible researcher bias when the significance of some indicators (usually those that have received more confirmation) is over-emphasized at the expense of the others that were either rejected or scantily confirmed. Third, the description of the end condition for each indicator should decrease the propensity of considering the best outcome as the only one possible to confirm the hypothesis.

Our first sub-hypothesis underscored the importance of political embeddedness and proposed formal and informal legitimacy as the indicators to measure it. In terms of the former, the research expects that embedded NGOs will reside in a state that has a separate legislation on nonprofit organizations, recognizes their differences from parties, businesses and governmental structures, and provides a favorable tax environment for their activities and clear mechanisms of state control over them. State's formal acceptance of NGO legitimacy will also be seen in such secondary indicators as a high status of civil liberties (as measured by annual Freedom House reports) and the absence of highly publicized instances of state-sponsored NGO abuse.²⁶ The latter will be manifested through the evidence of common cooperative efforts (such as projects, programs or initiatives) that an NGO undertakes with parties and the government. Such efforts should also receive positive assessments from the actors involved as well as possible external observers. The end, or ideal, state of political embeddedness would be the situation when an NGO is accorded a distinct place in the society, respected and engaged by the state and political parties.

²⁶ The data will be derived from U.S. State Department and Freedom House annual reports.

The sub-hypothesis on social embeddedness considers such indicators as constituency, internal normative transfers, societal influence and financial sustainability to determine whether an NGO is implanted in the environment, in which it has to operate. As far as the issues of constituency are concerned, an embedded NGO would have a diverse and inclusive membership, by allowing people of different social classes, ages, genders and ethnicities to join it in different capacities and at different stages of an NGO's existence. It will also welcome potential "black sheep" – individuals whose socio-economic characteristics do not match those of a typical member of that NGO. The leadership of a rooted civil society organization will be socially diverse, horizontal (with few layers of authority separating leaders from regular members) and open to feedback. It will be elected on a rotating basis and accountable to the organizational base through reports and board oversight. An embedded NGO will conduct its recruitment campaigns frequently, publicize them widely and offer a wide range of internal positions. In that group, organizational communication would usually take place through multiple channels with a constant and predictable frequency in exchanging information. Thus, ideas are able to flow effectively bottom-up (from members to the leadership) and top-down (from leaders to members). Because of well-developed recruitment and communications techniques, an embedded organization is expected to have a clear plan for mobilization, which accounts for possible contingencies and is known to all of its members. In the end, such an NGO becomes an internally democratic and externally open entity.

In terms of the second indicator – internal normative transfers, a nonprofit is able to attract people with relevant expertise and provide novices with an initial battery of

trainings as well as regular (once every organizational cycle²⁷) re-training activities on mission-specific and general issues. This will be the evidence that trainings are successful as an internal process of organizational development. The evidence of trainings' external success envisions members having sufficient skills and knowledge to perform their duties with competence, as evaluated by an NGO itself and other external sources. To identify whether an internal normative transfer has been successful a set of three measurements has been put forward. If an NGO follows a methodology closely (with or without minor changes), it is said to have adopted the normative transfer. If an organization decides to alter some details (add new elements, modify or discard old ones) to address various local specifics, but does not change the central purpose of a methodology, this serves as the evidence of adaptation. Finally, if a methodology is discarded without pilot-testing or after initial failure, it lends proof to its rejection. According to the ideal scenario, a firmly embedded NGO should be able to train its own members effectively as well as evaluate the relevance of its methodology independently.

Speaking of societal influence that an implanted civic group should have, five points ought to be noted. First, this NGO would fulfill a niche by providing absent or underperformed services within the host society. It has existed for a period of at least five years²⁸ and received internal and external assessments²⁹ that confirm its positive impacts in a qualitative and/or quantitative manner³⁰. Its goals correspond with societal needs and take into account unfolding events, and its pursued activities are directly connected to the stated goals and external circumstances. At the same time, neither goals

²⁷ An organizational cycle can be either a budgetary or programmatic period of time when organizational activities start anew.

²⁸ The number was chosen for two reasons: a) it covers at least one presidential and one parliamentary election, making sure that an NGO is not an election/political project; b) it presumes that five years are enough for a group to reach some organizational maturity.

²⁹ Such as written reports, media coverage, experts', parties', government's evaluations and public opinion surveys.

³⁰ Sub-indicators to measure effectiveness: framing debates, getting issues on the agenda, causing procedural change, affective policy, influencing behavioral change in target actors.

nor activities remain static. Regular adjustments of both take place to reflect changes in the domestic situation as well as the outcomes of previous programmatic and organizational experiences. An embedded civic group stays active within the NGO community, by taking part (as an equal partner) in domestic NGO coalitions that advance the same or similar issue. Furthermore, such experiences receive positive feedback from all participating sides and external observers. Finally, a rooted non-governmental organization offers an ample of opportunities for wider public involvement. It employs volunteers and interns, conducts media outreach through a variety of means³¹ and, if needed, organizes public actions³² to attract attention to its cause. In the end, an embedded nonprofit is viewed as a natural participant in societal processes.

The last indicator of societal embeddedness deals with financial sustainability. A civic group that has a considerable level of implantedness relies on several (at least 2) types of domestic sources, which include private citizens, businesses, government and NGO coalitions, for monetary support and in-kind donations in its annual activities. The end state would therefore be a nonprofit that has medium-term sustainability (i.e. the ability to survive without external support beyond one year).

The third sub-hypothesis deals with the questions of external influence that comes as a result of normative transfers and financial support. It is reasonable to expect that an embedded NGO would cooperate with foreign non-government and donor organizations by participating in joint projects, international events and NGO coalitions. Furthermore, all the involved sides and external observers will share positive

³¹ Such encompass press conferences, press releases, a website, interviews, internal publications, attendance of media events.

³² For instance, meetings, demonstrations and civic events.

experiences about such instances of cooperation. Though NGO members may be initially trained by foreign experts, they will show decreasing reliance on additional foreign training, as the organization becomes more implanted. At the same time, members' skills, knowledge and, more importantly, the capacity to train themselves or identify their training needs will be positively evaluated by their key donors. In reality, this capacity means that an NGO requests external training rather than is ordered to have one by a foreign donor. When considering the relevance of external normative transfers, such as trainings and seminars, the dissertation applies the same set of criteria that was previously used to assess the impact of domestic educational and training activities.

To sum it up, the final state for an embedded NGO would be when normative transfers take place in a more natural setting, where it becomes an active partner in the cause, rather than a passive recipient of advice. As our literature review has shown, foreign funding is a thorny subject for many civic groups. It can be foreseen that an organization that has attained a significant level of embeddedness will use a diverse pool of foreign funders (at least two³³) and exhibit progressively decreased reliance on external grants. Furthermore, even those grants, for which it applies, will seek funding for specific projects rather than broad organizational support as well as complement external grants with domestic contributions. For an embedded NGO, the donor-grantee relationship moves from subservient to cooperative. Ideally, foreign funding becomes one of the many means to support that NGO's existence.

While all the preceding materials have described what an embedded organization will look like, it is also important to consider the opposite – the process or the state of

³³ A minimum number of two is necessary to make an NGO more immune to the shocks of external funding changes.

disembeddedness. Doing so will help us evaluate more accurately how far from the ideal or the moderate stage of implantedness an NGO under our consideration is.

In terms of its relations with a government and state's political structure, a disembedded nonprofit would possess little informal legitimacy, commanding no respect among parties and state officials. The existing instances of cooperation, if any at all, would be infrequent and superficial, with the sides feeling obliged to engage for the sake of public relations and image rather than at their own volition. Under these circumstances, the existing legal framework is either insufficient in offering civil society an adequate space to develop or underutilized by nonprofits themselves to get enough strength. A marginally embedded civic group would thus be relegated to a peripheral status in the society and viewed by major political actors as a pariah.

In regard to societal embeddedness, such an organization will have a small pool of members, most of whom derive some material benefit from their involvement. Its leadership structure will be hierarchical and resistant to change. Furthermore, it may seek to limit opportunities for expertise acquisition for the fear that its monopoly on power might be contested. Though a disembedded NGO is able to evaluate the relevance of internal normative transfers, the process of doing so will be much slower and much more covert. As a result of internal secrecy, many of its activities will quickly become obsolete and bear little connection to the original goals and/or external events. In the end, a weakly embedded nonprofit will not be known beyond a handful of NGOs working in the same field³⁴ and will not be able to secure necessary domestic financial support for its activities.

³⁴ Even with those, the relations are more likely to be competitive than cooperative, because of the fight for funds.

Finally, the nature of external involvement will be different for a marginally implanted civic organization. Instead of serving as short-term assistance, foreign aid will become an irreplaceable crutch. Because an NGO does not have a pool of trusted members and responsive leaders, it is more likely to accept any ideas and pursue their implementation with a lot of vigor and very little critical analysis of their applicability in order to prove its loyalty to the funder. The result will be a slew of ill-conceived initiatives that retard the progress and trivialize the goals in a specific issue area. Without significant domestic funding sources, a nonprofit would become exclusively dependent on foreign grants.

A marginally embedded non-governmental organization will have few, if any, connections with the political society and the domestic public within which it has to operate. It is also quite common for an entity like this to look down upon both, claiming that politics and politicians are too “dirty” and too removed from the high ideals of civicness to deal with and the public is too uneducated in civic manners to involve in NGO’s intricate internal workings. A disembedded nonprofit is glad to cooperate only with a pool of foreign donors, which provide it with financial support and unquestionable normative guidance. It is thus unsurprising that in the society such civic groups will be perceived as “foreign agents” that come and fade at the behest of their overseas benefactors.

It is pertinent to finish our discussion about embeddedness, by concentrating on the natural state of affairs that a regularly embedded NGO would find itself in on a daily basis. The necessity to do so stems from the danger of taking the index too far or perceiving its classification too literally. The capacity to categorize nonprofit organizations according to their level of rootedness may inadvertently lead one to

assume some statism – once the ideal state of high embeddedness is attained, an NGO does nothing, but rest on its laurels. This vision would be not only oversimplified, but also erroneous at the core. Like many social processes, embeddedness is neither final nor permanent. Instead, NGOs – mature and new alike – have to grapple and balance continuously the key dimensions of embeddedness. The dilemmas of how to interact with political parties without being swallowed by them or how to attract new generations of citizens to support an old cause (which by then has been extensively redefined), or how to cooperate with international partners in advancing shared goals, while maintaining NGO's own identity, remain at the forefront of every nonprofit's concerns. What makes it all different for those organizations that are significantly implanted into their host societies is the ability to strike the right balance (sooner, rather than latter) by relying on the acquired experience, innate intuition and knowledge of the local society and its circumstances, and never-ending feedback from all the relevant actors that is available in abundance in highly participatory societies.

Defining success

Since the second part of the main hypothesis ties greater embeddedness to more success during the color revolutions, it is important to specify what success means in this particular case.

The dissertation advances two indicators of success – function and contribution. In the first case, we will evaluate whether the four organizations under analysis performed the function that was expected of them by others and defined by the organizations themselves during those events. For instance, an election watchdog (like ISFED or CVU) is supposed to monitor elections, announce the results of its efforts and

distribute its assessment among relevant political and societal actors. A youth group (like Kmara or Pora) is expected to mobilize previously passive segments of the population to vote and to defend their choice. The second indicator deals with an NGO's specific contribution to the revolutionary process, which may come in four different forms (which also coincide with the stages of a revolution) – initial mobilization of protestors, organizing and sustaining large-scale demonstrations, helping to resolve (through legal or political means) the impasse that generated the revolution.

After assessing embeddedness for each organization, the dissertation evaluates their performance in the color revolution to determine their success based on the two indicators outlined above.

Antecedent variables

As the dissertation's first chapter makes it clear, civil society never emerges and develops in a vacuum. It is, therefore, not possible to analyze the embeddedness of specific civic groups without considering broadly the variables that shape the milieu for civil society in general. Based on the review of the extant literature, two of them should be distinguished.

The first one is political culture that is defined as “the specifically political orientations – attitudes toward the political system and its various parties and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system” as well as “the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation.”³⁵ The importance of a specific political culture for organizational embeddedness lies in a set of

³⁵ Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 12-13.

behaviors that either encourage or discourage citizens to be involved in wider societal processes.

Within the three types of political culture, which Almond and Verba identify, the participant one provides most features that are conducive to wider public involvement. Its members are oriented both toward input and output mechanisms of the system and see themselves in the “activist” role. The least amicable to participation is the parochial culture where people hold no expectations of the political system and/or are deeply unaware of the political aspects of life. For this culture, most participatory activities occur within a narrow range of one’s family or most proximate community settings. The subject culture occupies the golden, but rather unhappy middle. Though its members are aware of specialized governmental authority, they have either a generally passive attitude toward the system and their role within it or, worst of all, perceive the whole structure as illegitimate.

The outlined categories enable us to hypothesize that NGOs will be best embedded in the participant political culture, which encourages various forms of engagement and draws strong links between civil and political societies. On the other hand, NGO’s embeddedness will vary from moderate to low in subject cultures with the range being dependent on the extent of people’s estrangement from the system or the strength of their perception that the government is illegitimate. Finally, civic groups will not be embedded in the states with parochial political cultures, because traditional societies are prone to expunge any external influence.

Our research will test these hypotheses by looking at the political culture in Ukraine and Georgia. Using public opinion surveys, we will consider the following set of indicators – people’s attention to politics, their discussion of politics in social settings,

national pride, trust in government and other state institutions, sense of efficacy, voting, social/general trust, education, tolerance, a belief in democracy, self-assessment of government's impact on one's life and strategies to influence it. Citizens in a participant culture are expected to be more concerned about politics and discuss political matters on a regular basis in common settings, such as family, friends and work. They believe government plays a great role in their daily life. They also have a high feeling of national pride, greater trust toward the state and its institutions (note – institutions, not specific individuals who may head them at present) and a greater feeling of efficacy. Because politics matters to them and they believe they can matter in politics, such people have a belief in democracy and are more likely to vote. Aside from voting, they employ a wide range of other participatory strategies, like civic involvement, meetings, demonstrations, legislative petitioning, etc. As a result of civic activism, they meet a great variety of people and become more tolerant of diverse political, social views and lifestyles.

The second critical antecedent variable is the role of the state. Our previous analysis has noted numerous times of the link that exists between civil and political societies. It has also been mentioned that where the state historically precedes civil society, it has the power of shaping the legal, social and political settings within which the former will have to operate.³⁶ The hypothesis that comes out of this historical analysis can be summarized as follows – the more powerful the state, the harder it is for an NGO to get embedded. In other words, a potent state will not only subsume the space normally taken by nonprofit organizations, but will also seek to use the mechanisms to

³⁶ M. Szabo, "Civic Engagement in East-Central Europe," in *Future of Civil Society: Making Central European Nonprofit Organizations Work*, ed. Annette Zimmer, Eckhard Priller, and Matthias Freise. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 38-39.

ensure control over such entities. The dissertation intends to look at two types of indicators to determine the state's strength.³⁷

The first deals with its coercive capacity, more specifically the scope and cohesion of suppression. If a state is highly repressive (i.e. responding with toughest instruments to most minute incursions on its authority), the scope is said to be high. If it is relatively tolerant (i.e. preferring not to interfere unless the absolutely vital interests are at stake), then the scope is determined as low. The cohesion of coercive powers depends on whether and to what extent the state is able to induce compliance with its apparatus. Such powers are high if groups comply immediately (or even preemptively by not pursuing certain actions) with state demands. However, if individuals and groups are able to resist and/or successfully avoid the state attempts of coercion, then the level of cohesion is deemed low.

The second indicator of strength assesses the role of the governing party organization, by looking at the scope of its infrastructure and its internal cohesion. A state will be strong if a governing party has a highly developed infrastructure that is able to penetrate all layers of societal functioning. Here the analogy with the Communist Party is pertinent. During its seventy-year hold over millions of Soviet citizens, the party had legendary omnipresence that included Communist cells in villages, schools, kindergartens, as well as party supplicants, like Communist pioneers, Komsomol and obedient trade unions. Wherever you were and whoever you were, the Communist Party made sure it was somewhere close to you. The example goes to illuminate the importance of state infrastructure in controlling its populace, observing its mood and forestalling possible dissent. The opposite is also true - if the government is absent in

³⁷ The indicators are derived from the work by Bunce and Wolchik.

certain areas, the vacuum of authority will soon be filled by other actors, including civil society groups. At the same time, it is not enough for the governing party to be widely present. It also needs to be internally coherent, by offering significant rewards to party members and other loyalists to support and promote its policies in their localities. Going back to the Soviet example, one of the reasons for the country's collapse was a split within the Communist Party between hard-liners (represented at different times by Yegor Ligachev and Vladimir Kryuchkov) and reformers (led by Mikhail Gorbachev). The high-level divisions manifested themselves at all echelons of the party. In the end, it was weakened and unable to remain the mechanism of repression it used to be in the past. To summarize, in reviewing the cases of Ukraine and Georgia, the research will consider to what extent the regimes of Kuchma and Shevarnadze relied on coercion and how effective such repression was. It will then assess the role of governing party organizations in shoring up support for these regimes.

While political culture and the state's role can be labeled as background variables (because they determine the setting within which NGOs have to seek embeddedness), Western leverage and domestic elite responsiveness often become ongoing antecedent factors in the process of embeddedness. Unlike in the previous cases, Western leverage does not play an unambiguously positive role. On one hand, the presence of Western pressures can ensure that civil society is given a chance to emerge and develop. Fearing Western economic and political retributions, state leaders may choose to ease their pressure on domestic civic groups. On the other hand, too much Western attention and leverage can isolate NGOs from the rest of their society or, even worse, make them look as foreign stooges. Though there is a positive correlation between Western leverage and elite responsiveness, the impact that foreign governments can make is obviously not

limitless. It depends on three sets of variables. The first includes such leverage factors as state's economic and political vulnerability, the consistency of Western attention and pressures, and the existence of countervailing powers.³⁸ The extant research asserts that the state will be more vulnerable if it possesses any of the five following characteristics: recently acquired statehood, a hybrid form of democracy, heterogeneous population, indicators of poor economic performance and post-communist structural deficiencies. Western impact will be amplified if it is both consistent (i.e. it happens on a regular basis around predictable issues) and credible (i.e. Western assessments and observers are seen as not openly supporting a specific domestic constituency).³⁹ However, it may be severely undercut if it occurs in the region with one or more countervailing powers, which can offer alternatives to Western support. The second set includes a wide range of linkages, such as shared history, interconnected economic development and close geographic proximity.⁴⁰ All of them will undoubtedly enhance Western impact. Finally, whether or not national political elites choose to respond to external pressures from the West depends on their internal cohesiveness, domestic popularity, political upbringing and a country's previous experiences of domestic unrest.⁴¹ If elites are divided from within, they will be more susceptible to foreign pressures in order to placate the internal group of moderates. Unpopular governments are also more likely to be responsive, as they try to avoid giving their domestic rivals another issue to rally around.⁴² Furthermore, leaders who have matured politically during the Soviet times are more sensitive to Western criticism because of their intention to be seen as "democrats"

³⁸ Lucan A. Way and Steven Levitsky, "Pigs, Wolves and the Evolution of Post-Soviet Competitive Authoritarianism, 1992-2005," *Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law Working Paper* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, April 2006).

³⁹ Bunce and Wolchik, 297-298; Michael McFaul, "Importing Revolution: Internal and External Factors in Ukraine's 2004 Democratic Breakthrough," *CDDRL Working Paper* no. 59 (May 2006).

⁴⁰ Way and Levitsky.

⁴¹ Bunce and Wolchik.

⁴² McFaul, "Importing Revolutions."

abroad. In the end, domestic leadership will base its responses on the past record.⁴³ If the instruments of coercion were once used without Western reproach, they have greater chances of being utilized again on the assumption of a similar Western reaction.

To conclude, the dissertation will consider three antecedent variables – political culture, the role of state and the influence of Western leverage. The first two set the stage for NGO's embeddedness. The last frequently intervenes in the process of an NGO getting rooted within the society. In terms of expected outcomes, the research anticipates that states with highly participant political culture and restrained mechanisms of coercion will provide a more favorable climate for NGOs and enhance their chances to become embedded. It is also speculated that the presence of several leverage factors, the specifics of elite composition and its domestic standing, and a country's tight linkages to the West will increase the responsiveness to Western pressures, which aim at helping NGOs to survive and thrive.

Addressing causality: civil society and embeddedness

It is important to elaborate on the causal link between civil society and embeddedness in order to avoid making a circular argument, thereby a strong civil society contributes to greater embeddedness and greater embeddedness contributes to a strong civil society. In civil societies of developed democracies, there is indeed a strong inter-linkage between the two phenomena because of the long record of embedded civic entities (ranging from trade unions to groups on social causes, like the Mothers Against Drunk Drivers). Such circularity is, however, absent in developing democracies because NGOs do not have a long record of existence. In many of such states we still deal with

⁴³ Bunce and Wolchik.

nonprofit organizations of the first wave that were set up in the mid-1990s. Therefore, the natural mutual enrichment - where strongly embedded NGOs make the whole civil society more in touch with the domestic landscape and a firmly rooted civil society will push NGOs to become more implanted simply to stay afloat and be competitive with others - is absent in the former Soviet Union because most nonprofit groups are still weak and the civil society in general does not have a history of being truly independent from the state.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The reliance on case studies to investigate the notion of domestic embeddedness brings a number of methodological advantages to our analysis. First, as a research approach, case studies are believed to be better suited for exploring complex phenomena that are difficult to model statistically.⁴⁴ It has been previously noted that embeddedness managed to escape a careful research scrutiny, precisely because it is so elusive in its manifestations. When NGOs are well implanted in their prospective domestic societies, embeddedness is implicitly assumed. When they are weak and detached, researchers choose to pay attention to other more perceptible problems (such as NGO's weak fundraising strategies, bad relations with parties, or an apathetic public), which are easier to track down. Second, the case study approach is useful in studying embeddedness as a conceptual innovation, because the engagement of theory and a close analysis of cases bring an unusual capacity to see the general in the particular.⁴⁵ From the theoretical perspective, this dissertation brings together the accumulated knowledge of two fields -

⁴⁴ Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Case Study Methods in International Relations Subfield," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (February 2007): 180.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

democratization and civil society. It combines them to flash out the hypotheses on how embedded civic organizations fit in democratic transformations. On the practical side, this research takes a step further by looking at the two events of rapid democratic transition to see to what extent embeddedness, as a theoretical construct, impacted the role of NGOs in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Rose Revolution in Georgia. In the end, the insights gained from these cases will be used to refine the initial theoretical speculations on NGO embeddedness and democratization, thus enriching both scientific fields from which they were derived.

Method and data collection tools

The dissertation will use the method of controlled comparison that collects data on the same variables across units with a small number of cases.⁴⁶ For this purpose, it has defined the concept of embeddedness and developed a specific set of indicators that will be tested separately, but consistently, for two non-governmental organizations in Georgia and Ukraine. The following four data collection instruments would be utilized in the process of data gathering.

First, the research will conduct participant interviews with leaders and members of the NGOs under consideration to get first-hand perspectives on their experiences as well as their views on the NGO's embeddedness and the stature of the domestic civil society in general. Second, expert interviews will be undertaken to obtain independent evaluations that would serve two concurrent purposes. On the one hand, they would supplement the information available from primary participant interviews, by providing additional detail. On the other, they may serve as a means to diminish the interviewer

⁴⁶ King, Keohane, and Verba.

bias, by offering alternative viewpoints and interpretations on the same issue. Third, the study will perform extensive content analysis of relevant NGO materials (such as websites, public statements, interviews, press releases, etc.) to see whether the private responses of NGO members and external experts match with the image that an NGO was projecting in public at the time. Fourth, a wide array of secondary sources will be used to fill in the gaps that emerge as a result of the interviews and the analysis of primary sources. Among qualitative secondary sources, the research will rely on reports and assessments by domestic governments, civil society watchdog groups, foreign and international donors that consider the performance of our NGOs and/or the civil society in general. The quantitative instruments will encompass public and NGO surveys that offer numerical data to strengthen our assessments. It should, however, be noted that the dissertation will not perform any statistical analyses of its own.

To emphasize, the complementarity of data collection tools is designed to achieve two critical goals. The first relates to the ultimate task of case studies – “to bring as much information to bear on our hypothesis as possible.”⁴⁷ Thus, the reader should be presented with a richer, multi-dimensional and highly nuanced picture of organizational embeddedness. The second seeks to ameliorate one of the inherent weaknesses of any qualitative methodology – the possibility that individual biases will greatly skew the obtained responses. To this end, the dissertation makes it a specific goal to consult several sources, juxtapose their responses and (in the process of collecting data) pursue on inconsistencies through additional interviews or subsequent clarifications. Secondary sources will become another valuable (though mostly indirect) check on the validity of the acquired information. Therefore, in the end the dissertation should combine a

⁴⁷ King, Keohane, and Verba, 48.

richness of detail and vividness of personal accounts with the reliability of a scientific inquiry that provides empirical and theoretical contributions to the field and enables future replicability.

Research structure

The research structure of this dissertation is a three-pronged approach that closely follows the model suggested by King, Keohane and Verba in their seminal writing “Designing Social Inquiry.” It begins by summarizing the historical detail. The goal at this stage is to focus on the outcomes (i.e. the background that led to the success of the “color revolutions”) that I wish to explain and to condense the information at our disposal. In the process of doing so, the research will review the general development of civil societies in Ukraine and Georgia and the legal framework that regulates NGO activities in the two states.

The second step conducts descriptive inference, which is “the process of understanding an unobserved phenomenon on the basis of a set of observations.”⁴⁸ The key objective in this undertaking is to distinguish between systematic and nonsystematic components of embeddedness as the phenomenon under analysis. In order to do that, the research will gather data on the set of specific indicators (e.g. constituency, societal influence, external and internal transfers, etc.) that have been outlined earlier in the chapter.

The third and final step is about making causal inference. The aim here is to establish a causal effect, by showing “the difference between the systematic component of observations made when the explanatory variable takes one value and the systematic

⁴⁸ Ibid., 55

component of comparable observations... takes on an other values.”⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning that this stage is fraught with difficulties and frequently avoided by researchers for the fear that presented evidence will not amount to a compelling case of causality. In our case, the challenge is further complicated by the choice of case studies as the research methodology, because qualitative techniques are thought to be more elusive (than their quantitative counterparts) in establishing apparent causal links. To evaluate whether there is a positive causal relationship between embeddedness and an NGO’s performance in a “color revolution,” the dissertation will rely on the index of embeddedness, which assigns weight specifications to each of our indicators. Therefore, when summarizing NGO’s performance, it will be able to conclude whether an organization is strongly, weakly or moderately embedded based on a cumulative weighted score it obtained on all the indicators.

Design of the case studies

Each case study will consist of two profiles. The first one describes a domestic civil society in general features. The second looks at the four non-governmental organizations (two in each country) that are the focus of this dissertation in Ukraine and Georgia.

Though the primary theoretical reasoning (i.e. the importance of summarizing the historical content) for putting the portraits of Ukrainian and Georgian civil societies first has been already presented, a couple of arguments ought to be further highlighted.

First, the composite picture of a national civil society and its members allows developing a certain background against which the embeddedness of our organizations

⁴⁹ King, Keohane, and Verba, 81-82.

can be better judged. For instance, it is not surprising that a more mature civil society is likely to produce a greater number of highly or moderately embedded nonprofits, because it provides more propitious conditions that help NGOs connect to people and political actors. Whereas in weak and underdeveloped civil societies, nonprofits may need to go an extra mile to achieve the level of embeddedness that their counterparts elsewhere take for granted.

Second, civil society profiles will enable to make a future descriptive inference as to whether our NGOs are typical, as compared to the general parameters of a nonprofit in that country. Furthermore, if they are not typical, the study will be able to pinpoint the specific features make them stand out in their host societies.

Data will be collected along two lines of inquiry. The first deals with overall characteristics of a nonprofit sector and looks at such variables as a number of registered NGOs,⁵⁰ their regional distribution, average size,⁵¹ issue orientation, longevity,⁵² and sources of funding. The second seeks to identify general socioeconomic and normative qualities of NGOs members. For the former, it pays attention to their age, income, gender, and length of membership. In the latter, the research looks at whether members of civic groups have a set of pro-democratic attitudes (like a belief in democracy, high general and institutional trust, patterns of volunteering, voting and greater tolerance as well as more civic-minded reasons for involvement).

The second part of each case study will deal with two non-governmental organizations in Ukraine and Georgia. The first type of NGOs includes those that

⁵⁰ We consider those NGOs that registered between 1991 (the year when both Ukraine and Georgia became independent) and the year of a "color revolution" (2003 in Georgia and 2004 in Ukraine).

⁵¹ The dissertation will consider not only how many members, but also their organizational roles (e.g. paid staffer, volunteer, part-time employee).

⁵² The timeframe identical to the one for registration will be applied.

organized public protests and received the greatest amount of attention from the Western media and policy-makers – Pora in Ukraine and Kmara in Georgia. The second group encompasses such nationally famous election monitoring groups as the Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU) and the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) in Georgia.

Their description will be divided into two large parts. The first delivers in-depth evidence of their background and activities that relate to the key indicators of embeddedness. The other details how organizational implantedness works in practice, by showing the ways in which the NGOs under consideration have exercised their influence on a regular basis and during the critical days of a “color revolution.”

Therefore, in the first part data will be gathered along four areas – organizational background, constituency, legitimacy, and external and internal normative transfers. In the second one, the information will be collected on two dimensions. The first will include the description of NGO’s general programs and activities and how well they have been able to penetrate the domestic political system and reach the ordinary public in order to produce the desired outcomes. The second scrutinizes the initiatives that the NGOs pursued during the color revolutions and their influence on the overall course of events.

Each case study will conclude by summarizing the state of the national civil society in Georgia and Ukraine and bringing together the major findings related to the performance of the four NGOs on the indicators of embeddedness.

CHAPTER III

CASE STUDY: UKRAINE

My dissertation seeks to provide its own answer on what it takes to build a functioning civil society in a nascent democracy. As Chapter I describes, civil society is a broad theoretical construct that consists of a variety of formal and informal elements. Civic groups, which represent interests of diverse constituencies, are the most prominent formal manifestation of civil society. They are especially important in the former Soviet republics where a historically produced lack of genuine civic structures is combined with mass apathy and withdrawal from the public into the private realm of life.¹

Under these conditions, in order to strengthen civil society as a whole, it is necessary to create successful civic organizations. In turn, my work asserts that NGOs' success is determined by the extent of their embeddedness in a host society. Deeply rooted civic groups will enhance the capacity of civil society to become a relevant and independent actor. Such NGOs will be more pro-active and flexible in regard to changing political and social circumstances. They will also serve as a magnet for individuals and other elements of civil society to get involved in public life.

With the goal to assess whether embeddedness contributes to the success of civic groups, this chapter considers how two Ukrainian organizations – Pora and the Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU) – participated in the Orange Revolution. The narrative begins with an overview of the event and the contribution that each group has made to its success. The description of Pora's and CVU's performance during the

¹ Stepanenko, "Civil Society in Post-Soviet Ukraine"; Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, "Introduction: Transnational Networks and NGOs in Postcommunist Societies" in *The Power and Limits of NGOs*.

revolution answers the question – “What did they do at that critical juncture for their domestic societies?”

However, limiting the analysis to just that would provide only half of the picture. The other half lies in finding out how those groups became so influential and why they decided to be (or not to be) involved in the revolution in the first place. Therefore, the research will proceed to a detailed assessment of the formative period for both civic associations. Enlarging the scope of inquiry beyond the timeframe of the revolution will accomplish two goals. First, it will set the context within these organizations had to operate in 1991-2004 by sketching the profile of the national civil society. Second, the evaluation of the groups’ formative years will trace the process of getting domestically implanted, which occurs over time.

The final section of this chapter will consider the failures and successes of Pora and CVU in the Orange Revolution, thereby setting the stage for a more comprehensive analysis of their embeddedness.

ORANGE REVOLUTION

Stakes and candidates

In 2004, Ukraine was scheduled to have the fourth presidential elections since its independence in August 1991. Though voters were offered a plethora of contenders, two Viktor – Yanukovych and Yushchenko – stood a real chance of winning.

The election was significant in marking the end of a decade-long and increasingly authoritarian rule by President Leonid Kuchma. Having finally decided not

to seek another (and dubiously legal²) term in office, the Ukrainian president anointed Viktor Yanukovych as his successor. Hailing from Donetsk in Eastern Ukraine, Yanukovych represented the interests of the region's and the country's richest oligarch Rinat Akhmetov and became prime minister in November 2002. He endeared himself to Kuchma by showing a ruthless style of governance as well as an ability to deliver results, more prominently an astounding victory of the pro-governmental party "For a United Ukraine" in the 2002 parliamentary elections in his region. As a presidential candidate, Yanukovych emphasized the continuity of economic stability and growth that ensued at the end of Kuchma's second term.³

On the opposite side of the battle, there was Viktor Yushchenko. In 1992-1999 he served as the Chairman of Ukraine's Central Bank and later in 1999-2000 as prime minister. Widely credited for a successful introduction of hryvnia (the national currency) and an economic upturn in the late 1990s, Yushchenko was extremely popular in Western and Central Ukraine. With Yulia Tymoshenko, a colorful and boisterous critic of Kuchma, agreeing not to run in favor of Yushchenko, he had no competitor within the usually fractious pro-democratic camp. His appeal among voters attracted second-tier oligarchs and former regime loyalists,⁴ like chocolate baron Petro Poroshenko.

Election campaign

"Dzerkalo Tyzhnia," an influential weekly newspaper, once compared President Kuchma to the sun that commanded every single object in the Ukrainian political solar

² Sergiy Rakhmanin, "Pytannia pryntsyphu" [A matter of principle], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 24-29 April 2004; Yuliya Mostova, "Tretij zajvyj" [The third one is not needed], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 3-9 April 2004.

³ For more on the candidates, see Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2005), 7-25.

⁴ Aslund and McFaul, ed., *Revolution in Orange*, 36-37.

system to revolve around his interests. From this perspective, the presidential campaign became the ultimate solar eclipse.

In summer 2004, authorities were anxious about their inability to control the campaign narrative.⁵ Yushchenko's rallies were attracting increasingly large crowds, regardless of media boycott. Foreign and domestic civic groups proved to be a noisy bunch that was hard to silence. Pora sent jitters with its public protests and recurring street posters. CVU reports were well read in foreign capitals, particularly in Washington and Brussels. Few independent media, like the already mentioned "Zerkalo Nedeli," online website "Ukrainska Pravda" and small TV station "5 Kanal," were outposts of an endless critical coverage of the regime.⁶ President Kuchma felt pressured by foreign delegations that descended upon the Ukrainian capital to emphasize the link between fair elections and the international recognition of a future Ukrainian president.⁷

The campaign took a decisive turn for the worse when on September 5, 2004 Viktor Yushchenko was allegedly poisoned during his dinner with the head of Ukraine's security services (SBU) Ihor Smeshko.⁸ Demonstrations erupted throughout the country. Both campaigns ratcheted up their rhetoric – Yushchenko with the famous slogan "Prisons to the Bandits!" and Yanukovych with the description of his opponent as "BUSHenko."

Voting

⁵ Wilson, 70-105.

⁶ Olena Prytula, "The Ukrainian Media Rebellion" in *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*, ed. Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 103-125.

⁷ Petro Daniluk, "Derzhavna polityka v dii" [The state policy in action], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 10-16 July 2004.

⁸ Roman Kupcinsky, "Ukraine: Mystery Behind Yushchenko's Poisoning Continues," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 18 September 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1071434.html>.

The first round of presidential elections took place on October 31, 2004 and revealed that the government had greatly improved its vast expertise in fraud from the 1999 and 2002 campaigns.

Thousands of employees were coerced into voting in advance with absentee ballots, which were collected by employers to verify the “correct” vote. Ballots of those who voted at home (often the elderly and the physically handicapped) were switched on the way to a district polling station. Discrepancies in voter lists were staggering. Citizens stood hours in line only to find out that their name did not appear on the list. Authorities relied heavily on the use of “dead souls,”⁹ who predictably supported the government candidate. In a massive effort to skew the results, bus tours transported thousands of people from Eastern Ukraine who used their “absentee coupons”¹⁰ to vote several times at several polling stations. Finally, large-scale irregularities occurred during the vote count by district commissions and most importantly by the Central Election Commission (CEC) in Ukraine. A suspension in counting was frequently announced when Yushchenko threatened to take the lead. The announcement of official results was delayed by more than a week. On November 10, the CEC informed that with 74.9 percent of the turnout, Yushchenko won the first round by 0.61 percent. He received 39.87 percent and Yanukovich got 39.26 percent of the total vote.¹¹

The campaign continued for another month and a half. However, the tactics of campaigning and the methods of conducting elections only worsened.¹² In the end, on

⁹ Deriving its name from the famous work of Nikolai Gogol, “dead souls” usually included the deceased, those who migrated abroad, moved to a different part of the country or were simply made up by authorities.

¹⁰ The Ukrainian legislation allowed the use of an absentee coupon (*vidkriptyj talon*) to those who would be traveling on the Election Day. However, it did not make any significant provisions to control that these people would not vote more than once.

¹¹ The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, “The Elections of the President of Ukraine 2004,” <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2004/wp0011>.

¹² For more on campaign dynamics, see Yegor Sobolev, “Vlada, yaku ne vydavyty” [Powers that cannot be squeezed out], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 20-26 November 2004; *Ukrainska Pravda*, “Yak Yanukovykh vybory falsyfikuvav” [How Yanukovich falsified the election], 24 November 2004, <http://pravda.com.ua/archive/2004/november/24/4.shtml>.

November 21, 2004 78.7 percent or 29,291,744 Ukrainians voted, surpassing any previous records of participation. On the night after the elections, extra 1.1 million votes were thrown in via computer manipulations. The results produced a Soviet-like turnout and voting in Yanukovich's native Donetsk region. Additional 871,402 votes also tilted the victory in his favor by 2.9 percent.¹³

Orange Revolution

By the end of the Election Day, first tents appeared on Khreshchatyk (Kyiv's central street), and about 25,000-30,000 activists gathered at the Maidan of Independence (the location of future protests). On November 22, the crowd grew up between 150,000-300,000 protesters who were mostly from Kyiv.¹⁴ Others were arriving continuously from western and central parts of the country. Demonstrators demanded the recognition of Yushchenko's victory. During first two nights, a violent crackdown on demonstrations by authorities was possible. As the New York Time revealed, the option was hotly debated inside the Kuchma circle. By November 23, the number of people downtown Kyiv was so large that any use of force was unfathomable. The announcement of official results by the Central Election Commission the following day had an opposite effect, by adding the oil of anger and determination to the fire of the revolution. Sensing a breaking point, Pora activists staged protests at major government buildings, including Preident Kuchma's dacha. On November 25, international mediators arrived to Kyiv to monitor negotiations between Yushchenko and Yanukovich. That day major Ukrainian TV channels lifted state-imposed censorship to cover demonstrations.

¹³ Wilson, 114-117.

¹⁴ Ibid., 123-130; *Ukrainska Pravda*, "Namety na maidani" [Tents at the Maidan], 22 November 2004, <http://pravda.com.ua/news/2004/11/22/13956.htm>.

By the end of the week, Ukraine's parliament – the Verkhovna Rada – recognized the second round as unconstitutional and ordered a re-vote. The situation remained tense as sides were haggling over precise details of the compromise, and Yanukovich's Party of Regions attempted to instigate the partition of Eastern Ukrainian oblasts into a Severo-Donetsk Republic.¹⁵ On December 3, the Supreme Court of Ukraine ruled on Yushchenko's appeal, by invalidating the results of the second round and ordering a re-vote on December 26. The Orange Revolution has achieved its main goal. The demonstrations began to dissipate after December 8 when the Ukrainian parliament approved a package of legislative and constitutional changes that enabled the third round of voting.

Pora and CVU in the Orange Revolution

Both Pora and CVU participated in the Orange Revolution, but did so in a different manner. Whereas Pora's input was direct and visible, CVU preferred to provide informal analytical assistance and strenuously maintain public neutrality.

Pora made three critical contributions. First, it enabled the revolutionary cascade by bringing initial protesters to the streets. The magnitude of immediate support and its seemingly high level of logistical organization tilted the public perception and persuaded hesitant politicians to join Yushchenko. The organization showed an astonishing ability to persuade and mobilize a large student population of the capital. Guided by Pora activists, young people from Kyiv's two largest schools – Kyiv Shevchenko and Kyiv Polytechnic Universities – marched downtown to the Maidan of Independence.¹⁶ The

¹⁵ Olena Lvova, "Kamo gryadeshi" [What is coming?], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 4-10 December 2004.

¹⁶ Olha Aivazovska, a regional Pora activist, interview with the author, June 2007.

growing crowd of students was quickly joined by Kyiv residents and began producing a ripple effect elsewhere.

Second, Pora was crucial in sustaining the demonstrations and the level of public involvement. By setting up and manning the Orange tent city downtown Kyiv, the group provided a focal gathering point for protestors and ensured that the demonstrations could not be crushed at night when mass participation dramatically decreased. In the end, Pora's tent city signified the endurance of protestors, determined to have their grievances finally addressed.¹⁷

Third, thanks to coordination with Yushchenko's bloc "Our Ukraine," Pora's well-attended and noisy protests at key government buildings instilled a sense of the opposition's inevitable victory. The national government was brought to a standstill when the group picketed the Cabinet of Ministers, Central Election Commission and the Presidential Administration.¹⁸ At his own dacha President Kuchma had to bear with a continuous drumbeat organized by Pora activists who were determined to sap his confidence. The tactics achieved their main goal – the recognition of the second round of voting as illegitimate and scheduling a re-vote.

In answering my question about the influence that the Committee of Voters of Ukraine exerted on the course of the Orange revolution, its Chairman immediately demanded a qualification on what is meant by the revolution. In his opinion, if one considers mere protests at Kyiv's central square as the revolution, then the impact was

¹⁷ Aslund and McFaul, 96; Tetyana Soboleva, NDI Political Officer in Ukraine, interview with the author, June 2007.

¹⁸ Ukrainska Pravda, "Yushchenkiivtsi zablokuvaly vsi vhody do Kabminu ta AP" [Yushchenko supporters blocked all entrances to the Cabinet of Ministers and the Presidential Administration], 25 November 2004, <http://pravda.com.ua/news/2004/11/25/14135.htm>.

minimal. If, on the other hand, one looks at the contributions to the revolution as a social event, then CVU can boast two achievements.¹⁹

One, its long-term observation reports kept Ukraine in the news on the Capitol Hill and became a powerful tool to exert influence on the Kuchma regime. The other, CVU was critical to the legal resolution of the revolution's conundrum – i.e. how to legitimize the ordering of a re-vote. By providing the factual dossiers to Our Ukraine, the Committee provided much needed substance for the case that the voting on November 21, 2004 was manipulated to such an extent as to completely alter the will of Ukrainian people.²⁰

To sum up the influence of both groups, Pora was crucial in empowering the politically disenchanting youth, organizing and sustaining its involvement in general and specific events that occurred during the Orange Revolution. Thanks to the media coverage, its activists became the face of the protests. Through the meticulous work of its activists, the Committee of Voters of Ukraine provided a critical coverage of the election campaign as well as a basis to legally challenge the outcome of the vote.

FORMATIVE YEARS

The majority of available research on the Orange Revolution usually stops at this point. Even the best analytical pieces do not go further than analyzing general trends and factors, which contributed to the successful performance of civil society as a whole. However, such analyses do not reconcile the discrepancy between previously negative

¹⁹ Ihor Popov, CVU Chairman, interview with the author, June 2007.

²⁰ Ibid., Oleksandr Chernenko, CVU Press Secretary, interview with the author, June 2007.

assessments of civil societies in Ukraine and Georgia and a surprisingly strong performance of specific civic groups in color revolutions.

The assessment below is designed to redress this problem. Its approach is two-fold. The first part will sketch a composite portrait of the Ukrainian civil society, thereby helping to understand the milieu within which groups like Pora and CVU had to operate. More importantly, the diagnosis of Ukrainian civil society's pathologies and strengths will provide a baseline to compare whether (and how) the civic associations under analysis differed from the rest of non-governmental organizations. The second part will trace the organizational evolution of Pora and CVU before the Orange revolution in order to provide evidence on the groups' political and societal embeddedness as well as the role of external influences.

In the end, both parts are key to answering the dissertation's main hypothesis on the contribution of embeddedness to the groups' performance in the revolution. If indeed groups were different from the rest of Ukraine's civil society and the differences can be attributed to their greater connections with ordinary citizens and political parties, then it would be possible to assert that embeddedness plays a critical role in facilitating the maturation of nonprofit organizations in nascent democracies. With this purpose in mind, we begin by evaluating how the Ukrainian third sector developed in thirteen years since the country's independence.

NONPROFIT SECTOR IN UKRAINE

Legal framework and NGO growth

Though Ukraine has a generally liberal legal framework in key areas of nonprofit activities, some remnants of the Soviet system persist. In the first decade of independence the growth of new non-governmental organizations was vigorous. However, their sheer number did not translate into potency or longevity.

The domestic legislation offers a fairly broad definition of a civic organization as “an association of citizens to satisfy and protect their legal, social, economic, creative, age, national-cultural, sport and other common interests.”²¹ NGOs are allowed “to organize the collection of charitable donations and contributions from individuals and legal entities, foreign states and international organizations.”²² The reasons for NGO dissolution encompass such widely accepted postulates as calls for violence against specific societal groups and activities to undermine state sovereignty.²³

One of the legislative loopholes is the requirement for NGOs to undergo, what in fact amounts to, a double registration process. An organization has to be registered by the Ministry of Justice to confirm its legality and obtain an approval from local police to qualify for a not-for-profit tax status. The redundancy is obvious – a group has to seek authorization from two state bodies where one (local police) is a subordinate of the other (the Ministry of Justice), which has already permitted NGO’s existence.

Soviet suspicions about any entrepreneurial activity also permeate the laws that regulate financial aspects of civic organizations. The Law on the Taxation of Enterprises is both convoluted and restrictive (if applied unfavorably). First and foremost, under the

²¹ Law of Ukraine on Citizens’ Associations, Article 3.

²² Law of Ukraine on Charity, Article 17.

²³ Law of Ukraine on Citizens’ Association, Article 4.

concept of “public organizations” it lumps together different types of entities. In the past, the ambiguity allowed states authorities to sponsor disproportionately state-funded groups, while claiming credit for supporting civil society as a whole. Second, the legislation imposes same reporting requirements on small civic groups and big businesses, even though the former may often have no funds to employ a full-time accountant.²⁴ Third, most confusion and frustration arise from the legal clause, prohibiting NGOs to engage in commercial activities without establishing a business sister entity, unless such activities support an NGO’s core statutory goals. This ambiguity leaves many nonprofits at the mercy of local tax inspections that have the discretion to classify NGO services as serving their statutory goals (thereby non-commercial) or revoke their nonprofit status. It is not surprising that under these circumstances 50 percent of organizations wishing to register as not-for-profit were denied the status by Ukraine’s tax authorities.²⁵ Finally, the legislative base before the Orange Revolution substantially limited the ability of NGOs to receive private donations from individuals and businesses to 4 percent of their total taxable income.

As a consequence of the abovementioned issues, 50 percent of nonprofit organizations see legislative obstacles to NGO development and 43-46 percent claim a lack of experience in implementing the pertinent legislation appropriately.²⁶

When speaking about the growth of the Ukrainian civil society, it is hard to imagine the striking magnitude of developments. The country began with merely 319 registered civic organizations at its birth in 1991 and accounted for over 23,000 NGOs

²⁴ Laboratory for Legislative Initiatives, “Non-governmental Organizations at the Market of Social Services: Financial, Institutional and Legislative aspects,” Roundtable materials (Kyiv, February 23, 2007), 12-15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁶ Counterpart Creative Center, “The State and the Dynamics of NGO development in Ukraine in 2002-2005” (Kyiv: CCC, 2005), 57-58.

and charity foundations by 1999.²⁷ The State Committee of Statistics reveals a progressive growth rate of civic groups, with Ukraine's Ministry of Justice registering between 1,006 (in 1996) and 2,069 (in 2004) new organizations.²⁸

Unfortunately, the official data is less helpful in determining how many of the registered organizations were able to survive. Because the government tracks only "birth," but not "death" of nonprofits (when they do not submit their financial reports and lose their nonprofit status), it is impossible to establish either mean longevity or survival rate. However, cross-regional evaluations from civil society experts offer a grim picture – only 10-15 percent of the legally set-up organizations function in the real life.²⁹ Their comments also point to a great level of fluidity within the sector when NGOs mushroom in the fields favored by foreign donors at the time. To sum up the situation, by 2004 Ukraine's civil society was only statistically strong.³⁰

Public participation and attitude

The research on civil society development in Ukraine has spoken at length about low public participation as a powerful impediment to greater civic activism.³¹ In 1994-2004, over 80 percent of Ukrainians were not members of any civic group.³² Explaining their apathy, almost equal portions saw either no need in civil society or indicated being busy with other problems, or simply not interested.

²⁷ EU Commission in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, "Neuryadovi organizatsii Evropejskogo Soyuzu: porivnyalnyj analiz z громадськими організаціями України" [Nongovernmental Organizations of the European Union: a Comparative Analysis with Ukrainian Civic Organizations] (Kyiv: EU Commission in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, 2002), 30.

²⁸ State Committee on Statistics "Civic Organizations in Ukraine," *Statistical Bulletin 2005* (Kyiv: State Committee on Statistics, 2006), 7.

²⁹ Valeriy Golovenko, political and civic analyst, interview with the author, May 2007; Dr. Nana Sumbadze, Co-Director of the Institute for Policy Studies, interview with the author, July 2007; Stepanenko, "Civil Society in Post-Soviet Ukraine."

³⁰ Golovenko.

³¹ Stepanenko.

³² Natalia Panina, *Ukrainian Society 1994-2005: Sociological Monitoring* (Kyiv: Institute of Sociology of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, 2005), 26.

A big part of public apathy stems from a deep resentment of organized participation that dates back to the Soviet times. That is why, even among those who were active, apolitical modes of involvement dominated over political activism. For instance, almost twice as many people took part in clubs than in civic organizations and social movements.³³

Lack of participation also informed a dubious public attitude toward NGOs. In 2004 (the year of the Orange Revolution) one half of Ukrainian citizens were, to a varying degree, distrustful of civic groups, and over one-third found it hard to determine their attitude at all.³⁴ While the number of people who had no information about civil society dropped from 24 percent to 14 percent between 2002 and 2004, the percentage of those who felt uninvited to join NGOs stayed the same at 11 percent.

It is possible to speculate that these predominantly negative sentiments might have stemmed from either insufficient awareness or the feeling of being excluded from nonprofit activities. The attitudes change rather dramatically when similar questions are asked of Ukrainian elites and the informed public. The two groups have a shared understanding on the proper role of civil society as a government watchdog (for the public) and as a tool for democratic development (for elites).³⁵

NGO landscape: distribution, structure and capacity

The survey of key indicators for NGO sustainability reveals the picture of a sector that is going through the pains of growth. That is why, a string of positive

³³ Panina, 26

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ukrainian Razukmov Center on Economic and Political Studies, "The External Factor in the 2004 Presidential Elections," *National Security and Defense Journal* 53, no. 5 (2004): 70.

developments in one area of organizational management is often countered by a persistent failure in another.

There are some apparent and hidden disparities in the geographical location of civic groups. Kyiv, the capital, accounts for 15 percent of all organizations. Though at first blush its share does not appear as large as in other post-Soviet states, like Russia or even Georgia, it can be suggested that there are more functioning NGOs in Kyiv, because of their proximity to funding sources (i.e. foreign donors and domestic capital) and much more propitious economic conditions in the capital. As another confirmation of this assertion, most NGO projects are implemented at the national and regional levels, but do not have any local presence.³⁶

In terms of their internal structure, the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian NGOs are permanently established operations with salaried staff. 87 percent employ from 1 to 7 people, 57 percent have a permanent staff of five individuals on average.³⁷ The majority of NGOs are membership-based organizations that rely on volunteers. However, their use is disproportionate among different organizations. For instance, 77 percent report working on average with 18 volunteers who spend 8 hours helping their nonprofits. But, if the outliers (i.e. nonprofits with the highest number of volunteers) are taken out, the average drops to eight volunteers per organization who contribute 2-3 hours per week. The profile of a typical Ukrainian volunteer includes traditional suspects – students (56 percent), who seek new experiences, NGO clients (30 percent), who are invested in the success of their helpers, unemployed (15 percent) and the elderly (11 percent) both of whom, for obvious reasons, have free time.³⁸ NGOs' access to modern

³⁶ EU Commission, 30, 32.

³⁷ Counterpart Creative Center, 21.

³⁸ Counterpart Creative Center, 23.

technology is rather modest. Though most organizations have an office phone, only a small minority (11 percent) was connected to the Internet in 2004.³⁹

In general, nonprofit organizations maintain a medium level of internal capacity.⁴⁰ Over a half of Ukrainian civic groups survive on the modest budgets that range from \$500 to \$5,000. The available information also dispels the myth about a generously funded nonprofit sector. Only 5-8 percent of organizations in 2002-2004 had budgets over \$50,000. And an extremely thin layer of civic groups (7-10 percent) enjoyed a comfortable living (by Ukrainian standards) on \$20,000-49,000 per year.⁴¹ When these statistics are combined, only between 12-18 percent or less than one-fifth of NGO can be considered financially well off.

As the third sector grew and nonprofits became more mature, their budgetary priorities began falling in line with the inherent logic of their existence. Whereas in 1996 NGO salaries constituted the largest identifiable expenditure, trailed by service payments and only then charitable expenses, in 2004 the difference in expenses for charitable activities and remuneration constituted about one percent, and service payments jumped to 22.5 percent of the total budget. In another positive development, NGOs became more transparent by cutting almost half of unidentified “other” expenses, which in 1996 constituted 65 percent of their budgets. Regardless of these improvements, overall financial auditing for nonprofit organizations remains weak, as over a half of them do not (or are not able to) release their reports.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 63; also see the summary of the USAID rankings in Appendix II.

⁴¹ Ibid., 30.

⁴² Ibid., 27, 29, 53.

The analysis further confirms previous assessments on the dependence of post-Soviet civil societies on foreign funders.⁴³ Most well financed groups admit that they get 72 percent of money from international NGOs, only 11 percent - from domestic businesses and merely 4 percent - from citizens' donations.⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, the largest number of organizations (60 percent) considers funding shortages as the most significant threat their survival. Domestic studies have also determined that NGOs, which combine international and domestic funding, have more capacity than those that rely predominantly one type of support.⁴⁵

Finally, long-term capacity and sustainability of many organizations is dependent not only on finding money and supporters, but also on having an office space. In this regard, 13 percent of NGOs that own their offices have a secure future. Other 40 percent depend on the mercy of entities that donate their facilities for free. And almost one half relies on administrative expenses (i.e. grants and donations) to rent a space.⁴⁶

To sum up, most functioning Ukrainian NGOs are modestly funded, staffed and equipped organizations that are located in the capital or regional centers. While their financial practices have improved, future sustainability remains problematic because of the dependency on foreign funds and the lack of long-term financial planning.

⁴³ Viktor Stepanenko, "Will the gene get back into the bottle?" The Peculiarities of National Civic Activism," *Political Portrait of Ukraine* 33 (Kyiv: Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2005): 15-28; Mendelson and Glenn, *The Power and Limits of NGOs*; Burnell and Calvert, ed., *Civil Society in Democratization*; McIntosh Sundstrom.

⁴⁴ Counterpart Creative Center, 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

NGO members and inter-NGO relations

Because the internal capacity of any civil society depends directly on the type of members it is able to attract as well as the nature of cooperation among those members, it is worth looking at both variables in greater detail.

Demographic and normative characteristics of NGO members in Ukraine present an interesting picture. The nonprofit sector attracts people who are in the prime of their life and professional careers. Between 1994-2004, the share of those aged 30-55 years old increased from 48 percent to 52 percent. Considering the fact that 87 percent of NGOs employ between one and seven people, it is possible to speculate that over one half of Ukrainian civic activists get paid to be active.

In the decade since its independence, Ukraine has begun to catch up with other developed states in attracting retirees to civic work. Their involvement rose from 18 percent to 23 percent. Civil society engages slightly more women than men. However, the gender disparity is not large and varies greatly by regions.⁴⁷

Large majorities of civic activists acknowledge that they are driven to join NGOs by the desire to help others or an opportunity to influence societal development. Over one-third wants to achieve personal self-fulfillment or assist fellow NGO members in their tasks. Merely 16 percent report being interested in obtaining funding.

In 2004 inter-NGO cooperation was high. 88 percent of groups exchanged information, 70 percent conducted joint activities and 57 percent had partnership projects. Many organizations found it advantageous to work with their civic counterparts to use additional experiences (68-70 percent) and increase their own reach and effectiveness (66-73 percent). At the same time, obstacles to greater collaboration

⁴⁷ Counterpart Creative Center, 92.

included (in decreasing importance) rivalries over formal leadership, competition for funds and resources, and insufficient awareness about activities of other groups.⁴⁸ The Ukrainian third sector was more oriented on domestic than overseas interactions. One-fifth of all civic groups pursued contacts with foreign counterparts and international governmental organizations in a partnership capacity.⁴⁹

To conclude, Ukrainian civil society is composed of mature individuals who are cognizant of the reasons for their involvement. They tend to be middle-aged, female and more philanthropic in their beliefs. The majority of civic activists are also positively predisposed to cooperation with other fellow members. However, through years of experience they remain clear-eyed about the obstacles that any joint efforts are likely to generate.

NGOs and other societal actors

The essence of embeddedness lies in the ability of NGOs to connect with other societal actors outside of the civic realm, thereby enhancing their overall relevance as one of the players on the domestic scene. From this perspective, interactions between civic groups on one side, government authorities, political parties and the general public on the other must be properly assessed.

In Ukraine, the intensity of civic cooperation with government authorities increases as one moves down the chain of governance. Specifically, only 6 percent of non-governmental organizations thought they had a high level of cooperation with the national government, whereas 52 percent believed it was low and 32 percent perceived it

⁴⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁹ EU Commission, 32.

as medium. The majority of NGOs blame the situation on the lack of understanding (68 percent) or awareness about civil society (60 percent) on the part of national state structures. The picture was somewhat brighter at the regional level where 47 percent saw NGO-government collaboration as medium and 8 percent believed it was high. One of the greatest obstacles to a greater partnership with civil society lies in the state's budgetary constraints. In 2004 (the year of the Orange Revolution), 60 percent of civic organizations received up to \$500 of government money. Domestic observers note that state funding did not have any regularity or predictability in terms of disbursement targets and amounts.⁵⁰

While state funding is scarce and sporadic, the support from businesses is reluctant. About one half of entrepreneurs complain that they do not have sufficient funds to contribute to civil society and charities. The argument is valid when applied to small and medium-size businesses suffocated by tax inspections during the Kuchma era. However, the major concern of businessmen seems to be a larger purpose for which their donation will be used. That is why, legislative and taxation hurdles worry only small minorities, whereas one-third fears their financial contributions will be misdirected toward a non-charitable purpose – a delicate euphemism for embezzlement. In fact, of those that donate, 80 percent give to the issues of social protection (e.g. feed the hungry, shelter the homeless and help the poor) rather than civic activism. My interviews have revealed that businesses do not consider advocacy NGOs as those whose causes require urgent support.⁵¹ The mode of interaction between the business sector and civil society

⁵⁰ Counterpart Creative Center, 32.

⁵¹ Golovenko; Popov.

remains mainly financial, with 77 percent providing money and only 5 percent volunteering for civic activities.⁵²

As for the Ukrainian public, nonprofit organizations interact with their target audiences on a regular basis, but do so through impersonal methods of communication. On a positive side, 47 percent of civic groups reach their supporters/clients on a daily basis, 31 percent - weekly and 13 percent - monthly. However, the effect of these outreach efforts remains dubious for two reasons. First, the prevalent means of establishing contacts do not assure that organizations get the attention of their specific audience or that informational materials convey the right impression. 81-85 percent raise awareness about their activities through the press and over a half relies on booklets and brochures.⁵³ Second, impersonal methods of outreach are unlikely to change a utilitarian manner in which many ordinary citizens perceive civic organizations as distributors of charitable goods and services. My interviews with NGO leaders and experts and an external assessment of the European Commission further confirmed a strong presence of this misconception as well as a negative impact it has on people's trust toward those NGOs, which simply by the nature of their work (i.e. advocacy) fail to offer free material benefits.⁵⁴

To summarize, Ukrainian nonprofit organizations cooperated more effectively with regional and local, rather than national, state authorities. They struggled to establish a better relationship with new businesses that did not perceive advocacy as a charitable cause. Most importantly, the prevalence of impersonal methods of outreach made it difficult for many groups to secure support among ordinary citizens.

⁵² Counterpart Creative Center, "Corporate Charity in Ukraine" (Kyiv: Counterpart Creative Center, 2005), 34.

⁵³ Counterpart Creative Center, "Corporate Charity in Ukraine." 48-49.

⁵⁴ Golovenko; Sumbadze; EU Commission, 35.

Fundraising practices

The review of nonprofit fundraising practices produces a number of critical observations, which confirm the dependency of NGOs on external support and a lack of domestic contributions to their activities.

According to different estimates, charitable donations (which include donor grants) constituted 32-37 percent of NGOs' budgets in 2004.⁵⁵ The figure has increased by more than 10 percent since 1996, thereby confirming the assertion of foreign donors that maturation of the Ukrainian civil society would not have been possible without external aid.⁵⁶ Over this period of time, the state support for NGOs was cut in half from 12.6 percent in 1996 to 5.9 percent in 2004.⁵⁷

In a surprising finding, the economic growth of the past decade did not increase the capacity of NGOs to raise funds by selling their services. The percentage of income derived from commercial activity dropped two-fold – from 33.2 percent to 14 percent.⁵⁸ Combined with another statistic, which shows an almost two-fold increase in funds from other unidentified sources (from 17.4 percent to 32.7 percent),⁵⁹ the dynamic suggests that civic groups might have become more adept at hiding their sources of income for the fear of taxation or state harassment of contributors. A survey of NGOs by a fellow nonprofit group lends further proof to this claim. Because organizations felt at ease to give approximate estimates of their financial support to a non-government source, the percentages of donations from businesses (19-21 percent) and citizens (11-12 percent)⁶⁰

⁵⁵ State Statistical Committee, 10; Counterpart Creative Center, 29.

⁵⁶ Western NGO representative, interview with the author on the condition of anonymity; EU Commission, 32.

⁵⁷ State Statistical Committee, 10.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Counterpart Creative Center, 29.

roughly match the figure, which they submit to the State Committee on Statistics as under the rubric of “other sources.”

Next, the lack of substantial variation in the share of membership fees indicate that in 2004 Ukrainian civil society organizations did not perceive members as potential providers of financial support.

Finally, the dismal fundraising performance of many nonprofit groups could have been predicted, given their happy-go-lucky attitude to financial sustainability. Only 40 percent of NGOs relied on any written plan to secure funds, and 69 percent of those that had a plan looked no farther than one year ahead.⁶¹ Under these circumstances, as one Western donor aptly summarized, “you had a lot of groups chasing a lot of money without any real, concrete results.”⁶²

To conclude, the Ukrainian nonprofit sector remains significantly dependent on foreign assistance for charitable donations. While covert support from business sources has increased, contributions from the state or NGO members remain dismal. The inability of many civic groups to attract funds stems not only from unpropitious political and economic conditions, but also from nonprofits’ own lack of financial planning and management.

Ukrainian civil society: strengths and pathologies

My portrait of the Ukrainian civil society will not be complete without outlining its strengths and pathologies. I classify these factors based on whether they contribute or hinder NGO embeddedness.

⁶¹ Counterpart Creative Center, 27.

⁶² Western NGO representative.

Strengths

The Ukrainian third sector has a number of advantages that help domestic civic groups to become better rooted in the host society. First and foremost, it possesses a sense of vibrancy and freedom that many civil societies in the former Soviet republics lack. The rate of NGO growth indicates that people are given sufficient freedoms to register such organizations with relatively few obstacles.

Second, the notion of civil society has an overwhelmingly positive connotation among the knowledgeable public and elites. This further strengthens the viability of the third sector as an independent societal actor, at least among those who are informed about NGOs.

Third, a set of organizational features, such as membership composition, internal interactions and technological capacity, facilitates better connections between civic groups and the society in general. Most NGO members are mature individuals who espouse (at least publicly) noble reasons for their involvement. Cooperation among nonprofit organizations is driven by pragmatic concerns of improving the effectiveness of performance and the efficiency of resource utilization. The civil society by and large has sufficient organizational structures and technologies to support its daily operational and programmatic activities.

The key strength in terms of political embeddedness lies in the liberal domestic legislation that regulates crucial political aspects of civil society functioning, such as registration, state control and dissolution. Our research has indicated that even during its most repressive years, the Kuchma regime did not move to change the framework that

enabled the proliferation of NGOs.⁶³ This fact further proves that the norm, regarding non-governmental organizations as a staple of any democracy, became firmly embedded in the domestic political discourse.

Finally, external involvement played a critical role in deepening both societal and political embeddedness of Ukrainian civic groups. Foreign funding provided a launching pad for most nonprofit organizations. Without seed grants from Western (primarily American) donors, the civil society would not have developed a base for continuous (though often struggling) existence. The attention of Western governments and donors to civil society raised its profile among Ukrainian intellectual and political elites and prompted the country to adopt and maintain a liberal framework for NGO activities.

Pathologies

In 1991-2004 societal embeddedness of the Ukrainian civil society was hampered by three sets of factors. The first stemmed from social conditions and resulted in low funding. The other lies in political and legal deficiencies, such as the inadequate regulatory base for NGO activities and limited cooperation with political parties. The final one includes negative externalities of foreign aid that manifested themselves in high dependency on donor funds and low accountability for their proper use.

First, like many post-Soviet states, Ukraine suffers from low public involvement in civic organizations. The majority of ordinary citizens are unaware of the benefits of participation and thus suspicious of civil society. As the compiled evidences shows,

⁶³ Anatoliy Grytsenko, "Ataka vlady na "grantoyidiv" [An attack of authorities on "grant-eaters"], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 13 December 2003.

those members of the public and elite who are cognizant of civil society were unable to spread their knowledge or pass their optimism to the rest of the population.

Two major reasons for this failure lie in the limited methods of NGO outreach and their predominantly urban concentration. Civic groups continued substituting meticulous (but largely unglamorous) grass-root work with impersonal forms of message delivery. Though the initial concentration of NGOs in urban centers was a result of discrepancies in urban-rural development during the Soviet Union,⁶⁴ newly emerging civic organizations further contributed to that divide. Trying to avoid grass-root work in general, they were even much less likely to spread the message and look for supporters in the depressing living conditions of non-urban areas.

As a result of these problems, the Ukrainian third sector was not implanted enough into the fabric of the host society to derive sufficient support from three possible stakeholders – the public, the business or the government. Funding from state authorities was meager, because of budgetary deficits and low interest in civil society. The support from businesses was limited and reluctant, for many of them either did not view advocacy as a charitable cause or feared that their donations would be misused. Combined with a low public appreciation of the sector, this left many organizations chronically dependent on Western support and continuously struggling for survival.

Second, in 2004 societal embeddedness of the country's NGOs was hampered by two political factors. One was related to the domestic legislation on taxation that severely constrained the opportunities for fundraising and survival, by limiting the rate of non-taxable donations and circumscribing entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore,

⁶⁴ Such developmental patterns relegated small towns and villages to the technological, social and intellectual periphery.

during President Kuchma's second term, legal ambiguities provided an ample room for the government to harass unfriendly civic groups through tax inspections.⁶⁵

The other factor had to do with the cooperation of NGOs with political parties. It is revealing that none of the domestic studies, which were reviewed in this work, asked civic groups about their contacts with political actors, besides the government. My own interviews with civic and political activists revealed a lack of understanding and interest in civil society on the part of politicians.⁶⁶ Mirroring the artificial delineation between parties and civic associations established by foreign donors,⁶⁷ politicians did not consider NGOs as a serious partner in the political transformation of the country. Their purview was believed to be "soft politics" (i.e. social and humanitarian issues), whereas parties were to deal with "hard politics," like wrangling over laws, constitutions and authority. Moreover, whenever politicians dealt with nonprofits, they were likely to apply the instincts acquired during political battles – to negotiate with the strong and to crush or subsume the weak. Having an uncertain base of support within the domestic society, many nonprofits were not enthusiastic to pursue this kind of cooperation.

Third, in the environment where societal roots were weak and unsystematic, formal collaboration with political actors was, at best, feeble, external involvement assumed a skewed importance, thereby resulting in two pathologies. One was a high reliance on foreign funds. The problem is not new and has been widely discussed in the previous studies about civil societies in the former Communist states. However, it acquires a special meaning when placed in the framework of embeddedness.

⁶⁵ After the 2001 protests, the Ukrainian office of the Freedom House was subjected to severe tax inspections. Two other American institutes – NDI and IRI – had to engage in high-level lobbying from Washington to force the Ukrainian government to certify their continued presence in the country. See also *Ukrainska Pravda*, "Nalogovaya tryaset organizatsii, kotorye rabotaut na granty" [The tax inspection is shaking down organizations that work on grants], 4 June 2004.

⁶⁶ Olena Botsko, NDI Civic Officer in Ukraine, interview with the author, June 2007; Soboleva.

⁶⁷ Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 1999).

Organizations that rely for their survival on external actors can never become a full participant in their host societies. Their loyalties will stay divided as long as foreign support continues to have at least an equal say in their organizational existence.

The other had to do with low financial accountability that NGOs exercised in regard to their funding. The issue is two-fold. On one side, foreign donor organizations are not accountable to the Ukrainian public, even though their funding is used by domestic NGOs to meet allegedly public needs. On the other side, the situation is made worse by the fact that the majority of organizations did not have transparent reporting procedures and/or did not release their financial audits to the larger public.

These pathologies undermined social and political embeddedness of NGOs and weakened the positive impact of foreign assistance. Instigated by the Kuchma government, the campaign against “grant-eaters” alleged that many third sector organizations were either embezzling foreign funds or were used by donors as a “destabilizing agent.”⁶⁸ Because the Ukrainian civil society had shoddy financial practices, the accusations could never be denied decisively. In the end, the campaign was partially successful, by tarnishing the image of NGOs among ordinary citizens and further complicating their cooperation with political parties.

To sum up, by 2004 Ukrainian civil society had a strong physical presence, but limited societal and political influence. Non-governmental organizations, as the most frequent practical manifestation of civil society, were sprouting everywhere, assisted by the liberal legislative base and continuous foreign support. However, the rapidly developing and vibrant civic community proved unable to locate and secure its niche

⁶⁸ Ukrainska Pravda, “Kommunisty trebut zapret nepravitelstvennyh organizatsyj” [Communists demand a ban on nongovernmental organizations], 21 May 2004; “Smeshko govorit, chto grantoedy chasto okazyvautsa shpionami?” [Smeshko says “grant-eaters” often turn out to be spies], 30 April 2004.

within the larger society for it lacked support from the public and acknowledgement from politicians. Its chronic dependence on outside assistance amplified many of its internal weaknesses and the rift of estrangement from other societal actors.

PROFILE: CVU

Launch

The Committee of Voters of Ukraine was established in 1994 and had been operational for ten years prior to the Orange Revolution. The idea of launching an election watchdog emerged at the Ukrainian office of the National Democratic Institute (NDI).⁶⁹ That year the country was to hold its first parliamentary and second presidential elections as an independent state. Though it had no shortage of political parties and candidates to run for office, there was no visible public group that would monitor the election process. Election observation itself was a novel idea in a former Communist republic where voting had been a formality in the past. Thus, NDI sought to fill the void as quickly as possible and urged local activists to establish an association of voters who were concerned about fairness of elections and people's ability to vote.

At the beginning, CVU tasks were fairly straightforward – to recruit and train Ukrainian citizens as observers, send them to as many polling stations as possible on the Election Day and then compile a report on the conduct of elections. Thus, CVU developed and followed the same routine since its inception in 1994 and until 2000.

⁶⁹ Botsko; Committee of Voters of Ukraine, "Pro Komitet Vybortsiv Ukrainy" [About the Committee of Voters of Ukraine], <http://www.cvu.org.ua/doc.php?lang=ukr&mid=aboutcvu>.

Maturation

In 2000 the organization faced two challenges. First, it was coming of age as a civil society association. With the growth of its staff in Kyiv and in twenty-five regions (known as oblasts) of Ukraine, it confronted the question of what should be done between election cycles. CVU needed a more expansive reason d'être in order for NDI to continue funding activities that were more meaningful than paychecks for dozens of activists waiting for a next election. Therefore, the Committee made an argument to the Institute that funds were necessary for CVU not to lose its regional network and capacity.⁷⁰ It also started looking for new programs. One of them was a public hours initiative that enabled the Committee to work with ordinary citizens, by collecting their complaints and advising on possible solutions.

Second, the 1999 presidential election became the first omen of increasingly authoritarian tendencies within the Kuchma regime. The election might have been free, but it was definitely not fair.⁷¹ To ensure Kuchma's victory, the government employed a number of methods – from skewing TV coverage, using administrative resources, coercing/bribing dependent voters to firing Ukraine's ambassadors who failed to secure the "correct" outcome in their embassies. CVU recognized that if a major bulk of fraud were committed long before voting, then the group's activities on the Election Day would become meaningless. That is why, it decided to complement its usual monitoring efforts with a long-term observation (LTO) program that would begin at the early stages

⁷⁰ Botsko, Popov.

⁷¹ For more see Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), "Ukraine Presidential Elections 31 October and 14 November 1999. Final Report," 7 March 2000, http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2000/03/1299_en.pdf.

of an election campaign and monitor the fairness of the political playfield for all participants.⁷²

To summarize, a greater level of organizational maturity as well as a more complex political landscape helped CVU pass the first critical test on embeddedness. It was able to adjust its focus from elections to election-related matters. In doing so, it was ahead of its major funder in understanding domestic realities. As late as 2002, many at the NDI-Washington office expressed doubts as to whether additional activities, such as public hours and LTO, were a distraction from the CVU's original mission to do solely election monitoring.

Mission

CVU mission crystallized as a result of successful programmatic experiences. Its issue-specific but fairly expansive nature was grounded in the organization's expertise in election monitoring as well as the certainty of foreign funding.

As many sources within and outside of CVU tell, the first conscious discussion of the organization's mission took place only after the 2002 elections. It was spurred in part by the group's successful performance, especially the notoriety that the Committee's long-term observation reports gained in the international community.⁷³ Activists were keen to build on that success without departing from the initial mission of election monitoring.

As a result of internal deliberations and an active involvement from NDI, three goals were identified as complementary to the mission. The first one was to provide

⁷² Committee of Voters of Ukraine, "Napryamy diyalnosti" [Activities], <http://www.cvu.org.ua/activity.php?lang=ukr&mid=activity>.

⁷³ Botsko.

democratic monitoring of elections. For this purpose, CVU employed its traditional programs that included election observation and parallel vote tabulation. The second goal was to foster active citizenship through public office hours and various community development projects. The third goal - to raise citizens' awareness and education – left enough room for the organization to include many miscellaneous and auxiliary projects. The latter were resource centers for communities, exit polls, support of international observers, election monitoring in other countries and lobbying to reform the domestic election law.⁷⁴

The presented list of goals and activities to accomplish them shows a growing level of sophistication and maturity on the part of CVU leaders. Unlike many Ukrainian nonprofits, which left their goals purposefully vague to assure that they can respond to “a theme de jour” of foreign donors, CVU presented them with sufficient precision. It put first the areas (i.e. election monitoring) where it performed best, having possibly no national competitors. It then outlined the second- and third-tier goals, which carved some niche for operation in-between election cycles as well as enabled it to look for supplementary projects. At the same time, the nonprofit was in a unique position when developing its goals and the mission. Unlike the majority of Ukrainian NGOs, it had one main sponsor, which, it was certain, would not renege on CVU. Therefore, the second and third goals were perceived at the time to be not a safety valve, but an opportunity to explore what else it can do, having the financial support of NDI.

⁷⁴ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, “Zvit pro diyalnist VGO “Komitet vybortsiv Ukrainy” u 2002 rotsi” [2002 Annual report on activities of non-government organization CVU], http://www.cvu.org.ua/doc.php?lang=ukr&mid=yreport&doc_type=&id=406&lim_beg=0.

Funding and sustainability

Though internal and external (mostly with NDI) discussions about CVU's financial sustainability were constant, until 2002 real progress in this area was hampered by three factors.

First, CVU had the same challenge as many other Ukrainian NGOs – difficulties in fundraising from sources other than Western donors in an economically unpropitious environment. Frank assessments from domestic civic experts admit that financial support from local businesses, not to mention the ordinary public, was not possible until an economic turnaround in late 1999 – early 2000. After that, the nonprofit sector was caught in a conundrum. Businesses did not perceive the causes promoted by advocacy groups as truly deserving their assistance, whereas advocacy groups adopted a somewhat “holier than thou” attitude, reluctant to make their case to entrepreneurs, whose wealth was dubiously acquired. CVU was not different in this sentiment, in large part due to the second factor.

While other NGOs were forced to make compromises either with businesses, parties (by often becoming their “pocket” groups) or donors (by rapidly shifting their priorities to satisfy another issue de jour), CVU had the luxury of NDI support. The relationship between the two entities vacillated from a bond of parents with their adolescent child to a long-term courtship on ill-defined terms. In fact, the dependency worked both ways. On one hand, the Committee relied on the Institute for support and survival. On the other, by 2002 NDI could not have backed out of cooperation with CVU and let the organization languish without admitting its own failure of over-committing

resources to one group.⁷⁵ Therefore, the Committee's sustainability was harmed not by over-reliance on one donor, but by the particular contours that this interaction assumed. Specifically, the core leadership of the Committee understood that bureaucratic reasons for supporting the group (which, to be fair, was good, but far from perfect) had long surpassed in importance the conceptual reasons for continued support.

This brings us to the third reason for CVU's lackluster funding record. Other grant-givers reported caution in cooperating with the Committee too vigorously for the fear that this "dancing with another's wife" would upset NDI.⁷⁶ In addition to not being clear on the terms of CVU-NDI relationship, they also felt little need to sponsor a group that had been already so well funded.

When all the three reasons – bad economic conditions, skewed dependency on one donor and the caution of other grant-givers – are combined together, the outcome was not promising. Initial attempts to secure external funding took place during the 2002 parliamentary elections when CVU got money from the Adenauer Foundation.⁷⁷ However, fundraising began in earnest in 2004 when many donors demanded matching funds for their grants. Only then CVU opened a bank account, which individuals and businesses could use for donations.

To summarize, the Committee was rather forced to fundraise rather than did so voluntarily or out of need. Its aversion to one of the core aspects of nonprofit existence stemmed from unpropitious economic and social conditions. It was further amplified by the presence of a financial safety net provided by NDI.

⁷⁵ Botsko, Soboleva; other NDI staff, interviews with the author off the record, June-July 2007.

⁷⁶ Western NGO member.

⁷⁷ Nick Drewelovsky, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, interview with the author, May 2007.

Donor influence

The previous discussion raises the natural question of donor influence. In regard to CVU, three distinct stages should be outlined.

The first took place in 1994-2002. At the time, the influence of NDI, as the sole driver and financier behind the establishment and functioning of CVU, was supreme. All initiatives were donor-driven.⁷⁸ The CVU leadership discussed and wrote all the projects under a watchful eye of NDI. Having access to the American donor scene in Washington, the Institute closely monitored the Committee's proposals to make sure that they fit into the framework of priorities designated for the former Soviet republics by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This pattern of cooperation brought clear advantages – CVU was always guaranteed foreign funding and entered a small pool of Ukrainian NGOs that did not need to worry about survival. The price tag was hefty, too. The Committee had to cede quite a bit of authority in internal matters. NDI representatives were omnipresent in CVU daily activities. Until 2002, an NDI Civic Program Officer attended CVU weekly staff meetings (to much consternation of all staffers).

The second stage occurred in 2002 and lasted well past the Orange Revolution. Recognizing the Committee's growth, NDI began to loosen its reigns. However, the arrangement lacked clear terms of engagement, and its dynamics were formed on a case-by-case basis. The group was more likely to bow to NDI's requests on the issues of its core competency – election monitoring. For instance, CVU was once requested to train ten thousand observers and refused to do so, citing a lack of capacity. When pressed by

⁷⁸ Botsko.

NDI, it relented, because the donor began questioning the effectiveness of its long-term investment into an organization that cannot meet its main goal.⁷⁹ When it came to internal politics, NDI refused to play an arbiter between the CVU central office in Kyiv and its regional branches, thereby relegating any decision-making power to the former.⁸⁰ Therefore, the Institute exerted strong influence in external matters where a danger of CVU missteps would impact the NDI's own reputation, but preferred a hands-off approach in usually messy office politics.

The third (at this point last) stage of donor relations is beyond the framework of this study. It began in 2006 when NDI pulled out institutional support behind CVU because of the clashing priorities between the two organizations. As a CVU regional supporter aptly remarked, "NDI could no longer digest us in the new form, while we did not want to go back to the past."⁸¹

In sum, the Committee of Voters made a one-hundred-eighty-degree turn in its donor relations – from complete dependency on NDI to a complete and almost hostile disengagement from it. Like in a relationship that goes sour, the two entities matured at a different pace and resented each another for not being on the same page or at least trying to be sensitive about newly found concerns. Whereas CVU wanted to continue receiving funds, but with fewer conditions and day-to-day oversight, NDI preferred having a mature and financially accountable grantee that would still heed its advice.

⁷⁹ Western NGO representative.

⁸⁰ CVU regional activist, interview with the author, given on the condition of anonymity.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Membership

Membership is the cornerstone of any civic group. As Chapter emphasizes, a civic organization without true supporters is hollow at its core and doomed for a quick demise. In 1994 NDI recognized that when it launched the Committee of Voters of Ukraine and encouraged members of the newly formed group to look wide for possible supporters.

The recruitment strategies at the time were quite vigorous. CVU activists put together street presentations, distributed leaflets and the organization's newspaper to attract supporters. The emphasis on visibility and grass-root methods of recruitment reflected the influence of NDI and its understanding of how civic groups make themselves known in the domestic environment.⁸²

The recruitment proved to be successful for a number of reasons. One of which was certainly the feeling of novelty. Merely three years past the independence, civic groups (like patriotic Prosvita) still had a reputation for being a niche for high-level intelligencia, not the masses. The other lied in the funding that permanently employed activists would receive. In the environment of a dire economic crisis, a Western-supported organization provided a stable salary that neither the bankrupt government nor the feeble, mafia-infused business sector could not offer.

By 1999, the core of CVU leaders was stable, and a rather rigid organizational hierarchy emerged. Twenty-five regional centers (each with a director and an assistant) were subordinate to the headquarters in Kyiv run by a tightly knit circle of 5-7 activists. Due to the internal hierarchy, the number of key paid positions was inherently limited. The situation was exacerbated by the slow staff turnover. Being part of the exclusive

⁸² Botsko, CVU regional activist.

group of leaders created a sense of personal comfort that CVU key activists cherished and thus were not eager to abandon.

That is why, new membership strategies were adjusted to satisfy a two-fold goal – to have enough members to do fieldwork, but not to pose a challenge to the present leadership. With that purpose in mind, CVU recruited people for temporary positions (such as election monitors), but limited any outsider's access to leadership posts.

Established in 1998, the Committee's youth wing was also supposed to be a good outlet for those activists who showed future promise but could not enter the main track within the organization.⁸³

Leaders and members

Nowhere were the apparent deficiencies of the Committee's recruitment approaches more visible than in relations between leaders and members. First, they restricted an influx of fresh blood. By 2002 NDI recognized that the grip on power by the present leadership became too strong and encouraged (to no avail) most senior activists to move to other organizations.⁸⁴ Recognizing that opportunities for professional growth and meaningful decision-making were almost non-existent, most young members moved quickly to jobs with political parties or other NGOs. Those who stayed accepted their temporary role – from one election to the next – and small monetary benefits that it brought.

Second, the arrangement did not promote efficient cooperation among CVU leaders. Since personal loyalty played a critical role in earning top positions, it gradually

⁸³ Botsko, Soboleva. CVU regional activist.

⁸⁴ Botsko.

became a substitute for professionalism. As a result, during the 2004 presidential campaign (most crucial in Ukraine's history) half of the CVU regional offices were so disorganized and weak as to be unable to function properly.⁸⁵

Grievances at the regional level could not be addressed properly, because external and internal channels for their resolution were blocked. Few regional leaders dared complain about matters directly to NDI for the fear of being viewed as a pariah within the NGO. Internally, the organization did not have effective mechanisms of feedback. It substituted an independent advisory board with a forum of leaders from the central office and regional branches, who were likely to rubberstamp decisions because of their financial dependence and personal loyalty.

The top-down approach to management and program execution constrained contacts among regional branches. Oblast leaders felt more comfortable interacting with their most geographically close peers (East, West, South) rather than CVU representatives elsewhere in the country.⁸⁶ Frequent neighborly cooperation on difficult election cases built trust and gave certainty that privately voiced complaints would not be reported to the headquarters in Kyiv.

Finally, rigidity and elitism in the organizational structure led to increased secrecy. CVU refused to establish a formal membership or release its membership lists for the fear of possible government repercussions. The rationale was dubious at best, since two of its regional branches in Lviv and Luhansk adopted an exactly opposite policy. Sources in the donor community speculated that the Committee's reluctance in this matter stemmed from a completely different concern. With a membership/observers'

⁸⁵ Soboleva, CVU regional activist.

⁸⁶ CVU regional activist.

database at hand, NDI would be able to check its validity, thereby undermining the CVU claim of a vast network of activists.⁸⁷

To summarize, CVU membership strategies were so narrowly conceived as to limit the pool of potential leaders and imperil its future viability. A clear separation between leaders and members and within the leadership ranks diminished internal coherence and external effectiveness.

Normative transfers

When it comes to normative transfers, CVU has passed through two periods, in which increasing organizational maturity determined the nature and content of normative transfers.

Between 1994 and 1997, NDI took an active part in ensuring the competency of its domestic offspring. Katie Fox, the Institute's Civic Officer in Ukraine, conducted initial trainings on election monitoring techniques.⁸⁸ In April 1995 fifteen CVU senior activists were brought to the United States to learn from American experiences. They attended a short-term seminar at the Midwestern Academy for civic leaders and were able to observe the mayoral elections in Chicago. As the organization's press report indicates, "a special attention was paid to the role of civic groups in election campaigns and to specific activities which are applicable for Ukraine."⁸⁹

From 1997 and on, the organization was able to handle its own training needs when it came to its core competence – elections. Between 1997-2000, the Committee

⁸⁷ Botsko, Soboleva, other NDI members off the record.

⁸⁸ Botsko.

⁸⁹ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, "Vybery mera v Chicago" [The Mayoral Elections in Chicago], http://www.cvu.org.ua/doc.php?lang=ukr&mid=chronicles&id=289&lim_beg=390&sdate_act_d=01&sdate_act_m=03&sdate_act_v=1994&sdate_act_end_d=31&sdate_act_end_m=12&sdate_act_end_v=2004.

made sure to educate its key activists in the regions. With that purpose, three national trainings were held in October 1997, and one seminar was conducted for leaders of CVU regional branches in December 2000.⁹⁰ In these and other events, CVU applied successfully the postulates of election monitoring (e.g. Why is it needed and what goals should it pursue?) to the local context. It tailored trainings to the domestic election legislation and political circumstances. For instance, all CVU observers were accredited as journalists of the CVU newspaper “Tochka Zoru” (Viewpoint). Trainings for monitors, when conducted at their best, were accessible in terms of context for those volunteers who did not have a deep understanding of the political scene as well as provided enough information for people to feel comfortable at a polling station during the day of voting.

In the second phase, the Committee also became strong enough to initiate its own programs that were based on local needs. The long-term observation initiative (LTO) reflected an increasing complexity of the methods to rig elections prior to the voting day. Its other initiative, public hours, was established to respond to the lack of accountability that became pervasive at all levels of government in Ukraine. CVU activists and external observers acknowledge that the organization’s most successful ideas often came from the regions that sought to counteract a particularly egregious type of violation in the future.

At this stage of CVU development, the majority of external normative transfers were focused on the problems of nonprofit management. CVU requested trainings on fundraising and grant writing from Western donors in Ukraine. NDI also pushed the group to seek assistance on conflict resolution and mediation.

⁹⁰ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, “KVU Hronika Podij” [CVU, The Chronology of Events], www.cvu.org.ua.

There are strong grounds to conclude that the nature of normative transfers and their content has evolved substantially throughout the fourteen years of CVU's operation. First, external normative assistance moved from primary to secondary issues – from election monitoring to organizational management. Second, the dynamic of external transfers has changed – CVU requested, rather than was mandated, to have certain educational opportunities, thereby becoming at least an equal partner, if not a driving force, in assessing its needs. Third, the prevalent mode shifted from external to internal. Since 1997, the major task was not to assure the competency of the CVU leadership core, but of its rank and file.

Inter-NGO cooperation

A theoretical discussion on the sources of societal influence in Chapter II has noted that cooperation among NGOs is one of the best opportunities to amplify their domestic impact. Collaborating nonprofit groups bring together their distinct target audiences, thereby promoting interactions among different segments of the population and facilitating the emergence of a broader civil society. In the world of limited resources, these NGOs are able to avoid duplication of some efforts and complete neglect of others.

However, as our portrait of Ukrainian civil society shows, cooperation among civic associations is easier said than done. While many nonprofits understand the benefits and speak positively of their experiences, they are also cognizant of the obstacles that make any joint projects a difficult endeavor.

It is thus unsurprising that CVU's performance in this regard is not straightforward. At the national level, the group was a willing, but cautious partner in working with other nonprofit entities. Though all interviewed CVU leaders recognized

the appeal of coalitions to foreign donors and greater effectiveness of joint actions, they were unwilling to cede their organizational autonomy to any joint initiatives.⁹¹ CVU never delegated the task of making election assessments to any entity and earned the respect for being independent and assertive of its interests in the nonprofit world.⁹² Whatever cooperation occurred, it was limited to informal, non-binding coordination of activities, occasional joint meetings, and, at most, some specific short-term assistance. For instance, CVU second-tier representatives attended meetings of many election-related NGO coalitions (including Vlad Kaskiv's "Freedom of Choice," a precursor to Pora). CVU regional observers said to have kept an eye on exit poll staffers of other groups, like the Democratic Initiatives Foundation.⁹³

At the regional level cooperation between a CVU branch and other groups was always more liberal chiefly for two reasons. There were too few strong organizations to compete with CVU in the election field. And any regional collaboration with other groups could go only so far due to the Committee's centralized organizational structure.

The Committee's semi-detachment within the nonprofit world can be explained by three factors. First and foremost, it had the money and, with it, the degree of freedom for an independent action. Unlike many NGOs (especially election-related coalitions), CVU was not a short-term project looking to strike the iron of foreign funds allocated for elections while the issue was hot. It could pick and choose its partners as well as be leery of free riders on CVU resources. Second, throughout its long-term existence CVU earned the reputation of a "diplomatic criticizer." It would always outline numerous violations, but confirm overall legality of the parliamentary elections. That is why, the

⁹¹ Popov, Chernenko, CVU regional activist.

⁹² Botsko.

⁹³ Dr. Iryna Bekeshkina, Democratic Initiatives Foundation, interview with the author, July 2007.

group could not take the risk of having its image ruined by a coalition whose judgment was unknown. Third, even in the best of the worlds (i.e. a long-term coalitions, with their own funding), CVU would have been a wary partner, concerned that an effective NGO coalition would overshadow its own work and undermine its appeal for international donors.

To summarize, when it came to working with other NGOs, CVU was an independent and rather demanding actor. Influenced by the considerations of autonomy, reputation and influence, it chose informal and non-binding means of collaboration to formalized agreements on the national and regional levels.

CVU and political parties

CVU's cooperation with political parties was hampered as a result of weaknesses in political party development that Ukraine was experiencing as a nascent democracy. First and foremost, its ability to reach out to parties was limited by the latter's ideology. Some, like the Communist Party or the Progressive Socialist Party, rejected the whole idea of civil society and nonprofit organizations as a Western invention.⁹⁴ Others, like the Social Democratic United Party or the bloc of parties "For a United Ukraine," were allied with the Kuchma government. Because the administrative system was working in their favor, they had little interest in an election watchdog whose goal was to expose the abuses committed by that same system. Cooperation with pro-governmental parties was generally inhibited after the 2001 anti-Kuchma protests, when the government viewed any dissent as a sign of personal disloyalty and opposition.

⁹⁴ *Ukrainska Pravda*, "Kommunisty trebut zapret nepravitelstvennyh organizatsyj" [Communists demand a ban on nongovernmental organizations], 21 May 2004.

Second, when it came to opposition parties (like Yushchenko's Our Ukraine or the bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko), CVU commanded informational, but not persuasion authority. Unlike their retrograde opponents, these parties were likely to take CVU reports into account and treat them as good piece of analysis, but neither of them would consult with CVU or treat the organization as an equal.⁹⁵ I specifically inquired whether foreign support made CVU reporting less credible and the organization in general less attractive for political parties. Contrary to Georgia, CVU's standing among oppositional parties and in the Ukrainian society was not undermined by external sponsorship. The CVU Chairman noted that trust toward the organization among party activists was strongly correlated with the quality of its reporting. That is why, the group had more respect from political leaders in 2002 after its long-term observation program than in 1994.⁹⁶ Opposition parties were unlikely to see it as a drawback, because many of their own members received trainings from the same Western institutions. The Ukrainian public was unaware of the sources that supported CVU, and government's attempts to discredit the Committee's image through Internet publications or the war against "grant-eaters" in 2003-2004 did not get any traction.⁹⁷

Third, the lack of more systematic institutional cooperation between oppositional parties and the Committee stemmed from the pathologies of party development in Ukraine. Many parties had their own youth wings or closely affiliated civic groups. This created the expectation directly opposite to the one in developed countries. Instead of political parties catering to the interests of civic organizations, which represent a larger

⁹⁵ Botsko; Soboleva.

⁹⁶ Popov.

⁹⁷ Anonymous websites began appearing in advance of all elections besmirching CVU and leveling allegations against CVU Chairman Ihor Popov. Though their ownership is impossible to prove due to technical reasons, it is likely that they were a tactic to scare CVU activists from making "hasty" assessments.

spectrum of the population, civic groups were expected to follow the party line because of provided financial assistance.⁹⁸ Other parties continued to suffer from the old Soviet habit of low tolerance for criticism. Because CVU was trying to be as non-partial as possible and because in Ukrainian realities, all sides commit election violations (it is their extent that matters), party activists would see CVU reporting of their mistakes as a sign of betraying friendly relations.⁹⁹ Little understanding of election observation mechanics generated misconceptions about its results. Most oppositional parties would expect CVU reports to uncover the evidence of a politically explosive “smoking gun” that could be used to booster their own agenda.¹⁰⁰

To summarize the situation, even within the pro-democratic opposition few political activists understood the essence of civil society. Many rushed to apply erroneously the same laws of “with-or-against-us” behavior from politics to civic groups. Depending on their ideological orientation, Ukrainian political parties either treated CVU as a Western nuisance or a source of useful analytical information. Neither informal contacts between CVU and party leaders nor occasional trainings performed by CVU for election commission members from political parties altered this arrangement.

Influence in the public

CVU had moderate influence in the Ukrainian mass media and nominal impact on the Ukrainian public. It could not sustain media publicity and long-term public interest toward itself for a number of reasons.

⁹⁸ Western NGO representative.

⁹⁹ Chemenko.

¹⁰⁰ Popov.

First, most media remained oriented toward political parties and political life in general, thereby relegating CVU to the second tier of news. Its press conferences attracted a wide range of media outlets and its experts were always in demand for commentary.¹⁰¹ But in both cases they served as an additional touch to the plethora of already unfolding events. The situation was not a fault of either the Committee or the press. The Ukrainian political life between 1994-2004 was marked by the predominance of two factors – an overwhelming influence of President Kuchma and the inherent instability of a highly hierarchical system of power relations that he built.¹⁰² That is why, the media fixation on politics at the expense of other news was based on a possibility for radical change that any shift in the system might have brought.

Second, CVU's inability to attract long-term public attention was due to its mode of operation, which lacked a strong advocacy component. The organization was diligent in reporting problems, but less aggressive in pushing for their solution. With time, the list of concerns became repetitive, yet it was not clear what else the civic group could do, besides rehashing them.¹⁰³ Because the CVU leadership avoided radicalization and a possible loss of neutrality, it pursued evolutionary, non-confrontational means of addressing election deficiencies.

Third, my interviews made it clear that the longer the same group of CVU leaders stayed in power, the stronger were its relations with key government players.¹⁰⁴ The Committee in no way "sold out" to the authorities, but it was definitely unwilling to pick up fights with powerful stakeholders, like the Central Election Commission (CEC). What in fact occurred is somewhat similar to the situation that radical political parties

¹⁰¹ Chernenko.

¹⁰² D'Anieri, "The last hurrah: The 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections and the limits of machine politics."

¹⁰³ Botsko.

¹⁰⁴ Soboleva.

experience when they first come to power. Faced with a stark choice of moderation or a loss of power (and an internal split), many choose to drop most extreme demands. As the Committee of Voters was becoming more mature and the Ukrainian regime was growing more repressive, it faced a choice of either to work within the system or to become its harsh critic (and risk ostracism and repressions). By 2002, it was obvious that CVU leaders chose and CVU members acquiesced with the former.

Fourth, CVU was well known among Ukrainian and Western politicians, but had a vague recognition among ordinary people. Ukrainian politicians had to pay attention to the Committee because its LTO reports were well received and read in Washington.¹⁰⁵ Through its Congressional liaisons, the National Democratic Institute ensured that top-ranking members of the appropriate committees, like the late Congressman Tom Lantos, would read assessments of the election situation in Ukraine. NDI Chairman and former State Secretary Madeleine Albright was familiar with reports and mentioned them in her meetings with high-level Ukrainian officials and national public forums.¹⁰⁶

When it comes to ordinary citizens, there are continuous disagreements in the assessment of CVU influence. As usual, the devil is in details – in particular, how one defines the extent of public awareness of the Committee's work. Some Western donors claim that CVU was better known in the power corridors and think tanks of Washington than on the streets of Kyiv. Ordinary Ukrainians were likely to have no clue what CVU was doing.¹⁰⁷ The Committee's greatest optimists (including its own activists) view familiarity within a larger society simply as "name recognition." This means that if people have a vague association about the group, then it is doing fine in terms of public

¹⁰⁵ Western NGO representative; NDI staff off the record.

¹⁰⁶ International Renaissance Foundation, "Civic Forum: Society Facing a Choice," 21 February 2002, <http://www.irf.kiev.ua/old-site/eng/news/news.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Botsko, Soboleva, Western NGO representative.

influence. At the same, their own estimates of this recognition provide diametrically different figures – from 93 percent as the highest to 5 percent as the lowest.¹⁰⁸ Their anecdotal examples reveal that at best an average person may associate CVU with the vague notion of elections or may recognize the group’s “public faces” (like CVU Chairman Popov or Press Secretary Oleksandr Chernenko).

To summarize the discussion, at best CVU had a visually, but not normatively recognized brand. It appears that neither donors nor the organization itself relied on any instruments to find out how popular it was. The CVU leadership frequently implied that public visibility or recognition automatically translated into public influence. Absent a critical event, this statement cannot be falsified. That is why, considering the group’s role in the Orange Revolution is important in evaluating the validity of this and other claims of its influence.

CVU AND THE ORANGE REVOLUTION

On the eve of the Revolution, the Committee of Voters was a well-established nonprofit organization. It has been active on the Ukrainian civic landscape for the past ten years. In that time, it developed a well-tested repertoire of programs and gained recognition within the Ukrainian political and civic establishment, if not the general public. Its intimate connections with NDI enabled CVU to project its influence in the United States. From the financial and methodological standpoints, it was one of the best-equipped groups in the country to handle any electoral contingency. CVU had the capacity to influence events, and do so decisively.

¹⁰⁸ These are the assessments provided to me by Ihor Popov and Oleksandr Chernenko.

Planning

CVU's goals for the 2004 presidential campaign were similar to those during previous elections – to organize independent observation and inform voters whether elections took place in a democratic manner. The group's Chairman Ihor Popov indicates that prior to the campaign, the Committee conducted a situational planning to account for possible contingencies and threats to a free election process and recommended a number of programs to tackle potential issues.¹⁰⁹ After my discussions with activists and review of the organization's materials online, it remains unclear how this process occurred and who, besides the top echelon of leadership in Kyiv and in the regions, was involved.

Though CVU should be credited for sticking to its original mission and core activities, in 2004 it had little reason to re-invent the wheel. Unlike many smaller NGOs, which had to re-craft their goals to get foreign grants, CVU had its repertoire of well-known programs and the certainty of NDI sponsorship. Popov himself noted that the pool of available foreign assistance at the time was sufficient to shift funds in accordance with unfolding priorities. Therefore, by being one of the top civic groups (in terms of both expertise and access to donors) in the country, the Committee of Voters had a considerable freedom in preparing for the elections as it saw fit.

Funding

Traditionally, CVU was funded by the National Democratic Institute through grants, received from the National Endowment for Democracy and the United States Agency for International Development. The 2004 elections were different in two aspects.

¹⁰⁹ Popov.

CVU secured some funds from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The evidence of that project was a round table meeting organized under the sponsorship of the German institute after the first round of presidential elections on November 8, 2004.¹¹⁰ The breakthrough is significant because European donor institutions are usually overshadowed by American grant-givers, most notably USAID.

In addition to that, for the first time CVU attracted support of the Ukrainian middle class who provided its in-kind contributions or volunteer services for monitoring purposes. The demonstrations at the Maidan of Independence resulted in collapse of the Kuchma regime. Throughout the country people became aware of the government's actions to falsify the elections and saw the potency of their power in forcing a re-vote. Driven by this newly acquired awareness, many contacted the Committee of Voters to offer their services for the third round of voting.

Ihor Popov likes to describe somewhat surreal images of this assistance. On the Election Day, one would see a new Mercedes driving through deep potholes of rural roads to a problematic polling station. Its owner was fired up and ready to film any violation on his family video camera.¹¹¹ The appearance of this group had a shellshock effect on commissioners. No longer were they dealing with the usual CVU crowd of pesky, but infirm retirees and enthusiastic, but inexperienced college students. Having survived the criminal chaos of the 1990s and the tax inspections of the early 2000s, the Ukrainian middle class could not be easily ignored or bullied.

It is unclear whether the burst of civic activism was a byproduct of the revolutionary events or a lucky conflation of a heightened awareness about the

¹¹⁰ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, "KVU Hronika Podij" [CVU, The Chronology of Events]; Drewelowsky.

¹¹¹ Popov.

importance of elections and the public knowledge about CVU (as its activists tend to suggest¹¹²). In either case, the group should be commended for thinking on its feet and taking advantage of a new pool of human resources.

Regardless of the assistance from Ukrainian medium and small-size businesses, CVU still had to rely on donor support to carry out its major programs for the 2004 elections. This raises the sore question on the extent to which foreign funding impacted the CVU's ability to perform. Predictably, there are different opinions on this matter.

CVU activists tend to see external grants as one of the formative variables, which shaped the contours of activities, but was not decisive for the group's involvement in the campaign. Its spokesman, Oleksandr Chernenko, said the importance of grants varied by the sphere of activities. CVU leader, Ihor Popov, went further by suggesting that because of the overwhelming domestic support, foreign money in 2004 did not play as great of a role as it used to in the previous elections. However, donors – both inside and outside of NDI – tend to emphasize almost unanimously the cumulative effect of supporting CVU (and the Ukrainian nonprofit sector in general) for the previous decade as a factor that enabled its effectiveness.¹¹³

These disparate observations can be summarized in three points. One, foreign funding in 2004 was important for CVU programs that were large in scope (i.e. election day monitoring) or technical in implementation (i.e. exit polls). Even with public enthusiasm, the organization would have been unlikely to find sufficient financial backing for these initiatives. Two, support from the Ukrainian middle class provided an unexpected, but welcome and important relief to monitor the additional (and previously

¹¹² Chernenko, Popov, CVU regional activist.

¹¹³ Western NGO representative; Igor Plaschkin, Konrad Adenauer Foundation Project Coordinator, interview with the author, May 2007.

unforeseen) round of presidential elections. It boosted credibility of the monitoring effort. Three, it was not the immediate external assistance, but rather its long-term nature that built the infrastructure and capacity of the Committee, so it could fare well in the 2004 campaign even with modest grant support.

Activities

CVU implemented numerous initiatives that targeted various audiences and approached the central goal of election monitoring from a multidimensional perspective.¹¹⁴

First, the group calibrated its monitoring capacity to accommodate the peculiarities of the Ukrainian election cycle. It re-launched its long-term monitoring program on June 25, 2004 to assure that authorities did not rig the election outcome through unfair campaigning strategies. Based on the monitoring results from the first round of voting, the group correctly identified the main opportunity for fraud – voter lists.¹¹⁵ To address the issue, in October 2004 CVU launched a medium-term observation program to uncover irregularities and mistakes in voter registration. Its short-term monitoring initiative deployed observers at polling stations on the Election Day to assure compliance with voting and vote tabulation procedures.

Second, the Committed conducted a parallel vote tabulation. By collecting ballots from regular precincts, it sought to catch any manipulations with results at the district and national levels. CVU assumed that the pressure to “re-distribute” votes would be

¹¹⁴ The assessment of the NGO’s initiatives is based on the interviews with Ihor Popov, Oleksandr Chernenko and the CVU 2004 annual report.

¹¹⁵ According to the Ukrainian legislation, citizens voted based on their “propyska” [registration at the place of residence]. This provision gave authorities a chance to manipulate votes, by enfranchising “dead souls” – people who no longer resided at a certain place, but were listed as eligible voters. Unsurprisingly, they did cast their ballots in favor of pro-governmental candidates.

greater at the level of district commissions where aggregate results are put together, and a general picture of winners and losers is beginning to emerge.

Third, CVU expanded training activities to new populations. In addition to training new members of precinct election commissions, the group identified two new target audiences – rural teachers and young voters. The former was the most frequent target of government harassment and intimidation. Because they command respect among rural residents and depend on village authorities for elementary needs, rural teachers were often coerced to campaign on behalf of pro-governmental candidates and assure a high turnout and a “correct” vote among parents of their students. CVU organized a number of trainings and distributed several brochures that outlined not only teachers’ rights as voters, but also stipulated punishments for violating the basic norms of fair elections. For young voters, it organized a national training of trainers as part of the “You Vote for the First Time!” project. The initiative ended up serving two purposes simultaneously – educating first-time voters about their rights as well as recruiting them to be election observers.

Finally, CVU tried to reach ordinary Ukrainians by opening an election phone line. The “Voter Protection Service” project started in April 2004 and involved four attorneys and twelve defense lawyers providing pro bono advice in twenty regions of the country. The hotline became not only an important source of distributing relevant information, but also an outlet to gather complaints about violations of the Election Law.

To summarize, in the 2004 presidential elections the Committee implemented a compilation of its regular programs as well as sought to launch new activities in order to accommodate changing circumstances and engage new target groups. Most importantly, the content, timing and nature of initiatives reveal that the norms of election conduct had

been deeply internalized by CVU activists. Elections were no longer viewed as a one-day event, but as a process. It was not even the outcome (fair and free) that was important for the nonprofit, but the manner in which it was arrived.

Cooperation with NGOs

Prior to the demonstrations at the Maidan, CVU maintained its usual “friendly, but cautious” stand on working with other NGOs. The Committee’s most visible partnership effort was the “New Choice 2004” coalition of NGOs. Formed on October 31, 2003 (less than a year before the presidential elections), it included a star cast of Ukraine’s best-known civic groups, such as “Democratic Initiatives” (the nation’s strongest public polling think tank), the Laboratory for Legislative Initiatives (a brainchild of the national Soros foundation), the Europe XXI foundation (known for its fiercely pro-Western orientation) and others. From the information available about its activities, it seems that the coalition was designed to facilitate information sharing among the organizations and attract media attention to the civic aspect of elections. For instance, on November 4, 2003 its members petitioned President Kuchma to include a civil society representative to the Central Election Commission as a permanent observer. CVU Deputy Chair, Evhen Radchenko, was suggested for the position. On February 23-29, 2004 three coalition members (including CVU press secretary Oleksandr Chernenko) visited the United States and briefed the American policy community on the course of Ukrainian elections. To prove that eagerness of the “New Choice 2004” did not go unnoticed, in January 2004 the coalition was invited to meet with Valeriy Mishura, who was appointed by the Ukrainian parliament to investigate the role of foreign funding in supporting Ukrainian NGOs. The coalition remained active throughout the campaign. It

organized an NGO forum between the first and second rounds of elections. The event was sponsored by the Soros foundation in Ukraine.¹¹⁶

In advance of voting, CVU also assisted international observation missions (i.e. OSCE, ENEMO and CIS-EMO) that came to Ukraine to monitor elections. As its annual report notes, the organization did not favor any mission in particular, instead preferring to exchange information and provide reasonable assistance with training, assigning monitoring locations and offering mechanisms for gathering and analyzing the data in the 17 regions where such missions were deployed.¹¹⁷ The assistance in deploying five hundred Canadian observers (most of whom were ethnic Ukrainians and came to Ukraine after the Orange revolution made international headlines) shows that the group's position on cooperation with other nonprofits was tactical and flexible. When it felt there was a niche and need for its involvement, it provided such.

My interview with the CVU Chairman makes it clear that Popov preferred informal methods of cooperation. For instance, he noted that during the election campaign meetings of civic leaders with U.S. Ambassador John Herbst were most helpful for him. They became a venue for otherwise busy NGO activists to come together, share information and compare notes.¹¹⁸

While Popov deemed such examples of inter-NGO collaboration sufficient, some CVU regional activists were interested more in joint activities than simple information sharing. However, because regional branches of many national nonprofits were unevenly developed, cooperation on equal terms was not always achievable. According to a CVU

¹¹⁶ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, "KVU Hronologia podij" [CVU, The Chronology of Events].

¹¹⁷ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, 2004 Annual Report, http://www.cvu.org.ua/doc.php?lang=ukr&mid=yreport&doc_type=

¹¹⁸ Popov.

activist in the East of Ukraine, the capacity of Pora branch there was so appalling that CVU had to stop any interactions or risk doing all of Pora activities.¹¹⁹

Whatever disappointments and personal tensions might have existed between various civic leaders and groups, they receded to the background on November 22, 2004. As many activists and observers noted, when the demonstrations at the Maidan began unfolding, civic groups started coming out from every nook and cranny.¹²⁰ People, who have been working on joint projects for years or met together at a long forgotten Western workshop, would call each other, asking to get involved. Some went together to the Maidan in Kyiv to bring people food. Others signed up to be election observers in Eastern and Southern Ukraine – the regions with the highest incidence of fraud.

To summarize, in the 2004 presidential elections the Committee of Voters worked with many domestic and international nonprofits by coordinating activities and providing sporadic assistance. In the course of the Orange Revolution, informal interactions among NGOs increased exponentially, because civil society in Ukraine, however feeble and dormant, still existed. All it needed was a pivotal event to get activated.

Cooperation with political parties

The dynamics of the 2004 presidential campaign made it challenging for CVU to sustain cooperation with oppositional parties, while maintaining its formal neutrality as a civic organization.

¹¹⁹ CVU regional activist.

¹²⁰ Bekeshkina, Popov, Western NGO representative.

On one hand, authorities treated any criticism as part of some ubiquitous foreign ploy to humiliate Ukraine and subvert its achievements. The President and his staff insisted that the country was already a democracy and did not need anyone to monitor its compliance with democratic norms.¹²¹ Because CVU observation efforts were bound to reveal some irregularities (if not outright violations of the Election Law), the organization was counted as “unreliable” and blacklisted from all media appearances.¹²²

On the other hand, as the spiral of revolutionary events started to unravel, CVU was coming under increasing pressure from several sources to side openly with the opposition. First, it was the Ukrainian public that was both activated and radicalized by the events. As Popov remarked, in the heat of the revolution people were unwilling to listen or read dry, factual reports, enumerating violations. The public yearning for action exerted implicit pressures on CVU to provide an indisputable proof that Yushchenko won overwhelmingly¹²³ and the victory was simply stolen from him. Then, there was NDI that believed this was the time for CVU to pay off the years of investment by becoming an indispensable ally of the revolution. And finally, the opposition forces, willing to build upon popular resentment of the Kuchma regime, were pushing CVU to join in the task.

Under these circumstances, it was only CVU Chairman Ihor Popov who could manage a semblance of impartiality, by making the organization’s support of the opposition parties indirect, diplomatic and highly nuanced.

¹²¹ The article by then Chief of Staff to President Kuchma illustrates this attitude to civil society: Volodymyr Lytvyn, “Hromadyanske suspilstvo: mify i realnist” [Civil Society – Myths and Realities], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 26 January -1 February 2002.

¹²² Chernenko.

¹²³ As the third round results revealed, this was not the case. Victory was always closely contested between the two candidates with one leading over the other by 4-5 percent.

In the course of the 2004 campaign, CVU trained Our Ukraine members to be election observers and commissioners as well as collected complaints from local party activists for its long-term observation reports.¹²⁴ As demonstrations at the Maidan were taking place, the task of separating political and civic activity became especially tortuous for the Committee of Voters. On one hand, CVU provided Yushchenko's party "Our Ukraine" with a dossier of specific violations that became the factual basis for his case to the Supreme Court to invalidate the outcome of the second round. The information proved especially crucial, because Our Ukraine activists failed to collect comparable data on their own.¹²⁵ At the same time, Ihor Popov turned down the request by Petro Poroshenko, one of the most powerful members of Our Ukraine, to speak from the Maidan's tribune. Justifying his decision, he stated that the atmosphere of righteous anger did not make people predisposed to listen to objective statistics, which he would deliver.

To summarize, the events of the Orange revolution have highlighted an eternal dilemma that each civic group has to address in its own way – how to be involved in the political life without crossing a blurred line that separates political and civic worlds. When working with parties during the revolution, the CVU leadership stuck to impartiality and neutrality to the displeasure of some activists, public and foreign donors.

Mobilization

Regardless of the extensive re-writing of history, done by Ukrainian politicians of all colors, almost nobody anticipated how well attended and well sustained the

¹²⁴ CVU 2004 Annual Report.

¹²⁵ Popov, Chernenko.

demonstrations at the Maidan would turn out to be.¹²⁶ Therefore, like many ordinary Ukrainians, CVU had to make an urgent decision on whether to join or stay out of the demonstrations.

Among those skeptical about long-term viability of the Orange demonstrations were CVU's Popov and Chernenko, who believed that at most the protests would be another "Ukraine without Kuchma" – a series of failed uprisings that were violently crushed in the wake of the "Tapegate" scandal in 2001.¹²⁷

As the Committee's leadership was trying to make sense of this unexpected turn of events, whispers for direction were getting louder in its regional offices and calls to take a stand became incessant from NDI. At a hastily assembled CVU board meeting, the discussion on joining the protests produced an internal split.¹²⁸

A faction of "radicals," populated by activists from some Eastern Ukrainian oblasts and the CVU press secretary, suggested siding with Yushchenko and fielding a CVU representative to the Maidan podium.

The "moderates," headed most prominently by Popov, insisted on remaining on the sidelines. This time, their reasons had nothing to do with the concern for impartiality. Instead they boiled down to the instinct of survival. In the first days of demonstrations it was clear that the turn-out was impressive and the durability was surprisingly long, but until at least November 25, 2004 (the arrival of international mediators) nobody could have predicted whether the government would use force to disperse protestors or order a re-vote. Popov asserted that if the peaceful uprising had failed, the repercussions would have been much more severe than at the failure of the 2001 protests. He pointed to the

¹²⁶ Roman Skrypin, lead anchor at 5 Kanal, interview with the author, July 2007.

¹²⁷ Popov, Chernenko.

¹²⁸ Recollections of the meeting are compiled based on the observations from Olena Botsko, Oleksandr Chernenko and a CVU regional activist.

case of the Freedom House office in Ukraine that endured harsh harassment of tax inspections for its involvement in the “Ukraine without Kuchma” action. At worst, CVU offices would be closed and CVU activists jailed for real and imaginary tax violations.

In the manner of internal decision-making emblematic of CVU, the discussion was soon dropped and a board vote on the matter never took place. Though the Committee issued a press release that welcomed “the civic activity of Ukrainian citizens, a peaceful nature of meetings and demonstrations, a balanced position of the majority of law enforcement officers, and an honest civic position of some journalists,”¹²⁹ Popov personally forbade CVU activists to participate in the demonstrations on behalf of the organization.

The situation with activist mobilization provides an important insight into CVU’s deeper organizational problems. First, the decision to abstain from protests was a top-down order rather than a consensus-driven compromise, which explains why three years after the revolution some activists still feel bitter about sitting out the event. Second, the outcome showed the leadership too comfortable with the status quo – to be oppositional enough to get foreign funds, but not too adversarial to provoke a government retaliation. As one observer aptly put it, CVU put too many eggs in too many baskets, which made the act of juggling them impossible.¹³⁰ Thus, casual friendships turned into enduring obligations. Finally, the situation highlighted another sore point for many Ukrainian nonprofits – financial transparency. While CVU’s worries are understandable given the repressive nature of Ukrainian politics, the organization that was involved in such a

¹²⁹ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, Press release, 24 November 2004, http://www.cvu.org.ua/elections.php?lang=ukr&mid=pres&eid=82&lim_beg=0.

¹³⁰ Soboleva.

sensitive area as election politics should have made certain that accounting practices of its regional branches were beyond reproach.

To summarize, as the Orange Revolution was unfolding on the streets and squares of Kyiv, the Committee of Voters was internally divided and chose to stay out of limelight altogether. While some CVU activists joined the ranks of protesters as ordinary citizens, their participation as civil society members was neither visible nor decisive at that point.

Assessment of the performance

The previous section leaves us with the most difficult question to answer – how did CVU perform during the Orange revolution? Because the resultant picture is so multi-layered and contradictory, the subsequent assessments also diverge, depending on the position of observers and their approach to the task.

If one is to consider purely quantitative indicators (which often end up in donor reports), the general picture comes out positive. As a result of its monitoring efforts, CVU produced seven long-term observation reports, submitted 5,168 legal acts, 2,826 notifications about violations of the election legislation, 176 complaint letters to district election commissions and courts of different jurisdiction. The voter hotline produced 1,208 complaint letters to election commissions, 290 – to prosecutor's office and provided 1,319 regular consultations. The service became so popular that lawyers from Ernst&Young, one of the most well known firms in Ukraine, offered their pro bono

assistance. The “You Vote for the First Time!” program held 200 lectures in 125 educational establishments and involved 10,000 young people.¹³¹

When asked whether and why CVU was successful in the Orange revolution, its activists point to a number of reasons. Among the most frequently mentioned is public awareness about the group’s brand that attracted a large number of observers from the Ukrainian middle class for the third tour of elections. The Committee’s Chairman focused on institutional expertise and leadership continuity that made CVU activists respected figures in the media and civic circles.¹³² Lastly, national and regional members agree that CVU had a lot of activists who were mission-driven. Instead of hunting for funds, they concentrated on improving what they did best – election monitoring. As a result, even a normally critical NDI representative acknowledged that CVU’s civic and political analyses became more mature and sophisticated.¹³³

Those critical of the Committee’s performance during the Orange Revolution believe its aversion to risk taking and predisposition to status quo diminished its impact in three key areas. First, its Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) program failed to anticipate the change in government tactics. While CVU thought territorial election commissions¹³⁴ would be most likely sites for fraud, authorities manipulated the results at the level of ordinary polling stations. So when the Committee collected election protocols from regular polling stations, they merely confirmed officially fraudulent results. In the first round of voting, CVU reported a statistical tie with 39.6% going for both Yushchenko

¹³¹ The statistics are taken from the CVU 2004 Annual Report.

¹³² Popov.

¹³³ Botsko

¹³⁴ CVU’s logic was that because polling stations bring their results to territorial election commissions, the latter would be more likely to manipulate the outcome when they see a compiled picture for the whole area under their jurisdiction.

and Yanukovych.¹³⁵ Unsurprisingly, the group's PVT for the second tour showed Yanukovych's victory and created so much argument between CVU and NDI as to be embargoed for public release. In addressing the issue, Ihor Popov whether PVT admitted some methodological flaws and too much NDI meddling in the process, but flatly denied any lack of oversight on the part of the Committee.¹³⁶

Second, the group's short-term observation program (STO) was financially and logistically mismanaged. Sources within NDI claim that CVU did not deploy as many observers as it promised, especially in the critical eastern and southern regions of Ukraine¹³⁷ where official harassment and fraud produced a Soviet-like ninety-some percent outcome in favor of Yanukovych. The crisis brought to surface the issues of accountability and transparency that existed between the Committee of Voters and the National Democratic Institute in the past. Some openly blame CVU for not being able to predict another twist in government tactics. With hindsight from the 1999 and 2002 elections, the authorities sought to ensure that local commissions would be staffed with "right members," and people vote "the right way," by casting their vote at home or through absentee ballots. So in many regions of Ukraine monitoring on the day of elections turned into watching a carefully staged spectacle.¹³⁸

Finally, CVU erred by choosing to sit out the events on the Maidan - the sentiment shared by many activists and foreign donors. The decision seems even worse in the retrospect not only because the Orange revolutionaries won, but also because it confirmed CVU's organizational pathologies – overly powerful leadership and a

¹³⁵ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, Press release, 1 November 2004, http://www.cvu.org.ua/elections.php?lang=ukr&mid=pres&eid=82&lim_beg=0.

¹³⁶ Popov.

¹³⁷ Soboleva; NDI staff off the record.

¹³⁸ OSCE/ODIHR, "International Election Observation Mission. Presidential Election (Second Round), Ukraine – 21 November 2004. Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions," www.osce.org/documents/html/pdf/html/3811_en.pdf.html.

preference to influence events indirectly. A review of its public statements shows a protracted exercise in diplomacy that threaded an increasingly shrinking line between admitting the truth and actively joining the public protest. In the statement on November 1, 2004 “CVU demands to indict those responsible for falsifying voter lists in the first round.”¹³⁹ The question is who “those” are, and why they cannot be named by the group that has monitored the process for so long and must know “them.” In another press release, the group says to be “disturbed by the information about an organized trip of a great number (16,000) of citizens from Eastern Ukraine with the goal to observe elections.”¹⁴⁰ Though the report proceeds to suggest there was no need for these people to do the work of CVU, it shies away from calling the practice for what it was – a forced busing of Eastern Ukrainians to vote multiple times using so-called “leave coupons.”¹⁴¹

To summarize, the evaluation of the CVU performance against our two indicators of success reveals that the organization only partially fulfilled its core functions of providing quality election monitoring. Its pre-election reports attracted much needed international attention to Ukraine, thereby increasing pressure on the already isolated government of President Kuchma. However, due to conventional thinking, the Committee proved unable to predict changes in state behavior and increased sophistication in rigging the election, which rendered a number of CVU Election Day programs not just meaningless, but potentially harmful as a tool to boost fraudulent results. When it comes to the issue of contributions to the revolution itself, the NGO had no direct impact on any stage of the event, preferring to keep a generally low profile

¹³⁹ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, Press release, 1 November 2004, http://www.cvu.org.ua/elections.php?lang=ukr&mid=pres&eid=82&lim_beg=0.

¹⁴⁰ Committee of Voters of Ukraine, Long-Term Observation Report, 13 September – 3 October 2004, http://www.cvu.org.ua/elections.php?lang=ukr&mid=pres&eid=82&lim_beg=0.

¹⁴¹ “Leave coupons” (*vidkripni talony* in Ukrainian) allowed those on a business trip to vote outside of their residence district. The major problem was that if an election commission did not take such a coupon from a voter, it could be used for voting several times at different locations.

until it became clear whether the revolution would win. By providing the evidence of election fraud to Our Ukraine representatives, it indirectly helped resolve the political impasse created by the second round of voting. In the end, the organization fared poorly on both indicators (function and contribution), and its involvement in the Orange Revolution did not become “a firing cannon” that would further strengthen the spirit and spiral of protests.¹⁴²

PROFILE: PORA

Launch

The idea of Pora was a product of simultaneous and uncoordinated deliberations within Ukrainian political and civic circles. On the civic side, it was verbalized during brainstorming sessions of the “Ukraine for the Truth” coalition of NGOs, whose activists believed the upcoming presidential elections would be most brutally fought to maintain the existing power structure.¹⁴³ A group called “Youth Resistance” piloted the concept of youth mobilization and educational outreach in Lviv, a heavily pro-democratic city in the West of Ukraine.¹⁴⁴ The experiences of Kmara and Otpor also proved to many domestic activists that, if organized and united, civil society could make an impact.

On the political side, three leading figures within Yushchenko’s “Our Ukraine” bloc – Taras Stetskiv, Roman Bezsmertnyi, and Volodymyr Filenko – recognized that if large-scale fraud occurred and an election outcome were falsified, Yushchenko’s victory would come about only as a result of active public pressure. However, they also had a lingering doubt whether traditionally passive and private Ukrainians were ready to stand

¹⁴² Botsko.

¹⁴³ Evhen Zolotariov, Pora Co-Chair, interview with the author, June 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Aivazovska

up for their rights. Since January 2004 Stetskiv took the lead in elaborating possible options to address this issue.¹⁴⁵

The events took a lucky turn for “Our Ukraine.” On March 9, 2004 some young activists were arrested in Kharkiv, while celebrating the birthday of Taras Shevchenko¹⁴⁶ and protesting against the Kuchma regime. Among them was Evhen Zolotariov, a MP representative for Volodymyr Filenko, who carried a Kuchma dummy during the event.¹⁴⁷ The demonstration and arrests showed that the Ukrainian youth – a previously apathetic electoral segment – might be ready to get involved. Furthermore, the resentment of the Kuchma regime must have spread far and deep to make protests feasible in Kharkiv, a historically pro-Russian city in North-Eastern Ukraine.

Vladyslav Kaskiv, Pora’s informal leader, did not need to conduct extensive recruitment to get the group off the ground. He knew many potential activists through trainings that were conducted for youth organizations since 2002 by the Network of Social Democratic Funds of Europe.¹⁴⁸ So merely a month after the demonstration in Kharkiv, Pora conducted its first seminar in Uzhhorod¹⁴⁹ and launched the first campaign - “Kuchmism is...?” The organization’s name and its literary associations immediately put it on the societal radar.¹⁵⁰ As if the message of change could have been missed, posters, asking people to define what living under the Kuchma regime meant for them, appeared on the weekend when Ukrainians moved their clocks one hour forward. Kuchma’s winter was over, the summer time has brought a welcome change.

¹⁴⁵ Diuk, “The Triumph of Civil Society,” 79.

¹⁴⁶ The founder of modern Ukrainian literature and language.

¹⁴⁷ Soboleva.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Pora, “The Chronology of the 2004 Civic Campaign,” <http://pora.org.ua/content/view/2870/250/>.

¹⁵⁰ The name “Pora” (translated as “It is Time”) unsubtly stated that it was time for change. It also reminded many of a verse by the 19th century Ukrainian poet Ivan Franko. Titled as “Ne Pora,” it called upon people to rise and actively protest against oppression and foreign dominance.

The second campaign earned Pora nationwide recognition as a force to be reckoned with.¹⁵¹ It organized noisy protests during brutally falsified and violent mayoral elections in a small Carpathian town of Mukachevo. The contest between pro-opposition Viktor Baloha and pro-government Emil Nuser became widely viewed as a rehearsal for the presidential elections in November 2004.¹⁵²

To sum up, from the very beginning the organization represented the duality of political and civic involvement. First, its two leaders – Vlad Kaskiv and Evhen Zolotariov – came from the NGO sector and party work respectively. The fact that the idea about Pora did not originate at once and could not be attributed to a particular source indicates that civic and political activists were thinking along the same lines for some time. Therefore, the group became the embodiment of a consensus rather than a top-down initiative or a donor project. Second, Pora was able to put itself quickly on the political map because it was starting to tap into previously under-involved target audiences through grass-root methods that caught attention of an average Ukrainian.

Mission

As one Pora activist aptly put it, its mission was to engage the disenfranchised and the angry.¹⁵³ It sought to fight public apathy, especially among young voters, through large-scale awareness campaigns and (if elections turned out to be fraudulent) mass mobilization.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Kuzio, "Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions": 367-369.

¹⁵² Volodymyr Arieiev, "Rozмова po-mukachivski" [Talk, the Mukachiv Way], *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 27 March – 2 April 2004; *Ukrainska Pravda*, "Mukachevo – Nusser or Baloha," 19 April 2004, <http://pravda.com.ua/en/news/2004/4/19/4532.html>.

¹⁵³ Aivazovska.

¹⁵⁴ Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbrig, "Pora – "It's Time" for Democracy in Ukraine" in *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*, ed. Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 89-90.

By 2004, Ukraine continued to have low levels of public efficacy and participation. Political experts speculated that reasons for the estrangement from politics varied by age. Whereas older generations were skeptical of their influence due to Soviet experiences, those in their twenties learned to rely on themselves and disengaged from the politics, which did not impact their daily living.

By learning from previous successes and failures of civic activism in Ukraine, Pora sought to break this pattern of behavior. From the 1990 student hunger strike, Pora activists took the importance of grass-root work to recruit participants and visible actions to attract media and public attention. Based on the failed anti-Kuchma protests in 2001, the group decided that its focus should be on non-violent methods of resistance.¹⁵⁵ In March 2001 the government was successful in sparking clashes between demonstrators and the police. The footage of massive unrest prompted ordinary Ukrainians to stay at home and undermined the image of protesters in the international community. As a result, public statements from foreign governments adopted a neutral stand and called for both sides to resolve their differences peacefully.¹⁵⁶ Pora was determined not to repeat any of those mistakes.

Between April and October 2004, Pora defined its mission very broadly as spreading awareness about importance of the campaign through its posters and public actions. However, after the first round of the presidential elections in September 2004, the civic group had to adjust its goals according to the situation. Shocked by the scale of fraud and its blatant nature, Pora activists realized that they were trying to accomplish too much in a short period of time.¹⁵⁷ Instead they decided to re-focus their efforts more

¹⁵⁵ Zolotariov.

¹⁵⁶ Wilson, 51-70.

¹⁵⁷ Aivazovska, Soboleva.

narrowly to fight state propaganda through mass actions and placed a greater emphasis on recruiting people for possible mobilization.

To summarize, because of the proximity to its target audience, Pora instinctively found a niche among those who yearned for change, but were either shut out or disaffected by the political process. It began tapping into this audience with a wide array of methods that relied on its core principle of nonviolence and sought to attract public attention. The shift in the mission from awareness to mobilization and protests speaks positively of Pora's ability to assess the situation after the first round of voting and sense the changing public mood.

Funding and sustainability

Pora and its leaders were able to overcome the usual pathologies of the Ukrainian nonprofit sector by successfully securing funds from numerous domestic sources. However, in the matters of financial accountability and transparency, the group continued to display problems similar to other NGOs.

At the beginning, the organization survived on some seed money that was available from the Freedom of Choice coalition, headed by one of the Pora leaders Vlad Kaskiv.¹⁵⁸ Because his NGO was well known from previous election cycles, Kaskiv could secure some funding from the Marshall Fund and the Freedom House to begin initial training activities, like the summer camp in Crimea. However, all talk about sustained American support for the group seems to be just a myth. Both foreign donors in Ukraine and Pora activists indicated how wary the former were of being perceived to

¹⁵⁸ Zolotariov

have any close association with the group.¹⁵⁹ Any institutionalized contact became especially radioactive after the government started pursuing a vigorous campaign to portray Pora as extremist and violent.

Lacking access to external funds, Pora had to turn inward and focus on possible domestic sources of support. Its financial base consisted of contributions and in-kind donations from medium and small businesses as well as ordinary citizens who contacted Pora activists through the phone numbers provided on street leaflets.¹⁶⁰ Each group was drawn to Pora for different reasons. Businesses sensed that a large-scale effort to redistribute property in favor of the Donetsk oligarchic clan was already underway. Its ruthlessness and breadth offered a preview of what would yet to come, if Viktor Yanukovych won. Middle-class Ukrainians understood that their cosmopolitan ambitions would be cut short if Ukraine obtained the image of a European pariah, akin to Belarus. Many also suspected that under the new regime, they would have to become serfs to oligarchs to maintain any semblance of good living standards.

What pushed all these social groups to help Pora was the government's zeal in besmirching the civic organization. The surreal tales of Pora activists being trained by former Vietnam War veterans on urban warfare only further confirmed the opinion that Pora was the real thing. Otherwise, the Kuchma regime would not have wasted so much airtime and propaganda talent on something it deemed benign (e.g. the traditionally "oppositional" Communist Party).¹⁶¹

At the same time, the evidence provided by Pora activists makes it clear that the group did poorly in terms of planning their funding. The initial intention was that Vlad

¹⁵⁹ Soboleva, Western NGO representative.

¹⁶⁰ Aivazovska.

¹⁶¹ Soboleva.

Kaskiv would use his connections within the donor community to generate grant money. By summer, it became apparent that foreign support was not forthcoming for a number of reasons.¹⁶² While in July-August the organization was so cash-starved that activists had to pay for cell phones from their own money, by the end of the election campaign (October-December 2004), it was overwhelmed by donations from citizens and businesses. It was then when Pora acquired a powerful financier, David Zhvania, who openly defected to join Yushchenko and began sponsoring the group. In the wake of the demonstrations at the Maidan, the group opened an improvised office at a local café downtown Kyiv where supporters of the Orange revolution could stop by and donate funds for residents of the Orange tent city. Evhen Zolotariov, the other Pora leader, acknowledged that soon they had more money than they could use.¹⁶³

Like many Ukrainian NGOs, Pora's leaders also did not institute clear fund allocation and reporting procedures. At first, this did not seem to be a problem since there were no funds to report about. The situation turned one hundred and eighty degrees in the fall with the deluge of public and business support. To this day, it remains unclear what the extent of contributions from each sector of the society was and, more importantly, where it went. The lack of financial transparency continues to provide a propitious ground for conspiracy theories, alleging clandestine foreign backing of the group by the Soros Foundation in Ukraine and the United Nations Development Program.¹⁶⁴ In addition, the group's domestic foes, especially among former

¹⁶² Zolotariov.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Soros staff, interview with the author provided on the condition of anonymity.

disenchanted members, assert that the top leadership (including Kaskiv and Zolotariov) might have appropriated the leftover of the funds donated during the demonstrations.¹⁶⁵

To conclude, though the potential of Pora to fundraise among the Ukrainian public powerfully attests to its broad appeal, the inability to manage money in a transparent and responsible manner underlies a bigger problem. Pora's strong rootedness in the Ukrainian society also brought a cavalier attitude toward money that many Ukrainians continue to carry from the Soviet times – “everything that belongs to a collective belongs to me.”

Donor influence

Regardless of the widely held assumption about the West funding the Ukrainian revolution by supporting Pora, the influence of international donors on the group was limited and sporadic. Three reasons can be provided to explain that.

First, as the government was ratcheting up its rhetoric against Pora, many donors decided to stay away from the group. Their decision was driven by multiple factors. They feared that any cooperation might provoke the Kuchma regime to suspend their own activities and presence in the country. Some observers in Ukraine and Georgia point out that donors were able to recognize the benefit of citizen-driven protest groups only in retrospect.¹⁶⁶ Pora (like Kmara in Georgia) was a completely new creature on the domestic civic scene. It did not quite fit the standard understanding of an advocacy NGO with its sedentary emphasis on education and glossy publications. Neither could it be branded as a political party, because it did not run for office. Pora's edgy, “in-your-face” tactics of work made international funders even more leery to get involved with an

¹⁶⁵ Ukraina Kryminalna, “Mordoboyshchik rvetsa v mery. U Kaskiva kassa nigodga ne skhoditsa” [The “face-beater” runs for the mayor. For Kaskiv, the till never adds up], 8 April 2008, http://www.cripo.com.ua/?sect_id=2&aid=51861.

¹⁶⁶ Mark Lenzi, IRI Country Director – Georgia, interview with the author, July 2007.

organization that was so volatile and unpredictable. It represented people's power at its raw and produced the same cautiousness with which donors treated "people movements" during the Cold War.¹⁶⁷ On one hand, they were willing to support a genuine display of citizens' participation. On the other, they were wary of its larger political consequences (i.e. large-scale regional instability). Another factor had to do with priorities. Many donors admitted that they (and their headquarters in Washington, DC) felt it was time to throw support behind Viktor Yushchenko who was the first viable oppositional candidate in a long time. Spending funding and political capital on Pora was seen as both dangerous and wasteful.¹⁶⁸

Second, because of the previous rationales Pora developed a different pattern of relations with donors. Since any donor funding would come with strict conditions, the group sought exclusively methodological and technical assistance.¹⁶⁹ For instance, it used grants from the Marshal Fund and the Freedom House to conduct activist training.¹⁷⁰ If donors could not provide direct financial assistance, it participated in their joint activities. Seeking to enhance its cooperation with Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine," especially at the regional level, Pora turned to NDI to organize an informal training where members of both organizations could meet and get to know each other.¹⁷¹ Otherwise, for its major programmatic activities the group relied almost exclusively on domestic funds, which vitiated possible foreign leverage.

In the end, many Pora activists and outside observers suggest that the lack of heavy donor involvement made a number of unexpectedly positive contributions. It

¹⁶⁷ Carothers, *Aiding Democracy*.

¹⁶⁸ Western NGO representative, Soboleva.

¹⁶⁹ Andriy Shevtsiv, "Gene Sharpe – nash uchytel, Vladyslav Kaskiv – zhyvucha istota, a zhovta Pora vkrala nash brand" [Gene Sharpe is our teacher, Vladyslav Kaskiv is a real survivor, and Yellow Pora stole our brand], *ZIK Information Agency*, 13 April 2005, <http://zik.com.ua/ua/news/2005/04/13/9379>.

¹⁷⁰ Zolotariov.

¹⁷¹ Soboleva.

provided an early test of survival, thereby pushing the group's ability to come through to the limits. Whereas many Ukrainian civic organizations spent years in the greenhouse of foreign funding and ultimately never made it to the outside alive, Pora was forced to face a post-donor reality fairly quickly. The absence of foreign grants made the group's activists think harder of how to appeal to ordinary citizens and be more persistent in seeking public support.

With no financial backing, it also had no content-related strings attached. Therefore, many of Pora's activities, which mocked the Ukrainian authorities mercilessly,¹⁷² would not have been imaginable if it had any foreign funding for they were too risky and provocative for donors to finance.

Finally, as mentioned before, Ukrainian civil society was a developed sector. Thanks to the previous years of infrastructural investments and seed grants, Pora had some fellow organizations (most prominently the Freedom of Choice coalition) to help it weather financial dry spells.

To summarize, though Pora received some donor funding for training purposes, it failed to secure any continuous foreign support for its edgy programmatic activities. The lack of donor enthusiasm stemmed from the political atmosphere on the ground, Pora's non-conventional nature and a limited pool of grant resources. In the end, having no foreign backing proved to be a blessing, for it enabled the organization to seek domestic support.

¹⁷² Wilson, 73-76; Kuzio, "Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions": 375-382.

Membership

Members of the organization can be broadly divided into two groups, which encompassed “little Ukrainians” (as Viktor Yushchenko lovingly called the ordinary folk) and urban would-be elites.

The first group was older, mostly male and over 35 years old. Its participants came from small towns in Central and Western Ukraine and had some previous “combat” experience by taking part in the 2001 protests of “Ukraine Without Kuchma.”¹⁷³ They joined Pora mostly for two reasons. The first had to do with the sense of patriotism. Sociological studies widely confirm that inhabitants in these regions of Ukraine are more patriotic than those from the heavily Russified East and South.¹⁷⁴ Many of them never perceived Russian-speaking Kuchma as a true steward of the Ukrainian nation. Extensive spread of the Russian capital throughout Ukraine left little doubt in their mind that Ukraine was heading for another period of colonization. Fueling the feelings of patriotic indignation was the gut sense of injustice. Living deep in the Ukrainian heartland, they were far away from the glamour of Kyiv or other financial hubs (like Donetsk or Dnipropetrovsk) where ordinary people could get spillovers of the economic growth. Instead, all they saw during the Kuchma decade was impoverishment, unemployment and massive labor migration of their family and relatives to the European Union in search of a better life. This group, mostly known as Black Pora, became the working horse of the organization. It made up the crowd during demonstrations, populated the Orange tent city and stood in freezing temperatures on the Maidan. Their

¹⁷³ Soboleva, Zolotariov.

¹⁷⁴ Panina.

tenacity and grit came from one simple fact – the life was so bad that they had little to lose.

Contrary to them, the second group had a lot at stake in 2004. It consisted of urban and highly educated young professionals who matured in already independent Ukraine. Though each articulated a different reason for joining Pora (i.e. a concern for the fairness of elections, the state of Ukrainian democracy, and support for Yushchenko's ideals), underneath it all was a basic worry about their future in a would-be authoritarian Ukraine.¹⁷⁵ Like Pora's middle-class supporters, they realized that no good would hold for independent-minded, career-oriented individuals in a country where success is doled out based on oligarchic connections and loyalty. Known as Yellow Pora, this group became the core of leadership and generated ideas and activities that formed the public image of the organization.

Pora began recruiting members long before it emerged. The initial wave of recruitment relied on a simple principle of networking. Those interested in the ideas of civic activism took part in a series of seminars on leadership skills that were organized and funded by the Westminster and Alfred Muller Foundations in October 2003 – April 2004.¹⁷⁶ At these events, future Pora members identified people who shared similar opinions and values about the political situation. Though, as the interviews reveal, the selection was informal, it was also fairly rigorous. Olha Aivazovska says Pora usually picked one to three people out of thirty participants in a seminar. She asserts that selectiveness reflected not simply elitism, but an intention to choose real believers

¹⁷⁵ Aivazovska.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; Wilson, 74.

among those who often go to donor events because they are free of charge and provide a break from the work routine.

The second round of recruitment relied heavily on grass-root organizing. Borrowing the term from the 17th century Ukrainian Cossacks, Pora activists divided Ukraine into 78 “kushs” (translated as a bush) and proceeded to establish a small cell in each of them.¹⁷⁷ Later on, this regional division became blurred. Trying to attract as many students as possible, Pora allowed a group of activists to form a “bush” in a university, as long as it had enough people.¹⁷⁸

The government’s over-reaction to the civic group produced a powerful counter-effect. The aura of danger, secrecy and adventurism, which infused its public image, became a magnet for the previously disaffected and passive youth.¹⁷⁹ By September 2004, when Pora was rolling out its most popular initiatives, like “The Tour in Stripes,” joining the group gave one the ultimate status of being “cool.” It is estimated that Pora had between 20,000 – 30,000 active members throughout the 2004 presidential campaign.¹⁸⁰

Given the seeming ease with which it was able to attract participants, one wonders how many of them joined for either superficial reasons of being fashionable or for practical considerations to advance their career (should Yushchenko win, of course). Persistent inquires on the issue provide a positive result that further strengthens the argument of Pora’s societal embeddedness.

Because Pora did not pay its activists, the monetary incentive (which usually persuades a lot of unhappy NGO members to stay) was moot. Though being in the group

¹⁷⁷ Demes and Forbrig, 89-96.

¹⁷⁸ Zolotariov.

¹⁷⁹ Western NGO representative.

¹⁸⁰ Wilson; Demes and Forbrig.

was considered cool among peers, university and law enforcement authorities, not to mention concerned parents, did not share the same opinion. Pora activists were regularly harassed by the government and often had to support financially their membership related activities. Diuk accounts that about 355 activists were arrested throughout the campaign,¹⁸¹ and on October 15 Pora's office and private apartments of its activists were raided by the police.¹⁸²

So why did they stay? One of the reasons has to do with the intensity of involvement. Unlike other civic groups, which often turn into debating societies, Pora leaders sought to retain people by keeping them busy.¹⁸³ Immediately upon joining, new members became engaged in small, but publicly visible activities. As if to confirm their expectations of danger, they were asked to post anti-government leaflets in public places at night. The other reason for members' retention lay in the internal workings of the group. For many activists, Pora's lateral structure made it possible to have their voices heard for the first time. This point brings us to the relationship between members and leaders.

Leaders and members

If there was a point in my interviews that members were insistent on me getting right, it was about a special pattern of relations between Pora members and leaders. The group's organizational structure, they emphasized, was fundamentally different from that of a typical Ukrainian NGO. According to the sketched profile of the Ukrainian nonprofit sector at the beginning of this chapter, many civic groups were strong at the

¹⁸¹ Diuk.

¹⁸² Demes and Forbrig, 194.

¹⁸³ Aivazovska.

top, but weak at the bottom. Recognizing this drawback and the fact that mobilization would be impossible without strong grassroots, Pora leaders proceeded to establish a new pattern.

First, the organization had no formal leadership, meaning that no internal hierarchy was established. The decision produced double benefits. On one hand, it prevented endless fights over titles and ladders of subordination. Instead the focus was placed on what specific tasks each person (or a group of people) would have to accomplish. On the other hand, it significantly decreased the danger of Pora's collapse under possible repressions. Had it adopted a traditional hierarchical internal structure, a quick arrest of the top echelon of its activists would have meant a severe loss of institutional capacity. At best, the group would have taken weeks to recover. At worst, it would have descended into the chaos of succession battles for the leadership "crown."¹⁸⁴

Second, even with the lateral structure Pora managed to establish a clear division of tasks thanks to a massive devolution of responsibilities. While the core group of twenty activists in Kyiv was in charge of developing thematic messages and activities, their implementation was placed completely on the shoulders of regional and local members. Each region would have a group of 10-12 people. They each knew another five people in the "bushes" to pass down the message and the strategies to implement it, who, in turn, relied on a similar principle of communication. This method assured a number of things. The most important of them was, of course, a sense of ownership and individual responsibility. Activists felt it was incumbent upon each of them to make sure that the message would be communicated and that Pora members would show up for a planned event. The principle helped expand organizational ranks as people further down

¹⁸⁴ Soboleva.

the communication lane would seek to bring new activists who could recruit others. The fact that each activist knew personally a limited number of people ensured that a) regional “bushes” would remain intact, even if one or several members are arrested and forced to reveal the names of all Pora activists they knew and b) government provocateurs would have a more difficult time penetrating the organization.¹⁸⁵

In the end, what Pora members called fancifully the “network” principle is reminiscent more of a “snowballing” method, used by many researchers to conduct participant recruitment in unpropitious environments. Like a social scientist, who studies a politically or culturally sensitive issue, Pora knew that to get involved in acts of civic protest and disobedience in a semi-authoritarian Ukraine, people would have to be approached by someone they knew – their close friends.

At the same time, the lateral organizational structure presented a number of problems. First, the core group of activists in Kyiv had little control over the implementation of their messages and strategies. As it turns out, they worked great in some places and failed in others, particularly in the East and Donetsk (where Pora did not even have a branch).¹⁸⁶ Second, with members being so loosely connected, gathering feedback and making improvements was almost impossible. That is why, in my interviews some activists found it hard to suggest what should have been done differently in terms of activities, because they did not have an idea what went wrong in the first place.

To conclude this discussion, Pora was right to rely on “snowballing” to expand its membership ranks. Since equality among current and would-be participants is a key

¹⁸⁵ Aivazovska.

¹⁸⁶ CVU regional activist.

prerequisite for the method to work, the group managed to ameliorate significantly both leadership contestation and threats to its survival from authorities. Regardless of the weaknesses that a highly lateral and loose organizational structure creates, it seems to have been the proper approach for a short-term campaign, such as the 2004 presidential elections.

Normative transfers

While Pora activists learned extensively from domestic and foreign experiences of democratization, they received little formalized or systematic training from foreign donors or groups. The group's normative transfers can be divided into three categories – from fellow civic organizations outside of Ukraine, from international donors and from interactions among its own members.

First, a lot of media and public attention has so far been paid to Pora's cooperation with Georgia's Kmara and Serbia's Otpor. The attention proved so overwhelming as to create a worldwide backlash against civic groups and democracy promoters in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes.¹⁸⁷ The inclination to exaggerate links between these groups is natural for both supporters and critics of “color revolutions.” While the former attempt to uncover the evidence of effective norm transference, the latter seek to bolster their case of these events being a Western orchestrated conspiracy.¹⁸⁸

In reality, the record does not match the hype. In August 2004, Otpor members came to the Crimean summer camp, provocatively titled “Pora [It is time] to Wake Up,”

¹⁸⁷ National Endowment for Democracy, “A Backlash Against Democracy Promotion.”

¹⁸⁸ Democratic Initiatives Foundation, “Political Portrait of Ukraine No. 31” (Kyiv: DIF), 24.

to teach three hundred activists the techniques of non-violent resistance and talk about their experiences in prevailing against the regime of Slobodan Milosevic.¹⁸⁹ Some members of Black Pora, a more radical wing of the organization, stayed in contact with Kmara, frequently soliciting its friendly advice. At least two activists from Otpor and Kmara were in Ukraine during the Orange revolution.¹⁹⁰

However, Ukrainian activists indicate that the main contributions from both groups were methodologies and an inspiration for change. Otpor and Kmara acted as classic political entrepreneurs. They sensed that a set of factors¹⁹¹ created propitious conditions for their skills and knowledge and brought them to Ukraine. The interviewed Pora members harbored no illusion that Otpor's or Kmara's friendly advice was no more than a toolbox, which would have to be adapted to the domestic reality. They recognized that Ukraine's size, population and national mentality presented a unique set of factors that vitiated any literary replication.¹⁹² One activist was keen to note that along with young people from Serbia and Georgia, members of Belarus' "Zubr" and Russia's "Smena" came to Ukraine during the Orange demonstrations to see first-hand how "Ukrainians were making democracy."¹⁹³

Casual statements from Pora and Kmara leaders further diminish the claim about a closely-knit web of cooperation and a mutual understanding that existed among these civic groups. When asked about ties with foreign civic groups, Evhen Zolotariov of Pora mentioned that the group relied a lot more on the experiences of Polish Solidarnost than Serbian or Georgian activists, because of Poland's proximity to Ukraine and shared

¹⁸⁹ Pora, Chronology of events, <http://pora.org.ua/content/view/2870/250/>.

¹⁹⁰ Zolotariov.

¹⁹¹ Michael McFaul, "Importing Revolution: Internal and External Factors in Ukraine's 2004 Democratic Breakthrough," *CDDRL Working Paper* No. 59 (May 2006).

¹⁹² Aivazovska and Zolotariov.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

features of the national character.¹⁹⁴ He also added it was clear to him that both Kmara and Otpor were externally conspired, while Pora was self-organized. Levan Ramishlivi, Chairman of the Liberty Institute and one of the co-founders of Kmara, noted that, because Pora was propped up and financed by Orange oligarchs (like David Zhvania), its freedom of action was limited.¹⁹⁵ The fact that the leaders of these organizations were so profoundly misinformed about the other group attests that any contacts between them were rather limited.

Second, immediately after its launch in April 2004, Pora turned to representatives of international donor organizations for trainings. Because the response was lukewarm (for the reasons already mentioned), it had to train the first wave of activists in summer 2004 partially with the help of Otpor and partially through its own capacity. At the early stages of the presidential campaign, the group received a seminar on communication strategies from the National Democratic Institute that in practical terms was aimed at brining together regional activists of Pora and Our Ukraine. However, further assistance from NDI had to be quickly suspended after pro-governmental newspapers ran stories of Americans training Pora.¹⁹⁶

Third, after the heightened government scrutiny had made Pora an “untouchable” among foreign donors, the organization relied on its own capacities to train activists. Here again the overall level of development in the Ukrainian nonprofit sector was a helpful factor. Having been a beneficiary of consistent Western funding in the first decade of independence, it had many activists who have previously received trainings

¹⁹⁴ Zolotariov,

¹⁹⁵ Levan Ramishvili, Chairman of the Liberty Institute (Georgia), interview with the author, July 2007.

¹⁹⁶ Soboleva.

from the National Democratic Institute or the Counterpart International Alliance. Thus, Pora could rely on the existing domestic pool of expertise.

Most internal trainings were focused on a set of skills and attitudes that members should have before fieldwork. In this regard, the group's normative background was shaped by Gene Sharp's book on democracy and non-violent resistance.¹⁹⁷ Its cult-like status provides a perfect illustration of how a norm, advocated by an external source, was quickly absorbed, because the conditions for its domestic acceptance were ripe. Driven by the recognition that Ukrainian society would never accept violent resistance, Pora activists were looking for an alternative path to victory and Sharpe's book offered just that.¹⁹⁸ It became such a must-read for any activist that some Pora members jokingly compared it to Mao's "Red Book." Other components of member trainings usually offered details on how activities and communication would be organized logistically as well as some helpful advice on interacting with law enforcement and state authorities.

All content-related ideas were generated domestically either through internal brainstorming or by developing previously successful projects of Pora activists.¹⁹⁹ This made them original and appealing. For instance, Pora's manifesto combines pragmatism and patriotism and reads like a piece of literary work. Engaging in a wordplay with the group's name (Pora, meaning "It is Time"), it proclaims, "Pora to stand straight or fall down. Pora to believe or forget. Pora to love or hate. Pora to fight or betray."²⁰⁰ The text provides a perfect illustration of the ideological core of the group – an emphasis on

¹⁹⁷ Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* (New York: the Albert Einstein Institution, 2002).

¹⁹⁸ Shevtsiv.

¹⁹⁹ Olha Aivazovksa mentioned that Pora borrowed a lot of ideas from the Lviv branch of Youth Prosvita – a patriotic organization of Ukrainian intelligencia.

²⁰⁰ Pora, "Manifest" [The Manifesto], <http://pora.org.ua/content/view/2502/151/>.

action and change, disdain for ambiguities and compromises, and a penchant for radicalism.

To summarize, while Pora's interactions with foreign donors and civic groups were not as dense or consistent as previously believed, the norm of nonviolent resistance still managed to become the group's overarching normative paradigm thanks to a fusion between external inputs and internal dynamics. Secondary norms of Pora's structure and activities were determined solely by its own members. Because many of them were experienced civic leaders, these internal normative transfers were much richer, much more intensive and much more successful in the end.

Inter-NGO cooperation

Pora's major NGO partner was the Freedom of Choice coalition, which enabled the group to weather financial dry spells in summer 2004. As for other civic organizations, Pora preferred ad hoc cooperation on complementary initiatives to formalized NGO coalitions that would inevitably invite a fight over a division of responsibilities.

The arrangement worked especially well on the regional and local levels. Because Pora had a loose structure and did not pay the majority of its members, it was able to attract a wider audience of civic activists from other organizations. Many of them decided to join Pora to add a more edgy part to the "desk" activities of their NGOs. They were also able to pull their resources to assist with the group's "fieldwork."²⁰¹

In general, Pora's allies in the nonprofit world can be divided into three broad categories. The first and ideologically closest encompassed friendly youth-driven groups,

²⁰¹ Aivazovska.

such as the “Student Wave” and student unions in colleges and universities. The second was patriotic organizations, like the “Clean Ukraine” and the “Young Prosvita.” They supported Yushchenko and were attracted to Pora because its activities aimed at raising national self-consciousness. The last category consisted of “professional” nonprofit organizations that had a different target audience or focus, but shared a similar goal with Pora. For instance, Znau (Know) was a darling of Western projects on election assistance and education. Like Pora, it wanted to tell Ukrainians about their rights. However, it did not want to cross the bridge from education to active advocacy. In another example, CVU and Pora activists in the regions cooperated because they shared the same political space and were concerned about the same subject – violations of people’s constitutional rights. Unsurprisingly, many Pora members acted as CVU observers on the day of elections.

To conclude, there were a number of reasons that contributed to Pora having such a diverse range of informal partners. One was the nature of its membership. The “come-as-you-please” approach meant that members were free to get involved whenever they felt their help was needed.²⁰² As a result, activists of other nonprofits did not view their participation in Pora as a threat to their organizational loyalty. The other reason is in its broadly defined goals that made them complementary to other NGOs. Finally, both Pora activists and external experts acknowledge that the overall level of civil society development in Ukraine helped the group net a lot of partners. In the decade since independence, Ukraine experienced a boom in the quantity (but not always quality) of civil society groups. Given the sheer number of civic associations, Pora had a large pool of nonprofits within which it could attract a few that were ideologically similar and

²⁰² Soboleva.

organizationally capable. In addition, it was inadvertently assisted by the gradual radicalization of Ukrainian civil society as a result of increasing authoritarian tendencies in the Kuchma government.²⁰³

Pora and political parties

At the beginning of Pora's existence, there was little formalized cooperation between the group and oppositional parties, most prominently Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" and the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko. Cognizant of this reality, the National Democratic Institute organized a joint training session to introduce activists from Pora and "Our Ukraine" to each other. Due to the publicity generated by this event, NDI could no longer play a facilitative role, and most inter-organizational contacts between Pora and "Our Ukraine" became confined to the level of regional members who exchanged information and political gossip.²⁰⁴

With few exceptions among "Our Ukraine" rank and file, oppositional leaders (including Yushchenko and Tymoshenko) saw Pora at best as a promoter of their ideas (which had to be subsumed in order not to waste scarce resources) and at worst as a noisy distraction from the real campaign (which had to be neutralized). It is not surprising that after the first round of voting, Viktor Yushhchenko met with Pora activists and suggested they demote their tent city downtown Kyiv and instead "go into the masses" to encourage people to vote.²⁰⁵

During the course of events between the first and second tour, Pora had to give up any pretense of civic neutrality and openly ally itself with the opposition. On October

²⁰³ Diuk.

²⁰⁴ Soboleva.

²⁰⁵ Zolotariov.

15, first attempts to coordinate activities between Pora and the opposition bloc “Syla Narodu” (backed by Yushchenko) began.²⁰⁶ Defending this decision, Pora activists argued that the magnitude of violations, their blatant execution and government harassment of critical voices left the group no choice.²⁰⁷ In order to fulfill its *raison d’être* – free and fair elections, they had to support Yushchenko whose victory represented the will of Ukrainian people.

It took the second round of voting to challenge the attitude to Pora at least among leading “Our Ukraine” officials. Yushchenko’s political bloc needed to generate the first wave of protests in order to forestall the impending legitimization of Viktor Yanukovich’s fraudulent win through domestic and international acquiescence.²⁰⁸ Time was a precious commodity. It was then when “Our Ukraine” leaders began to act in close coordination with Pora and divided responsibilities over most critical projects (e.g. mobilization, picketing, etc). My interviews with Pora activists further undermine any suggestions of the “plan” that was allegedly available to either (or both) side to start public unrest immediately after the presidential elections (no matter what an outcome was). As it turns out, neither Pora nor “Our Ukraine” members planned any actions after the voting on 21 November. Confirming this finding, other accounts note of a small gathering by Pora activists at the Maidan of Independence that day, which quickly dissipated by nightfall.²⁰⁹ Most active regional members purchased train tickets and left for Kyiv, merely wishing to be at the center of any future events. Lacking funds and instructions, the rest stayed home.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Demes and Forbrig, 95.

²⁰⁷ Aivazovska, Western NGO representative.

²⁰⁸ Soboleva.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Zolotariov, Aivazovska.

To conclude, the cooperation between Pora and “Our Ukraine” did not take any systematic character until the final stages of the campaign. The prevalent view among political party leaders and members that regards civil society as ancillary to politics prevented deeper institutional collaboration. For some Pora activists, the situation did not present a problem because the group and the party targeted different audiences. Others believed it diminished possible joint effects as well as persuaded most ambitious Pora activists to set up a separate political party shortly after the elections.

Influence in the public

There are continuing disagreements on the influence and recognition of Pora among ordinary Ukrainians, which cannot be decisively resolved due to the dearth of supporting statistical data. In a very conscious attempt to diminish the narrative of the Western media, some international donors assert that at most 5 percent of Ukrainian citizens knew about Pora.²¹¹ They suggest that the attribution of the revolution’s success to Pora came as an after-thought. In public forums, TV talk shows and elite parlors, many were wondering how the regime that was so seemingly strong and firm in its grip on power as Kuchma’s could collapse so spectacularly. In search for answers, Pora was quickly identified as the main culprit, because of its colorful identity. In reality, the skeptics insist, the group’s influence on the course of events was minimal. To buttress their position, they cite the organization’s performance during the 2006 parliamentary elections. Immediately after the Orange revolution, one of Pora’s founders, Vlad Kaskiv, decided to patent the group’s trademark and organize a party under the same name. His intention was clear – to capitalize on the popularity and name recognition that the

²¹¹ Western NGO representative.

Orange Revolution provided to Pora. The outcome was a crushing defeat. Pora, as a party, garnered a mere 1.47 percent of voters, falling far below the required 5 percent threshold to get into the Parliament.²¹² This result, the skeptics insist, proved that Pora was not a household name as the Western media claim.

Optimists interpret the group's election performance differently. Pora got 373,478 votes²¹³ – not a paltry amount for an organization that emerged in 2004 and landed the 10th spot among political parties, whose leaders have been permanent fixtures on the Ukrainian political landscape for the past decade. One thing, they say, is obvious. Pora was no ordinary civic group, because few of those attempted to enter the political arena in their own right. The amount of gathered votes is even more impressive given the fact that in 2004 Pora did not have any positive publicity in the media. Furthermore, Pora members point to their own research that showed 93 percent recognition of the group.²¹⁴

To summarize, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Previous media reports in the West and conspiracy theorists in Russia overplayed the influence of Pora in Ukrainian society. Even Pora activists do not deny that their societal penetration was rather low in the East and South of Ukraine – the core constituency of the Party of Regions. At the same time, the group's performance during the 2006 parliamentary elections (as the only quantitatively available indicator) shows that it had quite a lot of supporters. The number of votes Pora received is especially impressive given the competition it faced from such political giants as “Our Ukraine” and the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko fighting for the same constituency of Ukrainian voters. It shows that the group successfully dealt with the main problem of Ukrainian nonprofit organizations.

²¹² Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2006 Parliamentary Elections National Results, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2006/W6P001>.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Aivazovska.

The majority of them are widely known only in narrow circles of NGO leaders and experts. It is without doubt that Pora's role in the events on the Maidan turned it into from a simple civic group a visible actor on the domestic scene.

PORA AND THE ORANGE REVOLUTION

On the eve of the Orange Revolution, Pora was a very young, but promising civic group. Established only in April 2004, it managed to attract attention within various segments of Ukrainian society through provocative and eye-catching activities. Though Pora was certainly energetic and enthusiastic, its potential and capacity were not well tested by time. It also stood out from other Ukrainian organizations because of its loose organizational structure and non-conventional advocacy methods that were reminiscent of those used by popular social movements rather than traditional nonprofit organizations. Finally, what outweighed the relative short-term existence of Pora was its impressive ability to tap into the dormant resources of Ukrainian civil society.

Pre-election goals and activities

Pora's goals were two-fold – to increase activism and political awareness among Ukrainians, in particular young people, and to be prepared to defend the fairness of elections if large-scale violations occurred.²¹⁵

In appealing to the broad audience of Ukrainian citizens, the group was not alone. It had to compete with political parties and other civic organizations. However, because of the non-conventional nature of its activities and its clearly crafted message of protest, Pora succeeded in finding its own niche, which included “the disenfranchised and the

²¹⁵ Demes and Forbrig, 89.

angry.”²¹⁶ The former came from the educated, urban youth who stayed aside from domestic political processes in the past. The latter consisted of the former middle-class who had to subsist in small towns throughout central and western Ukraine.

To emphasize its preference for grass-root activities and difference from regular “programs” of other nonprofits, Pora called its initiatives “fieldwork.”²¹⁷ A team of 10-12 activists in Kyiv was put in charge of generating ideas. However, thanks to Pora’s horizontal structure, it was not alone in this task. Many good suggestions were often picked up from regional or local “bushes.”²¹⁸

The organization faced peculiar challenges in implementation. Its colorful initiatives had to be tested informally and implemented simultaneously throughout the country. Any overt pilot testing would alert authorities to act preventatively elsewhere. Though the main challenge was for an idea to work well the first time, the biggest reward was an element of surprise and shock (at how well organized Pora was) experienced by authorities. If the content of Pora’s actions and posters could be summarized in one word, it would be – originality. Their messages wisely combined popular folklore images, caustic humor with memorable slogans.

The obstacles in implementation and a complete media boycott generated a curious blending of most rudimentary and most advanced strategies of outreach. Street activities became the first tool to attract attention of inadvertent by-standers who would then spread the word to their friends and relatives. The second was a return to the archaic methods of publicity. Instead of glossy brochures that often became the benchmark of

²¹⁶ Aivazovska.

²¹⁷ The word itself became popularized among the Ukrainian educated class after the publication of Oksana Zabuzhko’s controversial feminist work. (See Oksana Zabuzhko, “Polyovi dozlidzhennia z ukrainskogo seksu” [Fieldwork on Ukrainian Sex] (Kyiv: Zgoda, 1996).

²¹⁸ Aivazovska, Soboleva, Zolotariov.

NGO development, Pora posted leaflets on buildings and in public transportation. The task required persistence and dedication. Activists faced a continuous battle with local police that was ordered to take off any provocative material during the day only to find it re-appear in the morning.²¹⁹ Finally, the third tool was the Internet where the group provided an instant response to the daily flow of the campaign in the manner to which people could relate.

To achieve its first goal of raising political awareness, Pora sought to undermine the government narrative.²²⁰ Its first activity was designed to poke holes in President Kuchma's argument that his regime brought a welcome economic stability. Posters appeared on many streets asking people to define what living under Kuchma meant for them ("Kuchmism is...?"). By leaving the question open, Pora challenged people to think independently and raised their curiosity about possible answers. Within a week, new posters proclaimed, "Kuchmism is Destitute, Unemployment, Corruption, Crime."²²¹

Another activity, "The Tour in Stripes," and a series of posters "Ukraina v. Urkaina" pointed to the criminal past of the pro-governmental candidate Viktor Yanukovich and a prison-like future of Ukraine under his regime. "The Tour in Stripes" became an immediate hit. Borrowing its title from one of the most beloved Soviet comedies, Pora activists marched on main streets of many cities wearing a prison uniform (with vertical black and white stripes). A series of posters soon appeared that

²¹⁹ Aivazovska, Soboleva.

²²⁰ Wilson; Kuzio, "Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions."

²²¹ See Appendix III for posters and pictures.

contrasted a folkloric image of Ukraine with what it could become under would-be President Yanukovich.²²²

Finally, Pora websites²²³ proved effective in combating government propaganda and official censorship. They became one of the key sources for an alternative narrative about the presidential campaign with stories about official abuse of resources or incidences of opposition harassment throughout the country. Most importantly, they turned into an outlet for people to make fun of the regime. By sharing anecdotes and jokes about Kuchma or Yanukovich, people were able to express their frustration and see that the authorities were not omnipotent. For instance, the footage of the prime minister “sustaining injuries” after eggs were thrown at him at one of the campaign stops²²⁴ became the butt of Internet jokes, which soon found their way into the public.

The second goal of Pora activities was to emphasize the importance of the presidential elections as a turning point for Ukraine. Therefore, between August 1 and November 21, 2004 Pora pursued a vigorous multi-step informational campaign.²²⁵

Its message was simple, yet appealing. By framing the fairness of elections in terms of human dignity, the group pointed to the disrespect that the government showed for ordinary people, by believing they were stupid enough to buy the falsified election outcome as their own will. The theme stroke a cord with Pora’s target group, who felt hoodwinked by post-Soviet privatization, aggrieved by economic injustices and angered by their political marginalization. Furthermore, the organization was successful in increasing the urgency and the categorical tone of its message with each step of the

²²² Ibid.

²²³ See websites www.pora.org.ua and www.maidan.org.ua.

²²⁴ It was believed to be orchestrated by the government to counter the public outcry after Yushchenko’s poisoning.

²²⁵ Pora, “The Chronology of Events,” <http://pora.org.ua/content/view/2870/250/>.

election campaign – from “Pora to Wake Up!” in August to “Vote or Lose!” in October.²²⁶

In addition to Pora’s work, government tactics and rhetoric were reinforcing the group’s message, by adding the fuel of arrogance to the fire of public frustration. In interviews, President Kuchma said, because of their inherent passivity, the Ukrainian people would not be able to mount resistance similar to Georgians in 2003. The pro-government candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, compared any opponents to silly goats (a Ukrainian pejorative for an idiot). Pora immediately responded with a poster, asking people to prove him that they were not “goats.”²²⁷

Recognizing a high probability of fraud, the group distributed materials that called upon people to come together at specified locations after voting. Such gatherings would set in motion the initial stage for mobilization and would deter authorities from proceeding brazenly and hastily to acknowledge the results as legal.

To summarize, Pora’s pre-election work provided one of the few visible outlets for criticism and open dissent, thereby forestalling official efforts to frame and structure the presidential campaign to the government’s liking. Its outreach strategy was built on a sequence of steps designed to activate public consciousness and stir public activism for a possible action.

²²⁶ See Appendix III.2.

²²⁷ Ibid.

Mobilization

Contrary to the widely held assertion that Pora's sole goal was to foment revolutionary unrest, the group did surprisingly little in terms of drawing up specific plans for mobilization as well as forecasting scenarios of post-election responses.

Some activists and external observers have noted that the attempt to cover too many areas (i.e. awareness-raising, campaign response, street "fieldwork") during the election campaign spread its resources too thin and ultimately distracted it from properly preparing for active mobilization during the revolution.²²⁸ For instance, the organization had very few opportunities to test its general framework of civic participation during four local by-elections.²²⁹

Furthermore, Pora was discouraged from pursuing overt mobilization strategies by the opposition. After the first round of elections, Viktor Yushchenko called upon its activists to disband their tent city at Kontraktova Ploshcha – the location of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, one of the oldest and most liberal universities in Ukraine. His concern was that an overly antagonistic behavior would give the government a pretense to cancel elections altogether or provoke violence. Still sensing the need to respond to the unfolding political crisis somehow, Pora organized a campaign to monitor voter lists and later started its famous "Orange Wave" - a large-scale action to distribute orange-colored ribbons, scarves and other symbols of the Yushchenko campaign.²³⁰

The belief that the Kuchma government would honor the will of voters was dying hard. In my interview, Olha Aivazovska, a Pora activist, acknowledged a somewhat

²²⁸ Zolotariov; Soboleva.

²²⁹ Pora tested its methodology for local elections in Odesa, Poltava oblast, Vakhrusheve and Zdolbuniv in May-July 2004. See Pora, "The Chronology of Events."

²³⁰ Ibid.

bipolar perception on a possible course of events.²³¹ On one hand, large-scale fraud was seen as inevitable, especially after the violent mayoral elections in a Carpathian city of Mukachevo. On the other, many members kept holding on to the idealist hope that the government would not dare falsify the election or use violence under “the watchful eye of the international community.” Because of these mutually exclusive opinions, neither Pora nor Our Ukraine was completely prepared for the reality and the aftermath of the second round of elections.

In the evening of November 21, Ukraine’s Central Election Commission produced Soviet-like percentages of support for Viktor Yanukovich in the East of Ukraine, which tilted the victory in his favor. Under these circumstances, the ability to launch protests became necessary to attract a critical mass of fence sitters among politicians and ordinary citizens, produce a chain reaction within the larger society and ultimately disrupt a quick legitimization of results.

At that point, Pora and “Our Ukraine” began working together to mobilize their supporters and stage demonstrations at the country’s main square – the Maidan of Independence. The lack of prior preparation was soon apparent. Neither group had a sufficient number of people whose participation would give the demonstrations necessary credibility. Though some Pora activists went to Kyiv at the end of the election, the majority stayed at home either having no instructions on what to do or having no money to buy train tickets.²³² As Diuk recounts, five thousand people gathered at the Maidan that day, but went home by nightfall.²³³

²³¹ Aivazovska

²³² Zolotariov.

²³³ Diuk.

The first wave of protesters would not have been able to get to Kyiv on time anyway, because the government delayed all trains going from major regional centers to the capital. To save the situation, Pora turned to university students and university strike committees, many of which were set up a short while ago.²³⁴ The strategy worked well because of the previously established system of communication. On Monday, November 22, 2004 Pora activists were leading thousands of students from Kyiv's largest National Polytechnic and National Shevchenko Universities to the Maidan of Independence where they met a growing number of Kyivites. As the day went on, the crowd increased to over two hundred thousand people. This was the beginning of the Orange Revolution and an early sign of the end to the Kuchma regime.

To summarize, in the immediate aftermath of the election Pora was not logistically prepared to mobilize its supporters because of discouragement from "Our Ukraine" and its own widely focused pre-election activities. However, the group was able to change the situation thanks to its connections and popularity among Kyiv university students who were able to mobilize quickly and sustain the nascent demonstration at the Maidan. In addition, because Pora had a strong presence in other regional universities, its activists in major student hubs began organizing their local "maidans," thereby turning the Orange Revolution into a nation-wide event.²³⁵

Assessment of the performance

The emerging evidence on the influence of Pora produces a two-dimensional picture. On one side, during the Orange Revolution Pora on its own was not as

²³⁴ Demes and Forbrig, 95; Pora, "The Chronology of Events."

²³⁵ Aivazovska; Demes and Forbrig, 95.

paramount of a player as its public reputation led many to believe. On the other, the group found a unique niche for civil society in quickly unfolding revolutionary events by having dedicated activists who were able to recruit others, organize and sustain their involvement for general and specific purposes. As my previous evaluation of CVU revealed, it is important to distinguish between involvement in actual events and general contributions to the revolutionary process. From this perspective, Pora performed well on both counts.

First, its deep roots within the student community of Kyiv and close relations with “Our Ukraine” enabled an expedient mobilization of the former and an effective coordination of activities with the latter. By housing a readily available pool of demonstrators, Pora’s tent city on Khreshchatyk (near the Maidan) was a physical remainder of unrelenting public pressure on the Kuchma government to give in to Yushchenko’s demands for a new election.²³⁶ Pora’s well-attended and noisy protests at key government buildings instilled a sense of the opposition’s inevitable victory. The national government was brought to a standstill when the group picketed the Cabinet of Ministers, Central Election Commission and the Presidential Administration. At his own dacha, President Kuchma had to contend with a continuous drumbeat organized by Pora activists who were determined to make his life unbearable.²³⁷

In effect, the group contributed to the two factors critical for success - the breadth and depth of support for the revolution. In regard to the former, a sheer number of demonstrators persuaded many fence sitters in the public and political establishment to join Yushchenko. Kyiv major Oleksandr Omelchenko admitted that previously unseen

²³⁶ Diuk, 81-82.

²³⁷ Pora, “Nashi Pryntsypy” [Our Principles], <http://pora.org.ua/content/view/2503/153/>.

crowds were a sign of the change in public attitude and prompted him to side with the opposition.²³⁸

As for the latter, the prevalent opinion was that large-scale demonstrations could not be sustained over a long period of time. The sentiment was definitely shared by the government. Conversations released by the *New York Times* showed the Ukrainian political elite in panic.²³⁹ Realizing that demonstrators could no longer be ignored or neutralized, President Kuchma grew so anxious as to seek advice from his equally perplexed counterpart, Vladimir Putin.²⁴⁰ This piece of evidence serves to further confirm the extent to which the perseverance of demonstrators proved surprising for all political actors.

Second, speaking of the larger contribution of Pora to the revolution as a social event, the group reawakened the generation of young Ukrainian who came of age since the country's independence. Asking how they did it, Pora activists and external observers give four reasons. First, from the beginning the organization had an open mindset and actively searched for ideas that could attract young people and make them active. In order to "click," it had to be oriented toward the external world and glue itself to the host society. Second, the absence of organizational hierarchy helped avoid internal rivalry and automatically created a lot of free space for diverse individuals and interests. Third, Pora went right about choosing the content of their message (which had to do with human dignity and liberty) and the methods to deliver it (which were nonviolent and creative). Fourth, because Pora did not complete for donor funds, it also did not get trapped in organizational mechanisms of the nongovernmental sector where the penchant

²³⁸ Wilson, 129.

²³⁹ C.J. Chivers, "Back Channels: A Crackdown Averted. How Top Spies in Ukraine Changed the Nation's Path," *New York Times*, 17 January 2005.

²⁴⁰ Wilson, 136.

for process often overwhelms the sight of goals. In the end, all these factors made Pora and its story more accessible and more believable to people.

An opposite argument can be made that Pora was simply lucky to fall in the right place (the semi-authoritarian Ukraine with public discontent) at the right time (critical presidential elections). This is a true, but incomplete view, as it misses another critical variable. When falling in the right time and at the right place, Pora was also of the right shape in terms of its content and composition. In case there is any doubt that the group represented “people power,” former President Kuchma, no fan of Orange revolutionaries, pejoratively labels it as the “lumpen resource.”²⁴¹ However, even he cannot deny the role of civic activism in those events – “After the revolution, nobody can tell that a Ukrainian is all about ‘not in my backyard.’ Civic institutions have been activated. The country has matured.”²⁴² As far as the content is concerned, Pora’s statement of principles²⁴³ and its supporting actions resonated with the society’s mood for fundamental changes, rejection of moral compromises and a willingness to cleanse the Ukrainian power structure.

The organization was by any means not perfect. Because so much in Pora was driven by passion, too little room was left for planning. This led to a number of other mistakes. One of them had to do with fundraising strategies, which were driven at first by the conventional wisdom among Ukraine nonprofits – to ask for money from donors. Only when that approach failed, the group decided to target medium and small businesses. The other drawback was the group’s overly ambitious thinking. Formed at

²⁴¹ Leonid Kuchma, *Posle Maidana. Zapiski Prezidenta 2005-2006* [After the Maidan. President’s Notes 2005-2006] (Kyiv: Vremia, 2007), 332.

²⁴² Kuchma, 582.

²⁴³ Pora, “Our Principles.”

the beginning of 2004, it tried to do a variety of activities instead of concentrating on the specifics of the 2004 elections. Narrowing the focus on those problems would have brought better results, most importantly in terms of mobilization. The third mistake was about its initial appeal. Founded by patriotic and pro-Ukrainian youth, it had a hard time adjusting its image to appeal to Russian-speaking Ukrainians.²⁴⁴ The group did not have a branch in Donetsk oblast (the homeland of Viktor Yanukovich). Some of its branches in the East (the stronghold of the Party of Regions) were weak and disorganized. Finally, Pora in its pre-revolutionary and revolutionary forms was suitable for short-term goals. Its internal mechanics did not always assure control over the message and its implementation. In its advocacy, it blurred the line between being a purely civic group and a political party. Being at the borderline of civic and political societies, it was soon forced to make a choice to which world it wanted to belong. As a result, immediately after the revolution the group split into two – those who thought it was time to exert influence in politics and those who thought Pora should continue engaging the movement of the disappointed in peaceful and constructive civic activism.

To summarize we need to evaluate Pora's performance based on the indicators of success – function and contribution. In terms of function, Pora did what it said it would be – it empowered two previously apathetic audiences to defend the choice of Ukrainian voters and made sure that the will of people could not be ignored. The group's contribution to the Orange revolution was most critical in two stages – the initial mobilization of protestors and the ability to sustain demonstrations around the clock, mainly by setting up an Orange tent city. By this, it carved a niche for genuine political participation of civil society during those important events. None of these achievements

²⁴⁴ Zolotariov.

would have been possible if Pora had not been successful in establishing deep roots within the Ukrainian society.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY: GEORGIA

The goal of this chapter is to assess the degree of embeddedness for two Georgian nonprofit organizations – Kmara and ISFED. For this purpose, it will begin by providing a general overview of the Rose Revolution as well as the contribution that each group made to its success. It will then offer a detailed description of the formative period for both organizations. In this section, a specific attention will be given to Georgian civil society, as the knowledge about it will enhance our understanding of the environment within which both NGOs were formed and had to operate. After offering a composite portrait of the civil society, the research will trace the evolution and maturation of Kmara and ISFED. The chapter will conclude with the successes and failures that they had during the Rose Revolution, thereby setting stage for a more comprehensive analysis in the last chapter.

ROSE REVOLUTION

Stakes and candidates

At the end of 2002, Georgia was gearing up for another parliamentary election. The country already had four of them since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. While change may not have been in the air, the sentiments of stagnation and frustration were quite powerful. The disapproval of President Eduard Shevarnadze was staggeringly high at 83 percent.¹ Having lived under his rule for almost twenty-five years, many Georgians

¹ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Stephen Jones, "Georgia's Rose Revolution of 2003: A Forceful Peace" (paper presented at the Conference on Civil Resistance & Power Politics, St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford, 15-17 March 2007), 4-6.

felt a palpable “Shevarnadze fatigue.”² And although the elections were not about his performance (the next contest for presidency was not till 2005), the conduct and content reflected the political reality that Shevarnadze built after bringing Georgia from the abyss of the civil war in the early 1990s.³ By the end of his presidency, the country was “a neo-patrimonialist state, in which notions of public accountability, constitutional review and normative rules and standards of government played little role.”⁴

Political forces that were running in the 2002 parliamentary election could be divided (rather conditionally and broadly) into oppositional, pro-governmental and neutral. The United National Movement, led by Mikheil Saakashvili, belonged to the first camp. After parting ways with President Shevarnadze in 2001, Saakashvili burnished his already strong⁵ credentials as a reformist. His work through the Tbilisi City Council brought visible improvements to the nation’s capital and unsubtly hinted at his capacity to do similarly great things for the whole country.⁶ Then, there was a coalition of Burdjanadze-Democrats, pulled together by the extremely popular Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Nino Burdjanadze and David Zhvania, who (just like Saakashvili) represented the breakaway faction of young reformers nurtured by Shevarnadze. Regardless of personal tensions and leadership ambitions, both political parties coordinated major activities during the campaign and in the course of the Rose Revolution.

² Shevarnadze was the first Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party in 1972-1985 and then the president of Georgia in 1992-2003. For more see Ivlian Haindrava, “Georgia: Through Elections to the Rose Revolution,” *Election Assessment in the South Caucasus* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2004), 102.

³ Stephen Jones, “Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition,” in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Tavas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 505-543.

⁴ Laurence Boers, “After the ‘Revolution’: Civil Society and the Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in Georgia,” *Central Asian Survey* 24, no. 3 (September 2005): 333.

⁵ He served in the Shevarnadze government as the Minister of Justice, making the fight against corruption his public crusade.

⁶ Irakly Areshidze, *Democracy and Autocracy in Eurasia: Georgia in Transition* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 92-93.

The government put forward “For a New Georgia” bloc, led by Avtandiv Jorbenadze and later by Vazha Lortkipanidze, both prominent and long-term members in the Shevardnadze administration, and the Democratic Union for the Revival of Georgia, backed by powerful leader of the country’s Adjara region Aslan Abashidze. Though the former did not become a visible player until March-April 2003, it quickly earned itself a bad reputation through affiliation with the unpopular president as well as unsubstantiated statements, which accused the Georgian opposition of having Russian backing. Abashidze’s party never truly campaigned outside of Adjara, certain of an easy victory in his own heavily controlled region.

The third group included such contenders as the Labor Party of Georgia, which espoused populist and anti-globalist slogans,⁷ and the New Rights Party, which tried hard to position itself as an alternative to the leftist National Movement. Both forces preferred to play an independent role, resisting domestic and foreign attempts to form a larger coalition of democratic parties.⁸

Election campaign

At the beginning of the campaign, the opposition had very modest expectations – to gain sufficient political visibility in a new parliament that would translate into a momentum before the critical 2005 presidential elections.⁹ Recognizing the danger of this opportunity, the government took numerous steps to foreclose it.

⁷ Zurab Karumidze and James V. Wetsch, ed., *“Enough”: The Rose Revolution and the Republic of Georgia* (New York: NOVA Science Publishers, 2005).

⁸ Areshidze, 100-103.

⁹ Giorgi Kandelaki, “Georgia’s Rose Revolution: A Participant’s Perspective,” *U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report No. 167* (July 2006).

The first of them was a battle over the composition of the Central Election Commission. The official policy would effectively neuter the body with the majority of members appointed by the President and delegated by Ajara leader Aslan Abashidze.¹⁰ The issue gained such international prominence that the Georgian government received a letter from Senator John McCain and a visit from former Shevarnadze's interlocutor Jim Baker in July 2003. As a result of that visit, the Baker formula¹¹ proposed a more fair division of seats, but was later quietly discarded by the regime.¹² In the end, the dispute did more harm than good to the pro-governmental forces, by pushing Speaker Nino Burdjanadze to side openly with the opposition.

Throughout the summer, the government continued to create obstacles to a fair voting process. In August, it announced that the CEC would not have to provide a total turnover of voters for several days after the elections. Soon it was discovered that 30-40 percent of voter lists had significant discrepancies that would in effect disenfranchise large segments of the population.¹³ Though it is not clear whether the authorities were completely at fault, the situation underscored a general state of the government's weakness. Furthermore, it played into the hands of Saakashvili's National Movement that sought to radicalize the discourse and broaden participation, especially outside of the capital.¹⁴

¹⁰ Wheatley, 180.

¹¹ The Baker formula envisioned that the national Central Election Commission would consist of 15 members. Its Chair would be nominated by OSCE and appointed by the president. The president would also have the right to appoint 5 additional members. The rest of the seats (9) will be divided between those oppositional parties that met three criteria: a) attained a four-percent threshold in the last parliamentary elections; b) gained four percent in the Tbilisi City Council elections; c) had more than 100 seats in the country as a whole. (The explanation is taken from David Usupashvili, "An Analysis of the Presidential and Parliamentary Election in Georgia: A Case Study, November 2003-March 2004," *Election Assessment in the South Caucasus (2003-2004)* (Stockholm, Sweden: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2004), 77, 79.)

¹² Areshidze; Usupashvili, 82-85.

¹³ Areshidze, 145.

¹⁴ Kandelaki.

Last months of the campaign witnessed a predictable sharpening of rhetoric on both sides. The government was increasing pressure on local oligarchs to stop funding the opposition and independent media outlets.¹⁵ Badri Patarkatsishvili, a Georgian businessman with strong Russian connections, defected from the New Rights Party to support Shevarnadze's "For a New Georgia."¹⁶ Rustavi-2, a vocal media critic of the president, was denied a permit to broadcast on the open "ORT frequency"¹⁷ that would ensure its national reach. On his end, Saakashvili tried to challenge authorities by campaigning in such government strongholds as Kvemo Kartli and Adjara. The attempts sparked unrest and beating of Saakashvili's supporters in Bolnisi and Batumi,¹⁸ thereby showcasing the regime's desperation to control the campaign narrative.

Voting

The Election Day was marred by large-scale irregularities and outright chaos in certain parts of the country. Polling stations in Kutaisi, Georgia's second largest city, were so unprepared that they could not open on time. In response to a public outcry, the Central Election Commission had to extend the elections there for additional two hours. International observers reported unrest in 15 percent of polling stations, tensions in 21 percent and 22 cases of open violence.¹⁹ The voting process was completely controlled in the areas populated by Georgia's two largest national minorities – Armenians in Javakheti and Azeris in Kvemo Kartli.²⁰ The elections in Adjara were a Soviet-like

¹⁵ Areshidze, 105, 124.

¹⁶ Wheatley, 181-182.

¹⁷ ORT frequency was used before by the first channel of the Soviet television and had transmitters readily available throughout the whole country.

¹⁸ Areshidze.

¹⁹ Hans Dieset, "Georgia: Parliamentary Elections November 2003," *Norwegian Centre for Human Rights*, 12.

²⁰ For instance, Natalia Antelava reports that entire families in Kvemo Kartli were escorted to polling stations. See Natalia Antelava, "Georgia: Chaos, Enthusiasm and Hope," *Transitions Online*, 28 October – 3 November 2003.

spectacle of people coerced by the Abashidze regime to come to polling stations with the full knowledge that their choice would never be recognized. Numerous reports indicate that government supporters (particularly state employees) were forced to establish a voting “merry-go-round” where an individual may vote at several polling stations.²¹

At the end of the day, it was becoming clear that official results would not match the parallel vote tabulations done by TV channel Rustavi-2 and the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED). The discrepancies were not minor. According to the emerging official count, “For a New Georgia” was strongly in the lead, followed by Abashidze’s Revival Party and only then the oppositional National Movement.²² ISFED and Rustavi posited that the National Movement gained 26.26 percent, followed by “For a New Georgia” (18.92 percent), the Labor Party (17.36 percent) and Burdjanadze-Democrats (10.15 percent).²³

These competing realities could not be easily reconciled. President Shevarnadze felt he did not have to justify himself or the results. In conversations with close aides, he dismissed possible Western objections as a noisy nuisance that would eventually subside.²⁴ At the same time, the Georgian opposition was not prepared to give up its rightful victory. The elections for many summarized everything that was wrong with the regime – utter corruption that was suffocating the nation. Thus, the stage for collision was set.

²¹ Antelava; OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, *Post-election Report*, 3-25 November 2003.

²² Kandelaki, 4.

²³ Areshidze, 153.

²⁴ For instance, Shevarnadze fired National Security Council Secretary Tedo Japaridze who proposed to call for a new election. See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Shevarnadze’s Resignation Resolves Constitutional Deadlock,” 2 November 2003, www.rferl.org/reports/caucvysu-report/2003.

Rose Revolution

The Rose Revolution began quietly and did not reach culmination until the very end. In the days that followed the election, Shevarnadze and its government inadvertently helped the revolutionary cause, by backing falsified results and refusing to call for a fraud investigation and a new election. What the Georgian President seems to have miscalculated badly was the mood of his own society.

On November 3, protesters first gathered around the Philharmonic Concert Hall and then walked down Rustaveli Avenue. Because their numbers were relatively small, nothing predicted any public unrest. Four days later, on November 7, the results from Adjara were announced. Abashidze's party received an overwhelming victory – 269,000 out of 284,000 votes cast.²⁵ Shevarnadze accepted the results and decried any international involvement.²⁶ Sensing that the victory may be snatched from their hands if more votes were added from Kvemo Kartli and Javakheti, the opposition and its supporters set in motion a series of protests that started on November 8 and lasted until the end of the Revolution.

At the same time, numerous attempts to reach a compromise continued to fail when key opposition leaders met with Shevarnadze on November 9 and when alleged negotiations between Saakashvili and Jorbenadze broke off on November 12.²⁷ Trying to shore up support, President Shevarnadze went to Adjara and accepted Abashidze's offer to send his supporters to Tbilisi to help with restoring order in the capital. Many Georgians were furious at the comment for it exposed what everyone long knew – Shevarnadze allowed the Adjara leader to establish his own fiefdom in return for

²⁵ The number of registered voters also increased by 20 percent between 2000-2003. See for more information OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, *Post-election Report*, 3-25 November 2003.

²⁶ Karumadze and Wertsch, 8.

²⁷ Areshidze.

political loyalty. On November 14, the opposition had one of its largest rallies that included 20-30 thousand protestors.

Things began to unravel precipitously after Shevardnadze's televised speech on November 19 in which he promised to convene a new parliament three days later. Seeking to enhance his following beyond the capital, Saakashvili went to the Western city of Zugdidi, which was known for its nationalist sentiments. As a long line of buses from Western Georgia was moving toward Tbilisi, the showdown seemed all but inevitable.

The following day, the Georgian president addressed the new parliament. "The speech said volumes about the extent to which Shevardnadze did not understand, or did not wish to acknowledge, the level of unrest on the streets."²⁸ At the Liberty Square, the largest crowd between 50 and 100 thousand protestors was demanding his resignation. As the opposition entered the parliament, chanting, "Resign," Shevardnadze was whisked away by his security. Saakashvili overtook the podium and invited Burdjanadze to take up the position of the acting president.²⁹ Later that day, protestors took over the state chancellery, thereby incapacitating any functioning of the old government.

The regime was in agony when Shevardnadze announced the state of emergency in the evening. Mediation efforts by Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Ivanov could no longer salvage the situation. On November 23, relieved that he managed to bring all parties to the table, Ivanov left Tbilisi for Adjara. Like many others, he was surprised to find out the outcome of that meeting. When Shevardnadze emerged from his official residence in Krtsanisi, he announced his immediate resignation. In later interviews, he

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Giga Chikhladze and Irakli Chikhladze, "The Rose Revolution: A Chronicle," in *"Enough!" The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia 2003*, ed. Zurab Karumadze and James V. Wetsch, 18.

suggested he did not want any bloodshed, which he felt would be inevitable if tensions continued. Other sources indicated that Shevarnadze could not count on the support of the army or police. Thus, fearing the fate of Ceausescu or Gamsakhurdia, he opted out for a somewhat graceful exit on his own terms. In any case, the revolution succeeded in ending his controversial tenure as Georgia's leader – the tenure that brought much needed stability at first, but at the end became the obstacle to further development.

Kmara and ISFED in the Rose Revolution

Kmara began to mobilize its activists immediately upon the announcement of the election results. The message to gather for protests in the center of Tbilisi quickly spread thanks to the power of email and cell phone. Growing numbers of Kmara activists helped create a snowballing effect among the general population who was persuaded that the protest had reached a sufficient level not to be easily dispersed. During revolutionary days, Kmara worked in close cooperation with Rustavi-2, an independent TV station, that helped spread the word about on-going and future protests as well as showed large crowds in order to attract more participants. The group's contribution to the Rose Revolution was two-fold. First, it helped generate grass-root level activism in the period preceding the elections. This empowered the young generation previously disenchanted with the political process. Second, it incited and helped sustain the first wave of protests that mobilized the rest of Georgian society.

If Kmara was the public face of the revolution by providing its foot soldiers, ISFED gave the event its substance. The NGO's two Election Day initiatives – monitoring and, most importantly, parallel vote tabulation (PVT) – gathered ample evidence that the process was falsified to the extent that would substantially alter the will

of voters. ISFED vigorously publicized its findings, which enabled others to call for public protests. Its PVT numbers were immediately printed in thousands of leaflets and distributed all over Tbilisi. Furthermore, the organization launched a series of legal challenges that resulted in invalidation of the voting results on party lists. Thus, even without participating directly in demonstrations, ISFED became one of the unsung heroes of the Rose Revolution. Through quiet, professional data gathering and advocacy, it delivered a lethal blow to the regime by exposing its fraud.

FORMATIVE YEARS

The discussion of the formative years is important because most of the literature analyzing the involvement of civic groups in the “color revolutions” reminds of a fairy tale. It captures the events themselves, showing NGOs as powerful, if not omnipotent, in facilitating the rise of people against evil and corrupt authoritarian leaders. Then there is, of course, a happy ending of victory over these rulers. And the story usually stops at this point, assuming, like in a good fairy tale, that all of them lived happily thereafter. The narrative is unhelpful because it simplifies the complexities of civil society’s role in democratization and raises expectations of a brighter future ahead. That is why, the dissertation will first sketch a portrait of Georgian civil society to understand the milieu within which the civic groups under analysis had to operate. It will then trace the organizational evolution of both NGOs. This research is critical to answering the central hypothesis of my work – whether the groups’ success can be explained by their embeddedness. It will also help illuminate how different they are from their domestic civil society and whether such differences may predict any future challenges for that society and the organizations under study.

NONPROFIT SECTOR IN GEORGIA

Legal framework and NGO growth

Georgia's legislation on nonprofit activities in 1991-2003 can be considered liberal. One of the reasons for that lies in active civic involvement in the design of pertinent laws.³⁰ The other is about the political situation at the time. In 1997-1998, the Shevardnadze regime sought to improve its external image and obtain Western support to cement control over the country.³¹ Therefore, "allowing certain liberal freedoms was more of a political calculation than a commitment to an open society."³²

Three key documents regulated activities of Georgian not-for-profit groups – the Law on Grants, the Civil and Tax Codes. For legal purposes, NGOs were broadly divided into two categories – unions/associations and foundations. The former were required to consist of at least five individuals and be registered by district courts. The latter did not have to have any members and needed to be registered by the Ministry of Justice.³³ The registration process was simple, quick and inexpensive, albeit inconsistently applied.

The Georgian legislation stipulated that grants, membership fees and donations were exempt from income tax. The same regulation applied to auxiliary entrepreneurial activities that served to accomplish nonprofits' statutory purposes.³⁴ On a positive side, the national Tax Code did not require civic groups to maintain a certain level of expenditure to remain legal. Doing otherwise would have severely undermined the sector where many organizations re-surge based on donors' priorities. However, neither did it

³⁰ Khatuna Nachkebia, Program Coordinator of the Civil Society Institute, interview with the author, July 2007.

³¹ David Kikalishvili, lead anchor at Rustavi-2 Television, interview with the author, July 2007; David Losaberidze, civil society expert at the Caucasian Institute for Democracy, Peace and Development, interview with the author, July 2007.

³² Kandelaki, 3.

³³ Vasha Salamadze, "NGO Legislation in Georgia," *International Center for Not-for-Profit Law Journal* 1, no. 2 (December 1998).

³⁴ Salamadze; International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, "Survey of Tax Laws Affecting NGOs in Newly Independent States" (Washington, DC: ICNL, 2003), 38.

encourage active giving, by providing no deductions on charitable donations for individuals or legal entities.³⁵ As in many post-Soviet states, the implementation of legal provisions remained a weak spot. Whereas grant recipients were entitled to a refund on any VAT (value added tax) on goods and services purchased within the framework of a grant, few were persistent enough to go through a procedure of claiming the money back.³⁶ Like in Ukraine, NGOs were subjected to the same extensive requirements on accounting and reporting to tax authorities as commercial structures.³⁷ This placed an undue burden on small groups with limited funds and personnel.

Over the period of twelve years (between acquiring independence in 1991 and the Rose Revolution in 2003), Georgia's civil society underwent three stages of growth. Its first stage was significantly delayed as a result of the civil war that engulfed the country during the presidency of Zviad Gamsakhurdia.³⁸ When the war ended in 1994, Georgia was in ruins, a shadow state that lost two large chunks of its territory (Abkhazia in the south-west and South Ossetia in the north) and where the government could not effectively manage any territory past Tbilisi. At that time, emerging civic groups became an employment venue for a vast group of Soviet-educated Georgian intelligencia. Viewed with suspicion as second-class citizens by the Soviet regime and completely neglected during the civil strife, those people managed to find a new niche that would generate some income.³⁹ In terms of the level of NGO growth, the period was marked by rather moderate achievements. The country began with 19 associations and 10 foundations in 1995 – the first year when the National Statistics Committee started

³⁵ International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 39-40.

³⁶ International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 40; Ghia Nodia, ed., *An Assessment of Georgian Civil Society 2005* (Tbilisi: Center for Training and Consultancy, 2005), 44.

³⁷ Salamadze.

³⁸ Areshidze, 17-32.

³⁹ Losaberidze; Lincoln Mitchell, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," *Current History* 103, no. 673 (October 2004): 345.

recording the data.⁴⁰ In 1996, merely 6 new associations and 6 news foundations were registered. The following year, that number tripled for both types of nonprofit entities.

The real proliferation of NGOs did not occur until 1998. By the end of the year, Georgia accounted for 559 associations and 252 foundations. Without a doubt, the country's third sector entered a new stage of development that lasted until 2001. During that time, the Georgian government proceeded to institutionalize key elements of civil society, by establishing a proper legal framework. Domestic civic groups became more professionalized and more apt at securing funding from a quickly expanding pool of international donors.⁴¹ Many of them also managed to attract a young generation of Western-educated Georgians. In essence, the NGO sector became one of the most vibrant spheres at home and among other former Soviet states.⁴² By the end of 2001, the country registered 2,599 associations and 714 foundations. In the meanwhile, the regime of Eduard Shevardnadze was turning increasingly corrupt. Aimed with the motto, "Do everything, just don't fight against me," it tapped into the "coping strategies" of the Georgian society that rejuvenated informal family and crony networks and disregarded common societal objectives for the sake of their own goals.⁴³ The divergent paths of development were bound to set the government on the course of collision with civic associations.

It is hard to tell the precise beginning of the third stage in the development of Georgian nonprofits. Certainly, the emergence of a strong media outlet, "Rustavi-2," which provided airtime to civic activists and opposition leaders, contributed to the

⁴⁰ State Department for Statistics of Georgia, "Business Register" in *Statistical Yearbook of Georgia 2003* (Tbilisi: State Department for Statistics of Georgia, 2003).

⁴¹ Sumbadze.

⁴² Lenzi; Khatuna Khvichia, National Democratic Institute in Georgia Parliamentary Officer, interview with the author, July 2007.

⁴³ Jaba Devdariani, "The Impact of International Assistance on Georgia," *Building Democracy in Georgia*, Discussion Paper No. 11 (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, May 2003), 8.

change in official attitudes. In 2001 the murder of a popular Rustavi-2 anchorman Giorgi Sanaia underscored the government's recognition that civil society groups posed a real danger to the stability and continuity of the Shevardnadze regime.⁴⁴ Even if one disregards the strength of NGOs (always a subjective judgment⁴⁵), their sheer number (4,082) in 2002 made them a formidable presence in such a small country as Georgia. Thus, the Shevardnadze government proceeded with a set of attempts to curtail an active role of civil society. In 2002, the Ministry of Finance put forward a bill, which envisioned a government review of foreign funds. A year later, the Parliament strengthened the legislation on libel by extending a possible term of imprisonment up to five years.⁴⁶ Pandering to public apprehension about evangelical groups in Georgia, the Ministry of Security proposed to suspend foreign militant and other organizations. All of these actions were complemented by a government propaganda campaign against NGOs, accusing them of "grantchamia" (grant-gobbling) and dissemination of anti-national values. Because of a harsh and very vocal response from the domestic civil society, the Shevardnadze administration had to withdraw the legal initiatives.⁴⁷ The clash showcased two points. First, though the Georgian government was growing increasingly authoritarian, it could not muster an effective clampdown on NGOs, because it did not have the material capability to do so without alienating critical foreign support that was necessary for its own survival. Second, the seeming prosperity of the third sector in

⁴⁴ Losaberidze; Kikalishvili.

⁴⁵ For instance, one assessment acknowledges that in its research on nonprofit organizations, only a fraction of all registered groups actually survived. See The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, "Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations" (Tbilisi: *Citizens Advocate! Program*, 2003), 4. Jonathan Wheatley acknowledges that only 20-50 NGOs have the capacity to influence national policy-makers (Wheatley, 145).

⁴⁶ As an example for others, some Shevardnadze officials pursued libel cases against oppositional media, most notably Rustavi-2. See Susie Mesure, "Akaki Affair Fuels Unrest," *Georgia Today* 10, 25 May 2000.

⁴⁷ Broers.

Georgia was fragile and illusory for it depended on the state's weakness and donors' generosity.

To summarize our discussion, pushed by dire domestic circumstances, the government of Georgia sought to establish a liberal legal framework for registering and operating civil society groups. Unpropitious economic conditions and the availability of foreign funding persuaded a sizeable segment of the country's educated class to start up nonprofit associations. Between 1995-2003 Georgian civil society grew at a staggering rate, adding on average 510 organizations per year.⁴⁸ Regardless of all this success, high and low-ranking officials in the legislative and executive branches had little understanding of the concept of a nonprofit and its role in society.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the government attitude to NGOs began to change dramatically when the independence of strongest civic groups threatened to challenge the existing political status quo. It is only thanks to the weakness of the state and its reliance on foreign assistance that President Shevardnadze was not able to suppress non-governmental organizations as dramatically as his Russian and Central Asian counterparts did later.

Public participation and attitude

Georgian society is known for a volatile combination of public passivity and a dormant, bellicose sentiment to conflict resolution. Due to bad economic conditions and distrust in state institutions, "the confrontational model is used overwhelmingly... to deliver ultimatums to the government."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ State Department for Statistics of Georgia.

⁴⁹ Nino Saakashvili, "The Nonprofit Sector in Georgia," *International Center for Not-for-Profit Law Journal* 1, no. 2 (Washington, DC: ICNL, December 1998).

⁵⁰ Gigi Tevradze, "Development of a Democratic Political Community: Civil Society Organizations," *Building a Democratic Community in Georgia, Discussion Paper 7* (Stockholm: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, May 2003), 34.

Available public surveys show low levels of efficacy. For instance, in Tbilisi – the biggest city and the center of national power – 64.1 percent of residents believe they exert no influence on key decisions in the country.⁵¹ It can be speculated that the level of apathy is even higher in provincial areas that were often neglected by the government over the period of independence. While majorities throughout the country (71 percent in 2001 and 73 percent in 2003)⁵² continue to believe in democracy as the best form of governance, they are profoundly disenchanted with the Georgian state. 91.7 percent think the government is corrupt,⁵³ 62 percent distrust politicians and 53 percent – courts.⁵⁴ Given this reality, 57.3 percent of Tbilisi residents are ready to join a protest rally and only 36.2 percent would appeal to local authorities.⁵⁵

The Georgian public remains ambiguous and divided in its attitude to civic organizations. One of the reasons for that lies in low or skewed awareness. 81.2 percent admit being poorly informed. 92.3 percent derive any knowledge about nonprofits from the media. Thanks to television, 55.6 percent know about the Liberty Institute (the key founder of Kmara), 18.8 percent have heard of the Georgian Association of Young Lawyers, and 15.2 percent are aware of the Soros Foundation.⁵⁶ Therefore, most people perceive civil society as a whole through a dozen of NGOs that appear on TV talk shows. Think tanks and social nonprofits are much less known.⁵⁷

This brings us to the second reason – many people harbor a bipolar attitude on the proper role of nonprofit organizations. On one hand, the majority (56.9 percent)

⁵¹ Gigi Tevradze, "Development a Democratic Political Community: Civil Society Organizations," *Building a Democratic Community in Georgia, Discussion Paper 7* (Stockholm: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, May 2003), 33.

⁵² Gorby Poll, "Survey of Political Attitudes in Georgia," June 2003.

⁵³ Nodia, 64.

⁵⁴ Gorby Poll, "Lifestyle in Georgia 2000," 4-5.

⁵⁵ Nana Sumbadze and George Tarkhan-Mouravi, *Public Opinion in Tbilisi: in the Aftermath of the Parliamentary Elections of November 2, 2003* (Tbilisi: Institute for Policy Studies, 2003), 19.

⁵⁶ Center for Strategic Research and Development, "The Sociological Study of Public Attitudes Towards Non-Governmental Organizations," Tbilisi, March 2003, 2.

⁵⁷ Nachkebia.

wants most problems to be solved by the government, leaving very little space for civic activism. On the other, many believe civic groups should address their most immediate concerns. For instance, 48.7 percent think civil society should deal with the issue of state corruption. Almost one quarter of the population suggests NGOs ought to provide humanitarian assistance or charity. As a result, people frequently approach civic groups with the “What have you done for me lately?” question and want to know their output in kilos of meat distributed for free.⁵⁸

Needless to say, when such expectations are not met, bitterness and distrust ensue. In the general population, the margin of difference between those who think positively and those who are negative about civil society is about 6 percent in favor of the former.⁵⁹ While 42.3 percent believe NGOs promote progressive notions, 32.3 percent think they spread foreign ideas and a quarter of the population cannot provide any answer. 60.2 percent believe the existence of civic groups makes no difference and 37.4 percent suggest the only thing they do is give out promises.⁶⁰

Finally, Georgian society has a powerful isolationist streak that is supported by the Orthodox Church.⁶¹ It purports Georgia’s uniqueness among nations – a claim easy to sustain for the ethnicity that uses its own alphabet. Emphasizing the Christian Orthodox faith as the guiding light that helped preserve the national identity through decades of foreign subjugation, Georgian isolationists despise non-governmental organizations as one of the mechanisms that is designed (this time by the West) to weaken and conquer the country.

⁵⁸ Sumbadze.

⁵⁹ Nodia, 63.

⁶⁰ Center for Strategic Research and Development, “Sociological Study of Public Attitudes Towards Non-governmental Organizations.”

⁶¹ Wheatley, 144-145.

To summarize the point, the Georgian society suffers from the usual post-Soviet apathy and resentment toward politics and politicians. However, the veneer of passivity hides powerful sentiments of frustration and despair that are ready to spill over if pushed to the brink. Few people are aware of civil society at the level deeper than provided by television. Thus, they approach it in the manner similar to other state institutions. They expect NGOs to address their daily concerns – from pervasive corruption to the lack of materials goods. Because most Georgian civic groups are focused on advocacy, they are not able to tackle these issues. The resultant public attitudes are divided between those who know little of and see no utility in NGOs, those who perceive them as a beneficial societal element and those who regard them as a pernicious element of Western intrusion.

NGO landscape: distribution, structure and capacity

As in other states of the former Soviet Union, the majority of Georgian NGOs was first set up in Tbilisi and later established regional branches. Based on the available data, 60 percent of all registered NGOs are based in the capital where only one-fourth of the country's population lives.⁶² There are divergent expert assessments on the extent of robustness of NGO activities outside the capital. Khatuna Nachkebia of the Civil Society Institute notes that there are fewer social service nonprofits outside of the capital. However, those that exist perform much better as a result of the natural survival process that sharpened their capabilities.⁶³

⁶² Nodia, 27.

⁶³ Nachkebia.

The rural-urban divide is most acutely felt in the area of funding and sustainability. The comparison of budgets between regional and Tbilisi-based NGOs in 2000-2002 revealed great discrepancies. For instance, the percentage of Tbilisi associations whose budget was 50,000-100,000 dollars increased from 21 percent (2000) to 29 percent (2003). Outside of the capital, the percentage grew by merely 2 percent during the same timeframe. Whereas 34-36 percent of regional civic groups had to subsist on 500 dollars or less, only 4-6 percent of their Tbilisi counterparts had to live on the same budget.⁶⁴ In a different survey, 65.2 percent of capital-based organizations acknowledge having had no funding interruptions. Only 32.3 percent of groups outside of Tbilisi had the same experience.⁶⁵

In terms of issue orientation, the majority of NGOs remains heavily focused on public advocacy. About 30.4 percent of organizations work in a watchdog capacity, by protecting human rights, monitoring the government or conducting civic education. Another 35.4 percent engage in a specific aspect of the democratization agenda (i.e. children and youth problems, women issues, and media development). Unfortunately, a disproportionately small share of groups deal with daily concerns of Georgian people, like poverty alleviation. Only 3.9 percent of NGOs help internally displaced persons (mostly refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and handicapped (a social pariah in many traditional societies), 2.2 percent are preoccupied with economic development and employment issues.⁶⁶ The answer for the disparity in the causes pursued by Georgian civic groups lies in how civic groups see their role. The majority believes that poverty will be better addressed by the state within the context of larger political and economic

⁶⁴ The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, "Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations", 69-70.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

reforms.⁶⁷ Therefore, purely social issues are wrongly perceived to be out of the purview of civil society.

Speaking of internal composition, the reliance of NGOs on permanent staffers, part-time employees and volunteers is greatly influenced by their location. Civic groups in the capital tend to have more salaried personnel and fewer volunteers. On the contrary to that, regional organizations rely less on paid staffers and more on volunteers. The differences are truly striking. In Tbilisi almost one third of all groups employ eight or more people. Outside of the capital, only 9 percent of associations do that. Whereas 48 percent of NGOs in the capital hire eight or more temporary workers, 10 percent of their regional counterparts use that type of human resource. The situation is reversed when accounting for volunteer use. 38 percent of groups in Tbilisi recruit volunteers, compared to 51 percent in the regions. The available statistics make it clear that the access to funding greatly impacts NGO recruitment practices. Unfortunately, it does so not in a positive manner.⁶⁸ The more money capital-based nonprofits get, the less likely they are to entice people to contribute rather than pay them for work.

The evaluation of financial sustainability shows an overwhelming degree of dependence on foreign sources.⁶⁹ 80 percent of civic groups rely for 50 to 100 percent of their budgets on international donor organizations. Only one-third of NGOs charges symbolic membership fees that constitute merely 5 percent of their total income. The issues of financial transparency remain a concern.⁷⁰ According to the data, Tbilisi-based groups seem more accountable than those in the regions, partially because their continued access to external funding is dependent on their reputation among donors. In

⁶⁷ Nodia, 56-57.

⁶⁸ The original data is derived from "Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations," 72.

⁶⁹ Lenzi, Sumbadze.

⁷⁰ Jeffrey Silverman, "No Graft Organizations?" *Transitions Online*, 9 September 2003.

2002, 69 percent of NGOs in the capital conducted an external audit, compared to 31 percent in the regions. However, the atmosphere of secrecy in financial and programmatic efforts continues to prevail, as only 13 percent of nonprofits made their annual reports public.⁷¹

Finally, it is challenging to analyze the overall capacity of Georgian NGOs. If one judges it by a mere presence of civic groups, then civil society and civic values seem to be well established.⁷² With a scarcity of domestic assessments on NGO strength, the most consistent analysis has so far been provided by the United States Agency for International Development. Out of seven indicators used to evaluate NGO sustainability, two pertain to capacity characteristics – organizational capacity and infrastructure. In regard to the former, the country’s civil society has scored consistently around 4 points on a seven-point scale where 1 is advanced and 7 is least developed. Between 1998-2003, the sector did not make any significant improvements. In 2002-2003 its organizational capacity was slightly worse than that of neighboring Armenia and on par with Ukraine. In the other indicator, infrastructure, the country continues to hover between 3.5 as the lowest in 1999 and 4 as the highest in 2002. Though it has the strongest infrastructural capacity in the Caucasus region, it falls in the medium tier of civil society development in the former Communist bloc. Overall, the classification provided by USAID would place Georgia at the low end of the mid-transitional stage.⁷³ In other words, the capacity of Georgian civil society is higher than that of Central Asian states, but significantly lower than that of Central and Eastern European countries.

⁷¹ Nodia, 31, 51.

⁷² Mikheil Chachkhunashvili, former OSI-Georgia Executive Board Chairman, interview with the author, July 2007.

⁷³ The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, “Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations.”

To summarize, in 1991-2003 the internal development of Georgian civil society was impacted by a host of issues that included a predominance of capital-based NGOs, significant discrepancies in funds and human resource use among civic groups based on their location and a high degree of dependency on foreign grants.

NGO members and inter-NGO relations

The Georgian nonprofit community cannot find a common theme that would unite its worthy, but often disjointed efforts. As a result, inter-NGO relations are impacted by a set of the following problems:

First, though the majority of organizations operate with the similar type of issues that pertain to either general or issue-specific advocacy, the shared agenda often generates not cooperation, but rivalry, which is instigated by a continuous competition for funds. While the USAID 2002-2003 assessment reports relatively high percentages of inter-NGO cooperation and coalition-building experiences in Tbilisi, the same statistics are very modest in other parts of the country.⁷⁴ The discrepancy can be explained by the lagging development of regional groups as well as the privileged status of organizations in the capital. Like civic associations in Moscow or Kyiv in the 1990s, their Tbilisi-based counterparts used the proximity to foreign funds to create an elite community of civic leaders. Even if there is cooperation among various organizations (regardless of their location), one wonders how genuine it is. In the same survey, all groups reported that NGO-coalitions were established primarily at the initiative of a donor.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 34.

Second, Georgian civil society does not apply the democratic principles it preaches to its internal practices. 50 percent of groups in Tbilisi and 78.2 percent of regional NGOs do not have a separation of the organization's board from its executive.⁷⁵ In practice, this means that the group leader both implements projects and evaluates his own performance. When coupled with the fact that most groups work in the same area, this breeds the insularity of thinking that impedes prospects for cooperation with other NGOs. Nodia rightly summarizes, "An undue focus on common agenda and values within civil society sometimes leads to a low level of pluralism and tolerance toward different opinions within the NGO community itself."⁷⁶

Third, the dearth of information that is available on the socio-economic characteristics of civic activists paints the picture of a rather elite segment of the population.⁷⁷ A typical Georgian NGO member is likely to be young, well educated, and reside in the capital. "It can be presumed with a certain amount of confidence that they genuinely share the values of liberal democracy, including trust, tolerance and public spiritedness."⁷⁸ Members of low-income classes, those with less education and rural dwellers are much less likely to hold NGO leadership positions, due to the lack of social connections and education.⁷⁹ As a result of progressive values being predominant within Georgia's civil society, women are better represented as civic leaders (approximately 29 percent of organizations) than in other spheres of social life.⁸⁰ At the same time, ethnic minorities lead only those NGOs that are focused on ethnic issues. The

⁷⁵ The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, "Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations", 48-49.

⁷⁶ Nodia, 56-57.

⁷⁷ Wheatley, 147.

⁷⁸ Nodia, 67.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁰ Lela Gaprinashvili, *Women Status in Georgia* (in Georgian), unpublished manuscript.

limitation attests not only to how far the progressive values of Georgia's civil society can go, but also to the overall weakness of Georgia in integrating national minorities.⁸¹

In the end, the country's third sector continues to be dependent on specific leadership figures within organizations, who run around searching for money without bothering about higher conceptualizations.⁸² There are no large umbrella organizations that would bring together numerous NGOs in different areas of activities.⁸³ On a wider scale, civic groups failed in their ultimate mission – to deepen social networks and create social capital.⁸⁴

NGOs and other societal actors

Cooperation of Georgian nonprofit organizations with four main societal actors – the government, the business sector, media and the public – has been uneven and mixed at best. What one often finds is a civil society hampered in its outreach efforts by unpropitious external conditions and its own unwillingness to step out of the comfort zone and engage with groups that may hold different views than its own.

Interactions with government authorities have assumed peculiar contours. On one hand, civic groups that do not work with governmental agencies constitute an absolute minority – 6-7 percent. On the other, the patterns of collaboration seem either superficial or one-sided. For instance, 39 percent of associations outside Tbilisi exchange only information with relevant governmental actors. 27 percent of groups in the capital engage with the government by offering their assistance or services without a prior request. At the same time, working with the Shevardnadze regime was not an easy thing.

⁸¹ Wheatley, 150.

⁸² Sumbadze. Chachkhunashvili.

⁸³ Nodia, 28.

⁸⁴ Wheatley, 152-153.

The president was not genuinely interested in civil society as an independent actor. Nor was it an endeavor that would always earn a civic group new friends among fellow nonprofits. The highest level of NGO-government interactions occurred naturally in Tbilisi. 50 percent of capital-based groups reported the experience of implementing joint projects, compared to 24 percent in the regions.⁸⁵ While the statistics can be seen as a positive sign of civil society trying to find its niche, some oppositional elements among non-government groups begged to differ. In his own assessment of the situation, Levan Ramishvili, the Chairman of the Liberty Institute, pointed that extensive cooperation often created cooptation. Once civic groups became deeply embroiled in joint projects with the government, they could no longer criticize it as freely. They were also much more willing to favor the political status quo that would bring change through a slow evolutionary rather than revolutionary transformation.⁸⁶ In the end, it seems, many nonprofits found themselves caught between two fires – the Georgian state that had to pretend to be cooperative to maintain its international image and “purists” within civil society that chastised others for getting too cozy with that state.

In reaching out to ordinary citizens, Georgian civic groups relied on highly non-personal strategies, which could not assure that their target audience had been properly contacted. In 2002, among the most frequent means to spread the message were newspaper articles (61 percent), media presentations (53 percent) and booklets (51 percent). Only 29 percent of organizations conducted presentations.⁸⁷ However, the picture is not all bleak. In reporting on their activities the same year, 77 percent indicated

⁸⁵ The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, “Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations,” 39-40.

⁸⁶ Ramishvili.

⁸⁷ The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, “Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations,” 39

doing trainings and seminars, 74 percent pointed to consultations, and an overwhelming majority (86 percent) spoke of collecting and disseminating information.⁸⁸ The question remains to what extent these activities were self-serving (i.e. seminars for civic activists who are already involved) or purposefully exaggerated for the survey. Other assessments only further such doubts. For instance, only 12.7 percent of the public reported receiving NGO services and 5.8 percent cooperated with nonprofit organizations. 94.2 percent said they had never collaborated with civic associations.⁸⁹ The problem here might be two-fold. Its one side has to do with strategies used by organizations to communicate with people. Many civil society members are often too comfortable with foreign funding to avoid reaching out to the “unenlightened masses.” The other side deals with the problem over which civic groups have little immediate control – namely their issue orientation. Ordinary people are unwilling to cooperate on NGO projects, because they perceive a civic need for “policy input” to be self-serving. In other words, all they see are well-educated, relatively well-off civic activists who seek information from them to fulfill their project requirements and, in the end, get paid. Unsurprisingly, 23 percent think NGOs are inefficient, and 16.8 percent believe they are self-serving.⁹⁰ In the end, attempts at cooperation between civil society and the public are often stifled because the lofty and progressive agenda of the former can never satisfy the literal appetite of the latter.

Compared to other segments of the society, interactions between Georgian civic groups and businesses are fairly insignificant.⁹¹ On average, almost 50 percent of organizations have never cooperated with the private sector. About a quarter offered

⁸⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Nodia, 46-47.

their services to businesses, and around 10 percent actually implemented joint projects.⁹² The meager record of cooperation is lamentable, especially because the private sector has a relatively positive view of civil society. In 2002 61.4 percent reported having positive and rather positive attitudes toward NGOs.⁹³ The problem was about finding the right modes of cooperation. On one hand, businesses in Georgia were generally weak. Medium and small-size enterprises were barely getting on their feet and had no money to splurge. Large businesses did not want to support a group whose radical ideas would get the private sponsor in trouble with the government and, more importantly, tax services. In addition, the biggest oligarchs were already heavily committed to supporting key political parties.⁹⁴ On the other hand, NGOs were leery of working with so-called oligarchs – a class of nouveau rich who acquired their wealth through thuggish business practices and close relations with the ruling elite. Furthermore, because of the readily available foreign money, they did not have to make any hard compromises between accepting business money and their own integrity

To summarize, Georgia's nongovernmental organizations tried to work with other societal actors. Their degree of success in such endeavors was determined by the willingness of both sides to collaborate as well as external circumstances. When it came to working with the government, NGOs (mostly in the capital and to the chagrin of their radical fellow groups) usually initiated cooperation. In case of the media, it was television stations that sought out nonprofit experts to comment on daily issues. While interactions with ordinary citizens were complicated by their misperceptions of civil

⁹² The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, "Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations," 39.

⁹³ Nodia, 46.

⁹⁴ Areshidze gives the figure of 15-20 million dollars spent by large businesses to support parties in the 2002 parliamentary elections. (Areshidze, 105).

society, joint projects with businesses were hard to come by because of civic reluctance and economic hardships. In the end, many of these patterns were shaped by the funding and fundraising patterns, which bring us to the next section.

Fundraising practices

Georgian non-governmental organizations had a hard time securing funding because of the domestic environment and their own weaknesses. Before the revolution, many nonprofits were caught among three forces – a bad state, a poor populace and an abundance of foreign donors.

Between 1991-2003, government support of civic groups remained both low and non-transparent. Few available estimates indicate that for instance, in 1997 the state allocated 0.0002 percent of the overall budget expenditures to civil society. Even this money was distributed through presidential “reserve funds,” which made any open competition for it impossible. This comically low level of funding is a result of two factors. One is the lack of interest on the part of the Shevardnadze regime that did not appreciate the meddling of NGOs in public affairs.⁹⁵ The other is the magnitude of economic collapse that Georgia was experiencing in the post-civil war decade. A brief review of the budget data for 2001-2003 reveals a growing domestic and foreign debt as well as increasing debt service payments.⁹⁶ The government was simply unable to finance nonprofit organizations when it struggled to pay for essential public services. As a consequence, only 15.5 percent of organizations relied on state support.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Chachkhunashvili.

⁹⁶ For more information, see State Department for Statistics of Georgia, “Government Finance” (section on the state budget) in *Statistics Georgia*, <http://www.statistics.ge/main.php?pform=134&plang=1>.

⁹⁷ The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, “Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations,” 67.

The support from public was lukewarm. Though almost a quarter of NGOs reported receiving private donations,⁹⁸ the population did not understand the purpose of the third sector. Here the problem is again two-fold. On one hand, many people believe if civic groups are charitable, then they are supposed to be free.⁹⁹ When this understanding is combined with mixed public feelings about civil society, nonprofits become less inclined to solicit money from the general population or charge membership/service fees.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the ability of an average citizen to contribute was severely limited by economic circumstances. The unemployment data available from the National Statistics Office indicates that in 2001-2003 between 11.1 and 12.6 percent of the population did not have a job.¹⁰¹ The figure reflects only those who were officially registered to collect unemployment benefits and is likely to be much higher. Given this reality, few would be willing to support groups whose purpose they cannot comprehend in the first place.

The contribution of domestic businesses to civil society was negligible. The blame for this situation is shared equally between the two parties. Like in Ukraine, many businesses were leery of engaging with NGOs because of past scandals that involved money laundering and grant embezzlement.¹⁰² This feeling was only fueled by the fear of possible state reprisals against those who would contribute to known anti-government groups, like the Liberty Institute. As another expert in civil society noted, Georgia had very few capable and well-off entrepreneurs and those knew who [meaning the government of Shevardnadze] they had to be thankful for their continued wellbeing.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Nachkebia.

¹⁰⁰ Sumbadze.

¹⁰¹ State Department for Statistics of Georgia, *Statistics Georgia*.

¹⁰² Nachkebia.

¹⁰³ Khvichia.

Similarly to Ukraine, the specter of political oppression and the Byzantine tax system pushed NGOs to hide the real level of contribution from businesses. Thus, the available estimates show great divergence – from 9 to 20.3 percent.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, many nonprofits were unwilling to engage with domestic entrepreneurs for their support may come with a lot of string attached as to the content of their activities.

Under these circumstances, foreign funding proved an easy and readily available solution. As donors and locals acknowledge, Georgia never experienced a lack of international support.¹⁰⁵ The country's position as the hub of regional assistance in the Caucasus,¹⁰⁶ its previous history of civil violence and a worldwide reputation of Eduard Shevardnadze as the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs during the "perestroika" contributed to the heavy presence of American donor organizations. The United States government was the largest bilateral donor. Since 1991, it spent 1.1 billion dollars on assistance programs in Georgia. In 2002, 23.5 million dollars was spent on democracy programs.¹⁰⁷ Though not comparable with American grant giving, the European Union also spent a hefty sum of 385 million euros between 1991 and 2003.¹⁰⁸ With this amount of money, it is understandable that 84 percent of NGOs said grants constituted their major source of income.¹⁰⁹

To summarize, when it comes to fundraising Georgian nonprofit organizations were caught in a tough spot that made an addiction to foreign grants much easier to

¹⁰⁴ Nodia, 46, 47; the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, "Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations," 67.

¹⁰⁵ Lenzi, Sumbadze.

¹⁰⁶ Many international organizations choose to establish their regional offices for the Caucasus in Tbilisi to serve Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, because of the small size of the three countries. Georgia was chosen as a hub because of the ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan that would have made it impossible for citizens of either state to travel to the other.

¹⁰⁷ Devdariani, 8, 15.

¹⁰⁸ European Commission, *Country Strategy Paper 2003-2006, TACIS National Indicative Program 2004-2006 Georgia* (Brussels: European Commission, 2003), 5. Please note that this amount does not include assistance provided by individual countries.

¹⁰⁹ The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia and the United Nations Association of Georgia, "Countrywide Assessment of Georgian Civil Society Organizations," 67.

acquire and much more difficult to give up. They had little chance of receiving support from a weak state, a destitute public and a feeble business sector. The scarcity of money from domestic sources was compensated by the heavy presence of foreign donors. Having gained the taste of grant support, many were unwilling to engage with public or businesses for fundraising purposes.

Georgian civil society: strengths and pathologies

Strengths

In the first decade of independence, formal political embeddedness remained the strongest aspect that facilitated the birth and tremendous growth of Georgian civil society. Upon assuming power, the government of Eduard Shevardnadze established a liberal legislative framework that regulated registration and activities of civic organizations. Furthermore, driven by the concerns for his international image of a reformer, Shevardnadze was unwilling to launch open repressions against non-governmental organizations that grew increasingly critical of his regime in 2000-2003.¹¹⁰ As a result of this policy, Georgia experienced a boom in newly registered civic groups and acquired an image of the state with one of the most vibrant civil societies in the post-Soviet space.

The second strong feature of Georgia's third sector was its ability to attract young people who were educated in the West. Many of them were lured to join civic groups as a way to implement their idealist vision for the country. It of course did not hurt that compared to other sectors of the national economy employment at nonprofits provided a steady and fairly decent income.

¹¹⁰ Interview with former president Eduard Shevardnadze in Karumidze and Wertsch.

This brings us to the third strength – external involvement. Because of the country’s strategic location in the Caucasus, its previous history of violent conflict and Shevardnadze’s stature in the international community, Georgian civil society never experienced a shortage of international attention. Thus, the presence of foreign donors created propitious conditions not only for NGOs’ registration, but also for their survival. Many organizations, especially those located in Tbilisi, were able to set up a permanent infrastructure, attract qualified staff and develop valuable initiatives only thanks to the continuous support of foreign grant-givers. It has been noted before that without international assistance, civil society in Ukraine would not have been the same in terms of strength and capacity. This point is even more pertinent when applied to Georgia, which after the civil war and two ethnic conflicts was thrown back in development by several decades. Under those circumstances, there were no other (but foreign) sources that could afford the luxury of supporting abstract democratization projects.

In the end, Georgian civil society made it alive and well through the decade of hardship thanks to the willingness of the state to allow its existence, the appeal of NGOs to Western-educated youth and intelligencia, and the financial support of foreign donors (primarily the United States).

Pathologies

In its struggle to survive, the Georgian not-for-profit sector has developed three critical weaknesses – inability to fit in politically, inability to connect socially, and inability to sustain itself financially. With all of them, the blame for failure ought to be shared between civil society and other relevant actors with which it tried to engage.

On the political front, convoluted taxation policies and overly extensive reporting requirements have prevented many groups from taking advantage of the otherwise liberal legislative framework. Most importantly, neither the Shevardnadze government nor officials at the regional and local level saw the utility of civil society. For them, it could be compared to a strange garnish that had to be added to a dish to make it attractive for the viewing by outsiders. Once the latter were satisfied, the government could brush the garnish aside and proceed with governance as usual. As a result, the NGO sector had a hard time fitting into the political life as an independent actor. Only by the end of the 1990s, a small number of NGOs from the capital managed to establish their own reputation and voice through mass media. However, their impact on the political course of development remained minimum.

From the perspective of societal embeddedness, Georgian civil society had a difficulty connecting with its population due to four distinct factors. First, the national public mood was a combustible mixture of passivity and confrontation. People were unwilling to get engaged unless they were cornered by desperate economic and political conditions. Second, the lack of awareness about NGOs determined a low level of public involvement or interest toward them. Many thought of civic groups based on the few that appeared on television talk shows. In this regard, they came out looking no better than politicians who talk a lot, but do little. The predominant advocacy orientation of nonprofits at the expense of social and humanitarian issues only confirmed that opinion. Third, because of rural-urban discrepancies non-governmental groups outside of Tbilisi were much less stronger and thus less capable to engage with the local public. The uncovered differences in terms of funding, sustainability and personnel use confirm that the post-Soviet reality applied to the nonprofit sector, too. Thus, NGOs that were closest

to regular people were also least able to help them. Fourth, a combination of insufficient accountability and an elite composition of many civic organizations made them seem even more out of touch. A pervasive impression painted by internal and external observers was of a civil society operating in its own universe. Not seeing any way how civic groups, focused on abstract democratization causes, can bring practical resolutions to their daily problems, people became unwilling to help with NGO projects. In their mind, well-educated civic leaders were working for their own benefit – to imitate civic activism that would allow them to meet grant requirements, get well paid and lead a relatively prosperous life in Tbilisi, while the rest of the population had to endure provincial subsistence.

Finally, though foreign funding seemed abundant, especially for groups that were in Tbilisi, pathological dependence on external support eroded the ability of civic associations to secure venues that would sustain them financially in the long term. The fault of Georgian NGOs is only partial for other domestic actors were either unwilling or unable to collaborate. The state did not have a clear idea as to what to do with nonprofits that were emerging like mushrooms after rain. Neither did it have the money to support their growing appetites, spoiled by foreign grants. Ordinary Georgians were too preoccupied with their own struggles to make ends meet to even think of donating elsewhere. Big businesses, known as oligarchs, considered NGOs as chump change, preferring to support political parties that yielded real influence. In the end, foreign grants became the default option for organizations that wanted to survive with their mission and integrity intact.

To conclude our discussion, while Georgian civil society had the advantages of a liberal legislative framework, the energy of young activists and the interest in the

country from foreign donors, it struggled to become part of the domestic society. The process of its embeddedness became imperiled by the inability to secure its own place in the political sphere, appeal to ordinary Georgians and loosen the reliance on external help.

PROFILE: KMARA

Launch

The Liberty Institute was at the roots of Kmara's emergence in Georgia. Founded in 1996, the Institute focused on key human rights issues, such as the freedom of speech and religion, access to a fair trial and prevention of arbitrary detention.

Since 1999 it had been working with numerous student self-governance groups. One of the strongest among them was located at Tbilisi State University (TSU) – the most elite higher education establishment in the country. In 2001 one-third of TSU students, who were also members of the student government, took part in the university-wide elections. Their demands were modest in scope. They wanted to curb corruption at TSU, improve the level of instruction and bring interactive teaching methods into the classroom.¹¹¹

It would likely have taken years for the group to step outside the boundaries of its school, had it not been for inadvertent help from the Shevarnadze regime. In October 2001 the government attempted to suspend a broadcasting license of Rustavi-2, an independent television station that was growing increasingly critical of the ruling regime. In response many TSU students launched public protests and promptly transformed their

¹¹¹ Ramishvili; Lika Sanidze, Kmara activist, interview with the author, July 2007.

group into the Student Movement of Georgia.¹¹² The demonstrations became a huge success. The government was forced to back down and allow Rustavi-2 continuing its broadcast. Furthermore, as an implicit recognition of the debacle, President Shevarnadze had to sack several government officials responsible for letting the situation get out of control.¹¹³

Buoyed by its newly found voice and power to influence events, the TSU student government realized that it needed to extend the movement to other universities in Georgia.¹¹⁴ It recognized that instead of battling specific issues of higher education, it had to look at their root cause – corrosive corruption within the Shevarnadze regime.¹¹⁵ The key figures within the Liberty Institute, like Giga Bokeria and Levan Ramishvili, acknowledged that on the eve of the 2003 parliamentary elections the balance of forces between the government and the opposition remained equal. Thus, a third actor was needed to tilt an election outcome in favor of the latter.¹¹⁶ This actor would also have to position itself very differently from other student unions, which were artificially set up by Shevarnadze to confuse the public.¹¹⁷ This is how the idea of Kmara (in Georgian “Enough”) emerged.

Its first protest took place on April 14, 2003. The group’s highly non-conventional tactics, which clashed with the conservative Georgian society, put it immediately on the map. That day “Kmara” sprayed its name on numerous public

¹¹² Kandelaki, 6.

¹¹³ Wheatley.

¹¹⁴ Tea Tutberidze, Kmara spokesperson, interview with the author, July 2007; Bunce and Wolchik, 63.

¹¹⁵ Losaberidze.

¹¹⁶ Ramishvili.

¹¹⁷ Tutberidze.

buildings and burned a flag portraying Shevarnadze and his entourage in front of the State Chancellery.¹¹⁸

Maturation

Kmara's maturation, as a civic organization, was marked by three factors. The first was a trip that occurred even before the group was actually set up. In February 2003, Giga Bokeria went to meet with Otpor leaders to see how useful their experience may be in Georgia.¹¹⁹ It was in Belgrade where "he learned the value of seizing and holding the moral high ground and how to make use of public pressure."¹²⁰ Therefore, by the time Kmara began putting its first activities in place, it already possessed a rather clear vision not only of what it wanted to achieve (i.e. Georgia without Shevarnadze), but also of how it would go about it (i.e. by espousing the Otpor model¹²¹).

The second factor was Kmara's inseparable ties with its "founding father" – the Liberty Institute. Seeking to differentiate itself within a large pool of advocacy groups, that NGO was known to adopt more radical approaches and seek confrontation to get its point across.¹²² When it came to street activism, it had one of the most experienced cohorts of civic leaders in the country. It meant that Kmara did not have to go through a steep learning curve, which was usually experienced by all new civic organizations.

The final factor was a series of events that pushed Kmara to further radicalization. One of them was a conflict over the composition of the Central Election Commission, which was not resolved satisfactorily even after the involvement of Jim

¹¹⁸ Giorgi Lomsadze, "Amid Controversy, Georgian Protest Movement Grows," *EurasiaNet.Org*, 10 June 2003.

¹¹⁹ Wheatley, 179-180.

¹²⁰ Mark MacKinnon, "Georgia revolt carried mark of Soros," *Globe and Mail*, 26 November 2003.

¹²¹ Kikalishvili.

¹²² For instance, it fought vociferously to allow foreign churches (like Baptists and Jehovah Witnesses) operate without harassment in a predominantly Eastern Orthodox, very conservative society.

Baker. The other was a trip of its activists to observe the presidential election in Azerbaijan on October 15, 2003. Kmara members were stunned by the weak and muted Western reaction on what in fact amounted to the coronation of Ilham Aliyev. Both occurrences provided empirical support to their suspicions that Western responses to election fraud would be the same in Georgia.¹²³

To summarize, compared to an average NGO Kmara matured very fast. The reason for that was not only a limited timeframe (from April to November 2003) within which the organization had to fulfill its goals, but also the level of preparedness among its activists. By the time Kmara was ready to launch itself, its key leaders had already gone over the planning stage, thus sparing the group from the need to learn through its own mistakes. Participating in the unfolding election campaign in Georgia and observing one in neighboring Azerbaijan provided a useful reality check as to what can be expected on the Election Day.

Mission and its evolution

Kmara's initial mission emerged as a result of successful protests against the closure of Rustavi-2. A group of student activists from Tbilisi State University saw that once united, student organizations had the capacity to expand their demands from mere improvements in the higher education system to fundamental political and social changes.

A widely held conspiracy theory that Kmara was set up by Americans with the only goal of toppling the Shevardnadze regime in the 2003 elections does not hold on a closer examination. At least two Kmara activists confirmed that the group's mission at

¹²³ Lenzi.

the beginning was much more modest. It wanted to demythologize the Shevarnadze rule.¹²⁴ By exposing flaws of the existing government, it sought to alter the perception (formed after the civil war) that Georgia could not do better, that given the internecine nature of domestic politics Shevarnadze was the only hope for stability. Thus, one part of Kmara's mission was to achieve a change in the discourse.

The other was to prepare for the 2005 presidential elections. That year Shevarnadze would no longer be eligible to run because of the constitutional term limits. However, like in Ukraine and other post-Soviet semi-authoritarian countries, Georgian opposition expected attempts either to change the constitution or to manipulate the vote for the victory of a successor anointed by Shevarnadze. From this perspective, Kmara viewed its activities as a dress rehearsal before 2005.¹²⁵

As the election campaign unfolded, Kmara's mission became more radical for it saw the government weakness as an opportunity for large-scale change. President Shevarnadze badly overplayed its hand, by refusing to address the conditions that were ripe for change. So instead of waiting till 2005 Kmara decided to capitalize on the moment that produced a unique constellation of forces – an increasingly weak regime and a progressively strong opposition.¹²⁶ By the middle of summer Kmara activists, like Ramishvili and Bokeria, seemed intent to remove Shevarnadze even through non-constitutional measures.¹²⁷

To summarize, Kmara's vision was borne out of frustrations with daily corruption in the Georgian education system. Thanks to initial successes, it expanded to include a more comprehensive political change, albeit in a somewhat distant future, in

¹²⁴ Kandelaki, 10.

¹²⁵ Ramishvili.

¹²⁶ Ramishvili.

¹²⁷ Areshidze, 97-99.

2005. However, the group's mission soon underwent another alteration as a result of the shifting external circumstances. The blunders committed by the Shevardnadze government, the unity of Georgia's fractious opposition achieved by the defection of Speaker Nino Burdjanadze and the brewing public discontent gave a valuable opening for Kmara to push for change in 2003. All of these factors, not an American conspiracy plot, turned a student government of a Tbilisi university into a radical advocate for a revolution.

Funding and sustainability

Kmara derived all of its funding from the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF).¹²⁸ The group consciously did not attempt to seek other sources of support. One of the most widely spread misconceptions holds that the local Soros Foundation almost manually set up Kmara and fed it from its hand. The reality looks a bit more complicated. In fact, legally Kmara never received any direct support from Soros for one simple reason – it was not yet registered as a non-government organization. So when at the beginning of 2003 OSGF (the Open Society Georgia Foundation) announced a grant competition for election monitoring projects, Kmara was not eligible to apply. Most of its financial assistance came directly from a sister-NGO, the Liberty Institute.¹²⁹

It was never clear why the Liberty Institute decided not to register Kmara. Perhaps, it knew that authorities would not process Kmara's papers anyway. And if that had happened, the group would have become explicitly illegal. Operating without registration relegated Kmara to a certain twilight zone where its assets could not be

¹²⁸ Sumbadze; Karumidze and Wertsch.

¹²⁹ Chachkhunashvili.

seized. If the government had decided to attack viciously, the unregistered group would have had an easier time vanishing, just like it appeared.

Though funding amounts are usually hard to obtain, a number of reputable sources reported that Kmara received about 500,000 dollars for a start-up grant in April 2003.¹³⁰ This was not a paltry amount. Based on my analysis of funding levels for many Georgian NGOs, Kmara was definitely in the top of the top tier of civic associations in the country. One of the group's activists, Levan Ramishvili, insisted that Kmara was much more effective and frugal in using this amount of money than many other Georgian NGOs because it operated like a Protestant church. By shaving off luxuries and adopting a simplified organizational structure, it was able to focus 95 percent of funds on programmatic activities instead of administrative expenses.

Kmara did not seek funding from the general public or the business sector. In the course of interviews with the group's activists and external observers, I heard a number of explanations for such passivity. One of them was the recognition that contrary to Ukraine in 2004, Georgia did not have an expansive middle class. Asking money from the already poor populace was something unimaginable.¹³¹ In addition, in Georgia political or advocacy fundraising carried an inherently negative stereotype of being self-serving. A Kmara activist told me that the group had much more success in hosting a charity event for a local orphanage than in approaching citizens about donations.¹³² In the end, Kmara was successful getting some in-kind assistance from its own members who provided accommodation and food for the group's activists outside of Tbilisi during the revolution.

¹³⁰ Lomsadze, MacKinnon.

¹³¹ Sumbadze, Khvichia.

¹³² Sanidze.

Asking for donations from businesses carried some perils, too. One was the anxiety about Kmara in the business community. Georgian businesses, like their counterparts in many post-Soviet states, were dependent on the government for their continued success. Fines and court summons produced by a series of “uncovered” tax violations could drive into the ground any nascent enterprise. Knowing that, Kmara did not even pursue that direction.¹³³ The other was a fear on the part of Kmara activists that funding from oligarchs would limit the group’s freedom of action. Many pointed to Ukrainian Pora and the Orange Revolution in general that fell victims of a heavy involvement from so-called “Orange oligarchs,” who hampered the impetus for change after the revolution.¹³⁴

In summary, Kmara relied exclusively on financial support of the local Soros Foundation to sustain its activities. Though a number of independent factors (like general poverty, corrupt business sector and a skeptical public) objectively prevented the group to diversify its funding base, it is also clear that Kmara did not try too hard to do so. With the Soros grant making it one of the most well financed groups in the country, it saw little need to step out of its comfort zone. Its message of radical change definitely did not extend to altering the perceptions of ordinary Georgians about the nonprofit sector. In fact, based on the following section, the group seems to have been in the best of the worlds – it had enough funding and enough creative freedom to use the money as it saw fit.

¹³³ Khvichia, Sanidze.

¹³⁴ Ramishvili, Kikalishvili.

Donor influence

Given Kmara's overwhelming dependency on a single foreign donor, the issue of its influence and the perception of such influence become paramount. In this regard, the obtained information posits that there was no programmatic interference from the national Soros Foundation. However, the group's association with George Soros damaged its credibility among certain segments of the Georgian population.

Similarly to Ukraine, both domestic civic activists and foreign donors on the ground play down the importance of foreign support in the actual success of foreign-funded nonprofit organizations. A representative of the International Republic Institute noted that it would be a mistake to think of foreign money as the driving force behind Kmara.¹³⁵ While the support came from overseas, without the impetus within the Georgian society it would not have had any impact. The same opinion is echoed by the Executive Director of the Georgian Soros Foundation. He said his organization had been supporting election observation projects and NGOs since 1994, and none of them had the kind of effect that Kmara did.¹³⁶ Thus, it was something different about the group rather than the money pumped into it.

Kmara activists also denied the influence of grants. For instance, Levan Ramishvili dismissively noted that the Liberty Institute got the money for the purposes, which were "typical NGO bull....," but used them for meaningful activities, like thematic trainings of activists.¹³⁷ His statement implies that there was little monitoring on the part of OSGF over the implementation of grants. The relaxed supervision may be explained by the fact that the foundation itself espoused anti-Shevarnadze views.

¹³⁵ Lenzi.

¹³⁶ Chachkhunashvili.

¹³⁷ Ramishvili.

However, to the detriment of Kmara, the majority of Georgians were not aware of these fine nuances in the relationship between the group and the Soros foundation. Because of Kmara's noisy reputation, its financial links to Soros became soon exposed by the government and alienated the conservative part of the population. Georgian Orthodox groups, which strongly objected to any external intervention, used Kmara's foreign funding to undermine its credibility among nationalist and isolation-minded Georgians.¹³⁸ As a result, Kmara activists were derogatively labeled "rentier democrats" and gasorosebuli ("Sorosized" in Georgian).¹³⁹

At the same time, the scope of overall damage remains unclear. Many observers and activists acknowledged that irrespective of Soros funding, Kmara would not have been able to attract some Georgians due to their status quo orientation.¹⁴⁰ The criticism of Kmara's foreign links produced a positive side effect, by enhancing its iconoclastic image and fueling its appeal to the youth. The group gained the necessary counter-culture status to be a magnet for those young people who were most radical and adamant about change.¹⁴¹

To summarize, in the months preceding the 2003 parliamentary elections the goals of Kmara to bring about change and the intentions of the national Soros Foundation to assure fair elections coincided. Thanks to the experience of the Liberty Institute, which secured grants for Kmara, the group received little supervision for its activities. The association with George Soros produced diametrically opposite reactions, by alienating religious and traditionally-minded Georgians and attracting young progressives – the precise target audience for Kmara.

¹³⁸ Kikalishvili, Khvichia, Sanidze.

¹³⁹ Broers.

¹⁴⁰ Nachkebia.

¹⁴¹ Chachkhunashvili.

Membership

Kmara's pool of members consisted mostly of university students and young professionals who were recently out of school. At its peak, the group accounted between 2,000-3,000 participants.¹⁴² Though divided on the specifics of political arrangements and preferences, they shared a common understanding of the need for fundamental reforms.¹⁴³

Regardless of age similarities, Kmara was by no means homogenous. Its core membership in Tbilisi included the first post-Soviet generation of Georgia's Westernized youth – those who either worked in Western NGOs or studied abroad.¹⁴⁴ From the beginning, leading activists at the Liberty Institute realized that in order to win the fight against social apathy, Kmara had to become more than a group for off-springs from Georgian elite families. Thus, its two concurrent goals were to broaden the base by expanding onto new student populations and to energize its members by establishing an unequivocally activist identity for the group.¹⁴⁵ Kmara activists went to different universities in the capital and outside Tbilisi to persuade students to join them. They turned the group's biggest disadvantage – its lack of political experience – into its strongest selling point among young audiences who felt tired of compromised leaders and politics as usual.¹⁴⁶

Their efforts proved successful because they correctly identified their target audience and were able to get its attention. Kmara members reasoned that other young

¹⁴² Kandelaki, Broers.

¹⁴³ Sanidze.

¹⁴⁴ Ramishvili.

¹⁴⁵ Ramishvili.

¹⁴⁶ Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchuk, "Youth and Electoral Revolutions in Slovakia, Serbia and Georgia," *SAIS Review* 26, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2006): 57.

people would be attracted to the group because youth wings of political parties were notoriously weak.¹⁴⁷ So politically active young people had often no place to go to air their concerns. At the same time, Kmara's horizontal structure and its snowballing methods of expansion, when new members were recruited through friends and very informal visits to other universities,¹⁴⁸ would create the sense of ownership. The group was able to tap into the traditionally high desire within the Georgian society to protest, especially among young people who see this method as a means for self-assertion.¹⁴⁹ Like Ukraine, the group's recruitment was made easier by the government whose over-reaction kept Kmara continuously in the news and helped fuel its popularity.¹⁵⁰ In the end, the second sub-group of Kmara members emerged. While they were also young (19-20 years old), they did not have much of an urban and upper-class flair, coming from outside of Tbilisi and speaking no language other than Georgian. How could then they relate to their much more privileged counterparts in the capital? For different reasons both groups felt equally disenfranchised from political processes and distressed about their future. Having lived overseas, sophisticated urbanites were appalled by the state of their country and the direction it was moving. After seeing the bleakest sides of life in the 1990s, young people outside of Tbilisi felt things could no longer get worse. David Kikalishvili, a prominent journalist from Rustavi-2, half-jokingly told a story that many teenagers in Zugdidi (a city in the West of Georgia) did not know why there were electric posts along roads for their town almost never received any electricity.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Tutberidze.

¹⁴⁸ Lenzi. Sanidze.

¹⁴⁹ Sumbadze.

¹⁵⁰ For instance, Wheatley describes how the arrest of Kmara members at some point provoked an outpour of public sympathy (Wheatley, 186). Rustavi-2 reported extensively on the government's attempts to disperse Kmara protests and on the beating of Kmara activists in Adjara (For more see Human Rights Information and Documentation Center, "Human Rights in Georgia," Issue 10 (56), October 2003).

¹⁵¹ Kikalishvili.

Like Ukrainian Pora, Kmara also recognized the need to move people from words to action rather quickly. Therefore, in order to test the seriousness of its new members, they were immediately asked to take part in demonstrations, protests and other activities. This way, the Kmara leaders told me, they were certain that people came to Kmara because of the ideological affinity, not for material reasons.¹⁵²

Regardless of generally progressive and inclusive recruitment strategies, Kmara faced a significant problem that it decided not to try to overcome. In particular, it proved unable to attract participants from other age groups. After probing this matter, three distinct explanations were collected. First, Kmara's controversial campaign strategies ran against the conservative nature of ordinary Georgians.¹⁵³ And while the group had to be aggressive to sap the confidence of the regime and attract the attention of people,¹⁵⁴ tearing portraits of political leaders and embarrassing them in public could not be tolerated by the nation where maintaining one's honor is taken very seriously. Second, the group had a very limited timeframe and resources to implement its goals – from April till November 2003. Soon any attempts to attract members outside of university circles were abandoned for they would bring little yield for a lot of distraction.¹⁵⁵

To summarize, Kmara was successful in bringing together young people throughout the country regardless of their social background. It succeeded in overcoming both apathy and resistance of the youth who benefited from the system of bribery and corruption.¹⁵⁶ Where it performed much less effectively was in expanding its ranks to other demographics. Scared by Kmara's radicalism and scarred by Georgia's experience

¹⁵² Ramishvili, Tutberidze.

¹⁵³ Nachkebia, Khvichia.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Khvichia, Lenzi.

¹⁵⁶ Tutberidze.

with violence, Georgians of other ages might have supported the group, but were unwilling to join it for the fear of uncertainty any change might bring to the existing fragile peace.¹⁵⁷

Leaders and members

Like Pora, Kmara had a very horizontal internal structure that brought its own benefits and flaws. Because relations between members and leaders were very informal, it was hard to pinpoint who was exactly in charge. On one hand, as one of the leaders Giorgi Kandelaki notes, it “encouraged a greater feeling of ownership and participation among activists that would have not been possible within a hierarchy.”¹⁵⁸ On the other, it was not always clear who was speaking on the behalf of the organization. Seeking to enlarge its cadre, Kmara was admitting many members who were not disciplined. Some of them chose to give interviews on behalf of the group to without being authorized or aware of the “party line.”¹⁵⁹ Thus challenges with message control resulted in several instances of outright public embarrassment.

From the programmatic standpoint, the lack of hierarchical relations was a blessing to a free flow of brainstorming sessions that several members described as long and heated.¹⁶⁰ Kmara was able to overcome one of the biggest weaknesses of many Georgian NGOs when as a result of group-think ideas are never vigorously challenged by those members who are not socialized into the internal nonprofit discourse. Furthermore, with Kmara’s main principle – “Democracy in planning, but dictatorship in

¹⁵⁷ Losaberidze.

¹⁵⁸ Kandelaki, 6.

¹⁵⁹ Tutberidze.

¹⁶⁰ Sanidze.

execution,” the group was able to implement decisions rather coherently once tactical details and budgets were worked out.

While a loose organizational composition encouraged creativity and challenged the potential of each member, it also complicated the mundane tasks of organizational management and activist mobilization. One activist acknowledged that because Kmara’s internal structure was rather weak and rudimentary it struggled to manage all of its members. In the end, it compiled a database of most active supporters to be called upon to spread the word to others in case of urgent events.¹⁶¹

In sum, non-hierarchical relations between members and leaders seemed to have brought more good than harm. Although having no clear lines of authority often meant little control over members and protracted decision-making, the absence of the leaders-versus-members schism enabled greater creativity in generating ideas and more intense involvement in their execution. The structure suited well in achieving the short-term goal of Kmara – to weaken Shevardnadze’s grip on power before the November elections.

Normative transfers

From the very beginning, Kmara espoused the methodology of nonviolent protest and selective public pressure as the major tool of fighting against the Shevardnadze government. Its key normative tenets were successfully borrowed from Otpor – a Serbian youth organization that was instrumental in bringing down the regime of Slobodan Milosevic.

Even before launching the group publicly in April 2003, members of the Liberty Institute became interested in the tactics used by Otpor and conducted a preliminary

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Internet search on the Serbian group.¹⁶² To obtain more information, in February 2003 Giga Bokeria and two representatives from other organizations¹⁶³ went on a fact-finding mission.¹⁶⁴ The visit made such an impression on the Georgian activists that they invited Otpor members to come and conduct trainings in Georgia in summer. As a result, three large summer schools were held for over 1,000 participants.¹⁶⁵

Asked what they learned from those trainings, Georgian activists mention two points. The first has to do with content. Otpor emphasized repeatedly the need to abandon the use of violence and do so explicitly in order to earn the trust of people and forestall government provocations. An openly stated preference for nonviolent tactics was especially important in Georgia where a fear of another civil war continues to loom large in the public consciousness. The second point is about presentation. In order to catch public attention, Kmara could not be an ordinary NGO whose protests were feeble and boring to watch. As some interviewers noted, every public action had to have some theatrical element - be it "Kmara" graffiti sprayed on the walls of government buildings or protesters tearing up a portrait of Eduard Shevardnadze. More importantly, the group had to make sure that its activities had a large physical presence (whether real or imaginary) and took place simultaneously to make an impression of a potent and well-coordinated civic movement.¹⁶⁶

External normative transfers were predominant at the beginning of Kmara's establishment. Kmara used Otpor's symbol (a clenched fist) and defined itself as a movement rather than a traditional NGO.¹⁶⁷ However, external influence was not decisive

¹⁶² Tutberidze.

¹⁶³ They included head of the Soros Foundation in Georgia and a member of the Georgian Young Lawyers Association.

¹⁶⁴ MacKinnon, Karumidze and Wertsch, 65-66; Wheatley, 179.

¹⁶⁵ MacKinnon, Sanidze.

¹⁶⁶ Tutberidze; Ramishvili; Usupashvili, 93.

¹⁶⁷ Bunce and Wolchuk, "Youth and Electoral Revolutions": 57-59.

throughout the group's whole existence. It is important to dispel a widely popular myth that Kmara was a puppet whose strings were aptly pulled by Otpor and the American government.¹⁶⁸ While it is true that Bokeria's trip to Serbia and the summer seminars were fully funded by the Open Society Foundation Georgia,¹⁶⁹ it was up to Georgians (not Serbian activists or American consultants) to decide what shape Otpor's methodological help was going to assume in the country.

Kmara leaders understood that if they were to succeed, external norms had to be married to domestic realities. Most Kmara members outside of Tbilisi spoke little English and, more importantly, were not socialized into the Western civil society discourse. Thus, the group had to find an overarching issue that would stir emotions and rally young people to the cause of change in an Otpor-like nonviolent manner. They correctly identified that general problem to be corruption, which "had become the dominant metaphor explaining state incapacity."¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, Kmara aptly appealed the values of Georgians, especially younger generations, who identified the country with Europe, the West and Western democracy.¹⁷¹ All of these factors logically tied external and internal normative transfers – Georgia could not become a European country (which it was destined to be) because of corruption. The only way to overcome the system of corruption was to get rid of the Shevarnadze regime that was at its core. Dismissing Shevarnadze ought to be done through civic and peaceful disobedience in order to gain wider public support.

¹⁶⁸ For the examples of this vision, see Vladimir Radyuhin, "U.S. Role In Georgia "Coup" *The Hindu Time*, 2 December 2003 and Charlotte Keatley, "A Very Georgian Coup," *Guardian*, 6 December 2003.

¹⁶⁹ OSF-Georgia is a national branch of the Soros foundations network, financed by American billionaire of Hungarian descent George Soros.

¹⁷⁰ Boers.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

As another proof that Kmara did not simply copy-cat Otpor's strategies, interviews with its activists made it clear that there were vigorous debates on the content of its activities throughout the group's existence. The obvious division was between those who argued for embracing more positive messages that would not only criticize Shevarnadze, but also help attract audiences from other demographic groups.¹⁷² Because the group decided to stick to a negative tone of campaigning, its activities generated a vicious and contradictory reaction by the government. This, in turn, helped unite the opposition by showing the extent of authoritarian degeneration within the regime.¹⁷³

Finally, when it came to specific initiatives, Kmara activists relied extensively on the Georgian tradition of direct action that persevered through the Soviet times in 1978¹⁷⁴ and during the struggle for independence in the 1990s.¹⁷⁵ Similarly to Pora, most ideas had to be tested among friends and families to see the initial response.¹⁷⁶ Here we note once again a blending of external advice and domestic realities. From Otpor, Kmara took the importance of public visibility. Based on the media market in Georgia, its members knew that the only way to get publicity was to appear in the news on Rustavi-2, a prominent oppositional channel. Therefore, it designed its activities to be newsworthy.¹⁷⁷

To summarize, the normative input of Serbian youth group Otpor proved critical in providing Kmara with the general framework for civic activities that included the emphasis on nonviolence and publicity. However, Georgian activists deserve most of the

¹⁷² Ramishvili, Tutberidze, Sanidze.

¹⁷³ Karumidze and Wertsch.

¹⁷⁴ I refer here to the demonstrations against introducing Russian as the state language in Georgia that forced the Soviet government to back down.

¹⁷⁵ Jones, 11-12.

¹⁷⁶ Sanidze, Kmara activist, interview with the author given on the condition of anonymity.

¹⁷⁷ Ramishvili, Kikalishvili.

credit for successfully adapting that methodology for local activists and translating its abstract tenets into specific activities that in the end enabled the regime change. The effectiveness of internal norm sharing was proved by the high level of participants' retention after summer schools. The fact that many people chose to stay with Kmara showed a genuine interest in its work rather than a simple desire to spend a free of charge week in the capital.¹⁷⁸

Inter-NGO cooperation

Cooperation between Kmara and other Georgian NGOs was limited in scope and strained in breadth. The reasons for that lie in the attitudes that both sides had toward each other.

On one side, Kmara activists claim that they failed to establish cooperation with other NGOs because the latter were interested in maintaining a status quo. Since many of them partnered with the Shevardnadze government on implementing Western-funded projects, they could no longer criticize it without ruining productive relations.¹⁷⁹ The deep-seated opinions that leading Kmara activists had about the Georgian traditional third sector also did not help foster cooperation. For instance, Giorgi Kandelaki asserts that most civic associations remained fundamentally elitist, never winning the support and participation of the masses.¹⁸⁰ Levan Ramishvili seconds his opinion and adds that they had little accountability to the public and spent most of their time writing reports or

¹⁷⁸ Sanidze.

¹⁷⁹ Nachkebia, Khvichia.

¹⁸⁰ Kandelaki, 10.

applying for grants.¹⁸¹ Born out of frustration, Kmara espoused a black-and-white strategy in selecting civic partners.

On the other side, Georgian nonprofit groups were perturbed and angered by Kmara's attitude, actions and even its mere existence. Many of them had a hard time taking it seriously. How could a group of youngsters take down a government or bring a revolution? NGOs, both domestic and international, were dismissive of its influence until after the Rose revolution when attempts of historical revisionism quickly proliferated.¹⁸² Even more sensible voices within civil society, who credited Kmara for its audacity, questioned its "take-no-prisoners" approach toward campaigning.¹⁸³ Two of them compared Kmara to the Chinese Red Guards during Mao's Cultural Revolution who were bent on destroying and humiliating everything and everyone from the past. Finally, many NGOs were secretly irked by the group's success for it exposed their own organizational weaknesses and handicaps.¹⁸⁴ It showed that many of them lacked stamina and, most importantly, guts to fight for their goals.

As a result, Kmara cooperated with a very few civic groups (e.g. ISFED and the Georgian Association of Young Lawyers) that consisted of demographically similar audiences. Their help, Kmara leaders acknowledge, was very important, especially at the beginning. By supplying their members, they enabled Kmara to boost the number of participants at its protests and fulfill the group's second goal – publicity. Its events seemed better organized and attended than they were in reality.¹⁸⁵ In turn, ISFED could count on a lot of Kmara members to serve as election observers.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Ramishvili.

¹⁸² Lenzi.

¹⁸³ Nachkebia, Sumbadze, Losaberidze, Khvichia.

¹⁸⁴ Chachkhunashvili.

¹⁸⁵ Kandelaki, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Ramishvili, Tutberidze, Tamar Zhvania, ISFED Executive Director, interview with the author, July 2007.

To wrap up the discussion, there was little formalized cooperation between Kmara and other Georgian NGOs because of mutual apprehensions. While Kmara believed other nonprofits have sold out civic activism in the process of cooperating with the government and securing Western grants, the latter felt annoyed and sometimes jealous by the group's self-righteousness and its non-conventional, aggressive methods of work. In the few instances where collaboration existed, it covered similar target audiences and was highly informal.

Kmara and political parties

Kmara's cooperation with political parties was extensive in scope, yet limited in the number of actual partners. The group worked most actively with the National Movement led by Mikheil Saakashvili. A host of factors facilitated this unusually close type of cooperation.

First, leaders of both entities had much in common. They were close in age (mid- to late-30s at the time), came into the political arena in the decade since independence, and grew eventually disenchanted with the Shevardnadze rule. Saakashvili was recruited by David Zhvania to enter Georgian politics as a promising young man with Western education. Ramishvili joined politics as a student in Georgia's liberation movement against the Soviet Union and later authored several laws. Thus, when several Kmara activists spoke about the unity of minds and almost familial relations about the two organizations,¹⁸⁷ their words were easy to believe, especially since after the Rose Revolution many Kmara members moved to work for the Saakashvili government.

¹⁸⁷ Ramishvili, Sanidze, Sumbadze.

Second, both organizations had the same message (i.e. the need for change), but realized that each would be better at delivering it for its own target audience. Kmara, as a group borne out of university self-governance, would fare well among younger and more radical audiences. In turn, the National Movement could attract older Georgians who would not listen to “green teenagers.” Their approach was successful in both cases, because they reached out to populations (whether students or provincial residents) who were shut out of the political life after the demise of Gamsakhurdia.¹⁸⁸

This brings us to the third, larger point – each saw the utility of cooperating with the other. The National Movement needed young idealists that Kmara was bound to recruit as voters and its loyal political supporters.¹⁸⁹ Kmara recognized that good relations with a key political actor gave it an opportunity to impact the course of political developments, by pushing for more radical solutions.¹⁹⁰

Finally, the top tier of the National Movement (i.e. Bokeria, Saakashvili and Zhvania) not only understood the role of Kmara (which many of their rank and file members did not grasp¹⁹¹), but also succeeded at establishing practical mechanisms for cooperation. Civic and political activists from both organizations held biweekly meetings where they coordinated strategies and compared notes.

The benefits of this cooperation were obvious. Each side could build upon the strengths of the other to achieve its own goals more effectively. In a rare exception for post-Soviet civil societies, where civic groups and political parties inhabit two parallel universes, Kmara and the National Movement were actively working on a goal greater than merely a victory in an election or the fulfillment of grant requirements. At the same

¹⁸⁸ Kandelaki, 9.

¹⁸⁹ Nachkebia, Khvichia.

¹⁹⁰ See the section on “Planning and Pre-election Activities.”

¹⁹¹ Lenzi.

time, this cooperation carried one significant problem. In working closely with the National Movement, Kmara had to give up any pretense of impartiality. This raises questions of whether and to what extent Kmara has crossed a thin and very blurred line that separates civic and political worlds.

Influence in the public

Though Kmara acquired worldwide popularity thanks to the international media coverage of the Rose Revolution, questions about its influence in the Georgian public have not been properly addressed. The evaluation of existing data and interviews with civic and political activists reveal bipolarity in public views about the group.

On one hand, the Kmara had a plenty of admirers. A survey in Tbilisi shortly after the revolution indicated that 59 percent of the capital's residents had a positive opinion about Kmara, 25.6 percent found Kmara useful and approved its conduct.¹⁹² Ordinary citizens felt natural respect toward Kmara activists because of their high level of education. As one observer noted, Georgians tend to scrutinize the education of those in positions of power. In this regard, many Kmara members definitely stood out having studied in the West.¹⁹³ In essence, this segment of the population treated Kmara supportively for it represented an opportunity to end stagnation that has come along with stability of the Shevardnadze regime.

On the other hand, there were many who liked Kmara's lofty goals, but despised its methods of implementing them. 33.4 percent of Tbilisi residents shared this opinion after the revolution. As mentioned before, much of the group's work was geared toward

¹⁹² Sumbadze and Tarkhan-Mouravi, 10.

¹⁹³ Khvichia.

attracting public and especially media attention. However, with that attention came the embarrassment of high-level officials, in particular President Shevarnadze. In a country where a man's honor is a perennial theme of national folklore, Kmara's crassness made people cringe.

Finally, there was a sizeable segment of people who held negative views of the organization. In Tbilisi, 15.3 percent thought badly of Kmara and its role in the revolution. In my interviews, two reasons figured prominently. The first was, of course, foreign funding, which was regularly used by Shevarnadze to sway the opinion of conservative Georgians against the group.¹⁹⁴ By implicating Kmara in receiving outside assistance, the government was able to tap into a rich well of existing xenophobic sentiments. Myths about Jewish-Masonic conspiracies to subjugate Georgia painted Kmara as an agent of foreign influence.¹⁹⁵ The group's affiliation with the Liberty Institute did not help allay the fears. The Institute earned a reputation for promoting zealous secularism.¹⁹⁶ The second factor was a deeply hidden fear that Kmara's actions would produce radicalization, which pushes the Georgian society into another civil war. Polling by domestic and international organizations reveals that one of the constant concerns of many Georgians was a risk of escalating instability.¹⁹⁷ Many remembered how Gamsakhurdia's radicalism and unwillingness to compromise plunged the country into years of infighting and massive impoverishment. To them, hotheads in Kmara did not realize that by playing with matches of public discontent, they could ignite the fire of a bloody rebellion. Kmara tried to change the perception of its radicalism and non-conformity by distributing leaflets about its purpose and becoming more structured in

¹⁹⁴ Lomsadze.

¹⁹⁵ In the interview with you David Losaberidze talked extensively how deep these conspiracies run among less-educated Georgians.

¹⁹⁶ Areshidze, 97.

¹⁹⁷ Gorby surveys.

delivering its message. In the end, many of its activists acknowledged that they had little chance of breaking through to the most conservative segments of the society.

Though the data from a public survey in Tbilisi provides a glimpse into popular attitudes, it cannot objectively tell the whole picture without examining samples in other parts of the country. However, based on my interviews and external sources, two speculations can be made. First, the recognition of Kmara was lower outside of the capital, because of the limited reach of Rustavi-2 beyond Tbilisi.¹⁹⁸ Second, negative attitudes toward Kmara could have been much higher in rural areas where conservative and religious attitudes are much more predominant than in the capital.

To summarize, Kmara was a well-known player on the domestic scene. However, public attitudes on its impact were split between those who thought it was useful, those who liked its goals, but not their execution, and the ones who despised Kmara as a externally propped up entity. To the group's credit, it recognized its key shortcomings and how they limit its appeal. But, given the polarization of the Georgian society, it is not clear what it could have done (short of giving up its radical message) to appease the ones displeased with its conduct and to convert its skeptics. Thus, the only option it had was to use its leverage to the maximum during revolutionary events and (as numerous activists told me) hope that people would join it in the process.

¹⁹⁸ Kikalishvili.

KMARA AND THE ROSE REVOLUTION

Planning and pre-election activities

Kmara's planning for the 2003 parliamentary elections concentrated on two concurrent goals -- to increase public participation in elections and civic life and to sap the confidence of state authorities in their omnipotence.

Through their numerous anti-government protests, Kmara activists sought to attract the attention of ordinary Georgians to the importance of elections as an opportunity to change the country's trajectory of development. Some of Kmara actions were filled with symbolism. For instance, its first demonstration took place on April 14, 2003 and commemorated the anniversary of the 1978 student protests against the Soviet attempts to introduce Russian as the state language in Georgia.¹⁹⁹ Later in summer, the group actively embroiled itself in major political controversies. It demonstrated against Shevardnadze's attempts to stack the Central Election Commissions with his loyalists and spoke up against the government's campaign to bully international grant-giving organizations.²⁰⁰

Recognizing that public protests in Tbilisi were not sufficient, many activists embarked on a grass-root campaign to spread the message among Georgian university students and young people in the capital and throughout the country.²⁰¹ During these personal meetings, Kmara members explained not only the importance of voting to increase the turnout, but also the necessity to be ready to stand up against fraud. The group was able to gain supporters from different parts of the country who later joined the protests in Tbilisi. As a result of these efforts, Kmara crushed the prevalent government

¹⁹⁹ Kandelaki, 6; Ramishvili.

²⁰⁰ Lomsadze, Tutberidze.

²⁰¹ Karumidze and Wertsch, 65.

view of NGOs as the sector small in number, disconnected from the public and vulnerable to cooptation, intimidation and defamation.²⁰² It also created a powerful official backlash against its activities. For instance, on October 10 police forces dispersed an attempted Kmara protest near the State Chancellery in Tbilisi, and thirteen days later its office was ransacked at night.²⁰³

While in many interviews with the press Kmara activists repeatedly spoke about following the Otpor model, little post-election planning occurred in reality. In fact, just like with the theatrical nature of protests, references to Otpor were part of the bluffing strategy that the group used to intimidate the government. Assessing the situation now, many of them acknowledge that they did not expect anything revolutionary. For instance, both Zurabishvili and Ramishvili assert that it was the tenacity of Shevarnadze (i.e. his unwillingness to compromise) that doomed the deal worked out between him and the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi.²⁰⁴ Tea Tutberidze says until the very last moment (possibly Saakashvili's trip to Mingrelia, the Western part of Georgia) she was not certain that enough people would join the protests.

At the same time, it would be wrong to suggest that Kmara activists watched the unfolding events from the sideline. Several sources confirm that in the days after the election, Kmara was urging a radical line.²⁰⁵ Its activists approached Mikheil Saakashvili with the proposal to organize a "march of the million angry voters" and bring people from the countryside, which he rejected. This fact confirms two points. One, mentioned before, is that negotiations over a possible compromise with the Shevarnadze

²⁰² Nodia, 101.

²⁰³ Human Rights Information and Documentation Center, "Human Rights in Georgia," Issue 10 (56), October 2003.

²⁰⁴ Karumidze and Wertsch; Ramishvili.

²⁰⁵ Areshidze, Ramishvili, Kikalishvili.

government were really underway.²⁰⁶ The other is that in those revolutionary days Kmara did a lot of things on the spur of the moment rather than as a consequence of deliberate planning.

To conclude, Kmara's involvement in the election campaign added a distinct and very loud civic voice to the political debate. The group established a necessary grass-root infrastructure in Tbilisi and outside of the capital to be called upon for post-election activities. In regard to the latter, it seems that Kmara did not conduct extensive planning for contingencies. Instead the leading role in this area was given to the opposition, mainly Mikheil Saakashvili and his National Movement.²⁰⁷ While negotiations among various parties were underway, Kmara and its activists were holding protests merely to remind the government of what was in store.

Cooperation with NGOs and media

Due to Kmara's radical profile, its cooperation with NGOs was initially limited. As its spokesperson tersely remarked, "we worked with people when our interests coincided and we moved on in cases when they did not."²⁰⁸ Thus, Kmara's cooperation with NGOs and other actors was most effective when it was spontaneous, need-based and mutually benefiting.

In the months before the revolution, Kmara relied heavily on the support from the Liberty Institute that provided technical and logistical resources, assisted with regional outreach, training and coordination with oppositional parties. The second closest group was the Georgian Association of Young Lawyers (GYLA) that gave pro bono legal

²⁰⁶ Areshidze.

²⁰⁷ Wheatley, 185-191.

²⁰⁸ Tutberidze.

advice when Kmara activists were detained by authorities.²⁰⁹ Realizing that they need help in implementing one of its key goals of monitoring election, Kmara turned to the country's oldest election watchdog ISFED. Both ISFED and Kmara members reported a positive record of cooperation in deploying civic observers (many of whom came from Kmara) to monitor elections throughout the country.²¹⁰

It remains unclear whether and to what extent Kmara was active in NGO coalitions. One thing is obvious that international donors favored building such coalitions as a way to amplify the power and voice of civic groups. Kmara activists that I interviewed said they avoided formalized agreements and preferred to cooperate with other civic groups on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, some of the leaders noted (not without disdain) that many nonprofit groups leaped to help Kmara only when it was becoming increasingly clear that Shevarnadze's days in power are numbered.²¹¹ Contrary to these claims, Areshidze asserts that in September 2002 the Open Society Georgia Foundation sought to put together a coalition of six NGOs, including Kmara's founder, the Liberty Institute.²¹² The effort did not last long. It is speculated that because the Liberty Institute, GYLA and CIPDD held more radical positions, other members were either excluded from further meetings or left on their own.²¹³ Whatever the case might be, the project did not go anywhere as informal patterns of cooperation prevailed over more formalized initiatives.

At the same time, collaboration was much more extensive and genuine with TV channel Rustavi-2. Founded by many civic leaders and employing many journalists with

²⁰⁹ Kandelaki, 6.

²¹⁰ Sanidze, Zhvania.

²¹¹ Ramishvili.

²¹² The other five were the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), the Center for Social Research, the Partnership for Social Initiatives, CIPDD and the Former Prisoners for Human Rights.

²¹³ Areshidze, 97-99.

Western training in news reporting, the media outlet was an open critic of Shevarnadze. While there was no formal deal, an implicit understanding existed between Kmara and Rustavi-2 that whenever the former would speak up, the latter would come to cover a demonstration.²¹⁴ In essence, it was Kmara's protests, their coverage by Rustavi-2 and angry government reactions (covered again by the media) that gave the group the biggest exposure and boosted its cause.²¹⁵

Mobilization

Like many Kmara activities, its mobilization during the events of the Rose Revolution occurred spontaneously and was assisted by other factors and events happening at the time.

While the membership pool of the group was significant (2,000-3,000 people) compared to other NGOs, it was not nearly enough to create the kind of public protests that would be treated seriously by the government. Recognizing this, the leadership of Kmara and the Liberty Institute sought to educate a larger public about the message of peaceful resistance. Several days before the elections, they provided a popular oppositional channel (and a not so secret admirer of Kmara) Rustavi-2 a documentary, produced by a small independent studio in Washington DC, with an activist social stand.²¹⁶ "Bringing Down A Dictator" was a story of how ordinary Serbs removed from power one of the bloodiest leaders in Europe, Slobodan Milosevic. The film was replete with references that immediately resonated among ordinary Georgians. Kmara looked and acted just like Otpor. The Georgian political opposition reminded of its Serbian

²¹⁴ Kikalishvili.

²¹⁵ Tutberidze, Nachkebia.

²¹⁶ For more information about the authors, see <http://www.yorkzim.com/otherFilms/ArabAndTheIsraeli.html>.

counterparts – disunited and always bickering within, it seemed only recently to have come together. At one point, the documentary shows Otpor activists cutting a cake where each piece represented a part of Serbia split away as a result of Milosevic’s militant policies. Georgians immediately thought of the territorial losses that the country suffered since becoming independent – South Ossetia, Abkhazia and half-independent Adjara. The main message was clear – if the vote is stolen, you must come to the capital (Tbilisi) and press for the real results to be recognized. In the end, showing the documentary became an important moment for rallying Kmara activists and educating ordinary citizens about the peaceful nature of possible demonstrations.

As the result of exit polls and ISFED parallel vote tabulations were broadcast on Rustavi-2, Kmara recognized that the showdown was inevitable. It began to mobilize the core of activists by email and cell phone.²¹⁷ Soon, the “snowball effect” kicked in, as Kmara members started text-messaging their friends, relatives, friends of friends and relatives of relatives to join the protest near the State Chancellery and then at the Liberty Square.

Kmara’s mobilization effort was inadvertently assisted by a number of other factors and events. The first was a continuous support from Rustavi-2 that broadcast unfolding protests and informed the public where future events would take place. Furthermore, the TV channel showed mostly close-ups of the demonstrations to create a perception of large public events and skew a cost-benefit analysis of ordinary people (i.e. the larger the crowds – the less likely the use of force).²¹⁸ The other was the formation of the ArtCom - a public group consisting of famous Georgian artists, singers and actors.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Jones, 8.

²¹⁸ Wheatley, 187.

²¹⁹ Jones.

The involvement of intelligencia in a country where the public reveres its educated class persuaded many ordinary citizens to step into the fray of revolutionary events. The final factor was the force of a revolutionary cascade.²²⁰ As teachers went on strike and cars drove honking their horns in protests, more and more people joined Kmara students to defend their vote.

To conclude, Kmara's mobilization effort was successful as a result of its lateral strategies and inadvertent support from other forces. Taking advantage of modern communication technologies, it was able to mobilize its enlisted members. Assisted by the media attention, it tapped into extended social networks of its members. Most importantly, Kmara was able to build on its own success, its popularity and its connections within the student and youth community in Tbilisi and around the country. Had that not been the case, the first wave of demonstrations would have taken much longer to materialize.

Assessment of the performance

Kmara's performance in the revolution should be divided into two parts – pre-election activities and participation in the revolutionary events. On the first count, the group was successful, because it produced “quality activism.”²²¹ What this means in practice is Kmara was able to attract people to its cause by making them feel empowered. This was not NGO activism as usual. Students and young Georgians joined Kmara not because of material rewards (e.g. an all expenses-paid seminar in Tbilisi or a small monthly stipend), but because of the genuine concern about their country's future.

²²⁰ Timur Kuran, “Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (October 1991): 7-48.

²²¹ Kandelaki, 4-6.

Since their involvement was much more spontaneous and genuine, it was also more appealing to others. As a result, the organization ended up playing the role that civic groups are supposed to play in pre-election campaigns – a noisy observer and a restless watchdog of the government.

As far as the revolutionary events are concerned, Kmara's contribution was two-fold. First, it incited and sustained the first wave of mobilization. In the morning following the election, Kmara activists plastered Tbilisi streets with the results of parallel vote tabulation that differed dramatically from the official record.²²² The group's members made up the crowd for small-scale, but continuous demonstrations that lasted from November 8 till November 14. By mobilizing up to 10,000 students, Kmara created a visible presence that was hard for the government to ignore. Second, through close but informal cooperation with Rustavi-2, the group helped fuel larger mobilization of the Georgian population.²²³ Having Kmara protesters in place, Rustavi-2 used media techniques (e.g. camera angles) to make demonstrations seem larger and better attended than they were.²²⁴ In this effort, both assisted Saakashvili's National Movement that sought to bring people out to the streets after failed negotiations with Shevardnadze.

In the end, the questions of whether Kmara was consequential and decisive enough loom large. The answer is yes to the first and no to the second. Kmara's participation defined the public image of the Rose Revolution as a youth-driven event and radicalized the discourse about possible solutions by framing election fraud into the

²²² Wheatley, 183.

²²³ Karumidze and Wertsch.

²²⁴ Mitchell, 345; Cory Welt, "Regime Vulnerability and Popular Mobilization in Georgia's Rose Revolution," *Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law Paper No. 67* (September 2006): 34. For more on the role of Georgia's media in the Rose Revolution, see David Anable, "Role of Georgia's Media – and Western Aid – in the Rose Revolution," *Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy* (December 2005) and International Research and Exchange Board (IREX), "Media Sustainability Index – Georgia," www.irex.org.

larger narrative of overall corruption that permeated the Shevarnadze regime.²²⁵ If initial demonstrations had not been well attended, the opposition would have been pushed into an unfavorable compromise. Given the American concern about regional stability in the Caucasus,²²⁶ both sides might have been pressured to sign a pact that would have left the Shevarnadze regime mostly in tact. However, the presence of street protesters (many of whom came from Kmara) gave Saakashvili and other oppositional leaders enough backing to insist on the cancellation of election results as a nonnegotiable demand. Had the discourse been shaped differently, the outcome might have failed to achieve greater mobilization as it happened in 1999 and 2002.²²⁷

This brings us to the second part of the question. Contrary to the impression that many media reports gave at the time, Kmara was not the decisive force for the revolution's success. Many, including Saakashvili himself and U.S. Ambassador Miller, claim that Rustavi-2 proved much more important as the megaphone of the revolution.²²⁸ The role of opposition was certainly important in facilitating the political process. In fact, most observers openly acknowledge that contrary to Otpor in Serbia, Kmara took a backseat in the revolutionary cascade.²²⁹

As a summary of the discussion on success, it is important to evaluate Kmara's performance against the suggested indicators of function and contribution. In terms of the former, Kmara fulfilled its key stated function by energizing a specific part of the Georgian electorate about the elections. Its contribution to the revolution was two-fold. It

²²⁵ Bunce and Wolchuk, 63.

²²⁶ Kandelaki, 10. James Baker (in Karumidze and Wertsch, 79-83) praised Shevarnadze for his record in Georgia and acknowledged that given the country's history (e.g. the birthplace of Joseph Stalin and Lavrenti Beria, the chief executioner of Stalin repressions) it was not an easy place to govern. Therefore, everyone should be grateful for what President Shevarnadze managed to accomplish. Lincoln Mitchell, NDI Chief of Party in Georgia, emphasized that while U.S. assistance was critical in Georgia, Western support for Shevarnadze was also palpable. He further claims that had Rose revolutionaries lost, they would have quickly blamed Western governments (in particular the United States) for indifference (See Mitchell, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," 346).

²²⁷ Nodia, 65.

²²⁸ Karumidze and Wertsch, 25-26, 78.

²²⁹ Wheatley, Bunce and Wolchuk

helped to initiate the first wave of protests that persuaded many others to join the revolutionary cause, and it sustained the demonstrations when the public enthusiasm seemed to be waning or when political negotiations between the government and opposition were taking place. Thus its input to the initial stage of the revolution and the management of protests is without any doubt. In essence, as many observers note, Kmara's great success in fulfilling its mission of voter mobilization and regime change became the cause for its demise. Once those goals were accomplished through the revolution, there was no place for Kmara in its old shape and form in the Georgian civic life.

PROFILE: ISFED

Launch

In 1995, after several years since the return of Shevardnadze into the war-torn country, Georgia was acquiring a modicum of stability. The president managed to consolidate power and neutralize his powerful opponents, like Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani. As a sign of stabilization, Georgia ratified its new constitution on 24 August 1995. Several days later, the Georgian parliament adopted the electoral code and scheduled the first post-war parliamentary and presidential elections for 5 November 1995.²³⁰ Like Ukraine in 1994, Georgia desperately needed an independent civic group that would monitor elections. Thus, the International Society for Fair Elections (ISFE) was established at the initiative of several existing local NGOs that lobbied foreign donors to provide funding for election-related projects.²³¹ Set up specifically in advance

²³⁰ Wheatley, 93-95.

²³¹ Zhvania; Mark Mullen, former NDI Resident Director in Georgia, interview with the author, July 2008.

of the 1995 elections, ISFE deployed 1,300 observers during its christening experience.²³² However, the organization got its first taste of Georgian rough politics only a year later when in September 1996 Ruslan Abashidze, the authoritarian ruler of Ajara, denied ISFE the right to monitor election of the Ajara Supreme Council.

Maturation

ISFE recognized the limitations of its primary focus on elections early in its existence. In 1996 it sought to expand the field for its activities by adding an advocacy component – Citizens’ Public Dialogue Meeting and Citizens’ Advisory Committees that were designed to solicit feedback from regular people and incorporate it in decision-making processes of local officials. A year later on 22 November 1997 the group decided to add democracy to its title, thereby making overall democracy promotion a definitive component of its work.

Though the organization tried to expand its operation beyond election monitoring, on a closer look a clear difference emerges between what it aspired to do and what it did or could do in local circumstances. In 1996-1999, ISFED activists identified four priorities – governmental transparency, civic participation and self-governance, education and empowerment, and advocacy. In the first area, the group launched a series of monitoring initiatives aimed at increasing accountability for budgetary processes of Sakrebulo (local councils), enhancing transparency of governments and police authorities at different levels and promoting the observance of “sunshine” laws. As for civic participation, the group accounted for 18 Citizens’ Advisory Committees (CACs) in different regions of the country. It also established

²³² Information taken from the old website of ISFED, <http://www.isfed.ge/eng>

neighborhood associations and student governments in three Georgian cities (Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Gori). ISFED's efforts seemed to be most prolific in the areas of education and advocacy where it developed and distributed numerous educational materials for voters and election observers, created the Civic Education library and produced its own publication "Civil Society." The organization's leadership engaged in extensive lobbying efforts to improve the status of Sakrebulo members, discuss legislative drafts and amend the national election legislation.

While the mere enumeration of activities may paint the picture of an extremely busy and vibrant organization, in reality ISFED struggled to adjust to its self-proclaimed mission. Several outside observers noted that before 2003 the group never managed to make a leap from being a purely election watchdog (which got activated from one election cycle to the next) to acting as a more permanent civic entity. Of course, it would be natural and thus easy to assign some blame on ISFED activists who should have tried harder to overcome the difficulties of organization building. However, their fault is only partial. Indeed, the attempts to establish a more stable shop might have been doomed from the start given Georgia's economic realities and a relatively limited pool of international funding. Mark Mullen, NDI's Country Director in Georgia, indicated that in-between elections ISFED had nothing more than a group of staff members in the capital and a few coordinators of rayons (counties) who had small, but regular salaries. So whereas it was possible to attract people for election monitoring, the group struggled to retain its participants on a volunteer basis after elections.²³³ The economic situation outside of Tbilisi was such that many people could not even fathom donating their time for free.

²³³ Mullen.

Mission and its evolution

The group's gradual maturation is clearly depicted in its mission. The review of ISFED mission-related documents shows that, unlike many NGOs in the former Soviet Union where mission writing was seen as a formality to satisfy foreign donors, the organization was both thoughtful and idealistic about its tasks. The normative framework, which guides organizational activities, is a predictably pithy statement of goals as well as an elaboration of espoused values and ideals, including a reference to international documents.

Between 1995-1996 the organization did not have an extensive view of its role. In this nascent stage it was mostly concerned about voter education, election monitoring and some basic elements of advocacy. Having gone through a set of formative experiences (both the 1995 parliamentary elections and the 1996 elections in Ajara), ISFED sought to define its place in Georgian civil society and its own view on the country's developmental trajectory.

It borrowed the central motto from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country... The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government: this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections." Though some of its espoused values consisted of usual civic buzzwords (e.g. human rights, open civil society), others showed a genuine concern for the country (e.g. independent, democratic Georgia and its constitution).

In the end, ISFED's mission statement settled for generalities that were slightly modified to show the group's inclination to work in the election field. More specifically it indicated that ISFED would promote democratic practices through citizens'

participation, civil society development, election and general government monitoring, advice, advocacy and civic education.

To summarize our discussion, two points should be noted. First, it is clear that the leadership of the organization was aware of the international normative framework²³⁴ that guided activities of election watchdogs in other countries. Second, ISFED also shared (at the very least rhetorically) the core assumptions and principles of this framework, which explains why it sought to embrace and elaborate upon them in detail.

Funding and sustainability

From the founding and till the Rose Revolution, ISFED was completely dependent on NDI in terms of funding and organizational support. While the group made regular attempts to secure grants from other sources, the level of support did not amount to any significant diversification of its financial base.

Numerous sources interviewed for the dissertation provide different reasons for this situation. ISFED activists indicate that the group consciously chose not to approach local businesses, perceiving them as biased and threatening to the NGO's image of impartiality.²³⁵ Whenever ISFED applied for donor funding, it engaged NDI to lobby on its behalf or provide assistance with developing a grant proposal together. Thus, the group was able to get money from such top-notch grant-providers as the British Council, Soros Foundation in Georgia (OSGF) and USAID. Unlike many other nonprofit groups, especially outside of Tbilisi, ISFED acknowledges that it never had to go through real

²³⁴ The framework emphasizes human rights, democracy and equality.

²³⁵ Ramishvili, Sanidze.

“dry spells” when funding was not available for basic operational expenditures. The main problem was how to put funds to good use rather than how to get them.²³⁶

The issue of financial sustainability came up frequently in discussions with NDI representatives who, as the most significant funder of ISFED, felt a special responsibility for its survival. However, even in this case the positions of two sides diverged rather sharply. Mark Mullen, who spent a long time in Georgia, believes that NDI was not genuinely interested in letting ISFED expand its roster of funders. The Democratic Institute recognized that if ISFED became truly independent, it would undermine the extent of NDI’s control over the NGO, especially its ability to influence post-election statements.²³⁷ One of the former Executive Directors of ISFED, Tamar Zhvania, shared at least part of that assessment when she expressed displeasure at the constant NDI’s meddling in daily operations of the group.²³⁸ Another NDI representative, who worked in Georgia, disagreed. Lincoln Mitchell remarks that accusations of sinister motives on part of the Institute are usually a face-saving technique. In reality, there were always talks in both organizations to give more space for ISFED to operate on its own or to remove the NDI safety net. However, when it came to action, both entities recoiled because they were not sure if ISFED would be able to make it on its own. Thus some ISFED activists might have created the perception that “they are not being let go” as a justification for organizational weakness.²³⁹

As usual, the truth is somewhere in the middle and it is much more nuanced.

Depending on specific circumstances, ISFED preferred to act independently during some

²³⁶ Nogiashvili, ISFED activist, in written interview with the author, June 2008.

²³⁷ Mullen. To support his assertion, Mullen cited the heavy-handed approach that NDI took in pushing ISFED to produce more lenient assessment reports for the latest elections in 2006 and 2008.

²³⁸ Zhvania.

²³⁹ Lincoln Mitchell, former NDI Program Officer in Georgia, in phone interview with the author, July 2008.

times and run for help from NDI during others. Though the group was able to secure occasional grants from other funding agencies, it was nowhere near achieving the diversification of sources that would enable it to distance itself from NDI on a more permanent basis. The interviews with activists and donors made it clear that the task of getting money and assuring financial sustainability was doubly complicated in the Georgian context. It seems that both activists and donors gave up on the attempts to secure money from the government or the business sector (not to mention the destitute population). In this case, the only hope for ISFED to have a more stable financial future was (and is) to have several donors with substantial and long-term contributions to its budget. By the time of the Rose Revolution, ISFED did not achieve that goal.

Donor influence

Financial dependency of ISFED on external assistance poses a natural question about the extent of influence that foreign organizations, in particular NDI, exerted on the group. The accumulated evidence shows a complex picture of donor-grantee relations where interdependence between the two parties was not as one-sided (i.e. the donor dominating the grantee) as it might have seemed from afar.

On one side, NDI tended to be bossy. According to the ISFED former director, until 2003 there was a tacit agreement that the group would not fundraise from other sources, solely relying on NDI. The ISFED leader was required to make weekly reports at the NDI office in Tbilisi.²⁴⁰ For the first two years, NDI reviewed and approved ISFED's post-election statements. However, neither ISFED nor NDI was internally united in its approach to the other side. As it happens in many organizations, those

²⁴⁰ Zhvania

divisions were greatly influenced by interactions among specific individuals and their ability to get personally along with each other. For instance, the relationship was definitely frosty between NDI and Ms. Zhvania, who sought to discontinue the practice of weekly reporting. On the other hand, Kakhaber Sopromadze, ISFED's current deputy director and long-term activist, spoke more gratefully about the Democratic Institute, calling it an extremely strong ally of ISFED that supported it through most difficult times.²⁴¹ At NDI, differences in how to treat the Georgian election watchdog emerged between the Institute's office in Tbilisi and its headquarters in DC. For instance, Mark Mullen did not hide his opinion that NDI-DC was a meddling, "bad cop" with ISFED. He sought to discontinue the practice of approving the NGO's post-election reports and fought hard, but unsuccessfully to publish the ISFED parallel vote tabulation report in 1999, which presented the leading pro-governmental party CUG (Citizens' Union of Georgia) in a bad light and was consequently embargoed by NDI for public release.²⁴²

On the other side, ISFED became the premier election civic group thanks to NDI. Having the backing of the Institute allowed the civic group to win a lot of political battles and get heard at the highest levels of government. It is also clear that the Institute had to be protective of ISFED for two other closely related reasons. First, the group often tended to exaggerate its capacity to act independently or to perform program-related tasks.²⁴³ For instance, Lincoln Mitchell, who worked at NDI-Tbilisi, believed ISFED would not have been adequately prepared to conduct a critical parallel vote tabulation in the 2003 parliamentary elections if it had not received the external training set up by

²⁴¹ Kakhaber Sopromadze, ISFED activist, in written interview with the author, July 2008.

²⁴² Mullen.

²⁴³ The assessment was repeated several times by the current and former NDI staff members in personal interviews.

NDI.²⁴⁴ Second, because of the Institute's long-term commitment to the group, NDI felt that its own image and stature were tied to ISFED. The Democratic Institute was under intense pressure from the regional office of USAID to spread donor funding for elections among several groups and set up NGOs that would perform tasks similar to ISFED.²⁴⁵ The precarious situation was not helped by the fact that left to its own devices, the leadership of ISFED showed a propensity for self-destruction. In the years preceding the Rose Revolution, Zurab Tchiaberishvili (the then Executive Director of the group) registered another nonprofit, called the Fair Elections, and transferred all the property and technical equipment possessed by ISFED to his own organization. The case eloquently demonstrated to NDI that the Georgian NGO was not yet ready to enjoy full independence.

To summarize the discussion, NDI exercised a great deal of influence over ISFED's programming and development. Both organizations developed an interesting pull-and-push dynamic. ISFED liked to play up its experience and readiness to act on its own, especially since its leadership recognized that NDI would always come to rescue. NDI was torn between two extremes as well. On one hand, it wanted to have a genuinely Georgian election group that was not seen as an American puppet. On the other, it gradually invested its own reputation into the wellbeing of ISFED and was not willing to have it compromised by the group's rash statements or actions. In the end, the extent of donor influence continued to depend on personalities in both offices and specific events. If people found a common language and managed to establish trust, NDI's meddling did not seem so intrusive. By 2000, NDI was willing to give ISFED for autonomy for events

²⁴⁴ Mitchell.

²⁴⁵ Mullen; Katie Fox, NDI Eurasia Program Officer, in interview with the author, July 2008.

of a lower magnitude. Most importantly, this relationship demonstrates one critical point – the pattern of dependency between foreign donors and their grantees abroad is not as one-sided as often assumed. Indeed, as seen with NDI and ISFED, the longer the funder supports the organization, the more dependent it becomes on the grantee's continued survival and performance. As a result, the implicit recognition of this reality changes profoundly how democracy-promoting organizations interact with their foreign beneficiaries.

Membership

From the very beginning, ISFED pursued multiple strategies to recruit its members throughout the whole country. As a positive outcome of this approach, the organization was able to get a diverse pool of individuals who still met the selection criterion of being nonpartisan. However, the long-term tradeoff was that ISFED members, who were so different from each other, had a lower level of personal loyalty and organizational identity.²⁴⁶

In 1995, ISFED sought to establish a broad governance structure that widely dispersed responsibilities between the central and regional [rayon] offices. Under the scheme, membership recruitment was outsourced to regional branches, and the headquarters in Tbilisi never attempted to conduct a serious recruitment campaign.²⁴⁷ ISFED had two categories of members – regular staff and election volunteers. For regular members, the organization worked hard to get individuals who were professionals and had a stature in their communities.²⁴⁸ The ranks of volunteers included

²⁴⁶ Fox.

²⁴⁷ Mullen.

²⁴⁸ Sopromadze.

the usual suspects – retirees who were mad at the previous Communist system and had time on their hands and students who were passionate and fearless about the task. The biggest in ISFED's recruitment strategies was their dependence on particular branch coordinators. Because Georgia is a very small country, personal relations played a great role in persuading ordinary citizens to volunteer for ISFED. The major problem came up after elections. While the organization maintained an extensive database of members, most of them were not involved in non-election activities. In reality, each branch had a smaller cohort of activists who could be counted to mobilize a larger crowd.²⁴⁹ However, this mobilization technique became useless when a branch coordinator left his position, thereby effectively dissolving the smaller cohort that formed around him. As a result, many regional branches lost a lot of institutional memory and experiences with any leadership changes.

It becomes clear from the interviews with ISFED activists that in terms of recruitment they were concerned with two issues – impartiality of their members and organizational diversity. Many of them emphasized laborious mechanisms that the group utilized not only to check the initial background of permanent staffers and volunteers, but also to monitor their interactions with political parties. In this regard, the task was made much easier by the size of the country, which encompassed 75 election districts and 3,000 polling stations.²⁵⁰ As for diversity, both external observers and activists emphasized how the group tried to ensure some gender balance²⁵¹ among members (an arduous task in the country where female politicians were few and far in-between). The

²⁴⁹ Nogiashvili, Mullen.

²⁵⁰ Zhvania.

²⁵¹ Nogiashvili, Sopromadze.

headquarters in Tbilisi sought to bring people outside of the capital in a meaningful manner, by assigning them to the positions of program coordinators and board members.

The strategy had its own advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it made the organization look more credible, because voters saw real activists who could emphasize with their problems. By being visible members in their communities, those people proved to be extremely dedicated, brave, unspoiled by the excesses of Tbilisi and very hard-working. Many of them had to deal with real clashes of interest and harassment.²⁵² On the other hand, the recruitment strategy decreased the group's political clout, because (unlike such famous NGOs as the Liberty Institute), ISFED had a lot fewer well-known and politically connected activists who had made their name in Georgian politics.²⁵³

Though the organization did not charge membership fees, by 1999 it had six regional subdivisions and most developed branches in Batumi and Kutaisi.²⁵⁴ Overall, ISFED could boast a fairly successful set of recruitment strategies. As a result of those, it was able to attract different audiences to the cause of fair elections and ensure a continuous blood flow within the organization. The practices were not without their flaws. One of them was the group's inability to involve significant numbers of "middle-aged" Georgians (those in their late 30s-40s). The other was a comparatively lower attachment of activists to the organization, which was dictated by their relatively short tenure in the group. The situation comes back to the familiar points on how an NGO should try to embed itself while balancing two conflicting impulses – an openness to newcomers and the strive for professionalism.

²⁵² Mullen.

²⁵³ Mitchell.

²⁵⁴ Mullen, Zhvania.

Leaders and members

ISFED's open internal structure ensured a close interaction between leaders and members. Drawing parallels with certain types of government systems, ISFED was more of a parliamentary republic where the executive board (composed of a lot of regional members) had a greater say in the running of the organization. Like any state with an immature parliamentary system, ISFED rescued itself from creeping authoritarianism of some NGOs where a strong leader crowded out potential competitors and turned a group into his own fiefdom. However, the multiplicity of voices often resulted in organizational volatility where leaders, who could not get along with the board, were quickly pushed out.

ISFED's initial leader Nugzar Ivanidze was quietly relieved of his duties by the board at the end of the 1990s. Board members saw a need for change when Ivanidze was becoming more authoritarian and allegedly corrupt.²⁵⁵ In 2000-2001, the NGO went through a period of organizational uncertainty where two other executive directors had to leave after failing to establish their authority successfully. By the end of 2001, Zurab Tchiaberishvili assumed the reins and sought to re-make the organization.

Tchiaberishvili's plan included bringing a group of young English-speaking activists into the headquarters in Tbilisi, attracting high-profile political figures to the ISFED Executive Board and raising public awareness of the group. Needless to say, the changes of this magnitude created discontent among ordinary members. In 2002, a clash of cultures emerged between the central and regional offices. Regional activists were grumbling that Tchiaberishvili was more interested in the big picture rather than the minutia of office administration and supervision. There was also resentment of the fact

²⁵⁵ Mullen.

that Tchiaberishvili was a member of the Georgian elite NGO class in the previously egalitarian ISFED. Sensing the tensions and trying to upstage possible challenges to his leadership, he secretly established the “Fair Elections” foundation.²⁵⁶ In doing so, Tchiaberishvili took advantage of the convoluted legislation on NGOs, which did not require the presence of co-founders for nonprofit foundations.

In the end, it seems, the group was able to pull itself together and do a great job with its election programs before the Rose Revolution. It is also clear that Tchiaberishvili’s fast-paced and ambitious approach was necessary to take the organization up to a higher level of operations. At the same time, his tumultuous tenure exposed a significant weakness that existed in the interactions between regular activists and the group’s leadership. While the organization was democratic internally (a rare example in the former Soviet space), it did not have more formal mechanisms for auditing programmatic errors, gathering feedback and incorporating otherwise rigorous informal discussions into future decision-making.²⁵⁷

To conclude, the review of leader-member interactions in ISFED emphasize two important points. First, the more open are the mechanisms of governance for an NGO, the less likely it is to succumb to authoritarian tendencies of particular leaders. Second, openness is not a cure in itself. Unless accompanied by sufficient formal mechanisms of feedback gathering and analysis, it may lead to excessive organizational volatility and internal strife. By 2003, ISFED was learning both lessons the hard way.

²⁵⁶ Mullen, Mitchell.

²⁵⁷ Fox.

Normative transfers

ISFED provided a wide range of training activities to assure that its activists were competent in relevant election-related activities and aware of the organizational norms and values. At the early stages of its existence, ISFED conducted a general training for all members of the organization on election management and administration, a legal framework and media relations.²⁵⁸ For every election, the group set up a plethora of trainings that were calibrated for specific capacities of observers. For instance, there was a separate seminar for long-term monitors, since they began their efforts very early in the election campaign. A week before an Election Day, there was a training for those who were involved in parallel vote tabulation. At that point, participants did not know which polling station they would be observing – a precaution taken to avoid possible harassment or corruption of monitors.²⁵⁹ It was only the night before election when observers were assigned a specific polling station. The NGO sought to maintain the competency of its regional leaders and regular activists by assuring that those who join the organization in-between election cycles would get eventually trained through its seminars on citizen participation and other on-going projects.²⁶⁰

Domestic trainings for activists focused heavily on the requirement of impartiality that would sustain ISFED's reputation for being an independent force. Trainings that the group received abroad or from foreign consultants were tailored to specific skills that would enable better project implementation. For instance, in 2003 NDI invited an expert that worked with ISFED to design and implement a reliable system of parallel vote tabulation. The group's successful performance in this area

²⁵⁸ Sopromadze.

²⁵⁹ Zhvania.

²⁶⁰ Nogiashvili.

helped make a critical normative shift within the larger Georgian society. Since 2003 when ISFED publicly released the results of PVT, the procedure and its results have become the golden standard to measure the veracity of election results.²⁶¹

In general, ISFED members talked little about external normative transfers. However, it is clear from the interviews with NDI that those were significant especially at the beginning and in critical projects. Some at the Democratic Institute complained about the Institute's fixation on bringing Western assistance rather than letting local activists to take field trips to the countries of the former Soviet bloc where civil society groups were most successful.²⁶² Regardless of these deficiencies, ISFED proved good in two things. First, it was able to assure that its members were trained in methodology and cognizant of the group's key emphasis on impartiality. Second, the NGO was sufficiently open to effectively absorb international normative assistance, especially in the area of parallel vote tabulation.

Inter-NGO cooperation

ISFED's cooperation with fellow non-government organizations was short-term and specific in nature. The group made an effort to avoid getting entangled in NGO coalitions and alliances. On the surface, ISFED interacted with a wide variety of Georgian and foreign institutions that included such titans on the domestic scene as GYLA, the Liberty Institute, Open Society Foundation, UNDP and the British Council. However, as ISFED members acknowledge, these interactions were not deep, because each of the mentioned organizations had its segment of work. Therefore, most genuine

²⁶¹ Fox.

²⁶² Mullen.

cooperation began only in advance of a specific election campaign when tasks (and with them the available money) became clear for every actor. Until 2002 ISFED coordinated very little with other NGOs, partially because (unlike CVU) the group was much less advanced in its organizational development. The other reason was certainly the position of the National Democratic Institute. Fearing that ISFED may be dragged into dubious coalitions, NDI was weary of ISFED's cooperation with others. It insisted that if ISFED were to cooperate with others, they should divide election-related tasks rather than assign different parts of Georgia to different groups for monitoring. The latter, quite reasonably, would undermine efforts to produce a comprehensive and credible election report.

Since 2002 ISFED has tried to establish informal mechanisms of cooperation that would include mostly information sharing and in rare cases exchanges of human resources. For instance, the group came to rely heavily on members of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Associations (GYLA) to provide law students as observers.

Two other aspects significantly complicated efforts to work with other civic groups. One, Georgian civil society was highly polarized. Thus, engaging with new and unknown NGOs promised a minefield of guessing whether they were truly impartial. So ISFED preferred to avoid asking for assistance at all for the fear of damaging its reputation for neutrality. The other, the group had little to offer to other organizations in the period between elections, because its activities never took off the ground to the extent that would make it an attractive partner.

To summarize, within Georgia's civil society ISFED stood out for it was not eager to engage with other NGOs. Strengthened by continuous funding from NDI, ISFED sought help from a very few organizations, whose political leanings were known

and who could help it with very specific tasks (e.g. providing monitors and observing their compliance with the rules of impartiality).

ISFED and political parties

ISFED had extensive cooperation with Georgian political parties and governmental authorities. However, throughout all of these interactions, the organization had to exercise extreme caution, trying to genuinely engage various political actors without becoming embroiled in their partisan squabbles.

The testimony from ISFED regional activists reveals that direct cooperation with parties and state authorities was the purview of the NGO's central headquarters in Tbilisi. Thus, regional branches acted as a conduit to pass information from ordinary activists to decision-makers in the capital.²⁶³ The lack of official cooperation at the lower levels of the organization can be explained by several factors. One, of course, had to deal with the internal cohesion of ISFED. Unlike regional branches of the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, regional offices of ISFED were much weaker in their capacity. As mentioned before, changes of the top personnel often resulted in the loss of institutional memory and previously established connections. Because of the size of the country, centripetal tendencies were much stronger in Georgia than they were in Ukraine. Political parties were also too weak to work effectively beyond the capital and a handful of big cities. Therefore, everyone understood that problems could be addressed only in Tbilisi.

In the capital the organization was well known among the government and political parties for its seriousness and impartiality. ISFED rebuffed several attempts to

²⁶³ Nogiashvili.

buy its observers, thereby passing the political litmus test that enabled it to earn the trust of political leaders.²⁶⁴ In 2001, it cooperated with the government on the 2001 Election Code that was a comprehensive bill for all types of elections.²⁶⁵ Because of the group's stature as an expert in election-related matters, it worked productively with the Central Election Commission where it even had an accredited representative.²⁶⁶ Overall, the record of working with the state is mixed. In the areas where the government knew what it wanted or desired real action (like election legislation), ISFED was effective and visible. Where the state preferred an imitation of activity (like the Inter-Agency Task Force to which ISFED was invited), the outcome was dismal.

By 2002 the relationship between ISFED and political parties has taken more or less set shape – ISFED would equally engage with all actors, by providing them with information on election developments.²⁶⁷ In turn, political parties would share the data on the violations they observed in the field, betting on ISFED's impartiality to report them in the media.

ISFED seems to come closest to striking the golden middle in working with political parties and government authorities before the 2003 parliamentary campaign. On one hand, it lobbied state authorities for election reforms and sought information from political parties on legal violations. On the other hand, it managed to maintain its neutrality and implemented several mechanisms to assure that activists on the ground would not become “double agents” willing to overlook violations for the sake for their party. ISFED was unconsciously assisted in these tasks by external circumstances. For

²⁶⁴ Zhvania, Mullen.

²⁶⁵ Sopromadze; Usupashvili, 75; Wheatley, 146.

²⁶⁶ For instance, one of the earliest things ISFED did was to supply state officials with the recommendations how to prevent violations of citizens' registration rights through the Soviet system, known as “propiska.”

²⁶⁷ Sopromadze.

instance, Georgian oppositional parties were always more willing to talk to the group because they could dump facts about violations that would have been otherwise ignored by the authorities. The other important factor that many authors frequently mention is the inherent capacity weakness of the Georgian government. Unlike Ukraine, where state authorities had enough muscle to cajole and coerce, the Shevardnadze administration had limited resources and a seemingly greater willingness to show that it could work with civil society. All of these amplified the leverage of ISFED election statements and its stature in the national Central Election Commission.

Influence in the public

Despite a variety of strategies pursued by the group, ISFED remained unknown to the majority of Georgians who lived outside the capital or who were not deeply interested in politics. Since its establishment the group tried a number of ways to reach out to the public. It organized education meetings, trainings, seminars and conferences. It published and distributed brochures and leaflets through its Civic Education Library series. It produced its own newsletter, “Civil Society,” with the circulation of 5,000 copies.²⁶⁸ The efforts were a complete failure. Several activists acknowledge that the organization was only known to people who followed politics closely through the media.²⁶⁹

The organization can be blamed for not trying harder. It never did any targeted research to make sure that its publications got to the people. Nor did it step outside the

²⁶⁸ ISFED, “Our Background,” <http://www.isfed.ge/eng>.

²⁶⁹ Sopromadze, Nogiashvili.

usual toolbox of impersonal outreach strategies used by the rest of Georgian NGOs. ISFED recruitment strategies were de-centralized and relied on personal connections.

Fortunately, ISFED's public image was not affected by the perception of its foreign funding. One of the reasons for that was the length of existence. Because the group had been functioning since 1995, it was considered part of the civic landscape.²⁷⁰ While Kmara was treated as an annoying mosquito, which appeared out of nowhere, ISFED had a wide range of established partnerships and a very well known agenda. The values it advocated (i.e. organizational neutrality, emphasis on a free and fair election) had long been accepted. Whereas Kmara adopted agitating, "in-your-face" tactics to reach out to people, ISFED preferred more conventional methods of gaining publicity. Finally, the fact that ISFED received support from NDI rather than the Soros Foundation made it less susceptible to attacks. NDI represented an amorphous structure, somehow related to the U.S. government. It lacked a specific individual who could be turned into a target. Not to mention that so many Georgian political and civic actors (including the government) took the money from the American government.²⁷¹ Therefore, the blame was harder to assign and more difficult to sustain for it would have implicated many others. The fact that the Open Society Georgia Foundation was supported by one person (George Soros) made it easier to turn him into a puppeteer and portray the NGOs, funded by OSGF, as the blind followers of his will. Therefore, ISFED might have lost some support on the fringes of Georgian society, but its reputation remained in tact. Both external observers and ISFED activists admit that the Rose Revolution gave the biggest

²⁷⁰ Khvichia.

²⁷¹ Mitchell, Mullen.

boost to ISFED's popularity.²⁷² One week in November 2003 did what all the years of public outreach efforts failed to achieve – they made the organization a household name.

ISFED AND THE ROSE REVOLUTION

Planning

For the 2003 parliamentary elections, ISFED mounted a serious preparatory campaign that included elements of previous activities as well as new components to promote the group's first-time initiatives.

In terms of the former, the nonprofit updated and developed manuals and instructions for observers. It held numerous trainings for its own monitors.²⁷³ Though it did not have an extensive long-term observation program (like CVU), it still managed to monitor the pre-election period and keep the public informed about the course of the campaign. For instance, ISFED produced a blistering statement after the failure of the Baker formula to resolve the dispute between the government and the opposition on the composition of the Central Election Commission. In the statement, it “concluded that the government had little if any intention to use the expertise and enthusiasm of civil society”²⁷⁴ to assure a more honest and transparent election process. This was a key moment that pushed ISFED closer to the opposition. As Tamar Zhvania put it, the organization had to be guided by the principle of choosing the best of the two evils.²⁷⁵

In the course of the election campaign, the organization did not give up attempts to assist the government. Its activists prepared electronic voter lists, which were

²⁷² Fox, Nogiashvili, Sopromadze.

²⁷³ Sopromadze, Nogiashvili.

²⁷⁴ Usupashvili, 92.

²⁷⁵ Zhvania, Sopromadze.

supposed to diminish the likelihood of fraud.²⁷⁶ Unfortunately, this effort bore little fruit as the national Election Commission decided to use only handwritten lists.²⁷⁷

Finally, the leadership of ISFED, and especially its Director Zurab Tchiaberishvili, should be credited for doing an enormous amount of awareness campaigning and educating key political actors and the public about the role and intricacies of parallel vote tabulation. This was a truly monumental task, given the complexities of PVT and the difficulty of explaining its difference from an exit poll.²⁷⁸

Cooperation with NGOs and political parties

Preceding the election, ISFED worked closely with civil society and political parties. However, the approach to cooperation with each of these actors was fundamentally different. Among nonprofit groups, ISFED collaborated most closely with the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA). Though the relations with GYLA were both informal and very specific, they provided a perfect example of how civic groups can establish a mutually useful partnership without placing themselves in the shackles of formalized coalitions. ISFED needed to recruit as many observers as possible to cover all polling stations in the country. Ideally, those individuals had to be well educated, so they could be easily trained as well as be receptive to the values of impartial election monitoring. There was no better audience for ISFED to ask for than law students, many of whom harbor ambitions of a political career. On its end, GYLA needed to be more than a professional guild for youngsters from elite schools and

²⁷⁶ The assumption in this case is that because lists are electronically made, it would be almost impossible to make sudden "corrections" at the local level.

²⁷⁷ Nodia, "The Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in Georgia," *Election Assessment in the South Caucasus* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2004), 121.

²⁷⁸ Mitchell.

families. It wanted members to be involved in politics, and monitoring national elections provided a perfect opportunity to acquire political experience. Therefore, it was a natural match for both groups. The closeness of the two and their ability to divide tasks and be mutually helpful explains why each one was so successful in retaining its original profile after the revolution when many other NGOs faced a profound identity crisis.²⁷⁹

In working with political parties ISFED had to tread carefully. Since 2002 relations with the government began to deteriorate. It was clear that the Shevardnadze regime was not interested in a genuinely open election. In addition, ISFED could not but be swayed by widespread popular dislike of the Georgian leader.²⁸⁰ After its initiative of working with election authorities had miserably failed in April 2003, the organization became viewed as anti-government. In that sense, unlike many popular Georgian NGOs (such as the Liberty Institute), it held out the longest in avoiding that label. At the same time, the group did not turn into a cheerleader for the opposition.²⁸¹ Tamar Zhvania, then the ISFED representative at CEC, explained that the organization was always leery about newly minted fighters for people, since all of them (including Mikheil Saakashvili) came from the moderate wing of the Shevardnadze regime.²⁸² ISFED managed to use the equal leverage that it had previously established with all political actors to its advantage. The organization established a media center where various political and civic groups could come and report violations.²⁸³ This initiative further strengthened its image of being an impartial observer of the process and enhanced the trust among the public and political actors to ISFED reports.

²⁷⁹ Mitchell.

²⁸⁰ Mullen.

²⁸¹ Mitchell.

²⁸² Zhvania.

²⁸³ Khvichia.

Activities

On the voting day, ISFED deployed almost 3,000 of its own observers to polling stations throughout the country. It also assisted in assigning 600 foreign representatives to critical locations.²⁸⁴ As a result of this effort, the organization was able to collect numerous testimonies about the compliance with voting procedures. This feedback laid the ground for the ISFED election report and further legal challenges. More importantly, the presence of observers proved critical for the group's second project – parallel vote tabulation (PVT).

The NGO placed its PVT monitors in 20 percent of all the polling stations to assure that the margin of error for reported results would be no greater than two percent.²⁸⁵ The organization went to great lengths to get a national statistically valid sample that would enable it to make a reliable projection. Unlike CVU, ISFED did not accept all the results that it received within its sample. Based on the analysis of voter turnout and the quality of election-day processes (i.e. the magnitude of violations), it discarded certain polling stations, because manipulations there would distort the general picture. Given the debacle of the PVT operation in Ukraine,²⁸⁶ this proved to be the most consequential decision of all.

At the end of the Election Day, the group amassed a sufficient number of reports from its field observers to declare that “The falsification of election results is not just misconduct...ISFED believes that what happened during the election... was in fact a purposeful obstruction of the voters' will.”²⁸⁷ The categorical tone of the assessment was

²⁸⁴ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “OCHA-Georgia Information Bulletin,” October-November 2003; Kandelaki, 10.

²⁸⁵ Broers, Zhvania

²⁸⁶ To remind, in Ukraine CVU collected and counted PVT results from all polling stations, which meant that areas of significant fraud impacted the outcome. In the end, CVU's PVT report served to confirm rather than challenge the manipulated election.

²⁸⁷ ISFED, Preliminary Election Statement, 2 November 2003, www.isfed.ge/eng.

not mere rhetoric. The PVT results, which differed significantly from the official count, provided the necessary factual basis to challenge the government. They were a spark needed by the opposition to mobilize its supporters.

Mobilization and participation in the Rose Revolution

ISFED's participation in the Rose Revolution was limited, but visible and consequential. On one hand, the group did not declare an open mobilization of its members. On the other, it was assumed that many ISFED observers would take part in the demonstrations as private citizens. What seems to make ISFED's performance so different from the lackluster response by CVU is the vigor with which it pressed its opinion and pursued legally available options to ramify the situation.

Immediately after the release of the PVT results, Kmara and the Liberty Institute printed and distributed tens of thousands of leaflets that contrasted the ISFED PVT with the official results.²⁸⁸ Based on its own assessment that "the officially reported turnout has been inflated and protocols were forged," ISFED filed 400 appeals and urged the Central Election Commission to investigate them and invalidate the fraudulent results.²⁸⁹ It filed a petition to the Supreme Court on the matter, which annulled the party list component of the election results on 25 November 2003.²⁹⁰

In the end, three things made a difference in the group's performance during the Revolution. The first was its willingness to pursue active advocacy through multiple channels. Not only did ISFED let its results be distributed by other sources, but it also spoke up on its own. Unlike CVU, ISFED took a risk on the revolution and it paid off.

²⁸⁸ Kandelaki, 10; Karumidze and Wertsch.

²⁸⁹ ISFED, Preliminary Election Statement.

²⁹⁰ Broers, Kandelaki.

The second was a definite success of its PVT initiative. While the effort was criticized by having some errors, few could dispute that it presented the right picture. In this regard, both ISFED activists and NDI should be credited for providing the group with sufficient technical expertise to set up such a complex procedure and assure its smooth running throughout the country. The final aspect was the group's ability to find its own niche in quickly unfolding events. ISFED knew where its expertise was and did not hesitate to use it. Therefore, the prior criticism that all ISFED did was elections and nothing more helped rather than hurt the nonprofit. In other words, unlike CVU (which had too many eggs in too many different baskets), ISFED had its priorities straight.

Assessment of the performance

To measure ISFED's performance during the Rose Revolution, we turn to our two indicators – function and contribution. In regard to the first, the group fulfilled its stated function by monitoring the parliamentary elections as well as vigorously publicizing the result of its efforts. Parallel vote tabulation (PVT) was its most successful monitoring initiative. According to PVT, Saakashvili's National Movement had a lead of eight percent. Numerous observers indicated that thanks to the trust which ISFED enjoyed in the Georgian society PVT bolstered the results of numerous exit polls and became the final piece of hard evidence to certify what everyone already knew, but had no factual way of proving – the government tried to steal the vote.²⁹¹

ISFED also made a major contribution to the success of the Rose Revolution by helping resolve the legal impasse that caused the public unrest in the first place. It legally challenged the results submitted by more than 150 precinct election commissions

²⁹¹ Mullen, Mitchell, Nogiashvili, Sopromadze.

and filed numerous complaints against district electoral commissions.²⁹² The fact that many of these challenges were satisfied, not least at the level of the national Supreme Court, gave legitimacy to the demand to annul the election results. It proved that the will of voters was manipulated beyond recognition. Therefore, the situation required either a re-vote (something Shevarnadze refused to acquiesce to) or deposition of the regime.

In the end, ISFED came out a winner from the revolutionary events. The prominence of PVT made it the permanent golden standard for future elections in the country. It also raised the profile of the group, making it one of the most recognizable NGOs in the country.

²⁹² Broers, Kandelaki. Khvichia.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research for this dissertation started with a key puzzle that had to do with the much-praised (or vilified, depending on one's political stand during those events) role of civic organizations in the "color revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia.

After reading through numerous assessments of the performance delivered by Ukrainian and Georgian groups,¹ one is left with the impression that an important piece to understand their success is missing. Simply saying that civil societies were strong and effective during the color revolutions does not help much, as it does not answer what precisely contributed to their strength. Was it foreign funding during the first decade of independence, as autocrats in the regional neighborhood assert? Or was it a canny act on the part of the NGOs that rode the wave of fame and success on the back of popular political parties, as many politicians tend to believe? Getting to the core of the matter has been further complicated when many authors offer comprehensive and multiple explanations for all the factors that help peaceful revolutions to transpire. While contributing to our understanding of the phenomenon, the complexity became so overwhelming as to imply that for civil society to ever be effective in a peaceful democratization event one has to have a perfect, star-like alignment of variables that rarely happens in the sky, let alone in politics.

¹ Previously reviewed works include: Kuzio, "Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions"; McFaul, "Transitions from Post-communism"; Wheatley, *Georgia: From National Awakening to Rose Revolution*; Diuk, "The Triumph of Civil Society"; Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*; Welt, "Regime Vulnerability and Popular Mobilization in Georgia's Rose Revolution"; Wilson, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West."

This work is advancing a hypothesis, which seems obvious, but yet has never been explicitly put forward. Civic groups that have better ties with societies within which they operate will also be able to respond better to such critical events as a revolution. Having defined such ties in a more abstract manner as organizational embeddedness, the dissertation places its work within two bodies of literature on civil society and democratization and seeks to answer critical questions about the role of NGOs in the “color revolutions” as well as highlight relevance of the concept for key debates in each field.

The findings presented below will address four major debates on the role of civil society that were elaborated in Chapter I. First, by analyzing interactions of the four NGOs under consideration with political parties we will look at the practical dimension of the perennial debate on the differentiation between civic and political realms. The main conundrum here is how a civic group distinguishes itself from a political party while seeking to impact political life. Second, the analysis of political embeddedness will consider state influence on the origins and evolution of civil society, in particular how the public and legal space, allotted by the state, impacts the trajectory of civil society development. Third, the findings on interactions within nonprofit groups will shed more light on the discussion about the nature of exchanges within civil society. Specifically, they will answer two questions: a) what kind of exchanges our NGOs promote among their members; b) whether embeddedness enhances the benefits and mitigates the weaknesses generated by civic groups. Finally, my attempts to look at how NGOs members work with each other on a daily basis and what they take away from their civic activity speak to the larger issue of a relationship between the individual and civil society.

After my analysis of embeddedness summarizes the groups' performance, it will place civil society within the international context of democratization. In this regard, it will concentrate on two critical debates. The first deals with the methods of providing better international support for civil society development. The dilemma, which reappears on the agenda of all foreign donors, is how to strengthen and support local civil societies and their most capable groups without making them chronically dependent on aid and detached from domestic publics. The other debate attempts to find a niche for civil society in the overall scheme of democratization and make it one of many (e.g. impartial judiciary, independent media, real separation of powers) effective components that conspire to the consolidation of democracy.

To fulfill my goals, the chapter will start by assessing the evidence accumulated for each group in the case studies. For that purpose, I will use the scale of embeddedness, which was elaborated in Chapter II. Based on the obtained results, the study will then consider the debates outlined above. The analysis will conclude by suggesting several lessons that can be taken from my dissertation by political scientists, NGO activists, government officials and Western democracy-promoters.

ASSESSING ORGANIZATIONAL EMBEDDEDNESS

The assessment will be conducted separately for each organization. It will follow the categories established in the methodology for my study. For every group, it will evaluate social, political embeddedness, external influence as well as indicators within each sub-category.²

² See Appendix IV.

Pora

The movement, which translates from Ukrainian as a brave call for action – “It is time,” has received a total of 77 points on a one hundred-point scale. The result puts it at the higher end of moderate embeddedness. Compared to the three other groups, Pora took the first place, because it proved to be most powerful in terms of social embeddedness as well as the capacity to handle external influence. At first blush, this outcome is surprising, given a relatively limited period of Pora’s existence. But a deeper analysis portrays a movement that attracted a cohort of highly experienced civic leaders who put to use the lessons of civic activism learned throughout the first decade of Ukraine’s independence.

Social embeddedness

In social embeddedness Pora scored 42 out of 53 points possible by the scale. Its strongest point was the ability to excite ordinary citizens and attract them to its cause. Its weakness was a lack of foresight about finances.

The movement’s constituency reminded of a Brownian motion of molecules. Recruitment was open to different audiences and strove for diversity. Horizontal structures brought a welcome exchange of ideas and participation that involved every member. However, the model was not without its flaws, as it did not provide any channels for long-term feedback and failed to develop plans for a timely mobilization of regional members. In essence, the internal structure was only good for the pre-revolutionary period when mass sentiments of discontent were brewing and needed a release. It was too loose and informal to be sustained over a long period of time.

Given its lack of formal organization, Pora performed extremely well in assuring that internal normative transfers were communicated to all members and executed with precision. Having no officially designated leaders in field offices and in the central headquarters, the organization overcame the major risk of its operations becoming a game of “broken phone.” The group was successful in inculcating and ensuring everyone’s unwavering allegiance to the ideas of nonviolent protest. That and the shock-and-surprise effect from its spontaneous activities secured Pora’s place as the leading civic force in the Orange revolution.

Unfortunately, on the matters of societal influence, the movement proved to be both popular and divisive. Its fiery rhetoric attracted a large segment that was disenfranchised by and angry at the Kuchma regime. Its daring actions and the government’s overreaction turned the group into a household name. However, with the popularity came resentment and fear. Pora’s early embrace of nationalism turned off potential members in eastern Ukraine to the extent that it did not have any declared supporters in Donetsk region. Its cooperation with NGOs was limited to sporadic joint efforts, dictated by pragmatic interests rather than a deeply shared agenda.

Finally, the movement scored lowest on financial sustainability. In this area, the motto of many activists seemed to be – make up as we go. The consequences of that were almost catastrophic, as Pora was on the brink of shutting down in the middle of summer 2004. It obtained funds from a variety of sources, but conducted little financial planning. It is unsurprising that the money was used with dubious efficiency and no accountability. The latter only fueled the rumors of furtive foreign support. In the end, Pora was so fixated on a short-term victory that it disregarded completely its long-term survival and had to re-build from scratch after the elections.

Political embeddedness

When trying to get implanted into the political landscape, any nonprofit has to make the best out of the situation that is set up by the force beyond its control – i.e. the government and political parties. By scoring 16 out of 27 points, Pora fared modestly. Its varied performance was not an accident, but rather a deliberate effort.

The group had a steep ladder to climb, because Ukraine, as a state, scored mediocre on formal embeddedness. Throughout its tenure the government of Leonid Kuchma gave a veneer of approval to NGOs without ever bothering to develop a more nuanced appreciation of civil society. This harsh assessment is substantiated by the incongruity between formally adopted legal instruments and real behavior. Though the country had a generally liberal legislative framework on registering and setting up non-profit organizations, laws on taxation were convoluted and open to bureaucratic interpretation, thereby discouraging substantial public giving to NGOs. The government record on civil and political liberties also confirms that the country remained partly free in both areas and exhibited steady erosion toward authoritarianism since 2001.² In sum, striving to meet only minimal international standards, the Ukrainian government was leery of NGOs and their entrepreneurial activity.

Pora's core goal of achieving a peaceful regime change foreclosed any venues of cooperation with the government or pro-governmental parties and drastically lowered its informal political rootedness. The group engaged only with one party (Our Ukraine) whose candidate represented the opposition. Speaking figuratively, Pora put all of its eggs in one basket (that of Viktor Yushchenko) and was going up or down depending on his performance. The magnitude of this choice exacted a heavy toll. At the last stages of

² See Freedom House annual reports on Ukraine, "Freedom in the World," <http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15>.

the campaign, coordination between the two entities became so intimate that it clearly violated the tenets of civic impartiality. Having condemned the existing political system as fundamentally flawed, Pora sought to embed itself into the political milieu with only one goal – to undermine the regime in power to the point of collapse and establish a new framework for interactions. In this commitment, it was ready to sacrifice everything, including its political neutrality.

External involvement

The group rated well in this category, getting 19 out of 20 possible points. Pora's success is a story of less (of direct donor's intervention) being more (in terms of the group's ability to learn from external sources and avoid financial dependence).

With respect to normative transfers, Pora did exceptionally well. Having no formal backing of one or a group of donors, it was left to its own devices. The absence of sponsorship proved liberating in many ways. Pora contacted independently relevant international actors (like Otpor and NDI) and sought the information it needed, not the one that was deemed better by some donor. Because the normative exchanges were initiated consciously, the group was also able to recognize very quickly the limitations of their applicability to Ukrainian realities. In the end, it adapted the foreign methodology of nonviolence to the theme of human dignity that resonated well within the Ukrainian society. Pora's success in this area strongly confirms that external assistance becomes very effective when its domestic recipients seek it purposefully and know their local societies exceptionally well to adapt the acquired techniques.

The issue of external influence has received a lot of attention, especially because of the accusations that Pora was a puppet in the hands of foreign governments. The

accumulated evidence shows a rather different picture. The group was treated by foreign governments and donor agencies as a red-haired cousin who may embarrass you during a carefully staged wedding ceremony. Foreign entities were afraid of Pora's radicalism and of its ability to get them in trouble with the Kuchma government. Therefore, any cooperation was mostly technical and related to trainings and seminars. Foreign funding was very limited and (starting in fall 2004) non-existent. But, as mentioned before, donors' leering about Pora made its relationship with them healthy, precisely because it was so limited. Pora's domestic fundraising efforts (mentioned in the previous section) give a glimpse of a possible mismanagement of international funds, had those been available.

Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU)

CVU showed the weakest performance on the scale of embeddedness among the four civic groups under analysis. Its score of 63 points reveals an insufficient level of rootedness and a consistently lower showing on the major categories. The result flies in the face of much conventional wisdom, because the group, which existed longest and was so carefully nurtured by foreign money, was expected to be much more robust. As the analysis below proves, money can buy you happiness, but it cannot always buy influence or longevity.

Social embeddedness

Among the three categories in my scale, CVU received the highest score for social embeddedness - 35 out of 53 points or 66 percent. However, even in this area, the

group's weakest spots turned out to be its own constituency and the ability to influence Ukrainian society.

Speaking of the constituency, the Committee traded loyalty for diversity, as its pool of members was highly and personally dedicated to the organization, but not very dynamic in terms of turnover. The leadership abandoned active recruitment strategies in favor of internal stability, which consequently circumscribed communication among members and foreclosed opportunities for membership expansion. In the end, CVU has become somewhat of an elite country club. It had a stable and small base that shared a deep attachment to the organizational values, but was unwilling to open the doors and provide the perks of belonging to outsiders.

The organization was a bit more successful in internal normative transfers. From the very beginning, it managed to attract people with relevant expertise and a genuine interest in the issue area. Thanks to a great deal of selectivity and the length of their tenures, its core leaders were highly knowledgeable about election legislation, skillful and very strategic in political analysis. The leadership was able to train competent rank-and-file members. At the same time, normative transfers within leadership were often hampered by an overly hierarchical and rigid organizational structure that discouraged honesty. So while the NGO was successful in providing basic training, it was terribly slow in recognizing its own mistakes because channels for feedback were either closed or self-censored.

The group's second weakness was a rather limited scope of societal influence. CVU exhibited a peculiar pattern of behavior. Having been created as an activist nonprofit, it often acted more like a think tank. The Committee earned the reputation of a respected source in the NGO and expert community, but did little to engage wider public

in capacities other than Election Day monitors. The leadership seems to have believed the knowledge about CVU among think tanks and media outlets in the capital and regional centers would eventually trickle down to the larger public. This expectation was only partially fulfilled. Though the Committee's representatives appeared frequently in the news, the organization itself was a mere buzzword to an average citizen, who frequently confused it with a governmental body.

In terms of financial sustainability, the group performed better than the three other organizations. Though its dependency on the National Democratic Institute decreased overtime, it remained so significant that NDI could be labeled as the CVU's chief safety net. The nonprofit was forced to diversify its pool of funds for election campaigns, but remained unwilling to expand its base of grants beyond elections. Part of the unwillingness can be attributed to a kind of fatigue and resignation about the chances of securing support in Ukraine's difficult economic conditions. The other explanation pertains to the lack of a sustained process for contingency planning in finances. As a result, the prognosis about CVU's future is mixed. Without single donor support, its chances of survival would be a bit higher than fifty percent since it has an established infrastructure. But in order to make it, the group will require tremendous downsizing by shutting down nonperforming regional branches and giving up on the luxuries (like an office located in a posh downtown apartment complex) that few nonprofits even in developed countries are able to enjoy.

Political embeddedness

In this category, the group got 15 out of 27 points. As mentioned in the analysis of formal political embeddedness for Pora, Ukraine had a challenging climate for NGO

development. While the government was declaratively supportive of civil society, it did little to facilitate its development and foster a genuine partnership. In the last years of President Kuchma, the mask of approval was slowly falling off and revealing nothing short of contempt and disdain for foreign-backed “grant-eaters.”³

The difference between Pora and CVU in surviving these conditions and making themselves informally embedded in the political landscape was stark. Whereas Pora put its faith in one political force, CVU preferred diversification to the extent that many of its bids became mutually exclusive. From the beginning, the group embraced the motto of incremental, not revolutionary, change within the existing system. It cooperated extensively with government authorities (especially the Central Election Commission) in training monitors and commissioners and suggesting amendments to election legislation. Its activists worked with many political parties by training their observers and gathering complaints on legal violations. This strategy of interactions allowed CVU to be heard, though not listened to, in the Ukrainian political establishment. As cracks in the political system began to widen in 2004, the Committee struggled to take an unequivocal stance. The truth was harsh to swallow – many of its leading activists became co-opted by state authorities and parties through enduring personal relations, which, in turn, became a self-censoring mechanism. As a result, CVU’s bet on diversifying political friendships did not pay off. Having become part of the political architecture, the group was forced to make a choice. Without making it explicit, it picked the status quo during the revolution and hid behind the adherence to impartiality to avoid taking sides. The words of one

³ Anatolii Grytsenko, “Ataka vlady na “grantoyidiv” [The Attack on Grant-Eaters].

activist summarize it best - “our leadership got too scared that if we protest, we would all be multiplied by zero⁴ later on.”⁵

External influence

The nonprofit received 13 out of 20 points. Its relatively good performance in the first indicator was offset by a meager showing in the second one. When it came to receiving external norms, the group proved effective, but arrogant. It developed and frequently exercised the ability to analyze the advice it received from NDI. The Committee was extremely effective in learning and adapting the methodology of election monitoring to Ukrainian realities. Within 5-6 years of its establishment, the leadership could claim a greater understanding of detail and nuances of the national election and political landscape than foreign donors. At this point, the organization stopped seeking direct normative transfers on its key competencies and instead asked for assistance on organizational management and development. By 2002, a clear pattern in dealing with external normative transfers emerged – the group accepted outside advice unless it threatened organizational stability or the leadership’s preconceived notions of how programs should be implemented. As the 2004 elections approached, the Committee was growing increasingly insular and on some occasions tended to reject suggestions before carefully reviewing them. The dismal performance of the parallel vote tabulation program (PVT) serves to confirm this tendency.

CVU’s love-hate dealings with NDI got it the lowest scores on the last indicator – the mechanisms of external influence. Both entities developed a complex relationship

⁴ A Ukrainian slang for being harshly repressed.

⁵ CVU regional member.

of mutual dependence. To make the matters worse, it was poorly defined and subject to continuous bargaining and contestation in terms of where the authority of the donor began and the independence of the grantee ended. The differences were fundamentally irreconcilable, because NDI and CVU moved at a different pace along the continuum of donor-grantee relations that normally start with subservience and end with cooperation. Mismatched expectations about the roles of each other and resultant tensions negatively impacted the performance of the group as well as its organizational maturation.

Kmara

Standing for “Enough” in Georgian, *Kmara* showed the second highest score (and a tie) among our organizations. At 72 points, it can be classified as a moderately embedded organization. While the movement’s relations with political parties leave much to be desired, its performance in social embeddedness is the second best after *Pora*. In a surprising turn, the group places on the same level as another Georgian organization, ISFED, which was often the unsung hero of the revolution.

Social embeddedness

In this category, *Kmara* received 38 out of 53 possible points. Though it was its second best performance on the scale, the obtained result was surprisingly lower than one could imagine (especially given all the publicity during and after the Rose Revolution).

To use a movie analogy, *Kmara*’s constituency was “no country for old men.” The implemented recruitment strategies were wide, but not diverse. As the election campaign progressed, the organization implicitly gave up on attracting other age

segments of the society. The group's activists combed through many student audiences, looking to recruit as many followers as they could. In fact, as many admitted, Kmara should have applied stricter membership criteria to avoid random people. In the end, the core membership was highly dedicated and capable of mobilizing its peers. Because of that, the group was successful in activating the Georgian youth (a slice of the population to which its leaders could most closely relate), but it did not reach out to others – assuming that either they would be covered by political parties or it could not win them in the first place because of its radical message.

The process of internal normative transfers was a creative disorder. However, it proved greatly effective in spreading the key principle of nonviolent protest – the accomplishment even more praiseworthy because the majority of ordinary members spoke only Georgian and thus could not benefit from Western materials. Kmara was also superb in generating ideas about specific means of protest on the spot and then quickly mobilizing its rank-and-file to implement them. The major caveat of this arrangement began to manifest only close to the end of the election campaign, as it became clear that Kmara needed a better structure for daily operations, especially ongoing message control and media response. Like Pora, Kmara seemed content with the situation for as long as it knew it was short-term.

When it came to societal influence, the group proudly wore the label of l'enfant terrible of Georgian political life. It was the infamous squeaky wheel that could be greased only by the resignation of Shevardnadze and a profound regime change. Thus, it lavished its status of being a household name that made even the admirers cringe at some of its public actions. The group was not too picky in using anything that helped to stir up people – be it graffiti on government buildings or the burning of Shevardnadze portraits.

Its leaders were extremely savvy in exploiting the media's predisposition for sensationalism to gain notoriety. Kmara's "take-no-prisoners" approach alienated an established civic community that despised its radicalism and flashiness. To conclude on the subject, the group's unconventional tactics made its prominence possible, but also left few without a strong opinion on its methods. This, in turn, set clear limitations on the scope of its influence within Georgian society.

Kmara got the lowest score for financial sustainability, because from its establishment till the revolution the group was living for the day. Though its leaders espoused progressive values for civic involvement, the attitudes on financing their activities were definitely retrograde. Without realizing it themselves, they became completely socialized by the mores of the Georgian NGO sector that they despised so much. One of those mores was unabashed dependence on foreign money and refusal to seek domestic funding for the fear of political influence. All of Kmara leaders repeated numerous times that they saw nothing wrong with relying completely on external funds. For them, Kmara was a project for which they had no plans of long-term survival. And even if they did, they said, there was nothing they could do in the existing financial climate. Therefore, financial sustainability was something that one preferred not to think about.

Political embeddedness

As mentioned before, in the analysis of political embeddedness nonprofits are placed in a tricky position since they have to make the best of what they have been offered by the government. For this indicator, Kmara received 17 out of 27 points.

The best that the Georgian government could give to its civil society was a “let-you-be” attitude. Thus in terms of formal political embeddedness, it was neither encouraging nor unbearably oppressive. In the middle of 1990s, the Shevarnadze government adopted a liberal legislative framework on the establishment and registration of NGOs. It muddled through with cumbersome reporting and taxation requirements that were the result of lacking civic experience rather than malice. At the end of the decade, NGOs were not helped by further deterioration of the country’s democratic standing. In the realm of civic and political liberties, Georgia continued along a wobbling path. The country moved from the lower to the middle end on the scale that still identified it as a partly free state.⁶ A greater vacillation can be observed in terms of political freedoms – from the higher to the medium end of being partly free. Throughout the first decade of independence, the official attitude toward NGOs ranged from indifference (in the early 1990s), to tolerance (in the middle of the decade) and then finally annoyance and subtle attempts of repression at the end of Shevarnadze’s tenure. What prevented the government to move as swiftly against civil society as authorities did in Russia and Ukraine (not to mention neighboring Azerbaijan and Central Asian states) were the concern over the president’s international reputation and the lack of financial resources at the government’s disposal.

In assuring its informal embeddedness in the political system, Kmara chose to use a bit more than a half of the available potential. First and foremost, cooperation with the government was precluded by the antagonistic nature of its activities and the key goal of regime change. The group further alienated itself from possible allies by treating everyone that was not vociferously opposed to Shevarnadze as a possible

⁶ See Freedom House annual reports on Georgia, “Freedom in the World,” <http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15>.

collaborationist. Thus, links with political parties, other than Saakashvili's National Movement, were never established. It firmly decided that it had to back one force that had the most realistic chance to bring about change, and the National Movement was that force. In fact, cooperation between the two entities was so intense on formal and personal levels that it raised doubts about Kmara's impartiality, which it did not even bother to maintain. In the end, the two presented political and civic sides of the same coin and found utility in each other. Having become Saakashvili's "comrade in arms" on the civic front, Kmara was given access (previously unavailable to NGOs) to the political process, but it lost the credibility among other political forces, which civic groups cherish so much.

External involvement

Kmara performed best when it came to dealing with outsiders. As with Pora, less seemed to be more. The group got 17 out of 20 points. In asking other organizations for normative transfers, the group showed civic entrepreneurship at its best. It was extremely pro-active and effective in finding foreign groups (like Otpor) and learning from them. Its leadership demonstrated the understanding that foreign ideas would have limitations early in the process. That is why, it took the foreign methodology (most succinctly presented in a documentary, "Bringing Down the Dictator") and translated it for the local landscape, by making corruption its main theme. Because the movement had a cohort of highly experienced civic leaders (mostly implants from the Liberty Institute), it did not seek any normative assistance from foreign donors that were based in Georgia. This proved a blessing in terms of giving Kmara a lot of independent space for adapting

foreign ideas. In this regard, the organization can serve as a textbook example of how civic entrepreneurs from abroad can spread their ideas successfully.

In relations with donors, the movement was very impersonal and business-like. Kmara activists showed a slightly disdainful attitude toward the donor machine that was more interested in meeting internal requirements and showing grant reports than real accomplishments. This attitude produced an arrangement where donors exerted no substantial programmatic influence. So contrary to public perceptions and speculations, Kmara did not receive “instructions” from international organizations on how to act. Through confidence that often turned into arrogance, it managed to establish a firm distance that (regardless of its complete financial dependence) did not allow donors to dictate the content of the group’s work.

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)

ISFED shared the second place with Kmara, by scoring 72 points on our scale. The organization’s moderate level of embeddedness stands in stark contrast with the performance of its Ukrainian counterpart on election observation. Even a brief comparative look at the scores reveals two key differences in their performances. ISFED proved stronger in three areas – greater societal influence, a more open membership base and unrelenting neutrality in cooperation with political actors. Regardless of its long existence, the NGO escaped the major risk of becoming a part of the existing political architecture or turning into an election bureaucracy instead of an activist group.

Social embeddedness

In this area, the nonprofit showed mixed results, getting 37 out of 53 points. The abysmal performance in the last indicator, financial sustainability, undermined a moderately high showing in other categories.

In terms of constituency, ISFED can be described as a symbol of diversity. The group strived for inclusive recruitment that was mostly centered on the networks of relatives and friends. Its activists emphasized that a specific effort was made to assure societal and gender equality, by recruiting members from different social classes and women. From the beginning, the organization established and maintained a democratic structure of internal governance with the board playing a strong role. However, absent formal mechanisms of feedback, that structure did not live up to its full potential and instead frequently produced leadership volatility. Several ISFED directors got fired before they could ever figure out what was lacking in their work. Diversity often became too much of a good thing. On one hand, it produced a marked difference from CVU with its macho culture and a “good-old boys” network. On the other, ISFED members did not possess high institutional loyalty due to their constant rotation. Unlike the Ukrainian Committee of Voters, ISFED’s “revolving door” produced few passionate supporters of the organization. Therefore, while being inclusive, mobile and often unintentionally diverse, the ISFED constituency frequently suffered the loss of institutional memory that retarded organizational growth.

In conducting normative transfers among its members, ISFED displayed a steady, albeit slow progress. It was successful in educating its rank-and-file about election procedures and developed rigid training protocols. The leadership was especially scrupulous about impartiality of its members. The accumulated evidence makes it clear

that the notion of political neutrality was taken so seriously as to become almost sacrosanct. All of these actions turned ISFED into the premier nonpartisan voice on election monitoring in the country. At the same time, the organization was slow in developing its own programs that would cover issues in-between election campaigns. There are two reasons for this failure – low funding from NDI and a lack of human resources that could be paid to do programming. As a result, though exceptionally good at election training and monitoring, ISFED did not succeed in expanding its base of activities beyond the core theme.

The Rose Revolution became a long-needed event that catapulted the civic group into the realm of popularity and made its societal influence unparalleled. Before the events in November 2003, ISFED filled the niche of election observation and managed to maintain leadership in this field through consistent NDI backing and its own diligence. The group (especially its leaders in Tbilisi) was active in the NGO community, but only few ordinary people, who were deeply interested in politics, were aware of its existence. Building on its expertise and professional standing, ISFED used the revolution as an opening to attract public attention. Because of its initial credibility, the NGO's parallel vote tabulation results were trusted by the majority of people and became one of the most important pieces of evidence against the Shevarnadze regime. When the dust of revolutionary events settled in December 2003, the Society was a household name and its PVT procedure had become the golden standard for measuring election fairness.

While the Revolution showed the group's best side, its attitude toward funding and financial sustainability presented ISFED at its worst. For the most part of its functioning, the civic group was in a state of denial when it came to its dependence on NDI or the future without the American donor. Only after the Rose Revolution, the

implicit agreement between the two entities that forbade ISFED to fundraise from other sources was re-negotiated by another director. The organization's leadership pursued lackluster attempts at diversification of funds and showed a derogatory attitude toward funding from business sources. If one were to imagine the nonprofit's survival now without American money, the chances would be less than 50-50. Unfortunately, in the matters of fiscal independence ISFED was no harbinger for change. Rather it was a typical representative of Georgian civil society with its total dependence on donors and unwillingness to look for other sources of support.

Political embeddedness

In this indicator, ISFED demonstrated its best performance. Indeed, the organization has much to offer to others in terms of handling a precarious situation and turning it to its advantage.

As noted before, the Georgian government performed modestly in providing formal political embeddedness to non-governmental organizations. It was neither welcoming (like Baltic states) nor openly hostile (like neighboring Azerbaijan). Having no resources to counteract NGOs and being chronically dependent for its survival on international institutions, it chose to tolerate (sometimes barely) the domestic civil society. In fact, Shevarnadze noted numerous times in interviews that he regretted not having "concentrated" on "pernicious" activities of foreign-funded organizations. In the end, the landscape for formal implantedness received 9 out of 13 points - the result, which can be summed up as mediocre.

Under these circumstances, the group performed better than any other organization under analysis. In achieving informal embeddedness in the political

landscape, it became a friend, but not a buddy for key political actors. It cooperated closely with the government on election legislation and yet managed not to become co-opted. This accomplishment should be attributed not only to the moral stamina of ISFED activists, but also to the fact that changes of the top leadership were not conducive to personal entanglements. ISFED also managed to achieve a semi-official recognition of its importance as a civic authority on election matters when it got an observer-status on the Central Election Commission. It endeared itself to political parties because of its proven neutrality. As a result, the group's media center became a focal point for gathering complaints from political parties on election violations. If there was any weakness in its informal rootedness, it was about the scope, as interactions with the political establishment were circumscribed mostly to Tbilisi. To summarize, the nonprofit received 12 out of 14 points in this category – an almost perfect score, for it managed to establish and maintain cooperative relations with political parties thanks to the perception of impartiality and due to continuous leadership rotations.

External involvement

For this indicator, ISFED obtained 70 percent (its second highest score) by getting 14 out of 20 possible points. The group's performance was not balanced. It did especially well in absorbing external normative transfers and failed in setting adequate outside mechanisms of influence.

Thus, in terms of the former, ISFED slowly transitioned from completely dependent to semi-partnership relations where internal trainings were done by NGO members and external assistance was requested on specific issues. For instance, unlike CVU, the group was more open to accepting external ideas and recognizing the need for help. The notable example here is how masterfully it handled the 2003 parallel vote

tabulation where foreign methodological assistance was instrumental. At the same time, ISFED activists subconsciously realized the liability of being too closely associated with foreign sources and consistently underplayed outside help. The group also had surprisingly little contacts with similar organizations overseas, partially because the funding for travel opportunities was still tightly controlled by NDI. Thus, with years the nonprofit became more independent in accepting external assistance, but remained weaker than similar groups in the western part of the former Soviet Union.

When it comes to external mechanisms of influence, ISFED, as one representative of the key donor organization put it, was trying to have it both ways. Its relations with NDI were subject to unpredictable push-pull dynamics. The group wanted to have more breathing space, but ran to the Institute for help the moment the going got tough. In addition, much of the interactions were heavily dependent on specific personalities. Those executive directors, who were authoritative and persistent, managed to carve out a greater space for themselves. Others, who became stuck in struggles with their own board to the point of extreme weakness, had to follow NDI orders more closely. Therefore, throughout its later stages of existence, ISFED was going through terrible growing pains and did not manage to come up with a workable model for the relations with its main donor. It is not clear whether and how the group will come to terms with that. One thing is obvious – without NDI's help, it would shrink immensely and may discontinue functioning throughout the regions.

To summarize, the detailed comparisons of the NGOs' performance enable to identify which variables are most critical for organizational embeddedness. First, it is clear that social embeddedness plays the leading role in assuring that a nonprofit establishes sufficient roots in a domestic society. No non-governmental group under

analysis scored more on the overall scale, while receiving low scores on social embeddedness. This variable is also most amenable to influences from civic actors themselves, while the two others (political embeddedness and external influence) are shaped with powerful inputs from the state and foreign donors respectively. Second, when it comes to political implantedness the most influential mechanisms for any NGO are informal. In essence, it is the ability of a group to walk a fine line between cooperating with political entities for the benefit of a group's cause or getting either completely subsumed or entirely shunned by them. Those who do it best, like Georgian ISFED, become more politically rooted than others. Finally, a meager showing of the four groups on external mechanisms of influence point to the importance of the other sub-variable in this category – external normative transfers. As described above, complex dynamics that are often at play between donors and their grantees often make it impossible to determine who impacts whom and to what extent. Given that, the success of foreign influence comes down to whether recipient NGOs are able to effectively translate foreign external influences to local circumstances their own agenda. The two NGOs (Pora and Kmara) that performed best in this category also proved to be most embedded.

EMBEDDEDNESS AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Research question and key hypotheses

The dissertation began with a simple question, “What made the NGOs under consideration effective during the “color revolutions” in Ukraine and Georgia?” In an attempt to put in perspective the excitement generated by the media and some scholarly works, I advanced the hypothesis, which suggested that the more embedded an NGO was

in domestic social and political landscape, the more successful it was during those democratization events. Three subsequent sub-hypotheses asserted that embeddedness would be greater if: a) an NGO is able to relate better to the political society; b) it has more connections to the society at large and its members in particular; c) it enjoys more tailored external assistance. The analysis below will evaluate whether each sub-hypothesis has been confirmed by the accumulated evidence. This, in turn, will determine whether the main assertion stands at the conclusion of my work.

Sub-hypothesis 1

Table 1. Sub-hypothesis 1

<p>Better ties to political society → greater embeddedness</p>
<p>OUTCOME: partially confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall embeddedness more impacted by constituency, societal influence • State influence as a powerful limitation • Higher political embeddedness as a sign of organizational maturity
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>For NGOs:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace issue advocacy • Cooperate with parties on specific issues only • Re-assess political embeddedness based on dilemmas: • Political influence v. longevity/public acceptance • Incremental v. revolutionary change • Ensure internal leadership turnover 2. <u>For Donors:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove civic/politics barrier • Establish monitoring and compliance mechanisms on impartiality • Teach how to process learning experiences

It is partially confirmed that the better an NGO is able to relate itself to the political society, the more embedded it becomes in the domestic landscape. In this case, ISFED provides the most positive example of political embeddedness (and thus the

highest score). The organization had a significant amount of officially recognized influence on the course of the election campaign and voting itself.

CVU, Kmara and Pora showed weaker examples of political embeddedness and fell victims to two scenarios. In the first one, an NGO chose greater cooperation and (intentionally or not) cut out others. As a result, Kmara and Pora became a partisan, not an independent voice that they were supposed to be. For the second scenario, a civic group manifested such a desire to accommodate all political players that it made itself irrelevant. This woe betided CVU whose “independence” meant that nothing in reality depended on its assessments.

In the general scheme of results, the sub-hypothesis holds only a partial key to explaining organizational embeddedness as a whole concept. Thus, the groups that were not sufficiently embedded in the political landscape, managed to be better embedded in the domestic landscape through a stronger constituency or greater societal influence. The evaluation of evidence has revealed two critical points. First, in societies where the state predated civil society, political rootedness will be heavily influenced by existing political conditions. The Ukrainian organizations obtained lower scores than the Georgian ones, because the regime in Ukraine was more authoritarian and the space for civil society was more tightly controlled. The outcome also highlights a sad reality (of which external observers of NGOs will need to remind themselves continuously) that sometimes no matter how hard a group tries to become part of political landscape, it is doomed to be weak in this area. Second, while political embeddedness is not a make-it-or-break-it indicator (which is a good thing given the previous point), higher rootedness is a sign of an NGO’s organizational maturity. In other words, an organization shows it can play in the world of decision-makers on its own, and it knows its proper place as a

representative of civil society. Pora and Kmara failed because they were too young.

CVU did not manage to attain it because the years of existence did not translate into the understanding of fundamental rules of political behavior for civic organizations.

This brings us to the set of key questions mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. The first of them deals with the perennial challenge for any civic group – how to remain distinct from politics, while advocating closely related issues and seeking to make political impact. The four nonprofit groups under analysis answered the dilemma differently, and each paid a price for finding a more or less successful way to balance an inherently political nature of civic demands. Three ways, though, broadly emerge from their cumulative experiences. First, it is important for NGOs to embrace open advocacy of the issues that pertain to their *raison d’être*. If a civic group works on fair elections, it should protest vocally against and expose those who seek to discredit the election process. By doing this, it will inevitably take sides in a political dispute. Pretending to be a mere impartial observer in this case will render the whole existence of a civic organization meaningless in the medium and long-term. So, one may ask, should a civic organization abandon its political neutrality? Yes, if neutrality means detachment from life and from the society in which it lives. No, if neutrality means a wider concept of non-affiliation with a specific political force. And this is where the second point comes to light. While advocating passionately for the causes it espouses, an NGO should never commit a mistake of associating itself with a political party, no matter how strongly this party supports or promotes a certain civic cause. A close affiliation between the two is dangerous for one obvious reason. Ideologically, parties are much broader creatures than civic groups. They embrace multitudes of issues and a range of political views (even within the same broad school of thought – i.e. from moderates to hard-liners). On the

contrary to that, non-government organizations work in a certain issue niche. As our first chapter noted, issue specification is important for any nascent NGOs to attract supporters, since groups that cover everything often end up standing for nothing. If an NGO gets too close with a political party, it may be perceived (or may feel forced) to support the party on a range of other issues on which its members may have divergent views. For instance, many people joined Pora for the need of fair elections. But it does not mean that all of them uniformly support Ukraine's membership in NATO, which Our Ukraine (the party with which Pora chose to affiliate extremely closely) advocates. Finally, the discussion above makes clear how hard it is to define the balance between situational agreements with political parties on the issues of common concern and open support of those parties' agenda. Based on the experiences of our four NGOs, the only cure seems to be staff rotation and leadership turnover. There is something about fresh blood that enables new people to see the dividing line between civic and political societies sharper and spot a conflict of interest (or an encroachment of the political world) quicker. This study supports the theoretical view that civil society is a training school for political life. At some point, civic activists tend to outgrow the boundaries of civic activism that forbids them to play a more direct role in politics. In that case, those people need to be pushed out to seek greener pastures in political party life. The fact that this process did not take place in CVU and the Liberty Institute meant that too many people had oversized ambitions for being just civic leaders. Staff and leadership turnover allows civic activists to realize those ambitions and prevents the formation of enduring personal relations between civic and political leaders who are supposed to play different roles.

The second dilemma is more practical, as it pertains to the challenge that international donors face in making civil society development an effective component within the larger context of democratization. The answer here is simple to state, yet hard to implement. On one hand, donors need to remove artificial boundaries that often separate civic and political worlds and push NGOs to become actively involved in politics by advocating their core issues. The disdain that intellectuals within civil society feel toward party members and leaders should be fought with vigor. In Ukraine and Georgia politicians may not be noble and pure as highly educated civic elite would like to see them, but they still remain the product of those societies. If NGOs want to change them or the quality of the political discourse, the only way to do that is to engage with the people you got, not the ones you want to have. Keeping this in mind, foreign donors should encourage NGO involvement in politics, but also insist on establishing procedures and compliance mechanisms that would assure civic impartiality. The question should be asked not whether NGOs should cooperate with political parties, but how. In this case the obvious concern is that despite elaborate mechanisms and comprehensive steps to assure impartiality, civic groups will never get it right. To assuage the worries they probably will not, but they will have to learn how to balance. Civic activists through their own experience or by watching other organizations soon discover that NGOs will be taken over by two opposite, but rather natural processes if they do not get their cooperation with the political world right. Under one scenario, if a group is too political, it will either split and turn into a political party or disband as a result of joining an existing political force. The first happened to Pora that produced two offspring – a civic organizations “Opora” (meaning support) and a political party, Pora. The second was the fate of Kmara, which disbanded after the revolution, letting its most

prominent members join the Saakashvili government or, in very few cases, return to their initial NGOs. Under the second scenario, if a group is too detached, it will be sidelined from the political landscape. This is what happened to CVU. Though the organization remains active, it is bound to find itself asking a question whether it wants to be a professional election think tank.

The final critical issue speaks to the long-standing debate on the relationship between civil society and the state. The accumulated evidence makes it clear that in countries where political society preceded civil one, the state would be able to shape the beginning of the path to political embeddedness that civic groups will be presented with as a *fait accompli*. However, this should not be a reason to despair since the state cannot shape the course along that path or its final destination. The proof to that are differences in political embeddedness between Pora and CVU, ISFED and Kmara. Each pair functioned in the same formal political environment, yet achieved a different stage of informal political embeddedness thanks to its own skill and ability to turn the existing political architecture to its advantage.

As with every rule, this one has its exceptions. In cases where civil society is under a direct attack from the state (thereby the state either denies formal acknowledgement of any NGO or prefers only GoNGOs), informal political embeddedness will be almost impossible to achieve. Under these circumstances, a civic group will have three choices. One is to ally itself with the government as its support source. The other is to ally itself with any political force that guarantees its future recognition when that force comes to power. If (as in many Central Asian states for example) political opposition is banned and demolished, a group will have no choice but

to rely only on societal support and work to redefine the formal political landscape in a way that will provide both formal and informal political embeddedness.

In conclusion, the discussion on interactions between politics and civil society presents every non-governmental organizations with two kinds of dilemmas that they have to struggle continuously to resolve individually. First, in relations with political parties civic groups have to balance the issues of political influence with their own longevity (as an independent civic force) and their wider public acceptance. The price for each choice is clear – greater political influence usually comes with a danger of dissolving an NGO in a specific party or losing support among the segments of the population that disagree with that party's politics. Second, in dealing with government a nonprofit has to decide what kind of change it is willing to accomplish – incremental or revolutionary. Willingness to settle for piecemeal progress ensures smoother cooperation with existing authorities. An ardent desire for a revolutionary breakthrough is likely to seal off interactions with most governments that are inherently status quo oriented. These dilemmas are presented here as binary challenges. The beauty and complexity of reality lie in the ability of each organization to find its own comfort zone on the continuum between the two extremes that each dilemma outlined.

Sub-hypothesis 2**Table 2. Sub-hypothesis 2**

<p>More connections to society → greater embeddedness</p> <p>OUTCOME: strongly confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nature of civic interactions: subjective due to practical implementation of abstract goals • better embeddedness → greater polarization, especially when: a) other channels are closed; b) external agent present <p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>For NGOs:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-assess social embeddedness based on dilemmas: • wide recruitment & loose structure v. strict membership & greater control • institutional memory v. staff turnover • visibility v. substance 2. <u>For Donors:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on grassroots and field work • stress the need for personalized appeal and distinctiveness
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It is strongly confirmed that groups with more connections to the society at large and its members in particular were more embedded than those who had lower societal embeddedness. Pora and Kmara, the movements with higher scores, were most visible during the revolutions. Pora (which obtained the greatest number of points for social embeddedness) also proved the most rooted of all four. Corollary to that, the Committee of Voters performed the worst in terms of its implantedness in the society and was the least visible political force in the Orange revolution. A deeper analysis of social embeddedness raises four crucial questions on a wider and more fundamental role of civil society.

The first harkens back to the debate on the nature of exchanges that civic groups promote by their functioning. In that regard, there are two interesting points – can NGOs be truly neutral and impartial and, if not, do they fuel general polarization within their host societies. As activities of Kmara and Pora show, the assessment of NGO exchanges is highly subjective. What the two movements promoted, was seen as positive by supporters and destructive by opponents and the government. So while abstract goals that nonprofits espouse can be neutral and impartial, their practical implementation will always produce an inherently political result. For instance, by numerous admissions of its activists all Pora ever wanted to do was to assure a fair election – a goal that is neutral in terms of supporting a specific political force. However, even Pora members acknowledged that the practical application of that goal often meant allowing people to express their will by voting for Viktor Yushchenko (a clearly partisan figure) and by having their voters count. In the end, what Pora saw as an application of the abstract and nonpartisan principle became the death knell to viability of the Kuchma regime, because Pora sought to ensure a complete execution of that principle. Even ISFED, the most impartial group of all, said its neutrality in observing elections did not translate in a neutral stance in the election's aftermath. It was clear that the Georgian government falsified the result, and thus there was nothing one could be neutral about.

So if pure neutrality is not possible in reality, do NGOs then become a vehicle for polarization? This is where an NGO's success in embedding itself in the host society becomes its enemy. Kmara and Pora, the best performers on this indicator, were also the most polarizing. The logical link between successful embeddedness and polarization is clear. The more relations a nonprofit has with its own society, the more visible it becomes by the sheer fact that its activists recruit and communicate with a greater

number of people. Visibility may create a fertile ground for polarization, especially when combined with the presence of polarizing external agents (like George Soros in Georgia) and the inability of the political system to digest feedback. Our case studies prove that the groups with greater embeddedness were also more polarizing thanks to their visibility and to the efforts of their national governments pitting regime loyalists against those groups, by asserting that the latter's agenda was not politically neutral, but covertly partisan.

The second critical question is how NGOs can become more socially embedded. There are no definitive answers since every civic group, like a human, is unique to some extent. Therefore, it would be more useful to concentrate on a set of dilemmas that each NGO has to address and balance for itself. The first one juxtaposes wide activist recruitment and a looser organizational structure against strict membership criteria and consequently greater efficiency and vertical control. For instance among our organizations, CVU chose the second model, while Kmara and Pora went with the first one. ISFED fell somewhere in-between. The advantages and negatives of each approach have been described in great detail in the case studies. So it will suffice to say that an NGO would be wise to conduct an honest review of its practices (to see where they might fall against these two extreme) even if such practices are officially declared as open and non-hierarchical, especially as it ages and its structure becomes more settled and thus more rigid.

The second dilemma is the need to balance institutional memory against the infusion of new blood that brings innovation and regeneration. Like any organization, a civic group has to maintain a core of activists who will remember and learn from previous experiences. However, it should also strive to bring new members. Otherwise,

the group will remain stuck in the past, as the old cadre grows increasingly cynical about politics and chances of success and skeptical about trying anything new or re-trying failed projects. Of the groups under analysis, CVU veered too much toward the first extreme with both institutional memory and loyalty turning into powerful impediments. ISFED, on the other hand, was perhaps too nonchalant about losing its members. Pora and Kmara represent a more appropriate golden middle. While both organizations were relatively young, they managed to retain experienced civic leaders and recruit young firebrands on the ground.

The final dilemma is an ongoing struggle between visibility and substance. It is worth mentioning that the two are by no means exclusive – there are a lot of substantive, sophisticated and well publicized advocacy campaigns. The struggle pertains to a more fundamental question that many activist groups (especially those propped up by foreign money) have to address and revisit continuously in developing civil societies. It is about a balance between deskwork and grassroots. If deskwork overwhelms grassroots organizing, the group begins to resemble a think tank. Any democracy practitioner in the former Soviet Union can easily name dozens of nonprofits that became analytical centers without realizing that or even ever leaving their offices. If the opposite happens, then many grassroots activities look like endless demonstrations with no long-term purpose. The Ukrainian Committee of Voters was a perfect example of the first extreme. Some Kmara activities, as its more critical supporters admit, fall in the second category. Within the Georgian movement, there was a great desire to attract attention, but there was little willingness and no time to bring more substance to protests.

To sum up our discussion on the dilemmas, two points should be added. First, these challenges are universal to all NGOs at different stages of their development.

Second, only conscious attention to them will help an organization choose a more nuanced position and avoid drifting toward one or the other extreme.

The third essential point inquires how to make civil society development an effective component within the larger context of democratization. Based on the performance of the four NGOs under analysis, the general path lies through grass-root organization and fieldwork.

It is clear from the table of embeddedness that social rootedness occupies the central place in assuring that an NGO becomes an integral part of its host society. In none of the four cases, a nonprofit was able to get to a higher level of implantedness while having lower social ties when compared to its counterparts. Our detailed analysis of the groups also revealed that in building more bridges with domestic societies, the old prescription of talking directly to people continues to stand and gain even more validity. In the complex and multilayered informational highway, it is much easier for citizens to ignore civic groups that choose conventional methods. Pamphlets and glossy brochures, press releases and expert appearances get quickly lost in the media noise. Therefore, only those NGOs that take time and make an effort (sometimes mundane and long-term) to talk directly to citizens will be able to develop a following. The attention must thus be paid to how (not whether and to what extent) nongovernmental organization can distinguish themselves and continue to re-design new ways to appeal to their target population. Pora and Kmara were successful precisely because they found a way (often not a polite one) to get through to people regardless of a vicious government reaction or a purposeful neglect by officially censored media.

The last question looks at social embeddedness as a tool that may enhance the benefits of civil society (e.g. civicness, greater tolerance and trust, higher participation)

and ameliorate its weaknesses (such as polarization). Unfortunately, the results in this area are inconclusive. From numerous interviews it was clear that activists from groups with higher embeddedness are more open to general participation and have a greater sense of efficacy. However, in statistical terms the evidence does not allow for generalization. Therefore, additional research (in particular statistically reliable surveys among NGO members) is sorely needed to speak conclusively on the benefits of greater rootedness.

Sub-hypothesis 3

Table 3. Sub-hypothesis 3

Better Tailored External Involvement → Greater Embeddedness
<p>OUTCOME: Confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less micromanagement on daily routines and specific targets ▪ Focus on fundamental dilemmas and indicators of impact
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <p><u>For Donors and NGOs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to the signs of dependency • Extended length of support • Loose terms of assistance • Increased visibility of foreign support • Focus on normative transfers to diminish dependency • Provide stable and consistent funding expectations • Conduct a frequent and realistic content assessment

The dissertation has confirmed that the more domestically tailored the external involvement, the more it helps an NGO become embedded. At the same time, the accumulated evidence enables us to refine this fairly general proposition by specifying what it is meant under rightly tailored involvement.

Positive experiences of Pora and Kmara (and negative ones of CVU) prove that international assistance is successful when it does less micromanagement and instead

concentrates on a bigger picture. When donors are preoccupied with technicalities of grant agreements that manifest themselves in the urgent need to fulfill artificially set indicators (e.g. public hours held per month, volunteers recruited per week) then those indicators are the only ones being met. It is worth remembering that in the former Soviet societies (where people are wired to misreport the achievement and over-achievement of five-year plan, *pyatiletka*, goals), civic activists feel more at ease with short-term hurdles than long-term challenges. Therefore, an internal discussion would gladly concentrate on how to establish a declared number of local branches rather than how those branches will fit in to the local civil society. Not to be misinterpreted, asking big questions does not mean engaging in grand philosophical discussions that have become an abhorrent landmark of many round tables and seminars in the region. What it does mean is that donors are not afraid to raise constantly big and hard dilemmas – e.g. how do you cooperate with political parties, is it effective and how can we make it more productive. Such questions transform the overall discourse from lofty abstract speeches (or endless whining routines on, for example, how arrogant and corrupt party bosses are) to specific measures that can improve the situation incrementally in the medium term. Like any researcher who knows how painful the search for adequate indicators to measure something is, NGOs should be challenged by donors to think whether their activities accomplish what they intend to do – does the campaign to increase female representation in power echelons really ensure not only visible gender diversity, but also the diversity of opinions? Finally, less micromanagement means letting NGOs decide what their needs are and sometimes waiting for them to arrive at recognizing a certain need that a donor has long considered essential. From the four available case studies, we see that where donors responded to the request of a nonprofit, they were more effective in

facilitating external normative transfers than in the situations where a transfer (through a training) was foisted upon a civic group.

In the end, it all comes down to two critical questions for every foreign donor – how to avoid making its brainchild dependent and how to fit it into the larger context of democratization. Here are some propositions that come out from my research for each issue.

As far as dependency is concerned, four observations should be kept in mind. In each case, the longevity of donor support is positively associated with dependency. CVU has with a messy relationship with NDI precisely because the Democratic Institute was its benefactor since the dawn of time. Furthermore, our research reaches a surprising conclusion that the pattern of dependency works both ways. Donors also become attached to specific NGOs in order to sustain and justify their institutional agendas. And in this case the length of relationships has a pernicious effect, too. The more a donor funds a certain group, the more its own reputation becomes related to the success of that group. As seen for CVU and ISFED, domestic civic groups are not afraid to exploit donors' fears that an NGO failure or dissolution will be a dark stain on the reputation of grant-giving institutions. The opposite examples only add veracity to this analysis. Donors were more objective toward Pora and Kmara. The harsher treatment pushed the Ukrainian group look for other sources of funding – something it did not plan to do.

The second observation indicates that the looser and more vaguely defined terms of support, the greater the dependency. Pora knew that donors would not step in if it failed. Its activists had to count only on themselves. At the same time, CVU and ISFED seemed to be always willing to see how far they can push the envelope by resisting donor control while relying on donor support as a permanently available safety net. In

other words, if donors are unwilling to set and stick to clear indicators that would be off the bounds for their influence or would result in decreasing support, they will find themselves in a quagmire of creeping dependency.

This conclusion is closely linked with our third point – the more visible the relationship, the harder it is to let go of it for both sides. CVU serves as a perfect example for this situation. The organization, especially in the donor community, was so clearly linked to NDI that other funders were leery to engage with it for the fear of upsetting the Institute. As a senior international donor staff said, “It would feel like dancing with another husband’s wife.”⁷ Such a high level of visibility corners both sides into a kabuki dance aimed at saving faces and inadvertently exacerbating the existing dependencies. It was clear from interviewing numerous NDI sources that the Institute is unable to let go or substantially decrease its support of ISFED for the fear that if the organization simply collapses, it will tarnish the image of NDI. The Institute’s farewell with CVU in 2006 was protracted and painful, because the NGO could not believe it would be actually cut loose. In an implicit acknowledgement of this highly visible relationship, other donors often spoke in whispers and with their eyes down about NDI dropping its main grantee in Ukraine.

The final observation pertains to normative transfers. Their predominance over simple funding relations re-defines the relationship into less dependent. If an NGO is interested in a foreign donor because of the information and content it can bring, this balances (if not decreases substantially) the financial side of the relationship. In other words, the grantor is not viewed merely as a cash cow. It is also a provider of valuable information that is directly related to NGO’s activities. For example, Pora and Kmara

⁷ Western NGO representative.

had a healthier relationship with foreign donors because they were interested more in their expertise rather than just grants. CVU and, to a lesser degree, ISFED regarded NDI as primarily their financial benefactor and political protector. One interviewer used the Russian word “krysha” (roof) to describe how NDI would shelter the two organizations from undue pressures by the government and political parties.

Based on the observations above, international donors will need to pay attention to the following three indicators in order to make NGOs an effective component within the democratization agenda. The first speaks to consistency of funding. Stable levels of grant support help avoid short-term dependency, by decreasing the likelihood that NGOs will hoard funds or inflate their budgets in the expectation of future cuts. The second is about the scope of funding. The more civic groups are funded, the greater positive spillover effects. Donors should make peace with the fact that many civic groups they fund will die, reorganize or disband. Such things happen in the West, too. What will not be lost is the civic potential and experiences that civic leaders will retain even after they move to other careers. The last, and definitely not the least, has to do with context. An adequate and continuously updated assessment of local conditions is paramount in several respects. It assures realistic funding plans. There is no need to fuel a nonprofit’ funding if it can never be sustained in local conditions. In many post-Soviet states, NGOs forgot that they were not-for-profit associations. They should not be competing with businesses in terms of their salaries, the luxuriousness of office space or the use of expense accounts. Most importantly, the situation assessment will allow aid organizations to promote embeddedness of their local partners with the domestic society, political parties and government regardless of where each of those entities stands in understanding the essence of civil society.

To summarize, our discussion has come a full circle to the original argument. Effective external involvement that is tailored domestically is also the one that promotes NGO embeddedness by tying it to the host society and avoiding dependency patterns that in essence substitute stable support at home with good donor relations.

Alternative hypotheses

Table 4. Alternative Hypotheses

<p>1. Greater Western Support → Better NGO Performance During Revolutions</p> <p>OUTCOME: Rejected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-funded NGOs proved less effective • Previously similar efforts gave no results • Western support matters for general long-term effects only
<p>2. Greater Alignment with Parties → Better NGO Performance During Revolutions</p> <p>OUTCOME: Partially Confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO-party cooperation depends on a goodness of fit (i.e. similar capabilities, complementary goals) • Neutrality abandoned in critical incidents

The major assertion of my work (i.e. embeddedness as the major factor that made NGOs strong during the “color revolutions”) is by no means widely accepted. Other prominent interpretations attribute the success of non-government organizations to their backing (mostly financial) by the West, and their close relations with political parties. It is worth examining each of them in greater detail.

Alternative hypothesis 1

In explaining the “color revolutions,” their opponents blamed the West, in particular the United States, for instigating public protests by funding oppositional civic

groups.⁸ The case was made especially eloquently in regard to Kmara, which had close financial ties with the local Soros foundation. The sheer number of those who ardently support this viewpoint prompted to look at it separately as an alternative hypothesis that may help the success of NGOs. Therefore, the dissertation speculates that the more support an NGO received from the West, the better it performed during the revolution. The gathered evidence provides strong grounds to reject this assertion for a number of reasons.

First, as the scale of embeddedness clearly shows, nonprofit groups that got most donor support performed either worse (CVU) or at the same level (ISFED) than the one that did not have substantial backing (Pora) or had a one-time grant infusion (Kmara). Second, taking further the argument of those who believe that money buys power, one could have expected CVU to be the loudest voice among all. After all, the organization was on continuous foreign funding, had the most extensive regional infrastructure, and believed that NDI would back it under any conditions. Because, as numerous people pointed out, the dog did bark and the cannon did not shoot, it means that something else was at work. That something apparently was also working in the case of Kmara. As the Executive Director of the Soros Foundation in Georgia remarked wryly, his organization funded election-related activities for a long period of time, and before the revolution nobody rushed to label them as treacherous. Perhaps, the major difference was that in 2003 such activities were approached seriously not as a part of the usual grant-utilizing routine. This brings us again to the central point – the success of Kmara and the failure

⁸ To show how prevalent this viewpoint is especially in the former Soviet Union, one merely has to google “color revolutions” in Russian and receive hundreds of pages with relevant articles. Here are some of the available publications: “Kto delaet tsvetnye revolutsii?” [Who manufactures color revolutions], *Novaya Politika*, 15 October 2007, <http://www.novopol.ru/text28692.html>; “‘Tsvetnye’ revolutsii: kto sleduuschij?” [‘Color’ revolutions: who is next?], *Polit.ru*, 30 Marcg 2005, <http://www.polit.ru/analytics/2005/03/30/revolution.html>; “Urazov: NKO i ‘tsvetnye revolutsii: k voprosu o ‘barhatnyh’ tehnologiyah” [Urazov: NGO and ‘color’ revolutions: on the question of ‘velvet’ technologies], *CentralAsia.ru*, <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1162806660>.

of CVU lies not in the fact how much money (or for how long) has been pumped into them. It is centered on their ability (or a lack of thereof) to embed itself in the societal context and take the most of it to accomplish its goals.

In summary, money was not central to the success of civic participation in the revolution. Having said that, one caveat is in order. While funding was not a make-it-or-break-it issue, it proved important in two aspects. First, having Western money available in the 1990s enabled to build a background upon which a future, more mature civil society was able to develop and evolve. Second, continuous Western funds provided much needed normative transfers and created overlapping networks of activists who could excite others to speak up even without grants. It is easy to imagine a counterfactual. If the United States and, to a lesser degree, the European Union had not given grants to civil societies in Ukraine and Georgia, the civic component would have been absent from those revolutionary events because civic activists a) would be too weak to act together or b) would join political parties long ago to have any impact. In that case, the transitions most likely would not have happened at all because the government would have squelched a small elite group of oppositional politicians with nothing to fear from the larger public.

Thus, as it turns out, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Contrary to what conspiracy theorists believe, there is no direct or immediate connection between funding nonprofit groups and having those entities “produce” a revolution. There is, however, a relationship between the presence of Western financial support, its longevity and quality on one hand and the long-term effects it is bound to generate.

Alternative hypothesis 2

The second alternative hypothesis attributes the success of domestic NGOs to their alignment with political parties.⁹ In other words, the more allied a civic group was with a major oppositional force (Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" or Saakashvili's "National Movement"), the better it performed during the revolution. Based on the accumulated evidence, the hypothesis is partially confirmed. In each country, the leading protest movement (Pora and Kmara) was closely tied to the opposition. However, ISFED presents a powerful exception. The organization was able to influence the course of elections while maintaining its neutrality.

This mixed result carries a number of critical implications. First, the relationship between alignment with parties and NGO success is dependent on the goodness of fit that comes from two things – an area of operation and the strength of each entity. In the cases where areas of operation overlap and complement and the entities are equally strong, cooperation and alignment are more likely and, as a result, will be more beneficial. For instance, during the period of the Orange Revolution both Pora and Our Ukraine were focused on citizens' mobilization, but targeted complementary audiences: the former – activist students, the latter – Yushchenko supporters. The two had an equally powerful presence on the ground. Therefore, it made sense for them to join their efforts to ensure success of the common project – a large-scale mobilization of Ukrainians against election fraud. A similar situation is observed in Georgia where the National Movement and Kmara were targeting complementary audiences, but for the

⁹ D'Anieri and Tudoroiu, "Rose, Orange, and Tulip: The Failed Post-Soviet Revolutions"; D'Anieri, "Explaining the Success and Failure of Post-Communist Revolutions"; Higley and Burton, "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns."

same purpose. Like in Ukraine, both entities had a firmly established own standing that made one useful for the other in achieving its independent goals.

Looking at ISFED, it is easier to understand why the NGO did not need alignment with a powerful political patron to make a difference. Political parties in the region are notoriously weak in election observation. Most of them are so consumed with campaigning and obsessed with winning that monitoring the actual voting often becomes an after-thought. From that perspective, the National Movement did not have the same level of expertise as ISFED. The other difference has to do with the complementarity of interests. While the two were broadly committed to democracy and free elections, ISFED did not see it as its task to mobilize the population or to appeal to any specific group. Rather, it was narrowly interested in communicating the results of election monitoring to as many people as possible. To achieve that, it pursued limited cooperation with the National Movement and Kmara. Therefore, the group did not need to ally itself with any political forces because: a) no party could claim to have as much expertise in the field of election monitoring; b) ISFED did not share the immediate goals of political parties to mobilize voters for protest.

The second implication from this hypothesis speaks to the larger issue of how NGOs can maintain their political neutrality and when they may abandon it. In all four cases, the non-governmental organizations gave up on the most purist interpretations of impartiality that assigns civil society the role of a detached observer of politics. The most extreme examples were Kmara, followed by Pora and, to a much lesser extent, ISFED and CVU (the latter got trapped in a web of conflicting political loyalties). Their experiences point that at crucial stages of a democratic transition NGOs may have to actively take sides in a political struggle. Such stages include various attempts to

challenge the fundamental principles of democratic governance – e.g. election fraud, a coup, an introduction of military/direct presidential rule, etc. They can also be described as critical incidents that will determine a country's future democratic or authoritarian trajectory. At these periods, civic and political components of any society are forced (by the nature of events) to come together to defend (or defeat) the existing order.

The final implication bears on the ongoing debate on how NGOs can remain distinct from the political society, especially taken into account that in an emerging democracy there may be times requiring cooperation more intimate than usual. The only reasonable prescription for these groups is to learn from iterative experiences how to distinguish between critical incidents and a routine (albeit often over-dramatized) daily political struggle. This internalized knowledge will enable NGO leaders and members to identify situations when overstepping normal bounds of neutrality is needed to salvage a long-term democratic future. Through their own mixed performances, groups will also begin to feel where they stand on the blurred line that separates civil society and political parties, and how to avoid those patterns of cooperation that may lead to internal collapse or absorption by a party.

In summary, the performance of NGOs at critical stages of a democratic transition is enhanced by their close cooperation with political parties when the two forces share a common agenda, possess similar organizational capabilities and work on complementary goals. At the same time, NGOs can be equally effective without close alignment with a political force when they possess a strong and self-sufficient capacity that fills the void in the competencies of political parties.

Antecedent variables

Numerous studies have speculated that the strength of civil society is significantly influenced by three intervening variables. The first is domestic political culture that creates a general milieu, which enables or disables pluralism at the ground level. The second is the capacity of the state to carry out its policies. And the third is the ability of external forces to influence state leaders by tying civic freedoms to other policies. The discussion below will review the performance of each variable and its impact of NGO embeddedness.

Table 5. Antecedent Variables

<p>1. Political Culture: More Participatory Culture → Greater Embeddedness</p> <p>OUTCOME: Modified (to subject-participant) and Confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change possible if significant portion (1/3) carries participant attitudes and another part is undecided • Groups with participant attitudes: Westernized youth, middle-class, old intelligencia <p>2. State Role: More Powerful State → More Challenging Embeddedness</p> <p>OUTCOME: Confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-authoritarian regimes in consolidation or equilibrium as culprits • <u>Ukraine</u>: moderate to high capacity in elite organization, power control, governance experience; low capacity in national identity • <u>Georgia</u>: weak capacity in elite organization, power control, governance experience; moderate capacity in national identity <p>3. Leverage Politics: Greater Western Leverage → Easier Embeddedness</p> <p>OUTCOME: Confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Ukraine</u>: High reputational and moderate economic costs → Moderate responsiveness to Western pressure - <u>Georgia</u>: High reputational and high economic costs → High responsiveness to Western pressure

Political culture

In his seminal research on civic culture, Sidney Verba asserts that citizens are most engaged in the matters of governance in a participant culture that encourages public involvement and interest.¹⁰ Extrapolating from this finding, my dissertation hypothesizes that nongovernmental organizations will be better embedded in a participant culture because it provides a fertile ground for active citizenry, which civic groups can utilize to plant their roots in a host society.

Our analysis confirms this hypothesis partially and requires its modification based on the two countries under analysis. As the data below will show, neither Georgia nor Ukraine has a fully-fledged participant culture. But both are a classical example of the subject-participant culture where “a substantial part of the population [in Ukraine – youth and the new middle class, in Georgia – mostly youth and intelligencia] has acquired specialized input orientation and an activist set of self-orientations, while most of the remainder of the population continue to be oriented toward an authoritarian governmental structure and have a relatively passive set of self-orientations.”¹¹

For instance, in Georgia and Ukraine one-third of the population supports protest. In Georgia, 66 percent believe in democracy and 34 percent have a medium to high level of interest in politics.¹² In Ukraine, the support toward the Communist Party declined from 22 percent in 1998 to 7.4 percent in 2005; over one-third of the society recognizes the need for a multiparty system.¹³ What these statistics persuasively show that while democratic and participatory attitudes are not yet overwhelming, they have taken a rather strong root in at least one-third of the society. Both countries also have large segments of

¹⁰ Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

¹² Panina, 25; GORBI, “Survey of Political Attitudes in Georgia,” June 2003.

¹³ Panina, 26; GORBI, June 2003 survey.

undecided individuals¹⁴ who can be swayed by either side. And this is precisely what the pro-democratic parties and NGOs were able to do during the “color revolutions.” By framing the issue in a way that spoke to the domestic society (corruption in Georgia, human dignity in Ukraine), they drafted a large number of uncommitted citizens to their cause.

This finding brings both good and bad news to democracy promoters. On the good side, countries without a developed participant culture are not doomed to decades of authoritarianism. Change is possible there with the presence of two important factors – a segment of the population that carries participant attitudes and another group of people whose political preferences are fluid or immediately indeterminate. This is where the bad news comes in. The two countries under analysis make it clear that three groups can play the role of a conduit for change – youth with Western education or experience of living in the West, new middle-class with its addiction to Western consumerism and standards of living, and old intelligencia with its highly ethical and progressive outlook. In many authoritarian states, it is hard to develop either of these groups to a sizeable proportion for different reasons. Youth may be either indoctrinated early on¹⁵ or choose not to return after education abroad. Middle classes are negligible in size and/or subservient in attitude because benefits are distributed through a patronage system.¹⁶ And old intelligencia is vigorously jailed or exiled.¹⁷ Thus, fostering any of these three agents of change may be a difficult long-term task, especially if efforts are sabotaged by

¹⁴ For example, in Ukraine 40 percent of respondents are not certain whether a direct presidential rule is a good idea and in Georgia over 60 percent have low or no interest in politics.

¹⁵ Consider the case of Russia where young people hold more nationalist and anti-Western attitudes than the older generations. For scholarly works, please see Taras Kuzio, “Ukraine is not Russia: Comparing Youth Political Activism,” *SAIS Review* 26, no.2 (Summer-Fall 2006): 67-83. More evidence can be found on the websites of two prominent, pro-government youth organizations: Nashi [Ours is a counter-response against Pora and Kmara] (<http://nashi.su/>) and Molodaya Gvardiya [the Young Guard is a youth wing of the government party United Russia] (<http://www.molgvardia.ru/>).

¹⁶ Here many African states serve as a classic example.

¹⁷ Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan come to mind.

local governments. The second part of bad news concerns the undecided segment of the population. If authoritarian governments are good at anything, it is intimidation and indoctrination, as they try to make sure that citizens have a firmly held opinion on everything and that opinion always coincides with the party line. To conclude, the immediate challenge seems to be not what authoritarian regimes fear most – the export of “color revolutions” but the need to develop independently thinking sectors within populations that can embrace key notions of participant culture.

Role of the state

While one of my indicators considered the formal landscape that the state created for NGO operation as a part of political embeddedness, it is important to evaluate broadly the role of the state and its impacts on civil society and rootedness. A more general look will ameliorate the highly legalistic and narrowly sectoral approach that the evaluation of formal implantedness for each NGO under analysis was bound to produce. In this regard, my initial hypothesis asserts that the more powerful the state, the harder it is for NGOs to get embedded.

State powers are assessed through a set of indicators originally offered by Bunce and Wolchik.¹⁸ Those include elite organization, authoritarian powers of control, experience in governance and a perception of the incumbent’s national identity. The acquired information is then used to classify the Ukrainian and Georgian regimes by the extent of their semi-authoritarian strength. In doing so, the research relies on the

¹⁸ Bunce and Wolchik, 297-298.

classification developed by Marina Ottaway that distinguishes such governments as those in consolidation, decay, change and equilibrium.¹⁹

Based on the analysis below, our hypothesis is confirmed – in states with semi-authoritarian regimes that are on the path of consolidation or in the equilibrium stage nonprofit organizations will experience more trouble getting embedded in the domestic fabric of society. Regardless of visible similarities in the shape and nature of “color revolutions,” Ukraine and Georgia were at different points in the evolution of authoritarian rule in each country.

Ukraine was an authoritarian regime on the path of consolidation. All the four indicators of state strength show a significant increase between 1992 and 2004. Elite organization improved from low to moderate. Whereas at the collapse of the Soviet Union President Kravchuk faced a tough reality when informal ties of the Communist party network no longer worked, President Kuchma managed to concentrate power and establish networks of enhanced regime loyalty through tightly managed privatization of state assets. State authoritarian powers grew from low to moderate. To their dismay, the first president, Leonid Kravchuk, and during his first term the second president Leonid Kuchma discovered that they had few real instruments of control over key societal actors. Vertical control (over subordinates) was weak. The state was financially impotent and thus unable to offer any rewards or punishments. Initial rounds of privatization created powerful oligarchs who did not yet feel any loyalty to the state. The situation began to change at the end of the 1990s. Improved finances bought more loyalty. Kuchma mastered the game of playing various oligarchic groups against each other and used further privatization as a tool to secure personal obedience. The experience of

¹⁹ Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged*.

governance grew from low to high. In the early 1990s, no Ukrainian politician knew how to govern or even function in a pluralist system. By 1999 the Ukrainian government learned how to manipulate the public opinion and secure the necessary outcome in elections. To summarize, while the government was by no means omnipotent, its capacity in the key areas has risen from low to moderate (or even high). Furthermore, realizing the inevitable reversal of fortunes, the regime was determined to consolidate gains by promoting an insider to succeed president Kuchma.

The situation in Georgia was qualitatively different. First and foremost, president Shevarnadze started with a steeper decline in the four sectors of control. There was a total breakdown in elite organization that resulted in violent internal challenges for leadership. In the early 1990s Georgia politicians had few common ties to each other – Gamsakhurdia, Ioseliani and Kitovani all hailed from the intelligencia class and had no experience of political interactions among themselves that went back to the Communist days. State power was virtually non-existent as the country plunged into the abyss of disintegration. South Ossetia and Abkhazia claimed independence, Ajara (a southwestern area) operated as a feudal part of Georgia. The powers of central government stretched no further than the capital. Georgian nationalist leaders had no experience how to run a state, and their Communist opponents had no idea how to be democratic. By the end of the 1990s, the situation changed. State powers became moderate in the areas of elite organization and governance experience. President Shevarnadze established small patronage networks and eliminated non-state paramilitary units. He also gained experience in manipulating elections, but remained afraid to use it to the fullest extent not to damage his international reputation of a reformer. However, unlike Ukraine, state authoritarian power remained rather weak. State finances were in a sorry state, relying on

substantial flows of aid. Feudalization of governance and centrifugal tendencies continued. The government was operating mostly in the survival mode. To sum up, the authoritarian regime in Georgia was in a state of decay, seeing no clear path how to consolidate gains and eliminate dissent with limited financial resources.

Given the analysis above, it should not be surprising that Ukrainian NGOs had a greater difficulty (than their Georgian counterparts) embedding themselves into the domestic society because of the moderate authoritarian capacity of the state and its experience in suppressing dissent. However, they managed to survive unlike many nonprofits in Russia. What helped them in this situation was a widespread nationalist resentment of Kuchma within the population and even among the disunited pro-democratic elites. Unlike in Georgia, where neither Gamsakhurdia nor Shevarnadze was ever seen as a Russian stooge, by the end of his term Kuchma was viewed as a traitor of national interests by the populations in central and western Ukraine and pro-Ukrainian intelligencia (the latter constituted the core of many national NGOs).

To conclude the discussion, our case studies make it clear that an overly powerful state is an obstacle to NGO embeddedness. However, the ingenuity of Ukrainian NGOs in dealing with this situation shows that state power should not always be treated as a death sentence to civil society, especially in countries with dual/split national identity.

Leverage politics

The debate on the importance of leverage politics in international relations has been long and prolific. In the area of democracy promotion, it has taken a clearly predictable shape. It speculates that the greater the Western leverage and, concomitantly, elite responsiveness to that leverage, the easier it is to promote democracy and, in our case, for NGOs to get embedded.

The evidence presented by the four cases studies strongly confirms this hypothesis for Ukraine and Georgia. Non-governmental groups in the former had a more difficult time surviving because the Kuchma regime was not as responsive to international pressures as the Shevarnadze government. However, in both cases the international leverage was sufficiently high. Thus neither Ukrainian nor Georgian leadership could afford to suppress or ignore the role of NGOs. The reputational and foreign policy costs trumped the desire of Kuchma and Shevarnadze to clamp down on NGOs completely.

As the hypothesis at the beginning of this section indicates, the evaluation of Western leverage should be approached by reviewing not only the tools, which Western states have in possession to influence foreign governments, but also the vulnerability of domestic regimes to external impacts.²⁰ The example of many post-Soviet states (among which Russia figures prominently) shows persuasively how some instruments have failed to work as well as provoked a sharp backlash because of their low capability to influence political elites. That is why, in reviewing the outcome for the intervening variable of leverage politics, the discussion will concentrate on both leverage mechanisms and elite responsiveness to them.

In Ukraine, Western leverage included high reputation and moderate economic costs. As the Kuchma regime grew progressively authoritarian, Western governments (in particular the U.S. and EU) sought to freeze their diplomatic contacts at high-level with official Kyiv. From 2001 Leonid Kuchma met mostly with Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski and infrequently with German chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Those close to the president rumored of his obsession to secure a meeting with George W. Bush. The

²⁰ Way and Levitsky, "Pigs, Wolves and the Evolution of Post-Soviet Competitive Authoritarianism, 1992-2005."

public humiliation of the Ukrainian regime went as far as a change of alphabets (from English to French) to avoid sitting the Ukrainian president between George Bush and Tony Blair at the 2002 NATO summit in Prague. In the meantime, the West continued to press for change by denying visas to key oligarchs who were allies of the regime, suspending portions of the U.S. foreign assistance to Ukraine and publicizing monitoring reports that were highly critical of the government. While the reputation costs were high and visible, economic ones were modest. Ukraine was not yet heavily integrated into the Western economic space. The major bulk of cooperation remained with Russia. Its share and importance continued to increase as Ukraine became increasingly dependent on cheap Russian gas to fuel the growth of its reinvigorated industrial sector.

Because of that, the responsiveness of the Ukrainian government to Western pressures was rather moderate. Kuchma officials increased their anti-American rhetoric, which in the months preceding the revolution turned into an outright hysteria. The government also did its best to impede the functioning of Western nonprofit organizations, such as IRI, NDI and Freedom House, by threatening to suspend their accreditation in the country. At the same time, the regime continued to emphasize multi-vectorialism. Kuchma insisted on attending personally the NATO summit in Prague and developed a very close bond with the Polish leadership, which helped a historic reconciliation of the two peoples. Although President Kuchma did not answer repeated phone calls from U.S. State Secretary Colin Powell during the events of the Orange revolution, his government accepted a foreign mission to mediate discussions between the opposition and pro-governmental forces. In other words, a much stronger internal capacity of governance (see the previous section) and an ability to re-orient to Russia and tap into the fears of instability from Ukraine's immediate Western neighbors (like

Poland and Lithuania) to avoid complete isolation gave the Kuchma government a greater degree of autonomy in handling foreign criticism than Eduard Shevarnadze ever had.

Western leverage in Georgia was high both in terms reputational and economic costs. Shevarnadze was heavily invested in his image of a reformer that lingered from the times of Gorbachev. He was also interested in maintaining the reputation of a national savior that he acquired domestically and abroad after coming back in the middle of the 1990s to war-torn Georgia. Therefore, initially his government had much less space for maneuvers and forays into the authoritarian realm. That autonomy was even further undercut by high economic costs, which any slide into dictatorship risked to impose. As acknowledged by numerous interviewees and government officials indirectly, Georgia was completely dependent on foreign aid to maintain the political system and make debt repayments. Without Western support, the government would have been unable to pay even meager salaries to state employees and social payments to retirees.

When combined, the two factors determined a high level of responsiveness to foreign interference. Shevarnadze was willing to show openness (albeit fake and temporary) and bow to international advice. For instance, he accepted foreign mediation from Jim Baker to resolve the dispute over the composition of the Central Election Commission. Overall, the government was never as repressive toward NGOs and independent media as in Ukraine. Rustavi-2 covered freely numerous protests by Kmara. ISFED was allowed to maintain its representation on the CEC – something that was never even under consideration in Ukraine, regardless of formal pleas from the Committee of Voters.

To summarize, both states were responsive to Western pressures but the extent of outside influence depended on the governments' concern for their reputations and the damage that could be done by Western isolation to their economies. In Ukraine, Kuchma's willingness to accommodate the West was moderate. He still cared about his reputation and did not want to be completely cornered into cooperation only with every former Soviet republic to the east of Ukraine. Therefore, the government did not kick out Western foreign groups, did not conduct massive arrests and never used torture against political activists. These were the red lines that Kuchma knew would make him "nevyjizny" (unable to exit the country – a Soviet term for those who could never leave the country). Unlike Yanukovych, he also shirked from the use of force against Orange demonstrators, understanding that it would land the Ukrainian government in permanent isolation from the West. However, the second Ukrainian president was no pushover. He had and used resources to silence his most annoying critics. He actively played the Russian vector to compensate for the lack of contacts with the West. But in essence, it was Ukraine's geopolitics – its location between East and West and thus its permanent attachment to each of those poles – that did not allow Kuchma to lapse into excesses.

In Georgia, the government's willingness to accommodate the West was high for it understood that without Western moral and financial backing the country may not survive. Again, the position seems to have been determined by the country's geopolitical location and economic strength. Before the viability of pipelines bypassing Russia became too obvious, Georgia was considered a far and remote country for close Western interest.

LESSONS LEARNED

The dissertation has proved that organizational embeddedness plays a critical role not only in helping nascent civil societies survive and thrive in new democracies, but also in facilitating the overall process of democratization. This central finding bears a number of implications for four key audiences that are concerned with civil society development as part of their agendas. I will review below what lessons each of these groups should take from this work.

For political science theorists on civil society and democratization

My dissertation contributes to our understanding of civil society by serving empirical proof that in nascent democracies societal embeddedness is the key in turning civic groups from a witness to a participant in the democratization process. It, therefore, adds to the existing knowledge on the role of civic groups in the “color revolutions.”

Most studies on the subject talked about the NGOs, which participated in those events, without providing a substantial previous background that would help explain how those groups emerged so strong on the day of elections. That is why, it was not clear what a group needed to do in order to become a strong voice in the process of democratic transition. It seemed puzzling why some NGOs stood out of the crowd, while others disappeared in the general picture. My dissertation provides a resolution to this puzzle through its most significant discovery – societal embeddedness as an explanatory factor of the successful performance of non-governmental organizations during the “color revolutions.” By assessing the degree of embeddedness, one is also able to see the difference in performance among the four groups under analysis as well as the difference between them and the rest of NGOs in their countries.

The second substantial finding of this research pertains to a series of alternative arguments. My analysis shows that the arguments about Western financial backing or party alignment as the key explanatory factors carry either no or much less (and more conditional) weight than previously assigned.

A new research agenda emerges from my dissertation and focuses on five points. The first emphasizes the importance of micro-level analysis. A large number of previous works were pre-occupied with assessing general trends (i.e. macro level) of civil society development in the former Soviet Union. This led to concentrating on either simple numeric measurements, or legalistic aspects of civil society functioning, or on painting too broad of a picture (e.g. the portrait of a national NGO sector) to gauge what actually needs to be done. As my dissertation shows, there is a need for more works on specific NGOs that would detail their successes and failures, let us refine our understanding how civil society really works and improve our policy recommendations. The second point pertains to the need to consider societal embeddedness in the framework of analysis. By doing so on macro- and micro-levels, scholars will be more inclined to see the performance of civic groups on the continuum of the embeddedness dilemmas rather than in dichotomous terms. This process will produce more nuanced suggestions and avoid two biggest pitfalls in recommendations – one that regurgitates common sense ideas (e.g. work with parties, cooperate with government), which read like truisms at this point, and the other that slides into highly judgmental and often condescending propositions of what is right and what is wrong. The third aspect is about re-focusing on normative transfers at the micro-level to see how foreign, mostly Western, ideas are re-constructed in other societies. It combines previously successful research on normative transfers with the attention to micro-level analysis of specific NGOs. The benefit of such endeavors is

more data that is available to all interested parties (but most importantly to democracy promoters on the ground) on what works and what does not, and how the process of transfer occurs. The fourth part of the agenda should break the analytical wall of separation between NGOs and other societal actors. This wall exists both literally (in too many texts there are separate sections on parties, government, media and civil society) and figuratively, as there is no attempt to see how these actors interact with each other and how their interactions change internal dynamics within each of them. The analysis of my dissertation makes it clear that in order to be effective, these assessments need to be intertwined. The final point is about an existing research gap. There are very few studies on attitudes within civil societies. Due to that, it is impossible to know if civic participation makes any difference for NGO activists or if such people are just another type of bureaucrats, albeit internationally funded. If the latter is the case, this would be another sign (at the macro level) that NGOs are not sufficiently embedded.

To conclude, it is important to identify what my work signals for current trends of the discipline. In essence, it suggests a refinement of existing approaches that brings together a micro-level analysis of NGOs, makes embeddedness the cornerstone in assessment and places NGOs under review within the general process of democratization.

For NGO activists in nascent democracies

Three key lessons come out of the dissertation for local activists. First, the need to concentrate on domestic societies should be a paramount and overarching priority in their work. In this regard, nothing will replace grass-root outreach and fieldwork. Only when these two are effective, a civic group is capable to de-Westernize the concept of

civil society and the specific norms it is advocating among the population. Unless such de-Westernization happens, there will be no local ownership in their project and no local interest in their future.

Second, non-governmental organizations must recognize and revisit the dilemmas of embeddedness. Only a continuous assessment of where an organization falls on the spectrum of choices in its relations with government, parties and public will make it aware of red flags, which may be pointing that the group is going off-course. Embeddedness should be recognized as a continuous balancing act, not a one-time event where major decisions are made once and forever.

Finally, civic groups need to become serious about domestic funding. Unless there is a minimum level of financial support at home, they may not be able to survive changing currents of foreign aid as well as a volatile economic situation.

To summarize, though each of these recommendations is not new, they look at the problem from a different angle – what an organization needs to do to transform itself from a body, implanted by foreign forces, into a natural entity in the domestic society.

For governments in nascent democracies

Much has been already said about the need for a larger and more systematic discussion within governments and between a government and an NGO sector on how to work together. Unfortunately, in most former Soviet states, this discussion seems necessary, but is unlikely to be helpful in enhancing cooperation in practical terms. The major reason for this grim assessment is that most individuals, who populate those governments, have little understanding about the concept of civil society. And even if they do (something that may be believed about Georgia's President Mikheil

Saakashvili), they are all too willing to ignore it in order to pursue their own agenda without having to overcome the hurdles of civic scrutiny and criticism.

In these circumstances, workable solutions should aim for a medium-term impact. To achieve it, governments need to recruit a new generation of citizens to mid-level bureaucratic positions. Such people are more likely to understand civil society and have participatory attitudes that come from three factors - no upbringing in the Soviet system, Western education and possible prior involvement in civil society. However, the arrival of this generation is not a matter of time. It ties directly to the ability of a government to pursue a larger democratization agenda that would fight corruption and nepotism and launch a progressive civil service reform. Without these changes, governments in nascent democracies will remain the last resort for an ambitious youth to work. Instead they will be what they are right now – a graveyard for ideas and a monument to passivity and incompetence.

Another point within the democratization agenda that governments have to consider is the need for greater institutional predictability. It is next to impossible for civil society to structure its interactions with a state that continues experimenting with various forms of government – parliamentary, presidential or mixed. Institutional unpredictability is usually a corollary of the political struggle among many factions that often results in a constant rotation of mid-level bureaucrats with whom civic activists are most likely to work on a regular basis. Therefore, in a situation when the political mega framework shifts all the time, NGOs prefer to retreat to their own civic domain until the system settles and the roles of each player can be clearly deduced.

Governments in nascent democracies need to advance economic reforms. Their success will have indirect positive results on the functioning of civil society. As wealth

spreads from the privileged few, NGOs will be able to fundraise more widely without fearing for political dependence on their patrons. Public donations and volunteering will increase, too.

To sum up, to help civil society it is more productive for newly democratic governments to engage in a larger political and economic reform whose positive externalities will assure both a better cooperation between NGOs and state, and greater chances for the nonprofit sector's financial survival.

For Western promoters of democracy

The dissertation advances a number of lessons that should be put to use in the effort to improve the delivery of foreign aid for democratization. The first of them stresses the need for an ongoing assessment of limitations for democracy promoters. As the case studies make it clear, geopolitical considerations alter the leverage of external democratic agents – sometimes for the better (where other states become interested in fostering democracy in a critical country for the sake of stability), but mostly for the worse (where immediate tolerance of authoritarian regimes is often advocated). Robust domestic economies, however flawed their model may be, may further circumscribe the channels through which pressure can be exerted on local governments. This does not mean that any attempt to build civil society is doomed if the country is high on the U.S. totem poll and its economy makes it less receptive to outside criticism.

In fact, the opposite may be true in a lot of cases, which brings us to the second lesson. In authoritarian regimes, it is possible to promote democracy and plant future (albeit very remote) seeds for civil society without providing a direct sponsorship of NGOs. Instead, foreign donors may concentrate on three types of citizens who

potentially carry participatory attitudes. Such groups include youth, middle-class and intelligencia. In this case, the goals are for the first group to get exposure to Western education, for the second group to form as a class regardless of hostile economic policies and for the third group to survive purges.

In the societies where host governments are willing to accept external assistance and stay on the path of democratization, donors should follow three general prescriptions. The first is to concentrate on bottom-up initiatives from the field as a means to avoid funding fads in Western capitals and better tailor normative assistance. It often means taking up non-conventional projects like Pora and being skeptical of long-standing civic associations whose membership pool can fit in a telephone booth. The next advice is to develop greater responsiveness to a host society's social needs. The major obstacle to greater relevance of nascent civil societies is the abstract nature of their activities at the time when people are suffering very concrete economic needs. Therefore, donors need to balance the funding for NGOs that deal with pure advocacy and those that provide social support. As patterns of foreign support become entrenched, external democracy promoters need to work hard to avoid dependency of their grantees. My dissertation suggests a number of ways to do that, most important of which is the assessment of how embedded a funded organization is in the societal and political environment.

Finally, much has already been written about the need of reform in the United States that would give foreign aid the priority it deserves. When applied to civil society, this suggestion means that any reform should be undertaken in order to better coordinate long-term efforts on civic and political fronts, thereby enabling a more organic transition from a foreign-sponsored to more independent nonprofit sector.

CONCLUSIONS

My dissertation has demonstrated that societal embeddedness is critical for civic organizations in nascent democracies to survive and thrive as a natural and strong component in their host societies. The initial success of the “color revolutions” in Georgia and Ukraine left some wondering about a role for NGOs in the “new” environment where the governments are openly committed to democracy. The sense of a long-awaited victory put many civic activists in a state of stupor about reality. A lot of them hit the speaking circuit and went to rest on laurels. Others quickly joined the new governments. As a result, in Ukraine and Georgia civil society has not yet become an active participant in the new stage of state building and democratization. Its failures have been glaring in both countries. First, the NGO sector was a watchdog that did not bark or barked not loud enough when the Saakashvili and Yushchenko governments began moving away from democracy by creating a super-presidential structure of governance (in Georgia) and eroding already weak institutions for the sake of personal gains (in Ukraine). Second, civic groups were unable to deal with the reorientation of international aid flows toward the Middle East and Afghanistan. More broadly, Ukrainian and Georgian civil societies failed to take advantage of the propitious post-revolutionary environment to build on the existing civic activism and increase the number of people with participatory attitudes. After the revolutions, most demonstrators returned to their homes, believing it was not theirs but the government’s turn to build a new country.

The democratic stalling after the “color revolutions” indicates that civil society remains critical to ensure a return to democratization in Georgia²¹ and to push for

²¹ Miriam Lansky and Giorgi Areshidze, “Georgia’s Year of Turmoil,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no.4 (October 2008): 154-168; Alexander Cooley and Lincoln A. Mitchell, “No Way to Treat Our Friends: Recasting Recent U.S.-Georgian Relations,” *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 2009): 28-33.

national reconciliation in Ukraine. Furthermore, it remains central to combating the Soviet political culture that treated people as subjects, not equal actors, of political process. There are a number of short-term tasks civil society needs to accomplish. NGOs should exercise their watchdog capacity more vigorously to ensure government accountability for the economic stabilization program (which Ukraine has received from the IMF) and the post-war reconstruction fund (which Georgia obtained from the U.S. and the EU). Civic groups must continue monitoring the observance of democratic freedoms and principles especially during these dire times – the war's aftermath in Georgia and a profound economic collapse in Ukraine when publics may yearn for a “strong hand” and leaders may advocate less democracy for more stability.

Participation of civil society is also important in the medium and long term. Ukraine and Georgia are facing profound questions in terms of foreign and domestic policies – what to do on the international arena now as EU and NATO memberships are out of reach, how to interact with Russia after the August war with Tbilisi and the gas dispute with Kyiv, how to re-structure the domestic economies to avoid similar financial shocks in the future, and how to maintain the countries together, given the loss of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and centrifugal tendencies in the Crimea. Civic groups can and should take an active part in forging a common societal agenda by engaging with other actors and developing ways for a wider public involvement. Civic groups will be capable to meet these challenges only if they are perceived as a natural element of domestic societies. The relevance of their societal embeddedness at the present stage stems from three factors. First, Western governments will have no (or very limited) funds for lavish aid programs. Therefore, most nonprofits will have to tighten their belt, fend for themselves and find other sources if they do not want to go extinct in this economic ice age. Second,

domestic public will hunger for concrete initiatives rather than round-tables on abstract topics and glossy brochures. This will demand more grass-root work and greater re-orientation toward social programs. Third, governments and political parties will be much less tolerant of a meddlesome voice from the so-called civil society when that voice does not have public support.

To conclude, a vibrant civil society in Ukraine and Georgia is a necessary component to achieve further democratic consolidation and address the fragilities that both states are currently experiencing. The vibrancy can be achieved only if non-governmental organizations are deemed as a natural participant in unfolding social and political processes.

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APPENDIX I - INDEX OF EMBEDDEDNESS

Societal Embeddedness - 53 Points

- Constituency (16)
- Internal Normative Transfers (11)
- Societal Influence (14)
- Financial Sustainability (12)

Scale of Embeddedness

Highly Embedded: 90 - 100
 Moderately Embedded: 65 - 89
 Insufficiently Embedded: 40 - 64
 Weakly/Marginally Embedded: 0 - 39

Political Embeddedness - 27 Points

- Formal Legitimacy (13)
- Informal Legitimacy (14)

External Involvement - 20 Points

- External Normative Transfers (11)
- External Mechanisms of Influence (9)

Potential Total - 100 Points

**APPENDIX II - USAID COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY
IN UKRAINE AND GEORGIA**

Year	Country	General	Legal Env	Org Capacity	Fin Viability	Advocacy	Service Provided	Infrastructure	Public Image
1998	Ukraine	4.2	4.6	3.7	4.6	4.4			3.9
	Georgia	3.4	3	4	4	4			2
1999	Ukraine	4.1	5	3.5	5	5	2.5	3.5	4
	Georgia	3.8	3.5	3.5	4.9	3.5	4	3.5	4
2000	Ukraine	4.4	5	4	5	4	4	4	5
	Georgia	4.0	3	4	5	2	5	3	5
2001	Ukraine	4.3	5	4	5	4	3	4	5
	Georgia	4.0	4	4	5	4	4	3	4
2002	Ukraine	4.0	4.5	3.5	5	3.5	3	3.5	5
	Georgia	4.2	3.9	4	4.9	4.3	4.2	4	4.4
2003	Ukraine	3.9	4	3.9	4.8	3.4	3.3	3.5	4.4
	Georgia	4.1	3.7	4	4.6	4	4.4	3.8	4.4
2004	Ukraine	3.8	3.6	3.9	4.6	3.1	3.3	3.8	4.1
	Georgia	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.8	3.7	4.1	3.9	3.7

Scores:

Consolidation of Civil Society: 1 - 2

Midway Transition: 3 - 4

Early Transition: 5 - 6

APPENDIX III – POSTERS



Figure 1. Pora poster: “Kuchmism – tse beznadia”
[The era of Kuchma is hopelessness].



Figure 2. Pora poster: “Pora dovesty, shcho ty ne kozel!”
[Time to prove that you are not a moron]

APPENDIX IV - EMBEDDEDNESS SCORES

	UKRAINE		GEORGIA	
	CVU	Pora	ISFED	Kmara
Social Embeddedness	35	42	37	38
• Constituency	9	13	10	11
• Internal normative transfers	9	11	10	9
• Societal influence	9	12	11	12
• Financial sustainability	8	6	6	6
Political Embeddedness	15	16	21	17
• Formal	8	8	9	9
• Informal	7	8	12	8
External Influence	13	19	14	17
• External normative transfers	9	11	9	11
• External mechanisms of influence	4	8	5	6
Totals	63	77	72	72

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EDUCATION

PhD candidate 2004 – *Present* Old Dominion University, International Studies Program
 MPA 2002 – 2004 University of North Dakota, Master's in Public Administration
 BA 1996 – 2001 Kyiv Shevchenko University, Bachelor's in English and Japanese

EXPERIENCE

2008 – *now* International Crisis Group, Central Asia Analyst

- Research and write on issues with a potential for conflict in Central Asia.
- Conduct advocacy activities on behalf of the organization.

2004 – 2008 Old Dominion University, Graduate Assistant and Adjunct Faculty

- Taught courses in general education and political science.
- Evaluated students' performance.

2001-2002 National Democratic Institute, Civic Program Assistant

- Cooperated with Ukrainian nonprofit organizations on election-related issues.
- Monitored and reported on political and civil society developments.

2000-2001 Soros Foundation (Ukraine), Scholarship Programs Coordinator

- Managed scholarship programs in Ukraine.
- Monitored operations of seven regional advising centers.

1996-1999 Soros Foundation (Ukraine), Debate Program, National Coordinator

- Launched the program throughout Ukraine through trainings and presentations.
- Organized national events, including workshops and seminars.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

2004-2008 Graduate Assistantship, Old Dominion University

2002-2004 Graduate Assistantship, University of North Dakota

2005-2006, 2007-2009 Global Supplementary Grant, Open Society Institute

1999-2000 Freedom Support Act Undergraduate Scholarship, U.S. State Department

CONFERENCES AND PUBLICATIONS

- "Who is 'We'? Ukraine, Turkey and the EU." Prepared for the 2007 Annual Conference of the British International Studies Association. Cambridge, UK: 18 December 2007.
- "Democracy Promotion in Central Asia: U.S. Foreign Policy Options in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan." Prepared with Marina Mateski for the 2006 Middle East and Central Asia Politics, Economics and Society Conference. Salt Lake City, UT: 8 September 2006.