



After the Color Revolutions

POLITICAL CHANGE AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN EURASIA

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PONARS Eurasia is a global network of social scientists that seeks to promote scholarly work and policy engagement on transnational and comparative topics within the Eurasian space. PONARS Eurasia is based at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

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Cover image: AP Photo/Sergei Grits. A Ukrainian fills a ballot during the presidential elections at a polling station in the village of Vasylivka, 16 kilometers (10 miles) south of Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, Sunday, Jan. 17, 2010.

Contents

About the Authors	v
Foreword	
Cory Welt.....	vii
Part I: Ukraine’s 2010 Presidential Election	
The Drama of Ukraine’s 2010 Presidential Election: Opportunities Lost – Does a Potential for Stabilization Remain?	
Olexiy Haran and Dmytro Prokopchuk	1
The Fallout from Ukraine’s 2010 Presidential Election: Internal Change and the Implication for Ukraine’s Ties with Russia	
Mark Kramer	7
Ukraine after the 2010 Presidential Election: Implications for Democracy and Foreign Policy	
Oleksandr Sushko	13
Part II: Shifting Structures of Power in Eurasia	
Political Turmoil in the Northwestern Black Sea Rim: Ukraine, Moldova and Transdnistria	
Kimitaka Matsuzato.....	18
The Making of a De facto State: Warlords and Militarized Society in Nagorno-Karabakh	
Nona Shahnazarian.....	25
Back on Track? Kyrgyz Authoritarianism after the Tulip Revolution	
Shairbek Juraev.....	30
Beyond “Resource Nationalism”: Implications of State Ownership in Kazakhstan’s Petroleum Sector	
Pauline Jones Luong	35

Part III: Democracy Promotion and Foreign Relations

<u>Kyiv and Tbilisi: No Longer Washington’s Favorites?</u>	
Volodymyr Dubovyk.....	41
<u>External Forces, Nationalism, and the Stagnation of Democratization in Georgia</u>	
George Khelashvili	45
<u>Russia’s Moldova Policy: Soft Power at the Service of Realpolitik?</u>	
Andrey Makarychev.....	51
<u>Odd Man Out Again: Explaining Belarus’ Post-Orange Transformation</u>	
Vitali Silitski.....	56

Part IV: Unintended Consequences of Color Revolutions

<u>These Colors May Run: The Backlash against the U.S.-Backed “Democratic Revolutions” in Eurasia</u>	
Alexander Cooley.....	63
<u>Russia’s Orange Revolution Syndrome</u>	
Nikolay Petrov.....	69
<u>Rethinking the Revolutionary Past: How Color Revolutions Have Led to New Interpretations of Russian History</u>	
Ivan Kurilla	74

Part V: The Future of Color Revolutions

<u>The Color Revolutions Betrayed</u>	
Georgi Derluguian	79
<u>What’s In Store for Color Revolutions? Managing a New Rise of Discontent in a Time of Crisis</u>	
Pavel K. Baev	85

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Foreword

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This collection of essays derives from a February 2010 workshop of the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS Eurasia). PONARS Eurasia is a program that promotes scholarly work and policy engagement on transnational and comparative topics within the Eurasian space, based on the expertise of a global network of social scientists.

The February 2010 workshop brought together scholars and experts from Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine, Japan, Europe, and the United States to assess the state of democratization and authoritarianism in post-Soviet Eurasia; the impact of U.S., Russian, and EU policies on regional political developments; and the prospects for future political change. The 16 essays in the collection consist of revised versions of draft papers that participants presented at the workshop and which were previously published online in March-June 2010 as PONARS Eurasia Policy Memos Nos. 89-104 (presented here in a different order and, on occasion, in slightly revised form).

Coming on the heels of the second round of Ukraine's presidential election, the workshop naturally focused on the transition of power in Kyiv earlier this year. In **Part I** of the collection, three essays examine the Ukrainian election and its implications for Ukraine's foreign policy and governance. Writing immediately after the election, *Olexiy Haran* and *Dmytro Prokopchuk* viewed the coming to power of Viktor Yanukovich, opposition leader, former prime minister, and "villain" of the Orange Revolution, as a consequence of both the consolidation of democratic institutions in Ukraine and the personality-based infighting of the Orange Revolution's "heroes," Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko. Analyzing Ukrainian foreign policy after the election, *Mark Kramer* predicted that while Ukrainian-Russian relations would inevitably improve, Ukraine's drive for NATO membership was going to dissipate regardless of who came to power and issues related to the status of the Russian language, energy transit, and the Black Sea fleet would not necessarily be resolved to Russia's liking (Kramer did not anticipate the controversial post-electoral parliamentary rule change that allowed the government to secure ratification of an agreement to extend the Fleet's stay). In his essay, *Oleksandr Sushko* raised the concern—later expressed by others—that the democratically-elected Yanukovich administration would bring back a semi-

authoritarian style of governance to Ukraine, while in foreign policy it could be expected to steer a middle course between Russia and the West.

Part II focuses on shifting institutions of governance across post-Soviet Eurasia. *Kimitaka Matsuzato* observes how Ukraine, Moldova, and even Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria have experienced similar political struggles in recent years, as elites in all three polities have fought to shape the balance of power between executive and legislative branches. Like Matsuzato, *Nona Shahnazarian* analyzes the nature of real politics in a "de facto" state, in her essay examining the role that warfighting and informal economies played in shaping norms of leadership in Nagorno-Karabakh and the challenges authorities have faced in reining in a political culture shaped by war. Writing before the unexpected April 2010 uprising in Kyrgyzstan, *Shairbek Juraev* explains that the country reverted to semi-authoritarian governance after the Tulip Revolution for three reasons: an absence of democratic ideology among the political elite; the persistence of blood ties; and a decline of American pro-democracy engagement coupled with a rise of Russian influence. *Pauline Jones Luong* examines a 2005 decision by Kazakhstan to require all new energy deals to grant majority ownership to the state and concludes that the agreement not only had an economic logic but a political one: to widen the pool of discretionary funds available to the government for the coercion and cooptation of political opposition. Jones Luong nonetheless argues that this kind of nationalization has kept the door open to checks on authoritarian governance, via foreign companies' support of corporate social responsibility programs.

Part III considers the relationship between political development in the states of post-Soviet Eurasia and their foreign relations, especially with the United States and Russia. *Volodymyr Dubovyk* explains the seemingly decline in priority for the United States of past "stars" Ukraine and Georgia: while the perception of their role in George W. Bush's foreign policy was inflated, a desire by the new administration to distance itself from Bush policy and to prioritize the U.S. relationship with Russia, a return to "selective commitments" in U.S. foreign policy, and less appreciation for the positive political changes that have occurred in these countries all contributed to a distinct policy shift. *George Khelashvili* argues that external actors contributed to democratic backsliding in Georgia after the Rose Revolution, but not in ways usually presumed (that is, through Western nonchalance or the Russian threat); rather, the Saakashvili administration's adherence to a political (and pro-Western) worldview reminiscent of the neoconservatism that prevailed at the time in U.S. government circles provided Georgia with a veneer of democratic legitimacy. *Andrey Makarychev* examines how in Moldova the ruling Communist Party's loss of power upended Russian policy toward Chisinau, leaving Moscow to awkwardly consider "soft power" approaches to maintaining its influence in the country, to date with little success. Makarychev proposes Moldova as a "test case" of the ability of the EU and Russia to promote a common vision of European security. Finally, *Vitali Silitski* analyzes a trend of mild liberalization in Belarus, attributing this trend less to the greater domestic security of the regime than to President Alexander Lukashenko's declining relationship with

Russia in the midst of financial crisis, which has led him to seek greater engagement with the West; Silitski cautions that this engagement will produce piecemeal and uncertain political change at best, but that such change is better than none.

Part IV examines the “blowback effect” of the color revolutions in Russia and other countries, where governments have imaginatively tightened up reins of power in an effort to forestall such political upheavals. *Alexander Cooley* discusses new restrictions governments imposed on nongovernmental organizations after the color revolutions and the efforts of Russia and others to reduce the impact of international democracy watchdog missions while using the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a multilateral cover for stifling dissent. Cooley also argues that the United States’ uncritical support of Georgia’s president Mikheil Saakashvili undermined the credibility of U.S. claims that it sought to support democratic, not just anti-Russian, states in the region. *Nikolay Petrov* argues that the Orange Revolution had a direct impact on the methods used by the Russian government to limit the space for democratic politics, including legislation limiting NGO activity; support for the pro-state youth organization Nashi; and the establishment of other “official” civil society networks. *Ivan Kurilla* demonstrates how the backlash against color revolutions has affected not only governance in Russia but also national historiography, as a wariness of mass protest has led to efforts to de-romanticize and diminish the role of “mass liberation” and revolutionary activity in Russian political history.

Finally, the two essays in **Part V** offer interpretations of color revolutions that predict what the future holds for such events in post-Soviet Eurasia. *Georgi Derluguian* situates the color revolutions in a longer-term series of struggles for power sharing involving ever broader circles of elites, with the limited involvement of wider social strata. According to Derluguian, the next wave of political change in the region is likely to feature the involvement of those outside the political elite – including workers and the “petty bourgeoisie” of the former Soviet intelligentsia. *Pavel Baev* analyzes the elements that set successful color revolutions apart from failed ones, while noting the rapid loss of appetite among Western patrons for such methods of political change. While the global economic crisis appeared to lead in the short-term more to political complacency than further upheaval, Baev observes that the crisis can have longer-term effects, including a weakening of authority and, eventually, an explosion of pent-up frustration. While Derluguian and Baev penned their initial drafts prior to the April 2010 mass unrest in Kyrgyzstan, the change in regime that followed vividly illustrated their thesis.

Many individuals were instrumental in the production of this volume, as well as the organization of the workshop that inspired it. I would like to especially thank Graduate Research Assistants Marina Litvinsky and Charles Sullivan; IERES Executive Associate Caitlin Katsiaficas; Program Assistant Olga Novikova; Managing Editor Alexander Schmemmann; and IERES Director Henry Hale. Finally, PONARS Eurasia, together with The George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs, expresses its deep appreciation to the International Program of the Carnegie Corporation of New York for its ongoing support.

The Drama of Ukraine's 2010 Presidential Election

OPPORTUNITIES LOST—DOES A POTENTIAL FOR STABILIZATION REMAIN?

Olexiy Haran and Dmytro Prokopchuk
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The Orange Legacy and the Reemergence of Viktor Yanukovich

The Orange Revolution remains an event of crucial importance to the entire post-Soviet space. Its main accomplishments were the establishment of political freedom (including freedom of the press) and free and fair elections. After Ukraine's 2006 parliamentary elections, the country was recognized by the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization Freedom House as the only free country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Elections in Ukraine matter, and no political force has managed to monopolize power.

On the other hand, many aspirations of the Orange Revolution were not realized, including ending corruption, strengthening the rule of law, and judicial reform. This led to the frustration of the Orange electorate, especially those who voted for Viktor Yushchenko in 2004 and his political bloc, Our Ukraine, in 2006 and 2007. As a result, politics in Ukraine became populist, and the Orange forces became hostage to electoral democracy. The Orange Revolution came to be perceived as only the first of many needed steps toward fundamental economic and political reform. As in other post-Communist societies that have experienced democratic change, broad opposition to the *ancien régime* differentiated and split after the Orange Revolution. This manifested itself not only in differences between the Orange leaders, Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, and their approaches to the economy and governance, but also in the institutional competition between presidency and cabinet that was provoked by hasty and unbalanced constitutional reform in 2004. More power moved to the parliament, the value of victory in the 2006 parliamentary elections increased dramatically, and the whole campaign turned into a "fourth" round of the 2004 presidential election. In this case, however, the Orange coalition was split: after dismissing Tymoshenko's cabinet,

President Yushchenko secured parliamentary approval of the new Prime Minister Yuri Yekhanurov by signing a memorandum with his main rival and Party of Regions leader, Viktor Yanukovich, thereby legitimizing Yanukovich's return to the political arena. Unfortunately for Yushchenko, this led to a decrease in popular support for Our Ukraine, while support for Yulia Tymoshenko's Bloc (BYuT) only grew.

The same Orange split happened after the early parliamentary elections of 2007. The president picked the wrong strategy; he could have positioned himself as a judge between BYuT and the Party of Regions. He had enough authority, and his faction (Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense) remained in government (Our Ukraine received only the third highest number of votes, but they gained half the cabinet positions thanks to an agreement with BYuT). Still, from the very beginning, Yushchenko viewed Tymoshenko as his main competitor and decided to sabotage her coalition. As a result, the president's popularity fell and Our Ukraine collapsed into many competing groups. The split between Orange forces helped Yanukovich strengthen his position by exploiting the opposition niche, especially convenient at a time of economic crisis starting in 2008.

The Potential for a Third Force

In the summer of 2009, it seemed a new sensation was on the horizon: 35-year old Arseniy Yatsenyuk (whose supporters even compared him to Barack Obama), who entered into the struggle between Yanukovich and Tymoshenko. His dismissal as parliamentary speaker only increased his ratings, as well as support from an Orange electorate frustrated with both Yushchenko and Tymoshenko. It even seemed that he had a chance to overtake Tymoshenko and make it into the second round.

However, Yatsenyuk did not provide answers to central questions about his team, political program, and funding. The creation of his party (Front for Change) was conducted in a traditional way "from above." Yatsenyuk even hired Russian spin doctors, who had achieved notoriety in Ukraine's 2004 presidential campaign. As a result, the former parliamentary speaker and minister of foreign affairs, who once signed a letter with Yushchenko and Tymoshenko in support of a NATO Membership Action Plan, and who supported Yushchenko's course for European integration, ended up expressing skepticism at these ideas. Instead, notions of "a Larger Europe" with Russia and Kazakhstan and an "Eastern European initiative" centered on Kyiv emerged. Subsequently, his support among the post-Orange electorate in Western and Central Ukraine fell dramatically (he received only 7 percent in the first round), while Tymoshenko's support rose again.

Former Minister of Defense Anatolii Hrytsenko also did not effectively exploit popular demand for "new faces." Enjoying a clean reputation, Hrytsenko created a new public organization, Civil Position, but, in fact, failed to make a successful appeal to civil society (from where he actually originated). He received just 1.2 percent of the vote in the first round. However, he still plans to participate in local elections and even in possible pre-term parliamentary ones.

The biggest sensation turned out to be former vice premier and head of the National Bank, Serhiy Tihipko. A successful banker, Tihipko won more than 13 percent of the vote, positioning himself as a technocratic pragmatist and declaring the creation of a new party, "Strong Ukraine." Before the runoff, Tymoshenko promised him the premiership if she won, but Tihipko refused to take sides. In the runoff his electorate evenly split between Yanukovych and Tymoshenko. After Yanukovych's victory, he agreed to become vice prime minister in the new government.

Yushchenko: The Tragedy of the Hero of the Maidan

During his term, Yushchenko was correct to speak about European integration, respect for Ukraine's history, the need to overcome the split in Ukrainian Orthodoxy, and mutual respect in Ukrainian-Russian relations. However, in many cases, his policies turned out to be counterproductive. Paradoxically, support for Ukrainian membership in NATO was higher under Kuchma than Yushchenko. Polls by the Kyiv-based Razumkov Center show that in June 2002 the number of those who supported joining NATO and the number against were nearly equal – approximately 32 percent each. In July 2009, at the end of Yushchenko's term, only 20 percent supported NATO membership, while 59 percent rejected it. The president unrealistically hoped to sign an association agreement with the European Union at a summit in Kyiv on December 4, 2009, but it became clear that the EU would adopt the agreement only after finalizing a component agreement on a free trade zone, which requires further negotiations and will have to be completed by Ukraine's new president.

Under Yushchenko, Ukraine's position in its relations with Russia became weaker than it was immediately after the Orange Revolution, when Orange forces were united and the Kremlin was afraid of its "export." In August 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev accused Yushchenko of "Russophobia" and said Russia would not send a new ambassador to Ukraine until there was a change in government. Yushchenko and Tymoshenko did not resort to cheap rhetoric and gave a balanced response to Medvedev's slight (unlike Yatsenyuk, Yanukovych, and parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn, who all tried to justify Medvedev's position). For some reason, however, Yushchenko decided to adopt his Russian counterpart's method. In November 2009, he published a letter to Medvedev demanding the revision of Russian-Ukrainian gas contracts. This was right before a summit of CIS heads of government in Yalta, where the Ukrainian and Russian prime ministers were set to meet. It was a fine desire, but one with a predictably negative outcome. Yushchenko's meeting with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili in Kyiv, while Putin and Tymoshenko were discussing gas supplies for 2010 in Yalta, came across as a challenge to Putin and, hence, made Tymoshenko's negotiations that much more difficult.

The Struggle between Tymoshenko and Yanukovych

The disappointment caused by Yushchenko's performance and the geopolitical U-turn made by Yatsenyuk in autumn 2009 led to a clear understanding that only Tymoshenko and Yanukovych had the potential to make it to the second round.

In 2006, after the signing of the “Universal of National Unity” between Yushchenko and would-be Prime Minister Yanukovych, it seemed that a historic compromise was about to occur. However, this attempt at a unity government failed, and the country was faced with early parliamentary elections. In 2009-2010, Yanukovych’s presidential campaign team settled on slogans from the 2004 election as still the best ones for mobilizing their regional electorate: anti-NATO sentiment, promises to make Russian the second official state language, and insistence on the absence of a falsified vote in 2004 (“our victory was stolen”). Yanukovych also mentioned the possibility of recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia. No Ukrainian president would do that because territorial integrity is a basic principle in Ukrainian politics. Such declarations were made in order to attract the attention of the Kremlin, which had become more reserved toward Yanukovych.

By contrast, Tymoshenko positioned herself as the pro-European candidate. At the same time, she managed to improve relations with Putin, who had his own insider reasons to be disappointed in RosUkrEnergo, the non-transparent intermediary that Tymoshenko managed to eliminate from Ukrainian-Russian gas relations. Although Yushchenko accused Tymoshenko of being pro-Russian during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, her position on the war coincided with those of the EU and the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly.

In many cases, the approaches of BYuT and the Party of Regions do look quite similar; Tymoshenko was quite comfortable negotiating with oligarchs behind closed doors. Nevertheless, a number of differences between the two parties remain. Genetically, BYuT was an opposition force. It has a sizeable national-democratic component, including the liberal “Reforms and Order” party. BYuT’s electorate is concentrated in Western and Central Ukraine. This means Tymoshenko is limited in her actions by the will of her electorate. Finally, the *Batkivshchyna* (Motherland) Party, led by Tymoshenko, is an associate member of the European People’s Party. Taking into account Tymoshenko’s ambitions, it is important for her to be understood and recognized by European leaders, including those from the EPP.

However, the economic crisis, as well as attacks from both the opposition (Party of Regions) and former Orange allies, worked against her. Therefore, on the eve of the runoff, the main question for Tymoshenko was whether disappointed Orange voters would consider her the “lesser evil” compared to Yanukovych.

The Runoff and Fate of the Government Coalition

Tymoshenko managed to almost double her results compared to the first round (45.5 percent up from 25 percent). These additional votes were cast not so much in support of Tymoshenko, but against Yanukovych. Tymoshenko won in 16 regions and the capital, while Yanukovych won only in nine regions. This was not sufficient for Tymoshenko to bridge the 10 percent gap between her and Yanukovych, however. It is now clear that the position of Yushchenko and other candidates who called on voters to say no to both Tymoshenko and Yanukovych disoriented the Orange electorate and played into the

hands of the latter, who received 49 percent of the vote (up from 35 percent in the first round).

However, these figures, and the fact that Yanukovych received less than 50 percent of the vote, weakened the new president's authority and legitimacy (there were some irregularities in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, but it was difficult for Tymoshenko to prove that these irregularities influenced the final results).

Additionally, after the 2004 constitutional reform, the Ukrainian president shares power with the prime minister. Yanukovych's victory thus did not seem to be as threatening as it might have been in 2004. It will also be risky for Yanukovych to push for early parliamentary elections. The entrance of new players like Tihipko and Yatsenyuk could mean fewer votes for the Party of Regions.

To have a governing coalition in the present parliament, the Party of Regions needed to find a compromise either with BYuT or with the pro-Yushchenko Our Ukraine. This last idea seemed to have already been Yushchenko's plan during the campaign.

However, after bargaining with Our Ukraine, the Party of Regions rejected this option. With the support of two small factions (the Communists and the Lytvyn bloc), it suddenly changed the parliamentary procedure for forming a ruling coalition. According to Ukraine's constitution, a coalition can only be formed by factions that have a parliamentary majority. The new procedure allows individual deputies to break from their faction to join a ruling coalition. As a result, the Party of Regions was able to create a new coalition and a government led by Mykola Azarov, a close supporter of Yanukovych. This decision may be dangerous as key positions can now be controlled by the Party of Regions. Both the executive branch and the opposition declared they would take the decision to Ukraine's constitutional court.

Prospects for the Country

Unlike the 2004 elections, which both sides viewed as a winner-take-all contest, the post-Orange experience has shown that Ukraine's main political forces can all make compromises. Despite the drama and scandals of the recent presidential campaign, and the potential dangers connected with the increasing power of the Party of Regions, Ukraine's political and business elites do not want a concentration of power in the hands of one leader, even if he or she represents the party they support. A return to a Kuchma-type presidential rule does not seem very likely.

A move to a parliamentary model, on the other hand, is possible. As the parties are weak, however, such a model could be unstable. Alternatively, if one party was to receive a majority in parliament, it could monopolize power. Moreover, Ukrainians would like to retain the right to elect their president. Hence, some kind of balance is needed. A kind of mixed model could thus emerge, in which executive power is not split but is under the control of the cabinet and balanced by a directly elected president (as in Poland). According to Ukraine's constitution and political realities, such changes can come about only as the result of a compromise between the country's main political forces.

During every electoral campaign, presidential candidates in Ukraine appeal to the electorate in the vote-rich East and declare their desire to improve relations with Russia. However, this does not mean that Ukraine's new president will be willing to defer to Russia or relinquish his freedom and authority to maneuver in foreign policy. It is also evident that Ukrainian business groups do not want to come under Moscow's control again, as they would face competition from more powerful Russian business groups. The tone of Ukrainian-Russian relations is likely to improve and become more pragmatic. However, despite zigzags and certain dangers, geopolitical logic will probably continue to push Ukraine towards Europe. It is in this context that the West should understand both the problems and potential of the young Ukrainian democracy and engage it accordingly.

The Fallout from Ukraine's 2010 Presidential Election

INTERNAL CHANGE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINE'S TIES WITH RUSSIA

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The dénouement of Ukraine's presidential election in January-February 2010 was as raucous as the campaign. Appearing at a victory rally on election night, Viktor Yanukovich spoke to his supporters only in Russian, even as he claimed to be grateful to "all Ukrainians." In subsequent days, the defeated candidate, Yulia Tymoshenko, refused to accept the outcome even though all international election monitors reported that the election had been fair and legitimate.

Despite this discordant ending, the election in many ways confirmed how far Ukraine has advanced since late 2004. Even as neighboring Russia has embraced a far more authoritarian and stultifying political system, Ukraine has moved closer toward Western-style democracy. The 2010 presidential election was the latest in a series of free, fair, and meaningful Ukrainian elections marked by lively competition and outcomes that are uncertain until the votes are actually counted. The incumbent president, Viktor Yushchenko, suffered a humiliating first-round defeat and did not even try to anoint a successor. The head of the large election observer mission for the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe, Heidi Tagliavini, hailed the 2010 Ukrainian election as "a well-administered and truly competitive election offering voters a clear choice." What has happened in Ukraine over the past six years is that all the major politicians and political parties have come to accept rules of the game that permit free elections and peaceful transitions of power. Tymoshenko's initial challenge of the 2010 results petered out precisely because it did not fit within those rules of the game. Although this achievement is still fragile and could, in some circumstances, be reversed, Ukrainian citizens seem unwilling to follow Russia down the path of authoritarianism.

Indeed, Yanukovych himself, despite all his failings, has no incentive to abandon free elections. Despite enduring a humiliating defeat during the Orange Revolution in late 2004 and early 2005, he has actually been the chief beneficiary of the democratic elections engendered by the Orange Revolution. As early as March 2006, his party, the Party of Regions, won the largest share of the vote in Ukraine's parliamentary elections with 32 percent, enabling him to be appointed prime minister in August 2006. In April 2007, Yushchenko dissolved the parliament and ordered new parliamentary elections, which, when held in September 2007, once again saw the Party of Regions win the largest share of the vote, attaining 34 percent. Even though Yanukovych, during the 2010 campaign, frequently condemned the Orange Revolution, the irony is that his victory in February would have been impossible without the legacy of the Orange Revolution. He thus has a stake in preserving that aspect of it.

The example set by Ukraine's competitive politics and democratic elections since 2005 has not gone over well in Moscow. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and other senior Russian officials have repeatedly depicted the turbulent political scene in Ukraine as "chaos" and "dangerous instability," contrasting it to what they insist is admirable "stability" and "predictability" in Russia. Their effort to denigrate the legacy of the Orange Revolution has had more to do with Putin's domestic priorities than with anything in Ukraine per se. The Russian authorities were deeply unnerved by the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and they were determined to prevent any such thing in Russia. By portraying the situation in Ukraine in an unfavorable light, they hoped to convince ordinary Russians that Orange-style protests in Russia would simply make things worse. But now that the unambiguously pro-Moscow candidate in Ukraine has come to power in a free election, such pretenses will be harder for the Russian authorities to maintain. After observing what has happened in Ukraine, some Russian citizens might even begin to ask themselves why Russia cannot join Ukraine in having meaningful elections, free-wheeling political competition, substantive debates about politics in the media, and peaceful changes of power from one party to another.

The potential "demonstration effect" of the 2010 election is only one of several key implications of the election for Ukraine's ties with Russia. Although relations with Russia will unquestionably be better under Yanukovych than they were under Yushchenko, the potential for friction is greater than one might assume.

Language and Minority Issues

Ukraine's 2010 election outcome, with the country divided between Yanukovych's 11 oblasts in the east and south, and Tymoshenko's 17 oblasts (and the city of Kyiv) in the center and west, reflected the tension that persists between ethnic communities, especially over the emotional question of whether Russian should be given the status of a second official language alongside Ukrainian (ethnic Russians now account for only around 17 percent of Ukraine's population, but the 2002 census indicated that roughly one-third of Ukrainian citizens regard Russian as their primary language). The Russian government has spoken out frequently on behalf of the Russian-speaking community in Ukraine and has urged the adoption of Russian as an official language. Yanukovych

pledged during the campaign to confer official status on Russian soon after he takes office, but he will likely encounter fierce opposition in parliament. If he tries to force the measure through too soon, or if the Russian government intervenes in a heavy-handed manner in favor of the change, the issue could spark a backlash, with adverse consequences for Ukrainian-Russian relations.

Energy Ties

Ukraine's heavy dependence on Russia for energy supplies has been a perennial source of tension between the two countries. The Ukrainian economy is extraordinarily energy-intensive (Ukraine's energy consumption per unit of gross domestic product is more than three times as high as Germany's) and receives large quantities of natural gas and oil from Russia. Ukraine had little incentive to try to mitigate its energy consumption prior to 2005 when it was receiving subsidized supplies from Russian companies that tolerated long delays in payments. After the Orange Revolution, however, Gazprom (the Russian state-owned natural gas monopoly) and other Russian energy companies threatened to cut off supplies if Ukraine did not agree to pay promptly at higher prices. Unresolved pricing and payment disputes spurred Gazprom to halt supplies of natural gas to Ukraine in early 2006 and again in early 2009. The cutoffs demonstrated Gazprom's ability to wreak havoc not only in Ukraine but in many other European countries that are at least as (or more) dependent on Russia for supplies of natural gas. Both times, moreover, settlement of the disputes lacked transparency and involved the sorts of murky intermediaries long favored by Gazprom.

In the long run, Russia's decision to charge Ukraine higher (and more realistic) prices for natural gas and oil will be beneficial by giving Ukrainians an incentive to reduce energy consumption. In the short to medium term, however, the potential for major disruption and an ever-greater burden on Ukrainian consumers will remain. Yanukovich's election does not eliminate the potential for further confrontations about payments and transit. What his election could change, however, is the status of Ukraine's natural gas distribution network. Legislation adopted at Tymoshenko's behest in February 2007 bans any transfer of ownership or control of Ukraine's gas pipelines. Tymoshenko, who had signed an agreement with the European Union in March 2009 to upgrade Ukraine's pipelines, pledged during the campaign to keep the gas distribution network under the control of Ukraine's Naftohaz and out of Russia's hands. Yanukovich made no such pledge and talked instead about a gas "consortium" with Russia. Given Ukraine's current economic plight, Yanukovich might be tempted to try to strike a deal with Russia like the arrangement set up in Belarus in 2006-2007 that made Gazprom a co-operator of Belarus's pipelines.

Whether Yanukovich can take such a step is doubtful, however. Unless he is able to overturn the legislative ban in Ukraine, he will not be able to transfer anything to Gazprom. That said, numerous experts in Ukraine have argued that the status quo with the pipelines is untenable in light of Ukraine's (and Naftohaz's) economic travails. Yanukovich might well seek to persuade parliament to allow at least partial privatization of the pipeline network, depicting this as a compromise that makes more

economic sense (and which would also benefit Yanukovich's wealthy supporters in the Donbass region, who would be well situated to purchase large shares). If a privatization scheme is eventually enacted, Russian authorities will want Russian investors to acquire major stakes, which in the future might be yielded to Gazprom. To guard against this, Ukrainian legislators would undoubtedly set sharp restrictions on participation by Russian investors. That, in turn, would likely provoke strong complaints from Moscow.

Relations with NATO

During the Yushchenko years, Ukraine's bid for integration into Western organizations was a constant irritant for Moscow. Whenever Ukrainian leaders hinted that they might someday be interested in joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or in receiving overt security guarantees from the United States, the Russian government sought to make clear that any such move would be unacceptable.

In April 2008, the NATO governments formally declared that "Ukraine will be a member of NATO," but they gave no timetable or any details about when Ukraine might be invited to join or even receive a Membership Action Plan (MAP). In the two years since, the issue has fallen off the agenda. Even if Tymoshenko had been elected, the question of NATO membership would no longer be a live one, for four main reasons.

First, the public mood in Ukraine has remained solidly against NATO membership. Polls conducted in 2008 and 2009 revealed that only around 20-25 percent of respondents supported NATO membership, whereas roughly 55 percent opposed it. Although political leaders could undoubtedly generate greater public support for NATO membership if they wanted to, achieving majority support would likely take many years.

Second, even if public opinion were more strongly in favor of NATO membership, the split in the Ukrainian political elite – with Yanukovich staunchly opposed to NATO – would deter NATO members from inviting Ukraine. In all of the former communist states that have joined NATO thus far, a consensus existed among the leading political elites that NATO membership was desirable. If one of the main politicians in Ukraine is adamantly against joining NATO, allied governments have little reason to extend an invitation.

Third, the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war has converted the question of NATO membership for Ukraine (and Georgia) into a non-starter. Even before the war, the German and French governments were strongly opposed to even giving Ukraine a MAP, much less inviting it to join the alliance. In the wake of the August 2008 war, German and French opposition to any further enlargement of NATO into the former Soviet Union is even more vehement. Because NATO members must unanimously approve the admission of new members, this factor alone is enough to prevent any consideration of Ukraine's possible entry.

Finally, most Ukrainians are distinctly favorable in their perceptions of Russia. Of the dozens of countries covered by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in mid-2009, perceptions of Russia were far more positive in Ukraine than anywhere else (aside from

in Russia itself). In Ukraine, 81 percent of respondents expressed a favorable view of Russia, and only 16 percent said their views of Russia were unfavorable. By contrast, in Germany, 52 percent of respondents expressed an unfavorable view of Russia, and only 42 percent were favorable. Similarly, in Poland, 59 percent expressed a negative view of Russia, and only 33 percent were positive. Although Ukrainians are worried about their country's dependence on Russia for energy supplies – 63 percent said they are “concerned that [Ukraine] is too dependent on Russia for energy sources” – this anxiety has not translated into a more broadly negative view of Russia. The durability of Ukrainians' positive views of Russia strengthens the likelihood that NATO membership is not going to be a high priority for Ukraine even if a new president who seeks greater military cooperation with the West is elected in 2015.

Relations with the EU

When Yanukovich was prime minister, his government was generally pragmatic in its dealings with Western-sponsored economic organizations and pursued important reforms needed to qualify Ukraine for entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and eventual membership in the EU. Although Yanukovich often wavered and seemed ambivalent about the implications of key measures required for WTO membership, the legislation moved forward during his tenure, facilitating Ukraine's entry into the WTO in May 2008. He also voiced interest, both while in office and during the 2007 parliamentary election campaign, in eventually bringing Ukraine into the EU, a goal also supported by other leading Ukrainian politicians at that time. Although Russian leaders occasionally expressed concern about Ukraine's possible participation in EU-sponsored military activities, the view in Moscow was that EU membership would be permissible, provided that Ukraine also retained strong economic links with the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Russian authorities thus drew a sharp distinction between the EU and NATO.

Over the past two years, however, the situation for Ukraine has changed. The severe economic jolt that Ukraine suffered from the global economic crisis altered the complexion of Ukraine's stance toward the EU. In October 2008, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) came up with a \$16.5 billion bailout package to keep the Ukrainian economy from going into free fall. In late 2009, the IMF suspended disbursement of the final \$1.8 billion until after Ukraine's presidential election. The bailout and Ukraine's continued economic woes induced EU leaders to put on hold any meaningful initiatives vis-à-vis Ukraine. In Ukraine, too, public support for EU membership, which once was around 67 percent, plummeted by early 2010 to only around 33 percent. This trend does not reflect a turn of sentiment against the West – indeed, Yanukovich's first official trip abroad as president was to Brussels – but it does mean that Ukrainians are wary of the austerity and disruption that will be necessary for eventual EU membership.

Conversely, Russia's economic role in Ukraine has increased in relative terms – a trend that may well continue even if the final tranche of IMF funding is soon restored. If Yanukovich is able to achieve visa liberalization and a free trade agreement with the

EU – goals that Ukrainian leaders have been pursuing for some time – Ukraine will no longer need to depend as heavily on Russia. However, Yanukovich's intentions are not yet clear. Although the appointment in March 2010 of Mykola Azarov, a close ally of Yanukovich, as Ukrainian prime minister might allow economic reform to move forward, the outlook is at best uncertain.

The Black Sea Fleet and Georgian Territories

Russia's current lease for the Black Sea Fleet headquarters at Sevastopol extends to 2017. The Russian government has repeatedly sought an extension of the lease, but both Yushchenko and Tymoshenko dismissed the idea out of hand. Even if Yanukovich proves amenable to extending the lease (in March 2010 he said that he will decide the issue "not to the detriment of Russia"), he has no leeway to do so on his own. The Ukrainian constitution bans foreign military bases, and any extension of the lease would almost certainly require a constitutional amendment. Because there is no sign that the Ukrainian parliament will condone such a step, Yanukovich did not stress the issue during the election campaign. Now that he is president, Russian authorities are likely to make a strong push on the Sevastopol renewal, but if they fail to make headway, that will effectively end the matter. The Russian Navy will have to begin serious preparations within the next few years if it is going to have to shift the Black Sea Fleet headquarters to Novorossiisk when the Sevastopol lease runs out.

Russia is also likely to see whether Yanukovich will agree to recognize Georgia's territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. In the wake of the August 2008 war, the Russian government pressured CIS states to recognize the two breakaway regions. The Ukrainian government in 2008 and 2009 refused, saying that any such step would "violate the fundamental principles of international law." Yanukovich expressed support early on for recognizing the two regions but retreated from this position during the presidential campaign. After assuming the presidency, Yanukovich said that recognition was "not on the agenda." Russian authorities undoubtedly will urge him to move ahead with recognition, but he seems to have very little to gain by recognizing the two states, especially given that even Belarus has yet to do so.

On this issue, as on most of the others discussed here, Yanukovich's desire for closer ties with the EU and his stake in portraying himself as the leader of all Ukraine are likely to induce him to take steps that will displease the Russian government. The acute tension that often existed between Ukraine and Russia during Yushchenko's presidency has now ebbed, but no one should expect Ukraine under Yanukovich to side with Russia on all key issues.

Ukraine after the 2010 Presidential Election

IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY AND FOREIGN POLICY

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In the wake of Ukraine's February 2010 presidential election, there are three major questions that need to be addressed before a comprehensive picture of Ukraine's "post-Orange" future can be developed:

What methods will Ukraine's new leadership use to improve statewide governance? Is there a real threat that democratic institutions and freedoms will erode? What regional and foreign policy implications can be expected?

On the eve of Ukraine's last several elections (2004 presidential, 2006 and 2007 parliamentary), observers typically described elections in breathtaking terms: "decisive," "crucial," "the final battle." However, this year's presidential election confirms the truism that if a democratic order is in place, nothing in politics is final: every decisive election is followed by another just as decisive as the one before. No politician in the foreseeable future will be able to overcome the natural heterogeneity of the Ukrainian nation. Ukrainian-speaking leaders may be replaced by native Russian-speaking ones; NATO enthusiasts may be defeated by those who advocate neutrality; people in power who feel themselves comfortable in Moscow may lose to those who feel at home in Brussels. In 2004, one might have thought that the "heroes of the *maidan* [square]" were going to be in power forever. Now, one might be forgiven for thinking they have been defeated for good. Realistically, nobody in Ukraine will permanently win or lose so long as democratic political competition exists.

Thus, the only distinction among Ukrainian political leaders that really matters concerns their level of commitment to democratic norms, practices, and values. Will the new Ukrainian leadership pursue policies aimed at strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions and practices, or will it attempt to institute a euphemistically-named Russian-style "sovereign democracy"?

While the most likely future scenario for Ukraine remains the continuation of a slow but clear movement toward integration with the West, poor governance and the fragility of Ukraine's political institutions could erode democratic practices, threatening this trend. This danger will be further exacerbated if Ukraine's newly elected leadership proves to be less committed to democratic norms than its predecessors.

At the same time, neither international nor domestic circumstances are currently favorable for ensuring the strengthening of Ukrainian democracy. First, there has been a regional trend away from democracy. The U.S.-based nongovernmental organization Freedom House has identified an erosion of democracy in Eastern Europe over the last three to four years. On this count, Russia stands out, but other states of the region, including Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Belarus, have also exhibited either no progress or further degradation of democratic institutions. Under Ukraine's new leadership, there are no guarantees that the country will be able to retain its unique status in post-Soviet Eurasia (excluding the Baltics) as a "free" state.

Negative developments within Ukraine, namely institutional chaos and poor governance, have also led to growing skepticism among the population. Political forces that positioned themselves as "democratic" proved to be unable to ensure efficient governance. A portion of Ukrainian society has thus become disappointed not only with their politicians but with the principle of democratic governance they represent. Currently, a sizeable number of Ukrainians believe that strong leaders can do more for their country than can rules, laws, and debates. Combined, these circumstances generate a growing risk of democratic erosion in Ukraine.

Leadership and Governance

After the departure of Yulia Tymoshenko's government in March, and the establishment of a new "Reforms and Stability" coalition that formed a government under Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, a fundamental ambiguity about Ukraine's political processes persists.

On the one hand, an opportunity now exists for the president, the cabinet of ministers, and the newly-formed parliamentary majority to form a productive connection. Such a connection may ensure a more consolidated decision-making process, the adoption of necessary legislation, and, ultimately, an overcoming of the institutional disorder, chaos, and scandalous competition between top state officials that partially undermined the credibility of democratic choice for Ukrainians.

On the other hand, there is a risk that the new authorities will misuse their power. The new political leaders have already challenged constitutional norms by forming a coalition with the participation of individual defectors from the previous ruling factions. This step was made despite the fact that in 2008 the constitutional court already ruled on the illegality of such an option. De facto one-party rule may lead to a concentration of power in the hands of a narrow circle of political elites, which may try to fix its stay in power through undemocratic means. This conceivably could lead to a temporary revival of semi-authoritarianism.

It is thus not (weak) institutions, but Ukraine's political and social diversity that offers the greatest insurance against a monopolization of power. Due to Yanukovych's narrow margin of victory (3 percent), his failure to achieve a majority of votes (49 percent), and his loss in 17 out of 27 regions, he enjoys only limited legitimacy. He will not be able to stabilize his rule without making efforts to build a broad-based consensus. His first victory messages suggested at least a basic understanding of his limited social legitimacy and a readiness to appeal to those segments of society that did not vote for him. At the same time, the present composition of government fails to reflect a need to rule on the basis of broad consensus. The overall profile of the new authorities thus remains uncertain.

Another form of insurance against semi-authoritarianism would be a strong opposition, which is able to consolidate the full spectrum of political forces that do not have a stake in the government (about 45 percent of parliament). Opposition parties will probably control most regional (*oblast*) councils.

Last but not least, the relative strength of civil society, which has evolved substantially over the last five years, might play an important role by setting limits to any attempts to reduce freedoms and build a kind of "sovereign democracy" in Ukraine. Although the impact of civil society on the policy process and implementation of reforms has so far been limited, an attempt to concentrate political power in the hands of the executive could well result in the consolidation and further strengthening of civil society, as happened in 2004.

Worrying tendencies in governance are accompanied by negative signs in the judiciary and media sphere. Problems in Ukraine's judicial system include a low level of public trust, violations of the right to an adequate defense, corruption in the courts, lengthy durations of judicial proceedings, ineffective procedures of judicial examination, poor implementation of court rulings, lack of professionalism and responsibility among judges, and non-transparency in judicial selection and appointments. Underfunding of the judiciary also continues to be a major problem. The current situation in Ukrainian courts makes them incapable of defending basic democratic norms, values, and human rights.

Freedom of the media is one of the few real achievements of the Orange Revolution. Despite clear progress, however, recent trends illustrate the threat of a possible deterioration of media freedom. According to Freedom House's 2009 *Freedom in the World* report, Ukrainian media has "grown increasingly pluralistic and a far broader range of opinions is available to the public. However...local governments often control the local media, and journalists who investigate wrongdoing at the local level still face physical intimidation; local police and prosecutors do not energetically pursue such cases." Such worrying trends have been confirmed by independent watchdogs like the Institute of Mass Information (IMI), which in 2009 cited a number of cases of economic, political, and other forms of pressure against journalists.

Ukraine's National Commission on Freedom of Speech and Development of the Information Sector stated its concern about the current situation: "The means of political struggle include party-sponsored materials, contractual relationships between corrupt

politicians and the media, obstructions to journalists' work, arbitrary dismissal of journalists, editorial censorship and the introduction of new forms of secret instructions in the editorial offices, prohibition of criticism, economic dependence, and other new constraints of journalistic rights."

In a pre-election speech, Yanukovych promised to defend media freedom. However, his habits lean far away from Western-style openness and respect for media freedom. He avoids open and direct communication with journalists. All his press conferences, to which well-known Ukrainian journalists are not invited, are strictly controlled by his press team, which prepares all questions in advance.

Foreign Policy Implications

Ukraine's new leadership arrived to power in a regional security vacuum marked by uncertainty and the lack of a stable international order. Ukraine's geographic location has placed it in the field of a powerful geostrategic competition that has in part focused on the country's development model and its values. Any consistent political course thus becomes a highly conflicted one, dimming the opportunity for Ukraine to develop a sustainable foreign policy.

The new leadership of Ukraine will be committed to continuing and concluding current talks on an association agreement with the EU, including a deal on free trade. Such an agreement would set regulatory and institutional limits on Ukraine's economic integration with Russia. According to past statements by Yanukovych, Ukrainian-Russian economic integration is possible, but on the basis of World Trade Organization principles. Taking into account the uncertainty surrounding Russian membership in the WTO, Ukraine is likely to use this approach to mask its lack of political will to pursue any kind of economic integration with Russia other than free trade.

At the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit, Ukraine obtained a promise of future membership. Two years later, the prospect for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration remains uncertain due to a lack of consistency in the country's own policy and the evident hesitation (and even opposition) of some NATO members unwilling to exacerbate tensions with Russia. Ukraine's new leadership is likely to "freeze" any movement in this direction, at least temporarily, and instead pursue a partnership agenda with NATO on the basis of existing arrangements (including the Partnership for Peace and the amended NATO-Ukraine Charter of Distinguished Partnership).

Under its new leadership, Ukraine is not expected to gain a better security environment or greater space to maneuver in international affairs. The United States' foreign policy agenda is likely to focus on its own strategic priorities (Afghanistan, Iran, nonproliferation, the Russian "reset"), and U.S.-Ukraine relations will be built around these major priorities. The Obama administration is choosing to deal with Eastern Europe in terms of what it can do with, not for, the states of the region. For its part, Ukraine's new leadership does not have any constructive Ukraine-U.S. agenda, except for the traditional rhetorical notion of a "mutually beneficial partnership."

The United States has a chance to lead the bilateral agenda, promoting initiatives in areas it considers important: the strengthening of democratic institutions, anti-

corruption, security cooperation (including technical-military cooperation), technology exchange, energy, and stronger people-to-people contacts. It can also cooperate with the EU to promote an integrative, transatlantic, coordinated, and consensus-based approach toward Ukraine, which will be welcomed by any leadership in Kyiv.

The Party of Regions' most noticeable foreign policy message after the elections was that of its deputy chairman, Borys Kolesnikov: "Ukraine with Yanukovich will not ally itself with Russia against the West, and will not ally itself with the West against Russia. Ukraine will be an open country for the whole world." This wording reflects a "soft isolationism" and is reminiscent of the Ukrainian saying "*moia hata skraju* (my house is on the edge)."

Given Ukraine's current political landscape, we can expect to see a certain temporary revival in government discourse of the concept of Ukraine as a "bridge" between the West and Russia. This concept can provide, above all, a comfortable niche for Ukrainian elites trying to minimize the need to make firm choices on the country's most contentious foreign policy issues. It might also be used as an excuse to avoid painful reforms in various spheres, including energy and the judiciary.

In the longer run, the foreign and security policy of Ukraine will mainly depend on domestic developments: either an erosion of democracy and freedom and, unavoidably, a move toward Russia, or the stabilization and further development of democratic institutions and rule of law, leading to gradual integration with the West.

Political Turmoil in the Northwestern Black Sea Rim

UKRAINE, MOLDOVA, AND TRANSDNIESTRIA

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We are witnessing the third wave of constitutional readjustment after the collapse of communism in post-Soviet Eurasia. Following the establishment of founding constitutional regimes in the early 1990s, the second wave occurred in the first half of the 2000s and derived from the malfunctions of the “patronal-presidential” systems (to use political scientist Henry Hale’s term) that had more or less been capable of running these countries in the first years of their existence. The second wave, often taking the form of hasty “revolutions,” in some cases produced what might be considered even more authoritarian regimes than before (Kyrgyzstan and Georgia); other readjustments proved to be half-minded (Transdniestria) or produced unworkable political systems (Moldova and Ukraine). This memo focuses on three countries in the northwestern Black Sea rim (Ukraine, Moldova, and, between them, the unrecognized state of Transdniestria) and assesses their struggle to overcome the negative outcomes of the second wave (Ukraine’s Orange Revolution in 2004, Moldova’s shift to a parliamentary regime in 2000, and Transdniestria’s de facto cohabitation after 2005).

Ukraine: The Collapse of the Orange Coalition and a Constitutional Deadlock

In 2002, then-president Leonid Kuchma began to think it was inevitable that his former prime minister, Viktor Yushchenko, would be victorious in the 2004 presidential election. He thus tried, unsuccessfully, to limit presidential powers by changing Ukraine’s constitution and in so doing neutralize a Yushchenko victory. During the Orange Revolution, such a constitutional amendment was in fact realized as a consequence of compromise between Orange and anti-Orange blocs. The president was practically excluded from the process of appointing the prime minister but continued to

wield considerable power in the state administration by, for example, appointing governors and proposing candidates for the posts of defense and foreign ministers.

These changes to the constitution, however, did not clarify the relationship between the president and prime minister. Before the Orange Revolution, Ukrainian presidents appointed strong figures to the premiership when they faced serious economic crises and replaced them with obedient practitioners once the crisis had largely been overcome. In this way, potential presidential aspirants occupied the premiership for 76 months total before the 2004 election, while “greyer” figures obedient to the president served for 77 months. The 2004 constitutional amendment politicized the premiership by making it the president’s rival *ex-officio*. Of the 57 months from the Orange Revolution to December 2009, presidential rivals Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yanukovich occupied the premiership for 48 months, leaving only 11 months to a technocrat, Yuri Yekhanurov, obedient to the president.

In 2008, Yushchenko sought to undo this new balance between president and prime minister. He proposed to introduce a completely new constitution, something that required a popular referendum. For Yushchenko, this was a far more promising mechanism for reform than seeking a resistant parliament’s approval for specific amendments. The Council of Europe’s constitutional advisory group, the Venice Commission, however, was extremely critical of Yushchenko’s attempt to resolve political conflict through a plebiscite.

The bipolar party configuration that arose in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution did not last long. From 2005 to 2009, governments collapsed and attempts to form cabinets failed not because of competition between Orange and anti-Orange blocs but because of “betrayals” within the blocs. This “de-ideologized” feature of Ukrainian politics may have enabled leaders to compromise in even the harshest of conflicts. As a result, however, the Orange parties lost their ideational attractiveness, one reason for Yanukovich’s victory in the 2010 presidential election.

Still, it is striking that the East-West regional divide so visible in the 2004 presidential election gave way to a more conservative/progressive divide in 2010, reminiscent of Ukraine’s first presidential election of 1991. Targeting the unprivileged strata of society, Yanukovich underscored that goods were cheaper and living standards higher during his premiership (2006-07) than under Tymoshenko’s. Tymoshenko, in her turn, appealed to younger, more educated, and politically active members of the population. Tymoshenko’s electorate did not even appear to expect from her what it did five years before. A young intellectual who volunteered as captain of a self-defense guard during the Orange Revolution now supports Tymoshenko because “she is stronger than Yanukovich. Yulia Vladimirovna, like Putin, will establish order in Ukraine.”

As the constitutional amendments of 2004 introduced a mixed “premier-presidential” regime, Tymoshenko was able to temporarily retain the premiership after her electoral defeat. However, as Yushchenko has repeatedly demonstrated, a premier-presidential regime does not mean that the president is a passive conveyor of parliamentary will who plays little role in cabinet formation (or destruction).

Yanukovych repeated his predecessor Yushchenko's tactics by splitting Tymoshenko's camp: parliamentary chairman Volodymyr Lytvyn's pivotal group and even some members of Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party withdrew support from Tymoshenko. The Ukrainian parliament subsequently passed a motion of no confidence in the Tymoshenko government, and a new coalition composed of the Party of Regions, the Communists, and the Lytvyn Bloc took shape, with parliament confirming Mykola Azarov as the new prime minister.

At the same time, Yanukovych did not intend to repeat Yushchenko's failures. First, he appointed as prime minister the technocrat Azarov, someone who would never become his rival. Second, after his election, Yanukovych openly initiated the formation of the cabinet, showing no respect for the premier-presidential principles of the Ukrainian constitution. In February, he tactfully unveiled his own preferred prime ministerial candidates and, in the end, virtually appointed the new cabinet members. While Yushchenko may have tried to return to Ukraine's 1996 constitution through his aborted "constitutional reform" of 2008, Yanukovych returned Ukraine de facto to the more centralized "president-parliamentary" republic that existed before 2004.

Moldova: A Slovakian Syndrome

As a result of protracted confrontation in 1998-2000 between President Petru Lucinschi and the Moldovan parliament, an anti-Lucinschi alliance of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) and right-centrists amended the constitution to turn Moldova into a parliamentary republic in 2000. However, PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin and other parliamentarians were hesitant to make the president a figurehead like the German president, and they left untouched the competences of the popularly elected president, such as veto power and the right to dissolve parliament. Moldova's politicians agreed, however, that parliament should not elect such a strong president by simple majority, and so the constitution was amended to mandate that the president be elected by more than three-fifths (61) of deputies. Since then, Moldova has constantly suffered from the "Slovakian syndrome," the inability of parliament to form a two-thirds majority to elect a president. The only exception to this was the first parliamentary election after the changes, held in 2001, when the PCRM won a decisive majority of 71 seats.

In the 2005 elections, the PCRM could only win 56 seats, but 11 deputies of the Christian Democratic People's Party (CDPP), who had been the PCRM's stern opponents, suddenly decided to vote for Voronin. The CDPP did not participate in the cabinet but otherwise operated practically as the PCRM's ally from 2005 to 2009. As a result, by the 2009 elections the CDPP had lost its traditional identity and electorate, who shifted to the Liberal Party, another right-wing, pan-Romanian party. Also, the CDCC was unsuccessful in reconciling the Communists' "Moldovanist" position with its own pan-Romanian one, and thus spoiled its relations with its patron, Romania.

On the eve of the April 2009 elections, four parties opposed the "Red-Orange dictatorship": the Liberal and Liberal Democratic Parties from the right-centrist spectrum and the Democratic and Our Moldova Parties from the leftist spectrum. The

electoral campaign was harsh; in April, the pro-opposition newspaper *Moldavskie vedomosti* published a voluminous article “exposing” Yuri Rosca, the CDPP leader, as a KGB agent since 1985 and “revealed” that in 1992 the Russian Ministry of Security (the successor organ to the KGB, soon reorganized as the FSB) ordered him to agitate in extremely pan-Romanian fashion to give Transdniestria a pretext for separatism. The newspaper also accused Rosca of embezzling a huge sum of money that the Romanian diaspora in the United States had donated to support the case of Ilie Ilascu, a pan-Romanian activist sentenced to death in Transdniestria at the time, and to help Ilascu’s family.

The opposition predicted massive fraud by the Communists. After voting day, the Central Electoral Committee announced that the PCRM had gotten 50 percent of the vote and 60 parliamentary seats. Two days later, furious rioters broke into the parliamentary and presidential buildings, burning the former and ravaging the latter (the differing levels of damage gave the opposition a reason to argue that the riot was organized by Voronin himself). The PCRM accused Romania of using schoolteachers, who allegedly mobilized students to join the meetings and demonstrations. According to the Communists, this is why Voronin could not resort to coercion. Voronin deported Romanian diplomats for their alleged involvement in the turmoil, and Romanian-Moldovan relations, tense throughout Voronin’s presidency, reached a new low. Voronin also accused Tiraspol and Moscow of involvement in a conspiracy to overthrow him. In turn, the opposition attributed the turmoil to Voronin’s secret police, which allegedly used the current unrest as justification for repressive measures and to impose the dubious electoral results on the nation. In an interview, however, a Liberal Democratic leader admitted that the scale of fraud in April was not significant and Voronin’s guards could neither have foreseen nor been ready for such fervent protests by Moldovan youths against “negligible falsification.”

Voronin eventually compromised by dissolving parliament in mid-June and ordering repeat parliamentary elections, which took place at the end of July. The vote for the PCRM declined five percentage points, leaving it with only 48 of 101 seats. The anti-communist bloc gained 51 percent of the vote, with 53 seats. The Communist leaders, however, did not admit they were defeated in either round of elections. After all, no party in Europe could gain 45 percent of the vote alone, especially during the global economic crisis. The opposition created a coalition named the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) and the leader of the Liberal Party, Mihai Ghimpu, became parliamentary speaker. Since neither the PCRM nor the AEI had the two-thirds majority necessary for parliament to elect a president, Ghimpu became acting president.

This constitutional abnormality led public opinion to support a return to the pre-2000 semi-presidential regime that featured a popularly elected president, a sentiment that Moldovan politicians and legal experts long shared. An opposing proposal was to lower the voting requirement for parliament to select a president from three-fifths of deputies to a simple majority of 51. This proposal, however, seeks to make the president a figurehead and would have to be accompanied by a more thorough overhaul of the constitution. Another issue is whether a constitutional amendment could prevent

parliament's pending dissolution, something mandated by its two-time failure to elect a president last year.

Unexpectedly, Moldovan leaders have tried to repeat Yushchenko's failed 2008 attempt at "constitutional reform." In February 2010, the Venice Commission advised Moldova to limit changes only to the provision concerning election of the president and only by parliamentary procedure (i.e., without a referendum), just as it had advised Ukraine in 2008. In March, AEI leaders reached a consensus that Moldova should return to a semi-presidential regime with a popularly elected president, but they proposed to change the constitution completely, thereby evading the current constitutional requirement to carry out such reforms through parliamentary approval.

It has been a curious thing to see Ghimpu, the apparent leader of the Euro-integration movement in Moldova, defiantly proclaiming that what the Venice Commission says is just a recommendation, not an obligation. He seems to have expected a positive reaction by the Venice Commission (or at least to overcome a negative reaction), something that Yushchenko failed to achieve two years ago. Possibly, this is because 70 percent of the Moldovan population, tired of constant political disorder, support a return to semi-presidentialism, while Yushchenko's attempt to re-strengthen the presidency did not enjoy public support. In 2000, Lucinschi could not exploit his comparative popularity vis-à-vis "parliamentary oligarchs" because the 1994 constitution did not allow change by referendum. This provision continues to be effective, but Ghimpu apparently expects events to take a different course.

Transdniestria: The Constitutional Crisis

Transdniestria is the only unrecognized state in the post-Soviet space in which the same leader who came to power at the beginning of the 1990s (Igor Smirnov) still rules. Except for the rejection of Samvel Babayan's "military dictatorship" in Nagorno Karabakh, which was followed by the attempted assassination of the president in 2000, past governments in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia have all surrendered peacefully through elections. Smirnov's everlasting administration and his family's privileged status in Transdniestria are a serious discredit to the de facto state. In fact, Transdniestria is one of only two regimes in the former Soviet Union to choose a full presidential regime (the other is Turkmenistan). Smirnov directly controls Transdniestria's cabinet of ministers. Already in 2006, Russia interpreted this practice as facilitating a clientelist distribution of resources and requested that Smirnov introduce the post of prime minister as a condition for financial support for a referendum confirming Transdniestrians' desire to associate with Russia modeled on the U.S.-Puerto Rico relationship. Pressed by Russia, Smirnov introduced a commission for constitutional reform and harmonization of legislation with Russia. As was the case with other promises to Russia, however, the commission remained inactive for three years.

In April 2009, under the guidance of Parliamentary Chairman Evgeny Shevchuk and his "Innovation" party, the Transdniestrian parliament proposed constitutional

amendments that would strengthen parliamentary control over the president, on the pretext of harmonization with Russian law. Smirnov organized furious counteroffensives. By the end of May, several deputies dropped out of the anti-Smirnov front and parliamentarians agreed to cancel the April resolution and participate in the president's constitutional commission. In this commission, Smirnov's clique prepared a superpresidential draft that, among other things, lacked a ban on a presidential third term.

In Nagorno Karabakh and Abkhazia, the opposition needed to overcome a similar authoritarian counteroffensive to overturn the regimes of Babayan and Vladislav Ardzinba. By contrast, the Transdniestrian opposition has suffered a strange spinelessness despite its sporadic assaults on what Shevchuk calls Smirnov's "sultanate regime." Since Shevchuk became parliamentary chairman in 2005, Transdniestria has been in a state of constant cohabitation. Strangely, Shevchuk did not run in the 2006 presidential election, though he would have been a formidable challenger to Smirnov. During the more recent constitutional conflict, Shevchuk resigned (August 2009) from the post of parliamentary speaker when he should have uncompromisingly resisted Smirnov's attempt to change the constitution. Transdniestrians suppose that Shevchuk's economic base, the oligarchic corporation Sheriff, which has extensive commercial networks and gas stations throughout Transdniestria, and which built the only football stadium in *de jure* Moldova where FIFA has authorized the holding of international matches, is highly dependent on Smirnov's favor for taxation, customs, and transportation privileges.

The new parliamentary speaker, Anatoly Kaminsky, has publicly fallen in line with the president, but in practice he has indefinitely postponed a referendum to confirm the draft constitution. Smirnov has not insisted on the referendum because public opinion polls indicate that only a low percentage of the population would go to the polls. Instead, Kaminsky has proposed to change the constitution step by step, beginning with the introduction of a prime ministerial post. In such a way, the Transdniestrian constitutional debate has returned to where it was in 2006.

Conclusion

The constitutional processes described here exhibit transnational characteristics. First, political elites have learned from each other, as demonstrated by the frequent references of Moldovan leaders to (and, hopefully, careful analyses of) Yushchenko's failures. Moreover, Kyivan newspapers (particularly *Dzerkalo tyzhnnya/Zerkalo nedeli*) are full of insightful analyses of Moldovan and Transdniestrian domestic politics, and vice versa. One of the flaws of existing studies of political transition is a lack of attention to this kind of cognitive jurisprudence, although the first task of any constitutional reformer is to survey experiences of other (often neighboring) countries. The common approach of contrasting one or another country's experience to global standards fails to appreciate the dynamism and "participatory" nature of the international constitutional process.

Second, the onset of constitutional reform in the northwestern Black Sea rim is a product of the geopolitical stabilization of the region. The boldness of Yanukovych and

Ghimpu's constitutional proposals, not expected from their predecessors, seems to derive in part from the fact that they have quickly built normal relations not only with their Western neighbors (the European Union and, for Moldova, Romania), but also with Russia. Observers tend to ignore the fact that the Medvedev administration and the Russian right wing (such as Konstantin Zatulin) view the pan-Romanianists (Ghimpu) and AEI as more reliable partners than the Moldovanists (Voronin). The former's behavior is more predictable, and they are also less attached to Transdniestria and more obedient to Romania, with which Russia traditionally has had amicable relations. Tiraspol also welcomed the AEI's victory because the existence of a pan-Romanian government in Moldova makes it easier to justify Transdniestria's independence.

AEI's focus on internal constitutional politics has also eased relations with Transdniestria in practical ways. In 2010, the custom exemption that the Voronin administration had offered to Transdniestrian enterprises in 2006 in exchange for their subordination to joint border control by Moldova, Ukraine, and the EU, expired. If Moldova began to demand that Transdniestrian enterprises pay taxes and customs to the Moldovan treasury in 2010, this could have led the two countries to the brink of civil war. In December 2009, however, the chairman of Moldova's parliamentary committee on economy, budget and finance (from the Liberal Democrats/AEI) told me that Transdniestrian enterprises would continue to be exempted from Moldovan taxation, saying, "We need to solve the problems on the right bank first and then we will think about the left."

The Making of a De Facto State

WARLORDS AND MILITARIZED SOCIETY IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

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“Warlordism” is sometimes seen as a self-repairing strategy for weak states. This memo assesses the rise of the twin phenomena of warlordism and militarism in the de facto state of Nagorno-Karabakh and the ways in which authorities have coped with their complex social effects in the aftermath of the 1992-94 Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

Rocky Times

After the break up of the USSR, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan fielded a regular army. When the newly established states found themselves in a state of war over Nagorno-Karabakh, volunteer armies were hastily formed. The Armenians were in a more advantageous position because of their deeper experience in the Soviet military, which had structurally discriminated against Azerbaijanis. Nonetheless, after the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Armenia in 1992, it was difficult for authorities to organize troops, especially considering the overall social and economic disintegration of the times. For Armenia, the war was unexpected, there was no unified command structure, and there was a lack of military discipline and weaponry. Fear and outrage among the population grew as the wealthiest members of the population found ways to save their possessions and leave while the rest remained in a stifling blockade. In Nagorno-Karabakh, a group of local activists, later joined by volunteers from Armenia, the Soviet army, and the Armenian diaspora, continued to provide civic defense and to fight for secession from Azerbaijan.

Black Markets

One consequence of the war was a rise in black market trade, stimulated by an influx of humanitarian assistance. According to numerous Armenian diaspora aid workers, significant amounts of supplies never reached their destinations. It became clear that aid and supplies were routinely placed into the pockets of influential clans or sold for

profit. Volunteers sent to inspect were fooled by all kinds of techniques used by local authorities (many learned from Soviet times). Humanitarian aid profiteering was notably disappointing and revealed the extent of lawlessness.

There were a number of reasons for this economic behavior, which can be found in the social and economic context of the region. For instance, one of the most criminal places in Soviet Azerbaijan where black markets flourished was the town of Agdam bordering Nagorno-Karabakh. Rumors and jokes ran unrestrained, for example: "They say the hydrogen bomb hasn't yet been invented because otherwise it'd be for sale from a kiosk in the Agdam market!" This infamous market was so close to people on both sides of the conflict that it could not but influence regional economic behavior. As well, Nagorno-Karabakh was a depressed agrarian area, and local authorities invented every possible subterfuge to secure financial grants from Baku.

Black markets were not a new phenomena in Nagorno-Karabakh, though the actors of these markets changed. Players became more barefaced and defiant as the economies transitioned from Soviet centralization to local independence.

Warlords, Rogues, or National Heroes?

Out of the conflict two significant figures rose to power in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh: Vazgen Sarkisyan, Armenia's first defense minister, and Samvel Babayan, the "golden hero of Artsakh" (the Armenian term for Nagorno-Karabakh).

Vazgen Sarkisyan (born 1959) was an indisputably charismatic leader. His sincere and passionate addresses on television created a sense of nationalism and he inspired the so-called "battalion of kamikazes." Known for serving at the forefront of numerous battles for Karabakh, Sarkisyan was able to hone his authority and popularity. In 1993, he founded the Yerkrpah veterans' movement, which, according to Thomas de Waal, author of *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, "became the most powerful organization in the country" and "took over large areas of the economy." By the end of the 1990s, the army became the most influential institution in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Sarkisyan became the most powerful political actor in Armenia, directly influencing political decisions and, when necessary, even election results.

In the last years of President Levon Ter-Petrosian's administration, a split appeared among the ruling elite between the so-called "intellectuals" who stood for economic development (including Ter-Petrosian) and the politician-veterans of the Karabakh war. The interests of these two groups did not always coincide, particularly concerning Nagorno-Karabakh. This ideological split became a source of great contention and one of the key reasons for the subsequent stagnation, poverty, and isolation of Armenia. The internal conflict was ultimately won by the veterans. In 1998, Ter-Petrosian was forced to resign, and Sarkisyan was appointed prime minister. However, in October of the next year, Sarkisyan along with seven others were shot dead by a group of homegrown terrorists.

Paralleling Sarkisyan's rise and tragic fall was the career of Samvel Babayan (born 1965), one of the brightest and most talented commanders of the Karabakh war.

Writing in the newspaper *Golos Armenii*, one observer noted that Babayan “made courageous and uncommon decisions without any academic and military knowledge.” Despite his young age, Babayan became the commander of Nagorno-Karabakh’s army (1992) and later de facto minister of defense (1995). In the late 1990s, he founded the political party “Right and Accord” and competed in Armenia’s 1999 parliamentary elections. For his merit in organizing the protection of Nagorno-Karabakh and for his courage and personal bravery, Babayan was awarded “The Gold Eagle” and “The Hero of Artsakh,” Nagorno-Karabakh’s highest rank.

Babayan epitomized the coming together of black markets and war. As de Waal explains, “Babayan and his family...made money out of both war and peace. In wartime, the wealth came from ‘occupied territories,’ when everything...was stripped... and sold, generally to Iran.” Trading hostages during the war also became a business. Later, Babayan established a monopoly over all cigarettes and gasoline imported to the isolated region. Together with his brothers and other relatives, Babayan also oversaw most local job appointments, all the way down to the most insignificant (including nurses, teachers, and prison inspectors). Babayan’s family members extorted bribes to release from prison those they themselves took into custody. Extremely suspicious of all around him, Babayan eliminated all his opponents, many of whom also combined politics with business, through intimidation, shootings, and grenade attacks. In 1999, Babayan was dismissed from his posts. The following year he was arrested and charged with organizing an attempt on the life of Nagorno-Karabakh’s de facto president Arkady Ghukasyan. Sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment, he served four years before receiving a presidential pardon. After his release, Babayan moved to Yerevan where he had a career as a minor politician. He founded the *Dashink* (Alliance) party, which later merged with three other parties.

In film, his memoirs, and media interviews, Babayan’s comments depict a man with extreme confidence in the virtue of his position. In remarks to a journalist who asked if he took money belonging to the army, he replied, “The only thing I wish to note is that when I was leaving, the ministry’s auditors uttered only ‘thank you!’ and ‘Ketstses!’ [Well done!]. This is because we did work that cost twice the amount of money that was allocated to the army budget.” He also observed that “if there is a single sign of mistrust towards me, I will leave. I am the very Samvel Babayan on whose shoulders the destiny of the nation was laid down in 1992. Thanks to God, I have managed with honor.” His “main mistake,” he concluded, “was continuing to work with people who did not accept my views after the cessation of military action.” Such an attitude was not an obstacle to his enjoying considerable popularity, especially at the start of the war when he distinguished himself through bravery and talent at a time when such qualities were in high demand. In later years, Babayan’s popularity remained high among veterans and villagers, nowhere more so than in his native mountain village of Mysmyna. When in 2000 Babayan’s family house was confiscated and converted into a rural school, parents refused to send their child to that school on September 1 as a sign of honor and appreciation for the “glorious family.” The same type of honor was displayed when the orchards of Babayan’s clan were confiscated for

public use. "Not a single fruit or berry was picked from the trees. No human foot stepped into those gardens. This belongs to him only, and to no one else," said one of the locals. This kind of obstinance in the face of official edict speaks of a kind of primordial loyalty to a patron.

Many consider the overcoming of Babayan's personality cult to be a turning point in the political history of the de facto state, a unique check of its durability. This test seems to have been successful. Despite Babayan's warlordish behavior, which in a short period of time managed to offend a large number of people, he was treated quite softly in light of his infinite popularity stemming from his wartime leadership. Ghukasian later argued that "Babayan's trial was an 'exam' that proved how 'Karabakh is developing as a society'" (de Waal, *Black Garden*).

Coping With Militarism

Between 1992-94, the military emergency was so severe that 15-year old boys were given weapons as though it were a great honor to be sent into combat and probable death. Fighters have later claimed that they made a free choice to take the extreme risks associated with military service in a combat zone. Nonetheless, they undoubtedly experienced pressure from their elders, specifically in the form of strong expectations that they were supposed to seek to avenge their family members' deaths.

In retrospect, it is difficult to say whether this was a reflection of longstanding socio-cultural rules or an ideology produced by the conditions of the time. In either case, as I learned in interviews with veterans, the actual effect of the aggression and anger produced by their military experiences had the opposite effect of what was intended. It undermined and distorted the young people's own identity. Many of them embarked on risky and practically hopeless missions, yet these experiences inexorably led to an exaggerated sense of pride. Once peace was restored, this hyper-masculine aggression was turned against local authorities in the form of disobedience, sabotage, and crime. The veterans also expected moral and financial compensation. Although veterans experienced grief, sadness, trauma, and even suicidal tendencies, not a single respondent ever spoke about feelings of guilt for participating in combat, or doubts about the motivation for conflict. They did, however, express misgivings about what they called "manipulation" or cheating by authorities.

The government of Nagorno-Karabakh made every effort to create a normal civil society as soon as possible. The capital of Stepanakert was rapidly rebuilt. Pensions were provided to invalids and widows. Houses were rebuilt and there was a redistribution of unused apartments, often to veterans and widows. Nonetheless, age-old habits of patrimonialism, nepotism, and patron-client relations could not be eliminated overnight and, on the contrary, became more extreme. Honors, positions, and pensions were handed out. Where possible, the authorities tried to reach agreement and avoid confrontation with veterans. At the least, they figured, in the event of a new outbreak of war, the loyalty and experiences of the veterans would be in very high demand.

Aside from the challenge of dealing with veteran issues, the authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh faced the difficult problem of civilian disarmament. Almost every young man in Nagorno-Karabakh had a cherished weapon. The authorities also faced widespread marijuana use and abuse. In such an atmosphere, truly incredible efforts were required to carry out disarmament. At times, officials had to resort to extreme measures, including searches, beatings, intimidation, and blackmail. In some cases, the authoritarian measures actually drove veterans out of the very polity they helped create. Some moved abroad, especially to Russia. There, some veterans felt free from their wartime “baggage” and began to lead new, normal lives, while others used their fighting skills to prosper in Russia’s underground markets.

Conclusion

A militarized consciousness remains in Nagorno-Karabakh. A ten-year armistice expired in 2004, and residents feel that war may break out again at any time. State media still broadcasts patriotic programs. Dance, song, and poetry continue to glorify and justify feats of war. In such a socio-political context, the attitude toward warlords (and, in general, warriors) remains supportive.

One might say that Nagorno-Karabakh became a model of legitimized and institutionalized warlordism, where some warlords gained high political office and enjoyed great social renown. Many people still perceive their abuses of power to be “deserved.” But the fact that Babayan could “joke that if he did not like what the Armenian government was up to, he would move his tanks on Yerevan” (de Waal, *Black Garden*) speaks to the continued gangsterish and usurper-type character of this authority, which is based on intimidation and force.

Unlike many, the Karabakh war transcended class divisions. Indeed, those higher up the hierarchy were forced to justify their own social position by participation in the war. Moreover, because of the war, the criteria for gaining access to political power were radically refashioned. Did a person fight or not, and how did he fight? In the presidential election of 2008, this was articulated quite clearly. “Tough guy” Bako Sahakyan harshly attacked his opponent, the intellectual Masis Mailyan, even though the latter had also participated in military operations. Their war experiences were an important part of the national discussion. Though less poignant than a decade ago, complex social, economic, and political effects of militarization and warlordism remain in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Back on Track?

KYRGYZ AUTHORITARIANISM AFTER THE TULIP REVOLUTION

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[Editors' Note: This memo was written prior to the April 2010 change in power in Kyrgyzstan.]

The year 2010 marks the fifth anniversary of Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution. The events of March 2005 fostered hopes that Kyrgyzstan was on a fast track to democracy. Five years later, most observers of Kyrgyz politics consider that Kyrgyzstan's post-Tulip Revolution regime has created a repressive authoritarian system in which the prospects for political liberalism further wane every day. For some, this represents a U-turn in the trajectory of Kyrgyz political development. Others argue that Kyrgyzstan has recently gotten back on track after a short deviation. This memo argues that political developments in Kyrgyzstan are being driven at least partially by three factors: the weakness of political ideals, the persisting importance of blood relations in Kyrgyz politics, and the unfortunate dynamics of international politics in Central Asia.

A Five-Year Trajectory of Kyrgyz Politics

The Tulip Revolution heightened hopes for the consolidation of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. The March 2005 events continued the chain of color revolutions that began in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004. For some observers of Kyrgyz politics, the ouster of former president Askar Akayev appeared to be a "return" to democratization. As analyst Ariel Cohen has suggested, unrest would not have been inevitable without Akayev's backsliding into authoritarianism in the mid-1990s.

The events in the immediate aftermath of the Tulip Revolution led to great optimism. Within hours after Akayev's hasty departure to Russia, one could feel how the regime's arms had fallen off, with mass looting in police-free Bishkek just one extreme example. The Kyrgyz national television station, traditionally a mouthpiece for the regime, turned into an open platform willing to broadcast just about anyone who had anything to say. Public protest actions began taking place daily, with demands ranging from calls for constitutional reform to the replacement of a local hospital chief

in the most remote villages in the country. The July 2005 presidential election, which Kurmanbek Bakiyev convincingly won, received the warmest feedback from Western observers of all previous elections held in independent Kyrgyzstan.

The “post-revolutionary” political honeymoon did not last long, however. Feliks Kulov, who once challenged Akayev in 2000, was released by a crowd the day Akayev fled the country and almost immediately entered into a discreet competition with Bakiyev. The “gentlemen’s agreement” brokered between these two political heavyweights resulted in a tandem of President Bakiyev and Prime Minister Kulov, which nearly paralyzed the daily operations of the executive branch. New opposition groups also began to grow inside parliament, consisting of opposition leaders who for whatever reason did not join the Tulip Revolution, such as Omurbek Tekebayev and Kubatbek Baibolov, and several other former allies of Bakiyev who became sidelined at various points after the revolution, including Azimbek Beknazarov, Roza Otunbayeva, Almazbek Atambayev, Melis Eshimkanov, and others.

The contestation phase culminated in November 2006 when Bakiyev, under heavy pressure from opposition-minded members of parliament, was literally forced to sign a new version of Kyrgyzstan’s constitution considerably limiting the president’s powers. This was the first major event demonstrating Bakiyev’s weakness, unusual for a president in Central Asia, but it was also the last.

A month later, the entire process began moving in the opposite direction, referred to by observers as the phase of Bakiyev’s consolidation of power. In December, Bakiyev explicitly suggested that parliament adopt new changes to the Kyrgyz constitution or submit to dissolution. Strikingly, most parliament members, including some opposition leaders, opted to vote for a new constitution that reversed some of the major achievements of the November draft.

This trend continued into 2007. Bakiyev dismissed Kulov early that year. An April protest action of Kulov’s United Front ended in a spectacular show of force by the police, who dispersed the crowd in a matter of minutes, while opposition leaders demonstrated a lack of unity and resolve in organizing the protest action and responding to the police. This put an end to public demonstrations of support for the opposition for a long period and undermined the country’s hopes of establishing a liberal democracy. In turn, Bakiyev took proactive measures to consolidate his own support base. In the fall of 2007, a new constitution passed smoothly in a national referendum. This was followed by new parliamentary elections, which ensured firm control over the legislature by Bakiyev’s Ak Jol party.

The period since the last parliamentary elections could be called the phase of Bakiyev’s aggressive consolidation of power. In addition to fully controlling parliament through Ak Jol, Bakiyev has begun to strengthen his family’s power base in the country. His son Maksim Bakiyev heads the newly established Central Agency for Development, Investments, and Innovations, an agency with an unclear legal foundation that has become a top public organ in charge of a seemingly unlimited range of issues. The president’s brother, Janybek Bakiyev, heads the State Protection Service, a military

entity in charge of guarding all objects of state importance within the country. Meanwhile, opposition leaders are regularly harassed and persecuted by the state.

The evolution of Kyrgyz politics since 2005 closely resembles similar developments in neighboring Central Asian states. However, some academics and policy analysts still wonder why the Tulip Revolution suppressed rather than energized impulses towards democratization. The next sections attempt to shed some light on three variables in Kyrgyz politics, which have significantly limited, if not foreclosed, chances for political liberalization in Kyrgyzstan since 2005.

The Questionable Relevance of Political Ideals

A close analysis of the events leading to Akayev's overthrow reveals that ideology played no role in the Tulip Revolution. While outside observers waxed on about a democratic overthrow, one rarely came across a well-argued speech on democracy by the "revolutionaries" themselves. As political scientist Scott Radnitz observed, the majority of protesters in March 2005 "were not young, middle class, educated urbanites clamoring for democracy, but candidates' supporters and migrants from outside of Bishkek." Also important to contemplate is the role of organized crime leaders in mobilizing the most "able" protesters, though this has rarely been publicly discussed. These examples just highlight the level to which modern political concepts such as democracy, liberalism, or even socialism remain alien to Kyrgyz political culture. Such notions are comfortably used by a handful of intellectuals, while wider politically active groups appear to not have a proper understanding and appreciation of these concepts, even when referring to them.

Telling is the state of political parties in the country. One can find socialist, social democratic, nationalist, liberal, and other kinds of parties. However, neither voting patterns nor the political moves of party leaders seem to correlate with their stated ideologies. The pro-presidential Ak Jol party, which controls nearly 80 percent of parliament, was set up within a month or so before the elections, and a dozen various small parties decided to merge with it within several weeks. Similarly, at least five out of twelve MPs from the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) joined the party in the weeks prior to the elections, including factional leader Otunbayeva, who moved to the SDPK from the Asaba Party of National Revival. These examples merely confirm political scientist Rafis Abazov's statement that political competition in Kyrgyzstan is "between individuals, not political ideas."

Turning the Tulip Revolution into a real opening for democratic transformation would require a strong commitment to democracy from Kyrgyzstan's political elite and electorate. The consecutive battles over the constitution, however, demonstrate the lack of such a commitment. Today, it has become commonplace for dismissed officials to join the ranks of the opposition (Beknazarov, Otunbayeva, Kulov, Isakov), while some opposition leaders, when offered a position, choose to diligently serve at the president's request (Eshimkanov, Atambayev, Babanov, Karabekov). In brief, it appears that expectations of democratization were simply misplaced.

Blood Ties in Kyrgyz Politics

While conventional political concepts appear irrelevant and underappreciated, notions of kinship and business relations remain highly relevant in Kyrgyz politics.

Kyrgyz society, like many other Central Asian ones, has been known for its organization along family and clan lines though patrilineal bonds. Kin-based relationships also permeate politics, serving as the basis for political loyalty.

One implication of such family-based organization of politics has been a tendency towards the establishment of family rule. Bakiyev, like Akayev before him, has been accused of “usurping” power for his family, with reference not only to immediate family members but also to members of his clan or region. Preferring family in politics is tempting, and often very hard to correlate with democratic procedures. As a result, family members usually end up exerting control either in informal ways, such as over business or political appointments, or by holding unelected formal positions.

One of the slogans during the Tulip Revolution was a call against the rule and business of the Akayevs. Bakiyev repeatedly claimed he would act in a different manner. In 2010, however, he turned out to be so bold as to not even bother making a public announcement about the appointment of his son to one of the highest positions in government.

Movement toward a functioning democracy would presuppose both the creation and maintenance of a merit-based appointment system and the holding of free and fair elections. Unfortunately, the persistence of blood relations in Kyrgyzstan undermines the country’s nascent democratic institutions.

Another implication of blood-based politics deals with the disaggregation of political mobilization. Opposition leaders, just like the president, tend to draw their support mostly among relatives and fellow villagers. As public actions in the last two to three years suggest, public mobilization on a national scale is extremely hard to pull off due to the localized nature of support for particular opposition leaders. In this sense, the mass mobilization in March 2005 was to a certain extent a “unique” situation, whereby fraudulent elections in single-member districts served to aggregate the disaggregated “unhappiness” of particular districts.

A De-Motivating External Environment

External support and pressure were important factors pushing former president Akayev to take some decisive steps toward political and economic liberalization in the early 1990s.

The “New World Order” of the early 1990s presupposed the active support of the West for democratizing regimes. Under the guiding hand of external partners, notions such as freedom of the press, political pluralism, and civil society began to take root in Kyrgyzstan. While many fellow former Soviet republics limited themselves to democracy in rhetoric only, Kyrgyzstan went much further with specific actions. The post-2005 period has featured very weak engagement of the United States with Kyrgyzstan. As many analysts have argued, U.S. interest in Kyrgyzstan has mainly been limited to the Manas air base to support military operations in Afghanistan. To the

surprise of many, the United States did not express open disapproval of recent elections in Kyrgyzstan, harshly criticized by many international and local observers as neither free nor fair. Many believe that the Pentagon has taken the lead in structuring U.S.-Kyrgyz relations.

This period has also coincided with the rise of Russia's involvement in the region. In turn, the increased activism of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), coupled with the deterioration of relations between Kyrgyzstan and neighboring Uzbekistan, has made Russia an even more important partner for Kyrgyzstan.

The increasing role of Russia and other Eurasian states has had some impact on Kyrgyzstan's domestic dynamics. As many have suggested, President Bakiyev appears to be following very much in the footsteps of Russia and Kazakhstan by creating a pro-presidential party, streamlining and strengthening the so-called executive "vertical," and restricting citizens' rights to assemble and protest against state policies.

Strong external support for democratization is vital for Kyrgyzstan where a domestic political culture precludes rather than permits a law-governed liberalization process. The current waning interest of the United States and the activism of Russia and the SCO in Central Asia do not suggest a favorable international context for sustained democratization.

Conclusion

The political developments that have taken place in the aftermath of Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution have followed along a path which differs significantly from those of Georgia or Ukraine. After a short period of political turbulence, the ruling regime in Kyrgyzstan managed to suppress political opposition, limit civic freedoms, and even formalize the rule of "the family."

The momentum which led to the forceful overthrow of an unpopular president in 2005 has failed to lead to further democratization for at least three reasons. First, democracy and related concepts remain alien to Kyrgyz domestic political culture. While many democratic institutions exist in Kyrgyzstan today, these should not be confused with indigenous support for liberal political values. For many in Kyrgyzstan, the Tulip Revolution indicated a change in "ruler" but not a change in the country's development. This has been reinforced by the continued salience of traditional kinship relations in Kyrgyz politics. Last but not least, the external support that Kyrgyz democrats of the early 1990s enjoyed is now gone. U.S. concern over maintaining its military base in Kyrgyzstan and Russia's increasing involvement in Central Asia have effectively killed all possibilities of effectively "aiding" democratization in Kyrgyzstan.

Beyond “Resource Nationalism”

IMPLICATIONS OF STATE OWNERSHIP IN KAZAKHSTAN’S PETROLEUM SECTOR

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Analysts have likened the growing direct state role in Kazakhstan’s petroleum sector since 2002 to a form of “resource nationalism” that is part of a global trend precipitated by high oil prices. This interpretation has obvious appeal, both in light of earlier periods in which waves of nationalization coincided with oil price booms and the recent so-called “re-nationalizations” in Bolivia, Venezuela, and elsewhere. However, it is misguided for two reasons.

First, it fails both to distinguish among forms of ownership structure over the petroleum sector and to delineate the respective roles of host governments and foreign oil companies under each of these different forms. In the early 1990s, Kazakhstan adopted foreign private ownership over its petroleum sector by selling off its assets to multinational oil and gas companies primarily via concessionary contracts, the terms of which were already being forcibly “renegotiated” by the late 1990s. When it ratified a new production sharing agreement law in 2005 requiring the national oil and gas company KazMunaiGaz (KMG), created in 2002, to hold a 50 percent stake in all new deals, Kazakhstan adopted state ownership without control by retaining a large role for direct foreign investment in its petroleum sector.

Second, it ignores the underlying domestic factors that have contributed to these changes in Kazakhstan’s petroleum sector. As is widely recognized, the political opposition in Kazakhstan reached its peak in 2001 with the emergence of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan. Since then, President Nursultan Nazarbaev has faced few challenges to his continued rule, in part because he has been able to utilize patronage to co-opt the opposition with the help of state resources, a process that was helped by the acceleration of profits from the petroleum sector in the early 2000s. Viewed in this context, the change to state ownership should be understood as a strategy to consolidate political power – not merely because it provides the state with

access to a greater portion of petroleum rents but also because it increases its discretionary control over this type of income.

Thus, the bad news is that state ownership is a conscious (and, thus far, effective) strategy to fuel the consolidation of authoritarian rule in Kazakhstan. There is also good news, however. The fact that Western (particularly U.S.) oil companies continue to dominate what are currently the country's most significant fields (in terms of size of reserves and production) and have not been completely shut out of developing future fields means that they still have the *potential* to play a much more positive role in Kazakhstan by embracing corporate social responsibility (CSR). What is needed, then, is more, not less, direct foreign investment in Kazakhstan's petroleum sector – but of the right kind. Both because the specter of “resource nationalism” has made many Western oil companies wary about existing and future investments in Kazakhstan, and U.S. oil companies have not yet opted to play an active role in promoting pro-CSR initiatives, this will require renewed U.S. government financial and moral support.

Not all “Nationalizations” are Created Equal

The use of the term “resource nationalism” to describe what has been occurring in Kazakhstan obscures three distinct ways in which a host government can unilaterally change (or seek to change) its pre-existing contractual relations with foreign oil companies: 1) forced “renegotiation” of the terms of existing contracts; 2) nationalization of current or future shares in development projects via state purchase or partnership; and 3) expropriation of assets sold to foreign oil companies via confiscation – usually without adequate compensation. Kazakhstan has been routinely exercising the first option since at least the late 1990s. It has actively pursued the second option since the end of 2004. However, it has not yet engaged in the third tactic (expropriation) and seems unlikely to be headed in that direction. Yet it is this option that is most closely (and accurately) associated with the wave of “resource nationalism” that swept across petroleum-rich states in the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s.

Forced contract “renegotiation” is consistent with Raymond Vernon's (1971) theory of the “obsolescing bargain,” whereby the host government takes advantage of an increase in its relative bargaining power once foreign investors have already made a substantial initial investment that cannot be recovered (i.e., “sunk costs”) to extract a greater share of the proceeds from petroleum development. While most analysts point to 2002 as the crucial year in which the Kazakhstani government began to exert greater influence over the petroleum sector via the creation of KMG, foreign oil companies operating in the country have long complained of the state's tendency to renege on contractual terms.

During the late 1990s, for example, foreign oil companies were routinely forced to pay VAT “due to budgetary shortfalls” despite the fact that their contracts made them exempt. Foreign oil companies have also been continuously subjected to new legislation concerning export restrictions and taxation despite the explicit stability guarantees included in their contracts. In 2000, for example, Kazakhstan's government

announced that it would undertake “a compulsory review of all contracts” to determine whether they were in compliance with the country’s new tax code. At the regional level, state intervention has taken an even more direct form. For example, local authorities have often imposed work stoppages in order to extract extra-contractual payments to supplement regional budgets, finance local infrastructure projects, or contribute to their discretionary funds.

What occurred at the end of 2004 was not merely part of the trend toward increasing state influence in the petroleum sector via KMG and the obsolescing bargain. Had it occurred in isolation, Kazakhstan’s assertion of the state’s right to first refusal when British Gas sought to sell its share in the OKIOC (Offshore Kazakhstan International Operating Company) consortium developing the Kashagan field could certainly be viewed in this light (the move was retroactively codified in an amendment to the Law on Subsurface Use). The July 2005 Law on Production-Sharing Agreements (PSAs), however, signals a clear shift in strategy from forced contract “renegotiation” to nationalization. More specifically, it amounts to a conscious change in ownership structure from foreign private ownership to state ownership without control, as defined below.

Two components of the law are crucial here. The first is that it makes PSAs the preferred contractual form going forward. Up to now, the majority of oil and gas production in Kazakhstan has taken place in fields that are under concessionary contracts. This includes Tengiz, one of three largest fields in terms of reserves and the single largest producing field (approximately 35 percent of total current production), as well as several older, smaller fields (Aktobe, Emba, Kumkol, and Uzen) that have much smaller reserves but together account for approximately 50 percent of current production. The other three largest fields (in terms of proven or projected reserves) – Karachaganak, Kashagan, and Kurmangazy – are already under PSAs. All future contracts – notably, those that involve offshore fields in the Caspian Sea (like Kashagan and Kurmangazy), where most of the country’s future production is expected to lie – will also be negotiated as PSAs. The second is that it requires that KMG own a *minimum* of half the shares (50 percent) in all new (i.e., offshore) projects. Combined with the state’s newly enshrined (and expanded) right of first refusal that facilitates its ability to acquire majority stakes in existing projects (onshore and offshore), the national oil and gas company is now poised to become the majority owner in the country’s petroleum sector.

Just as it is important to distinguish between renegeing on contractual terms and requiring the national oil and gas company (NOC) to be *at least* an equal partner in all new contracts, there is also an important distinction to be made between state ownership with control and without. On the one hand, because the state has designated itself as the rightful owner of what is actually the entire nation’s property, under both forms of ownership structure we should expect an expanded role for the NOC, much less transparency, and higher social expectations regarding both the extraction and allocation of proceeds generated from the petroleum sector.

Forms of Ownership Structure

State ownership with control

The state must own the rights to develop the majority of mineral deposits and hold the majority of shares (50 percent or more) in the mineral sector. Foreign involvement in the mineral sector is limited either to participating in contracts that restrict their managerial and operational control, such as carried-interest or joint ventures (JVs), or to operating as service subcontractors.

State ownership without control

The state must own the rights to develop the majority of mineral deposits and hold the majority of shares (50 percent or more) in the mineral sector. Foreign investors can participate through more permissive contracts, such as PSAs, which grant them significant managerial and operational control.

Private domestic ownership

Private domestic companies can own the rights to develop the majority of mineral deposits and hold the majority of shares (50 percent or more) in the mineral sector.

Private foreign ownership

Private foreign companies can own the rights to develop the majority of mineral deposits and hold the majority of shares (50 percent or more) in the mineral sector via concessionary contracts.

Indeed, in the few short years since Kazakhstan adopted state ownership without control we have already witnessed these trends. For example, KMG is required not only to supply household and industrial consumers with subsidized fuel throughout the country but also to sell petroleum products to the agricultural sector at well below market price. KMG is also expected to finance cultural events and construction projects that provide highly visible and short-term benefits to the general public. At the same time, the Kazakhstani government has altered the rules governing its Natural Resource Fund in order to utilize the funds to pay for an ambitious state-driven development program that it launched in 2006 without specifying how the money will actually be spent. On the other hand, the key difference between state ownership with and without control is that under the latter, foreign oil companies can still play a significant role in developing the petroleum sector. As I will argue below, under certain conditions, this can mitigate the negative effects described above.

The Fuel for Consolidating Power

Blurring these distinctions also serves to privilege the role of international (over domestic) factors in explaining “resource nationalism.” Analysts have commonly

described what has occurred in Kazakhstan as part of a global trend in response to booming oil prices, which automatically shifts the bargaining power away from foreign oil companies and toward the host government. The empirical evidence, however, suggests otherwise.

First of all, the number of petroleum rich countries in the developing world that have retained private foreign ownership – Kazakhstan’s previous ownership structure – since international oil prices began to rise rapidly in the early 2000s is quite high (about two-thirds of the total). In fact, the number of countries adopting this form of ownership structure has been increasing since 1990; whereas at the beginning of the 1990s there were 10 such countries (out of 45, or 22 percent), by 2005 there were 17 (out of 47, or 36 percent). At least two such countries (Algeria and Indonesia) actually adopted private foreign ownership, in lieu of state ownership without control, during the oil boom. Secondly, several of the classic cases cited as evidence of this global trend either amounted to new legislation that explicitly violated (but did not end) existing contracts with foreign oil companies (e.g., Bolivia) or reasserted the state’s primary ownership rights vis-à-vis foreign oil companies (e.g., Venezuela). Finally, the Kazakhstani government was already in a relatively strong bargaining position vis-à-vis foreign oil companies due to the latter’s inability to thwart continuous contractual violations, for example by forming a united front. Despite forming organizations such as the Kazakhstan Petroleum Association (KPA) in the late 1990s to represent their collective interests, individual oil companies made bilateral “backroom” deals with the Kazakhstani government that undermined these efforts.

In Kazakhstan, domestic factors played the key role in the government’s decision to adopt a new ownership structure in 2005. I am not referring to the nationalist sentiments of the regime or the population, since it is well known that both were just as strong in the early 1990s, if not stronger than they are now. Nor is the issue of fairness relevant here, since by industry standards the contracts signed in the 1990s set reasonable terms considering the risks involved. Rather, the primary motivation for adopting state ownership without control was regime consolidation.

Whereas in the early 1990s the Kazakhstani government adopted private foreign ownership in order to generate revenue quickly (e.g., from royalty payments) so as to counter opposition forces that threatened Nazarbaev’s continued rule, by the early 2000s both the need for quick cash and the threat of political opposition had abated. The state’s budgetary revenue from petroleum development alone (i.e., excluding bonuses, privatization receipts, and other exceptional payments) began to rapidly accelerate as of 2000; it nearly quadrupled from \$158 million in 1999 to \$604 million in 2000, and then more than doubled the next year to \$1.43 billion. In addition, any viable opposition had been virtually eliminated by this time. Some of the reasons for its debilitated condition consist of the failure of opposition leaders to mobilize a sustained constituency and their relatively limited resources. At least equally important, however, is the Nazarbaev regime’s increased ability to utilize its coercive capacity and access to patronage to either intimidate or co-opt opposition leaders.

Making Lemonade out of Lemons

The news is not all bad. That adopting state ownership without control is both a conscious and (to date) effective strategy to fuel the consolidation of authoritarianism in Kazakhstan is an unfortunate but hardly unique outcome. In other words, given the dearth of democratic regimes in its neighborhood, it is highly likely that Kazakhstan would have ended up in the same place with or without petroleum wealth. More troubling are the social and economic implications of a petroleum-rich country that lacks any checks on its discretion to extract and spend proceeds from this sector. One of these, certainly, can come from civil society. However, there is also another potential source – foreign oil companies that are both committed to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and are able to effectively resist the obsolescing bargain. The choice of state ownership without control rather than state ownership with control means that this is still a real possibility.

While there is ample and often justifiable skepticism about the actual impact of CSR, there is also good reason for some optimism about its potential under the two aforementioned conditions – and it comes from within the post-communist world. Consider the experience of Azerbaijan, which adopted and has retained state ownership without control since the early 1990s. In short, because the majority of foreign oil companies operating in the country have not only embraced the principles of CSR but also been able to form a united front against the government, they have improved the prospects for Azerbaijan's oil wealth to actually improve its citizens' lives. There are several areas in which this has occurred, including: 1) raising the level of transparency; 2) contributing to local business development; and 3) involving local communities in the determination and evaluation of socioeconomic development projects.

In the interest of space, I will highlight only the first of these. Relative to Kazakhstan (and most other petroleum-rich countries in the developing world), Azerbaijan has a fairly high degree of transparency over its oil revenues. A major factor has been the leadership of British Petroleum (BP), which has received financial as well as moral support from the British government. As the operator of the Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC), BP has essentially imposed its own preference for disclosing both the terms of its contract and its payments to the government on the other members of the consortium – including SOCAR (the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan). Alongside Shell and Statoil, BP has also influenced Azerbaijan's decision to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), making it part of the first tranche of petroleum-rich countries to do so and only one of two countries deemed to be in compliance. Conversely, the refusal of TCO (Tengizchevroil, operated jointly by the U.S. company Chevron and now KMG) to join EITI until 2008 is widely considered to have been the chief obstacle to EITI implementation in Kazakhstan.

Kyiv and Tbilisi: No Longer Washington's Favorites?

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Since Barack Obama has come to power, the United States has not fundamentally distanced itself from Ukraine and Georgia or, as some critics would have it, abandoned them to their fates. Joint projects are ongoing, and new initiatives have also been launched. There has been talk, for instance, of Ukraine being a part of the anti-missile defense system that the United States plans to install in the region; Washington and Kyiv have resumed an initiative to reconstruct a high-level bilateral body, the Strategic Partnership Committee. Many strong ties also remain between Washington and Tbilisi; the United States is committed to support Georgia in its transformation.

At the same time, there have been signs that Washington has been unhappy and even impatient with leaders in Kyiv and Tbilisi. The administration has been reviewing the U.S. relationship with Ukraine and Georgia and, to a certain extent, been uneasy in dealing with certain politicians and political forces.

Before we get to personalities, however, it is important to recognize how the changing context of U.S. foreign policy has set the stage for a change in relations. Several factors are relevant. Some involve a broader reconsideration of the conceptual background for U.S. foreign policy and geopolitics that has taken place in the United States since Obama came to power. Others involve Washington's reassessment of both its priorities in the international arena and the best ways to achieve its goals.

Let us first begin with conceptual and strategic considerations. One could argue that there has been considerable continuity in U.S. foreign policy since President Obama took office. At the same time, the new administration has definitely taken a fresh look at the conceptual foundations, ideology, and methods of U.S. foreign policy. We have been witnessing a return to a kind of "traditionalism" based not on attempts to achieve hegemony but on a renewal of American leadership.

Obama has also promised more multilateralism, which he is working to deliver. After eight years of often-arrogant unilateralism, the attempt to achieve greater

multilateralism is mostly welcome. The administration is not explicitly trying to align U.S. policies with those of the European Union or with particular European capitals, but it is trying to listen to and take into consideration the words and arguments of traditional allies in, say, Berlin or Paris. With regard to Ukraine and Georgia, Europeans have been very much disappointed in recent years. This European negativism has influenced what Washington thinks about its relations with the two states.

At the same time, both extreme views on the subject of U.S. hegemony are incorrect. No such hegemony exists, but the United States is also not broke or impotent. The reality is in between. The United States still has considerable power and potential to lead, but its ability to commit itself globally and to support its worldwide endeavors has limits. While there is still much talk of globalism in Washington, the United States realizes that it need not be present in every corner of the world. We thus see a return to selective commitment, more characteristic of a moderate conservative approach (in many respects, the Obama administration finds itself closer to moderate conservatives than to traditional liberals). The logic of selective commitment implies that the United States needs to choose carefully what and where are its priorities.

This brings us to a second point: that Ukraine and Georgia have never been very high on the list of U.S. priorities and probably never will be. They will always fall within the ambit of broader regional policies, whether these are directed toward greater Eastern Europe or the Wider Black Sea Area (WBSA), or even the more vaguely defined Eurasia. Contrary to some expectations, the WBSA, or the so-called Black-Caspian Sea region, has not become a priority for the United States. There has been no clear vision of U.S. interests in the region and Washington is not really strengthening its presence in the area in a way that one might expect. Take U.S. bases in Romania and Bulgaria – they have nothing to do with the region itself but with contingencies beyond its borders. For a time, there was an opportunity for the WBSA and certain regional states to be high on the list of U.S. priorities, but this opportunity greatly diminished after the events of 2001. The subsequent reorientation of U.S. policy had dramatic consequences for the WBSA, including Ukraine and Georgia, who have slipped down the list of U.S. priorities.

The core of U.S. interests today lies between the Eastern Mediterranean and the western borders of India (and, perhaps, even further to the east to encompass India and China). Afghanistan has increased in importance for this administration, and the war there is often characterized as “Obama’s war.” It is an urgent priority and challenge, and it has become a prism through which Washington sees everything else. The first thing the administration does when talking to its allies is try to assess how they can help with efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. This has automatically reduced the relevance of countries like Ukraine and Georgia and is reminiscent of the days when, after September 11, the Bush administration dispatched requests to U.S. embassies worldwide to find out what their host states could do to assist the United States in its “war on terror.”

Third, as mentioned, the Obama administration appears to have a different understanding of what it means to be a liberal in foreign policy and to conduct liberal

foreign policies. Obama is certainly a liberal, as are many in his inner circle. However, they appear to represent a “new breed” of liberals, which we might consider pragmatic or “realist” liberals. They focus less on human rights, for instance. When this administration talks to Russia, the issue of human rights surfaces (if ever) at the very end of the conversation. There are always other more concrete and pressing issues to discuss. The same can be said for Obama’s relations with China and other authoritarian states. Indeed, being too principled on human rights is seen as a major obstacle to opening up a dialogue with the “bad guys,” a dialogue Obama promised to have during his presidential campaign and that he has tried to undertake since becoming president. There is an appreciation of the fact that it is close to impossible to successfully talk to such “bad guys” while harshly criticizing them for violations of human rights.

Generally, U.S. democracy promotion has experienced a strange fate in recent decades. The Clinton administration sought to expand the community of democratic and pro-market states through humanitarian interventions and financial assistance. The Bush administration had a different idea of how to install democracy, often resorting to means of “democratic imperialism” and, in certain countries, “bombing in” democracy. The Obama administration has not shelved the slogan of democracy promotion but it holds a different view of liberalism and democracy. With respect to Ukraine and Georgia, for instance, there is lesser appreciation for the extent to which democracy has taken hold. It is not of inherent value for the administration that Ukraine and Georgia have a free media or reasonably fair elections, for example. Having free press and pluralistic elections is fine, but it is not enough (and, indeed, there is a fair point to this).

Finally, the perpetual “Russia factor” needs to be taken into account. While relations with Moscow are also not a priority for the Obama administration, the latter still sees Russia as a more important partner than Kyiv or Tbilisi with regard to the foreign policy issues that really matter to the United States. The logic of the U.S. “reset” with Russia is based on at least four major arguments. First, Washington needs Moscow to deal with issues like Afghanistan, Iran, and North Korea. Second, there is a need to have Russia involved in nuclear nonproliferation efforts and strategic arms control. Third, Russia is not as authoritarian as is usually portrayed; there may be problems with democracy, but the emphasis should be on Russia’s stability and predictability (so unlike that of some other post-Soviet states, which have engaged in democratic experimentation). Fourth, if the United States were to soften its approach toward Russia, this would lead to Russia softening its policy toward its post-Soviet neighbors.

This last argument has become a basis for the Obama administration’s repudiation of a regional “balance of power” approach toward Russia. Calls to contain or counterbalance Russia, and to use countries like Ukraine and Georgia as vital elements in this, are rejected by Washington’s policymakers. Such an approach has never really been dominant, though it was well liked by some in the previous administration. It might also have been a more fashionable approach if the 2008 U.S. presidential election had turned out differently. With the Obama administration, however, this regional balancing approach has been set aside.

Arguments for the Russian “reset” have their shortcomings, but only time will prove their validity or lack thereof. The “reset” is certainly serious, but it is far from the strategic rapprochement taking place between, for instance, Berlin and Moscow (whether the “reset” turns out to be a strategic move or more of a tactical maneuver remains to be seen). In the meantime, a new wave of “Russophile” and “Russocentrist” sentiments have surfaced in Washington.

Finally, the so-called “color revolutions” have been discredited in the eyes of many in the current administration, both in theory and in implementation. They have certainly produced muted results in all the places where they occurred, and the momentum these “revolutions” initially built up has been squandered to one degree or another. Also, most people in the administration, including Obama himself, tend to strongly dislike politicians who are ideologues, “revolutionaries,” or populists. Instead, they favor credibility, effectiveness, and persistence. The “leaders” of the “color revolutions” in both Georgia and Ukraine look rather pale in this regard.

Moreover, one way the Obama administration has attempted to set itself apart from the Bush legacy is related to personalities. An informal term in Washington – “Bushies” – refers to people who were in the Bush administration or who actively supported it. One might argue that there are not only domestic “Bushies” but international ones as well, foreign political leaders who enjoyed great support from the Bush administration. Both former Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko and Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili fall into this category. Trying to distance itself from the Bush legacy, the Obama administration also distances itself from Kyiv and Tbilisi.

In the case of Ukraine, now that the Yushchenko era is over, much will depend on the policies of those who have succeeded him. Washington had no preferences or personal stakes in this. Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine and the next set of leaders in Georgia will be judged by their actions. The United States has learned its lesson: it will not personalize its policies in Ukraine or Georgia, or anywhere else for that matter. The preferred option is to be supportive of certain dynamics and trends in these countries instead of extending support to particular individuals.

This is a credible approach. However, it also poses a certain risk that while U.S. decisionmakers wait for new Ukrainian (or Georgian) leaders to deliver much-needed reforms, bilateral relations will suffer. The level of engagement may decrease, and these countries (not only their leaders) could become neglected or kept at a distance exactly at the time when continued U.S. support is so important.

External Forces, Nationalism, and the Stagnation of Democratization in Georgia

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Since the so-called Rose Revolution, Georgia has been a promising testing ground for theories of international influence on democratization. The Georgian government was a collection of young “democrats,” heavily dependent on foreign (most importantly American) political, economic, technical, and moral support. However, Georgia slipped ever backwards in democracy rankings. What went wrong? Is there anything external actors could have done, or could do now, to support Georgian democratization? This memo tries to analyze whether foreign contributions were important for the democratization process in Georgia and why this most likely candidate for democracy promotion backtracked on democracy. It concludes with a discussion of the Barack Obama administration's chances for improving the prospects for Georgian democracy.

Introduction

Georgia has recently become a divisive issue, not only between great powers but also between people of different ideological inclinations. The idiosyncrasy of the Georgian regime under President Mikheil Saakashvili has elicited a great range of emotions, from admiration to outright contempt. Assessment of the regime’s performance is equally diverse – some laud Saakashvili’s economic performance and state-building efforts while others point to grave mistakes in foreign policy and an excessive concentration of power domestically. An important issue in these debates is an implicit disagreement about what the role of external forces (including Russia, the United States, international and nongovernmental organisations, private funds, and specific personalities) has been in shaping the Georgian government’s policies and, ultimately, in producing the policy outcomes we see today.

At first glance, Georgia appears to have been a prime candidate for democratization. Its new political elite clearly fell under the label of “democrats” who enjoyed a “decisive power advantage,” a key criterion for successful democratization according to political scientist Michael McFaul. Moreover, Georgia depended heavily on foreign assistance (mostly Western) thus making conditionality and democracy linkage particularly effective ways of influencing democratic transformation from the outside. Also, Georgia, compared to most of the post-Soviet space, had a uniquely vibrant civil society before the Rose Revolution as well as a relatively free media.

Yet democracy did not take root in Georgia. Quite the contrary, the country slipped back to ten year-old conditions of democratic governance and freedom of speech. Power became increasingly concentrated within the executive branch under President Saakashvili, who also commands an overwhelming majority in parliament. The all-powerful Ministry of Internal Affairs now controls virtually every aspect of government, including the military. Both presidential and parliamentary elections (both in 2008) were marred by irregularities and fraud, more reminiscent of practices under Georgia’s former president, Eduard Shevardnadze, than of those in the democratic world. Most of the opposition remains marginalized. The majority of the country’s electronic media are either under state control or in the ownership of private individuals who are closely connected to the government.

Why this relative consolidation of authoritarianism happened in the particular case of Georgia is a question that needs to be answered. It is also one that invokes quite a few plausible explanations.

Plausible Explanations for the Backtracking of Democracy

There are a few contingent factors that contributed to the emergence in Georgia of a “super presidency,” probably the single most important reason for the stagnation of democracy. An unchecked concentration of power was legally facilitated from the start when the Georgian constitution was altered in February 2004, merely two months after the Rose Revolution. These constitutional changes paved the way for increasing the powers of the executive at the expense of the legislature.

Despite these swift and dramatic changes, the process of concentrating power did not start immediately after Saakashvili took office in January 2004. There still was some semblance of checks and balances in the government as the president’s influence was nearly matched by, and largely balanced with, that of Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, once Saakashvili’s mentor and close associate. Zhvania’s tragic and unexpected death a year later, in February 2005, left Saakashvili virtually unmatched in terms of influence and power. His team of able operatives managed to quickly spread control over administrative resources and lucrative private and state enterprises. Massive privatisation of state assets generated revenues for the state budget and also strengthened Saakashvili’s grip on the economy.

We may assume that the concentration of power in Saakashvili’s hands is an historically contingent process, following on the heels of revolutionary events and the absence of an effective opposition. But was the stagnation of democratization a

necessary and unavoidable result of such a concentration of power? Admittedly, there is a contrary viewpoint, which argues that a certain level of power concentration was necessary for reforming state institutions and transforming the economy (colloquially referred to together as “modernisation”), as well as establishing the rule of law. This concentration of power, however, appears to have contributed little to democratization.

External Forces and Georgia’s Democratization

Could Georgia’s path of democratization been different had external actors used the “democracy linkage” to push for further democratization?

There are four basic potential sources of pressure that the Georgian government had to bear in the last few years: Russia, the United States, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Most significant of these was Russia’s meddling in Georgia’s internal affairs through the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. I argue, however, that none of these forces have done much to either advance or delay democratization in Georgia.

Russia. Moscow continuously tried to provoke the Georgian leadership into open confrontation, which culminated in the Georgian army’s attack against the South Ossetian militia, resulting in open Georgian-Russian hostilities in August 2008. It would be difficult, however, to find a direct logical connection between external pressures generated by Russia and the stagnation of democratization in Georgia. Russians indeed applied economic, political, and military pressure against Georgia and supported the secessionist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia against the central government in Tbilisi. However, these pressures cannot really account for the suppression of opposition in November 2007, excessive concentration of power since 2004, or closure of television companies. The Georgian government might have used Russian pressure as an excuse for hardening its grip on power and decimating opposition, but this pressure could hardly be considered the primary reason for the backsliding of democracy.

United States. Another notable force was the U.S. government, which, throughout the last decade, was Georgia’s main foreign political supporter. The United States provided much needed economic, political, and technical assistance for upgrading Georgia’s system of governance, including its armed forces. Yet, direct U.S. democracy assistance to Georgia decreased under the administration of George W. Bush. It is difficult to argue, however, that this decrease caused the backtracking of Georgian democracy; there were more important domestic factors at play. For instance, under Saakashvili, the government, with many representatives from the nongovernmental sector, learned how to manipulate civil society groups in order to avert their criticism and political pressure.

Paradoxically, however, there could have been a particular streak of U.S. democracy promotion that, in conjunction with the Georgian government’s policies, created permissive conditions for the derailment of democratization. I discuss this particular argument below.

Europe. European influence on processes within Georgia was rather weak. Apart from French president Nicolas Sarkozy’s spectacular mission to rescue the Georgian

capital from Russian invasion in August 2008, European influence on Georgia's democratization processes was slight. The policy of the Brussels bureaucracy remained uncoordinated when it came to the southern tier of the post-Soviet space. Various initiatives that were advanced since the mid-2000s – the European Neighbourhood policy and, most recently, the Eastern Partnership--either never took off or lacked detail and executive muscle to promote any semblance of democratic change. Separate governments of the leading European states – Germany, France, and Britain – either delegated policymaking to Brussels or remained largely unconcerned, especially after August 2008. Their major task was to avoid Georgia as it was an irritant in their dealings with Moscow. The EU provided technical assistance to Georgia in various sectors of the economy and governance, and funded programmes that aimed to promote democratic reforms. However, European conditionality and democracy support remained marginal for democratization. They could not stop the general backsliding of democracy, especially in conditions of general euphoria about Georgian reforms that permeated both U.S. and, to a lesser degree, European policymakers in the years immediately after the Rose Revolution.

NATO. NATO had a formally endorsed tool of influence over democratization in Georgia. Its two consecutive agreements with Georgia--both the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) from 2004 and Intensified Dialogue from 2007 onwards contained vast provisions that warranted not only specific changes in the military but also wider liberalisation efforts, including democratic change and the advancement of the rule of law. However, NATO representatives' on-site inspections largely approved steps taken by the Georgian government.

From the above analysis, I conclude that the role played by external forces in Georgia's democratization remained somewhat redundant after the Rose Revolution. Russian pressure was an excuse rather than the cause of democratic backsliding, while U.S. and European democracy assistance was too weak or patchy to stop this backsliding. For its part, NATO was too complacent in endorsing Georgia's successes along the path of democratization. Overall, the congratulatory mood towards Saakashvili's reforms of the past several years largely obscured the process of stagnation, if not erosion, of democracy in Georgia. Both the Georgian government and the opposition appealed to international actors only for the sake of their narrow political needs, either to justify their own actions or to discredit the other. There is very scant evidence of any substantial effects of these actors on Georgia's political landscape, let alone their contribution to the promotion of democracy.

Nationalists, Neocons, and Cold Warriors

What then was the most important foreign factor influencing processes in Georgia? I argue that the major imported feature that significantly affected Georgian domestic and foreign policy was the ideological support of American neoconservatives throughout the second half of the 2000s, ever since President Bush visited Tbilisi in May 2005 and pronounced Georgia a "beacon of liberty." The most relevant historically contingent

factor was the convergence of the neoconservatives' view of democracy promotion with Georgian nationalists' perception of world politics.

Neoconservatives who worked for the Bush administration transplanted their views on foreign policy from the Ronald Reagan years. For them, the end of the Cold War was not so much an end of an epoch but an interlude on their way to the transformation of the world. This perception of "unfinished business" was complemented by a fervent anti-communism, which had been centered on the former Soviet Union.

This restricted version of the "Reaganite" vision of the world neatly coincided with the traditional worldview of Georgian nationalists. The West's view of the Rose Revolution as a "democratic" revolution was nurtured by analogy to the East European "velvet" revolutions of the late 1980s. However, the worldview of the Georgian "revolutionaries" reflected the aspirations of the Georgian nationalists of the 1980s rather than those of their East European "colleagues."

This particular worldview on international affairs, which has been part of Georgian identity ever since the eve of Georgia's independence, rested on the following four major assumptions: first, Georgia was a strategically important country, regardless of the current configuration of world politics; second, Russia's meddling in Caucasian affairs was illegitimate and, thus, unacceptable; third, Russia and the West, especially the United States, would always be at loggerheads over Georgia and the broader post-Soviet space; and fourth, no matter how things appeared at a given historical moment, the West, as a monolith, was destined to prevail in its struggle against Russia. These assumptions about Georgia's importance, Russia's negative role, and the power of the West partly stem from the Georgian elite's enthusiastic appreciation of U.S. power in the late 1980s. This basic Cold War-type picture of world politics has stuck and been constantly reproduced in Georgia's domestic debates about foreign affairs ever since independence.

Moreover, the above frozen picture of world affairs perfectly suited the aspirations and hopes of Georgian nationalists, who rhetorically embraced the United States (and with it American values, including democracy) from early on. Democracy and nationalism have never been incompatible concepts for Georgian public politicians or its academic community. Their compatibility neatly stems from the heritage of nineteenth century Georgian liberal nationalists, most notably Ilia Chavchavadze. In the early 1990s, Georgian political philosopher, and later, member of Saakashvili's cabinet, Ghia Nodia, argued that nationalism could indeed be conducive to democracy.

Under Saakashvili, the nexus between a particular understanding of democracy and Georgian nationalism was complemented by an idiosyncratic self-perception of the ruling group. Saakashvili's close circle of potentates came to equate democracy with their own survival, giving birth to the rather curious case of a nascent totalitarian worldview based on a rhetorical embrace of liberal democracy.

Nationalism has had a detrimental effect on the promotion of democracy in Georgia. Under the cover of pro-democracy (or, more accurately, of a rather nebulous "pro-Western") rhetoric, the government tightened its grip on power. This process

occurred against the background of a total consensus on foreign policy. Except for marginal groups, no major political party, at least until late 2009, openly challenged the government's narrative of the need for national consolidation in the face of Russian aggression. The official description of Russia's aggressive behaviour was getting gloomier over time. The Orwellian "big brother" rhetoric, justified or not, further restricted the limits of political pluralism. It must be pointed out that this nationalist rhetoric has not been the sole cause of increased authoritarian tendencies. However, it certainly was one of the conditioning factors, which led to the stagnation of Georgian democracy. The rhetorical collusion of the Georgian government's and American neoconservatives' viewpoints provided an aura of foreign approval of legitimacy for Saakashvili's restrictive policies, conducted in the name of the national cause.

Conclusion: What are the Chances for Obama to Promote Democracy in Georgia?

Given a context of declining U.S. political and economic resources, "resetting" of relations with Russia, and the stagnation of projects related to Caspian energy, it is highly unlikely that the Obama administration can come up with a comprehensive democratization plan for the post-Soviet space, or even the southern tier of the former Soviet Union, including Georgia. Taken separately, Georgia cannot represent a case that is important enough to attract significant and exclusive political support from the U.S. government. Georgia has no instruments of influence over U.S. domestic politics, no substantial material resources, and a strategic significance that is insufficient for it to be considered an irreplaceable partner. Georgia only makes sense in a regional context, and there is no discernable U.S. policy toward the region yet.

Historically, democratization efforts and rhetoric always accompanied a larger U.S. agenda towards the region. In the early 1990s, it was the stabilisation and security of the former Soviet republics; later in the same decade, democratization went hand in hand with the promotion of U.S. economic and business interests, especially in matters of Caspian energy; and in the early 2000s, the ultimate demands of anti-terrorist war efforts and broader U.S. security interests prompted Washington's political support for democracy promotion.

So far, the Obama administration has not come up with a comprehensible strategy for the post-Soviet space, even less so for various parts of it. Democracy promotion has to wait until any semblance of such a policy is put into place. Time is passing, however, and just following the tide may contribute to the further worsening of democracy standards in the region.

Russia's Moldova Policy

SOFT POWER AT THE SERVICE OF REALPOLITIK

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This memo focuses on the intricacies of Russia's policies towards Moldova in the aftermath of the electoral victory of the Alliance for European Integration (AEI). The defeat of the Communist Party of Moldova in the repeat parliamentary election of 2009 and the resignation of President Vladimir Voronin have deeply challenged Russia's position in this geographically small, yet politically very important, country. It has also made Moscow reshape its policies toward Chisinau.

The main reasons for Russia's policy disorientation in Moldova are to be found in the sphere of identity politics (including perceptions, expectations, and interpretations of foreign relations). Unfortunately, Russia appears to have underestimated the importance of identity to Moldova, involving debates on reunification with Romania and the choice of a European future, as well as a rethinking of relations with Russia. As a result, Russia is unsure how to proceed in its policy toward Moldova, which is now stuck between relatively traditional geopolitical approaches and the application of more sophisticated soft-power tools.

Russia's Misperceptions

The case of the Russian-Moldovan relationship suggests that a path-dependent approach, which holds that common history predetermines the safekeeping of associative links for the future, is too simplistic. Instead, it calls for greater attention to issues of misperception and miscommunication in the bilateral relationship. First, the Kremlin grossly overestimated the political capital of Moldova's Communists. In the repeat parliamentary election of July 2009, the Communist Party won a plurality of votes but ended up receiving less seats than the four opposition parties that formed the AEI. This turned what was technically the Communists' victory into a political defeat.

Second, having publicly supported President Voronin, Russia overestimated his pro-Russian potential, ignoring the fact that it was under his leadership that Russia's plan for resolving the Transdniestrian conflict was rejected and some people with radical views (such as Yuri Rosca) were given official positions in the government. Economic relations between Moscow and Chisinau were equally cloudy, as illustrated by Russia's ban on the importation of Moldovan wine.

Third, Russia has wrongly ascribed to the AEI anti-Russian intentions, which the Alliance itself painstakingly rejects. Kremlin-supported mass media and public policy organizations in Russia have been keen to divide the Moldovan political and expert scenes into pro-Russian and anti-Russian segments, despite the highly questionable nature of this division.

The Kremlin and the Communist Party of Moldova: Similarity of Discourses

As an effect of these miscalculations, Russian official discourse has been structured along the same lines as the discourse of Moldovan Communists and, in fact, has imitated its two main points. First, the Kremlin has joined the Communist Party in accusing the AEI of intending to reunify the country with Romania. Russia invokes this rather dubious point to defend the need for a policy of maintaining Moldova's sovereignty. Intentionally focusing on the issue of sovereignty, however, has in a way been self-defeating for Russia, since it only more clearly highlights the political gap between the dominant strategy in Moldova of European integration and the sovereignty-centered Russian worldview, predicated upon a much more skeptical attitude to any form of trans- or supra-national integration. In addition, Russia's skepticism about – if not resistance to – the EU-sponsored Eastern Partnership program casts doubt on the supposition that Russia and the EU share common approaches to Europeanization.

The second point common to both Moldovan Communists and the Kremlin is a presumption that only Russian-speaking groups can be considered genuine defenders of Russian interests in Moldova and, therefore, to be Russia's interlocutors. This attitude has led to two interrelated effects. The first is a disregard for the prospects of social, cultural, and professional communication with non-Russian organizations in Moldova. The second is the promotion of so-called professional Russians, groups campaigning for closer ties with Russia solely because they view the Kremlin as a source of financial resources to be spent on the support of compatriots living abroad.

The securitization of both the reunification and EU integration perspectives and the focus on forging contacts with pro-Russian segments of civil society have limited the gamut of Russian options in Moldova and imbued Russian policy with a great deal of controversy.

Realism and Russian Interests in Moldova

Moscow generally views its relations with Moldova from the vantage point of geopolitical schemes, where the sheer size of Russia predetermines its dominance in the entire post-Soviet territory, or prescriptions grounded in political realism, where the

success of Russian policies depends on the strict pursuit of national interests. Both perspectives, however, look deficient. Russia's geopolitical ambitions, based on a shaky foundation of repeated and mostly unconvincing references to common historical memories, are not very welcome in Moldova. The re-actualization of the experience of the Soviet Union makes Russian identity conceptually trapped in a Soviet past that is not only rejected by the majority of Eastern and Central European nations but also increasingly less attractive for the European-oriented segments of Moldovan society.

As far as the realist perspective is concerned, the Kremlin has been very slow to fill the hollow notion of national interest with specific meanings pertinent to its relations with Moldova. It is usually taken for granted that these interests are well established and understood within Russia's political community, but this is far from the case.

The question of what Russian interests are in Moldova is, in fact, open to debate. One possible articulation of these interests is the maintenance of Moldova as a sovereign and independent state. In practical terms, this argument implies a need to prevent Moldova from becoming a potential member of the EU. Russian politicians seek to persuade their Moldovan colleagues that the EU is just a junior partner of the United States, which is toning down its political commitments in Eastern Europe and will not lobby for countries like Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova to become EU members. The EU is also frequently portrayed as a closed club that lacks sufficient financial resources or ability to assist weak economies. EU membership for countries like Moldova, the logic goes on, means manipulation, submission, loss of identity, provincialization, and new economic challenges (such as increased prices and a need to reorient trade from Russia to the West).

Trying to halt, or at least slow down, Moldova's European integration, pro-Kremlin politicians frighten their counterparts in Chisinau with the prospect that Moldova will lose its sovereignty by joining Western institutions (the EU and NATO). According to the logic of Russian officials, such misfortune is ruled out in the so-called post-Soviet model of integration. This logic, however, contains a trap, the implications of which stretch far beyond the case of Moldova. The distinction between an EU model of integration, which presupposes the dispersal of sovereignty, and a post-Soviet one intending to safeguard the sovereignties of all parties involved is perceived in Moldova as an indication of Russia's intent to merely imitate integration and reduce it to a series of state-to-state agreements.

Arguing in support of Moldova's sovereignty also serves as an instrument for seeking to prevent the country's unification with Romania. This perspective, however, may still fuel debate within the Russian political community. Some policymakers and experts in Moscow do not deem this scenario detrimental to Russia's interests, since it could pave the way for the formal separation of Transdnistria from Moldova and legitimize its subsequent absorption by Russia.

Russia claims that another of its interests is fostering Moldova's neutrality, which, more concretely, means blocking its chances for NATO membership. Yet again, declarations alone seem insufficient, since it remains unclear what kind of security

arrangements Russia can offer to Moldova in its stead. President Dmitry Medvedev's proposals regarding a new security architecture in Europe neither resonate in countries like Moldova nor are discussed with them.

Russia also declares that it is in its interest to retain the current format of negotiations over Transdniestria. This argument, however, merits deeper debate on the question of what Transdniestria means for Russia: is it a tool for exerting political pressure on Chisinau, a Russian-controlled piece of land at close proximity to NATO and the EU, or a breakaway territory with a perspective of accession to the Russian Federation? Neither the political system of Transdniestria nor its huge debts to Gazprom have been matters of serious debate in Russia so far.

The Hurdles of the Soft Power Approach

These uncertainties have forced the Kremlin to recalibrate its policy instruments in Moldova. To the rather traditional – though not always workable – geopolitical and realist approaches it has added more subtle forms of influence grounded in instruments of soft power. In light of the political changes that took place in Moldova in 2009, Russia has begun to invest more resources in bridging communication gaps with the new pro-Western elites in Chisinau and a variety of nongovernmental groups (mostly think tanks) that support the European reorientation of the country.

One such effort has been undertaken by the Moscow-based Priznanie foundation, which initially focused on sponsoring humanitarian projects in Ukraine. In the summer of 2009, the foundation began operating in Moldova, aiming to foster contacts with influential policy and opinion makers. In doing so, Priznanie has appeared to imitate the kind of Western foundations that intensively operate in foreign countries and are instrumental in influencing local policy agendas and promoting certain policy ideas.

Good intentions, however, do not always come to fruition. Instead of bridging communication gaps between Russia and host countries, the functioning of Russian foundations in places like Moldova and Ukraine sometimes produces polarizing effects within these societies and only complicates the political relationship between Moscow and local capitals. Despite these foundations' self-presentation as independent civil society institutions, they are overwhelmingly viewed in post-Soviet states as offsprings of the Kremlin.

An even deeper problem is the absence in Russia's foreign policy arsenal of what might be dubbed normative appeal, which is one of the strongest instruments of the EU's neighborhood policy. This deficit of value-based policies is detrimental to attempts to make use of soft power as a foreign policy tool. The way soft power is understood in the Kremlin does not match the expectations of the new Moldovan elite and just strengthens the perception that Russia is still a *realpolitik* type of power dabbling unsuccessfully and mostly ineffectively with soft power resources. Such soft power experiments are doomed unless Russia can offer a long-term concept of post-Soviet integration that is attractive and competitive compared to the EU model. Russia dubs the Moldovan drive to Europe as ideologically biased, while considering its own policy

towards CIS countries as pragmatic. Yet alleged Russian pragmatism can easily turn into geopolitical sloganeering, which fails to offer an efficient conceptual framework for tackling the problems that Russia faces in countries located on Europe's doorstep.

Conclusion

In a more general sense, the case of Moldova raises important questions about Russian attitudes toward Europe. The political success of AEI not only made the portrayal of Europe in Russia less favorable, it unveiled the real scope of Russia's skepticism toward and lack of trust in the EU. Rather than offer a joint approach with Europe, as was the case in the aftermath of Ukraine's Orange Revolution, Russia has moved toward making efforts to counterpose the EU project with Russian-led, post-Soviet integration. At the same time, it is the EU to whom Russia addresses its warnings about the prospects of so-called Great Romania incorporating Moldova.

Odd Man Out Again

EXPLAINING BELARUS' POST-ORANGE TRANSFORMATION

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Post-Soviet Eastern Europe in a Post-Orange World

A mountain of competing explanations seeks to account for the success of electoral “color revolutions” in some places and their failure in others. The comeback of Viktor Yanukovich, who was recognized to have won Ukraine’s 2010 presidential election fair and square, will produce another pile of written thoughts on what the “wave of electoral regime change” really meant and what its long-term impact on democracy and the geopolitics of the region will be.

In the end, the color revolutions became a self-defeating prophecy. They advanced only at the expense of weak and dysfunctional states, where incumbents were unable to fend them off. In more authoritarian states, they became scarecrows for both strong incumbents and populations who were unwilling to trade the dubious benefits of uncertain democracy for guaranteed stability. In places like Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan (to some extent), and also (in a sense) Russia, the anti-Orange consensus spread over both rulers and ruled. The failure of Ukraine’s Orange Revolution in particular to bring forth any sense of “the end of history” (i.e., to set the country firmly on a track to European and Euroatlantic integration) has had a negative effect for aspiring democrats in the neighborhood, whose pro-democracy and pro-European agendas now clearly lack substance or a realistic chance of being implemented. The exhaustion of the “color” revolutionary scenarios has thus become one of several tendencies, including the global financial crisis, the simultaneous decline of U.S. hard and soft power, and the European Union’s reluctance to even consider further enlargement, which undermine the stock of positive incentives the West is able to formulate for local societies and which can be translated into mobilizing messages for democratic opposition movements.

At the same time, shifting foreign policy priorities in the EU and the United States may point to a new strategy for influencing change in the region, based on a

search for win-win solutions that accommodate, rather than alienate, incumbent elites. This new agenda will be driven more by strategic considerations (ensuring security and balancing Russian hegemony in the region) than “Wilsonian” ones; will focus more on development than democracy; and will prioritize long-term factors securing development of civil society and effective governance over regime change. It would be premature to call this policy a shift to *realpolitik* or a promotion of “change through engagement”; the simple matter is that old-fashioned democracy promotion does not appear to be a realistic policy alternative for now.

The Belarus Exception

The feasibility of “win-win” strategies for influencing change in the region may be tested in the case of Belarus, a country that once defied the trend of regime change in the region and even became a leader in “preempting democracy.” The March 2006 presidential election in Belarus was the pinnacle of President Alexander Lukashenko’s successful effort to preempt the possibility of a color revolution happening on his home turf. His resounding victory, although achieved with repression and manipulation, was accepted de facto by Belarusian society, which seemingly would have elected him even if the vote count were fair. The political opposition, while encouraged by the defiance and sacrifice of young activists, proved to be too weak to challenge the status quo. Any prospects for regime change in Belarus appeared to be put off indefinitely.

Belarus defied the general logic of developments in the region, however. Change began to arrive in 2007, once the counter-revolutionary clean-up was complete. There is much discussion in Belarus and elsewhere as to whether internal developments since 2007 can be characterized as “liberalization.” Nonetheless, it is evident that for the first time since Lukashenko came to power, there has been a steady and consistent softening of the political climate, including a decline in political repression. The change going on so far is forced, piecemeal, controlled, and effectively reversible. Nonetheless, it is much more than any observers could have expected at the lowest point in 2006. While external factors (such as energy relations with Russia and the war in the Caucasus) have contributed heavily to “Lukashenko’s transformation,” some of the impetus for it comes from the accumulation of long-term deficiencies in the system, including declining competitiveness of the key industrial sector and mounting macroeconomic imbalances. Importantly, Lukashenko has shown himself to be flexible in adapting to new realities, which allows one to brush aside the long-standing argument that a system like his simply cannot change.

Why Lukashenko Is Changing (Some of) His Spots

External and internal factors for Lukashenko’s transformation include the following:

Energy Conflict with Russia

Russia’s decision in 2006 to raise energy prices and develop market-based relations with Belarus rattled prospects for the long-term stability of Lukashenko’s political and economic system. Cheap energy resources played a vital role in both securing an

implicit “social contract” with the population and maintaining the loyalty of the ruling elite, who have benefited enormously from the rents associated with monopoly access to the import and export of oil and refined products. A decline in the amount available for these rents presented serious questions for Lukashenko: what else could he offer to the elites and how else can he maintain the loyalty of the electorate? Contrary to Moscow’s expectations that Lukashenko’s instinct for power would not let him accept devastating increases in energy prices and would force him to submit to Moscow’s demands (that is, to sell critical energy and transit infrastructure to Russian companies) in exchange for continued subsidies, Lukashenko opted for a new geopolitical game involving a search for new allies, investors, and creditors.

The Financial Crisis

Things were not made much better by the unfolding economic and financial crisis, which held particular significance for Belarus. In addition to reducing rents from oil refining, as Belarus’ export market dramatically contracted, the crisis underscored a long-term tendency of declining competitiveness in Belarus’ manufacturing sector, almost solely oriented toward the Russian market. As the crisis first struck demand for investment goods, Belarusian industry suffered badly. The government sought to support the real sector through stimulation of internal investment demand (i.e., providing cheap loans to industry and construction), but this only boosted demand for imports and by the end of 2008 made the current account unbearable, necessitating a 20 percent devaluation of the national currency. Lukashenko had to search for different options to keep the economy afloat. These included securing access to Western loans, cooperating with international financial organizations, attracting investment to fix the current account, and authorizing some privatizations to secure revenue for the maintenance of “old” industries.

Geopolitics in the Region

Lukashenko’s failure to support Russia in its war with Georgia in August 2008 sparked a major crisis of confidence in Belarusian-Russian relations. As Moscow realized that it could no longer take the loyalty of its primary client for granted, Lukashenko had to face angry Kremlin leaders, who surely made it clear that his political and personal fate could be endangered if he continued to exhibit such misbehavior.

Self-Destruction of the Opposition

As external pressure began to force change upon Lukashenko, he found it acceptable to allow some change precisely because he had nicely completed his “homework” in the previous period. That is, the Belarusian opposition had been successfully suppressed, marginalized, and demoralized, with no realistic chance to oust the regime from power. A feeling of hopelessness permeated civil society, which found itself in a deep crisis since 2006. Most Belarusian “opposition-minded” nongovernmental organizations were created and financed as prospective actors in what now seemed hopeless and unrealistic regime change scenarios. This lack of hope in political change caused a

steady defection of activists, either back to contractual relations with the state or, among its youngest and most active elements, out of the country. Facing the self-destruction of the opposition, Lukashenko allowed himself to reverse some of his preemptive tactics. He tolerated unauthorized social and, to some extent, political activism a bit more. Much of this relaxation simply allowed groups and networks too weak to challenge the government to assemble without fear of immediate crackdown.

Liberalization: Facts and Counterfacts

Lukashenko's transformation has been closely regulated and monitored. While the regime does make concessions in some areas where liberalization is deemed least threatening to the stability of the system, it closely guards its foundations and effectively blocks any reforms that might shake them. It consistently presents all liberalizing measures as one-off concessions and insists that no one should expect these to pave the way for an overall liberalization. At the same time, there is a tendency to compensate liberalization with repression of a different sort, including introducing new methods of harassment against opposition activists that do not automatically qualify as "political repression."

Release of Political Prisoners and Election Performance

The release of most political prisoners by August 2008 led to a dialogue with the EU on thawing relations. Nonetheless, the government continued to practice policies effectively punishing the opposition. For instance, political prisoners quickly reappeared through the forced conscription of leaders of youth opposition movements, who were drafted to the army after illegal expulsions from the university and, in some cases, dubious medical check-ups.

In the sphere of electoral politics, Lukashenko's government backtracked on its promise to the EU to carry out September 2008 parliamentary elections in a free and transparent fashion. Instead, it resorted to tried and true tactics of electoral abuse and falsification, ensuring that government representatives won all 110 seats of the lower house in the first round. The regime tried to offer a "consolation prize" to opponents by establishing various public advisory councils in which pro-government and opposition-minded figures would debate government policies and advise authorities. The most prominent of these bodies, the public advisory council of the presidential administration, was formed in February 2009 and has, out of its 30 members, ten representatives from the independent civic sector, including some veteran leaders of the opposition. The advisory board of the Ministry of Information also includes opposition journalists. In December 2009, the Belarusian parliament passed amendments to the electoral law, which introduced some improvements like enlarging opportunities for political parties to campaign, but it stopped short of making changes that would allow for a transparent vote count.

At the same time, independent monitors have noticed a remarkable decrease in incidents of persecution, arrests, and convictions of opposition activists participating in street rallies (the sizes of which have increasingly dwindled). No prosecutions were

made on the basis of infamous article 193-1 of the Criminal Code, which establishes punishment for up to three years in jail for running an unregistered NGO. Overall, the rules for registering NGOs relaxed a bit, and some groups managed to obtain registration, although these were mostly one-off political decisions, as in the case of the “For Freedom” movement of Alexander Milinkevich.

Concessions to Media

The Belarusian authorities have also somewhat eased their grip on the independent press. Several newspapers were allowed to return to state-run distribution and subscription networks. However, most independent newspapers continue to be mistreated through discriminatory practices and harassment. In particular, the government tightened the conditions for foreign broadcast electronic media, set up by Western donors to break the government monopoly in television and radio. In January 2010, Lukashenko signed a decree imposing new internet regulations that will make it illegal to run web resources dedicated to Belarusian current affairs outside the country.

Economic Liberalization

This is the area where Lukashenko’s transformation has advanced the most. The first large-scale privatization deals in years were concluded in 2007. Belarusian authorities subsequently authorized a modest economic program that included tax reform, deregulation of certain sectors of the economy, cessation of social privileges, liberalization of prices, revamping of licensing rules, and an active wooing of foreign direct investment. The government made impressive progress in liberalizing the business climate in the country, causing Belarus to jump more than 50 places in the World Bank’s Doing Business survey in just two years (from 119 to 57). Regardless of the crisis, however, Lukashenko’s government has continued its policy of maintaining full employment through generous subsidies of the public sector. Counterintuitively, the financial crisis, while creating an impetus for reforms in some areas, nearly killed it in others. On the other hand, international financial organizations took a somewhat lax approach to issuing foreign loans (partly, perhaps, for political reasons), which helped Lukashenko avoid major current account problems via borrowing.

Conditionality and Geopolitical Competition: EU, Russia, the United States, and Lukashenko’s “Liberalization”

While much of Lukashenko’s transformation has been triggered by external factors, the EU, a major actor that can potentially leverage change in Belarus, was barely prepared for the twists in Lukashenko’s policy. As late as November 2006, the European Commission came up with a comprehensive list of 12 political demands for Lukashenko to fulfill in order for Belarusian-EU relations to unfreeze. Good behavior was to be rewarded by vague and obscure promises of extending cooperation, strengthening ties, and promoting dialogue for mutual advantage. The sides could not reach an agreement to reverse the exclusion of Belarus from the Generalized System of Preferences in June 2007, done to punish Lukashenko for a poor human rights record. Furthermore, the EU

could not find common ground on priorities in dialogue with Lukashenko; the latter masterfully manipulated EU diplomats to break consensus on demands such as the full release of all political prisoners.

The EU revised its list of political demands in November 2008, downsizing it to just five: a moratorium on new political prisoners, press liberalization, better electoral conduct, improving the environment for NGOs and political parties, and abolishing the death penalty. A carrot, however, was still largely lacking, even though the EU could play with the invitation of Belarus to the new Eastern Partnership program, as well as with the voting rights of its member states in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) when it came to offering loans to Belarus.

Lukashenko's government chose the path of making just enough concessions that the EU would not get completely frustrated and abandon talks. It took advantage of the vague formulations of the EU's demands by demonstrating some progress in each of the areas, while overall keeping the repressive apparatus intact.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP), when announced in 2008, seemed to have the soft power potential to make the European Union a more effective player in Belarus. The country was included as a full participant of the program, even without having a ratified Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU or taken part in the European Neighborhood Policy. Even though the EaP still lacks sufficient rewards for leaders like Lukashenko to comply with EU conditionality, the program has helped to break down some barriers in communication between the EU and Belarus, and between Belarus' own government and civic sector. Through the civil society forum, it has also given NGOs status and a sense of security they generally lack at home. Nonetheless, the maximum possible impact of the EU initiative is the encouragement of a slow, incremental, and largely reversible change that does not tackle the foundations of the system.

Meanwhile, Russia fully embraced geopolitical competition with the EU in Belarus by pursuing a targeted approach that stipulates very concrete sticks and carrots for Lukashenko. Thus, in November 2009, the Belarusian leader was forced to sign a not very beneficial deal to establish a customs union with Russia and Kazakhstan, simply to maintain access to Russian markets, and to accept increased export duties on Russian oil in January 2010, securing exceptions only for oil shipped to satisfy internal consumption. Russia continues to string along Belarus with cheap loans and with the promise of financing construction of a new nuclear power plant. At the same time, the Belarusian government is looking for different options to cope with mounting balance of payments problems, including borrowing from China and attracting Chinese investment. Against this background, the EU's softer "no stick, no carrot" approach is exhausting its capacity to influence change in Belarus.

As for the United States, its policy toward Belarus remains an enigma. The "sanctions offensive" undertaken by the administration of George W. Bush in 2007-2008 was easily rebuffed by Lukashenko, who used the restrictions on Belarus' major energy exporter, Belnaftekhim, as a pretext to minimize the presence and activity of the U.S. embassy in Belarus. The Barack Obama administration is not interested in new

sanctions but has yet to come forward with a new policy. The United States' abstention from blocking IMF loans to Belarus in June 2009 signaled that it might be willing to follow EU policy, albeit with a more critical twist. A shift in U.S. democracy assistance on the ground (prioritization for non-politicized civil society projects as opposed to direct support for the opposition) is another hint that the United States, too, may be ready for "critical dialogue" with Belarus.

Conclusion

So far, Lukashenko's transformation has consisted of largely cosmetic steps, which many observers doubt may be called liberalization at all. Nonetheless, the openings created by this transformation have had a positive impact in at least four areas. First, they have somewhat relieved the atmosphere of fear in Belarus and allowed for a modest increase in civil society activity. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum has given NGOs a better opportunity to transform openings created by the Belarus-EU dialogue into practical projects, bringing about positive change on the ground. Second, the independent press has been given a new breath of life. Over the past two years, the independent media has been remarkably more reckless in writing on issues they abstained from covering for several years out of fear of reprisal, including internal fights within the presidential entourage, the private life of the president, and the government's inability to deal with the economic crisis. Third, certain cracks in the wall separating the government and civil society sectors have emerged, as both sides increasingly engage in dialogue on key issues of political and social development. Fourth, there is a remarkable professionalization of the economic bureaucracy, which is increasingly comfortable in dealing with international financial organizations. Lukashenko's partial compliance with Western conditions extends only so far as those conditions do not shake the foundations of his political power. It may thus be concluded that his engagement with the West, particularly the EU, will last only as long as no external player pursues an agenda of regime change. At the same time, Lukashenko has shown that, if necessary, he is able to revise the foundations of his own regime and introduce whatever reforms are necessary, including truly unpopular ones, to re-equilibrate the system.

Playing on the incumbent's survival instincts to promote piecemeal change that might one day be irreversible may sound like a dubious agenda for promoting democratic change in Belarus. However, it is one of the few options left in the post-Orange period. Moreover, such a course may take unexpected turns once the regime is no longer able to achieve a new equilibrium through mere cosmetic change and faces the need to implement more fundamental but politically less manageable reforms. Sometime in the next decade, Western leverage and conditionality could return as powerful instruments for promoting change. In the meantime, it is important that Belarus be linked to policymaking environments in the EU, the United States, and international financial organizations via transmission belts of cooperative ties that can eventually make this leverage effective.

These Colors May Run

THE BACKLASH AGAINST THE U.S.-BACKED “DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONS” IN EURASIA

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The victory of Viktor Yanukovich in the second round of Ukraine’s 2010 presidential election has been widely portrayed as a rebuke of the 2004 Orange Revolution and the pro-Western alignment it ushered in. Even before the election, however, the effects of the Eurasian color revolutions, celebrated with such euphoria in some Western foreign policy circles in the mid-2000s, had far-reaching and unintended consequences, which have proven to be detrimental to U.S. influence and credibility in the region.

Although most Western commentators and policymakers understood the electorally-induced regime changes in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan as victories for democratic forces, in Eurasia these same events were largely viewed as U.S.-sponsored efforts to topple regimes and replace them with pro-Western clients. Accordingly, soon after the Orange and Tulip Revolutions, a variety of Eurasian regimes, with strong backing from Moscow, adopted a series of measures to counter the activities of external democracy actors so as to avoid a replay of the sequence of events which led to the overthrow of these governments. This backlash has not only eroded basic civil liberties and media freedoms in many Eurasian countries, especially in Central Asia, but also challenged the authority of many international organizations and nongovernmental organizations in the region. At the same time, in the case of Georgia, U.S. officials reinforced the theme that the color revolutions were primarily motivated by geopolitics by uncritically treating the pro-Western government of Mikheil Saakashvili as a consolidated democracy. As Georgia’s nascent democracy began to deteriorate, U.S. officials remained silent, signaling that the “common values” that it publicly proclaimed to share with Tbilisi were more indicative of strategic alignment than a mutual interest in democracy.

The Color Revolutions and the Dynamics of Diffusion

Recent scholarship on the origins and dynamics of the color revolutions suggests that external environments and transnational actors played critical roles in diffusing the electoral revolution model across Eurasian states. Political scientists Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik have explored how international donors like the U.S. Agency for International Development, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe played pivotal roles in strengthening civil society and opposition movements throughout the region. Bunce and Wolchik reveal, moreover, how domestic nongovernmental organizations and youth groups in countries like Georgia and Ukraine learned from the experiences and activities of other groups that had succeeded in pressing for regime change. Thus, graduates of the 2000 “Bulldozer Revolution” in Serbia assisted Georgian groups in 2003, while Georgian and Serbian groups contributed to Viktor Yushchenko’s victory in Ukraine in 2004. Political scientist Mark Beissinger has characterized the diffusion dynamic in the color revolutions as “modular,” in the sense that actors in each successive case emulated the features of previous successful revolutionary models. That said, according to Beissinger, after coming to power these governments faced serious challenges in trying to consolidate state institutions and enact democratic change.

Dimensions of the Backlash

The Orange and Tulip Revolutions sent alarm bells ringing across Eurasia. Eurasian elites viewed the color revolutions not as legitimate democratic responses to corrupt authoritarian rule, but as Western-sponsored threats targeting their very survival. These perceptions were supported when various Western NGOs and donors began to publicly take credit for their role in ushering in regime changes, even though their importance, especially in Kyrgyzstan’s case, tended to be exaggerated. Not surprisingly, a number of Eurasian governments soon began treating external NGOs and democracy-promoting actors as actual security threats. The backlash was especially intense in Central Asia where, with support from Russia and China (which saw the color revolutions as potentially encouraging separatism in Xinjiang), all states took steps to curtail the activities of Western NGOs and placed new legal and bureaucratic restrictions on their activities. Around the same time, Eurasian governments introduced a number of repressive new media and internet laws and redoubled their efforts to crackdown on opposition groups and consolidate single-party political rule.

Governments that conducted elections soon after the color revolutions, such as in Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, took great care to block the transnational networking of domestic NGOs in pre-electoral periods and to prevent opposition groups from gaining access to media outlets. Thus, just as pro-democracy NGOs diffused their strategies and techniques across cases, so too did Eurasia’s governments learn how to effectively counter the “electoral revolution” playbook.

One of the biggest organizational casualties of the democracy backlash has been the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Since the mid-1990s, the ODIHR has been the primary external monitor of national elections in

Eurasia. During the color revolutions, ODIHR's labeling of elections as "neither free nor fair" served to cast doubt upon the legitimacy of national elections and played a pivotal role in mobilizing opposition groups to press for change. Not surprisingly, Russia, supported by Belarus, Armenia, and the Central Asian states, introduced at the 2007 OSCE summit a draft proposal to curtail ODIHR's election monitoring activities. The proposal included limiting the size of monitoring missions to fifty, allowing the host state to veto proposed mission heads, and obliging ODIHR to submit its preliminary findings to the host for initial collaborative review prior to public release. Such measures would effectively gut future ODIHR missions of any independence.

Today, Eurasian governments view ODIHR as a pro-Western entity that must be countered. Some countries, such as Russia and Uzbekistan, have simply refused to host any meaningful ODIHR mission during their most recent elections whereas others, such as Kyrgyzstan, have imposed more subtle yet important restrictions on the scope of ODIHR mission activities. At the same time, as governments scrutinize and inhibit ODIHR's activities, other more government-friendly teams of observers, from the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are now routinely sending election monitoring missions to member states. Not surprisingly, the conclusions of these "alternative monitors" regarding the quality of elections have been at odds with ODIHR assessments in every case.

Finally, the rise of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a political and security organization in Central Asia is virtually a direct consequence of the color revolutions. Although the organization's potential to become an anti-NATO military bloc has been much exaggerated, its more underappreciated role has been to target the activities of regional political dissidents and democracy groups under its stated goal of combating the three "evils" of separatism, extremism, and terrorism. Human rights organizations have accused the security services of SCO states of routinely violating domestic asylum laws and bypassing national procedures. The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Center (RATS) coordinates "cybersecurity" efforts and maintains a common list of extremist groups that also contains the names of pro-democracy organizations. Although the rivalry between Russia and China continues to inhibit the institutionalization of many of the organization's activities, the governments of the Central Asian states themselves see the SCO as a useful counterweight to the demands for political change and external conditionality being promoted by Western actors.

"Common Values," Loss of U.S. Credibility, and the Escalation of the Georgia Crisis

The pushback against actors promoting Western-style democratization has been one major regional consequence of the color revolutions. That said, the United States has also contributed to the erosion of its own credibility as a promoter of democratic values through the manner in which it dealt with the government of Georgia and its democratic failings in the post-Rose Revolution period. Indeed, for outside states and observers, the United States' vigorous support of Georgia contributed to the notion that Washington's efforts to promote democracy in the post-Soviet space were simply justification for supporting anti-Russian regimes.

The Georgian case is especially important not only because it was the original “color” revolution, but also because the administration of George W. Bush and the government of the charismatic self-styled reformer Mikheil Saakashvili publicly championed the theme that the two countries shared “common values” and a commitment to democratic ideals. In the post-Rose Revolution period, however, U.S. officials rarely criticized Tbilisi’s backsliding and continued to act, for political reasons, as if Georgia was a mature and consolidated Western-style democracy rather than a country still undergoing political transition. Early in Saakashvili’s first term, USAID curtailed its assistance programs designed to support civil society development and media independence. In turn, U.S. policy became focused on directly backing the Georgian regime. The new government in Tbilisi also proved highly skilled in crafting an image of Georgia as an embattled democracy and using this image to its political advantage. Georgian officials, many of whom were educated or otherwise spent time in the United States, understood how Washington operated; they effectively navigated the city’s thicket of influential think tanks and policy institutes and regularly traveled to Washington to brief Congressional staffers and U.S. government officials. Georgia’s numerous points of contact with the U.S. government ensured that Tbilisi exerted an influence in Washington that was probably beyond what its small size and geopolitical position warranted. In the end, Georgia succeeded in curtailing U.S. criticisms of its democratic shortcomings, documented with increasing alarm by international democracy watchdogs and NGOs.

These shortcomings became increasingly acute over time. Since the Rose Revolution, President Saakashvili had made the strengthening of the Georgian state and eliminating corruption top priorities. However, these gains have come at the expense of undermining democratic institutions. In 2005 and 2006, the Georgian president was criticized by international observers for reasserting executive control over the judiciary and unduly interfering in the affairs of opposition media outlets. On November 7, 2007, tensions peaked when government security forces violently cracked down on thousands of anti-government demonstrators in Tbilisi, beating them with wands and spraying rubber bullets at protestors. International observers such as Human Rights Watch estimated that over five hundred Georgians were injured in actions that were widely condemned as excessive. As the events of November 2007 were noted with alarm in Brussels and other Western political capitals, U.S. officials downplayed the heavy-handed crackdown.

Part of the deal that was brokered between Saakashvili and opposition leaders in the aftermath of the November events was the holding of early presidential elections in January 2008. The poll in which the Georgian president cleared 50 percent to triumph in the first round of balloting had some flaws, but the Georgian president most likely would have won comfortably in a run-off against any of his opponents. Much more problematic was the conduct of the May 2008 parliamentary elections under which the president’s political party, the United National Movement (UNM), gained 119 out of 150 seats with a certified 59 percent of the vote. The final ODIHR election mission monitoring report identified “a number of problems” with the election, noting

irregularities in the vote count, the intimidation of opposition candidates, the UNM's improper control of the Central Election Commission and other state agencies and resources, and a general lack of balance in media coverage. Yet Washington again remained notably silent about the quality of the flawed election.

Georgia's privileged position as a "democratic client" state also prevented Washington from soberly assessing the deteriorating situation in the South Caucasus in the spring 2008 run-up to the August war. Ultimately, the Saakashvili government lacked either the capabilities or common sense to restrain itself from launching a kamikaze-style attack against South Ossetia in early August that initiated the disastrous Russian response and occupation of its breakaway territories. Whether increased U.S. criticism of Tbilisi's democratic shortcomings would have made any difference in Saakashvili's calculations to initiate military action is subject to debate. That said, Washington's failure to restrain the Georgian leadership in August 2008 is indicative of the United States' inability to translate its close "values-based" relationship with Tbilisi into actual influence at the most critical of times.

The Obama Administration's Response and the Democratic Challenge

The irony of Ukraine's latest elections is that, from a comparative perspective, it is in the best shape, democratically speaking, of all three of the Eurasian states, which experienced a color revolution. The very process of an orderly government turnover, facilitated by national elections, should be widely acknowledged and appreciated, even if the results are not to Washington's liking. By contrast, in early 2010 Freedom House downgraded Kyrgyzstan to "Not Free" from its previous level of "Partly Free." At the same time, the aftermath of the Georgia-Russia war has raised concerns about the quality and fragility of Georgia's democratic institutions. Thus, although the election of a Ukrainian candidate advocating a more conciliatory orientation towards Moscow may not be good news for Ukraine's Atlanticists, the quality of Ukraine's national election in 2010 was clearly superior to the last national election in either of its Eurasian counterparts.

More broadly, it is now clear that the color revolutions have seriously damaged U.S. influence and credibility throughout Eurasia. The regime changes, which took place in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan sparked a substantial backlash among Eurasian elites who viewed U.S.-sponsored democratization as a security threat. As a consequence, the OSCE and its democratic monitoring efforts are now operating on life support, while Eurasian regimes have become increasingly emboldened to flout democratic norms. Moreover, the United States' strong support for the Georgian government, despite its democratic backsliding and inability to restrain its military response to Russia's creeping annexation of the breakaway territories, crystallized the view that Georgia was the United States' privileged client in the region.

Does the damage that was inflicted by the color revolutions offer the Obama administration any lessons for the future? To be sure, the current climate does not favor democratic advocacy and U.S. officials are now constrained in their ability to push for democratic reform in the region. That said, U.S. officials should take care to explicitly

reject the now widely accepted conflation of supporting democratization and pressing for regime change. Indeed, U.S. officials should make clear that the type of democratic progress they wish to see is gradual, long-term, and pluralistic in nature.

However, ignoring the grave erosion of democratic rights currently underway across the region would actually further undermine U.S. standing and influence in Eurasia. Even as governments in the region actively promote multivectorism and play the West off of Russia and China, U.S. administration officials should realize that the West continues to be a critical vector for Eurasian states in these balancing efforts. That alone is reason enough for U.S. officials to demand an open and honest dialogue with Eurasian governments about the deteriorating state of democratic governance.

Russia's Orange Revolution Syndrome

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"We must not in any way allow the Ukrainization of political life in Russia."
- Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, January 22, 2010

The victory of Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine's 2010 presidential election called into question the significance of the Orange Revolution both in Ukraine and in the post-Soviet world at large. In my opinion, the Orange Revolution was more successful in Ukraine than many experts alleged. At the same time, it negatively contributed to Russia's political development.

Viktor Yanukovich's defeat in Ukraine's 2004-2005 presidential election was a humiliation for the Kremlin. It also raised the specter of a similar mass movement in Russia. Indeed, in the wake of the Orange Revolution, a wave of so-called "anti-monetization" protests spread across the country. This movement was against reforms that sought to exchange generous social benefits for relatively small amounts of cash. Together, the above developments pushed the Kremlin to a) dispense with large-scale economic reforms that had been developed based on an assumption of steadily increasing political control and b) increase pressure on nongovernmental organizations while encouraging official and semi-official political networks to flourish.

In assessing the impact of the Orange Revolution on Russia's political development, I will limit my analysis to three subjects: the increase in administrative control over NGOs by means of both tougher legislation and the creation of a pyramid of "public chambers;" the changing of key players in public politics exemplified by the pro-Kremlin *Putinjugend*-type youth organization *Nashi* (Ours) and the fate of Open Russia's public policy schools; and the establishment of new political organizations and networks.

One can conclude that if the Orange Revolution and the mass protests in Russia that followed had not happened, Russia's political development might have taken a very different course.

The Rationale for Counterrevolution

The Kremlin's understanding of the color revolutions has been well articulated by political scientist Sergey Markov, a Duma deputy from the United Russia ruling party. According to Markov, the color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine opened a new page in the theory and practice of revolutions. Revolutions no longer take the shape of military turnovers, like they did during the 19th century, nor are they made by professional parties, as in the 20th century. Rather, they are prepared openly – not from a single center but by a network of nongovernmental organizations united by an ideology. Such networks are present in many countries undergoing development with foreign financial and technical assistance. According to this line of thinking, the Orange Revolution was instigated by the Ukrainian branches of international NGOs and, in a more extreme variant (elaborated, for example, by political scientist Vladimir Frolov), the U.S. government and its numerous puppet organizations among Ukrainian civil society, media, political parties, and the state apparatus. Protesting against this new reality makes little sense; those who want to actively participate in 21st-century politics should instead create their own NGO network and provide them with ideological, personnel, financial, and other so-called “political-technological” support.

Tougher NGO Legislation

The most publicized policy shift to occur in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution was the introduction of amendments to Russia's law on NGOs. The January 2006 amendments regulate the functioning of foreign NGOs and considerably broadened the oversight of the Federal Registration Service (FRS). The amendments stipulated that NGOs had to a) submit annual reports on their financial expenditures and use of property, b) disclose the source of all funds and assets received from foreign organisations and citizens, and c) issue reports on the activities and personnel of NGO management bodies.

The 2006 amendments caused many problems for NGOs, in particular smaller and poorly-financed regional organizations. According to the findings of a team led by Alexander Auzan, president of the “Social Contract” institute, the financial burden imposed by the amendments considerably exceeded the volume of state aid provided in the form of grants to NGOs in 2006 and 2007. Yuri Dzhibladze, head of the Centre for Democratic Development and Human Rights, observed that the law gives wide latitude to the FRS to deny approval of documents submitted by an NGO. Officially, 2,600 organisations were closed in 2006, and 2,300 in 2007. If any NGO repeatedly fails to submit its papers within the established timeframe, the new legislation empowers the FRS to request that the court exclude it from the State Legal Entity Register. Of special concern has been the process of state inspections, which in practically all cases have

concluded that the NGO under inspection has violated one or another article of the law, subjecting it to threat of closure.

Over time, some improvements in the legal climate for NGOs have taken place. In 2007, the State Duma passed amendments to facilitate state registration procedures for homeowner associations, as well as for gardening, dacha, and other citizen associations. This bill takes these organizations out of the sphere of the basic law, allowing their registration and reporting under a simpler procedure more relevant to their activities. Slight legislative improvements were introduced for other categories of NGOs in 2009. These, however, mainly apply only to the “good guys,” i.e. organizations that do not get financial support from foreign organizations. Further improvements are expected, such as a draft law (2009, signed into law in April 2010) on socially oriented NGOs, which may receive special aid from the state.

The Public Chamber

Established in 2006, the Public Chamber was designed to promote interaction between state authorities and civil society organizations. The Chamber somewhat serves as democratic decor, attempting to fill the void of dismantled or weakened state institutions. At the same time, it is an attempt to vertically organize civil society organizations, bringing NGO representatives into its ranks and providing NGOs with financial support (1.2 billion rubles in 2009). The Chamber also has aspired to take on other functions, including civil oversight over defense and law-enforcement duties.

In reality, the Chamber’s functions and methods are not very clear. It is essentially a non-constitutional body that has been created by the president for the president. The executive appoints one-third of the chamber’s members, who then establish mechanisms for choosing the second (federal) and third (regional) components.

Other than channeling funds to useful NGOs, the Public Chamber has only advisory functions. Its main task is to serve as a buffer between civil society and state authorities. It alerts authorities to matters of social discontent, sets the tone and defines the agenda for state-civilian dialogue, and pushes aside those who are viewed as inconvenient.

Nashi (Ours) and “Closed Russia”

The start of the Nashi project can be dated to February 2005, when reports initially appeared in the media about a new Kremlin-sponsored youth movement that was to take the place of an existing movement called *Idushchie vmeste* (Going Together). At the start of March, then-leader of *Idushchie vmeste* Vasily Yakemenko declared the establishment of an anti-fascist youth movement, Nashi, with the stated aim of “promoting Russia’s transformation into the global leader of the twenty-first century.” To do this, it was to pursue a number of goals, which included keeping Russia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity intact, building an active civil society, and overseeing the modernization of the country through a so-called “cadres revolution.”

Political technocrat Gleb Pavlovsky visited Nashi's first summer camp at Russia's Lake Seliger in 2005 and encouraged its members to be tougher and ready to "break up fascist demonstrations and to physically resist attempts of anti-constitutional turnover."

Nashi also sought to uphold the notion of "sovereign democracy," invoked by Russian leaders as a countermeasure to the allegedly imported and destabilizing color revolutions. Yakemenko is generally assumed to be the first to use the term. As reported in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in October 2005, Yakemenko explained that Nashi "support[s] sovereign democracy, where freedom of the person and freedom of the state are necessary and of equal importance."

In 2007, Yakemenko was appointed head of the State Committee on Youth, which was later upgraded to a federal agency. After Yakemenko asserted in January 2008 that the Orange Revolution threat no longer exists, rumors that the Kremlin youth agenda would undergo another transformation flourished. But Nashi is still in existence. The Public Chamber awarded the group 5.5 million rubles (approx. \$175,000) for its 2010 summer camp.

Meanwhile, the most successful and fastest developing public organization in Russia, Open Russia, fell victim to the Orange Revolution syndrome. Open Russia was established in 2001 by shareholders of Yukos, the energy company headed by now-jailed Mikhail Khodorkovsky, to serve charity, educational, and enlightenment goals. Its "public policy schools" organized year-long curriculums involving regular roundtables and discussions on contemporary issues of politics and governance, as well as practical training courses on the ins-and-outs of electoral politics. Participants were drawn equally from the NGO and academic world, business, and the government sector (including, initially, activists from United Russia). Such seminars were convened with the cooperation of regional authorities, but in 2005 Open Russia faced increasing troubles. It was shut down in March 2006.

Official Political Networks

The creation of semiformal hierarchical NGO and civil society management networks began in 2005 after the Orange Revolution and the "anti-monetization" protests. This process was accompanied by state and local government sponsored deconstruction of civil society networks.

Although the implementation of public reception rooms by federal presidential envoys was pioneering and began to increase from 2002, official civil society networks really took off in 2005. The structure was a pyramid of public entities with the federal Public Chamber at the top (July 2005), public council chambers at the district level, and regional and municipal chambers at the bottom. There was also a Presidential Council for the Implementation of National Projects (October 1995), which had regional branches led by governors. Two other special networks were later established, both times on the eve of nationwide elections: the National Antiterrorist Committee in February 2006 and the National Anti-Narcotics Committee in October 2007. The latter is led by the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN),

again with governors heading regional branches. Around the same time, United Russia was transformed into a mass party, with a membership that is now approaching two million. Some 25,000 have participated in the project “Cadres Reserve – A Professional Team for the Country,” with the top 300 activists selected and presented to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

In recent years, such networks have been playing a more important role in personnel decisions, especially at the regional level. Not only are regional governors increasingly replaced by outsiders, but in many cases entire administrative sections (especially political ones) are staffed by former Kremlin-based “political technocrats.” One prominent parent company is Gleb Pavlovsky’s Foundation for Effective Politics, which actively (if not effectively) sided with Yanukovich in Ukraine’s 2004 presidential election.

Conclusion

The negative trends in Russia’s political development since late 2004 cannot be entirely explained by the authorities’ reaction to the Orange Revolution. However, the events in Ukraine played an important role in shaping the Kremlin’s anti-democratic worldview and increased the negative trends that already existed. The measures undertaken to avoid an orange threat in Russia included: an increase in state control over, and the “cleansing” of, NGOs (first and foremost those that received Western funding), a diminished role for elections, a cleansing of the political space, especially of recognizable politicians and semi-autonomous actors, the adoption of populist policies instead of socioeconomic reform, and the establishment of pro-Kremlin youth movements. While the Kremlin may consider its goals to have been achieved – the 2008 presidential transition was particularly smooth – the price has been high, including the loss of reform opportunities connected with a favorable economic climate.

In conclusion, the Orange Revolution had a negative impact on Russian policy and political development. It may, however, still have a much more important and positive impact on the Russian public if Ukraine’s political progress is followed by socioeconomic gains.

Rethinking the Revolutionary Past

HOW COLOR REVOLUTIONS HAVE LED TO NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF RUSSIAN HISTORY

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Contemporary historical writing in Eastern and Central Europe is filled with “presentism,” the idea that major past events should be treated in a way that supports the pursuit of specific, usually political, goals. One prominent example of this is history writing for the purpose of nation building. In newly independent states, whether in the post-Soviet space or elsewhere, this typically involves the creation of new pantheons of heroes and “historical foes.” Other examples include the re-evaluation of the diplomatic failures and betrayals that led to two world wars and the occurrence of genocide in Europe, the study of ethnic and class-based purges, and many more dark and difficult pages of the last century. In many cases, such history writing incorporates different “sides” that are easily associated with contemporary political entities.

The latest foray of post-Soviet “historical politics” into academia developed in the aftermath of the so-called color revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. These events delegitimized notions of revolution and popular sovereignty in the eyes of many local elites. At the same time, anti-Western sentiments were projected into history by television and new textbooks. To grasp the tectonic shift, which has taken place in the dominant historical interpretation of these ideas, we need to briefly describe major patterns of past narratives, specifically those disseminated in school textbooks and the public sphere.

Three Dominant Historical Narratives

The Soviet Narrative

Soviet historiographic tradition elevated to a central position in school textbooks the narrative of the “Russian liberation movement,” from the eighteenth-century revolutionary writings of poet-philosopher Alexander Radishchev to the nineteenth-

century Decembrist revolt, *narodnik* movements, and spread of Marxism. This tradition held that the Great October Revolution was the highest point of the liberation movement, including the struggle of the non-Russian peoples of the empire. The focus in the Soviet era of Russian history was the Great Patriotic War and the USSR's anti-capitalist struggle as the leader of a "progressive mankind," marching from a past of colonialism and dependency to a bright socialist future.

When Joseph Stalin sought to strengthen the power of the state, some of the anti-colonial themes of early Soviet historiography were eliminated, while powerful Russian czars like Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great became positive personages of historical propaganda.

The pendulum began to swing back in the 1960s, as late Soviet historiography expressed a strong interest in the mass and revolutionary movements of the imperial period. Historians during the Brezhnev era, for example, heavily criticized Nicholas I (1825-1855) while lauding the activity of the Decembrists. Some historians employed such portrayals to subversively represent the relationship between Soviet rulers and dissidents.

The Post-Soviet Narrative

The narrative of the 1990s began to take shape during the late Soviet years of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. During this time, historians emphasized liberal developments that had been suppressed by the state and viewed the Russian liberation movement's ultimate success to be not the October Revolution but *perestroika* and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Bolsheviks' ascent to power was forced into the shadows of the democratic revolution of February 1917.

Authors of many new historical works promoted the subject of the suffering and struggle of ordinary people during both Czarist and Soviet rule. Even during his lifetime, Stalin was compared to earlier Russian "tyrant-czars" such as Ivan the Terrible, but it was only in the *perestroika* era that such a comparison was construed to be a negative one. Those who saw in Stalin a reflection of Peter the Great condemned them both for putting the interests of the state above the lives of the people.

The "Post-Color Revolution" Narrative

The next major shift in the official version of Russian history was an outcome of the color revolutions. Today, Russian leaders' understanding of the color revolutions includes three components that have influenced their interpretation of the past: Western influence, mass activity, and the inability of the state to manage the situation. A new ideology began to be introduced in the aftermath of Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution, which included a large dose of anti-Western sentiment, negative assessments of all forms of public activism, and a highly critical attitude toward participation in any kind of "revolution." This ideology has not been constrained to politics. It has also constituted a major departure from the historical narratives that previously dominated the educational system and public sphere.

Most importantly, this historical project has not only dealt with recent events but has gone far back in time in search of historic events in need of re-evaluation. One prominent example of this is the 2008 television documentary "Death of an Empire," in which the fall of the Byzantine Empire is interpreted as a result of Constantinople's misplaced trust of the West rather than its military and economic weakness against Arabs and Turks. Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), the author of the film (said to be a spiritual advisor of Vladimir Putin), clearly drew an analogy between Byzantium and contemporary Russia, finding examples of the fight against "oligarchs," the "power vertical," and the "Orange" threat in the medieval empire.

After the color revolutions, even Russia's Czarist-era liberation movement came under scrutiny. New textbooks questioned the agenda of the Decembrists and compared them to the revolutionaries that carried out the terror of late 18th century France. "If such people...were to come to power in Russia," states a new eighth-grade history textbook by Alexander Bokhanov, "a great misfortune would befall the country."

Even more striking, after the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, Russian state television aired a documentary elaborating on the old hypothesis that the Russian Revolution was organized by the Bolsheviks with German money channeled by the Kaiser's government to undermine Russia's military efforts. While such accusations have existed since 1917, it was the first time that state-owned television disseminated them to a wide audience. Later, the author of the documentary, Galina Ogurnaya, shot several other films developing the idea that the revolution was "in fact" a result of an international plot against Russia. These found their way to the national broadcast media in 2006 and 2007.

Soon the October Revolution even ceased to be an event deserving of public commemoration. In 2005, this long-lasting holiday was transformed into a commemoration of the Polish expulsion of Russians from the Kremlin in the early 17th century "Time of Troubles." Anti-Western sentiments replaced revolutionary celebrations. At the same time, new history writers were more sympathetic to Czarist authorities.

This ideological shift among Russian elites has also resulted in the discouraging of all attempts to describe popular movements in sympathetic ways. Such a view has spread widely, even beyond the Kremlin-oriented part of society. Even such a liberal journalist as Yulia Latynina recently said on an *Ekho Moskvy* radio broadcast that "no social movement in history ever brought about the progress of mankind. The great French Revolution gave mankind nothing but terror and the guillotine."

On the contrary, new interpretations have insisted upon the artificial character of all protests, whether they were paid for or manipulated by various political forces, and have argued that elite schisms are the main cause of all mass mobilization in politics. From this point of view, the history of the "velvet revolutions" in Eastern Europe is entirely one of mass manipulation. Such a contemptuous view has also spread to new scholarly interpretations of *perestroika*. According to the new narrative, these historic

developments have nothing to do with democracy. They were steered solely by political elites, and popular movements were just victims or pawns of mighty political interests. The main intent of such revisionism appears to be to keep people quiet. Democracy as a value has been subordinated to stability. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has referred negatively to the “Ukrainianization of politics,” widely understood to be a euphemism for democratization. This, it is suggested, is something Russian elites must not allow.

The other side of this approach has been to indulge all forms of “the state” in Russian history. Post-Orange authorities have tried to establish a narrative uniting Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet pasts into a sequence of “benign states” that neglects the clear gaps between phases of Russian history. This statist approach, which ascribes everything progressive in Russian history to the efforts of the state, has reached new heights in contemporary interpretations. The main intent of an [in]famous school textbook by historian Alexander Filippov was not to rehabilitate Stalin, as many understood it, but to rehabilitate the state: according to the new history, all Russia’s rulers moved the country forward. Every step by the government is explained by some historical (often external) threat or challenge; no alternative motivations are considered. The textbook’s concept was publicly supported by then-president Putin in 2007. Soviet victory in World War II has stood for some time at the center of the Russian historical narrative as its most positive event, one marked by enormous sacrifice.

In recent years, however, the narrative of the war has acquired new characteristics, including an anti-Western tone and an emphasis on the great organizing capacity of the state. The role of partisan (guerilla) warfare (a strong part of the discourse about the war during the Brezhnev era) has been abandoned. (It should be said that these changes cannot solely be chalked up to unilateral Russian initiatives; they have also been prompted by certain activities in Eastern Europe, particularly post-Orange Ukraine.)

Scholarly and Popular Reaction

The dramatic break with Russian historiographical tradition, supplemented by the creation of certain repressive institutions, including a commission to fight historical “falsification,” eventually caused a reaction within society and the professional historians’ community.

While some historians have, of course, taken part in recent developments, it is striking how united the majority of historians have appeared in their disapproval of “historical politics.” Over the last two years, historians have increased their efforts at professional integration, initiating several organized campaigns (mostly Internet-based) and developing several new organizations. Among recent bestsellers is a new two-volume *History of Russia in the Twentieth Century* (ed. Andrei Zubov), which is written from an anti-statist position, building on the narrative dominant in the 1990s. The Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Universal History, Alexander Chubarian (whose official position should force him to side with the authorities), repeatedly expressed his rejection of the “excessive politicization” of historical science.

Distinguished international scholars are invited to Moscow to support Russian historians in their fight to preserve history. In February 2010, for example, French historian Pierre Nora, chairman of the *Liberté pour l'Histoire* association, explained to a Russian audience in the Academy of Sciences that “history is just a long series of crimes against humanity. As authors of those crimes are dead, so the laws against them are targeted against historians that study those periods and professors who teach them.”

The historical community tends to see the unlimited reinterpretation of historical events for the sake of present political agendas as a gross misunderstanding of what history is supposed to be, a menace to their professional standards, and potentially dangerous. The intensity and unanimity of protest by Russia’s formerly atomized historical community has played some role in bringing about the current thaw.

The Color Revolutions Betrayed

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The color revolutions of Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005) promised these countries substantive democratization, which was supposed to end the immoral practices of post-Soviet imitation democracies, foster market-driven prosperity, and open the way into the prestigious club of European nations. High hopes, alas, quickly sank into renewed cynicism. Prevalent opinion put blame on the personal faults of leaders or even entire peoples said to lack democratic values and modern dispositions. A better explanation, however, might draw on the insights of macro-historical sociology, extending its reinterpretation of early modern revolutions and Western patterns of democratization into the early twenty-first century.

Given how vigorously Eastern European revolutionaries and Western “transitologists” rejected all vestiges of Marxism, it seems ironic that recent theoretical advances in historical macrosociology have returned states, class relations, and elites to the forefront of social scientific inquiry. This new materialism, however, differs significantly from erstwhile Marxist-Leninism with its rigid linearity and prophetic thrust. The focus is now on the historical processes that create key collective actors, together with their perceived interests and the institutional arenas in which they come to clash. This is why we ought to put the recent events in a longer-term and more comparative perspective, allowing a clearer view of what forces and constraints were actually involved in both the color revolutions and their non-occurrence in countries like Russia and Belarus.

The Paradox of Self-Democratizations in the USSR

Why did the ostensibly totalitarian Soviet Union twice attempt democratization, in 1956-1968 and again in 1985-1991? The answer lies in the costs, challenges, and evolving social composition of the socialist military-industrial state. The Bolshevik revolutionary dictatorship survived by emulating an ultra-Germanic war economy and, since 1929, institutionalizing it on a permanent basis, which meant fusing all sources of social power: economic, administrative-political, military, and ideological. Weberian-minded political scientist Stephen Hanson has wryly defined the resulting monster as

“charismatic bureaucracy.” The totalitarian trend peaked in 1938-1942. The war, however, forced Stalin to concede the practical impossibility of a perfect command structure backed solely by ideological cult and terror. The prerogative of decision making had to be shared with the top military. This became the first historical factor undermining the Soviet dictatorship of development.

The second factor flowed from the first. Soon the nomenklatura became a self-conscious elite capable of pursuing collective interests. Nikita Khrushchev’s “collective leadership” was essentially the Magna Carta of the nomenklatura. Security of status and office were achieved during Brezhnev’s “stagnation.” Mikhail Gorbachev’s *perestroika* already promised security of inheritable private wealth. In a linear progression, the end result would have been a capitalist oligarchy but not yet democratization. The USSR could then have been preserved by this capitalizing nomenklatura to serve as a powerful bargaining platform vis-à-vis the West and their own population. This realization now seems to drive the counter-reformation of Vladimir Putin.

What critically complicated things was, in a sense, proletarian class struggle, albeit of a variety hardly envisioned by Marxists. The Soviet industrial dictatorship reduced to wage labor even its functional equivalents of entrepreneurs and liberal professionals such as doctors, lawyers, scientists, and educators. Their emancipatory project was de-proletarianization, while contemporary Western societies served the desirable example of “normal life.” The new class of educated specialists pursued a double-pronged strategy of acquiring autonomous cultural and economic capital, i.e. becoming middle class, and curbing bureaucratic authoritarianism through the institutionalization of genuine political rights within enterprises, professional associations, neighborhoods, and the polity at large. The class of educated specialists was essentially reformist. Their goal was to update the power structures, cultural practices, and consumption in accordance with their growing collective weight in new industrial society. Such a strategy presupposed the existence of an effective and responsive state capable of enforcing collective rights and legal guarantees, hence democratization.

The Scramble for Spoils

Neither Khrushchev nor Gorbachev found a solution to the contradictions between the nomenklatura and the nascent middle class. Instead, the USSR ended in sudden chaotic collapse. It would be wrong, however, to assume that any specific social class had an interest in this outcome. Depending on local structural opportunities and fleeting contingencies, Soviet collapse produced all over the social pyramid many losers but also some winners, from former nomenklatura and the intelligentsia down to déclassé sub-proletarians who emerged as criminal entrepreneurs or ethnic warlords.

Overall, the end result was a sudden and spectacular, if unstable, concentration of private power and wealth. Entire national republics were privatized, in effect, by new presidents. In the process, similar looking opportunistic alliances of fractured elites, entrepreneurial intelligentsia, and able interlopers sought control over territorially

localized bases of power and legitimacy. In the industrial sectors, conflicts among coalitions of claimants assumed the form of insider intrigues, business “raiding,” and assassinations. A lack of stable property rights, personal security, and institutions of safe political bargaining throughout the broken post-Soviet landscape made personal patronage networks paramount.

In the meantime, the vast majority of the population suddenly found themselves economically as well as socially marginalized. They no longer seemed to matter, neither as producers of value and military recruits nor even as an audience for propaganda. Their bargaining position was drastically reduced and their very survival called into question. Populations withdrew into micro-adaptations, such as moving together into larger neo-traditional families, expanded subsistence, petty “shuttle” trade, informal employment, labor migration, and “brain drain” abroad.

Two key conditions for democratization were lost in the post-Soviet nineties: a broad distribution of power and resources across society, enabling its various groups to advance collective claims, and an effective state, which could be used to institutionally transform such claims into policies and rights.

The “Young Turks”

The situation seemed intolerable to almost everyone, including many members of the elite who found themselves inhabiting almost Third World countries. The emergence of new leadership was eagerly anticipated, and it did arrive. But who were they? Putin is regarded as the polar opposite of a Mikheil Saakashvili, Viktor Yushchenko, or Yulia Tymoshenko. But is he really? Some interesting similarities lie right on the surface. First, they all stormed into power by forcefully outflanking more senior rivals with strong regional bases such as Viktor Yanukovych (eastern Ukraine), Aslan Abashidze (Ajara), and Yury Luzhkov (Moscow). The new arrivals, however, were not total outsiders. At some point they used to occupy high positions in the regimes they overthrew. Contrary to traditional nomenklatura, they projected the image of “Young Turk” modernizers, blending nationalism with technocratic competence and knowledge of the West. They all pledged to take their countries out of the shame and disorder of the previous decade, punish the thieves, reign in sub-national potentates and separatists, achieve economic dynamism and modernization, restore popular faith in their nations, and bolster their international position.

Domestic configurations of forces were also rather similar on the eve of takeovers, whether revolutions or palace coups. Toward the late 1990s, Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine (and also Kyrgyzstan) all had what could be called “unconsolidated authoritarian” regimes. The evolution of these post-Soviet regimes subverts the common notion that democracies are built by democrats. In all these instances, it was the democrats from the *perestroika* era who ended up building personal authoritarian regimes: Gorbachev’s erstwhile ally Eduard Shevardnadze, the maverick populist Boris Yeltsin, the cosmopolitan scholar Askar Akayev, and Leonid Kuchma, once a progressive technocrat from the rocket industry. Generally speaking, it was not power as such that corrupted them but rather a historically specific logic of power that

imposed a constrained range of options in a situation nearing state collapse. At the beginning of their tenure as leaders of newly independent states, they might have genuinely believed in progressive reform. But the exigencies of daily survival instead prescribed a muddling through, suppression of opponents, the seizure of resources before they could be snatched by rivals, and securing the compliance of clients by awarding them former state assets and personal exemptions from law. Western recognition mattered greatly for these leaders of feeble and indebted states. For this reason, as well as the lack of any ideological alternatives after the end of communism, these post-Soviet regimes maintained a façade of procedural democracy in untidy contradiction to their actual “sultanistic” practices.

However, these imitational democracies could not become consolidated authoritarian regimes either. This was not so much due to ideological resistance as to drastic state weakness, when more or less autonomous potentates and oligarchs emerged within regions and key economic sectors. These lesser but often locally strong patronage “machines” continuously bargained and occasionally clashed with the central potentate and amongst themselves. Since virtually all such political “machines” and oligarchs soon developed their own public relations campaigns, the overall result was a series of political battles reflected in a boisterous if increasingly dirty and venal media environment, which contributed to an impression of democratization. In Belarus, by way of contrast, a once obscure but very capable populist seized a relatively advanced and better-managed chunk of the former Soviet industrial state. Using a relatively well-preserved state apparatus and its assets, President Alexander Lukashenko did not allow the emergence of sub-national potentates through privatization or regionalism. Here, no color revolution could materialize despite the continued presence of an oppositional intelligentsia that enjoyed significant outside support.

In a fundamental sense, the color revolutions, like more traditional “bourgeois” revolutions before, did not mean a total negation of the old. Rather, they grew out of the escalation of ordinary politics within the previous regimes. Political scientist Henry Hale was among the first Western scholars to identify the weak point in patronage regimes: the moment of political succession. This suggests what may be the key empirical test for determining how consolidated a given patronage-based authoritarian regime is: whether aggrieved or ambitious oligarchs and regional potentates are present. The next indicator of revolutionary possibility would be the presence of alternative (not to be confused with free) media and various nuclei of intelligentsia supported by oligarchic resources. Alternative press and intelligentsia organizations could, of course, be more genuinely “grassroots,” but in the impoverished and unstructured landscapes of post-Soviet states this is not as likely. Foreign sponsorship (overt or covert) can certainly play a role, but the commitment of foreign actors is often subject to the complexity of ideological and budgetary politics among national governments, international organizations, and private foundations. George Soros and George W. Bush could at some point find similar stakes in a peripheral country, but one should not expect such associations to last.

Last but not least, the color revolutions — as well as Putin’s ascendancy — suggest yet another critically important indicator: the emergence of younger alienated cadres or entrepreneurs socially located near the summit of state power yet for some reason excluded from the circuits of wealth distribution. At the time of succession, these actors can serve as “fuses” igniting popular anger already concentrated by oppositional media outlets and nongovernmental organizations. Alternatively, this could lead to swift preemptive action, as in Russia around the year 2000, when certain elites basically stage a palace coup and target all possible contenders: rival media empires and political parties, NGOs, oligarchic wealth, and regional “machines.”

Revolutions of Intermediate Importance

The state remains at the center of revolutions. So do property rights. Here we arrive at the root cause of both the apparent failures of the color revolutions as well as the Russian counterreformation. In all these cases, new leaders certainly shook up existing elite structures, but they did not change in any consequential way class relations, defined as the balance of enforceable property and political claims between the often-factional elites and the multiple groups located further down the social hierarchy. It is a robust and well-established finding of historical sociologists that in the modern history of the West, democratization has been driven mostly by alliances of intelligentsia, urban workers, and the petty bourgeoisie. Put simply, democracy is a political cooperative of a majority who lack the weight to individually secure access to state power. In the pithy expression of sociologist Terence Hopkins, it means making states and power elites issue guarantees against themselves.

This is exactly what did not happen. The color revolutions and Putin’s coup wrought consequences on the relative distribution of power and wealth only among the elites. Some factions lost, other gained, but states did not become substantively more effective in providing public goods or enforcing rational policies (with a slight exception possibly for Georgia, since its starting point was so dismally low). Insufficient provision of public goods, particularly woeful in these once highly industrialized and urbanized societies, means that the level from which economic or political entrepreneurship can emerge is very high, within the elites themselves. However, this kind of entrepreneurship is directed at wielding political influence and force in order to repossess rents from existing assets and transborder flows rather than inventing anything new. That is why the recently fashionable talk of modernization in Russia, for instance, remains a charade: the margin of profit is simply incommensurate.

Is there any hope for the future? The color revolutions marked an intermediate political upheaval perhaps comparable to the July 1830 revolution in France. Many such events got buried in history books because they never rose to the epic proportions of “true” social revolutions. Nevertheless, as sociologist Charles Tilly demonstrated throughout his life’s work, in the West intermediate revolutions, protests, and coups helped to maintain a dynamic which eventually strengthened civil societies and forced states to become less patrimonially venal and more bureaucratically disciplined. The current ruling elites in post-Soviet Eurasia, whether those that experienced color

revolutions or avoided them, keenly understand the precariousness of their own position. Their space of action in the face of possible protest or economic crisis is severely limited by the oligarchic pattern of resource distribution, which bars resources from being effectively tapped for policies of industrial, social, or even military reform.

All this points to the likelihood of another wave of elite collisions in the near future, perhaps this time associated with the consequences of economic crisis, the resulting reduction of rent flows, and increased factionalism within oligarchic elites. There can be no certainty whatsoever that further socioeconomic upheavals will revive class-conscious political action toward reform and democratization. The immediate result could be spontaneous and quasi-spontaneous rioting by the young male sub-proletarians – as we have just witnessed in Kyrgyzstan. The same recent example also indicates that police repression might not be enough to save the “unconsolidated authoritarianisms” of Eurasia. However provocative this might sound, the class forces to watch and probably to support now are the workers and petty bourgeoisie emerging from the former Soviet intelligentsia.

What's in Store for Color Revolutions?

MANAGING A NEW RISE OF DISCONTENT IN A TIME OF CRISIS

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The angry and hopeless demonstrations in the streets of Tehran last June did not resemble the enthusiastic “happenings” on Kyiv’s *maidan* (main square) in November 2004. However, successive eruptions of public protest after elections perceived to be “stolen” occur too often to avoid attempts at generalization. It is clear that these events, which have acquired the common name of color revolutions, should not be treated as fresh cases for classical theories of revolution. The so-called “transitology” school, for its part, interprets them as assaults on the barriers regimes erect to contain the global march toward democracy, but this characterization contains much wishful thinking.

As the sudden eruption of violence in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010 demonstrated, investigation into the causes of the color revolutions presents not only an academic challenge but also a practical political task. The development of any revolutionary situation is certainly driven primarily by internal conflicts, but rises and falls of the revolutionary trend depend strongly on the course taken by external actors, including the United States and the European Union. There is obviously more pragmatism and less ideological zeal in present-day U.S. policy than there was in the previous decade. The American commitment to supporting democracy remains unquestionable and every revolutionary situation sets a test for it. There is no simple key for passing these tests, and this analysis does not aim to invent one, but it might be useful to examine the evolution of this exciting but elusive phenomenon.

Revolution No. 15?

We cannot proceed by conceptualizing the color revolutions simply as explosions of creative energy similar to the romanticized “happenings” of 1968. A more neutral working definition could be an organized and unarmed public uprising in a post-Soviet

state, aiming to replace by democratic means a discredited semi-authoritarian regime with a government formed by an alternative and usually more pro-Western elite coalition.

One issue with this definition concerns geography. Revolutionary energy is brewing in Iran and bursting through political dams in Thailand, but this analysis assumes that post-Soviet political developments possess a unique quality originating in the USSR's spectacular collapse, which brought into existence a group of inherently fragile proto-states with weak identities. Stabilization of these state-projects was achieved in the latter part of the 1990s through the consolidation of political power by "enlightened" authoritarian regimes. The breakdown of Yugoslavia was in many ways similar to the collapse of the Soviet Union, even if it was aggravated by a series of wars. The uprising in Belgrade in October 2000 that cast out Slobodan Milosevic can therefore be classified as the first in the chain of color revolutions.

Starting with the year 2000 may appear artificial, but the fact is that the civil wars and coups of the 1990s constitute an entirely different set of analytical puzzles. This analysis considers 14 events that fit the above definition, more than is usually associated with the notion of color revolutions since the unsuccessful attempts are included (my more elaborate analysis of this data set can be found in a forthcoming article in *Comparative Social Research*). At the same time, it is essential to mention several outliers that this definition does not capture: the uprising in Andijan, Uzbekistan (May 2005) and the armed clash in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria (October 2005), the angry demonstrations in Cherkessk, Karachaevo-Cherkessia (November 2004) and in Maikop, Adygeya (April 2006), the armed attack on the Armenian parliament in October 1999, and the unrest caused by massive electoral irregularities in Derbent, Dagestan (October 2009).

Common Features--and Lack Thereof

Every color revolution is certainly *sui generis*, with its own particular trajectory and special emotional catharsis. Nonetheless, from this collection of cases several characteristic features are apparent. Two that stand out most prominently are a strong link between uprisings and elections and low levels of violence. Unarmed and often unruly crowds did not always remain peaceful (looting and capture of official buildings happened in half the cases), but the regimes under threat never resorted to machine guns or tanks. Indeed, what is absent in the picture is tough authoritarianism; the revolutions emerge not as protests against brutal repression but as responses to the weakness of corrupt quasi-democratic regimes.

As far as elections are concerned, there appears to be no difference between presidential and parliamentary elections, and the scale of falsification cannot really be connected to the intensity of public outcry. The key point, as political scientist Joshua Tucker has pointed out, is that elections open a shortcut to overcoming a problem of collective action. Individual choices are made on the assumption that expressing disapproval of an elite that has every intention to retain its grasp on power is, in this context, essentially risk-free. The direct connection between mishandled elections and

an explosion of protests shapes several other noteworthy features: the presence of international observers, for instance, and the heavy concentration of protest activity in capital cities (where election results are finalized), even in such large and internally diverse states as Ukraine.

Color Revolutions Accomplished and Attempted

State	Success	Period	Elections	Crowd	Victims	Civil war
Yugoslavia/ Serbia	Yes	27 Sept-5 Oct 2000	24 Sept 2000	250,000	2	1990/94 1999
Azerbaijan	No	16 Sept-20 Oct 2003	15 Oct 2003	25,000	Few	1991/94
Georgia	Yes	15-23 Nov 2003	2 Nov 2003	100,000	None	1990/93
Ajara/ Georgia	Yes	14 Mar-5 May 2004	28 Mar 2004	50,000	Few	No
Abkhazia	Yes	12 Oct-5 Dec 2004	3 Oct 2004	15,000	None	1992/93
Ukraine	Yes	22 Nov-04 Dec 2004	21 Nov 2004	500,000	None	No
Kyrgyzstan	Yes	18-24 Mar 2005	13 Mar 2005	25,000 Bishkek	Few	No
Azerbaijan	No	8 Aug-26 Nov 2005	6 Nov 2005	20,000	Few	1991/94
Belarus	No	19-23 Mar 2006	19 Mar 2006	35,000	1	No
Georgia	No	28 Sept-8 Nov 2007	5 Jan 2008	75,000	Few	1990/93
Armenia	No	20 Feb-2 Mar 2008	19 Feb 2008	100,000	Few	1991/94
Mongolia	No	1 Jul 2008	29 June 2008	10,000	5	No
Georgia	No	9 Apr-24 Jul 2009	21 May 2008	50,000	None	2008
Moldova	No	6-7 Apr 2009	5 Apr 2009	15,000	3	1991/92

A student of the 1917 Russian revolution would expect to find a correlation between the phenomenon under examination and war. Indeed, in nine cases, countries had experienced civil war, but in only two (Serbia in 1999 and Georgia in 2009) was this trauma fresh enough to be perceived as a real driver. The impact of the “war factor” might conceivably be found in the readiness of seasoned militaries to use deadly force

and in the availability of weapons for “revolutionary” crowds – but neither feature is observed in our collection of cases. What is clearly observable is the high concentration of cases in the Caucasus (8 out of 14) and especially Georgia (with its breakaway provinces), which comes out as the champion with five revolutionary events (not to mention four wars).

External Sponsorship and Export of Counterrevolution

One trend that is clear through all these diverse features is the spectacular success of color revolutions in the first half of the decade, and the chain of failures in the second. The 15-month period from late 2003 to early 2005 saw an impressive concentration of successful uprisings, and the sharp break from this trajectory remains largely unexplained. It was definitely not for lack of trying. Economic factors also have little explanatory value; all post-Soviet states enjoyed strong economic growth for most of the decade, and color revolutions themselves were not really triggered by economic setbacks.

One key factor that keen observers like Vitali Silitski and Alexander Cooley have noted is that “demonstration effects” work both ways. Like aspiring revolutionaries, resistant regimes learn lessons from color revolutions and figure out what it takes to diffuse the potential for protest and isolate the most radical groups. There is also a particular Russian feature in this learning process. Russia’s then-president Vladimir Putin suffered a humiliating personal defeat in Kyiv in late 2004 and came to perceive the risk of regime implosion under the pressure of street protests to be an existential threat to Russia that had to be resolutely countered in every case, and at any cost. In hindsight, the turning point appears to be the Andijan massacre in May 2005, after which Putin--and after him Dmitry Medvedev – extended unconditional support to leaders seeking to face down potential “color revolutionaries”: Ilham Aliyev in Azerbaijan, Serzh Sargsyan in Armenia, Alexander Lukashenko (despite far from ideal chemistry) in Belarus, and even Vladimir Voronin in Moldova, making an exception only for Georgia’s Mikheil Saakashvili. Denial of support to Kurmanbek Bakiyev in Kyrgyzstan (more on which later) marked a clear deviation from this counter-revolutionary stance.

This Moscow-centered “solidarity” network of quasi-democratic and neo-patrimonial rulers constitutes a serious deterrent in revolutionary situations. This influence points to the need to consider the role of Western sponsorship in successful color revolutions. Various pro-Western networks were in many cases the main transmitter of the demonstration effect for protestors, amplified by media campaigns, organizational resources, and money. This does not mean that Putinesque conspiracy theories about subversive strategies executed by joint operations of the CIA and Amnesty International are credible, but it is sufficiently clear that successful revolutionaries were typically inspired not only by democratic ideals but also relied upon multiple sources of Western support.

A significant reduction of this support, not least due to disappointment in the results of the Orange Revolution, coupled with the EU’s flat refusal to grant Ukraine

any prospect of membership, has seriously weakened the revolutionary drive in post-Soviet Eurasia. While discontent with corrupt despotic regimes has not diminished since 2005, many opposition groups are too discouraged by the lack of U.S. and European involvement to pursue the “try-again-fail-again-fail-better” strategy. The EU flag raised over the sacked Moldovan parliament in April 2009 was a desperate attempt to reconnect with an indifferent “ever closer” union.

Does the Crisis Make Much Difference?

A working draft of this memo was presented soon after it had become clear that Yulia Tymoshenko had failed to snatch an electoral victory from the jaws of the unrelenting Viktor Yanukovich and had also failed in staging protests against alleged election rigging and in defense of the tired Orange Revolution. That anticlimax provided a perfect illustration of the easily observable fact that the devastatingly deep economic crisis has not so far brought a major spike in revolutionary activity. This observation fits the larger trend: the global recession has not generated a corresponding increase in anti-government (or anti-globalization) protests; neither, for that matter, have we seen a proliferation of civil wars, which generally correlate strongly with economic performance, particularly within the group of poorest countries.

The easiest available explanation for this muted impact is the time gap: the shock of the crisis was absorbed during a period when the sum of individual choices shifted toward adaptation rather than protest. Angry rallies in Latvia – one of the worst victims of the crisis – caused a fall of government but nothing resembling a revolution. At the same time, that political spasm demonstrated that it was rather improbable that a change of government would help revive economic dynamism in any of the states potentially susceptible to color revolutions.

Arriving at the two-year mark since the strike of the disaster, when the recession has technically ended in most economies, we see some revival of political protest, first of all in Greece, but also stabilization, as in Latvia. Such recovery, while uncertain, has led to another counter-intuitive finding: while the depth of the unexpected fall made it possible to predict profound economic and political transformation, recovery has generally led toward the restoration of “business-as-usual.” The lessons of the crisis have been lost not only on the economists who expect that consumption will return to pre-meltdown (and definitely unsustainable) levels, but also on the politicians who refuse to see the scope of growing public demand for change.

An event that stands sharply in contrast to this picture of political pause in the face of economic disaster is the sudden explosion of violence in Kyrgyzstan that resulted in a swift collapse of governance in April 2010. The Tulip Revolution of March 2005 bequeathed the lesson that toppling a corrupt regime was easy, but the anti-Bakiyev revolt can hardly be qualified as a color revolution. It was not caused by fraudulent elections but triggered by an increase in communal tariffs, and, most significantly, it saw considerable violence with about one hundred casualties. Moscow immediately recognized the new government. This readiness to embrace a regime

change and reluctance to intervene invites a closer look at developments within Russia itself.

The slogan of “modernization” touted by President Dmitry Medvedev contains an acknowledgement that Russia cannot return to the status quo ante but must find a new model of economic growth. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that Medvedev aims only for a minor upgrade of Putin’s “vertical” of executive power, which, even if accomplished, would be entirely insufficient for stimulating economic innovation. The petro-prosperity of the 2000s is irreproducible but its political superstructure is irreplaceable, and this contradiction translates into conflicts between different elite groups and clans, a typical setting for color revolutions.

The proposition that Putin’s Russia might become the epicenter of a new wave of revolutions might seem preposterous, but it is worth noting that Dagestan is currently the most violent hot spot in the “zone of instability” running from Central Asia to the Balkans. Whatever trajectory the political crisis in Russia follows, Moscow will hardly be able to perform the role of counter-revolutionary leader, and the chaos in Kyrgyzstan proved this incapacitation. This could open up a certain opportunity for radical opposition in Belarus or Azerbaijan, even if they cannot count on any involvement from the United States (preoccupied with Afghanistan) and the EU (overloaded with centrifugal problems).

Russia’s preoccupation with domestic crises and the EU’s neglect of the fledgling Eastern Partnership reduce the probability of a neo-Orange Revolution in the course of the next parliamentary elections in Ukraine (which could be centered in marginalized and depressed Lviv), but increases the risk of breakdown in such Russian-dependent quasi-states as Transdnistria. In Georgia, a new spate of discontent against the Saakashvili regime might trigger a provincial revolution with a secessionist twist in Ajara, which Russia would recognize with few doubts. While Saparmurat Niyazov’s demise did not – against many predictions – shatter Turkmenistan, Islam Karimov’s sudden end might unleash an explosion of smoldering discontent in Uzbekistan. Overall, the weakening of corrupt regimes caused by the protracted recession increases the chances for success in one of the next revolutions, but it appears probable that accumulated anger could turn peaceful protests ugly, while desperate despots could resort to military means for suppressing the opposition.

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