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Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West*

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Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West*

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Abstract *This article examines the role of Western support for domestic non-governmental organisations during the 2004 Ukrainian election and the Orange Revolution. It critically assesses the thesis that Western support and the groups who received Western money were overly biased towards a particular candidate, namely Viktor Yushchenko.*

Introduction

During Ukraine's dramatic 'Orange Revolution' in November and December 2004, several commentators, both in Russia and in the West, claimed to detect a hand – not particularly well hidden – at work. 'Pro-democracy' non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which had supposedly backed a particular candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, served as conduits for the decisive Western commitment to his cause and had 'imported' various techniques that allegedly swung the election. The critics had highlighted an important, if partial, truth: the NGO sector in Ukraine may be weaker than in neighbouring central European states, but is noticeably stronger than in Russia.¹ Moreover, whereas the Russian independent sector has found life increasingly difficult since 2000 under President Vladimir Putin, in Ukraine it has been expanding since the establishment of the 'Freedom of Choice'² umbrella in 1999.

Expansion has been neither steady nor exponential. After his questionable re-election in November 1999 Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma began a campaign against both media and civil society freedom. In part, his harassment of both led directly to the September 2000 Gongadze affair, the disappearance and murder of the founder of Ukraine's first investigative website, Ukrainian Truth.³ However, in turn this affair led to a storm of protests that began a revival of third sector activity. By contrast, in Russia at this time (2001) the infamous 'political technologist' Gleb Pavlovskii organised a grand Kremlin gala 'Civic Forum' for government-approved NGOs. The Ukrainian parliamentary elections in March 2002 provided another stimulus to activity and served as a dry run for 2004,

*This article develops ideas first published in Wilson (2005)

¹ See the portals <www.civicua.org> and <www.intellect.org>.

² See <www.coalition.org.ua>.

³ See <www.pravda.com.ua>.

with organisations like Freedom of Choice and the Committee of Voters of Ukraine⁴ helping to shadow the elections, and to minimise electoral fraud, thereby forcing the authorities to create a majority in parliament by bribery and intimidation *after* the vote. It was this partial success that led the government to launch another anti-NGO campaign through the winter of 2003–4, this time backed by Kuchma's new strong-arm Chief of Staff Viktor Medvedchuk and his normally reliable allies, the Communist Party of Ukraine. A Temporary Parliamentary Commission was established in December 2003; reporting to Parliament in May 2004. Its chairman, the Communist deputy Valerii Mishura, demanded that 'foreign financing' of NGOs be banned, and that Western-funded domestic NGOs be closed (Kuzio 2004).

Harassment, rather than closure, was the norm, but the 2004 election was never really a proxy contest between a 'Western' set of NGOs and a 'Russian' set: the Kuchma–Yanukovych–Russia side did not think in such terms. There wasn't a Russian, pro-Russian or pro-Yanukovych third sector as such. Indeed, after the Orange Revolution, Pavlovskii openly regretted the fact that 'during the electoral campaign in Ukraine there was an underestimation [by Russia] and low level of cooperation between Russian society and Ukrainian NGOs. We will try to avoid such an underestimation in the future. Mr Yushchenko will certainly not be regarded by us as a person with exclusive rights to interpret the position of Ukrainian society, political, and nongovernmental organizations' (Socor 2005). This article will therefore consider whether the Ukrainian NGOs that played an important role in the election did so independently, or whether they *de facto* served one particular candidate and/or the West. Russia and the Yanukovych camp preferred to use 'political technology', which is discussed elsewhere (Wilson 2005).

The Critics' Case

Russia's accusations of illegitimate or excessive Western interference found an echo in certain circles in the West, some of whom argued that the entire Orange Revolution was 'made in the USA', as some sarcastic banners put up by Ukrainian protestors then had it. The argument was that, first, the West's role was partial; it being alleged that 'Yushchenko got the Western nod, and floods of money poured in to groups which support him' (Steele 2004a). Second, the West's role was therefore inappropriately financial. Combining the points, the critics sought to draw rather more than general 'attention to the degree of funding by the US and other western governments *for the campaign*' (Steele 2004b, *emphasis added*), zeroing in on the figure of US\$65 million over two years that had been used to back the then Ukrainian opposition (Traynor 2004; Almond 2004; Walsh 2004). For example, in December 2004 US Congressman Ron Paul of Texas, a libertarian Republican and critic of the Iraq War, echoed President George W Bush's words 'that "Any election (in Ukraine), if there is one, ought to be free from any foreign influence."' He continued, 'I agree with the president wholeheartedly. Unfortunately, it seems that several US government agencies saw things differently and sent US taxpayer dollars into Ukraine in an attempt to influence the outcome' (Paul 2004).

⁴See <www.cvu.org.ua> .

A subsidiary theory is that funding had to be covert, because it was biased. It was therefore alleged that monies were funnelled through US organisations such as Freedom House and the Carnegie Foundation (Kelley 2004), as if these were extra monies to those already mentioned. This is normal practice. Overall, it is alleged that the implicit bias of the West and the weight of money involved cast doubt on NGOs' self-proclaimed neutrality. Either their pre-existing bias led them to seek out Western funding, or that funding led to the distortion of their role. Non-governmental organisations therefore acted as interest groups rather than as promoters of universal standards, and as tools of US foreign policy rather than as local representatives of the 'global conscience' or 'transnational civil society' (Keane 2003; Florini 2000; Colas 2002).

The Sums Involved

Western support was indeed substantial, and came mainly from the US. However, American spending was actually decreasing in Ukraine: according to the publicly available official figures the total expenditure on aid to Ukraine by US government agencies in the fiscal year 2002 was US\$280.48 million, which included US\$157.92 million under the 1992 Freedom Support Act (designed for the funding of democracy promotion in the former USSR). This second figure included US\$74 million channelled through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and US\$25 million for the more specific US State Department Public Diplomacy programme (US Department of State 2003).

In 2003 Washington reacted to the Gongadze affair and the revelations on the Melnychenko tapes, specifically the so-called 'Kolchuha affair', by cutting funding for democracy support in Ukraine by about a third. (Washington expressed its anger at one key tape that it believed to be genuine, in which President Kuchma apparently approves the illegal supply of a hi-tech radar system dubbed 'Kolchuha' [Chainmail] to Saddam Hussein on the eve of the invasion of Iraq in 2003.) Overall funding that year was US\$227.48 million, with only US\$55.11 million for democratic reform programmes (US Department of State 2004a).

The figures for 2004 were even lower: US\$143.47 million, with just US\$34.11 million for democracy assistance (Department, 2004b). There was, therefore, no increase in spending in the election year, although America decided to provide more money *after* the Orange Revolution, an extra US\$60 million in fiscal year 2005 (later cut to US\$33.7 million). Joel Brinkley (2004) quotes US\$97 million in the fiscal year that ended on 31 October 2004, including approximately US\$28 million for democracy-building projects. The equivalent figures for the UK Department for International Development's overall annual budget in Ukraine reveal a more stable £6.5 million, only a small proportion of which went on democracy assistance. In the British case, there was no scaling back after 2003.

Some figures are also available for the biggest private donors. George Soros's International Renaissance Foundation, for example, spent US\$1.65 million between Autumn 2003 and December 2004, supporting the 'New Choice 2004' and 'Freedom of Choice' coalitions of NGOs.⁵ Considerable sums were also raised

⁵ The International Renaissance Foundation provides very detailed accounts. See <www.irf.kiev.ua/files/eng/news_659_en_doc.doc>, accessed 21 November 2005.

privately by the Ukrainian diaspora and by foreign supporters of the Orange Revolution. Here it is harder to be accurate, but a figure of several million dollars is likely. In Chicago, for example, home to one of North America's largest Ukrainian communities and original home of the new first lady Katherine Chumachenko, US\$363,000 was raised. It is also harder to be precise about the destination of this type of funding, although it is likely that such funds supported the opposition much more directly. Overall, Timothy Garton Ash and Timothy Snyder estimate Western funding at closer to US\$100 million (Snyder and Ash 2005).

The sums involved for state spending were within the framework of the Freedom Support Act, which not only creates the legislative framework for democracy assistance to the former Soviet Union, but also makes such assistance conditional on the degree of progress. The extent of political discretion in allocating funds is, therefore, limited. Moreover, given the cuts made to the budget for Ukrainian support in 2003, American aid per capita was much higher in other supposedly controversial cases like Georgia (US\$141.16 million in total in 2003, including US\$21.06 million for democracy assistance, population 4.7 million) and Kyrgyzstan (US\$50.8 million and US\$12.2 million in 2003, population 5.1 million); Ukraine's 2003 population, at 47.4 million, was ten times as high.

The NGOs

Some critics have also questioned some of the recipients of aid. Freedom House administers the Polish–American–Ukrainian Cooperation Institute (PAUCI),⁶ which is also funded by USAID.⁷ The PAUCI funds a variety of Ukrainian NGOs, and its grants are all listed publicly.⁸ Again, one argument was that the recipients were either inappropriately political or inappropriately partisan. Ron Paul for example criticised one Ukrainian NGO, the International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS) set up in 1994,⁹ because Yushchenko was a member of the board. However, the aim of ICPS was to encourage elite dialogue, explaining why regime stalwarts like Serhii Tihipko, Yanukovych's campaign manager in 2004, were also on the board. The ICPS itself claimed that 'the only ICPS–PAUCI project [in this period], worth US\$4,500, was aimed at researching and developing methodology for designing regional small business development programs and had nothing to do with any election campaigns' (*ICPS Newsletter* 2004).

Paul also attacked the Centre for Political and Legal Reforms¹⁰ for having a picture of Yushchenko on its website. The Centre was run by two Rada deputies with legal experience, Serhii Holovaty and Ihor Koliushko. They set it up in November 1996 with the not particularly sinister aim of promoting constitutionalism, that is, promoting the better working and, often enough, simply the actual observance of Ukraine's Constitution after it was passed in June of that year. The National Democratic Institute funded similar works, running

⁶ See <www.pauci.org>.

⁷ See <www.usaid.kiev.ua>.

⁸ See <www.pauci.org/en/grants/grant>.

⁹ See <www.icps.kiev.ua>.

¹⁰ See <www.pravo.org.ua>.

legal seminars and supporting the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, which has also received help from the Eurasia Foundation. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) supported the Laboratory of Legislative Initiatives and its excellent publication of academic reference, *Parlament*.¹¹ It has also funded the website first set up by Hryhorii Gongadze, <www.pravda.com.ua>, as did the US Embassy with a grant of US\$24,000 in October 2000 to save it from the threat of closure. The NED and the US Embassy Public Affairs Section helped fund <www.telekritika.kiev.ua>, a site devoted to media analysis and media bias monitoring, which was actually more popular at home than abroad, quickly establishing itself as a must-visit site for Ukrainian journalists.

Most such grants therefore helped NGOs with a good track record for independent work. Other NGOs were inherently bipartisan. In late December 2004, the Ukrainian Ministry of the Economy released details of two particular contracts, resulting from a Memorandum on Mutual Understanding signed by the Central Election Commission (CEC) and USAID in March 2004. These were 'Citizens' Role in the Elections in Ukraine' (budget US\$3.674 million) and 'Promoting Election Organisation in Ukraine' (budget US\$4.481 million); much of this money went to the CEC and the parliament (Verkhovna Rada) to improve their institutional performance in the election (counting the votes and drafting the relevant law). The projects benefited all the main political parties, including supporters of both Yushchenko and Yanukovich, and even many of the fake parties set up by supporters of Yanukovich (*Ukraine List* 2005). A large proportion of foreign funding therefore rightly went to the government side, yet it was the government side that was often accused of removing monies for partisan use or personal benefit. This was one reason for the scale-back of funding in 2003: the West was increasingly reluctant to fund projects involving compromised, high state officials.

A partial consequence was that the West worked more with the regime's critics thereafter – although this was as a result of the regime's behaviour and of the patrimonial and neo-Soviet political culture in east Ukraine, where the embryonic third sector tended to work within the state rather than outside its structures. Donors remained as even-handed as they could in difficult circumstances; a stress on due process was entirely natural when it was the government side that was flouting its own commitments to such standards. Most NGOs made constant efforts to engage all sides and the Yanukovich camp's frequent aloofness reflected as much its way of thinking as the thinking of the NGOs.

In the election year, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) played a prominent role in monitoring the voting process.¹² Freedom House, along with the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute (IRI), also helped to fund election monitoring by the European Network of Election Monitoring (ENEMO), which was strongly critical of the 21 November 2004 poll (Freedom House 2004). Ukraine had been a member of the OSCE since 1992 (when it was the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), and had signed up to its standards. The permanent OSCE mission to Ukraine was established in

¹¹ Ukrainian spelling. For website, however, see <www.parliament.org.ua>.

¹² See <www.osce.org/ukraine/documents/html>, accessed 21 November 2005.

November 1994. Russia has long been vocal in its criticism of the OSCE's approach and, after 2004, the defeated Yanukovych side followed this lead. Ukraine, however, has no previous history of claimed exceptionalism and has always set much greater store by its membership of 'European club' organisations, constantly proclaiming its commitment to 'European values' before 2004, even during the darkest hours of diplomatic purdah at the height of the Gongadze affair. After the Orange Revolution, the new government went to the opposite extreme of withdrawing from the rival Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) election 'monitoring' body, the CIS Election Observation Mission, since it had always given any election in the region a clean bill of health.

Critics have also attacked Ukrainian NGOs and their Western sponsors for their role in backing the key exit poll, which calculated that Yushchenko had been the real winner of the second round vote on 21 November by 53% to 44%, in stark contrast to the rapidly declared official result that had Yanukovych the winner by 49.5% to 46.6%.¹³ Eight Western embassies (the US, UK, Canada, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark) and four NGOs (the NED, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Eurasia and George Soros's Renaissance Foundation), helped fund the exit polls in each of the three rounds, which were initially conducted by a consortium made up of the Kiev International Institute for Sociology (KIIS), the Razumkov Centre thinktank and the opinion pollsters SOCIS and the Social Monitoring Centre. The latter two broke ranks and were widely accused of tampering with their results after round one (in the government's favour). Only KIIS and the Razumkov Centre remained in the consortium after the first round.

Dick Morris, a former adviser to Bill Clinton, has admitted to a clandestine meeting in an unnamed East European capital with members of Yushchenko's team, at which he advised them that a big exit poll would not only be useful in helping minimise fraud, but might also help to bring protesters out on to the streets if the exit poll indicated obvious ballot fraud (Allen and Harris 2005).

However, despite the assertion by some that this meant a manufactured projection replacing a 'real' count, the opposite was the case. Everyone expected the official results to be fixed, as they had been at previous elections in 1998, 1999 and 2002 (and the truly farcical figures for the referendum held in 2000), most of the fraud being carried out by the CEC itself. All sides were aware that the introduction of an exit poll in 2002 had made it difficult for the CEC to announce results that wildly diverged from expectations. The Western critics were guilty of looking at exit polls through a Western prism, where, for example, early polls conducted using skewed methodology may tip the margin of a prediction. This was the case for polls predicting a narrow Kerry victory in the 2004 US election. In Ukraine, the exit polls were considered differently. The government side tried to confuse the issue by organising rival exit polls that were conducted by corrupted 'sociologists' (the Sociological Association of Ukraine was abandoned by the honest pollsters after the vote). The exit poll by KIIS–Razumkov was therefore the only legitimate poll. The government's fatal mistake was to claim at the last minute an extra turnout of one million people. No one believed such

¹³ See < www.cvk.gov.ua > for the official results and < www.exitpoll.org.ua > for the exit polls.

a wide divergence. The exit poll established what was credible, and what was not. The money, US\$24,700 in round one and US\$31,000 in round two, was extremely well spent.¹⁴

Finally, the NED, Open Society Initiative, and the Citizens' Role in Elections in Ukraine programme, run by Freedom House, NDI and IRI, provided some support for the youth organisation PORA.¹⁵ Despite this group being the focus of many critics' allegations, however, the donations were mostly seed money, being spent on general training sessions rather than on PORA direct. PORA's own claim is that

[Their] campaign's initial funding was supplied by PORA founders. These funds were directed to organizing activities, information support and printing of materials. Training of activists was supported by small grants provided by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, Freedom House and the Canadian International Development Agency (in the overall amount of approx. \$130,000). It is worth noting, thus, that PORA, unlike its counterparts in Serbia and Georgia, received only minimal financial support from the international community.

In this situation, entrepreneurs from all regions of Ukraine provided the bulk of resources for PORA activities during the presidential elections. A large number of these entrepreneurs had been directly involved in the students' movement of the early 1990s. The support they provided came largely in kind, including free production of publications, communications, transportation etc. It is estimated that the value of this in-kind support exceeded 5 million Euro. In cash, PORA expended 1.2 million Euro (including the resources used at the regional level). It is also noteworthy that more than 60 per cent of these resources were spent during the Orange Revolution and for the organizational needs of tent camps, transport, food etc. (Kaskiv et al 2005)

General seminars for youth activists had been run as early as 2002–03, supported by the Alfred Moser Foundation (the Netherlands), the Westminster Foundation (UK) and the Fund for European Education (Poland) (Solantai, 2005); many of those trained later ended up in PORA. Freedom House also helped train election monitors in the Crimea in August 2004. In April 2004, 18 Ukrainian activists went to a seminar in the Yugoslav town of Novi Sad. Aleksandar Marić, leader of the equivalent Serbian group Otpor ('Resistance'), was a frequent visitor to Ukraine until he was eventually denied re-entry in October 2004 – Otpor by this time having developed into a transnational organisation of professional revolutionaries. According to Marić, 'We trained them [Ukrainian youth activists] in how to set up an organization, how to open local chapters, how to create a "brand", how to create a logo, symbols, and key messages.' He added, 'We trained them in how to identify the key weaknesses in society and what people's most pressing problems were – what might be a motivating factor for people, and above all young people, to go to the ballot box and in this way shape their own destiny' (Bransten 2004; Simpson and Tanner 2004). Considerable help for PORA also came from Slovak organisations, drawing on the experience of the coalition

¹⁴ Author's conversation with Valerii Khmel'ko of KIIS, 25 February 2005.

¹⁵ 'PORA' means 'It's Time', both in the sense of it being time for the old guard to go and time to protest if they didn't. See <www.pora.org.ua> and the earlier, more sharply satirical <www.kuchmizm.info>. Author's interviews with Peter Byrne, 21 February 2005, and Rostyslav Pavlenko, 22 February 2005.

OK'98, which had helped bring down local strongman Vladimír Mečiar in 1998, and from Pavol Demeš, the Slovak national who served as Director for Central and Eastern Europe for the German Marshall Fund of the US.

There is not yet any evidence of extra, covert payments to PORA. This is unlike the more direct Western support of other equivalent youth organisations, such as Serbia's Otpor in 2000, where US organisations supposedly spent US\$41 million on the 'operation' (Cohen 2000), and to lesser extents, Zubr ('Bison') in Belarus in 2001, when much money went missing, and Kmara ('Enough') in Georgia in 2003 (Silitski 2003; Traynor 2001; Peterson 2001). According to Natalia Antelava, the US spent US\$2.4 million in Georgia on democracy support and the local Renaissance Foundation US\$350,000 (Antelava 2003). In Ukraine a year later, 'the NED provided more than \$240,000 for projects "to mobilize Ukrainian youth to greater political participation" from 2001–04, according to NED records, but it also did not contribute money directly to PORA' (Corwin, 2005).

Most of the protest campaign after the original fraudulent election, in which PORA played a prominent role, was also funded domestically. According to Yushchenko's top aide Oleksandr Tretiakov, speaking in late December 2004, the total cost of organising the ongoing protest and stage show at Kiev's central square (the Maidan) was 20 million in Ukrainian currency (about US\$3.8 million) and US\$1 million, all in cash and nearly all from small donations, with not a penny from abroad (Amchuk 2004). Some initial support came from opposition businesspeople like Davyd Zhvaniia, who was the main provider of tents, mattresses, food, transport and bio-toilets (Sledz' 2005); but his supply soon ran out and more had to be found from the general public. Zhvaniia, who would later join the new Tymoshenko government as minister for emergency situations, also funded PORA. The city council provided some material help, but was still hedging its bets.

Some American money also funded Znaiiu,¹⁶ an organisation set up to encourage people, especially the young, to vote, and to combat attempts at disenfranchisement. According to Znaiiu's youthful leader, the then 28-year-old Dmytro Potekhin, his group won a US\$650,000 grant from the US–Ukraine Foundation, with an extra US\$350,000 for the third round, topped up by US\$50,000 from Freedom House (Byrne 2005). The money went on ten million leaflets, a toll-free helpline and advertisements in various papers explaining voters' rights, and paid for visits by incoming US congressmen. Twelve thousand copies of Gene Sharp's book, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* (1993), which had also been popular in Serbia in 2000, were published with money from his Albert Einstein Institute and distributed through <www.maidan.org.ua> (see below). Znaiiu avoided anything that smacked of political campaigning, but was happy for the more radical wing of PORA, dubbed 'Black PORA', to deliver its 'negative message' on the dangers of fraud.

Among other links, the Institute for Sustainable Communities, based in Vermont, had an US\$11 million federal contract to help bring about, as the organisation puts it, a 'fundamental cultural shift' in Ukraine 'from a passive citizenry under an authoritarian regime to a thriving democracy with active citizen participation'. Leslie J McCuaig, Ukraine project director, accepted that 'It has become particularly tricky

¹⁶'I know', that is, 'I know my rights', in its alternative transliteration, 'Znayu'. See <www.znayu.org.ua>.

to walk a very thin line'. In May 2004, the Virginia-based private management consultancy Development Associates, Inc. was awarded US\$100 million by the US government 'for strengthening national legislatures and other deliberative bodies worldwide.' According to the organisation's website, several million dollars from this went to Ukraine in advance of the election.¹⁷ The Washington public relations firm Rock Creek Creative helped set up a 'Friends of Ukraine' network on behalf of the Global Fairness Initiative linked to Clinton, and a conference on 'Ukraine in Europe and the World' held in Kiev in February 2004 which was attended by Yanukovich, Yushchenko and the likes of Václav Havel and Madeleine Albright. It also helped set up the corresponding website <www.ukraineineurope.com> . A press release of 8 February 2005¹⁸ implied that the website was closer to the centre of the 'Ukrainian democracy movement' than it actually was. In Germany, both the Friedrich Ebert Foundation¹⁹ and the Centre for Applied Politics have funded many of the same causes.

Assessment

Generally, the West was doing in Ukraine exactly what it should have been doing, although arguably it could have done more. As State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said, '[o]ur money doesn't go to candidates; it goes to the process, the institutions that it takes to run a free and fair election' (Kelley 2004). The West was promoting its own values. It may not always live up to them itself, but that does not mean it was wrong to try. Non-governmental organisations worked against election fraud. The vast majority of the fraud was committed by the Yanukovich side, so their effect was partial in this limited sense. The West should be proud of the part it played in tipping the balance against the widely expected steal (McFaul 2004; Ash 2004; Snyder and Ash 2005; Applebaum 2004).

However, it would also be wrong to claim that the line between supporting fair process and supporting a particular candidate can always be drawn. The Yanukovich side was often the ironic victim of creating the impression that Western money meant Western preference. Several websites, such as <www.pravo.org.ua> , had prominent links and endorsements ('we recommend') to Yushchenko's party's site <www.razom.org.ua> , which was inadvisable (however much closer he was to their aims), but far removed from the instant insinuation that US\$65 million funded Yushchenko's campaign. The West is at least aware of the need for this differentiation.

Normally, the left is proud of the West's spending on international aid, constantly urging it to spend more. (Although, interestingly, Britain has re-designated its department for 'aid' as one for 'international development'.) Supporting good government helps the money to be spent well. The critics talk of a covert campaign, but they are quoting official figures; proof would require a different type of evidence. Moreover, suggestions that the more conspiratorial groups like PORA embodied the revolution, or that the revolution followed some kind of US script, lack credibility. The demonstrators were highly organised, but they were organised by Ukrainians

¹⁷ See <www.devassoc.com/devassoc/index.html> .

¹⁸ See <www.rockcreekcreative.com/news/RCC_UKRpress2.pdf> .

¹⁹ See <www.fesukraine.kiev.ua> .

who were determined to avoid the mistakes that had been made during the previous 'Ukraine without Kuchma' campaign at the height of the Gongadze affair in 2001. Then the protests had failed because they could not build a wide enough coalition, or mobilise sufficient public support. The protesters also allowed too many questionable 'nationalists' and too many agents provocateurs into their ranks, whose carefully staged confrontation with the local police gave the authorities the excuse they needed for a crackdown. In contrast, in 2004 PORA was kept off the main stage, although they had learned the lessons of 2001, many youth activists having been at the sharp end of the previous demonstrations.

That said, as even Gleb Pavlovskii tentatively recognised, the West's role was both direct and indirect. 'Soft power' was also important (Nye 2004). The perceived attraction of relative prosperity and the general ambience of life *à la européenne* undoubtedly played a role in the Ukrainian Revolution. The efforts of local NGOs were riding to an extent on general globalisation processes, and on the pulling power of Western capital and political institutions, which gave them a multiplier effect to offset the crude, cash-spending advantages of the incumbent regime. 'Joining the club' of the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the World Trade Organization would be a very powerful implicit promise, and one that only candidates 'anointed' by the West could claim to deliver. Nor should the pulling power of democratic ideals and liberal culture be underestimated. Was the West caught doing anything more heavy-handed? As far back as November 2001, Yushchenko was campaigning to build bridges with the Bush administration, helped by the NED and the public relations and strategic consultancy company PBN, whose Senior Vice-President Myron Wasylyk is on the board of ICPS. But nothing more substantial has yet been proven, and it is up to the critics to provide evidence.

The West could never have outspent the regime and its backers, many of whom were Russian. One reliable estimate is that the Yanukovych side spent US\$410 million. (Wilson 2005, 120–1). The West was, however, much more influential on method; the Sharp book for example was extremely popular because its central message fitted well with the lessons learnt in 2001. The core strategy of PORA and other like-minded organisations was one of 'strategic non-violence', neither passive nor a means of avoiding conflict, but a means of identifying and engaging the weak points that any regime will have, and of avoiding giving semi-authoritarian regimes an excuse to crack down. Furthermore, the opposition made much better use of new technology than did the Yanukovych campaign, whose 'political technology' methods – that is, mass-producing propaganda through control of the commanding heights of state TV – were made to look distinctly old-fashioned. The opposition, in contrast, made skilful use of alternative sources of information and agenda-setting technologies such as the Internet, texting and video clip posting (PORA used the wonderful slogan 'Kill the TV within yourself').

Conclusions

Ukrainian NGOs played a sufficiently important role in the 2004 election to produce a notable backlash against the 'Western-funded' third sector in the more nervously authoritarian post-Soviet states, most notably in Kazakhstan and Belarus (in the run-up to elections due in 2006) and in Russia (with its next election cycle due in 2007–8). In March 2005, Kazakhstan amended its election law to ban demonstrations between the end of voting and the official announcement of

results – specifically to try and exclude the pattern of protest seen in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004. In June, Kazakhstan also changed its law on NGOs to make their independent action virtually impossible; the new law would permit financing of local or foreign NGOs only with the consent of the authorities. Meanwhile, in Belarus in May 2005, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka issued a particularly bizarre decree requiring all media, NGOs and parties using the words ‘national’ and ‘Belarusian’ to re-register or be banned.

In large part, this was to mistake a phantom danger for a real one. The real danger was of NGOs activating dormant local protest populations, which could not appear out of nothing. The idea that the West could use its own proxies to remove popular regimes (Putin’s personal popularity remains high) that lacked real opponents (the starting line for the opposition in Belarus was much lower than in Ukraine; even the candidate of the ‘united opposition’, Uladzimir Hancharyk, won only 15.4% in 2001) was misplaced. International aid cannot change the basic ‘correlation of forces’, especially when it is mainly channelled through bureaucratic institutions. Unless there is a genuine domestic mass movement, it will have little effect.

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