COLORED REVOLUTIONS IN UKRAINE AND GEORGIA: REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

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Two years ago, after the Georgian President Eduard Shevarnadze tried to legitimize electoral fraud in order to prolong his power, a united opposition movement headed by the young lawyer Mikheil Saakashvili initiated public protests against the corrupt regime and actually removed the old political elite from power. Saakashvili supporters, representatives of the civil society and opposition parties, flooded central squares of the Georgian capital bringing hundreds of roses. Those flowers were just the first signs of serious changes that were to come in the post-Soviet space.

One year later, in November 2004, thousands of Ukrainian citizens, wearing headscarves and bandages of orange color and freezing for several weeks in the tents at the central Independence square of Kiev, actually asserted the right to choose their president. Both explosions of public protests brought to power new democratic leaderships that assumed office soon after that. Thousands of people present at the inauguration of both Presidents could not check their tears. Later on, in late March 2005 the leaders of the organized public protests in the capital of the formerly Soviet Republic of Kyrgyzstan seized power ousting from the office President Akayev with little resistance from his side.

The analysis of the repercussions of these internal developments for the regional system of international relations should be started from the definition of the major factors and processes, which shaped the post-soviet space architecture in the past decade. The first among these is the process of state and nation-building in the Newly Independent States. New political elites in the former Soviet states had a certain vision of their state-projects which, as a rule, harbored Euro-Atlantic aspirations and, in fact, removed

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relations with Russia as well cooperation in the post-Soviet space from the list of priorities in their foreign policy agendas. Second, these aspirations, along with the changes in Europe and its periphery, resulted in the involvement of outside players in the post-soviet region - US, NATO, EU and the Western European states, and, some regional actors, i.e. Turkey, China, Poland, etc. The third actor in the post-Soviet space remains Russia, which was considerably irritated by the emergence by the aforementioned (f)actors in its Near Abroad, since Moscow had its own quite different vision for the development of this space.

However, despite those three (f)actors worked in diametrically opposite directions and their relations were rather frequently complicated, this interaction did not produce serious tensions in the formerly Soviet space, which could shake the regional system of international relations. As a result, 14 years after the collapse of the USSR, the regional international system still could not find its stable equilibrium. It rather found itself in the situation of unstable equilibrium which could not last forever.

Internal Developments

One of the defining (f)actors of this state of affairs was the internal developments in the post-Soviet states. The process of state-building and transition to democracy and market economy in most of the post-totalitarian societies, including Georgia and Ukraine, in the past decade did not proceed too far. Internal liberalization has been delayed or even wrapped up while the local leaders have digressed from being progressive "apparatchik" to a semi-authoritarian and as rule corrupt leaders. This metamorphosis actually made it impossible for Ukraine and Georgia to realize their proclaimed goals of joining NATO and the EU in the past decade.

As a respectable Ukrainian new agency stressed: "Ukrainian politicians considered foreign policy as resource for achievements of their purely personal goals, first and foremost consolidation of their power inside of the country".[1]

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1. Olesia Yachno, "Zabud' pro ES. I pro EEP tozhe. (Forget about the EU. Forget S[ingle] E[Economic] S[pace] too)", available at <www.glavred.info>.

This delay made it impossible for Ukraine and Georgia to deepen their relations with Euro-Atlantic structures. Consequently, the "frozen conflicts" (in South Osetia, Abkhazia, Transniestria) could not be solved. Sensitive issues of bilateral relations (Russian fleet in the Crimean Peninsula, military bases in Georgia and Abkhazia) also remained unresolved. This situation was the preferable option for Kremlin as it allowed to avoid serious changes in the post-Soviet space and promote Russia's national interests, as they were perceived by Moscow; namely lobbying the interest of major business players, ensuring rights of the Russian-speaking and pro-Russian minorities, maintaining military presence, etc. On the other hand, Euro-Atlantic structures were not eager to undertake significant commitments within the post-Soviet space, preoccupied with serious events they had to address (Balkan crises, EU and NATO Enlargement, European integration and digestion of new members, war against terrorism).

However, any change in power applied or course of action of any of the major (f)actors in the post-Soviet space could affect the whole system. Growing resentment with delayed transition and setbacks, political and social developments together with maturing civil society contributed to accumulating critical mass in Georgia and Ukraine, which in combination with specific irritator - electoral fraud resulted in social explosions against the semi-authoritarian regimes in these states. The very fact of the colored revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine delivered a serious blow in the regional system of international relations.

Russia on the Eve

Even before the revolutions took place in Georgia and Ukraine, the Russian Federation introduced serious changes in its foreign policy strategy towards the post-Soviet space. These changes were rooted in the consensus achieved by the Russian society and elite groups about the concept of the Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet space. The essence of this consensus is that unlike the Balkans and Central Europe, the post-Soviet space was recognized as the sphere of the Russian real national interests. This recognition is the product of the processes which have taken place in the past decade in and out of the post-Soviet space.

It should be noted that the lack of sensitivity Europe and the US displayed in their policies towards the Balkans and Central Europe predetermined Russia's hostile attitude towards any "intrusion" in its Near Abroad. Initially the feeling of disillusionment was born in Russia with the decision of NATO to expand to Central Europe in the early 90s and continued in the Balkans from 1995 until 2000. The crisis in Kosovo was a turning point in the Russian perception of the Euro-Atlantic structures. Russian alarmists started to wear the NATO intervention into Kosovo conflict as a scenario which can be at any moment applied to Russia. Afterwards, the second wave of NATO enlargement contributed to Russian feelings of insecurity. In addition, the EU enlargement into the Baltic States, the European Neighborhood Policy produced irritation even for the most moderate groups of the Russian elite - economists and diplomats.

While Moscow could hardly do anything in these cases, apart from expressing diplomatic protests, in the case of the Near Abroad, Russia tired to respond by deepening economic integration in the CIS and supporting pro-Russian political elites. As the international actors penetrated into the post-Soviet space, this feeling grew up. In the year 2004, an analyst close to the Kremlin, suggested that Putin's priority in the second term of office will be to increase cooperation with the formerly Soviet states.[2] Even Anatoly Chubays, a veteran of the liberal political elite, expressed the idea of Russia playing the role of "liberal empire".[3] Kremlin did not hesitate to translate this theory into practice. Moscow analysts were quite positive in their conclusion that while the old political elites in the New Independent States remained in power the status quo in the post-Soviet space was unlikely to change drastically.

Therefore, the colored revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine took place in the time, when the feeling of insecurity caused a "zero-sum game" perception in Moscow about the regional architecture in the post-Soviet space. And, this radicalism was developing increasingly from Georgian to Ukrainian events.

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2. S. Belkovsky, "Tragedy of Vladimir Putin", available at <www.Vip.Lenta.ru> , "Orders to Putin from Famous Oligarch Hunters," available at <www.rosbalt.ru>.
3. Anatoly Chubays, "Missiya Rossii (Mission of Russia)," Speech at the S.Petersburgh Engineer-Economic University, available at <www.chubays.ru>

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While the Russian-Georgian relations were seriously deteriorated after the Rose revolution, it was natural to foresee that the Russian decision makers would demonstrate their decisiveness to contribute to every possible way into keeping the old Ukrainian political elite in power. Russian spin-doctors made the Ukrainian capital their home and test-ground for the application of their PR technologies. The failure of Russia despite massive support provided to its protégé to bring to power in Ukraine the pro-Kremlin candidate is explained by the fact that Russian intellectual elite, despite the common historic roots and cultural fraternity with Ukraine, actually reduced the whole complexity of the societal processes in Georgia and Ukraine to a "conspiracy theory". The emerging modernist elite and civil society that demonstrated their commitment to democratic values were interpreted as a plot of foreign intelligent service(s) or, in the case of Georgia, plan of the major stock gambler George Soros.

At the cabinet session of November 24, President Putin said that those who organize and encourage such actions take a great responsibility on themselves. He also said that he hopes the new Georgian leadership will "restore the tradition of friendship" between the Russian and Georgian peoples.[4]

The Russian society, the political and intellectual elite, all those who have lived the highly negative experience of the "wild capitalism" in the Yeltsin era and who for a number of reasons opted for a strong hand authoritarianism, adopted this interpretation of the political developments in Ukraine and Georgia.

The colored revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine increased significantly the power with which the two diametrically opposite approaches were applied to the regional system of international relations in the post-Soviet space. Except the deterioration in bilateral relations, which will be described below, this divergence gave birth to a new trend in the CIS space. The interaction of the diametrically opposite powers in the post-Soviet space caused increasing tension along all the rift lines, which go not only through post-Soviet space but also through their societies. This

4. "Putin Call Georgian President to Ouster Logical Results," *RFERL Newsline,* Vol. 7 No. 222 (25.11.2003).

tension appeared in recent events very vividly. It is sufficient to observe reaction chain in the post-Soviet space. Almost immediately after the democratic revolution in Georgia, Russia introduced visa regime at the border with Georgia. The process of state building attempted by the Georgian President Saakashvili in South Osetia provoked Russia's open support breakaway region. The situation in Ukraine was even more complicated.

Clash of Civilizations or Two Ukraine's Debate?

In the case of Ukraine, the reductionism of interpretation resulted in the political and geographical split of Ukraine. When Samuel Huntington proposed his theory of the clash of civilizations, he drew the future conflict line along the border of the Western, predominantly Catholic regions and Eastern Ukraine, taking as the main dividing criteria culture and religion. Huntington's model could have become reality in 1990-1992 because Western Ukraine, being highly nationalistic and obviously more politically active than the Eastern Ukraine, was actually the driving force behind Ukrainian independence. Thus, different from the Eastern, and even the Central part, it could not but provoke negative feelings in the rest of the country. Therefore, differences between Orthodox and Catholic Western Ukraine, which was part of Austro-Hungarian Empire and Poland, could provide a fertile ground for a conflict between the nationalists of Western Ukraine and the Russian speaking conservative hardliners of Crimea, or the "red directors" of industrialized Eastern Ukraine. Despite sometimes balancing on the edge, the old Ukrainian political elite had a rare success for the post-Soviet space. It managed to preserve civil peace during the initial crucial phase of Ukrainian independence.

The most destructive result of the pre-electoral campaign and the presidential elections of 2004 was the undermining of the process of the Ukrainian civil nation- building. Ukrainian presidential elections undermined this process by launching the process of division of Ukraine, along another clash line which, with certain degree of generalization, can be described as *South and East vs. the Rest [of Ukraine].*

When the results of the elections were announced and thousands of protestors flooded into the central streets and squares of Kiev, the old political elite chose to continue accusing Yuschenko-led democratic opposition of participating in a plot inspired by foreign forces. Yuschenko supporters, protesting against electoral fraud, were pictured as "drug addicts and vodka-affected crowds who are led by the well paid foreign conspirators".[5] On the other hand, allies of the old political elite rallied Southern and Eastern Ukraine with slogans making accusations of attempts to steal the elections from the hard working people of Donietsk and Lugansk, who produce one third of the GDP of the country in metallurgy plants and coal mines. The institutionalization of this attitude took place at a congress of a varied hierarchy deputies from Eastern Ukraine, in the city of Severodonietsk, of the Lugansk region, where the slogans of federalization of Ukraine and autonomization of its Eastern regions, were raised.[6]

Facing the threat of expulsion by public protests, the old political elites used autonomization as a bargaining chip with which they threatened the opposition. This tactical success of the old political elite became a dangerous precedent for future of the country. He retained the same rhetoric. The split, which was initiated in the electoral campaign and in the course of the public protests, is mostly between the nationalist Western Ukraine and the moderate Central Ukraine with its liberal, mainly Russian speaking, capital, Kiev on the one hand versus some heavily industrialized, mainly Russian-populated, regions of Eastern Ukraine on the other. As the former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski stated, Ukraine was witnessing a process of historic significance -"a sort of marriage between Ukrainian nationalism and Ukrainian democracy. There were many nationalist movements in the history of Ukraine, however not all of them were democratic. But one can talk about the unification of Ukrainian patriotism, Ukrainian self-perception and Ukrainian democracy, freedom and liberalism".[7] Roman Szporlyuk, another analyst of Ukrainian developments, was positive in denying such a cultural split in Ukraine

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5. The apotheosis of these tactic was a speech by Mrs.Yanukovich at the rally in his stronghold city of Donetsk where she described the protestors as zombies wearing valenki-boots with the label "made in USA", standing in queues to take drug-injected oranges available at the website of the opposition 5th Channel; available at <http://5tv.com.ua/>.
6. Autonomist Congress of Severodoniestk was attended by the Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who also is known for his broad activities with the aim of support and mobilization of Russian speaking population in the post-Soviet space.
7. BBC Russian Section Report of 02.12.2005, available at <www.bbc.co.uk/russian>.

saying that: "Dividing Ukraine, as is traditionally done, into East and West does not correspond to modern reality …Ukraine is not divided into Lviv [in the West] and Donietsk [in the East], rather she has transition zones, in particular the Cherkassy, Chernihiv, Poltava, Zhitomir oblasts - these are central regions of Ukraine and, as such, they integrate both the extremism of the West and the extremism of the East…Ukraine now is divided between supporters of democracy and those who, for some reason, have no trust in western type democracy, who emotionally hold on to the traditions of the Soviet Union, who like leaders and believe in the wise leading role of the party".[8]

However, the old political elite tended to oversimplify the events in Kiev, presenting the division as one between the "hard working" Russian speaking Eastern Ukraine against the nationalist and fascist Western Ukraine.[9] This negative trend born in the electoral process and political bargain between the old and new elite, however, will not finish with Yuschenko assuming presidential office.

At the time of writing, there is a significant indication that President Kuchma and Prime-Minister Yanukovich are paying special attention to the Russian speaking regions of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. On December 29, when, after the preliminary results of the re-vote it became obvious that Yuschenko would become the next Ukrainian president, the State TV Radio Company of Sevastopol, the largest city of Crimea and naval base of the Russian fleet in Ukraine broadcast Mr. Yanukovich's live address to the citizens of the city, in which candidate thanked them for support, stressed that "regardless of the results of vote the fight will go on and promised to visit city as soon as possible".[10] Former incumbent President candidate remains one of the frequent guests in Russian "Unity" pro-Kremlin Party. It is also well known that the outgoing President Kuchma had a deep interest in the problems of the Crimean peninsula, making frequent, and sometimes sudden, visits to the region, as well as instituting a special preferential regime of taxation, which allowed the city to enjoy substantial financial comfort.

8. BBC Ukrainian Service Report of 05.11.2004 available at <www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian>.
9. For further analysis of this split line look Mykola Ryabchuk, "Two Ukraines?," *East European Reporter,* Vol. 5, No.4 (1992); and for further debate see Roman Szporluk, "Why Ukrainians Are Ukrainians?"; Mykolya Riabchuk, "Ukraine: One State, Two Countries?"; and Tatiana Zhurchenko, "The Myth of Two Ukraines" available at <www.eurozine.com>.
10. Analysis of Yanukivich and Kuchma activities in Crimea is in Ilmi Iliasov, "Kuchma Perebiraetsa v Sevastopol?" (Is Kuchma Moving to Sevastopol), available at <www.rupor.info>.

Members of the old political elite are therefore likely to campaign and attract support in their local constituencies, with a view to returning to the wider political arena, once their position has been reinforced and the political situation is more favorable. The old Ukrainian political elite did not only remain at the political scene, it also managed to present itself as sole defender of the Eastern and Southern regions of the country which will continue to support it. Therefore, the fault line between the "two Ukraines" was open and even if the new political elite succeeds in achieving substantial improvement in the economic situation, the Ukrainian politics and bilateral relations will always bear the stamp of the aforementioned rift line.

Export of Revolutions and General Climate of the Post-Soviet Space

One of the preconditions for a democratic revolution to succeed in a country in nowadays, it is necessary that political and military elite in this country possess certain degree of political responsibility to refrain from the use of force. Nevertheless, it is not always the case in the post-Soviet space. While the democratic movements in Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan, being inspired by Ukrainian and Georgian events, were successful, the suppression of opposition in Azerbaijan and in Uzbekistan demonstrated that there are regimes which will not hesitate to shed blood in order to remain in power.

Wearing the worst of possible scenarios for itself and applying incorrect interpretation of the Ukrainian and Georgian revolutions resulted in the Russian initiative to encourage suppression of rebellions in the post-Soviet space. This Moscow's decision realized when Russia interfered into the course of democratic elections in breakaway republic of Abkhazia. After the Kyrgyz Tulip Revolution took place, Moscow did not hesitate to go to rapprochement of its relations with Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.

The new emerging rift line in the post-soviet space - between supporters of democratization of the post-Soviet space versus the group of states which insist on preserving legal procedures and status quo in the post-Soviet was institutionalized after the Community for Democratic Choice was established by presidents of Georgia, Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland in Crimea on August 13, 2005.

Moscow demonstrated its intentions to support the adopted principles with the demonstration of power through a series of the joint military exercises with former Soviet Republic in Central Asia and China. Moscow also offered to conduct common military exercises on suppression of rebellion under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. However, this idea was opposed by Kazakhstan.

Euro-Atlantic Ambitions of Ukraine and Georgia and Possible Russia's Response

The Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine and Georgia is an urgent task for the transition to democracy and market economy. Two key elements for such a transition, would be the following: First, Europeanization (from adopting and implementing a comprehensive EU-Ukraine Action Plan in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy, legislative and economic reforms and finally, if as a long-term prospect, the country's accession to the EU); and second, joining NATO.

In what appears to be a sort of action plan for the West and Ukraine, Radek Sikorski, director of the American Enterprise Institute Euro-Atlantic Initiative, as well as some other analysts, advise the West to propose "a support package" to Ukraine which would include the following:

-NATO action plan, to be implemented during Yuschenko's first term in office;
-The EU should create a tough but tangible path for Ukraine's accession within a decade or so. In the meantime, the EU should spend serious money on Ukraine's infrastructure, with the aim of connecting it to Europe. Pipelines, highways, and railway lines across Ukraine to the Caspian basin would help anchor Ukraine to the West, and would contribute to Europe's energy security;
-The WTO membership;
-The support from IMF and World Bank.[11]

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11. Radek Sikorski, "Back in the (Former) USSR," American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) Publications; Jennifer Moroney and Taraz Kuzio , "How to Help Yuschenko," *International Herald Tribune,* 06.05.2005.

Taking into account the influence and respect the aforementioned Institute enjoys among the American political elite, such a program would reflect a consensus around the future action of Washington towards Ukraine. However, implementing both key elements of this strategy would also present a serious challenge for Ukraine. The source of this challenge is the Russian reaction to the Euro-Atlantic trajectory of Ukraine.

In view of Russia's attempts to prevent Ukraine from leaving the trajectory towards closer integration inside the CIS, the Euro-Atlantic choice of Ukraine will provoke Russia into making steps that could threaten the European integration of the country. Even after the Russian MFA stated that Moscow would have no problem with Ukraine joining the EU, President Putin, in his congratulations to Viktor Yuschenko, stressed the importance that Russia attaches to the Single Economic Space.[12] Ukrainian decision to withdraw from the deepening integration structure - Single Economic Space provoked Kremlin's decision to raise the rate for the Russian natural gas supply to Ukraine up to the world price level. Kiev being monopolist in the transit of 50 percent of the Russian gas export exercised responsive pressure which resulted in the Russian-Ukrainian gas impasse.

Except the energy pressure, Russia still possesses serious levers of influence in Ukraine. Should Ukraine join NATO and switch its economic ties towards the EU, it is likely that Moscow will not hesitate to apply this pressure. The most efficient instrument would be to support the pro-Russian elites of Eastern and Southern Ukraine and the preservation of the Russian naval base in Crimea.[13]

Moreover, taking into account the feeling of insecurity, there is a high probability that the current Russian leadership will undertake such actions in order to legitimize its authoritarian regime and justify the restriction of democracy in the country. Ukraine's immediate integration with the NATO would be such a provocation. As a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace stressed: "The wrong way to try to

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12. Congratulations of Russian President Vladimir Putin extended to Viktor Yuschenko on the occasion of his election to President of Ukraine, 20.01.2005 available at <www.kremlin.ru>

13. The opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich is warmly welcomed guest at congresses of the Russian pro-government party "Unity". Yulia Timoshenko after been discharged from the position of prime-minister established regular dialogue with Moscow.

integrate Ukraine with the West is through early NATO membership. Such a move would infuriate and terrify Russia, and risk a severe Russian reaction. And, if NATO membership long preceded Ukraine's actual economic and social integration into the West, then the close ties between Russia and Ukraine, and the strong support of many Ukrainians, could give Moscow dangerous opportunities to make its anger felt."[14]

The strategy for the West towards democratic independent states, therefore, should, first of all, include the gradual Europeanization of those societies, with special attention being paid to the process of decriminalization and democratization of the Eastern and Southern Ukraine and break-away republics of Georgia and Moldova, in order to eliminate possible causes for the deterioration of inter-ethnic relations and a possible negative social response to Euro-Atlantic integration of those states. Public campaigns devoted to the issue of the future of these countries should be launched. Special programs should be elaborated in order to enhance the emerging identity of the Ukrainian civil nation, so that the Russian-speaking population of these regions does not feel isolated from the process of European integration of Ukraine. The second component of the strategy for shaping regional system of international relations would be an Action Plan for Russia to be applied by NATO and the EU in order to ensure a peaceful engagement of Russia into realization of the European Neighborhood Policy. Such an Action Plan in order to offer some form of Russia's constructive participation in the regional system of international relations should first of all answer the following questions:

- What are the main reasons behind Russia's negative response toward Wider Europe concept and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the formerly Soviet states in the Russian periphery?
- Which of their political, geopolitical, military, economic concerns are reasonable and which are not, how can both of them be addressed?
- What should be the format of cooperation of the European Union with the NIS in order to encourage Russia to enhance their relations with both above-mentioned parties?
- What are possible ways of convincing Russian political elite that the

14. Anatol Lieven, "A Shotgun Wedding is Bound to Fail," *International Herald Tribune,* 21.12.2004.

European trajectories of the NIS and their relations with Russia is not a "zero sum game"?

Only having answered those questions, initiating such a debate and acting in those directions simultaneously can promise certain stability in the regional system of international relations.