

## **Anti-Revolutionary Measures of the Post-Soviet Regimes**

In 2000-2005 four post-Soviet leaders-Milosevic (Serbia 2000); Shevardnadze (Georgia 2003); Kuchma (Ukraine 2004); and Akaev (Kyrgyzstan 2005) - found themselves stripped of power as a result of a new political phenomenon- electoral revolution. Surprisingly, in the mostly anarchical political world based on sheer power and force, non-violent protests successfully overpowered the formidable tools available at the (semi)-authoritarian regimes' disposal. In the enigma of the modern world, the roses have replaced guns and street demonstrations have replaced street fighting. In all these cases, non-violent means succeeded in achieving the oppositions' goal-bringing down the ruling regimes- and inspired the opposition forces in other post-Soviet countries to attempt to repeat this success. On the other hand, in order to challenge the spread of electoral revolutions, the post-Soviet regimes were compelled to undertake dramatic steps in terms of developing anti-revolutionary measures. The wave of peaceful revolutions dubbed as a "the fourth wave of democratization" <sup>1</sup> and the regimes' response to them have unleashed dramatic processes which are going to shape the political processes in the region for years to come.

Hardly any other political development in the region has had such a tremendous impact on the post-Soviet regimes as an electoral revolution. These regimes perceived electoral revolutions as a mortal threat to their authority, the most ferocious enemy, which should be combated and defeated at any means. The question "who is next?" was menacingly echoing in the presidential palaces in the Moscow, Baku, Astana, Minks, etc. The regimes had every reason to be worried about their survival. With upcoming elections in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, a probability of next 'color revolution' looked realistic. There seemed to be all preconditions for this-enthusiastic and determined opposition, groups of population discontented with the regimes' performance, international backing for change. Markov, a leading Russian political technologist even calculated which post-Soviet county had a higher chance of 'hosting'

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<sup>1</sup> Michael McFaul, "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship- Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World," *World Politics* 54, no. 2 (2002): 212-244.

electoral revolution “I think the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Moldova is about 80 percent ready; in Kyrgyzstan it is 40 percent ready, and in Kazakhstan it is 30 percent ready”.<sup>2</sup>

Even immunity of the most powerful post-Soviet country- Russia- against ‘orange virus’<sup>3</sup> seemed deficient and provoked the Member of Russia’s Parliament Mikhail Delyagin ( Motherland Party) to state that “ there are many signs suggesting that revolution in Russia is inevitable, and nearly everyone already understands that”<sup>4</sup>. Yet, despite all these calculations and expectations and oppositions’ efforts to stage revolutions, in the period of three years since last post-Soviet electoral revolution- Kyrgyzstan March 2005- no electoral revolution has taken place. With this regard, the most evident question, which can be posed is “have the post-Soviet regimes succeeded in defeating a threat of electoral revolutions?”

Research on this question reveals a very interesting and complex picture. The major part in the post-Soviet regimes’ success in defeating electoral revolutions can be attributed to specific anti-revolutionary strategy and measures developed and carried out by these regimes. Since these revolutions, the idea that these regimes constantly kept in mind has been” in tightening screws, you can break the thread. And therefore the elites need to learn more complicated games of patience. Forewarned means armed. The experience of Georgia and Ukraine is invaluable for those who wish to retain their power or to hand it over to their successors”<sup>5</sup>. The leaders of post-Soviet regimes studied and analyzed the experience of their ‘unfortunate’ Serbian, Georgian, Ukrainian and Kyrgyz colleagues. They employed the ‘brightest minds’ they had at their disposal, used the resources of think tanks and the intelligence services to study the causes and mechanisms of electoral revolutions and finally came up with the product of their labor- antirevolutionary ‘antidote’- a combination of anti-revolutionary measures. The use of these methods can be observed during the presidential elections in Belarus 2006 and parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan 2005. In these countries these measures proved effective in sealing the

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<sup>2</sup> Sergei Markov quoted in Charu Singh, “A Quiet Cold War,” *Frontline* 22, no. 03 (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Andrei Vladimirov, “ Revoliutsiia na eksport (Revolution for Export)” *Itogi*, December 7, 2004, quoted in Graeme Herd, “Colorful Revolutions and the CIS: ‘Manufactured’ Versus ‘Managed’ Democracy?,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, no. 2 (2005): 3-18.

<sup>4</sup> RFE/RL Newline, “Party’s Chief Ideology Warns of “Inevitable” Russian Revolution,” June 14, 2005, <http://www.rferl.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Aleksei Malashenko. *Gruzino-Ukrainskoe posobie dlia SNG (Georgian-Ukrainian Textbook for the CIS)*, Nezavisimaia gazeta (December 20, 2004). Quoted in Herd, G. P. 2005. *Colorful Revolutions and the CIS: "Manufactured" Versus "Managed" Democracy?* *Problems of Post-Communism*. 52(2): 3-18

regimes' electoral 'victory' and suppressing the opposition's attempts of protesting against the fraudulent elections. Anti-revolutionary measures are actively being used for "tightening screws" for upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia 2007-2008 in which the Russian regime hopes to insure smooth transition of power to the 'hand-picked' successor. By now it seems these anti-revolutionary measures are indeed effective tools against electoral revolutions. Deeper analyzes into each above-mentioned elections unfolds a detailed picture on the true nature and forms of anti-revolutionary measures.

The Presidential Elections in Belarus on March 19, 2006, particularly represent a case-book scenario of use of anti-revolutionary measures. At these elections the incumbent Aleksander Lukashenko was confronted three candidates- Alexander Milinkievic (United Democratic Forces of Belarus), Sergei Gaidukevich (Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus), and Alaksandar Kazulin (Belarusian Social Democratic Party). Among the opposition candidates, Milinkievic was considered to be the major contender against the incumbent Lukashenko. His style of campaigning resembled the experience of the leaders of the previous electoral revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. He was traveling extensively in the regions of the country and exposing the negative sides of the regime. He also visited several European countries and met with national leaders as well as EU officials. His active campaigning coupled with that of Kazulin, also a vocal critic of the regime, was a considerable irritating factor for the regime, especially taking into account that the opposition never concealed their desire to see a repetition of the electoral revolution in Belarus.

Belarusian regime's measures aiming at preventing the electoral revolution as a response to the elections manipulations during the presidential elections were carried at the wide front. They were aimed against the political opposition and civil society. Hundreds of opposition's activists were arrested and the demonstrations were dispelled. The police's 'flexibility' to suppress the demonstration was enhanced with the amendments to the Police Law, which granted the president a right to make decisions on the use of firearms by police in peacetime. Belarusian President Lukashenko threatened that "any attempt to destabilize the situation will be met with drastic action. We will wring the necks of those who are actually doing it and those who are instigating these acts"<sup>6</sup>. The loyalty of the law-enforcement bodies was achieved by conducting purges among the high ranking officials; for example, KGB chief Leanid Eryn was fired for

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<sup>6</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "Bringing down Europe's last Ex-Soviet Dictator," *New York Times Magazine*. February 26, 2006.

meeting with the opposition demonstrations. The Prosecutor-General Viktor Sheiman was appointed as the Head of the Presidential Administration with a clear mandate “to consolidate the power systems, unity the command structure, and avoid situations such as those that had occurred south of the border”.<sup>7</sup> The opposition was attacked from another front as well- in early 2005 the new Housing Code which required that the party offices to be located only in the office buildings resulted in the closure of three hundred party offices, considerably impeding the opposition’s organizational capacity.

The regime undertook harsh measures against non-governmental organizations- in November 2005, the government adopted amendments to the Criminal Code according to which participation in activities of de-registered NGOs by up to three years in prison. Four key leaders of the largest election monitoring ‘Partnership’ were arrested in February 2006 on charges of “organizing fraudulent exit polls and planning a violent uprising after the election”<sup>8</sup>. Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies, the independent polling agency in the past critical against the official election and referenda result, was banned by the court in April 2005; conducting of public opinion surveys without a license were considered to be a crime. A regular pattern was to portray these NGOs as closely linked with foreign security services. Viktor Veger, deputy chief of Belarus' security service, argued that “certain forces want to implement a so called velvet revolution through NGOs for 50 million dollars”<sup>9</sup>. The usual reference was made to ‘meddling in internal affairs” of Belarus by the international community in order to conduct “acts of banditry” (Lukashenko’s definition of electoral revolutions). With the date of elections approaching the official statements were becoming harsher. On March 16 at a joint press conference, the head of the KGB, the Chief Prosecutor and the Interior Minister that stated that “under the guise of elections the opposition was preparing a violent overthrow of the government on election day and warned that all individuals who joined election day protests would be ‘considered as terrorists under Article 289 of the penal code’ ”<sup>10</sup>. The independent electoral observers were refused entrance to Belarus or expelled from the country; for example, on March 15, eight members of a Scandinavian unofficial election observers group Silba were expelled, eight Members of

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<sup>7</sup> David Marples, “Belarus: The Return of Sheiman,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 1- 8 December 2004

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International, “*Belarus: Election Monitors Imprisoned*”, November 2006, <http://web.amnesty.org/appeals/index/blr-011106-wwa-eng>.

<sup>9</sup> Vitali Silitski, “Contagion Deterred: Preemptive Authoritarianism in the Former Soviet Union (the Case of Belarus),” CDDRL Working Papers (2006), [http://iisdb.stanford.edu/pubs/21152/Silitski\\_No\\_66.pdf](http://iisdb.stanford.edu/pubs/21152/Silitski_No_66.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report on Presidential Elections in Belarus 2006, [http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2006/06/19393\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2006/06/19393_en.pdf).

Georgian Parliament who arrived in Belarus to observe the elections under the aegis of OSCE election monitoring mission were refused an entry and deported from Minsk's airport. On the other hand another election monitoring organization- the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Election Monitoring Organization- was not only spared of any criticism from Lukashenko, but on the contrary praised for "an unbiased approach and the point of view that was expressed during the election monitoring process"<sup>11</sup>. This fact should not be considered surprising if the stance of this organization towards these elections taken into account. The only violations that CIS observers of the Belarusian presidential election of 2006 found were in the process of nomination of candidates and all of these allegations, pertained to opponents of incumbent Aleksander Lukashenko. This fact was propagandized by the regime to show there was no election fraud during the elections- the Belarusian Foreign Affairs Ministry issued the statement "in the opinion of the overwhelming majority of observers, including the CIS election observation mission, the election campaign and the ballot complied with the election code and Belarus' international commitments of democratic elections despite the unprecedented external pressure"<sup>12</sup>.

The regime was particularly brutal against the youth organization Zubr (Bison). The mass arrests of Zubr activists took place on a regular basis. The regime also tried to obstruct establishing contacts between Belarusian youth and the international community. Foreign youth activists visiting Belarus were arrested and deported out of the country. After the elections the opposition's rallies never reached the high numbers, as a result of the conducted anti-revolutionary measures the revolutionary forces' capacity to mobilize large number of people was weakened. On the other hand, the regime was determined to continue using every means to suppress the opposition's demonstrations. On March 24 -25 2006 the police forcefully dispersed the opposition rallies arresting hundreds of people, including the opposition leaders who afterwards were jailed. Once again the Belarusian regime triumphed over its opponent it. The long-anticipated electoral revolution in Belarus 2006 did not materialize.

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<sup>11</sup> Official web-page of the President of Belarus, "Alexander Lukashenko Meets with the Head of the Mission of the CIS Observers Vladimir Rushailo", March 20, 2006. <http://www.president.gov.by/en/press20681.html#doc>.

<sup>12</sup> Rick Fawn, "Battle over the box: international election observation missions, political competition and retrenchment in the post-Soviet space," *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006), 13.

The key factor that should be taken into account in order to understand why the above-mentioned measures carried out by Lukashenko's regime succeeded in reducing a chance of electoral revolution to zero is a particular nature of electoral revolution itself. Electoral revolution can be defined as fall of the government as a result of the peoples' non-violent protests organized by the opposition against fraudulent elections. It can be considered to be unique political phenomenon which does not just emerge in the empty place, but needs favorable conditions in order to happen. The list of these favorable conditions is long which makes it vulnerable for an attack by ant-revolutionary forces. This fact is continually emphasized by leading political scientists. For example, Michael McFaul, a leading scholar on the post-Soviet region, admitted that "in seeking to learn lessons from these democratic breakthroughs, it is important to realize that the list of necessary conditions is long"<sup>13</sup>. Valerie Bunce and Sharon Volchik list four characteristics and five tools of electoral revolutions.<sup>14</sup> Kuzio lists ten factors which resulted in revolutions in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>15</sup> Though, it is still far from clear a combination of which favorable condition results in a successful electoral revolution, one fact is evident that by combating these favorable conditions, the post-Soviet regimes can dramatically reduce the revolutionary forces' capacity to stage a successful electoral revolution.

Detailed insight into these favorable conditions gives a good idea on a true complexity of a nature of electoral revolution. It is noteworthy that each scholar studying electoral revolutions develops his list of the causes, which though are not diametrically different, still vary to some extent. McFaul defines several conditions, which are necessary parts of electoral revolutions: "(1) a semi-autocratic regime; (2) an unpopular incumbent; (3) a united and organized opposition; (4) an ability to create the perception quickly that the elections results were falsified, (5) enough independent media to inform citizens about the falsified vote, (6) apolitical opposition capable of mobilizing tens of thousands of demonstrators to protest electoral fraud, and (7) divisions among the intelligence forces, military, and police."<sup>16</sup> Welt also defines several elements, which led to the Rose Revolutions (these factors can be generalized to other post-Soviet electoral revolutions): "a) the peculiar nature of the regime - unpopular with

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<sup>13</sup> Michael McFaul, "Transitions from Postcommunism," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 3 (2005):5-19

<sup>14</sup> Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik "Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions", *Journal of Democracy* 17, no.4 (2006).

<sup>15</sup> Taras Kuzio, "Democratic Breakthroughs and Revolutions in Five Post-Communist Countries: Comparative Perspectives on the Fourth Wave", [www.utoronto.ca/jacyk/Kuzio\\_ComparativeRevolutions.pdf](http://www.utoronto.ca/jacyk/Kuzio_ComparativeRevolutions.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Michael, McFaul, "The Second Wave of Democratic Breakthroughs in the Post-Communist World: Comparing Serbia 2000, Georgia 2003, Ukraine 2004, and Kyrgyzstan 2005", *Danyliw/Jacyk Working Papers*, Center for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies. University of Toronto (2005): 3-4

authoritarian leanings, but weak and tolerant of democratic procedure; b) the peculiar electoral scenario of democratic checks-and-balances matched by egregious examples of fraud; c) the opposition's ability to persuade followers that political change was possible; d) external democracy promotion efforts, particularly those of the United States via its assistance programs and diplomatic efforts, and other international pressures; and e) the passivity of the security forces.<sup>17</sup>

The empirical data from the electoral revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan strongly support these scholars' ideas. In all these countries there existed the critical mass of people unsatisfied with the governments' performance. McFaul refers to it the factor of "an unpopular incumbent"<sup>18</sup>. He uses empirical data to prove his argument "In Serbia, polls put Milosevic's popularity at less than 30 percent by the summer of 2000. In Georgia, 82 percent of respondents were saying as early as 2001 that the country was going in the wrong direction, up from 51 percent the year before. Kuchma's approval ratings plummeted during his last year in office"<sup>19</sup>.

High number of discontented citizens is the significant factor for the successful revolution, especially at its final stages, when the regimes faced with the widespread demonstrations and other mechanisms of civil disobedience starts fall apart. But it should be noted that mere existence of unsatisfied people is not prerequisite to the revolutions. Dissatisfaction should be transformed into the dynamic protest movement in which citizens become active agents of change. This is achieved through use of other factors. Welt combines the factor of unpopularity of the regime with "[its] unusual tolerance for the "motions of democracy" and a visible lack of regime strength"<sup>20</sup>. Indeed, if the regime's tolerance for 'motions of democracy' can be explained with its semi-authoritarian nature, 'visible lack of regime strength' can be conveniently explained with the division among the actors of power- McFaul refers to it as "splits among the guys with guns"<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Cory Welt, *Georgia: Causes of the Rose Revolution and Lessons for Democracy Assistance* (Washington, DC. Management System International, 2005), 4

<sup>18</sup> McFaul, "Transitions from Postcommunism", 8.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Welt, *Georgia: Causes of the Rose Revolution and Lessons for Democracy Assistance*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> McFaul, "*The Second Wave of Democratic Breakthroughs in the Post-Communist World: Comparing Serbia 2000, Georgia 2003, Ukraine 2004, and Kyrgyzstan 2005*", 16.

The mobilization of a high number of demonstrators is possible only through the coordinated efforts of a united opposition. McFaul maintains that “a united opposition – or the perception of a united front – is a third factor that appears crucial for democratic breakthrough”<sup>22</sup>. United opposition in case of the post-Soviet electoral revolutions was better positioned to conduct preelection social mobilization, expose the election fraud, manage the demonstrations, and conduct negotiations with the government. People were more inclined to support the opposition when it acted in unison than when it was divided and fragmented. The lack of visible friction among the opposition leaders showed to the public that the leaders “could stand above narrow personal interests and unite around an election platform”<sup>23</sup>. Existence of united opposition helped the international community to identify the major actors from the opposition they can communicate with. Nevertheless, the level of opposition’s unity varied from country to country- for example, it was high in Georgia and Ukraine and lower in Kyrgyzstan. But in every crucial moment the position leaders spoke in one voice.

Semi-authoritarian nature of regime is the most unique feature of electoral revolutions. Every post-Soviet electoral revolution took place in the countries with semi-authoritarian regimes: Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Scholars maintain that it is not a mere coincidence and there is a firm link between the nature of political regimes and causes of electoral revolution. In this regard, Kalandadze and Orenstein explain that “electoral protests are more likely to succeed in hybrid than in more closed authoritarian regimes due to a favorable combination of factors in the former such as a better organized opposition, a more independent media, and the security forces reluctant to use violence against the demonstrators”<sup>24</sup>. Because of particularity of their political nature, hybrid regimes are compelled to create the façade of democracy and control the political processes through ‘soft power’ (occasionally ‘hard power’) tools. However, such regimes do not succeed in shutting down completely the operational space for opposition, which uses the limited opportunities it possesses to expand its support base and create favorable conditions for its success.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 8

<sup>23</sup> Kuzio. “Democratic Breakthroughs and Revolutions in Five Post-Communist Countries: Comparative Perspectives on the Fourth Wave”, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Katya Kalandadze and Mitchell A. Orenstein, Electoral Protests and Democratization: Beyond the Color Revolutions, “research workshop paper, Sawyer law and Politics Program, Campbell Public Affairs Institute, Maxwell School of Syracuse University



External factors in general and International non-profit organizations in particular, youth organizations, independent election monitoring organizations were also instrumental in bringing down the regimes in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. In general, external factors which influenced the revolutionary outcomes in the post-Soviet region fall into two categories: foreign countries' governments /international inter-governmental organizations and international non-profit organizations. Understandably, the level and format of their involvement in the revolutionary processes were different. The foreign governments – the United States and the European Union (the latter in most cases acting as the single actorness) were most active among them- in many cases avoided being directly associated with the revolutionary processes and preferred to act through the international non-profit organizations. The typical pattern of their activities included: providing funding for local and international nongovernmental organizations; exerting pressure on the regimes to hold fair and free elections; denouncing the results of the fraudulent elections; and acting as mediators between the government and opposition. The empirical data could be used to portray the pattern of the foreign government's involvement. For example, the United States, driven by its agenda of expanding democracy worldwide, was instrumental in increasing the capacity of independent election monitoring organizations. According to Welt, in the case of the Rose Revolution in Georgia “U.S. election assistance was substantial and included funding for voter list reform, PVT [parallel voting tabulation] training and implementation, and the cultivation of local election monitoring NGOs”<sup>25</sup>.

The foreign governments' firm position on refusing to recognize the fraudulent elections in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan was an important supporting tool for the opposition, adding significant weight to the accusations of election fraud. The news on the position of the international community would immediately become known to the general public, giving them additional assurance of the rightness of their cause and lack of support of the regime on international level. International community acted on individual basis as well. Foreign dignitaries visited the Georgia and Ukraine before the elections and brought to the regimes the message of an importance of conducting free and fair elections. The dignitaries also acted as mediators between the regime and the opposition- example of Ukraine 2004.

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<sup>25</sup> Welt, *Georgia: Causes of the Rose Revolution and Lessons for Democracy Assistance*, 7.

The international non profit organizations, which were doing the actual work in the field, also came into two categories- funded through the governments or through individual benefactors. The area of their expertise was wide: providing much needed financial-technical assistance to the local non-governmental organizations, training the representatives of media, equipping the opposition groups with the social mobilization tools, training the opposition activists and often acting as mediators between the different opposition groups, establishing and supporting the independent-election monitoring organizations. As they worked directly in the field, these organizations were in better position in responding to changing realities of the revolutionary process and offered valuable assistance whenever it was most needed. National-Democratic Institute of International Affairs, International Republican Institute and Open Society Institute were among the most active international organizations acting during the post-Soviet revolutions. The strength of such organizations was that they were more flexible in working with the local actors, than the official structures of the foreign governments and could be engaged in activities with them on a regular basis. They served as the important communication channels through which the opposition forwarded its message to the wider international community.

Pora is a representative of another important mechanism of electoral revolutions- youth organizations. The members of Otpor (Serbia), Kmara (Georgia), Pora (Ukraine), KelKel (Kyrgyzstan) were among the most active participants of the revolutions. These organizations, representing young people from all walks of life, managed to pursue the people that a change of the regime was possible. The youth organizations were the most vocal critics of the regimes. As Kandelaki, Kmara leader says “Kmara (Enough) played an important role in combating widespread political apathy among the Georgian public and youth in particular”<sup>26</sup>. This was particularly important factor in the post-Soviet regimes, where although population is generally interested in politics, the idea of engaging personally in the demonstration aimed at dismantling the regimes, could be a scary factor for many people.

Funding for the youth organizations came through the international non-profit organizations which provided necessary funds for setting up and running the organization - for example, Kmara was funded by the Open-Society Institute. The youth organizations established regular contact with each other and shared their knowledge and expertise. The youth activists from

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<sup>26</sup> Giorgi Kandelaki, “Georgia’s Rose Revolution- A Participant’s Perspective”, Special Report 167, United States University of Peace. July 2006.

Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine traveled to each others' countries to offer trainings on the tools of civil disobedience. The youth organizations have been in regular contact with local non-governmental organizations and together exposed the election fraud orchestrated by the regime.

In this regard, in the process of exposing the election fraud, particularly significant work was done by independent election monitoring organizations. They played a crucial part in the post-Soviet electoral revolutions. They were the independent sources of the documented data on the cases and scale of election fraud. The information they provided was invaluable in terms of showing to the public how the regimes stole the elections. Backed with these figures the opposition was able to intensify his demands for the resignation of the presidents. The election monitoring organizations which worked in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan fall into two categories: a) international and local organizations. International organizations represented non-profit organizations- for example, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, International Foundation for Electoral Systems- and inter-governmental organizations- Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe/ Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; b) local election monitoring organizations- for example, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (Georgia), the Committee of Ukrainian Votes (Ukraine). These organizations were actively engaged in every phase of election monitoring through combining various mechanism- short and long term election observation missions, exit polls, compiling voter's lists. The organizations' observers represented the experts on election issues, foreign dignitaries, representatives of international and local non-profit organizations. The area of the organization's activities either could be one geographical region or the whole country. The organizations' funding came either through the inter-governmental sources, foreign governments or non-profit donor organizations. Because they possessed trustworthy, documented information on election fraud independent election monitoring organizations enjoyed a unique position to influence the revolutionary developments. The opposition could not hope to influence a high number of people to join the protests against the election fraud orchestrated by the regime unless they had the documented information on the election manipulations produced by independent and impartial election monitoring organizations.

The above-mentioned mechanisms were most effective as they acted in unison, gradually contributing to the success of electoral revolution. The post-Soviet electoral revolutions showed that different instruments such peoples' discontent with the governments'

performance, external mechanisms, youth organizations and election monitoring organizations possess formidable power which matched with the revolutionary situation resulted by specific causes, has a great potential to bring down almost any (semi)-authoritarian regime.

As the example of Presidential Elections in Belarus 2006 shows the post-Soviet regimes gradually realized the scale of threat to their rules posed by the electoral revolutions. They comprehended the need to preempt this threat and develop specific antirevolutionary strategy and implement the measures. They have particularly launched pre-emptive strikes against the revolutionary mechanisms- such as youth organization, political opposition and independent election monitoring organizations. These anti-revolutionary measures have not been limited to one country or one specific geographical area and saw light in different post-Soviet countries. The Azeri regimes' response to Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan held on November 6, 2005 is another example of anti-revolutionary measures.

Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan were held on November 6, 2005. The main contenders were the ruling New Azerbaijan Party and the opposition bloc Azadliq (Freedom) consisting of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, the Equality Party and Azerbaijan Democratic Party.

The Azeri opposition was inspired by the success of the previous post-Soviet electoral revolutions. Ali Kerimli, one of the opposition leaders, stated, that "this election is taking place after the revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, which showed people that if you fight to the end, you can win. The psychological impact of these events should not be underestimated"<sup>27</sup>. However, the government was ready to take on a challenge of suppressing any attempts of organizing electoral revolutions

The government also had its own plans towards the opposition. Its major goals with regard to the opposition parties were to suppress the opposition's capacity of organizing the rallies and demonstrate to the opposition's supporters that any attempt to organize electoral revolution was doomed for failure. These goals were secured through the use of various anti-revolutionary measures.

One important anti-revolutionary measure was the use of physical force to dispel the opposition rallies and arrest the opposition activists. The common practice was to deny the

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<sup>27</sup> Yigal Schleifer, "In Azerbaijan 'a Neck-Tie Revolt'", *CSMonitor*, November 3, 2005, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1103/p06s01-wosc.html>.

opposition authorization to organize the demonstrations in the central locations. This was observed in four separate occasions when Azadlig was denied authorization to hold rallies in the downtown Baku. By depriving the opposition an opportunity to organize the demonstrations either by denying authorization or dispelling the rallies, the regime was eradicating one of the fundamental revolutionary mechanism- people's power. The opposition could not hope to organize long and large demonstrations- prerequisite for a successful electoral revolution. The demonstrators could not be sure of their safety. Hundreds of people were arrested, often for short period, occasionally for several days. According to Ali Kerimli, a leader of the opposition Azadlig bloc, "At every rally attempt, we had about 200 of our supporters arrested [and] hundreds beaten. Candidates were threatened, and made to withdraw [from the race]" <sup>28</sup> .

The regime also carried out measures against the leadership of the opposition movement. On October 17, Rasul Guliyev, the leader of DPA, sought by the Azeri police on corruption charges, was not allowed to come to Azerbaijan, as according to the Azerbaijan government's request he was arrested in Ukraine. On the same day, the officers of Azerbaijan National Security Ministry arrested 26 people, mostly members of Guliyev's party on charges of a coup attempt. The official sources started to circulate the news that that the opposition was planning to disrupt the election process and the authorities prevented such a provocation.

Such actions were typical cases of anti-revolutionary measures aimed at discrediting the opposition, "demonizing" the concept of electoral revolution and indoctrinating people with the idea of the regimes' omnipotence. The government controlled TVs channels, radio an Internet were conducting PR campaigns portraying the opposition as "traitors" and "provocateurs" who would plunge the country into an anarchy.

The regime comprehended the danger that the youth organizations posed to its rule and attacked first. In this regard, Fuad Mustafayev, deputy chief of the Popular Front Party, and one of the leaders in the Azadlig opposition bloc said that "Authorities were aware of the power of the youth movement, and therefore decided to strike a preemptive blow"<sup>29</sup>. On

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<sup>28</sup> Rovshan Ismayilov, "Azerbaijan's Campaign Ends, Attention Now Focusing on Post-Election Period," *Eurasia Insight*, October 4, 2005, [http://www.eurasianet.org/azerbaijan/news/campaignend\\_20051104.html](http://www.eurasianet.org/azerbaijan/news/campaignend_20051104.html).

<sup>29</sup> Mina Muradova and Rufat Abbasov, "Youth Groups in Azerbaijan Encounter Difficulties during Run-up to Parliamentary Elections", *Eurasianet, Azerbaijan Elections 2005*. November 3, 2005. [http://www.eurasianet.org/azerbaijan/news/youth\\_20051103.html](http://www.eurasianet.org/azerbaijan/news/youth_20051103.html)

August 3, 2005 Ruslan Bashirli, a leader of Yeni Fikir, was arrested on charges of plotting a coup attempt in Azerbaijan with financial backing from Armenian special services. The Azerbaijani Prosecutor-General's office disseminated video that depicted Bashirli signing a receipt for \$2,000 and drinking cognac with two men identified as Armenian agents. On September 12, Yeni Fikir Deputy Chairperson Nuri was detained for 48 hours on charges of conspiring to organize a coup against the Azerbaijani government. According to the official sources, while attending a training session in Poland sponsored by the National Democratic Institute, Nuri allegedly received instructions on organizing anti-government protests with the aim of overthrowing the government. The same day, Ramin Tagiyev, Yeni Fikir another deputy chairperson, was sentenced to a three-month prison term for his role in a supposed coup plot. Commenting on these arrests, leader of the Popular Front Party Chairman Ali Kerimli stated that the arrests were carried out because of the authorities' fear of Yeni Fikir's increasing popularity and their desire to reduce youth activism in Azerbaijan. Human Rights Watch condemned the regime's oppressive policy against the youth organizations.

The regime also launched the attacks aimed at disrupting the cooperation between the local youth organizations and the Ukrainian youth organization- Pora. On September 15, 2005, Sergei Yevtushenko, a leader of Pora, was arrested at Baku airport. Two days after he was deported to Ukraine. Azerbaijan also deported Pora activists who traveled to Azerbaijan as election observers- among them were a senior leader of Pora, Yevhen Zolotariov, and Serhii Taran, head of the Kyiv-based Institute for Mass Media, Ukraine's representation for the international watchdog Reporters Without Borders.

Understandably, the wave of arrests of the leaders and the members of the youth organizations as well as thwarting the attempts of establishing cooperation with more experienced foreign counterparts significantly undermined the youth organizations' capacities to influence the preelection and post-elections developments. The youth organizations in Azerbaijan never managed to become such as significant force as Otpor, Kmara and Pora.

The election was marked by the fact of establishing of various “pseudo- Independent” election monitoring organizations. As Maharramov argues “The existence of such groups- which claim the same status as nonpartisan CSOs [civil society organization]- makes it difficult for CSOs to mount election observation efforts that citizens can trust and tarnishes their accomplishments in doing so”<sup>30</sup>.The high number of election monitoring organizations was confusing, often purposefully orchestrated by the regime. The different findings issued by these organizations were aimed at confusing the public with the real situation. The same goal was attempted through use of various exit polls. The opposition claimed that the sponsors of the two companies Mitofsky International and Saar Poll- were the representatives of the Azeri regime and the aim was to produce the results which would compete with those of USAID funded independent exit poll.

With all these preemptive strikes carried out the by the regime, it is not accidental that the oppositions’ protests against the elections results which granted the absolute majority to the governmental party was not strong. The opposition was disorganized and lacked the capacity to mount widespread protest movement. It became engaged in the negotiations with government which did not bring any results for them. The attempt to organize a rally in downtown Baku on November 26 was brutally suppressed by the police and the authorization for future rallies was denied by the Baku city government. The international community did not react that strongly to the developments in Azerbaijan as in Georgia or Ukraine. Apparently, the USA and the EU were not interested in ‘spoiling’ relations with the strategically important country rich in oil. Russia was prompt in offering support for the Azeri regime. The Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Lavrov stated that “They [violations] were not so serious as to prompt

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<sup>30</sup> Sarvat Maharramo, “Azerbaijan Ready for Election”, September 27, 2005, <http://www.postchronicle.net/newsboard/index.cgi?frames=n;read=6232>.

us to call into question the outcome of the elections”<sup>31</sup>. The Russian President Putin congratulated the Azerbaijan President Aliyev with “the successful completion of parliament elections.”<sup>32</sup>. Without the strong capacity to organize the mass protest and the considerable international backing, the Azeri opposition did not attempt to continue organizing the rallies. This marked the end of attempt to change the regime in Azerbaijan.

The success of Belarusian and Azeri regimes to stamp their victory over the opposition forces through use of anti-revolutionary measures has been an inspiring lesson for Russia’s regime when it gears for crucial parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2007/March 2008. In this regard Russia’s regime has not only benefited from the experience of other countries but moved anti-revolutionary measures to higher, more sophisticated level. The major focus has been taken on establishing pro-governmental youth organizations, controlling international and domestic non profit organizations and developing anti revolutionary ideology.

In this process, an instrumental role has been played by Russian political technologists (spin doctors) who assumed a leading role in designing anti-revolutionary measures. Gleb Pavlovsky, director of the Effective Politics Foundation; Modest Kolerov, head of a Kremlin department in charge of relations with the CIS; Yevgeny Kozhokin, director of the Strategic Studies Institute; Andranik Migranyan, chairman of the Commission on Issues of Globalization and National Development Strategy in the Public Chamber; Sergei Markov, director of the Institute for Political Studies, are few among dozen of leading political technologists who are on the vanguard of defending/ promoting the Kremlin’s interests not only in Russia, but in other post-Soviet countries as well. These technologists among others could be credited with establishing pro-governmental youth organizations, forming pro-governmental civil

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<sup>31</sup> Sergei Blagov, “Russia Backs Azerbaijani Leadership in Poll Controversy,” *EurasiaNet*, November 17, 2005, [http://www.eurasianet.org/azerbaijan/news/leadership\\_20051117.html](http://www.eurasianet.org/azerbaijan/news/leadership_20051117.html).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



organizations, establishing 'pseudo-democratic' election-monitoring organizations, spinning the public opinion in favor of the government through information technologies- internet and media. Russian political technologists are active not only in Russian but in other post-Soviet countries. The group of the Russia technologists led by Gleb Pavlovski and Sergei Markov were actively assisting Yanukovich's election campaign during the Presidential Elections in Ukraine 2005 . These technologists were instrumental in designing the information campaigns for Yanukovich which underlined his achievements and positive qualities, as well as designing propaganda campaigns against the orange opposition in which they were portrayed as the "puppets" of the West. A special comment should be made with regard to the role of Russian political technologists in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. According to political analysts the tactics of mimicking the tactics of the electoral revolutions used by the regimes were developed by these technologists who "have been working since Ukraine's 'orange revolution' to stymie any popular revolt in Russia itself, as well as in other ex-Soviet republics" <sup>33</sup>. These tactics afterwards were disseminated among the regimes which resorted to them during the elections. The Russian political technologists also visited Uzbekistan several months after the Andijan massacre. On the meeting with the President Karimov the goal of the visit became evident "noting that Uzbekistan is currently under an "information attack," the Uzbek strongman told his Russian guests, 'I am confident in your unbiased and objective evaluation of the issues'" <sup>34</sup> . This comment made by the ruler who never been particular generous in giving a praise underlines the importance of the factor of Russian political technologists in developing information strategies for the post-Soviet regimes

The product of joint efforts of the Russian political technologists and the Russia's regime is creation of the pro-governmental youth- Idushie Vmeste (Walking Together); Nashi (Ours);

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<sup>33</sup> *Gulf Times*, "People power bandwagon grinds to halt in Kazakhstan", Monday 5, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

Mestnye (Locals). The idea behind establishing these youth organizations has been to assemble the well-organized groups of youth people who would be instrumental in organizing the pro-governmental organizations and dispersing the opposition rallies.

The regime also aimed at weakening the opposition's capacity to recruit youth. In this regard when explaining the Russia's Youth Policy, the political analyst Stanislav Belkovskii stated that "the goal of this program is understandable to me, and it consists of keeping youth from joining radical opposition group"<sup>35</sup>. The same comment was made by the leader of Nashi Yakemenko according to whom "he wants the 'West to see that the Ukrainian variant will not happen here'"<sup>36</sup>. These organizations held numerous rallies in which the tens of thousands of activists participated and where the main message conveyed was to express their support for Russia's regime and contempt against the democratic opposition. According to Sergei Fateev, leader of the Mestnye, the members of his organization "are against political charlatans who want to divide our society before the elections. They are preparing to sell Russia out to the West"<sup>37</sup>. Though the government at first tried to distance itself from these organizations the further developments showed that they were not only established by the Kremlin, but they were a part of a bigger antirevolutionary plan which among other targets was also aimed against non-governmental organizations.

The regime's steps unleashed against NGOs can be divided into two groups- against the domestic NGOs and international NGOs. In January 2006, the President Putin signed a law which imposed the restrictions on registration, financing and activities of NGOs. The new law requires that foreign organizations and groups which receive funding from outside Russia

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<sup>35</sup> Julia A. Corvin, "Taking Youth Policy to the Next level", *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*. November 11, 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/11/58BA252F-9639-421C-8E91-4A4C5FC0EB05.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Anna Arutunyan, "Pro-Kremlin Youth Group: Orange Revolution, Go Home!", *Moscow News*. May 16, 2005, <http://www.mosnews.com/commentary/2005/05/16/nashirally.shtml>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

register with the government. With regard to this law Putin stated that “Whether these organizations want it or not, they become an instrument in the hands of foreign states that use them to achieve their own political objectives. This situation is unacceptable. This law is designed to prevent interference in Russia’s internal political life by foreign countries and create transparent conditions for the financing of nongovernmental organizations”<sup>38</sup>. According to the Member of Russian Alexei Ostrovsky who was one of the bill's sponsors, “legislation should help the government clamp down on NGOs that might use foreign funding to promote an upheaval like Ukraine's Orange revolution”<sup>39</sup>. This bill received much criticism from the international community which with enough reasons considered it violation of democratic standards. Another major tool to combat NGOs was the use of propaganda campaign which portrayed NGOs as spies and puppets working against Russia’s and Russia’s allies national interests. For example, a typical case of such propaganda was statement made by Russian Federal Security Service head Nikolai Patrushev “foreign intelligence services were plotting a so-called "velvet revolution" in Belarus to topple the government by financing the opposition through non-governmental organizations”<sup>40</sup>.

The regime also attempted to develop the anti-revolutionary ideology in order to offer an alterative ideological basis to Russia’s population. In this regard the concept of ‘Sovereign Democracy’ which was devolved in February 2006 by Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Vladislav Surkov represents a case book example. This doctrine which outlines Russia’s way of democracy (according to the Kremlin’s understanding of democracy) immediately was considered as “Moscow’s response to the dangerous combination of populist pressure from below and international pressure from above that destroyed the Leonid Kuchma

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<sup>38</sup> Sara Flounders, “ 450,000 NGOs in Russia. U.S Finances opposition,” *Workers World*, February 6, 2006. <http://www.workers.org/2006/world/ngos-0216>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *China View*, “Moscow accuses foreign spies of funding ‘revolution’ in Belarus”, May 12, 2005, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-05/13/content\\_2954292.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-05/13/content_2954292.htm).

regime”<sup>41</sup>. Surkov himself did not conceal that the focus of the doctrine was combating “a soft take” in Russia (his reference to electoral revolutions). As he stated “I can't say that this issue is off the agenda, since if they managed to pull it off in four countries” -- the reference includes Serbia in the list of “orange” victims – “why not do it in a fifth? I think that these attempts will not be limited to 2007-08 [when Russia holds parliamentary and presidential elections]. Our foreign friends can and will try to repeat them”<sup>42</sup>. Surkov’s reference to the elections 2007-2008 proves their vital importance to the Kremlin and explains the enormous amount of work carried out by the regime in order to avoid electoral revolution and insure a smooth transition of power from Putin to his successor. In general, the dominant opinion now is that there is only slimmest chance of electoral revolution in Russia (the fact that can be in some measure explained by the success of anti-revolutionary measures).

The above mentioned examples show the important role that anti-revolutionary measures have started to play in the process of retaining power of the regimes. Based on the available information these measures can be conveniently divided into ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ power measures. Soft measures include: use discourse/rhetoric of political and public figures aimed at corrupting a notion of electoral revolution; use of spin-doctors (political technologists) and think tanks for developing anti-revolutionary measures, establishing pro-governmental youth organizations, forming pro-governmental civil organizations, establishing election-monitoring organizations, use of information technologies- internet, media, adopting new election and criminal codes and amending the existing ones aimed at reducing a probability of electoral revolution, curbing the activities of international non-governmental organizations, banning

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<sup>41</sup> Ivan Krastev, “‘Sovereign democracy’, Russian-style”. *OpenDemocracy*, November 26, 2006. [http://www.clssofia.org/uploaded/1163753090\\_\\_od161106.pdf](http://www.clssofia.org/uploaded/1163753090__od161106.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Kimmage, “Kazakhstan: 'Sovereign Democracy' In Almaty and Moscow,” *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*. July 10, 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/7/6129BE69-8044-4EAD-A401-3AC4D549A134.html>.

local non-governmental organizations, controlling media, splitting opposition. Hard measures are: training, mobilizing and using police, army, intelligence services against the revolutionary forces, surpassing the demonstrators, jailing the political opponents, crashing public protests, killing the protestors.

The experience of recent political developments in the region shows that the regimes are gradually closing the 'operation space' for the opposition and civil society. The pattern of suppression does not have nature of indiscriminate and random purging, but it carefully analyzed, reveals the well-planned and devised plot of antirevolutionary measures. The regimes directly and purposefully attack those tools and mechanisms which might be used by the opposition and civil society if an attempt of electoral revolution is made.

The message can be conveyed to the forces striving to promote democracy in the post-Soviet region -the anti-revolutionary measures of the post-Soviet regimes is a matter of reality; they exist; they have been tried, and as they proved to be successful in suppressing the revolutionary forces and prolonging the regimes' existence, they will be used again in the future. Now it time for the democratic forces to take upon a challenge on responding to these anti-revolutionary measures. The future developments in the post-Soviet regimes will show how successfully the democratic forces will be in doing so.

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