"Surfing the wave" - civil society development and colour revolutions
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Abstract

Der Beitrag untersucht den Prozess ausländischer Unterstützung für die Zivilgesellschaften in den post-sowjetischen Staaten und die damit verbundenen Implikationen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der „farbigen Revolutionen." In Serbien (2000), Georgien (2003), der Ukraine (2004) und Kirgisistan (2005) wird allgemein die Rolle der Nichtregierungs- und der Jugendorganisationen beim Organisieren gesellschaftlichen Protests als das eigentliche, kritische Element während der „farbigen Revolutionen" angesehen. Im Gegensatz zu verbreiteten Auffassungen wird die These vertreten, dass diese „Revolutionen" keine direkte Konsequenz der gewachsenen externen Unterstützung für die Zivilgesellschaften waren. Stattdessen wird den gesellschaftlichen Bewegungen eine Schlüsselrolle innerhalb der „farbigen Revolutionen" zugeschrieben. Diese verwarfen das westliche Modell rigider, hierarchisch strukturierter Organisation zugunsten deutlich flexibler strukturierter „rhizomischer", transnationaler Formen.

Considering recent cases of authoritarian consolidation all over the world (Uzbekistan, Belarus, Burma, Zimbabwe), the international call for increased aid to support human rights' defenders, to bypass authoritarian governments in the implementation of development projects, and to improve the working conditions of non-governmental organizations presumes that a strong "civil society"[1] promotes development through democratization. This presumption lies behind most of the millions of dollars that international agencies and bilateral donors have spent on official aid to strengthening civil societies of developing and/or authoritarian countries.[2] Since the mid-1990s, the failures of methods based on

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1 The expressions "civil society" as well as that one of "colour revolutions" refer to a diversity of possible meaning that will be discussed later on.

2 According to the Development Assistance Committee database, the OECD countries' total aid targeting Civil Society has constantly grown since 2000. In 2005, the Government and Civil Society sector represented 9,324.28 millions of dollars or more than

inter-State relations (top-down) have progressively made international donors amend their strategies and programs of democratization toward more "grass-rooted" methods aiming less at imposing democracy than at favoring a social hybridizing of democratic norms and procedures.

However, the effectiveness of the current design of civil society support programs remains a highly controversial issue for academics and development practitioners, who have debated over it ever since NGOs first appeared as recipients of official aid.[3] From both sides of the political spectrum, attacks on the effectiveness of civil society support related to democratization have become a growing industry for development's experts: the bottom-up paradigm is criticized either for its inability to spread democratic values worldwide and for its neocolonial bias.[4] Some critics also point to inappropriate management of grants and selection of recipients, to bad or useless projects funded by aid. Others focus on aid granted to NGOs actually linked with "bad" governments, usually inferring this is the rule and not the exception.[5] Moreover, recent backlashes against Civil Society Organizations (CSO) would be symbols of persistent forms of authoritarianism as well as evidences of the incapacity of social movements to fight successfully against autocratic regimes. Criticized for their lack of sustainability and for their vulnerability to State repression, Civil Society Organizations would be no more than the gadgets of their financial supporters and thus unable to launch effective, autonomous and spontaneous pro-democratic actions. This paper argues for a more comprehensive analysis taking into account both the appropriation of the civil society rhetoric by authoritarian governments and the ability of social actors to exploit it to develop indigenous forms of political dissent.

The recent phenomenon of colour revolutions supposes to have a second glance at these critics. In 1994, Larry Diamond assessed the contribution of civil society to transition processes.[6] He regarded as weak the role civil society plays in transition periods whereas a strong civil society would be critical in democratic consolidation. Contrary to this analysis suggesting that the implication of CSO would be extremely limited in the phase of regime change, recent colour revolutions are largely seen as counterexamples to such predictions: From Serbia to Kyrgyzstan, from *Otpor* to *Kel-Kel*, CSO and youth organizations seem to have played a great role in social mobilizations that have led to the political

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10 % of the total bilateral aid (source: DAC5 Official Bilateral commitments by sector. OECD.stat).

3   Abramson wrote already in 1999 that NGO and development bashing is somewhat in vogue, especially among anthropologists who are not getting their bread and butter directly from development or aid organizations. Cf. David M. Abramson, A Critical Look at NGOs and Civil Society as Means to an End in Uzbekistan. In: Human Organization, 58 (1999) 3, pp. 240–250, here 242.

4   Cf. Jude Howell, In their own image: Donor assistance to civil society. In: Lusotopie, 1 (2002), pp. 117–131.

5   Cf. Abramson, A Critical Look at NGOs.

6   Cf. Larry Diamond, Rethinking Civil Society. In: Journal of Democracy, 3 (1994), pp. 4–17.

transformation of Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005). Even the strong repression of popular movements and social mobilization in Belarus (2005), Azerbaijan (2005), Uzbekistan (2005) and Burma (2007) are seen as encouraging cases of civil actions aimed at overthrowing the state or changing its policy. The colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and the Kyrgyz Republic would have thus demonstrated the effectiveness of external programs aiming at strengthening civil society and carried on before these political changes. As soon as external actors shift their programs from State actors toward CSO, democracy would then appear as a realistic, achievable and legitimate objective.

The passage from a "transition paradigm" to the "civil society formula" is not only a change of scale. Following the works of Jean-François Bayart, the social practices related to the diffusion of the rhetoric of civil society and the particular social background that Civil Society Organizations constitute ought to be analyzed as such[7] and beyond the role they can play in the process of democratization: Who are their members? What are their motivations? What effects does the external intervention in closed regimes produce on the social field, on the repertories of collective action and on the expression of political dissent? Almost 10 years after the "end of the transition paradigm",[8] is the civil society approach now over? Were colour revolutions direct consequences of the intensification of external civil society support?

This article is based both on field research conducted in Central Asia[9] and an extensive review of literature dealing with colour revolutions' dynamics, social movements' theory and democratization studies. Its aim is less to present exhaustive descriptions of colour revolutions than to lay the foundations for further researches on foreign intervention, social mobilization and regime change. In picking colour revolutions as a case study, this paper targets the process (and its implications) of international support to so-called civil societies movements. Although it is commonly conceived as a domestic process, colour revolutions ought to be conceived in a global perspective and as a transnational process. Thus, this paper will also argue for an extension of the theoretical and geographical scope generally used to analyze democratization processes.

Our analysis will require multiple points of view on the social practices of civil society: actors "inside" this category, allied or antagonistic actors of civil societies and external promoters of the civil society formula. We will argue that international donors' involvement in colour revolutions through the use of the civil society formula has had two major and paradoxical implications. On the one

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7   Cf. Jean-François Bayart, La revanche des sociétés africaines. In: Le politique par le bas en Afrique noire. Contributions à une problématique de la démocratie, Paris 1992.
8   Cf. Thomas Carothers, The end of the transition paradigm. In: Journal of Democracy, 13 (2002), 1, pp. 5–21.
9   This article is mainly based on information gathered during various journeys in Central Asia from 2002 to 2006 and during a three-month internship at the Budapest headquarters of the Open Society Institute (Summer 2006).

hand, international support to civil society has largely contributed to the depolarization of political dissent nationwide. On the other hand, it has made possible the rejection of rigid and hierarchical organizations in favor of new forms of dissent movements. The limited scope and the fragile existence of the third sector are both consequences of the repressive measures taken by the local authorities and the specific patterns of international support to civil society. But, at the same time, such a weakness seems to be one of the critical elements for political action and democratic invention.

I. Civil society aid and democratization: preliminary precautions

It is quite unsurprising that many researchers have found the relationship between civil society aid and actual democratization to be weak. Evidence suggests a high level of heterogeneity in the effects of aid, which comes on top of the typical problems that arise in cross-country analysis. Multiple markers for democratic success – elections, human rights' record, non-discriminatory access to public positions – further complicate empirical research. As for democracy assistance as a whole, some argue that civil society aid has not prevented growing numbers of hybrid regimes worldwide; others argue that the situation would be far worse without it.[10] Although these findings may make civil society aid less and less defensible, much of the criticism is misguided. This isn't to say the impact of aid is easily known or that we can fine-tune aid to improve results. But the civil society formula as a whole cannot be globally discredited. Assessing the bottom-up approach of democratization should go through a subtle process of deconstruction: the civil society formula has been linked up with many historical and normative elements, which cannot be taken for granted.

First, critics of civil society aid arise in a broader context where both the commitment and the capacity of external actors to promote democracy abroad are put into question. Since the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion and protection of human rights have constituted the core of the American, and, to a

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10   In their recent Journal of Democracy article (Edward D. Mansfield, Jack L. Snyder, The Sequencing "Fallacy". In: Journal of Democracy, 18 (2007) 3, pp. 5–10), Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder emphasize the costs of failed democratizations. They argue that premature, out-of-sequence democracy assistance programs toward authoritarian countries may make later efforts to democratize them more difficult than they would otherwise be. According to them, democratizing in the wrong sequence not only risks bloodshed in the short term, but can also nurture the mobilization of illiberal forces with the capacity to block democratic consolidation over the long term. Thomas Carothers responded to their analysis in an article entitled "How Democracies Emerge: The 'Sequencing' Fallacy" (In: Journal of Democracy, 18 (2007) 1, pp. 12–27). Exploring cases from South America to Africa and Middle East, Carothers claims that democratic struggle against authoritarianism is actually compatible with rule-of-law development and state-building.

lesser extent, the European foreign policy discourses. But, beyond this rhetoric, the importance of Western democracy promotion and especially American foreign policy is rather limited.[11] According to Thomas Carothers, despite its growing references to the global spread of democracy, the Bush Administration has significantly damaged U.S. democracy promotion efforts by increasing the number of close ties with "friendly tyrants". Security interests and U.S. energy needs have led the Bush Administration to maintain friendly, unchallenged relations with more than half of the forty-five "non-free" countries in the world.[12] Moreover, the pessimistic assessment of the U.S. willingness and capacity to promote democracy overseas appears as a result of a broader reaction to its enthusiasm about democracy promotion[13] that has emerged since the second half of the 1990s.[14] Believing that the global democratic wave was over and largely overrated, several scholars articulated a pessimistic and cautionary view on democratization. Fareed Zakaria, alarmed by the recent elections of leaders restricting rights and abusing power, thought that rapid democratization could lead to "illiberal democracy".[15] Considering the new conflicts breaking out in countries in transition, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder argued that democratizing states lead more to conflict situations than stable regimes.[16] Worried by the conflict-prone nature of transition, Amy Chua concluded that promoting both democratic practices and market reforms in countries with "market-dominant minorities" leads both to ethnic conflict and illiberal backlashes.[17] Often arguing to respect local forms of civility and autochthonous informal relations, other scholars tend to reject the even concept of democracy promotion assessed as a new form of colonialism.[18] As Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik summarize it, this last point highlights the "more general question of whether democracy can be in fact promoted effectively by external actors."[19] Experts on democratic tran-

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11   Cf. Valerie Bunce/Sharon Wolchik, Bringing Down Dictators: American Democracy Promotion and Electoral Revolutions. In: Postcommunist Eurasia, Working Paper Series n 5–07, Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, July 2007.
12   Cf. Thomas Carothers, U.S. Democracy Promotion During and After Bush, Washington D.C. 2007.
13   Cf. Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, Norman/London 1991.
14   Cf. Carothers, The sequencing fallacy, pp. 12–27.
15   Cf. Fareed Zakaria, The Rise of Illiberal Democracy. In: Foreign Affairs, November 1997, pp. 22–43; Fareed Zakaria, The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad, New York 2003.
16   Cf. Edward Mansfield/Jack Snyder, Democratization and War. In: Foreign Affairs, May/June 1995, pp. 79–97.
17   Amy Chua, World On Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability, New York 2003.
18   Bertrand Badie, L'Etat importé. L'occidentalisation de l'ordre politique, Paris, November 1992; Nicolas Guilhot, The democracy makers – human rights and the politics of global order, New York 2005.
19   Cf. Bunce/Wolchik, Bringing Down Dictators, p. 1.

sitions often assess that democratization is in essence a domestic process:[20] "external actors usually lack the knowledge, the stakes, the long term commitment, and the control over the levers of change that are essential for transforming long-lived dictatorships into democratic polities."[21] As I have argued elsewhere,[22] external interventions in support of democracy and bottom-up programs of democratization can have adverse effects that undermine effective democratic development. They can exacerbate local inequalities in favoring an urban-based, highly educated elite and thereby increase internal resentments of both the beneficiaries of Western assistance and their foreign patrons.[23] They can fuel dependency relations and undermine the sustainability of local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).[24] Finally, they can distort domestic politics by making CSOs to focus on the current "hot issues" of the international donors' community and to prevent domestic questions from emerging.[25]

Second, civil society is a heterogeneous concept, made up of three different dimensions, which have to be distinguished. The bottom-up paradigm of democratization merges an analytical tool (civil society, as a scientific category, is a means *to understand* political changes), a political instrument (Civil Society Organizations foster democratization of closed regimes) and a normative bias (both civil society as a concept and CSOs *ought to be promoted* for the sake of political societies).[26] According to most development agencies and private donors,[27] civil society comprises the various associations located in a distinct

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20 Cf. Eric Hobsbawm, Spreading Democracy. In: Foreign Policy, September/October 2004.

21 Bunce/Wolchik, Bringing Down Dictators, p. 2.

22 Cf. Simon Tordjman, Démocrates sans démocratie: Soutien à la société civile et démocratisation en Ouzbékistan post-soviétique. In: Sens public, Octobre 2007.

23 Ase Grodeland, "'It really strikes me as suspicious when people buy a jeep or a luxurious car and drive around in it after two or three successful projects': Public Perceptions of Non-Governmental Organizations in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia", Unpublished manuscript 2005.

24 Jude Howell/Jenny Pearce, Civil Society and Development, a critical exploration, London 2001.

25 See, among others: Sarah Henderson, Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and the Non-Governmental Organizations Sector in Russia. In: Comparative Political Studies, 35 (March 2002), pp. 136–167; Sada Aksartova, NGO Diffusion in the Former Soviet Union and its Effects. In: Civil Society from Abroad: U.S. Donors in the Former Soviet Union, PhD. dissertation, Princeton University 2005; Sarah Mendelson/John Glenn (eds.), The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, New York 2002.

26 Cf. Michel Camau, Sociétés civiles réelles et téléologie de la démocratisation. In: Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée, 9 (2002) 2, pp. 213–232. See also Krishna Kumra (ed.), Postconflict Elections, Democratization and International Assistance, Colorado/London 1998.

27 Due to editorial constraints, I cannot include here all the definitions of civil society given by international donors and development agencies. However, a few of them need to be quoted here: The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations to Civil Society refers to civil society as an association of citizens (outside their families, friends and businesses) entered into voluntarily to advance their inter-

space, which is neither the State, nor the market. However, this "third sector" would show similarities with these two spheres: like the State, it is made up of organizations, and as with the market, it is defined by the voluntary and active participation of its members. Civil society aid is based on the idea that the more the third sphere would be dense and inclusive, the more civil society would be strengthened and democracy would consolidate. In implementing the concept of civil society, democracy promotion programs conceive civil society as a pragmatic tool and a normative goal: it is at once the objective and the instrument to achieve it. Consequently, the study of the concept of civil society cannot be dissociated from the analysis of its realization.[28] The bottom-up paradigm of democratization can then be understood as an "action on actions", to recall the terms employed by Michel Foucault to define the concept of *governmentality*: "It is an action on possible actions: it plays on the field of possibility where subjects act: it encourages, it induces, it diverts, it facilitates or makes more difficult, it widens or it limits, it makes more or less probable; it can even constrain or prevent absolutely; it is always a way of working on one or several subjects, when they are actually acting or as soon as they are likely to act."[29]

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ests, ideas and ideologies. The term does not include profit-making activity (the private sector) or governing (the public sector); cf. We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and global governance. Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations, A/58/817, 11 June 2004. The World Bank regards civil society as "the groups and organizations, both formal and informal, which act independently of the state and market to promote diverse interests in society"; cf. World Bank, http://www.worldbank.org, last accessed November 2007. According to the DFID (UK Department of International Development), "civil society" corresponds to "arenas of associational life located between the state and the family or household, where society debates and negotiates matters of common concern and organizes to regulate public affairs"; cf. DFID, How to work with civil society to support country strategy objectives, London 2002. According to Charles Taylor, civil society is a web of autonomous associations independent of the state, which bind citizens together in matters of common concern, and by their existence or actions could have an effect on public policy; cf. Gail Kligman, Reclaiming the public: a reflection on recreating civil society in Romania. In: Eastern European Politics and Societies, 4 (1990) 3, pp. 393–438, here 420. Schmitter defines civil society as [a] set or system of self-organized intermediary groups; cf. Philippe Schmitter, On Civil Society and the Consolidation of Democracy: Ten Propositions, July 1995, p. 1. The inclusion of the private sector within civil society remains highly debated. Although the Concise Oxford dictionary of Politics defines civil society as the set of intermediate associations that are neither the state nor the (extended) family [civil society therefore includes voluntary associations and firms and other corporate bodies], other scholars insist on the non-lucrative nature of Civil Society Organizations; cf. Thomas Carothers, Think Again Civil Society. In: Foreign Policy, No. 117, Winter 1999–2000, pp. 18–29.

28 See Jeffrey Alexander, Civil Society I, II, III: Constructing an Empirical Concept from Normative Controversies and Historical Transformations. In: Jeffrey Alexander (ed.), Real civil societies. Dilemmas of Institutionalization, London 1998.

29 Michel Foucault, Histoire de la sexualité, tome 1: La Volonté de savoir, Paris 1976, p. 105 (Translation by the author): un ensemble d'action sur des actions possibles: il opère sur le champ de possibilité où vient s'inscrire le comportement de sujets agissants: il incite, il induit, il détourne, il facilite ou rend plus difficile, il élargit ou il limite,

Third, the civil society formula unquestionably provides ample fodder for critics: many cases exist of civil society projects poorly conceived, badly executed, or unsustainable. The term of civil society is vague enough to become a common reference to both liberal democracies and authoritarian (or hybrid) regimes: some badly managed organizations and/or government-oriented organizations (GONGOs) may have, indeed, received high amounts of funding. International donors have progressively substituted the civil society formula with the "transition paradigm", but, once the latter proved misguided (recall the huge number of fake elections that have brought real autocrats into power in the 1990s), the bottom-up paradigm should now be discredited. However, this does not prove that all civil society programs have been, or are, ineffective.

II. The diffusion of a new democratization paradigm: the "civil society" formula

In 1959, Seymour Lipset wrote a seminal article regarding development as a precondition to democracy.[30] However, since the beginning of the 1990s, international assistance explicitly and exclusively targeting the latter has represented a growing part of international aid.[31] Democracy has been considered either as a goal in itself, or as the main guarantee for local populations to effectively get the benefits of the international aid. By way of consequence, as soon as democracy is effective, disfavored populations would be both the best means to manage assistance funds effectively and the final recipient of them. Democracy is then preferable, not because it is better in itself but because it would guarantee the effectiveness of development by involving the populations into its process. Consequently, the realization of civil societies, which would favor both development and democracy, would meet the two main objectives of international donors.

In embracing and realizing the concept of civil society, development agencies partly show their disillusionment with respect to the State and to its effectiveness as an actor of development. Lack of accountability and legitimacy, corruption and mismanagement of national budgets have been progressively regarded as the main features of many States in the South and as fundamental obstacles to their development.[32] As Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce summarizes it during the

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il rend plus ou moins probable; à la limite, il contraint ou empêche absolument; mais il est bien toujours une manière d'agir sur un ou sur des sujets agissants, et ce tant qu'ils agissent ou sont susceptibles d'agir.

30   See Seymour M. Lipset, Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy. In: American Political Science Review, 53 (1959) 1, pp. 69–105.

31   Cf. Thomas Carothers, Democracy assistance: The Question of Strategy. In: Democratization, 4 (1997) 3, pp. 109–132.

32   Cf. Howell, In their own image.

1990s, "the State [...] started to be perceived as part of the problem, and not of the solution."[33] Consequently, the civil society formula is a means of solving the serious difficulties met by the programs of development and a tool of political resistance against authoritarianism. According to Joseph Stiglitz, since top-down approaches failed to effectively promote development and democratization, "civil society in general and NGOs in particular, were to assume a new role, not replacing the state but holding it accountable so that it served the interests of society, a role summed up in the term 'advocacy'."[34] The shift from a State-centered approach to this bottom-up method "meant that local people were no longer seen as passive beneficiaries; the idea that the State had the key to solutions was replaced by recognition of the knowledge of local people. Consequently, the role of development professionals also changed; they tend to be seen less as controllers and more as facilitators."[35] That is not to say that top-down measures, political conditionality and sanctions have totally and definitely disappeared but they are no more the only ways to promote both development and democracy abroad.

Civil societies are double-faced: they both embody the right of all people to self-determination and favor a greater involvement of local populations in their own development (*empowerment*). Since the 1990s, the civil society formula has been a way to merge a political strategy with (civil society is a basis for political resistance in "closed societies"[36]) "economic" advantages.[37] Since civil society stands in between the State and the individual, strong civil societies would protect and preserve what is necessary to liberal democratic societies: both the autonomy of individuals and the sense of "collective consciousness" which is necessary to foster economic relations between agents.[38] One can then distinguish a liberal conception from an ultra-liberal view on civil society: Although the former regards civil society as a means to strengthen State accountability, the latter considers civil society as a way to fight against the excessive power of State.

Seeking to address the issue of bad governance in weak or corrupted States, foreign donors have increasingly considered NGOs as key elements of civil society. According to Ottaway and Carothers, "donors' tendency to think of NGOs as the heart of civil society is part and parcel of their ahistorical approach to this domain. When Western democracy promoters embraced the notion of civil soci-

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33 Howell/Pearce, Civil Society and Development, p. 14.
34 Joseph E. Stilgitz, Participation and Development: Perspectives from the Comprehensive Development Paradigm. In: Review of Development Economics, 6 (2002) 2, pp. 163–182, here 163.
35 See Dennis Dijkzeul, Programs and the problems of participation. In: Idem/Yves Beigbeder, Rethinking International Organizations. Pathology & Promise, Oxford/New York 2003.
36 Cf. Karl Popper, The open society and its enemies (1945), 12th ed., London 1977.
37 Cf. Douglass C. North, Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance, New York 1990.
38 Cf. Edward Shils, The Virtue of Civility: Selected Essays on Liberalism, Tradition, and Civil Society, Indianapolis 1997.

ety aid in the early 1990s, they often assumed that since the countries in which they were working had few organizations of the type donors designate 'civil society organizations' – that is, Westernized advocacy NGOs – they had little civil society of any kind."[39] NGOs largely benefit from what are supposed to be their undeniable advantages: adaptability, flexibility and then efficiency on the ground.[40] Asked the question of whether NGOs constitute "sustainable civil society or service delivery agencies",[41] foreign donors generally answer both. Civil society ought to be realized because it is not only an interface between State and citizens but also a service provider and a way of stimulating the involvement of citizens in the public sphere. By identifying the needs of local populations and managing international resources more efficiently, Civil Society Organizations would foster "social capital", which, according to Robert Putnam, "refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue'."[42]

Strong civil societies would then promote civic virtue but would do it without engaging high financial costs.[43] James Scott highlights the fact that the success of such projects is not indexed on their financial amount.[44] On average, the amount of grants dedicated to civil society is distinctively low (often less than $ 5 000 per year). But civil society assistance consists less in carrying out huge and expensive initiatives than to multiply small and exemplary projects at low cost. Contrary to other sectors of international aid like infrastructures or public facilities building, the effects of civil society support cannot be evaluated in the short term.

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39 Cf. Marina Ottaway/Thomas Carothers, Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democratic Promotion, Washington D.C. 2000.
40 Cf. Alan Fowler, NGOs in Africa: Achieving Comparative Advantage. In: Relief and Micro-Development, IDS Discussion Paper, Brighton 1988.
41 Cf. Ian Smillie/Kristie Evenson, Sustainable civil society or service delivery agencies? In: Dijkzeul/Beigbeder, Rethinking International Organizations.
42 Robert D. Putnam, Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community, New York 2000, p. 19.
43 Alison Van Rooy, The Global Legitimacy Game, Civil Society, Globalization, and Protest, London 1998, p. 58 f.
44 Cf. James Scott, Seeing like a State, How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed, London 1998, p. 257.

III. The implementation of the "civil society formula" in post-communist countries

Apart from being diffused and integrated in all donors' discourses and institutional organizations, the civil society formula has largely been implemented in post-Soviet countries whose hybrid political regimes have merged democratic and authoritarian elements.[45] Both on a per-capita or per-state basis, post-Soviet countries have been the largest recipients of U.S. democracy assistance programs.[46] Since the mid-1990s, Georgia has been the second recipient of U.S. aid after Israel, and Ukraine has not ranked very far behind.[47] In Ukraine, since 2001, USAID civil society support has remained constantly high from 4.2 million dollars in 2001 to 3 million in 2006.[48] By comparison, in full dictatorships such as Uzbekistan or Burma, due to the harsh repression implemented by the local authorities and the apparent dead-ends of civil society support in terms of the country's democratization, the total amount of civil society aid has remained low (Burma)[49] or drastically collapsed (Uzbekistan).[50]

Foreign involvement in democracy promotion has taken diverse forms ranging from promotion of electoral processes to public criticisms of violations of civil liberties and political rights and aggressive actions. As far as civil society support in the post-communist region is concerned, international donors has designed it as a sequential process. Strengthening emerging civil societies has first supposed to build the organizational and juridical basis of the third sector. External democracy promoters have then focused on financial support to CSOs through capacity-building grants. The main domains in which NGOs are active include civic education, media assistance and defense of human rights.

Relationships between NGOs and civil society seem at once over-theorized and a blurry issue. Even if foreign diplomats and donors highlight that NGOs do not embody the entire sphere of civil society, at the same time, they concede their tendency to work quasi-exclusively with them. The limits of civil society are not clear; boundaries move, categories get tangled, while the definition of an

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45 See Michael McFaul, Transitions from Postcommunism. In: Journal of Democracy, 16 (2005) 3, pp. 5–19.

46 Steven F. Finkel, Perez-Linan Anibal, Mitchell A. Seligson, Dinorah Azpuru, Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building: Results of a Cross-National Quantitative Study. Final Report, USAID, version 34, January 2006.

47 Jaba Devdariani, The Impact of International Assistance. IDEA website and conference, May 2003, quoted in Bunce/Wolchik, Bringing Down Dictators, p. 5.

48 USAID, Civil Society and Media Budgets, FY 01–06: Ukraine. In: http://ukraine.usaid. gov, last accessed 15 November 2007.

49 According to the OECD Creditor Reporting System, the total amount of development assistance targeting NGOs' development from 1990 to 2006 is 10.5 million dollars.

50 According to the UNDP Development Assistance Database, in 2001, more than 1.2 billion dollars were allocated to social development projects in Uzbekistan. The same sector only got around 67,000 $ in 2005. Cf. Development Assistance Database, http://www.dad.uz, last accessed 15 January 2008.

NGO is vague and encompasses different types of organizations. Thus, when addressing the issue of CSOs, one needs to distinguish between different types of organizations involved in external civil society aid.

Table 1: Typology of Civil Society Organizations in the Post-Communist Area

Type of NGO/CSO	Goal	Source of funding
Issue-Based Organization (IBO)	Advance a certain "global" cause (environmental, religious, cultural ...)	Primarily international donors or the State and secondarily membership fees
Community-Based Organization (CBO)	Advance the interests of a geographically delimited community (inclusive of all residents)	Primarily international donors or the State and secondarily membership fees
Membership-Based Organization (MBO)	Advance the interests of members often defined by a certain profession or social status but not necessarily inclusive of all persons in such a category (i.e. farmers' association, youth organization, invalid society ...).	Primarily Membership fees and secondarily international donors and the State
NGO Support Organization (NGOSO)	Support NGO in their activities.	Quasi-exclusively international donors or the State

Source: Daniel Stevens, Conceptual travels along the silk road: On civil society aid in Uzbekistan, unpublished PhD Thesis, London 2004, p. 126.

The above typology is derived from the classification Uphoff made for development NGOs.[51] As soon as civil society is targeted as such, one needs to specify the notion of Civil Society Organizations and to distinguish between CBOs and MBOs. Focusing on the different sources of funding of these organizations raises the question of their own accountability. Strengthening State accountability and people empowerment have constituted the main objectives of the democracy promotion programs but, ultimately, those who fund an organization are the ones to which it is accountable. In the case of an MBO, funded primarily by membership fees, accountability is to its members. As far as CBOs, IBOs and NGOSOs are concerned, accountability is to the donor or State agency, which funds the organization. Although international donors aim to foster State accountability toward national citizens, the creation of NGOs mainly strengthens

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51   See Norman O. Uphoff, Grassroots Organizations and NGOs in Rural Development: Opportunities with Diminishing States and Expanding Markets. In: World Development, No. 21, 1993, pp. 607–622.

their accountability towards international donors. In former Soviet Union, IBOs have been the most important recipients of external aid. In Eurasia and to a less important degree in Central and Eastern Europe, development agencies support local NGOs in order to produce strong civil societies but, at the same time, they tend to usurp their role in sending, for example, foreign consultants to help and intervene in domestic matters (constitutional issues, the legislative process, NGO management ...).[52]

Depending on the country, civil societies in former Soviet countries have been designed as a global break involving three dimensions: an exit from traditional solidarities, a fight against corruption and bad governance,[53] and a rupture with the former Soviet organization. According to Daan van der Schriek, analyst for the *International Crisis Group*, "democratization can be built on the Soviet legacy. But it does require a break, provided for by an exceptional and committed leadership intent on de-Sovietizing the state."[54] Civil society would be then less defined as a vector of democratization than by its opposition to "uncivil" practices and actors.[55] As far as politics is concerned, interactions among citizens depend on two variables: the kind of solidarity between them and their degree of ideological polarization. In his first major work, *The Division of Labor in Society*, Emile Durkheim distinguishes two kinds of social integration: "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity". The former applies to societies in which all members have common and shared social experiences, and each individual is directly and equally attached to the society. Organic solidarity refers to a system in which increasing division of labor makes social cohesion based upon the dependence individuals have on each other. Ideological polarization refers to the degree in which individual or collective actors express normative conceptions of political and social life. Explicitly or not, in realizing civil societies, international donors promote relationships that should correspond to the characteristics of organic solidarity. Thus, according to Ernest Gellner, civil society is a

52   Pauline J. Luong/Erika Weinthal, The NGO paradox: Democratic Goals and non-democratic outcomes in Kazakhstan. In: Europe-Asia Studies, 51 (1999) 7, pp. 1267–1284, here 1279. See also: David Abramson, From Soviet to Mahalla: Community and Transition in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Ph.D Dissertation, Indiana University, 1998; Andrea Berg, Encountering Transition in Contemporary Uzbekistan – A Critical Perspective on Foreign Aid and Non-Governmental Organizations, IEE Working Papers; Mirka Dreger/Anke Huenninghaus, Social Research on Transformation in Developing Countries, Results of interdisciplinary PhD-School participants, Band 171, Institut für Entwicklungsforschung und Entwicklungspolitik der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Bochum 2003; Sarah Henderson, Russia's Virtual Civil Society. Foreign Aid and Civic Development, Paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, Washington, D.C., September 2000.
53   Luis Roniger/Ayse Gunes-Ayata (eds.), Democracy, Clientelism, and Civil Society, London 1994.
54   Interview with Daan van der Schriek, International Crisis Group Office, Bishkek, February 2006.
55   Chris Hann/Elizabeth Dunn (eds.), Civil Society: challenging western models, London 1996.

strictly voluntary sphere opposed to ethnic or religious associations and located between the family and the state.[56] Civil society is then incompatible with corruption, which merged political elites and traditional networks during the Soviet time.[57] Moreover, external democracy promoters often refuse to support particular political or religious views. Excepting political foundations such as the *National Democratic Institute*, the *International Republican Institute* or the German *Partei-Stiftungen*, foreign donors generally do not finance political parties and avoid committing themselves to religious organizations. In the former Soviet Eurasia and to a less extent in Central and Eastern Europe civil societies are separated from "traditional society" (mechanical solidarity and ideological neutrality), from "religious spheres" (mechanical solidarity and ideologically oriented) and from "political society" (strong ideological commitment and organic solidarity among members). As Thomas Carothers summarizes it, "much democracy assistance is overly formal and suffers from a disconnection to the local context. Yet when donors attempt explicitly to take account of the real power relations and interests in a particular context, the aid [causes] aid officials themselves to question the appropriateness of their own role."[58] In all colour revolutions, civil societies encompassed various types of associations and adopted different strategies. However, their "societal localization" tends to remain the same as the one described above: Too politically engaged[59] or too exclusive, religious groups, political parties and to a lesser extent neighborhood committees are excluded from the list of potential beneficiaries.

The role of NGOs and student activists in organizing creative nonviolent resistance is commonly assessed as the critical common feature among colour revolutions. During the pre-revolutionary period, youth NGOs were the dominant forms of civil societies in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. In all these post-communist countries, most members of NGOs were under 35 and, according to Kuzio, "in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004), democratic revolutions [...] would not have taken place without the energy of young people":[60] Serbia's *Otpor*, Georgia's *Kmara*, Ukraine's *Pora* and Kyrgyzstan's *Kel-Kel*, which are assumed to have played a central role in colour revolutions, all expressed their desire to break with older generations, old politician and often corruption-related practices. In all these democratic revolutions, activists adopted strategies and discourses highlighting the necessity of change: The Georgian opposition group named itself "Enough!" (*Kmara*); in the

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56 Ernest Gellner, Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals, London 1994.
57 See Ghita Ionescu, Patronage under communism. In: Ernest Gellner/John Waterbury (eds.), Patron and Client in Mediterranean Societies, London 1977, p. 97–102.
58 Thomas Carothers, Aiding Democracy abroad, the learning curve, Washington 2006, p. 108.
59 Ibid., p. 221: "Advocacy NGOs are expected to be politically engaged in the sense of tackling issues that concern government policies, but nonpartisan – that is to say, not affiliated with or working to advance any particular political camp".
60 Taras Kuzio, Civil society, youth and societal mobilization in democratic revolutions. In: Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 39 (2006), p. 366.
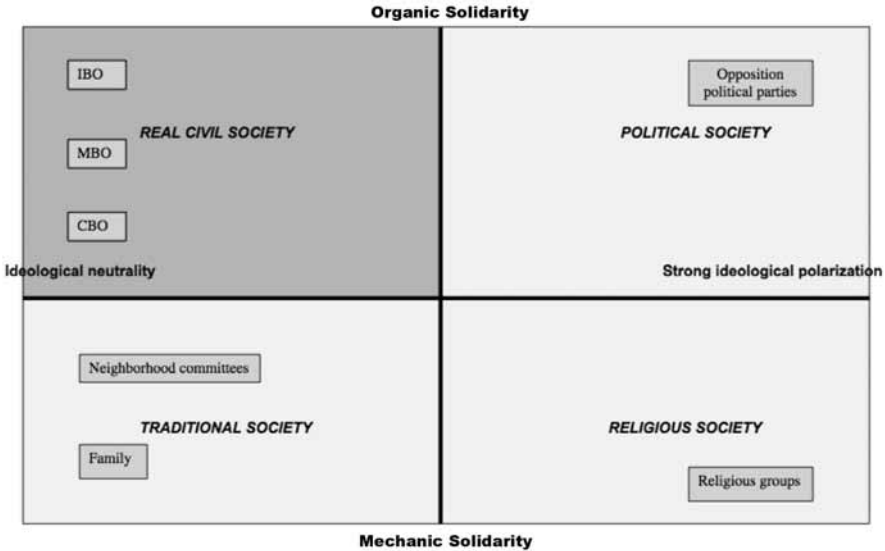
Figure 1: Civil society and societal divisions

Ukrainian Orange Revolution, the movement worked under the slogan *Pora* ("It's Time"); in Kyrgyzstan, the youth group's name *Kel-Kel* means "renaissance"; in Belarus, opposition forces launched a protest campaign under the motto *Hopits* ("enough"). On the one hand, these names largely reflect the "sense of urgency"[61] and the necessity to break with old politicians' practices and corruption. On the other hand, they do not promote an alternative conception of society. They insist on the need of change but they remain "evasive about where the crux of the old regime's unacceptability lies and about the precise objective of change."[62]

Revolution can be defined in two ways: 1) a rapid and often violent change of discredited political authorities, 2) an attempt to seize the state apparatus to implement wide-ranging social and political changes. Colour revolutions however do not correspond to any of these characteristics: in depolarizing politics and atomizing the social sphere, the civil society formula would have only contributed to "sterilize" political contention[63] and to develop standardized contentious actions.

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61   Charles H. Fairbanks, Revolution reconsidered. In: Journal of Democracy, 18 (2007) 1, pp. 42–57, here 53.
62   Ibid.
63   See Rob Jenkins, Mistaking 'Governance' for 'Politics': Foreign Aid, Democracy, and the construction of civil society. In: Sudipta Kaviraj/Khilnani Sunil, (eds.), Civil Society: History and possibilities, Cambridge 2001.

IV. Colour revolutions: from antipolitics to apolitics

Colour revolutions embody an explosive paradox. Their apparent success (former leaders were all made to retreat from power) seems in opposition to the depolarization of contentious action furthered by the diffusion and the implementation of the civil society formula. In Eastern Europe, the term "civil society" arose out of the failure of the Prague spring and the loss of faith that the overthrow of the regime could occur. Drawing from this disillusion, the idea emerged that instead of trying to change the state, it was important to change the relationship between state and society by creating self-organized institutions, independent of the state but aiming to challenge the reach of the state.[64]

The idea of "antipolitics", developed by Konrad in 1984, aimed to provide an alternative to the over-politicization of life under communism in which the omnipresence of the Soviet power in the public sphere had resulted in the general distrust of politics.[65] According to Konrad and Havel, civil society must operate within the boundaries of the existing system rather than attempt to usurp it.[66] But this principle has not been designed as a way to legitimize passivity. Civil society was conceived as something inherently positive comprising a normative, rather than simply an empirical or descriptive, meaning.[67] The core revolution the principle of "antipolitics" intended to encapsulate was that of individual consciousness: an "existential revolution."[68]

As I argued earlier, civil societies have been rather designed as technical instruments than defined by ethical positions. From the Central-European dissent movements in the 1980s to the recent diffusion of the bottom-up approaches of development and democratization, civil society – both as norm and instrument – has shifted from *antipolitics* to an apolitical posture. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, political dissent has largely been expressed in ideological terms and focused on the possible forms of political change after the end of communism. In colour revolutions, which were focused on the questions of corruption and electoral fraud, the question became a more technical one: how to improve self-rule and achieve good governance in a country? In equating civil

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64 Adam Michnik, The New Evolutionism. In: Letters from Prison and Other Essays, California 1985.

65 George Konrad, Antipolitics, New York 1984.

66 "Antipolitics and government work in two different dimensions, two separate spheres. Antipolitics neither supports nor opposes the government; it is something different. Its people are fine right where they are; they form a network that keeps watch on political power, exerting pressure on the basis of their cultural and moral stature alone ... That is their right and their obligation, but above all it is their self-defense" (Konrad, Antipolitics, p. 231).

67 See Tessa Brannan, From 'antipolitics' to 'anti-politics': What became of East European 'civil society'? Working Paper Series, Development Studies Institute, No. 03–41, 2003.

68 See Vaclav Havel, The Power of the Powerless. In: Idem (ed.), The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe, London 1985, p. 92.

society support with the strengthening of non-governmental sectors, external donors have progressively disconnected the notion of civil society from the whole revolutionary tradition based and "unconstitutional and often violent paths to power."[69] Elaborating on Fairbanks, one can argue that external donors "concentrate[d] [...] on building a decent, non-ideological 'civil society' [...] in which men could live more freely"[70] without using any violent or unconstitutional ways. Thus, civil societies would be incompatible with any revolutionary movement. Besides, the word "revolution" has rarely been used as such by local democracy activists. From the Georgian "rose revolution" to the Burmese "saffron revolution", it was applied either by friendly foreign analysts or journalists, or conservative forces intending to discredit the emerging movements.

Revolutionary processes have been traditionally analyzed as domestic movements bringing down the old political order and arguing for a quick (and violent) change of the dominant group to the benefit of the whole community. Although one cannot presume that there is an unchanging formula that would guaranty the success of such revolutions,[71] all colour revolutions seem relatively analogous, as far as their conditions and their characteristics are concerned. First, they have usually occurred in relatively similar political contexts whether called soft autocracies, competitive-authoritarian regimes or partial democracies.[72] Contrary to other authoritarian countries such as Belarus or Uzbekistan, Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan have been characterized by partial forms of democratic procedures and by their comparatively strong civil societies. In the Caucasus region, Georgia had much more CSOs than its neighboring countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan).[73] In the early 1990s, because of its mountainous landscape and protection afforded to the press and freedom of association, Kyrgyzstan had been called "the Switzerland of Central Asia", where, according to USAID's *NGO sustainability index*, since the early 1990s the NGO sector has steadily expanded in the society. Second, in each case, "revolutionary" movements did not intend to implement a fundamental change of the rules of the political game. They rather criticized electoral fraud and corruption and aimed to "defend the existing, democratic constitution."[74] A third common feature of these revolutions is the importance of external and notably American commitment in these political changes. According to Bunce and Wolchik, "there is clear evidence that there was substantial U.S. involvement in all the successful cases, both in the longer-term, such as investments in civil society, and in the short-term, such as pressing incumbents to reform the electoral process and election commissions and for improvements in the quality of campaigns, voter registra-

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69 Fairbanks, Revolution reconsidered, p. 46.
70 Ibid., p. 49.
71 Bunce/Wolchik, Bringing Down Dictators, p. 12.
72 McFaul, Transitions from Postcommunism, p. 5.
73 USAID, The NGO sustainability index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, Office of Democracy, Governance and Social Transition, Washington D.C. 2005.

tion and voter lists and the actual conduct of the elections."[75] Finally, these revolutionary movements involved quite similar actors and strategies. According to Kuzio, CSO, NGO, students' organizations, young people and young women participated more in revolutions "because they have less to lose"[76] than other actors whose careers or families could be threatened if they had joined the revolutionary movement.

The isolation of civil societies tends to be both a weakness and a strength. The weak social integration of the NGO sector diminishes its capacity to mobilize large social movements but, at the same time, the seclusion of civil societies would favor a greater engagement of their members who fear less about their personal situation. However, this could be true if the NGO sphere had not become a profitable sector in itself. Abramson highlights the contradiction in the fact that someone could be making a relatively high salary and receiving benefits while working for a nonprofit organization.[77] The more the country is closed and the number of jobs in foreign companies is limited, the more careers in NGOs are comparatively retributive. Contrary to what Kuzio argued, NGO workers and democratization experts are not necessarily and inherently more keen to join revolutionary movements than other people.

V. The survival of civil society: Transnationalizing contentious politics

According to Goldstone, "contentious collective action emerges through the mobilization of individuals and groups to pursue certain goals, the framing of purposes and tactics, and taking advantages of the opportunities for protest arising from shifts in the grievances, power, and vulnerability of various social actors. But the *form* and *outcome* of that action is not determined by the conditions of movement emergence."[78] Consequently, understanding the dynamics of

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74   McFaul, Transitions from Postcommunism, p. 6.
75   Bunce/Wolchik, Bringing Down Dictators, p. 15.
76   Kuzio, Civil society, p. 366. For more information about the strategies and the different actors involved in "colour revolutions", see among others: Eric Miller, Smelling the roses. Eduard Shevardnadze's end and Georgia's future. In: Problems of Post-Communism, 51 (2004) 2, pp. 12–21; Anders Aslund/Michael McFaul (eds.), Revolution in Orange, Washington D.C. 2006; Charles H. Fairbanks, Georgia's Rose Revolution. In: Journal of Democracy, 15 (2004) 2, pp. 110–124; Damjan Krnjevic-Miskovic, Serbia's prudent revolution. In: Journal of Democracy, 12 (2001) 3, pp. 96–110; Florian Bieber, The Serbian Transition and Civil Society: Roots of the Delayed Transition in Serbia. In: International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society, 17 (2003) 1, pp. 73–90; Marija Kleut, Slobodanka Markov, Women in the Popular Movement Resistance ('Otpor') in Novi Sad 2000. In: Gender Studies, April 2005, pp. 162–170.
77   See Abramson, A Critical Look at NGOs.
78   See Jack A. Goldstone, Social Movements or Revolutions? On the Evolution and Outcomes of Collective Action. In: Marco G. Giugni/Doug McAdam/Charles Tilly (eds.), From contention to democracy, Lanham 1998, p. 143.

the colour revolutions requires confronting the two variables Goldstone identifies as key elements of contentious action: the valuation of the protest movement by society and the type of State response to contentious actions. The former corresponds to the "cultural valuation"[79] that individuals and groups throughout society place on the protest movement. The latter refers to the nature of state's actions related to the protest movement. When the State fights mobilization only through legal means and the protest movement takes place in a supportive environment, social contentious actions are likely to take the shape of conventional advocacy movements. When the State uses arbitrary repression to cut down the protest, and if the social valuation of contentious action is rather negative, movements are likely to disappear or stay underground. Table 2 tries to sum up the different forms protest movements can take, according to these two variables.

Table 2: Forms, sequences and outcomes of contentious action

Intensity of *top-down* measures	Legalistic	Weak/Inconsistent Repression	Strong/Consistent Repression
Supportive	*Protest cycle (advocacy)*	*Revolutionary process*	*Unstable authoritarian State*
Narrowly Supportive	*Autonomy/Civil rights movement*	*Regional revolt, violent religious or ethnic conflicts*	*Unstable State with nationalist, religious or ethnic tensions*
Not Supportive	*Isolated social movements*	*Guerrilla or Terrorist groups*	*Extinguished or underground movement*

The left axis is labelled "Intensity of *bottom-up* measures". The first column header reads "State response / Valuation of Protest Movement by Society".

Source: Inspired by Goldstone, Social Movements or Revolutions? The graphic elaboration Goldstone made on the relation between the social valuation of protest movement and the State response remained a descriptive one. We extended his analysis by incorporating dynamic components such as the impacts of top-down and bottom-up external actions.

The preceding sections argued that international democracy promotion actions have tended to focus progressively on realizing civil societies. However, top-down mechanisms have not totally disappeared from the donors' portfolio. Although some funding agencies, private foundations and NGOs have been more likely to adopt the civil society formula, political authorities and high-rank diplomatic actors remain focused on political dialogue and keen to use political conditionality mechanisms and top-down sanctions as means of democracy promotion. Efficacy and actual outcomes of diplomatic sanctions have remained

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79   Ibid., p. 140.

highly debated issues in the academic and diplomatic spheres. Nevertheless, the more they are universally adopted and well designed, the more they are likely to play a role in the shaping of state responses toward popular protests. As we argued earlier, civil society support programs have largely been planned as "building NGO sectors from scratch."[80] However, it doesn't mean that external actors are inherently incapable of playing a role on the social valuation of protest movements in foreign countries.[81] As soon as international donors decide to craft civil society programs accordingly to local social configurations and political movements, international democracy promotion initiatives would be likely to counterbalance the short-term focus of most aid and support positive valuations of protest movements by societies.[82] Drawing from these considerations, Table 2 incorporates both bottom-up and top-down strategies as critical factors for the forms and outcomes of contentious action.

Colour revolutions' processes can then be apprehended through successive and particular combinations of top-down and bottom-up measures. In Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, top-down sanctions remained of high concern for ruling leaders. These countries' multi-vector foreign policies aimed at balancing U.S. and Russian influences by maintaining good relations with Western multilateral organizations and influential powers (NATO, USA, European Union). This meant that Shevardnadze, Akayev and Kuchma could not ignore Western pressure to accept foreign election monitoring missions and open up the political sphere. If colour revolutions would certainly not have taken place without electoral processes, external pressure contributed to limiting the extent of State electoral manipulation and repression toward local activists. Referring to our last model, one can say that top-down foreign initiatives partly prevented local authorities from implementing strong and consistent repression towards democratic forces.

External civil society support faces a paradox: the characteristics of local labor unions, political parties or religious groups that are locally critical to civil society are at the same time in opposition with basic values of the Western assistance. The fact that the most important forces of civil society are not generally part of programs labeled as civil society support has contributed to the depolarization of political dissent nationwide. Both the sociological and ideological disconnection of civil societies from existing social networks has also played a role in the perception shared by local populations, policy analysts and political leaders that democratic movements are highly influenced by Western interests and powers. They assume that the NGO sector and democracy activists are closer to the Western countries in their approach than to local issues. However, civil societies cannot be limited to export products. They do produce specific effects,

80 Cf. Olivier Roy, The predicament of 'civil society' in Central Asia and the 'Greater Middle East'. In: International Affairs, 81 (May 2005), pp. 1001–1012.
81 Cf. Sarah E. Mendelson, The Seven Ingredients. When Democracy Promotion Works. In: Harvard International Review, No. 20, Summer 2004, pp. 87–88.
82 Carothers, Aiding Democracy abroad, p. 227.

which have not been necessarily anticipated by international donors. So that colour revolutions reflect probably less the success of the civil society formula than the capacities of forces and actors to adapt it, exploit it or express themselves through it. The ousting of President Akayev during Kyrgyzstan's "tulip revolution" is much more linked with preexisting ethnic issues and ties between informal youth groups to influential political and business elites than the direct result of NGO advocacy actions. According to Khamidov, "that the youth were instrumental during protests is clear. [...] Kyrgyzstan's Tulip revolution resulted more from poorly coordinated events by an improvised alliance of powerful and informal local elites than from well-planned and well-executed protests by a cohesive opposition alliance. Because of disunity among the opposition groups and the weaknesses of formal institutions, influential political leaders and business elites chose to work with and channel resources for protests through their informal patronage and local networks rather than through formal youth organizations."[83] During protests held in Bishkek in November 2006 aimed at compelling the new Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev to implement constitutional changes, Khamidov also states that "the majority of protesters were tied to influential leaders of the opposition through influential kinship or localism ties."[84] The "tulip revolution" was then less a global democratic movement than the replacement of a northern elite by more provincial ruling groups[85] from Southern Kyrgyzstan, which Justin Burke calls "the greenhouse of the revolution."[86] In Ukraine's "orange revolution", the cleavage between democratic forces and conservative former elites seems less critical to the emergence of protest movement than the divide between a pro-European western elite and the pro-Russian eastern regions. The most critical element of these movements was their capacity to use civil society and the rhetoric of democracy to their own end. Conversely, the success of the civil society formula provided them with a favorable political opportunity structure, which can be easily used to increase mobilization and raise capacities for collective action. Soon after the demonstrations, which took place in Rangoon in September 2007, foreign commentators labeled the monks' uprising as the "saffron revolution". However, Buddhist monks had never benefited from foreign assistance, whether it be financial or "educational". According to Burmese democracy activists exiled in Thailand and local NGOs, civil society support played a very limited role in the democratic protest, which had been largely a surprise for international donors involved in Burma-

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83   See Alisher Khamidov, Kyrgyzstan's Revolutionary Youth: Between State and Opposition. In: SAIS Review, 26 (2006) 2, pp. 85–93.

84   Alisher Khamidov, Kyrgyzstan's Unfinished Revolution. In: China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, 4 (2006) 4, pp. 39–43, here 39.

85   Cf. Elina Karakoulova, Multiethnicity in Kyrgyzstan's multicoloured revolution, Master of Arts in Nationalism studies, Central European University, Budapest 2006.

86   Justin Burke, Kyrgyzstan's revolution: be careful what you wish for, A EurasiaNet Commentary, March 2005. Available at: http://www.eurasianet.org.

related activities.[87] Similarly, Beissinger stresses, "the spread of democratic revolution to the post-Soviet states was not predicted by most analysts."[88]

Traditional revolutionary practices remain mainly domestic but colour revolutions exist only in relation with each other. According to Beissinger, the power of example has allowed "some groups that might be less structurally advantaged to engage in successful action by riding the influence of the prior example to others."[89] Despite different levels of Internet usage among countries and among regions of the same country, the significance and potential of this electronic medium has became a critical resource for the diffusion of successful scenarios and methods. The worldwide diffusion of Gene Sharp's books presenting non-violent tactics of regime change, of videogames explaining how to bring down a dictator and of individual *blogs* aiming to promote experience sharing among activists contribute to shifting the foundations of democratic movements from a domestic basis into a transnational virtual sphere.[90] However, contrary to Claire Wilkinson who considers colour revolutions as a "revenge of the clones",[91] they were less standardized reproductions than local factors of contention expressed in more global and "democratic" terms. Social movements in colour revolutions are closed to the metaphor Deleuze elaborates on surf: a surfer does not surf as if he was at the origin of an effort but part of a movement: "All the new sports – surfing, windsurfing... – aim at fitting into a wave, which already exists. How to be accepted into the movement of a great wave, an air column, 'going in-between' instead of initiating the movement."[92] Youth and civil movements in colour revolutions have turned from rigid and hierarchical Western-style organizations in favor of new kinds of less structured "rhizomic" transnational movements. Based on the conclusions drawn by Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille plateaux,*[93] one can then conceive colour revolutions as symbols of struggle between a "nomadic war machine" constituted by transnational networks of Civil Society Organizations and youth movements opposed to state apparatuses.

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87 Interviews with NGO leaders, Burmese exiled dissidents and Foreign donors, Bangkok and Chiang Mai, October 2007.

88 Mark R. Beissinger, Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions. In: Perspectives on Politics, (2007) 5, pp. 259–276, here 262.

89 Ibid., p. 263.

90 Besides electronic exchanges among activists, regional centers such as the Belgrade-based Center for Non-violent Resistance provided training to young activists from Belarus (Zubr), Georgia and Ukraine. Kyrgyz Kel-Kel leaders also met Ukrainian Pora activists during electoral monitoring in Kiev and in several forums supported by the Open Society Institutes' network.

91 Claire Wilkinson, Kyrgyzstan: e-revolution, 21 July 2005. Available at: http://www.eurasianet.org.

92 Gilles Deleuze, Pourparlers 1972–1990, Paris 1990, p. 165 (translation made by the author).

93 Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, Mille Plateaux, Paris 1980.

VI. Conclusion: Hybridizing civil society

External promoters of civil society development often conceive civil society as strictly demarcated from uncivil practices (traditional, religious, political ones). Political theories have often seized the world, drawing lines and borders whose values and geographical scales differ according to diverging heuristic systems: politics vs. economics, civility vs. incivility. Limits or boundaries always convey a change of nature: distinguishing a unit from any dissimilar entity amounts to indicating both an end and a beginning. That is why these theories traditionally and exclusively consider relations to otherness as a form of conquest or regulation.

The apparent dead-ends of the bottom-up programs did not make local activists and indigenous contentious dynamics disappear. If civil society development alone did not stimulate any "revolutionary" movement, it channeled its orientation. Colour revolutions are characterized by a subtle balance between local dynamics and international impulses. We argue that civil society programs did not play a significant role in the initial stage of mobilization. There can even have been negative factors in terms of social integration. That is not to say that they were without use. In each of the "colour revolution" cases, the civil society formula did not instigate contentious action but catalyzed preexisting social tensions. Thus, the success of the civil society formula in "colour revolutions" depends less on the intensity with which the NGO sector had been supported than on the ability of local actors to relate previous contentious issues with democratic elements. The diffusion of the civil society paradigm has not only influenced the social expression of dissent. Local tensions, formal or informal groups, have continued through the civil society formula and, at the same time, they conversely give a proper and new meaning to it. Contrary to what it is generally asserted, the civil society formula does not work in weak societies but in those that possess strong social relations, whether they be formal or not. Colour revolutions have not taken place where local social forces were malleable but where they were strong enough to reformulate the terms of the formula, to use them and to surf the transnational wave of dissent.