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Democratisation and Cultural Differences in the Former Soviet Union

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the process of democratization in post-Soviet space (valued primarily through achieved level of civil liberties and political rights) and attempts to answer the question how much was this process determined by cultural and civilization differences, in the way in which Huntington defines them. Considering that the very process of democratization in the former Soviet Union is characterized by the conflict between two civilizational and ideological approaches, where the first one is personified in universalist ideas of liberal (Western Christian) democracy, and second one, the Russian concept of sovereign democracy, the author explains U.S. actions in an attempt to export democracy to the area of the former USSR, as well as Russia's response towards the restraint of so-called "fourth wave of democratization".

Key words: democratization, Samuel P. Huntington, cultural identity, USA, NATO, Russia, human rights, clash of civilizations, the colour revolutions, Freedom House, fourth wave.

Instead of introduction

The creation of the cultural identity of countries and nations in post-Soviet space occurred in parallel with the third wave of democratization, therefore, if we want to understand the processes of democratization in the countries arising

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from the Soviet Union, in order to explain why in some countries this process is successful, while in others stopped or has not even started, it is necessary to integrally observe these two processes which are intertwined and strongly affect each other.

The basic starting hypothesis of this paper is that civilizational differences in the way defined by Samuel P. Huntington, are also the important factor of democratization in post-Soviet space, and that the Orthodox and Islamic civilizations, in contrast to the West, proved as unproductive soil for consolidation of democracy. We should add that even though they pose significant barrier, cultural differences are not decisive limiting factor of democratization in post-Soviet space.

Bearing in mind the given hypothesis, aspirations of this paper are not in finding of a single factor responsible for the success or failure of the consolidation of democracy in post-Soviet space and the eventual emergence of a reverse wave of democratization. We claim that no such individual factor can be regarded as sufficient for explanation of the success or failure of democracy in certain countries, but that democratization in each country is a result of specific combinations of causes. Therefore, the central theme of this paper is the role of cultural (civilizational) identity in the process of democratization in Post-Soviet region, and the impact of strengthened Russia on this process on one side, and the United States, as a “beacon of democracy” on the other.

1. Cultural identity as a factor of democratization in Former Soviet Union

For the needs of this paper, at the very beginning it is necessary to clearly define what we imply under democracy in the modern sense. We must limit the number of definitions which provide us philosophical and historical meaning of the term and remain within the framework of practical or political. Therefore, we use a minimal definition of democracy as a form of governance observed in relation to procedures for the constitution of government, while not ignoring the fact that every form of repression against the opposition and citizens (which may be reflected in the control and censorship of the media and NGOs, fixing elections, persecution and imprisonment of political opponents, restricting and endangering actions of the opposition, threats to physical integrity and human dignity, political opponents, etc.) is irreconcilable with democracy. This bare-boned democracy we define as a institutional arrangement “in which the most powerful ones, share decision-making, elected in a fair, honest and periodically kept elections in which the candidates freely compete for votes and voting rights have almost all adult

citizens.”² Non-democratic regimes on the other hand, can exist in many forms, but primarily come down to authoritarian and totalitarian types. Totalitarian regimes imply the existence of only one party, one leader, the actions of powerful secret service, highly developed ideology that preaches the ideal society, government control of media and communications, as well as most of the social and economic organizations. Authoritarian regimes assume leadership of one person or a small number of people, without a developed ideology and a strong party in which the political pluralism, freedom of expression and media, as well as many other civil liberties are limited.³

“In the post-Cold War world, the most important differences between people are not ideological, political or economic, but cultural”.⁴ In this way, Huntington characterized the state of the new world order, arguing that cultural identity, on the broadest level, represents civilizational identity, which is often determined in relation to others. Basic values, philosophical assumptions, customs, traditions and overall view on life, are significantly different from civilization to civilization, and their basic characteristic in the post-Cold War world is the religion. The civilization and cultural identity is confirmed in the integration processes, which have divided the world between the West, so far the most dominant civilization, and many non-Western civilizations, that are becoming more powerful, which makes the multi-polar and multi-civilizational global politics. Cultural identity, and therefore civilization (according to Huntington, which represents nothing but a pronounced culture), is defined by common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs and institutions, as well as subjective self-identification of people. In simple terms, nations and countries with similar cultures are involved with each other, while the people and countries with different cultures keep apart. In such global political conditions, according to Huntington, all countries, especially emerging ones, the former communist ones, must discover and strengthen their cultural identity, and accurately determine their place in world politics in which we distinguish seven – eight civilizations: Western, Orthodox, Islamic, Latin American, Sinic, Hindu, Buddhist, Japanese and eventually African.⁵

George Kennan has already claimed that cultures can be seen as one of the most important factors of democratization, that is that the largest global civilizations are so different in their beliefs, values and principles, that some are

² Samjuel P. Hantington, *Treći talas*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2004, p. 15.

³ Ibid, p. 19.

⁴ Samjuel P. Hantington, *Sukob civilizacija i preoblikovanje svetskog poretka*, Cid, Podgorica, 2000, p. 21.

⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

incompatible with the principles of a democracy, while others favour the development of democracy. Huntington states Kennan's ideas and adds that the thesis that the culture is a factor of democratization occurs in two possible versions.⁶ First one, according to which Western culture is only suitable for the development of democratic institutions and the second, which assumes that one or more cultures represent particularly undue environment for the consolidation of democracy. Some deeply anti-democratic cultures are restraining the spread of democratic norms in society and argue the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Bearing in mind that modern democracy arose in Western Europe, that most democratic countries are in Western civilization, and that those outside the boundaries of Western civilizations democracy are most common in former British colonies, we claim that a significant number of compelling evidence are in favour of this thesis.

The thesis of Western culture as the most favourable for democratic form of government has direct implications on the democratization process on post-Soviet space. With the collapse of communism and Marxist-Leninist ideology, which was a primary centripetal and stabilizing force in USSR, strong identity crisis in this region occurs. Valid social norms, value system and the basic principles of the previous society, and even the social structure are discarded, and the long-term sources of identity and authority of the system are destroyed. The gap between state and society, which originated in the collapse of the communist system, has created the need for rapid discovery of new sources of identity, new forms of stable community, and moral regulation. The sense of meaning and purpose that was provided by the ideology, is replaced by cultural identification which is primarily determined by religion. Only religion was able to quickly and adequately meet the needs of citizens, to give them direction and a sense of belonging to a particular community (which is different and better than others), to provide them with direction and find meaning in the collapse of the state and society, as well as to clearly separate them from others, and strengthen their cultural identity.

In the post-Soviet space, which includes the former USSR with its boundaries it had continuously since the World War II until 1992, new civilizational boundaries emerged, which inclined Catholic and Protestant people towards Western civilization, separating them from the Orthodox and Islamic people. The desire of the Baltic countries to confirm their Western identity and civilizational distance themselves from Moscow, actually caused their hatred and discrimination against the Russian minority, and their identification with Western civilization. On the other hand, the passionate

⁶ Samjuel P. Hantington , *Treći talas*, loc.cit., p. 282.

desire of the Russian people for identity, self-assertion and the sense of superiority, caused the revival of the Orthodox Church, which was the only link with the imperial Russia and thousand years of history. If we add to this that the Islamic nations of Central Asia tended to assert their religious identity, which has been disputed for decades to them in post-Soviet space, we find the borders of the fifteen countries that are in most cases inadequate in terms of the existing civilizational divisions. The existence of civilizationaly inappropriate borders or state borders that were not drawn so that they match cultural boundaries, pose a potential threat to peace and the consolidation of democracy.⁷

Many will agree that Huntington was right when he predicted that the eastern border of Western civilization will divide areas in which democracy will consolidate from those in which will not. This boundary line descends to the south by borders of Finland and Russia, the eastern borders of the Baltic republics, crosses Belarus, Ukraine and Romania and goes to Serbia, separating its central part from Vojvodina.⁸ Baltic countries in Post-Soviet space, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that are located on the western side of the border, according to Huntington, belong to Western civilization with a strong Western orientation, belonging to the Protestant-Catholic group of nations and are members of the European Union and NATO. Their democratization has flowed in relatively stable orbit, and membership in NATO and EU is for now an isolated case in the entire post-Soviet space. In XVI century, during the Reformation, most of the Estonians and Latvians moved to Protestantism with ethnic Germans, while Lithuanians in the highest percentage remained loyal to Catholicism.⁹ Today, the main obstacles to full democratization of these countries alleges to the Russian minority status, to which is in substantial part, denied the right to language and citizenship. The Constitution of Estonia does not provide special representation of minorities, and as important data, only 80% of the population has the citizenship of Estonia while as many as 12.4% have no nationality, and 6.3% are citizens of Russia.¹⁰

Despite the fact that discrimination against minorities in Estonia is implemented in all elements of the electoral system, the organization *Freedom House* has awarded the highest average rating (1) to the Baltic countries of Post-Soviet Region in 2007, which has introduced them into the line of free

⁷ Samjuel P. Hantington, *Sukob civilizacija i preoblikovanje svetskog poretka*, op. cit., p. 154.

⁸ Ibid., p. 117.

⁹ Dragan Petrović, *Geopolitika postsovjetskog prostora*, Prometej, Novi Sad i Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2008. p. 19.

¹⁰ Milan Jovanović, *Izborni sistemi postkomunističkih država*, Službeni glasnik SCG, Fakultet političkih nauka, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2004, p. 303.

states.¹¹ Each year this organization gives a numerical value of the states, by analyzing the level of democratization in two categories: political rights and civil liberties, on a scale of one to seven (from 1 to 2.5 – free states, 3 to 5 – partly free, and from 5.5 to 7 – not free). The same organization considers as a *free country*, the one in which there is an equal political competition, the prevailing climate of respect for civil liberties, a developed and an independent judiciary, civil society and independent media. *Partly free countries* are those in which a respect for political rights and civil liberties is limited, with widespread corruption, a weak rule of law, often characterized by the existence of ethnic and religious conflicts, and where usually one party dominates the political scene, despite a certain degree of pluralism. On the other hand, *not free countries* are totalitarian autocratic entities in which there is no respect for basic political rights, and basic civil liberties are systematically violated.¹²

In the latest report by Freedom House of 2012, none of the of the former Soviet countries which belong to the Islamic civilization did not receive a passing grade, i.e. status of a free country. Among the countries with the least democratic potential, as the most authoritative, dictatorial regimes in the Post-Soviet space, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were emphasized. These two countries were given the worst rating (7), in terms of both political rights and civil liberties. According to the report of Freedom House, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan represent dictatorships which have their roots in the Soviet period.¹³ Uzbekistan in particular became known to the general public as dictatorial and oppressive regime after the massacre in Andijan in 2005, when security forces brutally killed between 300 and 500 civilians, which was followed by the months of arrests and other forms of political persecution of citizens.¹⁴ Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan with grade 5.5 are still listed as not free countries, while Kyrgyzstan only received a passing grade 5, which puts it in the group of partly free countries.¹⁵ On the other hand, the same report listed Russia in the group of not free countries of the Orthodox civilizations, with a score of 5.5, as well as Belarus, as still the least free country in Europe, whose regime was rated 6.5. The remaining countries of the Orthodox

¹¹ Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash – Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Farnham, 2009, p. 29.

¹² *Freedom in the World 2012: The Arab Uprising and Their Global Repercussions*, Freedom House, 2012, Internet: www.freedomhouse.org, 22/1/2012, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Preliminary Findings on Events in Andijan, Uzbekistan, 13 May 2005*, OSCE, ODIHR, Internet: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/15653>, 1/2/2012, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Freedom House*, Internet: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/regions/central-and-eastern-europeeurasia>, 10/2/2012.

civilization, Ukraine (3.5), Georgia (3.5), Armenia (3.1) and Moldova (3) are also classified as only partly free countries.¹⁶

Table 1. Freedom House indicators, average (former Soviet countries, 1991-2007)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Armenia	5	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4.5	4.5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Azerbaijan	5	5	6	6	6	5.5	5	5	5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Belarus	4	3.5	4.5	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
Estonia	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1	1	1
Georgia	5.5	4.5	5	5	4.5	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	4	3.5	3	3	3
Kazakhstan	4.5	5	5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5	3	4	3.5	4	4	4	5	5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Latvia	2.5	3	3	2.5	2	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1	1
Lithuania	2.5	2.5	2	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	1	1	1
Moldova	4.5	5	5	4	4	3.5	3.5	3	3	3	3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Russia	3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4.5	5	5	5	5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Tajikistan	3	6	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Turkmenistan	5.5	6.5	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Ukraine	3	3	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	4	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Uzbekistan	5.5	6	7	7	7	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	7	7	7

Source: Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash - Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Farnham, 2009, p. 218.

If we value the process of democratization on the basis of the achieved level of civil liberties and political rights in a country, Huntington’s thesis according to which democratization and development in the societies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are shaped by their civilizational identity, can hardly be argued. “Those (the society, author’s note) with the legacy of Western Christianity reach towards advancing economic development and democracy, the prospects for economic and political development in the group of Orthodox countries are uncertain, the prospects in the group of Muslim republics are bleak.”¹⁷ However, we believe that although the development of democracy in the post-Soviet space is shaped by civilizational identity, it is not determined. What is the range of cultural obstacles to democratization, i.e. what is the impact of culture on the democratization of the post-Soviet space, cannot be clearly quantified, nor is it possible to prove the hypothesis according to which Islam and Orthodox Christianity are incompatible with democracy.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Samjuel P. Hantington, *Sukob civilizacija i preoblikovanje svetskog poretka*, loc. cit., p. 29.

2. United States of America and the export of democracy to the Former Soviet Union

Sudden change in the world with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the transition from bipolar to a unipolar world order, imposed new challenges and responsibilities onto the United States as the only world power and global “beacon of democracy”. The cultural identity of the U.S. as one of the leading countries of Western civilization, is closely tied to the principles of liberal capitalism and democratic freedoms, thus this wave of democratization is inseparable from the U.S. national interest. This is why the U.S. was not a mere witness of the third wave of democratization, but has used various means of action, in order to promote, and even impose democracy, all through the advocacy of human rights.

In foreign policy of the United States, human rights were not important determinant until the early 1970s. At that time the report of the Subcommittee on International Organisations and Movements of the U.S. Congress, expressed the need for promotion of human rights and proposed it to be one of the main goals of U.S. foreign policy.¹⁸ Even during the Carter administration, human rights have become one of the basic factors in U.S. foreign policy. It was followed by the suspension of economic assistance to several countries, adoption of numerous laws that allowed conditioning of help for those countries that violate human rights, and introduction of economic sanctions. The Reagan administration went a step further, selectively interpreting this foreign policy goal as an excuse for the destruction of the communist regimes. The decade that followed was marked by Reagan Doctrine, which obliged the U.S. support to anti-communist rebels who were trying to overthrow regimes supported by the Soviet Union. Huntington says: “Support of President Reagan to ‘Project Democracy’ in the first year of his reign, his speech in the Parliament in 1984, his message to the Congress in March 1986 and the activities of American diplomats in many countries helped the democratization to remain in the focus in international affairs during the 1980s, and to strengthen the overall global environment inclined to democracy.”¹⁹

Collective unconscious of the American people has been deeply defined by Western Christianity, Judeo-Christian heritage and Protestantism, and thus its missionary work represents a significant part. The very beginning of the United States is tied to freedom of religion and the human rights and individual freedom for the American people are the basic determinant of democracy, and therefore the process of democratization. American public was concerned about

¹⁸ Samjuel P. Hantington, *Treći talas*, loc.cit., p. 95.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

the fate of democracy in the world, because it is concerned about the freedom, as the highest civilizational value. Therefore, Washington believes that people of other civilizations should devote themselves to Western values of democracy, free market, limiting government, human rights, rule of law and culture of individualism. These are universal values for the creators of American foreign policy, seeking to export to other civilization. We may say that global democratization of governing from Washington represents a specific form of political missionary. Walter Mondale, U.S. Vice President under President Carter, criticizing the neoconservatives who directed the U.S. foreign policy during the administration of G. Bush Sr., and then G. W. Bush, states: "We have also often had the opportunity to hear phrases like 'you're either with us or against us' or 'good vs. evil'. They wanted to destroy evil, and similar arguments had often carried in religious connotations. If you would criticize them, or you would not agree with their conclusions, you could often stand as accused for the lack of clear moral principles."²⁰ Quite often has this universality of the United States sounded like imperialism.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as if the assumptions and hopes of ideologists of the global democratic revolution came true. Washington believed that throughout the World the idea of human rights will soon prevail and thus democratic governments in a Western form shall be installed. Driven by the enthusiasm of victory, the United States had, as a primary goal of its foreign policy, set expansion of democracy. The Clinton administration has even officially announced the expansion of democracy as the pillar of U.S. foreign policy, by tying their national interests for the future of the world democracy.²¹ In 1990 Huntington wrote: "the future of freedom, stability, peace and the United States to some extent depends on the future of democracy".²²

Export of democracy to the former Soviet Union has not proceeded as smoothly as expected. Democratization in the former communist countries includes the replacement of the basic roles of the state. It is not enough to create an efficient government, the success of democracy depends on how the government perceives itself, but also how its citizens and the international community feel about it. In the Soviet Union, as well as in other communist countries, there was expressed belief in the omnipotence and omnipresence of secret police, a culture of secrecy and mystification of power included the emphasis on authority, at the expense of individual freedom and loyalty, all at

²⁰ Jevgenij Primakov, *Svet bez Rusije?*, Službeni Glasnik, Beograd, 2010. p. 23.

²¹ Glenn Hastedt, *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, Facts On File, Inc., New York, 2004. p. 122.

²² Samjuel P. Hantington, *Treći talas*, loc.cit., p. 36.

the expense of the rule of law. Democratization is required to create conditions that favoured the development of previously non-existent civil society.

The active role of the United States as an external factor in the process of democratization and the creation of civil society in the former Soviet Union was reflected in three important factors: the policy of conditionality, the integration into international organizations and regional trends of democratization.

3.1. Policy of conditioning

Policy of conditioning is reduced to political, economic, moral and cultural activities, of one or more countries in relation to that country in which the regime is wanted to be democratized. A basic tool of the policy of conditioning is reward and punishment, or threat of punishment. If an authoritarian regime starts to act in the direction of liberalization and democratization, countries interested in creating changes create stronger diplomatic ties, provide economic assistance and loans, enter into bilateral trade arrangements, liberalize customs and non-tariff barriers etc. On the other side, if the authoritarian regime make steps toward further isolation or stays on the line of denial of political rights and civil liberties, the interested nations confront this regime through diplomatic channels, through activities in international organizations, the denial of economic aid, political and economic isolation and sanctions, as well as the provision of logistical support and by providing material resources to opposition groups.

At the post-Soviet space sanctions were used as well as the rewards, as a form of policy of conditioning of the United States and the European Union. Although the European Union refrained itself from imposing sanctions, and its policy of conditioning was limited mainly to the possibility of reward, the United States had frequently used sanctions and other forms of punishment. In 1994, Clinton introduced the term “rogue state”, which were later connected to “failed states” as entities that the United States must help, but also must be protected from.²³ Unfortunately the U.S. has often selectively applied the classification and punishment of these “failed states”, and after the aforementioned massacre in Uzbekistan in 2005, failed to punish regime of Islam Karimov. The British Ambassador to Tashkent Craig Murray, claimed in 2002 that the security forces of Uzbekistan cooked alive two members of Islamic movement Hizb ut-Tahrir and brutally tortured prisoners, in cooperation with agents of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).²⁴ In addition to these charges, while still

²³ Naom Chomsky, *Failed States*, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2006., p. 107.

²⁴ Craig Murray, *Joint Enterprise on Torture*, Internet: <http://www.craigmurray.org.uk/26,15/1/2012>.

Ambassador in Tashkent, Murray, in 2002 and 2003, in an official dispatch to London, said: “The U.S. conceal the real situation of human rights in Uzbekistan ... Viewed from Tashkent, U.S. policy is not focused much on democracy and freedom. This is because of oil, gas and hegemony. In Uzbekistan, the United States seeks these goals, by helping the ruthless dictatorship.”²⁵ In a strictly confidential letter to London of 18 March 2003, Murray wrote: “Last year the U.S. gave half a billion dollars of help to Uzbekistan, out of which a quarter was intended for military purposes. Bush and Powell have repeatedly extolled Karimov as a friend and ally. This regime has at least seven thousand prisoners on its conscience: it is a one-party state where no freedom of speech exists, nor free press, freedom of movement, right of assembly, nor the right to free exercise of religion.”²⁶ The situation is similar with U.S. policy in relation to Azerbaijan, through whose territory pipeline “Nabucco”, on which Washington insists, has to cross, as well as Turkmenistan, for which *Human Rights Watch* claims to be one of the most repressive regimes in the world.²⁷

3.2. Policy of integration

As the second most important international factor of the democratization of post-Soviet space, policy of integration is pointed out. It can be argued that this policy is extended hand of policy of conditioning, as it includes certain economic and political benefits that follow the democratization of the state and membership in international organizations. Thus, the possibility of joining the European Union for the Eastern European countries of the former Soviet Union, represented the most significant motive for the implementation of broad social and political reforms. International institutions like the European Union, NATO, the Council of Europe, the World Trade Organization and others, have imposed to these countries strict requirements of harmonization of its politics with their basic principles, which coincide with the values of liberal democracy. In this way, the promotion of democracy got its institutional forms, which have, by the claims of many scientists, directly contributed to the reform of the former communist societies and their economies.²⁸ Perceived benefits of membership in these organizations exceeded all other alternative forms of political existence in a given area that borders with Western civilization. This particularly refers to membership in the European Union and the World Trade Organization, for

²⁵ Naom Chomsky, *Failed States*, loc.cit. p. 141.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash – Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, loc. cit., p. 15.

which was thought that shall directly affect the increase in real income of citizens and improvement of the economy.

The U.S. role in this process was reflected primarily in the expansion of NATO into post-Soviet space, but also in the strong influence in determining international economic and financial organizations like the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank etc. In contemporary literature, is often stated that NATO has never been solely a military organization which dealt with issues of defence and security, but it was a political coalition, led by the United States, whose work is based on common ideological postulates.²⁹ In 1999, at the NATO summit in Washington, it was concluded that “the common democratic values, human rights and rule of law are the foundation of the Alliance” and the expansion of democracy was listed as one of its basic tasks.³⁰ The membership in this organization shall be permitted only to those countries that advocate the basic values of liberal democracy. All NATO members are secular democratic states, with a multiparty system, and officially liberal democratic system.

The Baltic countries of the former USSR, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became members of NATO in 2004. It is no coincidence that the NATO summit of 2006 was held exactly in Riga, where the strategic document was adopted which states that the main threats to NATO members in the coming years are: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed states, regional crises, misuse of new technologies and disruptions in the supply of basic resources.³¹ By this the U.S. has, in public discourse of one of the most important international organizations of predominantly Western civilization, crammed, among other things, the notion of failed states. At the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, the United States had withdrew the proposal to include Ukraine and Georgia closer in NATO. This proposal was rejected primarily because of disagreements between Germany and France, which were aware of the fact that Russia cannot see NATO strategically as a friendly force. That same year, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the Baltic states instilled a new life to NATO and that thanks to the energy acquired from new members, NATO began to participate in military operations far beyond its original sphere of responsibility. According to her, NATO needs to continue to increase the number of its members.³² Yevgeny Primakov points out that the

²⁹ Dragan Petrović, *Integracioni procesi na postsovjetskom prostoru*, Pešić i sinovi, Beograd, 2010, p. 190.

³⁰ Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash - Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, loc. cit., p. 154.

³¹ Ibid. 191.

³² Jevgenij Primakov, *Svet bez Rusije?*, loc. cit., p. 109.

NATO expansion process is designed predominantly to make Russia more indulgent, and that the U.S. did not include the extremely negative attitude of Russia towards admission of former Soviet republics into NATO. He adds: "We did not have a written agreement with the United States on this issue. However, when I was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, several times I spoke to Madeleine Albright and Strobe Talbott and his other American colleagues, that the admission of former Soviet republics into NATO represents for us 'crossing the red line'. In response I heard that there are no grounds to believe that this will happen in the near future. And it has happened."³³

A referendum was held in Georgia where the majority of citizens voted to join NATO. It should be noted that the referendum was conducted at the time of strained relations between Russia and Georgia. Although the Georgian regime hoped that membership in NATO shall provide military support in case of further escalation of conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia continues to remain outside the organization. On the other hand, Ukraine has, in 2008, with support from the U.S., while "orange forces" were still in power, expressed its readiness to join NATO, but this idea is the one where Ukraine's leadership met with considerable opposition in Moscow, as well as from a large number of local people. In Ukraine, about 20% of the total population identify themselves as Russians, while in the whole Ukraine, Russian language is spoken by almost 50% of the population.³⁴ Most of the population of Ukraine does not approve its entry into NATO. Such a scenario would even more intensify unstable political situation in Ukraine, and put on the agenda the question of Russia's Black Sea naval base in Sevastopol. In addition, Russia would give up its military component manufacturing industry in Ukraine, which would have strong economic consequences. Primakov asks: "... whether the United States and NATO are ready, in case of Ukraine admission to NATO and the inevitable escalation of its relation with Russia, to firmly side with Kiev against Moscow, at the risk of returning Russia to the period of confrontation with the West?"³⁵ The State Department's Strategic Plan for the 2007-2012, as one of the major goals of U.S. policy lists the bringing together "the new democracies of the Community of Independent States", with European and North Atlantic structures, through support, encouragement and technical advice.³⁶ It is not necessary to be an expert in international relations to conclude that involvement of Ukraine and other republics of the former USSR

³³ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁴ Dragan Petrović, *Geopolitika postsovjetskog prostora*, loc.cit., p. 40.

³⁵ Jevgenij Primakov, *Svet bez Rusije?*, loc. cit., p. 111.

³⁶ Ibid., 120.

to NATO is unacceptable for Russia. Kremlin does not see democratization, but the broadening of U.S. armed force bases.

In 1997 United States attempted to export democracy into post-Soviet space by the establishment of an international regional organization GUAM, which is named after the first letters of the countries which have established her: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. This organization was supposed to represent an alternative to the CIS integration processes led by Russia, and was briefly joined by Uzbekistan, who later left the alliance. After the political changes in Ukraine in 2010, which brought to power pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovych, Ukraine has distanced itself from the organization, while Moldova and Azerbaijan passived their membership.

3.3. Regional trends of democratization

Huntington vividly explains the snowball effect, which means that knowledge on important political events in the world, often in a region, affects the possibility of nearly simultaneous launch of similar events in the country. Success of democratization in a country encourages the view that democratization represents a solution to domestic problems. In the literature, this effect is also called the diffusion or domino effect and involves a situation in which authoritarian regimes are exposed to significant external pressure of “proliferation of democracy” at the very borders of their country.³⁷ Although science has not managed to reach a conclusion as to how big this snowball can grow and whether it can “skip” some states, as well as whether this phenomenon can be controlled, practice has shown that the overthrow of the communist regime in Poland in 1989, sparked a wave of democratization in Eastern Europe, which significantly influenced the collapse of the Soviet Union. The main advantage of this proliferation of democracy lies in the fact that the techniques and methods of successful termination of authoritarian systems are transferred to other countries, and as their primary carrier NGOs occur. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, United States have financed a significant number of civil society organizations in post-Soviet space, in order to promote human rights, political freedoms, and other universal values. The proliferation of techniques and methods of termination of authoritarian regimes occurred in the so-called “colour revolutions” in the post-Soviet space, from 2003 to 2005.

The colour revolutions are the common name for the events that occurred in Georgia in 2003, in Ukraine in 2004, and in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Perhaps we could also call them flower revolutions, because the events in Georgia were

³⁷ Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash – Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, loc.cit., p. 12.

called the Rose Revolution, Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and in Kyrgyzstan Tulip Revolution. It is arguable how these events can be called revolutions, because the political system after them did not fundamentally changed. What characterizes them is the change of power after elections in which, according to official information, ruling parties or its candidates won, after which the opposition organized mass protests, claiming that the elections were falsified. In this process an important role in the protests and the opposition campaign had a non-governmental organizations funded largely by the United States, with the logistical help of former members of a Serbian organization OTPOR (RESISTANCE), which was a striking fist of the opposition in Serbia in 2000, led by students and youth. Resignation of Shevardnadze in Georgia, the victory of the pro-Western candidate Yushchenko on the re-elections in the Ukraine, as well as Askar Akayev's leaving of the country in Kyrgyzstan, represented a significant success for U.S. policy of demortization in the post-Soviet space. A number of authors inspired by the enthusiasm of the new democracy in the former Soviet Union, using Huntington's concept of the third wave of democratization as basis, have described these events as a new fourth wave of democratization that has fundamentally changed the political situation in these countries primarily for the benefit of American interests.³⁸

3. Russia and restraining of the fourth wave of democratization

Colour revolutions, that within three years passed from Georgia to Ukraine, and then Kyrgyzstan, gained the character of the regional trend of democratization, which threatened the current regimes in the post-Soviet space. The power of demonstrated example in the democratization processes has already been mentioned. The fall of a regime in one country, and with it the introduction of democratic reforms, not only can initiate a wave of democratization, but can create confidence in the neighbouring countries that this process is inevitable. On the other hand, stopping this wave and setting example according to which countries in the region do not necessarily have to experience the transformation of the Western type, significantly stimulates the opposite belief. In a similar way in which the United States perceived expansion of communism in Indochina as a threat to its security and national interests, Russia saw the stopping of colour revolutions within their boundaries and starting reverse waves as an imperative. Any expansion of this "virus" outside Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, would constitute a threat to Russia's sovereign democracy. In response to external pressures, different types of opposition to the U.S. promotion of democracy in the region emerged. For the

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

purposes of this paper, we shall indicate the four most important: isolation, redefining, strengthening and undermining.

The strategy of *isolation* most often involves the ban of media and organizations financed from abroad. Russia has taken major steps that, through the isolation policy, brought in unfavourable position many non-governmental organizations accused of espionage activities and characterized as a threat to national security and sovereignty. As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, USA allocate significant funding for foreign non-governmental organizations aimed at promoting democratic values. Having realized the importance of the civil sector in modern ideological and civilizational struggle between the Western and others, the authorities in Moscow, after the colour revolutions, have decided to strictly supervise and control the activities of the organization funded from abroad. In 2004, Putin listed as the main priority of these organizations raising funds from numerous international influential foundations and serving their interests.³⁹ Under the accusation that organizations financed from abroad represent the interests of foreign powers, and act as their agents on the territory of Russia, in early 2006, Putin signed a law that significantly restricts the civil sector. Among other things, this law prohibits the registration of those organizations that “threaten the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, national unity, unique character, cultural heritage and national interests of the Russian Federation“.⁴⁰ Although the legitimacy of the state to prohibit work of all those who act against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence is not being brought into question, what represents the possibility for misuse of this law are concepts like national unity, national character, cultural heritage and national interests. This has enabled the authorities to arbitrarily decide on the existence of non-governmental sector, and to have a discretionary right to deny registration and issuance of their work license. At the end of the same year, the Federal Security Service (FSS) announced that it has registered a significant increase in the number of foreign spies working under the guise of NGOs.⁴¹ Vladislav Surkov, who in late 2011 became the Deputy Prime Minister, and is considered the main ideologue of Russian policy, in his speech in 2005, while working as the Deputy Chief of the Presidential Administration, criticized the work of the organization Freedom House: “Only an idiot would be likely to believe that the mission of that “office“ is purely humanitarian“.⁴² In the years that followed,

³⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴² Ibid., p. 70.

many organizations disappeared from the list of non-governmental organizations operating in Russia.

An important way of restraining the fourth wave of democratization is the policy of *redefining*, which implies the rhetorical defence and ideological support to the current political situation in the country and the course on which the regime persists. By questioning the moral superiority of the West, particularly the United States, in terms of their struggle for universal human rights, criticizing their hypocritical advocacy for civil liberties and selective democratization, Russia stepped out with its own democratic concept, representing the “sovereign democracy” as the only possible and correct theoretical basis of Russian policy. The concept of sovereign democracy is based on the idea of the political system protected from external pressures. It represents an alternative to liberal democracy, which according to the Moscow ideologues is not in accordance with the Russian political culture. According to this doctrine, the democratization from the West represents American project that seeks to weaken the sovereignty of Russia, as it was done in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan after the color revolutions. Sovereign democracy represents the right of the Russian people to persist on the unique path of democratic development, consistent with its historical, geopolitical and other characteristics. Differences in cultural and social development require a different approach to democratization in relation to the standard Western model, which is wanted to be replicated in region. For advocates of this approach, only with the leading role of the state in creating new political classes and President’s “firm hand” policy, it is possible to establish a functional model of democracy in Russia. In other words, democratization in Russia must be guided from the top, without external pressures and West’s interference in the internal affairs, which tends to destabilize the region and threaten national sovereignty.

Policy of *strengthening* implies supporting regimes that are not contaminated with the virus of democratization in the region, as well as strengthening of regional cooperation. By recognizing the impact of regional integration on the process of democratization in post-Soviet space, Russia has launched its own initiative to strengthen regional integration and international networking mainly through the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Providing support particularly refers to Belarus, with which Russia fosters special cultural, military and economic relations. Therefore, Russia is determined not to let the orange virus spread within the boundaries of Belarus. These two countries are in the state union based on the Agreement of 1999, while Belarus in terms of ethnicity, religion, history, and culture can be considered an integral part of Russian national corpus.⁴³ Although the joint

⁴³ Dragan Petrović, *Geopolitika postsovjetskog prostora*, op. cit., p. 28.

state jurisdictions of the Community created in 1999, have not yet been signed, the President of Belarus Lukashenko claims he is a supporter of cooperation and partnership with Russia. Lukashenko himself said in 2005: “Revolution in Belarus is revolution in Russia”, so that later in June 2011, during democratic protests in Minsk, he vowed there will be no colour revolution in his country.⁴⁴ Although there is political disagreement between Minsk and the Kremlin, Putin continued to support Lukashenko on the international scene by diplomatic means. Moscow does not recognize the legitimacy of the Belarusian opposition, nor in any way encouraged Lukashenko to take a step towards democratization. Only one day after American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2005 met with representatives of the Belarusian opposition, when she supported them by claiming that it is time for change in Belarus, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed her comments, adding that the process of democratic reform must not be imposed from outside.⁴⁵ Only in 2005, the United States allocated 11.8 million dollars for funding of pro-democratic parties and non-governmental organizations in Belarus, as well as various Belarusian opposition groups based outside the country.⁴⁶ In response to Washington’s actions, Russia has supported Lukashenko in the 2006 presidential elections and since then actively opposes any kind of external pressure on Belarus.

After the colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, and with the change of regime in Tbilisi and Kiev, the relations between these countries and Russia have deteriorated. In response to the anti-Russian policy and turning the two former Soviet republics towards Europe and Washington, that is the European Union and NATO, Russia has launched a campaign of *undermining* the consolidation of these regimes. Since 2005, the Kremlin has criticized the colour revolutions, and the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia did not go in favour of good neighbourly relations between Russia and Georgia. In relation to Georgia, undermining the Saakashvili’s regime manifested not only the diplomatic pressure, but also economic sanctions imposed in 2006, which included a boycott of Georgian wines, mineral water, fruit and other goods. In addition to these measures, Georgia has accused Russia of misuse of energy for political purposes, and visa regime between the two countries has also tightened. Tensions between Georgia and Russia culminated in August 2008,

⁴⁴ Lukashenko vows ‘no color revolution’ in Belarus, CNN, Internet: http://articles.cnn.com/2011-07-04/world/belarus.protests_1_president-alexander-lukashenko-belarusminsk?_s=PM:WORLD, 7/1/2012.

⁴⁵ Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash – Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, loc. cit., p. 111.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

when the Georgian military in quick attack occupied the capital of the unrecognized South Ossetia. By the actions of Russian military forces that were located in this territory (according to the Agreement of 1992, as a peacekeeping force) and with the help of additional troops from Russia, Georgian units were forced to withdraw. After these unfortunate events, President Medvedev officially recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Towards Ukraine as the most important country in post-Soviet space after Russia (observed by size of territory and population) Russia launched a major initiative to undermine the orange forces led by Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko. It is not necessary to analyze in detail how important Ukraine is to Russia in geostrategic terms, but we would only add the fact that Huntington mentions - that Ukraine is in cultural and civilizational terms country divided into eastern pro-Russian part, contrary to the western part, which in the history has long been under the Catholic Poland and Austro-Hungary.⁴⁷ After the orange revolution in late 2004, all the way to the 2010 presidential elections, Ukraine became the main arena of political conflict of interests between Russia and the United States. Poor relations between Kiev and Moscow culminated when "Gazprom" in 2006 suspended gas supplies to Ukraine, on the grounds that Ukraine has refused to negotiate the market price calculation. In response, the Ukrainian "Neftogaz" began to take away the gas which was intended for European consumers. After Ukraine agreed to negotiations, gas supply was restored, which was supplied until March 2008, when the Ukrainian side has refused to sign the document on its debt for gas imports, which reached more than 1.5 billion dollars.⁴⁸ The situation normalized only when Ukraine signed this document under pressure from the European Union (which is highly dependent on imported oil and natural gas from Russia).⁴⁹

Orange wave was stopped in 2010, when Ukrainian former President Yushchenko won only 5% of the votes, while in the second round of voting pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich won, with about 3.5% difference compared to Tymoshenko.⁵⁰ After taking over the power, Yanukovich freezes future relationship with NATO, develops live collaboration with Russia with frequent meetings of state leaders, enables Russian language to be used as a second official language in most of Ukraine's parts, signs a long-term agreement on gas, as well as an agreement on extension of residence of the Russian Black

⁴⁷ Samjuel P. Hantington, *Sukob civilizacija i preoblikovanje svetskog poretka*, loc.cit., p. 185.

⁴⁸ Jevgenij Primakov, *Svet bez Rusije?*, loc.cit., p. 92.

⁴⁹ Stevan Rapaić, "Tržište energenata u Evropskoj uniji i interesi Srbije", *Međunarodni problemi*, vol. 61, No. 4, 2009, p. 533.

⁵⁰ Dragan Petrović, *Predsednički izbori u Ukrajini 2010.*, Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2010, p. 103.

Sea Fleet in Sevastopol until 2047.⁵¹ The final blow to the forces of the fourth wave of democratization in Ukraine is the court judgement of 11 October 2011, by which Yulia Tymoshenko was found guilty of abuse of office and sentenced to seven years imprisonment. The same judgment ordered her to pay about 189 million dollars in damages to the country and prohibited her participation in political life while serving a prison sentence. As a curiosity we emphasize the fact that she was convicted because of the signing of the controversial contract with the Russian side in 2009, in which the Ukrainian “Neftogaz” took over the debt repayment obligations, and by which the gas crisis ended.⁵²

It is necessary to mention here that in 2010 in Kyrgyzstan, under unclear circumstances, violent demonstrations occurred in which 88 people were killed and more than 1000 wounded. After these demonstrations the regime of Kurmanbek Bakiyev was destroyed, who came to power in 2005, with the tulip revolution. Bakiyev, in his first reactions, accused Russia of this overturn, primarily because of the extension agreement with the United States on the use of military air base Manas. Violence was preceded by the energy crisis in late 2009, which has hit Kyrgyzstan after the rise in heating prices by 400% and electricity by 170%. In order to decrease its dependence on Russian energy, President Bakiyev had initiated the construction of transmission lines with China, and in January 2010 signed a contract worth 342 million dollars with the Chinese company Tebian Electric. Although it is still unknown what exactly caused the riots, a few days before the revolution, Russia has imposed tariffs on exports of energy sources in Kyrgyzstan, which has caused the wave of discontent over the country in relation to the regime of Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

After the riots in Kyrgyzstan and elections in Ukraine in 2010, Georgia has remained the only country where the colour forces remained in power. Bearing in mind that the Saakashvili’s regime did not bring significant democratic progress and functioning of democratic institutions, we can claim that the democratization process led by the United States of America on post-Soviet space represented the project of limited scope.

Conclusion

Huntington’s thesis that human history is history of civilizations, that is history of culture in which religion plays a dominant role, and that the contemporary world is divided into nine civilizations in which nations and

⁵¹ Dragan Petrović, *Rusija i Evropa*, loc.cit., p. 145.

⁵² *7 years for Ukrainian ex-prime minister Tymoshenko*, Gazeta, Internet: http://en.gazeta.ru/news/2011/10/11/a_3797050.shtml, 17/1/2012.

countries with similar cultures merge, while nations and countries with different cultures are separating and coming into conflicts, has significant implications for the post-Soviet space. The collapse of communism caused a strong identity crisis in this region. Valid social norms, value systems and the basic principles of the former society, and even the very social structure are discarded, and the long-term sources of identity and the system of authority were destroyed. The gap between state and society, which originated in the collapse of the communist system, has created the need for rapid discovery of new sources of identity, new forms of stable community, and moral regulation. Cultural and religious identity replaced Marxist-Leninist ideology, which was a primary centripetal and stabilizing force in the Soviet Union.

In the former Soviet Union new civilizational boundaries emerged, which inclined Catholic and Protestant people towards Western civilization, separating them from the Orthodox and Islamic people. Although the process of democratization in the post-Soviet space was shaped by civilizational identity and there is strong correlation between Western Christianity and democracy, we yet believe that this process was not determined by it. The range of cultural obstacles to democratization, and the impact of culture on the democratization of post-Soviet space, cannot be clearly quantified, nor is it possible to prove the hypothesis according to which Islam and Orthodox Christianity are incompatible with democracy.

In the decades after the collapse of the USSR, the United States launched a major political, economic and military campaigns of democratization in the post-Soviet space aimed at building the civil sector and strengthening universal human and political rights. However, exporting democracy to the former Soviet Union countries was not going so smoothly. Democratization in the former communist countries implies the transformation of the role and competences of a government. Democratization required creation of conditions that favoured the development of hitherto non-existent civil society.

The active role of the United States as an external factor in the democratization process in the post-Soviet space was reflected in three important factors: the policy of conditioning, the integration into international organizations and initiating regional trends of democratization. The proliferation of techniques and methods of termination of authoritarian regimes occurred in the so-called “colour revolutions” in the post-Soviet space, from 2003 to 2005, under the auspices of the United States. On the other hand, Russia saw stopping of these revolutions in their own boundaries and initiating reverse waves as an imperative. Any expansion of this “virus” outside Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, was a threat to the concept of sovereign democracy in Russia. In response to external pressures, different types of opposition to the U.S. promotion of democracy in the region were created.

Cultural differences in the post-Soviet space have created a clash between two concepts of democracy. The first, liberal democratic, guided by the Western Christianity of the United States, which insists on its universality and the second, the Russian concept of sovereign democracy that opposes the universal principle, questioning the moral superiority of the West. According to this doctrine, the democratization from the West represent American project that seeks to weaken the sovereignty of Russia, as was done in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan after the colour revolutions. Moscow ideologues of sovereign democracy advocate the theory according to which differences in cultural and social development require a different approach to democratization in relation to the standard Western model, which was to be literally implemented onto the former Soviet Union. Seen from the perspective of liberal democracy, the concept of sovereign democracy is nothing but a demagogic defence of the authoritarian regime, which seeks to violate human rights and limit political freedom, actively acting to undermine the democratic process in the region.

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