Success and Failure in the Color Revolutions
The Role of American Democracy Assistance

The Color Revolutions
A series of mass protests after fraudulent elections in the former Soviet sphere during the 2000’s


Democracy Assistance
Foreign aid from the United States given to NGO’s and political parties aiming to promote stronger democratic institutions

Research Question
Why did the Orange Revolution in Ukraine succeed in overturning its targeted election results while the Denim Revolution in Belarus did not?

Hypothesis
The Orange Revolution succeeded overturning its election, while the Denim Revolution did not, because of Orange Revolution activists’ greater organizational capacity. Activist capacity was greater in Ukraine due to greater application of democracy assistance programs by the United States.

Methodology
• Small-n case study, Process tracing
• Data sources
• Contemporary news reports (The Current Digest of the post Soviet Press)
• Contemporary interviews
• US government reports
• NGO reports on civil society

Findings
UKRAINE
- US democracy assistance was crucial for opposition efforts to document election fraud
- Democracy assistance aided party organizing capacity, but the extent of the impact is unclear
- Democracy assistance was given toward vital media coverage, but this media would have existed without democracy assistance

BELARUS
- The government was able to eliminate vital civil society and political groups due to their lack of specific resources
- Democracy assistance targeted these groups, but did not give them the specific resources they needed

Democracy assistance was a salient cause of the Orange Revolution’s success, but it was not the only one. Democracy assistance did not produce a successful Denim Revolution because it failed to deliver necessary resources to local actors.

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