Against all odds: aiding political parties in Georgia and Ukraine

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CHAPTER FIVE: POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN GEORGIA AND UKRAINE

This chapter presents the bulk of data on party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine that have in part been collected from interviews, and in part are documented in reports by the institutions on the supply-side of party assistance. The next chapter, in turn, drawing on the data from the current chapter, explains why the assistance effort has failed to help parties become more stable, democratic, and representative. Data are presented in the current chapter primarily when they are vital to the discussion in chapter six. The first two sections provide a basic, descriptive overview of party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine, respectively. These sections outline the types of activities that have been undertaken by the principal actors involved in party assistance, as well as the approaches that have shaped these activities. The latter two sections address central questions in party assistance, in relation to Georgia and Ukraine, with distinct ramifications for the effectiveness of the effort. First, which parties have been selected to receive assistance, and on the basis of which criteria have they been selected? Second, to what extent has the assistance favored certain forces over other forces? These two issues coincide with the two key standards of good practice in party assistance that have been identified in section two of chapter two. The discussion in sections three and four makes clear that providers of assistance have frequently fallen short of adhering to these two standards, and besides reveals much about the form that party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine has taken. More crucially, the two questions are related to the discussion of the failure of party assistance in chapter six. As will be demonstrated there, a combination of unfortunate and misguided decisions made by providers of assistance with regard to party selection have contributed to their inability to overcome domestic constrains on party development.

5.1. POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN GEORGIA

NDI

NDI was involved in political party assistance in Georgia from 1996 until 2004. During these years, NDI in Georgia also implemented a civic program, primarily through support to the local election watchdog ISFED, and a parliamentary program, aimed at improving the functioning of the legislature. Before the 1999 parliamentary election, NDI conducted political party seminars primarily with three
parties: the ruling Citizens’ Union of Georgia (CUG) of president Shevardnadze, the National Democratic Party (NDP), and the People’s Party (PP), which emerged from a split in NDP in 1996. Political party assistance was concentrated on these ‘three main democratic parties’ in order to intensify training (NDI 1998: 2). Seminars with CUG focused, among other things, on how to address voters’ concerns, media strategies and press relations, and included training-of-trainers. Activists and leaders of NDP were trained in ‘party communication and cohesion’, campaign skills, and message development. Training to PP was mostly on election-related issues (NDI 2000a: 18-20). During these years, NDI to a lesser extent also worked with the Socialist Party, the Traditionalist Party, and the Green Party. Between the 1999 and 2003 parliamentary elections, most of NDI party assistance in Georgia was with six parties: CUG, NDP, Labor Party, the New Rights Party (NRP), the United Democrats (UD), and the (United) National Movement (UNM). Especially in 2002-2003, much more assistance went to the latter three than to other parties. After several splits occurred within CUG, the party lost much of its interest in participating in party assistance programs. NDP and Labor equally were not as eager to receive NDI’s assistance as NRP, UD, and UNM were. 

Party assistance by NDI included the standard components of educational seminars, consultations with party leaders, and study visits. Four objectives of assistance programs during these years can be discerned: strengthening organizational capacity, enhancing the campaign skills of parties, training-of-trainers, and coalition-building. Much of training related to organizational development targeted the expansion of the regional and local representation of parties. Other training aimed at strengthening party organizations focused on issues such as recruitment of members, media relations, and internal coordination within parties. Training was typically organized for individual parties. In 2001 and 2002, a number of seminars were organized, and consultations held with party leaders, on the topic of coalition-building. These events had the explicit purpose to encourage a variety of small parties to look for partners. The most visible and controversial party assistance effort by NDI in the years leading up to the Rose Revolution was the unsuccessful attempt to help forge a coalition of three new opposition parties - UNM, NRP, and UD. The Traditionalist Party was initially included in this effort, but soon dropped out.

Different sources indicate that coordination between NDI in Georgia and the head office in Washington during these years was scarce. Allegedly, NDI in Georgia took decisions that it did not coordinate with main offices. From 1999, there was no clear division of labor with IRI: the party institutes took the freedom to work with
any party they selected themselves, and as a result there was some overlap of political parties that were assisted by both NDI and IRI. After the Rose Revolution, the party institutes agreed to establish a strict division of labor: while IRI continued to work with parties outside parliament, NDI from that moment shifted its focus almost entirely towards legislative strengthening, for which it received a multi-year grant. The fact that one of the party institutes now dedicated most of its work to improve the functioning of parliament is seen as a reflection of the heightened interest that the U.S. government took in supporting institutions of government after the Revolution, at least in part at the expense of support for civil society. Because of its new mandate, NDI in Georgia from 2004 has not to any significant degree been involved in party assistance as it is understood here (see section one of chapter two).

IRI

IRI has been continuously involved in political party assistance in Georgia since it opened its country office there in 1998. Throughout the years, party assistance has taken up about half of IRI’s overall activity in Georgia. The main other areas of activity of IRI in Georgia include support to youth and women’s organizations and opinion polling. IRI’s chief partner among youth organizations is New Generation New Initiative, an NGO that, among other things, runs information campaigns in relation to Georgia’s possible accession to NATO, and that is generally believed to be close to the Saakashvili administration. IRI in Georgia has also organized several get-out-the-vote campaigns targeted at youth, which, it claims, have led to a 30 per cent increase in the percentage of voter turnout among young people (IRI 2004: 14). Although not an intrinsic part of its political party program, IRI’s polling, which is also done in many other countries where IRI works, at least partly serves to promote party development. IRI surveys typically consist of a part on general topics, the findings of which are made public, and a part which contains questions on individual parties and party leaders, and that is disseminated to these parties only. The findings of these surveys are thought to enable parties to develop a message which reflects voters’ concerns and thereby make parties more responsive.

In 1998, NDI and IRI agreed to divide available parties between the two party institutes in order to avoid overlap. The agreement, however, was abandoned one year later because both institutes wanted to work with the ruling party, CUG. IRI consequently provided assistance to roughly the same set of parties, including CUG, UNM (from 2002), People’s Party, the Labor Party, and the Socialist Party, that NDI
also provided assistance to before the Rose Revolution. Since the Rose Revolution, IRI, now the one U.S. party institute that works with parties outside parliament, has provided assistance to a wide range of parties, which are selected by IRI on the criterion of alleged political relevance. Training by IRI in Georgia is mainly demand-driven. To parties eligible for party assistance, IRI disseminates an overview of around fifty-five topics on which it can provide training. Reflecting an overall emphasis on election-related programming, most of these topics, including for instance ‘psychological types of voters’, ‘how to defend results’, and ‘agitation’, are related to campaigning. Concurrently, a frequent topic in party assistance training by IRI in Georgia is ‘message development’, which has the aim to better connect with voters. A second, altogether less frequent type of party seminars by IRI, in addition to those on campaign management, are on party building. Seminars on party building by IRI are primarily concerned with reforming the organizational structures of parties.

Most seminars are for individual parties, particularly those with an election-related topic, because it is believed that training is more productive when party activists are in the company of their fellow party members. Participants in party assistance events by IRI in Georgia are more often from the upper levels within the parties than they are rank-and-file party activists. At least as frequent as training to larger groups of people are ‘consultations’ with selected persons from parties. Dozens of these consultations are held each quarter. Moreover, some events are specifically targeted at party leaders, such as the ‘party building schools’ for ‘parties’ top managers’ that were organized in 2005. In addition to training and consultations with party leaders, since the Rose Revolution several study visits for political party leaders to Lithuania were organized, over the course of which party leaders from the two former Soviet republics exchanged ideas and know-how. Lithuania was selected for this purpose due to personal ties of IRI’s former chief of party with that country.

**ODIHR-NIMD**

In response to the ‘democratic opening and momentum offered by the so-called Rose Revolution’ (OSCE ODIHR 2006: 31), the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of OSCE, in cooperation with NIMD, in 2005 initiated a multi-faceted political party assistance program that eventually would run until the May 2008 parliamentary elections. Implementation of the project was in the hands of NIMD in tandem with local experts from the Caucasus Institute for Peace Democracy and Development (CIPDD), while ODIHR provided funding and fulfilled a coordinating role.
The initial stage of the project consisted exclusively of an ‘interactive assessment’ of the political situation and party development in Georgia. During this stage, expert teams met to identify issues in party development, and workshops were organized in which participating parties were requested to engage in self-analysis in order to identify shortcomings in party development in Georgia. The six biggest parties in Georgia, as suggested by the results of the 2004 parliamentary election, were selected to participate in the project. These were the United National Movement, Labor Party, Conservative Party, Industry Will Save Georgia, Republican Party, and New Rights Party. The initial stage of the project culminated in the publication of the book Political Landscape of Georgia - Political Parties: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects (Nodia and Pinto Scholtbach 2006), which provides a comprehensive assessment of political party development, and of the environment in which parties operate in Georgia. In the ensuing stage of the project, which stretched from 2006 until 2008, and which built on the ‘interactive assessment’ of the first stage, the project comprised three separate ‘tracks’: educational seminars; preparation and implementation of VoteMatch; and a ‘special track’ aimed at promoting interparty dialogue. Two types of educational seminars were organized: first, training-of-trainers (ToT), mostly by Dutch experts, and targeted at mid-level activists. Participants in these trainings went on to conduct trainings within their respective parties. Second, multi-party seminars or workshops in which mainly the higher tier of party organizations participated, and which featured topics such as party funding, strategic planning, and regional party politics.

The VoteMatch track of the project was modeled after the online voting advice application StemWijzer, developed in the Netherlands by the Institute for Political Participation. The primary aim of VoteMatch in the context of the ODIHR-NIMD program was to compel parties to formulate policy positions and to identify a target electorate in the run-up to the 2008 parliamentary election. It was envisaged that a more lasting effect of the program would be that the significance of programs in electoral competition would be enhanced. As part of VoteMatch, parties received a long-list of ninety-three questions to which they were requested to provide answers. From the answers, a number of issues would be distilled on which parties apparently disagreed, and that would form the basis of the VoteMatch application which voters could then use to determine which parties is closest to them in terms of program or ideology. Because of the limited reach of internet in Georgia, VoteMatch was to be distributed on cd-rom, in a paper format outside metro stations, and at various events, in addition to an online version. The execution of VoteMatch was cancelled
shortly before the elections because the United National Movement deliberately omitted to provide answers to all ninety-three questions on the long-list.\textsuperscript{82}

The ‘special track’ of the project sought to promote interparty dialogue by bringing together party leaders. To this end, among others, dinners were organized at the residency of the Dutch Ambassador to Georgia in Tbilisi, and several party leaders were sent to the Netherlands to participate in an election observation mission.

Among the broad objectives of the project were to strengthen party organizations, to stimulate cooperation between parties, and to help parties develop recognizable party programs so as to make them more responsive and representative.\textsuperscript{83} Strengthening party organizations should lead, among other things, to a more pluralist playing field, in which the ruling party would face serious competition. It was argued by a representative from NIMD that UNM itself was interested in seeing stronger opposition since this would be conducive to the country’s democratic development.\textsuperscript{84} More specific objectives that have been mentioned by the project’s coordinators were to invigorate political competition by strengthening the opposition, to contribute to coalition-building among participating parties, and to enhance the significance of women and youth within parties.\textsuperscript{85} An ultimate objective of the project was to establish a ‘multiparty centre’ in Tbilisi. The project was not extended beyond the 2008 parliamentary elections primarily because funding by ODIHR was discontinued. The decision to halt funding for the project was part of a wider stop to funding of politically sensitive democratization projects of ODIHR, and reportedly was influenced by criticism of prominent OSCE member Russia concerning this type of projects.\textsuperscript{86} Considering the highly contentious political situation in Georgia prior to and after the parliamentary elections, it is unlikely that the project had been extended if funding would not have been discontinued.

\textit{Stiftungen}

FNS has provided training to its partner the Republican Party of Georgia (RPG) since not long after the Rose Revolution. RPG was selected to become FNS’ partner in Georgia due to that party’s observer status in the Liberal International. Training to RPG has revolved around three themes: party organization in the regions, the role of youth in the party, and campaigning.\textsuperscript{87} The ruling United National Movement was initially viewed as a potential partner by FNS, but the party’s decision to move closer to a rival party family cut short its ties to FNS in Georgia. Besides providing assistance to RPG, FNS in Georgia have worked in two other areas: advocacy of liberal free-market values, and promoting dialogue between Georgians and the peoples from the two conflict regions on Georgia’s legal borders. The reluctance of
FES throughout and KAS until 2007 to engage in party assistance was informed by their assessment of party development in Georgia. A ‘natural’ partner in Georgia for FES would be the Labor Party, given that party’s stated ideological position as a center-left or social-democratic party. The Labor Party, however, was not considered an appropriate partner by FES as the FES questioned the social-democratic credentials of the party. KAS did not work with parties in Georgia until 2007 because it was unable to identify a viable Christian-democratic partner party. With the establishment of a permanent office in Tbilisi in 2007, however, KAS set out to start a party assistance program in Georgia. Until the 2008 parliamentary elections, only a few informal meetings with party representatives were organized. The objectives of KAS’ party assistance in Georgia have been, first, to promote interparty dialogue, and second, to increase the weight of programs in political competition. Regarding future party assistance programs, KAS intended to work with an inclusive range of parties, but direct a disproportionately large share of its assistance to the United National Movement and the New Rights Party, which are both affiliated with the European People’s Party.

**Dutch party institutes**

Following fact-finding missions in 2004 after the Rose Revolution, the three biggest Dutch party institutes - Eduardo Frei Stichting (EFS), Alfred Mozer Stichting (AMS), and the International Bureau of VVD - have, on a modest scale, become involved in party assistance in Georgia. Since 2005, the three party institutes have collectively organized annual ‘leadership academies’ for youth from the most relevant parties. During these ‘academies’, participants are familiarized with political ideologies in Western democracies, are taught media skills, and reflect on the shortcomings of their respective parties. Besides this collective effort, the three party institutes also have individual partners among parties and youth organizations. EFF has organized several seminars for Saqda, the youth branch of the marginal Christian-Democratic Union of Georgia. AMS has conducted seminars for the youth branch of the Labor Party. VVD, finally, has cooperated with the Republican Party. Like FNS, VVD initially worked with the United National Movement, but terminated this relation when UNM started seeking affiliation with the European People’s Party. In addition to party assistance, EFF and VVD provide support to civil society organizations in Georgia.
5.2. POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN UKRAINE

NDI

NDI has assisted political parties in Ukraine since 1992 when it opened an office in Kyiv soon after Ukraine became an independent state. For most of the period since 1992, NDI’s programming in Ukraine has consisted of three elements: political party assistance, legislative strengthening, and promoting civic organizations. NDI’s work in parliament has been strictly distinct, in organizational terms, from party assistance. The chief beneficiary of NDI’s support to civic organizations over the years has been the Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), an election monitoring organization. In many other countries where NDI is active, including Georgia, a large part of its civic program has been devoted to cooperation with a local election monitoring organization. After the Orange Revolution, NDI received funding from USAID for a fourth program, aimed at providing support to reform of the presidential apparatus. Allocation of funding by USAID for this program reflected the heightened expectations on the part of the U.S. government regarding Ukraine’s post-Revolution leadership.

Party assistance by NDI in Ukraine has been viewed as consisting of three separate elements: seminars, efforts aimed at coalition-building among parties, and individual consultations with political leaders. Unsurprisingly, seminars have made up the bulk of party assistance. While most seminars by IRI in Ukraine were conducted with several parties at once (‘multi-party seminars’), NDI has opted to train parties individually. Different than in Georgia, where NDI and IRI at one point have simply divided up available parties, and NDI later ceased doing party assistance while IRI continued working with parties to avoid overlap in programming, the division of labor in Ukraine has been along geographical lines: NDI has worked in about ten of Ukraine’s twenty-five regions, and IRI in slightly more, while both have simultaneously worked with parties in the capital.

Three stages of party assistance by NDI in Ukraine can be distinguished, with the first and second divided by the wave of mass demonstrations against the Kuchma regime in 2000, and the second and third by the Orange Revolution. In all three stages, much attention in party assistance in Ukraine, a heterogeneous country where political life is nonetheless very much concentrated in Kyiv, has gone towards strengthening the local and regional representation of political parties. A second element of continuity is that NDI throughout has encouraged like-minded parties to forge alliances and coalitions, which were supposed to halt fragmentation and lead to a more comprehensible and better organized party system.
Before 2000, NDI assisted a limited number of ‘reform-oriented, democratic’ political parties, including foremost Rukh, the Reform and Order Party (PRP), and the People’s Democratic Party (NDP), which was the most prominent attempt to establish a party of power in the 1990s. Since 1992, NDI has maintained a particularly close relationship with Rukh and its two successors, informally known as Rukh-Kostenko and Rukh-Udovenko after their respective leaders, following a schism in Rukh in 1999. Assistance to parties that were deemed not ‘reform-oriented’, such as the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) and a range of social-democratic and socialist parties, was purposely declined. In addition to common objectives of party assistance such as party strengthening and improving campaign skills, an explicit objective of party assistance in the 1997-1999 period was to strengthen the ‘reform-oriented, democratic’ parties at the expense of the purportedly undemocratic and reform-averse KPU (NDI 1999: 3).

Informants who worked for NDI in Ukraine during the years concerned have stated that most party assistance from 2000 until the Orange Revolution was aimed at helping democratic parties against the regime. Changing the balance on the electoral playing field in favor of democratic parties was attempted foremost by pressing for coalition-building among a number of opposition forces. Two episodes of the coalition-building effort between 2000 and 2004 stand out. First, in 2001, around ten opposition parties gathered in a hotel in Poland at the initiative of NDI to discuss opportunities for cooperation. At the occasion, NDI representatives convinced party leaders of the necessity of an alliance in order to be able to challenge the regime and come out as the biggest force in the 2002 parliamentary election. Although a formal electoral coalition of a number of the political forces present in the hotel in Poland materialized only later, the event is regarded as the genesis of the Our Ukraine electoral bloc, which won the parliamentary election in 2002 and subsequently named Viktor Yushchenko as their candidate for the 2004 presidential election. Second, it is alleged that NDI, in the run-up to the 2002 election, convinced the Our Ukraine bloc with two other opposition forces, the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT) and the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU), to nominate only one candidate from these forces collectively per SMD in the 2002 election to maximize the combined opposition share of MPs in the new convocation of the parliament. Also, through its seminars for political parties, NDI now sought to contribute to a mass grassroots movement of primarily young people, that was hoped to become successful, in contrast to the Ukraine without Kuchma movement of 2000, in truly challenging the regime, as eventually happened during the Orange Revolution. Political party seminars were organized in these years for ‘a wide range of parties that support political reforms to help democracy take root’ and emphasized ‘basic skills training, internal management, public communications and
regional growth’ (NDI 2000b: 2). At the instigation of the NDI’s chief of party of that moment, NDI now also provided assistance to SPU and the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine, which were previously regarded as insufficiently ‘reform-oriented’. Since the Orange Revolution, the range of parties for which NDI has organized seminars includes both opposition forces and pro-government forces. Most assistance since the Revolution has gone to individual constituent parties of the Our Ukraine bloc and to BYuT, all of which were in the ‘Orange camp’ at the time of the Revolution; less often, seminars have been conducted for the Party of Regions, SPU, and other parties. On order of the U.S. embassy in Kyiv, NDI and IRI party assistance programs were put on hold for a few months in 2007 after PRU and KPU accused the U.S. government, but not specifically NDI and IRI, of having provoked the dissolution of parliament and consequently the fall of the PRU-KPU-SPU government. The PRU-KPU-SPU government succeeded the ‘Orange’ government coalitions of 2005-2006. Two of its coalition parties, PRU and KPU, had previously been skeptical of the purported role of the U.S. in the Orange Revolution.

IRI
Two years after NDI, IRI became engaged in political party assistance in Ukraine in 1994. For most of the time since, party assistance has taken up the bulk, roughly eighty per cent, of IRI’s activity in Ukraine. Besides party assistance, IRI runs programs in Ukraine for political active women and youth, supports civic organizations, and, as in Georgia and in many other countries, conducts opinion surveys. In addition, similar to NDI, IRI implements a governance assistance program, reflecting the trust that was placed in the authorities after the Revolution. This program helps ‘government officials in their efforts to improve communication with voters, develop policies that address issues of concern to Ukrainians, and manage public expectations’ (IRI 2006: 17). The role of women and youth in politics is a subject that IRI has pressed for outside party assistance, but, other than for NDI, is also a frequent topic in party assistance seminars.

Three sorts of activities are common in party assistance by IRI in Ukraine: seminars, study visits of political party representatives to the United States, and consultations with party leaders. The goal of one typical study visit was ‘to demonstrate the methods that U.S. political parties use between elections’ (IRI 2001: 4). Consultations with party leaders are held to receive feedback on current programs, and to inquire on parties’ needs. IRI political party training in Ukraine is distinct from that of NDI in two significant, and related ways. First, whereas NDI seminars are in principal with individual parties, a large majority of IRI seminars are ‘multi-party’. The main reason for IRI to organize seminars in a multi-party format
is that, by gathering groups of people from several parties at once, more people are reached with fewer funds. Moreover, it is hoped that a multi-party setting will induce increased dialogue between parties.\textsuperscript{101} Considering that a multitude of parties attend most seminars, the second difference from NDI assistance is that the range of parties which receives IRI party assistance is more inclusive. While in 1998 IRI maintained that it only provided assistance to ‘reform political parties’ (IRI 1998: 3), in later years parties from very different stripes took part in seminars or were at least were invited to seminars. With the exception of a few parties that were staunchly anti-American, ahead of the 2006 parliamentary election, for instance, all forty-four parties which participated in the election were offered assistance. Despite the fact that a larger number of parties takes part in IRI seminars, an estimated four out of five are seminars for the two, three biggest parties, for the simple reason that these parties have bigger organizations and therefore more people to send to seminars.\textsuperscript{102} Sometimes, representatives from parties that are known to be not so Western-oriented, such as PRU and KPU, participate in seminars without discussing beforehand their participation with the party leadership. It has been said that while in earlier years the topics of the between fifty and one hundred seminars that IRI organizes on average per year, addressed basic skills, they have become more sophisticated and specialized to continue to be of interest and relevance to participants.\textsuperscript{103} One topic that is sometimes included in IRI party seminars is coalition-building, though it has been less of a priority than it has been for NDI.

\textit{KAS}

The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung has focused on three themes since it opened its office in Kyiv in 1994: fostering democracy and the rule of law, European and Euro- Atlantic integration, and social market economy. Support to political parties is provided under the heading of ‘fostering democracy and the rule of law’, and, in 2007, amounted to about one fourth of KAS’ activity in Ukraine in terms of the number of events around political parties as a share of all events organized that year.\textsuperscript{104} The central objective of political party assistance by KAS in Ukraine - strengthening the centre-right part of the party spectrum - has essentially remained unchanged since 1994. KAS seeks to strengthen centre-rights parties both by educating them on issues of party organization and management, and by encouraging them to cooperate, engage in electoral coalitions, or even to merge. During the 1990s, KAS’ centre-rights partners included Rukh, the Reform and Order Party (PRP), and the People’s Party. Since 2001, the Our Ukraine bloc, and later the People’s Union Our Ukraine (NSNU) party have become KAS’ principal partner, with the smaller People’s Movement of Ukraine (NRU) and the marginal Christian
Democratic Union (CDU) counting as secondary partners. NSNU and NRU, by virtue of the fact that they enjoy observer status in the European People’s Party, are regarded KAS’ ‘natural partners’ (Wachsmuth 2006: 66). Because NSNU is a much more relevant force in Ukraine than NRU, however, most of the fraternal assistance has gone to NSNU. KAS explicitly takes credit for the initial emergence of the Our Ukraine bloc in 2001, for which, it contends, the foundation was laid at a KAS-organized gathering of centre-right parties. After the election victory of the Our Ukraine bloc in the 2002 election, KAS directed many of its efforts at convincing the participating members of the bloc to create one united party on the basis of the electoral bloc. There is little, however, that indicates that KAS has played a role in the eventual merger of six parties which established the People’s Union Our Ukraine in 2005.

For its partners, KAS organizes trainings and seminars on a wide variety of topics, touching on the general themes of party organization and electoral campaign management, that are not unlike those of seminars of other providers of assistance. Reflecting the fraternal nature of its partnership with NSNU, KAS even advises the party and the electoral bloc of which it is the leading party on the contents of their election programs. In addition to the party-to-party seminars, multi-party seminars are organized for only the most relevant political parties and their youth branches, which have included, after the Orange Revolution, particularly NSNU, the Party of Regions, and Batkivshchyna. The practical organization of seminars is often outsourced to the Kyiv-based NGO Institute for Political Education, whose director is a former international secretary of the Christian-Democratic Union, and which has ties to both NSNU and Rukh. Besides seminars, party assistance by KAS also holds consultations with a range of political leaders and organizes study visits to Germany, primarily for NSNU representatives.

**FES**

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, present in Ukraine since 1993, works in three project areas: labor relations and social dialogue, democratization and civil society, and international co-operation and European integration. One element of the democratization and civil society project area is ‘development of the political parties and parliamentarism in the context of democratic and social values’. At an estimated one tenth of overall activity, party assistance takes up a smaller part of FES’ work in than it does of KAS’ work in Ukraine. Party assistance activities by FES in Ukraine comprise both multi-party seminars and single-party seminars, and consultations with party leaders. Ever since 1993, FES in Ukraine has involved a
wide range of parties in its party assistance programs simultaneously, and left-wing parties merely somewhat more than others. Training is most often organized for several parties at once. Despite the fact that SPU counts as a ‘sister party’ because it has observer status in the Socialist International, FES has been reluctant to accept SPU as an exclusive and close partner. During the 1990s, several parties vied for recognition as the prime social-democratic party of Ukraine. One contender, SDPU, after 1998 was pushed to the margins after its leader Buzduhan was not re-elected to parliament. Another, SDPU(o), had dubious credentials, mainly because of its strong economic interests and its complicity in the Kuchma regime. Following the Orange Revolutions, relations with SPU were intensified, as it was hoped that the party would now consolidate and become one of the main parties in a more democratic Ukraine. SPU lost sympathy with many, however, when it joined a government coalition with PRU and KPU in 2006.

Other providers of assistance

FNS has started working in Ukraine only after the Orange Revolution, the achievements of which it sought to help consolidate. Whereas KAS divides its work almost evenly between four types of activities, and FES chooses to have a small party assistance program relative to its other activities, for FNS party assistance is a primary activity. Next to its work with parties, FNS organizes debates in Ukraine aimed at promoting liberal thought. FNS sees Our Ukraine as its ‘natural partner’ in terms of ideological and programmatic kinship, but cannot work with that party because KAS already is. When it started working in Ukraine, FNS therefore had to look for alternative partners. In the few years since it has provided party assistance, FNS has worked with the youth branch of Our Ukraine (but not with the ‘mature’ party) and the youth branch of BYuT, as well as with the Reform and Order Party (PRP) and the PORA party, which came out of the yellow PORA youth movement, one of the most vocal organizations in the Orange Revolution. Assistance to PORA was suspended after a schism occurred in the party.

Providers of party assistance in Ukraine without an office include EFS and AMS. EFS has conducted seminars on campaign management, some of which were organized through the Institute for Political Education, with which KAS has also cooperated, for activists from the Our Ukraine electoral bloc. In addition, EFS organized a study visit for youth of the Our Ukraine bloc to the Netherlands. AMS organizes seminars for the youth wing of SPU. In previous years, assistance was provided to the nominally social-democratic party SDPU.
5.3. Party selection

The principal donors and providers of party assistance that have worked in Georgia and Ukraine bind themselves to only work with parties that are both democratic and viable (see section two of chapter two). A considerable share of the parties that have received assistance over the years, however, are either undemocratic or unviable, or both.

The standard of viability

Appendices one and two demonstrate that a large number of parties that won seats in parliament through the 1998 legislative election in Ukraine and the 1999 legislative election in Georgia, as well as many parties that came up at the next election, have not succeeded in maintaining popular support or upholding their organization. Among the parties that have disappeared or become marginal since 1998/1999 were many that received assistance from the actors whose programs have been outlined in the previous two sections. Two of the three core recipients of NDI party assistance in Georgia before 1999 - CUG and the People’s Party - have disappeared, while the third, NDP, has at best turned into a marginal force. The three other parties with which NDI worked in Georgia until 1999 - the Socialist Party, the Traditionalist Party, and the Green Party - have equally withered. Of the six parties that received the bulk of NDI and IRI assistance between 1999 and 2003, two have withered (CUG and NDP); the Labor Party and the New Rights Party, which rose to prominence around the turn of the century, are still active; and the National Movement and the United Democrats have merged to become the ruling United National Movement after 2003.

One party, Industry Will Save Georgia, that has participated in the ODIHR-NIMD project, has been largely absent from public view since 2004. Another party, the Labor Party, through its self-positioning as a centre-left party, occupies a niche on the Georgian political party landscape, and has been a relatively consistent opposition force, albeit one that is particularly known for being ruled at the almost exclusive discretion of its leader Natelashvili, since the beginning of the decade. The New Rights Party, the Republican Party, and the Conservative Party, which also participate in the project, are three of a large number of small opposition forces, most of which designate themselves as ‘centre-right’, and which in highly volatile coalitions and occasional alliances lead a struggle against the regime. These parties were selected for the ODIHR-NIMD project because they had some representatives in parliament after 2004. A few years into the project, however, it was no longer evident that these parties were more relevant or viable than some of the many
other opposition parties, such as Georgia’s Way, the Freedom Party, of For a United Georgia. Moreover, it can be questioned whether these parties were relevant forces at all, given the degree of fragmentation among the opposition and the highly uneven playing field in which the ruling United National Movement, the sixth participating party in the ODIHR-NIMD project, towered over all other parties in terms of representation in parliament and available resources. Though UNM is clearly relevant, it is not necessarily also viable, because its continued existence depends on the sustainability of the regime and that of its president. Should the regime be overturned or a new president elected, UNM may be abandoned, as the previously ruling CUG was abandoned directly after the Rose Revolution.

The turnover of political parties and forces in Ukraine since 1998 has been less pronounced than in Georgia, but still very substantial, as appendix two shows. The three parties that received most of NDI’s assistance during the 1990s - NDP, Rukh, and PRP - have lost much of their relevance, if they ever had much relevance. While NDP has subsided, both PRP and the successors of Rukh are reduced to the role of ‘junior partner’ in electoral coalitions, and in that role have little autonomous potential. The same can be said of almost all ‘junior partners’ in electoral coalitions, including the large number of small parties from the Our Ukraine bloc, many of which have eagerly participated in assistance programs. The political force that has received far more assistance than any other force in Ukraine since 2000, the ‘presidential’ People’s Union Our Ukraine, which formally exists as a party only since 2005, obviously has been a highly relevant force. In 2008, however, splits occurred within the party, and it is unclear whether the party will be sustained after president Yushchenko leaves office. In early 2009 it was even reported that the party de facto had ceased to function (Topolianskyi 2009). The sustainability of Batkivshchyna is believed to be entirely dependent upon the future of its leader, Yulia Tymoshenko. SPU, long-time partner of FES and AMS, is at risk of becoming marginal after failing to cross the electoral threshold in the 2007 parliamentary elections. Two other nominally social-democratic parties, SDPU and SDPU(o), which have previously received assistance from several actors, have already become marginal.

Ironically, KPU, the one party that has been continuously represented in parliament since the early 1990s and by that token has proven to be the most durable political party in Ukraine, has barely received assistance. The party was often not invited to assistance programs; when it was, the party turned down the invitation. Moreover, the most relevant party of recent years in terms of electoral support and political leverage, the Party of Regions, has received relatively little assistance, and admits not to have made any changes in the party following the little assistance it
has received. A large portion of the assistance that has been provided to political parties in Georgia and Ukraine since the late 1990s, in sum, has gone to parties which did not turn out to be relevant for the longer term, or even disappeared entirely. Providers of assistance, to the extent that their efforts were targeted first and foremost at assisting parties to become stable and democratic forces, as a consequence, have seen much of their effort go to waste. It could be argued that providers of assistance have too easily assumed that the parties with which they worked would either remain or become stable and relevant. The ODIHR-NIMD project is a telling example: its initiators were hopeful that the six parties that were invited to the project would present the nucleus of an impending stable party system. A few years into the project, however, they were confronted with a different reality. Since the project did not allow for quick adjustments, some of the original purpose of the project could no longer be fulfilled.

The standard of democracy
To be eligible for party assistance, parties need to adhere to democratic standards both regarding their internal organization and in relation to other parties and the political process. The requirement of democratic internal organization boils down to the existence of functioning procedures of internal democracy in the party, or at least an aspiration to install these procedures. As has been argued in section three of chapter four, a defining feature of party politics in Georgia and Ukraine is that parties there have been overwhelmingly elite-led and that, relatedly, few have implemented meaningful procedures of internal democracy. Parties are often described as the personal fiefdoms of their leaders, and formally existing procedures of internal democracy as merely cosmetic. While some parties, such as, arguably, the Republican Party of Georgia and the People’s Movement of Ukraine, have implemented a reasonable degree of internal democracy, most others have not and did not intend to do so in the foreseeable future. If the criterion of internal democracy would have been strictly observed, few parties would have been left for providers of assistance to work with.

An extreme example of a leader-dominant party is the Georgian Labor Party: ‘In a country where parties were often dominated by their leaders, Labor was extreme even by Georgian standards’ (Mitchell 2008: 49). Still, the Labor Party has received assistance from both NDI and IRI, participated in the NIMD-ODIHR project, and counts as a ‘sister party’ for AMS. An example of a party of which the overly dominant position of its leader has been detrimental to the goals of party assistance, is SPU. According to a former international secretary of SPU, years of
receiving party assistance have not led to any changes within the party because its leader, Oleksandr Moroz, ruled the party as a dictator and did not allow change. SPU is a participant in assistance programs by all major providers of assistance, and is the ‘sister party’ of FES and AMS.

On top of exercising internal democracy, parties need to have democratic credentials both in terms of attitude and in terms of actual behavior, and both in relation to other parties and to the political process. As has been argued in chapter four, many parties in Georgia and Ukraine, especially among the more relevant parties, essentially were products of undemocratic practices, or otherwise were led by incentives which are seen as inimical to democracy, such as the overriding aim to win office for economic gain. Together, these ‘undemocratic’ parties contribute to distort the electoral playing field. Undemocratic practices in party politics have been most evidently embodied in the parties of power which benefited extensively from state resources and patronage. Although CUG of president Shevardnadze contained most features of a party of power, the party counted as one of NDI’s main recipients of assistance until not long before the Rose Revolution. NDI’s lack of inhibition to work with CUG squares with the generally favorable opinion of Western governments towards the Shevardnadze regime until at least 1999. Since the Rose Revolution, all providers of assistance have been eager to work with UNM. Even after the 2008 parliamentary elections, which have been generally seen as suffering from serious flaws (e.g. Cooley and Mitchell 2009: 33-4; Lanskoy and Areshidze 2008: 165), NIMD staff maintained that UNM is a ‘democratic’ party and an appropriate partner for party assistance. Providers of assistance have had reservations to work with other undemocratic forces in Georgia considering their refusal to offer assistance to the Revival party, which was a vehicle of the autocratic and repressive regime of Aslan Abashidze in Adjara, rather than the ruling party of a feeble, semi-authoritarian regime that CUG was. The Socialist Party and the Traditionalist party, which entered in an electoral coalition with Revival for the 1999 parliamentary election, however, were still eligible to receive assistance after 1999. Besides the parties of power, numerous other parties in Georgia with dubious incentives were offered assistance. Among them has been, for instance, Industry Will Save Georgia, which rather than seeking to promote the common good, sought to promote first and foremost the business interests of its leader Topadze (Mitchell 2008: 36).

As in Georgia, a party of power, albeit in this case the unsuccessful NDP, was one of the main recipients of assistance of NDI in Ukraine during the 1990s. Other parties that have received assistance in Ukraine, such as SDPU(o) and the Labor Party,
have been equally associated with the exploitation of state resources for electoral gain. Providers of assistance generally have held back from offering assistance to parties that ostentatiously were virtual projects. Since IRI in Ukraine, however, as part of a very inclusive approach, has only declined assistance to a few extremist parties among the parties that took part in parliamentary elections, some ‘virtual’ and ‘oligarchic’ parties have inevitably been offered assistance. Several arguments could be put forward why the Party of Regions would not pass the test of being a democratic force and therefore should not be eligible to receive assistance. Among other things, its leaders sought to steal the presidential election in 2004, the party contains features of a dominant party of power on a regional level in southern and eastern oblasti, and is propped up by donations from the country’s wealthiest businessman, Rinat Akhmetov. Still, all major providers of party assistance do not refrain from offering assistance to the party. The democratic credentials of SPU, one of the political parties which actively supported the Orange Revolutions, were shattered in the eyes of many when the party entered a government coalition with PRU and KPU in 2006. The example of SPU illustrates that providers of assistance often harbor unrealistic expectations concerning the parties they work with. Another example is CUG. A work plan of NDI in Georgia for the years 2001-2002 stated that NDI ‘would try to help CUG remain true to its original democratic ideals’ (NDI 2001c: 8). Given that CUG was a party of power which served the interests of a less-than-democratic regime, as became clear, for example, in the complicity of CUG in the large-scale fraud during the 1999 parliamentary election, it is far from evident that there was much sincerity to the ‘original democratic ideals’ of CUG.

A significant share of parties that have received assistance in Georgia and Ukraine, in sum, have not met the criteria of viability and democracy that the providers of assistance impose on themselves with regard to the selection of parties. This was to some degree unavoidable: if only those parties had been selected that were both credibly viable and democratic, then very few would have been eligible for assistance. Decisions to include certain parties in assistance programs have besides been driven by misguided perceptions of those parties. The problems with the selection of unviable and undemocratic parties for the effectiveness of party assistance are obvious: the possible effect of assistance on unviable parties is lost when these parties disappear, while undemocratic parties are a priori unreceptive to assistance.
5.4. PARTISANSHIP

A second standard of good practice prescribes that assistance should be provided to a set of parties that collectively are representative of the democratic section of the political party spectrum, so as not to influence the outcome of an election or to interfere directly in the domestic affairs of recipient states (see the second section of chapter two). If one provider of assistance through its individual efforts cannot attain non-partisanship, then the efforts of assistance providers from the same country should fill the gap to ensure a net effect of non-partisanship. Thus, NDI and IRI through their combined effort, in theory, are non-partisan, and so are the Stiftungen. As a consequence of the selection of parties or the type of activity that is carried out, however, party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine more often than not effectively favors certain forces over others. Some of the persons who have been interviewed for this research have acknowledged that party assistance by their organization indeed was at least partially aimed at increasing the electoral chances of certain forces over other forces. A range of excuses are put forward by donors and providers to vindicate partisan outcomes of party assistance.

First, in a less-than-democratic or a non-pluralist setting providers of assistance can direct most of their assistance to disadvantaged forces in order to 'level the playing field' (USAID 1999b: 28). Doherty (2002: 5) notes that Ukraine is an example of a country where NDI was right to work mainly with 'reform-oriented' parties, because these were 'severely disadvantaged by a restricted political environment'. A 2007 USAID report contends that 'party assistance directed at providing democratic alternatives to UNM is critical for creating a level political playing field' (USAID 2007: 25). Since the Rose Revolution, however, there have been frequent allegations that IRI instead favored the ruling party. Leveling the playing field can also be pursued in a single segment of the political party spectrum. A representative of IRI in Georgia has remarked that it lends support to the small Kartula Dasi party with the aim of creating more competition in the left-wing part of the political spectrum, which is seen as being virtually monopolized by the Labor Party. Second, supporting reform-oriented parties can be proposed not so much to give them better chances in a less-than-democratic or non-pluralist setting, but rather to help them in their competition against reform-averse parties. In a number of post-communist countries including Ukraine until, roughly, the turn of the century, reform-averse parties have been equated with communist successor parties. A USAID report on NDI's Ukraine program during the 1997-1999 period openly states: 'NDI's focus on consolidation stems from concerns that the lack of cooperation among democratic forces would further undermine public support for democratic
reform and result in another parliament dominated by the Communist Party’ (NDI 1999: 3). NDI’s efforts to check communist successor forces arguably compromised its objective to also contribute to a level playing field, since one of the three ‘reform-oriented’ parties with which NDI worked closely was the state-sponsored NDP. The ‘restricted political environment’ that NDI apparently wanted to oppose by working with reform-oriented parties was in no small measure a consequence of the interference in party politics by the regime through parties like NDP. Third, a partisan outcome in party assistance is excused by pointing out that parties which are not trained are invited to participate, but do not respond to the invitation. The fact that a party like KPU has barely received assistance, indeed, may be at least as much because the party is not responsive to invitations for party assistance, as it may be because of a possible partisan bias on the part of the providers of assistance. Fourth, parties can be excluded for being insufficiently viable. Decisions to exclude parties for being unviable, however, ultimately rest on a qualitative assessment, and may easily turn into decisions led by partisan motives. Fifth, a provider of assistance may opt to work with a small number of parties in order to intensify training programs. If they do so, selecting a representative sample of democratic parties is even more difficult than when a more inclusive range of parties is selected. NDI in Georgia before the 1999 parliamentary elections concentrated its training program on three parties: CUG, the People’s Party, and NDP. These parties were earmarked by NDI as, respectively, centre-left, centrist, and centre-right, suggesting a balanced division of the three parties along the left-right spectrum (NDI 2000a: 17). It can be questioned, however, whether these labels really reflected the respective ideological positions of the parties concerned. Finally, when providers of assistance choose to conduct seminars with individual parties, as NDI in Ukraine has done, the number of parties they can work with is typically smaller than when they conduct seminars which are attended by representatives from several parties at once. As noted above, when a narrow selection of parties is made, the selection more often tends be non-representative.

Providers of assistance in Georgia and Ukraine have often been subject to criticism for alleged partisanship. The coalition-building efforts of NDI in Georgia were widely perceived as favoring the political forces of especially Saakashvili and Zhvania over other forces, both from the opposition and the regime. Criticism targeting NDI was voiced by the government, by Shalva Natelashvili, leader of the opposition Labor Party (Mitchell 2008: 88), as well as by well-known Georgian political scientists. IRI in Georgia since the Revolution has been criticized for allegedly favoring UNM or more generally for acting in cahoots with the ruling forces. According to one IRI
representative in Georgia, UNM receives a disproportionate share of party assistance by IRI because it is more advanced and better coordinated than all other parties. IRI was also criticized for its partnership with NGNI, which ‘was, in essence, hand selected by the governing UNM’ (McGlinchey 2007: 20). Allegations by the opposition to the effect that IRI was pursuing a partisan line appeared to be substantiated when Dimitri Shashkin, long-standing program officer for IRI in Georgia who was promoted to become IRI’s chief of party in 2008, accepted an offer to join the government as Minister for Penitentiary and Probation in February 2009. Reportedly, Shashkin stayed on as IRI chief of party for some time after he took up his cabinet position. The ODIHR-NIMD project came under fire from a few participating parties because the director of the local partner organization CIPDD, Ghia Nodia, was rumored to be close to government circles, before he left CIPDD to join the government as Minister of Education. In Ukraine, the Party of the Regions has accused NDI of support to the opposition ahead of the Orange Revolution. A blatant expression of partisanship has been the active participation in party politics by two local representatives of the providers of assistance. One representative of KAS in Georgia was on the list of the Rightist Alliance-Topadze Industrialists in the 2008 parliamentary elections, while a representative of NDI in Ukraine has been on the list of the PORAPRP coalition in 2006. Both were on unelectable positions.

Since coalition-building in Georgia and Ukraine has typically been promoted among parties from a particular part of the political spectrum, it has inevitably taken on a partisan nature. NDI has arguably been the most assertive actor in coalition-building in Georgia and Ukraine. In a 2003 publication by USAID entitled Political Party Assistance Policy, it is argued that coalition-building among ‘a fragmented opposition’ is permissible ‘in a strict authoritarian system’ (USAID 2003b: 10). It is a stretch, however, to typify Georgia under Shevardnadze and Ukraine under Kuchma as ‘strict authoritarian’, if only because a degree of political pluralism in these countries was preserved. KAS in Ukraine has actively promoted coalition-building among centre-right forces both before and following the Orange Revolution, with the explicit aim of a formal merger of these forces into one larger force. Especially before the Revolution, the balance of German party assistance in Ukraine was clearly partisan due to the fact that FES had only a small party assistance program that moreover comprised seminars for political parties from different parts of the political spectrum, and other Stiftungen were not, or only marginally active in party assistance. A secondary objective of the ODIHR-NIMD project was to contribute to coalition-building among the participating opposition parties, and more generally to strengthen the opposition so as to create a more level playing field.
According to an NIMD representative, this approach was justified because the ruling UNM had itself indicated that it wanted to be faced by a stronger opposition because this would enhance the country’s democratic legitimacy. It is remarkable in this light that the authorities undertook measures, such as amendments to electoral legislation which reduced the number of parliamentary seats chosen from party lists, to ensure a particularly big win in the 2008 parliamentary election (Mitchell 2008: 94).

Partisan motives are obvious in the selection of partner parties by the Stiftungen and the Dutch party institutes. It has been argued before that claims by providers of assistance to the effect that the cumulative efforts of providers of assistance from one country guarantee non-partisanship, are untenable, in part because some of the Stiftungen and the Dutch party institutes work exclusively with partner parties, while others opt for a multi-party approach, whether on top of party-to-party assistance or not (see section two of chapter two). Despite claims that the U.S. party institutes do not engage in fraternal relations, in practice their party selection sometimes has seemed to strongly favor one particular party. This applies especially to NDI’s relationship with Rukh in Ukraine during the 1990s. IRI’s relationship with UNM after the Rose Revolution equally borders on a fraternal relationship.

The selection of a partner party by the Stiftungen and the Dutch party institutes has often involved decisions that were informed by incorrect assessments of parties. Too often, the decision for a partner party appears to have been driven by that party’s membership or observer status in a transnational party or a similarity in party name or stated ideological position. It has been naïve of EFF, the party institute of the Dutch Christian-Democratic Appeal, to believe that the Christian-Democratic Union of Georgia, a fringe party, had the capacity to grow into a more viable force (EFF 2004). Both FNS and VVD were initially eager to accept UNM as their partner because that party had voiced its intention to become a member of the Liberal International. After some time, however, UNM changed course to seeking observer status in the European People’s Party, which it received in 2008. FNS in Ukraine was not amused when it found out PRP, known up to that moment for them as a liberal party, had suddenly joined the BYuT electoral coalition, which, to many, has a populist centre-left outlook. Batkivshchyna, the leading party in BYuT, surprised providers of assistance by seeking affiliation with the European People’s Party while it had previously stated an interest to join the Socialist International. FES and AMS, for which SPU counts as a partner, were surprised when that party apparently betrayed the ideals of the Orange Revolution by joining a government coalition with PRU and KPU. SPU was shunned for years by NDI in Ukraine, before it became one
of the vanguard parties in the anti-Kuchma opposition, and a regular recipient of NDI assistance. An evaluation of the Matra Political Parties Program, from which the party assistance programs of the Dutch party institutes are funded, has noted that the ideological indeterminacy of many parties in recipient countries renders partner selection virtually impossible (Verheije et al.: 2006: 59). Sometimes, providers of assistance have apparently shared this view: because they were unable to identify appropriate partners, KAS (until 2007) and FES, for instance, have refrained from engaging in party assistance in Georgia.

In sum, the outcome of the assistance that is provided to parties is nearly always to some degree partisan. The many possible excuses that are put forward for a partisan outcome are not all credible. More often than not, providers of assistance do not ‘make a good faith effort to assist all democratic parties with equitable levels of assistance’ (USAID 2003b: 1), as is generally required from them. The frequent instances of partisanship raise questions about the legitimacy of party assistance and have sometimes compromised the effort in the eyes of domestic stakeholders. Individual examples of partisanship show that providers of assistance in Georgia and Ukraine have often strayed from self-imposed norms in order to achieve desired effects. Even if they did so, however, party assistance has remained largely without a positive, lasting impact on parties. As the next chapter will argue in more detail, party assistance, despite the many irregular approaches that it has incorporated, has not been able to put up a challenge to the domestic constraints on party development in Georgia and Ukraine.