Number 14 • Fall 2011

ScholarForum

THE JOURNAL OF THE OPEN SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

Corruption and Governance

Regional Focus: THE CAUCASUS

Essays and creative works by Open Society Scholarship Programs' grantees and alumni

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Dear Readers,

As the Scholar Forum publishes its 14th edition, we once again throw a spotlight on one of the Open Society Foundations' key areas of geographic interest: the Caucasus, a region marked by a rich and complicated history, politics, and culture. This edition also presents grantee and alumni thoughts on an issue of critical importance to the strength and stability of any society: corruption and governance.

Though geographically small, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are rich with greenery, mountains, sea, natural resources, and inhabited by hospitable people who reflect and are shaped by layers of ancient cultures, religious traditions, and political conflicts. Articles with a regional focus highlight the struggle of young Armenian women to break through both Soviet traditions and generational obstacles, present the views of scholars from outside of the region on the legal positions of the breakaway entities of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the role of politics in the Rose Revolution in Georgia.

Providing views on governance and corruption that are shaded by increasing pessimism, contributing grantees and alumni express a common sense of frustration with weak and corrupt governments in the countries where they work or live. From a Belarusian look at the stultifying effects of governmental policy on the educational system, to the façade of liberalization in Burma, the articles expose the reality that many countries have a long way to go towards improving the lives of their citizens. In Kazakhstan, one grantee calls for the constitution to be followed once and for all. Two articles focusing on Southeastern Europe expose the intricacies and depth of government corruption: in Macedonia, political figures are becoming interwoven with media, creating a mix of news and information that is increasingly politicized. Meanwhile in Albania, a PhD scholar provides an analysis of the country's murky politics.

The Scholarship Programs' Academic Showcase highlights the practical, academic research that our scholars have and are currently undertaking, and displays an illuminating and diverse range of scholarship and activities.

Happy Reading! We look forward to continuing to report to you about our support for successful and meaningful scholarship in 2012!

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ScholarForum

The Journal of the Open Society Scholarship Programs

Fall 2011 · Number 14

Editor: Zoë BROGDEN

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Designer: Samuel BUGGELN

ScholarForum is published by the Open Society Scholarship Programs. ScholarForum is distributed to current and former scholarship recipients, host institutions, educational advising centers, and educational professionals.

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COVER TOPIC

Corruption and Governance

Simple Wish by a Global Citizen

GLOBAL CITIZEN*
Supplementary Grants Program—Asia

At first, I was full of excitement as I travelled home after a long stay abroad. However, approaching the immigration queue, an uncomfortable, oppressive feeling overcame me. As I watched the government officers, I thought, "Welcome back to Burma, the second worst country in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2010!"

It hadn't always been this way. Once it gained independence from British rule in 1948 up until 1962—the year the military took over—Burma was one of the world's largest rice producers and one of the region's richer countries. Once the military came to power, it went downhill from there. By 2007, according to the UNDP Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey, 32 percent of Burma's people lived under the poverty line of 162,136 Kyat or $150 per year. The government has claimed that this has been reduced to 26 percent based on the survey conducted in 2009-2010. It is both unpleasant and interesting to observe the destructive power of corruption on a country that has so much development potential. The spectacle is only enhanced by the fact that this power has endured for half a century.

Needless to say, the destructive power of corruption and poor governance is a curse for every country under authoritarian rule. Yet in Burma, the curse is more severe than in other undemocratic societies. Some socialist and communist countries have managed to be flexible while still practicing what they believe, like Vietnam, for example, which has adopted a market economy to pursue real economic development while keeping governance firmly under the Communist Party's rule. Burma's junta, however, has adopted socialist policies and a market economy in name only, using them simply to disguise its objective of exercising ultimate control over society.

Corruption was implicit throughout Burma's socialist period from 1974-1988, as the private sector was, apart from small businesses, all but banned. A closed economic policy drove the economy into total collapse and brought people onto the streets, crying for democratic change. The junta responded by taking over power with another wave of generals who adopted a market economy and guaranteed an election. When the private sector opened, it became legitimate for elite members of the junta to take a big slice. Thus, corruption became a quasi-legitimate practice.

Burma's junta recognizes that demands for greater democracy, transparency, and integrity in government become stronger as per capita income rises. As a result, prosperity is limited to constrain such demands.

"It is both unpleasant and interesting to observe the destructive power of corruption on a country that has so much development potential"

As a constraint, exports have been subject to 10 percent tax while other neighboring countries are encouraging exports in monetary or non-monetary incentives. A country's abundant labor force is an advantage for industrial business development, but in Burma no attention or support was given to this sector apart from rules, regulations, and procedures which became increasingly unreasonable. The unpredictable regulatory environment bred rent-seeking behavior

Photo: Alayung THAKSIN / Panos Pictures

Burma, Myanmar, 11/05/2008. Police stop a photographer, telling him that he cannot visit the area to document the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis, which hit Burma in May 2008. The officers also insisted that no aid donations from private individuals were to go to victims without going through them.

*The author wishes to publish under a pseudonym

across all levels of the economy. Though sanctions help, the main responsibility lies with the ruling group who really did not care for real development. Apart from the natural resource extraction business, almost no foreign direct investment has been coming in since investors realized the real attitudes of the ruling authority.

Based on the finding by Graf Lambsdorff that an improvement in a country's Transparency International Corruption score by one point increases productivity by 4 percent of the GDP and increases net annual capital inflows by 0.5 percent of GDP, a rough estimate can be made as to how much the country with a corruption score of 1.4 is losing a year. This should not be seen as a country's loss, but a global loss. The world's resources are limited and Burma should have contributed to the global community with its services and products.

Burma entered a new stage in its far from certain political transition when a civilian government took over in April 2011 and the president named "good governance" as a priority. It has taken the junta almost two decades to hold an election. The last one, in 1990, was a landslide victory for the major opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which the junta nullified. As part of the terms of the 2010 elections, the military directly appointed 25 percent of the seats in parliament. Out of the remaining 75 percent of seats, the junta won 74.8 percent of the seats in the House of Nationalities and 79.6 percent in the House of Representatives. The NLD boycotted the election. Today, the new government has taken measures to relax trade procedures such as reducing the export tax from 10 percent to 7 percent and holding national level workshops for rural development. However, the measures taken thus far seem more like a reactionary measure to the voices of business and humanitarian groups. The government itself has not come up with a clear picture regarding the overall reform strategy. Indeed, their no-tolerance policy toward all opposition, including Daw Aung San Su Kyi, mirrors the previous military regime. The general public feels strongly that the government has initiated a reform process only to ease international pressure.

Burma remains a deeply traditional society with strong elements of reverence for hierarchical forms of organization, respect for "elders" and a powerfully superstitious spirituality which promotes a fatalistic belief in "fortune" and the efficacy of religious "merit-making." While this kind of culture reflects a militarist and royalist spirit in Burma, it has also become a perfect tool for oppressors.

From the perspective of a global citizen, a simple thought is that maximizing the full potential of a country is of global interest. While globalization could have transformed more and more countries into open societies and encouraged good governance gradually, there are many places like Burma where conventional approaches do not work and more support is needed from the global community to counter organized crime by oppressors. ■

Contemplating Issues of Corruption and Governance in Kazakhstan

Zhenis KEMBAYEV, Kazakhstan
DAAD-OSF Program, University of Hamburg, Faculty Exchange, 2006

In December 2011, Kazakhstan will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its independence. During the first decades of its sovereign existence, Kazakhstan, like many other post-Soviet countries, has been in a process of unprecedented and fundamental transformation. This inconceivably complicated process has included, on the one hand, the transition from a Communist political system and a state-managed economy to a—at least theoretically—democratic and market-oriented state, and, on other hand, the restoration of national statehood.

The removal of the planned economy resulted in a catastrophic economic recession throughout the 1990s, leading to widespread poverty and massive inequalities in income. In a country where the political culture had never promoted democratic beliefs and values in its citizens to support democratic institutions, the process of transformation could easily have caused the division of the population into antagonistic social, ethnic, and religious groups.

Nevertheless, despite many assumptions that Kazakhstan would slide toward economic and political chaos, the country remained united and developed a cohesive multinational identity and ideology. Kazakhstan has stable relationships with all members of the international community and has enjoyed significant economic growth since the start of the new millennium, thanks to its market-oriented reforms and the strong energy sector. The current objectives pursued by the country include diversifying the economy away from an overdependence on natural resources and becoming one of 50 most competitive countries in the world.

Many in Kazakhstan believe that all these achievements would not have been possible without a strong presidency. In fact, Kazakhstan may certainly be described as a "super-presidential republic," where the president is not only the head of state and the major policy-maker, but also "the arbiter ensuring concerted functioning of all branches of state power" and "the guarantor of the inviolability of the constitution." He is exclusively entitled to initiate any amendments or additions to the constitution. President Nazarbayev is guaranteed under the constitution full immunity from prosecution for all potential illegal acts, except for high treason. Moreover, on May 13, 2010 (on the eve of Nazarbayev's 70th birthday), the Parliament of Kazakhstan adopted a set of amendments granting him the title of the Leader of the Nation (Elbasy in Kazakh). Such amendments reiterated his life-long immunity and provided him additional exemptions (in particular, the private property of both the president and his family members will be immune from

seizure, while the damage of the president's image and distortion of the president's biography will constitute a criminal offense). As for the most recent events, on April 3, 2011, Nazarbayev was reelected ahead of schedule for another seven-year term with over 95 percent of the votes against three nominal candidates, the fact which is clearly indicative of the high degree of the centralization of the political power in the hands of the Kazakh President.

At the same time, however, the excessive concentration of political power in the presidency creates a weakness and fragility in the legislature, stalls efforts at democratic reforms, and jeopardizes civil liberties. Consequently, Kazakhstan's progress toward true democracy and rule of law remains insufficient; there is still considerable danger of ultimately losing rudimentary democratic institutions and fully reverting to a form of authoritarian rule. The lack of effective legislature, fully independent judiciary, and a self-governing civil society, which could efficiently monitor the omnipotent executive branch, results in widespread and extensive corruption, as shown by Kazakhstan's ranking of 105th place out of 178 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Ranking.

Here, it should be noted that countries taking the top places in the Transparency International Ranking simultaneously belong to the most competitive economies in the world. Accordingly, it may be concluded that the lower the corruption, the stronger the economic competitiveness.

Indeed, corruption poses a serious development challenge, primarily since it significantly undermines economic growth through inefficiencies. It increases the cost of production, distorts competition, and diverts public investment into less competitive (or even absolutely useless) projects. Corruption undermines good governance and even the legitimacy of the government by flouting or even subverting formal processes, reducing the quality of government services, diminishing responsibility in policy-making, and compromising the rule of law.

Accordingly, corruption is both a cause of economic backwardness and political dictatorship. As such, it breeds social and political unrest which may potentially derail any economic growth.

The implication is clear: should the Republic of Kazakhstan be serious and consistent in achieving its declared goal of becoming one of 50 most competitive countries in the world, it must fight corruption by all possible means. In other words, that means further economic growth is dependent on a substantial degree of democratization. The overcentralization of political power, which was required in the initial stage of Kazakhstan's development to increase political stability and facilitate economic reforms, is now certainly an impediment to further growth.

The best case scenario would require profound reforms from above. In view of a lack of a strong civil society, the ruling elite should not only be tolerant of political opposition, but actively take steps to support the creation of fully fledged opposition parties. In turn, the creation of a multi party system would certainly facilitate transparency.

> "Kazakhstan's progress toward true democracy and rule of law remains insufficient"

Currently at a crossroads, Kazakhstan should be persistent in pursuing programm atic objectives laid down in Article 1 of its Constitution, which proclaims the Republic to be "a democratic, secular, legal and social state whose highest values are an individual, his life, rights and freedoms." Only in doing so can Kazakhstan successfully fight corruption and become a free, stable, and prosperous country confidently facing the future. ■

Zhennis is a Professor of Law at KIMEP University, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Reporting on Macedonian Media: the Corruption of Information

Aleksandra JORDANOSKA, Macedonia
OSF Chevening University of Cambridge Program, 2009-2010

As a former communist country, Macedonia underwent a complex process of transitioning to a democratic society through high-speed (and uncontrolled) privatization, deregulation, and disarray in law enforcement. These circumstances created many legal gaps and hidden spaces in which various corrupt practices flourished. Corruption-related scandals in public administration, the judiciary, higher education, and the health system have received the most attention and research. Yet a crucially neglected problem remains the degree of corruption in the professional delivery of impartial information by the Macedonian media.

Since my graduation as an OSF Chevening scholar from an MPhil in Criminology at the University of Cambridge, I have gained first-hand insight into the aetiology and phenomenology of corruption in the sphere of the media. Working at Transparency International–Macedonia, I conducted research for the 2011 Macedonia Report, analyzing progress in the field of tackling corruption. The main cause of Macedonia's media malaise appears to be the strong influence of political parties upon media independence. In this sense, the phenomenology of Macedonia's corrupt practices most often consists of favoritism, cronyism, and inappropriate political donations.

One of the most problematic issues in the relationship between political parties and the media is the reported favoritism in selecting the media to advertise government activities. Outlets perceived as

friendly receive far greater advertising revenue than media perceived as critical. The official stance of the State Commission for Preventing Corruption is that government spending for advertising represents a form of legalized corruption. The most disquieting thing is that the highest executive body in Macedonia appears complicit. This is particularly worrying given the position of the government as the country's biggest advertiser.

Activities by media companies toward political parties also place in question the impartiality of reporting. Specifically, the media overtly figure as large donors to party electoral campaigns. According to the Audit Report on the financing of the 2009 presidential and local elections, one national media company was the highest donor to the biggest party in the government. In fact, this national TV broadcaster granted a 97.42 percent or €1.867.000 discount for the party's advertisements during the elections. This is also one of the top two media companies in the country which has received the largest amount of government advertising money. To make matters worse, the Law on the Financing of Political Parties does not provide a requirement for guaranteed price equality to parties for advertising in various media. This legal gap enables media companies to donate to their preferred party by giving discounts on advertising prices.

Finally, a significant issue affecting the strength of both the Macedonian media and democracy is the hesitancy and fear of the press to investigate and report on corruption. This stems in part from the fact that a number of television stations and newspapers are owned by or linked to leaders of political parties, both in the government and in the opposition. Editorial policy is therefore shaped by ownership interests and the aforementioned monetary provisions between the media and political parties, especially those in the incumbent government. What's more, the regulatory Broadcasting Council remains underfinanced and entirely dependent on the government.

Poppy fields near Tbilisi, Georgia
photo: Zurab TATANASHVILI

Media coverage during the recent Parliamentary elections in June 2011 demonstrated the continued politicization of media, in which reporting and analysis are deeply polarized along the lines of interest of business people with political party connections. In fact, the Macedonian Institute for Media, a non-profit agency monitoring the election coverage, revealed numerous cases of biased and selective reporting, censored and opinionated news content, and, highly worryingly, journalists slandering each other due to political differences.

"Coverage of corruption cases remains superficial and dependent upon editorial policies"

Aside from this form of harassment, criminal and civil libel charges by politicians against journalists remain a common means of pressure in Macedonia. According to the 2010 Freedom House Report, in 2009 there were more than 160 pending cases against journalists, and cases filed in 2007 and 2008 had already resulted in fines totaling €247,000.

Consequently, as pointed out by the non-partisan Centre for Civil Communications in 2009, Macedonia's media do not fulfill their role in the battle against corruption as their coverage of corruption cases remains superficial and dependent upon editorial policies.

In summary, corrupt practices have a corrosive impact upon the ability of the media to uphold professional journalistic standards, and the ability of bodies of public oversight to promote and protect such journalism. The corrupt tend to neglect their obligations because of their exclusive attention to corruption, to the point where they become indifferent to the harmful consequences of their actions on media and the public service it performs. It is this metastatic effect which multiplies and distorts the democratic process and the engagement of citizens. ■

Aleksandra is pursuing a PhD in Law at Queen Mary, University of London, focusing on economic crimes.

An Insight into the State-Owned Education System of Belarus

ANONYMOUS, Belarus
OSF Chevening University of Sussex Program 2004-2005

The authoritarian regime in Belarus employs two major tools to keep society under control: on the one hand, coercive and repressive measures, and, on the other, what I call an "information environment distortion technique," a descendant of ideology, which was employed under Soviet totalitarianism. The former generates fear, the latter generates ignorance.

The role played by the Belarusian education system in obliterating critical thinking and churning out narrow-minded and conformist voters is quite significant. The country's education system is under complete government control. All educational establishments are subordinated to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry develops academic programs for every subject taught at school. It tells schools what textbooks they must use, how many hours of each subject they must teach every year, how many years students must study, etc. A few years ago, the Ministry ordered schools to switch from a minimum of twelve years of schooling to eleven years. It is noteworthy that the reform was initiated in the wake of remarks by President Lukashenko about the country having too many university graduates and too few blue-collar workers to work at state-owned factories.

Another relatively recent development in the field of education was the introduction of compulsory two-year work placements for university graduates. As a result, the right of many university graduates to a free choice of employment is violated, as they are sent to work in remote villages with primitive local economies. Those graduates are, in fact, overqualified to perform their work duties, and have little to no opportunity to put their skills to work. No wonder Belarus's rate of emigration for university students and mid-career professionals is going through the roof!

In my freshman year, there were twelve students in my class at Minsk State Linguistic University. As of today, only three or four of them remain in Belarus. Most people who are able to learn a foreign language emigrate to Western Europe or North America, others to Moscow where they do not face linguistic or cultural barriers.

So, if the education system in Belarus is no longer efficient as far as imparting scientific knowledge to students is concerned, what other function does it perform? Apparently, it plays a key role in de-politicizing the public.

The education system has been fine-tuned in such a way that young citizens are programmed with patterns of behavior and thinking that rule out or drastically mitigate any possibility of focusing their attention on political life in Belarus. The primary objective of the education system is to raise new generations of de-politicized peons who possess a minimum set of skills required to generate GDP.

But it gets even worse. A side-effect of de-politicization is the complete obliteration of an individual's aspiration for freedom of opinion and critical thinking. By adopting the behavioral patterns of their role-models—teachers and parents—students develop certain "no-go" areas in their minds: they simply refrain from posing politically sensitive questions, at first to adults, and then to themselves.

In addition to this self-censorship function, the state monopoly on education provides the government with a tool for exerting control over students, who are normally the most active vehicle of change and resistance. In the case of Belarus, being active and participating in any sort of "undesirable" activities (street rallies, student unions, etc.) is rather dangerous, as it provides university management with a valid pretext to expel such activists or to deny them a room in the dormitory.

If we ponder upon why the people of Belarus do not look at the progress of their Western neighbors who broke free of communism in 1989, we will learn that there is little awareness of the new realities in Lithuania, Estonia, or Slovakia. The state-owned mass-media persistently compare the level of social well-being and economic development in Belarus with our eastern neighbor—Russia (and with Ukraine, a country still struggling with the shock which follows any profound economic and political restructuring). On the other hand, state-owned television companies never miss an opportunity to broadcast episodes of social unrest in democratic countries. In this way, the regime successfully creates a connection in the minds of the people between democracy and socioeconomic chaos, a terribly damaging association.

There are some civil society organizations which conduct macroeconomic analyses of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia and then inform the public—it's a good opportunity to refute popular fallacies—but in the absence of an independent mass-media, they do not have a voice, and efforts are limited to small seminars, circulating printed materials among like-minded people and posting them on the Internet. This work, however, is extremely important and it will continue to raise awareness in Belarusian society.

> "Students refrain from posing politically sensitive questions, at first to adults, and then to themselves"

I believe these and other educational activities are the right *modus operandi* for countering the spreading sense of ignorance among the general population that state education does little to counteract. It is a slow path to change, but it's better than nothing.■

The author, who wishes to remain anonymous, currently works as a freelance translator.

Albanian Political Parties and the Mafia—Providing "Protection" for Democracy

Fabian ZHILLA, Albania
Global Supplementary Grants Program–Europe, 2009-2010

Mafia-like mechanisms may help political elites "protect" democracy, a trend which appears to be surfacing in Albania. In 2011, Albania was scheduled to hold local elections and, unlike in many developed countries, they are very important points for analysis. First, if they go well, the European Union (EU) may consider Albania as achieving free and transparent elections, one of the key standards for EU membership. Secondly, this voting process will be helpful in assessing the degree of influence of the mafia-type structures in the success of the political elite. Elections are usually a strong indicator of the interplay between the formal and informal forces which rule post-communist societies.

> "Elections are a strong indicator of the interplay between the formal and informal forces which rule post-communist societies"

Federico Varese, in his landmark work on the definitions of organized crime, describes the mafia as "an organized group [which] attempts to regulate and control the production and distribution of a given commodity or service unlawfully." He goes on to add that mafia-like organizations act as a form of organized crime with the role of "controlling the supply of protection." It is worth analyzing the behavior of Albanian political parties in the recent local elections based on these definitions. I argue that informal instruments similar to mafia-like methods are still thriving and have been used interchangeably by political elites for years to achieve their aims. They were even used in the recent elections.

It is not new that political parties in post-Communist societies emerged differently from their Western counterparts. They were not constituted on the basis of a clear and pure ideology. Nor were they representing interest groups. In general, the political elite in post-Communist societies were based on closed interests. The format of the political party was a cover to exploit both natural and human resources. The Albanian political elite are no different in this respect, a trend shown in the 2011 local elections. Although they were local, the entire political discourse following the election process was mainly grounded on political disputes.

Generally, Albanian elections have been favorable settings to exploit democracy by manipulating votes. As votes are the only instrument where people can show their will, they have become valuable political "property" for the parties. Those who are able to control the voting process or this "property right" gain power. In a highly corrupt environment such as Albania, where public confidence in the political elite is decreasing sharply, the only way for the governing political class to rule is to manage votes by operating as a mafia-like structure. In this election, political parties have established parallel and hidden networks, usually using regional and family connections. Both main political formations, democrats and socialists, have reflected aspects of organized criminal behavior.

The dynamic of this criminal behavior is different, however, between governing parties and the political coalition in opposition. The behavior of the government resembles the definition of organized crime in terms of regulating and controlling the production of artificial votes. Political parties in power abuse the entire state's apparatus and its infrastructure to advance their private goals. Public servants are forced to vote and asked to serve as commissioners of political parties in the vote counting process. Unlawfully, according to the media, the majority of employers working in public institutions were coerced to attend political campaigns and technically assist representatives of ruling parties throughout the campaign. Even public schools, hospitals and universities were not safe from this institutional misconduct.

In stark contrast, the political coalition in opposition followed other informal patterns. To a certain extent, its network resembled a mafia-type structure. To "protect" democracy, the opposition, according to the media, organized an informal parallel mechanism to protect and control the voting process, the so-called "army for protecting votes." One of its tasks was to stand and check people for their ID before they entered voting booths, a violation of the law.

This "army" was organized and managed by deputies of the opposition formerly having high-ranking positions in the Albanian police force. Although the number of individuals in this structure has not been made public as of yet, there are estimates that around 3,000 people have been engaged only to "protect" the voting process of approximately 400,000 voters in the capital city, Tirana.

The election process in Albania after 20 years of democracy still seems to suffer from a lack of transparency and freedom. Political parties have monopolized the voting process and appear to use informal methods to manage and hold it in control. It is a paradox that the use of these informal ways and parallel structures were justified under the name of "protecting" democracy. The transplanting of mafia-like patterns into political parties in Albania flags a significant concern for the rule of law in post-communist societies. The recent local election in Albania has shown how this can happen and the patterns that can occur.■

Fabian ZHILLA is a PhD Candidate at King's College Law researching the causes of judicial corruption and its interplay with organized crime in Albania.

REGIONAL FOCUS

The Caucasus

Zoë BROGDEN
Program Coordinator
Open Society Scholarship Programs

In the 20 years since the countries of the Caucasus became independent states after the fall of the Soviet Union, the gradual maturing of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia has brought cross-cutting social, economic, and political idiosyncrasies to the fore. Conflicts within such a geographically-close area pepper the region. The secession of the Abkhazia and North Ossetia in the North Caucasus and the number of internally displaced people have led to gaps in education in the youngest generations, as well as ingrained poverty and a struggle for rights. Four years of stalemate between Armenia and Azerbaijan has heightened concerns by organizations such as the International Crisis Group that an armed conflict over the disputed territory of Nagorno Karabakh is imminent. Armenia continues to face its own internal political wranglings between incumbent and opposition groups following the shooting of protestors in 2008, whilst also still struggling to find solid economic incentives to persuade potential migrants to stay. Azerbaijan, rich in oil and with the highest per-capita GDP in the region, is also slipping into media and freedom of information censure, facing allegations of corruption at the highest echelons of the government, and trying to balance secularism in a majority Muslim state. Compounding individual and regional conflicts and concerns, the Caucasus finds itself in a somewhat sensitive location wrapped between Russia, Iran, and Turkey. As the essays in this edition show, individual countries, the region as a whole, and the wider international community have a role to play in cooperation and stability in the region. The region is united, however, by the warmth, spirit and hospitality of its people, the richness of the cuisine, and the beauty of the natural landscape, from sea level to mountain top: we hope these endure. Articles in this section are the thoughts and opinions of our contributors. In response to any of the articles, your letters to the Editor at scholarforum@sorosny.org are welcome. References are available upon request. ■

Toward Establishing a Women's Movement in Armenia: Achievements and Challenges

Gohar SHAHNAZARYAN, Armenia
Faculty Development Fellowship Program, 2008, 2010, 2011

The question of women's rights in Armenia goes back as far as the 6th and 7th centuries, when, according to the laws and regulations at the time, women and men had equal rights and opportunities with regards to property, divorce, and remarriage. Even the ancient Greek philosopher, Xenophon, pointed out that Armenian women have rights and privileges, including speaking freely with men in the streets and participating in community life.

The whole concept of gender equality and women's rights has undergone significant transformations throughout Armenian history, taking into account the influence of Babylonian, Hellenistic, and Byzantine Empires, as well as Arabic, Turkish, and Russian civilizations. As a result, Western and Eastern cultures appear not only in poetry, art, music, and architecture, but also in attitudes toward the role of women in society.

One of the most important steps for the recognition of Armenian women's rights was the Declaration of Women's Rights, written by the Armenian female intellectuals, Srbuhi Tusab and Zabel Asatur, in the beginning of the 19th century. Unfortunately, a tradition that could have transformed into a national movement did not arise, but was instead replaced by a Soviet ideology of equality, which, despite helping women achieve progress, significantly diminished the ethnic and cultural discourses of the movement.

A challenging new stage began after the collapse of Soviet Union. The current manifestation of the women's movement is represented mostly by non governmental organizations (NGOs) and individual activists. The establishment of a new identity for women is controversial and based on at least two opposing social and political discourses. Firstly, the so-called process of "Europeanization," with its stress on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all spheres, and secondly, a conservative and nationalistic discourse which is trying to popularize a new image of the traditional Armenian woman.

Despite some positive developments in the area of gender equality since 1990, including the adoption of international documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted after independence in 1993, there are still numerous macro- and micro-obstacles for the successful development of the women's movement in Armenia.

Firstly, there is a large difference in the understanding of the concepts of "civic organization," "grassroots organization," and "social activism" among older women, often former activists from the Communist Party, who are now running women's NGOs, and younger women who hold different perspectives on democracy, activism, and social change. As a result, young women are marginalized, underestimated, and struggling to be heard.

However, the empowerment of this young cohort of women could bring positive changes and ensure the effective and sustainable development of the women's movement.

According to research conducted by my organization, the Armenia Women's Resources Center, along with other organizations in the region, comprehensive obstacles that restrict young women's empowerment and limit their opportunities to take civic leadership positions include the absence of any kind of reference to problems specific to young women in existing youth policy and National Action Plans as well as social pressures that restrict young women's public participation. Up to 80 percent of the women surveyed stated the main problems they face today are social stereotypes, traditions, and pressure from the family (Young Women's Network of the South Caucasus, 2008).

At the same time, there is an increasing interest and motivation among young Armenian women to get leadership positions and play a significant role in the development of the country and the region. Based on the survey, 85 percent think that young Armenian women could play a very important role in social, economic, political, and cultural processes, while 66 percent are willing to develop their capacities to participate in awareness raising, lobbying, and advocacy campaigns to promote women's rights and gender equality.

This is an important sign. Under more favorable circumstances, a new women's movement could emerge in Armenia based on an understanding of democratic values and principles and ethnic and cultural peculiarities that incorporate the concept of gender and women's rights.■

For more information on the Young Women's Network of the South Caucasus, please visit www.ywnsc.info. For the Armenia Women's Resources Center, please visit www.womenofarmenia.org

Reflections on the Rose Revolution in Georgia: The Importance of Cultural Context for Political and Social Transformation

Nadejda MAZUR, Moldova
Doctoral Fellowship Program, Indiana University–Bloomington, 2010

The Rose Revolution attracted a new wave of scholarly attention to Georgia almost a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In November 2003, the country held parliamentary elections, the results of which were widely contested by the opposition and the public alike. It also raised public concerns about the legitimacy of the result. After weeks of protests, the opposition, headed by Mikhail Saakashvili, came into power, bringing democratic changes to the country.

The main questions following the Rose Revolution concerned the circumstances that influenced changes in power, which were limited by a weak state and civil society, and a poor economy (Laverty, 2008). At the same time, factors such as religion, subcultures, values, and beliefs were less addressed despite playing a significant role.

The concept of new elites, as one subculture, emerged in Georgian politics when Shevardnadze's government (in power from the 1990s until 2003), failed to undertake promised reforms to move Georgia away from the Soviet past. In that period, new values and ideas, brought back by young people who had completed their education in the West, resonated in the minds of Georgia's young urban elite who also saw their future aligned with the West.

Another element strengthening the new elite in the Rose Revolution was the presence of personalities who had the potential to be perceived as and accepted by citizens as leaders. That capacity created a spiritual connection between the new elite and civil society, which contributed to the unity, persistence, and success of the movement. Although the new elite consisted of several potential leaders, it was Mikhail Saakashvili who was recognized for his "undeniably courageous and strategically smart leadership" (Jones, 2006). As well as his personality, the success of Saakashvili was also based on his goals for establishing a European-orientated, prosperous, and democratic state with "national unity based on a newly 'cultured' public" (Jones, 2006). However, those elements are effective only if shared by the public, as was the case in the Rose Revolution. Voting preferences for Saakashvili were preconditioned by a belief and trust in his party.

> "Thousands of Georgians protesting on the streets reminded authorities who Georgians are"

The new leadership appealed to the Georgian people with certain distinctive traits developed over centuries: honor, love for the Georgian culture, and strong political opinions. Being a part of such heritage, this new, young elite could have established links between various political and social concepts and Georgian identity, thus mobilizing society around a subcultural vision of Georgia.

In particular, in addition to a clear awareness of the public aspiration toward Europe and a strong leadership, the new elite also understood that Georgians had a feeling of closeness to Europe. One of the key elements was free and fair elections. When such expectations were not met, people went to the streets.

Perhaps the most significant element which justified the Georgian understanding of "Europeanness" was to be found in the Georgian culture; namely through religion and Western identity. Thousands of Georgians protesting on the streets reminded authorities about who Georgians are. Through the nonviolent character of the Revolution (an important feature of a democratic Western society), they provided a reminder that being a Georgian meant sharing a common origin, the Eastern Orthodox religion, and an ancient European history (Nodia, 2005).

We need hardly mention that Saakashvili and his supporters relied heavily on the notion of this Western identity in their rhetoric. Consequently, it created links between how people identified themselves as Georgians and the idea of European integration,

An ancient church in Kakheti, Georgia
photo: Nelly AKOBIA

which influenced the formation of voters' preferences and duly united them when they felt deceived. Indeed, the new leadership was criticized a few years later by the same Georgian public for concentrating power in the executive branch, for a weak party system, and a lack of respect for electoral law (Tatum, 2009). The authoritarian approach of President Saakashvili toward public protests through force and the arbitrary closure of independent media outlets brings into question the democratic values of the leadership and the subsequent ability to transition to a democratic state.

The case of Georgia revealed not only the importance of cultural context for the country's development, but also the significance of the interrelation between the public (as carriers of distinctive cultural traits) and a political subculture (the new elites). On the one hand, no structural factor could have achieved the results in the Rose Revolution that the cultural elements of the European identity created. As Nino Burjanadze, an important leader of the new elite, noted that "Georgians can tolerate a lot of things, poverty and so forth, but when it comes to [a reduction of] our dignity, we cannot tolerate it." (Wertsch, 2005).

When in power, the new elite sacrificed some of their more democratic principles in the name of "controlling the achievements".

The Rose Revolution showed that in a case where a "culture" of retaining power becomes more important than the democratic values shared by the majority of society, it becomes a threat to democracy and development.

However, it should not undermine the overall Georgian post-Revolution experience, a movement which proved the significant role the will of the people can have in fostering democratic achievements. It leaves strong hopes for further positive transformations. ■

Legally Limited Caucasus: How Restrictive International Law Prohibits the Secessions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia

Stefan VUKOTIĆ, Montenegro
OSF Chevening University of Cambridge Program, 2009-10

Abkhazia and South Ossetia, internationally recognized as integral parts of Georgia and the Soviet Union, attempted to break away from Georgia following the disintegration of the USSR. These de facto secessions, which have occurred but which have not been formally recognized, have been backed by Russia following several military conflicts with Georgian authorities. Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili applied forceful means against South Ossetia to re-take control of the region in August 2008, an attempt that, it was argued, was prevented by Russia with the assistance of Abkhazia on humanitarian grounds. Despite the de facto secessions, the entities remain largely unrecognized. Without concern for the political dimension of the issue, it can be seen that Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not meet demanding legal criteria for secession, and further, that international legal norms keep them in a legally ambiguous position, thus thwarting their international standing.

How international law precludes independence

International law is precluding the secessions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia because international legal doctrines of self-determination are based on contradictory principles. These are a result of the position international law maintains between the interests of states on the one hand, and of people, on the other (Weller, 2008). From this, certain internal inconsistencies emerged in the international legal tradition that have created a legal impasse for Abkhazia and South Ossetia in their pursuit of independence from Georgia.

The goal of the self-determination doctrine is to facilitate the creation of new states, but it has, over time, actually done more to limit them (Weller, 2008). When it was introduced globally through UN Resolution 1514 (XV) (1960) it was intended to accommodate and safeguard secessions arising from the break-up of colonialist regimes, mainly in Africa and Asia (Cassese,1995). However, it was immediately limited so as to prevent the uncontrolled proliferation of states which was perceived as a threat to international security (Weller, 2008). Namely, Resolution 1541 prescribed the conditions for the right to self-determination through secession that have curbed and outlawed many secession attempts, including those of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and have, as a result, produced very limiting self-determination doctrines, both constitutional and remedial.

Since Abkhazia and South Ossetia were not Soviet republics for which Resolution 1541 envisaged the right to secession, but were sub-entities of Georgia, which would not allow their secession, there was no legal basis for their claims. In other words, the doctrine of constitutional self-determination does not deal with the desires of entities wishing to secede, but looks instead into whether the mother-state recognizes the right to secession in its founding document, such as is the case with the former republics of the USSR, or whether it would at least be willing to acquiesce to such a demand, as was the case of Quebec in Canada. It was,

> "This international legal order is preventing Abkhazia and South Ossetia from achieving full statehood"

therefore, the USSR and Georgia, who in respective periods could, but did not, create the binding legal basis for the secessions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In the case of remedial secession, secession from a state which has betrayed the sovereignty entrusted to it by its citizens is permitted. In practice, this means that remedial secession from the mother-state could be attempted if the mother-state gravely disregards human rights and denies citizens' representation on a permanent basis, which is at the same time a policy of the state rather than of a government (Doehring, 1994). Since Abkhazia and South Ossetia have experienced protracted periods of peace with Georgia since the mid-1990s, whose reprisals were never so oppressive as to amount to the prerequisites of the constitutional doctrine, the preconditions for remedial secession that would result in the mother-state losing its right to exercise sovereignty have also not been met.

Drawing on the discussion above, it seems clear that the right to secession in international law depends on the actions of the mother state, rather than those of the entity trying to secede. Such an international legal order is preventing Abkhazia and South Ossetia from achieving full statehood, as neither entirely meets the very strict criteria for a legally accepted secession.

Regardless of Abkhazia and South Ossetia not meeting the legal criteria, they have achieved independence as a de facto sovereignty. However, due to the fact that they are not recognized by the international community, they are unable to exercise some of the most important statehood prerogatives. While recognition is not affecting their statehood in general (Cassese, 1995), the failure to obtain such recognition may be a serious impediment to a full international existence. The pursuit of independence by Abkhazia and South Ossetia was widely perceived to be in violation of the norms of international law, which has undoubtedly been one of the main reasons that only four states recognize the two entities' independence and enter into full relations with them. Therefore, as concerns the legal dimensions of the issue, the secessions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are curbed by the international law of self-determination, whose creators have the ability to limit an entity's statehood even if it meets the statehood criteria. This leaves them in a legally ambiguous position—a limbo between de facto statehood and a full international life.■

Men play chess in Narimanov Park, Baku, Azerbaijan
photo: Tamerlan RAJABOV

Social Justice through Photography in the Caucasus

Zoë BROGDEN
Program Coordinator, Open Society Scholarship Program

Driven by the belief that the power of an image can have an unquantifiable impact, the Open Society Documentary Photography Project provides Production Grants for photographers in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Mongolia, and Pakistan to help shape public perception and effect social change. In the Caucasus, grantee photographers have focused on social justice issues as diverse as the experience of women in Georgia, the effects of oil on the lived environment in Baku, Azerbaijan, and the everyday lives of communities in rural Armenia. "There is a lot of interest in photography in the Caucasus, and a great thirst for professional training and grant opportunities," states Amy Yenkin, director of the Documentary Photography Project, "although a tradition of photographic expertise has been passed down from the Soviet era, at present there are few formal institutions in the region in which to study documentary photography." In spite of this, Armenia has had a particularly strong tradition of documentary photography due to the presence of a photojournalism department, which was part of the Caucasus Media Institute School of Photography in Yerevan. The program succeeded in producing a generation of young, skilled, professional photographers. Unfortunately however, with the death of the director of the photojournalism department, the photography program has since closed. Documenting the gradual physical dismemberment of a historic district in Yerevan and the disintegration of a community that followed, Armenian photographer, Hayk Bianjyan, compiled the exhibit entitled *Forced Evictions: Property Violations in Armenia*, from which two powerful images are shown below and on the opposite page. For videos by Production Grant photographers from 2009–10, including a more complete showcase of Hayk's work, please visit: www.soros.org/initiatives/photography/multimedia/2009-production-grants-20110511 ■

Remnants of lives lived in the historical neighborhoods of Yerevan litter the ground
photo: Hayk BIANJYAN

Men move their possessions from soon-to-be demolished houses in Yerevan
photo: Hayk BIANJYAN

Open Society Programs in the Caucasus

The Open Society Foundations have a myriad of programs that engage with civil society activists and organizations, academic departments, and scholars in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Information on program grants as well as reports is available at: www.soros.org/initiatives. Within this location there are Open Society Foundations programs and initiatives that offer individual and organizational grants:

- Arts & Culture Program
- Central Eurasia Project
- Documentary Photography Project
- Human Rights & Governance Grants Program
- International Higher Education Support Program
- Open Society Fellowship
- Public Health Program
- Rights Initiatives
- Roma Initiatives
- Think Tank Fund
- Documentary Photography Project

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS IN THE CAUCASUS:

- Open Society Georgia Foundation
  www.osgf.ge
- Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation–Azerbaijan
  www.osi-az.org
- Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation–Armenia
  www.osi.am

OPEN SOCIETY BLOG

The Open Society Blog aims to showcase the ideas, opinions, and thoughts of those working for and with the Open Society Foundations. By giving our experts and grantees a platform to present their issues, the blog helps sharpen their thinking, and engage with a wider public in conversations about advancing open society values around the globe. Read more at www.soros.org.

Georgian Rural Reality: An Empirical Snapshot

Maia CHANKSELIANI, Georgia
Georgian Scholarship for Educational Professionals, 2006-2007

Poor rural villages can seem like a window into the distant past, where little has changed for millennia (Glaeser, 2011)

Unsurprisingly, rural-urban welfare disparities are much larger in poor countries than in rich countries. Georgia is a poor country with a large urban-rural income differential. An analysis of self-reported information surrounding consumption trends demonstrates that up to 70 percent of the population self-report as "poor" (World Bank, 2008). Poverty levels are much higher in villages where 47.3 percent of Georgia's population lives (GeoStat, 2009).

Rural families have serious difficulties generating surplus income for investment in good years and face income shocks in bad years. Indeed, an average rural household in Georgia spends 80 percent of its expenditure on food. Therefore, food price fluctuations affect rural populations to a significant degree and threaten their capacity of food self-sufficiency (ibid.). The rural-urban gap in poverty is widening as poverty increases in rural areas and decreases in urban areas (ADB, 2007; CEGSTAR, 2009).

"Just 39 percent of rural households consider their children's school environment acceptable"

The entrenchment of poverty in rural Georgia can be attributed to the narrow economic growth in the non-agricultural sectors (World Bank, 2008), a tendency toward subsistence of those employed in agriculture (ADB, 2007; World Bank, 2008), and poor employment opportunities for trained people in villages. As a result, only a few idealists would see any incentives to work in a village after acquiring a profession.

Protracted isolation from urban centers during long winters in mountainous areas leaves village residents economically depressed, with extremely limited opportunities for non-farm employment.

A look at the educational sector shows a similarly depressing trend. According to the 2006 Household Budget Survey, approximately half of Georgian families think schools meet the educational needs of their children. The difference in perception between rural and urban households, however, is striking: 66 percent of urban families maintain that their children's school learning environment is acceptable compared to just 39 percent of rural households.

The government of Georgia positively discriminates in support of rural schools in terms of school financing. Schools in Georgia receive public funding in the form of vouchers per pupil. The voucher amount varies according to the school's location: it is highest for those in mountainous rural areas, and lowest for those in the capital, Tbilisi. However, there is as yet no empirical evidence to demonstrate that the voucher mechanism is sufficient to ensure equality in learning outcomes. Gray (2005) shows that disadvantaged schools require significantly more funding to provide education of the same quality that non-disadvantaged schools do, as teachers are less eager to serve at such schools and students need more incentives to produce the required outcomes.

Availability and affordability of private schools is a further important factor as private school attendance is strongly associated with urban residence. In a market-oriented system like Georgia, there may be fewer chances of having private schools established in poor rural areas as it may not seem profitable to start a business in a location where few will be able to pay for the services. Governments that choose the privatization path often use a "what works rather than who does it" approach and sometimes ignore the primary profit-oriented nature of private education (Whitty, 2000).

According to a 2006 study by the Open Society Foundations, 50 percent of students in Georgia maintain that private tutoring is the only way of acquiring high quality education. Moreover, 80 percent of the sample used private tutoring as a supplement to formal schooling. The 2006 Household Budget Survey shows that the incidence of private tutoring in Georgia is higher in urban areas (39 percent) than in rural areas (17 percent), and more frequent among children from higher socioeconomic levels.

In Georgia, per pupil vouchers do not cover the full tuition costs of privately provided general or higher education, nor can they be spent on private tutoring. Vouchers pay for full tuition in public schools only. Families who choose private options need to make out-of-pocket payments.

Individual decisions on borrowing to finance education are constrained by imperfections and information asymmetries that characterize capital markets.

Under the condition of an imperfect capital market, the poor, the majority of whom reside in rural areas in Georgia, may not have credit available for education as banks may not take the risk. An evaluation of Georgia's small-scale student loan program demonstrated that the average monthly family income for students who obtained loans in 2008 was around $1,970 (MoES, 2008), whereas the average monthly monetary income per adult in Georgia in that year was $58 (World Bank, 2008). Thus, there is some evidence to maintain that access to affordable loans in Georgia may be restricted for disadvantaged students.

Secondly, it can be argued that rural families have lower access to information about educational opportunities than urban families. In market-driven systems, educational institution information to consumers is individualized. Such information, as demonstrated by Levin & Belfield (2003), may not be accurate and it could be particularly difficult for less educated parents to understand.

Thus, Georgia, like many other less developed countries, faces the imbalance between urban and rural areas. The question that arises is: Does the existence of unequal educational opportunities in rural areas guarantee that poor people remain poor because rural areas retain the disadvantaged, thus giving the future generations fewer and fewer chances to succeed?■

Academic Showcase

The Academic Showcase section acts as a platform for Scholarship Programs' grantees and alumni to contribute summaries of their scholarly research-in-progress or more succinct abstracts. Details on the criteria for submission can be found on page 23. For reference requests, feedback to the authors or comments on the pieces, please feel free to email us at scholarforum@sorosny.org.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Human Rights in the Former Soviet States after Two Decades of Independence

Alla MANUKYAN, Armenia
Global Supplementary Grants Program,
Georgia State University, 2009-2011

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent republics were waiting for democracy to arrive. Having struggled as transition countries for years, most non-Baltic former Soviet states were still reported as either "semi-consolidated" or "consolidated authoritarian" regimes in the Freedom House *Nations in Transit* 2001 report. Twenty years on, the picture is even gloomier.

As a part of a piece of ongoing independent research, this article outlines an evaluation conducted to date of the human rights conditions in former Soviet states, examining the relationship between women's rights and other human rights. By tracing the trends in human rights conditions, as measured by Freedom House's political rights and civil liberties ratings over the past two decades, this research shows that improvements in women's social rights, as opposed to women's economic or political rights, specifically increases the likelihood of improvements in a range of civil rights and liberties in the rest of society. The findings underline the potential for further in-depth analysis of the relationship between empowering women and an improvement in other human rights.

Analysis, Discussion, and Recommendations

As the third wave of democratization unfolded in former Soviet states in the early 1990s, many scholars of democratization suggested a teleological theory of democracy which falsely stated that transitions caused by the fall of non-democratic regimes would eventually end in Western-style democracies (O'Donnell 1997). The claim that "[n]o country's culture, history, or economic circumstances bar it from democracy" (Carothers 1997), resounded as a salvation statement for most post-Communist countries. Thus, for several years, the ambiguous label "transition" was commonly attached to such states, later characterized as "gray zone" countries (Carothers 2002).

What is the current condition of human rights in these former Soviet states? Comparing the current Freedom House *Freedom in the World* ratings to those in 1991, conditions for political rights and civil liberties have deteriorated in eight countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and have remained steady in Armenia and the Ukraine.

Against this backdrop, this research goes further in attempting to establish the relationship between civil rights and liberties on one side, and women's rights on the other. Civil rights and liberties include a number of rights, including freedom of speech, religion and movement, the right to political participation, and workers' rights.

Women's rights encompass a number of internationally recognized political, economic, and social rights for women specifically. Examples of women's political rights include the right to vote, to run for political office, to hold government positions, and to join political parties. Women's economic rights include the right to free choice of occupation, to equal pay for equal work, to equality in hiring and promotion, and maternity leave, while social rights include the right to equal inheritance, to initiate divorce, to education, and to equality in marriage.

Following analysis tests which assessed whether improvements in women's rights are followed by improvements in civil rights and liberties in all 15 former Soviet states from 1991 to 2009, the results partially support the argument for the positive effect of the improvement of women's rights on improving civil rights and liberties.

The combined measure of women's political, economic, and social rights is not statistically significant with the level of civil rights and liberties. However, when analyzing the effect of women's political, economic and social rights separately against civil rights and liberties, interesting positive results are found.

While women's political or economic rights do not correlate positively to the level of civil rights and liberties, there is a highly statistically significant and a substantial relationship between the level of women's social rights and civil right and liberties. This relationship needs to be further studied for its robustness against other models. As expected, the level of democracy largely correlates to the level of civil rights and liberties, while economic development, to some extent counter intuitively, is not associated

with civil rights and liberties once the level of democracy is taken into account.

The findings have important implications for arguments about the sequencing of the promotion of human rights. While the evolution of human rights may suggest that the promotion of civil and political rights should precede the promotion of socioeconomic rights, one can argue that today a simultaneous promotion of civil, political and socioeconomic rights may provide the best results in transition countries, even arguing that a certain level of protection of socioeconomic rights is necessary before a meaningful exercise of political rights becomes possible. The present analysis strongly supports the argument that countries which improve women's social rights are more likely to experience improvements in civil rights and liberties.

"There is a substantial relationship between the level of women's social rights and civil rights and liberties"

The failure to find statistically significant relationships between women's political or economic rights and civil rights and liberties raises questions for future research. Women's economic rights may show as statistically insignificant due to its strong correlation with women's social rights, and thus it may be more suitable to develop an alternative research design to study the relationship between women's political and economic rights and civil rights and liberties.

The analysis shows the potential of exploring the relationship between women's political, economic, and social rights separately, as well as in combination, and other civil rights and liberties through a narrative about how countries that empowered women in the early years of independence by allowing a better representation of women in legislative and executive bodies and in the business sector, succeeded in improving other human rights conditions. This is a promising research agenda that remains largely understudied. ■

ABSTRACT

Uncovering the Quality of Orphanage (*Internat*) Education in Ukraine: Myths and Reality

Alla KORZH, Ukraine

Global Supplementary Grants Program, Columbia University, 2009-2011

This interdisciplinary study, carried out between November 2010 and August 2011 in northern Ukraine, seeks to understand how the orphanage education system shapes the trajectories of orphaned children. In particular, it examines how school elements, such as expectations of teachers and upbringers (those responsible for supervising a child's development in the orphanage), curriculum, pedagogy, and peer relationships, shape a former resident's academic trajectory post-institutionalization.

This qualitative multiple case-study involves two levels of investigation. The first level entails an in-depth examination of two urban and rural orphanages, where Ukrainian teachers and upbringers, among other school factors, influence orphaned children's decisions about their educational and professional endeavors and how they respond to their teacher and upbringer expectations, duly negotiating their decision-making processes. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who can "purposefully inform" the understanding of the researched phenomenon and to help achieve representativeness of Ukrainian children in the two orphanages examined. Maximum variation sampling was used to select students with distinct learning aspirations in order to represent the diversity of perspectives.

The second level of investigation involves tracing the orphanage's population currently studying in vocational schools and universities in the same region. Their educational experiences in orphanages are examined, particularly the decision-making process on post-secondary education as well as academic preparation for and adaptation into a new educational environment. Methods employed in this study include direct observation of activities inside and out of the classroom, individual and focus group interviews with youth in Grades 10 and 11, teachers, upbringers, social workers, and policymakers.

Preliminary findings reveal structural inequalities embedded in orphanages and entrenched in society at large. The study found an unequal enactment of the national curriculum which resulted in, amongst other effects, truncated subject teaching, a lack of commitment towards an orphaned child's educational development, and rampant unemployment and homelessness upon exit from vocational schools or, more rarely, universities.

This research aims to contribute to existing literature by countering the dearth of research on socio-economic inequalities in orphanages and ultimately inform educational policy making with respect to vulnerable children trapped in poverty in transitioning states. Further inquiry will investigate the implementation of foster care reform in Ukraine, and a cross-country comparison of the quality of orphanage education in the post-Soviet bloc. ■

ABSTRACT

An Assessment of the Third Energy Package in Romania

Corina MURAFA, Romania
Undergraduate Exchange
Program, 2005-2006

After intense negotiations, the European Commission and European Union (EU) member states approved the Third Energy Package (TEP), aimed at enforcing competition and integrating the energy markets for electricity and gas. The following research, as part of a Master of Public Policy thesis, assessed the impact of the TEP in the Romanian energy market. Based on expert interviews, document analysis and general welfare analysis—a microeconomic tool for conceptualizing the impact of market distortions on producer and consumer surplus—scenarios for the effective implementation of TEP in Romania were constructed.

The European energy market suffers from certain structural deficiencies, such as lack of liquidity, regulated tariffs, lack of cross-border interconnection capacity, and vertical foreclosure, aspects which the TEP aims to remedy. A detailed analysis of the package demonstrates that its impact at EU-level will be mixed. The creation of a new European agency coordinating national energy regulators will most probably remedy incompatible market designs between EU countries, but the package does not de facto break up regulated tariffs, nor does it prevent market concentration due to diluted unbundling provisions.

The nature of the Romanian energy market makes an effective implementation of the TEP even more unlikely. Romania is negatively affected by non-competitive arrangements such as bilateral over-the-counter contracts concluded between state-owned electricity suppliers and "political clients," price and quantity caps for gas, retail prices set significantly below the EU average, and a chronic lack of investment in energy generation and distribution.

Loans from the International Monetary Fund posit the condition of energy reform through price liberalization and restructuring, and thus in this respect, the TEP can act as a trigger for reform. The thesis draws on three possible TEP implementation scenarios: business-as-usual, implementation "in the letter"; implementation "in letter and spirit" plus incremental reform and implementation plus drastic reform. In conclusion, it is recommended that incremental reform, based on more transparency in transactions, gradual price liberalization, privatization of minority packages in state-owned enterprises, and strengthened regulator independence would benefit Romania in its implementation of the TEP. ■

Corina MURAFA has recently obtained her Master of Public Policy, with a focus on Economic Policy and Sustainability, at the Hertie School of Governance, Berlin.

Personal Essay

Why Are Apples Not Falling on My Head?

Hakim ZAINIDDINOV, Tajikistan
Doctoral Fellowship Program, Rutgers University, 2008

The journey to a PhD degree does not resemble the well-known metaphor of a roller coaster ride. It is more like climbing a hill or, to be more accurate, a mountain, the peak of which seems invisible and unreachable.

What has been interesting in this whole PhD process is that every step one intends to take toward the final goal creates the false illusion of ease, while still being as far back as before. Finding one's self at this stage, one realizes how difficult it is. Half way through my academic journey toward my PhD, I thought that choosing a dissertation topic would be the easiest task, compared to two years of full coursework and another intense year of writing publishable qualifying papers. After attending workshops on how to choose a dissertation topic, perusing books related to the subject, talking to faculty and my advisor, dealing with the attractiveness of ideas which keep changing with every semester, and listening to appealing stories of how others have chosen their dissertation topics, I thought I would be more than ready to easily choose a dissertation topic that will be an unforgettable endeavor.

It turns out that developing a topic is not a one-size-fits-all process. While listening to others you realize that for many, enlightenment came when they were taking a shower. For another group, it occurred while reading a book. For the third group, it came while going for a walk or jogging. Why does it not occur to me? Have I not taken enough showers, pondered deeply over the literature or walked sufficient miles? Have I been sitting under the wrong tree?

The list of advice I have is very comprehensive. I realized that being cautious about what works best for you is prudent. One of the better pieces of advice I have heard is to not let outside pressure force your decision. This is actually easier said than done, because external as well as internal pressures are always there. I also realized that the best strategy will be to start with a piece of advice that best suits your situation. I found that having a passion about the topic is the most relevant. Without a certain amount of passion and naively thinking that one's love for the topic will develop down the road is wrong, as it might turn the whole process into agony. Do I have a dissertation topic now? Not yet, but I have found the right tree to sit under. ■

Alumni Updates

Open Society Scholarship Programs' alumni from a variety of programs share their current activities with you in the pages which follow. Feel free to contact them where their email addresses are listed.

DAAD-OSF Program

2006

Anna KUZHKO (Ukraine) completed her master's degree at the Catholic University Eichstaett-Ingolstadt and now works at the Swiss embassy in Kyiv, in the defense attaché's office.

2007

Vyacheslav HNATYUK (Ukraine) is a public relations manager and translator. Email: slavko_hnatyuk@hotmail.com

Naira MKRTCHYAN (Armenia) is an assistant professor in the Department of Social Philosophy and Ethics at Yerevan State University, Armenia. Her article, "Morality, Truth and Politics: Between Everyday-Practical and Scientific-Philosophical Discourses in Transformative Society," appeared in *Sociocultural Transformations*, Yerevan 2010, Vol VII. Email: naira.mk@gmail.com

2008

Mirat URMAT ULUU (Kyrgyzstan) is an advisor in the Department of External Relations and Protocol of the Office of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. He received an LLM from the University of Bremen in 2008.

2009

Irakli BURDULI (Georgia) (Faculty Exchange) is a professor of corporate law, comparative corporate law, and financial market law and is the dean of the law faculty at Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi. Email: irakli.burduli@tsu.ge

Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship

1999

Valeria SABITOVA (Azerbaijan) is the founder and executive director of the LINGVA Language School (www.lingva-school.com)

Faculty Development Fellowship Program

2001

Eka AVAILANI (Georgia) is a full professor of ancient history and culture at Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. Eka has a research interest in ancient Near Eastern studies, the Ancient Mediterranean, classical studies, and ancient religions (comparative studies), as well as ancient urbanism and modeling of ancient cities.

2003

Urmat M. TYNALIEV (Kyrgyzstan) is a part-time lecturer in management at the International Ata-Turk Ala-Too University and manager of the Central Asian Faculty Development Program. He is also a research consultant for the projects: "Ranking of Economics and Business Administration Schools in Kyrgyzstan," and "Profiles of Boards of Trustees at Kyrgyzstan's Economics and Business Schools." Both projects were supported by the American Chamber of Commerce in the Kyrgyz Republic. Email: lginkg@gmail.com

2004

Saltanat MAMBAEVA (Kyrgyzstan) is the head of the simultaneous translation department at Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In 2010, Saltanat became a Senior Fulbright Visiting Scholar at SUNY University, Buffalo, working on her post doctorate papers. E-mail: saltmam65@yahoo.com

2006

Samara IULDASHEVA (Kyrgyzstan) is a university instructor/project specialist at the Center for Multicultural and Multilingual Education, Bishkek. Samara previously worked for the OSCE in the area of multicultural education. Email: samara1979@gmail.com

2007

Irina KOSHORIDZE (Georgia) is chief curator at the Georgian National Museum and an associate professor at Tbilisi State University specializing in Islamic art and culture. Irina has recently curated temporary exhibitions on Chinese and Japanese art at the museum.

Rustam BURNASHEV (Kazakhstan) is a professor in the Department of Social Sciences at Kazakh-German University, and director of analytics at the Institute of Political Solutions (Almaty). Previously, Rustam was a member of a HESP Central Asia Research and Training Initiative project entitled "Regional Security in Central Asia: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Analysis" from 2003-2005.

Munkhbat OROLMAA (Mongolia) is head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work and director of the Social Research Institute at the National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Email: omchue@yahoo.com

2008

Zakir CHOTAEV (Kyrgyzstan) is a senior lecturer in the Department of International Relations, Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University and an associate professor at the School of International Relations, J.Balasagyn Kyrgyz National University. Zakir recently participated in academic and civil society activities related to political development and constitutional reforms in Kyrgyzstan, which resulted in him publishing a number of analytical and academic articles. E-mail: zchotaev@gmail.com

Georgian Scholarship for Educational Professionals

2007

Rusudan CHANTURIA, (Columbia University) is manager of the "Youth Civic Education and Community Participation" project conducted by World Vision International in Georgia. Rusudan has been working in the field of education policy and management for over eight years, including time at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, and the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN USA). Email: rchanturia@gmail.com

Global Supplementary Grant Program

2008

Tsetsen TUGSMANDAL (Mongolia) is a PhD candidate in public health at Simon Fraser University, Canada. Her current research examines non-communicable disease (NCD) prevention efforts among health professionals working in the Mongolian health care system's primary health care sector. Her work aims to identify areas for possible improvement of NCD prevention and management practices among family doctors working at the primary health care level in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Email: tsetsen_t@yahoo.com

Palestinian Rule of Law Fellowship

2005

Murad Enad FARES is a partner at the Ramallah-based law firm, Ittqan Consulting Services. Murad is also one of the founders of the Anajah legal clinic, which, when operational, will provide a range of services to the local community in the Governorate of Nablus and Northern West Bank. Anajah will also provide students with "hands-on" experience in the judicial system.

Ayman KHALIFAH is assistant professor at Al-Quds University Jerusalem, teaching Arabic composition at Honors College and serving on the curriculum committee for the program in Arabic Language and Composition. He also teaches a Culture, Identity, and Class course in the master's degree teaching program. Dr. Khalifah's research interests include cultural studies and its relationship to international trends in education. He is particularly interested in cultural representations in education. Email: aymankhalifah@gmail.com

Social Work Fellowship Program: Washington University–St Louis

2005

Batkhishig ADILBISH (Mongolia) is PhD student at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, examining the area of child protection. Batkhishig previously received an Alumni Grant Program award for a project conducted with two other Open Society Foundations alumni to train 100 local practitioners and educators on child protection in Mongolia, as well as being a member of the Open Society Foundations' Academic Fellowship Program (2007-9), which provided financial and technical support for the teaching of social work courses in the Department of Social Work at the Mongolian State University of Education.

Undergraduate Exchange Program

2007

Simona IFTIMESCU (Romania) is an MSc. candidate in Comparative and International Education at the University of Oxford, UK, and the former president and founding member of LEAP—Link Education and Practice, an NGO based in Bucharest, Romania. Email: simona.iftimescu@gmail.com

Delgerjargal SUKHBAATAR (Mongolia) is studying for a master's degree in International Studies and working as a temporary research assistant at Georgetown University. Delgerjargal founded the women's empowerment group, "Women of the World," for female refugees in the Hampton Roads area. Email: degisukh@yahoo.com

2008

Daniela ATANASOVA (Macedonia) is currently finishing her BA degree and working as a translator. Daniela is the editor of an independent student magazine *Izlez* (Way Out) which she founded as part of her Home Country Project. *Izlez* will soon be issuing its fifth issue, both in print and online, at www.izlez.mk. Email: danielaatanasova@yahoo.com

Bogdana CEKO (Bosnia and Herzegovina) is a Home Country Project coordinator for the Undergraduate Exchange Program and general secretary for the National Youth Association of the Republic of Srpska, as well as a public relations manager for a university career center, University of Banja Luka. Email: ceko_bl@yahoo.com

2009

Ana SIMON (Moldova) is an advertising account manager at JWT Moldova. Email: ana.simon@gmail.com

ALUMNI GRANT PROGRAM

The Open Society Scholarship Programs is pleased to offer the Alumni Grant Program. This program offers grants to Scholarship Programs alumni to further expand the knowledge gained during their scholarship and to make a positive contribution in their home country. All grant proposals must be related to the Open Society Foundations mission of supporting programs in the areas of educational, social, and legal reform, and of encouraging alternative approaches to complex and often controversial issues.

Research-based awards are also encouraged from qualified alumni who are currently engaged in developing evidence-based approaches to current and upcoming policy issues and who are fully or partly affiliated with a policy institute or higher education institution. Research-based candidates are eligible to apply for a grant to publish their findings in recognized local media or international peer-reviewed journals.

In all cases, preference will be given to collaborative projects between alumni, across countries, and with host universities, and to projects that promote the development of a specific discipline in the region.

Detailed information, including eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application forms are available on the Open Society Foundations website: www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/focus_areas/alumni/guidelines; or by sending inquiries to Zarina USMANOVA, Senior Program Coordinator: zarina.usmanova@osf-eu.org

The competition for this grant is offered once a year, beginning in January of each year. The application is made available on the website in April of the preceding year, with applications due in May.

Contribute to the next Scholar Forum!

The 14th Edition of Scholar Forum, to be produced in late 2012, calls on Scholarship Programs' grantees and alumni to submit articles, opinion pieces, and short essays on the issue of Freedom of Expression. The 14th edition will also focus on the general area of the Middle East, where writings about this region are welcome independently of the cover topic above.

COVER TOPIC: Freedom of Expression

The ability to freely express one's thoughts is a basic human right and often a matter of debate and negotiation in societies at all levels of development. Freedom of expression can encompass issues ranging from the role of the media in supporting dissenting voices, to the influence of social networking, blogs, and citizen journalists to the ability of a person or group to display and express their social and sexual orientation. This topic truly provides a rich source of stories and analyses and we welcome your contributions in either words or images.

Length: 750–1000 Words

REGIONAL FOCUS: The Middle East

The "Arab Spring" is now a common term encompassing the series of uprisings and reforms that in 2011 swept the Middle East, a region previously marked by regimes steeped in traditionalism and authoritarianism. The effects of the changes have, at this point in late 2011, not resulted in the wholesale change to the democratic rule and political and economic stability which some thought might emerge from the protests and citizens' initiatives that thrived in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Your thoughts on the development of the region and its potential impact on the rest of the world—whether it be it related to energy resources or as an inspiration for democratic change, are welcome.

Length: 750–1000 Words

Personal Essays

We welcome any personal thoughts you have on your experiences during your scholarship: your reflections, opinions, and photographs are welcome. Works of original fiction can also be submitted for editorial consideration.

Length: 300–750 Words

Alumni

Updates from Scholarship Programs' alumni are key to evaluating our work and produce inspiring material for future leaders in your countries and beyond. Please feel free to send us a brief note on your current work situation, academic career, and/or any calls for collaboration at an upcoming event, project or conference.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor regarding the content of Scholar Forum are welcome and will be printed at the editor's discretion.

Maximum length: 300 words

HESP International Higher Education

The International Higher Education Support Program (HESP) promotes the advancement of higher education within the humanities and social sciences throughout the regions of Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe, Russia, the states of the former Soviet Union, Afghanistan and Mongolia.

The Central Asia Research and Training Initiative

The Central Asia Research and Training Initiative (CARTI) promotes the development of indigenous capacities for original scholarly and academic work and internationalization of scholarship in the region of Central Asia and Mongolia and Afghanistan through supporting individuals in the early stages of their formal doctoral studies (such as aspirantura). The initiative focuses on the development of ideas and skills for high-quality research work. Senior fellowships are also offered for postdoctoral faculty to advance or revise their research agenda and develop international research and teaching partnerships. **For a complete program description please visit** www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/carti

Mobility Programs

Mobility programs support visits to/from a HESP network institution by students enrolled at higher education institutions in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Mongolia. **For more information, visit** www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/mobility/grants/student

Academic Fellowship Program

The Academic Fellowship Program offers support to reform-minded university departments and faculty returning to the region with international degrees to contribute to the academic development in the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, and select countries of Southeast Europe. The program also

Academic Showcase

Building on the wealth of knowledge and critical inquiry Open Society Scholarship Programs' scholars create during their scholarship and beyond, we invite all scholars and alumni to submit summaries or abstracts of their research to be published in the Scholar Forum's Academic Showcase section.

Submissions should be short and relate to an area of research undertaken as part of an MA or PhD degree, or to independent research conducted in the field. Due to space constraints, Scholarship Programs will only print exceptional pieces, but will endeavor to send improvement points from the editorial board to each author.

We would like to offer the following guidelines for Academic Showcase article submissions:

Abstracts

Abstracts are a concise text encapsulating the whole body of research to be addressed in a longer paper or presentation to follow. Outline the topic of research, the main objective of the research or the research problem, the methodology employed, the main findings, and your conclusions.

Maximum length: 350 words

Research in Progress Essays

For Research in Progress Essays, authors need to be cognizant of the educated but general nature of ScholarForum's audience, therefore specialized terms and concepts should be concisely explained in simple language. Articles should include footnotes and references, and any ideas expressed by other authors should be referred to in Harvard Style citations within text. Reference will be given upon request by readers.

Introduction: Include a brief statement on the thesis/rationale to be developed in the article, as well as a short summary of the findings and recommendations. Outline what the work is part of (i.e. PhD, MA, independent research).

Analysis and Discussion: Clearly and concisely explain any of the theories, concepts, and terminology, citing concrete examples. Keep in mind the audience will be outside of your discipline.

Recommendations (may be included in previous chapter). Outline your recommendations or aspects for further study or research.

Conclusion: Concisely summarize the content of the work above.

Maximum length: 1500 words

Email all submissions to scholarforum@sorosny.org by May 15, 2012

Support Program

offers fellowships for highly qualified international academics interested in consulting with those departments on reform plans.

Please see www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/afp **for more details, or send an email of inquiry to** afp@osi.hu.

Southeast European Student Initiatives

The Southeast European Student Initiatives program supports cross-border student initiatives to empower students to address systemic changes in higher education from university student communities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia.

For more details and a list of student networks, please visit www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/sesi

Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching

The Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching (ReSET) aims to develop and nurture teaching at the undergraduate university level. The program establishes a framework for the long-term collaborative development of scholarly teaching for qualified and dedicated regional and international faculty, and creates opportunities for a substantial contribution to the process of educational change in the region.

For more details about the program and eligibility requirements, and to download applications, visit www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/reset

OPEN SOCIETY FELLOWSHIP

The Open Society Fellowship supports individuals seeking innovative and unconventional approaches to fundamental open society challenges. The fellowship funds work that will enrich public understanding of those challenges and stimulate far-reaching and probing conversations within the Open Society Foundations and in the world. For detailed information on the Open Society Fellowship and for grantee profiles, please see www.soros.org/initiatives/fellowship. Inquiries may be sent to OSFellows@sorosny.org.

Open Society Scholarships and Fellowships

The Scholarship Programs' offers the following scholarships and fellowships. Programs are only offered in certain countries. For eligibility, guidelines and application forms, please visit:

www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship

Afghan Communications Scholarship:
This program provides fully funded scholarships to qualified citizens of Afghanistan to study for an MA in Communications at the University of Ottawa.

CNOUS-OSF Program:
In conjunction with the French government, this program offers up to 15 scholarships for students in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to pursue master's degrees in the social sciences and humanities at institutions in France.

DAAD-OSF Program:
A joint scholarship program in Germany for graduate students and junior faculty from the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, who are pursuing advanced studies in the social sciences and humanities.

Doctoral Fellows Program:
The Doctoral Fellows Program provides fully-funded PhD scholarships for four years of study in North America to students positioned to become leading scholars in the social sciences and humanities from Moldova and Tajikistan.

EARTH University Awards:
Up to 10 awards are granted to accomplished students and young leaders from Haiti, Liberia, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone to enable them to complete a four-year undergraduate degree in Natural Resource Management, Social Responsibility, and Entrepreneurship at EARTH University in Costa Rica (for information, please visit www.earth.ac.cr)

Faculty Development Fellowship Program:
A non-degree program that offers up to 15 awards for faculty teaching in the social sciences and humanities in the Caucasus and Central Asia to spend one semester at a U.S. university, each year for up to three years.

Civil Service Awards:
Provides scholarships for master's degree study and professional training and development to public sector employees from Georgia and Moldova engaged in policy analysis and implementation.

Global Supplementary Grant Program:
This program offers supplementary grants to students from selected countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union to pursue doctoral studies in the humanities and social sciences at accredited universities in Asia, Australia, the European Union, and North America.

Open Society Foundations Scholarships in European Studies:
These awards provide European Studies Master's scholarships at Maastricht University to scholars from Georgia, Moldova, and the Ukraine, and at the University of Aarhus in Demark to scholars from Belarus.

OSF UK Scholarship Programs:
These programs provide one-year Master's level awards in the social sciences and humanities for scholars to study at various institutions in the United Kingdom.

Palestinian Rule of Law Program:
This program supports LLM degree studies for up to 10 Palestinian lawyers or law graduates annually at U.S. law schools and at Central European University.

Social Work Masters Fellowship Program:
This program provides up to 10 awards for individuals from Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to complete a two-year Master's degree in social work in the United States.

Supplementary Grant Program—Asia:
Supplementary grants provide partial scholarships to Burmese students worldwide who are currently unable to pursue their studies in Burma.

Undergraduate Exchange Program:
A non-degree program for university students in Southeast Europe to follow a liberal arts curriculum during their third year of studies at various institutions in the United States.

Scholar Rescue Fund:
Supports scholars who are at risk in their home country by providing them with fellowships at "safe" universities and colleges throughout the world. Scholars from any country may qualify (for information please go to: www.iie.org/srf).

ScholarForum
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