The Color Revolution Virus and Authoritarian Antidotes

Political Protest and Regime Counterattacks in Post-Communist Spaces

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Abstract: This paper addresses the post-Communist color revolution phenomenon, utilizing aspects of all the major approaches (structure, agency, diffusion). It surveys the varying degrees of success enjoyed by color revolutionary movements and demonstrates that the color revolutions involved a learning process not only for insurgent forces but for the state that such forces aimed to dislodge. Furthermore, it illuminates the factors that facilitated opposition movements to exploit popular disenchantment, framed in the context of contentious elections, and to transform these protests into a force capable of dislodging the regime. We argue that the ability of potentially vulnerable regimes to observe and digest the reasons for initial color revolution successes assisted them in resisting the further spread of the phenomenon. Accordingly, we maintain there is a strong correlation between the attitudes of a regime—in particular its capacity to produce a backlash—and the failure of a color revolution.

Keywords: authoritarian regimes, color revolutions, democratization, former Soviet spaces, social movements

Since Étienne de La Boétie first conceptualised the idea of civil disobedience in the sixteenth century[1] street protests have evolved, become ever-more embedded in politics, and ultimately acquired the ability to threaten empires. During the past 50 years, nonviolent protests have taken a wide variety of forms in myriad locations, from factory

workers' strikes in Łodz (1971) to massive election-framed protests in the Philippines (1986) and the singing revolution in the Baltic States (1989). Since 1995–96, such protests have occurred with such regularity and sequencing that many scholars and analysts have regarded them as interconnected actions, one influencing the other, rather than isolated and random events.

Few had initially considered the 1998 events in Slovakia as more than a regional issue; even fewer had remarked upon the Bulgarian, Romanian and Croatian civic campaigns during the same period. However, when bulldozers broke through barricades surrounding Belgrade in 2000, and reversed the results of rigged elections, the world began to look with renewed interest and curiosity at anti-regime protests taking place in Eastern Europe. The former Soviet Union, where many undemocratic regimes remained in power, was found to have fertile ground for political protests. Over a five-year period, street protests, prompted by contested election results, had urged the presidents of Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan to leave office (and also, in the case of Kyrgyz president Askar Akaev, the country). Regimes in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova and Uzbekistan had faced significant threats, and other post-Soviet states, such as Russia and Kazakhstan, had become increasingly perturbed by the existence of about grassroots movements. Consequently, civil society was subjected to ever-greater restrictions; international NGOs like the Open Society Institute were expelled from some countries and a wide array of other international organizations from the BBC to Freedom House was viewed with increasing suspicion.

Because these events occurred in quick succession, and always within the framework of national elections (with the exception of Uzbekistan), many analysts began to detect a common thread. While some common elements are visible (such as foreign-supported democracy promotion strategies, and civil disobedience techniques apparently inspired by the work of Gene Sharp), a coherent narrative composed of a parade of color revolutions was created, partially as an attempt to make the protests more attractive and easily understood. However, the expression "color revolutions" became increasingly—though not universally—accepted as referring to post-election protests taking place in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, and to attempted demonstrations in other post-Soviet states.

The symbolic significance of a color should not underestimated. A color, in many cases, has been a way to express dissent without speaking, has had a substantial visual impact, and has been a symbol that united the protesters, emotionally and politically. It is sufficient to remember the powerful images of Kiev's Independence Square painted orange, giving the impression that orange, and the protesters, were everywhere. The inability to contain the blossoming of a color may also be viewed as reflecting a regime's limited capacity to control its citizenry.[2] However, when each new post-Soviet election seemed to call for a color and a revolution, regardless of how prepared the opposition was and how ready people were to take to the streets, one could see that such an interpretation had gone too far. When editing a volume on the "color revolutions," we received contributions on the possible "Melon revolution" in Uzbekistan and "Carpet revolution" in Turkmenistan. We sometimes responded, tongue in cheek, by soliciting an appropriate symbol for each of them[3] (like a grape revolution in Moldova) but this seemed underline that a popular fantasy had begun to construct categories not necessarily mirroring reality.

An intense scholarly debate emerged on whether it was appropriate or accurate to call such events "color revolutions," or even "revolutions," drawing on definitions of revolution that are often associated with a transformational change affecting

mankind or executed through violent means.[4] Some works have referred to transition or democratization literature.[5] Bunce and Wolchik have adopted a more neutral definition—electoral revolutions—drawing attention to the fact that the protests occurred within the framework of contentious elections.[6] We do not believe that the term "color revolution" is deceptive or bereft of descriptive value because we have tried to focus on the substance rather than the form of these protests. If "color revolutions" is the only way to pinpoint connections between events in the former USSR, and suggest that they are all generated from the application of similar techniques to contexts with several common features, we believe the term retains considerable merit, at least until a better definition or label gains currency.[7]

So long as color revolutions can be considered an ensemble of events that occurred with systematic regularity in a specific world region we consider unsuccessful protests, those that failed to reverse election results or dislodge the governing regime, as of equal interest to those that attracted interest by ousting the incumbent president or his anointed his successor.[8] Comparing what went wrong with what was achieved enables us to better understand the dynamics and conditions leading to political and social change, and how to enhance or subdue them. In this article we would like to focus on the elements that allowed some color revolutions to triumph and other attempts to be thwarted. The starting question for us is: What were the conditions that made it possible to emulate successful attempts in some neighboring states and made it impossible in other ones? One could maintain that certain regimes were unprepared to face these types of protests, while others learned quickly how to get subvert them. The capacity of the opposition or civil society to take advantage of political opportunities can also be crucial.[9] Moreover, the manner in which ordinary people reacted to anti-regime stimulations could prove surprising, even for organized opposition movements long-accustomed to futile agitation.[10] Aware of the complexity of such situations, the model we have used has focussed on five variables: the attitudes of the political elite, the unity and capacity of the opposition, the role of external forces, the capacity of non-state actors to engage with political struggle and the attitude of the population. Of these variables, the attitude of the elites and their capacity to learn how to deal with color revolutions is of particular importance. We are not trying to over-simplify the question and suggest that elites alone can decide the fate of a color revolution, not least because the five variables are inter-related. Nevertheless, given the capacity of opposition forces to learn (how to mobilize masses, use international support, find common objectives and unify) we believe that regime survival depends greatly on the capacity of the incumbent elite to digest the lessons of how best to neutralize or counter-balance opposition movements' strategies.

In this paper we suggest that there has been a strategy, or a set of actions, that regimes have adopted in order to defend themselves from the "colored virus." Failure to learn this strategy, or to apply it correctly, can open the way to opposition forces and to political change in a country. This does not exclude the idea that the opposition might fail to take advantage of a weak regime or a less authoritarian environment; rather, we seek to focus attention on the learning capacity of the elites and further nuance the discourse on the diffusion of color revolutions. As the dynamics of the color revolutions have become evident, so it became harder for an opposition to take advantage of the surprise effect.

The next section will locate this paper within the literature on color revolutions and the debates relevant to, or that emerged from, the phenomenon. Subsequent sections will

explore at the anatomy of a color revolution and how threatened regimes have accumulated a bank of knowledge on how best to neutralize the opposition armed with its color revolution banners. In our view, the fact that since 2005 no color revolution has been successful reflects *inter alia* the perfecting of the counter-revolutionary techniques employed by the incumbent elites, which have undergone an intensive learning process designed to ensure regime survival. Control of social and political processes can be pre-emptive (e.g. Kremlin sponsored youth movements to counter anti-regime youth associations such as OTPOR in Serbia and PORA in Ukraine) or curative (e.g. the violent crackdown by the Uzbek authorities in Andjan). What is important, and what will be illuminated in the course of this paper, is that some elites have been able to produce an antidote to the color virus—they have taken note of the lessons arising from the color revolution phenomenon and have been sufficiently united, makig decisions effectively while securing obedience from both formal and informal centers of power within the state. This counter-strategy has been successfully employed to survive civil protests in other regions of the world (such as Asia and the Middle East). Its efficacy, however, depends on the elite's comprehension of how best to apply this antidote to their specific situation and state structure—which, as the case of Kyrgyzstan and Egypt demonstrate, has not always been possible.

Structure, Agency and Diffusion in Color Revolutions

Since their appearance, color revolutions in former socialist spaces have sparked and maintained a debate on their causes and consequences. In an effort to foresee new developments, scholars have sought to ascertain why anti-regime efforts have been successful in some states and not in others. At the time of this paper's writing, no published research exists that attempts to compare several regions—despite obvious similarities between the techniques used in Burma and Nepal, and more recently in North Africa and the Middle East—to those employed in the former USSR, despite declarations from influential activists to the effect that they have been working outside their native region.[11]

The main question, however, remains: What makes color revolutions possible in some contexts and impossible in others? The debate on color revolutions has recently been framed within the wider one of structure versus agency. Most works on color revolutions concentrate on the role of agency, in particular on external forces,[12] with particular attention devoted to US democracy assistance strategies since the fall of the Soviet Union.[13] The role of the opposition, its learning capacity and the ability to take advantage of political opportunities has been considered another main factor.[14] Civil society,[15] along with popular attitudes,[16] has been credited with successful mobilizations, with the result that many apparently harmless organizations have been shut down to stymie possible attempts at a color revolution.[17]

Lucan Way has been a prolific advocate of the structural thesis, and has suggested a model of the likely collapse of an elite based on levels of ideological commitment, competition within the regime, and control of economic and political resources.[18] In our previous works, we also have tended to support the structural thesis, enlarging the analysis from top-level factors (i.e. the elite) to include non-state actors.[19] Scholars concentrating on diffusion dynamics have argued that conditions for a color revolution, or revolutions in general, were boosted by the emergence of similar phenomena in neighbouring states.[20] This created new political opportunities, but also fresh expectations, with the result that events were *a priori* considered connected.[21] Another approach is represented by the work

of Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, who suggest that agency is the determinant in color revolutions. In a recent article, they have argued that agency "refers not to idiosyncratic and very short term actions taken by a handful of people who were able to take advantage of a sudden expansion in opportunities for change but, rather, to an ensemble of deliberate, detailed, coordinated, and indeed planned actions taken by a wide range of international and especially domestic political players."[22] This hypothesis is of undoubted relevance; however, inflating the meaning of agency risks invading the "competency" of structure.

These approaches reflect a general tendency about theories on color revolutions. While stressing the importance of either factor, or diffusion, explanations end up also acknowledging the other. Structure and agency should not be separated totally, but rather may be regarded as two extremes of a line (spectrum) meeting at some point—and, as it has been suggested, one influences the other.[23] Expanding either category too much into the other risks neutralizing their analytical utility,[24] which has been a common flaw in color revolution literature.

Learning Dynamics in Post-Socialist Spaces

Color revolutions, as they have been observed in the former Soviet Union during the last decade, have shared many common elements. First, they have occurred in states where the regime enjoys acquiescence rather than popularity.[25] Color revolutions can be distinguished from military coups, as they claim popular legitimacy; this has been demonstrated through street protests that have attracted several thousands. They organize around the principle, suggested by Gene Sharp, that withdrawing support is the only way to "kill" a dictator.[26] In color revolutions, anti-regime forces have tended to claim that the majority of the population is against the regime. The challenge is to back up this claim, and they have attempted to do this by offering the electorate an effective way to express dissent. In an ideal world, a normal way to establish levels of support from the people is an election. This was based on the assumption that, if a regime was unpopular, a clear defeat would convince the president to leave office or permit a new parliamentary majority to emerge. History had shown, however, that in some cases presidents or ruling parties have rejected the election results; in others, results have been blatantly falsified. The "color revolutions strategy" worked out a scenario that would be applied in such cases. A first step was to engage in a parallel vote-counting and exit polls that could demonstrate the real results; a second was to bring people to the street. Street protests have at least two meanings in this context: they provide evidence that a large amount of people are against a regime and prove that the people are not willing to tolerate fraud any longer. Another clearly identifiable principle of the color revolutions has been nonviolence. Not only was this suggested by the limited resources to resist physical attacks, but it was meant to attract international sympathy and made any violent repression less justifiable in the eyes of the international community.

The complex strategy described here, and mostly drawn from the writings of Gene Sharp, can be understood mechanically, but its application is far more difficult. First of all, even if conceived or designed by a single person, it has to be implemented by a team, or sets of teams, with different skills, political opinions, values and intelligence. A counter-strategy would face the same challenges. It takes lots of wit, and self criticism, for a regime to acknowledge it weaknesses, to identify and remedy them and to be able to withstand an oppositional assault of the color revolution variety. The remainder of the paper will illustrate, using case studies of successful and failed revolutions, how this

strategy has been carried out by oppositions and regimes in an ongoing competition over a vast geographical space.

The Genesis of Color Revolutions

As we have suggested, it is not possible to find a clear starting point to color revolutions,[27] but it is arguable that "everything began" with Slovakia in 1998. Though similar techniques had been used for years in the post-socialist and other regions,[28] Slovakia provided the prototype of a strategy that will be developed in the forthcoming years and possesses all the key elements save for street protests. This experience inspired other movements and allowed them to improve and perfect a strategy. The increasingly authoritarian and isolationist attitude of Slovak Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar prompted the international community and the opposition to see parliamentary elections in 1998 as Slovakia's last chance to get back on the path to EU accession. Civil society had been enhanced throughout the 1990s, thanks to international assistance programs like PHARE and USAID. The increasingly vibrant civil society that resulted perturbed the authorities, which became increasingly repressive, in turn prompting the launch of a "third sector SOS" campaign in 1996. On the eve of the OK '98 (Občianska kampaň OK '98) campaign, which played such an influential role during the 1998 election, some 14,400 civil society organizations were registered in the country, including 422 foundations and 161 non-investment funds.[29]

There are three aspects of the campaign that are worth exploring. One is the coordination of the civic campaign with opposition leaders that in turn helped the opposition to gather around common goals. The second is the importance of external actors; although it was clear that Mečiar would try to influence the electorate, international pressures from the EU and US helped to limit the level of repression during the campaign and prevented fraud at the polls. Ultimately, pressures from international forces compelled the government into accepting international electoral observers, aided by a large number of (unaccredited) domestic ones. The third relevant factor is that the OK'98 campaign fought political passivity to bring people to the polls. It was estimated that if all those disillusioned with current politics were to vote, Mečiar would be defeated politically. Thanks to a combination of political messages, rock concerts and other grassroots actions, opposition forces encouraged a turnout of 84 percent (compared to 75.65 percent in 1994), and Mikuláš Dzurinda's Slovak Democratic Coalition emerged as the main force in the country. The positive (getting the vote out) and negative (discrediting the regime) parts of the pre-electoral campaign had produced the desired effect and this synthesis provided the basis for a similar strategy to be deployed in future actions. However, this strategy would have to be equipped with instructions on what to do in the case of election result falsification.

When Election Results Have to be Announced "Loudly": Serbia

Serbian President Slobodan Milošević employed a variety of strategies, fair and foul, to stay in power until 2000 and keep his allies dominant in parliament. The 1996 elections, where anti-Milošević forces fared best, were still characterised by opposition fragmentation. From 1996 on, however, the regime proved unable of maintaining the full support of the army, and the foreign media was substituted with domestic one. Sensing the opportunity, in 2000 parliamentary elections opposition representatives were able to form the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), a coalition of no less than eighteen parties, constituting the first serious

internal threat to Milošević's grip on power. However, to be considered a real opposition, the DOS needed to secure popular support of the voters, as the Slovak case had demonstrated two years before. The Serbian case differed from that of Slovakia. Mečiar had accepted his defeat and left his post but Milošević seemed less inclined to comply. What would happen if the regime refused to acknowledge the election results?

The September 2000 presidential election was also seminal by virtue of the fact that hundreds of thousands of hitherto apathetic young people cast their vote for the first time. This was another result of the work of the anti-regime youth movement OTPOR, which cooperated with political forces and a number of civil society actors to transform youth perceptions about elections. Owing to their efforts, the youth came to view elections not as part of establishment politics but rather a "cool" way to "rock the vote." By framing the election campaign in such a manner, OTPOR succeeded in cornering Milošević. It limited his options to either doing nothing, which would allow his opponents to thrive and foster ridicule, or ruthlessly suppress, which would only delegitimize his government. When the government refused to acknowledge the opposition's September 28 election victory, the people took to the streets, following a strategy that would characterize subsequent protest movements.

Shortly after Milošević's downfall, it was reported that OTPOR, far from being the spontaneous happy-go-lucky amateurs whose resourcefulness could be attributed to youthful ingenuity and thriftiness, was in fact funded to the tune of millions of dollars by US organizations like the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).[30] Indeed, in March 2000, the IRI hosted a secret conference at the Hilton Hotel in Budapest where OTPOR members were trained in nonviolent protest techniques and introduced to Gene Sharp's ideas by veteran activist Bob Helvey.[31] But while US taxpayers may have funded the purchase of several thousand cans of spray paint, "revolutions always need revolutionaries."[32] Accordingly, the Bulldozer Revolution needed the willing volunteers to risk their freedom to do the graffiti and the citizens to respond to it—actions executed and supported by many ordinary people that would not receive much formal acknowledgement. Similarly, the producers of 2.5 million stickers emblazoned with "gotov je" ("He's Finished") had to be confident that there would be people who agreed with the principle sufficiently enough to wear them. While the OTPOR did not deny that they had received US funding when hard evidence emerged in late 2000, some simply argued that the money accelerated the anti-Milošević surge, which would have won out sooner or later, and facilitated a nonviolent transition.[33]

American and European donors spent $80 million in total during the eighteen months prior to Milošević's overthrow.[34] The US-led NATO bombing of Serbia had accentuated anti-Americanism, and funding for the OTPOR that could be traced back to Washington would have discredited many of their activities. It would be wrong, however, to over-emphasize the significance of external support for domestic opposition. Even Milošević himself, with an arrest warrant for charges of crimes against humanity hanging over him, depended on the appearance of popular support to demonstrate democratic legitimacy. By having re-invented himself as a nationalist and populist, Milošević left a gap through which democratically inspired opportunists might also slip in. Elections in this context were vital.

A Rose is More Powerful Than a Sword: Georgia

With Milošević's overthrow, Belgrade became something of a revolution university where students of regime-change flocked for advice. The era of transnational activism in

post-socialist spaces had officially begun. OTPOR veterans (and to a lesser extent OK'98) became tutors of transformation, deans of democratisation, and rectors of revolution. Future Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili travelled to Belgrade during the years after the Bulldozer Revolution and former OTPOR activists travelled to Tbilisi to train their Georgian counterparts in KMARA ("Enough!"). The model was available, had been successful, and was now ready to be shipped abroad: "all demonstrators knew the tactics of the revolution in Belgrade, everyone knew what to do, this [the Georgian one] was a copy of that revolution, only louder".[35]

After the events of November 2003 in Georgia, accusations against George Soros and Western actors in general arose among post-Soviet elites. In an attempt to prevent a "color revolution," the Open Society Institute was expelled from Uzbekistan, its offices raided in Belarus and Kazakhstan, and, by the end of 2004, the Russian office of the Civic Education Project was moved to Kiev. Popular wisdom suggested that American money and technology had been enough for the US to "win" Georgia for the West.[36] To this day, and with the benefit of considerable hindsight, Shevardnadze attributes his defeat primarily to the efforts of erstwhile supporter George Soros.[37]

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By post-Soviet standards, Georgia was a liberal state, though this was as much a result of state weakness as by regime design. By supporting separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia had demonstrated its will to weaken and subordinate Georgia by applying political and military leverage, a policy that was complemented by Georgia's complete dependence on Russia for gas and other vital imports. The West not only provided a potential counterbalance to Russia, but was also a vital source of aid. This funding further committed the Shevardnadze regime to using a democratic vocabulary to justify their place in power. It also necessitated permitting freedom of action for a range of potential opposition-orientated activity in the media, the NGO community or the parliament. These attributes, a relatively free society and a democratic basis (rhetorically at least) of governance provided weapons that could be exploited by Georgian oppositionists and the international community. While initially considered a success story, a Caucasian island of democracy in a post-Soviet authoritarian sea, the Shevardnadze regime, despite its early accomplishments, descended into a corrupt oligarchy that had to rig elections to stay in office. To the Georgian opposition and many foreign observers, the question was not whether the November 2003 elections would be rigged but rather to what degree. The answer trumped even the worst prophecies. Cornered by exit polls (sponsored by Rustavi 2 TV) and accurate parallel vote tabulations (carried out by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy), Shevardnadze's administration dragged its feet for twenty days before announcing the final results.[38]

Opposition strength, built on the foundations of a free media, pluralistic civil society and open society, was sufficient to mobilize impressive crowds to show their outrage at

attempts to tamper with the election results. As in Serbia, Georgians managed to seize the dominant political discourse (Georgia as a pro-Western European democracy) and turn it against the regime. Oppositionists also succeeded in framing the issue in terms of national and personal pride—was Georgia's position so pitiful that one's vote could be taken without protest? Tens of thousands of people demonstrated outside parliamentary buildings, and Rustavi 2 TV carried sympathetic coverage (even going so far as to broadcasting "Bringing Down a Dictator" on how OTPOR overthrew Milošević, twice). The international community in its different guises issued statements of concern. For all this, the Rose Revolution reached its critical point only following Saakashvili's characteristically daring invasion of the parliament, which stole the initiative from Shevardnadze, who was shepherded out as he tried to open the disputed legislature. Shevardnadze's subsequent declaration of national emergency and its failure to be effectively enforced indicated that the regime could no longer rely even on the power institutions as a last resort.

A Long Orange Concert: Ukraine

Like Georgia, Ukraine enjoyed a vibrant non-government sector, independent media outlets, and a recent history of collective action and anti-regime protest. Street protests in Ukraine had already been used in 1990 and had reemerged during the Kuchmagate movement in 2001 and 2002. Popular mobilization was matched by an increasingly active civil society and independent media like Kanal 5 TV, *Ukrainska Pravda* or *Zerkalo Nedeli.* Pre-existing networks were instrumental in spreading information and civil disobedience techniques and foreign support was substantial. The US alone allocated more than 65 million dollars in 2003–2004 to support democratic initiatives, while the Open Society Institute began a fund from which NGOs could obtain election monitoring know-how. And well before 2004, Ukrainian NGO leaders and politicians had been invited to international trainings in nonviolent protest methods and civil disobedience.

A main role in the Orange Revolution was played, however, by the regime itself. Conversely, from other countries, opposition parties were mildly harassed and Viktor Yushchenko's Nasha Ukraina could win the largest number of parliamentary seats in 2002. In addition, competition between Communists and the party in power resulted in fragmentation of majority forces. Sensitive to Western criticisms, Ukraine had allowed development of civil society and relative freedom of expression that would prove crucial in November 2004. This eventually led to an open confrontation between the government and the opposition once evidence was produced that elections had been falsified. Ukrainians mobilized in large numbers and forced the government to enter negotiations with the opposition, with Russia and EU representatives arriving to mediate. Diplomatic and internal pressures compelled the regime to propose as an exit strategy a third round of the presidential elections. Moscow found no effective strategy to oppose this decision and the regime accepted relegation to opposition.

Despite the mistakes made by the regime, it has to be acknowledged that the opposition, together with civil society, had a main role in this transformation and in perfecting the nonviolent strategy deployed in Slovakia and Serbia. Capacity to resist pressures, to manage large crowds, to not respond to provocations, to approach key persons in the regime and secure their cooperation, and the use of humor are all techniques that had been employed in earlier protests. But Ukraine's Orange Revolution witnessed a dramatic

escalation. The understanding that opposition elements were mastering new techniques and that the rules of the game had substantially changed gave other former Soviet regimes a signal they had to modernize their strategies to maintain power.

Did It Really Happen? Kyrgyzstan

The Tulip Revolution can be seen as a turning point in the wave of color revolutions. While many analysts classify Kyrgyzstan as a successful color revolution, it is perhaps best viewed in a separate category or as a "stand-alone" case. Transnational activism had reached Kyrgyzstan and the basic technique of a color revolution had been mastered, but neither the population nor the activists themselves were strong enough to prepare a similar scenario. Instead, as Beissinger suggests, it was the strength of expectations, rather than the opposition, that played the decisive role in overthrowing President Askar Akaev, who gave up presidential power and went into exile without a fight.[39]

The Slovaks and Serbs could be written off as democratically-inclined Europeans and the Georgians as hot-blooded Caucasians, but the mass uprising of millions of Ukrainians raised the hopes of oppositionists throughout the former USSR while simultaneously alerting reigning presidents to the dangers of the color revolution formula. As one of the more liberal post-Soviet regimes, with parliamentary and presidential elections due in 2005, Kyrgyzstan seemed the most likely candidate for a repeat performance—a perception not lost on Akaev's administration. As a preventive measure, electricity was shut off in February at Freedom House's Bishkek printing press, where opposition newspapers were produced. The major opposition papers, *MSN* and *Respublika*, came under relentless attack; their newspapers were seized, sellers harassed and they were subjected to numerous and expensive government-inspired libel cases.[40] By fingering foreign funded subversives Akaev distracted himself from domestic opposition sizzling in the south of country. Corresponding with a very wide definition of civil society this southern-based opposition were non-state actors bound by blood, kinship, locality and region.

By Central Asian standards, civil society in Kyrgyzstan was developed and most of the international bodies most associated in the public mind with the color revolutions—NDI, IRI, IFES and the Soros Foundation—had offices in Bishkek. Kyrgyzstan's Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society represented the most serious attempt to coordinate democratically-inclined NGOs and received a grant of over $100,000 from the US Government. Its leader, Edil Baisalov, had led 75 Kyrgyz monitors during monitoring Ukraine's 2004 presidential election and developed a strong admiration for the Orange Revolution.[41] Formal youth movements were far less prominent in Kyrgyzstan than in Serbia, Georgia or Ukraine, and did not play a decisive role in the Tulip Revolution.[42] In January 2005, Kel-Kel (Renaissance) was formed with the modest objective of ensuring free and fair elections, but even during the height of the election campaign its leaders claimed no more than 300 members—mostly Bishkek university students, of whom only a small percentage were very active.[43] A more radical group, Birge (Together), broke from Kel-Kel at the end of February 2005. This group had only twenty activists, all centered in the capital.[44]

Certainly, the notion that Western-funded NGOs mobilized the masses doesn't hold much water in Kyrgyzstan's case.[45] While the protesters in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine had been young, urban, educated and under the guidance, coordination and direction of strong political leadership what happened in Kyrgyzstan was a spontaneous revolt of the periphery against the centre. Those who took over government buildings in southern

cities were not Western-trained, English speaking, foreign-funded NGO leaders but rather a traditional, rural, Kyrgyz underclass that saw an opportunity to strike a blow against a regime without the will to adequately defend itself. Bishkek was besieged by those who felt marginalized not just in the elections but during the previous decade. Moreover, even the most ardent protester didn't believe that the opposition had actually won the election; a majority of local "businessmen" formally unaffiliated to any party took the lion's share of seats and the cosmetic character of the "revolution" soon became apparent when the new parliament, produced by the disputed elections, was left in place while an elite pact drained the life from the subsequent presidential election.[46]

The storming of Kyrgyzstan's presidential palace (the White House) had not been organized or planned by opposition leaders. The assault was spontaneous, its success largely due to the unwillingness of security forces to defend the palace, which had already been deserted by the president. The widespread looting, violence and intimidation that engulfed Bishkek, though of mercifully short duration, was symptomatic too of the leadership deficit. Power was not seized by opposition politicians but handed to them on a plate by mob action. While Akaev's overthrow may have been revolutionary in deed, Kyrgyzstan proved the least revolutionary in result. Rather than spring tulips signalling a flowering of a new political dispensation, a Kyrgyz renaissance amid the Central Asian political desert, the new regime proved as corrupt and authoritarian as its predecessor. This was not surprising given that while Georgia, Ukraine, and Serbia possessed leaderships with visionary purpose and had witnessed a progressive strengthening of civil society, the conceptual foundations had not taken root in Kyrgyzstan. Accordingly, the beneficiary of the Tulip Revolution, Kurmanbek Bakiev, was himself overthrown in April 2010, but not without a fight. Believing that Akaev had failed to create a sufficiently strong vertical of power and a well-resourced coercive apparatus, Bakiev attempted ruthless suppression of his opponents.[47] When history repeated itself and the crowds gathered outside Bakiev's presidential palace, almost five years to the day of Akaev's ouster, he unleashed teams of snipers. The result for the chief executive—flight and exile—was the same, but almost 90 people lost their lives during the siege of the presidential palace in Bishkek, and two months later hundreds more were massacred as inter-ethnic clashes filled the political vacuum. Marx's maxim was inverted, as an event of historical significance occurred twice, first as farce but then as tragedy.[48] Bakiev's failure to insulate himself from his opponents suggests that it is not enough to understand the character of the threat and the means necessary to combat it to remain in power. As we will demonstrate in the remaining sections of this paper, the learning curve for post-Soviet authoritarian regimes has involved not merely digesting the lessons of the color revolutions, but also correctly identifying the regime's weak points and taking effective remedial action before they can be exploited by the opposition, civil society and/or external forces.[49]

Learning to Limit Color Revolutions

The color revolutions provided lessons not only for frustrated oppositional movements but for the regimes they sought to overthrow. With each color revolution attempt, post-Soviet Governments refined their understanding of the process. Complementary to this was an enhanced appreciation that if they were to avoid the fate of their ousted peers they would have to take pre-emptive action at several levels. The five-variable model we have constructed can also be used to identify the priorities of a regime. However, an under-

standing of the priorities and the features of a color revolution strategy does not guarantee containment of the anti-regime threat. Depending on the ability of regimes to limit the actions of the opposition we can further divide protest movements into three categories: those pre-emptively neutralised (i.e. almost no street protests); those repressed (street protests occurred but were eventually quelled) and those that achieve regime-change (Kyrgyzstan 2010 and more recent cases in North Africa, even if there is no evidence, due a dearth of research, that they were connected). The following analysis will concentrate on the five points that we believe were the mos important for regimes to target: maintaining unity within the ruling elites; repressing and dividing opposition forces; limiting the influence of external forces; domesticating civil society; and raising the cost for private citizens of participating in street protests.

After an intense flurry of mass mobilizations leading to regime-change, the color revolutionary wave lost momentum as potentially vulnerable regimes enhanced their precautionary measures and the winning formula of external support for domestic non-state actors grew diluted. The Bishkek events were a turning point in the history of color revolutions. After March 2005, challenges to post-Soviet regimes through street protests were unsuccessful in that they failed to achieve regime-change.

The color revolutions were successful in the countries offering the conditions most conducive to establishing and maintaining anti-regime opposition movements. Once the initial wave of color revolutions had subsided political participation was insufficiently strong to challenge the regime in the remaining regimes that were potential targets. These opposition movements were either bereft of resources or human capital, or were inexperienced. In the rare cases when they could potentially act, they encountered a new tougher regime that had quickly mastered the techniques used in neighbouring countries. In other words, the same conditions that had facilitated mass mobilization to defend election results were unavailable in the remaining authoritarian post-Soviet states; most of these regimes had identified the key ingredients of color revolutions and had taken measures to ensure that civil society actors were not afforded the same degree of latitude.

The shift in attitudes was most noticeable perhaps in the evaporation of tolerance for international NGOs, particularly those that had been identified as cheerleaders for the anti-regime opposition movements spearheading the color revolutions. Tajikistan, for example, refused to register Freedom House. As that country's foreign ministry euphemistically put it, "after Ukraine and Georgia we have certain concerns about the activities of these Western democracy promotion organizations."[50] Uzbekistan closed down a host of NGOs suspected of playing a part in color revolutions, including Freedom House, Internews, and the BBC. The Soros Foundations—often referred to as Open Society Institutes—came under particular scrutiny for, as one US visitor to Central Asia put it, "in CIS countries, George Soros is considered the devil incarnate."[51] In fact, attitudes toward Soros became a good barometer of attitudes towards democratic reforms. Days after Yushchenko's historic victory, the Kazakhstan authorities raided the offices of the Soros Foundation, ostensibly on tax evasion charges.[52] The reversal of fortunes for OSI in Uzbekistan had come earlier but was also swift; shortly after the Rose Revolution – the organization was permanently shut down for a host of technical violations.[53] During a rare parliamentary session in spring 2004, Uzbek President Islam Karimov told those assembled that Soros had planned a similar Rose revolution in Uzbekistan. OSI's main goal, he said, was to "select from among

TABLE 1. The learning process of opposition forces

	Main "mistake(s)" committed by the regime	Achievement(s) of the opposition	Achievement(s) of civil society	Lessons applied
Slovakia	Allowing too much liberty of action to non-regime actors and permitting fair elections	Achieving an unprecedented 84% election turnout	Use of youth and "cool" tools to involve people in politics	Employing positive (get out the vote) and negative (discrediting regime) campaign
Serbia	Underestimating the role of grassroots movements	Agreeing on a single candidate	Extensive use of humour to defuse potential clashes	Street protests
Georgia	Building a weak coercive apparatus	Finding a charismatic leader, mobilising electorate	Ability to learn from Serbians and apply to Georgian context	Coordination with security forces to avoid repression
Ukraine	Allowing too much liberty of action to non-regime actors and being too dependent on Western goodwill towards election results	Unification behind a single candidate, attracting external support	Learning to mobilise masses, create a carnival atmosphere in which protesters were happy to sleep in the street despite temperatures averaging -20C	Widespread use of civil-disobedience techniques
Kyrgyzstan	Building a weak coercive apparatus	Peaceful mobilization	Peaceful mobilization	Learnt from Georgians that storming of centre of government power key turning point in opposition fortunes

the young talented Uzbek intelligentsia, those who could become a supportive force for them, to fool and brainwash them against the constitutional order." Karimov said that he had never met Soros, unlike his Kyrgyz counterpart "who meets Soros once every three months. Akaev and I are not alike at all. We have different opinions." When interviewed in early 2004, Karimov emphasised his fear that Akaev would be overthrown by neglecting to take forceful actions against Western funded NGOs. He recounted a conversation with Akaev when the Kyrgyz president told him that Western money was being funnelled into Kyrgyzstan to eliminate the democratic deficit:

> I asked him: if so, why don't you prevent what is happening, why don't you take measures? The answer was: I can't. What can I say to this? I hope we do not get to this and that in Uzbekistan there will be no repetition of events in Georgia and Ukraine. After all, people should understand what is being prepared for them and resist such plans. Otherwise, they will regret it.[54]

Akaev's overthrow confirmed not only Karimov's fears but those of all remaining Central Asian presidents, to ex-Communist leaders.[55] Karimov made good on his word that those who would try to challenge the state would regret it. Seven weeks after Akaev's ouster, in the Ferghana city of Andijan, state forces killed several hundred people who had gathered to protest in the main square. While the motives that animated the demonstrators may have been labelled differently from those in Ukraine, the Karimov regime was taking no chances. The Uzbek President had spoken for most of the remaining post-Soviet autocrats when he made clear his suspicion of Western funded NGOs, their role in the Rose and Orange Revolutions, and his determination to combat a similar color revolution on his home turf:

> … Everything depends on [the length of] the preparation … In Ukraine, preparation to present changes started back in 1995. Look at the number of nongovernmental organizations there and their sources of financing, and everything will be clear to you. By the way, now we are monitoring the projects that receive funds and grants to understand if the certain project is really humanitarian or if this is a hidden preparation to some other "color" revolution.[56]

The counter-revolution, if it may be so called, took on many dimensions. The media and internet servers came under increased scrutiny, and while suppressing organizations that emulated OTPOR, KMARA or PORA, and forbidding entry to foreign activists from entering the country, the authoritarian governments created new proregime youth movements like Russia's Nashi and Kazakhstan's Zhaz Otan. The Kremlin led the way in attacking OSCE election monitors, threatening to veto funding for them unless the OSCE modified the composition and activities of missions. In the meantime, Russia and its allies sponsored Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) monitoring missions to counter the OSCE by giving ringing endorsements of rigged elections throughout the post-Soviet space.[57] Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have not registered any opposition parties but even in those countries where opposition parties do exist, their activities are hampered by repressive legislation and state harassment.[58] In January 2005, Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan was banned from a party conference speech that condemned the September 2004 parliamentary elections as rigged and the resultant parliament as illegitimate. Opposition party candidates failed to take a single seat

TABLE 2. The learning process of the ruling regimes

	Learned lessons by the regime	Main "mistake" by the opposition	International Context
Belarus	Limit ability of opposition to mobilise to cooperate with international NGOs and foreign governments	Lack of unity	Economy relatively isolated and self sufficient save for energy dependency on Russia with which the regime usually enjoys good relations. Western isolation of regime, embargo on Lukashenka and close allies
Armenia	Limit ability of opposition to mobilise	Lack of unity and inability to garner international support	Strong support for regime from Russia. Substantial support from Diaspora in the West.
Azerbaijan	Limit ability of opposition to mobilise, provide incentives for young elite to support regime	Lack of unity and inability to garner international support	Acquiescence of authoritarian excesses due to abundance of oil and gas and Azerbaijan's pivotal role in Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline
Uzbekistan	Close down international NGOs and use maximum force to quell any signs of opposition	Inability to garner international support	Economy relatively isolated and self sufficient, state strategically important for those executing the war in Afghanistan
Kazakhstan	Limit ability of opposition to mobilise and receive external assistance	Lack of unity and inability to garner external support	Energy rich and a major exporter of oil and gas, multi-vector foreign policy and moderate policies towards ethnic minorities has delivered good relations between regime and Western powers

in Kazakhstan's national legislature as parliamentary elections in August 2007 produced a one-party assembly.[59]

Belarus had long been considered a likely site of a color revolution and, correspondingly, opposition elements in the country had received significant international assistance since 2000. Presidential elections were due in 2006 but Premier Lukashenka wrong-footed the opposition by calling the presidential elections four months early. He had learned that elections provided a focus for the opposition and that they would time their protest activities to coincide with what they anticipated would be a rigged contest. An early election would give the opposition less time to campaign and organize, and the rush to collect the necessary 100,000 signatures in 30 days to secure candidature would be additionally chaotic. Moreover, by having the election in March instead of summer, opposition protesters would be condemned to braving Minsk's harsh climate instead of basking in the July sun. The twelve-member Central Election Committee was composed exclusively of Lukashenka acolytes[60] and the Commonwealth of Independent States would be on hand to

give the election a clean bill of health. All candidates were limited to a very modest sum ($31,000) to advertise their campaign, but this was merely a ploy to limit the opposition; the president dominated the media—officially as president, not as a candidate—and the election campaign coincided with a government promotion campaign "Za Belarus" ("For Belarus"), which turned out to be a thinly veiled marketing ploy to laud the president and his achievements.

NGOs were kept on a very tight leash lest they facilitate opposition election campaign or post-election protests. Of 1,284 NGO registration applications, less than 2 percent (61) were successful.[61] The country's last human rights NGO, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, was fined and then suspended after a decade of activity,[62] while a month before the elections observers from the "Partnership" NGO was arrested and given prison sentences of up to two years. The independent media, already cowed from previous assaults, was further undermined as the election approached. In September 2005, the assets of independent newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* ("People's Will") were frozen and the government-run distribution network BelSoiuzPechat refused to circulate the publication.[63] An amendment to the Criminal Code in January 2006 strengthened already oppressive conditions for journalists by making it a criminal offense to misrepresent or discredit Belarus or its president.

In Ukraine, oppositionists could take refuge behind parliamentary immunity but this luxury was not afford to anti-regime leaders in Belarus, not least because parliament did not contain opposition members. So while protesting legislators in Kiev could defy police in the knowledge that an arrest was unlikely, and deter excessive police brutality for fear of prompting parliamentary inquiries, in Belarus it was made clear that opposition leaders would not be spared arrest and imprisonment. Opposition rallies and campaigning were continuously interfered with, and during the run-up to the vote over 200 opposition campaigners were arrested. Presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin was arrested during the campaign for holding an unsanctioned press conference.[64] A week later, ten supporters of the other main opposition candidate, Alyaksandr Milinkievič—including his deputy campaign manager, Vincuk Viačorka—were arrested and imprisoned for the remainder of the election campaign.[65] Government rhetoric became increasingly bellicose equating opposition protests with terrorism and attempts to undermine the constitutional order. Emulating protesters in Georgia and Ukraine, mobile phones were used to send chain sms messages saying "Freedom is as close as never before! We are in the majority! Come to October Square at 20.00 on 19 March. Vote and Protect! Send this out to your friends!" But the Government was more than equal to the task and used the technology for its own counter-revolutionary ends. Mobile phone users were sent a message on March 19 through the cellphone operator Velcom, stating "On 19 March in the evening at October Square provocateurs are preparing bloodshed. Safeguard your life and health".[66]

Unlike in Georgia and Ukraine, there were widespread arrests during and in the immediate aftermath of the protests. Not only was the post-election tent city attacked and dissembled by state security forces, but up to a thousand mainly young activists were rounded up and imprisoned. Alyaksandr Milinkievič was imprisoned in April for attending an unsanctioned Chernobyl commemorative rally; in July, defeated opposition presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin was sentenced to five and a half years in prison, after which he embarked on a hunger strike. Youth movements were kept under surveillance; in September the leader of Belarus's Malady Front (Youth Front), Zmister Dashkevich, was also

TABLE 3. Differing regime approaches to color revolution threat

	Permissive regimes (what was allowed)	Authoritarian backslashes (what changed once regimes learnt how to deal with color revolutions)
Elite	Generally the majority was not fully united and this led to some defections to the opposition	United (as a result of a common enemy to fight i.e. the West/democracy promotion) but also as a result of a sort of political Darwinian selection process (only the toughest regimes will survive)
Opposition	Elites allowed the development of an opposition so long as they did not openly defy the regime (when they did it was too late to stop them)	Elites outlawed the opposition, made clear that international assistance to opposition was considered akin to a declaration of war; discredited or jailed opposition members (making clear that even parliamentary immunity would not save them if they challenge regime); raise costs of openly challenging the regime to undermine unity of the opposition
External actors	International actors allowed to have major role in exchange for political support/economic or technical assistance	Financial or technical assistance declined; refuse to host international election observers and/or challenge them with rival ones; raise the price of interference (e.g. energy supply/prices, cooperation in other spheres)
Civil society	Civil society actors tolerated so long as they did not openly challenge the regime. If restricted to local activities or national on a non (overt) political basis, actions and initiatives were allowed	Strictly control civil society and its funding; reduce internationalisation (arrest other NGO leaders when trying to enter the country, stop domestic leaders when trying to go abroad for trainings); raise costs of challenging the regime (harsh punishment for 'dissidents'); create alternative civil society movements (e.g. Nashi), not tolerate alternative vote count
People	Public opinion only partially controlled; non-state controlled media easily accessible, repression of protesters modest in quantity and quality	Cost of action raised (arrest, beating or killing of protesters); Appeals to patriotism/nationalism (state's "unique" path to democracy, opposition to international assistance); economic inducements offered for compliance/acquiescence; media manipulation

imprisoned.[67] Central to the government's success in countering opposition protests was the belief that if threatened, the Lukashenka regime would not hesitate to use lethal force to preserve its position.[68] The most recent presidential election, conducted on December 19, 2010, followed a similar pattern. The regime, which maintained a substantial level of popular support, successfully isolated pockets of the opposition and frustrated their attempts to secure external support. Attempts to mobilize several thousand citizens on election night were forcibly stymied; over 700 protesters were arrested along with seven of the nine opposition presidential candidates.[69] When the

OSCE issued a critical report about the election, its mission in Minsk was promptly closed down on the grounds that, according to the Belarusian foreign ministry, there were "no objective reasons" for recommending its retention.[70]

A similar situation can be observed in the Caucasian republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the presidents of which had reason to fear the spread of the color-revolutionary virus from neighbouring Georgia. In Azerbaijan, the regime of Ilham Aliev, who had "inherited" the presidency in a fraudulent contest following his father's death, took several substantial preemptive measures prior to parliamentary elections in November 2005. Members of youth movements that had sprung up openly imitating the symbols and tactics of their Georgian, Serbian and Ukrainian counterparts were harassed, imprisoned, and wholly prevented from organizing rallies or hosting visiting OTPOR or PORA members.[71] Nor was the opposition able to rely on support from the west or the new color revolution regimes in Tbilisi and Kiev, since all sought access to Azerbaijan's energy resources and did not want to push Baku toward the Kremlin or jeopardize existing arrangements symbolised by the 2005 Baku-Tbilisi-Cheyan pipeline.[72] As opposition leader Guliyev tried to return to Azerbaijan, over a hundred opposition leaders were arrested, several thousand troops were placed at the airport, and it was made clear that should Guliyev set foot in Azerbaijan he would be arrested. Guliyev's retreat slowed vital opposition momentum and dissent was killed off entirely when a wide-ranging purge was carried out and the alleged ring leaders of the conspiracy to overthrow the president forced to capitulate on national television.[73] With all internal dissent crushed, the president's supporters romped to victory on November 6.

Finally, with the notable exception of Belarus, Western states—and in particular the United States—proved less interested in having an each-way bet on regime change as a new cost-benefit analysis applied. Some regimes—for example, those with plentiful natural resources or of strategic importance—found they could largely escape Western censure. Criticism was generally dictated by the demands of ritual rather than revolution and these regimes had little difficulty absorbing the gentle chiding that dutifully followed flawed elections. Moreover, concerted support for anti-regime oppositions risk exacerbating relations between the West and Russia, not least because the Kremlin viewed many of these regimes as allies whose ideas on how to" manage" democratic development was not dissimilar to those prevailing in Moscow. Even soft support for non-state actors could contradict diplomatic principles and be seen as a challenge to the elites, particularly in countries like Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan where anti-regime opposition movements are illegal. Regimes made it known that relations with the West could be only conducted on the understanding that Western states would not seek to assist those domestic actors bent on regime-change. Accordingly, protesters in states like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan found that, as far as the west was concerned, they were largely on their own. Both countries conducted elections in 2005, within months of the Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution but despite transparent irregularities in the election process Western governments were muted in their criticisms. In 2010, Kazakhstan was bestowed with the honor of being the first post-Soviet state to chair the OSCE, despite the fact that the state had never held a free and fair election in the view of the OSCE's own monitors, chronicled in numerous critical reports.

Conclusion

Initially the color revolution phenomenon appeared sporadic and casual, but it rapidly developed into a major component of post-Communist politics. External support complemented a network of NGOs and political activists ready to act in a

nontraditional way—they challenged the authority of the regime and to think of the best way to adapt imported theories of action to their situation. This political opportunity boosted civic activism and was the basis for national and international networks to challenge the authorities through domestic and global channels and set up a network of trainers in civil disobedience that are now operating worldwide in relative secrecy.

The surprise factor could not, however, be maintained. While the wave of color revolutions created new links and political opportunities for domestic actors throughout the former Soviet Union by internationalising their struggle it also prompted local governments to employ similar strategies such as manufacturing pro-regime NGOs and training of activists to maintain the status quo. Potentially vulnerable post-Soviet presidents focussed on civil society as a political instrument and strove to limit its effects. Once familiar with the main features of a color revolution, the regime's capacity to contain the "color virus" could be seen as depending on the ability of the elite to identify its own potential weak points and to defend key institutions, people and groups from potential threats. This has led some states to become extremely color-revolution-proof, thanks to an effective strategy of protecting the regime's vital organs with appropriate measures.

NOTES

1. Etienne de la Boetie, *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, Paris: Mille et une nuits ([1548], 1997).

2. Abel Polese, "The Future is Orange," *Transitions Online*, November 2004.

3. Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Abel Polese, "From Roses to Bullets: The Rise and Decline of the Color Revolution Phenomenon in the Post-Soviet Space," in Uwe Backes, Tytus Jaskulowski, and Abel Polese (eds.), *Totalitarismus und Transformation - Defizite der Demokratiekonsolidierung in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Gottingen: V&R, 2009): 63-100.

4. Karl Griewank, *Der neuzeitliche Revolutionbegriff* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp: (1955) [1973]); and James Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1988).

5. Michael McFaul, "Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution," *International Security* 32, no. 2, (2007): 45-83

6 . Valerie Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 4, (2006): 5-18; although "electoral revolution" was also used by Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Electoral Revolutions," *Society* 35, no. 1 (1997): 61-65

7 . In this respect,we look forward to see if the recent events in the Middle East and North Africa will call for a new definition, given that no visual color terms have been used.

8. Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Abel Polese, "Introduction: What's in a Color?," in Ó Beacháin and Polese (eds), *The Color Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics: Successes and Failures* (London: Routledge, 2010).

9. Bunce and Wolchik. "Transnational networks, diffusion dynamics, and electoral revolutions in the post-Communist world," *Physica A* 378, no. 1 (2007): 92-99; for a definition of political opportunities see Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movements* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

10. Celeste Wallander, "Ukraine's Election: The Role of One International NGO," CISI Report, March 2005, available at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0503_ukraine_en.pdf (accessed March 20, 2011).

11. A common matrix is visible since they seem all to use nonviolent methods classified by Gene Sharp. Evidence can be the fact that Sharp's book *From Dictatorship to Democracy* has been translated in Burmese and Chin, Arabic and two dozen of other languages. Also, some PORA activists declared they were training opposition leaders outside of the CIS region, see Polese, "Ukraine 2004: Informal Networks, Transformation of Social Capital and Colored Revolutions," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 24, no. 2-3 (June 2009).

12. Anders Aslund, Michael McFaul (eds.), *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006); Bunce and Wolchik, op. cit. 2007; Paul D'Anieri, "The Last Hurrah: the 2004 Elections and the Limits of Machine Politics," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38, no. 2, (2005): 231-249; Taras Kuzio, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution. The Opposition's Road to Success," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2, (2005): 117-130; Ecaterina McDonagh, "Is Democracy Promotion Effective in Moldova? The Impact of European Institutions on Development of Civil and Political Rights in Moldova, *Democratization* 15, no. 1 (2008):142–161; McFaul, 2007, op. cit.; and Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution,* (Yale University Press, 2006). For limits see Ó Beacháin and Polese, "American Boots and Russian Vodka: The Importance of External Factors in Color Revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan," *Totalitarismus Und Demokratie* 5, no. 1 (2008): 87-113.

13. Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: US Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1991); Jeroen de Zeeuw and Krishna Kumar, *Promoting Democracy in Postconflict Societies* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner , 2006)

14. Bunce and Wolchik, "Defeating Dictators: Electoral Change and Stability in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes," *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (2010): 43-86; D'Anieri 2005, op. cit.; Kuzio 2005, op. cit.; and Stephen White, "Is there a Pattern?," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 2, (2009): 396-412.

15. Joerg Forbig and Pavol Demes (eds), *Reclaiming Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund, 2007); Olena Nikolayenko, "The Revolt of the Post-Soviet Generation: Youth Movements in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine." *Comparative Politics* 39, no.2, (2006): 169-188; Joshua Tucker, "Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Post-Communist colored Revolutions," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3, (2007): 537-553; Polese 2009, op. cit.; Simon Tordjman, "Surfing the Wave : Civil Society Development and Colored Revolutions," *Totalitarismus und Demokratie* 5, no. 1, (2008): 43-66; Tarrow 2005, op. cit.; Florian Bieber, "The Serbian Opposition and Civil Society: Roots of the Delayed Transition in Serbia," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 17, no. 1, (2003): 73-90; Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, *Foreign Funding, Foreign Assistance and NGO Funding in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

16. Kuzio 2005, op. cit.; and Tucker 2007, op. cit.

17. David Lane, "Colored Revolutions' as a Political Phenomena," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 2, (2009): 113-135.

18. Lucan Way, "The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 259-276; Steve Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

19. Ó Beacháin and Polese 2010, op. cit.

20. Kurt Weyland, "The Diffusion of Revolution: '1848' in Europe and Latin America," *International Organization* 63 (2009): 391-423.

21. Mark Beissinger, "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions," *Perspective on Politics* 5, no. 1 (2007): 249-264; Paul Manning, "Rose-Colored Glasses? Color Revolutions and Cartoon Chaos in Postsocialist Georgia," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2007): 171-213; Andres Schipani-Adúriz, "Banana Revolutions and Banana Skins," *Transitions Online* 7, September 2005; and Schipani-Adúriz, "Through an Orange-Colored Lens: Western Media, Constructed Imagery, and Color Revolutions," *Demokratizatsiya* 15, no. 1 (2007): 87-115.

22. Bunce and Wolchik 2010, op. cit.: 77.

23. Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

24. Margaret Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995): 65.

25 Passive support here refer to Sharp's (1993) definition. A when citizens are unhappy with a decision or a regime but do not openly oppose them they are de facto accepting it

26. Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (Boston: Albert Einstein Institute, 1993).

27. Ó Beacháin and Polese 2010, op. cit.

28. Mark Thompson, *Democratic Revolutions* (London: Routledge, 2003); and Peter Ackerman, and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2001).

29. Martin Butora, M, "OK'98 A Campaign of Slovak NGOs for Free and Fair Elections," in Pavel Demes and Forbig Joerg (eds), *Reclaiming Democracy* (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund, 2007): 21-52.

30. Michael Dobbs, "U.S. Advice Guided Miloševic Opposition: Political Consultants Helped Yugoslav Opposition Topple Authoritarian Leader," *The Washington Post,* December 11, 2000; and Robert Cohen, "Who Really Brought Down Miloševic?," *New York Times Magazine,* November 26, 2000, available at http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20001126mag-serbia.html (accessed March 20, 2011).

31. Srdja Popovic, "An Analytical Overview of the Application of Gene Sharp's Theory of Nonviolent Action in Milošević's Serbia," January 31, 2001, available at http://nonviolentaction. net/?p=70 (accessed March 20, 2011).

32. Thompson 2003, op. cit.

33. Slobodan Homen, a student leader who travelled several European capitals, including Budapest to meet US officials and democracy consultants, cited in Dobbs.

34. Marlene Spoerri, "Uniting the opposition in the run-up to the electoral revolution: Lessons from Serbia 1990-2000," *Totalitarismus und Demokratie* 5, no. 1 (2008), 67-86, here 81.

35. *The Washington Post,* November 25, 2003, A22.

36. V. Yaroshevsky, "Why the Russian Authorities Failed in Ukraine, an Interview with Olga Kryshtanovskaya," *Novaya Gazeta*, December 9, 2004.

37. Eduard Shevardnadze, interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Tbilisi, October 24, 2008.

38. Ó Beacháin and Polese 2008, op cit., 95-97.

39. Mark Beissinger, "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 1 (2007): 249-264.

40. Rina Prijivoit (then chief political editor of MSN), interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, March 10, 2005 and Zamira Sydikova (then editor-in-chief of *Respublika* newspaper, now Kyrgyzstan Ambassador to the United States and Canada), interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, March 11, 2005.

41. Edil Baisalov (then head of the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society), interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Bishkek, March 12, 2005.

42. Alisher Khamidov, "Kyrgyzstan's Revolutionary Youth: Between State and Opposition," *SAIS Review* 26, no. 2, (2006): 85-93.

43. Burul Usmanalieva, interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Bishkek, March 9, 2005.

44 . Mirsuljan Namazaliev (leader of Birge), interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Bishkek, May 30, 2008.

45. David Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia* (London: Hurst, 2008).

46. International Crisis Group, Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution (Bishkek and Brussels: ICG, 2005) and International Crisis Group, Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State, (Bishkek and Brussels, ICG, 2005).

47. This section is benefits from many interviews conducted in Kyrgyzstan by Donnacha Ó Beacháin in September and October 2010, in particular those conducted with Edil Baisalov, who was appointed presidential chief of staff by interim president Roza Otunbayeva and with Kyrgyzstani academics Shairbek Juraev, Emir Kulov, Bermet Tursunkulova, Azamat Temirkulov and Burul Usmanalieva.

48. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Karl Marx wrote that "Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce."

49. We are not suggesting here that what occurred in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 constitutes a color revolution. For one thing, the uprising did not occur in the context of national elections.

50. Foreign Ministry of Tajikistan Information Chief, Igor Sattarov quoted in Kathy Gannon, "Islamists See Opening in Central Asia Chaos," Associated Press, March 24, 2005.

51. Robert Legvold, "US pundit speculates "rose revolution' unlikely in Central Asia," BBC Monitoring, March 14, 2005.

52. Donnacha Ó Beacháin, in conversation with Soros Foundation employees, Almaty, January 2005.

53. One of the authors, Donnacha Ó Beacháin, was given a diplomatic card by the Uzbek authorities simply for being indirectly employed by the Soros Foundation in Tashkent. These cards were summarily withdrawn in 2004.

54. Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Islam Karimov Excludes Possibility of 'Color' Revolution," available at http://2004.press-service.uz/eng/rechi_eng/rechi_eng32.htm (accessed March 20, 2011).

55. Unlike Nazarbayev, Karimov and Niyazov, Rakhmon in Tajikistan had not reached the position of General Secretary of his country's branch of the Communist party but instead was a staunch party member who had attained the rank of collective farm director.

56. Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Islam Karimov Excludes Possibility of 'Color' Revolution," available at http://2004.press-service.uz/eng/rechi_eng/rechi_eng32.htm (accessed March 20, 2011).

57. Rick Fawn, "Battle over the box: international election observation missions, political competition and retrenchment in the post-Soviet space," *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2007): 1133-1153.

58. Ó Beacháin, "The Necessary Lie: Political Parties and Elections in Central Asia," in David Louis Dasseault (ed.), *The Commonwealth of Independent States: Form and Substance* (Helsinki: Kikimora/Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, 2007) 269-298.

59. Ó Beacháin, "Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan, September and October 2004," *Electoral Studies* 24, no. 4, (2005): 762-769; Rico Isaacs, "The Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan, August 2007," *Electoral Studies* 27, no. 3, (2008): 381-385.

60. Six members were nominated by the president and six by the presidentially controlled upper house of parliament.

61. OSCE-ODIHR, "International Observer Mission: Presidential Elections, Republic of Belarus-19 March 2006," available at http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdftohtml/18437_en.pdf_s.html, (accessed March 20, 2011).

62. Ostensibly the NGO was shut down for not paying taxes on an EU grant, which legally should have been exempt from taxation.

63. UNHCR, "Human Rights Watch World Report 2006 – Belarus" (2006), available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,HRW,,BLR,43cfae (accessed March 20, 2011).

64. Alyaksandr Kazulin, interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, August 2009.

65. Vincuk Viačorka, interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, August 2009.

66. Pontis Foundation, "Belarus Brief," March 19, 2006, available at http://www.nadaciapontis.sk/tmp/asset_cache/link/0000014871/Belarus_Brief_Sunday_March_19_2006.pdf (accessed March 20, 2011).

67. Zmister Dashkevich, interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, August 2009.

68. Alyaksandr Milinkievič, interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, August 2009.

69. One of the authors (Donnacha Ó Beacháin) was present in Belarus for the election campaign, and witnessed the post-election demonstration and sequence of events that led to the mass arrests. The author also attended the OSCE's post-election press conference.

70. " Belarus closes down OSCE office after poll criticisms," BBC News, December 31, 2010, available at www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12100765 (accessed March 20, 2011).

71. The name of one of the more visible movements, MAGAM, was Azeri for "it's time," the same term used by PORA in Ukraine. See *Eurasia Insight* (2005b); *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (2005a); BBC (2006); and Levan Ramishvili, interview with Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Tbilisi, January 24, 2008.

72. "Rose, Orange Revolutions' Protagonists Against 'Color Revolution' in Azerbaijan," *Eurasia Daily Monitor,* November 1, 2005.

73. "Ukrainian Authorities Release Azerbaijani Oppositionist," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* October 20, 2005.