



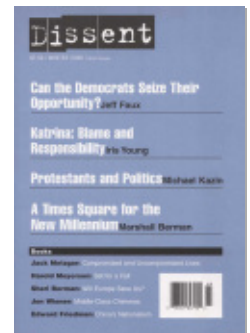
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## Promoting Democracy: Is Exporting Revolution a Constructive Strategy?

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when an upheaval took place in November: Labor Party chair Shimon Peres was defeated and replaced by Amir Peretz. This transformed the sleepy party, for Peretz, a dovish, social democratic trade unionist of Moroccan origins, was critical not only of the Ashkenazi elite and the neoliberal manifesto of the party, but also of the security ethos so dominant in Israeli culture at large. But will his call for the adoption of a civilian discourse win the hearts of the electorate in this warring soci-

ety? Although the split within the Likud Party, initiated by Prime Minister Sharon's turn to the center, enhances this possibility, the answer will be known only after the next general election. ●

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## Promoting Democracy

*Is Exporting Revolution a Constructive Strategy?*

**Mark R. Beissinger**

**O**VER THE PAST five years, four successful revolutions have occurred in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, overthrowing pseudodemocratic regimes and bringing to power new coalitions expressing commitment to democratic reform. There is now enormous interest in revolution among democratic activists throughout the region. The "colored revolutions" (so named for their adoption of "people power" tactics of nonviolent resistance and their symbolic use of colors to identify supporters) have inspired oppositional groups in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Oppositions in places as distant as Lebanon, Egypt, Togo, and Zimbabwe have been emboldened by these developments. Like European monarchs after 1848, post-Soviet strongmen are now concerned about the transnational spread of revolution to their fiefdoms. Some have already taken countermeasures to stave off such a possibility. Post-Soviet Eurasia today is a region consumed by the hope and fear of revolutionary change—and of its aftermath.

"Colored revolution" has come to the attention of the U.S. government as well—as a

strategy for promoting democratization. In November 2003, as the Georgian Rose Revolution was just getting underway, President George W. Bush spoke before the National Endowment for Democracy, where he redefined (once again) the purpose of the American invasion of Iraq, calling it the beginning of a "global democratic revolution." Since then, we have seen active efforts by the United States and a number of American-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs such as Freedom House, the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and the Soros Foundation) to support democratic revolutions within the post-Soviet region and elsewhere. In October 2004, Bush signed the Belarus Democracy Act, which authorizes assistance to pro-democracy activism in Belarus, with the intention of overthrowing the Lukashenka regime. And in May 2005, Bush traveled to Tbilisi, where he praised the Rose Revolution as an example to be emulated throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia. Democratic opposition leaders in Armenia and Azerbaijan (both countries plagued by extensive electoral fraud and both allies of the United States) took heart from Bush's speech, seeing in it the possibility that they too might receive support for efforts to topple their corrupt regimes—although senior administration

officials were quick to deny that the United States was in “the revolution business.” Nevertheless, neoconservatives have lauded the Bush administration’s readiness, in Max Boot’s words, to “apply the lessons of Ukraine” throughout the world. As Boot has argued, “The triumph of the Orange Revolution should dispel the quaint notion still prevalent in many Western universities and foreign ministries that democracy is a luxury good suitable for rich countries with a tradition of liberalism stretching back centuries. . . . These revolutions reveal the hollowness of the cliché that ‘democracy can’t be imposed by outsiders.’ . . . Sometimes, when dealing with an entrenched dictatorship, this requires military intervention of the kind that occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan. More brittle regimes can be brought down by their own people, but even they often need a little extra shove.”

Recent developments in the four countries that experienced “colored revolutions,” however, raise questions over whether the promotion of democratic revolution from abroad significantly advances the long-term prospects for democracy—or, alternatively, has unanticipated and sometimes deleterious effects for democratic development. There are real dangers in the export of revolution as a strategy for democratization: first, the danger that democracy could come to be viewed as a tool of external statecraft rather than an indigenous development; second, that human rights organizations could compromise their ability to act as independent monitoring organizations if they involve themselves with specific political movements or come to be identified as “revolutionary organizations”; third, that efforts to promote democratic revolution could produce intensified ethnic conflict and even civil war; and finally, that giving democratic revolution “a little extra shove” could lead to postrevolutionary situations in which democratic development is highly vulnerable to reversal.

**T**HE EMERGENCE of the American government as a “revolutionary state” within the world system is, of course, a novelty and marks a departure from its traditional role within the cold war order. Growing conflict between the United States and a number of

post-communist governments (Serbia, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, and Uzbekistan) over their foreign policy orientations and internal human rights practices together with the Bush administration’s embrace of unilateral efforts to reshape the world in America’s interest have been responsible for a more aggressive approach toward democratization. New as well is the use of third-party, democracy-promoting NGOs to channel aid to revolutionary causes. Such organizations in the past acted mainly as monitors and informational clearinghouses, mobilizing transnational support in order to sanction offending behavior, rather than as the financiers and trainers of revolutionaries. Direct external financial and organizational aid from third-party countries or from foreign NGOs was not a significant element in earlier waves of democratic revolution—as in Portugal, for example, or the “People Power” revolutions of East Asia, or the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Some of the NGOs involved enjoy close relationships with the U.S. government. The National Endowment for Democracy, for instance, was established by the Reagan administration as a private, nonprofit organization that channels federal funding to pro-American civil-society groups throughout the world. Others, such as the Soros Foundation, have independently embraced more confrontational modes of fostering democratic change out of frustration with the progress of democracy in the post-communist region and under the influence of the civil-society communities they serve.

For the most part, the post-communist “colored revolutions” were not engineered from abroad. They relied on local dissatisfaction and replaced corrupt regimes that maintained themselves in power through electoral fraud (and in the cases of Milošević and Kuchma, regimes that also occasionally practiced political murder). Few advocates of democracy could deny the euphoria felt in Serbia, Ukraine, and Georgia as hundreds of thousands of citizens—in Kyiv, up to a million people—incensed by massive electoral irregularities, braved the threat of violent repression (and inclement weather) to reclaim their right to free and fair elections.

But while the sources of these revolutions

may have been indigenous, support provided by the American government and American-based NGOs was critical to their materialization and spread. The U.S. government, for instance, spent \$41 million promoting anti-Milošević civil society groups such as Otpor, the student group that spearheaded the Serbian Bulldozer Revolution in 2000. The Clinton administration even erected a series of transmitters around the periphery of Serbia to provide alternative news coverage, and it established a special office in Budapest to coordinate assistance to Milošević's opponents. Georgian social movements first formed links with Otpor in spring 2003 (six months before the Rose Revolution), when civil-society activists from Georgia visited Belgrade on a trip sponsored by the Soros Foundation. With financial and logistical help from abroad, Otpor activists trained Georgian activists in techniques of nonviolent resistance. The local Georgian branch of the Soros Foundation helped support Kmara (the Georgian version of Otpor) out of its \$350,000 election support program, and Kmara and other opposition groups received significant financial and organizational aid from the National Democratic Institute. In Ukraine, the U.S. government spent \$65 million promoting democracy in the years immediately preceding the Orange Revolution—most of it channeled to Ukrainian NGOs and social movements that opposed Kuchma—through third-party NGOs such as Freedom House or the National Endowment for Democracy. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for instance, granted millions of dollars to the Poland-America-Ukraine Cooperation Initiative (PAUCI), administered by Freedom House. PAUCI then sent these funds to Ukrainian NGOs associated with the anti-Kuchma opposition.

Indeed, fostering democratic revolution has now become an international business. In addition to the millions of dollars of aid involved, numerous consulting operations have arisen, many of them led by the former revolutionaries themselves. Since the Serbian revolution, for instance, Otpor activists have become, as one Serbian analyst put it, “a modern type of mercenary,” traveling the world, often in the

pay of the U.S. government or NGOs, in order to train local groups in how to organize a democratic revolution. A number of leaders of the Ukrainian youth movement Pora were trained in Serbia at the Center for Non-Violent Resistance, a consulting organization set up by Otpor activists to instruct youth leaders from around the world in how to organize a movement, motivate voters, and develop mass actions. “They taught us everything we know,” one leading member of Pora told a *Deutsche Welle* correspondent. After the Rose and Orange revolutions, Georgian and Ukrainian youth movements began to challenge Otpor's consulting monopoly. Pora activists even joked about creating a new Comintern for democratic revolution. In fact, Vladislav Kaskiv, the leader of Pora, met with President Bush at the Bratislava summit and received the president's support for creating a center to aid the spread of democratic revolution to Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and Azerbaijan. Ukrainian, Georgian, and Serbian activists have developed modules for teaching the art of nonviolent revolution. These modern professional revolutionaries have turned up with increasing frequency in Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan.

SOME DEMOCRACY-PROMOTION NGOs such as Freedom House have embraced nonviolent resistance as the most promising path for promoting democratic change around the world. A March 2005 Freedom House report by Adrian Karatnycky, senior scholar at Freedom House, and Peter Ackerman, chair of its board of trustees, argues that the greatest long-term gains in democratization have occurred as a result of nonviolent “people-power” movements rather than “pacted” democratic transitions from above. They base their findings on a simple correlational analysis of Freedom House scores over the last several decades. Karatnycky and Ackerman call for a “paradigm shift” in democracy-promotion that would target aid to those groups that make nonviolent civic resistance a priority, encourage broad-based coalitions among opposition forces, transfer knowledge about civil resistance to opposition groups, invest in alternative media networks, and wield external sanctions to constrain the repression of democratic

opponents. Ackerman himself is a major expert on nonviolent resistance and founder of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, which conducts training workshops on promoting democracy and human rights. His film *Bringing Down A Dictator*, a PBS documentary detailing the overthrow of Milošević, has become something of a best-seller among would-be democratic revolutionaries.

THE PROBLEM WITH the Karatnycky/Ackerman argument (and with Boot's wholesale embrace of democratic revolution for export) is not that revolution is an inappropriate mode of democratization or that the strength of civil-society movements and popular mobilization are unimportant for successful democratization. On the contrary, a large body of literature in recent years has documented how mass movements and pressure from below have played a more critical role than is usually recognized in democratization. Rather, the problem lies in the consequences of packaging, exporting, and spreading democratic revolution like a module across a broad array of settings, irrespective of local circumstances.

For one thing, as those who study revolution know, the outcomes of revolutionary upsurges are highly unpredictable and just as often lead to failure and prolonged civil war as to democratic success. Failed revolution can in fact be worse for democratic development than the protracted evolution of civil society—because widespread repression can lead to the decimation of democratic forces. Some observers, for instance, attribute the Uzbek government's radically repressive response to the May 2005 protests in Andijan, where Uzbek government troops by some accounts killed more than five hundred people, to the panicky sense that the spread of revolution in Central Asia had to be stopped. Andijan lies immediately across the border from the Osh valley, where the Kyrgyz revolution originated. By inflicting an overwhelming blow against dissent, Karimov sought to demonstrate that he would not tolerate the same outcome as in Kyrgyzstan, where President Askar Akaev was overthrown in part because of his refusal to apply significant force against his opponents.

In view of the unpredictable outcomes of revolutionary crises, promoting a wave of democratic revolutions is a form of brinkmanship—the equivalent of playing a high-stakes game of poker with democracy. And where sharp cultural differences are embodied in state institutions, the political crises provoked by mobilized civic groups may easily flow over into ethnic violence. For instance, civil war was only narrowly averted in the Georgian, Ukrainian, and Kyrgyz cases. There was nothing inevitable about their felicitous outcomes. They depended on the political restraint of the actors involved—including the restraint of the dictators themselves, none of whom ordered widespread repression. As the Uzbek case demonstrates, that same restraint is not likely to be evident in most places where dictatorial regimes are entrenched. Thus, one of the unintended consequences of the attempt to export democratic revolution could be the inadvertent stimulation of repression, ethnic conflict, and even civil war.

Of course, Karatnycky and Ackerman most definitely do not advocate the violent seizure of power. They are consistent proponents of nonviolent resistance. Their correlations show that when movements turn to violence, the long-term prospects for democratic development sharply decline. The catch lies in the unpredictability of violence within revolutionary crises. In the Kyrgyz "Tulip Revolution" of March 2005, for example, ten thousand opposition enthusiasts, drawing inspiration from recent revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine and responding to fraudulent parliamentary elections, violently seized a number of towns in southern Kyrgyzstan. When they attempted to spread their revolt to the capital Bishkek, thugs associated with the regime attacked them, leading to the storming of the presidential palace and subsequently to riots that decimated much of central Bishkek. The Tulip Revolution occurred almost accidentally and in contradiction to the plans of opposition leaders. And, though it was inspired by the example of nonviolent revolution in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, it succeeded only because it was violent, because the structural conditions for a successful "people power" revolt were lacking. The Kyrgyz opposition was at most capable of

turning out fifteen thousand people in demonstrations—hardly enough to force Akaev's resignation through nonviolent disruption.

Nor were the results of the Tulip Revolution particularly democratizing. It was more a shift in power among clans than a democratic breakthrough. The seizure of power occurred several days after the new, fraudulently elected Parliament was sworn in. In a deal brokered by the provisional government's leader, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the fraudulently elected parliamentarians were allowed to remain in place, thus undermining the original rationale for the revolution. Bakiyev subsequently ran in a presidential election in which he captured 89 percent of the vote. Corruption and the penetration of organized criminal groups into the Kyrgyz government remain prevalent under the Bakiyev administration, and efforts to pursue official wrongdoings led recently to the dismissal of the country's chief prosecutor.

The Kyrgyz experience suggests the possible consequences of stimulating revolutionary democratic change where the conditions for civic activity are weak. Karatnycky and Ackerman are aware that their statistical association between the strength of nonviolent civic movements and long-term gains in democratization was not controlled for the influence of levels of income, education, or other factors widely known to be associated with stable democratic development. But these factors may be, as Boot contends, less important in the making of democratic revolution when democratization is given "a little extra shove" from outside or when it occurs in significant part as the result of modular change—due, that is, to the cross-national influence of successful examples elsewhere. The result, however, is likely to be a "democratic" revolution in contexts where the structural conditions for democracy are lacking.

Even in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine the long-term stability of democratic change produced from these revolutions is in doubt. Political freedoms improved in all three of these countries in the immediate wake of revolution. That is to be expected whenever a repressive regime is overthrown. According to Freedom House's own ratings, the progress has been more evident in Serbia and considerably less

so in Ukraine and Georgia. But we don't know what the long-term prospects for democracy are in any of these countries, and recent trends have raised doubts about democratic stability.

Vojislav Koštunica returned to power in March 2004 as prime minister, after slightly less than four years as president of Serbia, by forming a coalition with Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia—the very political force that the Bulldozer Revolution aimed to overthrow. Indeed, Serbian president Boris Tadic has recently accused the Koštunica government of reviving the political atmosphere of the 1990s, and many leading liberals have expressed dismay with the direction in which the country is moving. Koštunica's government, for example, has dropped criminal charges against Milošević's son and lifted an international warrant against his wife. It has failed to live up to its obligations to turn over war criminals such as Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic to international authorities. Human Rights Watch has documented a wave of violence against minorities in Serbia since 2003 (including physical assaults, attacks on religious and cultural buildings, and cemetery desecration) to which the authorities have turned a blind eye. Another report by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe singled out Serbia for its high levels of corruption and lack of judicial independence, lumping it together with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

A SIMILAR THERMIDORIAN reaction appears to have taken shape in Ukraine in September 2005 when the coalition that had sustained the Orange Revolution unraveled completely. Yushchenko's chief political adviser, Oleksandr Zinchenko (head of Yushchenko's 2004 election campaign), resigned, claiming that corruption "is now even worse than before." Stunned by the resignation, Yushchenko fired his entire cabinet, which had been consumed by behind-the-scenes fighting between populist prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko (Yushchenko's ally during the Orange Revolution) and chocolate magnate Petro Poroshenko (head of the National Security Council) for control over key media and industrial assets. In an astounding reversal, Yushchenko then forged an alliance with his

erstwhile rival Viktor Yanukovich (whose electoral manipulations had prompted the Orange Revolution in the first place) to ensure the election of his choice for prime minister. Part of the deal with Yanukovich included formal promises by Yushchenko not to open criminal cases against those involved in perpetrating electoral fraud in 2004 and to expand parliamentary immunity to local deputies, thereby protecting criminal structures. The achievements of the Orange Revolution have today been placed in doubt. Yushchenko's popularity has plummeted, and many of those who helped to make the revolution now find themselves in opposition. Of course, revolutionary coalitions are always fragile formations and typically begin to disintegrate once the revolutionaries take power. As the Serbian and Ukrainian cases suggest, a strategy of external encouragement for a broad coalition among opposition forces may indeed aid the overthrow of dictators. But it does not promote stability or predictability in the democratic evolution of postrevolutionary governments.

In Georgia, democratic revolutionaries have been attempting to transform what amounts to a failed state into a functioning democracy within a short period of time—a daunting task in a society where, in many areas, electricity functions for only an hour a day, and large swaths of the country remain outside the government's control. More than a fifth of the population has abandoned Georgia due to the dire conditions there, and most live below the poverty line. President Mikhail Saakashvili has engaged in a concerted campaign against corruption and contraband, initiated a major road-building effort, and overthrown the local satrap in the enclave of Ajaria, bringing the region back under Tbilisi's sway. But this has hardly solved the deeper problems of the country's territorial integrity, ethnic division, rampant lawlessness, and corruption. Saakashvili's increasingly authoritarian drift and his emphasis on ensuring territorial integrity over civil liberties (opposition figures and independent journalists have been harassed, a subtle censorship operates, and police torture is still practiced) have spawned fears among a number of his erstwhile revolutionary allies about the potential "Putinization" of Georgia.

Some, like human rights activist Davit Zurabishvili, who ran Tbilisi's Liberty Institute (a human rights center that played a critical role in making the Rose Revolution), have left Saakashvili's parliamentary group over concerns about the direction in which the country is evolving.

**I**N SHORT, democratic development remains under serious question in all of the countries that experienced "colored revolution." Moreover, the effects of the "colored revolutions" on other countries so far have been far from positive, as authoritarian regimes have cracked down on democratic opponents, closed down or monitored more closely relations with human rights NGOs, and attempted to isolate themselves from transnational influences. In the Russian case, the emergence of youth movements favoring "colored revolution" inspired the Putin regime to organize its own countermovement—Ours (*Nashi*)—which is strongly anti-American and attacks the influence of foreign ideologies (particularly liberalism) on Russian society. The role of NGOs such as the Soros Foundation and Freedom House in aiding democratic revolutionaries has precipitated a backlash in a number of post-Soviet states, which have begun to view them as revolutionary organizations. The Soros Foundation, for instance, no longer operates in Belarus, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan precisely because of growing hostility from host governments; in other countries their ability to work effectively has been undermined. In the wake of the latest revolutionary wave, the transnational NGO presence within the Eurasian region is waning. Rather than active engagement with nondemocratic societies in order to encourage the emergence of democratic forces, what we see is the increasing isolation of authoritarian regimes, even where the prospects are remote for successful democratizing revolution. This is not likely to be a recipe for promoting the long-term prospect of democracy.

Perhaps the United States would do well to learn a lesson from its rival in the cold war, which also tried to export revolution, though not of the democratic variety. The attempt by professional revolutionaries to stimulate global revo-

lution and provide “a little extra shove” to what they envisioned as the march of history, and even to engage in externally induced regime-change through military means, transformed their movement into a tool of state power, perverted its goals and meaning, generated a series of unstable postrevolutionary regimes, and ultimately unleashed forces that it did not un-

derstand and could not control. Having already entered the democratic revolution business, the United States finds itself facing similar dilemmas. Let us hope, for the sake of democracy, that the results prove better. ●

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# From Real Estate to Nation-State

*Who Will Lead Afghanistan?*

**Charles Norchi**

**K**HANS, KINGS, and conquerors—these are the leaders Afghans have mostly known. The legacies of Alexander the Macedonian, Genghis Khan, the Soviet Army, the Mujahadin, and finally the Taliban and Osama bin Laden share one feature: leadership based on power and divorced from authority—or with only the Qur’an as the authorizing symbol of governance. Invariably, the outcomes have been cumulative human rights abuses and what I call disvelopment, that is, the unraveling of the little development that existed. A common denominator in the repetitive failures of governance, human rights, and economic development in Afghanistan has been bad leadership.

As a journalist in Peshawar, Pakistan, on the rim of the Afghan war of the 1980s, I was fortunate to spend time with the late anthropologist Louis Dupree, whose book *Afghanistan* had become required cold war reading. “This place has always been more real estate than nation-state,” he said. “They are wonderful people, with a rich history and culture, and often below the surface, some fine leaders—the glue that holds the thing together.” The fine leaders could not operate above the surface because this land was on everyone’s way to someplace else; it was a pawn in the games of external powers that imposed leaders. Afghan

leaders were nurtured and empowered by a Kalashnikov culture.

Crossing the Khyber Pass, the young commander Abdul Haq, who had left Kabul University to oppose the Soviet occupation, said, “Afghanistan can be a democracy when the occupiers are gone, and when we have a new generation of leaders who can lead without the gun alone, and without the Qur’an alone.” In October 2001, even as an American air strike attempted to rescue him, Abdul Haq was captured and executed by the Taliban while on an ill-advised secret mission—killed by the Kalashnikov culture that he could not escape.

Through the 1980s, for many in the West, Afghanistan held a romantic image of a land of Kipling and Kim, where turbaned freedom fighters crossed deserts, mountains, and Central Asian steppes to fight the foreign occupiers. So long as the Soviets were in Afghanistan, it was the good jihad. It was on the battlefields of Afghanistan that our cold war was won. But a price was paid in human dignity—by the poor and marginalized who became refugees, the many victims of torture, the innocent villagers who were massacred, and by every Afghan who has since stepped on a land mine.

During that period, Commander Ahmad Shah Massood, who became known as the Lion of the Pansjhir Valley, was an enlightened statesman as much as a military leader. He built schools and clinics, implemented a tax system in the region under his control, and occasionally negotiated truces with the Soviets.