

# Through an Orange-Colored Lens: Western Media, Constructed Imagery, and Color Revolutions

ANDRÉS SCHIPANI-ADÚRIZ

**Abstract:** The democratic breakthroughs or “color revolutions” (a reference made by the media to the symbols used by opposition movements) that occurred in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan resemble one another. They were sparked by electoral fraud and backed by many in the West. Moreover, they brought back nostalgic memories of the end of the Cold War. This article shows how, while covering the events in these three former Soviet republics, Western journalists depicted scenarios in a similar vein to the October 2000 Serbian election and the Czechoslovakian Velvet Revolution of 1989. Covering the recent “revolutionary” events in the post-Soviet space, the foreign reporters—using a functional scheme of being mirror, witness, and transmitter at the same time—have provoked a remarkably effective revival of the end of the Cold War portrayals.

**Keywords:** color revolutions, democratic breakdowns, democracy promotion, foreign correspondence, foreign news, Velvet Revolution, Western media

“Watch out . . . he’s a foreign journalist.”

—From *Tintin in the Land of Soviets*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In June 2005, Ian Traynor, a foreign correspondent of the Manchester-based newspaper *The Guardian*, wrote a story claiming that “from the Chinese frontier to the borders of the European Union, the vast post-Soviet space has been in the grip of revolutionary fervor over the past few years—a second wave of democratization after the 1989–91 revolutions symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall.”<sup>2</sup> He was referring to the “bloodless,”<sup>3</sup> “peaceful,”<sup>4</sup> “electoral,”<sup>5</sup> “democratic,”<sup>6</sup> or “color revolutions”<sup>7</sup> that occurred in Georgia,

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Andrés Schipani-Adúriz is an Argentine-born journalist. He attended the Universities of Cardiff, Bologna, and the London School of Economics, and is currently reading for the postgraduate degree in Global Governance and Diplomacy at the University of Oxford. His work has appeared in the *Observer*; *La Repubblica*; *La Nación*; the *Buenos Aires Herald*; the *European Voice*; and *Transitions Online* (TOL). This article is respectfully dedicated to Anna Politkovskaya. Copyright © 2007 Heldref Publications

Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, respectively. Those popular upheavals were based on the October 2000 Serbian election, when democratic protests toppled Slobodan Milošević's authoritarian regime.<sup>8</sup>

After Serbia, the democratic upheavals in the former Soviet Union shared the common feature of being centered on fraudulent elections with an opposition supported by key circles in the West. As a result, protests varying in size broke out in all three post-Soviet countries. Following a period of uncertainty, the incumbent president either resigned from office and/or the election outcome was overturned, resulting in a member of the opposition becoming president.<sup>9</sup> All these situations ended without bloodshed (although looting was visible in Kyrgyzstan), the challengers embraced nonviolent tactics, and the incumbents did not call on state-security forces to repress the protests. Not even the opposition leaders predicted the scale and duration of the street protests.<sup>10</sup> As in the 1989–91 period when, like falling dominos, socialist governments fell to the forces of democratization, Western journalists ran to the East to offer their perceptions to the West.

The media not only watched, they also played a crucial role<sup>11</sup> in the years after the then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, as rapid developments dramatically changed the status quo. Images of influential figures in the “eastern bloc”—Mikhail Gorbachev, Lech Wałęsa, and Václav Havel—facing leaders from the “West”—Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II—were mingled with those of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Bucharest crowds that violently deposed Romanian tyrant Nicolae Ceaușescu.<sup>12</sup> In Moscow, an attempted coup by Soviet hard-liners failed in large part because the media was telling everyone around the globe what was happening with Gorbachev in Foros, while Yeltsin and putschists addressed a crowd from the top of a tank.<sup>13</sup>

The perception of the world aligned along East-West lines was, arguably, simpler to understand—at least as defined by the Western press. Today, readers and viewers can know almost as much as they want about distant, formerly inaccessible places such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. However, the window on the world is now wider, but it can be disorderly and confusing to look through it. The dimension of these changes carries implications not only for journalists and news organizations everywhere, but also for the governments and the citizens they portray. Some critics argue that today there is a muddled approach to international news in the West that is especially unfortunate because it ignores the news media's responsibility to provide the public with important information.<sup>14</sup> The loss of the “grand-narrative” of the Cold War is highly responsible for this.<sup>15</sup> If the public is uninterested in foreign news, it is a challenge to foreign correspondents to make their coverage more relevant and interesting. Correspondents have since developed codes and norms that guide not only their behaviors, but also their editors' behaviors, which therefore shape the content of news stories.<sup>16</sup> In moments of crisis such as these revolutions, the dimensions of the various roles played by the media (monitoring the surroundings, creation of collective imagination, and so on) take on its full meaning. In time of crisis, hence, the media acquire a previously unknown autonomy. Crisis—again, in this case, revolutions—allows a new side of the media to show through; the excitement provoked by the revolution also reaches the journalists. As expressed by Natalia Antelava, who covered the Georgian Rose Revolution for the BBC: “It is fun to cover, it is fun to watch.”<sup>17</sup> At the start of the revolutions (or the speculations about a potential one) the media asserted their roles as essential elements of “democratic equilibrium” by circulating information to allow the developing crisis to be followed and the “real stakes” to be understood.<sup>18</sup> From the start, for its respec-

tive audiences (and governments), the Western media were associated with the crises, which allowed them to play (for their audience) three different roles simultaneously:

- **Mirror:** the media are a mirror of reality; “a sometimes faithful, sometimes distorting mirror.”<sup>19</sup> Reality is amplified through the images that the media transmit; this gives a certain definition of reality that led to a particular interpretation of the revolutions.

- **Witness:** they are a witness to reality as well. The role of the witness renders truthful that which it sees. The media were thus more than neutral observers taking note of the revolutionary events as they developed. They bore witness and, because of this, gave credibility to the events and the discourses they conveyed.<sup>20</sup> The reporters wanted to see and hear; to be present at all stages of the revolution to ensure that their public’s right to information was well served, as they were representing “Western democratic values.”<sup>21</sup>

- **Transmitter:** the media made themselves the spokespeople of the colored groups that expressed themselves, coloring with their points of view the relation of events.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the media are then “social actors,”<sup>23</sup> but reporters—foreign correspondents, in this case—remain “committed observers”<sup>24</sup> of that respective social reality. This analytical framework leads us to the point of the comparisons of the color revolutions with previous upheavals. Such emulations with the Czechoslovakian Velvet Revolution, and the October 2000 Serbian election, have been, to a great extent, artificial, driven by a desire among some to establish a pattern as to whether the causes for the political upheavals are heroic populations finally breaking their shackles, or Western conspiracies trying to establish influence via willing puppets or dupes. There were vastly different historical backgrounds and reasons for the different revolutions. Sometimes the coverage seemed naïve as foreign correspondents often have to be instant experts about places they have suddenly been sent to for the first time or know very little. The temptation to look around for reference points is very great. Most knew about the Velvet Revolution, making it an obvious comparison. Russian resurgence was a legitimate factor to explore and incorporate in coverage, and references to the Cold War were legitimate and obvious because Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan represent very public differences between the former Soviet Union and the West. The Russia-West divide provides a familiar framework and was certainly part of the story, but not the only one, because in the end these revolutions produced changes. Such comparisons were, in some way, attractive and provided another example of journalists’ desire to find reference points for themselves and their audiences. It was also the case that there was a strong element of completing unfinished business from 1991 when the USSR collapsed.

Foreign correspondents have long used critical incidents—such as the Eastern European revolutions and now the three color revolutions—as a way of framing the hows and whys of their journalistic practice. Those correspondents have troubles of their own, which only compound the difficulties of awakening the mass public’s interest in international affairs. In much of their work, whether routine or not, they are bedeviled by sharply rising costs, savage competition, censorship in many guises and obstacles that are deliberately raised by a large number of new nations and some older ones as well. The worst of these, in the correspondents’ view, is the increasing tendency in the West, for all its liberal tradition, to look on news and those who deal in it as tools of national and international policy.

“In the first instance, after all, foreign news is basically about relationships between peoples. And that can never be ignored.”<sup>25</sup> The public opinion polls drum away at the comparatively small global-minded audience for all but crisis foreign news. Even editors of well-respected newspapers demand that articles on the most nuanced and confused situations make sense to the average reader, which horrifies intellectuals, who are against simplified writing and thinking on international affairs, claiming that they alone are a sufficient audience. It is also untrue that most of the writings of foreign correspondents working for Western media (even surrogate correspondents) reflect their own national values and interests to a large extent. The same is true when such correspondents venture to explore those areas of the world that constitute the missing factor in international affairs, such as some of the post-Soviet nations. That, questionably, makes them more readable for the standard audience. Hence the updated version of the end of the Cold War-style portrayals, almost twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. For journalists, discourse about critical incidents suggests a way of attending to events that are instrumental for the continued well-being of the journalistic community. Those critical incidents are what Claude Lévi-Strauss once called “hot moments,” phenomena or events through which a society assesses its significance.<sup>26</sup> If the end of the Cold War led foreign correspondents to reexamine the scope of their coverage,<sup>27</sup> the recent upheavals in the post-Soviet space caused a renaissance of some journalistic rules, conventions, and practices that were adopted before and mostly during the 1989–91 period.

The Georgian, Ukrainian, and Kyrgyz experiences are portrayed as critical incidents since they—arguably—represented a definitive break with the Soviet legacy.<sup>28</sup> Those revolutions sparked a second wave of democratization in the post-Soviet space. Only a few postcommunist countries managed to emulate the patterns of Western-style liberal democracy after the collapse of the USSR. Yet, there was still a democratizing bias in assessing political realities in the cases that were neither clearly democratic nor definitively authoritarian.<sup>29</sup> These nondemocratic outcomes were given much less attention in the first years of the end of the Cold War and were largely treated as exceptional cases. The broader authoritarian tendencies in the region were generally overlooked, as many of the hybrid regimes were initially deemed as diminished forms of democracy rather than diminished forms of authoritarianism. The efforts to closely examine the nondemocratic regimes in the area occurred after some of the regimes were already established autocracies.<sup>30</sup> This was the case in Georgia under Eduard Shevardnadze, in Ukraine under Leonid Kuchma, and in Kyrgyzstan under Askar Akayev.<sup>31</sup> However, as the outcomes of the three color revolutions show, these regimes were somewhat more fragile than originally thought.<sup>32</sup> Each transformation, regime change, or social revolution is usually divided into three stages: the period of the destruction of the old system, the period of transition, and the period of the construction of the new order. Before the democratic breakthroughs, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan were in a transition period that blended elements of the old system with forerunners of the new order. When asked in 1992 by the Polish-Belarusian reporter Ryszard Kapuściński about the political situation in the former Soviet Union, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn stated that “the system that governs us is a combination of the old *nomenklatura*, the sharks of finance, false democrats, and the KGB. I cannot call this democracy—it is [a] repugnant, historically unprecedented hybrid, and we do not know in which direction it will develop.”<sup>33</sup> That notion of “transitional period”<sup>34</sup> was the answer to everything that was happening inside those countries. The main contents of a transitional period are

implementing large-scale political and economic reforms, changing the regime, and creating a new quality of life. Nevertheless, the period of transition in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, instead of steering the country to liberal democracy, was marred by a turn toward authoritarianism. They needed that to destruct the ingrained reminiscence of the old system. There is then a link between these color revolutions and the ambivalent characteristic of international news that is related to continuities and discontinuities. Identifying something as news implies a discontinuity, a rupture, even an eruption, and these discontinuities acquire their meaning against a background of continuities.<sup>35</sup> In these post-Soviet republics, the continuity was given while the regimes in these countries were “delegative democracies.”<sup>36</sup> That was the scenario until Slobodan Milošević was toppled in Serbia when people started to pay more attention to these cases. One interesting feature about these democratic breakthroughs is how few analysts predicted them. Then, those regimes turned out to be “competitive authoritarianisms,”<sup>37</sup> which made them more attractive to the media and started to set the stage to portray their forthcoming discontinuities in the form of popular revolts. If there are any replacements for the theme of the Cold War, two are democracy and the chaos of small states, and both fit into the analysis of the color revolutions.<sup>38</sup>

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### Staging a Revolution

“The country is the theatre, but the play is universal.”

—Ryszard Kapuściński<sup>39</sup>

British political theorist Harold Laski asserted more than six decades ago that the problem with international news lies “at the heart of the major problems of the modern state.”<sup>40</sup> By subscribing to this line of thinking, it is relevant to explain the political inferences that propagated the color revolutions. If the Georgian, Ukrainian, and Kyrgyz democratic breakthroughs have been widely covered by the Western media, emulating the patterns of the Eastern European revolutions of the 1989–91 period, it was not because the story was colorful and politically charged, but because it was politically substantial. They had considerable implications for the international community. Political context influences foreign news coverage, and, inside that scope, the story throughout modern history that popular forces motivated by radical democratic ideals have sought to combat structures of hierarchy and domination is widely known. However, following the Marcusean idea, the novel historical pattern of the color revolutions is “perhaps best reflected in the role played by a new sensibility in radically changing the style of the opposition.”<sup>41</sup> And this revolutionary opposition was what made a politically substantial story become attractive. Those revolutionary task forces that drove the Kremlin’s favored candidates out of the race were colorful, mostly youthful, media savvy, and they formed the core of the demonstrations and

led the mass mobilizations.<sup>42</sup> They also looked very similar to the 1989–91 revolutionaries. Nevertheless, this revolutionary class is media savvy, with front-line-holding tools: the logo and brand recognition.<sup>43</sup> In the words of Antelava: “I think pictures of squares filled by protestors are attractive and compelling whether they are in post-Soviet Tbilisi or post-Hariri Beirut. Lots of people holding colorful slogans, flags, screaming loud slogans simply make good and easy telly. . . . It captures momentum. It is a story that sells. . . . People’s power makes sexy TV, and we buy into it.”<sup>44</sup> These new revolutionaries were organized with militaristic precision,<sup>45</sup> and, with Western support, they have succeeded.<sup>46</sup> The emergence of this competitive democratic opposition was very newsworthy for countries with a history of one-party rule.

The use of the word “revolution” does not imply any radical change from the basis and any long-term consequences of these events, but rather only to identify that the pro-democracy movement in each case was successful in overthrowing the current regime. Some theorists<sup>47</sup> refer to these events as “post-Soviet electoral revolutions,” while others<sup>48</sup> call them a “second wave of democratization in the post-Communist world.” Generally speaking, issues on terminology are more chaotic than ambiguous, as is the case in defining revolutions. The color revolutions—like all major upheavals—posed questions of definition about the concept of revolution.<sup>49</sup> Modern world history and the history of the international system cannot ignore the role of revolutions.<sup>50</sup> This also applies to the history of modern foreign news coverage: the first correspondents on assignment working for the Western media were sent by English newspapers to cover the American and French Revolutions, respectively.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, to call the series of events that led to regime changes in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan revolutions is inaccurate. Hitherto, if journalists frequently use the word *revolutions* it is because there is no other term in the Western political lexicon to describe the collapse of a social system. It is also used because it is both very attractive and very descriptive for headlines or breaking news.

In the Western political tradition, the term “revolution” evokes an idea of a politically violent rupture with the *ancien régime*, while also implying an act of popular volition.<sup>52</sup> On a very basic level—and avoiding any sort of essentialism to contextualize it inside a journalistic analysis—the three main ways of defining revolutions are by the intentions of the key activists (whether and to what extent they aim to transform state and society); by its outcomes (the changes of state and society they actually affect); and by the situations of multiple sovereignty, in which two or more competing parties (each governing part of a populace previously ruled by a single regime) battle for state power.<sup>53</sup> Inside this theoretical framework, the color revolutions might be defined by their “intentions.”<sup>54</sup> They are then a sort of rebellion that protests political abuses, but do not transform society and usually begin unintentionally, and conclude with unexpected and undesired results. Yet, revolutionaries believe in promoting their ideology beyond their frontiers as a way of strengthening their stance, which might provoke a “copycat effect” in neighboring nations.<sup>55</sup> In these three cases, the revolutions’ names (Rose, Orange, and Tulip) accentuated their similarities with one another among both supporters (using them as blueprint for the own actions) and opponents (to be prepared to face them).<sup>56</sup>

After the end of the Cold War, *democracy* became a catchphrase of political and media rhetoric. Concepts such as terrorism, fascism, peace, globalization, and integration, among others, trail behind in their usage. This is especially true of the West where politicians, theorists, and journalists regularly remind the public about totalitarianism and its inadmissi-

ble practices. The Soviet variant of totalitarianism is still used in the West as a boogeyman; it is presented as the only alternative to democracy.<sup>57</sup> According to the commonly accepted opinion, which is widely praised by the Western media, the only choice is between totalitarianism (which is inadmissible) and democracy (as the inevitable option). Meanwhile, the experience of most post-Soviet states shows that rejection of totalitarianism does not mean an immediate transfer to democracy: democracy is not the complete absence of totalitarianism. The experience of post-Soviet democratization demonstrates that even if all formally necessary mechanisms for setting up democratic bodies of power were present in the newly democratized societies in 1991, their political elite is capable of self-reproduction to the same extent as in totalitarian regimes. The voters are invited to watch how the ruling party reproduces itself by toying with democracy. Those who went to the polls in the hope of changing something took part in a fictitious process; therefore, the public manifestations by those who wanted to replace the people came into being. They replaced the discredited election system and can be described, thus, as a form of people's democratic involvement, the so-called change from below.<sup>58</sup> The typical feature that led to the revolutionary experiences in the area was that fifteen years since the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, many of the post-Soviet republics were (while some still remain) ruled by members of the Soviet nomenklatura.<sup>59</sup> Some republics, as the Georgian, Ukrainian, and Kyrgyz cases show, have freed themselves from the older leaders inherited from the Soviet times to the hooting of crowds and scathing criticism. This is a characteristic of the Soviet political legacy. In the Soviet Union, nearly every leader consolidated his authority by disgracing his predecessor: Stalin gradually removed Lenin from power; Khrushchev trampled on Stalin's personality cult; Brezhnev plotted to topple Khrushchev; Gorbachev criticized all his predecessors; and Yeltsin never hesitated to criticize and humiliate Gorbachev.<sup>60</sup> The events in Georgia, where Soviet-era ruler Eduard Shevardnadze was removed from power, in Ukraine, where the same happened to Leonid Kuchma, and in Kyrgyzstan, where Askar Akayev lost his post, demonstrate that the members of the former Soviet elite were removed according to Soviet patterns (a coup organized by a small group of elite members) with the difference being that they were tinged in democratic hues by the active involvement of the masses and political and communication technologists. The sorts of autocratic/authoritarian regimes nomenklatura-style politicians were running tended equally toward totalitarianism and democracy. They sparingly distributed rights and freedom while gradually delegating powers; they remain in control and keep the opposition in check; they let people appreciate freedom, yet they are never too lavish with it. It was in this context that the Western pro-democracy rhetoric came into being. Nonetheless, the base of the kind of political dissent that developed its actions in the post-Soviet space is, up to a certain point, inherited from the Velvet Revolution, in that its intellectual explanation comes from Václav Havel's ideas regarding civil society. Havel put faith in a challenge "from below," in the independent life of civil society outside the frame of state power. In his 1978 essay "Power of the Powerless," he argued that the power of the people resides in the self-organization of civil society that defies the instrumental reason embodied in the state and the technological apparatuses of control and domination. Civil society designates the terrain of open struggle, a terrain in which the antagonisms can articulate themselves.<sup>61</sup> Conversely, this notion of the power of the powerless can be perverted and manipulated as a stratagem to gain more power (as in the case of the new political elites), in the same way that today, for one's voice to be heard, one has to legitimize it as being some kind of

victim of power.<sup>62</sup> This globalized idea of victimization is also the basis for Western democracy promotion.<sup>63</sup> This legitimizes the Western position that when the rulers of a sovereign state fail to accomplish the responsibility to protect its citizens, then the responsibility is transferred to the international community.<sup>64</sup> This is a good starting point for media coverage on democracy promotion issues, because the media is a perfect means to mobilize sentiment-based empathy.<sup>65</sup> As in the three cases of the color revolts, the media helped the process of long-term Western investment in civil society organizations. On the other hand, at the beginning of the new millennium, the Russian political establishment did not fully grasp that the great imperial phase was over, and it still indulged in irredentist and neo-imperial rhetoric with some of the former Soviet republics.<sup>66</sup> Solzhenitsyn's urgings for Russians to extirpate their "great power" complex and free themselves from the "imperial delirium"<sup>67</sup> were ignored and Putin continued to offer unconditional support to the pro-Kremlin candidates in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. The current situation is the result of a rivalry among Russia, Europe, and the United States for influence throughout the former Soviet Union. According to Nick Paton Walsh, who has covered the three color revolutions for *The Guardian*: "The whole reason for Russia's particular pain was that Ukraine rubbed their Cold War loss."<sup>68</sup> The economic struggle between the competing groups within each country also played a considerable role in setting the stage for the events. Last, the people's discontent with the authorities' policy during the almost fifteen years of their rule was a factor that led to the upheavals. Both Russia and the West revert to a Cold War mentality when their interests intersect. It was also very convenient for the media to present the revolutions as an extension of changes in the early 1990s. They were, in effect, the completion of those changes. Many of the new states in the former Soviet Union gave the impression of unfinished business. Clearly, the revolutions created an expectation of change and democratization. According to Steven Lee Myers, Moscow bureau chief of the *New York Times*: "Considering the historical context of the end of the Soviet Union, the events in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan have been portrayed, accurately, I think, as a second wave of democratization."<sup>69</sup> If foreign news coverage of politics and international relations is still a product of the existing frameworks of nationhood, then the political frameworks developed in this chapter have set the stages for the Western foreign correspondents to cover the revolutions as such.

### Framing a Revolution

"The revolution passed from poetry into prose."

—Václav Havel<sup>70</sup>

The changes in the breakthrough of forces in the three post-Soviet nations show that an opposition led by the local elites, backed by a massive task force of mainly young protesters, drove the color revolutions. The legacies of the Serbian electoral breakthrough and the Velvet Revolution, provided the media a clear blueprint to put the three post-Soviet events inside a well-known frame.

As with the color revolutions, the principal theme of the Eastern European revolutions during what the sociologist Lord Ralf Dahrendorf has called the "annus mirabilis"<sup>71</sup> of 1989 was "people power." This implies that people could achieve anything if they took to the streets en masse in peaceful protest. The opening of the Berlin Wall was reported as a



government “giving way to the parliament of the streets”; even the security forces were “forced to retreat in the face of people’s power.”<sup>72</sup> Hitherto, the certainty for journalism throughout the Cold War was the bipolar world of East and West that provided a framework for interpretation, a way of seeing the world and of reporting on a global scale. This Cold War template conformed the predictable patterns and narrative outcomes. This is a crucial point when the role of the Western media during that time is considered: they constructed their Cold War imagery both through and within one such main pattern or interpretative framework. Those patterns form the scripts to major events and the journalists have to count on their audience’s expectations. During the coverage of the color revolutions, the pictures of squares filled by peaceful protestors brought nostalgic memories of the Velvet Revolution to which the audiences could immediately relate.<sup>73</sup> Writer and Bologna professor of semiotics Umberto Eco claims that the interpretation of something that is happening now and that we must immediately describe it “may well be one of those cases in which the conventional response is also the most effective.”<sup>74</sup> The public will demand it, and, in these cases, the foreign correspondent will feel compelled to give it to them. The journalist then will prefer to tell an unfolding story in a familiar format.<sup>75</sup> As described by a single script, the story of the Eastern European revolutions seemed at first to fit a single framework: people on the streets and nations breaking free from tyranny to embrace the freedom and democracy emulated from the West with new leaders addressing the crowds. Old assumptions became null and void. However, the question remains, then, whether Western media confection has met the challenge of interpreting that revolutionary change accurately. Those revolutions were then portrayed as the right story of democratic ideals<sup>76</sup> in the same way as the color ones have been portrayed. Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of “master patterns,” by which he means “an infinite number of individual patterns directly applicable to specific situations are generated” is useful here. The problem is that although such master patterns help us sustain thought, they may also take the place of it. Whereas they should help us master reality with minimum effort, “they may also encourage those who rely on them not to bother to refer to reality.”<sup>77</sup> If we accept this, we have to make a distinction between the actual framework, as the “deep structure” of thought and action and, for example, the instrumental “enemy image,” that rationalizes the ideological framework from where the color revolutions were portrayed.<sup>78</sup> It also helps to understand how the reporting of the correspondents and the media shape our views of the world.<sup>79</sup> Inside this structure, the pro-Kremlin candidates were given an “enemy image” while the Western aligned and pro-democratic political forces became glaring stars<sup>80</sup> and the nonviolent masses gathered in the streets were the main heroes.<sup>81</sup> These massive, non-violent social movements contributed to the transformation of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union<sup>82</sup> between 1989 and 1991 as much as they did in the past three years. The 1989–91 revolutions were a culmination of an awakening in which citizens became increasingly vocal in expressing their grievances and insisting on governmental reforms. Timothy Garton Ash has described them as “non-violent explosions”<sup>83</sup> with the claim “we have bare hands”<sup>84</sup> becoming its leading chant. Also, they have been the main characteristic of those upheavals, and at the same time, the most attractive and colorful aspect depicted by Western media. The *New York Times* has described this as “a revolutionary people’s movement [that] has brought into motion a process of great change.”<sup>85</sup>

The most precipitous transformation (and the most covered by the West) among Eastern European nations occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1989. The Velvet Revolution became

the insignia of any peaceful breakthrough that occurred afterward: “In the space of just a few weeks in November 1989, the Communist system in Czechoslovakia was brought to its knees. Massive protests on the streets of Prague forced the resignation of the hard-line Communist party rule in what became known as the ‘Velvet Revolution. . . .’”<sup>86</sup>

The Czech opposition—noting that nonviolent resistance against Communist regimes succeeded in Poland after ten years, in Hungary after ten months, and in East Germany after ten weeks—thought accurately that it would take Czechoslovakia only ten days.<sup>87</sup> Some of the most dramatic protests took place in Czechoslovakia and the Western correspondents were ready to report the events: “Czechoslovak boys and girls, wrapped in

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parkas against bitter cold, danced tonight in human chains through Prague’s lanes and boulevards, waving the red, white and blue flags of the nation that have become symbols of what the students call the ‘Velvet Revolution’, for its gentle quality. . . .”<sup>88</sup>

Petition signing campaigns turned into regular public demonstrations, often in Wenceslas Square in downtown Prague, where thousands of Czechoslovakians listened to addresses by Václav Havel and by Alexander

Dubček, the tragic hero of the Prague Spring of 1968. The rallies were highly charged events, and many observers have commented on the way in which the “crowds developed a collective voice that often spoke in unison and answered those addressing the crowds.”<sup>89</sup> Regardless of who organized the collective voice, it left a significant impression on observers, contributed to a collective effervescence, and aided citizens in overcoming their fear of retaliation by authorities: “But the square was full of people drunk with joy. Soldiers in uniform, mad slogans pinned to their backs, walked up and down, arm in arm, waving flags. . . . The square belongs to the students. Draped in flags, wearing flags on their heads, waving them, holding them high, they strolled, singing and shouting up and down the square. . . .”<sup>90</sup>

After continuous demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of people in Prague jangling keys as a form of protest, over half-a-million people gathered near Letna Park for the largest rally yet. As consequence, the Communist Party’s secretary general, Miloš Jakeš, alongside the Communist leadership, resigned. A few days later, Havel was installed as the new president on December 29, 1989: “Speaking to tens of thousands of Czechs and Slovaks who crammed into the city’s central Wenceslas Square for a festive demonstration of joy, Mr. Havel addressed once again the moral concerns of the revolution he had brought about. . . . ‘Let us keep it bright and pure,’ he said. ‘Truth and love must win out over lies and hate. . . .’”<sup>91</sup>

This was “the first gentle revolution,”<sup>92</sup> and the Western media brought a colorful and democratically tainted euphoria to it<sup>93</sup>: “The phenomenal wave of democratic protest simply swept the old regime into the dustbin of history. . . . There can be no better way to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution than by the Czechoslovak people’s revolution in the true spirit of ‘liberty, equality and fraternity.’”<sup>94</sup>

Although the coverage of the Velvet Revolution helped in spreading the gospel of peaceful revolutions and democratic values in the postcommunist sphere of influence, it took eleven years and a bloody civil war for Serbia to experience one. With democracy becoming a sort of transnational form of government, democratic ideals are now detaching themselves from national boundaries.<sup>95</sup> It is claimed that globalization minimizes political differences within states by converting elections into trivial rituals<sup>96</sup>; however, Serbians disproved that argument by using the polls to topple a tyrant. The Serb example was the definite experience that opened the doors to other electoral experiences in postcommunist countries while creating the foundations of mass protests toward the East, giving the media the perfect revival of the Eastern European revolutionary period.

In the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević would have been overthrown earlier, but the wars he started (first in Slovenia, then Croatia and Bosnia, and later in Kosovo) helped him stay in power. In conditions of war, there is a natural tendency for people to rally around the government; competing politicians are forced to compete on the issue of patriotism where, by virtue of being out of power, they are at a disadvantage. The opposition can then be marginalized or branded as traitors, because the leadership is in a position where it can easily monopolize political discourse.<sup>97</sup> In August 2000, it appeared that Milošević would have himself declared the winner in the September 24 elections. As election day approached, and the considerable strength the Democratic Opposition of Serbia led by Vojislav Koštunica became apparent, foreign observers began to speculate that Milošević would grant the need for a runoff and then try to steal it.<sup>98</sup> After a favorable result for the opposition, the Federal Electoral Commission set runoff elections for October 8. Rather than agreeing to a second round, Koštunica insisted he was the president-elect and his supporters took their protests to the streets of Belgrade: “Over chants of ‘He is finished, he is finished!’ and ‘Arrest Sloba’ from the crowd, Koštunica said: ‘our weapon is the truth. What we are doing here today is making history.’”<sup>99</sup>

Facing Milošević’s intransigence, the opposition began a nationwide strike and by the end of the month there were signs that the army would not support the regime. Everything was shut down in Belgrade and elsewhere in support of the opposition’s claim to victory: “Revolutionary crowds are some of the bravest and most generous groups of people on earth. Nothing is too dangerous for them to attempt, or too precious for them to share. . . .”<sup>100</sup>

On October 3, people marched on Milošević’s official residence. Milošević first dubbed his opponents “Western puppets,”<sup>101</sup> then ordered the arrest of strike leaders. On October 5, as hundreds of thousands of angry Serbs descended on Belgrade, demonstrators stormed the Federal Assembly building, taking control of it and setting it on fire.<sup>102</sup> The police responded violently at first, but eventually let demonstrators seize control. As euphorically reported by the BBC World Affairs editor, John Simpson:

It was the last eastern European communist domino to fall, but it happened to the same accompaniment as all the others, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Russia itself. The same whistles and plastic trumpets, the same loud chanting, the same belief that because so many people were out in the streets they must be invincible, and yet the same occasional moments of panic, when a bunch of policemen emerged. . . . It wasn’t entirely a revolution of velvet like the Czechoslovak one was, partly because this is the Balkans, not peaceable

Central Europe. . . . But that was pretty rare and when demonstrators brought out hat-stands, chairs and policemen's helmets from the parliament building, it was more in the spirit of souvenir hunting than looting. . . . A revolutionary crowd with its spirit up can do anything and policemen or soldiers, who are merely armed with guns, quickly understand that they can't do much against that kind of thing. . . .<sup>103</sup>

By the end of the day, Koštunica was declared president and the Western media were reporting with the same joy as during the Velvet Revolution: "Huge crowds are on the streets of Belgrade, celebrating what appears to be the overthrow of President Milošević after a day of mass protests."<sup>104</sup>

The October 2000 events were not just another occurrence of shock-and-awe elections that brought in a new era of political development. They established a pattern of regime change: the "electoral revolution."<sup>105</sup> This gave the media the first revival of the 1989–91 scenarios. For Peter Finn, the *Washington Post* Moscow correspondent, the Serbian template "contained some of the elements that came to be seen as critical" in the coverage of the color revolutions.<sup>106</sup> This framework, blended with the peaceful, Velvet Revolution, established the basis for the coverage of the color revolutions. According to Robert Cottrell of *The Economist*, "the Serbian revolution established the toolbox, or the mechanism" for the Western media.<sup>107</sup> One can claim that the color breakthroughs were a continuation of the war among the oligarchic clans, but under different denominations and using more up-to-date methods. The tactic of revolution organization<sup>108</sup> in Ukraine—in which Georgia's recent experience was used, but it did not lead to such harsh collisions as occurred in Kyrgyzstan—confirms this. These colorful revolutionary tactics gave the news media the missing novelty factor in their coverage of the color revolutions. This blended with the basis of the Czechoslovakian and Serbian scenarios and provided the final version of the journalistic script that proclaimed a "new era"<sup>109</sup> in each of the three countries and it was used as a template for the coverage of the revolutions. This rhetoric took place in a polemical context, because "transformative media events are utopian, yet also, as we know, somehow subversive."<sup>110</sup> The color revolutions were not simply media events, because even staged as events reminiscent of a previous era they were catalysts for positive changes. However, they took the form of media events with all the characteristics of the challenge. As a journalist from the *New York Times* wrote regarding the events in Prague in 1989: "It was powerful political theatre, the raw drama of protest, sponsored by the target of protest."<sup>111</sup> The media clearly revived this during the Georgian, Ukrainian, and Kyrgyz upheavals. The examples of Serbia and Czechoslovakia were a reference point, as they are seen as a second or belated revolt. The Soviet Union's collapse resulted in authoritarian leaders losing power, and reports often depicted the revolutions as resulting from the failures of the first generation of postcommunist governments. In other words, the public finally recoiled from the manipulation of elections and other symbols of democracy, and everything was given a Cold War tinge.

The Orange Revolution is a good example. Western audiences were naturally drawn to the story and its many other compelling elements—a poisoned candidate versus the former criminal, the daily concerts, hundreds of people taking to the streets despite freezing weather, and the color orange. According to Helen Fawkes, a BBC correspondent in Kyiv: "There were so many elements which made it in one of the biggest stories of the year. There is no denying the 'Orange Revolution' was also a media event, planned for the age of rolling news."<sup>112</sup> As Czech writer Milan Kundera once claimed: "[Revolution is a] deed which has got out of hand, it has escaped from under the control of its creators."<sup>113</sup>

### **The United Colors of Revolution: The Rose, the Orange, and the Tulip**

The Georgian democratic breakthrough of November 2003, commonly known as the Rose Revolution, is the milestone of the new revolutionary culture that was contagious to its former Soviet counterparts and resurrected the velvet rhetoric of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This oratory is clearly shown in the reports by Western correspondents. Rob Parsons, a senior correspondent of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) was then the BBC's Georgia analyst. He expressed back in 2003:

In Georgia, a distant echo of the revolutions that swept Eastern Europe in 1989. Even the language sounds the same, Misha Saakashvili, the leader of Georgia's National Movement, speaks of a "bloodless revolution", even a "velvet revolution", recalling the end of communism in Czechoslovakia. As chance would have it, the victim of Saakashvili's "revolution" is a former Communist Party boss—Eduard Shevardnadze, ruler of Georgia for the best part of 30 years. . . . After days of demonstrations, capped on Saturday by an enormous rally in Tbilisi's Liberty Square, he and his supporters barged their way into a parliament due to begin its first session after the 2 November highly flawed parliamentary elections. It was a heavily symbolic moment—no subtlety, just a brutal statement of intent. The people of Georgia, represented by a vast crowd on the streets, had simply had enough. Crucially, the security forces did not intervene. . . .<sup>114</sup>

During its struggle for independence from Moscow, a nationalist and semi-autocratic leader, Zviad Gamashuridze, was elected president, but shortly afterwards he was ousted in a violent coup that brought the former Soviet Politburo member and former Georgian First Secretary Eduard Shevardnadze<sup>115</sup> into power. In the first fifteen years after independence, Georgians have constantly faced civil war, separatist movements, economic malaise, rigged elections, and a dysfunctional government.<sup>116</sup>

Those years of political and social dissatisfaction included two flawed elections in favor of Shevardnadze in 1999 and 2000, and the dismissal of his government in 2001. Public dissatisfaction with the ruling authorities resulted in significant opposition gains in local elections held in mid-2002, and attention subsequently focused on the 2003 parliamentary election.

As written in a story by Natalia Antelava, BBC correspondent in Tbilisi, "it felt almost like toppling Slobodan Milošević all over again."<sup>117</sup> Unmistakable parallels to the Serbian electoral experience of 2000 were, alongside velvet ones, then common currency in the reports by Western journalists:

. . . Georgia's new power brokers are following in the footsteps of the opposition movement, which deposed Yugoslavia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, in October 2000 after a similar popular uprising. . . . Members of Serbia's opposition organisation *Otpor* (Resistance) slipped into Georgia to run training courses in civil disobedience for thousands of students. Financed by the George Soros foundation, they organised the mostly student opposition under the slogan *Kmara!* (Enough!) which was modelled on the Serbian anti-Milosevic slogan "You're cooked!" . . . All the demonstrators knew the tactics of the revolution in Belgrade by heart. Everyone knew what to do. This was a copy of that revolution, only louder.<sup>118</sup>

The factor that sparked the revolution arrived when Shevardnadze, and the coalition party behind him (Alliance for the New Georgia), tried to tamper with the 2003 parliamentary elections. Then, opposition factions of the parliament, headed by reformers, insisted on canceling the official results and together with Georgian nongovernmental organizations

(NGOs) backed by Western advocates, monitored the elections. They claimed that parallel vote counts and exit polls, which were showing different results, were more credible. According to those results, the opposition was the winner. Georgians who were loyal to the opposition demonstrated against the election outcomes. The revolution took as its symbol a red rose held by Mikheil (Misha) Saakashvili, a lawyer and member of the Georgian elite who led the protest movement, when he and his supporters stormed into the Parliament building:

A revolution of the kind, that this turbulent and volatile region [the Caucasus] has never seen before. . . Not one person was injured, not a drop of blood was spilled. And the only weapons used were red roses. Tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets to protest against the flawed results of a parliamentary election. Mr Shevardnadze told protesters they risked civil war and he deployed hundreds of soldiers onto the streets of Tbilisi. . . . It was then that the students first decided to give red roses to the soldiers. Many soldiers laid down their guns. "People were kissing the police and military, it was really spectacular." . . . And the roses of course which people had with them, which Misha carried with him into the parliament hall, that was the moment when people said that it was a rose revolution. . . .<sup>119</sup>

Eventually, Shevardnadze was forced to resign, and this was welcomed, ultimately, by Western reporters with an enthusiastically velvet-style rhetoric: There is euphoria among the tens of thousands of people here gathered in front of the parliament building. "The 'velvet revolution' that the opposition was talking about has actually happened. There's been no bloodshed and it would appear that the military are firmly on the side of the opposition. . . ."<sup>120</sup>

Similar to the Velvet Revolution almost fifteen years ago, Western journalists also eulogized the Rose Revolution: "The ouster of Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze is being praised as an example of a popular uprising that was accomplished without bloodshed. . . . The peaceful uprising in Georgia is being called the 'Revolution of Roses' by the Georgian opposition . . ."<sup>121</sup>

A few weeks later Saakashvili was elected president. The jubilation of the "Rose Revolution" has now dissipated amid the difficulties of transition and unfulfilled expectations.<sup>122</sup> The *Financial Times* published an op-ed written by Saakashvili, where he admits: "[. . . it] is much easier to make a revolution than it is to transform a failed state into a well-performing democracy."<sup>123</sup>

Despite this, the revolutionary euphoria sparked by the Georgians arrived in a much stronger form to another former Soviet republic: the Ukraine. The Western media played a fundamental role in this successful arrival, using the Rose Revolution as the newly born template of this new revolutionary wave based on the Czechoslovakian and Serbian experiences. In Kyiv's Independence Square, a uniform mass painted in orange signaled the rise of a powerful civic movement, a skilled political opposition coming from an oligarchic background and a determined middle class that had come together to stop the ruling nomenklatura-style elite from falsifying a presidential election favoring the pro-Kremlin candidate, Viktor Yanukovich.<sup>124</sup> The masses, one more time, took to the streets to defend their vote and their chosen candidate, Viktor Yushchenko. As was the case in Georgia, foreign correspondents played a central role:

Convinced the election was being stolen from the rightful victor, supporters of Western-leaning opposition leader Yushchenko poured into Kiev's Independence Square to demand that their

man be recognized as the winner. City residents mixed with swarms of protesters from across the country, all of them wearing something orange, the color of Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party. Despite heavy snow and freezing temperatures, the crowd was in a festive mood, eager to embrace Yushchenko's orange revolution against the country's Moscow-backed old guard. . . . Pro-Yushchenko youth organizers, some of them trained by the same dissidents who helped coordinate successful electoral revolutions in Serbia and Georgia, rallied volunteers with rock music, puppet shows and free food. Even Poland's famed Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa made an appearance, telling the crowd: "I opposed the Soviet Union and I opposed communism and I came out victorious. Ukraine has a chance! . . ." <sup>125</sup>

Over the next few weeks, through harsh cold and sleet, millions of Ukrainians staged nationwide, nonviolent protests. The epicenter was a concert stage in the middle of *Maidan* or Independence Square. One of the key players of the revolution, Yulia Tymoshenko, told the press that "Maidan will not go anywhere."<sup>126</sup> The Western media were, once more, reporting with a velvet-style rhetoric:

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***“The jubilation of the ‘Rose Revolution’ has now dissipated amid the difficulties of transition and unfulfilled expectations.”***

It felt like a democratic fairy-tale. On the night of November 21st, after the polls had closed in the second round of the presidential election, tens of thousands of euphoric Ukrainians gathered in Kyiv's Independence Square to celebrate what the exit polls suggested would be a victory for Victor Yushchenko. Swathed in orange, the colour of Mr Yushchenko's campaign, they were entertained by rock bands and addressed by elated Yushchenko allies as a gentle snow fell. The flag of Georgia, where another corrupt government was toppled a year ago, flew among the orange banners. . . . Both he [Yushchenko] and Yulia Tymoshenko, his glamorous demagogic sidekick, have called for a general strike. There are parallels with what happened in Georgia . . . <sup>127</sup>

Leonid Kuchma's regime became such that, as Timothy Garton Ash wrote, "even sober analysts describe it as 'gangocracy.'" <sup>128</sup> Now, his prime minister, Viktor Yanukovich, was running against a former prime minister, Viktor Yushchenko, who had joined the opposition after the oligarch-led, pro-Kuchma factions in Parliament voted to dismiss his cabinet in 2001.

The Orange Revolution was more spectacular and colorful than the Rose Revolution; Ukraine was a bigger story and Georgia prepared the media for it, and it set a new landmark in the postcommunist space. Similar to the Velvet Revolution, Ukraine's Orange Revolution was the climax of the new wave of revolutions in the post-Soviet space. It was a fantastic story that perfectly fit on a velvet stage: a pro-Kremlin candidate invested in white and blue colors, facing a pro-West one embracing the orange of the masses. The latter one, poisoned by the secret services, addressed the crowds with a disfigured face. The already-in-use template proved handy for foreign correspondents:

We must salute the courage of the people of Ukraine. They have ejected their corrupt masters from power, challenged western indifference and rebuffed the Kremlin's imperial ambitions. They have opened up opportunities for themselves, for the west and even for Russia. Fifteen years ago a wave of revolutions swept across central and eastern Europe. Two years

later, the Soviet Union disintegrated. Earlier this year, we saw one long-delayed consequence of the end of the Soviet empire: the enlargement of the European Union. Now we celebrate another: Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution.'<sup>129</sup>

Faithful to their template, journalists placed the Ukrainian democratic upheaval alongside the other revolutionary examples: "The presidential election result in Ukraine is another striking example of the 'people power' which has swept central and eastern Europe over the last 15 years. The 'Orange Revolution' will take its place alongside the 'Velvet Revolution' in former Czechoslovakia, the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia and all the other revolutions which might not have a name but which certainly had an effect."<sup>130</sup>

The critical incident of the Orange Revolution added something to the international media coverage patterns and, since then, both editors and journalists become excited the minute they see an opposition activist waving an orange flag in the former Soviet space, something that was seen in Kyrgyzstan a few months after the Orange Revolution,<sup>131</sup> and, more recently, in the March 19, 2006, Belarusian elections.

Before the Serbian revolution, Timothy Garton Ash wrote that "Europe doesn't end, it fades away."<sup>132</sup> He seemed to have predicted another democratic breakthrough in a former Soviet republic: Kyrgyzstan. Here, the Tulip Revolution was more Serbian and less velvet in style: it was marred by looting and people storming government buildings. The organized and nonviolent characteristics of the Rose and Orange revolutions have faded away, even the Kyrgyz opposition admitted they had not planned a revolution to topple the president. Yet, with the Georgian and Ukrainian examples so fresh in their memories, the rhetorical revolutionary inertia developed by the Western media arrived in Central Asia, gaining momentum one more time: "The outside world has been watching events unfolding in Kyrgyzstan with a mixture of excitement and fear. Excitement because this could be the beginning of another 'velvet revolution' in a former Soviet country. Fear because in such a poor and volatile region as Central Asia, it may not be as non-violent or democratic as those in Ukraine or Georgia."<sup>133</sup>

In 1991, Kyrgyzstan's independence was met with tepid enthusiasm as there was no credible flag or other legitimate national symbols around which people might rally. They would not have gained independence if the Soviet Union had not collapsed. Kyrgyzstan, therefore, was left with no option but to accept this shift in political power and to proceed with the task of building an independent state.<sup>134</sup>

Askar Akayev, whom the Supreme Soviet elected president in 1990, began increasing his powers by controlling the opposition and rigging the polls. A government reshuffle in 2004 and the expansion of the presidential administration's press service indicated that Akayev was strengthening his position in preparation for the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections. Mindful of the opposition's success in Georgia and Ukraine, the authorities continued to harass opposition activists in the run-up to the February 2005 election. Discontent at the authorities' handling of the elections, in which pro-administration figures won an overwhelmingly majority, resulted in protests almost immediately after the second round, held in March 2005. Initially concentrated in the south of the country, the demonstrations, which blamed Akayev for the flawed election, soon spread nationwide. Initially resisting calls for his resignation, a mass protest forced Akayev to flee the country and Kurmanbek Bakiyev, leader of one of the opposition blocs, was appointed prime minister and acting president<sup>135</sup>: "It's the victory of the people. . . . The protesters want the president to annul the results and rerun the election. Comparisons have been made with the political upheaval in other former Soviet states in recent years."<sup>136</sup> The Tulip Revolu-



tion was more violent<sup>137</sup> than the other color ones. But this only slightly altered the coverage. Even with a different scenario, reference was common currency; for journalists, the story was clearly colorful following the excitement of the Orange Revolution:

First came the Rose revolution in Georgia, then the Orange Revolution in Kyiv. Is it now time for Tulips? Another people power revolt has erupted in the former Soviet Union. . . . On a bright spring morning last Thursday in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, thousands of protesters, armed with sticks and stones, stormed the White House, the government's seat of power. . . . Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution came just three months after Ukraine's Orange Revolution and 16 months after Georgia's Rose Revolution. In all three cases, peaceful street demonstrations over rigged elections brought down corrupt, out-of-touch regimes with strong ties to Moscow.<sup>138</sup>

Scenes of mass protest in Kyrgyzstan prompted some Western media, such as the *Financial Times*, to observe that “the democratic revolutions of Georgia and Ukraine seem to be provoking central Asian imitation.” With Kyrgyzstan on the revolutionary map, comparisons with recent upheavals were inevitable. The *Washington Post* was concerned, however, that “the latest uprising against autocracy is not proceeding as smoothly—or as peacefully—as its predecessors.”<sup>139</sup> Why was this the case? Was it people power, mob rule, an insiders' stitch-up, or just a mess? Undoubtedly, the Tulip Revolution was an unsavory blend of all four.<sup>140</sup> Peter Finn from the *Washington Post* admits that, “we continue to cite the country [Kyrgyzstan], almost in rote, along with Ukraine and Georgia, but I think it's a very different place.”<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, the Western media were not ready to change their coverage script. This rhetoric is clearly expressed by a commentator from *The Economist*: “The transition toward democracy [in Kyrgyzstan] may be rapid, as in most of Eastern Europe—or just glacial. An absolute precondition, though, is to get the autocrats out of power. In most cases, what follows will be better.”<sup>142</sup> The Tulip upheaval perfectly sums up the coverage of the three color revolutions by illustrating the arguments of mirror, witness, and transmitter via continuities/discontinuities and the narratives that the media provides their readers (more mirror in Georgia, more transmitter in Ukraine, and more witness in Kyrgyzstan). There are reader-friendly reasons for this: it gives coherence to events and makes them comprehensible. Besides, some of the continuities are legitimate as descriptions (to a certain extent, there was a second wave of democratization in the area). However, there are clear limitations to these continuities and grand historical narratives (such as the Velvet Revolution). One is that they encourage simplifications and those simplifications encourage readers and commentators to impose their default interpretations of the world on these specific events (e.g., the ease with which people assume these were simply Western-made revolutions and that, ipso facto, there must be some nefarious aims involved and nothing else). They also encourage an elemental interpretation of events (e.g., a “wave” of democracy against the authoritarian status quo consciousness and a sort of “Machiavellian” manipulations of events) rather than an analytical view of events. (What factors enabled the revolution? Why did it happen now?) There is also an associated flipside to these continuities, and that is, simply, that there are huge discontinuities in the coverage of these regions—which was clear in Kyrgyzstan. It is important to highlight that, however good a journalist is, it makes a difference if he or she has not been exploring a country's issues for years and has, at most, just covered some of the events. Some issues and factors simply are overlooked in the hurry to write about “far away countries about which we know little,”<sup>143</sup> which precludes alternative narratives.

### Conclusion

The three revolutions followed a near-identical trajectory spearheaded by local elites, Western democratization advocates, and Russian spying and assassination attempts. As stated by the Belarusian scholar Vitaly Silitski: “It could seem as if we have been watching the same play simply performed against a new backdrop”; Miloš Jakeš and Slobodan Milošević become Eduard Shevardnadze then Leonid Kuchma or Viktor Yanukovich (or Askar Akayev). Václav Havel and Vojislav Koštunica are reincarnated as Mikheil Saakashvili who, in turn, becomes Viktor Yushchenko, who ends up being Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Yulia Tymoshenko “brings to mind” Alexander Dubček. The masses gathered in the squares resembles the Czech students that are revived in Serbia’s youth movement Otpor that “finds new clothing” in Georgia’s Kmara!, Ukraine’s Pora, and Kyrgyzstan’s Kel Kel.<sup>144</sup> But the fact is that these color revolutions resembled more the Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Romanian breakthroughs in 1989 than they did the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution that same year. Instead of Yushchenko, Saakashvili, and Bakiyev as Havels, the media could have noted the “palace coup” and “elite driven” quality of these revolutions instead, possibly comparing these figures not with Havel but with Ion Iliescu, Imre Pozsgay, Gyula Horn, and Petur Mladenov. This way, the press not only could have played a more realistic role in assessing the nature of these revolutions themselves, but also would have likely led its readers to have more realistic expectations of the outcomes. Much of Yushchenko’s failure is attributed to his association with the previous regime and his reluctance to break with it. At best, Yushchenko could have been compared with similar democratic figures with ties to the previous regime that also failed to bring about the radical changes expected of them. These include Zhelyu Zhelev of Bulgaria, Boris Yeltsin of Russia, and Emil Constantinescu of Romania. Similar to Yushchenko, these presidents played a liberating role but failed to consolidate their power and enact reforms. Like Yushchenko, they also directed their wrath and obstructed, and ultimately dismissed, more radical-minded prime ministers. Yushchenko’s relations with Tymoshenko seemed to be a *déjà vu* of Zhelev’s relations with Philip Dimitrov; Yeltsin’s with Yegor Gaidar; and Constantinescu’s with Victor Ciorbea. Ukraine certainly did not resemble Havel’s Czechoslovakia, where Charter 77 dissidents took over the government, a lustration law was passed, and the seductive structures of the previous regime did not lure Havel. Yet, in terms of emulating portrayals, the Czech revolution was much more seductive for journalists—and much more present in the collective imagery—than its Hungarian, Bulgarian, or Romanian counterparts.

While watching the scenarios described in the past three years by Western reporters who refocused attention on the former Soviet Union there is not much of a difference, almost twenty years after the end of the Cold War, from those times, because it is true that a grand narrative and continuity will be picked up much more quickly and voiced more widely and loudly than the kind of alternative narratives that real experts can provide. That holds true even when a very good journalist mentions alternative narratives and highlights other factors: these are still new ideas and need to be adopted by readers and commentators, but that takes time and in the heat of a revolution ideas do not have the time to mature, spread, and gain public credence. Reporters are social actors of a respective social reality, and the temptation to look around for reference points at the time of reporting is substantial. Similar decisions taken by political actors (especially when faced with a deadline) hardly conform to the assumption of a rational decision based on perfect information. The field of cognitive theory can also explain this phenomenon with cognitive psychology theories that

explain real-world decision making, which can also be applied to the journalists who covered the color revolutions. They include terms such as groupthink, bounded rationality, bias, heuristics, and mental maps. Heuristics can be termed as “shortcuts to rationality [that] allow individuals to reduce complicated problem-solving tasks to simple judgments; they are strategies for managing information overload. . . . In the *availability* heuristic, we draw inferences based on whatever pattern or frame of reference is most available and therefore most easily comes to mind.”<sup>145</sup> A mental map also catalogs and simplifies decision-making, and is defined as “the cognitive frame on the basis of which historians of international relations, like diplomats and others who think and act internationally, orient themselves in the world.”<sup>146</sup> Journalists covering the color revolutions in the former Soviet republics have found a useful mental map in Czechoslovakia.<sup>147</sup> According to Rob Parsons of RFE/RL: “I think the Color Revolutions were seen by the media as a natural continuation of the earlier revolutions.”<sup>148</sup> The readers, like reporters and editors, responded to the fact that, in Tbilisi, Kyiv, and Bishkek, there were hundreds of thousands of people massed in the streets; however, another part of what made the stories compelling was Russia’s angry reaction.

After this revival, it is surely not a coincidence that some of the headlines in the past year were puzzling, worrying, and related to Russia and some of the former Soviet republics. Despite a new era, the media still portrays relations with Cold War musings.<sup>149</sup> This rhetoric that reemerged during the color revolutions was a reflection of the sharply divergent reactions of Europe and the United States versus Putin’s Russia. Most of these stories have been sparked by the idea that Putin is retaliating against those post-Soviet republics that favor the West.<sup>150</sup> It is no secret, though, that the United States and Britain, like the rest of the European Union, support the development of civil society in Russia, as it more or less successfully did with Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, the media are the perfect means to promote, support, and encourage that end. It is hard to know what is really going on inside the massive and intricate post-Soviet patchwork, and this is probably—alongside nostalgia—what makes it attractive to Western audiences and foreign correspondents; it gives both the journalist and the viewer a real sense of history in the making.

In this article, the questionable objectivity of Western journalists has been discussed. However, even if there are times when the ways in which the news media presents the world are criticized, the nature of news and a sense of the conditions of its production process should be maintained. Moreover, the main concern is the way that international news, with its biases and limitations, interacts with other understandings about the world and its regions. The flow of news becomes variously embedded in other sets of practices and ideas, which are part of personal experience or public culture.<sup>151</sup> In the later stages of the revolutions, “as soon as the action begins to diminish in scope and the players,” activities can no longer be considered hard news, the media begin to question their role in the crisis.<sup>152</sup> At this point, the questions of whether this or that media were the object of manipulation (democracy promotion argument), and whether in their quest for colorful images the media warped reality, are raised. Then the media can reply saying that, yes, there might have been some mistakes, but democracy emerged strengthened in this case because they arguably won the battles, thanks to the widespread distribution of information. Moreover, news is a perishable commodity and one cannot do hindsight, as one does not get that practical chance.<sup>153</sup> Regarding the Orange Revolution, British-Ukrainian correspondent Askold Krushelnycky wrote that “journalists are not supposed to take sides, but in a situation that

is loaded with emotions it can be impossible not to, especially if one has come to now a place and its people closely. Objectivity, however, is more than uncritically allowing both sides to have their say, particularly when one of them is a proven liar.<sup>154</sup> Yet, journalism is cluttered with practices that should generate questions about journalists' ability to act as authoritative reporters of real-world events. From news gathering to news presentation, journalists' authority is often derived from the fact that the public cannot verify what they have done. This situates the establishment of journalistic authority within the hands of journalists, and their authority is informed by their own decisions about how, why, and in what way they turn ordinary events into news stories. The argument can be made that in the rush

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***“Yet, journalism is cluttered with practices that should generate questions about journalists' ability to act as authoritative reporters of real-world events.”***

to get the story first, important facts are not corroborated or explained, leaving stories deeply flawed, because even if the basics are right, the complexities and nuances that are so important in international affairs are likely to be glossed over or ignored. Nevertheless, foreign correspondents have advanced the means through which the peoples of the world communicate with each other, and that is their cause, their contribution to their profession and their time that goes alongside their cos-

opolitan ambition of wanting to be sensitive to every country and to every epoch.<sup>155</sup> This may even be extended to the branding of the revolutions: Václav Havel always insisted that the term “Velvet Revolution” came originally from a foreign journalist in Prague in 1989.<sup>156</sup> Following that trend, almost fifteen years later, Steven Lee Myers of the *New York Times* explains: “The ‘Color Revolutions’ became clear as a trend only after the events in Ukraine. Out of curiosity, I went back and checked our stories. The words ‘Orange Revolution’ did not appear until a story of mine on December 9 [2004].”<sup>157</sup>

Hitherto, for many, these color revolutions have proved to be more a sort of colorful media events than successful and long-lasting political projects and that may lead us to criticize the professionalism of the reporting in the sense that it should have not been framed inside a particular framework. These events have shown that the political opposition leaders did not want serious changes, presenting their demonstration against the authorities to the news media as a revolution to mobilize the population, which was promised radical changes with the arrival of new, honest, and uncorrupted people at the helm.<sup>158</sup> Apropos problems with (and among) the new political elites are sad and they may have not brought what they promised, but they do not erase what the will of the people have achieved: the greatest and most lasting legacy of these revolutions is that they marked a “psychological watershed”<sup>159</sup> for the post-Soviet citizens. They learned their voices counted and they could have a say in their countries' destinies. Whatever one thinks of what happened or how well the political changes turned out, or how accurate they have been reported, these were significant, historic events that have affected millions of lives. After so many years of tsarist, Communist, and postcommunist hard-line rulers, it is too early to say if these revolutions will prove truly effective, leaving aside what the media might tell us; how these revolutions will develop will depend on the citizens themselves

despite the accuracy of the reporting. The French Revolution brought the guillotine and an emperor, but its ideals lasted longer and have been highly contagious.<sup>160</sup> It is up to the Georgians, the Ukrainians, and the Kyrgyz to remember for what they fought, and for their neighbors to take a closer look at those recent events. Then, if they have any doubts, they can check that up inside old newspapers and magazines because, if the color revolutions were great media events, it was because they shaped history.

### Acknowledgments

The author acknowledges Fredo Arias-King; Dr. Howard Barrell; Tim Di Muzio; Thor Ekevall; John Galante; Andrew Gardner; Alyaksandr Kudritsky; Jonathan Ledgard; Professor Justin Lewis; Dr. Paul Mason; Ana Maria Otero-Cleves; Dr. Fabio Vighi; Dr. Claire Wardle; Martin Woollacott; RFE/RL's librarian in Prague, and the two peer reviewers who generously read the article. The author is utterly indebted to all the foreign correspondents mentioned in the article who gave up some of their precious time to help with this research.

### NOTES

1. Hergé, *The Adventures of Tintin in the Land of Soviets* (London: Last Gasp, 2003), 15.
2. Ian Traynor, "Young Democracy Guerrillas Join Forces," *The Guardian*, June 6, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1499871,00.html> (accessed January 17, 2006).
3. Natalia Antelava, "How to Stage a Revolution," BBC News, April 4, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/3288547.stm> (accessed January 23, 2006).
4. C. J. Chivers, "Ukraine's Leader Looks Back in Melancholy," *New York Times*, January 21, 2005.
5. Paul Quinn-Judge and Yuri Zarakhovich, "The Orange Revolution," *Time*, November 2004, <http://www.time.com/time/europe/magazine/article/0,13005,901041206-832153,00.html?cnn=yes> (accessed January 24, 2006).
6. Jackson Diehl, "Battle for Belarus," *Washington Post*, January 3, 2005.
7. Quentin Peel, "A Chance for an Unlikely Peacemaker," *Financial Times* (London), November 3, 2005.
8. Leonard Cohen, *Serpent in the Bosom: The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milošević* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 420–25.
9. In Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, although the fraudulent elections were for the legislature, the conflict was still resolved by the resignation of the current president and the election of an opposition leader in a subsequent early election (author's note).
10. Michael McFaul, "Transitions from Post-Communism," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 3 (2005): 6.
11. It is not possible to ascribe the changes of the period 1989–91 merely to live broadcasting, satellite television, or increased international communications. On the other hand, it is similarly difficult to see how such changes could have taken place without those factors. Barry Elliott, former head of the BBC Central European Services, claimed in 1992: "In terms of keeping hope alive and spreading democratic ideas of really putting it to the people that there were alternatives, yes, I think we did have a role. We were not propounding a change of regime—that wasn't part of our job—but we were stimulating the democratic process, and providing a whole range of views; by reporting strikes and demonstrations that people would not have heard about from their own media we encouraged them to come out and demonstrate." Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside, 1992), 128. By the same token, when asked about the influence of the covert broadcastings of Radio Free Europe in Poland, the reply by Lech Wałęsa, leader of the Solidarność movement was simply: "Could there be an earth without sun?" Philip M. Taylor, *Global Communications, International Affairs and the Media since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1997), 86.
12. The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, "Global News after the Cold War," *Media Studies Journal* 7 (Fall 1993): 21–27.

13. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992), 7.
14. David Halberstam, "The Powers That Were," *Brill's Content*, September 2000, 23–26.
15. Ian Hargreaves, "Is There a Future for Foreign News?" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 20, no. 1 (2000): 3.
16. "The unsurprising fact is that events abroad are of interest to readers or viewers in proportion to the ways their own national concerns." William Hatchen, *The World News Prism*, 4th ed. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1996), 138.
17. From the author's e-mail interview with Natalia Antelava, BBC correspondent in Tbilisi, Georgia. March 7, 2006.
18. Bernard Dagenais, "Media in Crisis: Observers, Actors or Scapegoats," in *Media, Crisis and Democracy: Mass Communication and the Disruption of Social Order*, ed. Marc Raboy and Bernard Dagenais, 120 (London: Sage, 1992).
19. Cohen, 123.
20. Ibid.
21. The survival of this "democratic value" that these cases are trying to promote are ensured as the media see and hear events and act as a watchdog; they can also add credibility or otherwise, to an event (author's note based on Ibid).
22. Ibid., 123.
23. Ibid., 132.
24. Andrew Graham-Yooll, *Committed Observer: Memoirs of a Journalist* (Luton: University Press/John Libbey, 1995).
25. John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 308.
26. Barbie Zelizer, "CNN, the Gulf War, and Journalistic Practice," *Journal of Communication* 42 (Winter 1992): 66–81.
27. "In the . . . confusing post-Cold War world, foreign reporters and news organizations are going through an identity crisis over what is news. As John Walcott of *Newsweek* said, 'The Cold War provided us with a coherent global road map, in terms of what to cover and how to cover it.'" Leon Hadar, "Covering the New World Disorder," *Columbia Journalism Review* (July/August 1994): 27, <http://www.archives.cjr.org/year/94/4/disorder.asp> (accessed January 29, 2007).
28. "The ongoing upheaval in Kyrgyzstan and the peaceful Ukrainian and Georgian democratic revolutions reflect two major realities in the space of the former Soviet Union: First, the geopolitical pluralism which emerged as a consequence of the collapse of the Kremlin's imperial domination is now an irreversible fact, despite nostalgic efforts by Vladimir Putin to restore Moscow's control over the newly independent states. Second, the younger post-Soviet generation is increasingly impatient and disgusted by the corrupt, bureaucratic authoritarianism that has persisted in much of the area. The new political opposition tends to derive its vital strength from a genuine demographic discontinuity." Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Russian Roulette," *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2005, [http://www.sais-jhu.edu/pubaffairs/SAISarticles05/Brzezinski\\_WSJ\\_032905.pdf](http://www.sais-jhu.edu/pubaffairs/SAISarticles05/Brzezinski_WSJ_032905.pdf) (accessed February 3, 2006).
29. Vitaly Silitski, *Post-Communist Authoritarianism in Eastern Europe: Serbia and Belarus Compared* (unpublished draft, 2005), 3.
30. Whereas Michael McFaul categorizes these regimes as "semi-autocracies," Joshua Tucker prefers "unconsolidated authoritarian regimes." Joshua Tucker, "Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and the Second Wave of Post-Communist Democratic Revolutions," Woodrow Wilson School and Department of Politics, Princeton University, September 2005 (unpublished draft), 2.
31. Others, such as Belarus and Uzbekistan, drifted toward even worse forms of dictatorship. This was also the case in Serbia until a democratic breakthrough ousted Slobodan Milošević in (October 2000 author's note). According to a commentator: "These sorts of authoritarian political systems are closely related but less repressive and politically demanding subspecies of non-democratic rule than totalitarianism. They rarely seek or obtain political uniformity or the full engagement of a state's citizen. Authoritarian regimes are the kind of dictatorships that seek popular consent, but shun any real competitive pluralism. Such regimes are thus; 'mixed' political systems ideologically diffuse, which

blends aspects of both contestation and coercion, authoritarian pluralism with restrictive monism. Political life in these systems exhibits facets that are free and un-free; they are systems poised between democracy and more radical dictatorship.” See also Cohen, 8.

32. “The events in these countries demonstrate that there may in fact be long-term consequences to repeatedly sending people out to vote in fake elections that have the potential to be competitive even if the ultimate winners are known in advance.” Joshua Tucker, “Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and the Second Wave of Post-Communist Democratic Revolutions,” Woodrow Wilson School and Department of Politics, Princeton University, September 2005 (preliminary draft), 27.

33. Ryszard Kapuściński, *Imperium* (London: Granta Books, 1994), vi.

34. “Things aren’t going well? Too bad, it’s a transitional period. Supplies are inadequate? That’s understandable, it’s a transitional period. The old bosses are still ruling? Don’t worry; it’s only a transitional period.” *Ibid.*, 322.

35. Jaap Van Ginneken, *Global News: A Critical Introduction* (London: Sage, 1998), 29 and 110–11.

36. Tucker, 3.

37. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 51–65.

38. Hargreaves, 4.

39. From an interview at London’s Institute for Contemporary Art, quoted in “Poet among Journalists,” *World Press Review*, February 13, 2006, <http://www.worldpress.org/Europe/201.cfm> (accessed February 16, 2006).

40. John M. Hamilton and Eric Jenner, “The New Foreign Correspondence,” *Foreign Affairs* 82 (September/October 2003): 138.

41. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon, 1972), 59.

42. Alan Cullison, “Russia’s Radicals Feel Heat,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 8, 2005.

43. Interestingly, some had initially hoped to call the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan the Lemon or Yellow revolution in relation to the color, which on a stoplight signifies “get ready to go” or “change.” Jeremy Page, “From West to East, Rolling Revolution Gathers Pace across the Former USSR,” *The [London] Times*, February 19, 2005, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-1490306,00.html> (accessed February 12, 2006).

44. Antelava interview.

45. According to Ivan Marovic, the Serbian youth opposition movement Otpor has become the model for parallel movements in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and even Lebanon: “Our idea was to use corporate branding in politics. The movement has to have a marketing department. We took Coca-Cola as our model.” As well as acting as an ambassador and training revolutionaries in other countries, he is also developing a computer game, “A Force More Powerful,” with programmers in the United States: you win by outwitting and toppling regimes through techniques of nonviolent guerrilla activism. As quoted in Traynor, “Join Forces.”

46. “Revolutionary groups, of course, have had access to the resources of foreign states—which is one of the ways in which the international state system (and geopolitical competition in particular) matters for revolutionary conflicts. While the extent of external aid . . . has often been exaggerated by their opponents, such aid [usually] figured prominently.” Jeff Goodwin, “State-Centred Approaches to Social Revolutions,” in *Theorising Revolutions*, ed. John Foran, 26 (London: Routledge, 1997)

47. Tucker, “Democratic Revolutions,” 2.

48. *Ibid.*

49. The spectrum for defining revolutions is immense. Definitions can range from more radical revolutionary conceptions, like one graphically expressed by Mao Tse-Tung: “A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an act of violence.” Mao Tse-Tung, “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, March 1927,” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Vol. 1, 3rd Printing (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), 29; passing through Hannah Arendt’s: “But violence is no more adequate

to describe the phenomenon of revolution than change; only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute the an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution." Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1962), 28; to the Habermasian notion that completely eliminates the notion of revolution from the theory by introducing the concept of crisis. The crisis is that modern society is not meeting individual needs and that institutions in society are manipulating individuals. People interact to respond to this crisis in an interaction that Jürgen Habermas calls interaction "communicative action." Habermas adapted Horkheimer's definition of reason, then combined it with the relation-based activities that result when humans agree. Communicative action is the one type of action that links all human ways of thinking and language. This combination allows human beings to understand and agree with one another, to make plans for common action. This coming together and agreeing, communicative action, takes the place of revolution as mode of change. Anthony Giddens, "Reason or Revolution? Habermas's Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard Bernstein, 95–121 (London: Polity, 1985). An approach that is really suitable for the analysis of this sorts of revolutions is the one developed by Gordon Hahn, who explained revolutionary outcomes as the complex interaction among four groups (regime hard-liners, regime moderates, opposition moderates, and opposition hardliners) where the final breakthrough often occurs as the result of pressure of the respective hardliners, which enables the moderates in both camps to negotiate, following a complex perception of mutual power and game theory. Gordon Hahn, *Russia's Revolution from Above 1985–2000: Reform, Transition, and Revolution in the Fall of the Soviet Communist Regime* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002).

50. Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (London: Macmillan, 1999), xiii–xix.

51. Hohenberg, 1–25.

52. François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), viii.

53. Rod Aya, *Rethinking Revolutions and Collective Violence: Studies on Concept, Theory and Method* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1990), 20–23.

54. This definition distinguishes revolutions from coups d'état, meaning to switch rulers but leave property and privilege intact (author's note).

55. "Mr. Putin Fears That the Orange Revolution Could Spawn Copycat Movements around the Region." Jeremy Page, "Court Clears Last Obstacle to Orange Revolution in Ukraine," *The [London] Times*. December 31, 2004. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-1420240,00.html> (accessed February 13, 2006).

56. For example, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has declared that: "In our country, there will be no pink or orange, nor even a banana revolution." Andrés Schipani-Adúriz and Alyaksandr Kudrytski, "Banana Revolutions and Banana Skins," *Transitions Online* (TOL), September 7, 2005, <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=132&NrSection=3&NrArticle=14432&search=search&SearchKeywords=banana&SearchMode=on&SearchLevel=0> (accessed January 28, 2006).

57. "This has nothing to do with world-wide political reality where there is any number of fairly smoothly functioning intermediate or alternative political systems." Artur Atanesian, "Paradoxes of Democracy and Democratisation Trends in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 36, no. 6 (2005): 16.

58. Vaclav Havel, "Power of the Powerless," in *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965–1990* (London: Vertigo, 1992), 125–214.

59. In many cases, they do enjoy wider popular support than the newfangled liberals; the less politically savvy sections of the public take the word "liberal" as synonym of "bourgeois" or "radical" (author's note).

60. Dmitri Volkogonov, *Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire: Political Leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: HarperCollins, 1999).

61. See note 57.

62. Slavoj Žižek, "Attempts to Escape the Logic of Capitalism," *London Review of Books*, October 28, 1999, 3–7.



63. "Global attention is often the only lifeline available to the oppressed," claimed the Hungarian-American financier and philanthropist George Soros, whose international NGO (The Soros Foundation) had spent five billion dollars in external aid to foster democracy, mainly in the postcommunist space. George Soros, "The People's Sovereignty," *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2004, 66.
64. "The talk of global democracy is unprecedented and, not surprisingly, in certain quarters eyebrows are rising at the suggestion that the methods and ideals of democracy can be stretched so far." John Keane, as quoted in *INDEX on Censorship, The A-Z of Free Expression* (London: INDEX on Censorship, 2003)
65. Jean Seaton, *Carnage and the Media*. (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 258.
66. Boris Rumer, *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (London: Sharp, 2002).
67. Aleksandr Solzhenistyn, as qtd. in Kapuściński.
68. From the author's e-mail interview with Nick Paton Walsh, Moscow correspondent of *The Guardian*, March 7, 2006.
69. From the author's e-mail interview with Steven Lee Myers, Moscow bureau chief of the *New York Times*, April 20, 2006.
70. Robert Giles, Robert W. Snyder, and Lisa de Lisle, *Reporting the Post-Communist Revolution*, (London: Transaction, 2001), 138.
71. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (London: Chatto and Windus), 5.
72. BBC (1989) BBC1, 21:00 Service, November 10, 1989.
73. Hachen, *World News Prism*.
74. Umberto Eco, *Opera Aperta* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982), 204.
75. It is a familiar format also for the correspondent who was part of the audience during the time of the Eastern European revolutions (author's note).
76. Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* (London: Pluto, 1989), 20.
77. Pierre Bourdieu, "Systems of Education and Systems of Thought," in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, ed. Michael Young, 192 (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1972).
78. Ibid.
79. "For many . . . the Cold War provided a cozy demarcation between the good guys and the bad guys, each of whom had similar, clearly defined attitudes toward the other." Andrew Graham-Yooll, "New Dawn for Press Freedom? A Personal and Prejudiced Opinion," *Media Studies Journal* 7 (Fall 1993): 23.
80. As is the case with one of the two main figures of the Orange Revolution and former Ukrainian Prime Minister, Yuliya Tymoshenko who, for example, was portrayed as: "Ukraine's Warrior Princess"; "The Millionaire Revolutionary"; "Goddess of the Orange Revolution," and "Marianna of the Orange Revolution." Taras Kuzio, "'Ukraine's Warrior Princess,'" *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2005, 72. James Meek, "The Millionaire Revolutionary," *The Guardian*, November 26, 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,1359986,00.html> (accessed January 24, 2005). Marian Rubchak, "Yulia Tymoshenko: Goddess of the Orange Revolution," *Transitions Online* (TOL), January 25, 2005, <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=100&NrSection=3&NrArticle=13378> (accessed January 27, 2006).
81. "I think for many of us the bad guy-good guy issue was a bit too clear cut. It takes an extra effort not to take sides during these kinds of events." Antaleva Interview.
82. Lee Smithey and Lester Kurtz, "We Have Bare Hands: Non-Violent Social Movements in the Soviet Bloc," in *Non-Violent Social Movements: A Geographical Perspective*, ed. Stephen S. Zunes, et al., 96-124 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
83. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolutions of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (New York: Random House, 1990), 68.
84. Czechoslovakian students chanted, "We have bare hands," during the pivotal demonstration on November 17, 1989, that marked the beginning of the Velvet Revolution (author's note).
85. Bernard Gwertzman and Michael T. Kaufman, eds. *The Collapse of Communism* [by the correspondents of the *New York Times*] (New York: Times Books, 1991), 175.
86. Natalia Antelava, "The Velvet Revolution," BBC News, November 18, 1999,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/analysis/31580.stm> (accessed February 6, 2005).

87. Smithey and Kurtz, 78.
88. John Tagliabue, "Upheaval in the East," *New York Times*, December 11, 1989, 6.
89. Gwertzman and Kaufman, 305.
90. Michael Simmons, "Prague's People Dance in the Streets," *The Guardian*, November 25, 1989, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4904862-106710,00.html> (accessed February 1, 2006).
91. Tagliabue.
92. Slogan painted in the walls of Prague during the Velvet Revolution. Bernard Wheaton and Zdenek Kavan, *The Velvet Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992), 190.
93. "The Czechoslovaks can afford to laugh. With their 'Velvet Revolution', they have toppled their old communist government without violence and, as US experts are fond of pointing out, they have probably travelled further along the road to democracy than any other Eastern European country." Lally Weymouth, "Reds Beneath the Velvet; Czechoslovakia's Communists Haven't Gone Away," *Washington Post*, March 18, 1990.
94. Jon Bloomfield, "Czech Revolution Pauses for Breath Amid Elation," *The Guardian*, December 1, 1989. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/eu/story/0,,1195171,00.html> (accessed February 1, 2006).
95. David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995)
96. Richard Falk, "The Decline of Citizenship in an Era of Globalisation," *Citizenship Studies* 4, no. 1 (2000), 5–17.
97. Eric Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999), 35.
98. "The more violent option is that he brazens it out, claims to have won, and puts down opposition protests with force." Jonathan Steele, "Voters Deliver Blow to Milošević," *The Guardian*, September 25, 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4067891-104090,00.html> (accessed February 14, 2006).
99. Alessio Vinci, "Milosevic 'Cannot Fight the People's Will' says Kostunica," CNN International, October 5, 2000, <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/europe/10/05/yugoslavia.kostunica/index.html> (accessed February 12, 2006).
100. John Simpson, "The Last Domino Falls," BBC News, October 6, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/959484.stm> (accessed February 15, 2006).
101. Dejan Anastasijevic, "Decision Time," *Time Europe*, September 22, 2000, <http://www.time.com/time/europe/webonly/europe/2000/09/serbia.html> (accessed February 19, 2006).
102. Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002), 357–61.
103. Simpson.
104. Alessio Vinci, "Huge Crowds Celebrate Apparent Fall of Milosevic," CNN International, October 5, 2000, <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/europe/10/05/yugoslavia.protest.04/> (accessed February 17, 2006).
105. "Sequence of events in which the opposition victory at the regime-sponsored elections, followed by attempts to steal/annul the elections on behalf of the outgoing authoritarian government, and culminating in a popular uprising that reclaims the victory and ousts the incumbent, paving the way for a democratic transition." As qtd. in Silitski.
106. From the author's e-mail interview with Peter Finn, Moscow correspondent of the *Washington Post*, April 5, 2006.
107. From the author's e-mail interview with Robert Cottrell, former Eastern Europe correspondent of *The Economist*, April 23, 2006.
108. As an example, one of the main components of the moral victory of the supporters of the Orange Revolution was music: "The 'Orange' team in Yushchenko's headquarters responsible for public relations did not create anything new, because art has always been a vital tool of protest and emotional driver of struggle. But the way in which it achieved this indicated its high level of professionalism. The centre of the campaign was a stage, which in size met the requirements of a rock concert, set up in the main square of Kyiv and equipped with a mobile television station that provided round-the-clock transmissions that went on, not only live, but also via satellite. Even with-

out detailed excursions into the history of non-violent national protests, this example could be called unique: Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) was more reminiscent of an auditorium where people came to socialise. At a result, was too much of one color (orange), loud music and standing all day on Independence Square. Reinforced by universal verbal stamps and abstracts slogans, the intensive color information had an impact on the subconscious. The mass psychosis that infected Kiev, graphically demonstrated how the promotion of a commodity, the ‘Orange Revolution,’ was imposed on the voters who founded themselves in the role of buyers.” Sergey Zhilstov, “Revolutionary Waves in the Post-Soviet Expanse,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 36, no. 6 (2005): 12.

109. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 160.

110. *Ibid.*, 179.

111. R. W. Apple Jr., “Czech Riddle: Who Will Lead?” *New York Times*, November 27, 1989, A1.

112. From the author’s e-mail interview with Helen Fawkes, BBC correspondent in Kyiv. March 31, 2006.

113. Milan Kundera as quoted in Timothy Garton Ash, “Reform or Revolution?” *The New York Review of Books*, October 27, 1988, 47–56.

114. Rob Parsons, “Georgia: At Crossroads,” BBC News, November 23, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/3230416.stm> accessed February 25, 2006).

115. After serving as the leader of the Communist Party in Georgia from 1978–85, Shevardnadze became the Soviet foreign minister in Moscow (author’s note).

116. Charles King, “A Rose among Thorns,” *Foreign Affairs*, 83 (March/April 2004): 13–18.

117. Traynor, 2.

118. Leonard Doyle, “Georgian Opposition Copied Serbs’ Bloodless Revolution,” *The Independent*, November 26, 2003, <http://news.independent.co.uk/europe/article80042.ece> (accessed March 23, 2006).

119. Natalia Antelava, “Roses Sales Bloom after the Revolution,” BBC News, January 2, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/3314095.stm> (accessed March 4, 2006).

120. Jill Dougherty, “Velvet Revolution in Georgia,” CNN International, November 23, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/11/23/otsc.dougherty/index.html> (accessed March 4, 2006).

121. Bruce Pannier, “Where Georgians See Roses, Regional Leaders May See Thorns,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 25, 2003, <http://www.rferl.org/features/2003/11/25112003170310.asp> (accessed March 4, 2006).

122. Economist Intelligence Unit, “Country Profile 2005: Georgia” (London: *The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited*, 2005).

123. Mikheil Saakashvili, “Five Core Principles for the World’s Reformers,” *Financial Times*, May 26, 2005, 19.

124. Adrian Karatnycky, “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution,” *Foreign Affairs* 84 (March/April 2005): 35–52.

125. Quinn-Judge, and Zarakhovich.

126. Steven Lee Myers, “Putin Backs Ukrainian Leader, Dismissing Call for New Runoff,” *New York Times*, December 3, 2004, 1.

127. *The Economist*, “Ukraine’s Democrat Revolt,” November 2004.

128. Timothy Garton Ash, “The Country Called Me,” *The Guardian*, December 9, 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,1369723,00.html> (accessed March 18, 2006).

129. Martin Wolf, “Ukraine: the Wider Challenge,” *Financial Times*, November 24, 2004, 11.

130. Paul Reynolds, “Analysis: Ukraine Looks West,” BBC News, December 27, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/4127989.stm> (accessed March 17, 2006).

131. Antelava interview.

132. From an interview given to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. As quoted in Elena Nikleva, “Timothy Garton Ash Discusses 1989,” RFE/RL Newslines, December 10, 1999, <http://www.rferl.org/newslines/1999/12/5-not/not-101299.asp> (accessed January 25, 2006).

133. Leonid Ragozin, “Analysis: Why Kyrgyzstan Matters,” BBC News, March 21, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4368837.stm> (accessed March 21, 2006).

134. Robert Lowe, "Nation Building and Identity in the Kyrgyz Republic," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath, 107–31 (London: Routledge, 2003).
135. Economist Intelligence Unit, "Country Profile 2005: Kyrgyz Republic" (London: *The Economist* Intelligence Unit Limited, 2005), 6.
136. Jeremy Lennard, "Opposition 'in control' in Kyrgyzstan." *The Guardian*, March 26, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,5155481-103681,00.html> (accessed March 21, 2006).
137. Media were not always so "naïve," Nick Paton Walsh wrote in a dispatch for *The Guardian*: "On the day of the violent storming of the presidential headquarters, in which dozens of people were injured by police or armed mobs, CNN bizarrely termed the events a 'peaceful revolution.'" Nick Paton Walsh, "Kyrgyzstan 'Potato Moment,'" April 4, 2005.
138. Frank Brown, Nadya Titova, and Eve Conant, "Another People's Revolt," *Newsweek*, March 2005, 20.
139. Toby Manhire, "What They Said about . . . the Protests in Kyrgyzstan," *The Guardian*, March 24, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/editor/story/0,,1444337,00.html> (accessed March 20, 2006).
140. "But rarely has so much color been associated with so much activism. 'It's a significant fad,' said Charles Tilly, a Columbia University social scientist, 'If the Orange Revolution had failed, we wouldn't have seen this.' The enthusiasm is infectious. In Kyrgyzstan, freedom-minded citizens are trying to stop the outgoing president, Askar Akayev, from packing the government with his cronies. 'We decided on the Lemon Revolution, [said] one leader of the youth movement Kel Kel (Come Come) 'because yellow is a color of change—like a traffic light.' At a recent rally, Kel Kel handed out 50 pounds of lemons to protesters and the police . . . There are no rules about what color works for whom." Thomas Vinciguerra, "The Revolution Will Be Colorized," *New York Times*, March 13, 2005.
141. Finn interview.
142. "One Down, Four to Go; Kyrgyzstan," *The Economist*, April 2005.
143. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain uttered this infamous phrase regarding Czechoslovakia, and encapsulated Britain's policy of "appeasement" toward Nazi Germany. That radio address to the British people was made on September 27, 1938, shortly before Chamberlain flew to Munich for a final round of talks with Hitler to avoid the prospect of war (author's note).
144. Vitaly Silitski, "Has the Age of Revolutions Ended?" *Transitions Online* (TOL), January 13, 2005, <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=98&NrSection=4&NrArticle=13298&search=search&SearchKeywords=beslan&SearchMode=on&SearchLevel=0#author> (accessed March 1, 2006).
145. Richard M. Immerman, "Psychology," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Patterson, 160 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Emphasis in original.
146. Alan K. Henrikson, "Mental Maps," in Hogan and Patterson, 177.
147. Czechoslovakia seems to be a magnet for mental maps, as it is often used to advise against "another Munich" by antiappeasement hawks that compare the tragic sellout to Hitler to subsequent international problems, from Iraq to Afghanistan to Vietnam to Nicaragua (author's note).
148. From an e-mail interview with Rob Parsons of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. April 20, 2006.
149. In January 2006, the charge that British spies had been at work in Moscow helping pro-democratic NGOs hit the headlines of the Western press and was portrayed in a Cold-War style. Nick Paton Walsh, Richard Norton-Taylor, and Ewen MacAskill, "The Cold War Is Over but Rock in a Park Suggests the Spying Game Still Thrives," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2006. Steven Lee Myers, "Echoes of the Cold War: Russia Accuses Britain of Spying," *New York Times* January 23, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/23/international/europe/23cnd-russia.html?fta=y> (accessed January 29, 2006). Peter Finn, "Russians Say British Diplomats Acted as Spies," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2006/01/23/DI2006012300951.html> (accessed January 29, 2006).
150. "Lenin defined communism as 'Soviet power plus electrification of the entire country.' Vladimir Putin takes a similar view. An updated slogan for Putin's regime might read 'Kremlin power plus control of the oil and gas industry.'" Anthony Robinson, "Gazprom and the Snarling

Bear,” *Prospect*, February 2006, [http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/article\\_details.php?id=7325](http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=7325) (accessed March 12, 2006).

151. Ulf Hannerz, “Among the Foreign Correspondents: Reflections on Anthropological Styles and Audiences,” *Ethnos* 67, no. 1 (2002): 57–74.

152. Raboy and Bernard, 121.

153. Paton Walsh interview.

154. Askold Krushelnysky, *An Orange Revolution* (London: Harvill Secker, 2006), 3.

155. From an idea expressed by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges in a speech given at the UNESCO in 1979: “Ser cosmopolita no significa ser indiferente a un país y ser sensible a otros, no. Significa la generosa ambición de querer ser sensible a todos los países y a todas las épocas.” (“Being cosmopolitan does not mean being indifferent to a country and being sensitive to others, no. It means the generous ambition of wanting to be sensitive to every country and to every epoch.” Translation by author.) Rodrigo Fresan, “Mirando las Estrellas,” *Página/12*, December 27, 2002). Radar Libros, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/libros/10-406-2002-12-27.html> (accessed January 29, 2006).

156. Timothy Garton Ash, “Cedar Revolution,” *The Guardian*, March 3, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,1429129,00.html> (accessed March 18, 2006).

157. Lee Myers interview.

158. “Perhaps the most disillusioned revolutionaries, though, are the orange-clad Ukrainians, who last September saw their former hero, Viktor Yushchenko, sack his government amid feuds, splits and charges of corruption, and last week saw their parliament sack its successor. A poll taken in November 2005 by Freedom House . . . said 60% of Ukrainians, including 44% of those who supported the 2004 protests, thought the country was heading in the wrong direction.” “A Rainbow of Revolutions—Bloodless Regime Change,” *The Economist*, January 21, 2006.

159. Krushelnysky, 360.

160. Andrew Gardner, “Ukraine: A Tintin Moment,” *Transitions Online* (TOL), September 12, 2005, <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=132&NrSection=2&NrArticle=14541&search=search&SearchKeywords=tintin&SearchMode=on&SearchLevel=0> (accessed October 1, 2005).