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14. ABSTRACT Upon comparing the relative degrees of success between revolutionary waves known as the Color Revolution and the Arab Awakening, four particular criteria emerge as critical to a successful revolution: non-violence, elections, a singular leader, and the regional exportation of democratic expertise. The Color Revolutions were revolutions that took place in the post Soviet space in the early 2000's. This paper specifically examines those in Georgia and Ukraine. Each of these revolutions was preceded by fraudulent elections, and after mass civil unrest the previous autocrats stepped aside. Although, in the long term, a revisionist Russia has sought to destabilize each of these nations, the revolutions did instill democratic tendencies within each nation's domestic power structure, and neither country degenerated into general lawlessness. In 2010 a revolutionary wave collectively known as the Arab Awakening, or Arab Spring, began to move through the Arab-Middle East and North Africa. This paper specifically examines the revolutions of Egypt, Libya, and Syria. Generally these revolutions lacked a clear central leader, and were spontaneous reactions to heavy-handed tactics used by regimes against initially small peaceful protests.					
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Thesis: Upon comparing the relative degrees of success between revolutionary waves known as the Color Revolution and the Arab Awakening, four particular criteria emerge as critical to a successful revolution: non-violence, elections, a singular leader, and the regional exportation of democratic expertise.

Discussion: The Color Revolutions were revolutions that took place in the post Soviet space in the early 2000's. This paper specifically examines those in Georgia and Ukraine. Each of these revolutions was preceded by fraudulent elections, and after mass civil unrest the previous autocrats stepped aside. Although, in the long term, a revisionist Russia has sought to destabilize each of these nations, the revolutions did instill democratic tendencies within each nation's domestic power structure, and neither country degenerated into general lawlessness.

In 2010 a revolutionary wave collectively known as the Arab Awakening, or Arab Spring, began to move through the Arab-Middle East and North Africa. This paper specifically examines the revolutions of Egypt, Libya, and Syria. Generally these revolutions lacked a clear central leader, and were spontaneous reactions to heavy-handed tactics used by regimes against initially small peaceful protests.

Conclusion: The stark contrasts between the results of these two revolutionary waves highlight why non-violence, elections, a singular leader, and the regional exportation of democratic expertise are components likely to engender success in a revolution. However, it is impossible to determine if any such criteria could ever be deemed "essential" to revolutionary success. Furthermore, this analysis leaves open the question about the influence of American instruments of power on a revolution.

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Preface

Revolutions are complicated intrastate power struggles that change the composition of a state's power allocation. A seemingly internal revolution can also affect the international order because it creates instability that risks spilling across national borders and challenges the existing international paradigm's definition of sovereignty. The community of nations cannot recognize every revolution, but inevitably some revolutions must be recognized as legitimate. This paper looks to identify components of successful revolutions by comparing and contrasting two great early 21st Century waves of regional revolution, the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring.

While developing this paper I received a great deal of assistance from Dr. James Joyner who was perpetually faced with the challenge of channeling my overzealousness into a singular manageable topic. I owe another debt of gratitude to my military faculty advisor for this year, Lieutenant Colonel Winston Gould, who has been a superb role model as both a professional officer and dedicated life long learner.

I would also like to thank my daughters, Helena and Charis, for sacrificing this year away from their father. In the future I hope they understand and appreciate the reasons their parents chose this lifestyle. Last, and most importantly, I must thank my wife, April. In the last year, with me gone she has managed her own professional career educating Air Force Academy cadets, given birth to Charis, and raised our two daughters affording me this opportunity to study at Marine Corps University. Furthermore, April's achievements academically and professionally both humble me and inspire me to achieve my very best.

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Introduction

The spread of democracy, specifically in the Middle East, is a key aspect of both the United States' *National Security Strategy* and the European Union's *European Security Strategy*.¹ Clinging to the well-founded democratic peace hypothesis, the Western world's hope is that an ever-increasing number of democratic nations will engender lasting peace and prosperity for all mankind. However, the ability of the US to influence democratic movements in foreign nations is fraught with challenges that arise from the complexities of the international order and human nature. Furthermore, external influences on revolutionary situations is an extremely under researched and under theorized field.² This dearth of knowledge should alarm policy makers because of the tendency in American policy to treat democratization as a wholly positive event, rather than considering democratization as the culmination of a long process with intervening steps, some of which may individually look undemocratic.

The end of the Cold War saw the Soviet Union disintegrate into numerous independent states. Despite the overwhelming rejection of communism, democracy did not immediately take hold in many of these nations. Rather a number of autocratic leaders entrenched themselves and struck a variety of delicate balances between the West and Russia. Nevertheless, in the early and mid-2000's a number of these states began definitive democratic transformations. Most notably Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan experienced relatively non-violent electorally focused citizen movements collectively termed the "Color Revolutions."³

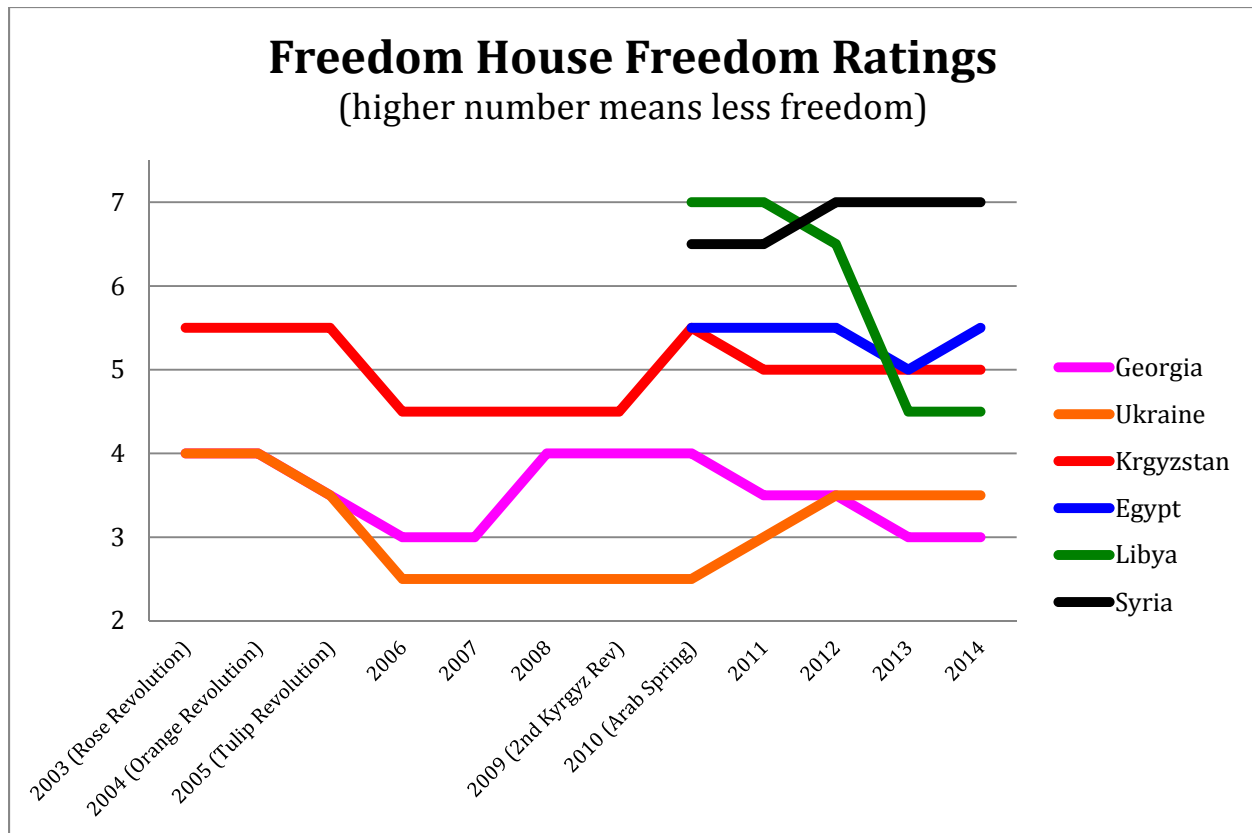
In December 2010 the self-immolation of a Tunisian merchant launched a revolutionary wave across North Africa and far into the Arabian Peninsula that has been collectively termed the "Arab Spring" or the "Arab Awakening." Four years later, the revolutionary situation in this region is far from stabilized, and American policy is particularly enmeshed in the Egyptian,

Libyan, and Syrian revolutions. Compared with the Color Revolutions, the Arab Awakening have been extremely violent, especially in Syria. This violence coupled with a perception of American neocolonialism limits American options for positively influencing the democratizing trend in the Arab region.⁴

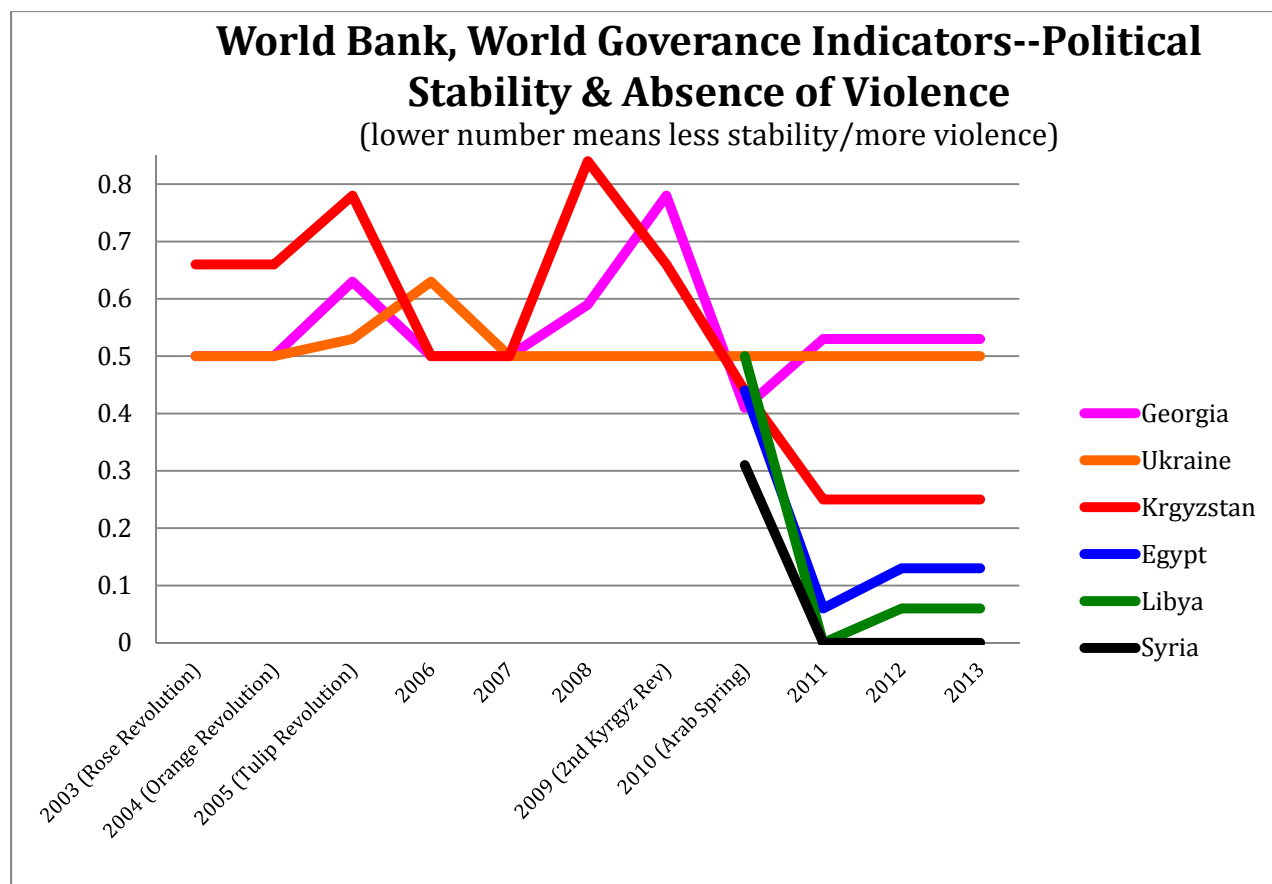
By juxtaposing two of the “pinnacle” Color Revolutions against the three most significant revolutions of the Arab Awakening this paper will identify several components that are likely to engender a successful revolution. Specifically, this paper will examine the revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. A conscious decision has been made to avoid in depth analysis of the Serbian revolution because it can be considered the proto-Color Revolution and it occurred within the context of the pre-September 11th international paradigm. The revolution in Kyrgyzstan has also been left out of this analysis because the simultaneous presence of American and Russian military bases in the country appears to have shaped the political discourse during the revolutionary period in ways that are unlikely to be repeated in a future revolution. While Syria does have a Russian naval base and receives Russian military aide, American interest in Syria is not as tangible as was the case in Kyrgyzstan. Also, the Tunisian revolution has been left out of the following discussion because, similar to the Serbian revolution, it was the proto-Arab Awakening revolution so has characteristics that differ from what would become the more common themes of the Arab Awakening. Also, there was less substantial research and analysis available on the Tunisian revolution than there were on the other revolutions considered here, though the peaceful nature of the Tunisian revolution does lend support to the following hypothesis. It may be illuminating in another research project to compare the Tunisian and Serbian revolutions to identify those factors that generate revolution in an otherwise peaceful period.

By comparing and contrasting these particular Color Revolutions against these examples of the Arab Awakening four components appear significant to the success of a revolutionary movement: non-violence, elections, a singular leader, and the regional exportation of democratic expertise. “Success,” however, is a word difficult enough to define in general discourse let alone in a matter as ambiguous as revolution. For purposes of the following discussion revolutionary success is defined by three components: First, the nation remains relatively secure and stable within the international order. Second, within a short time (less than two years) of the revolution conditions are generally peaceful or safe for average citizens. Third, political conditions are such that peaceful democratic power transitions begin to take place subsequent to the initial revolutionary movement.

There is no such thing as a perfect revolution, but using the three aforementioned criteria and a rudimentary comparison of key indicators of governance elucidates that Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan were far better off, in far shorter order, following their revolutions than Egypt, Libya, and Syria have been thus far. First, using the Freedom House overall freedom rating it is evident that the nations of the Color Revolutions are experiencing greater democracy and civil liberty⁵:



Next by applying the World Bank, World Governance Indicator for Political Stability and the Absence of Violence it is evident that Color Revolution Nations are also more stable presently, and exhibited far greater stability during their revolutionary periods⁶:



One may look at these charts and draw the conclusion that the Color Revolutions were more stable and have experienced greater gains in freedom because those countries transitions started with higher levels of stability and freedom. While this is partially true, it is an overly simplistic explanation and does not account for the devastatingly precipitous drops in stability associated with the Arab revolutions.

Additionally, the Russian incursion into Ossetia and the present instability in Eastern Ukraine bring into question Georgia and Ukraine's security and stability. However, relative to the Arab Awakening this instability is of little consequence. In Libya and Syria the immediate aftermath of their revolutions has been a complete collapse of governance in major portions of the country allowing transnational terrorists to claim de facto control of vast expanses. The Russian threat came to Georgia and Ukraine well after their revolutions, and are clear cases of a

relative power imbalance with a belligerent neighbor rather than an inability to provide basic rule of law across the expanse of their territories. With this broad, relative comparison of the five revolutions let us now turn to a particular examination of each.

Georgia—A Dictator that Invited Revolution?

In 1991 Georgia gained independence following the Soviet Union's disintegration. Oddly enough, Eduard Shevardnadze, who was something of a communist insider considering his previous positions as the Georgian Communist Party's First Secretary and Soviet Foreign Minister, assumed the presidency in 1992.⁷ Yet his presidency may not be so surprising when one considers he was of an ideological mindset similar to Mikhail Gorbachev and also accepts that the Soviet Union's disintegration was more the result of a coup d'état, the rapid transition of power between differently aligned elites, rather than a genuine revolution which is a power change based on massive popular mobilization.⁸ Accepting this model explains that Shevardnadze was an elite able to establish his own authoritarian regime in the absence of Soviet dominion, but nonetheless had some reformist leanings in line with Gorbachev.

Whether because of genuine reformist tendencies or more callous power calculations Shevardnadze did open a door to the West.⁹ One of the consequences of this opening was that a multitude of democratically inclined non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with much of their funding directly from the United States and Western Europe, were allowed to operate in Georgia.¹⁰ These NGOs served two primary functions in Georgia's democratic transition. They provided technical assistance to help organize and mobilize opposition parties, or they provided "watchdog" services monitoring both elections and the behavior of the government toward its citizens.¹¹

Concurrent with the grassroots effects of these democratic NGOs there was a significant fracturing within Georgia's ruling elite. A number of Shevardnadze's protégés from his Citizens' Union of Georgia began to break away, started to form their own parties, and became dubbed "the young reformers."¹² None of these would be as significant as Mikheil Saakashvili who left to form the National Movement party in November 2001.

In 2003 National Movement and many other reform parties expected to make substantial gains against Shevardnadze and his party. None expected to win the presidency outright, but believed 2003 would be a significant electoral turning point in Georgia.¹³ However, the 2003 elections proved to be patently fraudulent and were roundly condemned by the NGOs that had taken root in Georgia in the 1990s.¹⁴

On 3 November 2003 a small number of citizens descended on Freedom Square in Tbilisi to demand accountability for the electoral fraud, but within 20 days the numbers would swell to over 100,000, representing seven percent of the national electorate. The demonstrators managed to storm the parliament building peacefully and prevented parliament from convening. Eventually these actions prompted Shevardnadze to flee Tbilisi, which paved the way for a transitional government and ultimately elections that ushered Saakashvili into the presidency.¹⁵ It is also important to note that during the course of what would be called the Rose Revolution state security forces refrained from using violence against protestors even though directed to do so.¹⁶

American influence on the events of the Rose Revolution was extremely limited. The American government supported democratically inclined NGOs, but this support was neither secretive nor with the intent of toppling the Shevardnadze regime. The express intent of these NGOs was to generate a pluralistic political culture and to monitor state political mechanisms.¹⁷

Therefore it must be accepted that American support of these NGOs was only to support those objectives, and the overthrow of Shevardnadze, while highly significant, was a coincident second order effect of that policy.

In addition to supporting NGOs the only other significant support America provided the revolution was diplomatic rhetoric which emphasized the desire for a free democracy and the importance of fairly counting citizens votes. The latter point was highly consequential because this is the same narrative around which Saakashvili coalesced the multi-party opposition, and for that matter would become an important narrative influencing mobilization in Ukraine's Orange Revolution. America did also try to influence Shevardnadze through direct personal relationships, but this proved of little benefit as Shevardnadze failed to compromise in the slightest.¹⁸

Ukraine—Revolution Against the Oligarchs

The story of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution is not very different from that of the Rose Revolution. Ukraine also achieved its independence in 1991 and in 1994 Leonid Kuchma, a former director of the Soviet Union's largest missile factory, ascended to the presidency.¹⁹ Kuchma's administration was corrupted by the nation's oligarchy and because the president possessed the legal authority to appoint local district executives the corruption was felt down to even the lowest levels.²⁰ Ukraine's economy spiraled downward through the 1990s.

In 2005 Kuchma was barred from seeking reelection due to constitutional term limits. However, he appointed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich as his successor and mobilized the entire apparatus of the state, especially the state run media, to ensure his man would win the election.²¹ Opposing Yanukovich was Viktor Yushchenko, who represented a united group of opposition parties.²²

Yushchenko was the chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine and in the late 1990s instituted a number of reforms that began to turn around the economy.²³ In 2000 Yushchenko became prime minister, but was ousted by Kuchma in less than two years. However, Kuchma's move may have backfired by transforming Yushchenko's persona from that of a competent but bland technocrat into that of the stalwart opposition leader.²⁴ Had Kuchma's opposition not coalesced around this persona in 2005 it is very likely that Yanukovich may have legitimately won that year's election.²⁵

Instead Yushchenko ultimately won the election but his path to the presidency was fraught with challenge. After two elections that were wracked by fraud protestors numbering nearly one million took to Kiev's Freedom Square and were supported by numerous other demonstrations across the country. Eventually a third election was agreed to and monitored by more than 12,000 international observers.²⁶ Yushchenko, unsurprisingly, was declared the winner of this third contest, but as part of the agreement with Kuchma and his allies to allow the third vote Yushchenko agreed to the curtailment of a number of presidential powers.²⁷

As with the Rose Revolution non-partisan democratic organizations played a major part in both mobilizing Kuchma's opposition and watchdogging for election fraud.²⁸ Yet again wealthy westerners, like George Soros, as well as Western governments, openly funded these groups. Also, state security forces were divided over supporting the government or the opposition and ultimately chose not to attack protestors.²⁹ Some have attributed, at least in part, the unwillingness of security forces to attack non-violent democratic protestors as a byproduct of the Ukrainian military forces' partnership with NATO.³⁰ If this is true, then one may also conclude the Georgian military's partnership with the US, most notably in Iraq, to have been a conduit for democratic ideals to infuse the security apparatus.

Egypt—The Dictatorship Strikes Back

Of the Arab uprisings in this survey, Egypt appears closest to realizing success and decidedly has the best stability index of the Arab Awakening. In January 2011, shortly after the revolution in Tunisia, Egyptian protestors took to the streets of Cairo and ultimately prevailed in ousting long time ruler Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian revolution remained relatively non-violent and had the benefit of some limited exported political, and practical, expertise.³¹ However, the Egyptians lacked a singular revolutionary leader and attempts at elections were post-facto and wholly unsuccessful in generating sustainable change to the political system.

The Egyptians had the benefit of seeing non-violent protests succeed in Tunisia, and some of the revolution's intellectual leaders were grounded in the classic non-violent concepts of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.³² Thus, protestors were mobilized in Cairo for nearly two weeks without resorting to any large-scale violence. It was only towards the very end of the revolution, when state security forces began to crack down violently, that protestors resorted to some limited violence. This approach not only allowed for protestors to maintain a moral high ground, but it also helped to sway the military to intervene on behalf of the protestors.

In Egypt the military has long been a political force independent of the executive and has often actually played kingmaker by installing or removing presidents.³³ During the early phase of the protests the military remained a passive observer, but eventually intervened once it saw the largely peaceful protestors attacked. It is noteworthy that the Egyptian revolution saw a little less than one thousand deaths, most of them protestors, in a nation of 85 million, in a region persistently bedeviled by violence.³⁴

In addition to the peaceful nature of the revolution the Egyptians benefitted from the expertise of Tunisian activists and foreign democracy promotion. The Tunisian influence was

primarily limited to practical tactical matters such as how to use onions and vinegar to overcome the effects of riot agents, or improvise protective “armor” against rubber bullets from everyday items.³⁵ More significant to the long-term democratization process was the intellectual and structural support that the Egyptian revolutionaries received from organizations like the American funded Egyptian Democratic Academy.³⁶

Despite initial success the Egyptian revolution has foundered because it lacked other key components necessary to sustain the democratic transition. First, it lacked any clear leader for the opposition to rally around and to lead the change. The diffuse nature and reliance on social media has been a much-celebrated aspect of the Arab Spring in general and Egyptian revolution in particular. However, in the long term this diffusion has proven to be a liability. In Egypt products of the Egyptian Democratic Academy turned to Facebook as a mobilization tool, but treated revolution like a marketing exercise.³⁷ No one took on the mantle and commensurate responsibilities of leadership. Ultimately the Muslim Brotherhood all too readily filled this void.

Once elections did take place the Muslim Brotherhood, which had sat on the sideline of the revolution until the very end, ascended to the presidency. Once in power the Brotherhood was able to affect the drafting of a new constitution so as to increase their hold on power and entrench conservative Islamic values in the new form of government.³⁸ Ultimately citizens once again took to the streets in protest and once again the military intervened deposing the Brotherhood and installing one of its own as president.³⁹ It seems as though little has changed for Egypt, but there is still hope. Egypt is relatively secure and the flames of democracy have been kindled even if they are smoldering for the time being. America may be able to use its substantial leverage with the Egyptian military to make sure that free and fair elections eventually take place. Additionally, America and the West can leverage their influence through

organizations like the Democratic Academy to increase the capacity of opposition parties and gain access for even more such organizations. This is necessary to both provide a capable alternative to the current military regime as well as to provide an appealing secular alternative to Islamic factions that are well organized and motivated.

Libya—Creating a Vacuum

By February of 2011 the winds of revolutionary fervor had blown into Libya where Muammar Gaddafi had been in power since 1969. The arrest of a human rights campaigner initially sparked unrest in Benghazi and within a matter of weeks the revolution had transformed into a violent armed clash with rebels holding vast swaths of territory.⁴⁰ From the outset both rebel factions and the regime were responsible for a wide range of human rights abuses.⁴¹

By March the United Nations Security Council authorized, with Russia and China abstaining, that a no fly zone be established over Libya. Additionally the resolution authorized member nations and regional organizations to take actions necessary, short of occupation, to protect civilians from the actions of the regime pursuant to the doctrine of responsibility to protect.⁴² NATO carried out this mandate through a wide-ranging bombing campaign that not only dismantled the regimes air and anti-air capabilities, but also attacked regime ground forces in what has been equated to close air support for rebel forces.⁴³ The NATO operation culminated in the fall of 2011 when rebel forces controlled Tripoli and most of the country except for a few loyalist holdouts. In October Gaddafi was captured and killed by rebel forces.

Today Libya has degenerated into a three-way standoff and it is estimated almost 3,000 were killed 2014 because of this civil strife.⁴⁴ There is the US and EU recognized government exiled to the city of Tobruk and another government of disaffected militias, allegedly supported by Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan, resides in the historical capital of Tripoli.⁴⁵ Further complicating

matters, a faction loyal to the Islamic State now controls a sizeable portion of the country and has most recently made headlines for beheading 21 Egyptian Christians. So while Freedom House may claim that Libya is freer than Egypt, that proposition is highly dependent on where one resides within Libya. Unfortunately while it did bring about a tyrant's downfall, the NATO led bombing campaign also served to rip asunder the institutions of government and civil order necessary to rebuild Libya.

Syria—the Wickedest of Problems

In March 2011, not long after revolution erupted in Libya, uprisings began in Syria. Initially these were small non-violent protests in the city of Dara'a that were a reaction to the Assad regime's imprisonment and torture of several teenage boys for the crime of writing anti-regime graffiti.⁴⁶ The government, however, violently cracked down on these protests and the country erupted into a full-scale civil war that remains unresolved.

This civil war has displaced almost ten million and taken more than 200,000 lives.⁴⁷ The Assad regime remains in control of the capital of Damascus as well as the critical ports on the Western region of the country.⁴⁸ Allied with Assad are many of Syria's Christians, Druze, and other minority groups in addition to his own Alawite sect. Opposing Assad is a highly fractured force of rebels that is counted at nearly 100,000 strong, but is divided among one thousand different "brigades." These brigades range in size from small gangs of a few dozen members to a couple thousand fighters from almost anywhere in the world.⁴⁹ The rebels are loosely organized into the Free Syrian Army (FSA) that is nominally subordinate to the Syrian National Congress, but the truth is neither of these organizations exerts much influence over individual brigade commanders.⁵⁰ Further compounding resolution of the civil war is the threat of a Russian veto in the Security Council that has stymied efforts in the United Nations to craft as

strong a resolution in Syrian as the one for Libya. Though considering the dismal state of affairs in Libya this may not be an entirely negative situation.

In addition to these two factions Syria represents the physical origin of the Islamic State (IS), which now controls vast territory in the North and East of the country to include much of the Syria's oil reserves. Although the FSA, Assad's forces, and the United States have a common enemy in IS these factions efforts to combat IS have not been coordinated. As IS has been rolled back in some parts of Iraq they appear to have renewed their efforts towards Damascus.⁵¹ This development likely means Iran will increase its support for allies in Damascus as well as raising the prospect Assad will take increasingly violent actions to maintain his own security.

The Four Criteria for Successful Revolution

Each of the Color Revolutions and Arab Awakening revolutions were shaped by their own unique geographical, cultural, and political considerations. Nonetheless there are some striking commonalities in the Color Revolutions and noticeably absent components within the Arab Awakening. Specifically we see four key criteria that lead to success: non-violence, protested elections, specific leaders who presented a clear alternative to the existing regimes, and regional exportation of political expertise. These four criteria should be the aims of the revolutionary and critical components considered before America or Western Allies choose to support a revolutionary movement.

Non-violence: The lesson of the color revolutions and many others is that non-violence makes practical sense as a means for revolutionaries to meet their goals.⁵² In Georgia a primary reason why state security forces did not crack down violently on protestors is because they saw those protestors posed no physical threat.⁵³ Popular television and movies may present security forces

as mindless drones only capable of violence, but the reality is these forces are made of citizens with their values and ethics shaped by the same culture as the protestors.

Violent revolutions also establish a winner take all approach to national management.⁵⁴ The revolutionary who takes national power at the end of a gun must always be on watch for the next man with a gun who could depose him. Subsequent to this fact is that a violent revolution, particularly because it is aimed at the existing power structure, will inevitably destroy those institutions of power that are necessary for the orderly conduct of national affairs. After the old regime is deposed the revolutionaries will be left rebuilding national infrastructure and the mechanisms of governance. Any delay in this process will leave room for grievances and dissatisfactions to fester that will foment subsequent waves of revolution.

The violent winner-take-all paradigm has been played out perfectly in the Arab Awakening. In Syria the regime's violence was met by violence from the protestors in a circular escalation pattern that has led to the current state of civil war. Military leaders who have abandoned their allegiance to Assad have taken up arms with the rebel factions rather than using their authority to stand down segments of the security apparatus as was done in the Color Revolutions. In Libya NATO air strikes so thoroughly dismantled the Gaddafi regime that no government apparatuses were left following his death, and, at a minimum, three factions have rushed into the void. Egypt's revolution, while more peaceful than Syria or Libya, was slightly more violent than in Georgia or Ukraine and consequently its degree of success lies in between these two extremes.

Elections and sanctity of the vote: It has been said that the color revolutions were less revolutions than national pleas to enforce the sanctity of the vote.⁵⁵ Regardless, the end result of these pleas was the semantic and functional equivalent of a revolution. The locus of power

transferred from one elite group to another.⁵⁶ Only now, in the case of the color revolutions, the new elite came to power expressly because of free and fair elections. If they abandon this process in the future their ideological support as well as the people's willingness to assent to their authority will erode; perhaps even more quickly than it did for their predecessors.

In the Arab Awakening elections were never really possible, with the exception of Egypt and to a lesser extent in Libya. However, in Egypt, elections occurred after the initial revolutionary wave but constitutional underpinnings were too weak for electoral results to endure. As Mohamed Morsi began to use executive power to curtail individual rights the military deposed him with little public outcry. It remains to be seen if a new round of elections can take place with lasting results.

In Libya the international community missed an opportunity to take advantage of Gaddafi's gradual co-optation into the international order. Rather than using violence to dismantle the regime the international community could have used its burgeoning influence in Libya following Gaddafi's decision to dismantle his weapons of mass destruction program to allow for nascent peaceful political opposition. This approach would have taken longer to eventually depose Gaddafi, but the results would have been more sustainable than the present situation. Although elections did take place in Libya, the thoroughness in dismantling the previous regime meant there was no structural capacity to either validate or enforce the results of those elections which has led to the present division between two governments claiming legitimacy

For good reason, sham elections are much derided by Western democracies, but these sorts of elections can be the seeds from which legitimate participatory democracy can grow. One must acknowledge that even in a sham election a great deal of governmental institutions and

infrastructure must be mobilized that are not all too different, logistically speaking, from what is necessary to execute a free and fair election. America and its allies must not look at the sham electoral process as yet another institution for dismantling during a regime change, but rather as an institution for gradual co-opting and reforming as was done in the color revolutions.

Practically speaking this might mean making distasteful bargains with dictators that provide aid or security guarantees, but as a trade for access by international election observers as well as organizations that provide democratic electoral expertise. While American military support to Middle Eastern autocrats is often derided, this criticism should be tempered if a contingency of such aid is to grant democracy promoting organizations access because as the color revolutions show these organizations are the seeds from which genuine sustainable reform can grow.

A singular leader: A significant methodological cornerstone of the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) 2.0 is the identification of key actors and how they manage to mobilize a portion of the population around particular grievances.⁵⁷ The premise is simply that without a leader is simply a mob that poses little threat to the established order. ICAF's primary purpose is to maintain or bolster an existing government; however there is a corollary truth applicable when looking to depose the existing regime.

Despotic and autocratic regimes abound with fodder for powerful grievances. Yet a revolution is doomed to failure without a leader who both directs the passions of the mob, and who also can be a motivating figure that passion to coalesce around. Furthermore, the singularity of the opposition leader makes preferable outcomes in an election much more likely.

The Color Revolutions, and much of history, exquisitely illustrate this point. The consensus on Ukraine is that had the opposition not united behind Yushchenko than Yanukovych

would surely have won.⁵⁸ In Georgia, one must conclude that had any of the other reform parties gained a more substantial share of the votes, Saakashvili would have lacked the mandate necessary to negotiate directly against Shevardnadze.

The Arab Awakening demonstrates the inverse reality. Social media's role in the Egyptian revolution has been much celebrated, but for the wrong reasons. Social media was an excellent tool to *mobilize* the population but it did little for *organization* of the revolution. Egyptian protests were simply motivated against the regime; no persona arose as a clear alternative. Once Mubarak stepped aside the Muslim Brotherhood was too easily able to step into the gap because of their excellent organizational capacity even though they expended little effort in the initial revolution.

Similarly, but more violently, Syria and Libya have lacked clear leadership within the opposition. Disparate groups have attacked the regime, but it is not clear who leads or can speak for these groups. Western powers should be very wary about providing active military support to any movement that lacks a clear centralized chain of command.

Contrary to most of the rest of the democratized world America maintains a two party system and it should embrace this seemingly bizarre type of political dichotomy when dealing with revolutionaries. At the strategic level when supporting a revolutionary movement America must simply divide a nation into those who support peaceful legitimate elections, threatening the regime's existence, against those who support the dictator. Once this split is made America must find its man, or woman, from the former camp and put the maximum diplomatic and informational effort towards the electoral success of his party. The economic carrot should be used to generate fair elections, and the military option should be saved only to stop human rights atrocities.

Regional exportation of political expertise: Finally, a subtle but very important component of the Color Revolutions was that democratic “experts” from the one revolution moved on to the other. Analysis of the Color Revolutions cannot ignore the sequential lineage from Serbia to Georgia, then onto Ukraine, and finally Kyrgyzstan. Yet, this lineage does not refer simply to passionate fervor, zeitgeist, or rabble-rousers who crossed international boundaries. Though, likely most of these things happened to some degree. Instead the idea is that a specific set of expertise was transferred between each of these nations. Georgians learned the intricacies of multiparty democratic politics, to include mobilizing voters, distributing campaign literature, and so on, in their own nation. Then they took these hard earned lessons and passed them on to Ukrainians who used the knowledge to mobilize their own efforts. The same also applies to the technical particulars of election monitoring and media watchdogging.

These knowledge transfers across international boundaries, but done by individuals with a modicum of cultural affinity, were necessary for these revolutions to spread, decrease their dependence on outside supporters, and topple regimes in increasingly complex situations. In the Arab world, where xenophobia is more pronounced than anywhere else in the world, the requirement for self-sustaining grassroots democratic organizers will be all the greater, and consequently should be a cornerstone of policy with regards to these revolutions. It may seem like a long shot at this juncture, but if democracy truly grabs hold in Iraq it could become a vital center that spreads this sort of expertise in the Arab world.

Alternative Explanation – American Power

After examining these two revolutionary waves it is evident there are other possible variables that may have affected outcomes. In the Color Revolutions the application of American power was limited to a “soft” diplomatic application and these appear to have been the

most successful revolutions. In Libya, American power was applied the most robustly but it is debatable whether Libya is more or less successful in its revolution than in Syria where there has been little direct application of American power. Egypt may once again turn out to be the middle ground that apparently justifies the hypothesis. In Egypt America applied more direct diplomatic pressure than it had in the Color Revolutions, but far less overt support to the revolutionaries than in Libya.

A targeted examination of Serbia juxtaposed with Libya may eventually shed more light about the application of American military power. In Serbia, years before their revolution, American military power had been selectively applied against Slobodan Milosevic in order to make him meet certain demands of the international community. This might have degraded his domestic political power to a sufficient degree that allowed for an eventually more peaceful transition of power. In Libya American power was applied in a more absolute manner and has led to the political vacuum discussed in the preceding pages. Comparison of the two begs a question about an ideal degree of American military power to apply in order to gradually change a regime.

The Future of the Arab Awakening

In surveying these three revolutions we see that Egypt possessed some, but not all of the criteria that made the Color Revolutions relatively successful. Even though Egypt has regressed institutionally the US has significant leverage to affect the military government so that free elections may eventually take place. There are two primary challenges to this, though. First constitutional guarantees must be put in place so the winning faction is unable to suppress minority views or implement fundamental Islamic policies that violate other rights, as did the Muslim Brotherhood. Second, the Egyptian nation must feel secure enough that it can weather

the instability that comes from the electoral process. The unchecked expansion of IS and events like the Libyan beheadings that directly touch Egyptian citizens make this appear a long way off.

In Libya and Syria none of the criteria from the Color Revolutions were or are present. The first phase of the Libyan revolution has passed, but the country is now in an all-important second phase. Reconciliation between the Tobruk and Tripoli governments must take place or IS stands to fill the gap. The US and NATO erred in the first phase by choosing sides decisively in an internal matter. Now they must use as much diplomatic and economic power as they can muster to hasten this reconciliation and bring in as many democracy building organizations as possible. Only then can a united and moderate Libyan national government turn back IS. In Syria the situation is grim, but the US can use the urgency of the moment to cajole the Assad government into accepting a reform process that would make the political situation much more like what was found in the Color Revolutions. This might, however, require a mea culpa from the US about the situation in Libya and serious rethinking by the international community about the right to protect doctrine, as well as the larger change in ideals about internal sovereignty.

Conclusions

Revolutions are complex forms of intrastate conflict that are influenced by numerous variables including political culture, civil culture, grievances, elite power structures, historical narratives, and much more. This brief survey has demonstrated that the Color Revolutions were generally more successful when compared with the Arab Awakening because they were non-violent, referendums on hijacked elections, had a unifying opposition leader, and benefited from the transmissions of democratic knowledge and expertise. Georgia and Ukraine of course have both been rocked by incursions from a revisionist Russia attempting to exploit ethnic tensions. Even though this has disrupted the entrenchment of democratic institutions it has not reversed

their course, and while internal stability is threatened on the frontiers shared with Russia the core of these nations remain relatively stable and united.

Another lesson of this survey, particularly in Libya, is that the US must avoid the exportation of Wilsonian idealism with a gun.⁵⁹ Wholesale regime change as was done in Libya, and for that matter Iraq, inevitably crosses the boundary from exacting justice against a dictator to entirely dismantling the apparatuses necessary for basic governmental services. The Color Revolutions demonstrate that often the best reformers come from within the existing regime structure.⁶⁰

The US needs to face the challenge of explaining to a restless public why strategic patience is prudent during these tumultuous times. However, the type of patience required is not without historical precedent. In the Republic of Korea the US was able to maintain a crucial strategic alliance and simultaneously prod a series of reluctant autocrats along the path of reform. South Korea is now a vibrant multiparty democracy with several peaceful transitions of power to its credit. Also, in the Serbia-Kosovo conflict the US successfully used limited kinetic strikes to change Slobodan Milosevic's decision making rather than attempt wholesale regime change.⁶¹ This campaign was a precursor to the domestic situation in Serbia that would eventually topple Milosevic and usher in the era of the Color Revolutions.

In addition to the US retooling its strategic approach, the international community ought to revisit the idea of an Elba for dictators as it rethinks the right to protect doctrine.⁶² In the ethnically and sectarian riven Middle East foreign military intervention becomes tantamount to an extra judiciary sentencing of not only the dictator du jour, but also the ethnic factions he protects. Military power should be applied in a limited manner so that dictator is forced to accept a multiparty process, not wage a fight for survival.

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