

## Electric Yerevan and Lessons on the Color-Spring Tactic

June 27th, 2015 -

- A Fort Russ and Greenville Post Feature -

by : Joaquin Flores



The Electric Yerevan protest provides us with an excellent opportunity to review some of the Color-Spring tactic. It is important to share these publicly, for it is indeed probable that the world as a "hybrid soft-power/hard-power tactic".

A moral principle held by Gene Sharp, who was one of the tactic's main developers, was that strange, contradictory, even dishonest here is that violence is reduced taxonomically to the civilians. But we know that violence comes in many forms.

We live in a time of great violence; physical, psychological, legal, economic, spiritual violence the latter four, but its mutation into the Arab Spring tactic also employs heinous physical violence. Libya, hundreds of thousands in Syria, and a mounting figure in Ukraine which threatens to s



"Non-violent" change in Syria

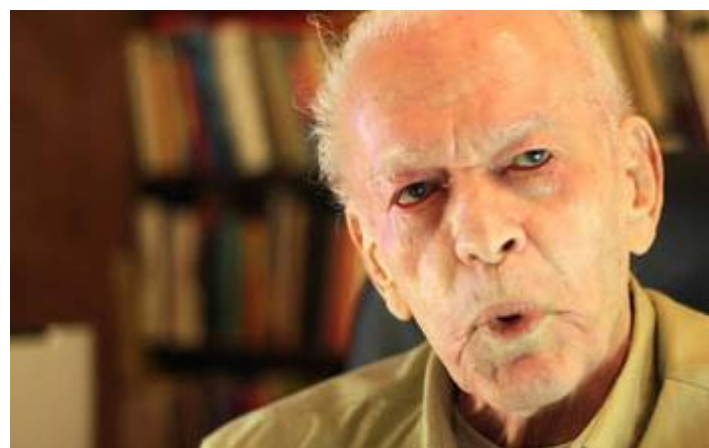
Novices to political science and political activism may be lured by the spectre and spectacle of ostensible movements for radical social change in the last generation. The symbols have been girl placing flowers in the gendarme's gun barrels, water cannons and tear-gas, the fist flag.

What is missing of course from this view is an understanding of the real social forces in a genuine activism, labor union militancy, has been marginalized. In place of direct action against wealth, is a strange simulation of late 1960's student activism; shown to us on a never-ending

Others have caught on to the fact that the US has been funding these protest movements as astroturf movements. Still, it is misunderstood how the US viewed these governments before

One thing which is often popularly misunderstood about the Color-Spring tactic, by the governments being targeted for regime change by the US are not just those which have appeared generally US-friendly governments. By and large, in fact, the latter is the case. We will be expected

Also we will look at some of the methods used in the application of this tactic in Armenia, and at some of the organizing methods.



Gene Sharp - a man of 'Non-Violence'

### Why the US Targets 'Regimes' for 'Change'

In the Color-Spring tactic, the US may target countries for 'regime change' that it has had

are increasingly problematic. It may be also generally friendly countries who refuse to con such as with Mubarak in Egypt, who was reluctant to interfere with Syria. Another rea relationship with other countries in its region which, regardless of the official position meta-political relationships and developments which are contrary to US interests. In the latt policy, known as the 'failed state', in order to destroy the material foundations of economic an

Given the failure of the Orange Revolution to frustrate relations with Russia, the situati earth/failed state strategy. Conclusively, the Color-Spring tactic is compatible with any nur number of desired outcomes, and as such is a very useful weapon to possess.

### How the US Sets up a 'Regime' for 'Change'

In this tactic, the US can effectively hide behind itself. It works to create or at least catalyze the pioneers of the Color/Spring tactic at Dartmouth and Harvard, Gene Sharp - whose work on the following truths:

- 1.) People often think of redressing grievances politically in terms of protests by citizens; it i that protests are legitimate.
- 2.) The mischief of mercantile and private interests: companies, corporations, investment con
- 3.) Yet it is the government's approval of (or inability to work against) these private intere protests.
- 4.) People generally understand that one actor (such as the US) may benefit from being beh actor may simultaneously generate the problem, provoke a public reaction, and then back a p difficult to understand or 'conspiratorial' in nature.
- 5.) Thus, the US can with a relative degree of public stealth, be the promoter and main benef short term, while simultaneously using the public discontent that these logically produce, a same government, up to and including 'regime change'.

The basic framework of the 'Electric Yerevan' protests is a prime example of this dynamic. T and support these protests are rational, and from the perspective of the public interest, even s network of NGO assets and favored charitable corporate entities, seeks to steer these protests

### Why the US wants to 'Regime Change' Armenia

When Armenia joined Eurasian Economic Union on January 2nd, 2015, it made history. Th relationship to the world for the coming period. The US saw this coming partly as a r longstanding partner in various Armenian economic and political projects, ever since the colla

Armenia never lost its close ties with Russia, and in the previous period - which in US foreig crisis - it was acceptable for the US within the framework of the US's lukewarm relationsh Armenia to maintain good relations with Russia.

Nevertheless, the US never lost sight of the importance of Armenia to Russia, and vice-versa. in terms of encouraging and promoting the pre-existing conflicts and problematic historical n

Insofar as the US could not decisively improve its power base within Armenia, it sim e

Serbia policy) which significantly favored Georgia and others. The end of 2014 was when the

Indeed, when the winds of change were felt a few years ago in Armenia, the US changed in December 2014, and declared that the US will substantially cut funding and assistance to Armenian development. The February 13th, 2013 presidential elections, as well as the May 6th, 2013, discussed for some years that Armenia would be joining the Eurasian Union, and US efforts to

The general context here is that going back to 1994, Armenia joined the important Collective Security Treaty Organization, known, is what the Russian Federation has been building with former Soviet republics as a successor to the Soviet Army.

Despite Armenia's willingness to globally diversify its partnerships (including in the energy sector), the post-2007 period has been characterized by a change in the US's tolerance for balanced or free trade. The US has never been a paragon of free market liberties, and to the contrary, as a realist, it has used tariffs, exclusive agreements, and gunboat diplomacy within its repertoire in pursuing its interests. But the upping of the ante vis-à-vis the 'BRICS and friends' nations has significantly changed the

Despite Armenia's willingness to allow US companies and NGO's to operate in Armenia, it's not clear if this is the US's primary reason for targeting Armenia for regime change.

### Why the US Thinks it can get Armenians to 'Regime Change'

As we have explained, the US's use of the Color-Spring tactic does not negate the fact that there is widespread discontent over several ongoing issues. Because Armenia's economy and public budget is so weak, any increase in prices or taxes related to public sector services are essentially a public recognition of the government's failure created far beyond Armenia's borders or the reach of its government.

A number of protests preceded this one, and while they were popular for tangible reasons, they were not 'Electric Yerevan'.

Protests happened two years ago when the government indicated its need to increase the transportation tax. The public protested for a week and the government heeded these demands.

Additionally, this type of protest happened last year in opposition to a new pension fund law that would have increased contributions for 18 months.

But what was popularly promoted by the NGO leadership among protesters in both of these instances was this without any leadership or organization.

Because there is an organizational history of protests, with organizers taking notes and perfecting their tactics, US financed organizers may now believe they are in the position to escalate the present protests.

They might believe this because they have been escalating the whole time. In labor and social movements, the method of escalation. Each step that escalates is harder to pull off, but is harder for the target to resist. The organizing results so far, and if the prior escalations have succeeded, then the next step stands a good chance of succeeding.

Now this protest dubbed 'Electric Yerevan', organized under the project name "No To Phishing", was promoted as a self-organised internal protest which has no leader and no political affiliation, in

Activists claim, and many believe, that there are no political dimensions, no political side to this protest. It is not against any country (Russia), are not for any country or international body (USA or EU or

any change in government policy.

At this stage, we can see they have attempted to sanitize the protests as purely being a demand for the privatization of Electric Networks of Armenia.

### The Protester's 'Demand' Reveals the real Target

The reason that this demand is indeed political, geopolitical, and geostrategic, is that the industry is controlled by one of the successors to Russia's electricity giant, Unified Energy System of Russia (UES). RAO UES technically ceased to exist, with its 51% government shares being largely privatized. It is still referred to by this name as a matter of habit, and because the various entities are essentially not new.

This makes a perfect narrative to steer this in an anti-Russian direction, and lay the blame at the feet of the Russian government. The purpose of this call for an investigation into Electric Networks of Armenia is more clear when you know that the main competitor of the US company, ContourGlobal.

ContourGlobal purchased the Vorotan Hydro Cascade, a complex consisting of three hydroelectric power plants. ContourGlobal increased its projected operating costs, compelling the government to recognize this, which it was forced to pass on to consumers.



In other words, the demands of the protest organizers exclude both the facts and the recent history of the industry, the distribution end of the industry.

Rather than demanding socialization of the Vorotan Hydro Cascade, protest organizers - not in an anti-Russian direction. This direction focuses just on Electric Networks of Armenia and its privatization by the Eurasian Union.

Economies of scale tend to deliver goods and services at a lower cost when compared to small-scale production. "RAO UES", in the wake of the collapse of the USSR, is and was well positioned to take advantage of this. "RAO UES" essentially inherited the system used by the USSR, which was already designed for a centralized management system. However, "RAO UES" and its successors are not 'non profit' power being run on a for-profit basis is rooted.

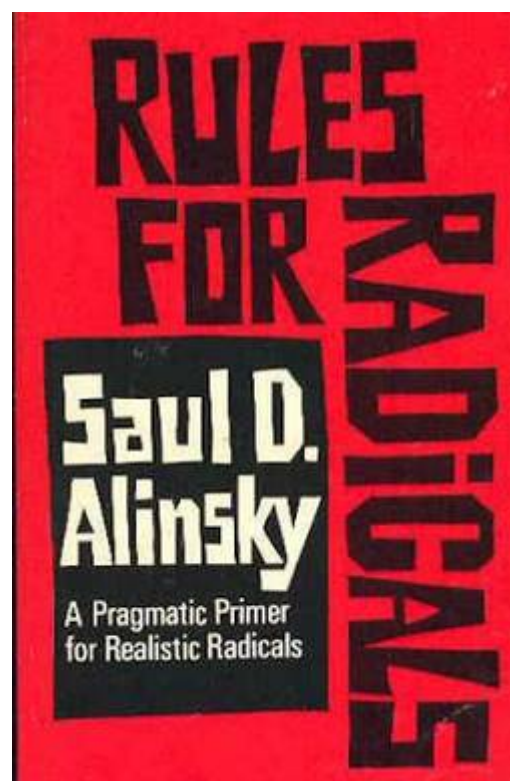
Nevertheless, we may believe at first that the relatively limited demand to focus just on the protestor's demands, conduct the investigation, and shift budgetary items around, or to reduce the cost of production.

## Organizing and Manipulating: The Course of Escalation

Ultimately, the Color-Spring tactic - in borrowing from the rich history of left-wing social protest - begins with minimal demands before moving forward to the maximal one; based upon a popular framework of peaceful assembly and seemingly realistic and benign one; and disorder which forces the gendarmes of the state to act, thereby finally de-legitimizing the

The demands change as 'things change'; the nature of the Color-Spring tactic always involves in strategically planned stages. Each reform that the government commits to as a compromise not promoted by the organizers as a sign of goodwill on the part of the government.

Rather, the concessions are couched as proof that the government was wrong in the first place were indeed criminal acts, and proof that the power of the people is growing, that the government moment to push forward with more and more demands.



An interesting distinction that Alinsky makes is between organizing and manipulating. Organizing is for the best interests of those being led. Manipulating is when the leading is done against the interests of those being led. In the last few decades, the US's co-option of Alinsky's work probably fits the latter. The actions of the employees and volunteers of these US backed NGO's in Yerevan ought to be called 'Manipulating'.

## From Riot to 'Revolution' and the Dynamics of Group Psychology

The group psychology of the encampment in Yerevan changes by the day. The more time the protesters spend together, the more common memories and the more they think and act as a single unit. The tone of the protest becomes the final, last stand.

The protesters are manipulated by the organizers and lose any sense of history or purpose. The organizers, in meetings, seem like natural, honest, charismatic figures. They symbolically project and

organizers whose first area of expertise is in downplaying or concealing the organization proceedings. The 'sworn testimony' of the regular encampment participants that there was 'been executed very well.

One reason also that regular protesters in Armenia do not believe they are being led, is that he is at the front, pulling people with him.

Leadership is conceived of as being done by people who are well spoken, professional, like politicians in elections.

Alinsky teaches in *Rules for Radicals* that leading is done not by pulling, not by standing in front, but by pushing. Most people do not want to lead, and they fear public speaking. Effective labor leaders act like they do not want to lead, they may even feign a little discomfort and humility. They identify very intimately with this person who 'leads by pushing'.



Leading from Behind - Lead by Pushing

### How the 1% Pretends to Be the 99%

One method in the tactic, used in Yugoslavia, Syria, Ukraine, Macedonia, and Armenia, works like a riot: In a crowd of a thousand, ten or fifteen individuals shout from the crowd. Their words and content is planned. They may seem to disagree with each other on minor things, but they all say "we will not leave until we win". The state will respond "and we must be ready to stand here because they are afraid of us; it proves we will win and they know it."

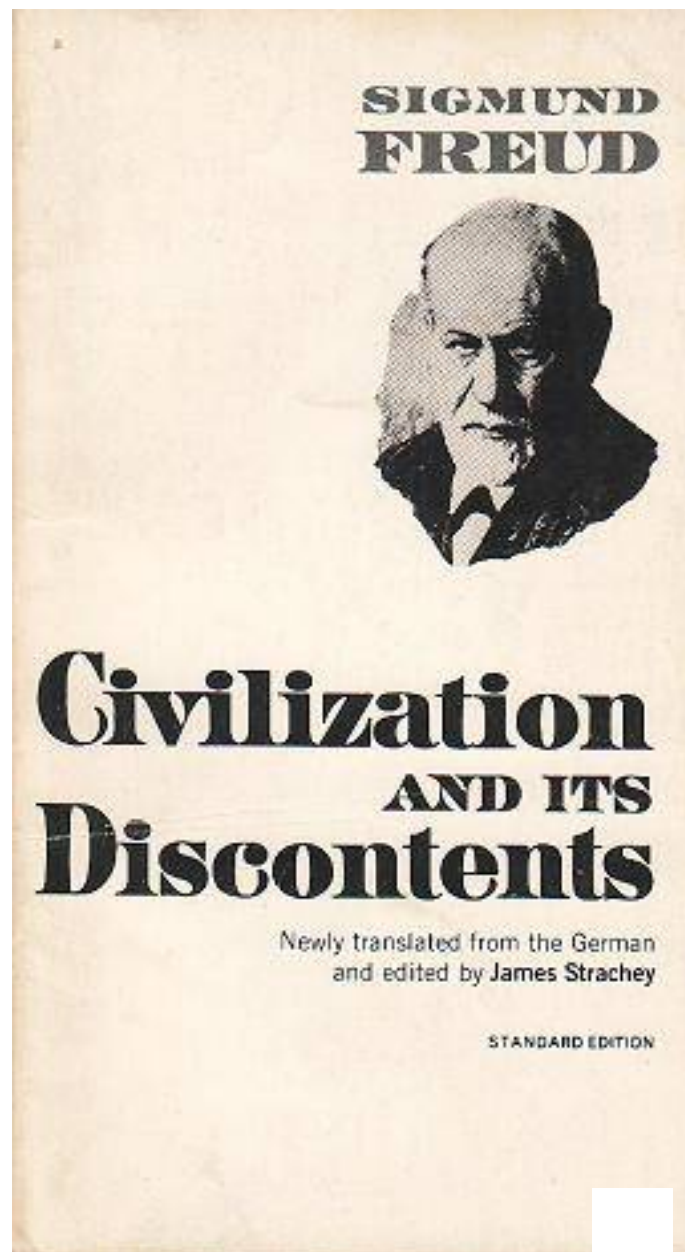
While representing at first only 1% of the protesters, they gain a monopoly on time and message, creating a consensus within the crowd. Each individual erroneously believes that what these protesters planted on this process the simulation of consensus is reified, and in actuality becomes the majority view.

Organizing science describes that mass protests without organization and leadership do not appear as spontaneous and leaderless, that is intentional on the part of the protest organizers.

### Freud and Reflexive Anarchism

This mass attraction to leaderless resistance fits into a simplified 'emotional' variation of anarchy of freedom and liberty which are irrationally connected to physical material life.

These are often cognitized and even verbalized as social concerns about conditions of work and corporate wrongdoing. However on the subconscious level these yearnings for freedom are innate to the human experience, and subsist on the level of the psyche as a motive force. The Revolution theoreticians, and borrows tremendously from Sigmund Freud's work *Civilization and Its Discontents* evolved over millions of years under conditions of pre-civilization, where the human experience was shaped by adversity.





Thus each concession by the government tends to solve real existing problems, but simultaneous relation to the realm of perceived possibilities. So the relatively simple initial demands of the will say the demands are, or were, at any given time. What matters is the interplay of forces turn generate shifts in collective consciousness. In the context of many global actors with several these hegemonies do not compete for control of the protest movement. In many cases, they have

### What we might Expect from the Protesters

At a certain later stage in the protest, western media will only focus on or interview certain people to be interviewed. This is common in both labor and community organizing within the US posing as protesters; visibly they are almost indistinguishable, with most organizers only seeing one person. Organizing guidelines indicate that selecting protesters to present to media for interview is most desirable.

This also requires a qualified media liaison or communications director working for the NGO. The BBC, CNN, 'Vice', and other similar pro-NATO propaganda outlets, must be willing to cooperate.

At this later stage, the person interviewed will exaggerate, invent, or distort narratives about western audiences with the appropriate western cultural cues and narratives that justify the 'target regime'.

Other times, the BBC, CNN, et al, will purely invent or read a script of what the protesters are saying. "What began as a protest over electricity rates has, after brutal crackdown by the regime, become a government to step down".

The viewer sees tens of thousands of protesters, either at present or from stock footage from the rate protest, but hears the BBC narrative. In this application, the language and the images create the expectation that the images are proof of the language. Thus, the combination of media sources creates what actually occurred.

This will create the justification the west requires for 'sanctions' and other forms of 'Arab Spring' narrative is how the Color Revolution transforms into the Arab Spring.

### How to Counter the "Color" before it "Springs"

What the government of Armenia can do is utilize the same science of organizing, and work conditions, use the state gendarmes to evict the encampments. Rather, they must cut the head off the snake.

They need their own team of community organizers and protest workers to infiltrate and counter 'behind' to discredit the established 'non-leading' leaders on the ground. In some cases, one-on-one organizers in order to justify their individual extraction from the site. This is why governments have a mirrored operation in place; we saw this used with high efficacy in both Russia and Macedonia.

Then, they must proceed externally to arrest organizers for various charges, off camera. They must close NGO's, closures of offices, even if temporary, even if the funds are ultimately released.

The protester encampment on the ground functions as a siege. A direct sallying forth is perceived as a crime against humanity.

The correct method against this is to conduct a counter-siege. The encampment functions  
These supply-lines must be cut, while increasing access to the same for the government  
'normality' line will prevail as the predominant 'meme' among the protesters, as the old leader

Only then can and should the government announce any concessions, in this case a repeal of  
concession before the proper protest leadership is in place to accept the concession will o  
sections above.

To prevent these in the first place, and looking long term, societies must work to create ric  
societies based on collective purpose. These can be constructed and reinforced in whichever  
in opposition to the relatively purposeless life provided by the western-liberal, commercia  
breeds alienation, depression, introversion, repression, and angst. These are prerequisites  
redirected and manifested as a protest movement which loses sense of proportion and reality.



Armenian folkloric dance and attire

Finally, a 'good culture' cannot solve or mask real corruption stemming from adventures in  
often political, as with the case of Armenia's energy markets. People must learn how to creat  
Color-Spring tactic. The difference is that the Color-Spring tactic only works with massive f  
that western audiences interpret media narratives, which justify western government action ;  
distrust and divisiveness in societies, as a rule and as a goal.

If the Armenian government had not allowed the sale of one of its most valuable resources to  
the costs to the Russian managed distributor, and there would not have been a price increase.

To remedy this problem requires a shift in commitments and thinking in Armenian governan  
and social life, but also is a large part of sovereignty. Armenian prosecutors can probe the ve  
that the US colluded to create this problem in order to instigate instability in Armenia. This c  
ContourGlobal. Then, the state would be in a good position to nationalize this valuable resou

The re-directed 'protest movement' would add the demand that an independent public oversi  
leaders, academics, and whistle-blowers. They would have authority to veto certain decisio  
electric enterprise.

## Conclusion

The protest movement in Yerevan over the electric bill hike has many of the clear signs of the

The US involves itself in much financing of protest movements, and does so with the aid of itself, but this does not mean that the demands in Yerevan and elsewhere are not real, and that people are on the face of them. These are not incompatible spheres, and it is problematic to understand

The US creates concrete economic problems, exporting its chaos - it then also reaches around the world with efforts against these problems. But the solutions it offers in fact creates more problems.

Protest organizers and participants tend to stress that their aims are limited, simple, defined, and their discourse can rapidly shift when the conditions are met. Ultimately the organizers will work to control the events, sometimes giving a very different rendering of reality than what actually is occurring in the country in local media whose owners are part of the western network.

People in modernity tend to share vague and frustrated aspirations for freedom and individualism, and a sense of childhood of being misunderstood. The particular difficulties of growing up which are specific to the modern way in post-modern political organizing schemes. Sex and sexuality are also not off limits in modernity. Issues related to the human experience are concretized and given shape in the Color-Spring organizing

These are combined with real existing problems, often economic and political, but are confronted with a concession from 'the authorities' are rejected for irrational reasons based in the psyche as a mechanism

The 'Color' tactic can be reversed before it goes 'Spring' if the targeted 'regime' also has access to the world. An 'occupy' 'siege' can be both infiltrated, and the supply lines to the destabilizing leadership can be cut

The 'Color' tactic requires certain pre-requisites, including US access to the societies under threat. This can be done through non-profits and charities, whose managers can be forced, for starters, to register. It is important that some of these organizations come through the UN, so a common global movement to raise the issue of doing the work of empire, needs to be waged.

Color Revolutions can be prevented if:

- a.) there is a strong multi-generational mono-culture which provides people with a strong 'citizen' model. This later model is provided by atomized, western, modern social projects as a result of
- b.) critical economic and infrastructural assets are publicly owned and managed, and all necessary social welfare are last resort and not first resort measures.

\*\*

**Joaquín Flores** *Joaquín Flores is a Mexican-American expat based in Belgrade. He is a full-time analyst at a geostrategic think-tank and consultancy firm, as well as the co-editor of Fort Russ news service. He is also an expert in organizing as well as the geopolitics of Eastern Europe, Eurasia, with a strong proficiency in Middle East studies and the role of mass psychology, as well as the methods of the information war in the context of 4th generation warfare. He holds a Ph.D. from California State University. In the US, he worked for a number of years as a labor union organizer and a labor federation.*

