



Gandhian ‘Non-Violent Civil Disobedience’ Strategy In The Peace Movements: An Analysis Of ‘Color Revolutions’

Dr. Lekshmi. K¹

¹ Dr.Lekshmi. K is a Guest Faculty with the Department of Gandhian Thought & Peace Science, The Gandhigram Rural Institute.

Abstract

Peace movements aim to minimize conflict through advocacy, non-violent resistance, and political lobbying. Color revolutions, characterized by nonviolent civil disobedience, are a series of post-Soviet era uprisings aimed at achieving democratic reforms and regime change. These movements, such as the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, largely relied on peaceful protests, demonstrations, and acts of civil resistance to challenge and replace pro-Moscow governments with pro-Western ones. Here, protests and regime change efforts by means of nonviolent tactics like civil disobedience and political non-cooperation were carried out. In a way, the ideology of liberalism meet with the notion of revolution against the conservative authoritarian regime by using non-violent tactics. A notion similar to the Satyagraha principle of M.K Gandhi through which he employed non-violent civil disobedience strategy against the imperial British regime notably in the 1930 Salt March, which sparked widespread resistance. So the paper tries to analyze the non-violent strategies of Color Revolutions mainly Rose, Orange and, Tulip revolutions of its co-relative approach with the Gandhian Civil Disobedience Method. The research methodology employed is descriptive and analytical in nature.

Keywords: Color Revolutions, Non-violent Methods, Peace Movements, Civil Disobedience

¹ Dr.Lekshmi. K is a Guest Faculty with the Department of Gandhian Thought & Peace Science, The Gandhigram Rural Institute. She can be reached at lekshmicug@gmail.com

Introduction

Color revolutions are a series of non-violent civil disobedience peace movements in the post-Soviet era aiming at attaining democratic changes and political change. These uprisings, like the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Rose Revolution in Georgia, mostly depended on nonviolent marches, rallies, and acts of civil resistance to replace the existing pro-Moscow regimes with the pro-western governments. In this movement, nonviolent strategies including political noncooperation and civil disobedience were employed to carry out protests and attempts to overthrow the regime. In a way, the ideology of liberalism meets with the notion of revolution against the conservative authoritarian regime by using non-violent tactics. A notion similar to the Satyagraha principle of M.K. Gandhi through which he employed non-violent civil disobedience strategy against the imperial British regime notably in the 1930 Salt March, which sparked widespread resistance. So the paper tries to analyze the non-violent strategies of Color Revolutions mainly Rose, Orange and, Tulip revolutions of its co-relative approach with the Gandhian Civil Disobedience Method. The research methodology employed is descriptive and analytical in nature.

Peace Movements by Means of Civil Disobedience: A theoretical perspective

Peace movements aim to achieve world peace by minimizing conflict through advocacy, non-violent resistance, peace diplomacy, boycotts, and political lobbying. Color revolutions political events involving mass street protests and riots in late 20th and early 21st century countries, aiming for revolutionary change through peaceful movements. Color revolutions occurred in former Soviet Union, Balkans, Middle East, Iran, and China, with popular ones like Georgia's Pink Revolution, Ukraine's Orange Revolution, Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution, and Ukraine's Euromaidan Revolution. Western media highlights the sophisticated nature of color revolutions, which initially aimed to export democracy through civil disobedience, now serve as guidelines for changing political regimes, with most coups starting with peaceful protests.

The present study analyzes the post 2000 'Colour Revolutions' through the lens of its strategies and peaceful communication methods employed. It can be seen that these revolutions as political phenomena that spread across countries or regions, as democratization has occurred in waves affecting specific regions since the 1980s. In a close society with autocratic rule, civil disobedience is senseless as subjects have only the right to petition and not be equal to the ruler. In a democratic society, civil disobedience allows individuals to resist injustice while adhering to the law. This concept complements the theory of constitutional democracy, suggesting that civil disobedience can contradict the duty to comply with laws accepted by the legislative majority. Karl Popper's concept of the 'open society' is a society that embraces criticism and dissent, allowing for the free exchange of ideas and the possibility of legal and social reform. Popper believed that all knowledge, including laws and social structures, is inherently fallible and subject to error. (Wettersten,

2006) This implies that individuals have a right to challenge and attempt to change laws they believe are unjust.

Civil disobedience is a form of opposition based on majority rule, similar to legitimate public demonstrations, purposeful law corruption, and military resistance. It is a form of democratic opposition, based on the social model of the open society. Henry David Thoreau in his essay, originally titled 'Resistance to Civil Government' and often referred to simply as 'Civil Disobedience', is a foundational text in the philosophy of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. (Thoreau, 1949) Thoreau's essay argues that individuals should prioritize their conscience above blind obedience to government laws, especially when those laws are unjust. Gandhi was deeply impacted by Thoreau's ideas, adopting his principles of nonviolent resistance in the struggle for Indian independence.

Post 2000's Color Revolutions and the Usage of Civil Disobedience against dictatorial regime

Color revolutions, involving mass street protests, occurred in late 20th and early 21st century namely Georgia's Rose Revolution, Ukraine's Orange Revolution and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution. These revolutions, which began as a means of exporting democracy through civil disobedience, have evolved into sophisticated strategies for overthrowing political regimes, with the majority of coups beginning with nonviolent demonstrations. Color revolutions involved with large-scale public demonstrations, boycotts, and other forms of political action aimed at challenging or overthrowing existing governments. Regime change, often through nonviolent means like mass protests and civil disobedience. Various peace movements primarily the 'Color revolutions' in the post-2000 are a series of largely peaceful, popular uprisings that occurred in several countries, primarily in the former Soviet bloc, during the early to mid-2000s. These movements often used a specific color or flower as a symbol to represent their cause and aimed to oust leaders considered authoritarian or corrupt. These are a series of peaceful protests in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan from 2003 to 2005, were initially seen as democratic breakthroughs. However, according to Lincoln A. Mitchell, these movements were more reflections of continuity than radical change, and further argues that the Color Revolutions were phases in each nation's post-Communist transition, not true revolutions. (Mitchell, 2022)

Rose Revolution (Georgia, 2003)

The Rose Revolution, also known as the Revolution of Roses, was a nonviolent change of power in Georgia in November 2003. It resulted in the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze following widespread protests over disputed parliamentary elections. (Charles H, 2004) The revolution is named after the moment when protesters, led by Mikheil Saakashvili, stormed the Parliament session with red roses. Widespread public discontent with Shevardnadze's government over issues like economic mismanagement, electoral fraud, and corruption fueled the protests. Following parliamentary elections in November 2003, which were widely seen as rigged, mass protests erupted in Tbilisi. Protesters, many carrying red roses, demanded Shevardnadze's resignation.

The red rose became a potent symbol of the peaceful revolution and the desire for change. The protests led to Shevardnadze's resignation and the cancellation of the election results. Mikheil Saakashvili, who spearheaded the protests, became president after subsequent elections. It marked a significant shift in Georgian politics and is considered a key moment in the country's move away from its Soviet past. (Charles, 2004)

Tulip Revolution (Kyrgyzstan, 2005)

The Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, also known as the First Kyrgyz Revolution, was a series of protests and political unrest in March 2005 that led to the ousting of President Askar Akayev. The protests were sparked by widespread dissatisfaction with Akayev's authoritarian rule, alleged corruption, and disputed parliamentary elections. The revolution resulted in Akayev fleeing the country and a new interim government being established. (Marat, 2006)

The Tulip Revolution stemmed from a combination of factors, including Authoritarianism and Corruption, Disputed Elections and Popular dissatisfaction. Broadly speaking, Akayev's presidency was marked by growing authoritarian tendencies and accusations of corruption within his administration and family. Alongside, the parliamentary elections in February and March 2005 were widely criticized for alleged fraud and manipulation, fueling public anger. (Marat, 2006) Similarly, years of economic hardship, lack of political freedom, and perceived nepotism under Akayev led to the widespread discontent among the populace. The protests began in regional areas and quickly escalated, culminating in the seizure of government buildings in the capital, Bishkek. Akayev's government was unable to quell the unrest, and he eventually fled the country.

Despite the initial euphoria, the Tulip Revolution did not fully achieve its goals of establishing a stable and democratic system in Kyrgyzstan. The country continued to face challenges related to corruption, political instability, and the influence of various interest groups. The Tulip Revolution is often viewed as one of the 'color revolutions' in the post-Soviet space, following similar events in Georgia and Ukraine. However, the specific context of Kyrgyzstan, with its strong clan-based political system and localism, shaped the revolution's trajectory and outcomes. Kyrgyzstan's presidential election and constitutional referendum on 10 January 2021 mark the end of violent episodes since October 2020. The victory of populist Sadyr Japarov prepares for a dismantling of democratic principles and rule of law, resembling Central Asian neighbours.

Orange Revolution (Ukraine, 2004–2005)

The Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004–2005) was a period of political upheaval, primarily in response to the disputed results of the 2004 presidential election run-off. The widespread allegations of fraud and voter intimidation in the runoff election between pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko and Russian-backed candidate Viktor Yanukovich resulted in hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, clad in Yushchenko's campaign color, orange, taking to the streets of Kyiv, specifically Maidan Square, to demand a fair election.

In the end, the Supreme Court of Ukraine annulled the fraudulent runoff results and ordered a revote. Yushchenko won this revote and was inaugurated in January 2005, marking the end of the Orange Revolution.(US Department of State, 2004)

The Orange Revolution demonstrated Ukrainian citizens' strong desire for democracy and self-determination, and it also highlighted deep-seated regional and political divisions within the country. These divisions, particularly between Western-leaning regions and Russian-aligned areas, would play a significant role in future political events in Ukraine. While the Orange Revolution brought about a change in leadership and a push towards democratic reforms, it did not entirely resolve the country's political challenges. Yanukovich later returned to the presidency in 2010, and subsequent events, such as the Euromaidan protests in 2014 and the ongoing Russian invasion, have continued to illustrate the complexities of Ukraine's political landscape. (USDS Human Rights Report,2004)

Gandhian Non-violent Civil Disobedience as a Method and a Strategy

Civil disobedience is a form of opposition based on majority rule, similar to legitimate public demonstrations, purposeful law corruption, and military resistance. It is a form of democratic opposition, based on the social model of the open society. Henry David Thoreau in his essay, originally titled 'Resistance to Civil Government' and often referred to simply as "Civil Disobedience", is a foundational text in the philosophy of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. Thoreau's essay argues that individuals should prioritize their conscience above blind obedience to government laws, especially when those laws are unjust. Gandhi was deeply impacted by Thoreau's ideas, adopting his principles of nonviolent resistance in the struggle for Indian independence

Gandhian Nonviolent Communication Strategy promotes empathetic, and open communication for peaceful conflict resolution where understanding, acceptance, compassion, self-discipline and self-restraint are accentuated in the communication endeavors. These Non-violent Communication strategies can be visible in the contemporary peace movements including the 'Color Revolutions' in the form of 'Civil Disobedience'. Mahatma Gandhi used Satyagraha, a non-violent civil disobedience strategy, in India's independence movement against British rule, notably in the 1930 Salt March, which sparked widespread resistance.

Mahatma Gandhi employed non-violent civil disobedience, known as Satyagraha, as a key strategy in India's independence movement against British rule. This approach involved deliberately breaking unjust laws in a peaceful manner, aiming to expose the injustice and inspire widespread resistance. The most famous example is the Salt March in 1930, where Gandhi led a protest against the British salt tax, sparking mass civil disobedience across India. The strategy of Satyagraha emphasizes truth and nonviolence as tools to fight injustice. It involves deliberately breaking unjust laws in a peaceful manner, aiming to awaken the

conscience of the oppressor and create social change. That is, Civil disobedience is a key component of satyagraha, involving the refusal to obey specific laws, regulations, or demands considered unjust.

The key Civil Disobedience Campaigns of M.K Gandhi against the British regime were the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 and the Quit India Movement of 1942. The Salt Satyagraha (1930) is a landmark event involved Gandhi leading a march to the sea to produce salt, directly challenging the British salt tax and monopoly. (Tylor, 2023) The march, known as the Dandi March, garnered global attention and inspired widespread participation in civil disobedience throughout India. The British government's response to the march, including arrests and violence, further fueled public anger and support for the independence movement. Whereas the Quit India Movement (1942) called for the immediate withdrawal of the British from India. It involved mass protests, strikes, and acts of civil disobedience, demonstrating the Indian people's determination to be free. The movement resulted in widespread arrests and imprisonment of Indian leaders and activists.

Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns played a crucial role in weakening British authority and galvanizing popular support for independence. The success of his nonviolent resistance inspired movements for social and political change around the world. His emphasis on truth, nonviolence, and the power of the human spirit continues to be relevant in contemporary struggles for justice and equality. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, known as Ahimsa and Satyagraha, forms the core of his approach to communication and conflict resolution. Ahimsa, or non-violence, is not merely the absence of aggression, but a positive force rooted in love and compassion. Satyagraha, meaning "truth-force", emphasizes holding firmly to truth and resisting injustice through nonviolent means. (Gandhi, 1907) The Gandhian approach has significantly impacted various movements for social justice and peace worldwide. It provides a framework for addressing conflicts and promoting positive change through peaceful and ethical means, building bridges and fostering lasting transformation.

Gandhi's philosophy emphasizes the inherent interdependence of all living beings, suggesting that our actions, including communication, impact others and the wider world. So the concept of Interconnected can be witnessed in the non-communication strategies. Gandhi extended the concept of nonviolence beyond political action to encompass all aspects of life, including communication. This means he employed Nonviolence as a way of life by practicing nonviolence in our thoughts, words, and actions. Gandhi's approach suggests that nonviolent communication can be a catalyst for social change by promoting a culture of peace, understanding, and cooperation.

Colour revolutions are non-violent peaceful protests and civil disobedience aimed at achieving political change, often in response to disputed election results or perceived authoritarianism. While some incidents of violence might occur, the core strategy of colour revolutions relies on non-violent resistance and mass mobilization. Colour revolutions, like the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, emphasize non-violent methods to challenge existing

regimes. Peaceful Protests and Civil Disobedience are one of the quintessential features of Color revolutions. These movements rely on tactics such as street protests, sit-ins, strikes, and other forms of civil disobedience to exert pressure on the government. Many color revolutions are sparked by contested election results, with protesters alleging fraud and demanding fair elections and democratic reforms; generally aim to replace authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes with more democratic governments. In this context, it is seen that the color revolutions represent the positive development in the struggle against authoritarian governments.

Analysis of the “Color Revolutions and its’ Nature of Strategies

From late 2003 through mid-2005, a series of peaceful street protests toppled corrupt and undemocratic regimes in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan and ushered in the election of new presidents in all three nations. These movements collectively known as the Color Revolutions were greeted in the West as democratic breakthroughs that might thoroughly reshape the political terrain of the former Soviet Union. But as Lincoln A. Mitchell explains in ‘The Color Revolutions’, it has since become clear that these protests were as much reflections of continuity as they were moments of radical change. Not only did these movements do little to spur democratic change in other post-Soviet states, but their impact on Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan themselves was quite different from what was initially expected. In fact, Mitchell suggests, the Color Revolutions are best understood as phases in each nation's long post-Communist transition: significant events, to be sure, but far short of true revolutions.’ The Color Revolutions’ explores the causes and consequences of all three Color Revolutions the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan identifying both common themes and national variations. Mitchell's analysis also addresses the role of American democracy promotion programs, the responses of nondemocratic regimes to the Color Revolutions, the impact of these events on U.S.-Russian relations, and the failed ‘revolutions’ in Azerbaijan and Belarus in 2005 and 2006. At a time when the Arab Spring has raised hopes for democratic development in the Middle East, Mitchell's account of the Color Revolutions serves as a valuable reminder of the dangers of confusing dramatic moments with lasting democratic breakthroughs.

The Rose Revolution in Georgia was a pivotal moment in the country's history, paving the way for significant reforms and modernization. The government aimed to attract foreign investment and strengthen ties with the West. The revolution paved the way for a more inclusive political system, improved education, health, and governance, and laid the groundwork for numerous achievements, including a competent civil service, a liberal economy, effective public services, and enhanced cooperation and integration into NATO. Public Predisposition for change is to a considerable extent a consequence of the effects of transformation. It is assumed that where transformation policies have led to unemployment, poverty and a decline in living standards, then there is a predisposition by the population for change. Of the countries under discussion, Belarus and China have had least disruption to economic life and have retained many of the economic and political structures of state socialism.

Gandhian Nonviolent Civil Disobedience Features in Color Revolutions

Color revolutions prioritize nonviolent methods like peaceful protests including demonstrations, rallies, sit-ins, and other forms of peaceful assembly to express dissent and exert pressure on authorities. These movements often utilize symbolic colors and other visual cues to unify participants and create a sense of collective identity which helped the mass mobilization easier. So its symbolic actions created mobilizations in a passive way. Similarly, Like Gandhian Satyagraha, they employed Nonviolent civil disobedience as a core strategy, involving actions like boycotts, strikes, and public acts of defiance to disrupt the status quo and challenge the legitimacy of the existing regime. For example in the case of Georgia's Rose Revolution (2003), Protests erupted following disputed parliamentary elections, culminating in the resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze after demonstrators, many carrying roses, stormed the parliament building. Likewise, during Ukraine's Orange Revolution (2004): Mass protests against alleged electoral fraud in the presidential election led to a rerun of the vote, which resulted in the victory of Viktor Yushchenko. In the similar case of Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution (2005), Public outrage over rigged parliamentary elections triggered widespread protests that led to the ouster of President Askar Akayev. Further, the rise of international norms emphasizing democratic governance, coupled with advancements in mass media, have facilitated the spread of information about election irregularities and human rights abuses, contributing to the success of nonviolent resistance.

Conclusion

Colour revolutions are peaceful protests and civil disobedience aimed at political change, often in response to disputed election results or perceived authoritarianism. They emphasize non-violent resistance and mass mobilization; similar to the Gandhian non-violence strategy like using tactics like street protests, sit-ins, and strikes. It is visible that most colour revolutions are sparked by contested election results, demanding fair elections and democratic reforms, aiming to replace authoritarian regimes with more democratic ones. On the geo-political front, it's movement significantly impacted the U.S.-Russian relations, with Russia viewing them as Western-backed attempts to undermine Russia's influence. Moscow saw these developments as U.S. intervention in the region, particularly in Georgia.

Bibliography

1. Areshidze, I. (2007). "Democracy and autocracy in Eurasia: Georgia in transition" East Lansing, MSU Press
BBC News. "How the Rose revolution happened" BBC News 10 May 2005
2. Charles H, Fairbanks Jr (2004) "Georgia's Rose Revolution", Journal of Democracy , 15:2
3. David Lane (2009) 'Coloured Revolution' as a Political Phenomenon, Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, 25:2-3, 113-135
4. Gandhi, M. K. "Duty of Disobeying Laws", Indian Opinion, 7 September and 14 September 1907
5. Gandhi, M. K. "For Passive Resisters", Indian Opinion, 26 October 1907.
6. Lincoln A. Mitchell (2022). "The Color Revolutions. Successes and Limitations of Non-violent Protest," Societies and Political Orders in Transition, in: Jack A. Goldstone & Leonid Grinin & Andrey Korotayev (ed.), Handbook of Revolutions in the 21st Century, pages 435-445, Springer.
7. Marat, Erica (2006), "The Tulip Revolution: Kyrgyzstan one year after", The Jamestown Foundation
Mydans, Seth. "President of Georgia Pleads For Calm as Protests Grow" New York Times 15 November 2003

Prime-News Agency. "Opposition party leader calls mass protest rallies for 8 November" 6 November 2003

Paton Walsh, Nick. "Georgia leader quits in velvet coup: Shevardnadze forced out in tense standoff" Guardian (London) 24 November 2003
----. "Poll crisis takes Georgia to the brink: Thousands of protesters risk violent clampdown after Shevardnadzes talks with opposition leaders fail" Guardian (London) 10 November 2003
8. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2012-12-27/color-revolutions>
9. Ukraine's Orange Revolution, by Karatnycky Adrian, published in Foreign Affairs; Mar/Apr2005, Vol, 84 Issue 2, pg. 35-52
10. "US Campaign behind the Turmoil in Kiev", by Ian Traynor, The Guardian, Friday November 26 2004, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/nov/26/ukraine.usa/>
11. Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia, by Henry E.Hale, published in World Politics 58 (October 2005), pg. 133-65
12. Conflict, cleavage and change in Central Asia and the Caucasus, edited by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, published by Cambridge University Press, 1997
13. Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions, by Mark R.Bessinger, published in Perspectives on Politics, June 2007

14. Preempting Democracy: The Case of Belarus, by Vitali Silitski, published in the Journal of Democracy, Volume 18, and Number 4 October 2005, pg. 83-96
15. The Tulip Revolution, Kyrgyzstan One Year After, by Erica Marat, published by The Jamestown Foundation 2006
16. Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Post-Communist Colored Revolutions, by Joshua A. Tucker, published in the Perspectives on Politics, September 2007, Vol. 5 and No. 3, pg 535-551
17. Huntington, Samuel. 1991. The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century. Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press
18. Kyrgyzstan: the fate of political liberalization, by Eugene Huskey, Conflict, cleavage and change in Central Asia and the Caucasus, edited by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, published by Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.265
19. Perspectives on postcommunist democratization, by Bruce Parrott, Conflict, cleavage, and change in Central Asia and the Caucasus, edited by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, published by Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.15
20. Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia, by Henry E.Hale, published in World Politics 58 (October 2005), 133-65
21. Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia, by Henry E.Hale, published in World Politics 58 (October 2005), pg. 133-65
22. Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia, by Henry E.Hale, published in World Politics 58 (October 2005), pg. 133-65
23. Kyrgyzstan: the fate of political liberalization, from Conflict, cleavage and change in Central Asia and the Caucasus, edited by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, published by Cambridge University Press, 1997
24. "US Campaign Behind the Turmoil in Kiev", by Ian Traynor, The Guardian, Friday November 26 2004, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/nov/26/ukraine.usa/>
25. US Department of State (2004), "Human Rights Reports: Ukraine" , Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, USDS
26. Thoreau, Esq., H.D. (1849). "Resistance to Civil Government". Aesthetic Papers; Edited by Elizabeth P.Peabody. Boston and New York: The Editor and G.P. Putnam. pp. 189–211.
27. Tylor, Miles (2023), "The ungrudging Indian: The political economy of Salt in India, c 1978-1947", South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies
28. Wettersten, John (2006), "Towards a New Theory of the Closed Society" in "Karl Popper: A Centenary Assessment", Routledge

<https://archive.org/details/aestheticpapers00peabrich>

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/06012024-color-revolutions-the-most-sophisticated-means-of-warfare-analysis/>