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# Color Revolutions, Old and New

By Stephen Lendman

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In his new book, "Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order," F. William Engdahl explained a new form of US covert warfare - first played out in Belgrade, Serbia in 2000. What appeared to be "a spontaneous and genuine political 'movement,' (in fact) was the product of techniques" developed in America over decades.

In the 1990s, RAND Corporation strategists developed the concept of "swarming" to explain "communication patterns and movement of" bees and other insects which they applied to military conflict by other means. More on this below.

In Belgrade, key organizations were involved, including the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and National Democratic Institute. Posing as independent NGOs, they're, in fact, US-funded organizations charged with disruptively subverting democracy and instigating regime changes through non-violent strikes, mass street protests, major media agitprop, and whatever else it takes short of military conflict.

Engdahl cited Washington Post writer Michael Dobbs' first-hand account of how the Clinton administration engineered Slobodan Milosevic's removal after he survived the 1990s Balkan wars, 78 days of NATO bombing in 1999, and major street uprisings against him. A \$41 million campaign was run out of American ambassador Richard Miles' office. It involved "US-funded consultants" handling everything, including popularity polls, "training thousands of opposition activists and helping to organize a vitally important parallel vote count."

Thousands of spray paint cans were used "by student activists to scrawl anti-Milosevic graffiti on walls across Serbia," and throughout the country around 2.5 million stickers featured the slogan "Gotov Je," meaning "He's Finished."

Preparations included opposition leader training in nonviolent resistance techniques at a Budapest, Hungary seminar - on matters like "organiz(ing) strike(s), communicat(ing) with symbols....overcom(ing) fear, (and) undermin(ing) the authority of a dictatorial regime." US experts were in charge, incorporating RAND Corporation "swarming" concepts.

GPS satellite images were used to direct "spontaneous hit-and-run protests (able to) elude the police or military. Meanwhile, CNN (was) carefully pre-positioned to project images around the world of these youthful non-violent 'protesters.' " Especially new was the use of the Internet, including "chat rooms, instant messaging, and blog sites" as well as cell phone verbal and SMS text-messaging, technologies only available since the mid-1990s.

Milosevic was deposed by a successful high-tech coup that became "the hallmark of the US Defense policies under (Rumsfeld) at the Pentagon." It became the civilian counterpart to his "Revolution in Military Affairs" doctrine using "highly mobile, weaponized small groups directed by 'real time' intelligence and communications."

Belgrade was the prototype for Washington-instigated color revolutions to follow. Some worked. Others failed. A brief account of several follows below.

In 2003, Georgia's bloodless "Rose Revolution" replaced Edouard Shevardnadze with Mikhail Saakashvili, a US-installed stooge whom Engdahl calls a "ruthless and corrupt totalitarian who is tied (not only to) NATO (but also) the Israeli military and intelligence establishment." Shevardnadze became a liability when he began dealing with Russia on energy pipelines and privatizations. Efforts to replace him played out as follows, and note the similarities to events in Iran after claims of electoral fraud.

Georgia held parliamentary elections on November 2. Without evidence, pro-western international observers called them unfair. Saakashvili claimed he won. He and the united opposition called for protests and civil disobedience. They began in mid-November in the capital Tbilisi, then spread throughout the country. They peaked on November 22, parliament's scheduled opening day. While it met, Saakashvili-led supporters placed "roses" in the barrels of soldiers' rifles, seized the parliament building, interrupted Shevardnadze's speech, and forced him to flee for his safety.

Saakashvili declared a state of emergency, mobilized troops and police, met with Sherardnadze and Zurab Zhvania (the former parliament speaker and choice for new prime minister), and apparently convinced the Georgian president to resign. Celebrations erupted. A temporary president was installed. Georgia's Supreme Court annulled the elections, and on January 4, 2004, Saakashvili was elected and inaugurated president on January 25.

New parliamentary elections were held on March 28. Saakashvili's supporters used heavy-handed tactics to gain full control with strong US backing in plotting and executing his rise to power. US-funded NGOs were also involved, including George Soros' Open Society Georgia Foundation, Freedom House, NED, others tied to the Washington establishment, and Richard Miles after leaving his Belgrade post to serve first as ambassador to Bulgaria from 1999 - 2002, then Georgia from 2002 - 2005 to perform the same service there as against Milosevic.

Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" followed a similar pattern to Georgia and now Iran. After Viktor Yanukovych won the November 21, 2004 run-off election against Viktor Yushchenko, it erupted following unsubstantiated claims of fraud. Yanukovych favored openness to the West but represented a pro-Russian constituency and was cool towards joining NATO.

Washington backed Yushchenko, a former governor of Ukraine's Central Bank whose wife was a US citizen and former official in the Reagan and GHW Bush administrations. He favored NATO and EU membership and waged a campaign with the color orange prominently featured.

The media picked up on it and touted his "Orange Revolution" against the country's Moscow-backed old guard. Mass street protests were organized as well as civil disobedience, sit-ins and general strikes. They succeeded when Ukraine's Supreme Court annulled the run-off result and ordered a new election for December 26, 2004. Yushchenko won and was inaugurated on January 23, 2005.

In his book, "Full Spectrum Dominance," Engdahl explained how the process played out. Under the slogan "Pora (It's Time)," people who helped organize Georgia's "Rose Revolution" were brought in to consult "on techniques of non-violent struggle." The Washington-based Rock Creek Creative PR firm was instrumental in branding the "Orange Revolution" around a pro-Yushchenko web site featuring that color theme. The US State Department spent around \$20 million dollars to turn Yanukovych's victory into one for Yushchenko with help from the same NGOs behind Georgia's "Rose Revolution" and others.

Myanmar's August - September 2007 "Saffron Revolution" used similar tactics as in Georgia and Ukraine but failed. They began with protests led by students and opposition political activists followed by Engdahl's description of "swarming mobs of monks in saffron, Internet blogs, mobile SMS links between protest groups, (and) well-organized (hit-and-run) protest cells which disperse(d) and re-form(ed)."

NED and George Soros' Open Society Institute led a campaign for regime change in league with the State Department by its own admission. Engdahl explained that the "State Department....recruited and trained key opposition leaders from numerous anti-government organizations in Myanmar" and ran its "Saffron Revolution" out of the Chaing Mai, Thailand US Consulate.

Street protesters were "recruited and trained, in some cases directly in the US, before being sent back to organize inside Myanmar." NED admitted funding opposition media, including the Democratic Voice of Burma radio.

Ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Washington tried to embarrass and destabilize China with a "Crimson Revolution" in Tibet - an operation dating from when George Bush met the Dalai Lama publicly in Washington for the first time, awarded him the Congressional Gold Medal, and backed Tibetan independence.

On March 10, Engdahl reported that Tibetan monks staged "violent protests and documented attacks (against) Han Chinese residents....when several hundred monks marched on Lhasa (Tibet's capital) to demand release of other monks allegedly detained for celebrating the award of the US Congress' Gold Medal" the previous October. Other monks joined in "on the 49th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule."

The same instigators were involved as earlier - NED, Freedom House, and others specific to Tibet, including the International Committee for Tibet and the Trace Foundation - all with ties to the State Department and/or CIA.

The above examples have a common thread - achieving what the Pentagon calls "full spectrum dominance" that depends largely on controlling Eurasia by neutralizing America's two main rivals - Russia militarily, China economically, and crucially to prevent a strong alliance between the two. Controlling Eurasia is a strategic aim in this resource-rich part of the world that includes the Middle East.

#### Iran's Made-in-the-USA "Green Revolution"

After Iran's June 12 election, days of street protests and clashes with Iranian security forces followed. Given Washington's history of stoking tensions and instability in the region, its role in more recent color revolutions, and its years of wanting regime change in Iran, analysts have strong reasons to suspect America is behind post-election turbulence and one-sided Western media reports claiming electoral fraud and calling for a new vote, much like what happened in Georgia and Ukraine.

The same elements active earlier are likely involved now with a May 22, 2007 Brian Ross and Richard Esposito ABC News report stating:

"The CIA has received secret presidential approval to mount a 'black' operation to destabilize the Iranian government, current and former officials in the intelligence community tell the Blotter on ABCNews.com. The sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity....say President Bush has signed a 'nonlethal presidential finding' that puts into motion a CIA plan that reportedly includes a coordinated campaign of propaganda, disinformation and manipulation of Iran's currency and international financial transactions."

Perhaps disruptions as well after the June 12 election to capitalize on a divided ruling elite - specifically political differences between Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader/Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on one side and Mir Hossein Mousavi, former president Hashemi Rafsanjani, and Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri on the other with Iran's Revolutionary Guard so far backing the ruling government. It's too early to know conclusively but evidence suggests US meddling, and none of it should surprise.

Kenneth Timmerman provides some. He co-founded the right wing Foundation for Democracy in Iran (FDI) and serves as its executive director. He's also a member of the hawkish Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) and has close ties to the equally hard line American Enterprise Institute, the same organization that spawned the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), renamed the Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) for much the same purpose.

On the right wing newsmax.com web site, Timmerman wrote that the NED "spent millions of dollars during the past decade promoting color revolutions in places such as Ukraine and Serbia, training political workers in modern communications and organizational techniques." He explained that money also appears to have gone to pro-Mousavi groups, "who have ties to non-governmental organizations outside Iran that (NED) funds."

Pre-election, he elaborated about a "green revolution in Tehran" with organized protests ready to be unleashed as soon as results were announced because tracking polls and other evidence suggested Ahmadinejad would win. Yet suspiciously, Mousavi declared victory even before the polls closed.

It gets worse. Henry Kissinger told BBC news that if Iran's color revolution fails, hard line "regime change (must be) worked for from the outside" - implying the military option if all else fails. In a June 12 Wall Street Journal editorial, John Bolton called for Israeli air strikes whatever the outcome - to "put an end to (Iran's) nuclear threat," despite no evidence one exists.

Iran's rulers know the danger and need only cite Iraq, Afghanistan, and numerous other examples of US aggression, meddling, and destabilization schemes for proof - including in 1953 and 1979 against its own governments.

On June 17, AP reported that Iran "directly accused the United States of meddling in the deepening crisis." On June 21 on Press TV, an official said "The terrorist Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) has reportedly played a major role in intensifying the recent wave of street violence in Iran. Iranian security officials reported (the previous day) that they have identified and arrested a large number of MKO members who were involved" in the nation's capital.

They admitted to having been trained in Iraq's camp Ashraf and got directions from MKO's UK command post "to create post-election mayhem in the country." On June 20 in Paris, MKO leader Maryam Rajavi addressed supporters and expressed solidarity with Iranian protesters.

In 2007, German intelligence called MKO a "repressive, sect-like and Stalinist authoritarian organization which centers around the personality cult of Maryam and Masoud Rajavi." MKO expert Anne Singleton explained that the West intends to use the organization to achieve regime change in Iran. She said its backers "put together a coalition of small irritant groups, the known minority and separatist groups, along with the MKO. (They'll) be garrisoned around the border with Iran and their task is to launch terrorist attacks into Iran over the next few years to keep the fire hot." They're perhaps also enlisted to stoke violence and conduct targeted killings on Iranian streets post-election as a way to blame them on the government.

On June 23, Tehran accused western media and the UK government of "fomenting (internal) unrest." In expelling BBC correspondent Jon Leyne, it accused him and the broadcaster of "supporting the rioters and, along with CNN," of setting up a "situation room and a psychological war room." Both organizations are pro-business, pro-government imperial tools, CNN as a private company, BBC as a state-funded broadcaster.

On its June 17 web site, BBC was caught publishing deceptive agitprop and had to retract it. It prominently featured a Los Angeles Times photo of a huge pro-Ahmadinejad rally (without showing him waving to the crowd) that it claimed was an anti-government protest for Mousavi.

Throughout its history since 1922, BBC compiled a notorious record of this sort of thing because the government appoints its senior managers and won't tolerate them stepping out of line. Early on, its founder, John Reith, wrote the UK establishment: "They know they can trust us not to be impartial," a promise faithfully kept for nearly 87 years and prominently on Iran.

With good reason on June 22, Iranian MPs urged that ties with Britain be reassessed while, according to the Fars news agency, members of four student unions planned protests at the UK embassy and warned of a repeat of the 1979 US embassy siege.

They said they'd target the "perverted government of Britain for its intervention in Iran's internal affairs, its role in the unrest in Tehran and its support of the riots." Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hassan Ghashghavi, wouldn't confirm if London's ambassador would be expelled. On June 23, however, AP reported that two UK diplomats were sent home on charges of "meddling and spying."

State TV also said hard-line students protested outside the UK embassy,

burned US, British and Israeli flags, hurled tomatoes at the building and chanted: "Down with Britain!" and "Down with USA!" Around 100 people took part.

Britain retaliated by expelling two Iranian diplomats. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon demanded an immediate end to "arrests, threats and use of force." Iran's official news agency, IRNA, reported that the Iranian Foreign Ministry rejected Ban's remarks and accused him of meddling. On June 23, Obama said the world was "appalled and outraged" by Iran's violent attempt to crush dissent and claimed America "is not at all interfering in Iran's affairs."

Yet on June 26, USA Today reported that:

"The Obama administration is moving forward with plans to fund groups that support Iranian dissidents, records and interviews show, continuing a program that became controversial" under George Bush. For the past year, USAID has solicited funds to "promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Iran," according to its web site.

On July 11, 2008, Jason Leopold headlined his Countercurrents.org article, "State Department's Iran Democracy Fund Shrouded in Secrecy" and stated:

"Since 2006, Congress has poured tens of millions of dollars into a (secret) State Department (Democracy Fund) program aimed at promoting regime change in Iran." Yet Shirin Abadi, Iran's 2003 Nobel Peace prize laureate, said "no truly nationalist and democratic group will accept" US funding for this purpose. In a May 30, 2007 International Herald Tribune column, she wrote: "Iranian reformers believe that democracy can't be imported. It must be indigenous. They believe that the best Washington can do for democracy in Iran is to leave them alone."

On June 24, Brent Scowcroft, former National Security Advisor to Gerald Ford and GHW Bush, told Al Jazeera television that "of course" Washington "has agents working inside Iran" even though America hasn't had formal relations with the Islamic Republic for 30 years.

Another prominent incident is being used against Iran, much like a similar one on October 10, 1990. In the run-up to Operation Desert Storm, the Hill & Knowlton PR firm established the Citizens for a Free Kuwait (CFK) front group to sell war to a reluctant US public. Its most effective stunt involved a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl known only as Nayirah to keep her identity secret.

Tearful before a congressional committee, she described her eye-witness account of Iraqi soldiers "tak(ing) babies out of incubators and leav(ing) them on the cold floor to die." The dominant media featured her account prominently enough to get one observer to conclude that nothing had greater impact on swaying US public opinion for war, still ongoing after over 18 years.

Later it was learned that Nayirah was the daughter of Saud Nasir al-Sabah, a member of Kuwait's royal family and ambassador to the US. Her story was a PR fabrication, but it worked.

Neda (meaning "voice" in Farsi) Agha Soltani is today's Nayirah - young, beautiful, slain on a Tehran street by an unknown assassin, she's now the martyred face of opposition protesters and called "The Angel of Iran" by a supportive Facebook group. Close-up video captured her lying on the street in her father's arms. The incident and her image captured world attention. It was transmitted online and repeated round-the-clock by the Western media to blame the government and enlist support to bring it down. In life, Nayirah was instrumental in Iraq's destruction and occupation. Will Neda's death be as effective against Iran and give America another Middle East conquest?

### Issues in Iran's Election

Despite being militant and anti-Western as Iran's former Prime Minister, Mousavi is portrayed as a reformer. Yet his support comes from Iranian elitist elements, the urban middle class, and students and youths favoring better relations with America. Ahmadinejad, in contrast, is called hardline. Yet he has popular support among the nation's urban and rural poor for providing vitally needed social services even though doing it is harder given the global economic crisis and lower oil prices.

Is it surprising then that he won? A Mousavi victory was clearly unexpected, especially as an independent candidate who became politically active again after a 20 year hiatus and campaigned only in Iran's major cities. Ahmadinejad made a concerted effort with over 60 nationwide trips in less than three months.

Then, there's the economy under Article 44 of Iran's constitution that says it must consist of three sectors - state-owned, cooperative, and private with "all large-scale and mother industries" entirely state-controlled, including oil and gas that provides the main source of revenue.

In 2004, Article 44 was amended to allow more privatizations, but how much is a source of contention. During his campaign, Mousavi called for moving away from an "alms-based" economy - meaning Ahmadinejad's policy of providing social services to the poor. He also promised to speed up privatizations without elaborating on if he has oil, gas, and other "mother industries" in mind. If so, drawing support from Washington and the West is hardly surprising. On the other hand, as long as Iran's Guardian Council holds supreme power, an Ahmadinejad victory was needed as a pretext for all the events that followed. At this stage, they suspiciously appear to be US-orchestrated for regime change. Thus far, Iran's Revolutionary Guard, Basij militia, and other security forces have prevailed on the streets to prevent it, but it's way too early to declare

victory.

George Friedman runs the private intelligence agency called Stratfor. On June 23 he wrote:

"While street protests in Iran appear to be diminishing, the electoral crisis continues to unfold, with reports of a planned nationwide strike and efforts by the regime's second most powerful cleric (Rafsanjani) to mobilize opposition against (Ahmadinejad) from within the system. In so doing he could stifle (his) ability to effect significant policy changes (in his second term), which would play into the hands of the United States."

Ahmadinejad will be sworn in on July 26 to be followed by his cabinet by August 19, but according to Stratfor it doesn't mean the crisis is fading. It sees a Rafsanjani-led "rift within the ruling establishment (that) will continue to haunt the Islamic Republic for the foreseeable future."

"What this means is that....Ahmadinejad's second term will see even greater infighting among the rival conservative factions that constitute the political establishment....Iran will find it harder to achieve the internal unity necessary to complicate US policy," and the Obama administration will try to capitalize on it to its advantage. Its efforts to make Iran into another US puppet state are very much ongoing, and for sure, Tehran's ruling government knows it. How it will continue to react remains to be seen.

"Swarming" to Produce Regime Change

In his book, "Full Spectrum Dominance," Engdahl explained the RAND Corporation's groundbreaking research on military conflict by other means. He cited researchers John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt's 1997 "Swarming & The Future of Conflict" document "on exploiting the information revolution for the US military. By taking advantage of network-based organizations linked via email and mobile phones to enhance the potential of swarming, IT techniques could be transformed into key methods of warfare."

In 1993, Arquilla and Ronfeldt prepared an earlier document titled "Cyberwar Is Coming!" It suggested that "warfare is no longer primarily a function of who puts the most capital, labor and technology on the battlefield, but of who has the best information about the battlefield" and uses it effectively.

They cited an information revolution using advanced "computerized information and communications technologies and related innovations in organization and management theory." They foresaw "the rise of multi-organizational networks" using information technologies "to communicate, consult, coordinate, and operate together across greater distances" and said this ability will affect future conflicts and warfare. They explained that "cyberwar may be to the 21st century what blitzkrieg was to the 20th century" but admitted back then that the concept was too speculative for

precise definition.

The 1993 document focused on military warfare. In 1996, Arquilla and Ronfeldt studied netwar and cyberwar by examining "irregular modes of conflict, including terror, crime, and militant social activism." Then in 1997, they presented the concept of "swarming" and suggested it might "emerge as a definitive doctrine that will encompass and enliven both cyberwar and netwar" through their vision of "how to prepare for information-age conflict."

They called "swarming" a way to strike from all directions, both "close-in as well as from stand-off positions." Effectiveness depends on deploying small units able to interconnect using revolutionary communication technology.

As explained above, what works on battlefields has proved successful in achieving non-violent color revolution regime changes, or coup d'etats by other means. The same strategy appears in play in Iran, but it's too early to tell if it will work as so far the government has prevailed. However, for the past 30 years, America has targeted the Islamic Republic for regime change to control the last major country in a part of the world over which it seeks unchallenged dominance.

If the current confrontation fails, expect future ones ahead as imperial America never quits. Yet in the end, new political forces within Iran may end up changing the country more than America can achieve from the outside - short of conquest and occupation, that is.

A final point. The core issue isn't whether Iran's government is benign or repressive or if its June 12 election was fair or fraudulent. It's that (justifiable criticism aside) no country has a right to meddle in the internal affairs of another unless it commits aggression in violation of international law and the UN Security Council authorizes a response. Washington would never tolerate outside interference nor should it and neither should Iran.

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