

## **4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare, color revolutions and the neurobiological preconditions for democratic praxis.**

Introduction.....	2
The neurobiological and social psychological base of political behavior .....	2
The social brain.....	2
Brain Plasticity as the base principle .....	3
Group behavior, social and antisocial behavior .....	4
Emotional and Reward systems .....	5
Persuasion .....	6
Neurobiological base of political orientation? .....	8
Changes in modern society - Overstimulation of the brain .....	8
Introducing „color revolutions“ .....	9
The colored revolution in Serbia and Otpors role.....	10
Techniques of color revolutions .....	14
Media .....	14
Commitment.....	15
Ethical problems with counter techniques .....	16
Countertechniques used in Serbia .....	17
Later developed counter techniques.....	18
Repression.....	19
Elections.....	19
Does changing social behavior block color revolutions in future? .....	20

## ***Introduction***

Social psychology has been defined as “an attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others”<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, social neuroscience has been defined as “an attempt to understand and explain, using the methods and theories of neuroscience, how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others”<sup>2</sup>. Both disciplines are incredibly valuable in political theory and as we want to show, also in political practice. We have much more clear evidence than most people believe and this evidence has both theoretical and practical consequences for politics as one of us has outlined several times<sup>3</sup>. We try to apply some of identified neurobiological and psychological mechanisms in this case study where we intend to explain some phenomena associated with so-called “color revolutions”.

This paper is structured as follows: We will first give a short introduction to (political) social psychology and social neuroscience. We will then discuss the phenomenon of “color revolutions” and give some ideas of the rather complicated picture on different levels, not least because we need a closer look to understand the following case study. We will then outline some particular patterns of color revolutions with help the specific example of “Otpor” in Serbia 1999-2002. We will then discuss the effect of counter-measures used by governments and we will discuss them in a dialectical context regarding progressive and reactionary properties of these movements.

Any paper discussing political aspects needs a clarification about the context of authors and the intention of the paper. Our work is influenced by modern political approaches represented by Heinz Dieterich, beyond others. In addition we are influenced by ideas of the Frankfurt school and modern feminist theories. Our approach is strictly scientific, based on experimental and field studies and the careful interpretation of it's results.

## ***The neurobiological and social psychological base of political behavior***

### **The social brain**

There exists still controversy about the notion of the “social brain”. Needless to say that brain regions are involved in social interaction. The discussion is rather about whether there exist particular brain sites dedicated to social interactions (modularity and domain specificity) or not. A potential candidate for a brain region dedicated to social interaction is a part of the brain processing only on the sight of faces, but not other parts of bodies observed or any other non-face stimuli<sup>4</sup> or a specific module for reasoning about mental states of others (eg. people's desire or intentions) not involved in other kinds of reasoning<sup>5</sup>. The opposite side argues for that there exist no social brain,

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<sup>1</sup> Allport 1968

<sup>2</sup> Ward 2012

<sup>3</sup> Ernst 2009, Ernst 2014

<sup>4</sup> Kanwisher 2000

<sup>5</sup> Saxe 2006

but any brain region involved in social behavior is also involved in non-social aspects of cognition. As often in science, the truth lies probably between these two notions<sup>6</sup>.

According to Stanley<sup>7</sup> at least four networks have been identified that have functional properties related to social processing:

- «Social perception network» is centered on the amygdala and is involved in human behavior<sup>8</sup> like the influence of emotion on decision making, responses to socially threatening stimuli, social affiliated behaviors and social pain
- The «mentalizing network» is engaged while thinking about others and reflecting on oneself<sup>9</sup> and involves beyond others the medial prefrontal cortex.
- The «empathic network» is involved when individuals experience vicarious emotions by observing others.
- The «mirror network» is partially involved in the empathic network, but has an own role in observing actions of others and learning by observation<sup>10</sup>.

## **Brain Plasticity as the base principle**

In 2010, Eleanor Maguire received the Ig Nobel Prize (an award unusual or trivial achievements in scientific research for which usually signifies veiled criticism or gentle satire) “for presenting evidence that the brains of London taxi drivers are more highly developed than those of their fellow citizens.”<sup>11</sup> She had enough humor to accept the honor, but the award committee has probably not understood the significance of her work. In fact she published an elegant landmark study which highlights the plasticity of the (human) brain. How?

Maguire and colleagues identified a group of humans undergoing rigid training of a very special part of the brain, the hippocampus. This tiny structure is involved in the development of spatial memory. Taxi drivers in London are not allowed to be based on GPS, but have to cram the streets of London, which normally takes two years and is tested by the police with demanding exams. Once driving they sustain their orientation ability. Maguire used structural MRI and measured different portions of the hippocampus in right handed taxi drivers and controls. She was able to show to things: The part of the hippocampus which is thought to be involved in spatial learning (the

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<sup>6</sup> Mitchell 2009

<sup>7</sup> Stanley 2013

<sup>8</sup> Bickart 2012

<sup>9</sup> Mitchell 2005, Spunt 2012, Van Overwalle 2009, Frith 2006

<sup>10</sup> Spunt 2012

<sup>11</sup> Maguire 2000; see: <http://www.improb.com/ig/ig-pastwinners.html>, checked 20.4.2014

posterior hippocampus) is significantly bigger in tax drivers than in the controls; and the size of hippocampus increases with driving experience<sup>12</sup>. Similar studies have been published earlier investigating the auditory perception abilities of trained musicians<sup>13</sup> or even changes in cortical motor areas after learning a one-handed, five-finger exercise on the piano<sup>14</sup>.

Today most neuroscientists agree to the idea of “use it or lose it”, meaning that training of skills increases cortical areas and both strengthens existing connections and provokes new synapses. This had been shown in numerous studies. There is still discussion about issues. We know that after brain damage, adjacent undamaged parts of the brain can (partially) overtake the functions. A “therapeutic window” is discussed, the idea that if neurorehabilitation is not started early enough, neuroplasticity decreases. It is also established, that when some brain areas lose sensory input, e.g. because the amputation of a limb, this now “not used” parts of the brain overtake other functions.

More controversial is the question of adolescent neuroplasticity and age-dependent decrease of it. We will later see that these aspects are crucial in the debate about digital media; they play also a role in the discussion of drug effects on juvenile brains which we will not take up in this work.

## **Group behavior, social and antisocial behavior**

If you face individuals with a problem, or you face a group with a problem, eventually they will come to an approach to solve it. If you construct problems which can be solved with different radicalism and if you, hypothetically, would first test individuals' radicalism in problem solving and then put individuals of the same radicalism together in a group to solve a similar problem: what happens. This is the issue of group polarization and the case of the «risky shift», investigated already many decades ago. The phenomenon has been called more generally group polarization, described as *discussion typically strengthens the average inclination of group members*<sup>15</sup>.

In general we have a lot of evidence related to group behavior based on several different research approaches, including mathematical models, laboratory experiments, field experiments and field observations. In general terms, group decision processes tend to be flawed because internal dynamics make rational judgment more difficult. A classical social psychological study has been conducted around the failed bays of pigs-invasion in Cuba 1961<sup>16</sup>, where the author coined the expression “groupthink”. Groupthink is according to him a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people, in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcome. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints, by actively suppressing dissenting viewpoints, and by isolating themselves from outside influences. The notion

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<sup>12</sup> Maguire 2000

<sup>13</sup> Pantev 1998

<sup>14</sup> Pascual-Leone 1995

<sup>15</sup> Moscovici 1969

<sup>16</sup> Janis 1972

of groupthink has since that been extended and modified. Whyte for instance suggests that collective efficacy plays a large role in groupthink because it causes groups to become less vigilant and to favor risks, two particular factors that characterize groups affected by groupthink<sup>17</sup>. Of particular importance is McCauleys discussion of groupthink's preconditions when he argues that the level of attractiveness of group members is the most prominent factor in causing poor decision-making<sup>18</sup>.

## Emotional and Reward systems

What makes us tick? What makes us get out of bed every morning and go to work, to school, or do whatever else is planned for the day? The approach of potential rewards and the avoidance of potential punishments are fundamental to all goal directed behavior<sup>19</sup>. There are at least three psychological components of reward. First, the consumption of rewards involves feelings of pleasure ('liking'). Second, these pleasurable feelings are highly motivating to obtain this reward more often ('wanting'). Third, in order to do so, one has to learn about the relationships among stimuli and the consequences of actions that led to the procurement of the reward ('learning')<sup>20</sup>.

The brain has a complex system involved in evaluating rewarding values of events and actions, involving several structures and neurotransmitter systems. The classical system consists of midbrain dopaminergic neurons. It has been argued that they are involved in any reward related behavior, but in the last decade evidence has been presented that it is mostly involved in estimating the predictability of a certain reward, being activated when the reward value is higher than expected and depressed when it is lower<sup>21</sup>. This resulted in investigations looking on other parts of the brain which might be involved. Our picture today includes structures of the prefrontal cortex (the orbitofrontal cortex) which might provide a kind of running commentary on the value of the present state and courses of action, compared to the value of subsequent predicted states<sup>22</sup>. A part of the amygdala, the basolateral amygdala is mostly involved in negative enforcement, punishment, fear and anxiety<sup>23</sup>, but in some kind also in positive reward evaluation<sup>24</sup>. The insula is involved in the emotional anticipation of suffering if a reward signal is not followed by an action<sup>25</sup>. The ACC has been proposed to be required for constructing and/or retrieving a choice–outcome history of both

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<sup>17</sup> Whyte 1998

<sup>18</sup> McCauleys 1998

<sup>19</sup> Miller 2000

<sup>20</sup> Boksem 2008

<sup>21</sup> Schultz 2002

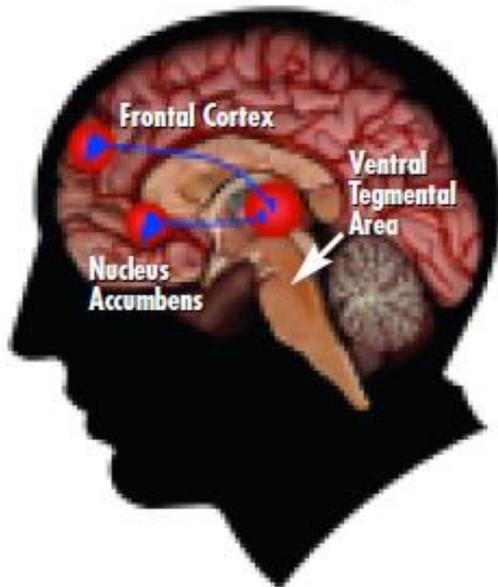
<sup>22</sup> Schoenbaum 2006, Boksem 2008

<sup>23</sup> Seymour 2007

<sup>24</sup> Cardinal 2002

<sup>25</sup> Boksem 2008

rewards and punishments, to guide behavior, so involved in deciding what to do and assessing the consequences of current actions<sup>26</sup>. The Nucleus accumbens influences response selection and can maintain or increase motivational response effects<sup>27</sup>. It integrates several other mentioned structures and has again projections to the PFC.



*Figure 1: Reward system in the brain (simple version)*

Summarized, the environment provides multiple response options associated with differential magnitudes of reward. The OFC, BLA and insula are primarily involved in coding the expected appetitive and aversive value that each option may provide. This reward-related information is relayed to the ACC, where these sources of reward information may be integrated to bias behaviour in a particular direction that is predicted to result in the largest reward and the least aversive consequences<sup>28</sup>.

## **Persuasion**

Persuasion and changing of attitudes and behavior is a complex issue. In principle, persuasion can be seen as the opposite of coercion. Coercion takes the form of guns or economic sanctions, while persuasion relies on the power of verbal and nonverbal symbols, but it would be a mistake to underestimate the coercive potential of social approval and disapproval. In most instances, language is an integral aspect of the persuasive transaction, with nonverbal behavior coming into play as an instrument for reinforcing the meaning and/or credibility of verbal messages. Thus, the phrase 'being persuaded' applies to situations, where behavior has been modified by symbolic transactions (messages) that are sometimes, but not always, linked with coercive force (indirectly coercive) and that appeal to the reason and emotions of the person(s) being persuaded. The response-reinforcing function underscores the fact that 'being persuaded' is seldom, if ever, a one-message proposition;

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<sup>26</sup> Kennerley 2006

<sup>27</sup> Boksem 2008

<sup>28</sup> Boksem 2008

instead, people are constantly *in the process* of being persuaded<sup>29</sup>. Under some circumstances, persuasion can occur rather fast, leading to a specific behavior (example: a car seller convincing a customer to buy a car, what he probably regret the next day), a normal persuasion process needs longer time. Political persuasion has been studied in a huge number of studies. A group of the most interesting studies has been conducted in association to religious sects like the Moon sect, known as the unification church which is extreme effective in persuading people.

The first important fact is that there is no specific personality of people becoming of the Moon sect (or any other sect). Several studies revealed that literally everyone is susceptible for the persuasion strategies used to catch new members<sup>30</sup>. The techniques used are based on basic mechanisms identified by social psychologists. A potential new member is directed to a meeting of the Unification church, often without mentioning the church or anything about religions. They get rather the information about a reunion of people talking about the meaning of life or philosophy. Potential members are especially people in a difficult situation or in a complex situation which is new for them – students in a new town, immigrants, and adolescents moving from home. In these situations the human brain is confused and therefore predisposed to change attitudes and behavior. A revolutionary situation is classical in that sense. In reunions the Unification church uses several mechanisms at the same time. They identify early possible members “Sheep” and possible difficult participants “goats” and isolate them from each other. The candidates are surrounded of sect members who are as similar as possible (same age, social class, etc.), but not informing that they are already members. An important step is a technique called “love bombing” – the sect members applaud to anything what the candidate tells, are all the time reinforcing. In the following they try to manipulate the candidates to make commitments (see below) – first simple, so increasingly more profound ones. Eventually they reach a state what is called cognitive dissociation, the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values. When inconsistency (dissonance) is experienced, individuals tend to become psychologically uncomfortable and they are motivated to attempt to reduce this dissonance, as well as actively avoiding situations and information which are likely to increase it. This means in this case that the new candidates for the Moon sect begin actively to block any information which contradicts the view of the Unification church, so accepting the internal norms which initially contradicted to own values and attitudes.

Social influence is an overarching term given to describe the persuasive effects people have on each other. The three main areas of social influence include: conformity, compliance, and obedience. Most principles of influence are strongest when they take place in social groups. Conformity is defined as the tendency to act or think like other members of a group. The identity of members within a group, i.e. status, similarity, expertise, as well as cohesion, prior commitment, and accountability to the group help to determine the level of conformity of an individual. Individual variation among group members plays a key role in the dynamic of how willing people will be to conform. Compliance refers to any change in behavior that is due to a request or suggestion from another person. The Foot-in-the-door technique is a compliance method in which the persuader requests a small favor and then follows up with requesting a larger favor, e.g., asking for the time and then asking for ten dollars. The third major form of social influence is obedience; this is a change in behavior that is the result of a direct order or command from another person. Obedience is close related to authority of a person, which can be associated with coercion (like the authority of a policeman or a dictator), but mostly with positive traits where the persuading person is highly accepted (such as physicians, scientists, "populist politicians").

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<sup>29</sup> Miller, in Pfau 2002 p 5-9

<sup>30</sup> Levine 2009

## Neurobiological base of political orientation?

One line of investigation is looking on personality traits and political orientation. Central findings are that individuals on the left are more likely to show empathy and openness to new experiences, to base their moral judgment on individualizing concerns like to harm avoidance and fairness and to support ideas like stimulation and autonomy. Those on the right report more often to value conscience and politeness, to prefer purity, authority and in-group/out-group distinctions and liking security, conformity and tradition<sup>31</sup>. Several lines of evidence suggest fundamental differences between right wing and left wing people, based on these brain structure changes, like personality, behavior, emotional control and other. All these factors are of course statistically, individual accurate identification is (still) no possible at a higher precision level.

A major debate arises around the question whether these differences are “hardwired”, genetically determined and consolidated in early childhood or if (and when, how) they can change.

One of our hypothesis is that media influence and other changes in society increase the functions of fear associated structures like the amygdala and decrease functions like the anterior cingulate, such causing a shift to the right. These functions have been associated in studies with left or right political orientations<sup>32</sup>.

## Changes in modern society - Overstimulation of the brain

As we mentioned is brain plasticity a central basic principle and the reward system involved in social motivational systems shows high adaptability. This is well known in drug addicts where stimulating drugs or opioids have decreasing effect and at the same time natural stimuli lose effects, making drug addicts anhedonic. The general principle is also related also to other factors with effect on the reward systems, examples for it are palatine food – more sweet, more fat (Vitamine T in Mexico).

The palatability of a eaten substance is determined by opioid receptor-related processes in the nucleus accumbens and ventral pallidum<sup>33</sup>. The opioid processes involve mu opioid receptors and are present in the rostromedial shell part of the nucleus accumbens on its spiny neurons. This area has been called the "opioid eating site"<sup>34</sup>. Overstimulation of these circuits cause decreased satisfying effect of meals. This causes a vicious circle where fat and sweet meet loses its effect, causing craving after even more palatable food – triple cheeseburgers and increased sugar concentrations are the consequence<sup>35</sup>. Mentioning this might be surprising in a paper regarding political phenomena, but potential anhedonic emotional states due to decreasing satisfaction has probably a higher impact in political attitude and behavior as assumed before. A side effect of this has its own consequences – recent research has found evidence for decreased cognitive function in

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<sup>31</sup> Hibbing 2014

<sup>32</sup> Kanai 2011

<sup>33</sup> Wassum 2009

<sup>34</sup> Peciña 2000

<sup>35</sup> Lustig 2012

overweight individuals. Similar effects of decreasing rewards can be assumed in the areas of sexuality (effect – increased use of pornography with particularly obscene features), movies (more aggression, bloody scenes, horror), but also in politics shown in movies like the “House of cards” series.

Other changes affecting cognitive processing and social intelligence can only be described briefly. In the last two decades, the sleep average sleep duration has decreased from about 8 to 6,5 hours which has profound effects on different health parameters<sup>36</sup>. Sleep deprivation has multiple consequences for cognitive functioning, with so far unclear effects on social areas<sup>37</sup>

“Multitasking”, use of several media at the same time, changed media presentation techniques and general the increasing use of media has clear consequences, frequently negative in cognitive and social function<sup>38</sup>. Beyond this are clearly concentration problems. Facing the increasing complexity of the social and political world this might increase the risk that individuals surrender themselves to totalitarian, oversimplifying ideologies. Increasing effect of symbols and pictures whereas the written or spoken text loses influence might have major consequences in deliberative debates with effects on any social democratic forms.

### ***Introducing „color revolutions“***

Color revolutions are described as “civic and political actions aimed at achieving political change and removing unpopular presidents (...) using non-violent protest methods and a political opposition, assisted by a vibrant civil society, popular support and Western aid (...)”<sup>39</sup> Other authors include also intended regime changes in other countries like Nepal 2006 or Myanmar 2007, even the revolution in Portugal 1976. All this revolutions have patterns in common, which make them eligible as “color revolutions”, but including any changes or intended changes of authoritarian regimes in the last 40 years makes the picture rather fuzzy. Common for all “revolutions” are nonviolent actions and media strategies. Other common properties are usually either assumed (against communistic or socialistic systems) without reflecting it or neglected. Why, for instance are revolutions or political movements against east-European or Arabic governments usually included, but student revolts in Europe in the 70-ties or revolts in South America (like in Venezuela 1989) not, although they have some similarities (especially nonviolent actions)? Several authors consider color revolutions when they are based on ideas presented by Gene Sharp or in case he was involved personally. Several lines of arguments support, that the notion of color revolutions is coming from Western societies, that the presentation of them is partisan and that any other political movements are ignored when they are directed against western governments (e.g. “Occupy”, M 5 de mayo, etc.). Most discussions are focused on the phenomenon, whereas the long-time consequences are not as much in focus<sup>40</sup>.

When color revolutions are discussed in Russia or China, this represents rather a reaction to the Western discussions. The discussion of color revolutions seems in most cases not an academic

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<sup>36</sup> [http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about\\_sleep/chronic\\_disease.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/chronic_disease.htm);

<sup>37</sup> Jackson 2013

<sup>38</sup> Spitzer 2012, 2013

<sup>39</sup> Ó Beacháin 2009

<sup>40</sup> Kennedy 2012

discourse, but includes always elements of a political process. Any debate about politics is somehow also part of a bigger process, but this is certainly true for discussions around color revolutions – on a meta-level they are part of an ideological process which provides a framework for a worldwide struggle which is not included in the publications and probably not always reflected by the authors themselves.

We are not discussing all aspects of color revolutions in this paper. Our intention is to analyze color revolutions with social psychological and neurobiological insights. But we need to have a closer look on the phenomenon first, due to several reasons. Besides the problem of definition which we mentioned in the previous part, we need also a closer look on the evidence. The phenomenon of color revolutions has several layers. The bottom layer consists of the real occurrences – what happened at a certain time and a certain place. Of course, already here exist at least two different narratives, the one of the government and the one of the opposing political movement, in addition the view of the “normal population”. This distinction is trivial. But the reports in Western media are fundamentally flawed by partisanship. This partisanship again has different origins. Government near reports from Western countries will focus on the “pro-European” elements, journalists support always movements consisting of younger people of the middle class (recognizing and identifying themselves in them) and media deliver the pictures the audience is interested in: ugly and old tyrannical systems struggling against modern ideas. The latter two moments are archetypical pictures in (Western) culture, in certain aspects grounded in neurobiological and psychological human structures. They represent expectations which again “prime” the observations and interpretations (we will come back to the idea of priming later). Therefore it is important to include and discuss this layer. The next layer is based on the “big game” of geopolitics. We are not able to discuss extensively the influence of foreign powers in these revolutions, but we can’t overlook them either. To make it simple we argue that there is clear evidence that foreign country, especially right wing foundations of the US, but also EU elements had profound influence on the revolutions. We cannot discuss extensively whether these revolutions succeed due to this foreign interventions or not, but we will discuss in some extent the elements of psych-ops and how and how much foreign interventions can cause this revolutions. This is crucial for the last part of our argumentation where we investigate how to counteract these influences while preserving positive parts of these movements. This is a genuine dialectical approach which appears naturally for us: color movements have clearly also progressive elements, even when we criticize many other structures of them.

### ***The colored revolution in Serbia and Otpors role***

Milošević's overthrow was the consequence of a year-long battle involving thousands of Serbs in a strategy to strip the leader of his legitimacy, turn his security forces against him, and force him to call for elections. In 1998, a dozen students met to form Otpor! (Serbian for "resistance"). Analyzing the mistakes of 1996–97 protests, they realized they needed a more effective organization (strategy, planning, recruiting) and all else necessary for a sustained fight.

The government of Milošević was known for cracking down on opposition, non-government organizations and independent media. From 1991 onwards there were campaigns of civil resistance against his administration that were to culminate in the largely non-violent revolution of October 2000. As the end of his first term in office of the president of Yugoslavia approached on 6 July 2000, the rules of the election of the president were changed. Whilst the president of Yugoslavia had previously been chosen for one term only by the legislature, in the Yugoslav parliament, it was now to be directly elected via the two-round voting system of presidential elections with a maximum of two terms. On August 25, 2000, Ivan Stambolić, a former mentor and big political ally of Milošević, disappeared from his home and was summarily executed (his body first found 2003).

Soon after the announcement of the elections, the anti-government youth movement Otpor! led the campaign to topple the administration and introduce a transparent democracy. To unify opposition, eighteen parties in Serbia formed the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition, with Vojislav Koštunica as the candidate against Milošević. Apart from this, two major opposition parties, Serbian Radical Party and Serbian Renewal Movement also had candidates. The election campaign lasted for about two months and was extremely tense, with numerous incidents, accusations of treason, independent media shutdowns and even murders. The vote took place on 24 September 2000. The DOS coalition reported that Vojislav Koštunica won over half of the votes. The government-controlled Federal Electoral Committee claimed that no candidate won over 50% of the votes and that a second round between Koštunica and Milošević would take place. The main incidents associated with the color revolution happened between this to elections. The protests started beyond others with strikers at the Kolubara mines, which produce most of Serbia's electricity needs and reached its height on 5 October 2000. Several hundred thousand protesters from all over Serbia arrived in Belgrade to protest, chanting "He's finished! He's finished!" Unlike previous protests, there was no large scale police intervention, despite that the parliament was partially burned during the protests. The protest is frequently named the "Bulldozer Revolution" after one of the most memorable episodes from the day-long protest in which an engineering vehicle operator used its vehicle to charge the building of the state TV station which was taken over. In the time between elections and the protest, Milošević said that he would gladly resign but only when his term expired in June of the following year. Due to pressure caused by the protests, Milošević resigned on 7 October 2000.



*Figure 2: Otpor-demonstration*

“Otpor projects itself, and is also visualized, as a spontaneous and largely diffusely organized movement. This image is fundamentally incorrect. Otpor is a political organization with a rather well-developed structure, a relative secluded leadership, an invisible, but efficient hierarchy, and internal informal censorship characteristic of organizations of this kind.”<sup>41</sup> Otpor as likewise other color revolutions has been characterized as a movement for democracy, but in general “the political complexion of the ‘colored’ revolutions has been right-wing.”<sup>42</sup> and it was elite led<sup>43</sup>, supporting private property, market mechanisms and opposition to state regulation. Their idea of democratization is also questionable. Color revolutions are not known as champions of direct democracy. As in most countries, Otpor is no exception; the movements supported the conservative interpretation of democracy with the idea of democracy as a kind of marketplace where the politicians present ideas and the voters ‘buy’ the idea which gives most private advantages. As Lane writes: “By limiting the definition of ‘democracy’ to a narrowly conceived political mechanism, the

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<sup>41</sup> Ilici 2000

<sup>42</sup> Lane 2009 p 115

<sup>43</sup> Cheterian 2009 p143

concept is emptied of any policy outcomes on, and continuous deliberation of public issues”<sup>44</sup>. This notion of democracy was in accordance to earlier transitions to democratic structures in former communistic states where the initially broader concept was fast reduced to this conservative version.<sup>45</sup> Another interesting aspect is, that Otpor was based on non-violent action, but some opposition groups had arms and pro-opposition mayors from Belgrad and Cacak had armed police forces loyal to the opposition prepared to intervene in case of violent struggles<sup>46</sup>. Typical for most colored revolution was that repression organs like the police or the military ceased to support the government and remained passive, even when demonstrators started to burn down buildings.

“Both Otpor leaders and activists insist in their frequent press statements that the organization’s sole or predominant source of funds is the Serb diaspora. However, the author’s professional experience, his private conversations with some Otpor leaders, and the content of radio broadcasts such as those as Voice of America tell him that this is not so. On the other hand, the organization’s adamant denial of any Western financial assistance other than that received from the Serb diaspora tells us a lot about the ideological profile of the organization and what image its leaders believe would go down well with the domestic public.”<sup>47</sup>

This resembles the well-known structure of ‘structureless movements’ since the 60ties with informal hierarchies, where evolving or existing elites dominate, often in form of males, as criticized of Jo Freeman in her article “The Tyranny of Structurelessness”<sup>48</sup>

“Otpor was held together mainly by its determination to oust the key person in the previous regime (...) and to change a system.”<sup>49</sup> It consisted mostly of younger persons and a crucial element was that they had leisure time, which could be used for the movement, as a field study reported (“(...) as many as 65 per cent could spare over six hours a day”<sup>50</sup>

Compared to another investigation among young Serbians “(...) Otpor activists are greater champions of egalitarianism than their on average somewhat older peers four years ago.”, but they had clearly an anticommunist attitude, “largely a consequence of the fact that nearly all leftist ideas put into practice in Serbia by the neosocialists have been compromised”. “(...) the question of changing the government [was] a matter of personal survival.”

“Besides the fist, the use of black and white paint and printer’s ink is another Otpor symbol chosen, in the words of its founders, as a contrast to the perceived ‘greyness’ of the opposition and also to put across a view of the state of society.”<sup>51</sup>

“Being a practical-minded political organization, Otpor satanized its political enemy all the time

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<sup>44</sup> Lane 2009 p116

<sup>45</sup> Cheterian 2009

<sup>46</sup> Cheterian 2009 p147

<sup>47</sup> Ilic 2000

<sup>48</sup> Freemann

<sup>49</sup> Ilic 2000

<sup>50</sup> Ilici 2000

<sup>51</sup> Pavlovic 2000

while understandably refraining from criticizing the citizens it sought to win over”

As after other color revolutions, the outcomes remain unclear. Serbia's development after 2000 has been analyzed with some optimism [Kennedy 2012], but it has also been argued that “Serbia represents a compelling case study of the contested and ambiguous nature of democratization in practice. It demonstrates not only how illiberal (sic!) forces can endure within a democratic polity, but also the complex and sometimes troubled interplay that can take place between lofty international policy objectives and gritty local political realities.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Edmunds 2009

## *Techniques of color revolutions*

### **Media**

Otpor and other color revolution groups have an offensive media strategy where they try to set an agenda. With their simple symbolic language this is frequently very effective. In a political struggle it is of crucial significance who is able to set the agenda. In social psychology the basic principle is called “priming” – a profound mechanism to influence the feeling and thinking of people which usually is underestimated.

Priming is an implicit memory effect in which exposure to one stimulus influences a response to another stimulus. The priming paradigm provides excellent control over the effects of individual stimuli on cognitive processing and associated behavior. Priming can occur following perceptual, semantic, or conceptual stimulus repetition. For example, if a person reads a list of words including the word table, and is later asked to complete a word starting with tab, the probability that he or she will answer table is greater than if they are not primed. Another example is if people see an incomplete sketch they are unable to identify and they are shown more of the sketch until they recognize the picture, later they will identify the sketch at an earlier stage than was possible for them the first time. The effects of priming can be very salient and long lasting, even more so than simple recognition memory. Unconscious priming effects can affect word choice on a word-stem completion test long after the words have been consciously forgotten.

Priming is thought to play a large part in the systems of stereotyping. This is because attention to a response increases the frequency of that response, even if the attended response is undesired. The attention given to these response or behaviors primes them for later activation. Another way to explain this process is automaticity. If trait descriptions, for instance "stupid" or "friendly", have been frequently or recently used, these descriptions can be automatically used to interpret someone's behavior. An individual is unaware of this, and this may lead to behavior that may not agree with their personal beliefs. It was found that even moderate exposure triggered priming responses. Goffman<sup>53</sup> defined this as frames, as 'schemata of interpretation' that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences in everyday life. In other words, priming seems to represent a good, dependable, theoretically motivated type of media effect that can be detected in many types of political and social contexts<sup>54</sup>.

When Otpor is able to prime the population with the idea that Otpor is sympathetic and the government is corrupt, presenting this within short time repeatedly has a profound effect and the reception of any Otpor actions and government reactions. For many matters, individuals do not attempt to make the best possible decisions. Instead, especially for routine matters or relatively unimportant concerns, they employ series of mental shortcuts that are expected to yield decisions that are good enough. The shortcut here can be as simple as "Otpor is good, Milosevic is bad". When this one time is anchored in individuals, it is difficult to turn.

One identified counter strategy is knowledge which does help to resist priming, as more knowledgeable individuals are less likely to be primed. Krosnick and Brannon, in their Gulf war study, found that knowledge, exposure, and interest all had the same effect on priming; that is,

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<sup>53</sup> Goffman 1974

<sup>54</sup> Kosicki, in Pfau 2002

higher involvement was associated with reduced priming<sup>55</sup>. This strategy is dependent on early beginning, it has only reduced or no effect when the agenda is set once by color revolutions.

## **Commitment**

Once you've made a person doing a small step into a certain direction, it is later much easier to make him to continue in that direction. Also this is not conviction, but classic manipulation. People have a strong tendency to be consistent or want to be, at least in their own self-image. It has been recognized in a long time as a central part of the human personality.

Here consistency is actually a form of energy-"thinking". People constantly encounter in their everyday life new situations and patterns. If one would every time reflect on how one should respond, this would consume too much time. In some situations it would not be possible. Consistency describes in the following a tendency to hold a conclusion, even if the actual experiences are scarce and new experiences does not actually fit to the old conclusion. In addition to that it exists a mental "inertia" that causes us to prefer to take the easy way of existing patterns.

The probably best known experiment in social psychology is the Milgram-experiment. Milgram was after the Second World War interested in the authoritarian personality and intended to investigate Germans. As a pilot study he used his experimental approach in Americans. Shortly, the experiment consisted in getting people to give high electroshocks to another "participant" who fakes pain and fear. A neutral investigator does not force the participants to give the electro shock, but simply tells him the "the experiment has to be continued", resulting that the great majority "tortured" an innocent participant, even to "death". Mostly interpreted as evidence that an authoritarian context can drive anyone to cruelty, it is in fact also discussed as an example for commitment. The participants had chosen to come to experiment, signed a contract, accepted explanations, and, probably most important, started with low voltage which was eventually increased. By all these commitments it became more and more difficult for the participant to stop. Would the same authoritarian figure have used the same approach, but urged to begin with the high voltage, most probably a great majority had resisted.

Otpor was also using techniques of commitment. Sweaters and T-Shirts with the popular symbol increase the binding to the movement. Otpor-activists were asked to complete and sign a declaration. This might not be surprising at first glance, but why should a "structureless" organization without centralized member lists, distressed for the secret police ask activists to complete this (see below)

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<sup>55</sup> Krosnick and Brannon 1993



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Figure 3: Signing as a commitment strategy

The social psychological function is rather affirmation which leads to commitment. Numerous studies have shown that individuals who signed declaration feel more connected to an idea and will defend it more than individuals who did not sign. Once commitment and consistency is achieved, changes are difficult.

Cialdini came with a memorable example. He attended a launch event for Transcendental Meditation (TM) along with a friend, a professor of logic. The event was attended by many people who were hoping for a solution to their problems through TM. After the lecture, the professor took up key arguments and pointed out with clear logic contradictions, ambiguities, false conclusions and poor arguments. The representatives of the TM were confused and did not know how to answer. Nevertheless, most participants signed a course. First it is a simple expression of the consistency principle: if you bother to go to an introductory lecture, this is the first step in one direction and first done, it is only consequent to follow the track. Cialdini reports that at least some of the participants had understood the arguments against fully, but signed anyway. Participants that in spite of the perceived and as correct experienced arguments did sign up, was due to Cialdini because mental inertia that prefers simple solutions. The reasoning of the professors has triggered rather a backlash: only register quickly and thus push away any critical thoughts.

Otpor was a champion in maintaining commitment – through symbols, stepwise dedication to the movement, social structures urging activists to be together several hours a day, media presentation, sympathy what made that activist continued in the movement over several months.

### Ethical problems with counter techniques

Considering possible psychological and neurobiological approach to meet movements based on the color revolutions ideology it is important to recognize the simple dialectic fact that color revolutions include besides of their negative parts clearly also progressive elements. The difference

between simple authoritarian suppression and a progressive and reflected approach is to include and keep the progressive elements, to discard the regressive parts and to accept both progressive arguments and to include their agents into a renewed left political movement. This is not easy, but the only political enlightened way. There exist clearly other rational possibilities. Out of political psychological techniques it is easy to construct strategies which can destroy such color revolutions in any of their phases, these techniques are common place for secret services and police groups, they are potentially successful as long as there is enough loyalty in at least relevant parts of the populations including the executive itself. It is, however, an approach which can be used of any government from the far right to the far left; it has nothing in common with left ideas and principles and should therefore be avoided. An enlightened left government will always intent not to destroy, but to include this movements in their political approach, either implicit or explicit.

As Ilic has revealed with his field research, many of the participants, respectively members of Otpor are left wing or could possibly be left wing<sup>56</sup>. Counter techniques can result in damaging a possible source for new members of the political left. Color revolutions do not have an ideology on which is predicted a fundamental replacement of the political class and socio-economic system, as a maximalist definition. “They do not fall into the category of classic revolutions because they have no political theory of major social change.”<sup>57</sup>. Others argue that color revolutions in reality was “a revolution against the revolution; a revolt against the original utopian revolution of the Bolsheviks which tried to build a new society and finally failed.”<sup>58</sup> But some of their individual members might have revolutionary potential, which is implicitly misused by the color movements. The subjective experience of the participants is described by themselves in revolutionary terms, like that everything changed, the relation to other individuals changed, an air of freedom. But disillusion occurred for some participants within days, for some eventually<sup>59</sup>.

Even when scholars propose that there is no room for revolutions today<sup>60</sup>, they would probably admit that other kind of revolutionary movements can occur. A counter example to color revolutions is e.g. the grass root movement of Kurds initiated by PKK and YPJ. Former Marxist Leninist organizations they change their policy to a variant of anarchism with elements of direct democracy and feminism in the Kurdish controlled parts of Syria (Rojava). In difference to color revolutions they have a clear ideology, focus on a different power system and even economic system. They use similar mobilization techniques like the color revolutions, but with a seemingly more profound effect on society.

## **Countertechniques used in Serbia**

The Serbian government did not remain passive. They used a combination of interventions – arresting demonstrator (it is estimated that about 45% of Otpor activists were arrested at least one time, including intimidating and beating some of them up). The effect of this measure was mostly to increase solidarity and a public outcry. Otpor was able to signalize themselves as non-violence movement and the majority of the population did not support this kind of suppression.

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<sup>56</sup> Ilic 2000

<sup>57</sup> Lane 2009 p 118

<sup>58</sup> Cheterian 2009 p 143

<sup>59</sup> White 2009

<sup>60</sup> Miles 2009

The authorities tried also to denunciate the movement as externally financed and provided facts for it (which was mostly accurate). This strategy did not work, mainly because the great majority of the Otpor members never observed any foreign influence and simply mediated this as a fabricated lie. They tried also to demonize Otpor members, which neither worked out because at this time point in the dynamics most people knew at least one activist who seemed to be harmless despite of the government propaganda.

## **Later developed counter techniques**

Several countries of the former Soviet Union have developed counterstrategies, but especially Russia and China were very effective with it

- Don't allow youth organizations to develop
- Be wary of Western funded organizations
- Divide the opposition
- Ensure your own forces are united
- Ensure security forces are on side
- Do not allow large gatherings of protesters, particularly close to official buildings.<sup>61</sup>

## **Priming and Agenda setting**

One tactic being used in (beyond others) in Russia is the use of “clones”, that is organizations established by the government that mimic by appearance existing (or potential) opposition movements and are designed to confuse the public by parroting a pro government agenda<sup>62</sup>. Particularly in Russia this seems to be a very effective counter strategy. Наши (nashi) was the name of the youth organization “Youth Democratic Anti-Fascist Movement”, with the significance "Ours!" Another strategy used of Russia was very effective internationally, when the government founded the eventually popular news channel which can provide the public with alternative information, often in difference to Western media.

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<sup>61</sup> Ó Beacháin 2009

<sup>62</sup> Ó Beacháin 2009



*Figure 4: Members of the youth organisation Hauuu in Russia. On the T-shirt.: “Our (Hauuu) Viktor (Putin)”*

## **Repression**

Using repression (detentions, riot police, crack down headquarters and media supporting the color revolution) is ambivalent. In the wrong moments (like in Serbia) repression simply increases the momentum of color revolutions. The tactics of color revolutions include to expect repression and to use it to blame the government. In addition repression is used to increase international pressure. This strategy worked in Serbia, but not in Kyrgyzstan. An effective repression needs that the security forces support unequivocally the regime, are highly trained and effective. In the case of GDR the government had probably the most effective security force with highly intelligent strategies working effectively in many decades, but in the 80ies with increasing doubts and decreasing ideological base they failed in decisive moments. In the right moments however, effective repression can stop and annihilate color revolutions. In Armenia spring 2003 the government chose clearly the right moment and had effective security resources what made possible to stop the color revolution within days. In China 1989 the repression was effective, but started far too late to avoid human fallacies. It did only work because some of the security forces came from remote areas of the country, effectively not understanding the dialect of Beijing (and vice versa), so blocking any communication between citizens and security officers. Such a strategy would never succeed in the situation of GDR or other smaller countries.

Repression can include very legal and acceptable interventions according to the laws of the country or introducing laws generally accepted in many countries. This can lead to paradoxical political situations like in Ukrainia where a security law was heavily criticized by opposition (and international journalists) which simply prohibited face masks and wearing of arms during demonstrations – general accepted rules in Western Europe.

## **Elections**

Most color revolutions used elections strategically. The ruling authorities tried to keep their political

hegemony to renew their political legitimacy<sup>63</sup>. In several countries, election results were in doubt. In some cases there was evidence for falsification, in others not, in principle this does not play a special role. More important is the impression of the “revolutionary subject” that the election results cannot be true. Imagine a country with substantial population at the countryside and a minority of middle class population in the urban centers. It is easy imaginable that the middle class through an impression of an effective election campaign of the opposition simply has to win, to be frustrated when the (real) majority supports the government. Color revolutions state then that the results are based on fraud. This was a very effective technique in eg. East-Germany or Serbia, it is on the other hand easily aborted when a fair and democratic election does not produce the desirable effects (as in the case of Ukrainia where a democratic elected president was removed).

In principle, there are two approaches. The first is simply based on avoidance of elections. If the government is not really ideologically convinced of elections, but feel forced to introduce or keep a more or less democratic election system this makes the system feasible for attacks, and this even in case that the elections are conducted completely fair according to liberal standards. It is probable more convenient to avoid elections at all or to ensure that everyone understands that the elections are in any case only affirmation of the ruling party (a strategy successfully used in the People’s Republic of China up to now). The second approach uses the fundamentally different approach to adopt elections ideologically as a part of mass movement. Venezuela, but also a couple of other Latin-American countries are most known for this. They were able to use elections in a decade to mobilize the normally silent majority of the people. In the case of Venezuela, this strategy was able to block heavily US financed and supported color revolution movements in a decade. It has to be acknowledged that this approach has advantages (keeping a political spirit in the population) but also draw-backs in form of the intensive use of resources, which probably could be used in other areas instead.

### ***Does changing social behavior block color revolutions in future? What are the effects of internet***

A crucial issue of debate is whether color revolutions are matter of history or if they can still occur. We are not able to conclude this debate, but have some arguments which support the view that color revolutions are probably a phenomenon of 2000-2010 and will not re-appear in the nearer future. One practical argument is that governments have learned to counter color revolutions more effectively than before. Several control mechanisms discussed earlier are now on place. Earlier, governments like in Serbia or Georgia, but also in Armenia (where it failed) were caught by surprise. Today at east as long a functioning government exist, they are better prepared. Almost routinely countries considering themselves at risk have introduced better control of NGOs (with the effect, as discussed of Lane that also original civic movements and political groups not even thinking about color revolutions are suppressed). Secondly, specifically in countries which experienced color revolutions this has led to a rather big disillusion (which also has effects on left-wing prospects) and other countries have learned. Not least the Arabian uprisings have shown mixed results, specially in Egypt where the situation is worse than ever, according to observers.

Thirdly, the context of media has changes substantially. At the beginning of the 2000ies, Internet and later tablets and iPhones just had started. Cellular phones had certainly a role as catalysators of communication. Ancient regimes like the Milosevic-government were experienced as ‘grey’ and

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<sup>63</sup> Cheterian 2009 p 144

outdated, the color revolutions literally coloring their subjective experience. Modern media have 2015 much more impact, they direct greyness has at least partially decreased..

We argue in particular that this changed media structure has profound effects on the brain. As argued comprehensively by Spitzer, several cognitive functions are changed by internet use and he multitasking of server media at the same time. At the same time, media are focusing increasingly on issues fear. This might have the following effects on the human brain: multitasking does cause distraction. The human brain is checking regularly every few minutes for new salient signals. The reward system then concludes if incoming signals are worth to change focus and intention. In the modern media environment this system is activated more frequently than before. This leads to a blunting reaction, an adaptation of this system. This system is predominant in “left brains” – when it is blunted, this might change attitudes. At the same time, fearful messages are conditioning the amygdala-related system which makes that this system increases and has more influence. This system is deeply involved in “right wing brains”. The combination of multitasking and fearful messages might change the balance in the human brain towards a right-wing attitude.

The problem with color revolutions is that they have misused this “left brain”-system. The described mechanism will diminish the probability of new color revolutions and at least diminishing its time period from months to days, but it diminishes at the same time the chance for broad left movements.

**In summary**, several arguments support the notion that color revolutions are rather a historical phenomenon. Analysis of the methods of color revolutions contributes to a better understanding of the complex area between the extremes of manipulation and persuasion. Social psychology and social neuroscience contributes to our understanding of politics.

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