

Color Revolutions, Geopolitics and the Baku Pipeline

By [F. William Engdahl](#)

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After a short-term fall in price below the \$50 a barrel level, oil is now bounding back towards \$60 a barrel and likely far higher. In this situation one might think that the announcement of the opening of a major new oil pipeline to pump Caspian oil to world markets might dampen the relentless rise in prices.

However, even when OPEC agreed on June 15 to raise its formal production quota by another 500,000 barrels per day (bpd), the reaction of NYMEX oil futures prices was to rise, not fall. Estimates are that world demand in the second half of 2005 will average at least 3 million barrels a day more than the first half.

Oil has become the central theme of world political and military operations planning, even when not always openly said.

Caspian Pipeline Opens a Pandora's Box

In this situation it is worth looking at the overall significance of the May opening of the Baku to Ceyhan, Turkey oil pipeline. This 1,762 km long oil pipeline was completed some months ahead of plan.

The BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) Oil Pipeline was begun in 2002 after four years of intense international dispute. It cost some \$3.6 billion, making it one of the most expensive oil projects ever. The main backer was BP, whose chairman Lord Browne is a close adviser to Britain's Tony Blair. BP built it in a consortium including Unocal of the US and Turkish Petroleum Inc., and other partners.

It will take until at least late September before 10.4 million barrels can provide the needed volume to start oil delivery to the Turkish port Ceyhan on the Mediterranean. Ceyhan is conveniently near to the US airbase Incirlik. The BTC has been a US strategic priority ever since Clinton first backed it in 1998. Indeed, for the opening ceremonies in May, US Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman attended and delivered a personal note of congratulations from US President George W. Bush.

As the political makeup of the Central Asia Caspian region is complex, especially since the decomposition of the Soviet Union opened up a scramble in the oil-rich region of the Caspian from the outside, above all from the United States, it is important to bear in mind the major power blocs which have emerged.

They are two. On the one side is an alliance of US-Turkey-Azerbaijan and, since the Rose Revolution, Georgia, that small but critical country directly on the pipeline route. Opposed to it, in terms of where the pipeline route carrying the Caspian oil should go, is Russia, which

until 1990 held control over the entire Caspian outside the Iran littoral. Today, Russia has cultivated an uneasy but definite alliance with Iran and with Armenia, in opposition to the US group. This two-camp grouping is essential to understand developments in the region since 1991.

Now that the BTC oil pipeline has finally been completed, and the route through Georgia has been put firmly in pro-Washington hands, an essential precondition to completing the pipeline, the question becomes how will Moscow react? Does Putin have any serious options left short of the ultimate nuclear one?

A clear strategy

A geopolitical pattern has become clear over the past months. One-by-one, with documented overt and covert Washington backing and financing, new US-friendly regimes have been put in place in former Soviet states which are in a strategic relation to possible pipeline routes from the Caspian Sea.

Ukraine is now more or less in the hands of a Washington-backed 'democratic' regime under Viktor Yushchenko and his billionaire Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko, known in Ukraine as the 'gas princess' for the fortune she made as a government official, allegedly through her dubious dealings earlier with Ukraine Energy Minister Pavlo Lazarenko and Gazprom.

The Yushchenko government's domestic credibility is reportedly beginning to fade as Ukrainian Orange Revolution euphoria gives way to economic realities. In any event, on June 16 in Kiev, Yushchenko hosted a special meeting of the Davos World Economic Forum to discuss possible investments into the New Ukraine.

At the Kiev meeting, Timoshenko's government announced that they plan to build a new oil and gas pipeline from the Caspian across Ukraine into Poland which would lessen Ukraine's reliance on Moscow oil and gas supplies. Timoshenko also revealed that the Ukrainian government was in positive talks with Chevron, the former company of Condoleezza Rice, for the project.

It goes without saying that such a project would run counter to the Russian regional interest. One reason for Washington's strong backing for Yushchenko last year was to counter a decision by the Kuchma government and Parliament to reverse the flow of the Brody-Odessa pipeline from a planned route from the Black Sea port into Poland. The initial Odessa-to-Poland route would have tied Ukraine to the West. Now Ukraine is discussing with Chevron to build a new pipeline doing the same. The country presently gets 80% of its energy from Russia.

A second project Ukraine's government, and the state NAK (Naftogaz Ukrainy) are discussing is with France's Gaz de France to build a pipeline from Iran for natural gas to displace Russian gas. Were that to happen it would simultaneously weaken ties of mutual self-interest between Russia and Iran, as well as Russia and France.

On the same day as the Kiev conference, Kazakhstan's government told an international investors' conference in Almaty that they were in negotiations with Ukraine to route Kazakh oil as well through the proposed new Ukrainian pipeline to the Baltic. Chevron is also the major consortium leader developing Kazakh oil in Tengiz. Given the political nature of US Big

Oil, it is more than probable that Condoleezza Rice, Dick Cheney and the Administration in Washington are playing a strong role in such Ukraine pipeline talks.

The Orange Revolution, at least from the side of its US sponsors, had little to do with real democracy and far more with military and oil geopolitics.

Pipelines and US-Azeri ties

The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was originally proclaimed by BP and others as The Project of the Century. Zbigniew Brzezinski was a consultant to BP during the Clinton era, urging Washington to back the project. In fact, it was Brzezinski who went to Baku in 1995, unofficially, on behalf of President Clinton to meet with then-Azeri President Haidar Aliyev, in order to negotiate new independent Baku pipeline routes including what became the BTC pipeline.

Brzezinski also sits on the board of an impressive, if little-known, US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce (USACC). The chairman of USACC in Washington is Tim Cejka, President of ExxonMobil Exploration. Other USACC Board members include Henry Kissinger, and James Baker III, the man who in 2003 personally went to Tbilisi to tell Shevardnadze that Washington wanted him to step aside in favor of the US-trained Georgian President Mikhail Shaakashvili. Brent Scowcroft, former National Security Adviser to George H.W. Bush, also sits on the board of USACC today. And Dick Cheney was a former board member before he became Vice President. A more high-powered Washington team of geopolitical fixers would be hard to imagine. This group of prominent individuals certainly would not give a minute of their time unless an area was of utmost geopolitical strategic importance to the United States or to certain powerful interests there.

Now that the BTC pipeline to Ceyhan is complete, a phase 2 pipeline is in consideration undersea, potentially to link the Caspian to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan with its rich gas reserves, directing that energy away from China to the West in a US-UK-controlled route.

In this context, it's worth noting that President Bush himself made a trip to Tbilisi on May 10 to address a crowd in Freedom Square, promoting his latest war on tyranny campaign for the region. He praised the US-backed 'color revolutions' from Ukraine to Georgia. Bush went on to attack Roosevelt's Yalta division of Europe in 1945. He made the curious declaration: *'We will not repeat the mistakes of other generations, appeasing or excusing tyranny, and sacrificing freedom in the vain pursuit of stability,'* the president said. *"We have learned our lesson; no one's liberty is expendable. In the long run, our security and true stability depend on the freedom of others.'* Bush went on to say, *'Now, across the Caucasus, in Central Asia and the broader Middle East, we see the same desire for liberty burning in the hearts of young people. They are demanding their freedom — and they will have it.'*

What color will the Azeri revolution take?

Not surprisingly, that speech was read as a 'go' signal for opposition groups across the Caucasus. In Azerbaijan four youth groups - Yokh! (No!), Yeni Fikir (New Thinking), Magam (It's Time) and the Orange Movement of Azerbaijan - comprise the emerging opposition, an echo of Georgia, Ukraine and Serbia where the US Embassy and specially-trained NGO

operatives orchestrated the US-friendly regime changes with help of the US National Endowment for Democracy, Freedom House and the Soros Foundation.

According to Baku journalists, Ukraine's Pora (It's Time), Georgia's Kmara (Enough) and Serbia's Otpor (Resistance) are cited by all four Azeri opposition organizations as role models. The opposition groups also consider George Bush's February meeting in Bratislava with Pora leader Vladislav Kaskiv as a sign that Washington supports their cause.

It seems the same team of Washington regime change experts are preparing for a 'color revolution' for the upcoming November elections in Azerbaijan as were behind other recent color revolutions.

In 2003, on the death of former Azeri President, Haider Aliyev, his playboy son, Ilham Aliyev, became President in grossly rigged elections which Washington legitimized because Aliyev was 'our tyrant,' and also just happened to hold his hand on the spigot of Baku oil.

Ilham, former president of the state oil company, SOCAR, is tied to his father's power base and is apparently now seen as not suitable for the new pipeline politics. Perhaps he wants too big a share of the spoils. In any case, both Tony Blair's UK Government and US State Department's AID are pouring money into Azeri opposition groups, similar to Otpor in Ukraine. US Ambassador Reno Harnish has stated Washington is ready to finance 'exit polling' in the elections. Exit polling in Ukraine was a key factor used to drive the opposition success there.

Moscow is following the Azeri events closely. On May 26 the Moscow daily, *Kommersant* wrote, "'While the pipeline will carry oil from the East to West, the spirit of 'color revolutions' will flow in the reverse direction.' The commentary went on to suggest that Western governments want to promote democratization in Azerbaijan out of a desire to protect the considerable investment made in the pipeline. That is only a part of the strategic game, however. The other part is what Pentagon strategists term 'strategic denial.'

Until recently the US had supported the corrupt ruthless dictatorship of the Aliyev's as the family had 'played ball' with US geopolitical designs in the area, even though Haider Aliyev had been a career top KGB officer in the Soviet Gorbachev era. Then on April 12, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld went to Baku, his second visit in four months, to discuss demands to create a US military base in Azerbaijan, as part of the US global force redeployment involving Europe, Mideast and Asia.

The Pentagon already de facto runs the Georgia military, with its US Special Forces officers, and Georgia has asked to join NATO. Now Washington wants to have direct bases in Azerbaijan proximate to Russia as well as to Iran.

The Pentagon has also allocated \$100 million to build a Caspian Guard of special forces military, ostensibly to guard the new BTC pipeline, though the latter was deliberately built underground to make it less vulnerable, one reason for its high cost. Part of the Pentagon money would go to build a radar-equipped command center in Baku, capable of monitoring all sea traffic in the Caspian. The US wants airbases in Azerbaijan which naturally would be seen in Teheran and Moscow as a strategic provocation.

In all this maneuvering from the side of Washington and Ten Downing Street, the strategic issue of geopolitical control over Eurasia looms large. And increasingly it is clear that not

only Putin's Russia is object of the new Washington War on Tyranny. It is becoming obvious to most now that the grand design in Eurasia on the part of Washington is not to pre-empt old Osama bin Laden and his Tora Bora cave dwellers.

The current Washington strategy targets many Eurasian former Soviet republics which per se have no known oil or gas reserves. What they do have, however, is strategic military or geopolitical significance for the Washington policy of dominating the future of Eurasia.

That policy has China as its geopolitical, economic and military fulcrum. A look at the Eurasian map and at the target countries for various US-sponsored Color Revolutions makes this unmistakably clear. To the east of the Caspian Sea, Washington in one degree or another today controls Pakistan, Afghanistan, potentially Kyrgystan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These serve as a potential US-controlled barrier or buffer zone between China and Russian, Caspian and Iranian energy sources.

Washington is out to deny China easy land access to either Russia, the Middle East or to the oil and gas fields of the Caspian Sea.

Whither Kyrgystan?

Since early 2005 when a series of opposition protests erupted over the fairness of parliamentary elections in February and March, Kyrgystan has joined the growing list of Eurasian republics facing major threat of regime change or color revolution. The success of former Kyrgystan Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiev in replacing ousted President Askar Akayev in that country's so-called 'Tulip Revolution,' becoming interim President until July Presidential elections, invited inevitable comparisons with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, or the Georgian Rose Revolution.

Washington's *Radio Liberty* has gone to great lengths to explain that the Kyrgystan opposition is not a US operation, but a genuine spontaneous grass roots phenomenon. The facts speak a different story however. According to reports from mainstream US journalists, including Craig Smith in the *New York Times* and Philip Shishkin in the *Wall Street Journal*, the opposition in Kyrgystan has had 'more than a little help from US friends' to paraphrase the Beatles song. Under the Freedom Support Act of the US Congress, in 2004 the dirt poor country of Kyrgystan got a total of \$12 million in US government funds to support the building of democracy. Twelve million will buy a lot of democracy in an economically desolate, forsaken land such as Kyrgystan.

Acknowledging the Washington largesse, Edil Baisolov, in a comment on the February-March anti-government protests, boasted, 'It would have been absolutely impossible for this to have happened without that help.' According to the *New York Times*' Smith, Baisolov's organization, the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Rights, is financed by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, a Washington-based nonprofit organization in turn funded by Condi Rice's State Department. Baisolov told *Radio Liberty* he had been to Ukraine to witness the tactics of their Orange Revolution, and got inspired.

But that isn't all. The whole cast of democracy characters has been busy in Bishkek and environs supporting American-style democracy and opposing 'anti-American tyranny.'

Washington's Freedom House has generously financed Bishkek's independent printing press

which prints the opposition paper, 'MSN,' according to its man on the scene, Mike Stone.

Freedom House is an organization with a fine-sounding name and a long history since it was created in the late 1940's to back the creation of NATO. The chairman of Freedom House is James Woolsey, former CIA director who calls the present series of regime changes from Baghdad to Kabul, 'World War IV.' Other trustees include the ubiquitous Zbigniew Brzezinski, former Clinton Commerce Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake. Freedom House lists USAID, US Information Agency, Soros Foundations and the National Endowment for Democracy, among its financial backers.

One more of the many NGO's active in promoting the new democracy in Kyrgystan is the Civil Society Against Corruption, financed by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The NED which, with Freedom House, has been at the center of all the major Color Revolutions in recent years, was created during the Reagan Administration to function as a de facto privatized CIA, privatized so as to allow more freedom of action, or what the CIA likes to call 'plausible deniability.' NED chairman Vin Weber, a former Republican congressman is close to neo-conservative Bill Bennett. NED President since 1984 is Carl Gershman, who had previously been a Freedom House Scholar. NATO General Wesley Clark, the man who led the US bombing of Serbia in 1999, also sits on the NED Board. Allen Weinstein, who helped draft the legislation establishing NED, said in 1991, 'A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.'

Not to be forgotten, and definitely not least in Kyrgystan's ongoing Tulip Revolution is George Soros' Open Society Institute — which also poured money into the Serbian, Georgian and Ukraine Color Revolutions.

The head of the Civil Society Against Corruption in Kyrgystan is Toilekan Ismailova, who organized the translation and distribution of the revolutionary manual used in Serbia, Ukraine and Georgia written by Gene Sharp, of a curiously-named Albert Einstein Institution in Boston. Sharp's book, a how-to manual for the color revolutions is titled 'From Dictatorship to Democracy.' It includes tips on nonviolent resistance — such as 'display of flags and symbolic colors' — and civil disobedience.

Sharp's book is literally the bible of the Color Revolutions, a kind of 'regime change for dummies.' Sharp created his Albert Einstein Institution in 1983, with backing from Harvard University. It is funded by the US Congress' NED and the Soros Foundations, to train people in and to study the theories of 'non-violence as a form of warfare.' Sharp has worked with NATO and the CIA over the years training operators in Burma, Lithuania, Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine to Taiwan, even Venezuela and Iraq.

In short virtually every regime which has been the target of a US-backed soft coup in the past twenty years has involved Gene Sharp and usually, his associate, Col. Robert Helvey, a retired US Army intelligence specialist. Notably, Sharp was in Beijing two weeks before student demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in 1989. The Pentagon and US intelligence have refined the art of such soft coups to a fine level. RAND planners call it 'swarming,' referring to the swarms of youth, typically linked by SMS and web blogs, who can be mobilized on command to destabilize a target regime.

Then Uzbekistan...?

Uzbekistan's tyrannical President Islam Karimov had early profiled himself as a staunch friend of the Washington War on Terror, offering a former Soviet airbase for US military actions including the attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan. Many considered Karimov too close to Washington to be in danger. He had made himself a 'good' tyrant in Washington's eyes.

That's also no longer a sure thing. In May Secretary Condoleezza Rice demanded Karimov institute 'political reforms' following violent prison uprisings and subsequent protests over conditions in the Ferghana Valley region in Andijan. Karimov has fiercely resisted independent inquiry into allegations his troops shot and killed hundreds of unarmed protesters. He insists the uprisings were caused by 'external' radical Muslim fundamentalists allied with Taliban and intent on establishing an Islamic 'caliphate' in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley bordering Kyrgystan.

While ouster of Karimov is unclear for the moment, leading Washington backers of Karimov's 'democratic reform' have turned into hostile opponents. As one US commentator expressed it, 'the character of the Karimov regime can no longer be ignored in deference to the strategic usefulness of Uzbekistan.' Karimov has been targeted for a Color Revolution in the relentless Washington War on Tyranny.

In mid-June Karimov's government announced changes in terms for the US to use Uzbekistan Karshi-Khanabad military airbase, including a ban on night flights. Karimov is moving demonstrably closer to Moscow and perhaps also to Beijing in the latest chapter of the new Great Game for geopolitical control over Eurasia.

Following the Andijan events, Karimov revived the former 'strategic partnership' with Moscow and also got a red carpet welcome at the end of May in Beijing, including a 21-gun salute. At a June Brussels NATO meeting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ivanov backed Karimov, declaring there was no need for an international investigation of what happened in Andijan.

Tajikistan, bordering Afghanistan and China, is so far the only remaining Central Asian republic not yet to undergo a successful US-led Color Revolution. It's not for lack of trying. For several years Washington has attempted to woo Dushanbe away from its close ties to Moscow, including the economic carrot of US backing for Tajik membership in WTO. Beijing has also been active. China has recently upgraded military assistance to Tajikistan, and is keen to strengthen ties to all Central Asian republics standing between it and the energy resources to the Eurasian west from Russia to Iran. The stakes are the highest for the oil-dependent China.

Washington Playing the China Card

The one power in Eurasia that has the potential to create a strategic combination which could checkmate US global dominance is China. However China has an Achilles Heel, which Washington understands all too well—oil. Ten years ago China was a net oil exporter. Today China is the second largest importer behind the USA.

China's energy demand is growing annually at a rate of more than 30%. China has feverishly been trying to secure long-term oil and gas supplies, especially since the Iraq war made clear to Beijing that Washington was out to control and militarize most of the world's

major oil and gas sources. A new wrinkle to the search for Black Gold, oil, is the clear data confirming that many of the world's largest oil fields are in decline, while new discoveries fail to replace lost volumes of oil. It is a pre-programmed scenario for war. The only question is, with what weapons?

In recent months Beijing has signed major oil and economic deals with Venezuela and Iran. It has bid for a major Canadian resources company, and most recently made the audacious bid to buy California's Unocal, a partner in the Caspian BTC pipeline. Chevron immediately stepped in with a counter bid to block China's.

Beijing has recently also upgraded the importance of the four-year-old organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or SCO. SCO consists of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan. Not surprisingly, these are many of the states which are in the midst of US-backed attempts at soft coups or Color Revolutions. SCO's July meeting list included an invitation to India, Pakistan and Iran to attend with Observer Status.

This June the foreign ministers of Russia, China and India held a meeting in Vladivostock where they stressed the role of the United Nations, a move aimed clearly at Washington. India also discussed its project to invest and develop Russia's Far East Sakhalin I, where it has already invested about \$1 billion in oil and gas development. Significantly, at the meeting, Russia and China resolved a decades-long border dispute, and two weeks later in Beijing, discussed potentials for development of Russia's Siberian resources.

A close look at the map of Eurasia begins to suggest what is so vital here for China and therefore for Washington's future domination of Eurasia. The goal is not only strategic encirclement of Russia through a series of NATO bases ranging from Camp Bond Steel in Kosovo to Poland, to Georgia, possibly Ukraine and White Russia, which would enable NATO to control energy ties between Russia and the EU.

Washington policy now encompasses a series of 'democratic' or soft coup projects which would strategically cut China off from access to the vital oil and gas reserves of the Caspian including Kazakhstan. The earlier Asian Great Silk Road trade routes went through Tashkent in Uzbekistan and Almaty in Kazakhstan for geographically obvious reasons, in a region surrounded by major mountain ranges. Geopolitical control of Uzbekistan, Kyrgystan, Kazakhstan would enable control of any potential pipeline routes between China and Central Asia just as the encirclement of Russia controls pipeline and other ties between it and western Europe, China, India and the Mideast.

In this context, the revealing *Foreign Affairs* article from Zbigniew Brzezinski from September/October 1997 is worth again quoting:

'Eurasia is home to most of the world's politically assertive and dynamic states. All the historical pretenders to global power originated in Eurasia. The world's most populous aspirants to regional hegemony, China and India, are in Eurasia, as are all the potential political or economic challengers to American primacy. After the United States, the next six largest economies and military spenders are there, as are all but one of the world's overt nuclear powers, and all but one of the covert ones. Eurasia accounts for 75 percent of the world's population, 60 percent of its GNP, and 75 percent of its energy resources. Collectively, Eurasia's potential power overshadows even America's.

‘Eurasia is the world’s axial supercontinent. A power that dominated Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world’s three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia. A glance at the map also suggests that a country dominant in Eurasia would almost automatically control the Middle East and Africa. With Eurasia now serving as the decisive geopolitical chessboard, it no longer suffices to fashion one policy for Europe and another for Asia. What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America’s global primacy....’

This statement, written well before the US-led bombing of former Yugoslavia and the US occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the BTC Pipeline, helps put recent Washington pronouncements about ‘ridding the world of tyranny’ and about spreading democracy, into a somewhat different context from the one usually mentioned by George W. Bush. ‘Elementary, my dear Watson. It’s about global hegemony, not democracy you fool.’

Global Research Contributing Editor F. William Engdahl is author of ‘A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order,’ from Pluto Press Ltd.

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