



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Georgians overthrow a dictator (Rose Revolution), 2003

- Colour Revolutions (2000s)

November 4,  
2003

to: November 25,  
2003

**Country:** Georgia

**Goals:**

Overthrow the dictator Eduard Shevardnadze

### Methods

**Methods in 1st segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols › rose represented the peaceful nature of the campaign
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

**Methods in 2nd segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

**Methods in 3rd segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › 20,000 rallied outside the parliamentary building

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 021. Delivering symbolic objects › delivered a rose to the dictator, asking him to resign
- 032. Taunting officials
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Democracy

**Group characterization:**

- citizens
- many were also students

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Mikhail Saakashvili - Leader of United National Movement (UNM)

**Partners:**

Zurab Zhvania (Ex-parliamentary speaker), Nino Burjanadze (parliamentary speaker ) - both of Burjanadze democrats. KMARA (pro democracy youth organization whose name translates to 'enough!') Liberty Institute (local Georgian NGO involved in protest activities)

**External allies:**

International Society for fair elections and democracy (ISFED - disputed election results), Georgian Young Lawyer's Association (GYLA) (disputed election results), Rustavi -2 (tv station which supported protesters and gave them an outlet to get out the message)

**Involvement of social elites:**

George Soros - American Billionaire provided over 42 million dollars towards the overthrow

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

- GYLA
- ISFED
- KMARA
- Rustavi
- United National Movement

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 4 days*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Eduard Shevardnadze and his regime

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not known.

**Campaigner violence:**

Not known.

**Repressive Violence:**

There were allegations coming from the campaign that an elderly woman had been shot by police officers.

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

6 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

The government was properly ousted with new free elections being held.

Campaign organizers survived throughout the campaign

The rallies continued to grow massively throughout the campaign.

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The Rose Revolution in Georgia sought to overthrow President Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze was elected as president in 1995. A hold-over from the communist period, Shevardnadze was often seen as a puppet for the Soviet Union. In 2003, his actions would lead to the downfall of his regime and the institution of free elections in Georgia.

Parliamentary elections in Early November of 2003 had a great number of seats up for grabs. The political landscape at the time saw such distrust of the Shevardnadze regime due to its intense corruption. Although these were not presidential elections, people took them as a decision on the future of Shevardnadze. If his party lost many seats, it would confirm the people's distrust for his presidency and signal a shift in power.

The election process ended with Shevardnadze being victorious. However, there were many reports alleging that the election results had been rigged. External election observers deemed the results wildly false and altered to depict Shevardnadze as the winner. In response to the allegations, Shevardnadze disputed rigging reports. Mikheil Saakashvili, an opposition leader who had earlier resigned from Shevardnadze's party due to his displeasure with corruption, claimed that his party had won the election, a result which independent observers supported.

Saakashvili urged all Georgians to demonstrate non-violently against the Shevardnadze regime. Demonstrations began all over Georgia. Large groups of demonstrators (sometimes totaling over 25,000 people) protested periodically throughout the next couple of weeks for a repeat of the elections and the resignation of Shevardnadze.

On the 4th of November, citizens held large rallies in protest of the election results. Saakashvili, leader of the United National Movement (UNM), called upon all opposition forces to "join up." Other rallies were planned to occur in the towns of Zugdidi, Telavi, and Gori. And opposition groups held another set of large rallies on the 8th of November. Two days later, thousands more gathered for a protest rally outside the parliamentary building where Shevardnadze had been meeting with leaders of the opposition.

The largest demonstration occurred on the 14th of November when between 20,000 and 30,000 took to the streets and gathered around the presidential building, chanting and dancing. In response to the massive unrest, Shevardnadze went on television and made a call for peace, warning that a civil war could be a possibility.

NGOs played a large role (as did American billionaire George Soros by donating millions) helping to organize the protests. While the protesters occasionally clashed with military forces, the protesters responded by giving the soldiers roses or kisses. Eventually, even some of the elite military forces stood in opposition to the current regime.

The final protest occurred on the 24th of November when protesters stormed the new session of parliament. Protesters carried red roses as they interrupted the parliamentary session. Saakashvili raised his rose in the air shouting "Resign!" in the face of the illegitimate leader, presenting it to him. The breach caused bodyguards of the president to evacuate him. It also prompted Russian politicians to set up a meeting with Shevardnadze regime and the opposition. Following the meeting, Shevardnadze announced his resignation.

In the upcoming weeks, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in which Saakashvili's party won the majority. Throughout the entire campaign, demonstrators remained nonviolent.

## Research Notes

### Influences:

The revolution was inspired by Otpor and its campaign. (1)

### Sources:

Areshidze, I. Democracy and autocracy in Eurasia: Georgia in transition East Lansing, MSU Press, 2007.

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----. "Poll crisis takes Georgia to the brink: Thousands of protesters risk violent clampdown after Shevardnadzes talks with opposition leaders fail" Guardian (London) 10 November 2003

### Additional Notes:

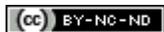
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Maurice Weeks 20/10/2008

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