

of a split in the “political elite” surviving from the Soviet era. The Rose, Orange, and Tulip revolutions were initiated and controlled by “outs” seeking to replace the “ins.”

Georgia’s new leader, Mikhail Saakashvili, once the justice minister under the regime he overthrew, has ripened into a little Napoleon Bonaparte, accumulating outsized powers and fending off lurid charges of murder and

The Rose, Orange, and Tulip revolutions in three former Soviet Republics, says a political scientist, have amounted to little more than a limited rotation of the ruling elites.

corruption. Ukraine’s president, a former prime minister and head of the national bank under the regime he defeated, did little after winning power, and finally was forced to offer the office of prime minister to a leader of the clique suspected of trying to kill him. Kyrgyzstan, whose president has polished coercive institutions to a brighter shine than in the Soviet era itself, is mired in corruption and nepotism and has suffered business-linked killings and political assassinations.

The democratic revolutions so beautifully named in the euphoria of mass street demonstrations, Tudoroiu writes, have proven to be not much more than a “limited rotation of the ruling elites within undemocratic political systems.”

## OTHER NATIONS

## Cuba’s Race Problem

**THE SOURCE:** “The Erosion of Racial Equality in the Context of Cuba’s Dual Economy” by Sarah A. Blue, in *Latin American Politics and Society*, Fall 2007.

IT DIDN’T TAKE LONG FOR Fidel Castro’s 1959 revolution to have a dramatic impact on race relations in Cuba. In a society so hung up on whiteness that even President Fulgencio Batista was denied membership in the Havana Yacht Club because he was a mulatto, relative racial equality arrived within a generation. Equal proportions of blacks, whites, and mixed-race Cubans graduated from high school and college. Life expectancy and infant mortality rates became virtually the same for all groups, writes Sarah A. Blue, a geographer at Northern Illinois University. Precisely equal percentages of the three racial categories held professional jobs.

But after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, an economy fueled by favorable trade deals with the Eastern Bloc countries went into near free fall. Starting three years later, Castro was forced to formally expand tourism and self-employment, and to allow relatives to send remittances from abroad. Cuba’s economy stabilized, but its hard-won racial equality was eroded, Blue writes.

Blacks are still likely to land good jobs with the state. But whites are five times more likely than blacks to have an annual income above about

\$700. The difference derives from access to dollars—or currency convertible to dollars, which whites are better positioned to possess.

Starting in 1993, residents could legally earn productivity bonuses paid by foreign (mostly European) companies in dollars, and engage in 157 specified commercial activities, such as selling crafts or homemade food, driving taxis, and opening restaurants.

In theory, dollars are equally available to all. In practice, whites are more likely to be hired for tourism jobs because managers say that foreigners feel “more comfortable” with lighter-skinned Cubans, according to Blue. Whites can open restaurants more easily because they are more likely to have room in their homes—fewer of them live with extended families because whites have emigrated at far greater rates. Moreover, 44 percent of white Cuban families receive remittances from abroad, but only 23 percent of black households do, according to a survey Blue conducted.

Living in historically disadvantaged areas with substandard housing, blacks are more likely to have moved into new Soviet-style apartment complexes far from the tourist haunts conducive to starting bed-and-breakfasts. And relatively few black or mixed-race Cubans have inherited vehicles that can serve as makeshift taxis.

A “nouveau riche” class is rising in Cuba, Blue says, but it is not equally open to all. Mere equality in education and government employment is no longer enough to level the playing field.