

The Checklist for Ending Tyranny

By Peter Ackerman and Hardy Merriman

Today the most deadly conflicts in the world are not between states but rather within them, pitting tyrants against the populations they oppress. It is widely believed that these oppressed populations have two choices: acquiesce to tyranny in hopes that it will evolve to something milder or launch a violent insurrection to gain freedom. This limited view is refuted by the fact that civil resistance campaigns (sometimes referred to as “people power” movements or nonviolent conflicts) have occurred far more frequently than generally realized. Beginning in 1900, there has been on average one major campaign of civil resistance challenging an incumbent ruler per year.¹ These citizen-led movements have increasingly defined the outcome of the most geopolitically significant conflicts and democratic transitions since 1972.² Yet policy makers, scholars, journalists, and other interested observers consistently underestimate this capacity of ordinary people to undermine tyranny and achieve rights without violence.

An Analytical Blind Spot

The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, and more recently in Ukraine in 2014, are examples of how grassroots civil resistance can surprise people with its power and transformative potential. No one saw these uprisings coming, but this makes them far from unique. Few if any saw the “Color Revolutions” coming in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), and Ukraine (2004). In decades prior, no one anticipated that organized nonviolent resistance would play a decisive role in the fall of Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos (1986), Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (1988), the Soviet regime in Poland (1989), or the apartheid regime in South Africa (1992).

As international and regional experts struggle to explain these and other nonviolent conflicts, they frequently conclude that successful cases of civil resistance are historical anomalies based on a unique set of circumstances in a given country at a given time. Because their dynamics are seen as case-specific, they are not regarded as evidence of a general strategy by which populations can wield power against a wide variety of oppressors. However, tyrants around the world do not suffer from this blind spot. They have come to recognize people power movements as the greatest threat to their ongoing rule.

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

With the incidence of nonviolent conflict accelerating over the last decade it is critically important for those who support democratic change to update their understanding of why people power movements succeed. Nonviolent conflict works across many different cases because it exploits two fundamental realities: that authoritarian regimes depend on wide-scale obedience among the populations they oppress in order to maintain their control, and that not everyone in such regimes is equally loyal.

How Civil Resistance Works

Based on these two realities, civil resisters mobilize populations to systematically withdraw their obedience and apply nonviolent pressure—through tactics such as strikes, boycotts, mass demonstrations, and other actions—to disrupt an oppressive system and achieve rights, freedom, and justice. When participation in civil resistance diversifies and grows, repression against resisters is often insufficient to restore tranquility and instead becomes more likely to backfire.

As disruption continues, cracks also begin to appear within the government and other institutions (i.e. police, military, media and political, bureaucratic, and economic entities) critical to the state. These cracks often lead to defections, and as defections cascade, the core capacities that an authoritarian depends on for their rule—control of material resources, human resources, people’s skills and knowledge, the information environment, and the capacity to commit sanctions—are devastated. Left with no viable chain of command with which to execute their orders, tyrants ultimately run out of options and are coerced out of their position by sustained nonviolent pressure. Sweeping change has often been the result.

Skills versus Conditions

With the increasing incidence and impact of civil resistance, it is important to examine what factors determine its outcomes. Do the conditions prior to the commencement of the conflict determine whether a movement or authoritarian will win? Or is victory for either side determined more by the strategic choices and skillfulness with which they wage the conflict?

A critical facet of the mission of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (of which we are a part) is to argue that skills are on balance more important than conditions in determining movement trajectories and outcomes. This point
This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

usually invites significant pushback especially focused on the willingness of the adversary to use violence. “Nonviolent resistance only works against benign or mild adversaries” is a frequent refrain, but conveniently forgotten is the defeat of the apartheid regime in South Africa, Pinochet in Chile, Marcos in the Philippines, or the communist regime in Poland. More recent examples include Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia. None of these regimes can be claimed to be mild, benign or unwilling to use severe repression.

These qualitative examples are supported by quantitative analysis. In 2008 the organization Freedom House issued a research study that examined various structural factors and their influence on civil resistance in 64 transitions from authoritarian governments between 1975-2006. Here is an excerpt of its key conclusion:

... neither the political nor environmental factors examined in the study had a statistically significant impact on the success or failure of civil resistance movements.... [C]ivic movements are as likely to succeed in less developed, economically poor countries as in developed, affluent societies. The study also finds no significant evidence that ethnic or religious polarization has a major impact on the possibilities for the emergence of a cohesive civic opposition. Nor does regime type seem to have an important influence on the ability of civic movements to achieve broad support.³

The only factor examined in the study that had a statistically significant influence on the emergence and outcomes of civil resistance movements was government centralization. The authors write that:

The study suggests high degrees of centralization correlate positively with the emergence of a robust civic movement with the potential to challenge regime authority. The reverse also appears to be true: the greater the degree of government decentralization, the less likely it is that a successful movement of civic mobilization will arise.⁴

Thus, while the study finds one environmental condition that influences the trajectories of civil resistance movements, their overall findings strongly undercut claims that conditions are determinative of the outcome of these conflicts.

Three years later, in their award-winning 2011 book, *Why Civil Resistance Works:*

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?*, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict, scholars Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan rigorously analyzed 323 violent and nonviolent campaigns that challenged sitting governments between 1900 and 2006.⁵ Their groundbreaking findings showed that nonviolent campaigns succeeded 53% of the time versus 26% of the time for violent campaigns.⁶ They also found that while state repression and other structural factors can influence a civil resistance campaign's prospects for success (though often by less than is commonly assumed—in the case of violent state repression it only reduced success rates by about 35%), they found no structural conditions that were determinative of movement outcomes.⁷ After thoroughly evaluating the data they conclude that “the evidence suggests that civil resistance is often successful regardless of environmental conditions that many people associate with the failure of nonviolent campaigns.”⁸

These results reveal the incorrect premises upon which the conventional wisdom about civil resistance is based. Skills and strategic choice often matter more than conditions in determining the outcomes of these conflicts. This is actually not surprising when we consider that the first strategy-based decision by opponents of tyranny is how to fight. It is reasonable to expect that if external conditions were key in determining the outcome then the strategic choice of how to fight by people challenging tyranny would not matter, and success rates between violent and nonviolent conflicts over time and many cases should be the same.

But that is not what the data indicates. Between 1900-2006 people power movements have been twice as successful, and recent case studies show that the differential in success rates has not significantly changed.⁹ Some may counter this by asserting that civil resisters pick battles that are easier to win, but Chenoweth and Stephan anticipated that argument and show that “... the vast majority of nonviolent campaigns have emerged in authoritarian regimes... where even peaceful opposition against the government may have fatal consequences.”¹⁰

Nobel Prize-winning economist Thomas Schelling had it right in an essay he wrote over 50 years ago in the book *Civilian Resistance as a National Defence: Nonviolent Action against Aggression*. Here is what he concluded:

The tyrant and his subjects are in somewhat symmetrical positions. They can deny him most of what he wants—they can, that is, if they have the disciplined organization to refuse collaboration. And he can deny them just about everything they want—he can deny it by using the force at his command... It is a bargaining situation in

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?*, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

which either side, if adequately disciplined and organized, can deny most of what the others wants; and it remains to see who wins.¹¹

According to Schelling the tactics selected by civil resisters have costs and benefits, as do the tactics used by their authoritarian opponent. The winner is the protagonist who distributes these costs and benefits most efficiently for their side. The skillful civil resistance leader wants to create disruption in order to maximize defections, and optimally wants to employ tactics where relatively small disruptions lead to large numbers of defections. The skillful authoritarian needs to enforce obedience, often through violence, and optimally wants to use minimal violence to achieve maximum obedience. The cumulative aggregation of defection vis-à-vis obedience determines who wins.

The Checklist

If skills and strategic choice are most influential on the outcomes of civil resistance movements then we should be able to identify shared capabilities, skills, and choices across a range of movements that form the common denominators of success. Many aspects of a movement can be analyzed, but when we distill the multitude of variables we find that three key capabilities of successful civil resistance movements are:

1. Ability to unify people
2. Operational planning
3. Nonviolent discipline

When these capabilities are present in a civil resistance movement, it sets the stage for three powerful trends to manifest that are also highly impactful on movement success. These trends are:

1. Increasing civilian participation in civil resistance
2. Diminishing impact of repression, and increasing backfire
3. Increasing defections from a movement's adversary

Taken together, we refer to these three attributes and three trends as “the Checklist.” We believe that achieving these attributes and trends significantly increases a movement's probability of success. In this regard, the checklist is not a formula that guarantees an outcome, but rather a framework that helps people organize their thinking and improve their effectiveness.

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

To this end, one function of the checklist is to cut through the sense of disorientation that can set in during a conflict. Complexity is one of the biggest challenges faced by any civil resistance movement, and in the fog of conflict it can be difficult to discern which factors are most important in decision making. We maintain that if an activist or an external observer wants to evaluate a movement's prospects, asking whether the three capabilities and three trends on the checklist are present will provide a strong basis for evaluating a movement's current state, strengths, weaknesses, and prospects for success.

We elaborate on the checklist below:

1. Ability to unify people

Authoritarians are adept practitioners of divide and rule and those who would challenge them must be more adept at creating unity. Building and maintaining unity is multifaceted, but the foremost aspect of doing so is developing a shared and inclusive vision for a civil resistance movement. Achieving this necessitates that movement organizers have deep knowledge of the grievances, aspirations, culture, and values of the various publics that they wish to mobilize. This knowledge forms the basis of developing and communicating a vision that attracts widespread support and mobilizes people. Effective visions resonate with the personal experience and feelings of ordinary people and summon their participation in collective civil resistance.

Another critical aspect of building unity is the presence of a leadership and organizational structure with legitimacy. Participation in movements is voluntary, and accordingly leaders do not have formal command and control authority over a mobilizing population. This means decisions in a movement must be made and carried out in ways that are felt to be legitimate by the publics that are being asked to mobilize. Each movement develops their own way of doing this—some more hierarchically, some in a more decentralized way, and some a combination of both over time. Regardless of a movement's exact leadership and organizational structural, there are different forms of leadership in movements, and unity involves harmonizing them. For every titular or charismatic national leader, there are many local leaders who need to be highly skillful at developing coalitions, negotiating, and aggregating interests among different groups. It is the ability of different leaders, at different scales (local or national), from different parts of a country, representing different groups, to work together that sustains unity over the long-term.

We can see evidence of both of these aspects of unity in the civil resistance used

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

by the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa in the 1980s. Hundreds of local civics groups sprouted up during that decade to advocate for municipal demands such as clean water and access to services, while simultaneously uniting under a common vision to end apartheid and to achieve national reconciliation. These civic groups, which coalesced into the United Democratic Front, had local leaders who were able to effectively lead decentralized tactics (i.e. consumer boycotts) for local issues, while simultaneously communicating with and collaborating with larger organizing structures and national movement leadership.

2. Operational planning

Waging effective civil resistance is far more complex than commonly assumed. The image that comes to mind when people think of civil resistance is protest, and yet that is only one of literally hundreds of tactics that are available. The most effective movements understand which tactic to choose, when, where, how, by whom it should be executed, at what it should be targeted, and among which other tactics it should be sequenced.

Answering these questions adequately requires planning based on a detailed analysis of a movement's and adversary's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as an assessment of the conflict environment and neutral or uncommitted parties (including members of the international community) that could influence the conflict. From this information movements can develop effective short-, mid-, and long-term objectives and corresponding operational plans. While those plans will evolve over time in response to events on the grounds (as all plans do), the planning process and mindset are more critical for a movement's participants to develop than any particular plan itself.

Incidentally, it is in operational planning that we see the clearest intersection of skills and conditions in a conflict. The basis of operational planning is an assessment of the conditions—favorable and unfavorable—faced by a movement. The movement then plans to exploit favorable conditions and overcome, transform, or circumvent adverse conditions through skills and strategic choice.

A clear example of operational planning is seen in the Solidary movement in Poland in the 1980s. Understanding their strengths and capabilities, workers articulated a powerful and politically realistic demand for independent trade unions (but restrained themselves from calling for the then-unachievable goal of ending Communist rule); concentrated their strengths in labor organizing and solidarity among diverse workers against their opponent's economic vulnerabilities and lack of legitimacy; and chose the effective tactic of striking by

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

occupying their workplaces (instead of marching outside of their workplaces, which had made them vulnerable to repression when they had tried this in prior years). This was augmented by the workers' reliance on alternative institutions—particularly printing presses and independent periodicals—that had been developed over the previous decade to facilitate communication between cities. By selecting a strategic objective, an appropriate target, and appropriate tactics (an occupation strike and the use of alternative institutions) that were within their capabilities, the Solidarity movement effectively navigated the conflict environment, overcame adverse conditions, and made progress towards their ultimate goal of a democratic Polish state, which was achieved in 1989.¹²

3. Nonviolent discipline

Maintaining nonviolent discipline—which is the ability of resisters to remain nonviolent despite provocation—is core to the functional dynamics of civil resistance. With nonviolent discipline, movements maximize civilian participation, increase the cost of an opponent's repression, heighten the probability that repression will backfire, and are much more likely to induce defections from an adversary's key pillars of support. As Chenoweth and Stephan's research shows, these benefits significantly contribute to the differential in success rates between violence and civil resistance campaigns.¹³

Achieving nonviolent discipline requires that movements have confidence that civil resistance is an effective means to prosecute their conflict. Information about how civil resistance works and its historical record can be helpful in this regard, as can an effective strategy that builds incremental victories over time and shows that civil resistance works. Movements also maintain nonviolent discipline by building a culture and norms that enforce it. For example, the Otpor movement in Serbia that ousted Slobodan Milosevic systematically trained new members to understand how civil resistance works and why it is important to remain nonviolent.

Such efforts do not require a movement to make ethical arguments about remaining nonviolent, but people must reinforce in each other the practical benefits of nonviolent discipline, while remembering cases (Syria being the recent tragic example) where impatience or lack of confidence in civil resistance yielded a shift to violent tactics, with predictably disastrous consequences.

4. Increasing civilian participation in civil resistance

High levels of civilian participation in civil resistance are arguably the single largest predictor of movement success.¹⁴ This makes sense since the more

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?*, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

people withdraw consent and obedience from an authoritarian, the weaker the authoritarian becomes, and the greater the cost to them of trying to remain in control. Furthermore, we believe that increasing civilian participation also increases the chance that repression will backfire and quantitative evidence shows that higher civilian participation increases the likelihood that defections among an adversary's supporters will take place.¹⁵

Illustrating the importance of high levels of civilian participation, the 2011 revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia galvanized wide support across different demographic groups—men and women; religious and secular groups; young, middle aged, and older people; lower- and middle-class workers, and urban and rural populations. In contrast, both the 1989 student movement in China and the 2009 Green Movement mobilized millions and grabbed headlines, but neither achieved its stated objectives in part because neither grew to include widespread civic participation beyond their initial demographic base.

Achieving high levels of participation in civil resistance is an outgrowth of the first three items on the checklist. A unifying vision helps to build cohesion and galvanize mobilization. Operational planning instills confidence and provides an array of tactics to accommodate people's varying risk tolerance, available time, and capacity for sacrifice for the movement. An effective strategy provides options for the poor, the wealthy, the young, the old, and everyone in between to do something, small or large, to support the movement. Nonviolent discipline ensures that everyone can participate (as opposed to only able-bodied men in armed resistance) and nonviolent means are much more likely to appeal to a broad cross-section of society.

5. Diminishing impact of repression, and increasing backfire

One of the authoritarian's most powerful tools is the capacity to commit repression, and effective movements learn how to reduce the impact of repression while increasing its costs. One way they do so is through accurate risk assessment and tactical choice because not all tactics risk repression equally. While centralized actions such as mass demonstrations are likely to face repression, decentralized tactics such as consumer boycotts, stay-at-home strikes, sick-ins from school, or anonymous display of small symbols in public places are much more challenging for a regime to repress. This is so because the participants in some tactics (i.e. consumer boycotts) are not obvious (you cannot tell by looking at someone whether they are boycotting a product or not) or because the perpetrators are diffuse and have deniability (i.e. a stay-at-home strike requires police to make home visits to every worker and participants in a

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?*, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

sick-in can claim that they really are sick that day).

In 1983 in Chile, political dissidents opposed to the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet had to find a way to circumvent his repression. A decade of mass arrests, executions, torture, and disappearances meant that people were terrified to organize or mobilize together. In April, copper miners called for a strike outside of Santiago, but Pinochet threatened bloodshed by sending his military to surround the mines before the strike was supposed to begin. In the face of such repression, labor leaders called off the strike and called instead for a national day of protest, in which anyone protesting the regime would work slowly, walk slowly, drive slowly, and at 8:00pm bang pots and pans.¹⁶ There was unprecedented and widespread participation in these actions, and this led to monthly calls for protests. This was the first major step in breaking through the layer of fear and atomization that was the cornerstone of Pinochet's rule. The actions had an acceptable level of low risk for participants and were also irrespressible—Pinochet's security forces had no answer for such wide-scale decentralized tactics.

Other aspects of reducing the impact of repression, or increasing its costs and the probability of backfire, involve articulating certain grievances in apolitical terms (demonstrators calling for clean water and safe neighborhoods, as opposed to the fall of a regime), building clear lines of leadership succession, and bridging social distance between a movement's participants and domestic and international groups, so that repression against the movement is more likely to backfire. For example, when the Egyptian blogger Khaled Said was pulled out of an internet café in 2010 and beaten to death by security forces for exposing corruption, the dissident Facebook group "We are All Khaled Said" countered the Egyptian government's attempts to try to devalue Said's life. Through their presence, they made it clear that Said had much in common with everyday Egyptians, thus causing the repression to backfire.

6. Increasing defections from a movement's adversary

As civil resistance progresses over time, it often induces loyalty shifts and defections amongst an adversary's active and passive supporters. For example, reformers and hardliners in government may begin to publicly struggle against each other for control. Economic interests may pressure the state to accommodate a movement's demands so that business will return. Regime functionaries such as soldiers, police, bureaucrats, and others may also begin to shift loyalties, perhaps because they've been persuaded of the movement's demands, disgusted with the regime, or because they have family members and friends who are participating in civil resistance. Even elites who are sympathetic

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

to the regime may begin to doubt its sustainability and become neutral so as not to risk ending up on the wrong side of history if the civil resistance succeeds.

In Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004, dissidents intentionally sought out lines of communication with security forces, relying on the military's retired officer corps as intermediaries.¹⁷ Over time, the opposition proved through their actions that they were nonviolent and reasonable; called on security forces to serve and protect the public good; bridged social distance through fraternization, slogans, and actions (such giving roses to riot police); revealed the corruption of the incumbent regime; and ultimately fomented loyalty shifts among the security forces. When it came time to engage in repression, many Ukrainian soldiers and police simply became neutral. This happened similarly in Serbia under Milosevic. Without openly defecting, security forces simply stopped enthusiastically carrying out the regime's orders. At the Otpor movement's October 5 climax, the police officer responsible for dropping chemical dispersants from a helicopter on the Belgrade crowds refused to do, claiming that he could not get a clear view of the crowds because the weather was unclear, even though it was sunny. He later commented that he felt he couldn't carry out orders because his family members may have been among the demonstrators that day.¹⁸

Whether driven by persuasion or self-interest, defections such as these are often the result of long-term processes catalyzed by a civil resistance movement. As with the previous two checklist trends, this trend emerges from a movement's embodiment of unity, planning and nonviolent discipline. Data shows that high levels of diverse participation correlate with an increased chance of defection, and unity, planning, and nonviolent discipline all contribute to broad and diverse participation. In particular, nonviolent discipline is important for inducing defections. So long as a movement remains nonviolent and avoids transitioning into violent insurrection (as was the tragic case in Syria during 2011) then the movement can live to fight another day and keeps open the possibility of defections. If the targets for loyalty shifts within a regime are not existentially threatened by a violent insurgency, their potential for defection remains a continuing threat to the cohesion of an authoritarian regime's power structure.

Implications for External Actors

This checklist is not just useful guidance for dissidents. Other constituencies can apply it as well to improve their performance in relating to these conflicts.

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

For example, the checklist can help journalists report more perceptively on civil resistance. If journalists want to make penetrating insights into a conflict, the checklist would indicate that placing a reporter in front of the burning target of a Molotov cocktail in Kiev in early 2014 so he can speculate on whether the violence could get worse does not illuminate the driving forces in the conflict. But investigation into the state of a movement's unity and planning, sources of breakdown in nonviolent discipline, increasing civilian participation, the decreasing impact of repression on a movement, and whether or not security forces are fully obeying orders, let alone defecting, would provide cutting edge analysis. Add to this an understanding of lost support in the business community and it becomes clear why Ukrainian president Yanukovich fled on February 21 this year, hours after the worst regime-perpetrated violence backfired. Such developments are more predictable if one is looking at right indicators beforehand.

If considered by policy makers in the latter half of 2011, the checklist may have indicated greater opportunities for a winning civil resistance against the Assad regime in Syria. Continued loyalty shifts (beyond just Sunni soldiers) in the military away from the regime could have been viewed as the best hope for victory. Withdrawal of support by members of the business community was another indicator. In this light, encouragement of the Free Syrian Army in early 2012 to fight Assad's remaining Alawite military should have been seen as counterproductive if not foreshadowing a tragedy.

The checklist can be especially useful in developing norms governing external assistance for indigenous people power movements. For example, the first three capabilities on the checklist are skill-based and can be augmented through robust information exchange. Under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, tyrants cannot restrict the flow of information across their borders or punish citizens who re-transmit that information to dissidents. All six items on the checklist can also evoke thought about pathways for technological innovation that can facilitate the cultivation of the three capabilities and three trends.

The Checklist and Conflicts that will Shape Our Future

The environments in which nonviolent conflicts are fought are complex, and civil resisters—requiring grassroots coordination to sequence an array of tactics into a strategy for winning—often experience a sense of disorientation. Their natural fear of making the wrong decisions with people's lives and freedom at stake can

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

induce the passivity that a tyrant seeks, and also bolster the illusion of a tyrant's invulnerability.

The checklist can help dissidents cut through this sense of disorientation and navigate a path forward. Some may argue that with so many variables in play, a checklist for ending tyranny is too simplistic, and that evaluating critical decision making during future conflicts will require paramount attention on factors unique to that time and place.

However, the checklist does not call for ignoring specific factors in a situation, but rather for understanding those factors in the context of a broader strategic framework that reveals how and why civil resistance movements can win. Atul Gawande, who has researched the importance of checklists in a variety of other contexts, writes that:

Checklists seem able to defend anyone, even the experienced, against failure in many more tasks than we realized. They provide a kind of cognitive net. They catch mental flaws inherent in all of us—flaws of memory and attention and thoroughness...¹⁹

Under conditions of true complexity—where the knowledge required exceeds that of any individual and unpredictably reigns... [effective checklists] ensure the stupid but critical stuff is not overlooked, and... ensure people talk and coordinate... to manage the nuances and unpredictabilities the best they know.²⁰

The checklist may not be final indicator as to who will prevail: the tyrant or the civil resister. However, the checklist can serve as the critical and continuing set of indicators to understand how citizen demands for freedom can overcome the entrenchment of authoritarian systems.

Endnotes

¹ Based on research by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, who identify 105 civil resistance campaigns seeking a change of government in countries and territories around the world between 1900-2006.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 6

NAVCO 1.1 data available at:

http://www.du.edu/korbel/sie/research/chenow_navco_data.html

² Based on 67 transitions to democracy analyzed between 1972-2005 in the research study *How Freedom is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy*. The authors find that:

“The force of civic resistance was a key factor in driving 50 of 67 transitions, or over 70 percent of countries where transitions began as dictatorial systems fell and/or new states arose from the disintegration of multinational states. Of the 50 countries where civic resistance was a key strategy (i.e., either countries in which there were transitions driven by civic forces or countries where there were mixed transitions involving significant input from both civic forces and powerholders), none were Free countries, 25 were Partly Free countries, and 25 were Not Free countries. Today [in 2005], years after the transition 32 of these countries are Free, 14 are Partly Free, and only 4 are Not Free.”

Ackerman, Peter, and Adrian Karatnycky. 2005. *How Freedom is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy*. Washington, DC: Freedom House. Pp. 6-7

³ Marchant, Eleanor, Adrian Karatnycky, Arch Puddington, and Christopher Walter. 2008. *Enabling Environments for Civic Movements and the Dynamics of Democratic Transition*. Freedom House special report. July 18. p. 1

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 1

⁵ Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 6

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 9

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 68

This chapter appears in: Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (eds.), *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?*, Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2015.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 62

⁹ Chenoweth, Erica. 2014 Trends in Civil Resistance and Authoritarian Responses. The Atlantic Council Future of Authoritarianism Project. April 15.

¹⁰ Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 66

¹¹ Thomas C. Schelling. 1968. "Some Questions on Civilian Defence," in Adam Roberts, ed., *Civilian Resistance as a National Defence: Non-violent Action Against Aggression*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books. p. 304.

¹² Ackerman, Peter and Jack DuVall. 2000. *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*. London: St. Martin's Press/Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 113-174

¹³ Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 30-61

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 30-61

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 46-49

¹⁶ *A Force More Powerful*. Dir. Steve York. York Zimmerman. 2000. Film.

¹⁷ Binnendijk, Anika Locke, and Ivan Marovic. 2006. Power and Persuasion: Nonviolent Strategies to Influence State Security Forces in Serbia (2000) and Ukraine (2004). *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39, no. 3 (September). pp. 411-429.

¹⁸ Interview with Nebojsa Covic, *Vecernje Novosti*, Oct. 2, 2010.

¹⁹ Gawande, Atul. 2009. *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right*. New York: Picador. p. 47

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 79