

The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns

Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail?

Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan



Front cover image (left)

Description: Maina Kiai & Frank La Rue at the 26th Session of the Human Rights Council on June 10, 2014. By: Jeff Vize for former UN Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0). The image has been modified by cropping.
Link to license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>

Front cover image (center)

Description: Protest at Egyptian Embassy in Washington, DC on January 29, 2011. By: tedeytan. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0). The image has been modified by cropping.
Link to license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en>

Front cover image (right)

Description: On Saturday, December 13, 1980, Amnesty International organized a demonstration against human rights violations throughout the world in The Hague. By: Rob Croes / Anefo. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication (CC0 1.0). The image has been modified by cropping.
Link to license: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns: Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail?
by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan (2021)
Published by ICNC Press

Publication Disclaimer: The designations used and material presented in this publication do not indicate the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of ICNC.

The authors hold responsibility for the selection and presentation of facts contained in this work, as well as for any and all opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of ICNC and do not commit the organization in any way.

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict

600 New Hampshire Ave NW, Suite 710 • Washington, D.C. 20037 USA
www.nonviolent-conflict.org

ICNC MONOGRAPH SERIES EDITOR: Maciej Bartkowski
EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE: Julia Constantine
CONTACT: icnc@nonviolent-conflict.org

© 2021 International Center on Nonviolent Conflict
Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan
All rights reserved.
ISBN: 978-1-943271-36-8

ICNC **MONOGRAPH** SERIES

The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns

**Poisoned Chalice
or Holy Grail?**

Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan

ICNC

PRESS

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	5
Four Perspectives on External Assistance	7
A Brief Summary of Eight Campaigns	20
Exploring General Patterns of External Support	60
Combined Analysis: Triangulating the Qualitative and Quantitative Data	74
Main Recommendations Informed by the Findings	81
Acknowledgements / About the Authors	100

Tables

TABLE 1: Case Studies Integrated into the Analysis	14
Four Perspectives on External Assistance	
TABLE 2: Types of Support.	15
TABLE 3: Supporter Types	16
TABLE 4: Recipient Types	17
TABLE 5: Timing of Assistance	18
Exploring General Patterns of External Support	
TABLE 6: Support Types	61
TABLE 7: Types of Support.	62
TABLE 8: Recipient Types	63
TABLE 9: Timing of Assistance	63
TABLE A1: Incidences of Support, High to Low, in EX-D.	87
TABLE A2: Positive and Negative Effects on Key Campaign Characteristics and Outcomes.	92
TABLE A3: Summary of Regression Models Undertaken	93
TABLE A4: Summary of Results Reported in Text	94
TABLE A5: Summary of Full Results.	95

Figures

FIGURE 1: Correlation between Training Support during Campaign Peak and Campaign Success	66
FIGURE 2: Correlations between Pre-Campaign Training Support and Campaign Dynamics	67
FIGURE 3: Correlation between INGO Support and Campaign Outcome	68
FIGURE 4: Correlations between Armed Group Supporters and Individual Supporters and Campaign Fatalities	71
FIGURE 5: Correlation between Local Media and Opposition Party Recipients and Campaign Success	72

Executive Summary

External support to various actors involved in nonviolent campaigns can affect the trajectory of a nonviolent struggle. This monograph evaluates which external support to civil resistance campaigns is efficacious as well as the cumulative impact of these forms of external support on campaign outcomes. Nonviolent campaigns usually take place in complex domestic settings. We develop a strategic approach to external assistance, arguing that nonviolent campaigns tend to benefit the most from external assistance that allows them to generate high participation, maintain nonviolent discipline, deter crackdowns, and elicit security force defections. But various forms of external assistance have mixed effects on the characteristics and outcomes of nonviolent campaigns. In this study, we use novel qualitative and quantitative data to examine the ways that external assistance impacted the characteristics and success rates of post-2000 maximalist uprisings.¹ In short, this effort produces nine key findings.

First, few nonviolent uprisings in the past twenty years existed without significant international attention and involvement. However, both quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that external support is always secondary to local actors. While authoritarian regimes often accuse domestic dissenters of being foreign agents, there is little evidence to suggest that external support is necessary or sufficient for the success of nonviolent campaigns.

Second, long-term investment in civil society and democratic institutions can strengthen the societal foundations for nonviolent movements. Long-term technical and financial assistance to civic organizations, election monitoring, political parties, think tanks, youth movements, unions, and independent media has helped build the demand side for human rights, civic participation and government accountability.

1 Maximalist campaigns are those with major political goals, including removing an incumbent national leader or achieving territorial independence—aims that would fundamentally alter the sovereign states in which they emerge. Our focus on maximalist campaigns allows us to explore external assistance across campaigns with comparable goals that are both difficult to achieve and deeply consequential for their societies. This allows us to avoid the trap of looking into nonviolent campaigns that have a broader range of goals that may or may not be comparable across contexts. Focusing on maximalist campaigns also has the practical benefit of allowing us to work with a more manageable sample size, while increasing our certainty that our data capture all reported campaigns during the time period.

Third, activists who receive training prior to peak mobilization are much more likely to mobilize campaigns with high participation, low fatalities, and greater likelihood of defections. Training provides important skills-building functions but, perhaps even more importantly, it can provide direct avenues for relationship-building, peer learning and spaces for strategic planning.

Fourth, mitigating regime repression via political, diplomatic, and security engagement is a critical form of assistance that supports an enabling environment for nonviolent organizing and mobilizing. Programmatic support to civil society needs to be backed by pressure, but sanctions can make getting support to activists very difficult. The research also highlights the need for greater investment in local and third-party mediation to mitigate violence and facilitate transitions.

Fifth, generally speaking, support from foreign governments appears to indirectly help most campaigns. But this finding does not mean that government assistance is what makes movements win. Government assistance before a campaign begins may help to strengthen the rule of law, support the creation of independent media, enhance capacities for election-monitoring and other accountability mechanisms, and create more opportunities for opposition parties, unions, student groups, and civic organizations to develop. Persistent bilateral government engagement with a state experiencing a civil resistance campaign may provide greater diplomatic leverage for the donor state—creating opportunities for mediation, negotiation, or even the threat of withdrawal of financial resources. And government assistance after a campaign may help to bolster civil society, democratic institutions, and independent media. Therefore, government assistance can indirectly support nonviolent campaigns. But in general, states seem to be most involved after the campaign has ended—serving as a critical check on transitioning governments.

Sixth, concurrent external support to armed groups tends to undermine nonviolent movements in numerous ways. Such activities risk militarizing a conflict where a nonviolent movement is already gaining momentum. Support to armed organizations is correlated with lower participation rates, lower chances of maintaining nonviolent discipline, lower chances of eliciting security force defections, and lower chances of movement success. And support by armed rebels groups or paramilitary organizations to nonviolent movements is associated with decreased nonviolent discipline, increased campaign fatalities, and movement failure.

Seventh, repressive regimes often benefit from outside support from powerful allies, posing a significant challenge for activists. This support, particularly when it is used to bolster regimes' security apparatus, can alter the relative balance of power between autocrats and opposition forces. On the other hand, an ally's refusal to back an abusive regime can also be pivotal to the success of the nonviolent campaign.

Eighth, direct funding to movements has few generalizable effects on movement characteristics or outcomes. The only statistically significant finding suggests that direct financial assistance to movements is correlated with fewer participants in the campaign, suggesting it has adverse effects on a vital movement characteristic. The qualitative research provides more measured evidence for direct financial support, depending on how it is delivered and implemented, as well as who is driving the agenda. Flexible donor funding that minimizes bureaucratic obstacles has been most helpful to movements.

Finally, donor coordination is important to be able to effectively support and leverage non-violent campaigns. Numerous interview respondents pointed out the necessity of alignment and coordination among donors in supporting movements, which occurred surprisingly infrequently. This insight helps us understand not just the *who* and *what* of external assistance, but also the *how*. Unity and cohesion are important for movements and donors alike.

INTRODUCTION

THIS MONOGRAPH EVALUATES which external support to civil resistance campaigns is efficacious as well as the cumulative impact of these forms of external support. Nonviolent campaigns usually take place in complex domestic settings. External support to various actors in such settings can affect the trajectory of a nonviolent struggle. We develop a strategic approach to external assistance, arguing that nonviolent campaigns tend to benefit the most from external assistance that allows them to generate high participation, maintain nonviolent discipline, deter crackdowns, and elicit security force defections. Our analysis differs from previous studies of external assistance to nonviolent campaigns in that we pursue a multi-methodological strategy that differentiates how various types of publicly-reported² support, donors, and recipients affect nonviolent campaign characteristics and outcomes.

Specifically, our combined qualitative and quantitative research suggests that training seems to effectively support nonviolent campaigns more consistently than any other form of assistance. Various forms of support to local unions, media outlets, and formal opposition parties seem to benefit nonviolent campaigns, whereas support to armed rebel groups or paramilitary organizations is consistently detrimental. Support by international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), corporations, and foreign governments has consistently beneficial effects, whereas support from individuals or paramilitary or armed rebel groups has consistently detrimental effects. But most dimensions of support have mixed effects: they are positively correlated with one dynamic (e.g., high participation numbers) but are negatively correlated with another (e.g., fatalities). This means that some forms of external assistance that appear to embolden campaigns in certain areas (e.g., increased participation) may come with increased risk in other areas (e.g., increased harm to participants).

Taken together, our findings are supportive of a highly-contextualized, strategic approach to managing the politics of external assistance to nonviolent campaigns. External parties eager to support nonviolent campaigns should be aware of the political and practical tradeoffs that come with aid that might appear to benefit campaigns in the short-term but are ultimately counterproductive or harmful in the long term.

2 The dataset necessarily excludes incidents of support that are not publicly reported. This could include support delivered privately or covertly, as well as systematic proprietary data from private foundations. All of our claims therefore relate only to publicly-reported incidents unless otherwise stated.

BOX 1: Key Definitions

Civil resistance: A method of struggle in which unarmed people use a variety of nonviolent techniques to achieve collective goals.

Nonviolent campaign: A coordinated series of unarmed collective actions—protests, strikes, boycotts, stay-aways, and other forms of nonviolent action—prosecuted by civilians against an opponent.

External assistance: Support of nonviolent campaigns by any actor—including individuals, diaspora groups, transnational solidarity networks, international governmental organizations (IGOs), foreign governments, or others—that is based outside of the location country.

Maximalist campaign: A campaign that has revolutionary goals, meaning (1) overthrow of an incumbent national government; or (2) territorial and national independence through secession or expulsion of a colonial power or foreign military occupation.

Social movement: A group of people engaged in various forms of collective mobilization, including but not limited to nonviolent campaigns, advocacy, and community organizing.

Four Perspectives on External Assistance: Optimists, Skeptics, Uncommitted, and Strategists

We define external assistance as support of nonviolent campaigns by actors outside of the location country. Such assistance can take many forms—public expressions of sympathy or solidarity, condemnations of repression, technical equipment, behind-the-scenes diplomatic pressure, legal support and advocacy, financial assistance, trainings, sanctions against an intransigent regime, nonviolent civilian protection, golden parachutes for dictators or their security forces, and other techniques.

But how does external assistance affect the movements it is meant to uplift? The existing literature contains four general perspectives, whose proponents we name the optimists, the skeptics, the uncommitted, and the strategists.

Optimists see external assistance as having important and positive impacts on the capacity and leverage of nonviolent actors. Optimists see external assistance as having two important effects. First, optimists argue that movements need both tangible and intangible resources to mobilize effectively.³ Some literature in the social movements research program suggests that an infusion of funds and legal and professional assistance can help to draw in, build, and sustain social movement organizations—adding to their capacity to recruit new participants and coordinate activities across the grassroots.⁴ In their book on democratic transitions in post-Communist states, Bunce and Wolchik⁵ argue that democracy assistance to civil society groups can be particularly important in setting the stage for nonviolent campaigns to flourish as well as in providing basic democratic institutional support such as electoral monitoring. For instance, support for independent media, think tanks, civic education, and activist groups in Serbia and Ukraine by US and European governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and foundations helped build alternative sources of news, supported mass mobilization, and helped get out and defend the vote in both countries.

3 Chris Allan and Scott DuPree, *Social Movements and Material Resources in Northwest Mexico* (Washington, DC: ICNC Press, Forthcoming 2020); Mahmoud Soliman, *Material Resources Mobilization and Palestinian Nonviolent Popular Resistance Campaigns in Area C* (Washington, DC: ICNC Press, Forthcoming 2020).

4 A parallel literature exists with regard to armed insurrection, where the general consensus is that external assistance—particularly sanctuary, weapons, and funds—vastly improves the chances of a rebellion to succeed. See for example: Idean Salehyan, *Rebels without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics*, 1 edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 493–515; Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Clifford Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

5 Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Second, optimists see external assistance as providing important constraints on autocratic leaders in their attempts to crack down on domestic nonviolent activists.⁶ In a global context, many have argued that international pressure through naming and shaming campaigns, targeted sanctions, and even threats of military intervention can help to prevent mass atrocities against movements—allowing them to gather steam, build networks with increased leverage, and ultimately prevail.⁷ For example, the global solidarity movement in support of ending apartheid in South Africa, which featured a broad range of divestments, boycotts, and sanctions, reinforced the locally-led anti-apartheid movement inside the country. Ultimately, many activists have therefore concluded that external assistance is desirable—and indeed necessary—for their success.

Perhaps ironically, many contemporary authoritarian leaders are also convinced that external assistance bolsters nonviolent campaigns. We can see this through their constant assertions that the nonviolent uprisings against them reflect foreign conspiracies to seize power through proxies. Vladimir Putin, Nicholas Maduro, Reycip Erdogan, and Xi Jinping alike have argued that nonviolent revolts in their countries (and their allies’) are the work of the West, seeking through “soft coups” to weaken their regimes and spread Western interests in Russia, Venezuela, Turkey, and Hong Kong. Putin regarded the major influx of post-Cold War democracy assistance to countries like Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, not to mention the involvement of foreign actors during the color revolutions, as a direct threat to Russia’s geo-strategic interests. Although mass nonviolent campaigns cannot be exported or imported,⁸ the idea that external assistance can bolster their chances now has adherents among both democrats and dictators alike.

Skeptics, on the other hand, argue that external assistance can unwittingly undermine nonviolent campaigns for three main reasons. First, nonviolent resistance movements are primarily reliant on people power from below for their success. When external actors provide direct assistance to movement leaders, the average community member may see the organization as overly tied to foreign interests, thereby undermining its domestic roots of legitimacy. Moreover, if movement leaders are seen to benefit from funds, this can undermine calls for mass participation, instead inducing free riding.⁹

6 Daniel Ritter, *The Iron Cage of Liberalism: International Politics and Unarmed Revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

7 Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

8 Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, “Drop Your Weapons,” *Foreign Affairs* (July 2014).

9 Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011.

Second, nonviolent campaigns tend to succeed because of defections—particularly defections from security forces. But external assistance to nonviolent movements appears to make such defections less likely, perhaps because it bolsters the regime’s inevitable claims that the movement is a foreign conspiracy intent on manipulating and undermining the nation—not just the regime.¹⁰ As a result of this lack of defection, studies have found that external assistance to nonviolent campaigns is correlated with higher risk of massive crackdowns against such movements.¹¹

Third, even when movements persist in their struggle, external assistance can steer a movement away from its primary aims and toward the donor’s preferences.¹² The skeptical view of external assistance, then, points to a moral hazard problem: External assistance may encourage or embolden more risk-taking by a smaller number of people, while simultaneously increasing the risk of repression, reducing the chances of defections, deviating movements from their primary aims, and lowering the odds of movement success overall. As a result, skeptics suggest that movements ought to be wary of seeking or accepting external assistance from donors outside of a movement.¹³

The **uncommitted** argue that there is no real way to discern the effect of external assistance on movement outcomes. This is because of the presence of selection effects that threaten causal inference. In practical terms, the concern is that donors do not tend to pick recipients at random, but instead attempt to provide support to movements that are already winning.¹⁴ There is ample evidence that nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International are strategic in their advocacy.¹⁵ A similar process seems to apply to armed groups receiving external support as well.¹⁶ To the uncommitted, the effectiveness of external assistance is a fundamentally unanswerable question without randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Yet RCTs present numerous ethical and practical challenges that make this sort of

10 Evan Perkoski and Erica Chenoweth, *Nonviolent Resistance and Prevention of Mass Killings During Popular Uprisings* (Washington, DC: ICNC Press, 2018).

11 *Ibid.*

12 Megan Ming Francis, “The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding, and Movement Capture,” *Law & Society Review* 53, no. 1 (2019): 275–309.

13 For another application of the moral hazard problem in the context of militarized humanitarian intervention, see Alan J. Kuperman, 2008, “The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans.” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1: 49-80.

14 Jaime Jackson, “Mobilizing for Change: The Influence of External Support on Violent and Nonviolent Civil Conflict Dynamics,” Ph.D., University of California, Davis, 2019.; Sarah Stroup and Wendy H. Wong, *The Authority Trap: Strategic Choices of International NGOs*, 1st edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

15 Stroup and Wong, 2017.

16 Bob, 2005.

inquiry difficult. Early on in the research development stage, we decided that for the purposes of this project, we would not pursue such an approach.¹⁷

Many scholars have therefore focused on external assistance as a cause of conflict rather than as a factor impacting campaign characteristics and outcomes. For instance, Jackson¹⁸ highlights the different effects of foreign state support and NGO support, both on the choice to use nonviolent or violent resistance, and on the tendency to shift between the two methods of contention. Belgioioso, Di Salvatore, and Pinckney¹⁹ find that the United Nations' peacekeeping operations tend to enable the onset of mass nonviolent campaigns, while Murdie and Bhaisin²⁰ find that the number of field offices of INGOs is correlated with an increase in both nonviolent and violent dissent. Within the armed conflict literature, with some important exceptions,²¹ the overwhelming focus has likewise been on explaining which rebel groups receive aid rather than on the effects of such aid on conflict.²²

The fourth perspective—the one we adopt in this study—is the one of the **strategist**. According to this perspective, there are few general rules about whether external assistance *as such* helps or hurts nonviolent resistance campaigns. Strategists see movements and their opponents as engaged in a strategic interaction in which each side is attempting to shore up its most important bases of power—popular support, the loyalty of security forces, and the ability to control or deter the state's coercive abilities.²³ Forms of support that reinforce these key elements of power may have both tactical and strategic benefits for the movements. Strategists therefore pay attention to the politics of external assistance. They take seriously the claim that opponent regimes can exploit fears of foreign interference to undermine a

17 The US Institute of Peace is conducting randomized controlled trial evaluations of its in-country trainings with activists, organizers, and peacebuilders in Tunisia, Nicaragua, and Sudan, based on the Synergizing Nonviolent Action and Peacebuilding (SNAP) curriculum. The RCTs are co-designed with local activists and trainers from those countries.

18 Jackson, 2019.

19 Margherita Belgioioso, Jessica Di Salvatore, and Jonathan Pinckney, "Tangled Up in Blue: The Effect of UN Peacekeeping on Nonviolent Protests in Post-Civil War Countries," *International Studies Quarterly* (3 April 2020).

20 Amanda Murdie and Tavishi Bhasin, "Aiding and Abetting? Human Rights INGOs and Domestic Anti-Government Protest," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 2 (2011): 163-191.

21 Idean Salehyan, *Rebels without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics*, 1 edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

22 Idean Salehyan, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and David E. Cunningham, "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups," *International Organization* 65, no. 4 (October 2011): 709–44; Daniel Bynam, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); Daniel Bynam, *Road Warriors: Foreign Fighters in the Armies of Jihad*, 1st edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

23 Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Veronique Dudouet, "Sources, Functions, and Dilemmas of External Assistance to Civil Resistance Movements," in *Civil Resistance: Comparative Perspectives on Nonviolent Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

campaign's popularity, while also recognizing that well-timed forms of support can be vital for a campaign's long-term capacity and resilience.²⁴ This perspective also takes for granted that donors themselves are interested parties involved in the strategic interaction, but strategists see this fact as a political reality rather than as a threat to causal inference. If this perspective is right, then activists should approach the question of external assistance with political savvy. The focus should be on seeking and accepting forms of support with a demonstrated ability to increase popular participation, maintain nonviolent discipline, elicit defections, and deter mass atrocities against the movement. To do this, campaigns need a consolidated base of descriptive evidence regarding the pros and cons of different forms of assistance from different types of donors. Moreover, potential donors require a similar evidence base for understanding which types of support to which types of actors affiliated with nonviolent campaigns are most likely to support them—and not undermine them. This study seeks to provide one.

Why Existing Findings Diverge—and How This Study Contributes

In the existing literature, one can find support for all four perspectives. Part of the reason for such divergent findings relates to the differences in the underlying data upon which they rely. In general, studies that view external assistance with skepticism²⁵ base their pessimism on a very blunt measure of external assistance—a binary measure of whether or not the campaign received direct financial assistance from a foreign state. As noted above, this is an incredibly narrow measure representing only one of many forms of external assistance. Moreover, it neglects donors other than states, which are also numerous.²⁶ Existing published measures do not allow us to gauge how the timing of assistance may play a part in explaining its varying effects on movement characteristics, nor do they focus on the question of how support affects the ultimate outcomes of these movements.

Most optimists base their assessments on qualitative evidence gleaned from a small number of cases. For example, *A Diplomat's Handbook for Democracy Development Support*²⁷ identifies numerous other forms of external assistance that states have used besides direct funding. Other qualitative studies of external assistance have likewise focused more on the

24 Perkoski and Chenoweth, 2018; Stephen Zunes and Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "External Actors and Nonviolent Struggles in the Middle East," in Maria J. Stephan, editor, *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization and Governance in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

25 Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Perkoski and Chenoweth, 2018.

26 Jackson, 2019.

27 Jeremy Kinsman and Kurt Bassuener, eds, *A Diplomat's Handbook for Democracy Development Support*, 3rd edition (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016).

impacts of non-state actors, liberal international institutions, and the Catholic Church on mobilization and state restraint.²⁸ Such studies have yielded the important insight that NGOs and INGOs can have significant effects on movement characteristics and outcomes. To our knowledge, among large, quantitative studies, only Jackson highlights the different effects of foreign state support and NGOs.²⁹ She focuses on the impacts of such donors on the tendency for movements to choose and shift between nonviolent and violent resistance, but she does not focus on the effects of such assistance beyond these two measures.

Another reason why existing findings diverge relates to the fact that many studies focus on a particular time period or type of campaign support rather than evaluating a wide range of support types across a broad timespan. For instance, some studies focus only on external assistance to civil society that might support an enabling environment for mass mobilization to emerge—by strengthening independent media outlets, and supporting capacity-building among labor organizations, trade unions, and youth groups, among others.³⁰ Of course, the arrival of support during a key moment of a mass campaign may prove decisive in its outcome. Therefore, others focus more explicitly on movement support during a movement’s peak mobilization.³¹ Still others, like Johansen, argue that external assistance in the aftermath of a campaign might be more impactful than pro-democracy assistance before or during a campaign.³² Such studies are crucial, and we aim to evaluate various periods of support as well as the degree to which the timing of the assistance proved critical to the campaign’s characteristics.³³

Finally, with some notable exceptions,³⁴ many studies of external assistance to social movements in the past have looked at movements operating in democratic or semi-democratic contexts. Most studies of external assistance to armed rebellions have focused on

28 Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Bunce and Wolchik, 2011; Jørgen Johansen, “Analysing External Support to Nonviolent Revolutions,” in *Experiments with Peace: Celebrating Peace on Johan Galtung’s 80th Birthday* (Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2011); Veronique Dudouet and Howard Clark, “Nonviolent Civic Action in Support of Human Rights and Democracy,” study commissioned by European Parliament, May 2009; Ritter, 2015; Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Catholic Social Activism* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).

29 Jackson, 2019.

30 Bunce and Wolchik, 2011.

31 Johnson, 2019.

32 Johansen, 2011.

33 Dudouet, 2015.

34 Gladys Kudzaishe Hlatywayo and Charles Mangongera, “The Challenges for Social Movements in Post-Mugabe Zimbabwe,” US Institute of Peace Special Report 460 (January 2020); Stephen Zunes and Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “External Actors and Nonviolent Struggles in the Middle East,” in *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and Governance in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

rebellions operating in autocratic or anocratic systems. Therefore, we know much less about how various forms of assistance affect *nonviolent* movements operating under and against authoritarian regimes. Among those studies that have examined external assistance to nonviolent movements against autocrats, most have been focused on developing new conceptual and theoretical frameworks, categorizing different kinds of support, and evaluating impacts of external assistance on a small number of cases.³⁵

To address discrepancies in prior studies of external assistance, we adopt a multi-methodological approach focusing on external assistance to maximalist campaigns that began between 2000 and 2013 worldwide. Our focus on maximalist campaigns allows us to explore external assistance across campaigns with comparable goals that are both difficult to achieve and deeply consequential for their societies. This allows us to avoid the trap of looking into nonviolent campaigns that have a broader range of goals that may or may not be comparable across contexts. Focusing on maximalist campaigns also has the practical benefit of allowing us to work with a more manageable sample size, while increasing our certainty that our data capture all reported campaigns during the time period.

Our focus on the post-2000 period allows us to evaluate political dynamics during a period wherein maximalist nonviolent campaigns had achieved their prevalence as the primary mode of popular struggle.³⁶ Moreover, all of the campaigns included in this study therefore took place in a similar global normative environment promoted by the United States. The 2000-2013 period was unambiguously unipolar, allowing us to explore the impacts of external assistance to nonviolent campaigns without needing to account for the bipolar rivalry that characterized the Cold War.³⁷ Additionally, all of the campaigns took place during the digital age, which means that nonviolent campaigns were more likely to be noticed and reported, and new forms of technical assistance were available to them. Finally, as Selina Gallo-Cruz notes, the postwar period saw a large increase in the number of INGOs committed to training, education, and research on nonviolent resistance. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the number of such INGOs had blossomed, making the post-2000 period a particularly salient one for analysis.³⁸

35 See some useful contributions by Johansen, 2011; Dudouet, 2015.

36 Erica Chenoweth, "The Future of Nonviolent Resistance," *Journal of Democracy* (July 2020).

37 That said, we did collect data on the South African Anti-Apartheid movement, which provides one historical example for comparison against these more recent cases.

38 Selina Gallo-Cruz, "Organizing Global Nonviolence: The Growth and Spread of Nonviolent INGOs, 1948-2003," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change* 34 (2012): 213-256; Selina Gallo-Cruz, "Nonviolence beyond the State: International NGOs and Local Nonviolent Mobilization," *International Sociology* 34, no. 6 (2019): 655-674.

These selection criteria do limit our ability to make inferences about the effects of external assistance on all nonviolent (or violent) campaigns during all periods. For instance, we cannot necessarily generalize these findings to non-maximalist campaigns, such as reformist movements, movements with local or regional goals, movements for rights, or movements targeting private actors like corporations.

The qualitative component of our study involves research on eight cases, which we selected based on their variation in region and outcome (Table 1). We conducted over 80 interviews with key stakeholders—activists, donors, policymakers, journalists, human rights advocates, and others—in these eight cases. Moreover, we collected and analyzed original data on over 25,000 publicly-reported incidents of external assistance to all of the maximalist nonviolent campaigns operating worldwide between 2000 and 2013.³⁹ Both collection efforts produced novel empirical material.

Table 1: Case Studies Integrated into the Analysis

LOCATION (YEARS)	MOVEMENT
Serbia (2000)	Bulldozer Revolution
Ukraine (2004–2005)	Orange Revolution
Belarus (2006)	Denim Revolution
Iran (2009)	Green Revolution and Day of Rage
Tunisia (2010–2011)	Jasmine Revolution
Egypt (2011)	January 25 Revolution
Syria (2011–2013)	Syrian Uprising
Sudan (2011–2013)	Anti-al-Bashir Movement

To evaluate the effects of external assistance on nonviolent campaigns, during both qualitative and quantitative data collection, we systematized four key dimensions of external assistance: types of support (Table 2), supporters (Table 3), recipients (Table 4), and the timing of the assistance (Table 5).

³⁹ This includes all 67 maximalist campaigns identified in the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) 2.1 dataset between 2000 and 2013. We also include an additional historical case (South Africa). See Table A1 in Technical Appendix and the discussion below for further information.

Table 2: Types of Support

Financial: Monetary assistance (e.g., small or large grants, scholarships, cash, loans, strike funds, legal funds, food, medicine, and debt relief). This can include direct assistance or assistance through intermediaries.

Moral / symbolic: Nonviolent solidarity actions (e.g., digital campaigning or advocacy, mobilization on behalf of group in one's own country, showcasing activists' cause and work, providing awards, visiting the country, and directly participating in the campaign in the country, like US Ambassador Robert Ford marching with Syrians in July 2011).

Technical: Assistance with planning, logistics, intelligence, coordination, convening activists, conducting and delivering background research, and the implementation of campaign-related tasks (e.g., putting activists in touch with one another, providing warnings of impending repression, providing physical space for training and organization without necessarily conducting the training, providing a strategic analysis of the situation, providing direct legal assistance, and providing direct medical assistance). Provision of equipment (e.g., cell phones, computers, and cameras), and materials (e.g., printing, books, articles, and translations). This can include relationship-building or convening for the purposes of relationship-building.

Training: The provision of leadership training, organizational capacity-building, labor organizing, nonviolent action or movement training, legal training, and medical training. Note that this category explicitly requires the supporter

to train the activists (not just provide space for training, which is coded as technical support).

Nonviolent civilian protection: Protective accompaniment, nonviolent interpositioning, mediation between conflict participants, monitoring regime behavior, ceasefires, and other local conditions.

Sanctions against regime: Issuing active sanctions (e.g., tangible bilateral or multilateral penalties) in direct response to the regime's actions toward the campaign. Includes travel bans, exclusion from meetings, freezing assets, imposing arms embargoes, or other measures (e.g., multinational corporations withdrawing from South Africa in opposition to apartheid).

Safe passage for defectors: Providing asylum, amnesty, "golden parachutes," or other incentives for regime elites to concede to the campaign or leave the country.

Preventing / mitigating repression: Providing safe havens for activists, granting asylum or refugee status to activists, demanding release of activists from prison, calling out / issuing demarches in response to abuses of activists, issuing indictments, arresting / trying war criminals, blocking or stalling on military aid shipments, etc.

Unspecified: There is evidence of support, but the available information regarding the support is too general to specify the type.

Other: Any other form of assistance not identified above.

Removal of Support

Yes: An ally withdrew tangible support for the opponent government (e.g., US President Reagan threatening to reduce aid to the Philippines under Marcos, or the US withholding aid from Egypt in mid-2013).

No: All other cases.

Table 3: Supporter Types

International nongovernmental organization (INGO): A formal, private organization that undertakes activities to assist people in other countries. Can include advocacy organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and International Fellowship of Reconciliation), foundations and philanthropic organizations (e.g., Open Society, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, and Nonviolence International), humanitarian organizations (e.g., International Red Cross and Red Crescent), educational or training groups (e.g., CANVAS and Rhize), and adjuncts to religious groups (e.g., Catholic Relief Workers).

Diaspora group: A collection of people living abroad who engage in advocacy on behalf of people living in their home countries (e.g., Tamils in Canada and Sudanese in the United States).

University / student group: A formal or informal group of students, educators and intellectuals who engage in advocacy (e.g., Indonesian students advocating on behalf of Timorese activists).

Transnational solidarity network (TAN): A formal or informal collection of activists who mobilize in support of struggles in other countries. Often (but not always) involves groups in the Global North mobilizing on behalf of groups in the Global South (e.g., American celebrities mobilizing in support of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa). Includes external movements (e.g., Egyptian April 6 activists who sent pizza to Wisconsin labor activists in 2011). Excludes transnational unions or organized labor groups, which are coded separately (see below).

Individual: A person acting in an individual capacity (e.g., a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, a celebrity advocate, and a financier). Excludes people acting in the capacity of their role in an organized group in any other category.

International governmental organization (IGO): A multilateral governmental organization, such as the United Nations, World Bank, International Labor Organization, or International Criminal Court. Includes regional IGOs such as the European Union.

Corporation: A company or firm. Typically a multinational corporation, such as Shell Oil, General Motors, AT&T, or Nike.

Foreign government: A foreign government (e.g., the United States Government), an agency within a government (e.g., the US State Department), or an individual acting on behalf of a government (e.g., the US Secretary of State).

Transnational labor organization / union: A transnational non-governmental labor group (e.g., the AFL-CIO). Excludes the International Labor Organization, which is an IGO.

Rebel / paramilitary / militia group: An armed non-state or semi-state actor from within or outside the country (e.g., Vietnamese insurgents giving political advice to South Africa anti-apartheid activists).

Media: A formal or informal media organization providing direct coverage of the movement.

Unspecified: There is evidence of support, but the available information regarding the support is too general to specify the supporter.

Other: All other supporters not listed above.

We emphasize that this study does not only analyze support to campaign recipients (activists, organizations, movements, or coalitions of groups that are part of a campaign) but also casts a broader net to include key actors in the domestic setting, such as advocacy groups, media organizations, student groups, labor unions, formal opposition parties, and others (see Table 4). We do this in part because we are interested in the broad ecosystem of actors who can have important impacts in the context of nonviolent campaigns and who may or may not be directly identifiable as actively participating in the campaign. We chose a number of recipient types based on a survey of the literature that revealed which types of domestic actors may be most relevant to identify.⁴⁰

Table 4: Recipient Types

Civil society organization (CSO): Formal civil society organizations. Can include local or transnational advocacy organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and International Fellowship of Reconciliation), foundations and philanthropic organizations (e.g., Open Society, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, and Nonviolence International), humanitarian organizations (e.g., International Red Cross and Red Crescent), educational or training groups (e.g., CANVAS and Rhize), and religious groups and institutions (e.g., Catholic Relief Workers). Can include state-run or independent CSOs.

University / student group: Formal or informal groups of students, educators and intellectuals who engage in advocacy (e.g., Indonesian students advocating for human rights).

Individual: A person acting in an individual capacity (e.g., a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, a celebrity advocate, a financier, etc.). Excludes people acting in the capacity of their role in an organized group in any other category.

Business or corporation: A local company or firm. Typically small- and medium-sized enterprises located in the country in which the movement is active. Can be state-owned or independent.

Government: Governments or elements of the government (e.g., the Egyptian Government), an agency within a government (e.g., the Egyptian military), or an individual acting on behalf of a government (e.g., the chief of staff of the Egyptian military).

Labor organization / union: Organized labor groups (e.g., unions). Can be state-owned or independent.

Rebel / paramilitary / militia group: An armed non-state or semi-state actor from within or outside the country (e.g., Vietnamese insurgents giving advice to South Africa anti-apartheid activists).

Local media: A formal or informal media organization providing direct coverage of the movement. Can be state-owned or independent.

Formal opposition parties: Legal opposition political parties operating in the country.

Movement activists: Civilians, including activists, movement leaders, and grassroots groups who receive direct assistance outside of the context of any of the categories above.

Unspecified: There is evidence of support, but the available information regarding the support is too general to specify the recipient.

Other: All other recipients not listed above.

40 Johansen, 2011.

Finally, we focused on the time periods in which the support took place—the pre-campaign period, the peak campaign period, and the post-campaign period. Table 5 defines these periods.

Table 5: Timing of Assistance

Pre-Campaign: Incidents of external assistance that began in the five years before the campaign commenced. For instance, providing financial assistance to media organizations to protect press freedom, training workshops for student activists, or computers or cell phones to poll workers prior to elections.

Peak Campaign: Incidents of external assistance that began during the period of mass mobilization—i.e., while there were at least 1,000 observed participants mobilized continuously as part of the maximalist campaign. For instance, small grants to civil society groups advocating for civil rights, legal aid

for human rights defenders who are imprisoned, or diplomatic maneuvers to express support and solidarity for the opposition.

Post-Campaign: Incidents of external assistance that began during the two-year period after the campaign ended, either in success (i.e., the removal of the incumbent national leader or territorial independence) or failure (i.e., the demobilization of the campaign, below 1,000 observed participants). For instance, mediating dialogue sessions regarding constitutional reforms, providing economic relief to support democratic reforms, or calling for transitional justice processes.

The results of our multi-methodological inquiry bolster our case for viewing external assistance to maximalist nonviolent campaigns from a strategic perspective. While few general rules can be laid down, nine consensus insights show how movements have benefited from various forms of external assistance that helped them sustain high participation, maintain nonviolent discipline, deter crackdowns, and elicit defections—key factors in determining their overall success. We find that training is one of the most consistently impactful forms of assistance.⁴¹ The sharing of skills, frameworks, and know-how for effectively waging nonviolent struggle has indeed helped campaigns to activate several of the mechanisms that are correlated with campaign victory—a clear indication that organizers and their adversaries are engaged in a strategic interaction where skillful planning, strategizing, and maneuvering can make a campaign more likely to achieve success. While few general rules can be laid down, nine consensus insights show how movements have benefited from various forms of external assistance—including training—that helped them sustain high participation, maintain nonviolent discipline, deter crackdowns, and elicit defections. Although opponent regimes often

41 Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Veronique Dudouet, “Sources, Functions, and Dilemmas of External Assistance to Civil Resistance Movements,” in *Civil Resistance: Comparative Perspectives on Nonviolent Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

try to exploit fears of foreign interference to undermine a campaign's popularity, well-timed support for training in particular can be vital for a campaign's long-term success.

The rest of this report proceeds as follows: We begin with brief descriptions of the findings derived from the eight cases, which help to highlight concrete examples of external assistance before, during, and after maximalist nonviolent campaigns. We then turn to a more general look at the impacts of external assistance across all 68 maximalist campaigns in the 2000-2013 period, relying on insights from the External Support for Nonviolent Campaigns Dataset (EX-D). We then summarize our combined findings into nine key takeaways. We conclude by providing concrete recommendations for activists and organizers, governments, nongovernmental organizations, and scholars based on our findings.

A Brief Summary of Eight Campaigns

In the case studies, we are attentive to the descriptive patterns regarding the correlations between different forms of support during the pre-, peak-, and post-campaign phases. Here, we present brief summaries of each campaign (Table 1) as well as how our respondents described the rationales and perceived effects of the support each campaign received. One important caveat is that although these cases assess a broad range of external actors, the interviews skew in favor of US-based entities (including the US government), due to the unique access of one of the authors. Please see the Technical Appendix for more information on the case selection and interview recruitment strategy.

1. Serbia: 2000 Bulldozer Revolution

After nearly a decade of civil war in the Balkans, Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, known as the “the butcher of the Balkans,” maintained a repressive grip on power. Civic groups, including the Women in Black, had been organizing against Milošević’s militarist-nationalist policies since the early 1990s. In 1996 and 1997, mass protests led by university students and opposition coalition group, Zajedno, over fraudulent regional elections put unprecedented pressure on Milošević. Following the 1999 NATO-led bombing campaign and with Serbia becoming increasingly isolated internationally, the youth-led group, Otpor, fixed their sights on uniting the opposition and removing Milošević from power. In October 2000, after Milošević attempted to steal an election won by opposition candidate Vojislav Koštunica, weeks of mass protests, strikes, road blockages and sit-ins across the country forced Milošević to recognize the election results and yield power to the opposition candidate.

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Following the war in Kosovo and the NATO-led bombing that devastated Serbia’s infrastructure, virtually all of the UN-imposed arms, economic, and trade restrictions, which had been lifted following the signing of the Dayton Accords were re-imposed. Milošević had been accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which created disgruntlement among senior commanders in the military. Balkans expert Daniel Serwer said that US and EU sanctions were effective at applying pressure on Milošević both because of the prospect that they could be lifted and because they were reinforced by an effective domestic movement.⁴²

In terms of foreign aid, direct democracy assistance through both the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and George Soros’ Fund for An Open Society became available in the late 1980s and early 1990s to support consulting, training, polling, and direct aid. After

42 Interview with Daniel Serwer, Director of the Conflict Management Program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, September 8, 2015.

effective lobbying by US-based Serbian diaspora and solidarity groups, the US Congress earmarked \$50 million to support civil society activities and the nonviolent opposition in 1998. In response, Serbian state TV declared that the opposition was backed by the CIA and that Secretary of State Madeline Albright was calling the shots.

Donor coordination was extensive. There were five major international democracy promotion conferences among aid providers between 1997 to 2000, and in 1999 the German Marshall Fund launched regular coordination meetings in Washington, DC with participants including USAID and the Department of State. Significantly, Ray Salvatore Jennings notes that after March 1999, offshore communities comprised of expatriate embassy staff, donor agencies, and implementing organizations evacuated from Serbia to Budapest, Szeged, and Macedonia became valuable avenues for exchanging tactical and strategic information.⁴³

Capacity-building was a third area of significant external support. For example, the “New Serbia Forum” was launched in 1999 by the British Foreign Office to convene virtually all of the key figures of the opposition against Milošević in order to prepare a comprehensive plan for a post-Milošević future for Serbia. In addition, regional activists from Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovakia entered Serbia and played an advisory role. The International Republican Institute (IRI) assisted in bringing Slovak Marek Kapusta of the Pontis Foundation to work with Otpor on designing campaigns.

Likewise, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) assisted the Serbian Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) with the development of mechanisms for vote tabulation, and CeSID personnel traveled to Bulgaria and Poland in 1997 to observe elections and speak with relevant CSOs. NDI polling data unearthed topics of particular resonance with the voting public, and helped identify electorally viable political figures within the Democratic Opposition of Serbia. With support from NED, NDI, OTI, the Swedish International Development Agency, and the Australian and German Embassies, CeSID organized several voter turnout initiatives and media campaigns and trained thousands of election monitors.

External assistance played a significant role in media coverage. The European Union, USAID, Norwegian Peoples Aid, and the Fund for an Open Society procured and secured communications and data processing equipment utilized during the 2000 election campaign and the demonstrations that followed. This included the installation of a back-up, high-powered radio transmitter at Radio Pancevo, nine miles away from Belgrade. Additionally, Serbian media outlets and related organizations in civil society could use a common application form for the purpose of applying for relevant grants from most funders. International cooperation on efforts to circumvent the government’s obstruction of Serbian airwaves included the design

43 Ray Salvatore Jennings, “Democratic Breakthroughs: The Ingredients of Successful Revolts,” *Peaceworks*, no. 81 (August 2012).

of the Ring Around Serbia system of FM radio transmitters situated in neighboring territories (including Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia, and Romania), that transmitted programming including content from the BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio Free Europe, Radio France International, and Voice of America. A Dutch internet provider helped B92 become operational via internet broadcast in 1996. The BBC World Service also retransmitted B92 programs.

The Clinton administration was laser focused on democracy promotion efforts. The US State Department Balkans Envoy, Jim O'Brien, said he received top-level backing from President Clinton and Secretary Albright to coordinate USG efforts to promote a democratic transition in Serbia, and had wide latitude to achieve that goal.⁴⁴ According to Albert Cevallos, who worked on USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)'s Balkans team at the time, OTI, NED, and OSF used "creative and unconventional means" to get small grants to Otpor and other civic groups.⁴⁵ That said, Otpor co-founder Slobodan Djinnovic noted that Otpor was self-financed during its initial development, and it had achieved a significant degree of organizational capacity prior to receiving its first foreign donations.⁴⁶

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Former Otpor activists note that external funding helped expand and amplify the nonviolent organizing that had already begun. In-kind support to Otpor paid for communications equipment, signs, and public service announcements on Serbian radio and TV. Support for independent media groups like B92 radio and ANEM helped provide non-regime information and amplify opposition messaging.

In the spring of 2000, IRI consultant Robert Helvey, who had studied with Gene Sharp at Harvard University, hosted a seminar in Budapest that convened a number of Otpor members to discuss waging strategic nonviolent conflict. "It helped us understand what we were already doing," notes Otpor co-founder Ivan Marovic.⁴⁷ Such training efforts reinforced mobilization that had already begun. Otpor's mobilization efforts in the rural parts of the country and alliance with miners and other worker groups helped ensure nation-wide civil resistance after the election was stolen.

Extensive US and European donor coordination, supported by Otpor members and other activists, helped ensure unity of effort. The US and EU facilitated the transport of food, fuel

44 Interview with Jim O'Brien, a former US State Department envoy to the Balkans-Serbia, November 10, 2015.

45 Interview with Albert Cevallos, a former USAID Office of Transition Initiatives official, September 17, 2015.

46 Interview with Slobodan Djinnovic, co-founder of Otpor and co-founder of the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), June 6, 2017.

47 Interview with Ivan Marovic, co-founder of Otpor, December 2016.

and electricity to pro-opposition parts of Serbia, which helped those areas remain resilient.⁴⁸ The US effort benefited from close relationships between the policymakers and programmers who were responsible for implementing the strategy. “We had been working together on Balkans conflict for over a decade and so we all knew each other,” said Cevallos.⁴⁹

The US and UK Embassies created a “black list” and a “white list” to incentivize security defections.⁵⁰ “We directly communicated with military commanders that if they shot at protesters they would face prosecution and travel bans,” said Jim O’Brien.⁵¹ Defense attachés from Western embassies liaised with the Serbian military, though their biggest concern was always paramilitaries and armed police from the Interior Ministry. A significant number of conscientious objectors fled from the Serbian military to Budapest. OTI helped the conscientious objectors obtain passports and connected them to civic groups.

The US administration also sought to bring Russia, a major patron of the Milošević regime, on board. The White House urged the Kremlin to support a unified opposition and the removal of Milošević by the end of the year should the elections be stolen or Milošević launch an attack on Montenegro. Securing Russian support was a challenge, given Moscow’s opposition to NATO’s air campaign the year before, but seemed to pay off in the end game, when Milošević stepped down immediately after a meeting with the Russian foreign minister.⁵² Koštunica and Milošević convened for a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov who provided assurances to Milošević—assurances that Ivanov lacked the requisite authority to offer—that if he were to resign, he would not be charged with war crimes.

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

In the immediate post-revolution period, the Serbian resistance community was “in disarray.” Activists who joined the government or political parties were accused of “selling out.”⁵³ Donor support (including USG) waned and the US shifted support from civil society to the new transitional government. Rumors that Otpor had misappropriated funds, combined with Otpor’s oppositional tactics towards the transitional government, prompted the US to stop funding

48 *Ibid.*

49 Interview with Albert Cevallos, a former USAID official, September 17, 2015.

50 Interview with Ray Jennings, an independent consultant for the World Bank and USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives, September 9, 2015.

51 Interview with Jim O’Brien, a former US envoy to the Balkans-Serbia, November 10, 2015.

52 Gregory L. Schulte, “Regime Change Without Military Force: Lessons from Overthrowing Milosevic,” *PRISM* 4, no. 2 (April 2015).

53 Interview with Ray Jennings, an independent consultant for the World Bank and USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives, September 9, 2015; Jennings, 2012.

them. O'Brien said the US and international community, "could have been more artful in transition by supporting both the government and Otpor."⁵⁴

Dan Serwer reinforced that point, saying, "This seriously set back the post-revolution period. The 8 years of the Boris Tadic presidency went badly. It didn't move Serbia in a democratic direction."⁵⁵ His point reinforced research on transitions: "The most dangerous phase for democratic consolidation is 6-12 months after the breakthrough. There should be a ramping up of assistance to help contend with a less adrenalized version of consolidating gains. It is much harder and less rewarding to put the state back together."⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the Serbian revolution, Jennings notes, "It is likely that breakthrough would have occurred in Serbia without significant outside assistance, but the character and timing of such a transition is open to interpretation."⁵⁷ This case reinforces the claim that outside aid is most helpful when it supports a winning strategy developed and executed by local civic groups. A combination of skillful get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activity, election monitoring, and mass resistance, strongly backed by governmental and non-governmental external actors, helped the opposition succeed. According to Dan Serwer, "The Serbs called the shots. They controlled the process. This gave them credibility locally."⁵⁸

2. Ukraine: 2004-2005 Orange Revolution

On November 22, 2004, Ukraine's Central Election Commission declared Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich the winner of the Ukrainian presidential election over opponent Viktor Yushchenko, despite significant voting irregularities during the first two voting rounds. That night and in the following weeks, Yushchenko's supporters and pro-democracy activists began organizing mass protests and sit-ins in Kiev and coordinating an array of additional election-related activities to push for a third round of voting. This final round of voting occurred on December 26, 2004 under intense domestic and international monitoring and, on December 27, it was apparent that Yushchenko had a clear lead. Though Yanukovich lodged formal complaints against the final round of voting, citing election abuses, the Central Election Commission declared Yushchenko the official winner on January 11, 2005. This three-month

54 Interview with Jim O'Brien, a former US envoy to the Balkans-Serbia, November 10, 2015.

55 Interview with Daniel Serwer, Director of the Conflict Management Program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, September 8, 2015.

56 Interview with Ray Jennings, an independent consultant for the World Bank and USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, September 9, 2015.

57 Jennings, 2012.

58 Interview with Daniel Serwer, Director of the Conflict Management Program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, September 8, 2015.

period from November 2004 to January 2005 became known as Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution.”

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

There was significant US and European support for Ukrainian civil society and political institutions in the lead-up to the 2004 election. The US Agency for International Development, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF, the Ukrainian affiliate of the Soros Foundation), Inter-news and Eurasia Foundation provided funding and election-related training and assistance to election watchdog and information organizations led by Ukrainian partners. The US spent over \$18 million on election-related assistance in Ukraine in 2002 and 2003 alone, which included USAID’s non-partisan elections-focused technical assistance.⁵⁹ Indiana University’s Parliamentary Program provided technical assistance to the Ukrainian parliament (Rada), which helped provide a check on then-Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma’s power. Before the run-off vote, the State Department invited Rada Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn to the US to underscore its support for the independent legislative body. “Western assistance and moral support helped sustain pockets of pluralism within the regime and independent, opposition actors outside the state,” writes McFaul.⁶⁰

The US-Ukraine Foundation, run by diaspora in DC, received \$1 million in funding from USAID through a Congressional appropriation. Dmytro Potekhin, who ran the Kiev office of the US-Ukraine foundation, told a funny story of when security forces raided their office in 2004. “They expected to find bombs and terrorists. Instead, Otpor activists and a Georgian were leading trainings with Ukrainian activists (Pora) as part of a Freedom House program.”⁶¹ They showed the security forces a copy of the US-Ukraine bilateral agreement, through which their activities were supported.

In addition, IRI and NDI cultivated relationships with individuals who became leaders within Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine party before it was founded in 2002 and went on to provide technical assistance to party organizing efforts and election monitoring organizations like the Committee of Ukrainian Voters.⁶² This was particularly important since it was the ability of election monitors to expose election fraud in real time during the 2004 vote count that pro-

59 Christine Emeran and Alina Polyakova, “External Actors in Revolutionary Change: Ukraine’s Orange Revolution and Euromaidan,” in *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?*, eds. Mathew Burrows and Maria J. Stephan (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2015).

60 Michael McFaul, “Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution,” *International Security* 32, no. 2 (September 28, 2007).

61 Interview with Dmytro Potekhin, a Ukrainian activist, February 7, 2017.

62 *Ibid.*

vided a foundation for mass mobilization. Elite connections between Our Ukraine leaders and Western leaders helped bolster Yushchenko's image.

Many NGOs also organized trainings in nonviolent action for local activists, including Freedom House and the Westminster Foundation's support of Freedom of Choice Coalition's summer camps for Yellow Pora youth activists, which were led by leaders of the nonviolent struggles in Serbia and Georgia. Donors and grassroots actors commented that this early support was critical in building a strong foundation and capacity on which to organize.⁶³ Donor investment in independent media, including *Ukrainska Pravda*, helped the opposition communicate Kuchma and Yanukovich's illegitimacy and criminality to world, influencing how capitals responded to falsified second round of elections.

Overall, donor coordination leading up to and during the Orange Revolution was strong. One donor cited that, while there were no joint statements or actions, "we knew what each other was doing."⁶⁴

The US Ambassador to Ukraine at the time, John Herbst, said that starting in 2003, there were clear messages sent from the highest ranks of the US government that there would be consequences if the elections were not free and fair.⁶⁵ Earlier, following the brutal beheading of journalist Giorgiy Gongadze in 2000—which triggered opposition resistance to Kuchma, who was suspected of being involved in the murder—the Bush administration denied Kuchma a presidential visit to Washington and provided asylum to Gongadze's widow and her family. Ukrainian activist Dmytro Potekhin noted that after the failed campaign following Gongadze, some activists discovered Gene Sharp's writings on nonviolent struggle, including *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, which had a "profound effect" on their thinking.⁶⁶

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Donor funding through groups like the US-Ukraine Foundation supported the mass mobilization and election monitoring campaigns. According to Dmytro Potekhin, "US funding was helpful because it supported the right strategy, which we built from scratch. We already had the infrastructure and partnerships in place before the funding arrived, which was late in the game (only 3 weeks before elections)."⁶⁷

63 *Ibid.*

64 Interview with Ambassador John Herbst, a former US ambassador to Ukraine, March 23, 2017.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Interview with Dmytro Potekhin, a Ukrainian activist who was earlier the Kiev-based Project Director of the US-Ukraine Foundation, February 7, 2017.

67 *Ibid.*

Aside from investing funding, training, and other resources into building election-related capacities, donors and capitals adopted a unified message to condemn the second round of voting as illegitimate. The Polish Sejm issued an appeal to the Ukrainian parliament to undertake everything it could do to “make the truth, freedom, and democracy win” and Czech president Václav Havel sent messages of support to the protestors.⁶⁸ Polish and Lithuanian mediators worked to engage both the Ukrainian government and the opposition via EU-sponsored negotiations that helped pave the way for another vote.⁶⁹ In addition, NDI and Freedom House collaborated to bring in the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (comprised of 1,000 observers from seventeen electoral monitoring organizations from former communist countries) ahead of the third vote.⁷⁰

Further, the US engaged in signaling tactics to raise the costs of and discourage bad behavior on the part of President Kuchma, who had endorsed Yanukovych. Senator Richard Lugar, who was President Bush’s envoy to the second round of Ukrainian elections, reported on fraud and abuse.

Crucially important was the role played by diplomats and other government officials in deterring security force crackdowns during the popular mobilization. The US and other embassies maintained contact with Kuchma and were in touch with the army, police, and Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) in Kiev 6-8 months before the election and received assurances that they would not engage in a crackdown. “But we never knew what other units would do,” according to Ambassador Herbst. Herbst said that when he learned police from Crimea were planning to come to Kiev after the election, he called Victor Pinchuk (Kuchma’s billionaire son-in-law) to give him a warning.⁷¹

Coupled with the opposition’s open communications to win support from security forces and the massive number of people taking to the streets daily, these actions worked well to prevent violent crackdowns on protestors. As former US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul noted, “in cases of democratic transition or breakthrough...external actions and resources that constrain autocratic actors can be just as important as aid provided to democratic actors.”⁷²

68 Taras Kuzio, “Poland Plays Strategic Role in Ukraine’s Orange Revolution,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1, no. 144 (December 2004).

69 Kuzio, 2004.

70 McFaul, 2007.

71 Interview with Ambassador John Herbst, a former US ambassador to Ukraine, March 23, 2017.

72 McFaul, 2007.

Demonstrations of solidarity also provided the inspiration needed to galvanize protestors in the streets. For example, former Poland Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa visited Ukraine to meet with Yushchenko in early December, and the main Solidarity monument in Gdansk was covered in an orange shawl to demonstrate Poland's support.⁷³ US Secretary of State Colin Powell strongly condemned the election results as illegitimate, which activists mentioned provided a huge boost to morale.⁷⁴ In addition, key Western policymakers and foreign policy experts worked to amplify the information shared by Ukrainian activists to help garner support in Western capitals.

However, donors and activists also noted examples of external support that worked against the pro-democracy movement. For years Russia embraced Kuchma without criticizing his antidemocratic ways, while its proximity and the significant Russian-speaking population in Ukraine facilitated the flow of ideas about Russia's model of "managed democracy." The Russian government and Russian businessmen provided significant financial support to Kuchma and to the Yanukovich campaign, at least \$300 million, endorsed the first election results, and encouraged rival protests in Donetsk.⁷⁵ Public relations firms in the US lobbied heavily on behalf of Yanukovich. One activist claimed that in the summer of 2004 there was a Russian-backed "terrorism prevention training" in Crimea (which was later annexed by Russia), involving several thousand members of the police and the national guard whose focus was on "providing safety" against mass protests.⁷⁶

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Ukraine expert Alina Polyakova noted, "There was a vacuum in civil society after the Orange Revolution." The US shifted its focus and "minimal support was provided to civil society organizations and movements outside of Kiev," resulting in a lack of focus on regional reforms and insufficient checks on local governments.⁷⁷ Combined with a lack of clear post-movement strategy to help transition networks and groups into government accountability and transparency watchdogs, many actors who participated in the Orange Revolution disengaged from the political space.⁷⁸ Polyakova noted, "USAID should have focused on con-

73 Taras Kuzio, "Poland Plays Strategic Role in Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1, no. 144 (December 2004).

74 William Schneider, "Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution,'" *The Atlantic*, December 2004,

75 "Timeline: Battle for Ukraine," *BBC News*, January 23, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4061253.stm>.

76 Interview with Andriy Ignatov, an economist who formerly consulted with the Canadian International Development Agency and Freedom House, March 14, 2017.

77 Interview with Alina Polyakova, Director of Research for Europe and Eurasia at the Atlantic Council, February 9, 2017.

78 *Ibid.*

necting urban centers to rural communities and should have supported groups other than professional NGOs.”⁷⁹ This is a consistent finding in the broader literature, and an ongoing policy problem.

However, there were bright spots. The Solidarity Center (S Center), a NED affiliate which has an office in Kiev, was in daily contact with Ukrainian workers during the revolution. While the S Center did not provide funding during the revolution, it distributed grants to support union activity after the revolution, particularly in the East where the mining industry is concentrated and where unions played an important role in highlighting corruption and the need for social protections.⁸⁰

CONCLUSION

As McFaul has written, in the Ukraine case, “external assistance played a direct, causal role in restricting some aspects of President Leonid Kuchma’s power, while increasing some aspects of the opposition’s power.”⁸¹ Significant long-term investments in civil society capacity-building and democratic institutions created an enabling environment for an effective, locally-devised and executed strategy of mobilizing, protecting, and defending the vote. Diplomatic pressure and intervention with security forces helped mitigate violence targeting protestors while European mediation efforts brought the Ukrainian government and opposition together at key moments. Russian political and financial backing for Kuchma and the Yanukovich campaign posed a challenge for pro-democratic forces. The minimal donor investment in civic engagement and mobilization in the aftermath of the uprising, however, weakened Ukraine’s prospects for a successful democratic transition.

3. Belarus: 2006 Denim Revolution

The Belarusian nonviolent resistance campaign sometimes called the “Denim Movement” began in the lead-up to the 2006 presidential elections, when activists from the Zubr youth-led movement took to the streets to express their frustration with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Mass protests broke out following the March 19, 2006 presidential election, when Lukashenko allegedly received 84% of the votes in an election that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe deemed fraudulent. Tens of thousands of demonstrators congregated in October Square in Minsk to challenge the results and set up an impromptu resistance camp. The opposition, led by Alexander Millinkievič and Alyaksandr Kazulin, declared that they would refuse to acknowledge the election results and announced a massive rally for March 25. The rally was broken up by riot police and hundreds

79 *Ibid.*

80 Interview with Shawna Bader-Blau, President of Solidarity Center, December 21, 2015.

81 McFaul, 2007.

of protestors were arrested. In the face of harsh regime repression and state domination of the media, along with its weak organization and participation base, the opposition movement was dismantled and Lukashenko, strongly backed by Russia, remained in power.

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Starting in 2001, the International Republican Institute sponsored “Democracy 101” workshops for youth and other civic leaders, many of which took place in neighboring Vilnius. Trygve Olson, who led IRI’s Belarus work from Lithuania, said the goal of the workshops was to provide a safe environment for activists to learn from one another and to develop skills in campaigning and leadership with experienced grassroots organizers in the region.⁸² These workshops included trainings in civil resistance for leaders of the Zubr movement conducted by leaders from the Serbian Otpor movement.

The US made significant investments in independent media and support for political parties and other election-related activities through the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, triggered by Lukashenko claiming victory in a referendum that eliminated constitutional term limits, and which was passed unanimously by the US Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush. The legislation authorized funding for FY2005 and FY2006 to support election observation and polling, independent media and indigenous-language radio broadcasting to Belarus, human rights, and the establishment of international exchanges and advanced professional training programs to strengthen civil society. Starting in 2005, USAID and European donors, including the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported leadership and capacity-building training for civic leaders through the Pact program, which supported civil society, independent trade unions, and media outlets, and NED, IRI, and NDI provided additional support.⁸³ IRI conducted polling and worked with political parties at the national level, and NDI conducted polling and worked with parties at the provincial level.

The Democracy Act called for multilateral loan and financial sanctions to be applied on the Belarusian government until it could demonstrate progress on releasing journalists and political prisoners from prison and could account for disappeared activists and journalists. According to Tom Melia, a State Department official at the time, while the Democracy Act was strong and comprehensive, its application proved to be much more of a challenge, with not all parts of the US government following its provisions.⁸⁴

82 Interview with Trygve Olson, former Director of the International Republican Institute’s Belarus program, February 23, 2016.

83 Pact, “Belarus,” accessed May 4, 2020, <https://www.pactworld.org/country/belarus>.

84 Interview with Tom Melia, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the US State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, January 6, 2016.

There was strong diplomatic support for activists and opposition leaders. In 2005, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with opposition leaders in Vilnius and offered moral support—stressing the importance of a national movement for democracy in Belarus.⁸⁵ The US Ambassador to Belarus, Michael Kozak, played a very proactive role in bringing together various parts of the opposition. This included support for a primary election and a “caucus of democratic forces” to choose the opposition candidate for the 2006 presidential elections. The development of a democratic process of decision-making was a success of the pre-campaign period.

Although Millinkievič won the primary, critics said it was a mistake for the US and Western embassies to “pick favorites” and push him to run for president since he lacked political or campaigning experience. Kazulin later ran as a second opposition candidate during the elections, which some say divided the opposition vote. Kozak, for his part, noted the opposition leadership overall was weak, as the “A team” of Belarusian leaders had been removed from the country in the 1990s.⁸⁶

Other key diplomatic support for the opposition included the Swedish Ambassador to Belarus, Stefan Ericksson, who spoke fluent Belarusian and actively promoted cultural activities and translations designed to promote a Belarusian national identity. Ericksson was very highly regarded by pro-democracy activists.⁸⁷

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

While there was significant diplomatic and donor support to the political opposition in the lead-up to the 2006 elections, Zubr, the main movement actor, also received direct financial assistance. Unlike in the case of Otpor, much of the support was donor-driven, inflexible and some of it went towards funding activist salaries. Interviewees noted that this led to significant competition and even corruption among grassroots organizations, with youth becoming “professional revolutionaries.”⁸⁸ Zubr leaders were accused of corruption and Russian KGB infiltration of opposition groups exacerbated the trust deficit amongst already weak civil society groups, and between civil society and the political opposition.

85 Elise Labott, “Rice Meets with Belarus Opposition,” *CNN*, April 21, 2005, <https://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/04/21/rice.belarus/index.html>.

86 Interview with Ambassador Michael Kozak, Senior Adviser to the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and a former US ambassador to Belarus, February 1, 2016.

87 Kurt Bassuener, “Belarus: Europe’s Last Dictatorship,” in *A Diplomat’s Handbook for Democracy Development Support*, eds. Kurt Bassuener and Jeremy Kinsman (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013).

88 Interview with Trygve Olson, former Director of the International Republican Institute’s Belarus program, February 23, 2016.

Some donor support proved to be highly effective, including the Lithuanian-sponsored SMS campaign on election night that encouraged tens of thousands of Belarusians to come out into the street in a show of solidarity to protest Lukashenko’s heavily disputed victory.⁸⁹ The protests and sit-in that followed, however, were highly unorganized and “it wasn’t clear who was in charge—Millinkievič or Kazulin—or who should speak for the protestors.”⁹⁰ The opposition protests were confined to Minsk and mostly made up of young, urban, middle class participants, making them relatively easy to suppress. Slobodan Djinovic, an Otpor leader, said that Zubr was unable to build broad-based coalitions or organize campaigns that weren’t focused on the elections.⁹¹

Meanwhile, diplomatic responses by the US, EU, Poland, Lithuania, and other key embassies to the election and subsequent protests were highly variable and uncoordinated. According to one European diplomat, “everybody was doing their own thing.”⁹² There was minimal embassy or donor coordination with Millinkievič and no pressure from civil society to coordinate their efforts.

Russia was the most significant external actor. The Russian government denounced the OSCE for being biased and offered strong backing for Lukashenko. That included support for the Belarusian government’s massive disinformation operations, and Russian intelligence was widely believed to have infiltrated Zubr—creating deep fissures in the opposition. International business backing for the Lukashenko regime, notably in the oil and gas sectors, remained a key pillar of support.

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Following the 2006 fraudulent election and crackdown on opposition leaders, which included rounding up hundreds of activists in Soviet-style prisons in Minsk and holding sham trials, the US and EU imposed sanctions against Lukashenko and other top officials, including travel bans and financial restrictions.⁹³ The UN Human Rights Council 2007 report cited the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus, who noted that “the political system of Belarus seems to be incompatible with the concept of human rights” and that “the

89 Interview with Slobodan Djinovic, co-founder of Otpor and co-founder of the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), June 6, 2017.

90 Interview with Ambassador Michael Kozak, Senior Adviser to the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and a former US ambassador to Belarus, February 1, 2016.

91 Interview with Slobodan Djinovic, co-founder of Otpor and co-founder of the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), June 6, 2017.

92 Interview with European diplomat who preferred to remain anonymous, February 16, 2016.

93 C.J. Chivers, “US and Europe Plan Sanctions Against Belarus,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/25/world/europe/us-and-europe-plan-sanctions-against-belarus.html>.

Human Rights Council should either call for the democratization of the political regime and a change in the political behavior of the Government [of Belarus] or admit that Belarus' human rights record cannot be improved because the human rights violations are consistent with the political nature of the regime."⁹⁴

International pressure helped secure the release of political prisoners, including Alyaksandr Kazulin. However, the strength of these sanctions was mitigated by continued Russian backing and the lobbying of Western firms eager to protect their business interests in the state. As Belarusian activist Franak Viacorka noted, "Study the trade lobbyists in the European Parliament and the US. You'll have a better understanding of why capitals engage with Lukashenko the way they do."⁹⁵ Critics assert that the US has been more interested in preventing Belarus from falling into Russia's arms than in supporting a democratic transition.

CONCLUSION

Donor-funded trainings and workshops helped build skills and knowledge in democratic deliberation and nonviolent organizing in the lead-up to the 2006 elections. However, with many of the most talented leaders forced into exile during the 1990s and its weak civil society, it was difficult for the Belarusian opposition to withstand government repression and disinformation. Donor funding created divisions and corruption within the Zubr movement, which was largely reactive and incapable of mobilizing people outside of Minsk. While there were significant diplomatic efforts to unify the opposition, the lack of coordination between the US and EU donors during the mass protests following the 2006 election further weakened an already weak opposition. The most significant external actor in this case was Russia, whose political, economic, and intelligence support for Lukashenko helped him weather the storm. However, as this report is being written, Belarusians are in the midst of a popular uprising against the Lukashenko regime, triggered by a fraudulent presidential election in August 2020 followed by protests that were met with security force repression. The violent crackdown sparked nation-wide protests and acts of non-cooperation across the country that are unprecedented in their size and scope. Russian President Putin has threatened to deploy troops to reinforce Lukashenko's grip on power.⁹⁶

94 United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus*, Adrian Severin, A/HRC/4/16 (15 January 2007), <https://www.right-docs.org/download/12434/>.

95 Interview with Franak Viacorka, a Belarusian activist with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, January 20, 2016.

96 Shaun Walker, "Belarus Protests: Putin Ready to Send Lukashenko Military Support," *Guardian*, August 27, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/27/belarus-protests-putin-ready-to-send-lukashenko-military-support>.

4. Iran: 2009 Green Movement

In June 2009, after the Interior Ministry announced that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won the presidential election despite significant evidence of rigging, mass demonstrations ensued in Iran. Led by political opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, protestors initially limited their demands to reversing the election results. Following a violent regime response, including the deployment of irregular *basij* militia (one of the forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), the demands of the protestors quickly escalated. The so-called Green Movement, named after the color associated with Mousavi's campaign, achieved the highest level of participation since the 1979 revolution. Although protests continued after Ahmadinejad was inaugurated, the opposition's lack of organizing infrastructure, combined with a participation base that was mainly confined to the urban middle class, left it unable to withstand the harsh regime repression. By February 2011, the Green Movement was largely suppressed, though the lingering impact of the movement may have contributed to the victory of moderate leader Hassan Rouhani in the 2013 presidential election.

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Although diplomatic relations between the US and Iran have been broken since 1979 and extensive sanctions are in place, the US established the Iran Watcher program in 2002 to support reporting and communications between US diplomats and Iranians in other countries. After US President George W. Bush's "axis of evil" speech in 2005, the Bush administration launched its \$75 million Iran Democracy Program, which aimed to support pro-democracy groups and media freedoms, including support for internet freedom. The program was initially administered by USAID, then shifted to the State Department's Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau. A former USAID and NSC official, Shannon Green, said most of the aid went to "supporting individuals," including human rights defenders and the leaders of civic movements. There were offshore trainings held for Iranian civic leaders that were done quietly and the names of participants were never revealed.⁹⁷

The Netherlands provided support for Iranian independent media starting in 2005. The 4.5-million member Iranian diaspora and universities were important actors before and during the Green Movement. Iranian dissident Mohsen Sazegara's weekly Voice of America satellite TV show, begun two years prior to the movement, was particularly popular, boasting an audience of 20 million. After the protests broke out, Sazegara said the goal of his VOA program, was to "inform people about what was going on with the protests and demonstrations and

97 Interview with Shannon Green, who at the time of the interview was Senior Fellow and Director of the Human Rights Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, former leader in USAID's Center of Excellence in Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, and former senior director for global engagement on the National Security Council, April 23, 2016.

provide info about civil resistance.”⁹⁸ He said that information and materials on civil resistance provided by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) were particularly useful.

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Following the June elections, German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for a “transparent investigation” into election fraud. The US and EU noted their concerns about alleged irregularities. Media rights group Reporters Without Borders urged foreign governments not to recognize the results of the June 2009 election, citing censorship and a crackdown on journalists. Amid restrictions placed on the media inside Iran, CNN International and BBC Farsi aired cell phone footage of the crackdown against protestors, including the assassination on June 20 of 26-year-old student Neda Soltan, which galvanized worldwide condemnation. *Time* magazine called it “probably the most widely witnessed death in human history.”⁹⁹

Human rights documentation and advocacy and support for asylum were important roles for external actors during the peak mobilization of the movement. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon’s press office called for an “immediate stop to the arrests, threats, and use of force.”¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other groups supported a global day of action on July 25, 2009 to demand the release of political prisoners that spanned to 100 cities around the world. Numerous hunger strikes occurred in cities worldwide.¹⁰¹ Popular rock stars including U2, Jon Bon Jovi, and Joan Baez released songs and statements of solidarity with the Iranian protestors.¹⁰²

Members of the Iranian diaspora were instrumental in providing the movement with alternative sources of information, including via private satellite TV shows and websites. However, according to one interviewee, some of the diaspora media programs “were harmful to the movement. Some groups advocated for the monarchy and their slogans discouraged unity.”¹⁰³ Iranian diaspora members at the University of Toronto, MIT, and other universities worked with technologists to get VPNs for activists to counter the Iranian regime, which had bought surveillance technology from Russia and organized a “cyber-army” to create fake

98 Interview with Mohsen Sazegara, an Iranian journalist and political activist, March 13, 2017.

99 “Neda Agha-Soltan - The Top 10 Everything of 2009,” *Time*, December 2009, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1945379_1944701_1944705,00.html.

100 “End Iran Violence, UN Chief Urges,” *BBC News*, June 23, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8114085.stm.

101 “Global Protests Staged Over Post-Election Crackdown in Iran,” *CNN*, July 25, 2009. <https://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/07/25/iran.world.protests/index.html#cnnSTCText>.

102 “BBC Radio 1 - Edith Bowman, Lunch with Bono,” *BBC*, accessed May 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00m3zcc>.

103 Interview with Mohsen Sazegara, an Iranian journalist and activist, March 13, 2017.

websites, infiltrate others, and send false information to the movement. Google, meanwhile, as part of its Project Shield program—designed to support activists who suffered from DDOS attacks—helped the Tavaana civic e-learning platform by providing monthly grants and helping it address cyberattacks.¹⁰⁴ Tavaana was established during the Green Movement by an Iranian-American human rights advocate.

President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were criticized for not being more outspoken during the Green Movement. Scott Busby, a State Department official, noted that there was a “major debate within the US government” on how to respond to the protests and crackdown.¹⁰⁵ Many were concerned that taking the side of protestors would provide the regime fodder to say the US government was behind the demonstrations. According to another former official, “The Obama administration was stuck. It just didn’t know what it wanted to do.”¹⁰⁶ Others insisted the Obama administration could have done much more to help. Elliott Abrams, who was then a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations noted, “The question is what we could have done to be helpful. This is not a binary choice between calling for regime change and doing nothing. You can talk about human rights without talking about regime change.”¹⁰⁷ Mariam Memarsadeghi, an Iranian-American human rights advocate, said that “rhetoric in support of dissidents is really important.”¹⁰⁸

When asked whether the US provided any material support to the opposition during the uprising, a State Department official who asked to remain anonymous noted, “Iranians weren’t looking for outside support during Green Movement. You can’t just throw money at a movement once it starts.”¹⁰⁹ However, the French and US governments, Kurdish groups in Iraq, and pro bono lawyers in DC helped get activists out of Iran and into asylum.

US policy to support uncensored Internet access for democracy activists backfired when the Haystack software, designed to help protect user identities, was released to Iranian activists prematurely. The software proved to have dangerous flaws that exposed activists’ identities instead of concealing them. According to Scott Carpenter, former State Department

104 Interview with Mariam Memarsadeghi, a human rights advocate and co-founder of Tavanna: E-Learning Institute for Iranian Civil Society, December 2, 2016.

105 Interview with Scott Busby, a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the US State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, January 21, 2016.

106 Interview with Scott Carpenter, Managing Director at Jigsaw and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the US State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, April 11, 2017.

107 Interview with Elliott Abrams, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, April 18, 2017.

108 Interview with Mariam Memarsadeghi, a human rights advocate and co-founder of Tavanna: E-Learning Institute for Iranian Civil Society, December 2, 2016.

109 Interview with State Department officials who preferred to remain anonymous, August 4, 2016.

official who is now the managing director of Jigsaw, “You better be sure people will be safe online if they are using the software. No software should be allowed to be transferred to activists without security audits.”¹¹⁰

According to a former NSC official, there was “not much” donor coordination regarding Iran because you couldn’t say anything about programs or grantees. “But donor coordination should be done at the policy and strategy levels—not just at the programmatic level.”¹¹¹ This would include multilateral diplomatic and economic approaches, in addition to coordinated donor support for technical programs.

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

In March 2011, the UN Human Rights Council voted 22 to 7 to adopt “a resolution establishing the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, who was tasked with monitoring and investigating human rights violations and publicly engaging on issues of grave concern.”¹¹² Meanwhile, US and European officials campaigned for the release of prominent Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, and human rights groups publicized her case. She also was the recipient of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2012. NPR noted that her release represented “a high-profile gesture” that “came less than a week before Rouhani’s first speech at the U.N. General Assembly in New York” and a campaign in which he committed to the effort “to open a broad dialogue with the West aimed at finding a way out of a nuclear standoff.”¹¹³ US and other donor support for independent media and internet freedom programs continued after the Green Movement.

CONCLUSION

In a January 2010 *Foreign Policy* article, Hooman Majd noted, “that the Green Movement has survived, and even grown, in the absence of foreign support (even moral support in its inception) is evidence that Iranians are perfectly capable of maintaining a civil rights movement and agitating for democratic change without the prodding, influence, or support of

110 Interview with Scott Carpenter, Managing Director at Jigsaw and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the US State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, April 11, 2017.

111 Interview with Shannon Green, Senior Fellow and Director of the Human Rights Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and former Senior Director for global engagement on the National Security Council, April 23, 2016.

112 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Special Rapporteur on Iran,” accessed May 4, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/CountriesMandates/IR/Pages/SRIran.aspx>.

113 Deborah Amos, “Iranian Activist Says Her Release Is A Gesture, Not A New Era,” *NPR*, accessed March 3, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/05/05/309728994/iranian-activist-says-her-release-is-a-gesture-not-a-new-era>.

foreigners.”¹¹⁴ While the Obama administration has been criticized for not being more outspoken during the Green uprising, most interviewees noted that it was unlikely that any form of external support would have turned the tide. “Honestly, no. The shortcomings of the movement were internal.”¹¹⁵ Donor support for independent media, and support from social media companies like Google and Facebook helped Iranian activists communicate with the outside world during the uprising. However, Iran’s Russian-backed cyber-repression and use of basij militia to attack protestors were daunting obstacles for the movement.

5. Tunisia: 2010-2011 Jasmine Revolution

While Tunisians always felt on the periphery of the Arab world and its leaders oriented towards the West, Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali oversaw a police state and ruled with a combination of rampant cronyism and an iron fist. Two years after a major uprising led by miners in the town of Gafsa, Tunisian fruit-seller Mohamed Bouazizi set himself ablaze on December 17, 2010 in response to degrading police treatment in the town of Sidi Bouazid. His self-immolation, which had been preceded by years of activism by Tunisians inside the country and in the diaspora, sparked massive protests across the country, prompting what came to be known as the Arab Spring. These protests, combined with a mass sit-in in the Casbah and strikes and boycotts launched by labor and trade unions, eventually prompted President Ben Ali to resign on January 14, 2011. With strong mediation efforts by the National Dialogue Quartet, comprised of the same forces that led the civil resistance campaign, Tunisia achieved a democratic transition, the only Arab Spring country to do so.

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Tunisia expert Daniel Brumberg said that the small country benefited from the lack of interference by the international actors, “who mostly stayed out until the critical moments where they helped when it was needed.”¹¹⁶ Tunisia’s long history of independent organizing by unions, including the Tunisian General Labor Union (CGTT) was a key domestic variable that facilitated the successful nonviolent resistance. The Solidarity Center, an affiliate of the National Endowment for Democracy, had cultivated strong relationships with union leaders and provided modest support in the pre-revolution period.

Another important form of external support in the pre-revolution period was the facilitation of dialogues involving Tunisian secular and Islamist leaders at the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) from 2005-2006. The dialogues, which included the co-founder of the

114 Hooman Majd, “Think Again: Iran’s Green Movement,” *Foreign Policy*, January 6, 2010, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/06/think-again-irans-green-movement/>.

115 Interview with Mohsen Sazegara, an Iranian journalist and political activist, March 13, 2017.

116 Interview with Daniel Brumberg, Associate Professor at Georgetown University, November 17, 2016.

Islamist Ennadha party, Rached Ghannouchi, who had been granted exile in the UK, culminated in the “October Program” in a political agreement. The dialogues increased mutual understanding between secular and Islamist leaders prior to the revolution.¹¹⁷

Tunisians inside the country and in the diaspora began a quiet awakening of sorts by expressing their grievances with the regime through social media. Many received international training and safe havens and were studying nonviolent resistance years before the revolution.¹¹⁸ Many Tunisians who emerged as leaders during and after the revolution—particularly women—had participated in National Democratic Institute (NDI) programs in the late 1990s. Starting in 2004, the US State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), through a bilateral agreement with the Tunisian government, provided small grants to Tunisian human rights defenders and NGOs like the Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center and the Tunisian-Arab Organization for Human Rights—organizations that weren’t on the front lines of the revolution but were connected to activists and quickly got involved.¹¹⁹ The director of the MEPI office at the time, Tamara Wittes, said that the US assistance line was modest (about \$1 million/year) but the small, flexible grants helped promote civic education and fostered networks of civic leaders.¹²⁰ Although the agreement with the Tunisian government was that the programs could not focus on Tunisia, Hawthorne noted that Tunisian NGOs “found their way around that.”¹²¹ MEPI’s Leaders for Democracy Program brought Tunisian civic leaders to the US, where they networked with other Arab civic leaders.¹²²

The US Embassy employed Tunisian local staff who were well connected to the different activist, human rights, and civil society circles. “This provided the connective tissue between the US and those who were taking action on the ground. That meant that needs could be communicated quickly and we could respond quickly. This was not in any way directed.”¹²³ Meanwhile, cables drafted by the US Embassy in Tunis highlighting massive corruption in

117 *Ibid.*

118 Mary Elizabeth King, “Egypt and Tunisia: The Untold Story,” *Waging Nonviolence*. February 17, 2011. <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2011/02/egypt-and-tunisia-the-untold-story/>.

119 Interview with Amy Hawthorne, Deputy Director for Research at Project on Middle East Democracy and former senior advisor in the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, March 23, 2016.

120 Interview with Tamara Wittes, Senior Fellow and Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institution, former Director of the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative, April 18, 2016.

121 Interview with Amy Hawthorne, Deputy Director for Research at Project on Middle East Democracy and former senior advisor in the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, March 23, 2016.

122 *Ibid.*

123 Interview with Scott Carpenter, Managing Director at Jigsaw and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the US State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, April 11, 2017.

Ben Ali's inner circle, released by WikiLeaks, signaled to Tunisians that the US government knew what was really happening.

Diplomats from the US, UK and Germany attended trials of dissidents, which Tunisian dissident lawyer Radhia Nasraou reported, "was a clear signal addressed to the regime to tell it that not everything was permitted."¹²⁴ The UK provided asylum to opposition leader Rached Ghannouchi for two decades, rejecting Ben Ali's claim that he was an Islamist terrorist.

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

During the protests, the EU, the UN and the US expressed their alarm at the violent crackdown against protestors and called on Ben Ali's government to exercise restraint. The French government, which had strong ties to the Tunisian police and intelligence apparatus, initially supported Ben Ali and the security forces leading the crackdown. France eventually condemned the repression targeting the protestors and stopped backing the Ben Ali regime which was, according to Brumberg, a crucial inflection point.

Social media platforms Facebook and Twitter helped Tunisian youth activists and others communicate and organize during the uprising. After the Tunisian government began using phishing campaigns to infiltrate the Facebook, email, and other social media accounts of Tunisian activists and organizers, the hacker group Anonymous entered the fray. When the regime blocked access to Wikileaks sites, Anonymous began carrying out distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks on the Tunisian government to protest internet and press censorship and as a show of support for the youth protestors.¹²⁵

There were also practical demonstrations of support for Tunisian unions, which were playing an outsized role in the uprising. Shawna Bader-Blau, president of the Solidarity Center (and fluent in Arabic), said that while the Solidarity Center's role in Tunisia was minimal, when the protests erupted, she and her colleagues translated statements from the workers and focused on advocacy with policymakers.¹²⁶

During the peak protests, Tunisian army General Rachid Ammar refused regime orders to use military force to suppress the protestors.¹²⁷ According to Brumberg, "The fact that the security apparatus was divided and the military thought highly of the US was helpful. The US

124 Laurence Michalak, "Tunisia: Igniting Arab Democracy," in *A Diplomat's Handbook for Democracy Development Support*, eds. Kurt Bassuener and Jeremy Kinsman (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).

125 Nate Anderson, "Tweeting Tyrants Out of Tunisia: Global Internet at Its Best," *Wired*, January 15, 2011, <https://www.wired.com/2011/01/tunisia/>.

126 Interview with Shawna Bader-Blau, President of Solidarity Center, December 21, 2015.

127 Steve Coll, "The Casbah Coalition," *The New Yorker*, March 28, 2011, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/04/04/the-casbah-coalition>.

had close relations with the Tunisian army, which trained in the US and received some supplies from the US. The army was socialized to US values.”¹²⁸

According to Tamara Wittes, US military-to-military contacts were used to reinforce diplomatic messages, like the non-acceptability of disproportionate force targeting protestors. Actions taken by the protestors themselves played an important role in how the security forces responded. Dennis Blair writes, “In both Tunisia and Egypt, opposition leaders were careful to show their respect for the armed forces and have called on them not to use force against their own people. This is a powerful appeal to service members of all ranks, touching their basic motivation for joining the armed forces.”¹²⁹

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

After the revolution, according to Wittes, the interim Tunisian government set the sequencing for the transition and the US and other governments supported it. The US Congress issued a resolution in support of the “peaceful jasmine revolution” in Tunisia and NDI and IRI were in the country within days of the revolution to support the Constitutional Assembly, electoral, and political process reforms.¹³⁰ Rather than holding a transitional presidential election, in July there were elections for a “national constituent assembly” to rewrite Tunisia’s constitution. Starting in May 2011, the US government worked with the Tunisian government on the Joint Political and Economic Plan (JPEP), which established priorities during the transition period. After the interim Tunisian prime minister made a trip to the US in early 2012, Secretary of State Clinton oversaw a \$100 million cash transfer to the new government that was turned around in less than two months. Ambassador William Taylor, who was special coordinator for Middle East Transitions in the State Department, said that was “amazingly fast by US government standards.”¹³¹

On January 31, 2011 the European Union froze the assets of Ben Ali and his wife at the request of the interim government. On February 4, 2011, the Council of the European Union adopted a regulation providing for the freezing of funds and economic resources of the persons responsible for the misappropriation of Tunisian state funds, and persons associated

128 Interview with Daniel Brumberg, Associate Professor at Georgetown University, November 17, 2016.

129 Dennis C. Blair, *Military Engagement: Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

130 Interview with Tamara Wittes, Senior Fellow and Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institution, former Director of the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative, April 18, 2016.

131 Interview with Ambassador Bill Taylor, who was special coordinator for Middle East Transitions at the State Department, December 30, 2015.

with them.¹³² The IMF and World Bank offered loan guarantees to the transitional government. There was significant donor coordination during the transitional period, which Wittes said was particularly helpful. This included assistance mobilization via the Organization for Economic and Culture Development (OECD)'s B-MENA process, which involved members of governments and civil society.

The National Dialogue Quartet, which drove the transitional roadmap and went on to win the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, was a locally driven effort that received minimal outside support. There were also some negative external influences during the post-revolution period, including Gulf support for Salafi jihadis, who carried out assassinations targeting secular politicians in 2012 which nearly derailed the dialogue process. The US, EU, and Algeria pressed President Essebsi and opposition leader Ghannouchi in Paris to negotiate and make a deal to keep the transition on track. Tunisia is the only Arab Spring nation that successfully saw a transition of power through the democratic process.

CONCLUSION

The fact that Tunisia is a small country, was not in geo-political crosshairs, and was first out of the gate during the Arab Spring may have facilitated the transition to democracy. The revolution “very much sprang from the soil of Tunisian society,” as one expert put it.¹³³ Donors’ small but targeted investments in civil society networks and leaders helped build skills and connections in the period leading up to the revolution. The facilitated dialogues between secular and Islamist leaders in 2005-2006 helped build trust and confidence. During the mass mobilization, the diplomatic condemnations of violence targeting protestors and the use of leverage over the security forces helped mitigate repression. The relatively fast and coordinated political and donor support to the Tunisian interim government, which was driven by the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet and interim government, helped shore up the gains of the successful revolution.

6. Egypt: 2011 January 25 Revolution

On January 25, 2011, after the successful Jasmine Revolution in neighboring Tunisia and following years of domestic organizing and activism, a large coalition of Egyptian civil society groups galvanized tens of thousands of people to take to the streets to protest police abuse, corruption, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The diverse coalition included the April 6 Youth Movement, Kefaya (“Enough” in Arabic), the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution, Youth for Justice and Freedom, Revolutionary Socialists, the Popular Democratic Movement

132 “Council Regulation (EU) No 101/2011 concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Tunisia” (2011) *Official Journal of the European Union*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:031:0001:0012:EN:PDF>.

133 Interview with Daniel Brumberg, Associate Professor at Georgetown University, November 17, 2016.

for Change, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Over the next two weeks, activists continued to organize by the thousands in largely nonviolent protests around Egypt when Mubarak refused to step down or make substantial concessions. Then, on February 11, eighteen days after the start of the campaign, Vice President Omar Suleiman announced that Mubarak had resigned and left the country in the hands of Egypt's Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF).

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Multiple donors, including NED, IRI, and NDI began making long-term investments in Egyptian civil society to strengthen capacity in human rights and democracy advocacy, grassroots organizing, and nonviolent resistance starting in 2005 with the George W. Bush administration (NED was providing some assistance before that time). This support helped establish a strong foundation in nonviolent tactics and catalyze several of the larger youth groups that took part in the 2011 revolution, including April 6 and Kefaya.¹³⁴ International NGOs like Freedom House and ICNC provided trainings for Egyptian youth, dissidents, and labor union leaders on civil resistance led by veterans of the Serbian, Ukrainian, and South African nonviolent struggles. ICNC distributed Gene Sharp's *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action* and other nonviolent movement literature to activists several years before the revolution, which Egyptian activists translated into Arabic and distributed widely.¹³⁵

As Egyptian activist Sherif Mansour noted, "By reading or attending trainings, Egyptians realized they have a role to play and it became more natural to them to assume their role."¹³⁶ The trainings helped them develop new tactics and helped build confidence in their ability to confront the Mubarak dictatorship. The Egyptian Kefaya movement adopted the clenched fist symbol used by the Serbian Otpor movement.

As part of legislation signed in 2005, the Brownback Amendment, the State Department was able to provide funds to NGOs in Egypt without Egyptian government approval. Grassroots actors cited the usefulness of flexible small grants funding during this time from the US State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.¹³⁷ USAID grants to Egyptian civil society were administered through a bilateral agreement and required the approval of the Egyptian government, a policy that was bypassed after Mubarak's ouster and had unintended negative consequences.

134 Interview with Emad Shahin, an Egyptian academic and visiting Professor of Political Science at Georgetown University, November 7, 2015.

135 Sheryl Stolberg, "Shy US Intellectual Created Playbook Used in a Revolution," *New York Times*, February 16, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/world/middleeast/17sharp.html>.

136 Interview with Sherif Mansour, Committee to Protect Journalists Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator and former Freedom House Middle East Director, March 16, 2017.

137 *Ibid.*

In 2010, NED allocated about \$2.5 million to Egypt, with nearly half of the amount going to the Center for International Private Enterprise to enhance civil society in the country, as well as to facilitate training and mobilization of youth. The Solidary Center, a NED affiliate, provided technical assistance and training in collective bargaining for labor unions.

Meanwhile, the US has provided Egypt with \$1.3 billion in annual military assistance since 1987, following the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The military assistance, provided in the form of aid grants that allow Egypt to procure weapons systems and services from US defense contractors, has been justified on grounds of advancing regional security and counter-terrorism.¹³⁸ Critics argue that this support ignored (and continues to ignore) the Egyptian government's long history of systemic human rights violations and reinforced its role as a repressive political actor.¹³⁹

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Mass protests began on January 25, 2010 as Egyptians from across the country took to the streets to denounce police brutality and demand that Mubarak step down. Weeks of protests, marches, sit-ins in Tahrir Square, strikes and other forms of civil disobedience paralyzed the country.

Independent journalists, including those who had participated in State Department-sponsored trainings, were critical in getting out news and information to the international media.¹⁴⁰ Tech-savvy activists, including Wael Ghonim, the administrator of the popular Facebook page, "We are all Khaled Said,"¹⁴¹ effectively used social media to mobilize supporters to communicate with the outside in real time. When the Mubarak regime blocked the internet, shutting down online communication, people came out in even larger numbers to learn and spread information. Donors and supporters demonstrated solidarity with the Egyptian people through boycotts of Egyptian tourism until Mubarak resigned and solidarity protests, including a "virtual march" on Facebook.

138 "Egypt: Background and US Relations," Congressional Research Service, Updated May 27, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>.

139 Ian Wallace, "Egypt: Six Years After the Coup What Has Military Assistance Bought Us?" *Middle East Eye*, July 2, 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/egypt-six-years-after-coup-what-has-us-military-assistance-bought-us>.

140 Interview with Karen Chen, US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, January 7, 2016.

141 Khaled Said was a 28-year old Egyptian man who was beaten to death by two policemen in Alexandria on June 6, 2010 after he posted a video showing police sharing the spoils of a drug bust. Said's death and the images of his barely-recognizable face became a rallying point for Egyptian activists protesting police brutality and other human rights abuses under Mubarak and was a catalyst for the 2011 uprising.

There were conflicting views within the US government, which had strong economic and military ties with the Egyptian government dating back to the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978, about how to respond to the mass protests and violent government crackdown. On February 2, US President Barack Obama called for the transition, declaring it “must be meaningful, it must be peaceful and it must begin now.” He also called for free and fair elections and for the new government to “be responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people.”¹⁴² British Prime Minister David Cameron then pushed for the EU to impose tougher sanctions against Egypt and to support the US plan for Mubarak to step down and turn over power to a military-backed interim government before speedy elections.¹⁴³

There was a high-level Egyptian military delegation in Washington, DC when the 2011 protests broke out, and the US military sent a clear signal that there would be repercussions for violent crackdowns.¹⁴⁴

On February 11, 2011, after failed attempts to offer concessions in an attempt to appease the opposition, Mubarak stepped down and a military council, the Supreme Council of Allied Forces, took power. The same day Mubarak’s resignation was announced, the Swiss government moved forward with freezing Mubarak’s bank accounts—including those of his family members and key figures in Egypt closely linked to the regime.¹⁴⁵

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Following Mubarak’s ouster, activists and donors said there was a lack of coordination and planning for what came next. Unlike in Tunisia, secular and Islamist actors in Egypt had not talked to one another about transition strategies before Mubarak’s resignation, and there seemed to be no attempt to bring them or other opposition parties together afterwards. One activist noted, “It was easier to mobilize and work together when there was a common enemy,”

142 “Obama Says Egypt’s Transition ‘Must Begin Now,’” *CNN*, February 2, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/02/01/us.egypt.obama/index.html>.

143 Bruno Waterfield, “Egypt Crisis: David Cameron Reprimands Baroness Ashton at EU Summit,” *Telegraph*, February 4, 2011, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8303929/Egypt-crisis-David-Cameron-reprimands-Baroness-Ashton-at-EU-summit.html>.

144 Interview with Tamara Wittes, Senior Fellow and Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institution, former Director of the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative, Brookings Institution, April 18, 2016.

145 “Swiss freeze Mubarak family bank accounts,” *Financial Times*, February 2011, <https://www.ft.com/content/f5c8422e-3631-11e0-9b3b-00144feabdc0>.

while a donor admitted that external actors had failed to form “the right relationships and connections going into the post-Tahrir period.”^{146,147}

Shortly after the revolution, NDI attempted to bring in leaders from the Chilean and Indonesian democracy movements to discuss the role of negotiations and concessions during transitions but, according to Les Campbell, the Tahrir activists were not particularly interested.¹⁴⁸ According to Emad Shahin, there was no mediation support to bring together members of the SCAF, the opposition, and youth leaders to work out a roadmap for a democratic transition—something that had happened in Tunisia. Youth and women were largely excluded from the deliberations. Meanwhile, Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood, with their strong organizing infrastructure, were out in the streets mobilizing people for the referendum on the constitution and parliamentary elections, paving the way to the victory of Islamist leader Mohamed Morsi in June 2012.

In the summer 2011, USAID provided \$65 million in direct support to grassroots actors, bypassing the Egyptian government for the first time. “It was a huge amount of funding for a short period of time—burn rate was stressed over quality,” said former State Department officer Amy Hawthorne.¹⁴⁹ Egyptian activists like Nancy Okail warned that there would be government blowback but their warnings went unheeded. The SCAF responded by cracking down on US funded NGOs, raiding their offices and jailing their leaders, while continuing to actively thwart the secular opposition. This exacerbated an already repressive operating environment.¹⁵⁰

To make matters worse, donors relayed that external actors also got the process wrong—stressing elections and becoming “too focused on procedural democracy in the midst of a highly unstable situation.”¹⁵¹ This failed preparation at home and lack of strategic focus among international actors pushed Egypt into turmoil, leading to the election of a divisive Islamist president who attempted to consolidate power before being overthrown by a military coup.

146 Interview with Sherif Mansour, Committee to Protect Journalists Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator and former Freedom House Middle East Director, March 16, 2017.

147 Interview with Les Campbell, Senior Associate and Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa programs at the National Democratic Institute, October 14, 2016.

148 *Ibid.*

149 Interview with Amy Hawthorne, Deputy Director for Research at Project on Middle East Democracy and former Senior Advisor in the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, March 23, 2016.

150 United States Government Accountability Office, “Democracy Assistance: Lessons Learned from Egypt Should Inform Future U.S. Plans,” 2014.

151 Interview with Nancy Okail, Executive Director of the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy and former Director of Freedom House’s Egypt program, February 3, 2016.

The US government's response to the 2013 coup that ousted Morsi, which was strongly supported by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, was muted, with Secretary of State John Kerry referring to the events as "restoring democracy." By declaring the event a coup, the US would have been legally obligated to suspend military aid under the Foreign Assistance Act. In October 2013, two months after the Rabaa massacre where over a thousand Islamist protesters were killed by the military during a sit-in, the US froze a small amount of military assistance and suspended the shipment of military systems. The US nevertheless continued to signal its support for strong military cooperation,¹⁵² likely weakening the coercive value of the suspension. Human rights organizations documented a worsening of the human rights situation under al-Sisi in the years following the coup.¹⁵³

CONCLUSION

Donors investment in capacity-building for Egyptian activists, journalists, and civil society helped strengthen skills and connections in the lead-up to the January 25 revolution. After Mubarak's ouster, however, there was minimal planning or preparation within the opposition and donor community for what came next. The proverbial elephant in the room remained the Egyptian military, which continued to receive strong US backing even after the military coup in 2013. Egyptian scholar Emad Shahin noted that mediation support to foster dialogue between different opposition groups, transition support in the form of skills and capacity-building, and US willingness to use its military and economic leverage over the SCAF could have increased the chances of a democratic transition.¹⁵⁴

7. Syria: 2011 Syrian Uprising

In March 2011, after regime security forces tortured a group of children who had scribbled anti-regime graffiti on a wall in Dera'a, protests broke out across Syria. The protests were met with brutal violence, with live fire shootings of protestors and widespread torture of activists in prisons run by the Syrian intelligence. Syrian activists and local coordination committees organized demonstrations, sit-ins, boycotts and other forms of nonviolent resistance while a formal opposition body gained diplomatic recognition. After 4-5 months of mostly nonviolent resistance, a group of Syrian army defectors announced the creation of the Free Syrian Army, headquartered in neighboring Turkey, and began to launch attacks on regime

152 Karen DeYoung, "Kerry in Cairo: Suspension of aid to Egypt 'not a punishment,'" *Washington Post*, November 3, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/kerry-in-cairo-egypt-aid-suspension-not-a-punishment/2013/11/03/f5b14242-4491-11e3-a196-3544a03c2351_story.html?utm_term=.ecee58e27fd0.

153 "Egypt: Year of Abuses under al-Sisi," Human Rights Watch, June 8, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/08/egypt-year-abuses-under-al-sisi>.

154 Interview with Emad Shahin, an Egyptian academic and visiting Professor of Political Science at Georgetown University, November 7, 2015.

forces.¹⁵⁵ The Assad regime responded with a dramatic escalation of violence, including aerial bombardments and chemical weapons attacks, and the anti-regime uprising morphed into a civil war and humanitarian catastrophe that continues as of the writing of this report.

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

In 2005, when Bashar al-Assad first took over power from his father, there was some opening of civic space. A small number of Syrian intellectuals and civic leaders were exposed to ideas and training in human rights, journalism, and nonviolent action, which included a training in organizing by well-known organizer and Harvard professor, Marshall Ganz.¹⁵⁶ A Syrian activist translated Gene Sharp's *From Dictatorship to Democracy* into Arabic and disseminated it. Still, there was relatively little outside investment in civil society prior to 2011. When the Arab Spring protests broke out across the region, Syrian civil society was extremely weak, mistrust was pervasive, and there was little history of collective action.

The US levied extensive sanctions on Syria starting in 2003 as a result of the country being on the US State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. The sanctions prohibited direct foreign assistance, restricted bilateral trade relations, applied targeted sanctions on Syrian individuals and officials, and imposed economic sanctions on the regime.¹⁵⁷ While strengthening sanctions against the Assad regime was a focus of US, European, and some Arab countries after the regime's crackdown on the 2011 protests, sustained Iranian and Russian financial backing of the regime weakened their impact.

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

When the protests broke out across Syria in the spring of 2011, the then US Ambassador, Robert Ford, said that the US Embassy in Damascus urged the Assad regime to "meet the protestors halfway" and encouraged the opposition to remain peaceful. However, "it soon became clear that Assad was not interested in any kind of engagement."¹⁵⁸ A tight-knit group of ambassadors from the US, UK, France, Germany, Turkey, Denmark, Japan, and sometimes Sweden and Norway met biweekly in Damascus until the US Embassy was forced to withdraw

155 Elizabeth O'Bagy, "The Free Syrian Army," Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report No 9. March 2013, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The-Free-Syrian-Army-24MAR.pdf>.

156 Conversation with Nishreen Haj, Fellow at Harvard University's Ash Center and member of Leading Change Network, February 28, 2017.

157 United States Department of State, "Syria Sanctions," accessed May 4, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/syria-sanctions/>.

158 Interview with Robert Ford, a former US ambassador to Syria, December 1, 2015.

in late-2011. US Embassy political officers met frequently with known activists and human rights defenders and attended the major demonstrations, at times fleeing gunfire.¹⁵⁹

There were some dramatic shows of diplomatic solidarity with Syrian nonviolent protesters. In July 2011, Ambassador Ford defied regime orders and visited the city of Hama, a focal point of the resistance, ahead of planned demonstrations there. Ford's physical presence in Hama, without the sanction of the Syrian government, was a show of solidarity with the demonstrators and a clear rebuke of the government-backed repression. Ford was physically attacked by pro-Assad supporters when he went to meet with dissidents or to visit mosques. Threats to his security forced him to be recalled in October and the US Embassy withdrew from the country in 2012. Before that, Ford met with a group of prominent opposition leaders, who thought the level of regime repression might prompt a US-led humanitarian military intervention as it did in the case of Libya.¹⁶⁰ Ford told them "this will not be like Libya" and warned that if the opposition used armed resistance, they would lose a lot of people.¹⁶¹

Human Rights Watch reported extensively on the widespread cases of torture and Assad's network of underground prisons.¹⁶² In August 2011, US President Obama and European leaders, confronted with the mounting evidence of the killing of protesters by Syrian security forces, announced that the time had come for Assad to "step aside."¹⁶³ Ford said of Obama's announcement, "it was not made because the timing was right." Obama was facing growing pressure from Congress, from key allies France and Saudi Arabia and the Syrian American community. However, according to Fred Hof, who was then the State Department's Special Envoy for Syria, "Those were magic words that amounted to a PR gambit. There was no serious plan to follow up on them."¹⁶⁴

159 Interview with Mounir Ibrahim, formerly of the US Department of State's Bureau of Near East Affairs, January 14, 2016.

160 On March 19, 2013, a multi-state NATO-led military campaign was launched in Libya following the popular uprising against Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi and the brutal response by regime forces. The purpose of the campaign was to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to attacks against civilians. The intervention included an Arab League-backed no fly zone and ended with Gaddafi's ouster.

161 Interview with Robert Ford, a former US ambassador to Syria, December 1, 2015.

162 Human Rights Watch, "Torture Archipelago | Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons since March 2011," July 3, 2012, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias>.

163 Scott Wilson and Joby Warrick, "Assad Must Go, Obama Says," *Washington Post*, August 18, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/assad-must-go-obama-says/2011/08/18/gIQAelheOJ_story.html.

164 Interview with Fred Hof, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council and former US Special Envoy to Syria, December 10, 2015.

In August 2011, the Syrian National Council (SNC) was formed to be the “legitimate representative of Syrians seeking peaceful democratic change.” By then the anti-Assad movement had become increasingly militarized and by the beginning of 2012, what began as a nonviolent uprising turned into armed resistance.¹⁶⁵ The Assad regime responded with even greater violence and the civilian death toll increased by threefold between March 2011 and June 2012. In November 2012, the SNC merged with other opposition members to form the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC). The US, the EU, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Arab League recognized the SOC as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people and the Arab League granted the SOC Syria’s seat.

In mid-2012, the US government began to provide \$50 million in non-lethal support to the unarmed Syrian opposition and civil society groups, including local councils and grassroots organizations. The assistance was focused on training, equipping and building the capacity of activists, local councils and grassroots organizations to respond to the needs of their communities and to support their nonviolent mobilization. There was funding to support independent media, including community radio, to facilitate connections between unarmed actors inside Syria and supporters on the outside, and to support planning for a democratic transition, including the establishment of a Syria Justice and Accountability Center to document human rights abuses and coordinate transitional justice efforts.¹⁶⁶

US government funding to support these efforts came in 3-month increments as there was no separate budget line for Syria. Bureaucratic red tape, legal precautions, and strict vetting requirements slowed the assistance considerably. Former US government officials said that President Obama was extremely cautious and administration lawyers applied strict interpretations of international law to guide programming decisions. There was a lack of clarity regarding Syria policy and “the lawyers went crazy figuring out what to do.”¹⁶⁷ Hof claimed, “Assad’s fall was seen as inevitable so there was no real planning for how to precipitate the transition. Instead, the focus was on planning for the day after.”¹⁶⁸ Ford largely

165 Isabel Bramsen, “From Civil Resistance to Civil War: Nonstrategic Mechanisms of Militarization in the Syrian Uprising.” *Peace & Change* 45, no. 2 (2020), 256-286; Maciej Bartkowski and Julia Taleb, “Myopia of the Syrian Struggle and Key Lessons,” in Burrows and Stephan, *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?*.

166 US Department of State, “US Government Assistance for Syria,” December 10, 2012, <https://photos.state.gov/libraries/saudi-arabia/231771/public/US%20Assistance%20to%20Syrian%20People%20December%202012%20English.pdf>

167 Interview with Ambassador Bill Taylor, who was special coordinator for Middle East Transitions at the State Department, December 30, 2015.

168 Interview with Fred Hof, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council and former US Special Envoy to Syria, December 10, 2015.

concurred with this view, saying, “There was no serious, high-level strategy to support the nonviolent opposition.”¹⁶⁹

Other countries, including France, the UK, Denmark, and Germany provided material assistance to the nonviolent opposition. The French Ambassador, Eric Chevalier, was proactive in getting humanitarian and other aid to opposition-controlled areas and in facilitating asylum for Syrian activists. The Friends of the Syrian People, a multi-lateral group of 50-70 countries established to coordinate the international response to the Syrian crisis, proved to be largely ineffectual. The London-11, another multilateral support group, was more serious but not all members were supporting civilian groups. There was informal coordination involving key donors providing humanitarian and non-lethal assistance to nonviolent opposition groups, but no formal coordination mechanism until USAID’s Mark Ward was appointed as the US government’s aid coordinator in Turkey in 2013.

US-led and EU-backed sanctions targeting the Assad regime may have weakened the Assad regime financially, but state backers Russia and Iran found a way around them while providing significant amounts of political, economic, and military backing to the Assad regime. The Iranian government provided military support, via Hezbollah, and cyber-support to the Syrian Electronic Army, which successfully identified and neutralized scores of Syrian activists.

Meanwhile, the extensive sanctions added layers of red tape for governmental and NGO backers of nonviolent opposition groups, who were required to get special US Treasury and Commerce Department licenses to be able to provide assistance to Syrian groups. International NGOs like the Dutch HIVOS and the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue provided support to nonviolent activists and local councils and attempted to build bridges between activists, armed groups, and regime actors.

Most Syrian security force defections occurred in late-2011 and 2012, in response to the regime’s brutal treatment of protestors. There were also a few high-level political defections, including former Prime Minister Riyad Hijab. However, it was difficult for high-level defectors to join the opposition.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, on the part of the US government, according to Ambassador Ford, “there was no real strategy to prompt defections or engage defectors.”¹⁷¹ Instead, Turkey provided sanctuary for military defectors and leaders of the Free Syrian Army. Syrian armed opposition groups began to receive strong backing from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Turkey. Divergent funding streams to different armed factions

169 Interview with Robert Ford, a former US ambassador to Syria, December 1, 2015.

170 Sophia Jones, and Erin Banco, “For Assad Defectors, Joining the Opposition Isn’t As Easy As It Sounds,” *The New Republic*, August 7, 2012, <https://newrepublic.com/article/105865/assad-defectors-joining-opposition-isnt-easy-it-sounds>.

171 Interview with Robert Ford, a former US ambassador to Syria, December 1, 2015.

divided the opposition further, as Saudi Arabia and Qatar fought a proxy war against each other via local surrogates.

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Starting in early 2013, the US State Department began to provide non-lethal aid to the Free Syrian Army via the Syrian Support Group (SSG), a group established in late 2011 to support moderate groups in the FSA.¹⁷² The US support was intended to help the more moderate parts of the armed opposition counter the growing influence of radical Islamist groups, including Al Qaeda and Al Nusra. As one former State Department officer noted, “On both the civilian assistance and military assistance we were in competition with the Islamists. And the Islamists didn’t follow our vetting procedures.”¹⁷³

Given the volume of assistance that began flowing to various armed opposition groups, and the fact that Russia and Iran did not appear to have a threshold in their support for Assad, civil war became all but inevitable. A UN Commission of Inquiry into Syria, established in 2013, has produced massive evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity that implicates responsibility at the highest level of the Syrian government, including the head of state. While also noting serious human rights abuses committed by rebel groups, UN reporting attributes the majority of abuses to the Syrian government.¹⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

The Syria case stands in stark contrast to the case of Serbia, where external assistance in support of a nonviolent democratic transition was undergirded by clear policies and extensive multilateral coordination. While there were concerted efforts by the US and other allies to provide diplomatic and, eventually, material support to the nonviolent opposition, these efforts were not backed by a coordinated or coherent strategy. “It was a case of too little, too late.”¹⁷⁵ At the same time, Ambassador Ford said that one clear lesson from the Syrian uprising and aftermath was that “destiny is in the hands of the locals—not foreigners.”¹⁷⁶ It is important to recognize that the level of regime brutality applied against Syrian nonviolent protestors is

172 Angela Hennessy, “Syrian Rebels Are Getting Serious Help from a House in Suburban Ontario,” *Vice* (blog), June 14, 2013, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ex5y7w/syrian-rebels-are-getting-serious-help-from-a-suburban-house-in-ontario.

173 Interview with Alex Fischer, formerly of the US State Department’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, December 9, 2015.

174 “UN Implicates Assad in War Crimes.” *BBC News*, December 2, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25189834>.

175 Interview with Alex Fischer, formerly of the US State Department’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, December 9, 2015.

176 Interview with Robert Ford, a former US ambassador to Syria, December 1, 2015.

unparalleled compared to the other cases in this study. Syrian civil society was incredibly weak and driven by mistrust, which made the kind of long-term planning necessary to sustain a nonviolent struggle particularly difficult. Time was not on the side of the nonviolent movement, and once the opposition turned to armed struggle and the weapons started pouring in, it was difficult to turn back.

8. Sudan: 2011-2013 Anti-al-Bashir Protests

On January 30, 2011, thousands of Sudanese youth and their supporters, inspired by the popular uprisings in neighboring Egypt and Tunisia and mobilized on Facebook and other social media platforms, took to the streets to protest rising oil and food prices and call for an end to the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and its leader, President Omar al-Bashir. The government dispatched riot police and national security forces to universities and other protest sites to forcibly break up the protests. Hundreds were arrested and many were subjected to beatings and sexual abuse.¹⁷⁷ In 2013, following a spike in fuel prices, tens of thousands protested in multiple cities across the country, including South Darfur, calling for the downfall of the regime. At least 200 protestors were killed by the pro-government Janjaweed militia and other security forces in September.¹⁷⁸ In the face of brutal violence, and hampered by a lack of organization and planning, the protests died down. Al-Bashir would remain in power until 2019, when a mass popular uprising led by the Movement for Freedom and Change, followed by a military coup, led to his ouster.

PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

The period of 2009-2013 was a time of massive crackdowns against civil society. In response to atrocities committed during the war in Darfur, in 2009 the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for al-Bashir. In response, al-Bashir forced the expulsion of a dozen humanitarian organizations and other NGOs, whom he accused of being spies for the ICC.¹⁷⁹

Significant donor funding leading up to and during the 2011-2013 period, including that of USAID, largely focused on NGO and civil society efforts to help implement the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (which would eventually form the new government in South Sudan after the latter seceded in 2011). The funding was linked to specific CPA milestones and there was less of a focus on encouraging democracy and human rights and little

177 "Sudan Police Clash with Protesters," *Al Jazeera*, January 30, 2011, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/01/2011130131451294670.html>.

178 Elshafie Khidir Saeid, "Sudan's National Dialogue Conference: The Permissible Questions," Berghof Foundation, 2017, https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Other_Resources/NationalDialogue/NDH_Sudan.pdf.

179 Interview with Dalia Haj Omar, Sudanese activist (Girifna) and former consultant for donors, October 7, 2015.

support for movements or new initiatives that were responding to community needs. Dalia Haj Omar, a Sudanese activist, said that donor funding during this time encouraged an “NGO-ization of civil society” and “de-politicized youth groups and activists.”¹⁸⁰ Donors and activists also mentioned that external support tended to focus heavily on groups and organizations based in Khartoum and neglected those working in the peripheries. With the end of the CPA in 2011, after South Sudan’s secession, most donor funding dried up and donors were confused about what to do next.

There was little appetite to support groups like Girifna, whose “regime change” slogan alienated donors who were “not willing to take the risk” and support the movement for fear that they would lose their ability to operate in the country and endanger other local partners.¹⁸¹ A number of Sudanese activists who critiqued the donor funding for being excessively inflexible and bureaucratic said that an exception was the Open Society East Africa Initiative (OSEIA), whose office was located in neighboring Kenya. While OSEIA did not provide a significant amount of funding, it was the most helpful because it was “flexible and came with zero paperwork.”¹⁸²

Donor support helped build the capacity of independent journalists and media. Beginning in 2008, the US State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor supported programs and small grants targeting women and independent media. A State Department officer referred to their support for independent radio as being particularly effective.¹⁸³

A Sudanese activist noted that while donor support to pro-democracy groups was fairly limited, Wahabbi and other Islamists groups from the Gulf poured billions of dollars into the country to support mosques and schools during this time.

PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Given that donor support had largely targeted traditional civil society and peacebuilding efforts, donors “weren’t prepared for youth-led, fluid movements” when mass protests began in 2011.¹⁸⁴ That did not stop the al-Bashir government from cracking down on foreign-funded groups. In 2012, an al-Bashir-allied newspaper accused the National Endowment for

180 *Ibid.*

181 *Ibid.*

182 *Ibid.*

183 Interview with Karen Chen, US State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, January 7, 2016.

184 Interview with Azaz Shami, Sudanese diaspora activist (Girifna), December 22, 2015.

Democracy of being affiliated with the CIA and published the names of NED grantees. A number of grantees' operations were shut down by the government.¹⁸⁵

OSEIA provided in-kind donations including computers and telephones, training, and flexible funding, which activists cited as particularly useful. Freedom House helped provide protection and support for activists and human rights defenders through its rapid-response grants program. In large part due to Sudan's highly restrictive environment, coordination amongst donors, such as Freedom House, NDI, and NED, was limited. "We weren't necessarily talking to each other about what kind of support we were providing and what we were doing around the movement."¹⁸⁶ By 2012, with many activists fleeing Sudan due to the security situation, support skewed towards them because it was easier to get support outside of the country. One donor suggested that that may have had a negative effect on the movement.

Activists noted that while support from governments and donors was minimal, support from the Sudanese diaspora was significant. Members of the diaspora helped channel equipment and money to the movement through a combination of flexible funding via crowd-sourcing, writing and submitting donor reports, attracting media coverage, and translating reports from Arabic to English.¹⁸⁷

International human rights groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called attention to the regime crackdowns on peaceful protestors and the vast human rights abuses.¹⁸⁸ Radio Dabanga, based in the Netherlands, provided important coverage of the protests at a time when the government was imposing harsh censorship and kicking international journalists out of the country.

Canada, the EU, the US and the UN issued statements condemning the regime's violent repression in the aftermath of the 2011 protests. In 2013, after the killing of dozens of protestors, the State Department issued a statement condemning the al-Bashir government's brutal crackdown and urging the government to have a meaningful dialogue with the Sudanese people.¹⁸⁹ There were solidarity demonstrations in cities such as London, where 50 members

185 Interview with Sonja Uwimana, formerly of the National Endowment for Democracy, March 9, 2017.

186 *Ibid.*

187 Interview with Azaz Shami, Sudanese diaspora activist (Girifna), December 22, 2015.

188 Dalia Haj-Omar, "Sudan's Popular Protest Movement: Will the International Community Continue to Ignore It?" *OpenDemocracy*, November 11, 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/sudans-popular-protest-movement-will-international-community-continue-to-ignore/>.

189 US Department of State, "Government Crackdown on Protests in Sudan," September 27, 2013, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/af/ci/su/prs/index.htm>.

of the Sudanese diaspora demonstrated outside the Sudanese Embassy.¹⁹⁰ Samantha Power, the US Ambassador to the UN, called al-Bashir's request for a US visa to attend UNGA soon after the bloody crackdown "cynical" and "deplorable." However, the diplomatic pressure as a whole—particularly from the US and Europe—was weakened as a result of conflicting national security interests, including al-Bashir's continued collaboration in immigration control and counterterrorism efforts in the wake of 9/11.¹⁹¹

One Sudanese activist said that US sanctions imposed on Sudan, which had been on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism since 1993, were important symbolically but were largely ineffective and posed challenges for grassroots actors trying to obtain external support.¹⁹² A Sudanese activist noted that the presence of foreign embassies at the trial of prominent political prisoner, Jamila Khamis, "sent a clear message to the government."¹⁹³

In the pre-campaign period and during the protests, governments of Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad, Libya, Qatar, and Egypt, among others, provided support to armed opposition groups, such as the SPLM and Darfuri groups, including weapons, money and sanctuary. Such support divided the opposition. According to Sudanese analyst Dr. Elshafie Khidir Saeid, "Had there been no external support for armed opposition groups this would have changed the situation. The weapons allowed these groups to control territory but didn't support a democratic transition."¹⁹⁴

POST-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

In the wake of the suppressed uprising there was some international focus on holding the al-Bashir regime accountable for human rights violations. A special UN mechanism pressured al-Bashir to fire some members of the police and judiciary responsible for violent crackdowns and to provide payment to victims' families.¹⁹⁵ "Without the regional and international pressure the government crackdown would have continued," said one Sudanese activist.¹⁹⁶ At the same time, the international community sent mixed messages. The World Bank issued

190 Tom Law, "Sudanese in London Demonstrate in Support of Khartoum Protests," *Sudan Tribune*, October 6, 2013, https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?page=imprimable&id_article=48327.

191 Interview with Mossaad Ali, Executive Director of the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, March 16, 2017.

192 Interview with Dalia Haj Omar, Sudanese activist (Girifna) and former consultant for donors, October 7, 2015.

193 Interview with Azaz Shami, Sudanese diaspora activist (Girifna), December 22, 2015.

194 Interview with Dr. Elshafie Khidir Saeid, a Sudanese intellectual and civil society leader, March 2017.

195 Interview with Maali Majid, Centre for Applied Human Rights at University of York, March 9, 2017.

196 *Ibid.*

a statement of support for al-Bashir shortly after protestors were killed, while the International Monetary Fund lauded the Sudanese government's repayment of debts.¹⁹⁷

Other actors focused on building greater unity and cohesion in the opposition. In January 2014, the Berghof Foundation and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue supported the drafting of the "Sudan Call" declaration to help bring about a "national consensus."¹⁹⁸ This declaration brought together a loose network of civil society actors, political parties, and armed groups to create a unifying message of collective goals for human rights, democracy, and a peaceful resolution of Sudan's conflicts. The Sudan Call members continued to meet and deliberate on key issues related to the peace processes over the next several years. On December 19, 2018, protests triggered by a sharp rise in bread prices began in Atbara, north of Khartoum, and spread across the country. After a violent regime crackdown, a coalition of civic and political forces, including the Sudan Professional Association, women's associations, community groups, unions, academics, and opposition political parties united to form the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) and issued a declaration calling for a peaceful democratic transition driven by civil resistance. Following mass demonstrations, a sit-in in front of the military headquarters and a general strike, a military coup d'état forced al-Bashir's ouster on April 11, 2019. Sustained pressure combined with negotiations between the FFC and the Transitional Military Council, mediated by the African Union and Ethiopia, paved the way to a landmark agreement for a 3-year transition process to democracy in July 2019.

CONCLUSION

A prominent Sudanese civil society leader said that the campaign between 2011-2013 failed because activists "tried to copy the Arab Spring" without a long-term strategy and the "muscle of organized collective work" was insufficient against the brutal regime.¹⁹⁹ Most donor support in the pre-campaign stage was pegged to CPA milestones and funding mechanisms were inflexible and difficult for activists to access. The US government's primary focus was on counter-terrorism, not on democratization, and sanctions had the unintended effect of making it harder for activists to receive support. Meanwhile, some of the most effective forms of external support came from the Sudanese diaspora, which used crowdfunding and other creative means to support opposition activists while engaging in sustained advocacy for human rights and democracy.

197 See International Monetary Fund, "Press Release: Sudan – Meeting of the Technical Group on External Debt," Press Release No. 13/404, October 12, 2013, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/14/01/49/pr13404>; Cited in Dalia Haj Omar, "Sudan's Popular Protest Movement: Will the International Community Continue to Ignore it?" *OpenDemocracy*, November 11, 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/sudans-popular-protest-movement-will-international-community-continue-to-ignore/>.

198 *Ibid.*

199 Interview with Azaz Shami, Sudanese diaspora activist (Girifna), December 22, 2015.

Summarizing the Cases: Some Key Insights

Overall, respondents during the qualitative interviews revealed cautious optimism in the promise of well-timed, strategic assistance for protecting campaign participants. This usually took the form of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic pressure and targeted sanctions including visa bans and asset freezes. A good example was during the 2005 Ukrainian Orange Revolution, when coordinated US and European diplomatic efforts, including joint demarches and high-level telephone interventions pressured the Kuchma regime and mitigated security force repression targeting protestors.

First, activists consistently cited the importance of diplomats attending trials of dissidents and journalists and reporting on human rights abuses in order to show that the world was watching. For example, Sudanese activist said that EU human rights groups proved very helpful when the youth movement Girifna campaigned for Jamila Khamis, a human rights defender, saying that “the presence of foreign embassies at her trial sent a clear message to the government.”²⁰⁰

A number of the cases featured multilateral pressure and acts of transnational solidarity in support of the nonviolent campaigns. The extensive UN, EU, and US sanctions targeting the Milošević regime in Serbia is one of the best examples of this.

Second, while external funding for movements can be a double-edged sword, the case studies revealed that small amounts of flexible funding provided to local movement leaders who drive the agenda can be particularly helpful. For instance, donor support to the Otpor movement in Serbia, which had already developed an organizational infrastructure prior to receiving US and European funding, helped boost their mobilization efforts. A number of interviewees critiqued donor funding that came with excessive bureaucratic requirements, that encouraged an “NGO-ization” of movements, or where donors imposed their agendas on the activists.²⁰¹

Relatedly, the interviews suggested that donor coordination is key to reinforcing organization and coherence in opposition groups. In the case of Serbia, the Otpor movement pro-actively directed and helped coordinate donor support. Belarusian activists cited lack of

200 Interview with Dalia Haj Omar, Sudanese activist (Girifna) and consultant for donors from 2006-2009, October 7, 2015.

201 These donor-related concerns have been expressed by activists and movement leaders in non-maximalist campaigns as well. See for example: Maria J. Stephan, Sadaf Lakhani, and Nadia Naviwala, “Aid to Civil Society: A Movement Mindset,” US Institute of Peace Special Report 361 (February 2015); Samson Itodo and Davin O’Regan, “Nigeria’s Movement for Transparency and Accountability Bringing the Pieces Together,” US Institute of Peace Special Report 433 (October 2018); Davin O’Regan, “Donor Assistance in the Transparency and Accountability Movement,” US Institute of Peace Peaceworks 151 (September 2019); Walter Flores and Miranda Rivers, “Curbing Corruption After Conflict: Anticorruption Mobilization in Guatemala,” US Institute of Peace Special Report 482 (September 2020); La Ring, Khin Sandar Nyunt, Nist Pianchupat and Shaazka Beyerle, “Nonviolent Action in Myanmar: Challenges and Lessons for Civil Society and Donors,” US Institute of Peace Special Report 483 (September 2020); May Miller-Dawkins, “Understanding Activism: How International NGOs, Foundations, and Others Can Provide Better Support to Social Movements,” Rhize, July 2017.

trust between activists and siloed relationships with donors as some of the key reasons behind the lack of a cohesive and coherent grassroots strategy.²⁰²

Third, training was regularly credited with playing an important role in building knowledge, skills, and relationships—even in cases where the campaign failed. For example, Egyptian activists cited the importance of workshops on civil resistance led by Serbians, Ukrainians, and South Africans and supported by ICNC and Freedom House in improving their ability to build coalitions and respond to repression, and in expanding their imaginations about the range of available tactics.²⁰³ These findings reinforce studies that have shown positive effects of cross-regional trainings and peer learning.²⁰⁴

Fourth, the interviews highlighted the importance of long-term donor investment in civil society in order to build relationships and strengthen the demand side for democracy and government accountability. The years of donor investment in Serbia and Ukraine helped build skills in human rights documentation, investigative reporting, political party development, election monitoring and mass mobilization. Investments in independent media and investigative journalism in nearly all of the cases helped provide independent sources of information and helped activists communicate with each other and the outside world.

Fifth, the cases overwhelmingly highlighted that external support has not only benefited nonviolent activists—it has also bolstered regimes and their efforts to suppress domestic challengers. Strong Iranian and Russian backing for the Assad regime helped Assad survive multilateral economic sanctions and bolstered the regime’s security and intelligence apparatus, including support for the “Syrian Electronic Army” which so effectively neutralized Syrian activists. Russian political and security backing for Lukashenko and the KGB infiltration of the Belarusian opposition divided and weakened an already beleaguered opposition.

Having presented this qualitative material, we next move on to evaluating the effects of external assistance among a broader number of cases.

202 Interview with Slobodan Djinic, co-founder of Otpor and co-founder of the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), June 6, 2017.

203 Interview with Sherif Mansour, CPJ and former Freedom House Middle East Director, March 16, 2017. Also, noting that this is one of the best articles on US funding and training of groups involved in the Arab Spring, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/world/15aid.html>.

204 Jeffrey Pugh, “Weaving Transnational Activist Networks: Balancing International and Bottom-up Capacity-building Strategies for Nonviolent Action in Latin America,” *Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 130–144.; Miller-Dawkins, July 2017. See also Maciej Bartkowski, “How Online Courses on Civil Resistance Can Make a Real Impact,” *Minds of the Movement Blog*, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, February 13, 2019, https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/blog_post/online-courses-civil-resistance-can-make-real-impact/.

Exploring General Patterns of External Support

To systematize some of the findings in the case studies, we developed the External Support for Nonviolent Campaigns Dataset (EX-D). This is the first incident-level dataset that identifies different types of support in the context of nonviolent campaigns. The EX-D contains information on 25,265 reported incidents of assistance in support of nonviolent campaigns by actors outside of the location country (e.g., “external actors”). The data provide coverage for 73 cases. This includes all 67 maximalist campaigns observed in the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) 2.1 Data Project from 2000-2013, as well as one additional campaign from earlier (the South African Anti-Apartheid campaign from 1984-1994). Five additional countries without observed maximalist campaigns at the beginning of the study are included for comparison (Cuba, Guatemala, Kenya, Malaysia, and Zimbabwe), with coverage from 1995 to 2013.

The total incident counts include support to both non-state actors and governments of countries in which these campaigns were taking place. However, all support had to be explicitly related to supporting civil society in the recipient state to qualify for inclusion in the EX-D. When the form of support was financial, for instance, in some cases the government was the recipient because it was the most practical receiver of direct support, even if it dispersed the funds to civil society groups later. When the form of support was preventing and mitigating repression or applying sanctions, the government was the recipient because it was the intended target of the measure.

The main categorical attributes appear once again in Tables 6-9, along with summary statistics, the description from the codebook, and one or more examples from the raw EX-D’s data.

Table 6: Support Types

Each category below includes the name of the category, the number and percentage of total incidents in EX-D, and an example from the EX-D.

Financial (n=20,780; 82.25%). *EX-D Example: “The government of Finland dedicates \$13,236 USD for democratic participation and civil society to support Indian representation within Mexican democracy, 1997-2001 (pre-campaign support, Anti-Calderon movement, Mexico).”*

Moral / symbolic (n=1,734; 6.86%). *EX-D Example: Amnesty International issues a public appeal for letters of support on behalf of two men who had not been seen since they were taken into custody during election protests, August 18, 2000 (peak-campaign support, Anti-Fujimori campaign, Peru).*

Technical (n=444; 1.76%). *EX-D Example: The British government commits 800,000 GBP to develop an independent media center in Ukraine to train journalists, politicians, businesses, lawyers, judges, and NGO leaders, 2002-2005 (peak-campaign support, Orange Revolution, Ukraine).*

Training (n=109; 0.43%). *EX-D Example: The Slovak Academic Information Agency and Freedom House holds a seminar in March 1999 in Bratislava, featuring the leaders of the OK’98 campaign and 35 participants from Ukraine, Croatia, Serbia, Belarus, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, the Caucasus, and Lithuania. The goal of the seminar is to make the participants familiar with the experience of Slovak CSOs in increasing citizens’ involvement in public affairs. The seminar is designed mostly for attendants from Croatia and Yugoslavia, countries that were still struggling with authoritarian regimes and that could make the best use of Slovakia’s experience, 1999 (pre-campaign support, Bulldozer Revolution, Serbia).*

Nonviolent civilian protection (n=315; 1.25%). *EX-D Example: The Committee to Protect Journalists releases a report detailing the first-ever deaths of Syrian journalists by the government and expresses outrage, 2012 (peak-campaign support, Syrian Uprising, Syria).*

Sanctions against regime (n=231; 0.91%). *EX-D Example: In Melbourne, unionists hold South African engineering goods as a virtual ransom for the release of trade unionists in South Africa, 1985 (peak-campaign support, Anti-Apartheid campaign, South Africa).*

Safe passage for defectors (n=20; 0.08%). *EX-D Example: The Presidents of the US, Kazakhstan, and Russia jointly negotiate for Interim President Kurmanbek Bakiyev to step down, 2010 (peak-campaign support, Anti-Interim Government campaign, Kyrgyzstan).*

Preventing / mitigating repression (n=1,551; 6.14%). *EX-D Example: The Indian government expresses concern about the crackdown on pro-democracy protesters by the Gayoom regime, 2003-2008 (peak-campaign support, Anti-Gayoom campaign, Maldives).*

9 = Unspecified (n=19; 0.08%). *EX-D Example: Otpor’s activists meet in Athens with Greek Foreign Minister Papandreou and are promised government support for their organization, 2000 (peak-campaign support, Bulldozer Revolution, Serbia).*

10 = Other (n=62; 0.25%). *EX-D Example: Fidel Castro pressures fence-sitting Venezuelan generals to restore Hugo Chávez to office after he was briefly deposed in a coup, 2002 (peak-campaign support, Anti-Coup Campaign, Venezuela).*

Removal of Support

Yes (n=96, 0.38%). *EX-D Example: France recalls its ambassador, announces that it would block new investment in South Africa, and says it would introduce a resolution in the U.N. Security Council condemning South Africa for its apartheid policies of racial segregation and urging concerted international action against it, 1985 (Anti-Apartheid campaign, South Africa).*

No (n=25,169, 99.62%). All other cases.

Table 7: Supporter Types

Each category below includes the name of the category, the number and percentage of total incidents in the EX-D, and an example from the EX-D.

International nongovernmental organization (INGO) (n=941; 3.72%). *EX-D Examples: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Maldives Election Watch, NDI, NRI, Committee to Protect Journalists.*

Diaspora group (n=98; 0.39%). *EX-D Examples: Lebanese in Kuwait, Syrian expats in Jordan, Malawi Diaspora Forum.*

University / student group (n=47; 0.19%). *EX-D Examples: McGill University students, Harvard University students, DC Coalition against Apartheid and Racism, Iranian students from multiple universities.*

Transnational solidarity network (TAN) (n=360; 1.42%). *EX-D Examples: Canadian Election Observers, American Committee on Africa, Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, FEMEN.*

Individual (n=165; 0.65%). *EX-D Examples: Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Elie Wiesel, Betty Williams.*

International governmental organization (IGO) (n=4,107; 16.26%). *EX-D Examples: UNICEF, UNDP, OSCE, NATO, EC, World Bank, IMF.*

Corporation (n=35; 0.14%). *EX-D Examples: Barclays, Motorola, Twitter, DigitalGlobe, Columbia Pictures, Google Ideas.*

Foreign government (n=19,282; 76.32%). *EX-D Examples: US, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Russia, France, India.*

Transnational labor organization / union (n=43; 0.17%). *EX-D Examples: The Operative Painters and Decorators Union, Central Council of Trade Unions of Czechoslovakia, AFL-CIO, Congress of South African Trade Unions, International Trade Union Confederation, Solidarity Center.*

Rebel / paramilitary / militia group (n=16; 0.06%). *EX-D Examples: Hamas, Hezbollah, FARC.*

Media (n=68; 0.27%). *EX-D Examples: Omroep voor Radio Freedom (Broadcasters for Radio Freedom), Pan African News Agency, The Guardian, Morning Star, Democratic Voice of Burma.*

Unspecified (n=18; 0.07%). *EX-D Examples: "foreign guests," unspecified foreign diplomats, "British sources."*

Other (n=85; 0.34%). *EX-D Examples: British Conservative Party, Brazil's Workers' Party, Norwegian Nobel Committee, anonymous hackers.*

Table 8: Recipient Types

Each category below includes the name of the category, the number and percentage of total incidents in the EX-D, and an example from the EX-D.

Civil society organization (CSO) (n=4,139; 16.38%). *EX-D Examples: Zambian NGOs, Association of Independent Electronic Media, Center for Free Elections and Democracy, Izlaz 2000, Lebanese Red Cross.*

University / student group (n=160; 0.63%). *EX-D Examples: Togo student groups, students from UNESCO-Project Schools, University Graduates of Tunisia, Haitian youth groups.*

Individual (n=509; 2.01%). *EX-D Examples: blogger Win Zaw Naing, Zarganar (Burma's most famous comedian), former Prime Minister Abdul-Karim El-Eryani, a UNDP Beirut intern, unspecified individuals.*

Business or corporation (n=41; 0.16%). *EX-D Examples: South African black businessmen, Tunisian Dairy Sector, Ukrainian Telekritika.*

Government (n=16,692; 66.07%). *EX-D Examples: Thai government, Nepalese government, Belarus government.*

Labor organization / union (n=46; 0.18%). *EX-D Examples: Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine, Bolivian Labor Party, Belarussian labor unions, South African Congress of Trade Unions.*

Rebel / paramilitary / militia group (n=20; 0.08%). *EX-D Examples: Sudan Revolutionary Front, Polisario Front, West Papuan rebels.*

Local media (n=598; 2.37%). *EX-D Examples: Charter-97, Radio B92, Association for Independent Electronic Media, Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation.*

Formal opposition parties (n=265; 1.05%). *EX-D Examples: Zajedno Coalition, African National Congress, Maoist Party of Nepal, Sudanese Congress Party, Awami League.*

Movement activists (n=977; 3.87%). *EX-D Examples: movement activists in South Africa, Zambia, Ukraine, Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Iran, etc.*

Unspecified (n=1,726; 6.83%). *EX-D Examples: unspecified public recipients in Syria, Morocco, Mauritania, Togo, Tunisia, Ukraine, South Africa, Lebanon, Burma, Thailand, etc.*

Other (n=92; 0.36%). *EX-D Examples: Zambian traditional leaders, local minority groups in Serbia, Lakas community in the Philippines, relatives of Gas War Victims in Bolivia, Thai women leaders.*

Table 9: Timing of Assistance

Pre-Campaign (n=6,914; 32.97%).

Peak Campaign (n=6,583, 31.39%).

Post-Campaign (n=7,472, 35.63%).

The data are incredibly rich in detail. Because the unit of analysis is the incident of external assistance, there is extremely wide variation in the volume of incidents observed across the cases.²⁰⁵

The most common types of assistance are financial support, moral/symbolic support, and preventing or mitigating repression. Combined, they make up 95.25% of the incidents. The most common supporters are governments, IGOs, and INGOS, which collectively comprise 96.3% of the observations. And the most common recipients are governments, civil society organizations, and unspecified movement actors, which together comprise 89.25% of the observations. We also note that carrots and sticks offered by governments against *rival* governments are the modal category of assistance to nonviolent campaigns; however tangible removals of material support by an erstwhile *ally* are exceedingly rare occurrences in the dataset.

The high counts of incidents by and to governments is largely explained by the high number of observations contributed by the AidData platform. AidData reports all publicly-reported, official, bilateral or multilateral transfers of funding and is therefore a systematic and comprehensive source of information from which to collect data in a way that augmented our manual data collection process, which relied on searches of open source materials such as news reports and official documents. As noted above, we included only those instances in which the assistance was explicitly meant for civil society development and/or democracy assistance in the context of the transition phase. Indeed, 50% of the observations of assistance by governments to governments took place during the two years immediately after the campaigns ended, with the remaining half divided fairly evenly between assistance observed during the five years prior to a campaign's start and assistance observed during the peak of the campaign's mobilization. Therefore, we interpret at least half of these observations as direct democracy assistance in the aftermath of a nonviolent campaign, and we interpret the other half of the government to government observations as indicative of bilateral democracy and civil society development assistance for which the receiving government was an official intermediary. Yet we broadly interpret such assistance as indirect assistance to nonviolent movements because the support may have been pressuring the governments to accommodate the movements or expand space for movements to organize effective challenges.²⁰⁶

Indeed, the two years after campaigns have ended can be crucial in determining whether democracy consolidates. Bilateral or multilateral pressure has helped prevent the consolidation of military coups after popular uprisings. One of the most important forms of support that the UN and regional bodies can provide to movements is to refuse to recognize or legitimize coup leaders.

205 See the Technical Appendix for a summary.

206 That said, it is not always clear whether such assistance was made in coordination with local movements.

After we cleaned the dataset, we created new indicators that aggregate the data across a range of assistance types, supporter types, and recipient types, and across the three different units of analysis: (1) the pre-, peak-, and post-campaign phases; (2) the peak-campaign-year unit; and (3) the campaign-year unit. These new indicators draw on the raw data, which we aggregated into count variables by the campaign and campaign-year for the purposes of the present analysis.²⁰⁷ In future research, scholars could use different forms of aggregation of the raw data, but we opted for counts for the purposes of this descriptive analysis.

We then merged the data with the 68 relevant campaigns in the NAVCO 2.1 dataset, which was the most comprehensive source of data available on maximalist campaigns from 2000-2013 at the study's outset and from which we drew data on campaign participation, violent flanks, security force defections, civilian fatalities, and the outcomes of the campaigns. We discuss estimation procedures in the Technical Appendix; Table A3 contains a brief summary of each of the models and outcomes reported below. We note that we ran several hundred models applying various forms of stepwise deletion for robustness. Detailed results and replication files are available upon request.

Results of Correlation Analysis

We developed a series of correlation analyses that focus on the impacts of different dimensions of support on both campaign characteristics and campaign outcomes. This allows us to focus on potential strategic tradeoffs in campaign support (e.g., that a certain kind of support might embolden a larger number of people to participate but also result in a higher number of fatalities among campaign participants). It also allows us to assess both the outcomes and potential risks of different types of assistance, which may provide useful considerations for both movements and potential donors. For the purposes of presentational simplicity, we report only the overall descriptive findings where we found consistent indicators of statistical significance across numerous model specifications.

Training Support is Consistently Impactful

Training is the only form of assistance that is positively correlated with nonviolent campaign characteristics. This is particularly true during the pre-campaign period, where higher incidence of training is correlated with higher participation rates, lower campaign fatalities, and higher probabilities of security force defections once the campaign has mobilized. Training

207 During the exploratory phase of the project, we aggregated the data along numerous other dimensions, such as direct and indirect support; material and non-material types of support; state and non-state supporter types; and state and non-state recipient types. These categories seemed theoretically relevant; however, we ultimately found that they did not produce any concrete results. Therefore, we returned to the count data to explore impacts of annual incidents of various forms of assistance. Further research could move beyond count data to aggregate these observations in a variety of informative ways.

during the campaign’s peak mobilization phase is also correlated with an increase in participation size and with the ultimate success of the campaign. Across all models, training appears to have no systematic, observed downsides—and it is the only form of support with consistently positive correlations across all models.

Figure 1 shows the results of a logistic regression that evaluates the correlation between the number of instances of training support during a campaign’s peak period and the probability that the campaign succeeded.

One could interpret this finding as indicating that increasing the number of trainings during the campaign makes the campaign more likely to succeed. However, one could also interpret this finding as indicating that campaigns that are likely to succeed tend to attract more instances of training support—in other words, that the correlation may be spurious and driven by selection effects.

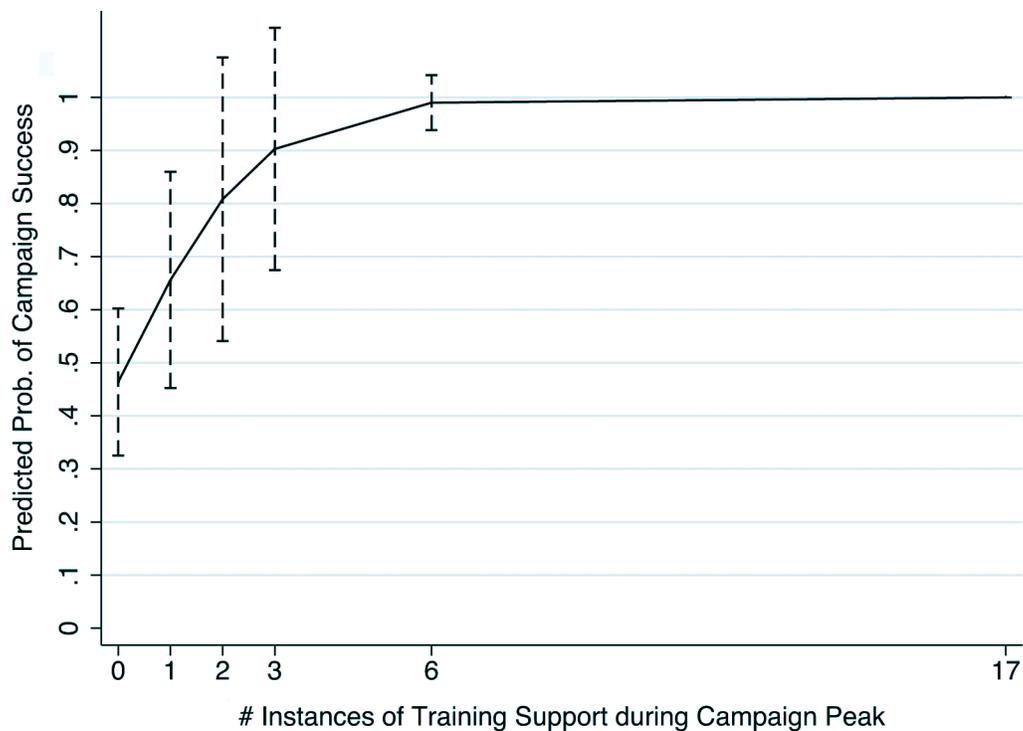


FIGURE 1. Correlation between Training Support during Campaign Peak and Campaign Success

Marginal effects of training support during campaign’s peak on campaign success with 95% confidence intervals. $p < .001$. Based on a logistic regression controlling for the logged number of campaign participants with robust standard errors clustered around location. $n=68$

However, it is clear that training support provided to activists, civil society groups, and movements *prior* to the onset on a maximalist campaign is also correlated with campaign attributes that are key factors leading to success. Figure 2 shows that higher incidence of training that occurs in the five years prior to a campaign’s onset is associated with higher levels of peak participation and an increased likelihood of security force defections. Higher incidence of training is also associated with a lower propensity for a campaign to adopt or tolerate a violent flank, as well as fewer deaths due to repression by the state’s security forces.

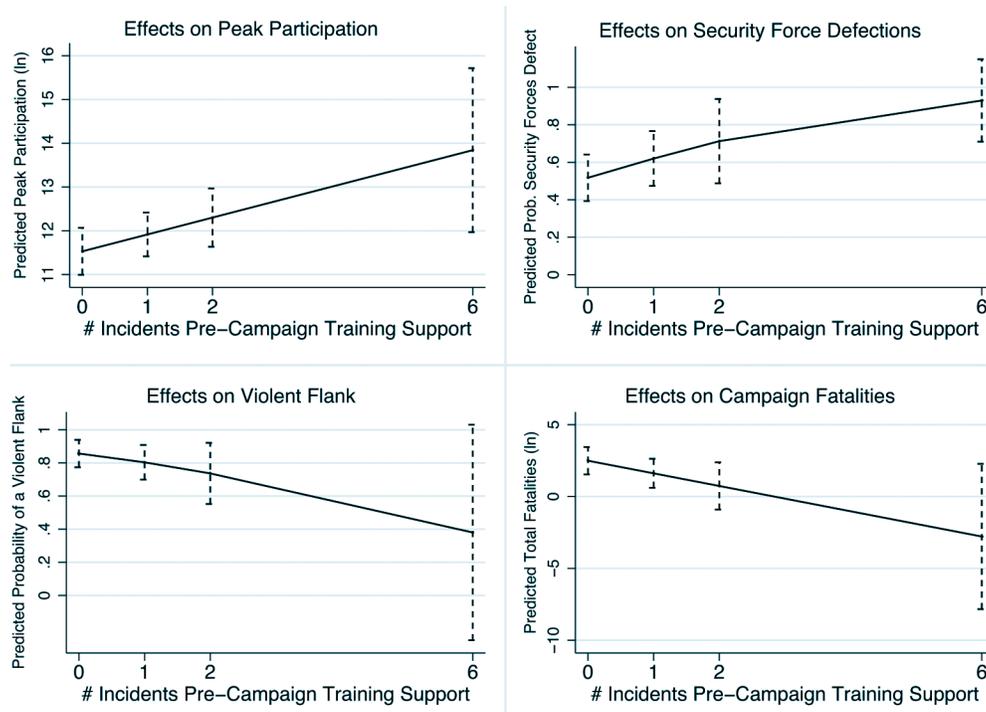


FIGURE 2. Correlations between Pre-Campaign Training Support and Campaign Dynamics

Marginal effects of training support during campaign’s peak on campaign dynamics with 95% confidence intervals. $p < .001$. Based on bivariate regressions (logistic regressions for defections and violent flanks, OLS regressions for participants and fatalities), with robust standard errors clustered around location. $n=68$

The fact that *pre-campaign* support also yields favorable campaign dynamics—such as higher participation rates, nonviolent discipline, security force defections, and less lethal repression—gives us greater confidence that the impacts of training are not driven by selection effects alone. Rather, the training itself appears to yield a greater capacity for strategic planning, tactical discipline, resource mobilization, and effective deterrence of state violence.

A Diversity of Impactful Supporters—And Some Cautionary Tales

Support by INGOs, corporations, and foreign governments has consistently beneficial effects. In contrast, we find that assistance from individuals or paramilitary or armed rebel groups has consistently detrimental effects on campaign participants and their prospects.

INGOs—whose most common forms of support were preventing or mitigating repression, providing technical assistance, and expressing moral support—appear to be the most influential during the peak mobilization phase, with pre-campaign activities yielding no statistically significant correlations. An increase in instances of support from INGOs during a campaign is correlated with a higher chance of campaign success (Figure 3).

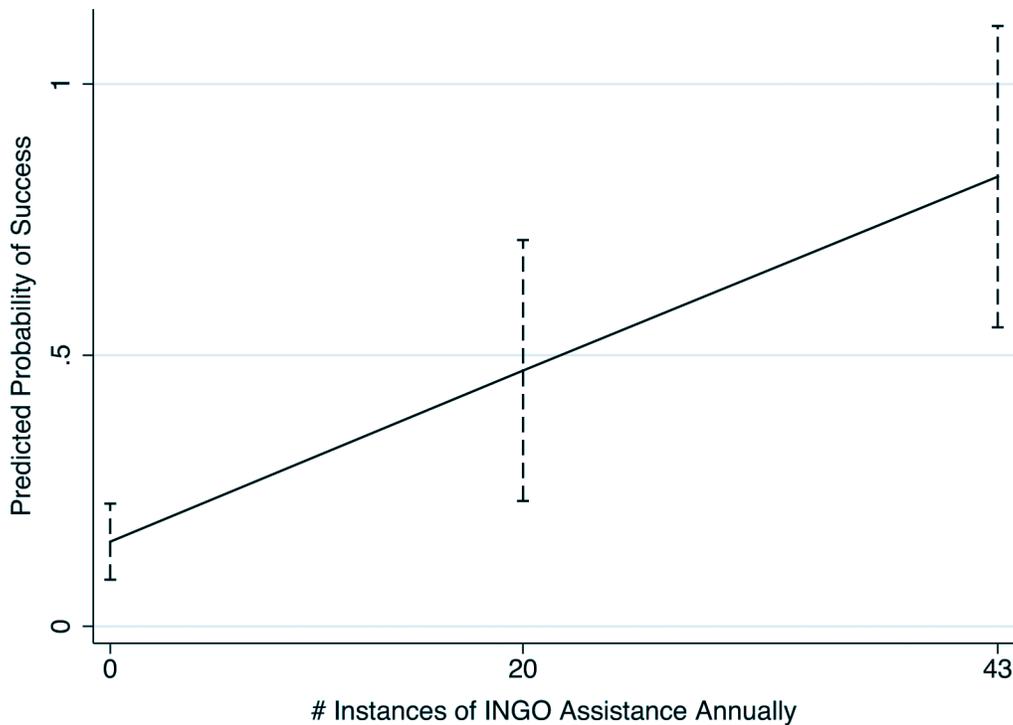


FIGURE 3. Correlation between INGO Support and Campaign Outcome

Marginal effects of incidents of INGO support during each campaign-year on the probability of campaign success with 95% confidence intervals. $p < .001$. Based on multivariate logistic regressions, controlling for all other types of supporters, with robust standard errors clustered around location. $n=198$

Generally speaking, during the 2000-2013 period, we suspect that INGOs promoting human rights and democracy, spreading knowledge and information about effective non-violent action, and naming and shaming violations of human rights were viewed with less suspicion by local actors than foreign governments or IGOs. The impacts of such actors may

also have been somewhat underestimated by autocratic governments during this period as well. We note, however, that fewer than 4.5% of the incidents of INGO support explicitly involved training efforts, which has been the most consistently helpful to movements, meaning that the impacts of INGOs could potentially have been even greater if they were more often focused on skills-building and training support. At the same time, the quality of the trainings and *how* they are conducted (content and pedagogy) may be as important as their frequency.

Next, support from corporations during the pre-campaign phase is associated with fewer fatalities during the peak mobilization phase. And support from corporations during the peak mobilization phase is associated with higher participation, nonviolent discipline, and lower fatalities. This may be because of the high incidence of support from financial institutions (like Barclays) and manufacturing companies (like GM), whose support for campaigns during the apartheid era was influential. More recently, companies like Twitter, DigitalGlobe, Google Ideas, and Telegram have provided important assistance to activists attempting to use their platforms to mitigate repression.

Support from foreign governments typically means that the targeted government receives bilateral or multilateral aid (70% of cases) aimed at strengthening the rule of law, supporting the creation of independent media, enhancing capacities for election-monitoring and other accountability mechanisms, and creating more resources for opposition parties, unions, student groups, and civic organizations to develop. Through these measures, civil society groups may be more capable of organizing coalitions, pursuing various legal forms of advocacy, raising public awareness for key grievances, and coordinating activities with other civil society actors. All of these effects might help to mobilize critical resources and coalitions necessary for an effective civil resistance campaign. It may also help to alter the calculations of government actors, who may be more sensitive to new accountability measures that constrain their options during a crisis. In fact, we find that government assistance during the pre-campaign phase is correlated with a higher likelihood of security force defections during peak mobilization. It may be that enabling forms of civil assistance reinforce attention to human rights standards while elevating the ability of local actors to call out abuses.

Moreover, during the peak mobilization phase, higher incidence of government assistance is correlated with greater rates of nonviolent discipline and lower rates of fatalities. Persistent bilateral government engagement with a state experiencing a civil resistance campaign may provide greater diplomatic leverage for the donor state, creating opportunities for mediation, negotiation, or even the threat of the withdrawal of financial resources. It may also incentivize activists and security forces to avoid escalating the conflict into a violent one, lest donor governments withdraw aid from the society. Therefore, we interpret this pattern as one where government assistance indirectly supports nonviolent campaigns by creating or expanding an enabling environment for civil resistance campaigns, rather than one in

which foreign governments directly support these movements. That said, we find no evidence that shows that support from corporations or governments is directly associated with a campaign's overall success.

In contrast, support to a nonviolent campaign from existing armed groups is correlated with the campaign's ultimate failure. We see various reasons for this. First, violent flanks are much more likely to emerge in campaigns that receive support from armed groups, which is perhaps intuitive. Similarly, nonviolent campaigns that receive support from armed groups tend to suffer higher fatalities than other campaigns. When a nonviolent campaign receives assistance from armed actors, it is easier for the adversary to depict them as an existential threat to the society, undermining their bases of popular support and providing a pretext for massive crackdowns against unarmed activists. The 2011 Syrian uprising faced this dilemma, for instance, when armed militia groups developed to defend unarmed protestors from state violence. Ultimately the campaign received support from the Free Syrian Army, which was comprised of defectors and militia members, both in response to and further escalating state violence against the uprising.

Support from prominent individuals is also associated with an increase in fatalities during a campaign (Figure 4). We also find that support from individuals during the peak-campaign phase is correlated with a reduced chance of eliciting security force defections in most models, as well as reduced participation rates in some models.

Impactful Recipients: Local Media, Unions, and Formal Opposition Groups

Various forms of support to local media outlets, unions, and formal opposition parties seem to benefit nonviolent campaigns, whereas support to armed rebel groups or paramilitary organizations is consistently detrimental.

A higher incidence of support to local media in the pre-campaign phase is correlated with higher likelihood of security force defections once the campaign has begun. And support to local media during a campaign's peak is correlated with lower campaign fatalities, higher likelihood of defection, and movement success. Intuitively, this may suggest that greater support to local, independent media helps a movement to spread its message among its own population, countering a regime's autocratic narrative. It also ensures that reporters are likely to witness and report on human rights abuses, potentially deterring atrocities by security forces and incentivizing their defection. Interestingly, like training, pre- and peak-campaign support to independent media within the target country has a consistently potent and positive correlation with campaign characteristics and outcomes.

Support to organized labor groups and unions during the peak mobilization stage of a campaign is correlated with higher participation, nonviolent discipline, and security force

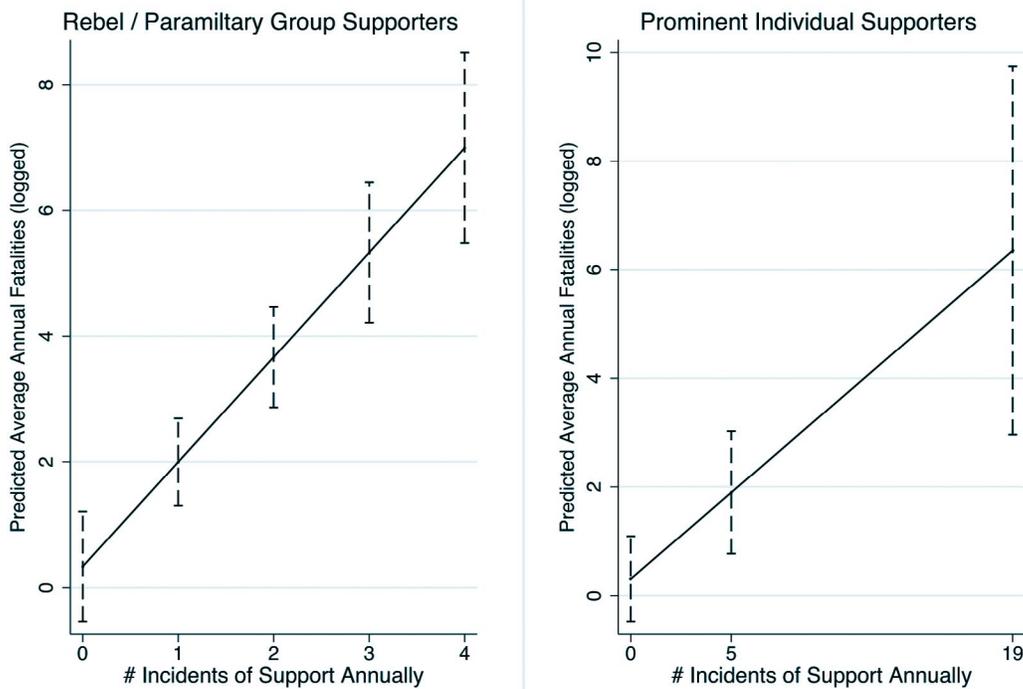


FIGURE 4. Correlations between Armed Group Supporters and Individual Supporters and Campaign Fatalities

Marginal effects of incidents of support during each campaign-year on campaign fatalities with 95% confidence intervals. $p < .001$. Based on bivariate OLS regressions, with robust standard errors clustered around location. $n=198$

defections. These results are not consistent across all of the models, but none of the models report any downsides from support to unions either.

Pre-campaign support to formal opposition parties is positively correlated with nonviolent discipline during the peak mobilization phase. Once a campaign is active in its peak mobilization phase, support to formal opposition groups is correlated with an increase in participation and a higher chance of movement success²⁰⁸—see Figure 5. In one model, peak-campaign support to formal opposition groups is correlated with higher fatalities, signaling one potential downside; however, that finding is not consistent across all models.

Finally, pre-campaign support to armed groups—such as paramilitary or rebel organizations—is correlated with lower participation rates and lower nonviolent discipline once a campaign begins. Moreover, support to such organizations during a campaign’s peak is correlated with lower nonviolent discipline, lower chances of defections, and higher campaign

208 See the Technical Appendix for information on how movement success is defined.

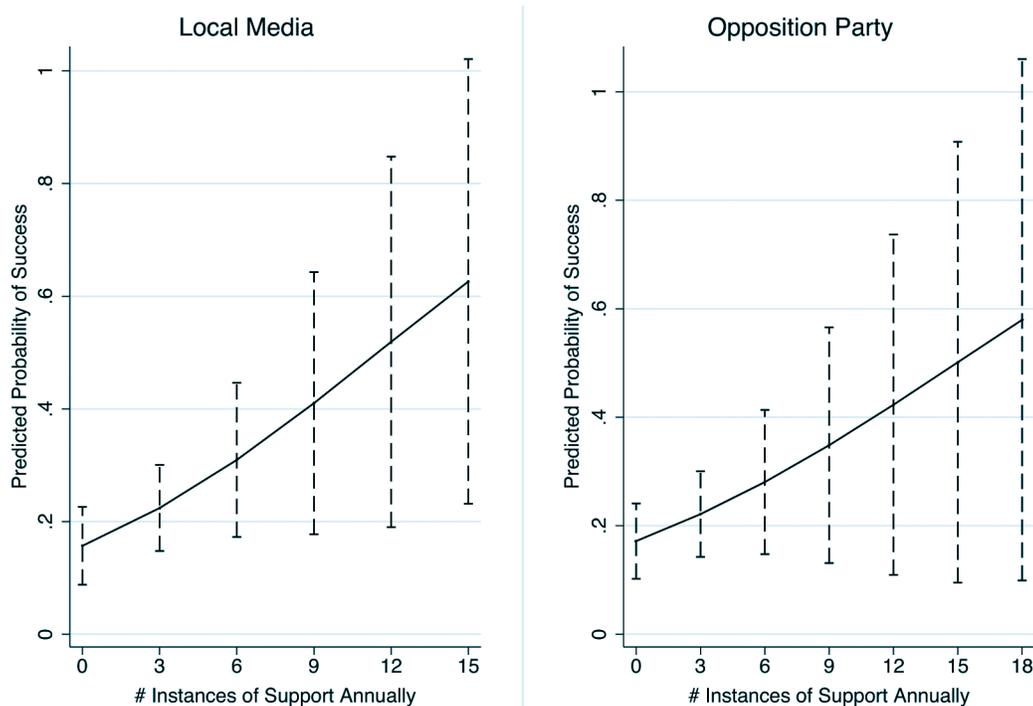


FIGURE 5. Correlation between Local Media and Opposition Party Recipients and Campaign Success

Marginal effects of incidents of support during each campaign-year on campaign outcomes with 95% confidence intervals. $p < .001$. Based on bivariate logistic regressions, with robust standard errors clustered around location. $n=198$

fatalities. Indeed, in one of the more definitive findings in this study, we did not find a single instance where support to armed actors in the midst of a nonviolent campaign resulted in the nonviolent campaign's success.

A Few Caveats

Most dimensions of external assistance show unstable effects on campaign characteristics and outcomes, and it is difficult to discern many generalizable results that apply across all 68 campaigns. There are several reasons for this. First, the most influential factors in explaining the outcomes of maximalist nonviolent campaigns involve the interactions between the movements and their domestic adversaries. Nonviolent campaigns that enjoy enduring large-scale participation and generate defections are the most likely to succeed regardless of whether external assistance is forthcoming. To the degree that external assistance might support increased participation and security force defections, it may have an *indirect* effect on these outcomes.

Second, the correlations between forms of support and various campaign outcomes appear to be highly complex and context-specific. Most dimensions of support have mixed effects: they are positively correlated with one dynamic (e.g., high participation size) but are negatively correlated with another (e.g., fatalities). Most dimensions of support also have null effects on one or more aspects of the campaign, meaning that there was no observable impact across the cases.

Third, as discussed above, the sample size is quite small. The findings are based on models that analyze between 68 and 198 observations. Moreover, the results from the quantitative analysis are correlational only and must therefore be interpreted only as descriptive. We cannot make causal inferences based on these descriptive findings because we cannot entirely rule out selection effects, even though we have tried to address this issue by analyzing instances of support that preceded (and could not necessarily have foreseen) the onset of a maximalist campaign. However, we do have some important descriptive findings that are suggestive of important, generalizable correlations in this sample.

Combined Analysis: Triangulating the Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Few maximalist nonviolent uprisings in the past twenty years existed without significant international attention and involvement. What varied is not whether nonviolent campaigns received support or not. Instead, what varied was the type and degree of support, as well as the primary actors involved in delivering and receiving the support. Combining the insights produced by our quantitative and qualitative research, our research yields nine important takeaways, which we summarize below.

1. External Assistance is Always Secondary to the Strategic Capacity of Local Actors

Both quantitative and qualitative evidence supports the claim that external support is always secondary to local actors. Democracy expert Thomas Carothers noted in 2006 that external support can “help boost existing civic groups and opposition parties. But it cannot create them where they do not exist or strengthen them when they are fundamentally weak.”²⁰⁹ While authoritarian regimes often accuse domestic dissenters of being foreign agents, there is little evidence to suggest that external support is necessary or sufficient to the success of nonviolent campaigns. Qualitative evidence suggests that external support in the form of financial assistance, diplomatic support, or transnational solidarity is most useful when it leverages good local strategies and networks. For example, the youth-led Otpor movement in Serbia, which began as a self-funded network committed to mass mobilization, benefited from donor support that helped the movement expand their activities. But nonviolent campaigns cannot be exported or imported, contrary to authoritarian propaganda.

2. Long-Term Investment in Civil Society and Democratic Institutions Can Create Enabling Environments for Nonviolent Campaigns

“It’s the work that goes on well before the mass mobilization that matters,” according to a senior leader at NDI.²¹⁰ The qualitative findings make this point clear. Long-term technical and financial assistance to civic organizations, election monitoring, political parties, think tanks, youth movements, unions, and independent media helped build the demand side for human rights, civic participation and government accountability in places like Serbia, Ukraine, Tunisia, and Egypt.

Interview respondents often emphasized that support for independent media and free information flows has been very helpful for movements. This includes support for B92 independent radio in Serbia and investigative journalists in Ukraine, which played important roles in countering regime narratives and exposing criminal government activities. During the

209 Thomas Carothers, “The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2006).

210 Interview with Leslie Campbell, Senior Associate and Regional Director for the Middle East, National Democratic Institute, October 14, 2016.

2011-2013 uprising in Sudan, the independent Radio Dabanga played an important role in spreading information about the protests and government crackdown.

In many cases, diplomats and embassies can be key conduits for free flows of information. Slovak diplomats shared lessons from their successful electoral revolution with Serbian youth activists prior to the Serbian revolution. Ironically, in the Tunisian case, wiki-leaked cables from the US Embassy about the corruption of Ben Ali's inner circle was an important revelation that supported the Tunisian Revolution.

The interviews also highlighted the value of technical support to labor and trade unions. The Solidarity Center, a non-profit organization aligned with the AFL-CIO labor federation and one of the core grantees of the National Endowment for Democracy, provided technical support to unions in Egypt prior to the revolution.²¹¹ The Solidarity Center helped translate materials during the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt to improve the unions' communication with policymakers.

In the quantitative data, the results are more measured but are consistent with this insight. Unlike many other forms of assistance, peak support to local media, labor unions, and formal political opposition parties has no adverse effects across the 68 cases. Such findings reinforce the idea that supporting and developing specific types of institutional capacity, such as supporting freedom of the press, expanding the autonomy and independence of formal opposition parties, and reinforcing labor rights, is correlated with an enhanced ability for people power movements to mobilize and succeed.

3. Training Support is a Consistently Impactful Type of Assistance

Activists who receive training in organizing and nonviolent action prior to mobilization are much more likely to mobilize campaigns with high participation, low fatalities, and greater likelihood of defections. Training provides important skills-building functions but, perhaps even more importantly, it provides a crucial convening and peer learning opportunity. "People look to other movements for inspiration. Information exchange is especially important in repressive places, to help break down fear barriers and give activists confidence."²¹² An Iranian interviewee mentioned the importance of knowledge transfer related to civil resistance before and during the Green Movement, including translated materials from ICNC that he shared via a radio program.²¹³ Respondents often referred to the usefulness of translated materials (especially Gene Sharp's book, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*).

211 Interview with Shawna Bader-Blau, Executive Director of the Solidarity Center, December 21, 2015.

212 Interview with Trygve Olson, who led IRI's Europe and Belarus work in the early 2000s, February 23, 2016.

213 Interview with Mohsen Sazegara, Iranian journalist.

4. Mitigating Regime Repression via Political, Diplomatic, and Security Engagement Can Be Critical

As Michael McFaul has written, “External actions and resources that constrain autocratic actors can be just as important as aid provided to democratic actors.”²¹⁴ During the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, diplomatic intervention by the US, Poland and the EU weakened the forces of repression.²¹⁵ In the case of Tunisia, military-to-military channels between the US and Tunisia were used to reinforce diplomatic messages during the uprising.²¹⁶ In Sudan, a special UN mechanism eventually pressured al-Bashir to fire some members of the police and judiciary responsible for violent crackdowns and to provide payment to victims’ families.²¹⁷

Other research shows that the threat of international sanctions against an incumbent regime, especially coming from multiple senders, can also be important symbolically for activists and encourage collective action. The threat signals a message of regime disapproval and can “constitute an international stamp of approval for the protesters.”²¹⁸ However, sanctions can be complicated when it comes to nonviolent campaigns. One unintended consequence is that economic sanctions can make getting support to activists very difficult, as happened in Iran, Sudan, and Syria. In the case of Sudan and Syria, US-based entities were required to obtain special Treasury and Commerce Department licenses in order to send financial or other material assistance to individuals and organizations in those countries, which proved to be laborious.

5. Foreign Government Assistance Can Strengthen the Rule of Law During and After Campaigns

Support from foreign governments—particularly support to bolster local media and organized labor—appears to be generally helpful for most campaigns, particularly during the peak mobilization phase. This is a surprising result that contrasts somewhat with our earlier findings,²¹⁹ which suggest that direct material assistance to a nonviolent campaign by a foreign government was both rare and unhelpful for nonviolent campaigns. However, in the current

214 McFaul, 2007.

215 Interview with Ambassador John Herbst, a former US ambassador to Ukraine, March 23, 2017.

216 Interview with Tamara Wittes, Senior Fellow and Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institution, former Director of the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative, April 18, 2016. In an interview on November 17, 2016 with Daniel Brumberg, he said, “The fact that the Tunisian security apparatus was divided and the military thought highly of the US was helpful. The US had close relations with the Tunisian army, which trained in the US and received some supplies from the US. The army was socialized to US values.”

217 Interview with Majid Maali, Centre for Applied Human Rights at University of York, March 9, 2017.

218 Julia Grauvogel, Amanda Licht, and Christian von Soest, “Sanctions and Signals: How International Sanction Threats Trigger Domestic Protest in Targeted Regimes,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 2017): 86-97.

219 Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011.

study, our data on foreign government assistance are much more nuanced and comprehensive—moving beyond financial support and including nearly 2,000 other incidents of non-financial support. In most of these cases, foreign governments are either attempting to mitigate repression against the movement, issuing sanctions against the regime, or providing moral or diplomatic support to the movement (these three categories of support constitute a combined 84% of the non-financial incidents)—a pattern that relates to the previous point as well. In three of the case study countries, Tunisia, Egypt, and Ukraine, support provided by the US government to civil society through bilateral agreements with those countries' governments ended up supporting civic actors that played a key role in those uprisings.

But in general, states seem to be most involved after the campaign has ended. Almost 50% of foreign government support incidents in the dataset occur after the campaign has ended. A good example is Tunisia, where the interim government set the sequencing for the transition and the US and other governments and multilateral organizations supported it. In the case of Egypt, the lack of mediation support to help build bridges between secular and Islamist forces, and between the opposition and the SCAF in the aftermath of Mubarak's ouster, was a weakness during the transition period.

More generally, the two years after campaigns have ended can be crucial in determining how a society emerges from a maximalist nonviolent uprising. Preventing the consolidation of military coups through bilateral or multilateral pressure can be particularly important in preventing authoritarian backsliding or mass violence in the aftermath of an uprising in which the military has played a key role.

6. Assistance to Armed Actors Undermines Nonviolent Campaigns

We find that concurrent external support to armed groups tends to undermine nonviolent movements in numerous ways. Several interview respondents confirmed that such activities risk militarizing a conflict where a nonviolent movement is already gaining momentum. In the case of Sudan, weapons and other forms of support provided by various countries to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and Darfuri rebel groups before and during the 2011-2013 protests set the pro-democracy movement back. The flow of weapons and money to Syrian armed factions across porous Turkish borders exacerbated divisions in the opposition and fueled a proxy civil war.

In fact, one of the most adverse support dimensions is support to local armed actors or rebel groups. This experience is borne out across all cases; support to armed organizations is correlated with lower participation rates, lower chances of maintaining nonviolent discipline, lower chances of eliciting security force defections, and lower chances of movement success. However, new research shows it may be important to distinguish where the support to armed actors is coming from. A study by Marina Petrova shows that support from the diaspora,

compared to foreign governments, may be better at influencing a militant group's shift toward nonviolent tactics.²²⁰ Petrova finds that diaspora support for militant groups increases the likelihood of these groups adopting nonviolent strategies, while foreign states do not affect militants' tactical considerations. Diaspora and the rebel groups they support can share cultural links, networks, and a vested interest in the conflict. This can "enable a higher degree of reliability and, in turn, make the adoption of nonviolence feasible."²²¹

Also, support *by* armed rebel groups or paramilitary organizations to nonviolent movements is associated with decreased nonviolent discipline, increased campaign fatalities, and movement failure. For example, armed security provided to anti-Assad protesters by the Free Syrian Army and other armed factions based in Turkey and neighboring countries was followed by an intensification of regime violence.

7. Allied Support for Repressive Regimes Poses a Significant Challenge for Activists

Foreign aid from allied governments, particularly when it is used to bolster the regime's security apparatus, can alter the relative balance of power between opposition forces and autocratic continuity. Russian and Iranian backing for Bashar al-Assad in Syria and Russia's interventions in Ukraine and Belarus made it more difficult for activists to escape harsh repression and to elicit defections. On the other hand, an ally's refusal to back an abusive regime can also be pivotal. For example, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ivanov played a key role in Milošević stepping down in Serbia in 2000. France's removal of support for the Ben Ali regime and its security forces may have been a key turning point in that campaign. The US government, a long-time ally of Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, eventually sided with the pro-democracy movement.

In the quantitative results, we find that the removal of support to an autocratic government by a foreign power has mixed effects. It is correlated with an increase in participation but also an increase in fatalities and has no systematic correlation with a campaign's overall success or failure. Such findings need to be interpreted with caution, however, because it is not clear in which causal direction the arrow goes. It may be that powerful states withdraw their support from a regime when movement numbers grow very large and their adversaries crack down. Or, it may be that the withdrawal of support from certain allies makes a government feel less constrained by the alliance and cracks down accordingly.

That said, the withdrawal of support by corporations can be similarly helpful for movements. The quantitative findings suggest that at various stages of a movement, corporate

220 Marina Petrova, "What Matters Is Who Supports You: Diaspora and Foreign States as External Supporters and Militants' Adoption of Nonviolence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 9 (October 1, 2019): 2155–79.

221 *Ibid.*

support for movements—through divestment or noncooperation with regime elites—can be influential in various movement characteristics. Increased incidents of support from corporations, such as Google’s support for Iranian cyber-activists, are correlated with higher movement participation, nonviolent discipline, and chances of eliciting defections. Such incidents are also correlated with lower fatalities. It is important to note, however, that meaningful incidents of corporate support are quite rare. There are only 35 such incidents in the entire dataset occurring across ten campaigns. Nearly half of these incidents (16) come from the South Africa case, so these results should be treated with caution. Troublingly, in the Syrian case, technology sold by a US company (Blue Coat Systems) and an Italian surveillance firm (Area SpA) were used by the Assad regime to conduct its brutal crackdown on activists. In the Iran case, the premature release of the Haystack cyber-privacy tool to Iranian dissidents, whose software malfunctioned, resulted in the outing of a number of activists—a clear example of external support badly backfiring.

8. The Jury is Out on the Benefits of Direct Financial Assistance

Direct funding to movements has few generalizable effects on movement characteristics or outcomes. The only statistically significant finding suggests that direct financial assistance to movements is correlated with fewer participants in the campaign, suggesting it has adverse effects on a vital movement characteristic. The qualitative research provides more measured support for direct financial assistance, depending on how it is delivered and implemented, as well as who is driving the agenda.

In the case of Serbia, funding for the Otpor movement by donors like the Open Society foundation and USAID’s Office of Transitional Initiatives mostly took the form of in-kind support to pay for office rental, equipment, supplies, and advertising. According to one Serbian activist, the fact that donors were not paying individuals’ salaries (Otpor had only one paid staff member) “limited competition between civic groups and discouraged a professionalization of their activism.”²²² By contrast, donor funding to the Belarusian youth movement Zubr ended up backfiring. Payments to activists created jealousies and divisions and one of the movement’s charismatic leaders was later accused of corruption.

Multiple interviews highlight the importance of flexible donor funding to helping movements navigate complex environments. Sudanese activists cited the fast, flexible support provided by Open Society’s East Africa office (OSEIA), including small grants and computers, as being particularly helpful during the 2011-2013 period. On the other hand, activists from Belarus and Syria criticized inflexible support loaded with bureaucratic obstacles for making

222 Interview with Slobodan Djinnovic, co-founder of Otpor and co-founder of the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), June 6, 2017.

their work more difficult. The intense vetting procedures associated with the US provision of material assistance to Syrian activists complicated the effort considerably.

9. Donors Should Always Coordinate with One Another

Finally, donor coordination is important to be able to effectively support and leverage nonviolent campaigns. Numerous interview respondents pointed out the necessity of alignment and coordination among donors in supporting movements, which occurred surprisingly infrequently. “It is rare for the international community working in breakthrough countries’ contexts to exhibit the kind of consensus it often exhorts domestic oppositions to display.”²²³ For example, Western governments’ policies and donor support to Belarusian civic and opposition groups during the Denim Revolution were neither aligned nor coordinated. During the Syrian uprising, though there were regular meetings between ambassadors of the US and other democratic embassies in Damascus when the protests began, there was no donor coordination mechanism in place during the mostly nonviolent phase. On the other hand, Serbia and Tunisia provided very good examples of donor coordination. In the case of Tunisia, there was extensive donor coordination both before, during and following the Tunisian revolution.

These insights help us understand not just the *who* and *what* of external assistance, but also the *how*. Unity and cohesion are important for movements and donors alike.

223 Ray Salvatore Jennings, “Democratic Breakthroughs: The Ingredients of Successful Revolts,” US Institute of Peace Peaceworks 81 (July 2012).

Main Recommendations Informed by the Findings

In sum, we present several key takeaways for activists, governmental actors, NGOs & INGOs, and scholars based on this research. These recommendations may be particularly relevant for the incoming US administration of Joe Biden, which has committed to working with allies to bolster democracy at home and internationally, including by convening a Democracy Summit early in his administration.

For activists/campaigns:

- External support will always be secondary to what local actors do. No amount of external funding or pressure can build and sustain movements that thrive on mass, volunteer-based participation. Activists should be realistic about external support and not make their movements dependent on it.
- Movements should set the agenda for external actors—not the other way around. Determine whether and how to accept external assistance, including funding, in consultation with other movement leaders and based on a long-term movement strategy and assessment of the costs and benefits of accepting support. Be prepared for donor efforts that are neither coordinated nor aligned.
- Training can help movements plan, develop skills, make connections, and learn from other activists and movements. Organizations like the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, Leading Change Network, Rhize, Nonviolence International, Beautiful Trouble, and the US Institute of Peace support trainings in civil resistance, nonviolent organizing, and peacebuilding and can be resources for activists and movements globally.
- As part of training, seek insights from veterans of nonviolent movements and lessons learned from past nonviolent struggles on topics like sustaining mobilization, sequencing tactics, mitigating repression, and using negotiations effectively.
- Be prepared to engage with diplomats and policymakers and make them work for you. Develop familiarity with the tools they have at their disposal or could potentially acquire as a result of the activists' input in order to facilitate dialogue with governments, pressure governments, and mitigate repression targeting activists. A description of these tools can be found in *A Diplomat's Handbook*²²⁴ and *How Democratic States Can Effectively Support Pro-Democracy Movements*.²²⁵

224 Jeremy Kinsman and Kurt Bassuener, *A Diplomat's Handbook for Democracy Development Support* (Quebec: McGill – Queen's University Press, 2016).

225 Maciej Bartkowski, *How Democratic States Can Effectively Support Pro-Democracy Movements* (Washington, DC: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2020).

Main Recommendations Informed by the Findings

In sum, we present several key takeaways for activists, governmental actors, NGOs & INGOs, and scholars based on this research. These recommendations may be particularly relevant for the incoming US administration of Joe Biden, which has committed to working with allies to bolster democracy at home and internationally, including by convening a Summit for Democracy early in his administration. Given the growing awareness that US domestic and foreign policy are inextricably linked, there is greater focus on addressing democratic shortcomings at home, like systemic racism, voter suppression, and the corrupting influence of money in politics, that weaken US credibility and leverage on these issues internationally. Linking domestic and international support for democracy and human rights is critical in the months and years ahead.

For governmental actors:

- Treat movements as stakeholders and conflict actors in their own right, with goals and demands.
- Listen to activists and movement leaders. Invite them to participate in policy fora and high-level diplomatic engagements. Encourage diplomats and development practitioners to engage with non-traditional civil society actors and movements, including as part of high-level country visits by government and UN officials, and recognize diplomats who do it well with awards and other incentives.
- Invest long-term in civil society strengthening and capacity-building, but avoid the NGO-ization of less formal civil society groups. Support for movements, independent media, human rights documentation and advocacy, election monitoring, and nonviolent action training and skills-building can help create an enabling environment for nonviolent campaigns.
- Provide convening spaces and opportunities for intra-movement cohesion and relationship-building and facilitate meetings between movement leaders and government officials. Strengthen the ability of international mediators to engage effectively with movements, particularly in the context of mass mobilizations.²²⁶
- Coordinate donor activities at the policy and programmatic levels. This is particularly important to counter malign external actor influence, including governmental backing of authoritarian repression.

226 Maria J. Stephan, “Mediating Mass Movements,” Oslo Forum Paper, September 2020, <https://www.hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Mediating-Mass-Movements.pdf>.

- For the US government specifically, designate a point person or office to take the lead in planning and coordinating USG efforts in the context of popular movements challenging authoritarian regimes. Convene outside experts who are familiar with civil resistance and transition characteristics to inform policy and programmatic decisions.
- Prioritize the prevention and mitigation of violent repression targeting nonviolent activists and movements. Use diplomatic pressure, targeted sanctions, and military-to-military levers to deter and punish security force or paramilitary violence targeting unarmed protestors. These tools are described in *Military Engagement*.²²⁷ Encourage nonviolent discipline on the part of activists and movements to avoid militarizing.
- Support NGOs and other nongovernmental actors that work regularly with movements. Challenge foreign governments' efforts to restrict civic space using legal, political, economic, and security assistance levers.²²⁸

For nongovernmental actors:

- Adopt a movement mindset and develop flexible funding mechanisms to support activists and movements, for whom timely infusions of small funds are often more useful than large chunks of funding.²²⁹
- Invest in trainings and workshops for activists and movement leaders that build skills in civil resistance and nonviolent organizing, help movements resolve internal conflicts, prepare them for negotiations, and bring veterans of successful nonviolent movements to share lessons learned. Providing spaces for strategic planning, trust and relationship-building, and peer learning can be particularly helpful for activists who are otherwise involved in the daily minutiae of activism.²³⁰

227 Dennis Blair, *Military Engagement: Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

228 Maria J. Stephan, "Responding to the Global Threat of Closing Civic Space: Policy Options," Testimony before the US Congress Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, March 21, 2017, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options>.

229 Maria J. Stephan, Sadaf Lakhani, and Nadia Naviwala, "Aid to Civil Society: A Movement Mindset," US Institute of Peace Special Report, February 23, 2015, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset>. See also the resources described in Hardy Merriman, "Civil Resistance and Human Rights Funding," Minds of the Movement Blog, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, n.d. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/civil-resistance-human-rights-funding/>.

230 See Nadine Bloch, "Education and Training in Nonviolent Resistance," US Institute of Peace Special Report, October 5, 2016, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/10/education-and-training-nonviolent-resistance>; May Miller-Dawkins, "Understanding Activism: How International NGOs, Foundations, and Others Can Provide Better Support to Social Movements," Rhize Report, July 2017, <https://www.rhize.org/understanding-activism>.

- Support research and education efforts that elevate the histories and contemporary applications of nonviolent resistance in different countries and contexts. Translating and disseminating these materials in local languages can deepen awareness of, and appreciation for, homegrown and culturally nuanced examples of nonviolent action.
- Expand the circle of local partners and engage groups operating outside the capital. Facilitate connections between grassroots actors and more traditional NGO leaders, between local and national groups and NGOs, and between civic actors in cities and rural areas without forcing collaboration.²³¹

For future research:

There are a variety of directions that future research could take. We identify seven of them here.

1. Scholars could expand the range of cases under consideration. A larger sample could include a wider set of historical cases, or a broader range of movements including those focused on various reforms rather than just revolutionary movements. Moreover, there could be more direct comparisons of pre-campaign support between cases and non-cases.
2. Future research could apply techniques that can move beyond correlation and into causal analysis. These could include instrumental variable approaches or quasi-experimental research, which could effectively allow scholars to identify the mechanisms through which support affects movement trajectories.
3. Scholars could work to identify which types of movements receive assistance, as well as why some supporters—particularly states—provide more assistance than others.
4. Future research could further disaggregate different categories of support. For example, preventing or mitigating repression involves a wide variety of activities that scholars could effectively explore on a more nuanced level.
5. Future research could also evaluate the long-term effects of such support on transitions to democracy or other broad social and political outcomes.
6. Scholars could examine the impacts of support to autocratic regimes and pro-government mobilization, as well as the effects of such support on shrinking civic space.

231 Further to this point, see Abigail Bellows, “Bridging the Elite-Grassroots Divide Among Anti-Corruption Activists,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Paper, January 7, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/01/07/bridging-elite-grassroots-divide-among-anticorruption-activists-pub-80687>; See also Gladys Kudzaishe Hlatwayo and Charles Mangongera, “The Challenges for Social Movements in Post-Mugabe Zimbabwe,” US Institute of Peace Special Report, January 22, 2020, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/01/challenges-social-movements-post-mugabe-zimbabwe>; Hussein Khalid and Tabatha Thompson, “Conflict Prevention in Kenya: Combating Corruption Through Nonviolent Action,” US Institute of Peace Special Report, September 25, 2019, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/09conflict-prevention-kenya-combating-corruption-through-nonviolent-action>.

7. Finally, a promising research direction is examining the way that external assistance affects the inclusivity of nonviolent campaigns—for example, whether campaigns are more likely to involve rural groups, women-led groups, groups led by marginalized communities, youth groups, and more.

Technical Appendix

The eight case studies (Table 1 in the main text) provide the primary qualitative evidence that informs our final analysis. The qualitative material was collected through over 80 interviews and several focus groups with policymakers, donors, and activists, which were conducted by Maria Stephan and a research assistant between 2016 to 2017. This research was exempted from Human Subjects Review oversight through both the University of Denver’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (IRB protocol #911046-1) and Solutions IRB, a private entity (IRB protocol #2016/06/9) for those employed on the project outside of the University of Denver.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in person, by phone, and over Skype. We used a standard questionnaire to touch on common elements in each interview, with additional probing questions improvised over the course of the interview. Most interviews were on the record, with a smaller number off-the-record. Interviews were recorded via hand-written notes. Certain interviewees requested anonymity, while others asked that the names of specific individuals and organizations that received assistance not be revealed for security reasons. Interview participants were selected via snowball sampling. Two 2017 USIP-hosted workshops and roundtables on donor support to movements, which involved representatives of government, (I)NGOs, and philanthropic organizations, shed further light on the topic.

We relied on a convenience sample, supplemented with snowballing, for reasons of practicality and security. We relied on our existing networks of activists to recruit into the study. US officials and their networks were easier to locate and recruit than other countries’ officials. As a result, one of the limitations of the qualitative data is that the sample is not representative of both external actors and activists in all cases. Here, US officials are over-represented in the sample.

However, the study’s respondents nevertheless provided a rich level of detail about the strategic and political contexts in which support came about, and a much more nuanced understanding of how aid is targeted toward particular movements, how the movements see such incidents of support, and the importance of aid delivery and implementation, among other issues. The interviews were reinforced by desktop research on each of the eight cases.

The EX-D data were collected by Erica Chenoweth in collaboration with more than a dozen University of Denver research assistants between 2015 to 2019. Research assistants

collected the data in two stages. In the first stage, they applied a uniform search string in Lexis-Nexis on a variety of news sources to identify supporters and recipients of assistance occurring during each campaign. They then supplemented these search strings with searches of additional data sources to obtain further information about each incident of support. This process yielded 4,915 hand-coded incidents of observed external support to nonviolent campaigns (19.45% of the total observations).

During the second stage, research assistants applied a uniform search to the AidData platform to identify additional incidents of public support. Each of these incidents was then carefully documented by hand according to our own coding protocol. This process yielded an additional 20,350 observations, comprising 80.55% of the total observations in the dataset.

Research assistants coded each incident for a range of attributes, including assistance types, recipient types, and supporter types.²³² Each incident was assigned an ID number and recoded on a standardized Word document containing notes and rationales for coding decisions. The coding document was checked by a project manager for quality control before each incident was then recorded in a spreadsheet. We also maintained a project Wiki with frequently asked questions to standardize responses to common coding questions. Once all data were compiled, the combined data were sorted by campaign date, manually de-duplicated, corrected for mistakes and logical errors, and cleaned by two project managers. We did not have resources for inter-rater reliability testing; however, this multi-tiered quality control system ensured general uniformity across coding decisions and eliminated any coder-specific biases from coding decisions.

Table A1 reports a summary of the total incidents for each campaign in the EX-D. In the table (and in the main report's analysis), pre-, peak-, and post-campaign counts are mutually exclusive and are coded according to the first year of the support. The total incidents column also includes incidents that cover all periods or unspecified periods and are therefore excluded from the pre-/peak-/post- counts. For the five cases in which no campaigns were observed (Cuba, Guatemala, Kenya, Malaysia, and Zimbabwe, labeled as "nonmovement"), we report total support observed.

232 A fuller discussion of the EX-D's data collection and cleaning process is in Erica Chenoweth, Paul Kemp, J.J. Janflone, Maria Lotito, and Maria J. Stephan, "Introducing the EX-D," unpublished working paper, Harvard University.

Table A1: Incidences of Support, High to Low, in EX-D²³³

MOVEMENT	LOCATION	TOTAL (N=24,780)	PRE- CAMPAIGN (N=6,914)	PEAK CAMPAIGN (N=6,583)	POST- CAMPAIGN (N=7,472)
South African Second Defiance Campaign	South Africa	1385	31	958	304
Anti-Mubarak Movement	Egypt	1154	267	725	122
Denim Revolution	Belarus	1145	288	856	0
(nonmovement)	Zimbabwe	1068			
Kefaya	Egypt	1016	158	273	566
(nonmovement)	Guatemala	904			
Orange Revolution	Ukraine	833	89	206	487
Awami League Protests	Bangladesh	821	354	112	245
Syrian Uprising	Syria	819	162	344	297
Anti-Aristide Campaign 2004	Haiti	784	165	23	569
Maoist Anti-Government Protests	Nepal	650	340	22	235
Anti-Saakashvilli Campaign	Georgia	605	149	322	1
Anti-Ben Ali Campaign (Jasmine Revolution)	Tunisia	587	79	107	359
Tulip Revolution	Kyrgyzstan	573	254	93	211
Anti-Ali Abdullah Saleh Campaign	Yemen	563	221	85	195
Nepalese Anti-Government Movement	Nepal	525	143	17	319
Anti-Sanchez de Lozada Campaign	Bolivia	524	121	5	382
Armenian Opposition Protest / March 1st Movement	Armenia	490	185	63	192
Anti-Milošević Movement	Serbia	481	170	85	206
Anti-Abdelaziz Bouteflika Campaign	Algeria	452	178	147	112
Anti-Mutharika Movement	Malawi	447	269	93	51
Second Revolution	Kyrgyzstan	445	293	149	2

233 The five “nonmovement” cases were collected as potential control groups or points of comparison, although we do not include them in our analysis here. In these cases, conceptually the observations are considered “pre-campaign” support, since no campaigns emerged. For each case, we collected data on support intended to enable civil society development, strengthen rule of law, support press freedom, etc., during the period 2000-2010, similarly to those cases where campaigns did emerge.

MOVEMENT	LOCATION	TOTAL (N=24,780)	PRE- CAMPAIGN (N=6,914)	PEAK CAMPAIGN (N=6,583)	POST- CAMPAIGN (N=7,472)
Cedar Revolution	Lebanon	439	10	138	289
Pro-Aristide Campaign	Haiti	408	114	230	56
Rebellion of the Forajidos	Ecuador	405	155	12	148
Euromaidan Movement	Ukraine	398	184	136	57
Pro-Ouattara Campaign	Ivory Coast	350	134	133	65
Anti-Fujimori Campaign	Peru	338	94	25	195
Rose Revolution	Georgia	319	113	14	156
Lebanon Political Crisis	Lebanon	289	0	6	271
(nonmovement)	Kenya	278			
Anti-Islamist Government Protests	Tunisia	268	157	107	3
Anti-Chiluba Campaign	Zambia	267	57	26	120
Anti-Ravalomanana Movement	Madagascar	258	98	1	120
Anti-al-Bashar Government Campaign	Sudan	246	107	94	42
Anti-Gnassingbe/Coup Crisis Campaign	Togo	227	60	55	103
Pro-Morsi Protests	Egypt	218	123	94	1
Anti-Morsi Protests	Egypt	201	123	5	0
Anti-coup Campaign	Venezuela	195	41	16	128
Saffron Revolution	Myanmar	193	29	59	96
Anti-Erdogan Campaign	Turkey	192	165	21	6
Let's Save Togo (Anti-Gnassingbe) Movement	Togo	192	128	18	5
Djibouti Arab Spring	Djibouti	183	141	21	21
Green Revolution and Day of Rage	Iran	171	4	135	4
Anti-PRI Campaign	Mexico	168	42	0	115
Red Shirt Campaign	Thailand	159	68	48	35
Pro-Democracy Movement	Madagascar	158	27	11	109
People's Alliance for Democra- cy Campaign	Thailand	145	53	2	76
Anti-Thaksin Campaign	Thailand	141	49	9	72
Anti-King Hamad Campaign	Bahrain	140	1	114	22
Pro-Democracy Movement	Guinea	126	25	79	14

MOVEMENT	LOCATION	TOTAL (N=24,780)	PRE- CAMPAIGN (N=6,914)	PEAK CAMPAIGN (N=6,583)	POST- CAMPAIGN (N=7,472)
Anti-Military Government Campaign	Thailand	124	41	0	63
Renewed Western Sahara Independence Protests	Western Sahara	122	68	29	23
Nasheed Supporters	Maldives	122	53	35	34
Anti-Calderon Campaign	Mexico	115	115	0	0
Civil Movement for Democracy	Thailand	95	90	3	2
Anti-Diouf Campaign	Senegal	95	23	25	35
Anti-Gayoom Campaign	Maldives	95	2	63	19
Frente Nacionalæde Resistencia Popular (FNRP)	Honduras	84	33	45	5
Anti-Monarchy Protests	Swaziland	80	25	5	43
Protest for Constitutional Reform	Jordan	75	66	8	0
Anti-Musharraf Campaign (Lawyers' Movement)	Pakistan	70	63	6	1
(nonmovement)	Malaysia	67			
Second People Power Movement	Philippines	60	34	21	2
Anti-Chaudhry Campaign	Fiji	53	9	1	36
People Power III	Philippines	52	44	3	2
West Papua Self-Determination Struggle	West Papua	36	4	23	9
Snow Revolution	Russia	32	19	13	0
(nonmovement)	Cuba	30			
Pro-Democracy Protests	Tonga	23	7	4	12
Dance with Me Campaign	Bulgaria	3	0	3	0
Cutlery Revolution (Kitchenware/Kitchen Implement Revolution)	Iceland	3	0	1	2
Anti-Aziz Protests	Mauritania	1	0	1	0

What the EX-D Does Not Do

There are some important limitations in the EX-D. First, the data do not weigh the impact of each incident of support. Because the contexts were so different and the meaning of each type of support so contingent, it was impossible to reliably document systematic data about the impact of each individual incident. Although there is still much to be learned from raw counts of support incidents, all incidences are necessarily considered “equal” from a statistical perspective, even though assistance can vary considerably in its significance. This is a crucial caveat and points to the importance of the case studies as a way to better get at the qualitative differences in these data.

Second, the data do not include comprehensive information on instances of support from private donors, philanthropists, or foundations. The data only include instances of philanthropic support that were publicly reported and documented in the sources discovered on Lexis-Nexis, in additional research, or on the AidData platform (which documented just under 1,000 such observations, or 4% of the observations in the dataset). Although systematic databases may be available to those with access to proprietary information regarding foundation or philanthropic support, seeking out and including these data was beyond the scope and feasibility of this project. Similarly, the data do not record covert instances of support, unless otherwise revealed in public reporting in the aftermath.

Third, although the EX-D contains an incredibly high number of observations, the data with which it is compatible contains only 68 cases (the NAVCO 1.2 data) or 198 cases (NAVCO 2.1, the country-year data). This means that the results drawn from the analyses are not based on the full NAVCO dataset of over 300 cases, thereby reducing the statistical power and the generalizability of the findings.

Finally, analyses derived from this project do not allow us to draw conclusions beyond the scope of the data themselves. We can make some general descriptive observations about the correlations between external assistance and maximalist nonviolent campaign characteristics from 2000-2013. However, we cannot make inferences about the effects of external assistance toward all nonviolent (or violent) campaigns during all periods. Nor can we make inferences about non-maximalist campaigns, such as reformist movements, movements with local or regional goals, movements for rights, or movements targeting private actors like corporations.

Discussion of Analyses and Results

To perform the quantitative analysis discussed in the text, we merged the EX-D with the NAVCO 2.1 dataset, which contains campaign-year data on numerous relevant strategic campaign variables—including the total level of campaign participation, the presence or absence of fringe violence within the movement (often called “violent flanks”), the presence

or absence of security force defections, the number of civilian fatalities through lethal government coercion, and whether the campaign succeeded or failed. We use each of the latter indicators as dependent variables in a variety of regression models described further below.

Because of the small sample size, we ran individual models for each outcome using the different types of support, recipient counts, and supporter counts, respectively. To evaluate the impacts of pre-campaign assistance on peak campaign characteristics, we estimated a series of models where the unit of analysis was the campaign (n=68). We aggregated counts of each form of assistance, supporter, and recipient during the five years prior to the campaign's onset. Then we regressed these variables on aggregate campaign participation rates, violent flanks, fatalities, security force defections, and campaign success. We then replicated this process for aggregated counts of assistance, supporters, and recipients during the peak mobilization phase relying on the same unit of analysis (n=68).

We are concerned about two issues regarding the aggregate models. The first is the small sample size, which can yield unstable results (especially for the logistic regression models). The second is the potential for reverse causality or simultaneity bias in this over-aggregated unit of analysis.

We therefore developed another series of more conservative models using the campaign-year unit of analysis (n=198). This analysis excludes all 29 campaigns that lasted one year or less and includes only the remaining 39 multi-year campaigns in which we can examine the number of incidents of external assistance on a year-to-year basis. This allows us to identify how instances of support in one year might affect campaign characteristics and outcomes in the next year. It has the added benefit of adding more observations, providing a modest improvement in statistical power despite the smaller number of campaigns.²³⁴

We also examined models in which we lagged each of the dynamic and success variables by one year to estimate the effects of the previous year's support on the current year's logged participation rates, violent flanks, fatalities, security force defections, or campaign success. For both the OLS and the logistic regressions, we estimated the models with robust standard errors clustered around the campaign's location to account for heteroskedasticity in the cross-sectional unit. Table A2 illustrates the ways that we construe positive (green) and negative (red) effects on campaign characteristics (indirect effects) and outcomes (direct effects).

234 Methodologically-inclined readers will note that we are dealing with a very large number of incident-level observations (over 25,000) distributed across a very small number of aggregate observations (68 in the campaign data, 198 in the campaign-year data). This is why we urge caution in the interpretation of the quantitative results absent the qualitative data, and why we are reporting the findings that are corroborated at the large-n descriptive level as well as in our interviews. There is some promise in the prospect of developing data on campaigns at the daily or tactical level (such as the effort undertaken to produce NAVCO 3.0: Erica Chenoweth, Jonathan Pinckney, and Orion Lewis, "Days of Rage: Introducing the NAVCO 3.0 Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research* 55, no. 4 (July 1, 2018): 524–34.), which could facilitate more detailed evaluations of the interactions between various incidents of support and immediate, on-the-ground impacts. One could also expand incident-level data beyond the 68 campaigns examined here to include a much larger sample. However, based on our experience manually coding such data, this would be a multi-million dollar, multi-year undertaking.

Table A2: Positive and Negative Effects on Key Campaign Characteristics and Outcomes

CHARACTERISTICS (INDIRECT EFFECTS)								OUTCOMES (DIRECT EFFECTS)	
Participation Size		Nonviolent Discipline		Campaign Fatalities		Security Force Defections		Campaign Outcomes	
High	Low	No Violent Flank	Violent Flank	Low	High	Yes	No	Success	Failure

By aggregating the data into campaign or campaign-year observations and the unit of analysis, we reduce the observations under study considerably. In future research, scholars could conceivably use the raw counts of these data to analyze patterns of protest at the level of each incident of assistance; however, event-level data on nonviolent discipline, participation, violent flanks, defections, repression, and campaign success are not currently available for all 68 maximalist campaigns between 2000-2013. Therefore, we opt for the higher level of aggregation with a smaller number of observations for the purposes of this descriptive analysis and we encourage researchers to further explore the richness of these data at a more granular level. Please see the NAVCO 2.1 codebook, available at the Harvard Dataverse, for more details regarding the coding and source materials for NAVCO 2.1’s variables.²³⁵

Each model examines the correlations between external support dimensions and four campaign characteristics—participation, nonviolent discipline, fatalities, and security force defections—and then we examine the correlations between external support dimensions and the success of the campaign (as defined by the NAVCO criteria).

The nature of the dependent variables necessitates different modeling strategies. For participation rates and campaign fatalities, we apply ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to estimate their correlations with counts of different forms of support, supporters, and recipients. We use log-transformed counts of participants and fatalities to standardize the distribution. Because the presence or absence of violent flanks, security force defections, and campaign success are binary indicators, we develop logistic regression models to estimate correlations with different forms of support, supporters, and recipients using the same approach as above.

235 Erica Chenoweth and Christopher Wiley Shay, “NAVCO 2.1 Dataset,” Harvard Dataverse, December 18, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/MHOXDV>.

Table A3 provides a summary of the different regression models undertaken to support the findings in this analysis, while Table A4 illustrates claims with some correlation tables based on two different time periods: (1) the campaign’s active period, and (2) the campaign’s year of termination.

Table A3: Summary of Regression Models Undertaken

For the success outcomes, in several models, additional covariates are applied, including logged participation, fatalities, defections, and violent flanks during the campaign or during the campaign-year, respectively.

	Logged participation	Logged participation, y+1	NV discipline	NV discipline, y+1	Campaign fatalities	Campaign fatalities, y+1	Security force defections	Security force defections, y+1	Campaign success	Campaign success, y+1
Model Type	OLS	OLS	Logit	Logit	OLS	OLS	Logit	Logit	Logit	Logit
Unit of Analysis	Campaign	Campaign-year	Campaign	Campaign-year	Campaign	Campaign-year	Campaign	Campaign-year	Campaign	Campaign-year
Multi-Year Campaigns Only?	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
N	68	198	68	198	68	198	68	198	68	198
N of campaigns	68	39	68	39	68	39	68	39	68	39
Pre-campaign aggregate counts	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Peak-campaign aggregate counts	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Campaign-year counts	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Additional controls applied?	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes

Table A4. Summary of Results Reported in Text

		INCREASE CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION?	CAMPAIGN MAINTAINS NV DISCIPLINE?	CAMPAIGN SUFFERS FEWER FATALITIES?	SECURITY FORCES DEFECT?	INCREASE CHANCE OF SUCCESS?
TYPE OF SUPPORT	TIMING					
Training	5 years prior to campaign					
Training	during campaign					
TYPE OF RECIPIENT	TIMING					
Labor organization / union	5 years prior to campaign					
Labor organization / union	during campaign					
Rebel / paramilitary group	5 years prior to campaign					
Rebel / paramilitary group	during campaign					
Local media	5 years prior to campaign					
Local media	during campaign					
Formal opposition parties	5 years prior to campaign					
Formal opposition parties	during campaign					
TYPE OF SUPPORTER	TIMING					
INGO	5 years prior to campaign					
INGO	during campaign					
Individual	5 years prior to campaign					
Individual	during campaign					
Corporation	5 years prior to campaign					
Corporation	during campaign					
Foreign government	5 years prior to campaign					
Foreign government	during campaign					
Rebel / paramilitary group	5 years prior to campaign					
Rebel / paramilitary group	during campaign					

Table A5. Summary of Full Results

(ALL MODELS IN TABLE A3)

(DVs in current year; all campaigns)	INCREASE CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION?	CAMPAIGN MAINTAINS NV DISCIPLINE?	CAMPAIGN SUFFERS FEWER FATALITIES?	SECURITY FORCES DEFECT?	INCREASE CHANGE OF SUCCESS?
PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORT					
Financial					
Moral / symbolic				Red	
Technical	Green	Green	Red		
Training	Green		Green	Green	
Nonviolent civilian protection				Red	
Sanctions against regime			Red	Red	
Safe passage for defectors	Green		Red	Green	
Preventing / mitigating repression	Red				
Unspecified					
Other	Red				
Remove support					
PRE-CAMPAIGN RECIPIENTS					
Civil society organization				Red	
University / student group	Red				
Individual					Red
Business or corporation	Red	Green		Green	Red
Government		Red			Green
Labor organization / union					
Rebel / paramilitary group	Red	Red			
Local media				Green	
Formal opposition parties		Green			
Movement activists					
Unspecified	Green				
Other					
PRE-CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS					
INGO					
Diaspora group		Green	Green	Red	Red
University / student group		Red			
Transnational solidarity network		Red			
Individual					
IGO		Red		Red	
Corporation			Green		

(DVs in current year; all campaigns)	INCREASE CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION?	CAMPAIGN MAINTAINS NV DISCIPLINE?	CAMPAIGN SUFFERS FEWER FATALITIES?	SECURITY FORCES DEFECT?	INCREASE CHANCE OF SUCCESS?
Foreign government					
Transnational labor org / union					
Rebel / paramilitary group					
Media					
Unspecified					
Other					
PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT					
Financial					
Moral / symbolic					
Technical					
Training					
Nonviolent civilian protection					
Sanctions against regime					
Safe passage for defectors					
Preventing / mitigating repression					
Unspecified					
Other					
Remove support					
PEAK CAMPAIGN RECIPIENTS					
Civil society organization					
University / student group					
Individual					
Business or corporation					
Government					
Labor organization / union					
Rebel / paramilitary group					
Local media					
Formal opposition parties					
Movement activists					
Unspecified					
Other					

(DVs in current year; all campaigns)	INCREASE CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION?	CAMPAIGN MAINTAINS NV DISCIPLINE?	CAMPAIGN SUFFERS FEWER FATALITIES?	SECURITY FORCES DEFECT?	INCREASE CHANCE OF SUCCESS?
PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS					
INGO	Green	White	White	Green	White
Diaspora group	White	White	White	White	White
University / student group	White	White	White	Green	White
Transnational solidarity network	Green	White	Red	White	Red
Individual	Red	White	White	Red	White
IGO	White	Red	White	White	White
Corporation	Green	White	White	White	White
Foreign government	White	Green	White	White	White
Transnational labor org / union	White	White	Red	White	White
Rebel / paramilitary group	White	Red	Red	White	White
Media	White	White	White	White	White
Unspecified	White	White	White	White	White
Other	White	White	White	White	White

(DVs led 1 year; for multiyear campaigns only)	INCREASE CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION (T+1)?	CAMPAIGN MAINTAINS NV DISCIPLINE (T+1)?	CAMPAIGN SUFFERS FEWER FATALITIES (T+1)?	SECURITY FORCES DEFECT (T+1)?	INCREASE CHANCE OF SUCCESS (T+1)?
PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT					
Financial					
Moral / symbolic	Green		Red		Red
Technical		Green			
Training					
Nonviolent civilian protection	Red	Red			
Sanctions against regime	Green		Red		
Safe passage for defectors		Red			
Preventing / mitigating repression					
Unspecified	Red			Red	
Other				Red	
Remove support	Green		Red		
PEAK CAMPAIGN RECIPIENTS					
Civil society organization		Green	Red		Red
University / student group					
Individual	Green				
Business or corporation	Green		Red		Green
Government			Green		Green
Labor organization / union					
Rebel / paramilitary group	Red		Green	Red	Red
Local media			Green	Green	Green
Formal opposition parties	Green		Red		Green
Movement activists					Red
Unspecified			Red		
Other				Red	Green
PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS					
INGO			Green	Green	
Diaspora group	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green
University / student group	Green				Green
Transnational solidarity network					
Individual				Red	
IGO			Red	Green	Green
Corporation		Green		Green	
Foreign government			Green		
Transnational labor org / union	Green		Red	Red	
Rebel / paramilitary group					Red
Media			Green		
Unspecified					
Other	Red				

(DVs led 1 year; for multiyear campaigns only)	INCREASE CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION (T+1)?	CAMPAIGN MAINTAINS NV DISCIPLINE (T+1)?	CAMPAIGN SUFFERS FEWER FATALITIES (T+1)?	SECURITY FORCES DEFECT (T+1)?	INCREASE CHANCE OF SUCCESS (T+1)?
PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORT (CONSISTENT RESULTS FROM MULTIYEAR & ALL CAMPAIGNS)					
Financial					
Moral / symbolic	Green		Red		
Technical					
Training					
Nonviolent civilian protection					
Sanctions against regime	Green		Red		
Safe passage for defectors					
Preventing / mitigating repression					
Unspecified	Red				
Other					
Remove support	Green				
PEAK CAMPAIGN RECIPIENTS (CONSISTENT RESULTS FROM MULTIYEAR & ALL CAMPAIGNS)					
Civil society organization		Green			Red
University / student group					
Individual	Green				
Business or corporation					
Government					Green
Labor organization / union					
Rebel / paramilitary group		Red			
Local media				Green	Green
Formal opposition parties	Green				
Movement activists					
Unspecified					
Other				Red	
PEAK CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS (CONSISTENT RESULTS FROM MULTIYEAR & ALL CAMPAIGNS)					
INGO				Green	
Diaspora group					
University / student group					
Transnational solidarity network					
Individual				Red	
IGO					
Corporation					
Foreign government					
Transnational labor org / union			Red		
Rebel / paramilitary group					
Media					
Unspecified					
Other					

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge financial support from the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. We are especially grateful for our team of research assistants, which included Maria Lotito, JJ Janflone, Paul Kemp, Patrick McCormick, Miranda Rivers, Christian Brunner, Sarah Chasin, Lee Cotton, John Dinges, Esra Dilek, Kaitlyn Dowd, Emma Dunn, Ned Feuer, Abby Harms, Laura Hosman, Duk Kyi, Christine Lazcano, Elise Mann, Drew Pederson, Patrick Pierson, Stacy Parson Stephens, Diego Prados, Evan Williams, and Melinda Zanner. We are grateful to Deborah Avant, Howard Barrell, Maciej Bartkowski, Anika Binnendijk, Alex Braithwaite, Cassy Dorff, Veronique Dudouet, Mel Duncan, Jack DuVall, Ellen Furnari, Cullen Hendrix, Kyleanne Hunter, Jaime Jackson, Ivan Marovic, Hardy Merriman, Pauline Moore, Matt Mulberry, Sharon Nepstad, Jonathan Pinckney, Megan Shannon, Tabatha Thompson, Stephen Zunes, and two anonymous reviewers for feedback that helped to enrich this project. We also thank Julia Constantine, who provided excellent editorial assistance. Finally, we thank the activists, organizers, officials, and donors who took time to talk with our research team over the course of our interviews. We did our best to reflect their lived experiences, analyses, and intuitions. Of course, all errors remain our own.

About the Authors



Erica Chenoweth is the Berthold Beitz Professor in Human Rights and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School and a Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University. Chenoweth is core faculty at Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, where they direct the Nonviolent Action Lab. Chenoweth has published seven books and dozens on articles on political violence and its alternatives. Chenoweth's most recent book, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2021), explores what civil resistance is, how it works, why it sometimes fails, how violence and repression affect it, and the long-term impacts of such resistance. Their next book with Zoe

Marks, *Rebel XX: Women on the Frontlines of Revolution*, explores the impact of women's participation on the outcomes of mass movements and the quality of egalitarian democracy more generally.



Maria J. Stephan's career has bridged the academic, policy, and non-profit sectors, with a focus on the role of civil resistance and nonviolent movements in advancing human rights, democratic freedoms, and sustainable peace in the US and globally. She most recently directed the Program on Nonviolent Action at the U.S. Institute of Peace, overseeing cutting-edge research and programming focused on the nexus of nonviolent action and peacebuilding. Stephan is the co-author (with Erica Chenoweth) of *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2011). She is the co-author of *Bolstering Democracy: Lessons Learned and the Path Forward* (Atlantic Council, 2018); the co-editor of

Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback? (Atlantic Council, 2015); and the editor of *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization and Governance in the Middle East* (Palgrave, 2009). From 2009-14, Stephan was lead foreign affairs officer in the U.S. State Department, serving in Afghanistan and Turkey. She later co-directed the Future of Authoritarianism initiative at the Atlantic Council. Stephan has taught at Georgetown University and American University. She received her BA from Boston College and her MA and PhD from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Stephan, a native Vermonter, is a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

ICNC MONOGRAPH SERIES

The ICNC Monograph Series aims to bridge research and practice. Drawing on scholarly literature and high quality analytical and empirical analyses, monographs enrich public discourse by expanding scientific knowledge in the field of civil resistance and providing recommendations for practitioners such as activists, organizers, journalists, and members of INGOs and the policy community.

Monographs are available for free download at:

<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/>

Hard copies are also available for purchase.

OTHER VOLUMES IN THE ICNC MONOGRAPH SERIES

*When Civil Resistance Succeeds: Building Democracy
After Popular Nonviolent Uprisings*

by Jonathan Pinckney, 2018

*Civil Resistance against Coups: A Comparative
and Historical Perspective*

by Stephen Zunes, 2017

*People Power Movements and International Human Rights:
Creating a Legal Framework*

by Elizabeth A. Wilson, 2017

Making or Breaking Nonviolent Discipline in Civil Resistance Movements

by Jonathan Pinckney, 2016

(Chinese translation also available)

The Tibetan Nonviolent Struggle: A Strategic and Historical Analysis

by Tenzin Dorjee, 2015

(Tibetan translation also available)

*The Power of Staying Put: Nonviolent Resistance
Against Armed Groups in Colombia*

by Juan Masullo, 2015

(Spanish translation also available)

Nonviolent campaigns usually take place in complex domestic and international settings, where support from outside actors can be a double-edged sword. We argue that nonviolent campaigns tend to benefit the most from external assistance that allows them to generate high participation, maintain nonviolent discipline, deter crackdowns, and elicit security force defections. But various forms of external assistance have mixed effects on the characteristics and outcomes of nonviolent campaigns. We use original qualitative and quantitative data to examine the ways that external assistance impacted the characteristics and success rates of post-2000 maximalist uprisings.

Among other findings, we argue that long-term investment in civil society and democratic institutions can strengthen the societal foundations for nonviolent movements; that activists who receive training prior to peak mobilization are much more likely to mobilize campaigns with high participation, low fatalities, and greater likelihood of defections; that donor coordination is important to be able to effectively support and leverage nonviolent campaigns; and that concurrent external support to armed groups tends to undermine nonviolent movements in numerous ways. Flexible donor assistance that supports safe spaces for campaign planning and relationship-building, and multilateral diplomatic pressure that mitigates regime repression can be particularly helpful for nonviolent campaigns.

ICNC'S Monograph Series publishes original studies that stimulate and enrich policy discussions around civil resistance and nonviolent movements.

This report underwent peer review.

PUBLISHED BY ICNC PRESS

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict

600 New Hampshire Ave NW, Suite 710
Washington, D.C. 20037

www.nonviolent-conflict.org

