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HOW FREEDOM IS WON: FROM CIVIC RESISTANCE TO DURABLE DEMOCRACY¹

By Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman

In recent months, the worldwide struggle for democracy has gained increased prominence in international affairs. In late March 2005, mass demonstrations helped topple Kyrgyzstan's authoritarian president. On March 14th, approximately one million Lebanese took to the streets in a remarkable display of nonviolent civic power to press for democracy and demand an end to Syria's military presence in their country.

In November-December 2004, the international community was surprised by the scale and perseverance of nonviolent civic resistance in Ukraine, as millions of citizens successfully pressed for free and fair elections in what became known as the Orange Revolution. But Ukraine's Orange Revolution was only the latest in a series of successful "people power" revolutions that include the Philippines in 1986; Chile and Poland in 1988; Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia in 1989; the Baltic States in 1991; South Africa in 1994; Serbia and Peru in 2000; and Georgia in 2003. The proliferation and success of such civic resistance movements in effecting political transitions is spawning increased international discussion of the mechanisms by which democracy replaces tyranny.

World leaders are taking notice. In his January 2005 inaugural address, U.S. President George W. Bush focused on global trends that are contributing to the spread of freedom and democracy. That speech and statements by other leaders, including UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the European Union's Foreign Affairs Commissioner Javier Solana, have helped place on the front burner the question of how best to promote democratic change and to build the infrastructure of stable democratic life.

Growing international discourse about democratization is not a theoretical exercise. In the last three decades, dozens of corrupt, authoritarian, autocratic, one-party, and military regimes have fallen. As empires, multinational states, and colonial systems have receded, new states have emerged. Dictatorships

¹ "How Freedom Is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy" is a study based on research conducted by Freedom House. Data and findings were reviewed and evaluated by a panel of independent academic authorities. The project was also supported by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.

collapse and new states and new democracies arise by a variety of means. **As this study shows, far more often than is generally understood, the change agent is broad-based, nonviolent civic resistance—which employs tactics such as boycotts, mass protests, blockades, strikes, and civil disobedience to de-legitimate authoritarian rulers and erode their sources of support, including the loyalty of their armed defenders.**

In other cases, transitions are generated by a combination of domestic civic pressure and reformers within the powerholding elite. Sometimes powerholders switch sides and lend their support to an increasingly powerful civic movement. Political liberalization is also initiated from the top down, by formerly authoritarian powerholders who seek to avert a social explosion, promote growth, or avoid international sanctions. At times, political rights and civil liberties advance through the actions of outside forces, including military and peacekeeping interventions by other states, regional organizations, and the broader international community. In a world in which tyranny is facing increased resistance, these factors and the long-term outcomes they produce deserve increased analysis and understanding.

Data for this study is based in part on original research and in part on narratives and political rights and civil liberties ratings taken from *Freedom in the World*, which has been produced annually for 33 years by Freedom House. The *Freedom in the World* data set reflects numerous political transitions and dozens of new democracies and “Free” polities that have come into existence since the survey was launched. According to more than three decades of survey data, the number of Free states, which ensure a broad array of political rights and civil liberties, has expanded from 43 to 88—an average of nearly 1.5 per year—while the number of Not Free states, where repression is widespread, has declined from 69 to 49, or by nearly 2 every 3 years.

The central conclusion of this study is that how a transition from authoritarianism occurs and the types of forces that are engaged in pressing the transition have significant impact on the success or failure of democratic reform.

In addition, statistical testing of the data for the effect of time on the scores did not produce any significant improvements for freedom. This suggests that **in a preponderance of successful transitions, the most dramatic improvements in freedom tend to come quickly—in the first years of a transition, rather than slowly and incrementally over a long period of time,** underscoring the importance of the nature of the civic and political forces that emerge as important actors in the pre-transition period.

This study examines a large array of long-term data about political openings, transitions from authoritarianism, political rights, and civil liberties in order to better understand how key characteristics of the period prior to a

transition correlate with the eventual outcome for freedom and democratic practice. The report looks at the pre-transition environment in 67 countries where transitions from authoritarianism occurred, and assesses and codes them according to three key characteristics: a) the sources of violence that were present prior to the political opening; b) the degree of civic (bottom-up) versus powerholder (top-down) influence on the process; and c) the strength and cohesion of a nonviolent civic coalition.

The study then correlates these three transition characteristics with the degree of freedom that exists today, some years after the transition. It does so by employing the ratings used in the *Freedom in the World* survey according to its broad categories of Free (countries where there is compliance with a wide array of political rights and civil liberties), Partly Free (countries with some significant limitations on these rights and liberties), and Not Free (countries where basic political rights and civil liberties are widely and systematically denied). It also correlates them to the post-transition state of freedom as reflected in the survey's nuanced numerical ratings for political rights and civil liberties. The numerical ratings used in the Freedom House survey are assigned on a 1-to-7 scale, with 1 representing a high level of democratic political practices and effective adherence to fundamental civil liberties, and 7 representing the absence of all political rights and massive and systematic human rights violations. For the purposes of this study, we have taken each country's scores for political rights and civil liberties and generated a combined average, again with 1 representing best practices and 7 the worst and most repressive setting for basic rights and liberties.

Each country in which a transition has occurred over the last 33 years is evaluated in each of the three categories and accompanied by a short narrative that describes the salient events in the period leading up to the transition. A detailed methodology is included as an appendix to the report.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This study covers transitions that have occurred over the last 33 years, as these are the years for which the annual *Freedom in the World* survey has produced comprehensive annual ratings data. Therefore, the post-war transitions to democracy in Western Europe and Japan were excluded.

We also have excluded transitions that occurred in small countries, defined as those with populations of less than one million. Excluded, too, are countries where major political transitions occurred in the last two years. We therefore do not include the recent events in Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine's transition of December 2004, or Georgia's of 2003. This is because there has not been a sufficient interval since the transition from authoritarian or pseudo-democratic rule to make firm assessments about the nature or durability of post-transition change in countries where institutional, political, legal, and human rights

environments are still evolving or where reforms either have not yet been launched or fully implemented.

In the context of the above limitations, the study has applied the following definitions to the term “political transition”: the establishment of a new government as a result of the fragmentation of larger state units (e.g., Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, USSR); as a result of the end of one-person dictatorships, military dictatorships, and one-party rule; or due to the end of authoritarian dominant-party systems. This definition, therefore, excludes cases where one form of tyranny or dictatorship immediately has been replaced with another, such as a *coup d’etat* that deposes one military leader only to replace him with another or the toppling of a monarchy or personalistic dictatorship and its replacement with military or junta rule. For example, we do not include Turkmenistan, where one-party Soviet rule was quickly replaced with one-man dictatorship. However, we do include Uzbekistan, because there a new state emerged in place of the Soviet one-party dictatorship and briefly permitted limited space for multiparty political activity—although the country since has banned most opposition parties and organizations and is now a Not Free polity.

Because we are measuring transitions from previously closed, authoritarian, or tyrannical systems, none of the countries in our list was rated Free in the year before the transition. In the end, our review found 67 countries that satisfy the above definitions and limitations. These “transition countries” represent over one-third of the world’s 192 countries.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: HOW FREEDOM IS WON

What are the study’s principal findings?

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

Second, there is comparatively little positive effect for freedom in “top-down” transitions that were launched and led by elites. Before transition, no such countries were Free, 6 were Partly Free and 8 were Not Free, while today, post-transition, 2 are Free, 8 are Partly Free and 4 are Not Free. On

a 7-point rating scale, top down transitions led to an improvement of 1.11 points in the combined average freedom score, while transitions with strong civic drivers

Of the 35 Free countries post-transition, 32 (or more than 9 in 10) had a significant “bottom up” civic resistance component. Twenty-two (63 percent) of them had mixed transitions, driven by a combination of civic resistance forces and segments of the powerholders, while 10 (29 percent) had openings driven by primarily by the force of civic resistance. Only two transitions that have led to high levels of freedom today were driven from the top-down by powerholders and one by external military intervention.

Among the 23 Partly Free countries post-transition, 7 (30 percent) of transitions were civic driven, 7 (30 percent) were mixed, 8 (35 percent) were driven by powerholders, and 1 (4 percent) emerged after an external military intervention. Among the 9 Not Free countries post-transition, one transition (11 percent) was civic led, three (33 percent) were mixed, four (44 percent) were driven by powerholders, and one (11 percent) was driven by external military intervention.

led to an improvement of nearly 2.7 points on the same 1-to-7 scale.

Third, the presence of strong and cohesive nonviolent civic coalitions is the most important of the factors examined in contributing to freedom. In 32 of the 67 countries (nearly 48 percent) that have seen transitions, strong, broad-based nonviolent popular fronts or civic coalitions were highly active, and in many cases central to steering the process of change. In these 32 instances, prior to the transition there had been no Free countries, 17 Partly Free countries, and 15 Not Free countries. Now, years after the transition, 24 of the countries (75 percent) where a strong nonviolent civic movement was present are Free and democratic states and 8 (25 percent) are Partly Free states with some space for civic and political life, while none of the states whose transitions featured a strong civic force are Not Free.

Among the 35 post-transition Free countries, 24 (69 percent) had strong nonviolent civic coalitions, 8 (23 percent) had moderately strong civic coalitions, and only 3 (8 percent) had movements that were weak or absent in the two-year period leading up to the opening for the transition. By contrast, among countries that are Partly Free now, 8 (35 percent) had “strong” civic coalitions, 7 (30 percent) were “moderate,” and 8 (35 percent) were “weak or absent.” Among countries that are now Not Free, the distribution was zero “strong,” 3 (33 percent) “moderate,” and 6 (67 percent) “weak or absent.”

In countries where there have been robust and cohesive coalitions employing tactics of nonviolent resistance, the mean *Freedom in the World* numerical rating improved from 5.33 pre-transition to 2.09 now, a jump of 3.23 points. This is a marked increase given that the overall scale in the survey is 1

(best) to 7 (worst), as explained above. In countries where cohesive and broadly based nonviolent civic coalitions represented a moderately strong presence, the numerical freedom score improved from a 5.11 pre-transition average to 3.39 today, an improvement of 1.72 points. In transitions where nonviolent civic forces were weak or absent, the scores moved from 5.47 in the year prior to the transition to 4.15 now, an improvement of 1.32 points: less than half the change experienced in transitions in which there was a strong and cohesive nonviolent movement. In other words, **the stronger and more cohesive the nonviolent civic coalition operating in societies in the years immediately preceding the transition, the deeper the transformation in the direction of freedom and democracy.**

Regression analysis indicates that the presence of a cohesive nonviolent civic coalition during the period of transition has a highly statistically significant effect on increasing the level of freedom.

Fourth, the data suggests that the prospects for freedom are significantly enhanced when the opposition does not itself use violence. In all there were 47 transitions in which there was no (or almost no) opposition violence. Before the transition, none were Free, 23 were Partly Free, and 24 were Not Free. Today, years after the transition, 31 are Free, 11 are Partly Free, and 5 are Not Free. The mean freedom rating in these 47 cases was 5.34 pre-transition and 2.97 years after the political opening. Then net improvement was 2.67, a very significant gain for freedom on the 1-to-7 freedom scale.

By contrast, in countries where the opposition employed violence, pre-transition, none were Free, 8 were Partly Free, and 12 were Not Free. Today, 4 are Free, 12 are Partly Free, and 4 are Not Free. As significantly, the mean freedom score of this cohort of countries improved 1.52 points years after the transition, in contrast with the 2.67-point improvement in the freedom score in all the cases where there was no opposition violence. In all, the data showed there is more than a three (66 percent) to one chance (20 percent) chance that a country will attain high freedom post-transition where the opposition does not employ violent force.

We also wanted to test whether the results for freedom are better if the opposition does not itself use violence in cases of significant or high state violence and instead employs disciplined nonviolent civic resistance. Thus we looked at all the cases of transitions preceded by high or significant levels of violence. Of 32 countries where transitions were preceded by significant or high levels of violence, 20 cases were characterized by violent force emanating from both the state and segments of the opposition. Of these, pre-transition 8 were Partly Free and 12 were Not Free. Today, 4 (20 percent) are Free, 12 (60 percent) are Partly Free and 4 (20 percent) are Not Free. By contrast, we found 12 cases where significant or high levels of violence were mainly generated by the state (but where the opposition was nonviolent), pre-transition, 5 were Partly

Free and 7 were Not Free. Years after the political opening, 7 (58 percent) are Free and 5 (42 percent) are Partly Free, while none are Not Free.

In the end, our data suggests that **recourse to violent conflict in resisting oppression is significantly less likely to produce sustainable freedom, in contrast to nonviolent opposition, which even in the face of state repression, is far more likely to yield a democratic outcome.**

A more detailed, numerical look at the data on transitions preceded by high or significant levels of violence confirms the conclusion that the opposition's resort to violence reduces the chances for high levels of freedom. In 20 transitions, both the state and parts of the opposition used violent force. The mean numerical freedom rating in these settings before the transition was 5.50. After the transition, it was 3.98, representing an improvement of 1.52 points on the 1-to-7 freedom scale. In only four (twenty percent) of these cases were strong civic coalitions influencing the direction of events as authoritarian systems fell.

By contrast, in the 12 settings with high or significant violence by the state when the opposition refrained from itself taking up violent force, the mean pre-transition freedom score was 5.25. Today, post-transition, their average freedom rating is 2.63 points, an improvement of 2.62 points.² Importantly, strong nonviolent civic coalitions were present in 83 percent of these settings (in 10 of 12 cases). **Our data therefore suggests that the activity of strong nonviolent coalitions reduces the appeal of opposition violence and at the same time leads to more positive outcomes for freedom.**

There is also significant positive synergy from a combination of factors. There were 18 countries where a nonviolent or mostly nonviolent transition was accompanied by nonviolent resistance led by strong, cohesive civic coalitions. In the year before the transition, no countries had been rated Free, 9 were Partly Free, and 9 were Not Free. But after the transition, 17 (94 percent) of these countries were Free, 1 was Partly Free, and none were Not Free. Transition countries in which these two criteria were present in the two-year period before the political opening saw their freedom score rise from a pre-transition average of 5.47 to 1.53 today, a dramatically positive gain of 3.94 points on a 7-point scale.

This study, therefore, suggests that the choice of strategies employed by the opposition in developing resistance to oppression is of fundamental importance to the outcome for freedom. This, in turn, suggests that both the international community and the leaders of opposition movements should pay close attention to these findings.

² The data also makes it clear that the factor of violence before the transition was less significant in determining the success or failure of a transition to freedom than was the factor of whether the opposition forces themselves engaged in significant violence.

THE NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

Given the significance of the civic factor in dozens of recent transitions from dictatorship, it is surprising how small a proportion of international donor assistance is targeted to this sector. Americans have been leaders in providing such democracy assistance, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Endowment for Democracy, and through major private donors such as the Open Society Institute and a small group of other private charitable foundations. Some European governments—in particular those of Great Britain, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, and Germany—have furnished timely support for independent civic groups. A high proportion of this assistance is provided through such independent groups as the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the U.K.'s Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and Germany's political party foundations, the *Stiftungen*.

However, support aimed at change that is driven by civic forces represents only a small proportion of international development aid that is directed at democracy assistance. Consider the funds allocated by USAID for democracy assistance: while a third of such assistance is formally allocated to civil society programs, most of these programs are not targeted explicitly at political-reform-oriented NGOs. Nor does such aid make a priority of assisting groups that are focused on nonviolent civic resistance or on activist youth groups that have been an important front line of civic resistance struggles.

Additionally, support for the advocacy work of NGOs has fallen somewhat out of favor among donors providing democracy assistance, and funding that encourages the building of nationwide civic coalitions to pressure for concrete change is relatively scarce. The overwhelming proportion of civil society funding supports what is called general capacity building—training and technical assistance—and is rarely matched with direct grants and the transfer of specific strategic and tactical knowledge and skills that are so essential to sustaining the infrastructure of emerging civic groups and nonviolent civic movements, especially in their early stages of development.

Moreover, most political party strengthening programs are typically carried out in complete isolation from the civil society programs. Yet, most successful civic transitions come from the joining of forces and complementary strategies that connect democratic political groups and the broader civil society.

Once a political opening has occurred and a transition to democracy is underway, it is essential for donors to continue support for pro-democracy civic

groups as a means of ensuring that there is civic pressure on the new authorities to continue down the path of liberalization and reform.

There is an urgent need for the international democratic community to understand better the importance of indigenous civic resistance directed at challenging authoritarian rule and spurring democratization and to implement a paradigm shift in its priorities in order to promote and strengthen such movements with new resources and new aid initiatives. It is also important for policymakers to recognize that in most cases, such investments in civic life are minimal—a matter of millions of dollars or less. Support for civic movements is far less expensive than major military expenditures and far less costly than the normal bill for large development programs. Yet given the correlations between open, transparent, democratic societies and peace, as well as sustainable development, there is an urgent need for greater international commitment to funding this sector, especially in closed societies and fragile new democracies.

With the promotion of freedom and democracy now a major declared objective for the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, Holland, Canada, and other democracies, there is a need for ongoing study of the phenomenon of political transitions in general and democratic transitions specifically. We hope this study is only the first step in a more comprehensive effort to address the many factors that contribute to lasting democratic change rooted in respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The world is moving toward greater respect for political rights and civil liberties. Authoritarian rule, political despotism, rampant state criminality and corruption, and the systematic abuse of minorities are under challenge. Yet while there has been momentum in favor of freedom, further such progress is far from guaranteed. If the globe's growing community of democracies does not fully understand and respond intelligently with specific initiatives that reinforce and promote change through the strategic use of nonviolent civic action, authoritarian rule will persist in many settings.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study of transitions from authoritarian rule, the factors surrounding them, and the long-term influence of these factors on outcomes for freedom is rife with specific policy implications for democratic movements and the international donor community. As can be seen from the findings, the study makes clear that how a transition from authoritarianism occurs and the forces that are engaged in pressing the transition have significant impact on the success or failure of democratic reform.

As is known, many transitions from authoritarian rule do not lead to freedom. When tyrannies or closed systems fall, democracy is far from the only outcome. Among the 67 countries we examined, pre-transition none were Free, 31 were Partly Free, and 36 were Not Free. Today 35 are Free, 23 are Partly Free, and 9 are Not Free. The opportunity for freedom after a political opening represented by the fall of an authoritarian is by itself not a guarantee of an optimal outcome for freedom in the long term. Therefore, it is essential that indigenous democratic activists and policymakers in democratic states understand more clearly what are the most productive and cost-effective ways to increase the chances for successful democratic transitions.

Transitions are largely indigenous phenomena. But while on the surface they often appear to be entirely spontaneous, closer examination shows such transitions frequently are the consequence of the cumulative effects of nonviolent strategies and cohesive civic coalitions. This means the democratic community of nations can devise policies and take steps that promote the factors most conducive to successful transitions to freedom. We will discuss these factors and their policy implications in greater detail below.

Invest in Civic Life

According to this study, one way to increase the odds for successful transitions to freedom is to invest in the creation of dynamic civic life. Such support is most effectively rendered in the following sequence: general assistance for civil society forces; targeted assistance focused on education and training in civic nonviolent resistance; and assistance for cohesive civic coalitions through which such resistance is expressed. This means government and donor policy should direct increased resources to this important factor in effective political change and provide significant resources and knowledge to NGOs, civil society groups, and the fostering of broad-based indigenous coalitions.

To support the development of civic life, governments, regional bodies, and global institutions also should exert diplomatic and other pressures on states to create political space and toleration for the activity of civil society as a key precondition for the formation of civic movements.

Specifically, government and private support should be offered to activist student organizations, anti-corruption groups, election monitoring and voter education organizations, independent media, political party training structures, trade unions and worker organizations, women's groups, and think tanks.

Encourage the Creation of Broad-Based Coalitions

While the development of a broad array of civic, reform-oriented organizations is essential for the success of most transitions, the study shows that such developments also should be matched by efforts to establish a broad-based civic coalition focused on nonviolent resistance. There are many reasons why such umbrella civic coalitions are important in the outcomes for freedom. First, the organization, training, and operation of a diverse and voluntary civic coalition require the shaping of consensus through internal democratic practices. Second, the emergence of such coalitions boosts enthusiasm among ordinary citizens and activists by giving them a sense of momentum and consolidation. This in turn increases the number of volunteers, participants, and activists who are mobilized for nonviolent resistance efforts. Third, when such movements achieve a mass scale, they effectively prepare millions of citizens for political and civic activity, which then makes powerholders accountable after a democratic change occurs. Fourth, when coalitions are broad based and incorporate a diverse array of societal and political interests, they gain increased legitimacy enabling them to act as credible representatives of the broader interests of the society or the nation.

Internally, broad-based civic coalitions are environments for compromise, common ground, and self-discipline. As separate groupings learn to work with others who hold different political beliefs, they create a basis for the tolerant give-and-take that is a crucial component of democracy. At the same time, mass-based civic movements become an important school for the preparation of future civic leaders, politicians, opinion makers, and government leaders in the post-transition period. They become a mechanism for the emergence of a new leadership cohort, often creating a talent pool that can sustain the transition toward freedom. In short, **broad-based democracy coalitions can imbue leaders and activists with the principles and experience that make for successful democratic governance.**

Such coalitions are also more likely to result in a negotiated transition based on co-opting segments of the powerholding elite that recognize the need for reform. This is because the emergence of a cohesive and powerful opposition force capable of taking power creates rifts and divisions among authoritarian powerholders. Internal divisions among powerholders help separate the most repressive segments of the ruling elite from open-minded segments, whose withdrawal of support for the government or their unwillingness to use force against a nonviolent mass opposition are among the critical processes in many successful democratic transitions.

Internal as well as external donors should encourage the leaders of a varied array of democratic groups to find ways of coalescing into broad-based coalitions for democratic change. Official and nongovernmental outreach to democratic movements should emphasize the need for such cooperation if a peaceful transition to democracy is to be achieved. Naturally, it is up to the civic forces themselves to decide what alliances they should form, but the international

democratic community should encourage opposition reformers to focus on broad-based coalition building and should encourage such steps with increased donor support and technical assistance. A component of such assistance should be programs that promote exchanges among civic activists in countries where successful transitions to freedom have occurred and their counterparts in closed societies.

As the data and narratives show, a key opportunity for broad-based umbrella coalitions to reach critical mass is provided by major national elections and referenda. This means that pressure on states to sustain electoral processes should remain a high priority of democratic governments and donors. While critics frequently point to sham elections and pseudo-democracy, it is very often precisely such seemingly illegitimate processes that spur mass-based challenges to authoritarian rule and open the door to real liberalization. Among such examples are Kyrgyzstan in early 2005, Ukraine in 2004, and Georgia in 2003 (all of which occurred too recently for their durable effects to be properly assessed and included in this survey); the 1986 presidential election in the Philippines; Chile's 1988 referendum on the presidency of Augusto Pinochet; Nicaragua's election of 1990; the 2000 presidential election in Serbia and Montenegro (formerly the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia); and Peru's tainted election of 2000. In all these cases, a vote became the catalyst for the successful application of civic mobilization and resistance strategies.

Broad-based civic movements usually fragment after a transition from authoritarianism. However, their fragmentation often results in the creation and regeneration of a host of active civic groups, media, and other mechanisms for non-state monitoring of government activities and for public pressure in support of democracy, human rights, anti-corruption measures, educational reform, and social change. A lively civic sector in the post-transition period can become an important force for transparency and accountability among the new government powerholders. It creates pressure groups that can push the new democratically-accountable leadership to hold to its pre-transition reform commitments.

Transfer Knowledge About Strategies and Tactics of Nonviolent Civic Resistance

Change and the capacity to force change in any country depends on internal factors and on internal changes in public opinion. But opposition forces can be helped in more effectively achieving their aims if they are assisted in thinking strategically about how to push change through nonviolent means. The existence of a growing civic infrastructure of well-trained activist groups and their coalescing into broad-based coalitions also needs to be coupled with knowledge on how to devise effective strategies of nonviolent resistance to authoritarian power.

This means that as indigenous civic movements are taking shape, they should be able to access expertise on a broad range of successful examples of broad-based civic resistance campaigns.

There should be a capacity to rapidly respond for requests for expertise and training when indigenous movements are ready for such assistance. A focal point of training and assistance should be how to organize and sequence nonviolent protests and mass demonstrations; strikes and other forms of industrial action; boycotts that exert domestic economic pressure on regimes and their financial backers; and nonviolent civil disobedience. They also should be given advice on more effective dissemination of information through media (including the Internet, telephone text messaging, etc.) that remain largely outside the control of authoritarian states.

Expand Space for Nonviolent Action through Targeted Sanctions

Another crucial way of assisting democratic transitions is to work to constrain insurrectionist and state violence and to expand the political space for nonviolent civic action. This means that in the cases of civil wars, governments and international organizations should seek solutions that lead to an end to hostilities and to internationally supervised or monitored elections. Democracies also should engage in preventive diplomacy to avert violence and support policies that prevent or limit the spread of violence in its earliest stages.

International democratic donor support also should support nonviolent movements that can serve in repressive settings as an effective alternative to violence and to the appeal of groups that espouse violence. Besieged populations that suffer from ethnic, sectarian, or political violence are often sympathetic to the demagogic appeal of authoritarian leaders who use the danger of conflict as a justification for their own repressive rule.

Efforts to restore personal security in extremely violent environments in countries that have suffered from war or civil war, therefore, can contribute in the long term to the emergence of civic coalitions for democratic change. Moreover, an environment in which civic organizing and nonviolent action are a viable option helps discredit the claims by violent extremists that they offer the only avenue for change.

A key mechanism in helping to constrain violence and create space for civic action is the willingness of the international democratic community to employ targeted sanctions against the economic interests of government officials who contemplate or use violent force to suppress nonviolent civic resistance. Such threats of sanctions can help constrain and discourage authoritarian states from resorting to the use of force by raising the costs of the use of this option. In this way, targeted sanctions and their threatened imposition can create greater space for nonviolent civic resistance movements.

As importantly, the data suggests that the interests of freedom are best furthered when the opposition resists state violence through nonviolent mass resistance. The study also indicates that the appeal of violent responses to the state is diminished when a strong and cohesive nonviolent coalition is a major presence in the period leading up to the political opening. This, in turn, reemphasizes the need to direct resources and technical assistance toward support for such civic movements.

Provide Enhanced Resources for Independent Media and Communications

Authoritarian leaders lack democratic legitimacy, and this lack of legitimacy needs to be challenged by democratic civic forces. But because repressive governments limit or control media and communications, pro-democracy activists must develop independent outlets of communication in order to stake their claim to represent the legitimate aspirations of the people. Invaluable in this effort are the Internet; independent newspapers and newsletters; unauthorized or external broadcast facilities; and cell phones, satellite phones, and text-messaging devices.

Independent communications and media are essential in mobilizing indigenous support for nonviolent resistance against a ruling elite. They also are crucial in helping opposition groups reach out to potential allies among disaffected members of the ruling elite, including segments of the defense and security services. Communications and alternative media can help civic opposition movements in making the case that they offer a viable alternative to illegitimate authoritarian rule. In this way they can erode support for authoritarians among their crucial pillars of power.

De-legitimizing an authoritarian ruler is as important to the success of a nonviolent civic movement as the movement's effort to establish itself as the legitimate voice of public aspirations. In many recent transitions, the corruption, cronyism, nepotism, and the outright criminality of authoritarian elites have been key factors in deepening public alienation and encouraging ideologically diverse groups to coalesce into a unified opposition. Independent media that report on state corruption and expose abuses of power are critical nonviolent tactics in facilitating this process.

Democracy assistance from the international community should therefore substantially increase resources for alternative media and independent communications that can carry the message of pro-democratic civil society and nonviolent resistance groups within closed and authoritarian societies.

CONCLUDING NOTES

This study is a first look at how freedom is won. It does not offer a panacea for the world's ills. Nor does it suggest a rigid formula for deposing tyrannies and replacing them with democracies. It only examines a number of factors that contribute to the success and failure of transitions to democracy. The study does not, for example, examine all the factors that help create an environment conducive to the emergence of cooperative civic coalitions. Nor does it examine correlations of its findings with levels of income, levels of education, or levels of middle class development, all of which are understood to be important factors in contributing to the success or failure of democratic reform. This study also did not look at how authoritarian systems or totalitarian systems successfully retain their power, nor did the study examine failed efforts by opposition movements to force a transition from authoritarian rule. It is our hope that this study will also promote research into all these other dimensions of freedom and its suppression.

It is essential to the advancement of democracy that the concrete mechanisms by which freedom advances are better understood and more widely discussed by the policymaking and analytic communities. Yet while there is no fixed blueprint for the replacement of tyranny with democracy, the initial findings of this study suggest some important trends that in many cases can be applied in a range of difficult authoritarian settings.

It is with this purpose that Freedom House and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict will work to promote and disseminate its findings.

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