

The Pillars of Protest:
Demands, Strategy, Composition and Organization

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1 Executive summary

This report examines the relationship between mass mobilization and democratic change. We focus on four central aspects determining mass mobilization success: Movement demands, campaign strategy, campaign composition and level of organization. The importance of these four factors lies in their assumed impact on two fundamental features for success: The size of the movement and the likelihood of loyalty shifts within the regime.

Pillar 1, *Demands*, matter because it influence the campaigns' mobilization base. Determining who, and how many, are likely to support the campaigns demands and aspirations is of critical importance for the strength of the campaign. Broad-based demands, such as regime-change, are likely to mobilize more people, increasing the chances of success and bringing about democratic change. Additionally, while some of these demands are directly linked to democratic institutions, secessionist movements do not necessarily need to be rooted in any democratic aspirations.

Pillar 2: *Strategy* is crucial because it carries implications for how many from the potential mobilization base are likely to join the movement. Various factors affect this outcome, but research indicates that campaigns using nonviolent strategies and challenging the regime are more likely to achieve short-term goals and promote long-term democracy. This is attributed to non-violent campaigns facing fewer moral, physical, and logistical obstacles for people joining compared to violent movements, thereby mobilizing more people. The mobilization advantage also implies that non-violent pro-democratic campaigns tend to engage a broader, more diverse group of participants. This structure lessens the likelihood of one individual actor dominating the movement, making it more challenging to implement a new autocratic project. Therefore, regime change initiated by non-violent mass mobilization tends to result in more democratic power-sharing arrangements. A critical crux for non-violent campaigns, however, is to stray away from resorting to violence; empirical evidence suggests

that organized armed violence reduces the chances for otherwise nonviolent movements to succeed.

Pillar 3: *Composition*, matters because some social groups command greater power vis-à-vis the sitting regime, and are simultaneously more inclined to have democratic aspirations. Furthermore, broad coalitions of social groups hold sway over multiple economic sectors crucial to the regime, and are more likely to include members who share social ties with regime elites. Consequently, such campaigns, have greater leverage over the government, and are more likely to induce defections. Finally, the social diversity of a coalition is also beneficial for more democratic outcomes.

Pillar 4: *Organization*, is important for sustained mobilization. Organizational networks within civil society typically weave intricate networks and platforms for information sharing, trust, and resources that can heighten mobilization potential and lower collective action problems. Organizational participation also improve a campaigns capacity to enforce tactical compliance. Particularly, organizations not designed for political power competition, can enhance a campaigns commitment and prospects for fostering democracy.

For international democracy promoters, supporting certain societal organizations is a promising avenue. It is, however, not without pitfalls, as international support can undermine the legitimacy of domestic actors. Furthermore, not all organizations are of equal merit. While the research is scant, international democracy promoters should likely seek coalitions of organizations capable of influencing important economic sectors. These coalitions should demonstrate sustained commitment to a democratic future, possess the ability to mobilize diverse segments of society, and express a commitment to non-violent activism.

Key highlights

- Pro-democracy campaigns have become increasingly common, especially since the end of the Cold War, and have now overtaken armed struggle as the most common form of mobilization against the government.
- Mass movements are more likely to achieve their primary objectives when they:
 - demand the end of the regime with a non-violent strategy
 - mobilize a large number of people and apply tactical diversity
 - mobilize a broad set of actors that cut across social divisions
 - are based in, or supported by, existing organizational networks
- While pro-democratic mass mobilization and civil resistance campaigns have increased in frequency in recent years, its success rate has started to decline.

Recommendations

- Support and invest in pro-democratic organizations and civil society so that these will be able to support mass mobilization efforts if and when they occur.
- Democracy promoters should not try to instigate moments of change.
- International support can backfire by undermining the legitimacy of domestic actors. Investments must therefore be locally embedded in each context.
- The choice of which specific organizations to invest in must take contextual factors into consideration. Look for opportunities to promote non-violent discipline, variation in applied strategies, and emphasize the importance of a broad social base cutting across, gender, ethnicity, class and geography.
- International support is likely to be more effective if it is accompanied by tangible consequences, such as removal of bilateral aid or implementation of sanctions, and naming and shaming of human rights abuses.
- Democracy supporters should look for opportunities to offer autocratic elites an exit to abandon the regime and still have a future. This will often go on accord with popular demands for justice.
- Democracy promoters should take care to understand the causes democratization, as opposed to correlations. The research on whether and how international effort might improve pro-democratic forces is still very much inconclusive.

2 Introduction

This report examines the relationship between mass mobilization and democracy, highlighting key findings in the literature. We explore the conditions under which large-scale non-violent mass mobilization is most likely to lead to regime change and foster democratic change, potentially contributing to democratic consolidation. To that end, we present new data from the Opposition Movement Groups Dataset, a comprehensive collection created through collaborative efforts between PRIO and UiO, recently finalized.

We focus on four crucial aspects of mass mobilization that contribute to explaining their varying degrees of success: Movement demands, campaign strategy, the social composition of the movement, and the organizational structures of the campaign. In diverse ways, these four pillars of protest influence the likelihood that a movement will be successful in reaching its primary objective as well as bringing about democratic change in the long run. The report also discusses the recent surge in anti-liberal protests, a trend possibly feeding into the recent global wave of democratic backsliding.

2.1 Mass mobilization and democracy

Democracy has become increasingly popular. Since 1946, the number of democracies worldwide has steadily increased, and about half of the world's population lived in a democratic regime by the early 2000s. Over the same period, democracy was also increasingly demanded by masses of people. Figure 1 illustrates the number of new campaigns every year between 1946 and 2019 that demand democracy, divided by regions of the world.¹ Between 1950 and 1985, the number of new campaigns in a given year demanding democracy never exceeded 5.

¹Since we want to measure the popularity of democracy in mass-mobilization campaigns, in this figure we only count whether democracy was *explicitly* mentioned by the protesters. We make no requirements as to what exactly they mean by democracy, and some groups, such as the January 6th uprising in the USA, claim to be democratic proponents when, in fact, they are not. Furthermore, we do not include movements that demanded changes to the system of government which would, in practice, entail democratization, but which did not mention democracy explicitly.

What is civil resistance and non-violence?

Civil resistance has a rich history, with various groups applying non-violent methods to oppose oppression and injustice. Non-violent campaigns, civil resistance, or mass mobilization involve the persistent use of non-violent approaches by civilians engaged in conflicts with an opponent. Non-violent action, as defined by Schock (2013), encompasses non-routine political acts that abstain from the use of violence. This can involve acts of omission, where individuals refrain from actions they typically undertake, are expected to perform by custom, or are legally obligated to perform. Alternatively, it may encompass acts of commission, where individuals engage in actions they typically avoid, are not expected to perform by custom, or are prohibited by law or regulation. More broadly, this encompasses a wide range of social, psychological, economic, and political methods. Notably, in his work, Sharp (1973) cataloged as many as 198 different types of non-violent tactics.

While non-violent strategies themselves are inherently free from violence, it is not uncommon for non-violent movements to involve some violent elements. Similarly, violent campaigns also sometimes make use of non-violent strategies. Importantly, when discussing non-violent campaigns, civil resistance, or mass mobilization here, we are referring to groups that *predominantly* employ non-violent strategies. Similarly, when referring to violent campaigns, we are addressing mobilization efforts that *predominantly* draw on violent strategies.

In 1987, a new wave of pro-democracy movements swept across the (now post-) communist states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This was followed by a wave of protests in Sub-Saharan Africa, as the structures of the Cold War collapsed worldwide. Since then, more and more groups have demanded democratic rule: Since 2005, at least 5 new campaigns have emerged *every year* demanding democracy, and never have more pro-democracy movements

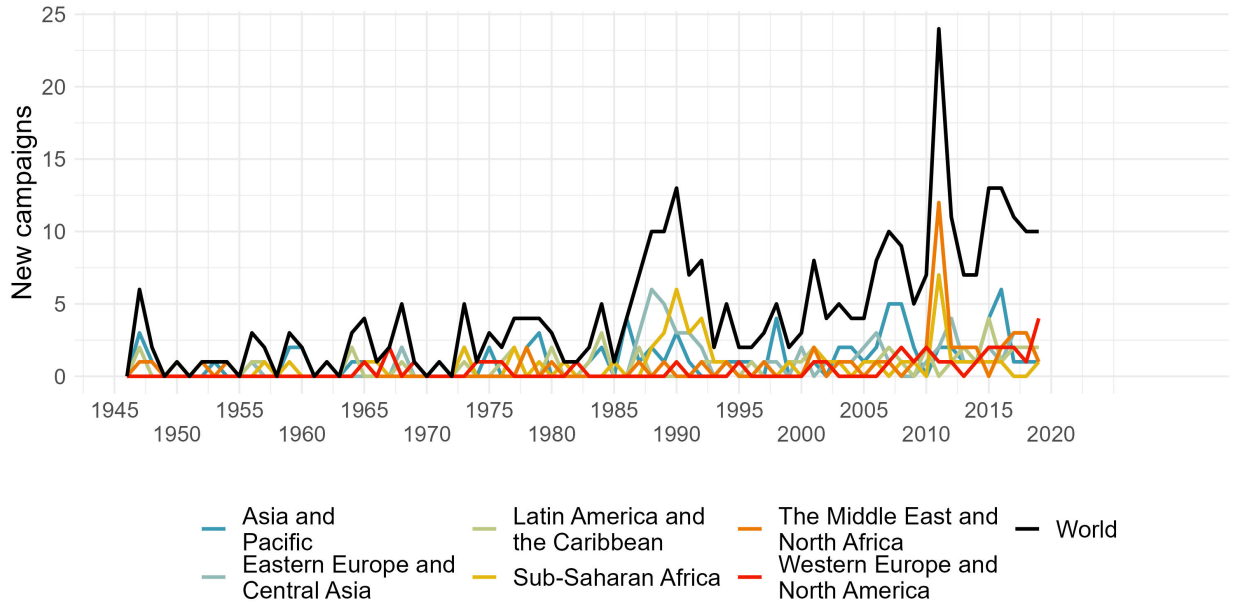


Figure 1: Campaigns demanding democracy, 1946-2019

erupted at once than during the 2011 Arab Spring.

Yet, many commentators and academics have pointed to a recent shift in the expansion of democracy, accompanied by the rise of an autocratic wave. Dictators seem to have become increasingly resilient to demands for democratic rights, and some of the more nascent democracies have failed to consolidate, gradually drifting towards autocratic rule. The ongoing autocratic wave has effectively reversed the democratic progress of the last 30 years, bringing us back to democracy levels reminiscent of 1989 (Boese et al., 2022; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019). Somewhat puzzling, this happens at the same time as an increasing number of people are mobilizing to demand democratic change. So, what do we know about the power of the public to promote democratic change?

2.2 The pillars of protest

To understand the potential for protest movements to succeed, researchers have focused on four key factors: Campaign demands, strategy, social composition, and organization. We

refer to these as the four pillars of protests.

Campaign demands refer to the stated goals and ambitions of a movement. Strategy involve a movement’s choice of violent versus non-violent strategy. The social composition of movements pertains to the social groups that make up the movement. Lastly, organization refers to the degree of central coordination, contrasting with more spontaneous or flat-structured campaigns. Beyond this, the organization also encompasses the movement’s ties to established groups in society, including civil society organizations, unions, or other entities with established networks and organizational capacities.

In the following sections, we elaborate on why scholars have paid particular attention to these specific pillars. We present the latest arguments regarding the significance of these pillars in understanding campaign success and their ability to bring about democratic change, examining whether and how these insights align with findings from a newly collected state-of-the-art dataset on protest movements (Dahl, Dahlum, Fjelde, Gjerløw, Knutsen, Strøm-Sedgwick and Wig, 2023).

2.3 Movement strength and state weakness

The significance of these four pillars of protest lies in their presumed impact on two critical conditions: the size of the movement and loyalty shifts within the ruling regime, both of which influence the likelihood of success.

First, the size of the movement is widely regarded as an indicator of campaign strength (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; DeNardo, 1985). Larger campaigns tend to impose higher costs—whether economic, reputational, or moral—on the regime and its allies. This, in turn, could compel the regime to consider accommodating the campaign’s demands and instituting democratic reforms. The motivation for such concessions arises not only from the mounting costs of maintaining status quo but also from the heightened risk of abrupt regime breakdown. In the face of a possible regime breakdown, “democracy becomes a salvation rather than a

sacrifice” (Miller, 2021, 6). Alternatively, rather than the regime initiating reforms, the campaign may ultimately succeed in toppling the regime.

Second, loyalty shifts within the elite, involving ministers, political parties, or members of the security forces, wield a crucial influence on the outcomes of campaigns. These shifts manifest across a spectrum of actions, ranging from shirking and deserting—leaving the security forces or the regime—to side-switching, endorsing the campaign, openly declaring that the security forces will no longer support the regime, or even staging a coup (Anisin, 2020; Dahl, Rivera and Gates, 2023). Weakness signaled by divisions within the elite can be decisive. Existing literature assumes that individuals generally prefer to align themselves with the winning side (see e.g.: Croissant, Kuehn and Eschenauer, 2018). Consequently, any indication of regime weakness has the potential to escalate into a broader fracture, as a majority of elites may start to fear the impending collapse of the regime, thereby creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Among the different elite groups, loyalty shifts involving the security forces are widely acknowledged as the most crucial (Apolte, 2022; Moore, 1978; Skocpol, 1979; Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Nepstad, 2013). Non-violent campaigns that successfully induce large-scale loyalty shifts within the security forces are reported to be 46 times more likely to succeed than those that do not (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). However, there are instances where loyalty shifts among other groups have played a critical role (Nepstad, 2021), such as at the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994. Economic elite pressure, spurred by financial losses due to boycotts, led to negotiations and ultimately the dismantling of apartheid (Nepstad, 2021; Wood, 2001).

Furthermore, the size of a movement and loyalty shifts are mutually reinforcing (Kuran, 1991; Lohmann, 1994). A large movement is more likely to induce loyalty shifts (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). Loyalty shifts, whether directly by increasing participants or indirectly by signaling a higher likelihood of campaign success, further contribute to the campaign’s

size. Impartial observers are more inclined to join movements perceived as destined for success (Kuran, 1989). Consequently, both large movements and loyalty shifts effectively attract these impartial bystanders, further bolstering campaign size. These dynamics mean that even modest indications of success can rapidly snowball into profound and sweeping transformations.

Thus, for a movement seeking change, there are two key tasks: mobilize as many people as possible and sow uncertainty amongst regime members. Figure 2 illustrates the assumed causal relationship between the pillars of protest, campaign size, elite defections, and campaign success. Like all maps, our illustration simplifies reality, and not all published research may align with our summary of the causal structure here. Nevertheless, we believe this map provides a sound outline to start the discussion before we introduce further nuance in the sections ahead.

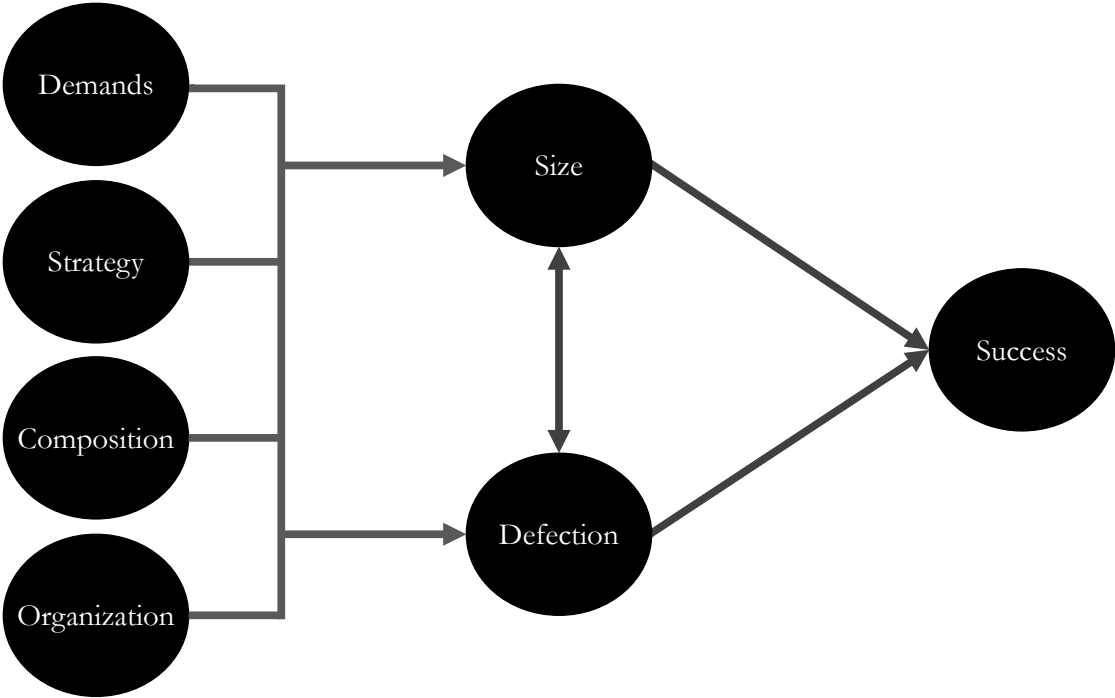


Figure 2: From the pillars of protest to movement success

We emphasize that campaign success does not automatically imply democratization.

Many campaigns, despite not having democracy as their primary goal, have nonetheless led to democratization. Additionally, campaigns that were unsuccessful in reaching their main target—such as toppling the regime—have still been instrumental in bringing about democratic change later (Dahl and Gleditsch, 2023). Conversely, numerous campaigns that initially succeed in democratization may fail to consolidate, experiencing a return to autocracy.

The existing literature focuses on assessing whether a campaign succeeds in reaching its main target, such as removing the regime or ousting a foreign occupant, or bringing about democratic change. When we refer to success, we specifically mean whether it reached its main demand. On the other hand, when we discuss its capacity to bring about democratic change or democratic consolidation, we refer to this specifically. We elaborate on this below. Importantly, this echoes prevalent terminology in the existing literature. In this report, we will summarize the main findings from existing literature and provide insights using the new OMG dataset.

3 The four pillars

3.1 Pillar I: Movement demands

The outcome of a mass mobilization event is intrinsically tied to the objectives of the movement. In this report, we are particularly interested in the prospects for democratization. However, to understand why some campaigns bring about democratic change, we also need to unpack why some campaigns are more successful than others, whatever demand they may have. Movement strength and democratization are different yet intertwined: A powerful pro-democracy movement is more likely to achieve democratization compared to a less powerful pro-democracy movement. But not all powerful movements want democracy.

Therefore, researchers often distinguish between short-term campaign success – when a

movement achieves its immediate goal – and long-term democratization, marked by more democratic institutions in the years following the mobilization event. The differentiation between regime change and democratization partly reflects the structures of existing datasets. NAVCO, the most widely used dataset, categorizes campaigns into regime change, secession, and the removal of a foreign autocrat, with non-violent regime-changing campaigns generally linked to democratic aspirations (see e.g.: Dahl and Gleditsch, 2023; Dahlum, 2023). The introduction of the OMG dataset enables us to assess whether a campaign explicitly asserts democratic claims, in addition to whether it also demands regime change.

Not all campaigns that achieve regime change also achieve democratization. For instance, the primary objective of the 2011 Arab Spring in Egypt was to overthrow Hosni Mubarak’s regime, a goal they successfully achieved. Nevertheless, akin to numerous other movements, they also voiced explicit demands for democracy and free and fair elections. The nature of these other claims is geared towards long-term outcomes, and the success may only become apparent some time after the removal of the old regime. While the regime, for a period, seemed to be on a pathway to democracy, efforts deteriorated with the coup in 2013, and the current state of democracy is, in fact, slightly below the levels of Mubarak’s rule.² The association between successful regime change and future democratization is more complex than what many of the existing datasets have allowed us to study.

In addition, some campaign demands are more likely to result in concurrent democratization, even if the demand itself is not explicitly about democratic reforms or democracy. For instance, in our own OMG coding, we never observed any indications that the Lithuanian independence campaign (1990-91) explicitly demanded democratic changes or democracy; yet, it brought about significant democratic transformations in its territory. In other instances, such as the Arab Spring in Egypt, the movement explicitly placed democracy on the agenda

²During Mubarak’s rule, the V-Dem’s Polyarchy score was slightly above 0.2 but has since 2014 been at 0.1 levels (Coppedge et al., 2022).

without being able to implement it.

In short, there are two ways in which campaign demands are important. First, some demands could be easier to achieve than others, either because they are less ambitious or because they are more popular, and therefore mobilizing more people. Second, certain campaign demands tend to lead to democratization, *whether or not democracy is an explicit part of those demands*. We elaborate on both aspects below.

Successful campaign: Anti-Ceaușescu movement in Romania

In 1989, a small-scale protest in the Romanian city of Timișoara quickly spread to the rest of the country. Millions took to the streets, demanding regime change. At that time, Nicolae Ceaușescu had ruled for 42 years, and the regime was marked by extreme brutality and rampant human rights abuses. Until then, like most other regimes brought down by mass mobilization, it was far from clear that the regime would soon come to an end. However, as people overcame collective action problems and demanded change, it began to crumble. More and more individuals joined the movement, and members of the security forces chose to align themselves with the movement rather than defending the regime. The final blow came when the Defense Minister, Victor Stănculescu, following a week of protests, ordered troops to withdraw, effectively spelling the end of the regime (Siani-Davies, 2007). The subsequent government initiated a series of democratic reforms and gradually distanced itself from its entrenched autocratic past. This development, however, is not unique. Several other autocracies have ended as people have taken to the streets and demanded change, including the Philippines in 1986, East Germany in 1989, and Tunisia in 2011.

Are some demands more achievable than others?

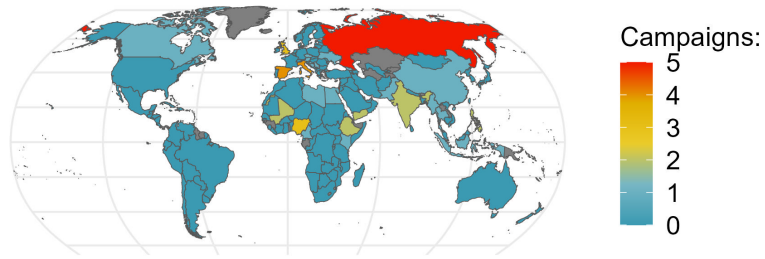
The OMG dataset categorizes movement demands into five groups: secessionist movements, movements that seek increased territorial autonomy, movements demanding the removal of the government, movements aiming to remove the regime, and movements advocating for institutional changes. Institutional changes encompass alterations to civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and association, adjustments to electoral institutions, covering the conduct of elections and suffrage rights, and modifications to the judicial branch.

Figure 3 depicts a heat-map illustrating the frequency of these five demands for each coded polity since 1989. Movements advocating territorial demands such as secession or autonomy are concentrated in a few high-frequency countries, with Russia, Burma, Spain, and Italy prominently standing out. In sum, these territorial campaigns constitute no more than 20% of all campaigns, indicating their relative infrequency. In contrast, movements seeking the removal of the government or regime, or institutional amendments, are more widespread, appearing in a much more diverse set of countries across the globe.

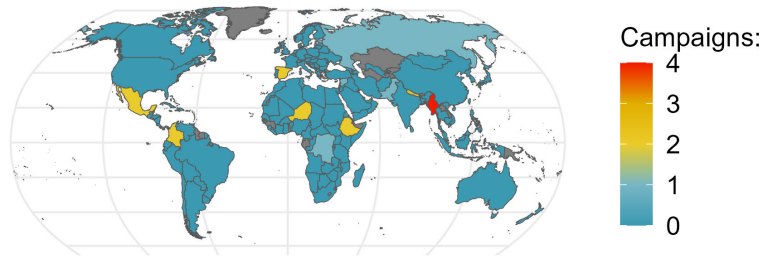
Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) demonstrate that campaigns seeking to secede from the state have a success rate as low as 9%, rendering them the least likely to succeed among the three types of campaigns. Following this, anti-occupation campaigns exhibit a higher success rate at 36%, while regime-changing campaigns boast the highest success rate at 41%. Movements that demand the end of the regime, particularly when they adopt non-violent strategies (see section 3.2), are also more likely to result in more democratic futures. Understanding why campaigns with such demands are more often successful should therefore be of interest to actors that wish to see democratic improvements.

Figure 4 shows the percentage of movements of three different size categories across all movements within each main demand category. The figure illustrates the convoluted causality problem between campaign demands and movement size. Within the group of movements that demanded the removal of the regime, a higher percentage mobilized more

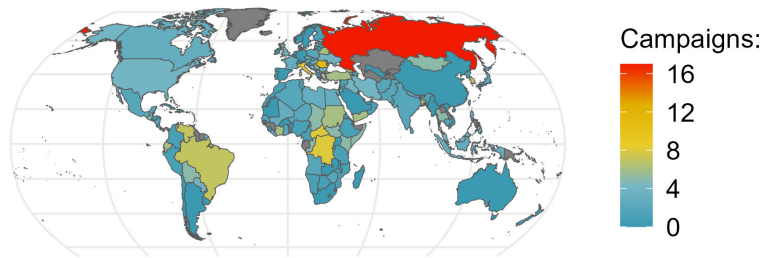
Movements demanding secession



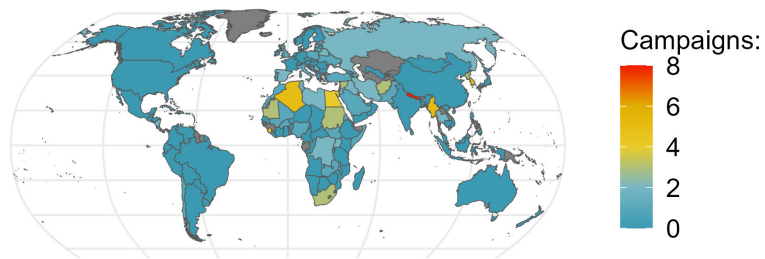
Movements demanding increased territorial autonomy



Movements demanding removal of the government



Movements demanding removal of the regime



Movements with institutional demands

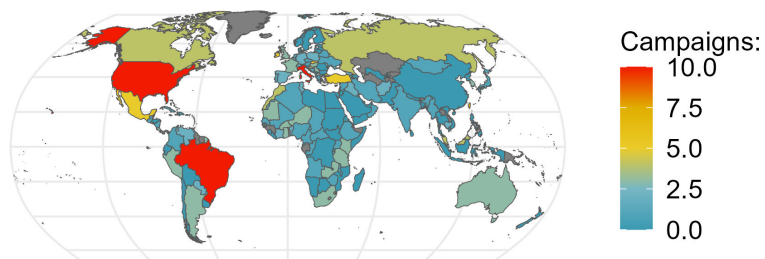


Figure 3: The frequency of campaigns by country since 1989, categorized by the main goal of the campaign.

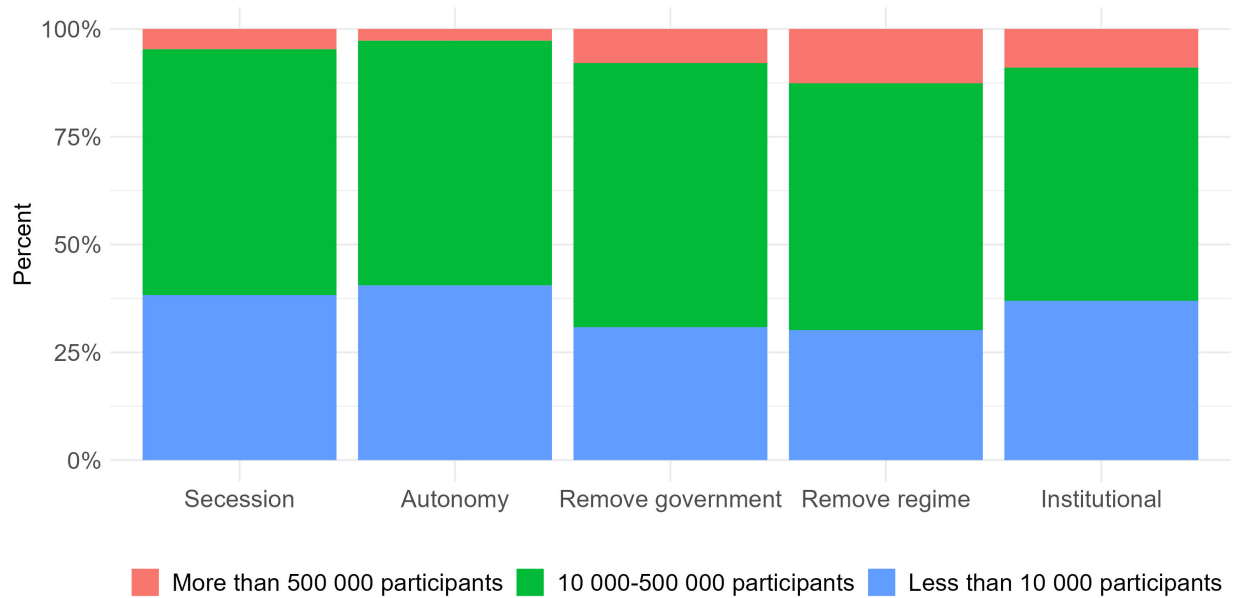


Figure 4: Size of campaigns with different goals.

than 500,000 participants. This may be due to the particular popularity of this demand, or it could be that movements gaining substantial support increase their ambitions. If the movement had mobilized fewer participants, it might have “only” demanded the removal of the current government or some smaller institutional changes instead.

In short, we currently do not know whether the adoption of certain demands makes campaigns more powerful by mobilizing more people. The differences in success rates across demands could be explained by correlation with other factors, such as the other three pillars. We *do* know, however, that, on average, campaigns that adopt non-territorial demands more often result in more democratic outcomes.

Why do some demands more often result in democratic improvements?

Territorial movements that demand either increased autonomy or full secession are less likely to induce democratic change (Dahl, Dahlum, Fjelde, Gjerløw, Knutsen, Strøm-Sedgwick and Wig, 2023). These movements typically do not aim to alter the existing political structures

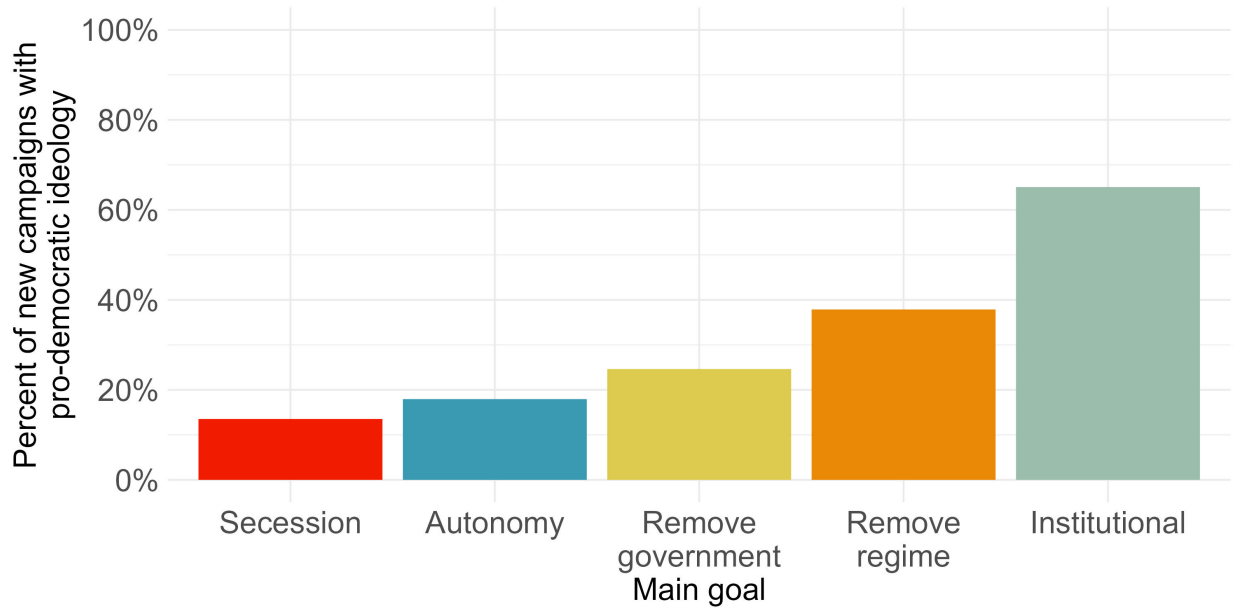


Figure 5: Percent of campaigns since 1945 with a pro-democratic and human rights ideology, divided by the main goal of the campaign.

but instead seek to break away from them. Consequently, they are also less likely to transform the existing regime. On the other hand, advances in democratic rights are more likely outcomes for movements that seek to remove the government, the entire regime, or implement institutional changes.

We can illustrate this association between movement demand and democracy by examining the guiding philosophy of mass-mobilization events. Figure 5 illustrates the percentage of campaigns guided by democracy and human rights as an ideology, categorized by our five types of campaign demands. The correlation between campaign goals and a pro-democratic ideology is striking: more than 60% of campaigns since 1945 that demand institutional change have been guided by a pro-democratic ideology, whereas only 18% of secessionist campaigns share this orientation.

In sum, the research is still inconclusive as to whether the choice of demand is important to the *strength* of a campaign, but the demand is important for the likelihood that a movement might improve or safeguard democracy.

Campaigns with anti-liberal goals

Some campaigns adopt goals that are detrimental to democracy. Related to the ongoing wave of autocratization, several contributions point to the recent upsurge in anti-liberal or pro-autocratic mass movements across the globe. Most of the existing literature treats popular mobilization as a “force of good”, where social activism is understood to be based on political cultures in support of democracy and more inclusive institutions. Thus, anti-liberal campaigns are a nascent research field.

Anti-liberal protests can be understood as campaigns explicitly supporting authoritarian regimes or advocating for anti-liberal institutional goals. It involves a diverse array of campaigns, including those endorsing authoritarian regimes, those pushing for the exclusion of certain groups from the voting system, and those opposing freedoms like expression or the expansion of civil liberties, such as reproductive rights. Despite their variations, these campaigns unite in their shared goal: the establishment or consolidation of policies positioned diametrically opposite to liberal democracy. Examples abound. Campaigns supporting authoritarian leaders include pro-Mugabe campaigns in Zimbabwe, pro-Chavez in Venezuela, pro-Pinochet in Chile, pro-Assad in Syria, pro-Bashir in Sudan, pro-Kim rallies in North Korea, and pro-junta campaigns in Myanmar. To name a few. Some movements also seek to infringe on the rights of other social groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Proud to Be British rally. Several campaigns are also anti-LGBTQ+, anti-women and anti-abortion. For example, the Tunisian anti-gender law protests, the Serbian anti-Pride campaigns, and the Irish pro-life campaigns.

While the frequency has increased in recent years, anti-liberal protests are not a new phenomenon. Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of all non-territorial campaigns that adopt pro-liberal goals versus anti-liberal goals. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, almost no campaigns adopted anti-liberal demands.³ 15%-30% of campaigns were anti-

³Note, however, that the late 1940s and 50s also had fewer mass mobilization events overall.

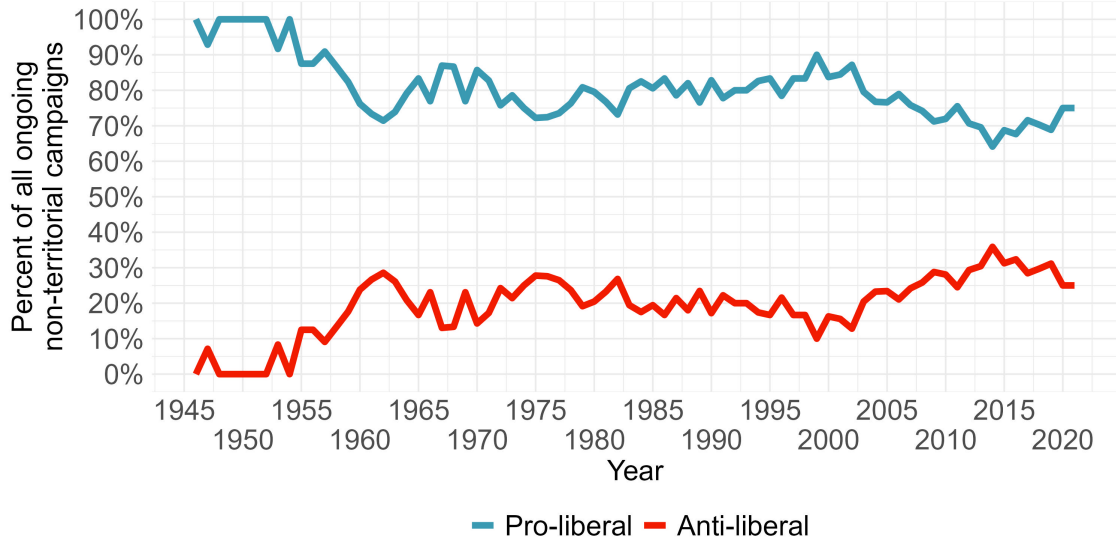


Figure 6: The percentage of all ongoing non-territorial campaigns categorized as pro-liberal (blue) versus anti-liberal (red).

liberal between 1960-1990, with a mild reduction in the 1990s. Since 2000, we have seen a substantial increase in the number and geographic spread of anti-liberal mass movements (Dahl, Dahlum, Fjelde, Nilsen and Rudolfsen, 2023). In 2014, 36% of all ongoing non-territorial campaigns had adopted anti-liberal demands.

The emergence of these campaigns seems to be linked to political or economic hardships. For example, both Hellmeier and Bernhard (2023) and Bernhard and Edgell (Forthcoming) demonstrate that mass mobilization for autocracy correlates with democratic erosion and autocratic consolidation. In some of these instances, anti-liberal protests have been staged by political elites to further their authoritarian agenda, initiated by so-called government-operated non-governmental organizations (GONGOs). Uzbekistan, for example, boasts more than 10,000 registered NGOs, many of which are government operated.⁴ Finally, in a recent working paper, Dahl, Dahlum, Fjelde, Nilsen and Rudolfsen (2023) find that economic hardship in the forms of economic recession and unemployment increases the likelihood of anti-liberal mobilization, while economic growth can act as a deterrent.

⁴<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/uzbekistan-has-10000-ngos-what-do-they-do/>

The impact of these anti-liberal campaigns is still unknown. Part of the issue has been a lack of systematic data. While several datasets on mass mobilization for democracy exist, they often do not capture protests advocating explicitly anti-liberal objectives or supporting authoritarian institutions. With increased attention to these campaigns in recent years, we are likely to also see more research on their impact in the years to come.

3.2 Pillar II: Campaign Strategy

In their seminal publication, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) demonstrated that large-scale non-violent campaigns were almost twice as likely to succeed as their violent counterparts. This finding spurred a surge of research comparing the merits and pitfalls of violent versus non-violent tactics, and a substantial body of research indicates that nonviolent mobilization, in contrast to its violent counterparts, increases the likelihood of democratic change and enhances the probability that such change will lead to democratic consolidation (Bayer, Bethke and Lambach, 2016; Karatnycky, 2005; Kim and Kroeger, 2019; Rivera and Gleditsch, 2013; Teorell, 2010; Pinckney, 2020). In this section, we first outline the main arguments for the relationship between choice of strategy and campaign success more broadly, before delving into why non-violence also increases the likelihood of a more democratic future.

Non-violent movements are more powerful

Empirically, non-violent campaigns tend to mobilize significantly more people compared to their violent counterparts. On average, maximalist non-violent campaigns are four times larger than violent ones, with 20 out of the 25 largest campaigns being non-violent (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). The average non-violent revolution brought in 1.6 percent of the national population at its peak, while the average armed insurgency only yielded 0.4 percent active participation (Chenoweth, 2021). We call this empirical phenomenon the *mobilizing advantage* of non-violent resistance, and it is the main reason why campaigns that adopt

non-violent strategies are more successful.⁵

Lower barriers for individuals to join non-violent campaigns, compared to violent ones, play a pivotal role in this. Most people encounter fewer moral, physical, and logistical obstacles when joining a non-violent campaign rather than a violent one (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Dahlum, Pinckney and Wig, 2023). Take, for example, the difference in physical requirements needed to participate in a violent rebel group, often resulting in such groups being predominantly comprised of relatively young individuals in good physical shape (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). In contrast, scenes of non-violent movements typically portray greater diversity, and it is not uncommon for men and women from all, or most, age groups to participate, thereby expanding the pool of potential participants (Chenoweth, 2021, 95; Marks and Chenoweth, 2020).

Figure 7 depicts the number of campaigns starting in a given year, divided by whether that campaign primarily uses violent or non-violent strategies. Furthermore, we divide the campaigns into three different size categories: Less than 10,000 participants, 10,000-500,000 participants, and more than 500,000 participants. There are two key points in this figure. First, since it is easier for people to participate in non-violent campaigns, it is also easier to initiate such campaigns. Therefore, there are far more non-violent campaigns than violent campaigns. Second, once a campaign has been initiated, those predominantly applying non-violent strategies tend to be larger: 70% of non-violent campaigns since 1945 mobilized more than 10,000 people, but only 59% of the violent ones.

In their research, Dahl et al. (2021) demonstrate that campaigns with significant mobilization potential are more inclined to adopt non-violent strategies, while campaigns with limited mobilization potential, such as small secessionist movements, are more prone to re-

⁵While the relationship between non-violence, campaign size, and success is generally accepted within the research community, it is not without its limitations and has faced some criticism (see e.g.: Dworschak, 2023). Notably, the increased likelihood of success primarily applies to campaigns aimed at regime change and does not extend to secessionist campaigns or campaigns aimed at ousting a foreign occupant.

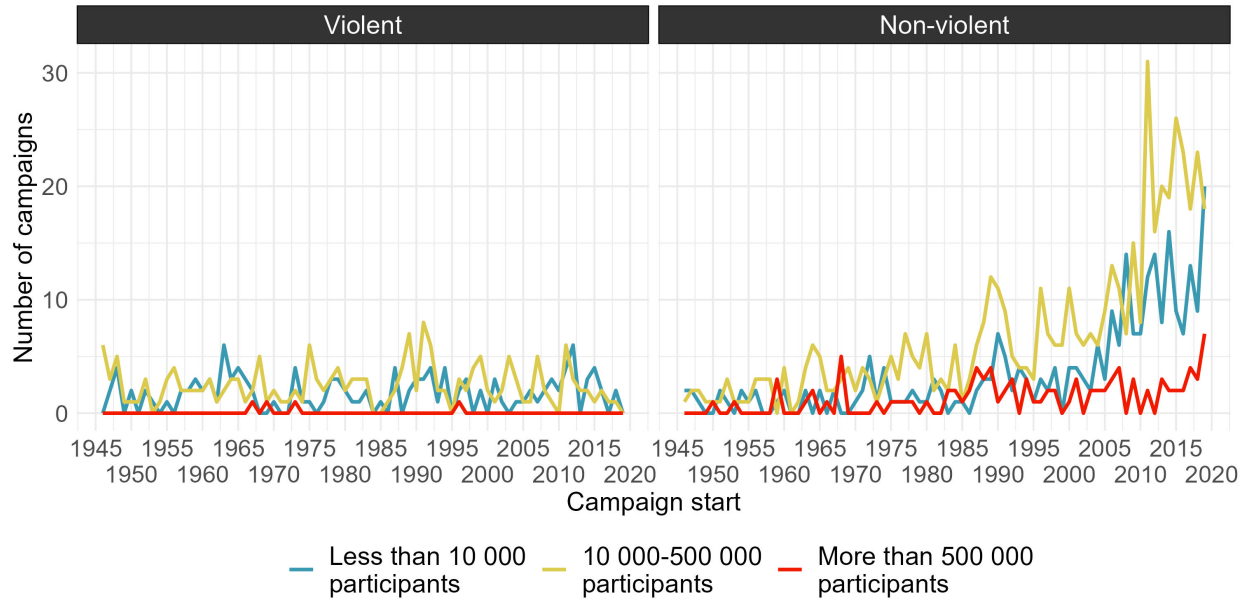


Figure 7: Number of campaigns divided by size and the use of violent versus non-violent strategies.

sort to violence. Additionally, Chenoweth and Lewis (2013) find that typical models of civil war onset poorly explain the initiation of nonviolent campaigns, implying that nonviolent and violent strategies of contention emerge in, and benefit from, different structural environments. However, other research suggests that non-violent campaigns are more likely in states deemed ‘stronger’ by traditional capacity measures (Gleditsch, Radean and Olar, 2022), suggesting a less straightforward bias.

Mass mobilization is more feasible when costs can be imposed on the regime without physically attacking it (Schock, 2013; Sharp, 2005). Here, non-violent movements have a wide array of tactics to employ, beyond violence and non-violence. This includes mass demonstrations, boycotts (social, economic, political), strikes, sit-ins, stay-aways, and other forms of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. Scholars suggest that tactical diversity is conducive to campaign success. Mass demonstrations are not always the most effective way of applying pressure on elites, particularly when they are not sustained over time (Chenoweth, 2020). Other techniques of noncooperation such as strikes and stay-aways can be more disruptive

to the economic system and thereby put more pressure on the regimes for immediate concessions. Strikes and boycotts, for example, are acts of strategic nonviolence that “hurt” the regime by withdrawing resources and legitimacy without engaging in direct confrontation with a repressive regime (Butcher and Svensson, 2014). According to Cunningham, Dahl and Frugé (2017), movements that apply a broad set of tactics make it harder for the regime to silence dissidents as the regime is attacked on multiple fronts.

A critical challenge for non-violent campaigns is to uphold non-violent discipline. The use of violence can alienate potential allies and sympathizers as well as increase public support for repression against the movement (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Murdie and Purser, 2017; Schock, 2005; Thomas and Louis, 2014; Wasow, 2020). In a comprehensive review of violence within otherwise non-violent movements, Chenoweth (2023) concludes that organized armed violence tends to diminish the likelihood of success for nonviolent movements. In contrast, the effects of unarmed collective violence are more ambiguous.

In sum, while the observed relationship between non-violence and success may be partly influenced by systematic differences in the types of groups that employ non-violent versus violent strategies, it seems likely that, as long as the mobilization potential is substantial, a non-violent strategy seems to enhance the prospects for success.

Non-violent strategy and loyalty shifts

A commonly held assumption in the literature suggests that non-violent campaigns tend to experience higher success rates, partly because they are more likely to induce loyalty shifts among the security forces (see e.g.: Ackerman and Rodal, 2008; Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008; Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Nepstad, 2011; Rivera and Gleditsch, 2013; Grewal, 2019; Chiang, 2021). This connection is underpinned by two key mechanisms: firstly, a morality mechanism posits that the psychological and moral costs of repressing unarmed dissidents are higher than those associated with repressing armed dissidents, increasing the

likelihood of security forces breaking with the state. Secondly, a network-tie mechanism suggests that because non-violent campaigns typically mobilize more participants with more diverse backgrounds, the probability of connections or ties existing between security forces and movement members is higher. This further strengthens incentives for security forces to resist orders and switch sides (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Nepstad, 2013; Rivera and Gleditsch, 2013; Schock, 2015).

While there has been a lack of empirical studies substantiating this relationship,⁶ in an unpublished paper, Dahl, Rivera and Gates (2023) corroborate this notion, asserting that nonviolent campaigns are more likely to foster large-scale loyalty shifts. However, the effect is not uniform across all types of loyalty shifts. Both desertion and side-switching are more common during violent campaigns, partly due to the high physical costs of participating in a civil war, creating incentives to desert and leave the conflict. Additionally, rebel groups might gain limited territorial control, fostering incentives to switch to their side.

Non-violent strategy and democratic change

Research spanning the fields of sociology, political science, and economics reveals that non-violent mass mobilization is efficient in toppling autocratic regimes, instigating democratic change, and promoting democratic stability (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Teorell, 2010; Bayer, Bethke and Lambach, 2016; Dahl and Gleditsch, 2023; Dahl, Dahlum, Fjelde, Gjerløw, Knutsen, Strøm-Sedgwick and Wig, 2023; Karatnycky, 2005; Kim and Kroeger, 2019; Rivera and Gleditsch, 2013; Pinckney, 2020; Ulfelder, 2005). The democracy-promoting effect of non-violent campaigns is evident when comparing the aftermath of non-violent incidents with that of violent incidents, as well as when contrasting the trajectory of countries with non-violent mass mobilization to those without any mobilization.

Importantly, the positive and significant impact of non-violent mobilization on democratic

⁶While Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) find no association, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) find that nonviolent mobilization campaigns induce defection, but conditional on campaign size.

change remains robust across various specifications of key variables, whether focusing on short-term or long-term changes and applying different models. Scholars have attempted to assess whether this empirical pattern is influenced by non-violent mass mobilization being more likely to occur in countries deemed “ripe for democracy”, but the finding persists even when accounting for variables associated with democratic transitions (Kim and Kroeger, 2019).⁷

There are at least three main arguments for why non-violent campaigns, as compared to violent ones, are more likely to improvements in democracy. First, since these campaigns have a higher success rate, it naturally follows that they also more often bring about democratization: If you don’t succeed in toppling the sitting regime, you are less likely to succeed in democratization. However, this underplays the additional implicit threat to autocratic elites that mass mobilization signals, even if unsuccessful. Change does not solely have to occur through a regime breakdown. Non-violent campaigns demonstrate that members of the civil society are both able and willing to mobilize against the regime. Once they have done so, there is a possibility of them mobilizing again. Therefore, even if the mobilization effort is not successful in toppling the regime, it could still increase the revolutionary threat, incentivizing the regime to implement democratic reforms on its own. In general, losing power through democratic elections opens up a much safer exit strategy than being toppled through mass mobilization efforts or a coup (Dahl and Gleditsch, 2023; Miller, 2021).

The second argument for why non-violent movements might be more pro-democratic is that these campaigns tend to have broader, more decentralized coalitions. This is a side-effect of the mobilizing advantage. Since unarmed resistance has lower barriers to participation, it follows that such campaigns also attract a more diverse group of participants (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). Broad participation and decentralized structure lessen the

⁷This, of course, does not rule out the possibility that the finding could be influenced by other unobserved confounding variables.

chance of individual actors dominating the movement, making it more difficult to carry out an autocratic project. Consequently, regime changes brought about by non-violent mass mobilization frequently result in more democratic power-sharing arrangements (Rivera and Gleditsch, 2013).

Third, some scholars highlight a possible cultural aspect, where non-violent direct action is more likely to foster a democratic culture (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; García-Ponce and Wantchekon, 2023; Rivera and Gleditsch, 2013). According to these scholars, non-violent resistance enables participants to learn the values of peaceful political participation, political compromise, and openness, such mass protests can provide the cultural and perhaps the institutional basis for civil liberties and democracy (Dahl, 1971).

Unfortunately, the power of non-violent mobilization seems to have waned in recent years. In an unpublished paper, Dahl, Gleditsch, Hermansen and Rudolfson (2023) argue that these findings might be largely influenced by the period between 1980 and 2010. When assessing the impact of non-violent mass mobilization on democratization over time, they find that it has a positive and significant effect on democratic change within this specific period only. Both before and after this, the effect is insignificant, and the estimates fluctuate between being positive and negative. This is, of course, concerning, and to a large extent, it aligns with Chenoweth (2020), which highlights a significant decline in the success rate for non-violent campaigns over the last decade. They suggest that the decrease might be, at least partly, linked to changes on the side of the campaign. These changes include mobilizing a smaller proportion of the population, adopting a more uniform set of tactics, and increasingly incorporating a violent component. Some scholars also point to advancements in repression technology, facilitated by new information technologies, allowing regimes to eliminate key opposition figures without triggering a backlash that could lead to more mobilization and regime splits (Smithey and Kurtz, 2018).

Unsuccessful campaign: Hong Kong's anti-ELAB movement

In 2019, the Hong Kong government proposed to amend the law regulating the extradition of fugitives. The amendment would make it easier to transfer fugitives from Hong Kong to mainland China. In opposition to this amendment, multiple large-scale protests erupted in May and June, eventually forcing the government to postpone the bill. Yet the postponement simply escalated the conflict, as protesters demanded its full withdrawal. Clashes between protesters and the police continued through the summer, and public trust in both government and security forces plummeted. In October 2019, the government withdrew the bill.

This, however, was a short-term victory. In 2020, Beijing introduced a national security law. The law gave the government wide authority to arrest individuals for threatening national security, and largely blamed foreign actors for instigating unrest. By May 2022, more than 10,000 people had been arrested for protest-related offenses.^a

The anti-ELAB movement failed to achieve its demands and liberties in Hong Kong ultimately deteriorated, even if the campaign had many features that characterize a successful campaign. Activists used non-violent strategies to oppose the government, although with some violent flanks. It mobilized large crowds, particularly students, and local elections held in 2019 showed massive support for the protests, with the pro-democratic camp winning 81% of the seats in the city council.

Civil society organizations in Hong Kong have since been harassed by the police for allegedly receiving international support, which is now a criminal offense. This is just one of many examples of the difficulties for international actors in supporting pro-democratic movements in authoritarian settings. Blaming foreign actors as a strategy to repress or delegitimize criticism has been used in multiple countries, such as Russia, Venezuela, and Zambia.

^a<https://hongkongfp.com/2022/07/16/explained-in-data-what-happened-to-hong-kongs-protesters>

3.3 Pillar III: Campaign composition

Who, or more specifically, which social groups participate in a campaign can influence the overall probability of campaign success, and the probability that a campaign will adopt democratic goals. Three factors define the role of distinct social groups: their relative strength, the preferences of individuals within those groups, and their ties to the regime – the latter influencing the likelihood of eliciting regime splits. Strength refers to both a social group’s potential for mobilization, but also its control over important, usually economic, resources.

First, we consider why mass mobilization is a more powerful tool for certain social groups. Second, we consider why democratization is a more likely outcome when movements are made up of particular social groups. Third, we briefly discuss the merits of coalitions of different social groups. Finally, we separately discuss recent research into female participation in campaigns.

Some social groups are more powerful

There is an extensive and longstanding body of literature catering to which groups are most likely to mobilize and bring about democratic change. For instance, labor unions and industrial workers have been recognized as a potent social force for mass mobilization (see, for example, Butcher and Svensson, 2014). Since the 20th century, manufacturing workers, in particular, have been a sizable and geographically concentrated group in urban areas. This concentration facilitates cooperation and coordination and coupled with their numerical strength, workers are endowed with significant mobilization potential (Collier, 1999; Butcher and Svensson, 2014; Putnam, 2001).

Workers also wield significant influence in crucial economic sectors. Workers have a central role in industrialization. Strikes and other forms of industrial conflict can impose substantial economic costs on society. In both Brazil and South Africa, coordinated strike

activity played a key role in constructing an organizational infrastructure that eventually challenged repressive regimes (Butcher and Svensson, 2014). When workers coordinate, they can disrupt the national economy.

Students are another group that has garnered scholarly attention. With the expansion of higher education, they form a substantial part of society. Similar to industrial workers, students maintain close networks on campus, providing them with significant mobilization potential. Despite their limited economic influence during their studies, students play a crucial role in future recruitment for technology-intensive industries. Furthermore, education is presumed to reduce individuals' inclination toward violence, making student-led campaigns more likely to adopt non-violent strategies. For example, Dahlum (2019) finds that student movements are more likely to succeed. However, it should be noted that the effect is attributed to their increased propensity to adopt non-violent strategies.

Figure 8 illustrates the percentage of campaigns using violent versus non-violent strategies across four social groups: Military personnel, peasants, students, and workers. The first thing to notice in the data is that urban groups like students and workers are far more likely to mobilize. When these groups mobilize, they are also far more likely to adopt non-violent strategies. Since 1945, 48% and 57% of all campaigns where respectively military employees and peasants participated employed non-violent strategies. 78% of campaigns with workers and 82% of campaigns with students did the same.

Which social groups are more likely to prefer democracy?

A recent strand of literature has stressed the association between urban social groups and democracy (Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig, 2019; García-Ponce and Wantchekon, 2023). There are at least four arguments for why urban groups are more likely to favor democracy compared to rural groups. First, social groups that are relatively numerous have incentives for democratic systems of government (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003). Democracy, aside

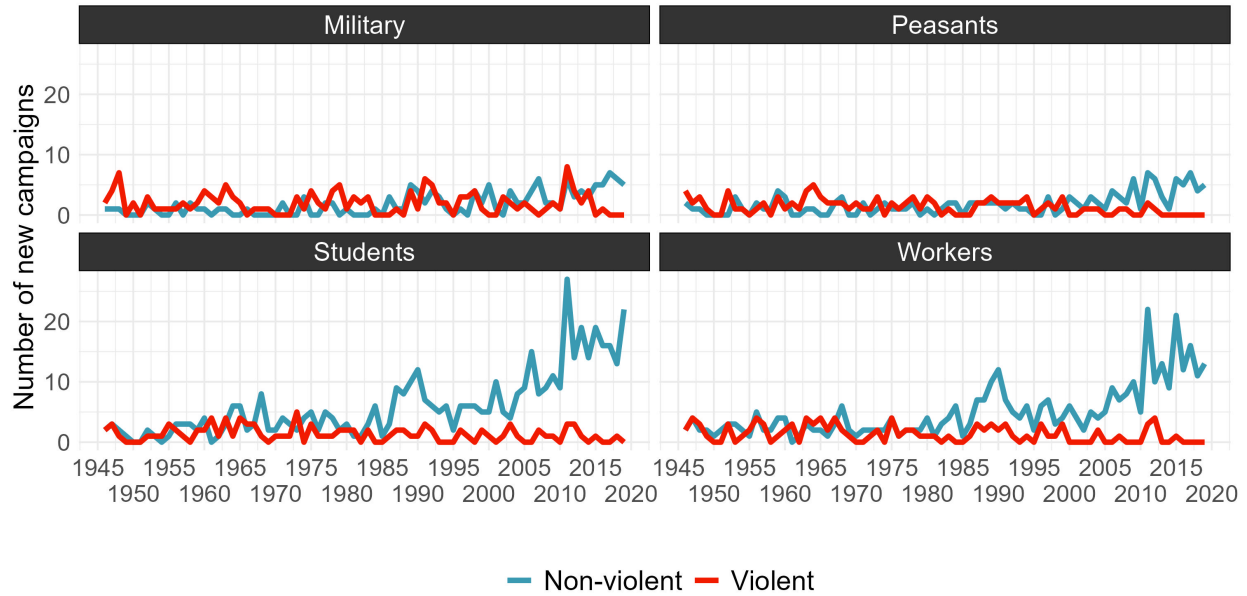


Figure 8: Frequency of violent (red) versus non-violent (blue) new campaigns across four different participating social groups between 1946 and 2019.

from its moral appeal, is a more efficient system of government when large groups need to agree, as opposed to ruling through a more narrow clique of individuals. Furthermore, large groups with below-average income can expect to be able to use democratic governance to redistribute resources from the rich to the poor (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006). The urban working- and middle-class are both numerous and have relatively more to gain from redistribution, and can expect to stay numerous in the future and thus continue to win elections under democracy. These groups therefore have a self-interest in democratic governance.

Yet the above is also true for rural peasant groups, which leads to the second argument: Urban groups are relatively more powerful *vis-a-vis* the existing regime. Urban groups' importance to the modern economic sector gives actors such as industrial workers and the urban middle class greater ability to disrupt important economic sectors. In comparison, large peasant groups across the world maintained or still maintain subsistence farming, with little or no importance to the regime. In other words, while peasant groups might favor democracy, they are less likely to achieve it. For most societies, the larger landholders and

farmers who are important to national agricultural production, are neither numerous nor poor and therefore have less motivation to favor democracy.

Third, researchers have pointed to the circumstances under which urban versus rural movements appear (García-Ponce and Wantchekon, 2023). According to these scholars, rural movements tend to be characterized by political exclusion, typically located in the periphery of the state using violent guerrilla warfare to oppose and perhaps topple a government that has excluded them. Urban groups, on the other hand, tend to be groups included in the central economy, close to the security forces of the regime, and without any rugged terrain to support warfare-like strategies. Accordingly, 69% of all movements dominated by industrial workers use non-violent tactics, but only 25% of peasant-led movements are non-violent.

Finally, and as a consequence of these different circumstances, authors such as García-Ponce and Wantchekon (2023) have argued that urban movements foster a different set of values. Peaceful political participation, political compromise, and openness are expected to be central to urban, non-violent mass movements, which can provide the cultural and institutional basis for civil liberties and democracy. Rural violent movements are more likely, according to this literature, to foster ideas of organizational hierarchy, political confrontation, and exclusion.

In Figure 9, we focus in on four different social groups: Military personnel, peasants, students, and workers. We count the number of new campaigns starting in a given year where one of these social groups participates. This total number of new campaigns per social group is shaded in blue. We then count how many of these campaigns were guided by democracy and human rights as an ideology, illustrated in red.

As in figure 8, a striking feature is that urban groups like students and workers are far more likely to mobilize. While the average number of new campaigns where military personnel or peasants participate is 3.7 and 3.2 respectively, the number of new campaigns with students or workers is 7.5 and 6.5. More than urban groups being more favorable towards

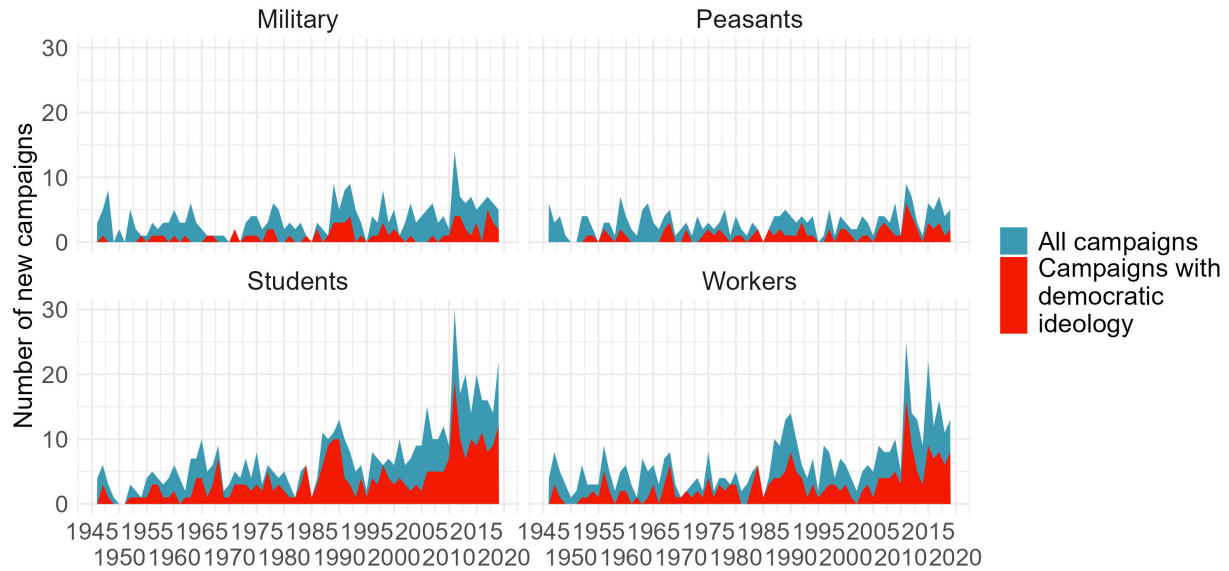


Figure 9: Frequency of new campaigns divided by four different participating social groups between 1946 and 2019. All new campaigns are colored in blue, overlaid by the number of those campaigns with an ideology of democracy and human rights, colored in red.

democracy, these groups use mass mobilization far more as a political tool, particularly in the modern era. If these urban groups have relatively more power *vis-a-vis* the regime, it follows that they would also more often use that power to reach their goals.

In addition to participating more often in mass-mobilization campaigns, urban groups, when they mobilize, are also more often guided by an ideology in favor of democracy and human rights: Since 1946, 52% of campaigns with students and 44% of campaigns with workers had a democratic ideology, but only 30% and 32% of campaigns with peasants and military personnel respectively.

Coalitions between social groups

To what extent are socially diverse protest movements more favorable to democratization than movements restricted to a limited number of social groups? Several prominent contributions emphasize the importance of class coalitions between social groups and broad-based

mobilization in achieving campaign goals (see e.g. Rokkan, 1999; Moore, 1966; Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens, 1992). Non-violent mass mobilization is most effective when participants can initiate campaigns quickly, where participants were drawn from broad sectors of society that cut across social divisions such as ethnicity, class, and geography (DeNardo, 1985; Beissinger, 2013; Lichbach, 1998). Thus, research on the social composition of movements suggests that coalitions formed by various social groups are more likely to overthrow authoritarian regimes (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Goldstone, 2011).

There are several reasons for this. First, social diversity equips movements with a wide array of resources and strategies enabling them to exert pressure on authoritarian governments across different sectors and potentially leveraging vertical ties to the elite. Diverse coalitions, composed of a mix of different groups, are more likely to include members who share social ties with supporters of the regime and its security forces. This increased interconnectedness enhances the likelihood that the movement elicits internal divisions and loyalty-shifts within the regime. The greater the social overlap between protesters and the (networks of the) the security forces, the more likely the military is to defect from a regime coalition (Dahlum, 2023; Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2014; Svobik, 2012; Thurber, 2019). Notably, this argument is consistent with the social ties mechanism, connecting non-violent movements to significant shifts in loyalty on a large scale.

Empirical research affirms that socially diverse movements are more prone to establish democratic institutions (Dahlum, 2023). Moreover, the diversity of a movement is not simply a function of the size of the movement, and there is significant variation in protester diversity even among very large movements. Indeed, when taking social diversity into account, the size of the movement appears to be less important. Thus, mobilizing a broad, diverse base for mass movements seems critical to advance democratic change. Figure 10 shows the number of new campaigns since 1945 by the number of participating social groups. It suggests that movements with more than nine participants are rare and have remained relatively stable

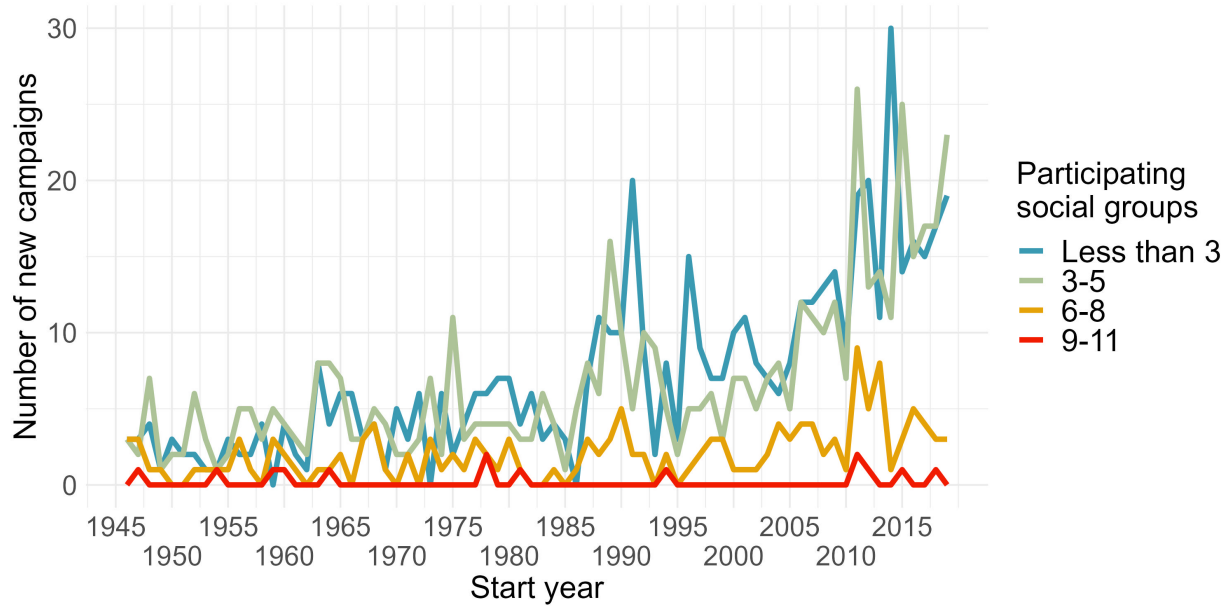


Figure 10: Number of new campaigns starting in a given year since 1945 grouped by the number of participating social groups.

over time. For movements with six to eight participants, there was a substantial increase during the Arab Spring. However, the most significant rise in the last decades occurred in campaigns mobilizing fewer than five different groups.

Women in protests

The level of female participation in social movements varies notably. In some movements, women barely figure, while in others, they both initiate and dominate the movement. One example is the Hirak movement against Bouteflika’s rule in Algeria (2019-21), where women played a key role, joined in unprecedented numbers, and took on leadership roles (Tripp, 2019). How does the level of female participation influence the dynamics of dissent, impact the outcomes, and shape the prospects for democratic change?

A substantial body of research underscores the significance of women and gender norms in mitigating violence and minimizing conflict risks. Scholars argue that women, more often than men, tend to oppose violence. In societies where women exert influence and contribute

to decision-making, the likelihood of war outbreak diminishes (Bjarnegård et al., 2015; Caprioli, 2003; Dahlum and Wig, 2020; Hudson et al., 2012; Melander, 2005). In the context of peace processes, female delegates are likely to enhance the prospects of success by establishing connections with women's civil society groups. These connections can positively influence both the content and implementation of peace accords (Gizelis, 2009; Krause, Krause and Bränfors, 2018). Moreover, empirical evidence also suggests that societal norms promoting gender equality are linked to a decreased willingness to resort to violence (Dahlum and Wig, 2020; Pinker, 2011).

Honing directly on civil resistance movements, there are indications that civil resistance movements with a high level of female participation are more likely to succeed (Chenoweth, Seyle and Dharmapuri, 2019*a,b*; Chenoweth, 2021; Marks and Chenoweth, 2020). Indeed, since the Second World War, very few movements that have excluded women have succeeded (Chenoweth, 2021). According to Marks and Chenoweth (2020), movements embracing gender-inclusive ideologies tend to be larger compared to those without such inclusivity, thus increasing the likelihood of success. There are three potential reasons for this. First, it can potentially be attributed to the doubling of the mobilization base compared to movements with male participants only. Second, the causality may be reversed, larger campaigns may attract more women as there is safety in numbers. Third, some scholars suggest that women participants can enhance the perceived legitimacy of campaigns and catalyze mobilization across broader segments of society (Loken, 2018; Marks and Chenoweth, 2020).

Female empowerment and participation are also linked to the dissident movement's strategic choices. Examining non-violent and violent conflicts, Schaftenaar (2017) finds that women's empowerment increases the likelihood of nonviolent conflict onset compared to no conflict or armed conflict. She argues that gender norms shape the expectations of movements regarding mobilization (mass or limited) and prevailing conflict norms (nonviolent or violent) in society, influencing the subsequent choice of conflict strategy and laying the

ground for non-violent mobilization. Similarly, Asal et al. (2013) reveals that movements embracing gender-inclusive ideologies are more prone to engage in protests and less likely to adopt a violent strategy. A notable illustration of this phenomenon occurred during the street protests in Sudan in late 2018, where women distinguished themselves by advocating for continued peaceful mobilization despite escalating violence and brutality (Friedman, 2019).

In general, movement diversity is considered to foster tactical innovation (Braithwaite, Butcher and Pinckney, 2023; Olzak and Ryo, 2007). This idea also figures in discussions of female participation, suggesting that the involvement of women tends to foster greater tactical innovation (Codur and King, 2015; Marks and Chenoweth, 2020; Principe, 2017), thereby increasing the likelihood of success.

Lastly, some argue that female front-line participation could prompt loyalty shifts within the security forces. Historical accounts indicate that placing women at the forefront of demonstrations has influenced the behavior of soldiers, making them less inclined to follow orders to repress and potentially encouraging defection. For instance, during the 2000 Serbian uprising against Milosevic, women were strategically positioned at the forefront of the protests. Exploiting Balkan gender beliefs that dictate women should always be protected, soldiers faced a dilemma: they could violate their convictions and attack the women, or they could refuse to follow orders (Gould and Moe, 2012, as cited in Nepstad, 2013). Thus, female participation can raise the moral costs of regime loyalty and compel security forces to question the legitimacy of repressive orders (Nepstad, 2013).

Chenoweth, Seyle and Dharmapuri (2019*b*) show that, when considering interaction with size, female participation seems to increase the likelihood of loyalty shifts. While this is encouraging, it should be noted that this research is relatively nascent, and there is a lack of empirical evidence published in peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, Principe (2017) highlights that the potential effectiveness of gender-oriented strategies depends on the context

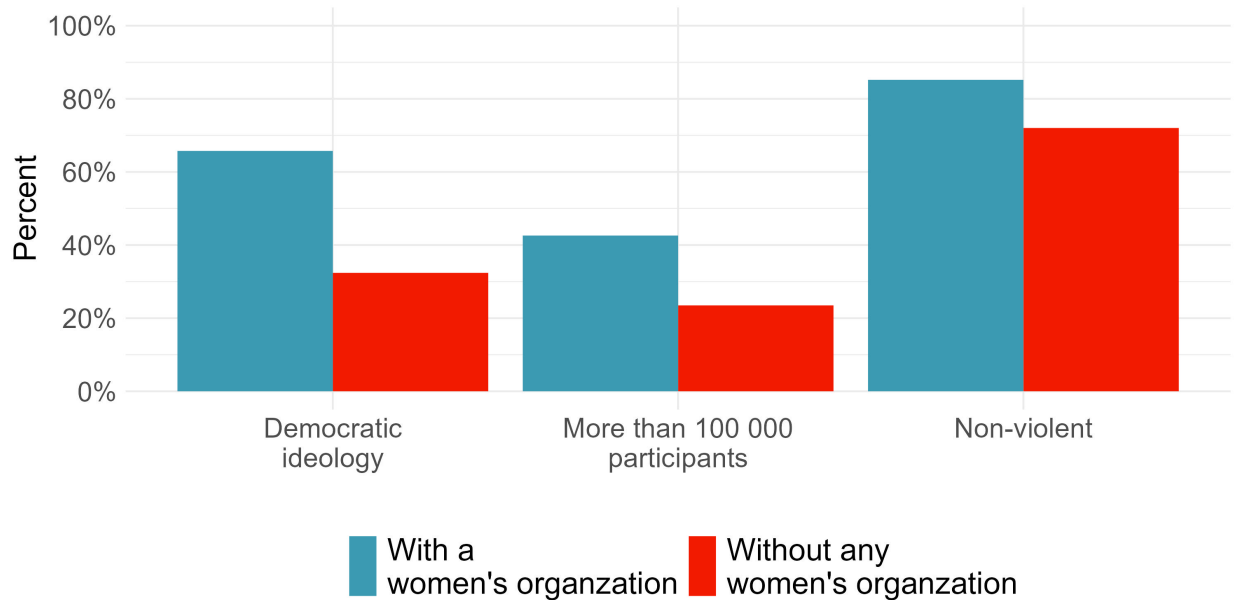


Figure 11: Percentage of campaigns with a democratic ideology, with more than 100,000 participants, and with a predominantly non-violent strategy since 1945, divided by campaigns where a women’s organization participated (blue) versus campaigns without the participation of any women’s organization (red).

and may not apply universally to all women but rather to specific groups of women.

Empirically, the participation of women’s organizations correlates with both the size of the movement, whether the movement adopts non-violent strategies, and whether the movement is guided by democracy and human rights as an ideology. This is illustrated in figure 11, where we compare the percentage of campaigns with and without participation by a women’s organization across these three metrics – ideology, size, and non-violence. Since 1945, 66% of all campaigns with a women’s organization were pro-democratic, compared to 32% of those without. 43% of campaigns with a women’s organization mobilized more than 100,000 people, compared to 24% of those without. And finally, 85% of campaigns with a women’s organization adopted non-violent strategies, compared to 72% of those without.

This does not tell us whether women’s participation *caused* a certain ideology, strategy, or mobilization, or if women are more likely to join campaigns with these features. As noted

above, the research is so far inconclusive.

3.4 Pillar IV: The organization of the movement

Finally, we investigate the significance and impact of organizational structure on the effectiveness and outcomes of social mobilization and examine the implications of building movements based on either organized structures or ad-hoc arrangements.

Organizational participation can empower campaigns

The literature suggests that the organizational context is likely to influence the feasibility of participation for the individual. Mass mobilization tends to be based on various coalitions by formal organizations, whereas organizational networks tend to have an already existing mobilization infrastructure (Butcher, Gray and Mitchell, 2018). These types of networks tend to include assets such as the sharing of information, trust, and resources that can heighten mobilization potential and lower collective action problems (see, for example, Parkinson, 2013; Brancati, 2016; Van Dyke and Amos, 2017; Larson and Lewis, 2017). When community or interest groups, political organizations, or unions invest the effort to strategize, coordinate, and lead a demonstration, it is likely to facilitate participation for the individual. Consequently, the ability to partake in collective actions should be supported by the existence of organizational networks, where networks influence individuals' ability to act on their demands and shape their views on feasibility and risk (Dorff, 2017; Ley, 2022).

In addition to an improved capacity to mobilize mass participation, cohesive movements are also conducive to enforcing tactical compliance. Campaigns with organizational participation are therefore better at managing disruptive action, and limiting violence (Pearlman and Cunningham, 2012), while avoiding disorder within a movement, which increases the risk of protester violence (Ives and Lewis, 2020). In extension, research suggests that a pre-existing campaign infrastructure is a key prerequisite for a sustained campaign, also after

violent state repression. Sutton, Butcher and Svensson (2014), for example, find evidence that a pre-existing organizational infrastructure increases the likelihood of continued domestic mobilization and security defections after violent repression. Also, Ketchley and Barrie (2020) suggest that mass mobilization in 2011 and 2012 was more successful in Tunisia compared to Egypt largely due to differences in the organizational capacity and coordinating role by trade unions able to orchestrate the protest's rhythm. In this context, the transitional regime often confronted successive days of protest that encompassed various sites, sectors, and tactics. In Egypt, on the other hand, activists used Friday prayers as an opportunity to gather large, temporary crowds. However, due to a lower level of organization, the protests were less likely to involve diverse groups, less likely to endure, and less likely to occur in multiple sites.

In short, organizational participation and strength empower a campaign's mobilizing potential, its tactical planning, and sustainability, all of which are important to campaign success.

Organizations and democracy

The research on organizational participation and democratization is scant, but some insights exist. For example, Pinckney, Butcher and Braithwaite (2022) find that durable civil society organizations that are not themselves designed to compete for political power drive successful democratization. This is because these organizations tend to have a more stable preference for democracy and durable mobilization networks that can resist attempts at re-autocratization.

In Figure 12, we illustrate the percentage of campaigns that are guided by democracy and human rights as an ideology, divided by the participation of 10 different organizational types. These organizational types overlap with different social groups, and we recognize several patterns from section 3.3. For example, among campaigns in which student organizations

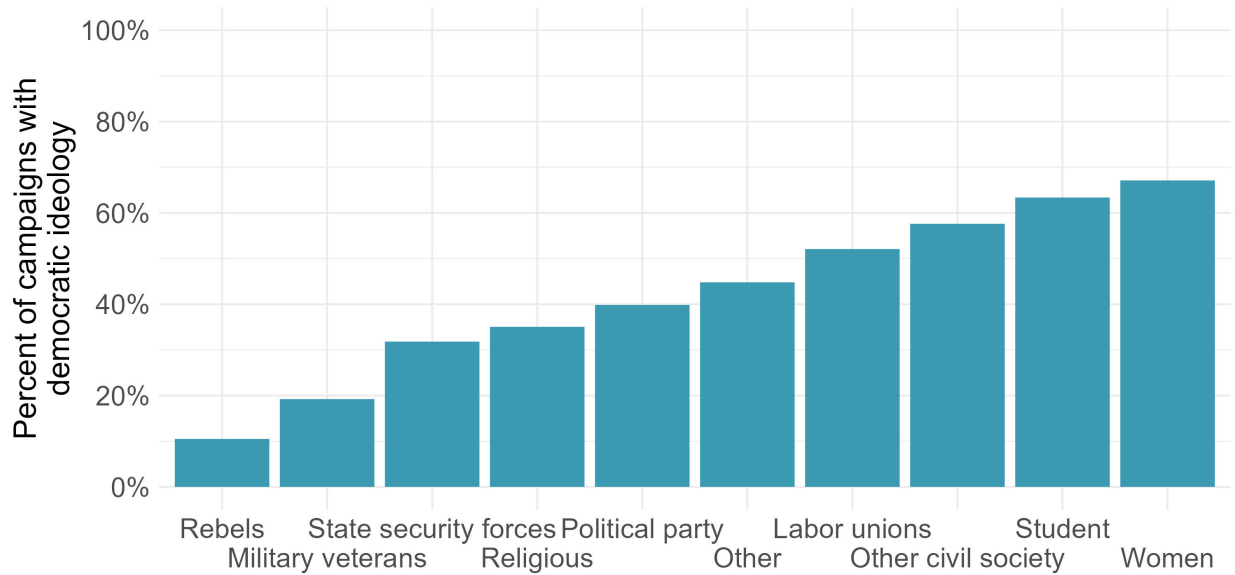


Figure 12: Percent of campaigns guided by democracy and human rights as an ideology since 1945, divided into 10 different participating organizational types.

participated, more than 60% were guided by democracy. In contrast, only 10% of campaigns with rebel group participation had a similar ideology.

This begs the question of whether the organizational aspect provides any *additional* impetus for democracy, or if it can all be explained by the associated social group. In figure 13, we only look at campaigns in which students participated. We then divide this subset into whether a student *organization* also participated, and calculate the percentage of each group that was guided by democracy and human rights as an ideology. While 47% of campaigns without any student organizations were guided by democracy, 68% percent of those with organizational participation were guided by the same. This supports the notion that pre-existing organizations can also guide movements toward a preference for democracy.

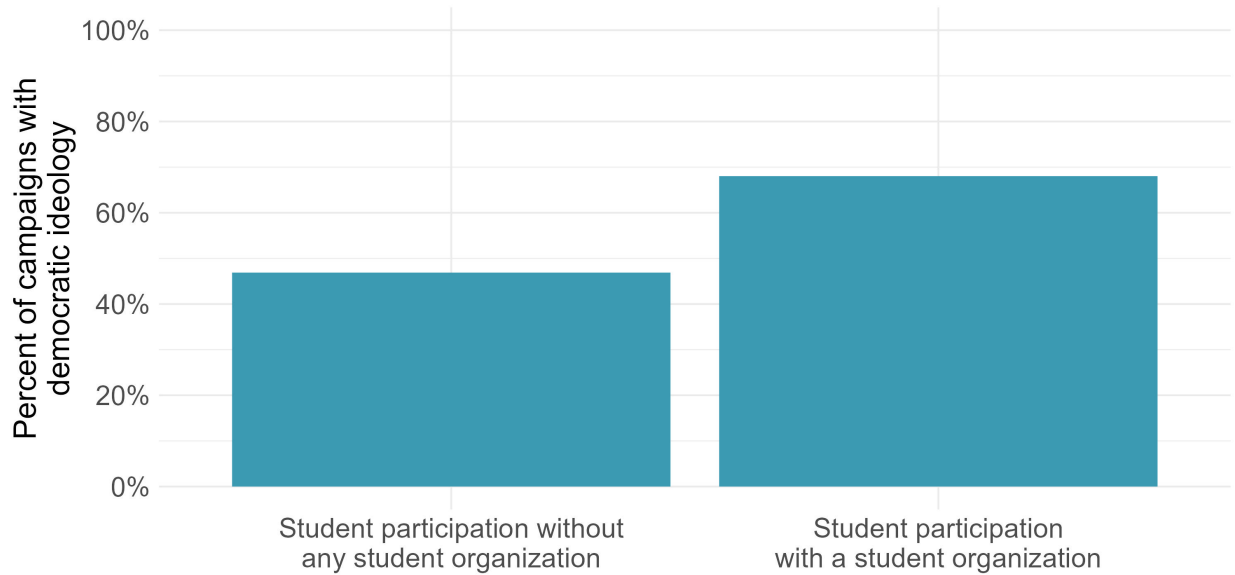


Figure 13: Percent of campaigns guided by democracy and human rights as an ideology where students participated since 1945, divided by whether any student organization was part of the campaign.

4 Implications for international democracy promoters

We have focused on what causal mechanisms the research has highlighted as most instrumental to campaign success, and ultimately, democratization. This is not a purely theoretical game: Without a precise description of what may *cause* democracy, democracy promoters risk investing resources into efforts that are worthless, or worse, detrimental.

As we have shown above, disentangling the causal nature is a complex task. Do some strategies mobilize more people, or do campaigns with a large mobilization potential selectively adopt certain strategies? Are women particularly influential in bringing about campaign success, or do women instead join movements that are already large, peaceful, and pro-democratic? Should democracy promoters invest in student organizations, training programs in non-violent activism, or labor unionization? The questions far outnumber the answers.

Democracy promoters should *not* try to instigate or somehow cause regime shifts. But

when moments of instability occur, democracy promoters should recognize them as opportunities. “The best chances for democratization are rare, sudden, and entirely unplanned” (Miller, 2021, 248). Unfortunately, when the moment occurs, it may already be too late. Sustained collective action through mass mobilization is empowered by pre-existing organizational networks, which can be difficult to establish overnight. Therefore, democracy promoters might need to invest in civil society organizations “in moments of peace”, so that these are prepared if and when such mass mobilization moments occur. To better understand how to capitalize on such opportunities, we need to consider the following questions: First, can foreign assistance empower civil resistance movements? Second, how can it be most effectively utilized?

The answer to the first question is not straightforward. Chenoweth and Stephan (2001) test whether international support can assist civil society movements. Their analysis suggests that fewer than 10% of non-violent civil resistance movements between 1900 and 2006 received some form of direct material support from other governments, and it did not improve the prospects of success. Direct foreign support risks undermining a campaign’s most critical source of strength: mass participation. If the campaign is seen as a foreign puppet, people may stay away, deeming it less legitimate (Chenoweth, 2021). Also, governments can perceive foreign aid to NGOs as supporting political opponents and threatening their rule (Dupuy, Ron and Prakash, 2016). In the words of Chaudry (2022, 11): “casting NGOs as “foreign agents” and linking their activities to foreign governments—whether the connections are real or perceived—can reduce their popularity”.

However, this does not rule out that foreign governments can play a valuable role in supporting civil resistance movements. First, it is premature to draw definitive conclusions based on a single study, and there is a general lack of more fine-grained studies into various types of support. Second, several findings suggest a more optimistic perspective. Some studies suggest that foreign donors can aid pro-democratic mobilization efforts (Wilson, 2005).

By attracting international funds, local organizations have more means to train the population in non-violent protest techniques. For example, a large part of US democracy aid reached the student group Otpor in Serbia in 2000, contributing to the grassroots campaign against the Serbian regime (Irvine, 2013). In addition, the literature suggests that international pressure on governments is more effective when it has tangible consequences, such as removing bilateral aid or official development assistance (Chaudry, 2022), also through naming and shaming of human rights abuses (Barry, Clay and Flynn, 2013; Dietrich and Murdie, 2017). Indeed, Liou, Murdie and Peksen (2023) demonstrate that international sanctions that hurt regimes economically have proven effective in increasing a movement's number of participants, the likelihood of security force defection, and overall success. Additionally, Chenoweth (2021) notes that secessionist and anti-colonial movements often rely on international support, particularly diplomatic recognition, for success. Without global recognition, secession campaigns have not actually won.

When deciding which organizations to promote, we are confident that democracy promoters should *not* invest in violent military organizations, and, instead focus on supporting civil society organizations. The specific organizations to support depend on various contextual factors, including the nature of the economy and the structure of social groups in the country. Ultimately, the question is as complex as it is simple: What role can democracy promoters play to boost organizations that could strengthen democratic ambitions in the future? At the same time, democracy promoters should recognize that in moments of distress, autocratic elites are looking for a way out. Elites must be convinced that autocracy cannot be sustained, *but also that there is a future for them if it falls*. This can go on accord with popular demands for justice, where crowds wish to see past leaders on trial, or, as in Libya in 2011, executed.

There are compelling reasons to believe that one approach for foreign assistance is to indirectly support movements by contributing to the development of its civil society in-

frastructure. This infrastructure can be leveraged by movements in the future, fostering sustainable resistance. While more difficult today, it might also be more important. We are currently witnessing a wave of autocratization and increasing surveillance and repression of civil society organizations and human rights movements. Global levels of democracy are receding, and the democratic progress made over the last 35 years is diminishing (Papada et al., 2023). Moving forward, it is crucial to analyze, understand and promote the determinants of mass mobilization to cultivate democratic change.

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