

THE DEMOBILIZATION OF PROTEST CAMPAIGNS

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Summary

All protest campaigns move through cycles of escalation and de-escalation and ultimately demobilize. Some campaigns demobilize quickly as protesters reach their goals. The 2011 Egyptian uprising when protesters left the streets after they brought down the Mubarak regime, for example, is a case of rapid demobilization. Others, like the 2011 uprising in Bahrain, demobilize over a longer time span before protests come to a complete halt. In Bahrain, the government first cracked down on the opposition by bringing in foreign troops, and continued to repress protesters until the protesters ended the campaign in 2012. Regardless of the length of time it takes for protesters to leave the streets and stop the protests, demobilization is a complex process. Numerous factors such as severe repression, government concessions, counter-mobilization of opposition groups, leadership changes, or even unexpected events can all bring about demobilization. These factors and strategies may occur simultaneously or sequentially, but usually one or a combination of these lead to the demobilization of a protest campaign. Moreover, demobilization is a dynamic process as it continues to evolve out of the endogenous interactions among governments, challengers, bystanders, and in some cases like in Bahrain, external third party actors.

Even though every protest campaign eventually demobilizes one way or the other, the demobilization phase has generally attracted less scholarly attention than the onset and escalation of violent and nonviolent forms of collective action. Most scholars, for a long time, addressed demobilization indirectly within the context of the repression-dissent nexus as they explored why repression backfires and escalates dissent in some cases while it succeeds in demobilizing the opposition in others. Nonetheless, factors besides state repression contribute to the demobilization of dissent. In other words, a state's accommodative tactics as well as individual, organizational, or even regional and

systemic level factors that interact with the state's actions have the potential to shape when and how political dissent demobilizes. More recently, scholars have begun to examine why and how protest campaigns demobilize by stepping out of the repression-dissent nexus and focusing on a variety of other factors related to organizational structures, regime types, individual level constraints, and contingent xalso begun to focus more heavily on the different causal mechanisms that explain how a state's repressive tactics can lead to demobilization. While this new line of research has made significant contributions to our understanding of the demobilization of protests, we are still left with important questions about the demobilization process that have yet to be answered.

Keywords: demobilization, protest campaigns, repression, accommodation, institutionalization, radical flank, polarization, disengagement

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The Complex Nature of Demobilization

All protest campaigns move through cycles of escalation and de-escalation and ultimately demobilize. Demobilization refers to the process by which collective action decreases in scale and scope and eventually ends (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Some campaigns demobilize quickly as protesters reach their goals. The 2011 Egyptian uprising when protesters left the streets after they brought down the Mubarak regime, for example, is a case of rapid demobilization. Others, like the 2011 uprising in Bahrain, demobilize over a longer time span before protests come to a complete halt. In Bahrain, the government first cracked down on the opposition by bringing in foreign troops, and continued to repress protesters until the protesters ended the campaign in 2012.

Regardless of the length of time it takes for protesters to leave the streets and stop the protests, demobilization is a complex process. Numerous factors such as severe repression, government concessions, counter-mobilization of opposition groups, leadership changes, or even unexpected events can all bring about demobilization. These factors and strategies may occur simultaneously or sequentially, but usually one or a combination of these lead to the demobilization of a protest campaign. Moreover, demobilization is a dynamic process as it continues to evolve out of the endogenous interactions among governments, challengers, bystanders, and in some cases like in Bahrain, external third party actors.

Even though every protest campaign eventually demobilizes one way or the other, the demobilization phase has generally attracted less scholarly attention than the onset and escalation of violent and nonviolent forms of collective action (Koopmans, 1997, 2004; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). Apart from the seminal works of Piven and Cloward (1977), Tarrow and della Porta (1986), and Tarrow (1989), most scholars, for a long time, addressed demobilization indirectly within the context of the repression-dissent nexus as they explored why repression backfires and escalates dissent in some cases while it succeeds in demobilizing the opposition in others.

Nonetheless, factors besides state repression contribute to the demobilization of dissent. In other words, a state's accommodative tactics as well as individual, organizational, or even regional and systemic level factors that interact with the state's actions have the potential to shape when and how political dissent demobilizes. More recently, scholars have begun to examine why and how protest campaigns demobilize by stepping out of the repression-dissent nexus and focusing on a variety of other factors related to organizational structures, regime types, individual level constraints, and contingent events that impact the trajectory of campaigns. At the same time, recent studies on state repression have also begun to focus more heavily on the different causal mechanisms that explain how a state's repressive tactics can lead to demobilization. While this new line of research has made significant contributions to our understanding of the demobilization of protests, we are still left with important questions about the demobilization process that have yet to be answered.

Defining Demobilization

As mentioned above, demobilization refers to a decrease in the scale and scope of contentious collective action (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Collective action, which is the coordination of efforts on behalf of shared interests, turns contentious when these efforts are designed to make claims that relate to other actors' interests. (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, pp. 7-8). Demobilization is generally indicated by a decline in the number of participants or participating organizations, declining frequency of activities, and a decline in the number of sites of activities, or some combination of these. Two fundamental characteristics delineate demobilization as a distinct phase of a protest campaign. First, demobilization is a process by which collective action declines; it is not a condition defining successful or unsuccessful outcomes. Most studies consider campaigns to have a successful outcome if they secure acceptance as a legitimate representative of their cause and achieve their stated goals (Gamson, 1990). Thus, a failure to achieve these would be considered an unsuccessful outcome. Even though the demobilization of a nonviolent campaign can lead to its failure, demobilization might also precede a successful outcome. Beissinger

(2002), for instance, shows that the demobilization of the Baltic and Crimean Tatar protests in 1987 and 1988 under coercive measures eventually led to a successful outcome as they triggered other protests, ending with the fall of the Soviet Union. In other cases, the demobilization of a protest campaign might lead to partially successful outcomes as governments repress certain groups while accommodating others. During the national revolts in Colombia, Kenya, and the Philippines, governments negotiated with key elites, meeting several of their demands, while repressing the lower classes (Goldstone, 1998).

Second, demobilization is distinct from the de-escalation or downswing phase of protest campaigns in that demobilization eventually leads to the end of the campaign (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 38). De-escalation, on the other hand, refers to the downswing phases of protest campaigns where collective action declines in comparison to the upswing phase, but can potentially be followed by another round of escalation (della Porta & Tarrow, 1986). For instance, Almeida (2008) demonstrates that protests de-escalated in El Salvador for several years in the mid-1970s during periods of severe repression, but then resumed as soon as the opposition consolidated a radical coalition across the rural and urban areas in El Salvador. Far from demobilizing, during this period, activists continued to mobilize under a repressive political environment and radicalized the civic organizations that were established previously between 1962 and 1972, during a period of political liberalization. Heavy repression de-escalated nonviolent types of protests, but intensified the radicalization process which later led to the rise of violent and disruptive protests. In other words, during the phase of de-escalation, activists were still engaged in collective action that ultimately led to the resumption of another round of protests (Almeida, 2008, pp. 125-137).

Even though these two characteristics set demobilization aside as distinct from the nature of outcomes or the de-escalation phases, studying demobilization is complex because it is inherently linked to the mobilization phase of a protest campaign. Since demobilization follows the mobilization phase where protest activity, sites, and actors expand, it is greatly affected by what happens during the mobilization phase (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). The onset of mobilization, the actors involved, the

organizational structure of the opposition, the state's response to mobilization all affect when and how demobilization occurs. Therefore, understanding demobilization requires us to also understand the dynamics of the mobilization phase. For instance, during the 2013 Gezi park protests in Turkey that were sparked by the government's destruction of trees in central Istanbul, the rapid escalation of protests in scale and scope and the participation of numerous groups with competing agendas impeded the formation of an alternative organization that would unify the opposition in the campaign against the government (Özen, 2015). Therefore, the Turkish government's repressive tactics eventually succeeded in deterring protesters and demobilizing the campaign (Demirel-Pegg, 2016).

Finally, just like mobilization, the demobilization phase of protest campaigns is characterized by interactive processes (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999). The actions of protesters, governments, bystanders, and external actors and their responses to each other's actions keep shaping the demobilization process. For instance, the competition for mass support among factions of protesters might trigger the emergence of radical factions, which might lead the nonviolent protesters to withdraw their support (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011), but also draw harsher state repression which then triggers an overall decline in protest activity.

State Level Factors on Demobilization

Governments play an important role in protest campaigns. Not only are governments often the primary target of protests, but they also set the rules of contention by deciding on who can make what kinds of claims. After all, their ultimate interest is to reduce or eliminate existing or potential dissidents' capabilities to challenge them (Tilly, 1978). Moreover, governments also control coercive means such as the army, police force, courts, and prisons (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 9). Therefore, how governments respond to protests and how they adapt their tactics and strategies throughout the campaign have an important impact on if and how campaigns demobilize.

When states face mass uprisings, they can a) repress the opposition; b) accommodate the opposition; or c) use a combination of repressive and accommodative tactics. Scholars have argued that the ways in which states respond to protests have a significant effect on the protesters' ability to continue to challenge the government. Given that governments generally respond with repressive actions to deter a challenge to the status quo (Davenport, 2007), numerous scholars have focused primarily on the effects of government repression to assess its effects on dissent. Nonetheless, the evidence is mixed as repression can both increase or decrease dissent, an effect Davenport (2007) refers to as "The Punishment Puzzle".¹

The Effects of Repression

Despite the mixed evidence regarding the effects of repression on dissent, studies have identified several conditions under which repression is likely to demobilize protests. First, repression reduces dissent, especially in autocratic countries mainly because governments have the power to deter protests (Ortiz, 2013; Pierskalla, 2010; Schatzman, 2005). Military strength is especially important here since autocratic governments rely mostly on their military forces to maintain the status quo (Ortiz, 2013). Moreover, governments' repressive capabilities tend to be more intense and effective in oil-rich autocratic regimes because they can invest more heavily in remaining in power to continue to reap the lucrative oil income (Girod, Stewart, & Walters, 2016). In addition, such countries receive more international support when they use repression because foreign countries that depend on the oil extracted from the repressive regime generally support the regimes to keep the oil flowing (Girod et al., 2016).

Second, the consistent use of repression, as opposed to the government wavering between repression and accommodation, demobilizes protest campaigns more effectively (Gurr, 1970; Lichbach, 1987). If governments repress protests while also making concessions, protesters will be encouraged by the concessions and they will think that their prospects for success are higher than before. Therefore, they will continue to mobilize against the government (Rasler, 1996). However, if governments use repressive

¹ For a comprehensive review of the repression-dissent literature, see DeMerrit (2016).

tactics consistently, protesters will understand that continuing to dissent against the government will remain costly and may thus be deterred.

Third, scholars generally agree that intense repression early on during the protest campaign is more effective in demobilizing campaigns (Demirel-Pegg & Pegg, 2015; Rogers, 2011; Siegel, 2011). The earlier repression is put in place, the less the chances of protest leaders to become influential in mobilizing the crowds (Siegel, 2011). The timing of repression is particularly important if the campaign has not yet secured the support of many people. Repressing the few highly-motivated early risers can have a detrimental effect on participation and lead to the demobilization of a campaign (Siegel, 2011).

Fourth, scholars find that certain types of repression are more likely to demobilize protests than others. Preventive repression, or repressive tactics that target the mobilizational capabilities of activists and are imposed by higher-level state authorities (such as governments or the judiciary) are more likely to lead to demobilization (Demirel-Pegg, 2014; Hafez, 2003; Koopmans, 1997). Restrictions of civil liberties, impositions of curfews, or declaration of martial law, for instance, not only make it more difficult for activists to mobilize support or recruit activists, they are also seen as more legitimate as they are imposed by higher authorities (Koopmans, 1997, p. 154). O'Brien and Deng (2015), on the other hand, argue that relational repression, a technique that is based on persuasion and used by the Chinese authorities, can effectively demobilize protests. Accordingly, when popular action occurs, the Chinese government investigates actors' social ties, and identifies individuals that might cooperate with the government in persuading the activists to stop their actions. Once a team that consists of such individuals is formed, the team members are expected to use their personal influence to persuade relatives, friends and other community members to demobilize. The effectiveness of relational repression depends on the leverage the Chinese local authorities have over the team members. Overall, these findings indicate that the severity, consistency, and the types of repression are important in explaining why repression can demobilize protest campaigns.

Finally, Bell and Murdie (2016) show that collective memory of violence conditions the effectiveness of repression. In their analysis of a global sample of repression and protests, they find that repression is likely to demobilize protests in countries that have no history of civil wars. In countries where the organizational infrastructure for dissent still exists and activists are more prepared to respond to repression, governments' brutal attempts to quell the opposition are likely to backfire (Bell & Murdie, 2016).

Not only can repression demobilize protests under certain conditions, but repression can also demobilize protests through several different causal mechanisms. In other words, repression can trigger a variety of different dynamics and causal pathways that eventually lead to demobilization. Although we still know little about such causal mechanisms, more recent case studies have begun to explore various pathways through which repression can demobilize protest campaign. Davenport (2015), for example, suggests that that "reappraisal" and "distrust building" are both important organizational level mechanisms that repression can trigger. He argues that repression is supposed to derail campaigns by surprising its members and prompting them to respond reactively. However, when leaders prepare for repression ahead of time and plan for a reasonable response, repression is less likely to disrupt the campaign and its unity. On the other hand, if campaign leaders fail to reappraise an appropriate response, the campaigns' attempts to counter repression will be ineffective. If governments use high levels of repression or outwit campaigns by using tactics activists do not expect, campaigns' ability to respond will diminish. Over time, campaign members' trust in their leaderships' capabilities will also decline. To find out about campaigns' capabilities to reappraise accurately, governments often infiltrate via informants or agent provocateurs so that they can outmaneuver campaigns successfully. Davenport illustrates these mechanisms in the New Africa Movement of the 1970s in the United States and shows that the campaign demobilized when its leaders were unable to reappraise and respond effectively to repression, leading to the erosion of organizational trust (Davenport, 2015).

Another causal mechanism through which repression can demobilize protests is the “prevention of an upscale shift” early in the campaign and by subsequently “buying-off” the radicals. In their study of the anti-oil protests in the Ogoni region in Nigeria, Demirel-Pegg and Pegg (2015) have found that both targeted and indiscriminate repression before the campaign diffused to other oil-producing communities led to its demobilization. The authoritarian Nigerian government first used brutal repression in response to nonviolent protests. To prevent a backfire effect by the radicals, however, the government offered financial and political incentives to the radicals and co-opted them while continuing to repress the moderates. By identifying the radicals and the moderates early in the campaign via brutal repression, the Nigerian government was able to calibrate its strategies and offset their potential threat for further mobilization. The campaign, therefore, demobilized as the radicals were bought off and the moderates were repressed.

However, Siegel (2011), suggests that milder repression can also demobilize protests via networks. He argues that social network structures, individual motivations, and types of repression condition the effects of repression on demobilization. For instance, networks that rely on a handful of individuals who are well-connected in the society are more vulnerable to targeted repression. When the government kills, or imprisons the influential campaign leaders, the campaign’s ability to increase participation via their influential leaders will be diminished significantly. Moreover, repression is likely to demobilize campaigns in societies that have few ties to other communities. The fear and anger that repression causes backfire effects only in societies that have ties to other communities.

The Effects of Concessions

As mentioned earlier, repression is not the only type of state response to dissent. Quite often, states respond to protests by using accommodative strategies to demobilize them. In their seminal study on demobilization, Piven and Cloward (1977) suggest that concessions demobilize campaigns through the institutionalization mechanism. Piven and Cloward argue that during times of economic and social change, political elites are especially inclined to make concessions to mass protests. To secure the votes

of the discontented masses, they offer concessions more keenly to the opposition and coopt them to channel their disruptive behavior into organized forms of contention. However, campaign leaders usually overestimate their abilities to keep the campaign strong and effective via organizations. After all, leaders need to devote significant time and attention to providing resources for organizations and keeping them running. As leaders devote their attention to organizational matters, they get isolated and removed from the agitated protesters. Thus, protesters get discouraged and vulnerable to repression, and campaigns eventually demobilize.

Sometimes, however, accommodative strategies, and especially low level concessions, which do not represent substantive advances for the dissidents, may contribute to the demobilization process by prolonging the negotiations and diminishing the effectiveness of protests. In her study on the Zapatista protest campaign in Mexico between 1994 and 2003, de la Luz Inclán (2009) demonstrates that the Mexican government eventually wore the Zapatista movement out by offering low level concessions that failed to meet the demands of the Zapatista activists. For instance, the Mexican government signed the Law for Dialogue, Reconciliation, and Just Peace in Chiapas in March 1995 and agreed to suspend military operations and arrest warrants against the Zapatista activists as long as the dialogue between the government and the campaign leaders continued. Nonetheless, the government increased its military presence later in December when the Zapatistas proclaimed five regional capitals. Similarly, the government refused to recognize and honor the accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture in September 1996, which it had signed earlier that year. Disillusioned by the negotiations and the political system, the Zapatista activists left the streets. The protest campaign demobilized and the Zapatistas concentrated their efforts on building parallel structures of government instead.

These studies on the effects of repression and concessions indicate that state responses to protests and the strategies they pursue have a significant impact on protest demobilization. Yet, organizational characteristics affect campaign resilience as well and determine if state tactics succeed in demobilizing campaigns or not.

Organizational Level Factors on Demobilization

Scholars have long argued that organizational strength is critical for grievances to materialize into collective action (Gamson, 1990; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). Nonetheless, organizational strength is also important for campaigns' resilience. Since states often resort to repression when confronted with opposition, the ways in which campaigns respond to states' attempts to stop protests, if and how they switch their strategies and tactics, how they preserve their organizational unity all play an important role in determining whether a campaign will demobilize. In his examination of seven randomly selected Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela), Franklin (2015) finds that organizational features play a crucial role in determining if a campaign can survive government repression. If campaigns attract large numbers of participants, challengers will feel more confident that protests will succeed and, hence, will feel more secure. However, if participation levels are low, repression is likely to deter campaign members more easily as they will not have much faith in the chances of success, and will be worried about the consequences they are likely to face. In addition, campaigns that lack an organizational structure have more difficulty in sustaining the commitment of participants, and hence, are more vulnerable to demobilize when repressed. Finally, campaigns that have no experience in staging contentious challenges are less resilient and are unable to offset or resist government repression (Franklin, 2015).

In addition to organizational characteristics, dynamics that emerge at the organizational level can also trigger demobilization. For example, Tarrow (1989) and della Porta and Tarrow (1986) illustrate in their seminal works on the Italian protests in the 1970s that competition for mass support among different groups triggers several causal mechanisms that eventually lead to demobilization. Accordingly, the competitive dynamics among groups can lead to internal divisions and create polarized camps between radicals and moderates and make it easier for states to exploit these divisions. When protest campaigns first emerge, disruptive protests diffuse to different locations and segments of the society. As established

groups (such as trade unions) and new groups join the campaign, they begin to compete for mass support. While protests expand, however, the personal costs of participation set in and wear people down. Hence, competition for mass support becomes more vicious in the face of declining participation. While moderates lead the shift toward conventional forms of collective action such as strikes and demonstrations, smaller and newer groups turn radical as they employ violent tactics to distinguish themselves from the moderates. The state then represses the radicals selectively and coopts the moderates, thereby reinforcing the polarization within the campaign (della Porta & Tarrow, 1986). Faced with repression, radicals resort to more violent tactics, resulting in a further withdrawal of public support while the moderates leave the streets to continue to pursue their interests within institutional structures. The split between the radicals and the moderates eventually leads to the demise of the protest campaign.

Other scholars that examined the trajectories of different protest campaigns also found that the polarization within the campaign is a major reason why campaigns demobilize. Koopmans (1993), for instance, traced the dynamics of protests in West Germany between 1965 and 1989 and found similar dynamics. More recently, Jung (2010) conducted statistical analysis of four protest campaigns in Western Europe, and also confirmed that the divisions between the moderate and the radical wings within these campaigns lead to their demobilization.

While the studies on polarization suggest that the moderates are coopted in the system as a result of competitive dynamics within the campaign, Bosi (2016) argues that institutionalization is not an inevitable outcome of mass competition and the subsequent polarization. Instead, he argues, institutionalization is an interactive process that depends on the strategic choices of activists (or a segment of them) to participate in formal politics and those of the state to integrate them and their demands into political institutions. In Northern Ireland, for instance, the moderate wing within the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) intentionally abandoned street politics in the aftermath of the Belfast-Derry march in 1968 in the face of rising communal violence and repression. Moderate CRM activists established the Socialist Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) and became part of the mainstream political arena. As the

radical wing led by the Provisional IRA staged a military campaign against Britain, British authorities turned to heavy repression. In the meantime, however, Britain began to implement initiatives to improve the economic conditions of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland to undermine the material conditions that bred violence. These initiatives compelled British authorities to engage with the Provisional IRA while enabling Provisional Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Provisional IRA, to bargain and secure concessions for their communities. The Provisional IRA announced a complete cessation of military activity in 1994, which initiated the peace process that eventually led to the Good Friday Agreement. In short, the case of Northern Ireland demonstrates that rather than the competition between campaign factions, the strategic interactions between each faction and the state led to the demobilization of protests.

Other scholars have also focused on divisions within campaigns and have examined how a lack of organizational unity can enable governments to coopt factions within campaigns and lead to demobilization without the emergence of a radical wing. For example, Lasnier (forthcoming) demonstrates that the lack of internal unity made the “For Fair Elections” campaign in Russia in 2011 and 2012 vulnerable to government concessions. Mass protests began immediately after the parliamentary elections in December 2011 denouncing them as fraudulent. Even though a significant number of people participated in protests, the campaign began to demobilize soon after the presidential elections in March 2012. Lasnier argues that the government successfully distracted the opposition from protesting on the streets by announcing reforms facilitating the registration of political parties for running in the October 2012 elections. Given the lack of unity among the campaign, various factions began to seek registrations instead of putting their energy into the protest campaign. Moreover, because the government did not allow for the formation of electoral blocs, the opposition divided quickly into smaller parties and diminished the power of the opposition to the ruling party. Along similar lines, Lapegna (2013) argues that in countries where patronage politics is pervasive, campaigns can demobilize due to the different motivations of leaders and activists. Accordingly, poor people participate in collective action because

they want to voice their rights, but also because they hope to gain access to resources that would meet their pressing survival needs. Campaign leaders try to meet these needs by allocating resources via alliances with national political actors. These alliances then put pressure on campaign leaders to prevent them from engaging in collective action. In other words, Lapegna argues that in the context of patronage politics, governments can still “coopt” campaigns via patronage links and demobilize them as opposed to incorporating them into the political institutional structures.

Organizational unity within a campaign can also be disrupted by party affiliations. According to Heaney and Rojas (2011), partisanship can significantly influence the demobilization of protests. Their analysis of the antiwar protests between 2007 and 2009 in the United States shows that many Democrats stopped taking to the streets after the election of President Obama. Once the threat posed by Bush’s presidency was removed and a Democratic president was in power, participation in protests declined dramatically. Interestingly, the decline occurred despite a simultaneous decline in confidence among antiwar activists in President Obama’s handling of the war in Iraq throughout 2009. Nonetheless, because most of the antiwar activists were Democrats, their withdrawal led to a significant decline in protest activity and led to the demobilization of the antiwar campaign.

Several scholars have also studied the effects of radical flanks on demobilization. A “radical flank” refers to the segment of a campaign that adopts extremist rhetoric and violent strategies to pursue its goals (Chenoweth & Schock, 2015; Tompkins, 2015). In their influential work on civil resistance, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue that campaign disunity, especially the discordance that occurs with the emergence of radical groups, is one of the major reasons why campaigns demobilize before reaching their goals. When campaigns consistently use nonviolent tactics, mass participation will increase as people are typically more willing to resort to nonviolent tactics than violent ones. Government repression of nonviolent protesters is also more likely to backfire and lead to loyalty shifts within the government such as the military. If the military switches sides and supports the campaign, the chances of the protesters achieving their goals increase dramatically. This trajectory for success however, largely rests

on the protesters' ability to ensure that the campaign remains strictly nonviolent (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Schock, 2005; Sharp, 1973). If protesters are unable to maintain nonviolent discipline, states are more likely to repress (Tompkins, 2015) and repression will be perceived as more legitimate. Violence will discredit the campaign, even if only a small faction resorts to violent actions (Sharp, 1973). As a result, repression will not backfire, loyalties within the regime will not shift, and participation will decrease, eventually leading to the demise of the campaign (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Schock, 2005; Tompkins, 2015).

While demobilization is often triggered by the dynamics produced by campaign disunity, sometimes leaders might decide to demobilize for strategic reasons. In other words, in some cases, campaigns demobilize because the leaders decide that pursuing more institutionalized forms of collective action might serve the participants' purposes much better than protesting on the streets. For instance, Oxhorn (1994) shows that during democratic transitions, political activity can shift toward more institutional forms of opposition and lead to the demobilization of mass actors. In Chile, when the opposition parties agreed to abide by the electoral rules the military regime set forth for elections for a democratic transition in the late 1980s, the autonomous protest campaign that emerged as a response to the institutionalization of the opposition declined rapidly. Political party leaders calculated that if they played by the rules, they would be able to register voters, campaign legally, and increase their support across the country. Thus, they removed the leaders and dismantled the organizational structure of the protest campaign, which led to the demise of popular opposition.

Finally, Demirel-Pegg (forthcoming) argues that spontaneous or critical events can lead to the demobilization of protest campaigns by giving rise to withdrawal of support and by putting pressure on campaign leaders to change strategies. During the anti-foreigner protest campaign in Assam, which had been challenging the Indian government since 1979, the unplanned communal violence that occurred in the rural communities changed the campaign's trajectory dramatically and led to a significant decline of protest activities. This is a particularly interesting case because the Assam protest campaign illustrates

how mass support and the participation of different groups in an ethnically heterogeneous society may work against the resilience of a campaign when an unexpected event happens. The heightened tensions amid the anti-immigrant protests during the controversial state legislature elections in 1983 triggered communal violence in rural areas in Assam, resulting in the killings of mostly Muslim immigrants. In the aftermath of this critical event, campaign leaders ended up changing their strategies from organizing mass protests and pressing the government to identify illegal immigrants to suspending protest activity to give the community time to heal. In the meantime, many Muslims withdrew their support from the campaign while other indigenous groups began to make demands that emphasized their distinctiveness from the ethnic Assamese, who were the leading ethnic group in the campaign. The combination of the loss of momentum with the suspension of campaign activity and the threats to campaign unity from within eventually led to the demobilization of the campaign in 1985.

Individual Level Factors on Demobilization

Individual level factors also play an important role in the demobilization of protest campaigns. After all, campaigns demobilize when activists disengage from protest activities and leave the streets. So, why do activists, who once took purposeful action to participate, change their minds and stop participating? Individual level factors certainly interact with state and organizational level dynamics and, hence, it can be difficult to isolate individual level factors. Moreover, activists generally leave the streets due to a combination of reasons that may include organizational and state level factors in addition to individual ones. Nonetheless, several scholars have examined the disengagement of activists and have identified some important causal links at the individual level of analysis.

In his influential study on the social psychological dynamics of protest campaigns, Klandermans (1997) argues that the combination of “insufficient gratification” and “lack of commitment” is critical in activists’ decision to leave campaigns. If activists begin to perceive that the costs of participation

outweigh its benefits over time, their grievances do not seem as vital as they used to, or their sympathy for the campaign fades, they will become less satisfied. Dissatisfaction and lack of commitment also evolve over time as they continuously feed each other. For instance, those activists for whom the cost of protesting on the streets after work or every weekend becomes unsustainable will also begin to reduce their commitment to the campaign. Alternatively, the satisfaction of demands and the institutionalization of the opposition can cause some activists to reevaluate their ideological commitments. Those who find that their ideologies no longer align with those that support the cooptation of the opposition might choose to disengage (Fillieule, 2010).

Obviously, many different personal circumstances can contribute to levels of gratitude and commitment. Disappointment, stressful experiences, availability of other attractive alternatives for collective action, or loss of motivation are among these. Scholars have often attributed “burnout” as a major reason for disengagement. Burnout occurs when activists experience high levels of psychological tension and feel like they are overcommitted (Klandermans, 1997, p. 103). Yet, as Davenport (2015, p. 33) notes, we still know little about how burnout affects demobilization apart from the fact that “challenging political authority is difficult, and after a while, most engaged in such behavior will just get fed up and quit.”

The most engaged in challenging political authority can also quit for personal reasons that are not related to burnout. White (2010) argues that shifts in activists’ identities over time affect their commitment to campaigns. These shifts generally occur as a result of changes in activists’ personal lives. White conducted three cycles of interviews with Provisional Sinn Féin members in Northern Ireland between the mid-1980s and late 2000s, and found that the common theme among the members who disengaged was that they did so because of financial, health, or family reasons. One of the respondents, for instance, indicates that active participation became unsustainable once he got married because he moved out of town for his wife’s career. White concludes that “for some activists, personal changes promoted the development of new social connections that generated competition between the activist

identity and identities associated with the new social connections, and this identity competition led to exit behavior” (White, 2010, p. 366). Along similar lines, Fillieule (2010) states that political contexts, organizational structures, and personal life trajectories all interact with activists’ identities and their commitment levels. Critical moments in these contexts can translate into reevaluations of the cost-benefit calculations and shift activists’ commitment levels. Therefore, changes in activists’ personal lives might decrease the expected rewards of activism and prompt them to disengage.

Nonetheless, feelings of burnout and exhaustion, waning of ideological commitments, or major life changes occur during the course of protest campaigns, but they do not always lead to demobilization. Individual level factors can lead to demobilization if campaigns cannot replace the people who leave. If campaigns lack social structures to support activists, they will have a hard time keeping activists engaged and recruit new ones instead. Nepstad (2004) argues that leaders can play a major role in determining the resilience of campaigns by developing strategies to keep activists committed. The leaders of the Plowshares Movement, a peace movement that has endured since the 1980s, have formed structures of support that helped activists overcome obstacles such as exhaustion or loss of commitment. For instance, the opportunities to interact with rank-and-file activists closely succeeded in keeping the emotional ties among members strong. The leaders also provided material assistance and community support to the families of incarcerated activists, and made housing arrangements for activists during trials. Nepstad’s study, therefore, demonstrates that individual level issues can become a challenge to a campaign’s resilience if campaign leaders fail to provide support mechanisms for activists.

Tarrow (1998) also links disengagement to demobilization and suggests that the unequal pace of disengagement for the radical and moderate activists is what determines if a campaign demobilizes or not. Tarrow argues that exhaustion will wear the moderate activists down more quickly than the radicals. Hence, once the moderates disengage, the balance will shift from moderate to radical claims and from peaceful to violent protests. The campaign leaders will respond to the decline in participation by either embracing more moderate demands to compromise with the opposition, or by siding with the radicals to

prevent them from disengaging. The polarization will paralyze the campaign and allow the state to repress protests more effectively, eventually leading to its demobilization (Tarrow, 1998, p. 148).

New Directions in Demobilization of Protest Campaigns

The above discussion shows that scholars have begun to pay more attention to the demobilization of protest campaigns in recent years. Nonetheless, we still need considerably more research to understand the dynamics of the demobilization process. While existing studies identify a host of different factors that lead to demobilization, the literature still lacks a more integrative approach that links contexts, processes and actors. One important direction for future research is to build on Tarrow's (1989), and della Porta and Tarrow's (1986) work and examine demobilization as a part of a larger process that is linked to mobilizational dynamics. Existing studies typically start out by identifying state strategies, organizational characteristics, or individual level factors that trigger the demobilization process. However, these characteristics and factors are often a result of the endogenous dynamics that evolve during the mobilization process of the campaign. Tarrow (1989) and della Porta and Tarrow (1986), for instance, demonstrate that the competition for mass support during the mobilization phase leads to the polarization of a campaign and triggers the demobilization process. What other dynamics during the mobilization phase can bring about demobilization? More research on the interactions between governments, protesters, bystanders, and third parties and their evolution is essential for a better understanding of why and how campaigns demobilize.

Related to the interactive dynamics, the learning process throughout protest campaigns is another area of research that scholars should pursue. Governments and protesters both learn from their own experiences in the past and absorb the lessons of other campaigns in different locations and adjust their tactics (Lawson, 2015; Weyland, 2012). Theoretical models that focus on the specific types of experiences, the ways in which parties adapt their tactics, and the timing of these tactical adaptations

exemplified in the impact of regional dynamics on the Arab Spring uprisings (Lawson, 2015), scholars need to examine the role of foreign governments on learning on demobilization more closely.

Another line of inquiry that merits attention is how these endogenous dynamics affect organizational characteristics as well as activists' commitment to participate. While Davenport (2015) has taken a lead in exploring the links between state repression and organizational cohesion, we need more research on how government and protesters' learning shifts organizational or individual level dynamics and leads to demobilization. Can a shift in tactics affect recruitment or replacement of activists? Or, what other causal mechanisms, in addition to an erosion of trust (Davenport, 2015), explain the effects of state repression on demobilization? Further research on interactive dynamics at various levels of analysis and how they impact the demobilization process is also essential to improve our understanding of this complex process.

Unlike the work on state and organizational levels, the literature on individual level factors does not examine their direct effect on demobilization systematically and rigorously across different cases and time periods. We still have very little understanding of how personal level circumstances translate into a collective disengagement from protests. For instance, similar to the threshold or bandwagon models for mobilization (Granovetter, 1978; Kuran, 1989; Lohmann, 1994), is there a threshold for disengagement where the disengagement of every single participant increases the cost of participation for others, and decreases the cost of disengagement? If so, how is that threshold effect triggered? Or, how does the disengagement of activists contribute to demobilization by challenging campaign unity? We need more theoretical models and hypotheses at the individual level that are tested by empirical evidence to link individuals to the demobilization process.

Finally, to be able to trace dynamics and causal mechanisms at all levels of analysis, we need granular-level data over time across cases. Using aggregate measures of repression and collective action masks the complex and evolutionary dimensions of the demobilization process and leads us to make generalizations that do not apply to many exceptions. The immediate and challenging task ahead is to

disentangle the complexities of the demobilization process bit by bit to be able to identify common mechanisms that connect actors, organizations, and structures.

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