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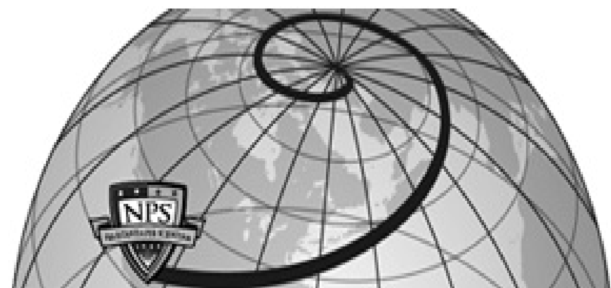

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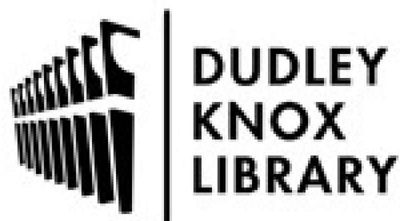

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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

A SOCIAL MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING CIVIL RESISTANCE CAMPAIGNS

by

William J. Tynan

June 2024

Thesis Advisor:	Douglas A. Borer
Second Reader:	Sean F. Everton

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Civil resistance campaigns and preexisting social movements are underutilized by the U.S. government. Providing support to allied, nonviolent social movements creates another means to deter malign influence and resist aggression. How can leadership, planners, and practitioners within the U.S. government best support an ally's civil resistance campaign? This thesis used contemporary social movement theory to analyze civil resistance campaigns in Mongolia, Poland, Serbia, and Burma. It then applied contemporary social movement theory and analysis to a hypothetical, partnered resistance strategy with an allied country: Mongolia. Analysis shows that civil resistance expands political opportunities in unique ways and has a sponsorship advantage compared to armed resistance. Based on the elements of social movements, planners can identify weaknesses in a resistance movement and develop strategies to augment the underlying mechanism of support. This model can also be used to develop civil resistance capacity before conflict to serve as a deterrent. Partnering with an ally to prepare before a crisis or conflict occurs can enhance a movement's ability to mobilize. This thesis recommends that military leadership and planners direct attention toward supporting nonviolent social movements and use contemporary social movement theory to inform resistance strategy.

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A SOCIAL MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING CIVIL RESISTANCE CAMPAIGNS

William J. Tynan
Major, United States Army
BA, Appalachian State University, Boone, 2011

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2024**

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ABSTRACT

Civil resistance campaigns and preexisting social movements are underutilized by the U.S. government. Providing support to allied, nonviolent social movements creates another means to deter malign influence and resist aggression. How can leadership, planners, and practitioners within the U.S. government best support an ally's civil resistance campaign? This thesis used contemporary social movement theory to analyze civil resistance campaigns in Mongolia, Poland, Serbia, and Burma. It then applied contemporary social movement theory and analysis to a hypothetical, partnered resistance strategy with an allied country: Mongolia. Analysis shows that civil resistance expands political opportunities in unique ways and has a sponsorship advantage compared to armed resistance. Based on the elements of social movements, planners can identify weaknesses in a resistance movement and develop strategies to augment the underlying mechanism of support. This model can also be used to develop civil resistance capacity before conflict to serve as a deterrent. Partnering with an ally to prepare before a crisis or conflict occurs can enhance a movement's ability to mobilize. This thesis recommends that military leadership and planners direct attention toward supporting nonviolent social movements and use contemporary social movement theory to inform resistance strategy.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BSPP	Burma's Socialist Program Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSMT	Contemporary Social Movement Theory
IW	Irregular Warfare
MDU	Mongolian Democratic Union
MPRP	Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLD	National League for Democracy
PPM	Political Process Model
PRC	People's Republic of China
RF	Russian Federation
RIT	Rangoon Institute of Technology
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
RU	Rangoon University
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SMO	Social Movement Organization
UNLD	United Nationalities League for Democracy
USG	United States Government
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOA	Voice of America

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis explores how the U.S. government can best support a civil resistance campaign. Analysis shows civil resistance campaigns can work in unique ways to expand political opportunities and support to resistance strategies are most effective when addressing weaknesses in the social movements' mechanisms of support.

Contemporary social movement theory is a useful tool when developing strategies to assist a resistance movement. It focuses on three main factors to analyze social movements (see Table 1): expanding political opportunities that shift the power balance, mobilizing structures that enable the movement to act, and framing processes that motivate collective action.[1] The U.S. government can apply this theory to analyze and support social movements aligned with policy interests. Based on the elements of social movements, planners can identify weaknesses in a resistance movement and develop strategies to augment the underlying mechanism of support.

Table 1. Elements of social movements and mechanism of support.

Supported Element of Social Movement	Mechanism of Support
Political Opportunities	Open the institutionalized political system
	Undermine adversary elite alignments
	Provide elite allies
	Reduce the adversary's willingness or capability for repression
Mobilizing Resources	Provide material resources
	Support to Social Movement Organizations
	Social Networks
	Provide free spaces/ safe havens
Framing Processes	Contribute to indigenous/ allied strategic framing
	Media influence

[1] Doug McAdam, John David McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3–6; David A. Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 464–81.

As a sponsor, the United States can support each mechanism through a range of activities: diplomacy, psychological operations, economic sanctions, training in election observation, funding, adjacent military operations, etc. Support to civil resistance has historically been most effective when it addresses the social movement's weaknesses as understood through contemporary social movement theory. This model can also be used to develop civil resistance capacity before conflict to serve as a deterrent. Partnering with an ally to prepare before a crisis or conflict can enhance a movement's ability to mobilize.

Among social movements, civil resistance campaigns carry unique advantages for the United States. Existing research suggests the value of mobilizing existing social movements and the efficacy of civil resistance.[2] The research in this thesis indicates civil resistance campaigns can act in several different ways to increase the openness of an institutionalized political system:

1. Nonviolent social movements can expand political opportunities by reducing the adversary's willingness for repression, even before defections, and by dividing elite alignments.

2. Nonviolent campaigns benefit from a sponsorship advantage. They do not risk alienating those who exclusively support principled nonviolence, due to ethical or religious reasons.

3. Civil resistance campaigns generally align with the United States's pro-democracy and self-determination values.

4. U.S. government support to nonviolent resistance has historically been less expensive than supporting armed resistance.

The Department of Defense is already poised to provide partnerships to develop resistance capacity due to its existing global relationships and expertise in working within the human domain, mobilizing large amounts of people, and conducting strategic planning.

[2] Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment"; Lee, Doowan, "A Social Movement Approach to Unconventional Warfare"; Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

Even with military involvement, a civil resistance campaign could be mobilized entirely without armed insurgency. While the military may have a larger capacity to partner, any element supporting resistance should be interagency.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

A. BACKGROUND

The 2022 *National Defense Strategy* identifies integrated deterrence as a focus for the U.S. government to address peer competitors and specifically recognizes irregular warfare (IW). Furthermore, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 sets aside funding for Special Operations support to IW.[1] Nonviolent civil resistance is often a key feature of IW across the globe, especially in the modern era. Some research even indicates nonviolent civil resistance is more effective and results in more stable democracies than armed insurrection.[2]

The U.S. Army is, and will likely remain, a leader in the human domain, which includes civil resistance. However, U.S. Army doctrine on the subject gives little attention to nonviolent strategies. Current doctrine identifies civil resistance as little more than attention-seeking devices or exclusively for occupied civilians; military doctrine does not provide detailed analyses of social movements.[3] Military doctrine often views civil resistance as a means to influence a third party and does not recognize other benefits of nonviolent strategies. Other research pursues the study and application of civil resistance but not in combination with violent techniques; this can be inherently limiting when viewing a broad IW campaign that includes violence and nonviolence, such as in Ukraine following Russia's invasion in 2022.[4] Civil resistance, especially as a component of a

[1] "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023," H.R.7900 – 117th Congress (2021-2022) § 1202 (2022), https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7900/text.

[2] Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[3] Department of the Army, *Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare*, FM 3-05.130 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2008); Andrew R. Molnar, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2001).

[4] Michael Beer, *Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021); Felip Sierra, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War: Analysis of Trends, Impacts and Challenges of Nonviolent Action in Ukraine between February and June 2022* (Barcelona: ICIP & Novact, 2022), https://www.icip.cat/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ENG_VF.pdf.

broader IW campaign, has shown to be an effective way for small elements to resist the powerful.

Mongolia is a small nation-state surrounded by expansionist and revisionist powers. With Russia to the north and China to the south, Mongolia must carefully identify its options and strategies to maintain sovereignty. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Mongolia has carefully pursued neutrality and avoided antagonizing rival great powers.[5] China, Russia, Japan, and the United States are all competing for more influence in the region. Mongolia's strategies for maintaining independence and developing allies will be critical to the future of the nation. Mongolia has a modern history of successful civil resistance; developing that capacity for civil resistance may serve to deter Mongolia's neighbors and maintain Mongolian democracy.

This thesis's research question seeks to use Mongolia as a case study to better understand how the U.S. government could most effectively support civil resistance. Understanding the features of various resistance strategies can help guide future policy, support IW, train military practitioners, and help nations seeking to maintain their sovereignty.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

Under what conditions can the U.S. government best support an ally's nonviolent, civil resistance campaign?

[5] Mendee Jargalsaikhan et al., *Mongolian Geopolitics* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2022).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. CIVIL RESISTANCE

Civil resistance strategies have attracted considerable attention from scholars and practitioners. Nonviolent resistance researchers generally agree on a theoretical framework and the primacy of popular support but differ significantly on the relative value of popular support, the role of violence, and leadership structures.

The definition of civil resistance and categorization of various forms of civil resistance are critical because a shared vocabulary is essential for communication and professional discourse. While many researchers use different definitions for civil or nonviolent resistance, most civilian and military researchers use the same word bank of contemporary terms. Civil resistance generally refers to deliberate action without the threat or use of violence intended to influence a population. Currently, Gene Sharp's categorization and foundational theory of civil resistance are the most widely accepted by researchers. He defines three categories of civil resistance:

- Acts of Expression (also referred to as Protest, Attention-Getting Devices)
- Acts of Omission (also referred to as Noncooperation, Passive Resistance)
- Acts of Commission (also referred to as Nonviolent Intervention, Civil Disobedience)[6]

Sharp asserts that "all political power is rooted in and continually dependent upon the cooperation and obedience of the subjects and institutions of the society."[7] Civil resistance is effective because it undermines political power. Nuance in the vocabulary of

[6] Gene Sharp, *The Power and Struggle*, 9. print, The Politics of Nonviolent Action / Gene Sharp 1–3 (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973); Otto C. Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)* (MacDill Air Force Base, Florida: The Joint Special Operations University Press, 2020); Sierra, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War: Analysis of Trends, Impacts and Challenges of Nonviolent Action in Ukraine between February and June 2022*.

[7] Gene Sharp, *Making Europe Unconquerable: The Potential of Civilian-Based Deterrence and Defence* (Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger Pub. Co, 1985), 151.

civil resistance (e.g., “protest” vs. “attention-getting device”) demonstrates the perspective of researchers and the framing of various nonviolent techniques. Although the exact language is not uniform across the literature, current writers generally follow Sharp’s categorization.

In addition to the general categorization accepted by researchers, most agree on the primacy of popular support. However, they differ in how they consider popular support important. Military doctrine identifies four parts of an insurgency: a guerrilla force, an auxiliary (clandestine support mechanism), an underground (a cellular organization providing leadership), and the public.[8] Using this model, winning the public’s support is critical because it increases the support for the military component of the insurgency, the influence of leadership, and the likelihood of foreign support (for resources and coercive pressure). This model views civil resistance as “persuasion through suffering” and is designed to demonstrate the righteousness of the resistor and earn sympathy; therefore, it is naïve to attempt to influence adversarial forces.[9] From this perspective, popular support is a means to gain additional influence and power.

In contrast, many current researchers see popular support as a direct means to an end. In *Why Civil Resistance Works: the Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, Chenoweth and Stephan study historical cases of both nonviolent and violent resistance campaigns. Their research shows that nonviolent strategies are historically more effective than violent ones, largely because there are reduced barriers to participation in nonviolent strategies, which ultimately increases involvement in the movement and the movement’s influence. They believe popular support is decisive and not a method to bolster other resistance elements. The importance of building support extends to the adversary’s supporters. Chenoweth and Stephan identify the shifting loyalty of adversarial regime elites and security personnel as decisive in successful nonviolent campaigns.[10] Nonviolent resistance can even theoretically be applied to resist genocide attempts; as Sharp points out, a leader’s

[8] Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)*, 28.

[9] Molnar, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*.

[10] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 58.

genocidal orders must still be carried out by a diverse number of thinking subordinates.[11] Sharp believes that nonviolence can even be effective in wars of annihilation.

The dichotomy in thought widens when determining the role of civil resistance. Some proponents of nonviolence, such as Beer, Chenoweth, Sierra, and Stephan, believe the strategy is a holistic approach to achieving strategic aims. Furthermore, this strategy has the potential to be effective regardless of the environment or opponent. Chenoweth and Stephan demonstrate that nonviolent campaigns have succeeded in resisting different types of opponents in various environments.[12] In these successful campaigns, violent resistance has been unnecessary. Sierra argues that the combination of nonviolent and violent resistance, as seen in Ukraine (largely information sharing and defensive collaboration), undermines the strategy of civil resistance.[13] Beer and Sierra write from the perspective that any use of violence is unacceptable and develop recommendations based on this foundational principle.[14]

Other researchers see civil resistance as a tool to be used in a broader strategy. To authors such as Fiala or Molnar, civil resistance is another component of a holistic approach to resistance. The *Resistance Operating Concept* refers to this as a Total Defense Strategy and argues civil resistance provides additional resources for a whole of government movement.[15] The *Comprehensive Defence Handbook* also incorporates nonviolent resistance as part of society's enabling support for the whole of society defense.[16] Civil

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[11] Sharp, *Making Europe Unconquerable*, 103.

[12] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 78.

[13] Sierra, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War: Analysis of Trends, Impacts and Challenges of Nonviolent Action in Ukraine between February and June 2022*, 26.

[14] Beer, *Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century*; Sierra, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War: Analysis of Trends, Impacts and Challenges of Nonviolent Action in Ukraine between February and June 2022*.

[15] Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)*, 73.

[16] NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *Comprehensive Defence Handbook*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (NATO Special Operations Headquarters, 2020).

resistance is discussed as a subordinate part of an overall strategy of insurgency or even as a subcomponent of psychological operations.[17]

In Tompkins's *Casebook of Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume I and Volume 2*, only two of the forty-six insurgency case studies relied primarily on civil resistance to reach success.[18] Tompkins discusses case studies of successful nonviolent resistance in terms of their unique environmental factors and not deliberate strategic planning; these successful cases are also not given much attention. Both the *Resistance Operating Concept* and *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* specifically mention the value of nonviolent action to demoralize the enemy and tie up security forces.[19] Authors such as Molnar and Fiala also tend to have less faith in the efficacy of nonviolent resistance in certain environments, like when the "occupier is unconcerned with popular opinion."[20] These researchers are also less interested in persuading the opponent's forces than imposing costs.

Sharp also explores cost imposition in *Making Europe Unconquerable: The Potential of Civilian-based Deterrence and Defense*. He suggests a nonviolent strategy of cost imposition (or deterrence by punishment).[21] He suggests making foreign occupation unbearable through nonviolent action, "civilian-based defense aims to deter and defeat attacks by making a society ungovernable by would-be oppressors and by maintaining a capacity for orderly self-rule even in the face of extreme threats and actual aggression."[22] in this instance, he champions nonviolent resistance as a national defense strategy. Kuul

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[17] Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)*; Molnar, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*; Paul Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume I: 1927–1962* (United States Army Special Operations Command, 2012); Paul Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009* (United States Army Special Operations Command, 2012).

[18] Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

[19] Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)*; Molnar, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*.

[20] Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)*, 69; Molnar, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*.

[21] Sharp, *Making Europe Unconquerable*.

[22] Sharp, 44.

follows this line of reasoning by suggesting that civil resistance in conjunction with overt military action may create the ideal national security strategy for Estonia.[23] This logic could be extended to develop Total Defense Strategies for other nations whose neighbors are militarily dominant.

The role of organization and leadership in nonviolence is another compelling issue. Military doctrine believes that legitimate government leaders, along with the underground, can control and manipulate popular sentiment through nonviolence. Nonviolence is orchestrated in a centralized, controlled, and planned manner. This opposes the grassroots leadership perspective, which favors decentralized leadership; this distinction is so important it is even included in some definitions of civil resistance.[24] This can likely be explained by the competing biases supporting whole of government action versus the desire to divest political power into local communities.

B. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A social movement is a "collectivity activity with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels to promote or resist change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part."[25] It is critical to note that social movements are defined by using extra-institutional methods to achieve change. Minority groups and politically marginalized people form these movements to reach political goals that are otherwise unattainable.

Social movement theory recognizes three main types of actors in social movements: protagonists, antagonists, and bystanders. Protagonists are those who are sympathetic to or represented by a social movement; we can differentiate this category into adherents, constituents, and free riders. Adherents are active members of a social movement.

[23] Margus Kuul, "Civil Resistance: An Essential Element of a Total Defense Strategy" (Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), 106, http://hdl.handle.net/10945/42667.

[24] Beer, *Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century*; Veronique Dudouet, *Powering to Peace: Integrated Civil Resistance and Peacebuilding Strategies* (Washington, D.C.: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2017).

[25] Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, *Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics* (Los Angeles, Calif: Roxbury Pub, 1997), xviii.

Constituents are those represented by or stand to benefit from the social movement. Constituents overlap slightly with free riders who stand to benefit from the social movement but do not contribute.[26]

We can understand social movements by exploring their facilitating conditions, diffusion and mobilization networks, and dynamics.[27] Various models have emerged to explain social movements' emergence and understand their organization. The classical model of social movement development identifies three distinct phases of social movement mobilization:

- The development of an underlying structural or systemic weakness (strain), such as increased social isolation or status inconsistency.
- This strain causes a disruptive psychological state among individuals (e.g., alienation and anxiety, cognitive dissonance, normative ambiguity).
- Social movements emerge as individuals seek to rectify their state.[28]

This model has been found lacking because it relies on a socioeconomic drive to generate social movements; it also paints movement participants as psychologically abnormal (irrational) when, in fact, they are seldom psychologically different from nonparticipants. The classic model also fails to explain "how individual psychological discontent is transformed into organized collective action."[29] Finally, it ignores the political reasons that inspire social movements.[30]

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[26] McAdam and Snow, *Social Movements*.

[27] McAdam and Snow.

[28] Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency: 1930–1970*, Paperback ed., [Nachdr.] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 6–11.

[29] McAdam, 15.

[30] McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*.

1. Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) emerged as a response to the classical model.[31] It asserts that social movements are rational responses to closed political systems. It holds that in every society, plenty of people are discontented with the status quo. However, most do not mobilize, and the reason is that they lack the resources to do so. RMT's insight is that groups without sufficient resources are less likely to mobilize than those with. RMT focuses on two primary resources: material resources that can fund operations and social movement organizations (SMOs) that help coordinate the mobilization of people and other resources. However, Doug McAdam has highlighted the importance of other types of resources, such as social networks for communication and recruitment, places to meet free from outside interference, and effective leaders who are often provided by SMOs.[32] RMT assumes that elite sponsors will provide the bulk of a social movement's resources, but McAdam believes that internal resources are more valuable than those from external sources.[33] He notes that social movement and minority expressions are inherently counter to the goals of elite members of institutions. Thus, external resources can reduce alignment with a movement's objectives.[34] He also points out that RMT ignores the strength of a social movement's mass base and its inherent political power (even when marginalized).[35]

2. The Political Process Model

McAdam's political process model (PPM) asserts that political power is unevenly distributed, but this is not inevitable. It emphasizes that social movements are a political phenomenon rather than a psychological one. It also conceives of social movements as a continuous process rather than a series of distinct phases (contrary to the classical model).

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[31] John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212–41.

[32] McCarthy and Zald, 83.

[33] Robinson, Glen E., "Hamas as Social Movement," January 2004, 116.

[34] McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, 56.

[35] McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*.

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It also recognizes the inherent power of the adherents to social movements. In brief, the PPM asserts that social movements mobilize as the result of a complex interaction of the three following factors:

- expanding political opportunities that lead to a relative change in insurgent strength
- indigenous organizational strength
- cognitive liberation (development of an insurgent consciousness), which leads people to believe that change is necessary and possible[36]

The interplay between these three dynamics is essential for a social movement to emerge. Figure 1 shows a balance of competing interests and resources is central.

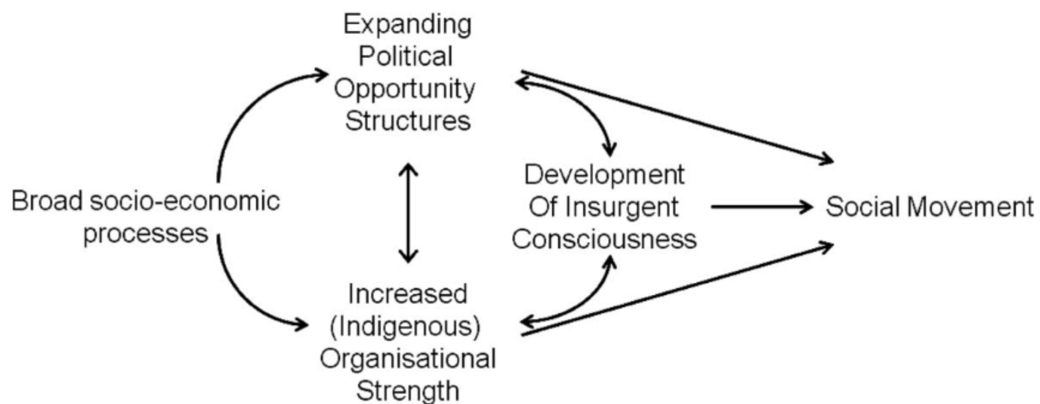

Figure 1. McAdam's political process model[37]

Using the PPM to analyze social movements, political opportunities emerge that either significantly disrupt the status quo or disproportionately empower a minority group. This can occur from shifting alignments among the elite, political and/or economic

[36] McAdam.

[37] Source: McAdam, 51.

instability, and ideological change. Regardless, these opportunities are significant because they change the relative power of a minority group. Indigenous organizational strength refers to the resources discussed above that provide the base of support for a social movement. Unlike RMT, though, here the emphasis is on internal (indigenous) resources to the movement, not those from external sources. For example, McAdam notes that African Americans' education and income levels increased substantially before the onset of the Civil Rights movement.[38] Increased indigenous organizational strength provides social movements a framework to communicate, recruit members, identify leaders, and incentivize people to participate rather than free-ride. Finally, the PPM highlights how cognitive liberation is an essential component of social movements; it is the recognition by potential participants that collective change is possible.[39]

The PPM acknowledges the difficulties social movements face after they emerge. Because of their minority status, adherents of a social movement lack resources and political power. To access political power, they must secure resources internally, which is difficult considering their marginal position, or seek sponsors. Social movements risk being co-opted or disconnecting from the original aims of the movement to satisfy elite sponsors. There is also the risk that social movement leadership stratifies the organization and seeks resources by implementing strategies contrary to the social movement's espoused goals, a process of oligarchizing.[40]

3. Cultural Framing Processes

A weakness of the PPM is that it offers a limited account of how cognitive liberation occurs. It fails to identify the mechanisms that cause it to happen. The work of David Snow and his colleagues does, however.[41] Snow et al. argue that social movements need to frame grievances in ways that mobilize people to act. They need to frame the interests of the

[38] McAdam, 97–98.

[39] McAdam, 36–59.

[40] McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*.

[41] David A. Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (1986): 464–81, https://doi.org/10.2307/2095581.

movement so they align with those of potential participants. Snow et al. identify three steps in the process: (1) diagnostic framing (what went wrong), (2) prognostic framing (what needs to be done), and (3) motivational framing (why we need to act rather than wait for others to do so). in short, framing entails the harmonization of individual interpretations with a social movement's goals.[42]

4. Contemporary Social Movement Theory

Contemporary social movement theory (CSMT) combines elements of resource mobilization theory, the political process model, and cultural framing processes. It recognizes three main factors for analyzing social movements:[43]

- expanding political opportunities: "changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system;"[44] more recently, social movement scholars have noted that threats to a group's existence can "expand political opportunities." Groups who believe their very existence is at stake are often motivated to mobilize[45]
- sufficient mobilizing structures: "those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action"[46]

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[42] Snow et al.

[43] Doug McAdam, John David McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

[44] McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 3.

[45] Jack A. Goldstone and Charles Tilly, "Threat (and Opportunity) Popular Action and State Response in the Dynamics of Contentious Action," in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, ed. Ronald R. Aminzade et al. (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 179–94.

[46] McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 3.

- cultural framing processes: “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action”[47]

Briefly, CSMT holds that the successful emergence of a movement hinges on expanding political opportunities, sufficient indigenous (internal) resources, and the framing of grievances so that the social movement’s protagonists develop an insurgent consciousness.[48] In isolation, any one of these factors is insufficient to initiate and maintain a social movement.[49] Together, they can. Figure 2 illustrates CSMT.

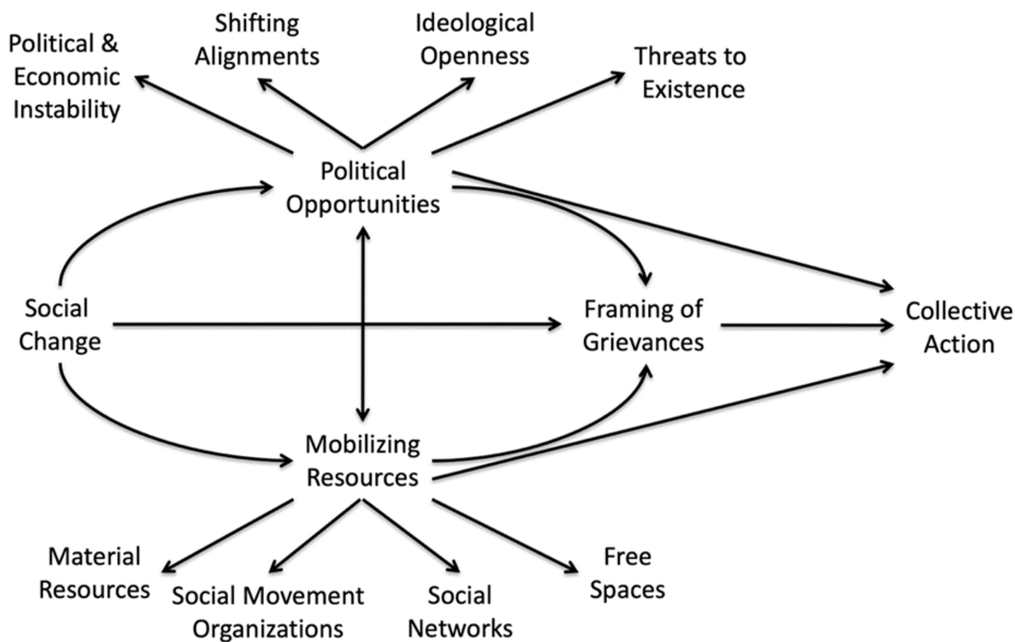

Figure 2. Contemporary social movement theory[50]

[47] McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 6; David A. Snow et al., “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 464–81.

[48] Lee, Doowan, “A Social Movement Approach to Unconventional Warfare,” 2013, 29.

[49] Douglas A Borer, Sean F Everton, and Moises M Nayve, “Global Development and Human (In)Security: Understanding the Rise of the Rajah Solaiman Movement and Balik Islam in the Philippines,” *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (February 2009): 187, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590802622615.

[50] Source: Sean F. Everton, “Social Movements and Social Networks,” in *CORE Lab Working Paper* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2024).

Although these factors offer insight into social movements, they cannot necessarily be taken at face value. For example, analyzing political opportunities can be useful, but McAdam warns about the risks of taking too broad a view of what a "political opportunity" is. Political opportunities can be confused with other contextual and concurrent trends that distract from analysis. For example, political opportunities can be confused with "expanding cultural opportunities."[51] McAdam warns that the term "political opportunity" may be so inclusive that it becomes meaningless. To rectify this, he identifies four specific dimensions that can focus analysis:

1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system.
2. The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity.
3. The presence or absence of elite allies.
4. The state's capacity and propensity for repression.[52]

McAdam suggests paying close attention when specifying the dependent variable. He suggests identifying "which dependent variable we are seeking to explain and which dimensions of political opportunity are germane to that explanation."[53]

McCarthy argues the importance of mapping social movement organizations for comparative analysis when describing mobilizing structures. Mobilizing structures can exist across a spectrum and take many forms, and McCarthy advocates for specifically describing the form to identify its significant aspects.[54] He offers four dimensions to identify movement-mobilizing structures, shown in Table 1.

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[51] Doug McAdam, "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John David McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25.

[52] McAdam, 27.

[53] McAdam, 31.

[54] John David McCarthy, "Constraints and Opportunities in Adopting, Adapting, and Inventing," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 144.

Table 1. Dimensions of movement-mobilizing structures[55]

	Nonmovement	Movement
Informal	Friendship networks Neighborhoods Work networks	Activist networks Affinity groups Memory communities
Formal	Churches Unions Professional Associations	Social Movement Organizations Protest committees Movement schools

Each of these example structures engages and mobilizes participants in different ways, which should impact the analysis of any given social movement.

An essential piece of organizational strength is recruitment. Perhaps the most widely documented phenomenon is the fact that social movements, religious or secular, recruit primarily through social ties.[56] For example, a meta-analysis by David Snow and his collaborators of several social movements found that most had a connection (friends and/or relatives) with someone already a member of a movement.[57] And Doug McAdam discovered that the primary factor in whether someone participated in the 1964 Freedom Summer voter registration campaign was whether they had a tie to the Civil Rights movement.[58] Nevertheless, Snow and his colleagues do highlight four methods of recruitment and their effectiveness:

- Seeking out strangers in public
- Institutionalized mass communication
- Recruiting strangers in private spaces (door-to-door)

[55] Adapted from McCarthy, 145.

[56] John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 6 (1965): 862–75, https://doi.org/10.2307/2090965.

[57] David A. Snow, Louis Jr. Zurcher, and Sheldon Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment," in *Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics* (Los Angeles, Calif: Roxbury Pub, 1997).

[58] Doug McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer," *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 1 (1986): 64–90; Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen, "Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism," *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 3 (1993): 640–67.

- Extra-movement social networks[59]

Interestingly, the demographic of recruited persons by method is distinct. Movements that require total participation are more successful when recruiting in public places; their target recruit is susceptible because of their status. For example, a susceptible recruit is in a transitional phase of their life, has few close social ties, and marginal employment status. In contrast, movements that do not require total participation are more successful in recruiting through social ties.[60] This aligns with Chenoweth and Stephan's assertion that nonviolent movements are more successful because there is a low barrier to entry, which increases overall support for the movement.[61]

Despite the importance of cultural framing processes, Zald asserts that it is the most amorphous and broadest factor for understanding social movements.[62] Despite the relatively loose conception of cultural framings, some terms can be readily defined to contribute to analysis:

> culture is the shared beliefs and understandings, mediated by and constituted by symbols and language, of a group or society; ideology is the set of beliefs that are used to justify or challenge a given social-political order and are used to interpret the political world; frames are the specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behavior and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action.[63]

In addition, Zald provides six topics to examine cultural framing's relationship with social movements:

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[59] Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment," 128.

[60] Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment."

[61] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

[62] Mayer N. Zald, "Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 261–74.

[63] Zald, 262.

- the cultural construction of repertoire of contention and frames: social movements are part of a large context, and frames must be appropriate to the culture and historical context
- cultural contradictions and historical events: contradictions in a society often drive mobilization
- framing as a strategic activity: framing is an active process to "provide shorthand interpretations of the world, to locate blame, to suggest lines of actions"[64]
- competitive processes: social movements and their adversary compete to define frames
- mass media: framing takes place within the media environment, which is not neutral, and shapes the information as it communicates
- outcomes: successful frames transform into policy and become symbols in the general culture[65]

C. OTHER ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Theories that explain individual rationalization for resistance do not contradict the CSMT, they complement it. Haslam and Reicher theorize that social identity theory can explain why people choose to obey or choose to resist. Social identity theory holds that people can identify as part of a group or as an individual and that people desire a positive, distinct identity. Haslam and Reicher studied theoretical prison experiments and carceral regimes (such as the Nazis in WWII) and suggest a shared identity, distinct from the oppressor identity, set positive conditions for group resistance.[66] They caveat this with the

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[64] Zald, 269.

[65] Zald, 266–74.

[66] S. Alexander Haslam and Stephen D. Reicher, "When Prisoners Take Over the Prison: A Social Psychology of Resistance," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 16, no. 2 (2012): 154–79.

warning that group identity is not enough to create resistance. Leadership is essential to establish the expectations and organization necessary for group resistance.

In Villalobos and Ward's thesis, they expand on the importance of leadership in social movements. They identify four critical components for a social movement's success: "leadership, network diffusion, a functional coordinating unit, and collective identity."[67] Not only does this research highlight the necessity for leadership to guide a social movement and the importance of a collective identity, but it also argues the importance of "functional coordinating unit" (organizational features) and "network diffusion" (recruiting).[68]

D. BUFFER STATES

Mathison defines a buffer state as a "small independent state lying between two larger, usually rival, states (or blocs of states)."[69] This definition can be useful when examining the role of smaller states in the international order but does not account for the complexity of challenges to buffer states' sovereignty. Partem expands on the definition of buffer states and describes the diplomatic strategies open to them.

Primarily, Partem highlights the importance of analyzing the entire buffer system and not just the buffer state; buffer states do not exist in a vacuum and their status is based on the conditions of their environment. Partem uses expected utility calculations, in part, to define a buffer system. His definition can be simplified to describe a buffer system when conditions are met across three domains:

1. Geography- a buffer country shares a border with two or more states (or blocs of states)

2. Capability Distribution- the buffer country is unlikely to win a bilateral military conflict against either of its neighbors, its neighbors have similar

[67] Leonardo Villalobos and Ryan J. Ward, "Social Movements in Irregular Warfare" (Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, 2022), 59, https://hdl.handle.net/10945/69655.

[68] Villalobos and Ward, "Social Movements in Irregular Warfare."

[69] T. Mathison, *The Functions of Small States in the Strategies of Great Powers* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Books, 1971).

military capabilities, and the country could not determine the outcome of a conflict between its neighbors

3. Foreign Policy Orientation- the buffer can either ally with one neighbor or pursue neutrality; the buffer country will prefer neutrality and avoid a military alliance with its neighbors[70]

Partem suggests that despite the constraints of the buffer system, buffer states can still exercise sovereignty and control their agency through careful diplomacy. They can adopt neutrality, lean to one side, or involve a third party. Involving a third party may be attractive because the geographically remote third party is usually less interested in dominating buffer states and more interested in containing the expansion of the buffer's neighbors.[71]

Turmanize critiques the diplomatic options available to buffer states. Neutrality is difficult to maintain because the buffer state must convince stronger nations that its neutrality serves the interests of stronger states. Essentially, this requires strong states to consent to the buffer's neutrality. Leaning toward a side poses its own challenges. Military and political alliances will be inherently unfair because the stronger nation can impose an unequal alliance on the buffer. Third-party strategies are also limited by the commitment of remote nations to come to the buffer state's aid.[72] Because of these strategic weaknesses, Turmanize continues:

> Thus, the foreign policy orientation of the buffer state is ultimately of no critical importance as its fate is to an immense extent determined by the balance of power in the international system and the will of the buffered powers. When the power equilibrium in the system is upset, the buffer state may either lose its buffer status or stop to exist at all.[73]

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[70] Michael Greenfield Partem, "The Buffer System in International Relations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. i (March 1983): 16.

[71] Partem, "The Buffer System in International Relations."

[72] Tornike Turmanidze, *Buffer States: Power Policies, Foreign Policies, and Concepts* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., n.d.).

[73] Turmanidze, 56.

Turminaze's criticism is probably accurate in general, but his conclusion ignores the ability of some buffer states to successfully survive and adapt to changing circumstances.

Using Partem's definition, Mongolia exists within a buffer system considering its geography, capabilities, and foreign policy orientation. Mongolia has maintained its independence since 1911, although in different government forms, even with great pressure from neighboring governments. Analyzing Mongolia as a buffer state, Her argues the Chinese view Mongolia as a historical region of China and Russia has preferred Mongolia's modern status as a buffer state. Buffer system politics have defined the modern boundaries of Mongolia; the state was subdivided into Inner and Outer Mongolia and split by Russian-Chinese negotiations, many of which took place without Mongolian participation.[74]

Mongolia has also implemented each of Partem's suggested diplomatic strategies based on strategic conditions. First, the Mongolians attempted neutrality between Russia and China but shifted strategies to lean towards Soviet Russia.[75] Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mongolia again adapted with a new strategy and invited third parties to support them. Mongolia's Third Neighbor policy has increased both economic and military support from countries abroad, especially with the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Turkey. This was strengthened in 2018 and 2019 with the Third Neighbor Trade Act which strengthens economic ties between the United States and Mongolia.[76] Since its declared independence, Mongolia has maintained sovereignty by adapting to changes in power within the buffer system.

[74] Eric Her, "The 'Great Game': Mongolia Between Russia and China," *The Mongolian Journal of International Affairs* 4 (1997).

[75] Her.

[76] Jargalsaikhan et al., *Mongolian Geopolitics*.

III. APPROACH

Nonviolent resistance provides a unique strategy for Mongolia, a nation sandwiched between two expansionist and revisionist states. The capability and capacity for civil resistance could enable a whole of society effort to deter aggression, resist foreign influence, and, if required, defy occupation. First, this thesis identifies the specific conditions that led to Mongolia's peaceful resistance and independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and then determines future conditions that may make nonviolent resistance an effective tool. It will then compare these factors against the existing conditions within Mongolia and future conditions that may threaten Mongolia's sovereignty.

Contemporary social movement theory provides a structure for analyzing the elements of a robust resistance movement. As detailed above, this model identifies three key factors to understand social movements: "political opportunities and threats, mobilizing structures, and cultural framing."[77] This analysis will seek to identify elements favorable to successful nonviolent resistance and how the United States can best provide support.

In addition to studying Mongolian resistance, this thesis will analyze and draw conclusions from analogous resistance scenarios to identify principles applicable to Mongolia. It will consider resistance campaigns by comparing factors such as resistance strategy, challenges posed by the adversarial threat, and foreign support. Nonviolent campaigns resisting foreign occupation, campaigns resisting foreign influence, and campaigns seeking domestic political change can all provide valuable lessons. the United States has previously supported pro-democracy, nonviolent campaigns such as the Polish "Solidarity" campaign and the Serbian "Otpor" movement.[78] These cases will be studied to determine what type of support could be most beneficial to a civil resistance movement and, in particular, characteristics relevant to civil resistance within Mongolia.

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[77] McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 2.

[78] Seth G. Jones, *A Covert Action: Reagan, the CIA, and the Cold War Struggle in Poland* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018); International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*, Documentary (2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F7PxCVQ5Nk.

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IV. CASE STUDIES

A. UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

The United States has a history of providing support to democratic organizations using nonviolence to achieve social change or political concessions. U.S. government support can cover a range of covert and overt actions: economic sanctions, public endorsement, funding, equipping, and influence campaigns. Historical cases show that U.S. support to existing pro-democracy movements can have a profound influence on the movement's success. This section will examine two civil resistance movements that received United States support, followed by two movements that were independent of outside support. All of these movements used predominantly nonviolent tactics to varying levels of success.

B. POLAND, 1981–1989: SOLIDARITY

1. Background

After World War II, leaders from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union met to establish the postwar world at the Yalta Conference. Stalin claimed Poland under the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and Western Powers ceded the nation; Poland became a Soviet satellite state. Poland eventually became a member of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet influence dominated Polish politics.

The Polish economy did not thrive under communism and living conditions spurred frequent resistance. The Solidarity movement was not the first protest movement against the communist government. Working conditions, poor wages, and the high price of consumer goods encouraged protest movements, sometimes violent, as early as 1953. In Poznan in 1956, a workers' riot led to fifty deaths.[79] The stress caused by poor living and economic conditions continued to build through the 1960s and eventually fomented widespread labor strikes.

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[79] Alain Touraine et al., *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement; Poland 1980–1981*, trans. David Denby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Before Christmas of 1970, the Polish government increased the price of food leading to the Gdansk Shipyard Strike. In this protest, Polish dock workers used both violent and nonviolent methods to protest. They refused to work, destroyed property, captured policemen, and made multiple displays opposing the Polish government. Their resistance eventually forced concessions: a change in Polish political leadership, decreased (temporarily) food prices, and increased wages.[80] However, the most important and lasting influence of the Gdansk Shipyard Strike was that it encouraged a series of riots, resistances, and labor unions throughout the 1970s. The strike began as a complaint against food prices but would eventually transform into a demand for civil rights, and eventually democracy.

In June of 1979, Pope John Paul II visited Poland. Chosen by the Catholic Church only a year earlier, the Pope already held pro-democracy and pro-labor views. He traveled across Poland to speak with the Polish people and reinvigorate their Catholic faith. He reinforced Polish religious identity and denied the Soviet's demand for loyalty to the state over the Church. In the end, the Pope's visit encouraged the Polish people to unify and pursue self-determination.[81]

Reminiscent of the conditions leading to the Gdansk Shipyard Strike, a decade later the Polish government announced a significant price hike for food and other goods. Workers began to strike in August of 1980. Lech Walesa emerged as the charismatic leader of a 17,000-man-strong protest at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk.[82] Walesa quickly negotiated for a limited pay increase to stop the rioting, but angry laborers made the compromise unfeasible. Instead, the laborers decided to continue their protest in solidarity with other protest movements that supported the strike at the Lenin Shipyard but could not receive concessions. Thus, the Solidarity movement was born with Walesa at the head. In late August of 1981, Solidarity negotiated with the Polish Deputy Prime Minister to sign

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[80] Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*; Jones, *A Covert Action: Reagan, the CIA, and the Cold War Struggle in Poland*.

[81] Touraine et al., *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement; Poland 1980–1981*.

[82] Will Irwin, *Support to Resistance: Strategic Purpose and Effectiveness* (MacDill Air Force Base, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2019), 28.

the Gdansk Agreement; this accord recognized Solidarity as a self-governed trade union and gave it the legal right to strike.[83]

By 1981, Solidarity had grown to over 10 million, which also included a rural component, and communism was losing influence in Poland.[84] A Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report identified this as the "total disintegration of the Polish Communist Party."[85] Soviet leadership realized that Solidarity had popular support within Poland and feared a widespread revolt. However, the Soviets were also concerned about the international repercussions of directly intervening using Russian and Warsaw Pact troops. Soviet influence within Poland continued to deteriorate throughout 1981; Polish resistance became bolder as the economic situation became more dire. In December, the Polish government led by Wojciech Jaruzelski implemented martial law. Polish security forces across the country conducted raids to arrest any threat to the government and arrested approximately 6,000 members of Solidarity, including 80% of Solidarity's leadership.[86] Jaruzelski also established 52 internment camps across the nation to contain these political prisoners. Under martial law, Solidarity's radio, television, and print operations were declared illegal and shut down.[87]

2. USG Support

With martial law declared and Solidarity driven underground, President Reagan had a fleeting opportunity to support a pro-democracy movement and undermine Soviet influence. The presidential finding of 1982 authorized a covert action in Poland with limited aims. This covert action, named QRHELPFUL, sought to provide support to Solidarity and undermine the Polish government, not overthrow the Soviet-backed

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[83] Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

[84] Tompkins.

[85] Touraine et al., *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement; Poland 1980–1981*.

[86] Jones, *A Covert Action: Reagan, the CIA, and the Cold War Struggle in Poland*, 122.

[87] Seth G. Jones, "A Covert Action: Reagan, the CIA, and the Cold War Struggle in Poland" (Video Conference, The Institute of World Politics, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SVLDojowoY&t=2s.

government.[88] To accomplish this, the CIA provided funding and non-lethal aid to Solidarity. It provided cash, radio transmitters, printing presses, ink, clothing, and computers; essentially, the CIA smuggled in anything Solidarity could use to spread its pro-democracy message and organize its followers. However, when the covert action got underway, the CIA had few resources in Eastern Europe or Poland.[89] Still, it managed to offer lifesaving support without using any covert assets within Polish borders, without operating out of the Warsaw Station, and without ever communicating directly with Solidarity. The CIA was able to maintain plausible deniability for the entire operation, which may have even boosted popularity and support for the covert action.

This plausible deniability was the result of sophisticated tradecraft. For the entire duration of support, the CIA did not recruit or insert assets directly into Solidarity in order to maintain compartmentalization.[90] From the beginning, the CIA used structures parallel to Solidarity to deliver support from without. Providing direct support would have been riskier, and a known link with Solidarity would have undermined the organization. Even the perception that the pro-democracy movement was secretly being controlled by the U.S. could have damaged public support and Solidarity's legitimacy.

The CIA was able to provide support by recruiting assets in Western Europe who could develop access into Poland. Specifically, the program targeted Polish émigrés, businessmen, tourists, and smugglers. The CIA then used these personnel to develop infiltration routes into Poland, use legitimate and semi-legitimate commerce routes, and take advantage of existing black-market routes.[91] For example, a recruited asset may purchase equipment in France, ship it to West Germany, then through Denmark, and finally arrive by ferry in Gdansk.[92] By the time the equipment arrived in Poland, it had passed through many different hands and used different modes of transportation. This made CIA-

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[88] Irwin, *Support to Resistance*.

[89] Irwin.

[90] Jones, "A Covert Action."

[91] Jones.

[92] Jones.

funded equipment nearly untraceable and helped the U.S. government maintain plausible deniability.[93]

The CIA's largest contributions supported Solidarity's media campaigns. Even after being driven underground, Solidarity managed to run illegal newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. The U.S. government's support was crucial to its communication operations. The CIA also provided limited support outside of Poland, including funding for protests as far away from Poland as Mexico City.[94] Throughout this process, Solidarity and Lech Walesa were unaware of the CIA's covert support. They understood they were receiving support from somewhere, and may have suspected covert U.S. government support, but from the beginning, the CIA used compartmentalized structures outside of Poland to provide approximately $20 million. The CIA was Solidarity's largest single sponsor and especially important in the early 1980s when Solidarity was at its weakest, although overt U.S. funding streams overtook the CIA's covert funding in the mid-1980s.[95]

In addition to covert support, the United States enacted economic sanctions, provided public support for Polish democracy, and gave overt funding to Solidarity to pressure the Soviet-backed Polish government. The U.S. government operated Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and Radio Free Europe to reach Polish citizens and communicate pro-Solidarity messages. In 1981, approximately two-thirds of Polish adults listened to Radio Free Europe.[96] The National Endowment for Democracy provided approximately nine million towards the end of the 1980s. President Reagan often voiced clear support for Solidarity. His support was augmented by Pope John Paul II, who supported a free and democratic Poland. While Pope John Paul II and the Vatican did support Solidarity, there is no evidence they were directly involved in the covert action. There is evidence that Catholic priests carried cash to Solidarity, but they were likely unwitting of its origin.

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[93] Jones.

[94] Jones.

[95] Jones.

[96] Irwin, *Support to Resistance*, 32.

Through the dedicated actions of Polish citizens and U.S. government support, Solidarity was eventually able to pressure the Polish government enough to receive political concessions. The first democratic elections were held in 1989, with Solidarity winning the parliamentary majority. Lech Walesa became president a year later.[97]

3. Analysis

Solidarity's success was not the result of U.S. influence; the inverse is true, U.S. policy goals benefited from existing conditions. Solidarity was a preexisting organization with a strong core of adherents and an influential message. The U.S. did not need to create a social movement, they only had to support an existing movement. From the perspective of CSMT, Solidarity possessed all of the elements necessary to create a strong social movement. Socioeconomic conditions throughout the 1970s helped form dissatisfaction with the Soviet-backed Polish government, while simultaneously setting the conditions for Solidarity to be legalized as a self-governing, democratic institution. The 1980s uniquely expanded Solidarity's political opportunities in two major ways. Solidarity had more access to the political system than previous protest groups and it had access to elite allies' support.

Solidarity's political access benefited from the decades of riots, civil unrest, and protests before its formation. The communist government recognized the increasing pressure caused by widespread economic problems and made concessions seeking to appease protestors. This culminated with the Gdansk Agreement in 1981 which gave Solidarity the right to self-organize and provided legal avenues for protest. The Gdansk Agreement legitimized disagreements with the communist government and, in a more limited sense, handed over a small amount of political power to Solidarity and Walesa. Even though the government harshly cracked down on Solidarity, signing the Gdansk Agreement still opened the door to reform and contributed to the cultural framing processes that shaped Solidarity. Additionally, during this timeframe, Poland was still part of the larger Communist Bloc affected by the relative tolerance of perestroika. In the late 1980s,

[97] Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

perestroika, the popularity of Solidarity, and later funding from abroad significantly boosted the social movement.

Solidarity was initially powerful but lacked the resources necessary to sufficiently expand their political opportunities, especially during martial law. It was in that niche that the U.S. government intervened with the greatest effect. The Polish resistance provided the personnel, organization, messages, content, and political viability. It simply needed additional resources to effectively communicate and survive against the government's repression, i.e., shift the balance of power. U.S. covert support contributed to Solidarity's survivability and overt funding helped to solidify political gains towards the end of the 1980s. This support was decisive. The CIA's covert funding likely kept the pro-democracy movement alive when Solidarity was weakened by the Polish government. Injections of cash and other aid provided the necessary resources for Solidarity to continue its operations. Overt U.S. support validated Solidarity's goals and contributed to pressuring communist leaders. Polish, and influential Soviet leaders, likely sought to avoid disproportionately violent repression which could undermine their image and international relations.

Solidarity's expansion and political success were also shaped by its mobilizing structures; the SMO especially benefited from networks not officially aligned with Solidarity. The largest contributions came internally from labor unions, the Catholic Church, and then the U.S.

Labor unions and work networks, both nonmovement mobilizing structures, provided the manpower for the social movement. Leading up to the 1980s, a diverse group of labor unions and work networks offered a vehicle for disaffected Polish workers to protest against the communist government. When this network consolidated into a single organization and formalized the structure of the Gdansk protest movement, Solidarity became the most significant formal, movement organization. Solidarity firmly established its organizational strength even before President Reagan decided to sponsor it with funding and other material resources. Solidarity recruited its members, provided leadership, organized strikes and protests, and ran its own media operation.

Even when Solidarity was forced underground, it continued to organize and communicate. Martial law and widespread arrests beginning in 1981 undermined but did not destroy its core structures due to the resiliency provided by other mobilizing structures. With U.S. covert support, it was able to fund its operations and continue its campaign. Additionally, the SMO was able to operate underground with the help of Catholic churches. The Catholic Church served as a formal, nonmovement organization and provided spaces for safe haven, organization, and communication. Members of the Catholic Church also had access to outside material resources and social networks.

Additionally, the movement's adoption of nonviolence likely expanded the reach of its available mobilizing structures. As previously discussed, Chenoweth and Stephan assert that nonviolence benefits from a participation advantage because there are fewer barriers for adherents upon entry.[98] Adherents may have been willing to strike and protest but not pick up arms against fellow Polish citizens. Nonviolent movements may also benefit from a sponsorship advantage because they can receive support from those practically, philosophically, or politically opposed to violence.

Solidarity may have benefited from this nonviolent sponsorship advantage in the case of the CIA's covert action. Policy makers readily and enthusiastically aligned with the social movement which did not pose an immediate risk of violent escalation. Additionally, U.S. government support for the Polish resistance met many of the policy guidelines for a successful covert action.[99] The covert action fit American foreign policy interests to undermine Soviet influence and was consistent with American values of democracy and self-determination. Because of these factors, the covert action received bipartisan support in its time. Once the movement gained momentum, overt support from the U.S. cemented Solidarity's access to material resources in the late 1980s.

The cultural framing processes at work in the Solidary movement largely drew off dormant political contradictions, examples offered by historical protests, and Catholic

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[98] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

[99] Alberto R. Coll, James C. Ord, and Stephen A. Rose, eds., "Legal and Moral Constraints on Low-Intensity Conflict," *International Law Studies* 67 (1995): xix–358.

identity. The basic contradiction in the communist nation existed between the premise that the Polish government would provide for its citizens and the reality of the poorly performing economy. This contradiction became especially glaring when food prices were raised, and workers believed they could justify their protest actions. Early workers' protests, strikes, and riots were tied to price hikes and provided a historical context for the Gdansk protests in 1980 that eventually formed into Solidarity. Previous protest actions provided a "cultural stock" of options to replicate how to organize the trade unions and react to government repression.[100]

There is also evidence of framing as a strategic activity. Walesa deliberately framed the method of action as nonviolent; he may have been unaware of the strong mobilizing effects of nonviolence, but he did fear the government would harshly repress a violent resistance. Nonviolent strikes and protests could be framed as the best tactic to limit bloodshed between fellow Polish citizens. The Catholic Church also played a role in framing the Polish political identity and alternatives. As previously described, influence from the Vatican helped galvanize the movement and continued to build momentum for political change. Pope John Paul II's support for a free Poland came at a critical time. His first visit in 1979 reinvigorated Polish faith and contributed to a shared religious identity.[101] Operating in secret in the churches likely strengthened Solidarity's identity and resolve because of its members' Catholic faith. The Pope's support of Solidarity provided traditional legitimacy, and members of Solidarity themselves appealed to Catholic leaders to provide religious affirmation and legitimize the movement.[102] Even the belief that a Catholic's primary allegiance should be to God and the Church weakened Soviet influence.

4. Conclusion

Solidarity's success stemmed from decades of protests and the progressive success of labor unions. Political conditions coalesced in the 1980s for Solidarity to form a unified resistance against the government. While the organization's most important strengths were

[100] Zald, "Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing," 267.

[101] Irwin, *Support to Resistance*.

[102] Touraine et al., *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement; Poland 1980–1981*, 38.

indigenous, covert support from the United States contributed to the organization's survivability when the communist government jailed Solidarity's leadership and drove the organization underground. Support from the international community, the Catholic Church, and later overt support from the United States combined to enhance Solidarity's ability to peacefully reform the government.

C. SERBIA, 1999–2000: OTPOR

1. Background

In 1999, Slobodan Milošević sat at the head of Serbia's communist government. Despite the outward appearance of democracy, the Serbian government was totalitarian. It ran an "illiberal democracy," creating the illusion of a democratic process while maintaining a stranglehold on power.[103] Milošević's denial of civil liberties, human rights abuses, and foreign interventionism alienated the Serbian population, especially younger Serbians. Milošević's ethnic cleansing of Albanians eventually provoked a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) response. A NATO bombing campaign in 1999 eventually caused Milošević to withdraw troops from Kosovo. Domestically, he presented himself as the man who stood down NATO, but young people opposed his use of violence and the repercussions from the West.[104]

A year prior, in 1998, "Otpor," Serbian for resistance, formed as a pro-democratic youth movement in opposition to Milošević's totalitarian regime. To prepare for the election in 2000, Otpor began to spread across Serbia. From its origin, Otpor's leadership chose civil resistance as a method to counter oppression. Unlike Solidarity, Otpor's leadership determined a clear strategy from the beginning of the movement. Otpor did not emerge from a series of practical concerns and labor strikes; instead, it was a pro-democratic organization concerned with civil liberties from its outset. Through a carefully coordinated and highly organized system, its leadership developed a strategy to increase their influence.

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[103] James Dobbins, *Foreign Service: Five Decades on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy* (Santa Monica, California : Washington, D.C.: The Rand Corporation ; Brooking Institution Press, 2017), 211.

[104] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

Primarily, the movement adopted a strict adherence to nonviolent action. Throughout its protests, it emphasized the importance of remaining nonviolent and maintaining unity with other Serbians.[105] Otpor's leadership studied Gene Sharp, one of the most prominent figures in nonviolent theory, and implemented Sharp's teachings to mobilize Serbian society against Milošević. It incorporated Sharp's teachings in a variety of high-profile displays conducted to influence public opinion. As dissatisfaction grew within Serbia, this youth movement emerged as the most effective resistance against the government.[106] It first mobilized young people, but its message and techniques were attractive to the broader Serbian audience. Otpor initially consisted of almost entirely young people and students but grew to over 70,000 personnel across 130 separate branches.[107]

Otpor banded together with other anti-communist political movements for the election in 2000 and backed Vojislav Koštunica, but its prime political concern was with removing Milošević.[108] Koštunica won the election in September, but Milošević refused to acknowledge his defeat or step down. Instead, he called for a runoff. Otpor then organized and led widespread, strictly nonviolent, protests across Serbia. Despite demonstrators seizing government buildings, Serbian security forces largely refused to employ violence against the protestors and Milošević was forced out of office in October.[109]

2. USG Support

Compared to U.S. support for Solidarity, the U.S. support for Otpor was more limited in scope but broader in nature. U.S. government support for democracy in the region consisted of a range of activities which included overt support, funding, military

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[105] Roger Cohen, "Who Really Brought Down Milosovich?," *New York Times*, 2000, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2233086178/A2B5C8159A07499EPQ/1?accountid=12702.

[106] Dobbins, *Foreign Service*, 214.

[107] Cohen, "Who Really Brought Down Milošević?"

[108] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

[109] Irwin, *Support to Resistance*.

action, diplomatic support, and economic sanctions. However, direct support to Otpor consisted primarily of funding, training, and advice.

The NATO bombing campaign, Operation ALLIED FORCE, was conducted as a response to Milošević's human rights abuses in Kosovo. This bombing campaign forced Milošević out of Kosovo and damaged his credibility; indirectly, the bombing campaign pressured the Milošević military operation and eventually was crucial in his defeat.[110] This air campaign was purportedly combined with Operation MATRIX. Operation MATRIX coerced Milošević's allies by targeting factories and refineries as leverage; essentially, this part of the bombing campaign threatened elite allies' businesses if they did not convince Milošević to accept reform.[111] Another NATO operation took a psychological warfare approach by establishing a "Ring around Serbia" of radio towers at the same time. These radio stations broadcast WorldNet, Voice of America, and Radio Liberty into Serbia to undermine Milošević's state media.[112] However, this campaign was directed against Milošević and not in support of a pro-democracy movement.

Despite the wide range of pro-democracy support, the core of the Otpor movement was indigenous. The United States contributed directly to Otpor by providing funds through the National Endowment for Democracy. Cash infusions can be helpful for any organization, but it may have been critical for Otpor due to its operations in impoverished Serbia. This funding was used for its marketing campaign, to buy computers, fax machines, and printers, and to keep its various offices open.[113] The United States also provided support by training Otpor leadership in election observation. The Serbian democratic process had been dismantled by this time, and Milošević could have easily held elections,

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[110] Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Operation Allied Force: Lessons for the Future* (Santa Monica, California, 2001), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB75.html.

[111] William M. Arkin, "Ask Not for Whom the Phone Rings," *Washington Post*, October 11, 1999, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/dotmil/arkin101199.htm; Julian H. Tolbert, "Operation Allied Force: A Case Study," in *Crony Attack: Strategic Attack's Silver Bullet?* (Air University Press, 2006), 27–40; Irwin, *Support to Resistance*, 176.

[112] Irwin, *Support to Resistance*.

[113] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

denied the results, and maintained power.[114] However, U.S. education and funding enabled Otpor to train approximately 30,000 election observers.[115] These observers played a critical role by communicating the valid election results and subverting Milošević's declaration of victory.

The U.S. also provided direct support to Otpor through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). For example, retired Army Colonel Robert Helvey provided training and advice to Otpor while working for an NGO, the Albert Einstein Institution. COL Helvey taught strategy to the Otpor senior leadership. He told them to consider their resistance as a form of warfare against the government and explained how the principles of warfare, such as objective, mass, and initiative, were relevant to their strategic planning.[116]

3. Analysis

Otpor's political influence in 1999 exploded; in approximately a year it was the central SMO responsible for the overthrow of the Milošević regime. Its timing coincided with a myriad of factors that helped boost Otpor's viability, its message, and minimized the state's response.

The relative openness of Serbia's government was the most significant factor which expanded Otpor's political opportunities. In Serbia's "illiberal democracy," the government still provided a façade of democratic governance. According to the American Ambassador present during the Otpor movement, "representative institutions were more than mere trappings but not yet sufficient to operate as an effective check on those in power."[117] Equally important, political organizations and opposition "were harassed but not banned."[118] Otpor began operating in this narrow margin and then took advantage of the government's

[114] Olena Nikolayenko, "Origins of the Movement's Strategy: The Case of the Serbian Youth Movement Otpor," *International Political Science Review* 34, no. 2 (2013): 140–58.

[115] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

[116] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*; Irwin, *Support to Resistance*, 178.

[117] Dobbins, *Foreign Service*, 211; Irwin, *Support to Resistance*, 178.

[118] Dobbins, *Foreign Service*, 211; Irwin, *Support to Resistance*, 178.

unwillingness to use violent repression as a tool. Using violence and widespread jailing against a humorous, nonviolent youth movement would have been absurd to Serbian society and delegitimized Milošević.[119] Security forces would not use widespread violence to disperse protestors, even when they marched to remove Milošević and took control of government buildings. Otpor leaders claimed that security forces refused to fire upon civilians because they could recognize their children in the movement.[120] This line of reasoning reinforces Chenoweth's assertion that security forces' defection in nonviolent campaigns can be decisive.[121]

However, relative political openness in Serbia was not entirely new and not enough to open the door for Otpor on its own. Outside pressure from the United States and other Western nations helped provide additional space for protest. The NATO bombing campaign caused Serbian forces to withdraw from Kosovo and delegitimized Milošević's military actions against Albanians. The extensive radio campaign undermined Milošević and increased ideological openness to democracy. Operation MATRIX targeted Milošević's allies and caused political elites to flee the country.[122] Widespread sanctions contributed to economic instability. Diplomatic pressure for Milošević to step down legitimized pro-democracy protestors. All this combined to augment Otpor's political access and help propel the social movement forward.

This increased political access provided enough tolerance for the pro-democracy movement in Serbia. This social movement was best defined by the formal, movement organization Otpor. It was the most influential organization because it had an effective outreach program to incorporate informal, nonmovement networks. As a youth movement, the SMO could spread through affinity groups and student networks. Otpor's public events (concerts, festivals, art displays, etc.) engaged local communities and neighborhoods.

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[119] Čhančhirā Sombatphūnsiri, *Humor & Nonviolent Struggle in Serbia*, First edition, Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015).

[120] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

[121] Erica Chenoweth and Christopher Wiley Shay, "Mapping Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO)," 2020, 58, https://navcomap.wcfia.harvard.edu/dataverse.

[122] Tolbert, "Operation Allied Force: A Case Study"; Irwin, *Support to Resistance*, 176; Arkin, "Ask Not for Whom the Phone Rings."

Otpor developed a calculated approach to promote organization and action. Organizational leadership included elements of deception in its strategic planning to influence mobilization and public perception. Especially in its early stages, Otpor's leadership deliberately created the appearance that the resistance movement was larger and more successful than it was. For example, a small cadre of leadership might distribute leaflets throughout an urban area to create the appearance that the actual circulation of Otpor literature was wider than in reality.[123] Leadership created the appearance of a large base of support to influence future participation, in a method very similar to Cialdini's psychological influence principle of "social proof."[124] Another deceptive strategy aimed at both its supporters and the Milošević government was to create the illusion of a grassroots and decentralized organization. While to some extent this was true, (Otpor's leadership was incapable of orchestrating every protest conducted by its 70,000 adherents), central leaders like Srđa Popović had significant influence that controlled the organization's direction. However, the decentralized appearance made it difficult for security forces to target actual leadership and promoted the movement's legitimacy.[125]

Otpor excelled at controlling the framing process and strategically shaping the pro-democracy narrative. It adopted a focus on "strategic humor" which was pervasive in all their messaging. It brought to bear a great amount of creativity to incorporate humor in protest; the following represent just some of the methods Otpor developed to undermine Milošević: street theatre, mockery of propaganda and government figures, staged parodies of government ceremonies, street art installations, "registering" historical Serbian heroes as Otpor members, concerts, festivals, and pranks.[126] Its most significant targets were regime propaganda and regime personnel because Otpor highlighted the absurd contrast between the regime's narrative and current conditions. The focus on humor empowered citizens and adherents.

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[123] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

[124] Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Rev. ed., [Nachdr.] (New York, NY: Collins, 20).

[125] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

[126] Sombatphūnsiri, *Humor & Nonviolent Struggle in Serbia*.

Strategic humor was effective in two major ways. First, it increased the protest audience. Otpor parodies were engaging, entertaining, and relatable to Serbians. Second, the increased size of the audience made repressive policies counterproductive. A highly visible crackdown would have only further delegitimized the regime. "Fundamentally, humorous protest actions create a situation where the justification for repression appears nonsensical."[127] Finally, there may have been an element of self-preservation in humor's effectiveness. Milošević failed at the competitive process to control the narrative; comedy helped subvert the security apparatus's characterization of Otpor as a terrorist organization.[128]

Otpor was also very effective at using familiar symbols to reach an audience. It developed a closed-fist logo, wore leather jackets and all-black outfits at demonstrations, and played Western rock music. This was all done intentionally to appear sinister.[129] However, Otpor carefully crafted its appearance to resemble and take advantage of rebellious symbolism while at the same time redefining meanings for its civil resistance movement. The raised fist, shown in Figure 3, was not a symbol of violence, it was a symbol of solidarity and commitment to nonviolent action.

Figure 3. Otpor's closed-fist logo[130]

[127] Sombatphūnsiri, 125.

[128] Sombatphūnsiri, *Humor & Nonviolent Struggle in Serbia*.

[129] International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, *Bringing Down a Dictator*.

[130] Source: Nenad Duda Petrovic, *Otpor Raised Fist*, 2008, Digital, 5 KB, 2008, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Otpor.png.

Otpor also used this strategy to reclaim traditional Serbian cultural symbols that were being used by the Milošević regime, including "popular events, national commemorations, historical narratives, and famous Serb figures."[131] in combination with humor, this could be a powerful method of undermining the communist adoption of traditional history and art. Otpor was very careful to implement symbols, sayings, and cultural norms in their messaging which were familiar to the Serbian population; for example, the raised fist was a deviation from the communist red fist imagery liked by Milošević.[132] This type of cultural nuance and understanding could only have been generated domestically.

4. Conclusion

Otpor serves as an example of a grassroots organization that displayed strong leadership, nonviolent discipline, and strategic framing of resistance. The organization's creativity and energy helped frame grievances to unite Serbians across the nation. United States support was whole of government and incorporated nongovernmental organizations. This support significantly improved Otpor's capabilities and was especially impactful in developing strategy, providing resources, and monitoring the elections to prevent fraud.

D. MONGOLIA, 1989–1990: MONGOLIAN PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

1. Background

After centuries of foreign rule, Mongolia declared independence from China in 1911. In 1924, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) announced the formation of the Mongolian People's Republic under communism; Mongolia was the second Asian country to adopt communism after the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).[133] Mongolia aligned itself with the USSR and the latter's influence grew to

[131] Sombatphūnsiri, *Humor & Nonviolent Struggle in Serbia*, 111.

[132] Cohen, "Who Really Brought Down Milosovich?"

[133] Julia S. Bilskie and Hugh M. Arnold, "An Examination of the Political and Economic Transition of Mongolia Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Journal of Third World Studies*, Third World Problems and Issues During the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries, 19, no. 2 (2002): 206.

dominate political life; Mongolia became increasingly important to the USSR as a buffer state.[134] In practice, Mongolia became a USSR satellite state until its nonviolent, democratic revolution in 1990.[135]

In the early years, Mongolian leadership closely resembled USSR leadership practices and followed Soviet policies. Khorloogiin Choibalsan, sometimes referred to as the "Mongolian Stalin," enacted harsh measures to stifle political opposition.[136] Under Choibalsan, the MPRP persecuted groups that could be a threat to the government and purged dissent. Even though political killings would continue until the 1980s, political killings climaxed in the 1930s. The MPRP targeted academics, political opposition, nobility, and Buddhist lamas. Between 20,000 and 30,000 died in the purges.[137] Only 1,000 of the estimated 100,000 Buddhist monks continued to serve after these political purges.[138] Most monasteries were damaged, destroyed, or permanently closed. After Choibalsan's death in 1952, the MPRP changed its policy to imprison dissidents instead of outright execution.[139] Political oppression continued into the 1980s paired with economic problems. Poorly executed agrarian reforms failed to augment the lack of food variety and there were frequent consumer goods shortages.[140] Mongolia was dependent on foreign aid. In the 1980s, 30% of Mongolia's Gross Domestic Product came from Soviet aid.[141]

Throughout the 1980s, Mongolia took progressive steps towards reform. Mongolian elites, who were educated abroad, primarily in Russia and Eastern Europe,

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[134] Her, "The 'Great Game': Mongolia Between Russia and China."

[135] Bilskie and Arnold, "An Examination of the Political and Economic Transition of Mongolia Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union," 206.

[136] Morris Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia: From Khans to Commissars to Capitalists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 6.

[137] Christopher Kaplonski, "Thirty Thousand Bullets: Remembering Political Repression in Mongolia," in *Historical Injustice and Democratic Transition in Eastern Asia and Northern Europe: Ghosts at the Table of Democracy*, ed. Kenneth Christie and Robert Cribb (Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 156, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=171824.

[138] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 6.

[139] Rossabi, 6.

[140] Rossabi, 7.

[141] Bilskie and Arnold, "An Examination of the Political and Economic Transition of Mongolia Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union," 208.

spearheaded calls for change. Returning to Mongolia, these educated individuals organized at universities to advocate for economic and political change. Influenced by political and social trends from the USSR, they called for "freer" communism and bureaucratic changes.[142] Under pressure from reformists the president of Mongolia, Jambyn Batmünkh, made concessions to implement change and encourage transparency. In 1987, journalists received the right to criticize government officials; the Politburo saw this as a way to root out corruption and hold ineffective government officials accountable.[143] Simultaneously, the USSR and the People's Republic of China improved relations and, as a result, the USSR began limiting commitments to Mongolia. The USSR withdrew troops, deployed fewer technical advisors, and demonstrated less political commitment to Mongolia. In response, Mongolian leadership expanded diplomatic relations with China and the West, including the United States.[144]

On December 10, 1989, protestors gathered in front of the Youth Cultural Center in Ulaanbaatar, the nation's capital, and energized a period of widespread protests and rapid political reform.[145] This initial protest consisted of a small group of academics and the youth of political elites. These nonviolent protests, scheduled to coincide with MPRP Central Committee Plenum and International Human Rights Day, called for an end to oppression. Protestors also announced the formation of the Mongolian Democratic Union (MDU). Sanjaasürengiin Zorig served as the general coordinator. Zorig is often the single person most associated with the pro-democracy movement. He was educated, from an elite although minority background, and well-spoken. His oratory skills and commitment to nonviolence won respect from his fellow protestors and Mongolians. Throughout the pro-democracy movement, Zorig would often be present to organize protestors and encourage civil resistance.[146]

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[142] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 2.

[143] Rossabi, 8.

[144] Rossabi, 9.

[145] Christopher Kaplonski, *Truth, History and Politics in Mongolia: Memory of Heroes* (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 57.

[146] Kaplonski, 59.

The government closely observed the protests but did not act to repress them. Political conditions with Russia and China, the civil behavior of the protestors, as well as the fact that the protestors consisted of the political elites' children, encouraged tolerance.[147] The MPRP agreed to support perestroika and glasnost, as well as the idea of reform but did not provide any way to guarantee their commitment to reform. Pro-democracy protestors continued to mobilize and hold demonstrations near the city center throughout the winter, sometimes every week, on a small but growing scale.[148]

The MDU and early reformists realized that a small group of intellectuals could not bring about change on their own and recognized the importance of building support in rural areas.[149] In late December, the MDU sent the prominent scientist and respected orator Erdenii Bat-Uul to meet with people in the mining town Erdenet. In the mines, Russian workers made significantly more money than Mongolian miners and engineers. Bat-Uul reframed the miners' and engineers' frustration with income disparity as an issue of bureaucratic oppression. He successfully secured their support in a pro-democracy movement. Erdenet served as an example to other mining communities that would later join the call for reform. The MDU continued to build its base of support and continued to stage protests throughout the winter and spring. Miners in Erdenet, and eventually elsewhere, supported high-profile protests in Sükhbaatar Square with work stoppages and strikes.[150]

In January 1990, protests began in Sükhbaatar Square, signaling direct opposition to the MPRP.[151] Additional protest organizations emerged calling themselves the "Four Forces" including the MDU, the New Development Association, the Social Democratic Movement, and the Mongolian Student's Association.[152] On March 7, 1990, ten protestors wearing traditional robes pledged to hunger strike and called for the abolishment of the

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[147] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 2.

[148] Kaplonski, *Truth, History and Politics in Mongolia: Memory of Heroes*, 57.

[149] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 5.

[150] Rossabi, 13–15.

[151] Kaplonski, *Truth, History and Politics in Mongolia: Memory of Heroes*, 61.

[152] Kaplonski, 61–66.

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Politburo and the Khural, the Mongolian parliament. The MDU organized other nonviolent protest actions to coincide with the hunger strikes. Reformers conducted demonstrations, strikes, and work stoppages in Erdenet, Darkhan, Mörön, and other towns across the nation. Protestors continued to stage protests to receive ironclad guarantees from the government. The gathering in Sükhbaatar Square attracted more followers and grew to up to 90,000 people.[153] The MDU could not control this dramatic influx of new protestors. While the movement intended to remain civil, a small group of protestors disrupted the demonstrations by seizing taxis and busses and extending the protest to President Batmünkh's official residence. The Minister of Public Security considered bringing in military forces to restore order and end the protest but decided against it because he feared some units would defect.[154]

After failed negotiations with the hunger strike participants, the MPRP eventually conceded to the protestors' demands. On March 12, President Batmünkh and every member of the Politburo agreed to step down.[155] Shortly after, the Khural formalized the legality of other political parties and agreed to hold elections sometime in the future. The MPRP likely expected its entrenched position in politics would give it an advantage in the pending elections.[156] After the MPRP opened up the political arena to additional political parties, six separate opposition parties sprang up with different perspectives on the adoption of democracy and economic reform.[157] Tens of thousands of reformers were skeptical of the MPRP's commitment and continued to hold protests, which included religious gatherings, demonstrations, and additional hunger strikes.[158] In May, the Khural promised elections would take place in July. The MDU, political opposition parties, and

[153] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 22.

[154] Rossabi, 22.

[155] William R. Heaton, "Mongolia in 1990: Upheaval, Reform, But No Revolution Yet," *Asian Survey, A Survey of Asia in 1990* 31, no. 1 (1991): 51.

[156] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 23.

[157] Heaton, "Mongolia in 1990: Upheaval, Reform, But No Revolution Yet," 52.

[158] Kaplonski, *Truth, History and Politics in Mongolia: Memory of Heroes*, 69.

other reformers accepted the Khural's promise and ended the civil resistance campaign. Pro-democracy protests ended in favor of election campaigning from opposition parties.

When the protests ended, the MPRP still had dominant control over power and maintained political dominance. After making concessions to the reformers, it introduced new policies to endear itself with the rural population and build its support base. These new policies included promising to "forgive agricultural cooperatives their debts, raise wages for low-income groups, reduce by 25% the charge for heat in state-owned housing, and increase student stipends and provide them with discount tickets during vacation periods."[159] This strategy and the support from the herding community proved to be effective.

Mongolia's historic first democratic elections were held on July 29, 1990. An estimated 95%-99% of eligible voters participated.[160] Election results maintained the MPRP's political power. However, democratic opposition received representation in the government and the MPRP maintained its commitment to reform. The MPRP established a coalition government and placed opposition political parties in charge of economic and social policy.[161] The MPRP did lose some power but was still in control of the Khural and most of the political power.

The pro-democracy movement continued to flourish after the elections. Even though the MPRP maintained power, there was rapid growth of democratic institutions and a resurgence of Mongolian culture. Chinggis Khan, maligned over the decades by the MPRP and USSR, was rehabilitated as a historic figure and cultural icon. Mongolians revived traditional dress, the Mongolian script, Buddhism, and other ethnic traditions. The economy became increasingly privatized and Mongolians enjoyed additional political

[159] Heaton, "Mongolia in 1990: Upheaval, Reform, But No Revolution Yet," 52.

[160] Bilskie and Arnold, "An Examination of the Political and Economic Transition of Mongolia Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union," 209–10; Kaplonski, *Truth, History and Politics in Mongolia: Memory of Heroes*, 70.

[161] Bilskie and Arnold, "An Examination of the Political and Economic Transition of Mongolia Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union," 210.

freedoms. Forty new journalistic publications appeared within a year.[162] In 1991, Mongolia took significant symbolic steps by drafting a new constitution and formally changing its name to the Republic of Mongolia.[163] Eventually, the MPRP accepted the need for additional symbolic change, split into two parties, and ultimately lost majority power.

Mongolia continued to privatize, establish a market economy, and democratize throughout the 1990s. Now, Mongolia is the "only formerly communist country in Asia classified as 'free' by the U.S. nongovernmental organization Freedom House."[164] the 1990 elections were not the source of an overnight political revolution. The pro-democracy movement was shaped by previous reform, won by the significant efforts of pro-democracy protestors, and maintained by the commitment to change.

2. USG Support

The U.S. government did not intervene or provide significant support before or during the pro-democracy movement. While Mongolia and the United States did develop diplomatic relations in 1987, the United States's support was limited to providing aid.[165] After the elections and the shift to democracy, the United States provided support and advice to draft the new Mongolian constitution.[166]

3. Analysis

Despite the lack of elite allies to shift power dynamics, political opportunities shifted throughout the 1980s to facilitate the reform and pro-democracy movement. Like

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[162] Judith Nordby, "Democratic Mongolia, 1991: Problems and Prospects," *East European Politics* 8, no. 1 (2007): 175–79.

[163] William R. Heaton, "Mongolia in 1991: The Uneasy Transition," *Asian Survey, A Survey of Asia in 1991* 32, no. 1 (1992): 50–55; Bilskie and Arnold, "An Examination of the Political and Economic Transition of Mongolia Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union."

[164] Maria A. Blackwood, *Mongolia*, CRS Report No. IF10926 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2023), 1, https://crsreports.congress.gov.

[165] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 36.

[166] Bilskie and Arnold, "An Examination of the Political and Economic Transition of Mongolia Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union," 210.

the rest of the world in the USSR's sphere of influence, the influence of glasnost and perestroika left an impact on Mongolian politics. Initially, reform in Mongolia did not seek to overthrow communism; it simply sought to change what socialism meant and faithfully adhere to the ideals of the socialist revolution. This allowed reformers from within the MPRP to take steps towards a more open and transparent Mongolia. In 1987, President Batmünkh discussed "transparency" in an apparent concession to those calling for glasnost.[167] Even early calls from reformers to end bureaucratic oppression did not call for the removal of communism. Mongolia is a unique revolutionary case because the 1990 elections maintained the MPRP's apparent political power; post-election, the MPRP was unable or unwilling to brutally oppress protestors or break commitments for reform. The MPRP's willingness to reform was institutionalized in the decade leading up to the elections.

Political instability outside of Mongolia also contributed to the MPRP's relative tolerance toward protests. The Tiananmen Square Massacre was a fresh memory, occurring only six months before the formation of the MDU. Both reformers and MPRP officials recognized the possibility of a similar massacre. Gorbachev cautioned against using violent repression.[168] The MPRP determined that it was unwilling to pay the price of a similar massacre or that such a response would be ineffective in quelling protests. External threats also opened the political landscape for change. With improved Sino-Soviet relations, Mongolian leadership became increasingly concerned with foreign influence from the People's Republic of China (PRC). The perception of domestic instability could have invited PRC influence or even direct intervention.[169] The MPRP's general acceptance of peaceful protests, negotiations with reformers, and the peaceful transition of power post-elections contributed to an image of stability.

Before the widespread protests, many in Mongolia were open to new ways of governing and this ideological openness was energized by the intelligentsia returning from

[167] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 8.

[168] Rossabi, 6.

[169] Rossabi, 12.

abroad. Academics could appeal to poor economic conditions within Mongolia as a symptom of ineffective governance. Economic conditions were poor for a variety of reasons, but the dwindling of the USSR's economy combined with the failure of the "virgin lands" policy highlighted failures in the centralized economy.[170] Pay disparity between Mongolian and Russian workers built discontent. The economic environment encouraged reforms from within the system well before the pro-democracy social movement erupted in 1989–1990.

The reformers' nonviolent strategy also acted in a unique way to increase political openness. The civil behavior of early protests did not invite the need for a violent response; the conciliatory tone taken by the MDU opened the door for diplomatic relations and the inclusion of opposition parties, even early on the MDU recognized the MPRP's contributions and historical importance to Mongolia. Discussion and negotiation between the government forces and reformers carried on parallel to the recognized illegal protests. Sometimes these discussions were even broadcast on radio and television, with the MPRP's consent.[171] Nonviolence also enabled pro-communist, but pro-reform, politicians to advocate for peace and deny MPRP hardliners who called for violent repression.

The pro-democracy movement began as an urban-centric, elite movement. Its early adherents were privileged youth educated in foreign universities and under relative protection from oppression. However, they were able to spread out of Ulaanbaatar and appeal to a wide variety of people. Organizers in the pro-democracy movement appealed to a wide cross-section of the population by framing their message appropriately. They argued how grievances could be directed at the government and how reform was the answer.

The MDU was the most influential social movement organization in the pro-democracy movement and was a central hub for the reformers to coordinate. It established a clear strategy and goals to mobilize. Other formal, movement organizations developed to

[170] Rossabi, 7.

[171] Kaplonski, *Truth, History and Politics in Mongolia: Memory of Heroes*, 61.

capture the diversity of thought that existed in the pro-democracy movement. Table 2 shows a sampling of the many organizations supporting the pro-democracy movement.

Table 2. Organizations involved in the Mongolian Pro-democracy Movement.

	Nonmovement	Movement
Informal	Mining Work Networks Engineer Work Networks	Student Groups
Formal	Buddhist Monasteries Labor Unions	Mongolian Democratic Union New Development Association Social Democratic Movement Mongolian Student's Association Mongolian Democratic Party National Progressive Party Mongolian Social Democratic Party

The MDU was itself not a political party and the formation of legalized political parties maintained the social movement's momentum. However, the sharing of power and political influence in the pro-democracy movement may have contributed to its poor results in the election. A centralized political party with more limited goals may have been able to garner more political influence from the onset.

Protestors wisely selected protest dates and locations to maximize their mobilizing effect. Protests took place simultaneously within city centers, most notably in Ulaanbaatar's Sükhbaatar Square. This ensured visibility and facilitated constituents joining public protests. The MDU also scheduled activities to coincide with MPRP political gatherings and national holidays. These included International Human Rights Day, the anniversary of Stalin's death, International Women's Day, and others. Coinciding protests on these days helped co-opt other public demonstrations to maximize impact and participation. There was also an important messaging effect by reframing the pro-democracy protests as equally important to these celebrations.

Leadership in the Mongolian pro-democracy movement excelled at framing their grievances in a way that was effective, proactive, and appealed to Mongolian citizens.

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Leading reformers understood the problems facing working people and redirected frustration towards the MPRP. Instead of describing detailed economic plans and steps for bureaucratic reform, reformers focused their message on describing poignant and easily understood messages. Instead of broadcasting a desire for a free market or structural changes in the Khural, the MDU created an easily understood agenda:

- A Multiparty System Is Essential
- Honor Human Rights Above All
- Freedom of the Press.[172]

These types of messages, while somewhat vague and broad, appealed to constituents without being divisive. The pro-democracy movement, especially in the pre-election season, was divided between opposition parties who had differing ideas on how to address political change. These early messages were effective in uniting the social movement towards a common cause even though intellectual leadership differed over the details. While leading intellectuals did have nuanced opinions on types of economic reform, it is difficult to rally around a flag of bureaucratic minutia.

The reformers also selected nationalistic imagery that resonated after decades of USSR influence. The strategic use of traditional script, the inclusion of Buddhism, the cultural revival of Chinggis Khan, and the wearing of traditional clothing effectively defined Mongolian identity separately from communism and the MPRP. Even though most Mongolians could not read the traditional script, the MDU's use of that script on posters and promotional material was an effective protest action. Generally, reformers protested using cultural frames available to all Mongolians.[173] Civil resistance was an easily understood and respected strategy to counter the MPRP's political dominance; Zorig earned respect by urging nonviolence and calming crowds that were losing nonviolent discipline. However, international influences and civil resistance tactics did not always translate. Initially, hunger strikes were a confusing and contradictory method of protest. During the early hunger strikes in March 1990, "… some passersby could not understand

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[172] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 11.

[173] Rossabi, 29.

the reasons for the fast. Why refrain from food in a time when it was plentiful?"[174] Eventually, though, observers understood the purpose of the hunger strike and some supporters even joined.[175]

4. Conclusion

Peaceful protestors in Mongolia helped develop opportunities for the pro-democracy movement by increasing the MPRP's openness to reform. Initially an elite, urban-centric movement in Ulaanbaatar, activists successfully mobilized protestors from across society. The MDU's commitment to continued protests until its demands were met ensured a successful transition to democracy.

E. BURMA, 1987–1990: BURMA UPRISING

1. Background

Burma is an exceptionally diverse and conflict-ridden country home to people who have sought autonomy in various ways since the nation's inception. Burma contains at least 13 distinct ethnic groups which speak more than a hundred distinct languages.[176] The British colonized Burma in the Anglo-Burmese Wars and administered Burma until 1937. During World War II, Japan occupied Burma. Various ethnic groups fought as guerrillas with Allied forces including the British-led Karen Rifles and Kachin tribesmen with Office of Strategic Services Detachment 101.[177] The British reestablished colonialism in 1945 but Burma received independence in 1948. Civilian leaders held power in Burma sporadically until 1962; in 1962, General Ne Win seized power in a military coup at the head of the nation's army, the Tatmadaw.[178]

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[174] Rossabi, 19; Timothy Severin, *In Search of Genghis Khan: An Exhilarating Journey on Horseback Across the Steppes of Mongolia*, 1st Cooper Square Press ed (New York, [Lanham, Md.]: Cooper Square Press ; Distributed by National Book Network, 2003).

[175] Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*, 19–21.

[176] Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*, 150–51.

[177] Tompkins, 154; Alfred H. Paddock Jr., U.S. *Army Special Warfare: Its Origins; Psychological and Unconventional Warfare, 1941–1951* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982), 27.

[178] Zoltan D. Barany, *How Armies Respond to Revolutions and Why* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 75–76.

Since colonial times, Burma has had a tradition of violent and nonviolent resistance. Ethnic nationalist movements began in the 1940s and continue to resist the Burmese government today; minority groups fought bloody insurgencies against the junta until many signed cease-fire agreements in 1989. The Karen National Liberation Army, representing the largest ethnic minority group, continues to wage its insurgency that began in 1949.[179] However, Burma has an equally long history of civil resistance which even inspired Gene Sharp, the famous civil resistance theorist, to write *From Dictatorship to Democracy*.[180] Buddhist monks from the Young Men's Buddhist Association traveled to London to appeal for peace in 1916 and anti-colonial student protests at Rangoon University (RU) occurred the same year. Protests and strikes continued under British rule and after Burma's independence.[181]

Protests against Ne Win and the Tatmadaw were met with violent repression. Ne Win's political party, Burma's Socialist Program Party (BSPP), isolated the country, devastated it economically, and severely limited civil liberties. Although initially somewhat popular after the coup, support for the BSPP quickly declined. In 1962, the Tatmadaw killed students at RU protesting military rule, killing thousands by gunfire and dynamiting a student union building where students were sheltered. Despite the violence, protests opposing military rule continued until 1964. Demonstrations in the 1970s were also met with heavy-handed violence. In 1975, the BSPP denied the Burmese statesman U Thant, the former United Nations Secretary-General, a burial with honors. Protestors seized the body and hastily buried it on the RU campus near the former student union. Ne Win responded by sending armed troops and tanks to recover the body. The resulting conflict led to between 16 to several hundred killed, hundreds injured, and 4,500 arrested.[182] The Tatmadaw responded with the same level of aggression to violent and civil resistance:

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[179] Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*, 149–51.

[180] Mark Engler, "The Machiavelli of Nonviolence: Gene Sharp and the Battle Against Corporate Rule," *Dissent* 60, no. 4 (2013): 59.

[181] Michael Schulz, *Civil Resistance and Democracy Promotion: A Comparative Study Analysis*, Routledge Studies in Conflict, Security and Development (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023), 30–32.

[182] Vincent Boudreau, ed., *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 95.

"most of these incidents… culminated in the armed forces' heavy-handed suppression of any dissent. The Tatmadaw had developed considerable capacity to subdue these sporadic upheavals, owing to its near-continuous fight against ethnic insurgents."[183]

Sporadic protests continued in the 1970s and 1980s, but civil resistance reached new heights beginning in 1987. Under increasing pressure from poor economic conditions, Ne Win instituted radical economic reforms in September. The BSPP gained Least Developed Country status from the United Nations Economic and Social Council to ease the debt burden (3.5 billion dollars), deregulated some parts of the economy, and demonetized currency. Ne Win decided to completely demonetize the 25, 35, and 75 Kyat notes. The surprise demonetization decision instantaneously destroyed many Burmese citizens' entire savings, often kept in cash. University students, unable to pay their tuition for the pending semester, began protesting immediately at the Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT). The Tatmadaw suppressed these protests and closed the universities. When schools reopened in October, protests continued in Rangoon and spread to other universities across the country. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Voice of America (VOA) announced Burma's status as a Least Developed Country in December which fueled protests. Some of these were violent and there were some bombings in Rangoon. At this stage in the movement, protestors were not calling for democracy but expressing frustration with poor economic conditions and the government.[184]

In March, an altercation in Rangoon between students became the catalyst for widespread protests that would last throughout the year. On March 13, two university students brawled resulting in arrests, one student with ties to the BSPP was released without charges. Students at RIT, and then students from RU, gathered to protest this unfair treatment. Security forces killed several students and, as a result, protests grew in Rangoon against the government. Some protestors called for democracy and directly criticized the

[183] Barany, *How Armies Respond to Revolutions and Why*, 78.

[184] Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 192–93.

BSPP.[185] Days later, riot police ambushed student protestors from RIT traveling to the RU near a bridge at Inya Lake. The riot police fired on fleeing protestors, including those who tried to escape by swimming away, and arrested others. The incident resulted in approximately 200 dead protestors, including 41 who suffocated in an overpacked prison van. On the same day, the Tatmadaw arrested over 1,000 RU students.[186]

The brutal repression incensed Burmese citizens and the protests grew to several thousand participants throughout the week. Protests left universities for working-class neighborhoods and other landmarks in Rangoon, including the Shwedagon and Sule Pagoda. As the protests grew, they became increasingly violent and out of the students' control. In response, the Tatmadaw harshly cracked down to gain control of the city. The government finally shut down protests on March 18 after shutting down the universities, killing hundreds, and jailing thousands.[187]

Students sent away from the nation's capital began to spread the pro-democracy movement in rural areas when they returned home. While the initial protests in the fall of 1987 and March of 1988 were mostly spontaneous, grassroots protests, there is evidence of an anti-military underground going back to the demonstrations in 1962. However, the school's closure became an opportunity for the protest underground to truly develop. Students in rural areas were free to coordinate, train others, share tactics, and prepare for future civil resistance.[188] Universities reopened in May and protests resumed immediately. Protestors demonstrated increased sophistication; they were prepared with leaflets, coordinated across universities, and had clear demands.[189] Protests continued throughout June and participation swelled to tens of thousands. Students, workers, poor Burmans, and Buddhist monks marched in the streets of Rangoon. Protests spread outside of the capital

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[185] Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*, Social Movements, Protest, and Contention, v. 22 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 94–95; Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 193.

[186] Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 194.

[187] Boudreau, 195.

[188] Boudreau, 196–97.

[189] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 178–79.

to Pegu, Prome, Mulmein, and Mandalay. The regime met these protests with typical brutality and killed between 80 and 100 protestors.[190] The BSPP enacted martial law and shut down Rangoon on June 21, 1988.

In response to the growing chaos, Ne Win stepped down as leader of the BSPP. He also established Sein Lwin as his successor and suggested a referendum on developing a multi-party system. Sein Lwin, the previous leader of the riot police and the man responsible for the violence in March, dismissed the referendum outright and attempted to establish order in Burma. Anti-regime protests increased and reform leadership called for democracy. Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Burmese national hero Aung San, was the most influential leader to emerge during this time. Even though leadership was present, no national SMO or political party developed to unite the protest movement. Protests often became violent and occasionally criminal organizations would co-opt the movement for their benefit, organizers were unprepared to control the large crowds:

> Because pre-demonstration underground networks were neither public nor connected to insurgent groups, they had no strong public followings and no disciplined mass machinery. The movement's consequent radical democracy therefore meant that experienced activists were quite effective building strike committees, linking them together and getting the strike started, but had more difficulty maintaining discipline, particularly as the movement expanded.[191]

The pro-democracy movement effectively mobilized a wide cross-section of urban Burmese and reached its peak at a protest beginning on August 8, 1988. Beginning on this date, 8–8-88 was an auspicious number for the Burmese based on its numerological significance, there were daily marches lasting until September 19.[192] Adherents grew to include teachers, lawyers, doctors, intellectuals, monks, professional organizations, and unions. Protestors gave speeches, burned BSPP membership cards, comedians performed, and people wore traditional Burmese clothes. Nearly 100 unofficial newspapers,

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[190] Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*, 94–95.

[191] Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 207.

[192] Jack Fong, *Revolution as Development: The Karen Self-Determination Struggle Against Ethnocracy (1949-2004)* (Boca Raton, FL: BrownWalker Press, 2008), 149.

magazines, and pamphlets circulated in Rangoon. A national strike shut down businesses across the nation.[193] Protests also spread in rural areas but on a limited scale. Sein Lwin resigned on August 12 as the chairman of the BSPP and was replaced by Dr. Maung Maung, a civilian, on August 19. Maung lifted martial law and the military left many areas entirely. Protestors continued their demands for democracy.[194]

Even though fractured reform leadership tried to consolidate its success, government forces from within the Tatmadaw acted more decisively to gain control of the country. On September 9, the former Prime Minister and unpopular politician U Nu announced the formation of a shadow government; neither the other protest leaders nor the movement supported him. On the 18th, the Tatmadaw seized control through a coup and formed a new government, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The new chairman General Saw Maung directed the Tatmadaw to immediately suppress pro-democracy protests across the nation. Troops appeared the same day as the coup and shot anyone who resisted their control. An estimated 3,000 protestors died, many picked up armed resistance, and up to 10,000 protestors fled to Thailand, China, India, and Bangladesh.[195] The civil resistance movement was crushed by September 19. However, along with this brutal repression came the promise of future multi-party elections.

The SLORC had no real intention of giving up power and developed a campaign to dominate the election. The government encouraged the formation of multiple parties to divide support, weakened the opposition by arresting influential political leaders, and limited the opposition's ability to campaign. Aung San Suu Kyi formed the National League for Democracy (NLD), which was the most successful at uniting support, and consequently, she was arrested in July 1989. Minor protests continued throughout 1989, but nothing like the scale of the previous year.[196] The SLORC carried out over 6,000 politically-motivated arrests by the end of 1989.[197]

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[193] Christina Fink, *Living Silence: Burma under Military Rule* (New York: Zed Books, 2001), 58–59.

[194] Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 206.

[195] Fink, *Living Silence: Burma under Military Rule*, 62; Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 200.

[196] Fink, *Living Silence: Burma under Military Rule*, 105.

[197] Fink, 62–68.

Elections eventually took place on May 27, 1990. Despite the oppression, the NLD and the United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD) won the majority of parliamentary seats. However, the SLORC did not honor the election results. Instead, the government arrested opposition leaders and maintained the military-led dictatorship.[198] The Tatmadaw continues to control the country today. There have been more civil resistance campaigns, notably the Buddhist monk-led Saffron Revolution in 2007, and attempts at liberalization with future elections. However, a coup in 2021 placed the country back in the control of the military.

2. USG Support

The United States Government did not provide direct support for the civil resistance movement. Notably, VOA broadcast in the area to communicate the Least Developed Country status, which motivated protest, and to direct activists to Rangoon during the August demonstrations.[199] After the SLORC coup, the United States cut financial aid, weapons sales, and downgraded diplomatic relations.[200]

3. Analysis

Economic instability coupled with outrage at heavy-handed treatment were the most significant factors expanding political opportunities for the 1988 pro-democratic uprising. Burma's isolation and economic policies under Ne Win impoverished its citizens, but the 1987 reforms demonetizing currency were not enough to generate the resistance needed for a pro-democracy movement. It was the Tatmadaw's harsh reaction to protests that spurred further action and created enough will to mobilize.

Still, the timing of the protests was suspect based on the lack of other political opportunities. There was no particularly new ideological openness, no existential threat to majority or minority ethnic groups, or outside support for the pro-democracy movement.

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[198] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 184.

[199] Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 193; Schulz, *Civil Resistance and Democracy Promotion*, 39.

[200] Tompkins, *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*, 172.

Examining the uprising's political opportunities from the perspective of McAdam's four dimensions[201] of political opportunity:

- There was no change in the openness of the institutionalized political system. The BSPP and Tatmadaw were still politically supreme.
- There was no discernible division in elite alignment.
- No elite allies for the civil resistance, no influential domestic politicians or popular heroes. The near exception to this is Aung San Suu Kyi who was not influential until after Ne Win stepped down. There was also no significant outside support; the international community was barely aware of the protest movement even leading up to the August 8 protests.[202]
- There was no change in the BSPP's capability or willingness for repression. The Tatmadaw conducted brutal, frequent, and highly publicized acts of violence against unarmed protestors since the junta's formation and protestors would have known this.

Given these conditions, it is amazing that the protest movement formed at all or had the influence it did.

Despite political conditions that existed for the nascent pro-democracy movement, opportunities expanded significantly as the civil resistance campaign developed. After Ne Win stepped down, there was a visible rift in the BSPP. Ne Win suggested a referendum for multi-party elections, but party elites quickly removed this possibility. Ne Win's public announcement suggesting a multi-party system may have even provided a goal for future protests to rally around.[203] Sein Lwin stepping down and the appointment of Maung Maung demonstrated to citizens the disruptive effect protests achieved even before the SLORC coup.

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[201] McAdam, "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions," 27.

[202] Schulz, *Civil Resistance and Democracy Promotion*, 39.

[203] Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 200.

The movement largely failed because it did not exploit its expanding political opportunities. Protestors and reform leadership mistakenly ended widespread protests after the brutal SLORC repression in September 1988. Pre-election, it was clear the government did not intend to relinquish power or afford rights to opposition parties. While protests continued on a smaller scale, widespread protests that could have solidified political gains did not occur as they did in the Mongolian pro-democracy movement.

Given, the environment and heavy-handed response to protests, it is impressive that the Burmese pro-democracy movement mobilized at all. The uprising was entirely indigenous and grew increasingly complex as the resistance campaign developed. It is clear there was some sort of resistance that fueled protest or discussed regime change throughout the 1960s and 1970s but it had to survive as a clandestine organization, "… the pro-democracy civil resistance in Burma could only survive by going underground, and even then, it was extremely risky to participate, not least because the regime often detected the resistance."[204] Despite the dormant underground movement, the initial catalyst in Rangoon was spontaneous and grassroots. Antigovernment and pro-democracy reformists were then able to direct the grievances held by protestors and mobilize more of Burmese society.

Reformers were able to expand their social networks to form closer bonds with other activists in prison and when sent home to rural areas.[205] When classes resumed in May, and especially as the protests grew in scale, the results of increased sophistication and coordination were apparent. Protests were no longer spontaneous and bore great similarity with the development of strike committees, common themes in speeches, common use of symbols, the development of newspapers, and coordination between cities.[206] During the August and September protests, the pro-democracy movement had near-total participation in Rangoon and other urban areas. This level of mobilization is remarkable considering the political environment only a year earlier and the Tatmadaw's willingness to use violence.

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[204] Schulz, *Civil Resistance and Democracy Promotion*, 37.

[205] Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship*, 199.

[206] Boudreau, 191.

The movement's inability to form a unified SMO and to engage large rural populations were its most significant mobilization failures. Every type of informal, formal, nonmovement, and movement organization participated in the civil resistance except for a unifying SMO. Factional differences and infighting prevented unification. U Nu's miscalculated announcement of an independent government confused pro-democracy adherents and failed to garner support from other leadership. A unified SMO could have helped encourage nonviolent discipline during protests; as it occurred, the movement was unable to maintain nonviolent discipline, and most major protests were accompanied by violent resistance and property destruction. A national-level SMO could have also maintained civil resistance during the SLORC era of government and lent political power to the NLD and UNLD. While it is difficult to predict the exact nature of a conflict between the Tatmadaw and a hypothetical unified SMO, unified protests could have demanded more concessions before opportunities for change disappeared.

The movement's successes in urban areas also could not be replicated in rural areas. While there were some rural protests, there were not enough to maintain pressure, especially during the crackdowns. When civil activists fled Rangoon and other urban areas, they joined the unsuccessful violent insurgencies instead of continuing their campaign of civil resistance in a new environment. Students fleeing for rural insurgencies or out of the country made it easier for the Tatmadaw to enforce control. Widespread, coordinated work stoppages and protests could have had just as great of a coercive effect from the countryside as the urban civil resistance.

Contributing to the lack of mobilization, the pro-democracy uprising did not benefit from widespread security forces' defection for three major reasons. First, the movement did not even attempt to sway the Tatmadaw. It was never part of the activists' strategy, and leadership even actively discouraged it. Even while denouncing the Tatmadaw's violence in speeches, Aung San Suu Kyi made statements like, "I am not looking for any assistance from the army… I strongly believe that the army should keep away from politics to

preserve its integrity, as well as for the good of the people."[207] Second, the Tatmadaw was exceptionally unified. After decades of ruling the country and fighting numerous insurgencies, it never faced a crisis that threatened it directly. During the 1988 uprising it did not need to side with Ne Win or the activists, it simply acted to restore order through a coup.[208] Thirdly, individual soldiers may have feared reprisals from the population, given their publicly known and harsh brutality.[209] While the movement was still powerful without defections, securing Tatmadaw defections would have surely undermined the government's power and spared activists' lives.

Whether it was entirely grassroots, manipulated by a pro-democracy underground, or a mixture of both, the 1988 uprising excelled at strategic framing. The movement reshaped itself to incorporate a mixture of grievances and evolved from venting emotional outrage to demanding democracy. The protests in March 1988 were triggered by a simple altercation, a fight in a Rangoon tea shop, but contributed to a movement that would gridlock the country and force three changes in government leadership. Activists' control over the cultural framing process enabled the social movement to direct frustration with the economy, the desire for ethnic autonomy, the lack of civil rights, and the country's low development status toward the goal of democracy. The networks developed by protestors at universities, when students were forced from the capital, and in prison enabled the formation and diffusion of this framing process.

Like the other cases examined in this thesis, the Burmese pro-democracy movement employed cultural and nationalistic themes in its protests. Examples include the common use of the peacock as a democratic symbol, the selection of protest dates associated with numerologically auspicious numbers (both 8–8-88 and the year prior with the failed protests of 7–7-77) or the Buddhist full moon (July 28, 1988), wearing traditional clothes,

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[207] Josef Silverstein, "Aung San Suu Kyi: Is She Burma's Woman of Destiny?," *Asian Survey* 30, no. 10 (1990): 1007–19; Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 189; Aung San Suu Kyi and Michael Aris, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 200.

[208] Yoshihiro Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution: The State and Military in Burma, 1962–1988*, Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies / Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University 8 (Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto University Press, Japan, 2013), 284.

[209] Barany, *How Armies Respond to Revolutions and Why*, 87.

and incorporating Buddhist monks in demonstrations. Combined with the highly visible protest activities, such as a march through Rangoon or public burning of BSPP membership cards, cultural symbolism was an important part of the movement's strategic framing.

However, the BSPP was also actively competing to reframe the uprising. Despite the Tatmadaw's treatment of unarmed civilians, the military still enjoyed a great deal of respect from the Burmese people, including pro-democracy leadership. Figure 4 shows a propaganda poster of a Tatmadaw soldier interacting positively with a farmer.

Figure 4. Illustration of a Tatmadaw soldier eating with a farmer[210]

The Tatmadaw framed itself as the protector of the people, with evidence to support this; the military worked with the Allies in World War II to drive the Japanese from Burma and its most famous general played a key role in gaining the nation's independence. In the

[210] Source: Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution*, 237.

1980s, the military protected the country from external threats while fighting multiple insurgencies.[211] Understandably, many people sympathized with the military, especially rural people who did not join widespread protests against the government. In addition to the credibility the BSPP drew from the Tatmadaw, the government also associated itself with important cultural traditions. The BSPP recognized that the majority of Burmans were Buddhist and closely associated itself with the Buddhist sangha. Ne Win promoted Buddhism by building pagodas and Tatmadaw generals reinforced their piety by joining religious ceremonies. However, the Buddhist monks themselves still had agency in this relationship. Monks frequently participated in the pro-democracy protests and in 1990 refused to perform religious services or accept donations from the government.

4. Conclusion

The pro-democracy civil resistance survived and grew under a harsh military regime willing to use force against unarmed protestors. The movement successfully forced three transitions in government leadership and won elections, but it demobilized too quickly and lacked unity following weeks of successful protests that brought the country to a standstill. The Burmese democratic uprising shows that civil resistance can successfully mobilize against a repressive government even though activists did not reach their goals.

[211] Barany, *How Armies Respond to Revolutions and Why*, 76.

V. DISCUSSION

A. INTERPRETATION

The cases examined in this thesis offer insight into how different civil resistance campaigns can operate, the influence of outside support, and practices a future campaign may want to include. Civil resistance offers unique benefits over armed insurgencies, both in achieving their goals and from a U.S. policy perspective. As previously noted, maximalist civil resistance campaigns are more likely to be successful and more likely to result in a stable democracy. Research indicates that civil resistance benefits from a mobilization advantage due to fewer barriers to entry and due to security forces' defection.[212] This thesis highlighted additional benefits that contribute to success and make civil resistance attractive to a U.S. sponsor.

Civil resistance may work in unique ways to expand political opportunities by increasing the openness of an institutionalized political system. The Mongolia pro-democracy movement and especially the failed Burmese Uprising show that nonviolence can be a way to create political opportunity. In Mongolia, the MDU maintained a conciliatory tone and consistently negotiated with the MPRP. Civil resistance reduced the government's internal willingness to repress the pro-democracy protests, and it also enabled members of the MPRP to advocate for reform against the hardliners in favor of brutal repression. The MDU's resistance strategy directly influenced its access to the political system. This effect was more pronounced in the Burman uprising; other than the discontent caused by poor economic conditions, opportunities to mobilize resistance were limited. The decision to demonetize currency was a significant trigger for protest, but impoverished and disorganized activists still did not have any other opening to create change. Once the protests mobilized and gained a significant following, they created their own opening in the political system by destabilizing the BSPP. The Burma movement both created division in the government elite (Ne Win's dismissed referendum and the

[212] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

subsequent leadership changes) and opened the political system for activism (see Maung Maung lifting martial law).

The mechanism for developing openness for each case was different. In Mongolia, tolerance and respect for civil behavior created opportunity. In Burma, the civil resistance's coercive power created instability leading to more tolerant leadership. Still, their differences underscore the ability of civil resistance strategy to create opportunity beyond lowering barriers to mobilization and regime defections. From the perspective of the CSMT analytical model, these civil resistance campaigns developed the conditions for their own success. To an extent, violent campaigns can also do this (e.g., reduce or defeat a state's capacity for repression), but civil resistance is unique because it can create these opportunities through influence alone and with significantly fewer resources.

Civil resistance also carries a unique sponsorship advantage for the United States. Civil resistance campaigns offer two advantages for support: they are less politically risky to support and can be effective with less financial commitment. Nonviolent campaigns do not risk alienating those who exclusively support principled nonviolence, due to ethical or religious reasons. Civil resistance campaigns also generally align with the United States's pro-democracy and self-determination values. The United States can offer public endorsements and symbolic forms of support for civil resistance movements even if direct support is not justified. For campaigns that receive more robust USG support, policymakers can commit fewer resources to achieve success. Compare the total price of the U.S. covert support to Solidarity, $20 million, against the $3 billion in covert spending to support the Afghan mujahadeen resistance in the 1980s.[213] Renting office space, providing printers, and supporting print publications are cheaper forms of support than providing ammunition or explosives. These factors satisfy both principled nonviolence supporters and policy-minded realists.

United States support could be in a direct role, in the case of financing or equipping, or simply an advisory role. The purpose for support does not necessarily have to be regime

[213] Jones, "A Covert Action"; Irwin, *Support to Resistance*, 151; Andrew Hartman, "'The Red Template': U.S. Policy in Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2002): 476.

change; the goal for supporting the Solidarity movement was simply disruption, not regime change. However, policymakers should consider which outcomes are acceptable to support a civil resistance for disruption, especially if there is a brutally repressive regime. What loss of life is acceptable for a civil resistance compared to an armed insurgency? Would leadership in the United States consider the Burma uprising's outcome successful for disruption? Gene Sharp has pointed out that civil resistance is often held to an unfair standard for casualties when compared to armed insurgencies.[214] If this is the case, leadership must make a sober analysis of risk to the social movement. Civil resistance campaigns are not always successful and never completely bloodless.

The case studies provide insight into how the USG could best support future civil resistance campaigns by using the CSMT model as a framework. Support can be divided into three main categories based on the factors essential for a successful social movement: intervention to expand the resistance's political opportunities, enhancing the movement's mobilizing structures, and augmenting the resistance's capability and capacity to frame grievances.

To maximize the chance of success, planners and policymakers should consider which element of the CSMT model could benefit the most from support. For example, Otpor excelled at framing its message and the strategic use of humor but lacked resources and organizational skills. U.S. support was effective because it shored up these weaknesses. Providing strategic advice and limited financial resources helped propel the organization toward success. The same is true for U.S. support to Solidarity. The U.S. helped expand political opportunities and covertly provided resources when the movement was most vulnerable. International support helped boost their indigenous ability to mobilize and provided political legitimacy.

The Mongolian pro-democracy movement serves as an interesting hypothetical. Should the United States have been more involved? the social movement possessed all the elements to be successful, so what would be the value of U.S. support? In this case, U.S. Support may have been unwelcome after a period of outside influence from the USSR. It

[214] Engler, "The Machiavelli of Nonviolence: Gene Sharp and the Battle Against Corporate Rule," 61.

could have also unnecessarily worsened diplomatic relations between the USSR and Mongolia or agitated conflict. From a U.S. perspective, there is not much value in investing resources and accepting political risk for something that will occur without intervention. However, this perspective still requires an accurate assessment of the social movement as it develops and benefits from historical hindsight.

The Burma uprising shows that a movement's success can be difficult to predict. While the movement lacked political opportunities at the beginning of the protests, it was able to have a profound influence before being repressed. If the U.S. had become involved, support could have had the biggest influence directly impacting political opportunities. In this scenario, undermining BSPP elites (possibly through an operation like Operation MATRIX in Serbia), pressuring the BSPP for tolerance, or enacting sanctions could have helped influence the outcome. A covert operation to provide material support, like in Poland, would likely have been unfeasible based on how isolated Burma was at the time or even unnecessary, as shown by the pro-democracy movement's resilience in surviving underground.

Each case attracted support in part because of how organizers deliberately and strategically framed the social movement's goals. However, this is not surprising. A social movement without a purpose or persuasive message is never going to mobilize enough support to even threaten a dominant government. Messaging strategies for a movement are best developed indigenously. U.S. attempts to influence potential adherents will never be as persuasive or as accurate as those developed by leaders with a nuanced historical and cultural understanding of core grievances. The USG should limit itself to providing advice on historically useful frames (e.g., use of traditional clothing or incorporating historical themes), supporting messaging through media like VOA broadcasts or the internet, or suggesting civil resistance tactics that may be helpful.

B. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Civil resistance may work in unique ways to expand political opportunities by increasing the openness of an institutionalized political system.

- Civil resistance carries a unique sponsorship advantage for the United States. Civil resistance campaigns offer two advantages for support: they are less politically risky to support and can be effective with less financial commitment.
- Planners can use CSMT to identify inherent weaknesses in a social movement. This can help guide strategy and the nature of U.S. support.
- The socioeconomic conditions required to support a civil resistance movement can take decades to coalesce.

C. CSMT FRAMEWORK FOR USG SUPPORT TO CIVIL RESISTANCE

The specific context of a social movement, which can be volatile, and the nature of a threat are challenging to predict. However, the basic elements of social movements and the mechanisms of support provide a foundation for understanding civil resistance. Tables 3, 4, and 5 demonstrate how some interventions can be developed and categorized as a planning tool:

Table 3. Support to political opportunities

Supported Element of Social Movement	Mechanism of Support	U.S. Support or Intervention
Political Opportunities	Open the institutionalized political system	Promote democracy abroad. Encourage pro-democratic concessions.
		Encourage diplomatic, academic, and military exchanges.
		Support participation in international organizations that respect international rules-based order.
	Undermine adversary elite alignments	Conduct psychological operations to undermine adversarial unity.
		Employ economic and financial sanctions against adversarial elite.
		Reduce or remove foreign military sales/ foreign military finance.
	Provide elite allies	Advocate for international support and funding.
		Provide legitimacy to allied resistance movement.
	Reduce the adversary's willingness or capability for repression	Conduct adjacent military operations.
		Support adversarial forces' defections.
		Introduce legal sanctions.

Table 4. Support to mobilizing resources

Supported Element of Social Movement	Mechanism of Support	U.S. Support or Intervention
Mobilizing Resources	Material resources	Provide overt funding and supplies.
		Provide covert support through smuggling routes.
	Support to Social Movement Organizations	Support with training, technical requirements, and advice.
		Advise unity and a central SMO aligned with the legitimate government.
	Social networks	Assist in the communication to and organization of movement, nonmovement, formal, and informal organizations.
	Free spaces	Provide funding for office space, gathering areas, and media operations.
		Develop a dispersed network of clandestine facilities for civil resistance.
		Provide a safe haven for shadow government, training key movement leadership, or media operations.

Table 5. Support for cultural framing processes

Supported Element of Social Movement	Mechanism of Support	U.S. Support or Intervention
Framing Processes	Contribute to indigenous/ allied strategic framing.	Provide advice on strategic framing.
		Provide advice on civil resistance tactics and techniques.
	Media influence	Support resistance movement's information operations through mass media.

D. THEORETICAL APPLICATION

An exercise in how the USG could provide direct to support an allied civil resistance movement requires a country-specific context. Mongolia is an interesting nation

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to apply this model because of its local experience with civil resistance campaigns, its strategic geographic location, and its historic challenges in maintaining sovereignty. This thesis does not suggest or analyze a civil resistance campaign against Mongolia's government. Mongolia benefits from a stable, legitimate democracy and is a U.S. ally. Instead, this section will identify how civil resistance could help Mongolia maintain its sovereignty against a foreign threat. Located between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, both of its neighbors have encroached on sovereign territory in recent years and made claims to justify continued expansion. Civil resistance is a tool that has successfully been used to fight against domestic regimes, occupying powers, and foreign influence. While a direct threat to Mongolia's sovereignty may be unlikely in the future, building the capacity and capability for civil resistance could serve as a deterrent against malign influence.

E. MONGOLIA'S DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Since the 1990s, Mongolia has continued to develop and modernize politically, economically, and culturally. Mongolian political life has maintained its commitment to democracy. The two most dominant parties are the Mongolian People's Party, a successor of the MPRP, and the Democratic Party which frequently cooperate in a coalition government.[215] Mongolia has maintained the peaceful transition of power through free elections which continue to have high voter turnout.[216] The country has also continued an active protest tradition. In 2008, protests in Ulaanbaatar over economic concerns and corruption became violent but political conditions have otherwise been nonviolent and stable.[217] Alongside political developments, Mongolia continued privatization throughout the 1990s and developed a free market economy.

The economy is still heavily based on herding but has become reliant on the mining industry. The majority of labor is committed to traditional herding and raising livestock.

[215] Blackwood, *Mongolia*, 1.

[216] Carol Skowron, Olga Petryniak, and Jamsranjav Chantsallkham, "Mongolia Strategic Resilience Assessment" (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps, 2017), 24.

[217] Luvsandendev Sumati, "Mongolia" (Berlin: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2009), 96.

However, this makes up a small portion of exports or economic contributions. Herding makes up approximately 35% of the labor force but less than 15% of the Gross Domestic Product.[218] The livestock sector also faces problems from the increasing number of livestock, rangeland degradation, and climate change. Unpredictable rainfall and dzud (winter blizzards) complicate raising livestock.[219] A dzud can have catastrophic results on a herd by preventing livestock from reaching grass underneath ice and snow; the 2011 dzud resulted in 10–15 million animal deaths and many households lost their entire herd.[220] Most of the products from herding are consumed locally. The mining industry, which by comparison only employs 4% of the population is responsible for 80% of the country's exports and 40% of government revenue.[221] Mongolia's economy is closely intertwined with its immediate neighbors. In 2022, 84% of Mongolia's exports were from China. In the same year, it received 35% of its imports from China, 30% of its imports from Russia, and imported 90% of its energy from Russia.[222] Dependence on foreign trade and domestic circumstances combine to make the Mongolian economy vulnerable to environmental conditions and commodity price shocks, especially in the mining sector.[223] These conditions also drive migration within the country, primarily to the capital.

The massive influx of people to Ulaanbaatar contributes to Mongolia's changing political and cultural identity. In 2023, half of Mongolia's 3.3 million population lived in Ulaanbaatar.[224] The majority, 70%, live in ger districts; a ger is a traditional, round tent traditionally used by nomadic herders. While Ulaanbaatar has had ger districts since its founding in 1639, urbanization since 1990 is unprecedented.[225] Approximately half of the

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[218] Skowron, Petryniak, and Chantsallkham, "Mongolia: STRESS Report," 16.

[219] Skowron, Petryniak, and Chantsallkham, 6.

[220] Richard Fraser, "In-Between the Rural and the Urban: Skill and Migration in Ulaanbaatar's Ger-Districts," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 88, no. 3 (2023): 666.

[221] Skowron, Petryniak, and Chantsallkham, "Mongolia: STRESS Report," 19.

[222] Blackwood, *Mongolia*, 1.

[223] Skowron, Petryniak, and Chantsallkham, "Mongolia: STRESS Report," 28.

[224] Blackwood, *Mongolia*, 1.

[225] Fraser, "In-Between the Rural and the Urban: Skill and Migration in Ulaanbaatar's Ger-Districts," 641–42.

migrants to Ulaanbaatar are young, between 15–29, seeking educational, social, and economic opportunities. Other migration includes families looking for economic opportunities, especially herders suffering financially from challenging conditions or recovering from a dzud.[226] Infrastructure in the ger districts is poor compared to more developed portions of the city; 80% of ger district residents do not have heating, sewage, or potable water. The lack of heating, in particular, is challenging in the winter. Most households spend 40% of their income on coal for heating; the predominant use of coal heating also exacerbates poor air quality in the city.[227] Urbanization and the ger districts' growth have contributed to ongoing social concerns. Poor living conditions combined with the loss of traditional roles challenge ideas on the Mongolian identity and have manifested societal issues with unemployment, violence, and substance abuse.[228]

Since the 1990s, Mongolia's relationship with its neighbors has shifted; throughout Mongolia's history, political life can be understood through its relationships with its large neighbors. Mongolia has participated in a wide range of economic cooperation, diplomacy, and military engagement with China and Russia. However, China and Russia both present security dilemmas. Both nations are autocratic, have contested the sovereignty of their neighbors, and have deep ties to Mongolia.

China is Mongolia's most influential neighbor and biggest trade partner.[229] On the world stage, China is the most populous nation, has the second-largest economy by Gross Domestic Product, and is a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.[230] While China struggles with demographic issues, growing national debt, and unpredictable future succession, it is a dynamic country with significant international influence.[231] China's

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[226] Fraser, "In-Between the Rural and the Urban: Skill and Migration in Ulaanbaatar's Ger-Districts"; Skowron, Petryniak, and Chantsallkham, "Mongolia: STRESS Report," 27.

[227] Fraser, "In-Between the Rural and the Urban: Skill and Migration in Ulaanbaatar's Ger-Districts," 646–58.

[228] Fraser, 663; Skowron, Petryniak, and Chantsallkham, "Mongolia: STRESS Report," 32–33.

[229] Blackwood, *Mongolia*, 1.

[230] Susan V. Lawrence et al., *U.S. China Relations*, CRS Report No. R45898 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 5, https://crsreports.congress.gov.

[231] Gregory Treverton, "Think Again about China," *The Hill*, May 30, 2021, https://thehill.com/opinion/international/556117-think-again-about-china/.

economic growth and development directly impact Mongolia, especially the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. The BRI is an infrastructure program that seeks to unite 2/3 of the world's population through six economic corridors. One of these corridors is proposed to connect China and Russia through Mongolia.[232]

This is an attractive project for Mongolia because BRI can bolster infrastructure and funding deficits, increase economic connectivity, and contribute to regional development.[233] However, this project is not strictly assistance. The PRC often requires interest on infrastructure loans and collateral commitments. This leads to concerns regarding sovereignty when the PRC collects on "unsustainable debt obligations," like the BRI port development project in Sri Lanka.[234] The Sri Lankan government was unable to meet debt requirements for Chinese infrastructure at the Colombo Port, so it traded its debt for a 99-year lease agreement. A Chinese business also took majority ownership of the port and nearby land for development.[235] This ceded critical infrastructure to the PRC and paved the way for the growth of a community resembling a Chinese colony in Sri Lanka.[236] Whether these are simply bad loans or part of a debt-trap diplomacy plan is debatable, but saddling developing nations with unsustainable debt is not unique to the BRI project in Sri Lanka. A Center for Global Development report showed that Mongolia and seven other countries are also vulnerable to BRI debt.[237]

China's territorial assertions are also a troubling security concern in the region. The PRC makes expansive claims in the South China Sea by claiming ownership of everything

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[232] Suisheng Zhao, "China's Belt-Road Initiative as the Signature of President Xi Jinping Diplomacy: Easier Said than Done," *Journal of Contemporary China* 29, no. 123 (2019): 320.

[233] Zhao, 325.

[234] Karen M. Sutter, Andres B. Schwarzenberg, and Michael D. Sutherland, *China's "One Belt, One Road" Initiative: Economic Issues*, CRS Report No. IF11735 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2023), 1–2, https://crsreports.congress.gov.

[235] Zhao, "China's Belt-Road Initiative as the Signature of President Xi Jinping Diplomacy: Easier Said than Done," 331.

[236] Patrick Mendis and Joey Wang, "Reconsidering the Belt and Road Initiative," *China-US Focus*, 2018, https://www.chinausfocus.com/finance-economy/2018/0112/15989.html.

[237] John Hurley, Scott Morris, and Gailyn Portelance, "Examining the Debt Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative from a Policy Perspective" (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2018), 6.

within the "nine-dash line." These claims challenge the territory of other nations in the area including Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The PRC has attempted to legitimize and solidify claims within the "nine-dash line" by developing artificial islands in the Spratly Island Chain. The PRC also claims sovereignty over Taiwan, with which the United States maintains only unofficial relations.[238] Many in the USG believe that the PRC intends to attack Taiwan to enforce its territorial claim sometime between 2020 and 2030, which is referred to as the "decade of concern."[239]

Mongolia's second neighbor, Russia, also presents security concerns. Russia has frequently employed its military against its neighbors in what it considers its sphere of influence. The RF has a fundamentally different perspective on international relations than democratic nations and has demonstrated the willingness to use hostile measures, military and nonmilitary, to accomplish policy goals.[240] In the last three decades, the RF has supported separatists in the Transdniester region of Moldova, occupied two breakaway regions in Georgia, annexed Crimea, backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine, and conducted a large-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian troops remain in each country despite objections from the legitimate local governments.[241] Misinformation campaigns accompanied each military operation, but the RF has also used information operations independently, like its election interference campaign in the 2016 U.S. presidential race.[242] In response to these actions, the West has enacted extensive sanctions on Russian interests.

These sanctions have caused Russia to withdraw and become more self-reliant, except for its expanded relations with China. Russia and China first strengthened ties in

[238] Lawrence et al., *U.S. China Relations*, 29–36.

[239] Ronald O'Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities – Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. RL33153 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2024), 49–50, https://crsreports.congress.gov.

[240] Keir Giles, "What Deters Russia: Enduring Principles for Responding to Moscow," Russia and Eurasia Programme (London: Chatham House, 2021), 2.

[241] RFE/RL's Moldovan Service, "Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine Voice Concern Over Russian Presence," *Radio Free Europe*, 2018.

[242] Felipe Bonow Soares, Anatoliy Gruzd, and Philip Mai, "Falling for Russian Propaganda: Understanding the Factors That Contribute to Belief in Pro-Kremlin Disinformation on Social Media," *Social Media + Society* 1, no. 10 (2023): 2.

2014 due to sanctions following Russia's annexation of Crimea. This economic relationship grew in 2022 as Russia became reliant on China to bypass Western sanctions. In 2023, China was the second destination for Russian exports, most significantly oil and gas, and the second source of imports.[243] Despite the 2022 announcement of a partnership that "knows no limits," the Chinese and Russian economic relationship overwhelmingly favors the PRC. Chinese commodities make up 20% of the RF's trade volume, while Russian products make up only 3% of the PRC's trade volume. This disparity is even more apparent in foreign investments; "it can be argued that China is among Russia's largest investors, whereas Russia's direct and accumulated investments in China… are still relatively insignificant."[244] This continues a trend that began in 2013 in which Russia has steadily increased trade with China instead of the European Union, but Russia still represents a small portion of China's overall trade.[245]

The developing relationship between the two nations challenges Mongolia's status as a buffer state and neutral nation. One analysis argues that Mongolia's value as a buffer state has decreased due to improved relations between Russia and China.[246] However this perspective discounts centuries of competition between the states and how future administrations will approach cooperation. Mongolia's status as a neutral nation and buffer state serves to prevent dependence on either Russia or China. The introduction of the "third neighbor" policy was designed to balance the power and interests of Russia and China with democratic nations from abroad. The "third neighbor" is not a single nation but includes the United States, Japan, South Korea, and the European community. In the mid-1990s, the

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[243] Andres B. Schwarzenberg, *Russia's Trade and Investment Role in the Global Economy*, CRS Report No. IF12066 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2023), https://crsreports.congress.gov; Ricardo Barrios and Andrew S. Bowen, *China-Russia Relations*, CRS Report No. IF12100 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2023), https://crsreports.congress.gov.

[244] Sergei Lukonin, "Russia-China Relations: An Asymmetrical Partnership," *MGIMO Review of International Relations* 16, no. 2 (2023): 65.

[245] Karen M. Sutter and Michael D. Sutherland, *China's Economic and Trade Ties with Russia*, CRS Report No. IF12120 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2022), 1, https://crsreports.congress.gov.

[246] Jaehyuk Jang and Kisun Kim, "Mongolia Becoming a Permanent Neutral Nation? Focusing on the Debate and Challenges of the Permanent Neutral Nation Policy.," *The Pacific Review* 37, no. 3 (2023): 506, https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/09512748.2023.2184853.

“third neighbor policy” developed into a formula to roughly balance a multi-pronged foreign policy: 30:30:40. The Mongolian government would attempt to divide its diplomatic focus with 30% to Russia, 30% to China, and 40% to third neighbors.[247] These efforts to balance local influence and international participation include the use of Mongolia’s military. Mongolian forces took combat roles in Iraq and Afghanistan in addition to peacekeeping operations in Sudan and South Sudan. Mongolia also participates in bilateral exercises with NATO, Japan, and its traditional partners Russia and China.[248]

Foreign interests also directly challenge Mongolia’s neutrality. Russia has a vested interest in preventing neutrality due to its desire to maintain influence. China wants to further its diplomatic mission and BRI programs. Both China and Russia have pressured Mongolia to support their contentious foreign policy, military operations in Ukraine and claims in the South China Sea, respectively.[249] Even the United States, as a third neighbor, opposes neutrality because the USG values continued military cooperation between Mongolia and NATO.[250] Full neutrality has the added impediments that it requires other nations to accept neutrality and it limits foreign policy options. Mongolia nullified its permanent neutral nation policy in 2020.[251]

Russia’s territorial aggression and China’s expanding interest in globalization pose more complex threats to Mongolian security. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 demonstrated the nation’s disregard for a neighbor’s sovereignty. This development not only stressed Mongolia’s own security planning to defend against traditional threats but also hybrid threats. The RF has shown a propensity to adopt hybrid warfare, using different modes of warfare to achieve physical and psychological effects, including the use of information operations.[252] Competition in the information environment is complicated

[247] Battogtokh Javzandolgor et al., “Political Culture and Foreign Policy of a Buffer Country: In the Case of Contemporary Mongolia” (National University of Mongolia, 2022), 14.

[248] Jang and Kim, “Mongolia Becoming a Permanent Neutral Nation? Focusing on the Debate and Challenges of the Permanent Neutral Nation Policy.,” 521–24.

[249] Jang and Kim, 517.

[250] Jang and Kim, 523–24.

[251] Jang and Kim, 504.

[252] Bettina Renz, “Russia and ‘Hybrid Warfare,’” *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 285.

by Mongolia's domestic environment. Because broadcast media is cheap, domestic political parties all have competing media companies which creates a low-trust environment.[253] Research has shown that trust in partisan media, compared to nonpartisan, is associated with vulnerability to Russian propaganda.[254] Chinese development programs, like the BRI, also create mechanisms for coercive leverage. If the country is made vulnerable by debt or economic commitments, it could be coerced into supporting a Chinese attack on Taiwan or even ceding territory. BRI also has a persuasive psychological impact by demonstrating China's strength and economic progress.[255] The infrastructure itself has its own propaganda value to increase Chinese influence.

Mongolia's development since its democratic revolution is characterized by a stable political environment, transforming society, and urbanization. The nation faces challenges from its economy which is vulnerable to market changes or severe weather conditions. Urbanization has propelled the nation forward in development and sophistication but has also resulted in social challenges. At the same time, Mongolia has other concerns about its resiliency. Mongolia has delicately balanced interests to maintain economic, diplomatic, and military cooperation with its neighbors. However, this cooperation is undermined by its immediate neighbor's territorial assertions, aggression towards other sovereign nations, and application of hybrid strategies.

F. CONCEPT FOR SUPPORT TO CIVIL RESISTANCE

Any USG action related to resilience or resistance should be bilateral with Mongolian partners; strategies must respect Mongolian law and autonomy. Taking any deterrent actions unilaterally undermines mutual relations and a nonviolent social movement's chances for success. Since Mongolia transitioned to a democracy, it has carefully managed relations between its immediate neighbors and international, or third

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[253] Sumati, "Mongolia," 106.

[254] Soares, Gruzd, and Mai, "Falling for Russian Propaganda: Understanding the Factors That Contribute to Belief in Pro-Kremlin Disinformation on Social Media," 5.

[255] Zhao, "China's Belt-Road Initiative as the Signature of President Xi Jinping Diplomacy: Easier Said than Done," 325.

neighbors.[256] Any strategy designed on deterrence, even against a neighboring authoritarian government, must avoid antagonizing relations.

Instead of developing new structures for resistance, a Mongolia-U.S. partnership can implement structures already present. In 2018, the Mongolian Khural enacted the Territorial Defense Law.[257] This law implemented a comprehensive defense system to include all parts of society in national defense, similar to theory discussed in the *Resistance Operating Concept* or *NATO Comprehensive Defence Handbook*.[258] While national defense often focuses on military components, it enables territorial and local leadership to prepare for resilience and resistance. A component of this could be civil resistance. Previous research indicates that mobilization occurs at the greatest scales when using preexisting networks.[259] The law already includes provisions to increase coordination with the civil sectors of society, including local citizens and organizations, like the National Emergency Management Agency.[260]

Preparation for civil society could also extend to include coordination with organizations that have been historical sources for mobilization in Mongolia, like university systems and workers' unions. Integrating networks within civil society, identifying potential local leadership, and conducting training on civil resistance would aid mobilization against an adversarial threat. This also has the advantage of ensuring a civil resistance movement has unity of effort aligned with the Mongolian government. Civil resistance can also be aligned with reinforcing Mongolian identity. A 2007 study by the Sant Maral Foundation showed that Mongolians strongly value freedom and individual

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[256] Munkh-Ochir Dorjjugder, "Correlation of Identity and Interest in Foreign Policy : Implications for Mongolia" (Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), 5, https://hdl.handle.net/10945/856.

[257] *Territorial Defense Law* (Mongolian Great Khural, 2018), https://legalinfo.mn/mn/detail/ 13524; Munkhbayar Bayarsaikhan, "The Role of Mongolian Special Operations Forces in Territorial Defense" (Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, 2022), https://hdl.handle.net/10945/71433.

[258] Bayarsaikhan, "The Role of Mongolian Special Operations Forces in Territorial Defense," 10; Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)*; NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *Comprehensive Defence Handbook*.

[259] Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment"; Lee, Doowan, "A Social Movement Approach to Unconventional Warfare."

[260] Bayarsaikhan, "The Role of Mongolian Special Operations Forces in Territorial Defense," 13.

freedoms.[261] Identifying civil resistance as a tactic to protect democracy and individual freedoms compliments Mongolia's history of pro-democracy resistance; showing that even untrained civilians without military experience can help defend the nation's sovereignty can have a powerful effect toward encouraging national unity in crisis. Even if a civil resistance campaign is never mobilized, building on relationships in the civil sector enhances national resiliency in a crisis.

In a 2022 thesis, Munkhbayar Bayarsaikhan argues that Mongolian Special Operations Forces (SOF) should have a pivotal role in training the Territorial Defense Force because SOF is the most prepared organization for a hybrid threat.[262] This presents a unique opportunity for partnership with the U.S. military and U.S. SOF. While it may seem counter-intuitive to have the military help develop a civil resistance capacity, the military has unique expertise working within the human domain, mobilizing large amounts of people, and with strategic planning. Consider retired COL Helvey's training for Otpor or the amount of noncombat roles in a modern military that focus on logistics or communications. SOF, in particular, have expertise in conducting IW and the nonstandard practices used to develop, support, or partner with an underground. While the military may have an institutional bias for armed conflict, policymakers would still control strategy. Even with military involvement, a civil resistance campaign could be mobilized entirely without armed insurgency. While the military may have a larger capacity to partner, any element supporting resistance should be interagency. Other government agencies have capabilities beyond the military, such as training election observers or covert operations.

If active resistance is necessary, the United States could provide support to a civil resistance campaign using the CSMT model to develop strategy. Whether the threat is an irregular threat within Mongolia, malign foreign influence, or a territorial incursion, the U.S. could provide tailored support based on the needs of the Territorial Defense Force and any augmenting civil resistance organizations. Support for resistance would foremost need to assert Mongolia's sovereignty because of its political status and history of democracy.

[261] Sumati, "Mongolia," 95; "Report on Voter Education" (Sant Maral Foundation, 2008).

[262] Bayarsaikhan, "The Role of Mongolian Special Operations Forces in Territorial Defense," 69.

In that sense, types of support that undermine government legitimacy would be inappropriate. Also based on feasibility alone, some interventions would be impractical. For example, covertly developing an infiltration route to provide material support would be difficult because of Mongolia's geographic location. Support to enhance mobilizing structures would best be conducted before a conflict. The USG's ability to support a civil resistance movement is also significantly enhanced if U.S. partners can be present with resistance leadership. Direct partnership in peacetime helps facilitate this. Table 6 shows the elements of a whole of government strategy supporting nonviolent social movements in Mongolia:

Table 6. Support to civil resistance options

<table>
<tr><th>Supported Element of Social Movement</th><th>Mechanism of Support</th><th>U.S. Support or Intervention</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Political Opportunities</td><td rowspan="2">Undermine adversary elite alignments.</td><td>Conduct psychological operations to undermine adversarial unity.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employ economic and financial sanctions against adversarial elite.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Provide elite allies.</td><td>Assert the Republic of Mongolia's sovereignty.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Advocate for legitimate governance through International Organizations.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mobilizing Resources</td><td>Support to SMO</td><td>Support with technical requirements, intelligence, and advice.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Support to SMO</td><td>Partner and advise SMO leadership. Provide communications capability to the government.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Framing Processes</td><td>Support indigenous strategic framing.</td><td>Support resistance movement's information operations domestically and internationally.</td></tr>
</table>

Note that this does not identify specific civil resistance practices. Other resources exist for developing civil resistance tactics; Gene Sharp's 198 methods of nonviolent action are a foundational resource that have since been updated to account for modern

technology.[263] Mongolian leadership is best able to identify tactics that would resonate culturally and introduce new protest methods. For example, protests with traditional dress and hunger strikes are now part of the cultural context, but flash mobs or self-mutilation as protest may not be understood or effective.

G. CONCLUSION

U.S. support to civil resistance has historically been most effective when it addresses the social movement's weaknesses as understood through CSMT. While direct support may not be necessary at all, CSMT is a useful tool when developing strategies to assist a resistance movement. Partnering with an ally to prepare before a crisis or conflict can enhance a movement's ability to mobilize. In some cases, partnership and support for the resistance may decisively affect its outcome.

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[263] Sharp, *The Power and Struggle*; Beer, *Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century*.

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