

# From Dissent to Democracy: The Promise and Perils of Civil Resistance Transitions

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Below is the pre-print version of the introductory chapter, pages 1-19 in the final published book.

## Introduction: When the Revolution Doesn't Deliver

“Liberation may be the condition of freedom but by no means leads automatically to it...the notion of liberty implied in liberation can only be negative, and hence, that even the intention of liberating is not identical with the desire for freedom. Yet if these truisms are frequently forgotten, it is because liberation has always loomed large and the foundation of freedom has always been uncertain, if not altogether futile.”

- Hannah Arendt (1963), *On Revolution*

The old activist's description was unequivocal. “We thought Zambia was going to be a paradise, a heaven on earth...the private sector would create jobs for people...people would have freedom of expression...and the government would create an enabling environment for them to do whatever they wanted to do.”<sup>i</sup>

After a year and a half organizing protests and rallies against the country's single party socialist government his group – the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) – had been on the verge of a democratic breakthrough. Their task was not easy. After only a brief period of democracy in the 1960s and early 1970s Zambia had become a single party state in the hands of

the United National Independence Party (UNIP). Power had become increasingly centralized around founding President Kenneth Kaunda. UNIP encouraged a cult of personality for Kaunda, ascribing almost superhuman abilities to the man. The slogan was: “In heaven, there is God. On earth, there is Kaunda.”

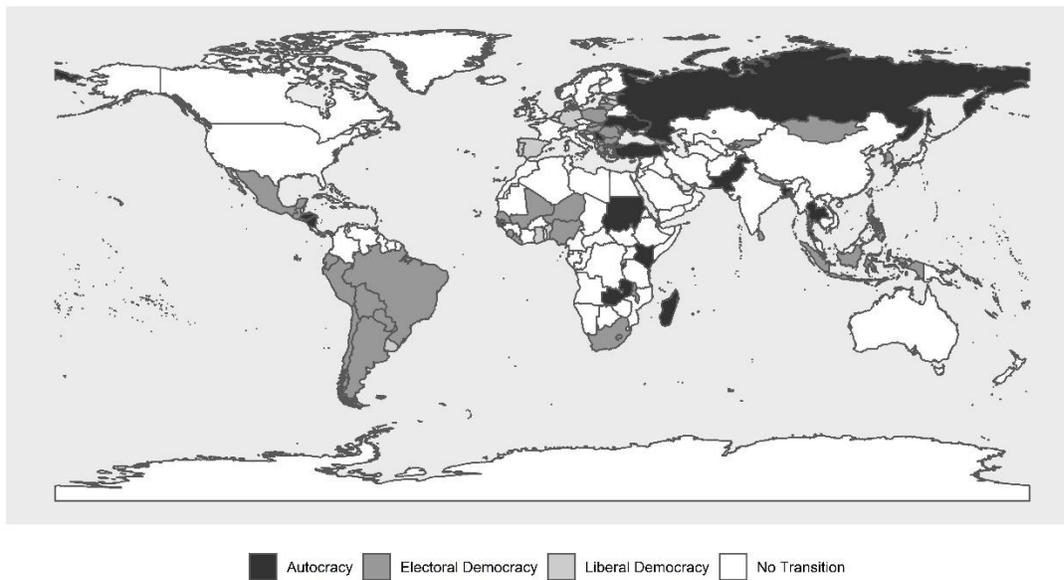
Despite the strength of the government’s opposition the MMD had won several victories. They pressured the government first to legalize other parties, and then to hold presidential and legislative elections. The ruling party was still trying to use state resources as its personal election fund and hoping to continue its rule with only the trappings of democracy. Yet through careful campaigning, nation-wide organization and a strong network of local supporting organizations the MMD slowly but surely began undermining UNIP’s hold on the Zambian political system. As the election approached, UNIP’s core structures began to collapse, with prominent figures defecting to MMD in droves. And finally, when the election came, MMD was able to not only win but to nearly sweep the parliament and gain three quarters of the presidential vote. It was a peaceful revolution, a dramatic overturning of the country’s political system through civic pressure from below. The conditions were in place for the MMD to create the “paradise” that they had promised.

Yet as the conversation continued the story rapidly turned from excitement and hope to frustration and disgust. New leaders used the privileges of office to foster their own interests and promote networks of corruption and patrimonialism. New jobs went to underqualified recipients based on kickbacks and tribal allegiance. The MMD government routinely obstructed the freedom of expression they had promised, using the repressive tactics of their old dictatorial opponents. A state of emergency and constitutional amendments a few years after the MMD

came to power with the transparent goal of disenfranchising the opposition marked a definitive turn away from the democratic path.

This outcome is sadly all too frequent. Many of the transitions of democracy’s “third wave” (Huntington, 1993) since the 1970s have failed to result in robust, high-quality democratic regimes. Countries have remained perpetually mired in “transition” (Carothers, 2002), established quasi-democratic institutions described in terms such as “competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky & Way, 2010), “illiberal democracy” (Zakaria, 1997) or “hybrid regimes” (Diamond, 2002), or reverted to dictatorship after only brief open periods (Svolik, 2008). The map in Figure 0.1 shows these trends’ prominence. Out of the 71 countries that have experienced democratic transitions since Portugal’s “Carnation Revolution” of 1974 (the typical starting point for the third wave of democratization), only 12 are liberal democracies today, 39 are minimally democratic, and 20 have returned to autocracy.<sup>ii</sup>

Figure 1.1: Democracy After Third-Wave Transitions, 1974-2019



The failure of many of these recent transitions connects intimately to another important global trend: what some have identified as a significant era of democratic decline (Diamond 2015; Mechkova, Lührmann, and Lindberg 2017; Mounk 2018). While the decline has multiple causes, including the erosion of democratic institutions in many formerly strong democracies, much of it can be explained through the failure of recent democratic transitions or democratic backsliding in new democracies.

What is puzzling about a case like Zambia is that its political transition had one key characteristic that scholarship would suggest might protect it from democratic reversal: its political breakthrough was initiated, led and brought to fruition through a peaceful, organized campaign from the bottom-up: a campaign of nonviolent resistance.<sup>iii</sup> While early democratization literature focused on the positive effects of elite-led transitions (Higley & Burton, 2006; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986), more recent work has found strong evidence that nonviolent revolutions are uniquely positioned to promote democracy in the political regimes that follow them (Celestino & Gleditsch, 2013; Johnstad, 2010; Karatnycky & Ackerman, 2005; Teorell, 2010).

Nonviolent resistance has numerous effects that should promote democracy. For instance, it involves ordinary people in political action, spreading norms of empowerment that diffuse influence from elites to the masses (Sharp, 1973). It creates networks of civic engagement that support strong democratic institutions (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994). And it often brings to power inspiring leaders like Nelson Mandela or Vaclav Havel who use their moral authority to push their countries down the democratic path.

Yet often the nonviolent overthrow of a dictator is followed not by a smooth transition to democracy but instead by violence, instability, and a return to dictatorship. Why these patterns occur has been of particular salience in the scholarly and policy literature in the years since the 2011 uprisings across the Middle East typically referred to as the “Arab Spring” (Roberts, Willis, McCarthy, & Ash, 2016; Zartman, 2015). Popular, primarily nonviolent revolutions in a part of the world that had long been resistant to democratic change created a moment of hope and a seeming vindication for advocates of democracy even in the most difficult environments. Yet the following years brought chaos in Libya, civil wars in Syria and Yemen, and a new even harsher authoritarian regime in Egypt. As of late 2019, Tunisia is the only country that appears to have emerged from the political transitions of the Arab Spring with its democratic institutions intact. These varying outcomes have highlighted both the potential power of nonviolent resistance to bring about change and the challenges that come once a major change has been initiated.

While the Arab Spring and its subsequent transitions focused scholarly and popular attention on nonviolent revolutions and their aftermath, the Arab Spring was far from unique, as the example from Zambia that opened this introduction shows. Both in the occurrence of large, primarily nonviolent revolutions and in the variation in their outcomes, the uprisings of 2011 are only one of the latest in a long historical trend that includes waves from Africa in the 1960s, Southern Europe in the 1970s, Latin America in the 1980s, and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Indeed, from the end of World War II through the Arab Spring of 2011, 78 political transitions across 64 countries were primarily initiated by nonviolent resistance.

The variation in these transitions’ outcomes has been immense, emphasizing the importance of understanding their dynamics. When nonviolent revolutions go right, they can lead

to high-quality democracies that transformatively improve the lives of their citizens, as in places like Portugal (Fernandes, 2015). Yet when they go wrong, the effects can be devastating and deadly, as seen in Egypt, where two turbulent years of transition from 2011-2013 culminated in a military coup, bringing authoritarian president Abdulfatah al-Sisi to power and initiating a period of repression even worse than the one that preceded the revolution (Ketchley, 2017).

So why do nonviolent revolutions sometimes go so very wrong? Why do successful nonviolent revolutions sometimes lead to democracy and sometimes not? Few scholars have looked directly at the mechanisms that connect nonviolent resistance with democratization, meaning that we have little systematic knowledge of when these mechanisms are likely to successfully operate and when they will not. Thus, variation in the outcomes of transitions initiated by nonviolent resistance remains a major scholarly puzzle. In this book I take on this puzzle, proposing a theory of the connection between nonviolent resistance and democratization that builds on the disparate insights of the scholarly literatures on these topics.

### The Argument: Mobilization and Maximalism

My central argument is that while successful nonviolent resistance indeed sets up political transitions that are more likely to lead to democracy, for these advantages to carry through into a new democratic regime they must meet and overcome several unique challenges. The positive effects of nonviolent resistance on democracy such as increased empowerment for ordinary people and spreading norms of consensus-based conflict resolution are indirect. They operate at a temporal remove. For nonviolent resistance to lead to democracy these effects must carry through an uncertain political transition when the rules of the political game are in flux.

The unique characteristics of nonviolent revolutions set up transitions whose politics differ systematically from others, such as armed revolutions or top-down liberalizations. To answer the question of how and when nonviolent revolutions lead to democracy, we must put civil resistance transitions under their own investigation, analyzing how their patterns of political interaction lead to unique democratic challenges. What are these challenges? The theory that I develop in Chapter 1, building on what we know about democratic transitions in general and nonviolent resistance specifically, leads me to hypothesize that two patterns of political behavior are highly likely to influence the level of democracy at the end of a civil resistance transition.

First, the high levels of *mobilization* characteristic of a nonviolent resistance movement must carry through the transition. This holds new elites accountable and ensures that the masses maintain the temporary power advantage of a nonviolent revolution until new institutions are in place. Second, political actors must redirect the tools of nonviolent resistance from the revolutionary breakdown of power structures into institutionalized paths. If they fail to do so, then the political system is characterized by what I refer to as *maximalism*. The higher the degree of mobilization and the lower the degree of maximalism during a CRT, the greater the likelihood of democracy at the transition's end.

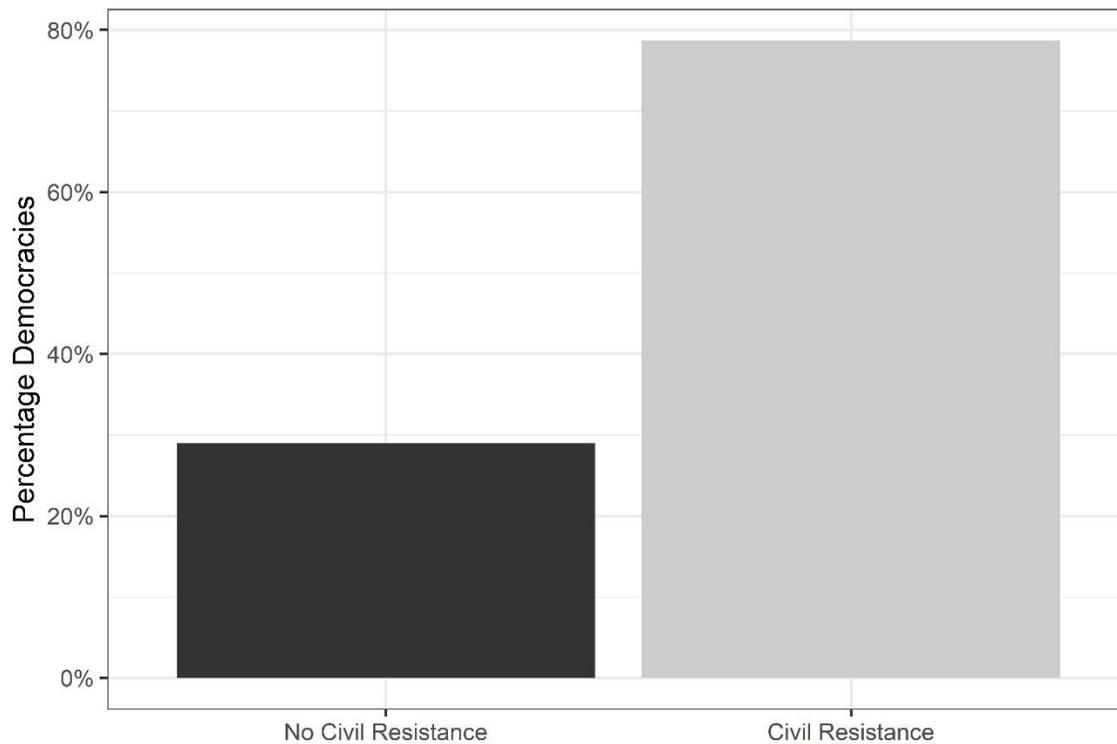
Patterns of mobilization and maximalism are influenced by earlier political, social, and economic structures, but are not fully determined by them. Instead they arise from patterns of strategic interaction between major political actors during the transition. This means both that we cannot fully predict a transition's level of mobilization and maximalism, and that these patterns of behavior have their own independent effects, rather than simply acting as the channels through which prior structural forces act upon politics.

## Previewing the Evidence

The claims I have just presented are all empirical, subject to testing and falsification. The bulk of the book is devoted to this testing, involving an integrated set of quantitative and qualitative research methods. I leverage the strengths of both these approaches through a nested analysis research design (Lieberman, 2005), blending the scope and external validity of quantitative analysis with the in-depth examination of causal mechanisms provided by qualitative methods.<sup>iv</sup>

The evidence provides strong support for the book's hypotheses. I present the bulk of the statistical evidence in Chapter 2 and highlight some of the key findings here. First, following prior work in the nonviolent resistance literature, I find strong evidence that civil resistance transitions are indeed much more likely to result in democratization than other modes of transition. Figure 0.2 shows this difference.<sup>v</sup> Nearly 80 percent of transitions initiated by nonviolent resistance ended with at least a minimal level of democracy, while less than 30 percent of transitions initiated by other means ended with the same minimal level of democracy.

Figure 1.2: Rates of Democracy by Transition Type

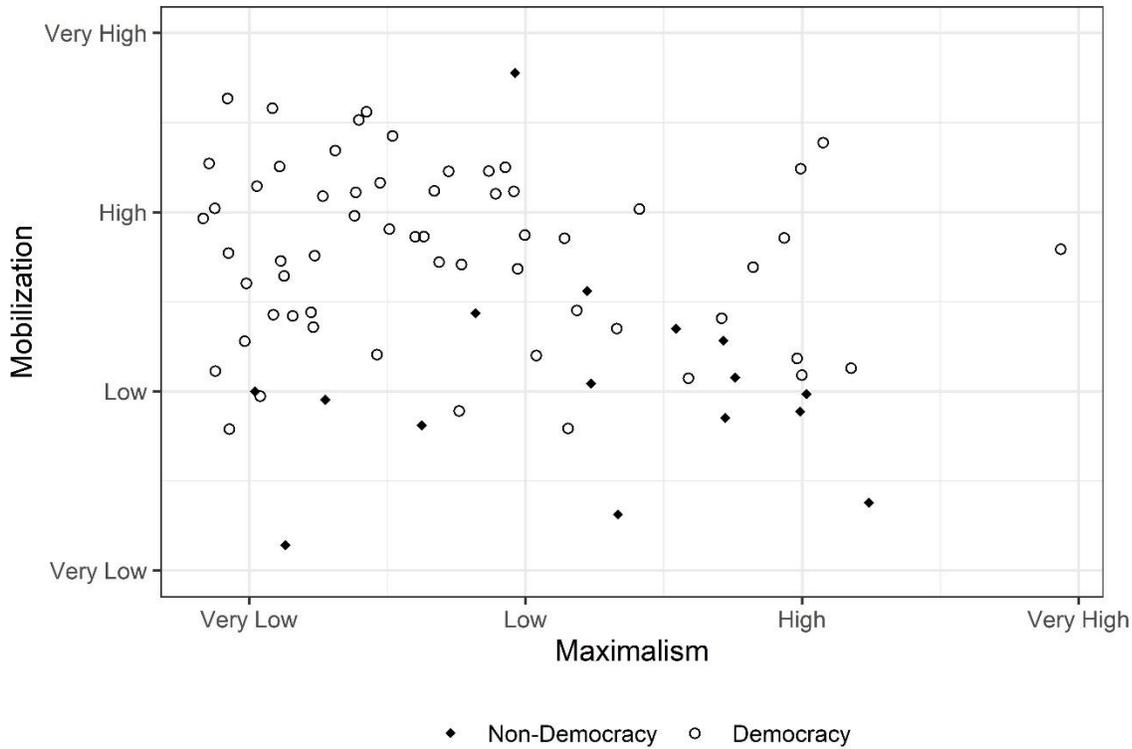


This is unsurprising, given the growing consensus in the literature that civil resistance has a strong positive effect on democratization, but provides further justification for my theoretical emphasis on civil resistance transitions. There is something distinctive about civil resistance and its relationship to democracy.

Second, I find strong and statistically robust evidence that mobilization during a CRT significantly improves democratic prospects, while maximalism during a CRT significantly harms them. Figure 0.3 shows the levels of mobilization and maximalism across all CRTs from 1945 through 2011, with the shape of the points distinguished based on whether the regime at the end of the transition was at least minimally democratic.<sup>vi</sup> There is a very clear distinction in the distribution of democracies and non-democracies. The countries that ended as democracies tend

to cluster in the upper left-hand side of the graph, with high levels of mobilization and low levels of maximalism. Those countries that failed to democratic cluster in the lower right-hand side of the graph, with low levels of mobilization and higher levels of maximalism.

**Figure 1.3: Mobilization and Maximalism in Civil Resistance Transitions**



Mobilization and maximalism during a civil resistance transition have strong effects both on the likelihood of achieving a minimal level of democracy, and on the overall quality of the democratic regimes that they precede. Nor can these effects be explained by pre-existing social, economic, or political structures. They both retain a significant effect on post-transition levels of democracy when controlling for the most common structural explanations of democratization and add significant explanatory power to purely structural democratization models.

Qualitative evidence from three in-depth case studies further bolsters these robust statistical findings. Following the logic of nested analysis, I selected three cases that my theory explains well but that are otherwise highly divergent from one another. This case selection strategy allows me to see whether the mechanisms of my theory occur across cases from a wide variety of backgrounds. The three cases, each of which I examine in their own chapter (Chapters 3-5), are the 1984 *Directas ja* movement against the military dictatorship in Brazil and the subsequent democratic transition, the 1991 Movement for Multiparty Democracy in Zambia, and the 2006 “Second People’s Movement” against a resurgent monarchy in Nepal.

In Brazil, I find that continued social mobilization, particularly around the writing of the 1988 constitution, significantly pushed the country’s democratic transition forward, undermining the elite hold on politics and ensuring the institutionalization of many important social and political protections. Furthermore, even formerly revolutionary actors such as the country’s communist party (the PCdoB) re-directed their mobilization towards institutional and electoral politics, strengthening the legitimacy of the new system. The result has been a robust democracy that has withstood many challenges in the decades since the transition. Challenges

In Zambia, the absorption of much of the country’s opposition into a single political party during the period of struggle led to very low levels of mobilization during the subsequent political transition. With few external checks, the new elites brought to power in the 1991 movement – particularly the new president and former trade unionist Frederick Chiluba – returned to many of the worst practices of the regime that went before them, even increasing levels of political corruption while using state power to shut down attempts to organize political opposition. However, a legacy of resistance facilitated the emergence of a new movement to

prevent the country's full return to autocracy when Chiluba attempted to change the Zambian constitution to run for a third presidential term.

Nepal's 2006 revolution sparked over a decade of massive mobilization throughout the country as political movements, civil society groups, and ethnic minorities took the example of the successful ouster of the king and the uncertainties of the transitional period as lessons in how to advocate for their own agendas. However, this mobilization has been characterized by high levels of maximalism as movements and political parties have sought to employ the most powerful tools in the resistance toolkit to disrupt the creation of new institutions that might disadvantage them. The result has been a fractious politics and an ever-extending period of transition, tied with a gradual loss of faith in and support for democracy among a population who have largely failed to see any fruit from the 2006 revolution.

In brief, the three cases provide strong evidence that the two challenges of civil resistance transitions indeed operate in the way suggested by my theory and shown correlationally in my statistical testing. When mobilization is high and maximalism is low, as in Brazil, it facilitates a successful democratic transition. When mobilization and maximalism are both low, as in Zambia, it brings about an "elite" semi-democratic regime, characterized by low levels of democratic accountability. When mobilization and maximalism are both high, as in Nepal, new elites are kept in check, but democratic politics fails to institutionalize and is subject to constant breakdowns. The failure to successfully resolve these challenges has enduring effects on country's post-transition political orders.

## Placing the Argument in the Literature

This book sits at the intersection of two scholarly literatures that have been, for the most part, separate: the literature on democratization and the literature on nonviolent resistance. While I do not engage in a full review of either of these literatures, it is important to summarize some of the major discussions and trends in both in order to situate my argument and its contribution.

Two axes have characterized many of the debates over democratization (by far the larger of the two literatures) in the last several decades. Along one axis, scholars have argued about whether democratization is driven primarily by slow-moving structural factors or shorter-term contingent political dynamics. Along the second axis, scholars disagreed over whether democratization is primarily a result of top-down decisions to liberalize or bottom-up pressure.

The debate over structural or contingent factors was jump-started by early work on democratization, most prominently by Seymour Martin Lipset (1959), which proposed that socio-economic development was the core factor influencing the likelihood of democratization (so-called “modernization theory”).<sup>vii</sup> The specific mechanisms through which development affected democratization, and the specific types of development most relevant for democratic prospects, varied depending on the scholar, but typical studies focused on economic growth, urbanization, and education. For example, Barrington Moore (1966, p. 418) intimately tied the possibility of democracy to the growth of the middle class, famously arguing “no bourgeois, no democracy.”

Many of the third-wave transitions beginning in the 1970s undermined scholarly confidence in the modernization theory story, giving rise to a much more contingent story of

democratization based on political factors primarily during the transition period itself (Di Palma, 1990; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986; Rustow, 1970). The emphasis on the transition as a crucial period of examination gave rise to the somewhat ungainly label of “transitology” to describe this approach to democratization. Barbara Geddes (1999) critiqued mono-causal explanations for democratization such as modernization theory, arguing that there were many distinct causal paths to democracy that required disaggregation. And in a paradigmatic book, Adam Przeworski and his co-authors (2000) argued that modernization theory's findings on the relationship between development and democracy essentially reversed the causal arrow. Poverty was not a barrier to democratization, rather wealth was a defense against democratic backsliding. While Przeworski and his co-authors still emphasized the centrality of development, they made important space for contingency in the shocks that could spark initial democratic transitions.

The gradual waning and eventual reversal of the third wave brought structural stories of democratization back into prominence. A widely-cited article by Thomas Carothers (2002) critiqued the transitology approach as overly teleological, and not adequately taking into account the real challenges to democratization from underdevelopment. Seminal scholarly touchstones such as Daron Acemoglu and William Robinson's *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (2005) and Carles Boix's *Democracy and Redistribution* (2003) focused on the role of economic inequality and factor endowments in motivating both the demand for democratization from below and the decision to repress such demands from above. More recently Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2010) have emphasized the rise of “competitive authoritarianism” across many transitions, and the frequent lack of democratic progress absent significant “linkage and leverage” from democratic Western powers. And the strong causal

relationship between economic development and democratization has been revived through in-depth work by Boix and Stokes (2003).<sup>viii</sup>

Running orthogonal to debates over structure and contingency in democratization have been debates over whether the primary pressure for democracy tends to come from elites or non-elites. The early transitologists tended to focus on elite moves to liberalize as the crucial factor in bringing about democratization (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). In a well-known article and book, John Higley and Michael Burton (1989, 2006) argued that elite consensus was the key factor leading to democratic stability. In contrast, other early influential works argued that pressure from below, often conceptualized in terms of economic class, was the key factor in driving democratic transitions (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, & Stephens, 1992). More recently, Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman (2016b) have emphasized the importance of “distributive conflict” in driving many democratic transitions forward.

My argument falls squarely in line with the *contingent* and *non-elite* sides of the democratization literature. I am skeptical of the ability of slow-moving structural factors to explain the dynamics of political transitions. Significant debate continues over even the most well-respected of these findings, leading Haggard and Kaufman (2016a, p. 11) to speculate in a recent review article that: “although debates over the structural determinants of democratization and democratic stability will undoubtedly continue, however, attempts to anchor the rise and fall of democracy to underlying socio-economic factors are likely to remain incomplete at best.” While economic development, education or other structural factors influence democratization they do a poor job of fully explaining its variation. Following the pattern of the “transitologists,” though, I argue that giving due respect to the contingency of political transition does not mean

abandoning any hope of broad, generalizable theory. Instead, by carefully analyzing the power positions and incentives of central social actors we can come up with consistent, operationalizable patterns of behavior that can give insight into how transitions are likely to unfold.

I also make the empirical claim that it is pressure from outside the elite, rather than elite consensus, which plays the crucial role in democratic progress. This is evidenced both by the finding that transitions driven by nonviolent resistance, rather than elite liberalization, are most likely to democratize and to remain stable democracies (Bayer, Bethke, & Lambach, 2016), and by my finding in this book, previewed above, that it is social and political mobilization and the character of that mobilization that drive democratization in civil resistance transitions.

While often studied in the broader literature on democratization (Linz & Stepan, 1996; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986), transitions specifically following nonviolent revolutions have been something of a black box. The democratization literature tends to group them with other transitions, obscuring their unique dynamics (Guo & Stradiotto, 2014; Haggard & Kaufman, 2016b). The literature on nonviolent revolutions tends to end its analysis with the success or failure of the nonviolent resistance campaign to oust the old regime and not look at what comes after the campaign ends (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Nepstad, 2011; Ritter, 2015).

Scholars who focus on “bottom-up” transitions more generally such as Elizabeth Wood (2000), Donatella Della Porta (2014), or Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman (2016b), have added significant and important insights to our understanding of democratization. Scholars such as George Lawson (2004) or Samuel Huntington (1993) who have included most of the CRTs in broader categories of “negotiated revolutions” or “transplacement” have also advanced our

understanding of many of the processes at work in CRTs. Yet the unique character of nonviolent resistance and its effects on political order provides a useful analytical entry point for continuing to enhance our understanding of the many distinct paths whereby countries move or do not move from dictatorship to democracy (Geddes, 1999; Haggard & Kaufman, 2016a).

This book thus addresses a significant gap in the existing democratization literature by putting this unique subset of political transitions under its own distinct empirical investigation. It also contributes to these larger debates on the relative influence of structural or strategic factors, and the power of elites or masses to shape political transformation.

The second literature this book's argument speaks to is the literature on nonviolent resistance. This literature is much newer and less developed. Early antecedents of the literature focused on the moral or ethical dimensions of nonviolent resistance with little discussion of its empirical dynamics or strategic considerations.<sup>ix</sup> The example of Mahatma Gandhi sparked a wave of interest in nonviolent resistance in the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Gandhi's own voluminous writings<sup>x</sup> reflected on both the ethical and strategic dimensions of nonviolent resistance, and sparked significant several scholarly examinations of his thought and practice throughout the decades of the Indian Independence Struggle (Bondurant, 1958; Gregg, 1935; Iyer, 1973).

A growing literature in the decades after Gandhi sought to develop a comprehensive theory of nonviolent resistance and to examine its dynamics either in specific cases or comparatively across a small number of case studies. Gene Sharp's (1973) book *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* was one of the most comprehensive efforts to provide a theoretical foundation for nonviolent resistance, drawing on thinkers as diverse as Gandhi and Machiavelli. Important

empirical works on the subject in later decades included Kurt Schock's (2005) examination of "Unarmed Insurrections" that blended the nonviolent resistance literature with a sociological literature on social movements, and Sharon Erickson Nepstad's (2011) book on nonviolent revolutions, that identified several of the important factors that determine nonviolent movements' success or failure.<sup>xi</sup>

There was a major shift in the literature on nonviolent resistance in 2011 with the publication of Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan's book *Why Civil Resistance Works*, one of the first attempts to perform a cross-national statistical study of the relative effectiveness of nonviolent and violent resistance. Chenoweth and Stephan's core finding: that nonviolent campaigns succeeded twice as often as comparable violent campaigns, sparked significant interest in the subject. This interest, tied with the public availability of their data on nonviolent and violent campaigns, led to a wealth of new studies looking statistically at various aspects of nonviolent resistance.<sup>xii</sup>

The theoretical link between nonviolent resistance and democracy has been a core part of that literature since its early days. Gene Sharp (1973) argued that nonviolent resistance was inherently democratizing, since it empowered those under systems of authority to change those systems. Several studies, beginning in the early 2000s, tested this relationship between nonviolent resistance and democratization. Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman (2005) conducted one of the first of these studies, showing that countries that had experienced a transition between 1972 and 2005 were much more likely to be "free" at the end of their transitions if the transition was initiated by civic forces without the use of violence (relative to transitions initiated by elites or by violent action). This general relationship has been replicated

in studies that have adopted several varying approaches to operationalizing the key concepts in question (Celestino & Gleditsch, 2013; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Johnstad, 2010; Teorell, 2010). Nonviolent resistance not only makes democracy more likely, but makes it more likely to endure over time (Bayer et al., 2016) and increases the quality of the democratic regimes it initiates (Bethke & Pinckney, 2019).

Yet the literature on nonviolent resistance, despite its significant insights, has given us little understanding to date on the variation in democratization outcomes after nonviolent resistance movements. This book's contribution to the nonviolent resistance literature is thus to extend the analysis beyond the success of nonviolent resistance in ousting dictators and initiating political change and ask what types of political change nonviolent resistance in fact brings about.

## Setting the Terms

Having described my core puzzle and the argument I raise to answer it, previewed the evidence, and situated my argument in the existing literature the final task in this introduction is to clearly lay out the concepts that will be underlying my arguments and evidence in the remainder of the book. I focus on four concepts here: civil resistance,<sup>xiii</sup> democracy, transitions, and civil resistance transitions.

What is civil or nonviolent resistance? These words conjure powerful historical images: Mahatma Gandhi marching to the sea or Martin Luther King, Jr. at the head of a column of protesters on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Others may think of a lone figure standing in front of a column of Chinese tanks moving on Tiananmen Square. Others may think of incidents from their own national histories: Russians surrounding parliament in 1991 to stop a hard-liner coup, South

Africans launching strikes and boycotts in the townships to bring down Apartheid, or millions of Filipinos gathering on the EDSA Boulevard to prevent President Ferdinand Marcos from stealing an election.

What do these images share? First, they are actions undertaken by *unarmed civilians*. In nonviolent resistance individuals come together to create change using their force of personality, moral authority, and non-cooperation, rather than their direct ability to impose physical costs. Nonviolent resistance is not only something that people without engaging in physical violence but also without bringing weapons; without the threat of violence.<sup>xiv</sup>

Scholars have rightly pointed out that violence goes well beyond its most direct physical manifestations (Galtung, 1969; May, 2015). Even if no direct physical force is involved, socio-economic structures in unjust political systems can have negative effects that are accurately described as violent. Yet measuring the impact of these more diffuse forms of violence consistently way across many different cases is challenging. To maintain consistency, I simplify civil resistance's definition to the most obvious and straightforward manifestations of violence: actual physical assaults upon persons or the plausible threat of such physical assaults.

Nonviolent resistance as I am discussing it is *political*. That is to say it involves struggle over what David Easton called the "authoritative allocation of values" (Easton, 1954), the ways in which communities define and distribute the things that they care about. Political targets are often governments but need not be so. They need only be an individual or collective actor that has some ability to affect this process of definition and distribution. Political action is a broad category. However, it excludes aspects of purely personal discipline or moral character that may sometimes be included in the category of nonviolent resistance.

Nonviolent resistance is *resistance*. Actions that lack physical violence or the threat of physical violence may be non-violent, but they do not necessarily constitute nonviolent resistance. Nonviolent resistance as *resistance* stands in opposition to the normal modes of constituting and conducting politics. Actions that are nonviolent but fall within the normal bounds of institutional politics are not nonviolent resistance. As an action that stands in opposition to normal modes of politics, nonviolent resistance is destructive to the current power structure (Sharp, 1973; Vinthagen, 2015).

Because of this, context is important in defining nonviolent resistance. The same action may not have the same meaning in different contexts. A march supporting an electoral candidate in an advanced democracy is not nonviolent resistance since such marches are a normal, accepted, and power-reinforcing aspect of such countries' politics. However, the same march undertaken in a country where the opposition is highly repressed or illegal and such marches undermine the rule of the regime, would clearly be nonviolent resistance.

Nonviolent resistance is not synonymous with any one action, method, or tactic such as protests, strikes, or boycotts. For an outside observer to know whether nonviolent resistance is occurring requires some degree of familiarity with the power structure in that society at that moment in time.<sup>xv</sup>

What are nonviolent resistance's effects on political order? There are two primary effects, the first negative and the second positive. The negative effect follows logically from nonviolent resistance's definition. If nonviolent resistance is non-institutional and disruptive of current patterns of political behavior, then by definition it will be destructive of the existing order. One need only look at the metaphors employed by scholars of nonviolent resistance to see this

destructive character. Robert Helvey describes the goal of nonviolent resistance as to “undermine, neutralize, or destroy...the pillars of support” (Helvey, 2004, p. 9) that uphold a power holder. It undermines current institutions, demanding their redefinition and reconstitution.

The positive effect is also inherent in the disruptive character of nonviolent resistance. Nonviolent resistance requires an act of agency, stepping outside of the routines and expectations of political life to envision a different order. This makes it inherently creative, expressive, and empowering. It puts tools in its participants’ hands and practices them in engaging in politics. It spreads civic culture and engagement, building social capital and investment in future outcomes.<sup>xvi</sup> This in turn is likely to build the social trust and norms of civic engagement necessary for a long-term sustainable political order (Putnam et al., 1994). For this reason, nonviolent resistance – while destructive of individual political orders in the short term – will have a positive long-term effect.

Nonviolent resistance is also a tool of those who lack traditional avenues of power. This is almost tautological based on this definition. Those with power employ institutional means because they have designed such means to suit their ends. Institutional politics solidifies the set of players in power and excludes challengers. In Bruce Bueno de Mesquita’s (2005) terms, institutional politics is the weapon of the winning coalition. As long as politics employs the same institutional mechanisms the winning coalition will remain of a similar size and composition.

Regular nonviolent resistance puts the boundaries of the winning coalition under challenge. The elite can never be entirely secure as the corridors of power are assaulted from outside. To avoid institutional arrangements’ complete breakdown elites must bargain with those who use nonviolent resistance, expanding institutional avenues of access to power (Tilly, 1978).

Nonviolent challenger groups will then be incorporated into institutional arrangements, with a concurrent expansion in the size of the winning coalition.<sup>xvii</sup> With each instance of major nonviolent resistance from a challenger group there is likely to be an attendant increase in winning coalition size, gradually expanding the representativeness of the political order and making the system more democratic.

The second concept I use throughout this book is democracy. I define democracy in two ways: an ideal-type and a binary characteristic. I use both definitions because both have insights to offer. There is a real sense in which democracy and non-democracy are categorically different, for instance in the perpetual presence of the threat of violence in non-democratic systems (Svolik, 2012), and thus simply looking at regimes along a spectrum of “more or less democratic” is limited. However, there are important distinctions between regimes that fall within these broad categories, and looking at these distinctions can also give insights.

As an ideal-type system, I follow Robert Dahl’s seminal definition of democracy as: “a political system which is...almost completely responsive to all of its citizens...considered as political equals” (Dahl, 1973, p. 2). This definition in turn implies that democracies give their citizens unimpaired opportunities to formulate their preferences, signify those preferences, and have those preferences weighted equally by the government. Political systems approximate democracy in this sense to greater or lesser degree. The closer a system comes to this ideal the greater its degree of democracy. When the system changes from a form that poorly approximates this ideal to one which more closely approximates it we may describe the process as democratization.

I also examine democracy from the binary perspective as originally formulated by Joseph Schumpeter (1942). For Schumpeter, democracy is: “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter, 1942, p. 241). Democracy either fully obtains or fully fails to obtain for a political system at any point in time. Democratization is the movement from one side of the line to the other. Countries accomplish it wholesale.

The next concept to define is the political transition. Scholars of transitions have written a great deal on this subject,<sup>xviii</sup> and so I follow their lead. Political transitions are those periods of time when one regime has broken down and a new regime is not yet in place. Regimes are the basic set of rules and institutions that define who governs in a society and the primary means of political access (Geddes, Wright, & Frantz, 2014). Regimes include, but are not limited to, the set of formal written laws that legally set out these procedures and identities. For example, both Lebanon’s constitutionally mandated religious power sharing (Aboultaif, 2019) and Nigeria’s informal alternation of the presidency between north and south are important aspects of their country’s regimes.

A transition begins when these basic rules and institutions are destabilized and become unclear to the major actors. This can occur because of any number of different impetuses, and can be initiated by decisions from the top (Trimberger, 1978) or resistance from the bottom (Wood, 2000). Scholars have categorized these in several different ways, distinguishing them on the basis of their level of conflict (Guo & Stradiotto, 2014; Karl & Schmitter, 1991), primary actors (Collier 1999; Della Porta 2014; Huntington 1993), or method of contention (Chenoweth

& Stephan, 2011). No matter the impetus, routinized politics ceases to operate as it has in the past (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986).

Times of transition are inefficient for achieving political goals since actors do not have shared expectations of others' behavior. Because of this, those involved will tend to minimize transitions' duration as much as possible. A transition ends when a regime has come into place and has endured long enough to begin functioning as a regime. That is to say, when a temporary configuration of political powerholders and rules for choosing them has persisted long enough that its actions become routinized and actors strategize about the future based around the assumption that this set of rules and powerholders will continue.

Civil Resistance Transitions are that subset of political transitions in which civil resistance played a crucial role in breaking down the prior regime. Had the civil resistance campaign not occurred then either regime breakdown would have been highly unlikely, or its dynamics would have been so radically different that it would be unrecognizable relative to the events that occurred.

Civil resistance need not be the only factor, or even the only necessary factor in initiating a transition for it to be CRT. For one thing, to demonstrate such a strong condition would be exceedingly empirically difficult, perhaps impossible. Even deep familiarity with particular cases will not free us from the difficulty of interpreting which factors were truly necessary in as complex a phenomenon as regime breakdown and transition.

For example, one of the cases I examine in a later chapter is the 2006 overthrow of King Gyanendra of Nepal in the so-called "Jana Andolan II" or "Second People's Movement." The

Jana Andolan II approximates the ideal type of a CRT. An autocrat stepped down after millions of people took to the streets to demand his ouster. His resignation initiated a major transformation in the political and social institutions of the country. This seems to be a clear example of a CRT.

Yet arguing that civil resistance was the *only* necessary factor in explaining the transition immediately becomes problematic. The civil resistance campaign came at the end of a ten-year civil war by Maoist revolutionaries. The civil war degraded state capacity and undermined the king's legitimacy (Adhikari, 2014). Furthermore, the civil resistance campaign was partially led by old elites who had been disenfranchised by the king's recent moves to consolidate power. It was also aided by the defection of the regime's former ally and regular Nepali *eminence grise*: the government of India. A careful observer could make a plausible argument that all these factors were necessary for the outcome of the Nepali transition.

A critical scholar could easily apply a similar analysis to any transition we might care to categorize as a CRT, if we are attempting to justify a strong set of inclusion criteria. We might quickly find ourselves with no cases remaining to analyze. It is important to note that such elimination of cases upon close inspection is not unique to civil resistance transitions. Almost any strict classification that attempts a high standard of empirical necessity will quickly run into problems if the investigators are intellectually honest. Because of these difficulties, the lower standard of crucial but not sole contributing factor is both much more useful and ultimately more intellectually defensible.

A critic can still, of course, attack whether civil resistance was indeed crucial to regime breakdown in a case. But in that case, we are on much more solid empirical ground and can have

meaningful discussions about the plausibility of alternative scenarios. Such discussion is particularly warranted in cases in which civil resistance movements took place but their impact is unclear. In the cases that I examine in depth this is perhaps most prominent in Brazil, where scholars have argued that the primary impetus for change came from the military hierarchy, not from resistance from below (Stepan, 1989).

If civil resistance was crucial for the initiation of a transition then the dynamics of transition approximate the theoretical model that I have described in the previous chapter even if other factors have played an important role. We should still observe a balance of power in favor of more pro-democratic figures, higher levels of popular mobilization and awareness, and the dispersion of skills and knowledge of nonviolent resistance among both elites and the general populace. In other words, all the mechanisms that move CRTs towards democracy should be present. These mechanisms should flow naturally from a crucial role for civil resistance, regardless of other precipitating factors. Hence, in identifying CRTs I rely on this definition of crucial contribution but not necessarily sole major contribution to transition initiation.

## The Rest of the Book

The subsequent chapters of this book move in detail through the argument that I have sketched in this introduction. Chapter 1 takes on the question of what makes civil resistance transitions unique and worthy of their own empirical investigation. I develop the theory of the power positions during CRTs that in turn generates my two hypotheses about the transitional behaviors that lead to democracy and discuss the implications of those hypotheses not just for the general level of democracy following a CRT but for the specific characteristics of regime likely to follow CRTs with different patterns of transitional politics. I propose four basic categories of

regime that typically follow particular patterns of mobilization and maximalism. Countries where mobilization is high and maximalism is low tend to become democracies. Countries where mobilization is low and maximalism is high tend to return to autocracy.

Countries along the other diagonal both tend to result in quasi-democratic or “hybrid” regimes, but of distinct types. Countries where mobilization and maximalism are both low tend to become what I call “elite semi-democracies,” with the forms of democracy but dominated by a small group of elites. Countries with high mobilization and high maximalism tend to become “fractious semi-democracies,” in which no one group can re-establish an authoritarian regime but the constant back and forth of revolutionary competition prevents the institutionalization of democratic politics.

Having laid out the theoretical rationale for my hypotheses, in Chapter 2 I begin my empirical analysis with a large-*n* quantitative study. I analyze every political transition around the world from 1945 to 2011 and examine the characteristics of transitions that tend to end in democracy and those that do not. I first show – confirming the earlier literature on nonviolent revolutions – that CRTs tend to have much more democratic outcomes. I then show that measures of *mobilization* and *maximalism* during CRTs largely explain variation in democratization in these cases, both in terms of improving a country’s overall level of democracy and in making it more likely that a country will at least meet a minimal standard of democratic rule.

The next step in the analysis is to confirm that the quantitative findings operate when examining individual cases. This is crucial to show that mobilization and maximalism are explaining democratization, not some outside unobserved factor that happens to correlate with

them. I perform this qualitative analysis in Chapters 3 through 5, with a separate in-depth case study in each chapter.

I selected cases following the logic of nested research design, which calls for analyzing “on-the-line” cases. In other words, the researcher examines cases that the theory predicts well but that otherwise are extremely different from one another. Thus, I selected cases that varied in terms of region, time period, and prior regime but whose levels of mobilization and maximalism and their regimes at the end of the transition fit what my theory would predict.

The transitions that I examine are the transition in Nepal in the 2000s following the 2006 Second People’s Movement in Chapter 3, the transition in Zambia in the 1990s following the overthrow of President Kenneth Kaunda by the Movement for Multiparty Democracy in Chapter 4, and the transition in Brazil in the 1980s away from military rule in Chapter 5. In each case the research is based on original interviews with key actors during these countries’ transitions, as well as in-depth examination of primary and secondary sources.

The studies are not comparative, except in the sense that they test the relevance of my proposed patterns of behavior in three contexts that are radically different, and demonstrate the plausibility of three transitional paths that implied by my theoretical framing. In each case, the transitional events and outcomes closely match the predictions of my theory. In Nepal, a case with high mobilization and high maximalism, the resulting regime is a “fractious semi-democracy.” In Zambia, a case with low mobilization and low maximalism, the resulting regime is an “elite semi-democracy.” And in Brazil, a case with high mobilization and low maximalism, the resulting regime is a democracy.

Chapter 6 concludes the study, summarizing the insights gained from the research and proposing new directions to continue examining this important question. While my research offers several insights it also opens many questions. I dig into some of these questions and offer thoughts on the lessons of this research for scholars, activists, and policymakers.

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Interview 55. To protect confidentiality, as required by the human subjects protection protocol for this project, all specific statements from interviewees for this project will be referred to by a randomly-assigned number. The complete list of interviewees is available in Appendix B.

<sup>ii</sup> Transitions calculated using the “Regimes of the World” indicator from the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge et al., 2018). All countries regime type measured in 2018.

<sup>iii</sup> Frequently referred to as a “nonviolent revolution.”

<sup>iv</sup> I discuss the logic of nested analysis in more detail in the introduction to chapters 3-5.

<sup>v</sup> “Highly democratic” here is defined as having a polyarchy score of 0.75 or higher, “Minimally democratic” as having a polyarchy score of 0.5 or higher, and “autocratic” as being less than 0.5

<sup>vi</sup> See Chapter 2 for in-depth discussion of how all these concepts are operationalized.

<sup>vii</sup> For major works of modernization theory see, for example Barro 1999; Bollen and Jackman 1985; Diamond 1992; or Jackman 1973.

<sup>viii</sup> Though see critiques from Acemoglu et al. 2008 and Robinson 2006.

<sup>ix</sup> See, e.g. Ballou 1910; Thoreau 2016; Tolstoy 1894.

<sup>x</sup> For an excellent selection of some of Gandhi’s primary writings on nonviolent resistance see Gandhi 2019.

<sup>xi</sup> See also Ackerman and DuVall 2000; Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Roberts and Ash 2009; Zunes, Asher, and Kurtz 1999 and many others.

<sup>xii</sup> See, e.g. Belgioioso 2018; Braithwaite, Braithwaite, and Kucik 2015; Butcher, Gray, and Mitchell 2018; Butcher and Svensson 2016; K. G. Cunningham, Dahl, and Fruge 2017; Dahlum 2018; Kristian S. Gleditsch and Rivera 2017; Petrova 2019; Pinckney 2016; Svensson and Lindgren 2011; Thurber 2018.

<sup>xiii</sup> Other terms commonly used for civil resistance include nonviolent resistance, nonviolent action, or peaceful resistance. Less common terms include passive resistance and satyagraha. I use nonviolent resistance and nonviolent action interchangeably with civil resistance.

<sup>xiv</sup> When aggregated to the level of a campaign, few nonviolent resistance movements are exclusively nonviolent. Movements often struggle to maintain “nonviolent discipline” in the face of provocation. What makes it meaningful to describe these movements as nonviolent resistance is the preponderance of nonviolent tactics over violent tactics (Pinckney, 2016).

<sup>xv</sup> A process that is often made more difficult by observational biases that tend to focus outside knowledge of contention on its violent elements and downplay nonviolent elements (Day, Pinckney, & Chenoweth, 2015).

<sup>xvi</sup> See for example Fernandes 2015, which examines this relationship through comparing the Spanish and Portuguese transitions to democracy.

<sup>xvii</sup> For example, consider the examination of the labor movement in Latin America in Collier and Collier (1991). While labor initially functioned in opposition to the political order, when repression failed to suppress the movement Latin American elites engaged in various strategies to incorporate the demands of labor into routinized politics, a shift that had important

consequences for contentious politics across the region for decades following the initial incorporation.

<sup>xviii</sup> For example, see seminal works by Acemoglu and Robinson (2001), Bratton and Van de Walle (1994), Collier (1999), Di Palma (1990), Mohamedou and Sisk (2016), O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) and Rustow (1970)

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