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DAMAI PANGKAL DAMAI

THE WORLD IS NOT OKAY

NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE IN INDONESIA AND THE WORLD 2024

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Institute of International Studies
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Damai Pangkal Damai:

The World is Not Okay

Nonviolent Resistance in Indonesia and the World 2024

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Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD), which loosely translates as "peace begets peace," is a nonviolence database project and campaign initiated by the Institute of International Studies (IIS) –the research and advocacy arm of the Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada (IR UGM).

DPD's database records nonviolent actions that take place in Indonesia throughout Reformasi (the post-Suharto era, 1998 onwards). Meanwhile, DPD's campaign focuses on disseminating information and analyses regarding methods and tactics of nonviolent action.

Commencing in 2021, DPD publishes yearly reflections on nonviolent resistance in Indonesia and worldwide, with the hope that the publications can serve as a useful resource to those who are committed to strengthening democracies. DPD believes that consolidation of democracy should not only be furthered through strengthening the structures that underpin democracy (free and fair elections, separation of power, etc.) but also through fortifying the cultural components of democracy–including the civil society's and the state's preference and skills in resolving conflicts through nonviolent means.

DPD extends its gratittude to Samsu Rizal Panggabean, Aghniadi, Arie Utami, Chaiwat Satha-Anand, Charles Butcher, Christopher Shay, Erica Chenoweth, Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, Jacky Manuputty, Jamila Raqib, Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, Joned Suryatmoko, Luqman-nul Hakim, Maulida Raviola, Melissa Kowara, Michael Beer, Nabilah Nur Abiyanti, Nisrina Nadhifah Rahman, Puri Kencana Putri, Sana Jaffrey, Tiffany Easthom, Treviliana Eka Putri, Veronique Dudouet, and Zainal Abidin Bagir.

@damaipangkaldamai @nirkekerasan Damai Pangkal Damai

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Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD) adopts Thomas Weber and Robert Burrowes' definition of nonviolence as "an umbrella term for describing a range of methods for dealing with conflict, which share the common principle that physical violence, at least against other people, is not used." Equivalent terminologies include active nonviolence, nonviolent conflict, nonviolent action, direct action, nonviolent resistance, civil resistance, and people power.

DPD also refers to Gene Sharp's 198 methods of nonviolent actions, classified into three categories: (1) nonviolent protest and persuasion, (2) noncooperation, and (3) nonviolent intervention.

Source:

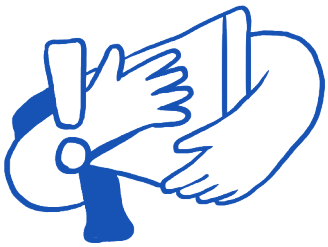
Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part 2: The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Bedford: Porter Sargent Publishing, 1973).

Thomas Weber and Robert J. Burrowes, "Nonviolence: An Introduction," *Peace Dossier* 27, no 2 (February 1991).

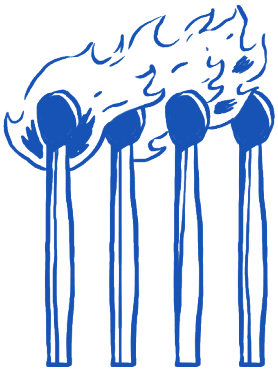
Executive Summary

2024 was the election year for more than half of the world's population. Unfortunately, instead of being the year where democracy gets more consolidated, it may go down in history as the year where autocratic actors succeeded in consolidating their power through democratic mechanisms. If anything, this should be a good reason to up our nonviolent resistance.

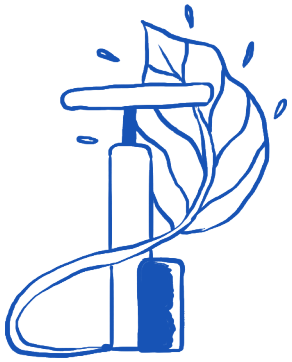
This fifth edition of Damai Pangkal Damai's (DPD) annual reflection consists of five parts. The first offers a reading of civil resistance movements in Indonesia, which culminated at the "Garuda Biru" (Blue Eagle) rallies, in August 2024. The second maps out maximalist regimes worldwide–ones that succeeded, persisted, or subsided. The third discusses pro-regime mobilizations by autocratic leaders, mostly involving right-wing supporters. The fourth advocates for unarmed civilian protection (UCP), as part of shifting the security paradigm towards one that centers the role of communities and decenters (read: renounces) the use of arms. Lastly, the fifth part celebrates the life of Chaiwat Satha-Anand, a beloved nonviolence scholar-activist, who relentlessly highlighted the compatibility of Islam and nonviolence as well as taught the state on how to conduct its affairs nonviolently.



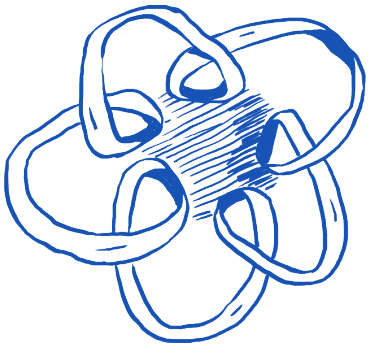
Garuda Biru. Not much has changed in terms of civil resistance in Indonesia: its frequency remained low, its repertoires remained narrow, and its intensity remained limited. Nevertheless, the 22 August 2024 "Garuda Biru" rallies managed to effectively impose dilemma actions on both the outgoing and incoming presidents, preventing them from overturning the Constitutional Court's decision. How can Indonesians seize the momentum to further push back against autocratization?



Nonviolent Avengers Assemble. Chenoweth's rule of 3.5% underlines that (almost) no regime can withstand challenges posed by at least 3.5% of its population. In other words, successful nonviolent resistance depends on assembling a lineup consisting of citizens from various walks of life, beyond students and activists. How do we bring in factory workers, gig-workers, health workers, teachers, artists, online gamers, parents, and others to join the movement while guaranteeing their safety? Perhaps one can learn from South Korea, Bangladesh, and Guatemala's success in brokering solidarity amongst groups that would have otherwise not formed alliances.

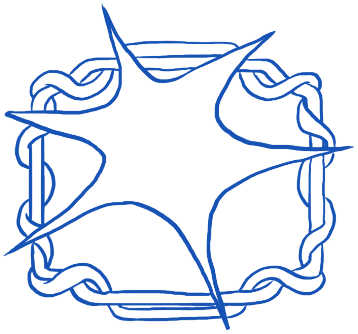


The Build-Up. Throughout 2024, we witnessed how maximalist campaigns subsided in Thailand, Myanmar, and Peru, persisted in Iran and Afghanistan, and succeeded in South Korea, Bangladesh, and Guatemala. While it rolled out in a short period of time, there is nothing instantaneous in South Korea's successful overthrow of its president. It took South Koreans years to normalize taking to the streets and to be skillful at doing it. Throughout those years, they managed to develop a shared understanding of what their "red line" would be, one that would be fiercely defended when crossed by the regime.



The Oddball. Nonviolent resistance has largely been understood as being anti-regime and a tool to bring down dictators. However, we have seen the rise of non-violent pro-regime mobilizations, mostly involving autocratic actors and right-wing groups. How do we push back against such movements that have no problem incorporating violent tactics, especially against minorities? How do we make sure that democracy-loving citizens become more adept in waging nonviolent actions than pro-autocracy ones in utilizing non-violent methods?

Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP). How do we shift the security paradigm, from military supremacy to civilian supremacy, from provided by third parties to brought about by communities themselves, from relying on means of separation (building walls, imprisoning people, etc) to relying on human relationships (negotiation, caring for one another, etc)? Many communities around the world have successfully applied it. Are we ready to embrace UCP?



Mission Impossible? Amidst the common perception that Islam is inherently violent and that the state is innately violent, Chaiwat Satha-Anand's mission to prove otherwise seems impossible. Fortunately, he left us with ample proof that Islam and nonviolence cannot be separated from one another and that the state can indeed be taught to utilize nonviolent techniques in governing and problem-solving.


TIMPUK DI
MULYONO

Indonesia 2024: The Dark Knights Rise

diah kusumaningrum

As swift as Batman would when responding to Bat-Signal, on August 22nd 2024, thousands of Indonesians took to the streets to heed Garuda Biru's call. Covered in blue, in the style of Indonesia's Emergency Alert System, the widespread use of this particular image of the nation's coat of arms kick-started demonstrations in many cities, provinces, and islands across the country. While the hashtag #DaruratDemokrasi (democracy in crisis) has been floating for some years, only after being coupled with Garuda Biru that it effectively shattered the long-held illusion that Indonesia's democracy is "all good" (*baik-baik saja*).

Did Garuda Biru signify the rise of a new and bigger wave of pushback against autocratization or was it a one-off event?[1] Why did such a demonstration appear only in mid-2024, not any sooner? How do we measure its effect and effectiveness? Looking into Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD)'s database, this chapter situates those questions in a wider context, taking into account the various social justice struggles that took place in 2024 and throughout the past 10 years.

1 Since the writing of this piece, there have been calls from "Garuda Merah" (Red Garuda) and "Garuda Hitam" (Black Garuda), leading to the #IndonesiaGelap (dark Indonesia) rallies in February 2025. Garuda is the bird that is part of Indonesia's coat of arms.

Box 1

Protest and persuasion consists of methods where actors "simply" show that they are against or for something. This includes demonstrations, marches, parades, petitions, speeches, posters, and art happenings.

Noncooperation consists of methods where actors not only demonstrate resistance, but also withdraw their participation from the practices or institutions that they oppose. This includes strikes, boycotts, and divestments.

Nonviolent intervention consists of methods where actors not only demonstrate resistance and withdraw their participation, but also strive to disrupt the practices or institutions they oppose. This includes sit-ins, nonviolent obstructions, nonviolent occupations, etc.

Resource:
Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part 2: The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Bedford: Porter Sargent Publishing, 1973).

2024 in Numbers

Five years into DPD's annual reflection, nothing much has changed in terms of nonviolent resistance in Indonesia: its numbers remain meager, its repertoires remain limited, and its intensity remains low.

DPD's main database, which takes its data from Kompas daily, records 15,408 nonviolent actions in Indonesia between January 1999 and December 2024, 335 of which took place in 2024. This number does not show any significant difference from that of 2023, and is still far from reaching the average number of nonviolent actions seen throughout the Reformasi period, marked at around 600 (see Diagram 1). However, given data collection challenges, this number should be seen as a low estimate, meaning that there are (way?) more nonviolent actions in Indonesia throughout 2024 than recorded in DPD's main database.

DPD's secondary database, which incorporates news from other print media, reports published by NGOs, and updates shared on social media by civil society actors, offers a richer set of findings. Firstly, it proves how partial the mainstream media has been in covering nonviolent actions across the country. Secondly, it confirms that the repertoires of nonviolent actions in Indonesia remain narrow. Most movements relied on the "classic combo" of doing demonstrations (method #47), often preceded by marches (method #38), accompanied by the display of banners and posters (method #8), slogans, and hashtags (method #7), alongside various artistic expressions (method #36). Based on DPD's main database alone, the classic combo accounted for 61.53% of the entire compilation of nonviolent actions throughout Reformasi and 61.19% of nonviolent actions throughout 2024.

Looking into DPD's secondary database, there seems to be an increase in nonviolent interjections and obstructions (methods #171 and #173), especially in the face of land-grabbing driven by mining, deforestation, and the government's "strategic projects." Meanwhile, hunger strike (method #159)—which saw a spike in 2023—was barely performed in 2024. Amidst the global community's increased utilization of strikes (methods #97-#117), Indonesians did not really engage with said method. In total, only 37 out of the 198 methods of nonviolent action (see the list at the end of this monograph) were used in Indonesia throughout 2024.

Diagram 1 Number of nonviolent actions in Indonesia throughout Reformasi

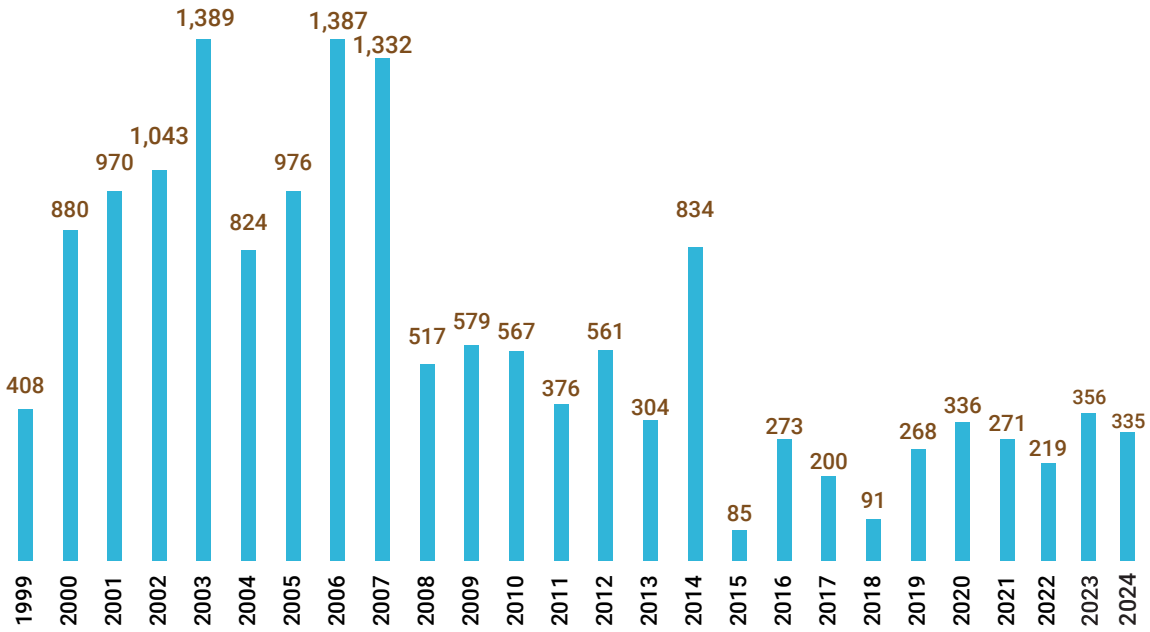
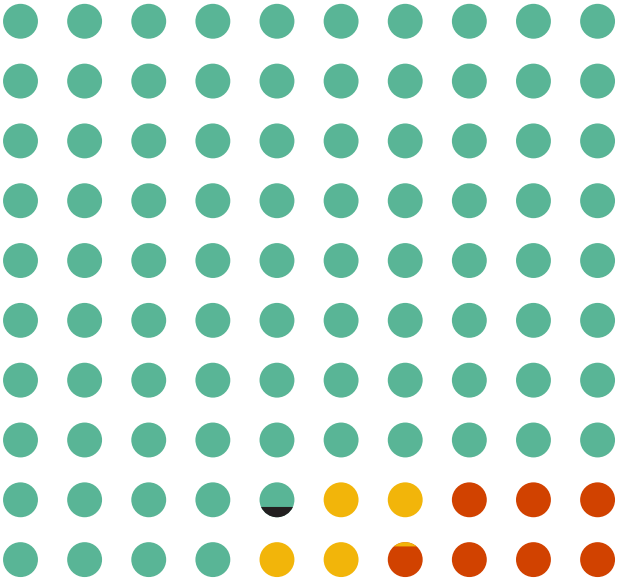


Diagram 2 Composition of nonviolent actions in Indonesia throughout Reformasi



Protest and Persuasion
13,684 actions
88,8%

Noncooperation
622 actions
4,04%

Nonviolent Intervention
1,043 actions
6,77%

Others
59 actions

Total
15,408
actions

Both DPD's primary and secondary databases portray how the majority of nonviolent resistance campaigns in Indonesia in 2024 still heavily relied on methods of protest and persuasion, with little to no expansion toward methods of noncooperation and intervention (see Box 1). While 2023 was marked by an increase in methods of nonviolent intervention, especially in the form of hunger strikes (method #159) to demand the enactment of the Protection of Domestic Workers Bill (RUU PPRT), the same was not observed in 2024. If anything, demands on said issue were made through methods of protest and persuasion.

2024's Main Themes

Unsurprisingly, most nonviolent resistance campaigns in 2024 revolved around the issues of governance, seeing that it was an election year. Nevertheless, these campaigns highlighted how issues of human rights, land-grabbing, and workers' rights are highly intertwined with governance.

While only culminating in the 22 August nationwide demonstrations, protests against governance issues have actually started early in the year. Throughout January and February, resistance was spurred by declarations (method #3) and petitions (method #6) in various universities across Indonesia, many of them led by senior and renowned professors.[2] They called out Joko Widodo regime's for betraying democratic values. A few days before the general elections in February, three academics provided a detailed account (method #50) on the various forms of electoral fraud that the incumbent government had tried to cover up through a documentary film titled Dirty Vote.[3] Later on, in June, civil society organizations held "Mahkamah Rakyat Luar Biasa" or the People's Tribunal (method #179) at Universitas Indonesia, outlining various constitutional violations that occurred during Widodo's reign.[4]

Nonviolent resistance on governance issues also targeted specific policies. Throughout the year, the "classic combo" (methods #47, #38, #7, #8, and #36) was used to protest against the draft revision of the Broadcasting Law, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs' failure to prevent ransomware attack on Indonesia's National Data Center, the granting of mining permits to religious organizations, the Value Added Tax (VAT) rate increase to 12%, and the implementation of the Omnibus Law. Also notable are the series of demonstrations (method #47) and encampments (method #173) held by university students across Indonesia to challenge rising tuition fees.

Perhaps the most remarkable was the wave of protests against the proposed revision of the Regional Election Law (UU Pilkada), which saw its peak on the 22nd of August. The high level of enthusiasm and public participation is likely founded on the sequencing and combining of various methods of resistance. Be it offline or online, the image of the Garuda Bird on a blue background—donning the words "Darurat Demokrasi" (methods #8 and #7)—first captured the attention of many by appearing on social media, buildings, and even music festivals. This was followed by calls for protest meetings in different cities (methods #8 and #48), which resulted in the conduct of massive, nationwide demonstrations (method #47) under the hashtag

2 The declarations and petitions were sent out by professors from Universitas Gadjah Mada (31 January), Universitas Islam Indonesia, and Universitas Khairun (1 February), Universitas Andalas, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Universitas Hasanuddin, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Universitas Atma Jaya, Universitas Indonesia, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Bangka Belitung (2 February), Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Universitas Padjadjaran, Asosiasi Perguruan Tinggi Katolik Indonesia, Universitas Islam Malang, and Institut Pertanian Bogor (3 February), Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia Bandung, Universitas Airlangga, Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Driyarkara, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Universitas Janabadra, Universitas Brawijaya, Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Driyarkara, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Universitas Malikussaleh, and Universitas Negeri Malang (5 February), Universitas Negeri Jakarta and Sekolah Tinggi Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa APMD (6 February), as well as Universitas Trunojoyo Madura (7 February), and possibly other universities.

3 PSHK Indonesia, "*Dirty Vote (Full Movie)*", Youtube.

4 Mahkamah Rakyat, "*Mahkamah Rakyat Luar Biasa Ungkap Mekanisme Kejahatan Pelanggaran Konstitusional Rezim Jokowi*", June 28, 2024.

#KawalPutusanMK (method #7). The demonstrations were enlivened by other, less convenient methods, such as the hacking of the House of Representatives' official email address to send calls for resistance to other official email addresses (methods #2, #168, and #196), the boycott of "buzzers" or pro-regime influencers (method #55), alongside invitations to call Widodo by his childhood name, Mulyono, which is believed to bring bad luck (methods #5, #30, #32, and #35).

Equipped with humor and satire, the campaign eventually targeted government officials and/or their family members. This includes the mocking of Widodo's son for going on a holiday using a private jet (method #32), to the delivery of flower arrangements (methods #8 and #21) on a number of different occasions—take, for example, wreaths by Universitas Airlangga's Student Executive Board over the inauguration of the new president and vice president, and a satirical congratulatory message on a minister-slash-politician's problematic obtaining of a doctoral degree.

On the impunity of human rights violation, activists consistently hold Aksi Kamisan, a weekly picketing (method #16) done every Thursday, 4pm, in front of the presidential palace and other places of significance in over 30 other cities. Since its inception in January 2007, Aksi Kamisan has become a hub for various pro-social movements, raising the alarm on land-grabbing, sea-grabbing, environmental destruction, police brutality, infringement on freedom of religion, criminalization of human rights defenders, etc. In February, the 805th Aksi Kamisan was specifically marked by the showing of a yellow card and red card (methods #18 and #21) by Ibu Sumarsih, a renowned survivor-turned-activist, to signify the gravity of human rights violations in Indonesia.

In the face of criminalization and judicial harassment of human rights defenders, where many had to redirect their time and energy to deal with endless legal and judicial processes, resistance also took place throughout the conduct of trials. Inside and outside court buildings, activists organized demonstrations, held banners, donned symbolic objects, and delivered speeches (methods #47, #8, #19, and #1).

Amid their own grievances, Indonesian civil society actors did not stop short of showing their unwavering support for the plight of the Palestinians. To condemn Israel's settler agenda and the ongoing genocide in Gaza, many expressed their stance (methods #8 and #7) and did awareness raising (method #50) on both online and offline platforms, conducted boycotts on Israeli products and/or pro-Zionist companies (methods #71 and #77), and carried out encampments (method #173)—featuring activists and musicians—in front of the United States Embassy in Jakarta.

On the issue of land- and sea-grabbing, obviously marred with human rights violations, resistance largely took place at points of destruction and decision (see Box 2). Pushing back against rampant land confiscation in Papua, the Awyu indigenous community and its allies held demonstrations (method #47), conducted indigenous rituals in front of the Supreme Court (method #40), installed red crosses to seal off their land (methods #40, #38, and #120), es-

Box 2

Point of production encompasses the economic system that directly affects workers, and where that system is most vulnerable.

Point of destruction is where harm or injustice occurs in its most blatant form. It could be where industrial resource extraction or obvious oppression takes place.

Point of consumption is the place where we interact with a product or service that is linked to injustice.

Point of decision is the location of the power-holders who possess the ability to meet the campaign's demand.

Point of assumption is where narratives that obscure, rationalize, or justify the injustices occurring at all the other points reside.

Point of opportunity comprises calendar events that present unique chances to draw attention to your cause.

Resource:

Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning, *Re:Imagining Change: How to Use Story-based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World* (PM Press, 2017).

tablished human blockades (methods #171 and #172), and physically occupied their sacred lands (method #173). Similarly, Rempang residents' opposition against the Rempang Eco City project was expressed through demonstrations in Jakarta (method #47) alongside blockades back home (methods #171-#173).

Other land and environmental cases that captured significant public attention include the assembling of People's Water Forum to criticize and counter the World Water Forum in Bali in May (methods #50 and #179), blockades by residents and mothers to protest against the ongoing environmental destruction by coal mining companies in Labota (method #173), the conduct of mud bath rituals by the people of Malind Makleuw to condemn the conversion of indigenous lands into food estates (method #20), demonstrations in the Rantai Balla village against the destruction of their land (method #47), rallies by fisherfolk against the reopening of Indonesia's sea sand export (method #47), and the dumping of truckloads of garbage at the Sintang Regent's office (method #21).

It is safe to say that there must have been more instances of nonviolent resistance than what got covered by mainstream media or shared by NGOs. As reported by the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA),[5] the year 2024 saw a 21% increase in agrarian conflict cases from the previous year. More generally, Widodo's 10-year presidency more than doubled the number of cases from Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's 10-year presidency. Reasons to justify state-sponsored land- and sea-grabbing include "boosting infrastructures and investments" through National Strategic Projects (PSN), "establishing food security" through erecting food estates, and "tackling deforestation" through forest amnesty procedures. With such justifications in place, it is not surprising to see that the majority of nonviolent resistance against the grabbing of land and sea were met with violence by state and/or corporations' security forces.

On workers' rights, perhaps the most widespread nonviolent resistance campaigns were those put forward by drivers affiliated with online hailing services (*ojek online*) and civil servant lecturers under the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology.

5 Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria, "*Adakah Reforma Agraria di Bawah Komando Prabowo?*", January 21, 2025.

In waging their campaigns, both groups have unsurprisingly relied on the "classic combo" (methods #47, #38, #8, #7, and #36). What separated the two was the incorporation of strikes (method #97) by drivers and group lobbying (method #15) by lecturers—both supported by their unions, respectively the *Serikat Ojek Online* (Online Drivers Union) and *Serikat Pekerja Kampus* (Campus Workers Union). A rather surprising turn of events came from judges who started to protest against inadequate welfare. From the 7th to the 11th of October, judges across Indonesia demanded their rights by taking a collective leave (method #104), staying at home (method #65), clearing court schedules (method #114), and/or participating in demonstrations (method #47).

Meanwhile, the long-standing fight to pass UU PPRT as well as to secure fair and decent pay amongst workers in general seemed to have amalgamated with other resistance campaigns, including the May Day rally and protests against the Omnibus Law, #DaruratDemokrasi, and the VAT rate increase.

Taking the High Ground

In its previous editions, DPD's annual review highlighted a number of things: dilemma action, infrastructures of resistance, authoritarian innovation, and nonviolent discipline. There is no redundancy in reiterating those within the context of "Garuda Biru."

Firstly, our understanding of nonviolent resistance should not be reduced merely to acts of resistance "without the use of violence," as it is first and foremost an act of imposing dilemma action on our opponents. Here, nonviolent resistance is about forcing our opponents to recalculate the political, moral, economic, social, etc, costs of not taking heed of our demands.

Unlike its predecessors, the 22 August rallies managed to effectively impose dilemma action to the regime. It made the outgoing president realize that he cannot afford losing his reputation should he want his newly established political dynasty to last. Also, it made the incoming president and parliamentarians realize that they cannot afford governing the country without the support of the people. The sheer number of people who took to the street deterred them from overturning the Constitutional Court's decision that would have otherwise enabled the outgoing president's second son to join (and very likely win) the gubernatorial election. This stood in contrast to when previous rallies failed to deter the outgoing president from coaxing the Constitutional Court to allow his underaged first son to run for (and eventually won) the vice presidential seat.

Secondly, nonviolent resistance needs certain infrastructures that would offset "the cost of resisting" against "the cost of not resisting" amongst the public. The 22nd August rallies certainly made it easier for different groups of people to take part in it. For example, numerous donation channels allowed workers who cannot afford to skip office to partake in the rallies. Their generous support has allowed organizers to provide food, drinks, anti-tear gas masks, as well as medical and legal support to protesters–which lessens the cost that the protesters

would otherwise have to personally bear. Also, a notable number of lawyers made their services available pro-bono to protesters in the case of arrests and detentions.

Another important infrastructure is the media–mass media and social media–in the sense that they arouse the fear of missing out (FOMO) amongst the general public. Upon knowing that their peers, professors, celebrity crush, and/or even parents would join the 22nd August rallies, "the cost of not protesting" becomes higher than "the cost of protesting." Mass media and social media effectively and affectively communicated professors' decisions to "move class to the streets," and parents' resolve to "hold reunions on the streets." This plays into the "intergenerational competition," if Gen X professors and/or parents are enthusiastic to join the rally, how can Gen Z students not? In addition, parents' acts of canvassing police stations to look for their possibly arrested children, served as an important infrastructure of resistance.

Erica Chenoweth's research highlighted that no regime can withstand challenges posed by at least 3.5% of its population.[6] This means that increasing any movements' margins of success would include assembling a nonviolent resistance lineup that consists of citizens from various walks of life, beyond activists and students. Thus, building infrastructures of resistance to ultimately lower the "cost of protesting" becomes imperative.

In building such infractures, it is crucial to put on our "duty of care" hats. We need to listen to the specific challenges faced by the most vulnerable groups and be willing to meaningfully address them. How do we safely bring into the resistance lineup health workers, teachers, online gamers, football supporters, and other groups who have all been negatively affected by the increasingly suffocating regulations throughout the years? How do we convince factory workers and online drivers that students and the middle-class are ready to be their meaningful allies? How do we stand up for and guarantee the safety of women, the elderly, children, people with disabilities, religious minorities, and persons with diverse SOGIESC upon participating in the resistance? These are only a few of the many tough, yet needed, conversations that civil society actors need to make.

Thirdly, we should be fully aware of the fact that social justice movements are currently facing a regime that is adept at utilizing democratic procedures to consolidate autocratization. As outlined in the Humanis Foundation's baseline study,[7] these autocrats have relied on various strategies of repression, cooptation, and distraction to shrink and crowd into our civic spacetime. Results range from activists and civil society organizations often finding themselves occupied with the need to prove that they are not *kadrun* (a label that surrogates people as being narrow-minded), university students competing with one another for scholarships, internships, and exchange opportunities with foreign universities (many of which offered by the government), lecturers having to allocate a significant portion of their time and energy to fill in assessments for ranks and regulations, journalists busy protecting themselves from cyber attacks, and so on.

6 Erica Chenoweth, "*Questions, Answers, and Some Cautionary Updates Regarding the 3.5% Rule*", Harvard University, April 2020.

7 Diah Kusumaningrum, Daniel Petz, Fanya Tarissa Anindita, Dhania Salsha Handiani, and Ni Kadek Dewi Puspitasari. *Outsmarting and Outlasting Autocratic Actors. A Baseline Study Report for Connect, Defend, Act!* (Humanis Foundation 2024).

Amidst all of this, it is then crucial for the movement to determine a red line that cannot be negotiated. For South Koreans, for example, said line is the monopoly of power in the hands of the executive. As such, in the face of price hikes, or when calls for a wage increase were made, not all citizens felt necessarily propelled to mobilize themselves. However, when the president declared emergency martial law that granted him unlimited power, swathes of people immediately took to the streets. Not only did they manage to reverse the martial law, but they also successfully impeached the president in question.

Although not explicitly agreed upon, perhaps the revision of the Regional Election Law by Widodo's regime was perceived by many Indonesians as crossing the red line. Perhaps, this was the reason why many quickly took part in the August 22 rallies, despite previously not participating in the demonstrations to cancel the Omnibus Law, pass UU PPRT, demand decent pay, and such. That said, moving forward, there should be a more explicit dialogue among civil society actors about the boundaries and red line to be upheld. The government should also be made aware that the crossing of said ride line will be met with massive public anger.

Fourthly, it is important to keep in mind that effective nonviolent resistance does not emerge overnight, but is a result of constant learning and reflection. Mama Aleta, the Kartinis of Kendeng, Greta Thunberg, Martin Luther King, Jr., and even Mahatma Gandhi all consistently trained their minds, feelings, and bodies in the discipline of nonviolence.

Therefore, to be able to effectively impose dilemma actions on the opponent, civil society actors need to practice the art of combining and sequencing more methods of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention, as opposed to over relying on the "classic combo" consisting of methods of protest and persuasion. For example, to address the government's relentless efforts to co-opt religious organizations and universities with mining permits, we could start to resort to the preclusive purchasing method (method #186). As a response to rampant judicial harassments, activists could also try to do a reverse trial (method #160).

Civil society actors should also up their game in combining conventional methods of nonviolent action with digital activism, especially ones from the digital transitional and gladiatorial categories. These combinations should further be practiced at points of production, consumption, assumption, and opportunity, as opposed to only waging them at points of decision and destruction.

"*Sporadis, terpencar, tak solid, tak memiliki pemimpin, dan tak punya skenario ajek*" or sporadic, scattered, fluid, leaderless, and without a fixed scenario. These are the words used by Tempo Magazine to describe the nonviolent resistance that took over the country on 22 August. Perhaps the very fluidity of said movement stores various elements of surprise that cannot be anticipated and tamed by the opponent. That said, it is now more important than ever to strengthen our dilemma action, infrastructures of resistance, red line, and nonviolent discipline to effectively carry out our fight for social justice.

2024 Maximalist Wrapped: A Mixed Genre of Maintenance, Persistence, and Anticipating Divergence

Dhania Salsha Handiani

From the occupation of the Prime Minister's office to the conversion of K-pop hits into impeachment anthems, maximalist campaigns in 2024 were plenty and lively. While the year mirrored the perseverance of 2023, it also witnessed the emergence of a new type of maximalist campaign that challenged existing boundaries.

What is a maximalist campaign? In our yearly report, Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD) utilizes the definition of maximalist and reformist campaigns established by the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) Data Project.[1] As such, it categorizes maximalist campaigns as nonviolent movements that aim to topple an entire government due to popular dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, it categorizes reformist movements as nonviolent movements that are more issue-driven, whose goal does not necessarily entail the ousting of an incumbent government.

Our yearly reports also highlight George Lakey's "Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution",[2] where we adhere to the proposition that successful nonviolent revolutions undergo five stages: the conscientization, organizing, confrontation, mass noncooperation, and parallel government stage. Upon keeping an eye on movements whose presence spanned over the years, this year's report would also emphasize that a movement's success is oftentimes not achieved in one cycle. Adopting Beautiful Trouble's framework on the "Movement Cycle",[3] this year's report reiterates that a cyclical movement can comprise both ups and downs. Based on the proposed framework, said cycle consists of the "enduring crisis" period (where public anger first grows), the "uprising" period (where a trigger event leads to massive mobilization), the "peak" period (where the movement gains the most attention), the "contraction" period (where the movement starts to face backlash, repression, and eventually burnout), the "evolution" period (where the movement is projected to reorganize itself after the former period of burnout), and the "new normal" period (where the movement is anticipated to once again be on the offensive, in anticipation of future triggering events).

What then is the difference between the movements in 2024 and 2023? While the 2023 report underscored the dwindling of the Sudanese and Iranian civil resistance movements, it also took note of the sustenance of campaigns in Afghanistan, Russia, Panama, Guatemala, and Tunisia–some of which owing to their strategy of turning reformist and breaking down their demands. It, too, celebrated the resurrection of campaigns in Myanmar and Thailand,

1 Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, "What is a maximalist campaign?," 2023.

2 George Lakey, *A Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution* (Philadelphia: Movement for a New Society, 1976).

3 Beautiful Trouble, "*The Movement Cycle*", 2024.

alongside the emergence of new ones in Peru, Syria, Poland, Bangladesh, Ghana, South Africa, and Madagascar.

In 2024, our report highlights a wider and newer set of dynamics. Putting aside the lack of updates shown by the movements in Russia, Panama, and Sudan, the report will delve into the decline of movements in Thailand, Myanmar, and Peru, the varying degrees of durability of the movements in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tunisia, alongside the successes obtained by the movements in Bangladesh and Guatemala. It also covers the swift entrance of new campaigns in Kenya, South Korea, and Georgia, the post-maximalist campaign conditions in Sri Lanka and Syria, as well as the (to-be-closely-observed!) emergence of maximalist right-wing campaigns in Colombia, Spain, and Poland.

What Discontinued, Continued, and Succeeded from 2023

In 2024, campaigns that existed in 2023 have taken different trajectories. While the movements in **Thailand**, **Myanmar**, and **Peru** saw a decline, others in **Iran**, **Afghanistan**, and **Tunisia** have persisted in their own right. In the cases of **Bangladesh** and **Guatemala**, 2024 was a year of success.

Last year, the world kept a close eye on the resurgence of maximalist campaigns in **Thailand** and **Myanmar** after a period of intense repression. Alas, the movements sizzled down yet again in 2024. After a period of reflection and reorganization, the lack of activity by the movements was linked to challenges to keep the momentum that sparked the initial resurgence going. In Thailand, for example, street protests dwindled following the Move Forward Party (MFP)'s dissolution on 7 August 2024.[4] Noting the resemblance to the disbanding of the Future Forward Party (FF) back in 2020, an observer pointed out how the lack of response in 2024 was primarily founded on the people's feeling of subduedness.[5] Meanwhile, in Myanmar, the waning of the country's nonviolent resistance occurred as armed civilian groups started to occupy various townships, thus shifting the momentum to their violent maximalist counterparts.

Unlike the previous two, **Peru**'s maximalist campaign enjoyed massive mobilization in 2023. However, the movement declined in 2024, as mobilization of the people was quickly responded to with a massive state crackdown. Under the auspices of President Dina Boluarte, protesters were targeted with disproportionate force, including arbitrary killings by the police and military. As such, one could say that the Peruvian movement is entering the "contraction" period–despite the presence of small pockets of resistance, the movement is said to be on the low in the presence of heavily armed state apparatuses.[6]

In other cases, movements that underwent the "contraction" period in 2023 were able to

4 Michael Montesano, "*The dissolution of Thailand's Move Forward Party is a dead end but it is not clear for whom*", East Asia Forum, August 13, 2024.

5 Panarat Anamwathana, "*Will dissolution of Thailand's Move Forward Party reignite wave of youth-led protests?*", SCMP, August 17, 2024.

6 Brian Osgood, "*Peruvian democracy weakened as government consolidates control: Report*", Al Jazeera, March 22, 2024.

slowly, but surely, retain their presence in 2024. Despite the wave of violence, arrest, torture, and killings undergone by tens of thousands of demonstrators, the movement in **Iran**–initially invoked as a response to the killing of Mahsa Amini by the state's morality police–showed its resilience by transforming itself to a "quiet revolution". A similar approach was seen in **Afghanistan**. To prevent more casualties without halting the consolidation of support for their respective movement, the people of Iran and Afghanistan have been resorting to nonviolent action done more discreetly and culturally.

In Iran, women opted to exercise their agency by refusing to wear their headscarves when running errands (method #141), bazaar merchants (often linked to the clergy) tactfully showed their solidarity by closing up their shops (method #136), and many others resorted to creating street graffiti and viral social media contents surrounding the resistance (method #7 and #8).[7] Meanwhile, ten Afghan women were able to conduct the country's first public protest in a year on 11 September 2024, where they marched down the street of Kabul (method #38) while wearing masks, holding small signs (method #8), and chanting "Women's rights are equal to men's rights" and "The Taliban should be condemned" (method #7). The march was a culmination of a year-long online campaign against new restrictions enacted by the Taliban–one of which being a ban on women's voices in public, where hundreds across the country correspondingly uploaded masked videos of themselves singing and reciting poetries on the Internet (method #141).[8]

In **Tunisia**, resistance against President Kais Saied's deepening authoritarian rule remained stable. Ahead of the country's presidential election in October 2024, thousands of Tunisians held week-long marches (method #38) and protests (method #47) demanding "Out with Dictator Saied" and expressing that "The people want the fall of the regime!" (method #8).[9] They, too, protested against Saied's intimidation of other running candidates and demanded the freedom of existing political prisoners.[10]

Meanwhile, having securely gone through the "contradiction" and "evolution" period, one could argue that the movements in **Guatemala** and **Bangladesh** were more readily able to be on the offensive, contributing to their larger margin of success in 2024. In Guatemala, efforts to secure a wide array of participants–consisting of thousands of students, professionals, public sector workers, informal workers, farmers, and indigenous authorities–allowed the movement to comfortably outsmart their opponent in the face of crackdowns. When concocting over 120 roadblocks (method #171) across the country, for example, demonstrants could easily thwart police's effort to create riots and dismiss the blockades by calling in more people to outnumber the authorities.[11] Such form of safety nets thus allowed the movement to engage in more intense methods of nonviolent action, an example being nationwide strikes (method #97), which

7 Bahar Makooi, "*Two years after the death of Mahsa Amini, a 'quiet revolution' is still under way in Iran*", France 24, September 16, 2024.

8 Ruchi Kumar, "*'If We Don't, Who Will?'—How Women in Afghanistan Are Speaking Out*", The Persistent, October 22, 2024.

9 RFI, "*Tunisians resume protests against president ahead of October election*", September 23, 2024.

10 Tarek Amara, "*Tunisians protest against president ahead of election*", Reuters, September 14, 2024.

11 Sonia Pérez D., "*Guatemalan police begin clearing protesters' roadblocks after president threatens a crackdown*", AP News, October 11, 2023.

successfully pushed for the long-awaited inauguration of the democratically-elected Bernardo Arévalo as the country's president on 14 January 2024.

The Bangladeshi movement's resilience also effectively propelled the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 5 August 2024. In its early conception, the movement was primarily driven by students, where public anger was directed toward the enactment of quota-based systems for government job recruitment that are deemed discriminatory. Here, the movement's "enduring crisis" and "uprising" periods–seen in the mobilization of tens of thousands of students–were essentially buttressed by similar quota reform protests in 2018 and anti-regime protests in previous years following the country's economic downturn.

Those previous experiences thus allowed the movement to swiftly reorganize itself in the face of a massive crackdown in the middle of the year, later dubbed the July massacre. With hundreds killed and thousands injured amid a nationwide internet shutdown,[12] the movement quickly escalated from a student-led protest into a "Student-People's Uprising"–comprising of university lecturers, artists, influencers, lawyers, and members of political parties–by further highlighting the country's worsening economy, corruption, human rights violations, and democratic backsliding.[13] Aside from rallies and demonstrations (method #38 and #47), new methods of resistance include holding sit-ins in multiple districts (method #171),[14] having government workers go on strikes (method #145), refusing to pay taxes and utility bills (method #196),[15] and later nonviolently occupying Sheikh Hasina's palace (method #173),[16] which led to her resignation, the creation of an interim government, and the release of political prisoners.

As such, the year 2024 has played host to different phases of the movement cycle for different movements that extended their presence from 2023. Movements that were able to achieve their demands, namely those in Guatemala and Bangladesh, were supported by diverse segments of society, whose roles were well-established in times of crisis. Of course, getting to the aforementioned stage requires a constant process of reflecting and reorganizing–in Iran and Afghanistan, this is currently undertaken through small acts of resistance that are discreet enough to prevent triggering repression, but notable enough to draw support and attention back to their struggles. Iranian and Afghan women's approach to influencing their family units, especially the men, also allowed them to expand their allies who could extend their privilege to protect more vulnerable groups, especially in the face of crackdowns.

In some other campaigns, the cycle may not be linear. In the case of Thailand and Myanmar, the short amount of time to reflect on previous shortcomings–in addition to a loss of momentum–could revert the movement to the "contraction" period. Meanwhile, the decision to lay

12 Umar A Farooq and Azad Essa, "*Why did Bangladesh student protests spark a crisis for the Hasina government?*", Middle East Eye, July 23, 2024.

13 Charlie Campbell, "*Bangladesh on Brink as Anti-Government Protests Become 'People's Uprising'*", Time, August 5, 2024.

14 Mahathir Mohammed, "*Protesters demand govt's resignation, reject PM's calls for dialogue*", Dhaka Tribune, August 2, 2024.

15 Agence France-Presse, "*Bangladeshi students call for nationwide civil disobedience*", VOA, August 3, 2024.

16 Nadine Shaanta Murshid, "*Bangladeshi students and activists have legitimised their commitment to democracy*", Hyphen, August 29, 2024.

low in Peru, alongside the stagnance projected by the movement in Tunisia, could be equated to a period of configuring the next steps to be taken by the resistance.

New, but Well-Established Maximalist Campaigns

Of course, 2024 also witnessed the emergence of several new maximalist campaigns, namely the ones in **Kenya**, **South Korea**, and **Georgia**. Most movements initially grounded themselves on a reformist demand, before eventually expanding to an all-around anti-government resistance.

In **Kenya** and **South Korea**, protests first emerged to express the people's discontent towards the proposition of a controversial bill and law in their respective countries. In June 2024, thousands of Kenyans first mobilized themselves against President William Ruto's plan to enact a tax bill projected to increase commodity prices amidst the country's economic hardships.[17] Meanwhile, public anger emerged in South Korea in the early hours of 3 December 2024, when President Yoon Suk Yeol declared emergency martial law on the premise of protecting the country from "North Korean communist forces".[18]

In Kenya, Gen Z's aptness in utilizing various forms of digital activism ultimately allowed the movement to not only ease the mobilization and coordination of demonstrations across the country, but also to amplify pressure on their government from the get-go. Other than trending the #OccupyParliament and #RejectFinanceBill2024 hashtags (method #7 and #8), for example, Kenyans made use of their digital prowess to hack and disrupt government websites (method #193), leak political leaders' personal information while spamming them with WhatsApp and text messages (method #31 and #32), and create a digital "wall of shame" that lists downs politicians in support of the bill (method #30).[19]

The role of youths also held great significance in South Korea's movement. Upon protesting against the martial law, demonstrations were nothing short of massive and festive–by using light sticks (method #24) and turning K-pop songs into protest anthems (method #37), the movement was able to appear not-at-all daunting, thus appealing to thousands of participants from different walks of life.[20] Meanwhile, on the night when the martial law was announced, members of the National Assembly pushed their way through military barricades to unanimously vote against the decree, before deciding to sleep at the parliament building to counteract possible misconduct from President Yoon and his party (method #173).[21]

17 Nimo Omer, "*Thursday briefing: How one controversial bill has Kenya on the brink of disorder*", The Guardian, July 18, 2024.

18 Sarah A. Son, "*South Korea: defeat of president's attempt to impose martial law shows a robust democracy at work*", The Conversation, December 4, 2024.

19 Job Mwaura, "*Kenya protests: Gen Z shows the power of digital activism - driving change from screens to the streets*", The Conversation, June 23, 2024.

20 Hyunsu Yim, Nicoco Chan, and Minwoo Park, "*K-pop light sticks fire up Yoon's impeachment protests in South Korea*", December 10, 2024.

21 Koh Ewe, Tessa Wong, Nick Marsh, Jake Kwon, and Yuna Ku, "*Fear, fury and triumph: Six hours that shook South Korea*", BBC, December 4, 2024.

As such, both movements' ability to inflict such pressure–in a short amount of time!–have accordingly propelled their governments to concede to their initial demands, which laid the foundation for their expansion to a full-fledged maximalist campaign. After successfully getting the bill withdrawn, Kenya's young protesters continued to conduct demonstrations (method #47), nationwide strikes (method #97), and blockades of major streets (method #171)–this time to shed light on other grievances against the government and further demand President Ruto's resignation.[22] Unable to appease the people, the president eventually declared the dismissal of his existing cabinet.[23] Little did he know that the protests would continue, in fact further encouraging demonstrations in neighboring African countries–Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Angola, Eswatini, Namibia, Mozambique, and South Africa–to protest against similar issues of corruption, inequality, and corrupt governance.[24]

Other than escalating in terms of numbers, South Korea's movement imposed a major dilemma action towards their opponents, further demanding the ouster of President Yoon. More than 2,500 renowned filmmakers and artists in the country joined together to file a formal document in favor of impeaching the president (method #2), making headlines across the globe.[25] Amidst the days-long protests, several K-pop celebrities canceled their concerts to give free shows in front of the parliament building (method #36), while those unable to join showed support by pre-paying meals and drinks to be given to protesters.[26] Others consistently sent funeral wreaths to the offices of ruling parties that did not approve of their demands (method #21 and #43), while ripping off flags containing the faces of lawmakers who refused to vote for President Yoon's expulsion (method #30), which culminated in the Constitutional Court's impeachment declaration on 13 December 2024.[27]

Meanwhile, in **Georgia**, protests first emerged on the basis of criticizing fraudulent parliamentary elections on 26 October 2024. Tens of thousands of Georgians–including key opposition figures–held demonstrations (method #47) in front of the parliament building to condemn the winning Georgian Dream (GD) party, which had been showing increasingly authoritarian tendencies.[28] In addition to the protests, students across the country have also engaged in strikes (method #62) and the nonviolent occupation of their universities (method #173).[29] The second wave of protests then started on 28 November 2024, when Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced GD's refusal of European Union aid and the suspension of membership talks with the EU. Thousands once again conducted hundreds of protests, which featured the creation of human chains kilometers long (method #171), thus dubbing the entire ordeal "the most significant mass uprising since the 2003 Rose Revolution".[30]

22 Reuters, "*Kenyan protesters demand Ruto's resignation*", July 2, 2024.

23 Tafi Mhaka, "*Is a sub-Saharan 'African Spring' in the offing?*", Al Jazeera, August 6, 2024.

24 Tafi Mhaka, "*Is a sub-Saharan 'African Spring' in the offing?*", Al Jazeera, August 6, 2024.

25 Kpop Charts, *Twitter*, December 7, 2024.

26 Yim Seung-hye, "*Korean celebrities show support to protesters*", Korea JoongAng Daily, December 15, 2024.

27 Reuters, "*How events in South Korea played out after President Yoon's martial law declaration*", January 25, 2025.

28 Emma Burrows, "*Tens of thousands rally in Georgia to denounce the parliamentary election they say was rigged*", AP News, October 29, 2024.

29 JAMnews, "*Student protests in Batumi spark solidarity across Georgian universities*", November 15, 2024.

30 John Chin and Anastasia Kim, "*Georgia's Second Rose Revolution*", The Loop, 2024.

At first glance, many might equate the emergence of these three movements with the "uprising" and "peak" period of the movement cycle. However, their significant scale and ability to swiftly intensify would not be possible without an existing repertoire of contention, or a sustained set of memories and lessons learned from years of past demonstrations. In other words, their relative success could very well be associated with a degree of "new normal" that they have cultivated throughout the years.

Georgians' knee-jerk reaction to instantly mobilizing tens of thousands of people in a nonviolent resistance–which was not an easy feat!–is likely founded by memories of the Rose Revolution in 2003, where the movement's unyielding commitment to nonviolence, led by the majority of its young population, was able to successfully topple Eduard Shevardnadze's ruling dictatorship.

On the other hand, South Koreans have been utilizing tactics that they themselves have proven effective in past anti-government protests in the 1980s, 2016, and 2017, alongside ongoing reformist protests. Take, for example, ensuring protesters' safety by positioning those with more than 30 years of protest experience at the frontline,[31] alongside creating silly flags (like the "Flying Spaghetti Monster Federation" and "Dumpling Association") as lessons from the 2016-2017 candlelight vigils against the-then President Park Geun-hye, where protesters were accused of having secret political backings.[32] This, too, includes the readiness and solidarity of South Korea's major telecoms carriers–among which include SK Telecom, KT, and LG Uplus–to amp up network capacity in dense demonstration areas, in anticipation of unexpected network shutdowns.[33]

Meanwhile, the case of Kenya shows that the transfer of knowledge on nonviolent resistance does not always occur vertically–from one generation to another–in a single country, but also horizontally, across countries.

Life After Maximalist Campaigns

Needless to say, a maximalist campaign's success is not merely indicated by its number and size, nor does it end at the ouster of the incumbent regime. The year 2024 also signifies the importance of nurturing resistance following the end of a maximalist campaign, as seen in **Sri Lanka** and **Syria**.

While large-scale protests against Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's corruption and mishandling of the country's economic crisis had successfully forced the president to flee and relinquish his position in 2022, **Sri Lankans'** struggle never ceased. Following said ouster, the political vacuum in Sri Lanka quickly became a platform for successor Ranil Wickremesinghe

31 Jenny, *Twitter*, December 7, 2024.

32 Joseph Kim, *Twitter*, December 6, 2024.

33 Lee Min-hyung, "*Telecoms in emergency mode as massive rallies continue*", The Korea Times, 2024.

to enact repressive measures and instill the same political regime many had fought against.[34] In response to it, Swasthika Arulingan, a human rights lawyer and activist who had taken part in the protests, admitted that they ultimately "have not achieved the long-term goals of Aragalaya [the movement]...no change in the political system, no accountability on corruption, and those who are responsible for stealing people's money are still in power".[35]

Despite this, momentum for the revival of the movement presented itself as the gradual emergence of the leftist National People's Power (NPP)–which promised the eradication of the country's deep-rooted political patronage and authoritarianism–throughout the following years. This is reflected in NPP's Anura Kumara Dissanayake's eventual victory in the 2024 presidential elections, a newcomer from a non-elite party, who symbolizes the 2022 movement's anti-status quo stance. It is thus more important than ever for the people of Sri Lanka to ensure the fulfillment of the aforesaid promises, to ensure that the 2022 People Movement did not take place in vain.

Meanwhile, what happens if the ouster of an incumbent regime occurs under the purview of armed forces? Irrespective of a year-long nonviolent resistance campaign in the country, 2024 saw the groundbreaking fall of **Syria's** Bashar al-Assad following the capture of Damascus by the paramilitary group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).[36]

A number of studies–among which include the work of Karatnycky & Ackerman (2005) and Celestino & Gleditsch (2013)–have shown how regime transitions brought about by violent movements are likely to create new autocracies. While many still took to the streets to rejoice over the ouster of al-Assad, sectarian tensions and fear of the new ruling regime arose. Tens of thousands of citizens from minority groups–including Christians, Druze, and Alawites–have chosen to flee to nearby countries in fear of persecution.[37] Even after the former president's exit, the country, too, witnessed the looting of churches and burning of minority villages.[38] As such, the nonviolent movement against al-Assad's regime in 2023 should accordingly adopt a "new normal" that involves reorienting themselves into a movement that not only ensures the safety of those currently being persecuted, thus taking the role of providing Unarmed Civilian Protection (see Huibert Oldenhuis's chapter for further reading), but also one ready to be at the offensive to push for a truly democratic and inclusive government.

A Different Side of Maximalist Campaigns?

Interestingly, 2024 also saw the emergence of anti-government protests that "went against the grain". Instead of aiming to topple an authoritarian government, the movements found in **Colombia**, **Spain**, and **Poland** were largely propelled by right-wing forces to condemn social reforms set forth by the countries' incumbent leftist governments.

34 Roshni Kapur, "*Sri Lanka's political elite fails to gatekeep change*", East Asia Forum, November 13, 2024.

35 Anbarasan Ethirajan, "*Sri Lanka: The fate of a protest that toppled a president*", BBC, July 9, 2023.

36 Antoinette Radford, "*The Assad regime ruled Syria for 50 years. Here's how it fell in less than two weeks*", BBC, December 9, 2024.

37 Ramazan Kılınç, "*Why Syria's reconstruction may depend on the fate of its minorities*", The Conversation, December 18, 2024.

38 Ammar Abdulhamid, "*Syria's Communal Diversity and the Challenges of Transition*", Lawfare, January 8, 2025.

In April 2024, tens of thousands of people congregated in multiple cities in **Columbia** to protest against leftist President Gustavo Petro's reform agenda.[39] While shouting "Petro Out", masses backed by conservative congress members and business groups engaged in marches and demonstrations to show their disapproval towards Petro's proposed economic and social reforms–this includes a labor reform package that aims to protect workers and unions, alongside health reforms that seek to expand access to public healthcare.

In **Spain**, approximately 20-30 thousands of people protested against Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's socialist government by occupying Madrid's Plaza de Castilla, all the while chanting "For unity, dignity, the law, and freedom. General elections now!"[40] to push for Sanchez's resignation. Backed by the country's right-wing parties, the crowd expressed their dissatisfaction with a number of policies, including the provision of amnesty for Catalan independence activists and secessionists, while also expressing anti-immigrant sentiments.[41]

Meanwhile, **Poland's** anti-government rallies, attended by thousands of people alongside members of the nationalist conservative opposition party, largely took place in the capital city Warsaw. While waving Polish flags and chanting slogans like "White Europe of brotherly nations!", protesters have been condemning the government for being pro-European Union, while similarly criticizing the country's intake of refugees.[42]

Paying heed to Daniel Petz' "Dispatches from the Dark Side" chapter from Damai Pangkal Damai's 2021 report, it is thus imperative to acknowledge that conservative, right-wing elements are getting more outright in acknowledging the effectiveness and successes of civil resistance, hence the abovementioned mimicries. Having said that, other than honing one's nonviolent tools and skills to fight against authoritarian, unjust governments, perhaps the "new normal" should also entail one's readiness to outsmart and one-up civilian groups who have resorted to non-violent action in pursuit of unjust and potentially violent goals.

39 AP News, "*Tens of thousands of Colombians protest against the leftist president's reform agenda*", April 22, 2024.

40 Agence France-Presse, "*Thousands join right-wing rally against Spanish government*", VOA, October 20, 2024.

41 Agence France-Presse, "*Thousands join right-wing rally against Spanish government*", VOA, October 20, 2024.

42 Marek Strzelecki and Aleksandra Michalska, "*Far-right Independence Day march in Warsaw draws thousands*", Reuters, November 12, 2024.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Afghanistan		→	●←	●←	↑←
Albania			→	✔	
Algeria	→	↑→	↓→		
Bangladesh				→	✔
Belarus	→	↓→	↓→		
Bulgaria	→	✔			
Chile	→	✔			
China			→	✔	
Colombia	→	↑→			
Ecuador			→	✔	
El Salvador		→			
Georgia					→
Ghana					●→
Guatemala		→	↑→	✔+←	✔+→
Hong Kong	→	↓→	↓→		
Iran			→	↓→	↑→
Kenya					→
Kyrgyzstan	→				
Lebanon	→	↑→			
Madagascar				→	●→
Malawi	→				
Myanmar		→	↓→	↑→	↓→
Panama			→	●←	
Peru	→			→	↓→
Poland				→	
Rusia		→	●←	●←	
South Africa				→	●→
South Korea					✔+→
Sri Lanka			→	✔	
Sudan	→	↑→	↑→	↓→	
Syria				→	
Thailand	→	↓→	↓→	↑→	↓→
Tunisia			→	●→	●→

Diagram 3

The trajectory of maximalist movements in the world (2020-2024)

Orientation	
→	Maximalist
←	Reformist
Intensity	
↑	Increases
↓	Decreases
●	Stagnant
Status	
✔	Successful

Future Maximalist Wrapped

Last but not least, in a number of other countries, 2024 was also a year of trigger points and–if amassing enough support–the foreshadowing of possible maximalist campaigns in the long run. While these protests have not necessarily assumed a maximalist orientation, a solidarity shoutout is in order.

In Venezuela, Mauritania, Indonesia, and Senegal, a string of protests emerged concerning the countries' conduct of presidential elections. While demonstrations in the first two countries were triggered by claims of fraud and the lack of transparency following their respective elections,[43] emergency calls were already made prior to Indonesia's election processes, as a critique of the former president's role in manipulating election laws (see diah kusumaningrum's chapter for further reading). In contrast, the Senegalese demonstrations have primarily revolved around the postponement of the country's presidential elections.[44]

Another interesting case has also taken the form of protests in Israel. While year-long demonstrations have initially demanded a hostage swap deal and ceasefire in Gaza, the end of the year has seen a growing demand for the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Occurring in multiple cities with various methods that span from blockades (method #171) to strikes (method #97), observations on the future of the resistance are therefore crucial to not only assess the effect of maximalist campaigns on the development of a democracy, but also the trajectory of the ongoing genocide of Palestine.[45]

In such cases, the sudden yet massive mobilization of people could very well serve as a trigger event to something that goes beyond a single-issue resistance. However, as seen in the various maximalist campaigns throughout 2024, it is necessary to understand that it takes time and experience to get to certain points of success, where strategic actions also entail the need to simply take a step back and "recharge" in the face of repression. Fortunately, also by acknowledging the diversity of movements and their dynamics in the year 2024 alone, one could argue that a movement's learning arc and repertoire of contentions could go beyond a movement's isolated experience within their own countries, and encompass those of other movements across different countries. As such, there's always more room and opportunities to learn–than being deterred!–to start a revolution.

43 Tiziano Breda, "*2024 Venezuela election protests: harsher repression at home and more global reach than in 2019*", ACLED, August 29, 2024; Rédaction Africanews and AP News, "*At least three die in post-election protests in Mauritania*", August 13, 2024.

44 News Wires, "*Hundreds protest in Senegal to demand presidential elections before April 2*", France 24, March 2, 2024.

45 Al Jazeera, "*Why are thousands protesting against Netanyahu's government in Israel?*", April 2, 2024; Eve Young, "*'Now is the time': Protestors call for significant action and civil disobedience*", The Jerusalem Post, December 27, 2024.


مردم ایران عاشق اسلام، انقلاب اسلامی و رهبری هستند
انقلاب اسلامی همچنان استوار
مطیع امر رهبریم
WE ARE OBEDIENT TO THE LEADER

"We are obedient to the leader!" The Curious Case of Pro-Government Non-Violent Mass Mobilization

Daniel Petz

Civil resistance has largely been studied as an anti-regime tool. However, amidst the third wave of autocratization, we have also seen an increase in the mimicking of nonviolent repertoires by autocratizing and/or autocratic actors. It is thus high time to look into the ways in which these actors have used nonviolent tactics to support autocratization and/or cement autocratic regimes.

In this chapter, I look into how, why, and when autocratic and autocratizing actors use tactics from the nonviolent action playbook to foster autocratization and/or cement autocratic gains. I start by going through some literature on mass mobilization by autocratic actors. I then hone in on some recent autocratizing countries—Hungary under Orban, Brazil under Bolsonaro, and the US under Trump's first presidential term—to identify some patterns linking pro-regime nonviolence to the different elements of the authoritarian playbook (see Box 3). I then link the discussions to my previous work on right-wing actors' use of nonviolent action,[1] where I assess how far the three tensions I identified in that paper—between violence and nonviolence, between dissent and political disobedience, between means and ends—also hold for pro-regime mobilization.

In terms of classifying the actions done by autocratic/autocratizing regimes and their supporters, I follow Gene Sharp's classification of 198 methods of nonviolent action and pay heed to Michael Beer's lists of nonviolent tactics. Given the morally problematic use of nonviolent repertoires by autocratic and autocratizing actors, I emphasize the hyphenated term "non-violence" to address said forms of mobilization. To be differentiated from the justice-seeking "nonviolence", I classify "non-violence" as a merely pragmatic and opportunistic use of nonviolent tactics, which relies on a top-down approach that thrives on punching down minorities, with problematic ends and a proclivity to breaching the boundaries of nonviolence.

1 Daniel Petz, "*The Dark Side of Nonviolent Action? Right-wing Populism and the Use of Nonviolent Action*," *Populism*, no. 4 (2021): 221-244.

Box 3

The current third wave of autocratization is qualitatively different from the first two waves, which respectively took place in the 1920s-40s and 1960s-70s. While its predecessors were largely marked by military coups and/or foreign interventions, the third wave of autocratization is mainly driven by democratically elected incumbents who gradually, but substantially, undermine democratic norms without abolishing key democratic institutions. As shown by Lührmann and Lindberg, 70 percent of cases of the third wave follow this pattern.

Protect Democracy has noticed convergence in the tactics used by autocratizers worldwide and listed them as an "Authoritarian Playbook." Here, the "salami tactic" is used to slice away democracy little by little, often in a mix of deliberate and opportunistic actions. The seven basic tactics in the Authoritarian Playbook include (1) attempting to politicize independent institutions, (2) spreading disinformation, (3) aggrandizing executive power at the expense of checks and balances, (4) quashing criticism and dissent, (5) scapegoating vulnerable or marginalized communities, (6) corrupting elections, and (7) stoking violence.

Source:

Anna Lührmann and Staffan I. Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?", *Democratization* 26, no. 7 (2019): 1095-1113.

Jennifer Dresden, Aaron Baird, and Ben Raderstorf, *The Authoritarian Playbook* (Protect Democracy, 2022).

The Logic of Pro-Regime Mobilization in Autocratic Regimes

While we know that totalitarian regimes (such as the fascist regimes in Italy and Nazi Germany) alongside many communist regimes relied on strong elements of popular mass mobilization, most non-totalitarian autocratic regimes are rather wary of utilizing nonviolent mass mobilization. It is thus not surprising that the topic of pro-regime non-violent actions is rather under-researched.

One notable exception is Hellmeier and Weidman's work on rallies in authoritarian regimes.[2] They highlight that public mobilization is not the norm in most authoritarian regimes, with authoritarian regimes tending to converge on low levels of political mobilization throughout time. They also emphasize that the dominant mode of interaction between the rulers and the ruled is "compliance, rather than active support or enthusiasm."[3] A prominent example is the People's Republic of China, where bottom-up efforts are censored and pro-government rallies are actively discouraged. Nevertheless, while there are numerous examples of regimes discouraging mass mobilization, there are other examples of authoritarian regimes in recent decades that allow for, if not actively encouraging, the conduct of rallies, including Russia, Iran, and Turkey.

Hellmeier and Weidman further argue that pro-regime rallies largely serve two different purposes. The first is to show the incumbents' strength and thus deter internal challengers from orchestrating coup d'états. The second is to respond to political oppositions' mobilization, such as anti-regime protests, by raising the costs of collective action. Here, rallies also have the important function of making sure that neutral bystanders get disincentivized to join the opposition camp, thus, at a min-

2 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*," *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 71-108.

3 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*," *Comparative Political* Studies 53, no. 1 (2020): 73-74.

imum, freezing the spectrum of allies.[4] They, too, argue that rallies are more likely initiated in situations where more direct means of coercion might lead to a backlash against the regime.[5]

Nevertheless, Hellmeier and Weidman highlight that mass mobilization comes with sizable costs for autocrats, given that autocratic regimes do not necessarily know the level of active and genuine support they have, as well as how big their supporters' organizational capacities are. There is also the risk that such rallies, when conducted in response to opposition movements, lead to open street violence, resulting in significant demobilization costs for regimes.[6]

An uptick in pro-regime mobilization can also occur as a response to maximalist challenges, most permanently if it occurs in neighboring countries. Aside from coup-proofing, Koesel and Bunce[7] have argued that pro-regime mobilizations are also enacted for diffusion-proofing purposes, or to make sure that pro-democracy movements in the region do not gain traction in their own countries, as seen throughout the Colour Revolutions (a series of maximalist campaigns that occurred in the Balkans and a number of other countries).

Koesel and Bunce further identify a number of diffusion-proofing strategies, namely censorship and negative state propaganda about the Colour Revolutions, harassment and legal challenges to deter opposition formation and mobilization, alongside the formation of "virtual" opposition parties to split the opposition camp.[8] Another important diffusion-proofing strategy is to court youth movements. The Russian government, for example, is known to have developed a large pro-Kremlin youth movement, committed to promoting patriotism and defending the Russian nation, its core values, and its policies.[9] Said youth groups would engage in a range of activities, with one group even practicing how to counter a Colour Revolution. Koesel and Bunce noted that "under the codename Poligon ("Firing Range"), members rehearsed military drills, orchestrated a pro-government rally, repelled the attack of potential opposition activists, and then staged an impromptu takeover of a local TV station in order to prevent an "illegitimate seizure of power" by colour revolutionaries."[10] The same strategy is also seen in Belarus, where President Lukashenko recruited students into the Belorussian Republic Youth Union and organized pro-government mass events to prevent the outbreak of the Colour Revolution.

It is to be noted, however, that the mobilization of regime supporters for pro-government protests is not necessarily an easy task. Due to the lack of free speech and free elections,

4 A framework from nonviolence studies that maps out actors into active allies, passive allies, neutral, passive opponents, and active opponents. See Boyd Andrew and Mitchell Dave Oswald, *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (New York: OR Books, 2012).

5 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*," *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 73.

6 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*," *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 73.

7 Karrie J. Koesel and Valerie J. Bunce, "*Diffusion-proofing: Russian and Chinese responses to waves of popular mobilizations against authoritarian rulers*," *Perspectives on Politics*, no. 11 (2013): 753-768.

8 Karrie J. Koesel and Valerie J. Bunce, "*Diffusion-proofing: Russian and Chinese responses to waves of popular mobilizations against authoritarian rulers*," *Perspectives on Politics*, no. 11 (2013): 757.

9 Karrie J. Koesel and Valerie J. Bunce, "*Diffusion-proofing: Russian and Chinese responses to waves of popular mobilizations against authoritarian rulers*," *Perspectives on Politics*, no. 11 (2013): 758.

10 Karrie J. Koesel and Valerie J. Bunce, "*Diffusion-proofing: Russian and Chinese responses to waves of popular mobilizations against authoritarian rulers*," *Perspectives on Politics*, no. 11 (2013): 758.

autocratic regimes have limited feedback about how popular they really are. Here, subjects' feedback might also not be credible as there is a tendency to overstate regime support due to fear of repression. As such, autocratic regimes might face free-riding problems, where a low turnout in pro-government events might embolden the opposition. Helmmeier and Weidmann thus argue that, to coax supporters to attend pro-regime events, regimes usually rely on a mix of three strategies: (1) selective incentives, (2) recruitment through regime-affiliated groups, and (3) propaganda.[11]

Selective incentives can take the form of either rewards (such as financial support) or punishment for non-participation. In Ukraine, for example, anti-Maidan protesters were at least paid in part for their participation. That said, citizens who depend on the regime, such as public sector employees alongside pupils and students, can also be more or less gently pushed to join pro-regime allies. Populist pro-regime propaganda—including nationalist and, at times, anti-minority appeals—can also play an important role in rallying support for pro-regime mobilization. In the case of Russia, protests were often held at highly symbolic venues that linked to nationalist meta-narratives and were accompanied by bouts of state media propaganda.[12] Playing on religious sentiment can also be a motivator. The Iranian regime, for instance, mobilized protesters in support of the hijab and a conservative dress code to build on government-backed rallies to respond to the nonviolent protests against the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody in 2022.[13] Said mobilization took place in Tehran and other cities such as Ahvaz, Isfahan, Qom, and Tabriz.

Based on the Mass Mobilization in Autocracies Database (MMAD), which records information on public gatherings of at least 25 people with an expressed political motivation to support the central, regional, or local government,[14] Hellmeier and Weidmann additionally provide interesting readings of pro-regime rallies. Through their data sample, they find that most pro-regime demonstrations were held by Putin (446), followed by Ahmadinejad in Iran (179), Al-Assad in Syria (175), and Chavez/Maduro in Venezuela (117/41). Significant numbers of pro-government rallies were also held under Aristide in Haiti, Un in North Korea, Castro in Cuba, Hasina in Bangladesh, and Tantawi in Egypt. Here we see that both "political right" and "political left" regimes have employed mass mobilization strategies.

Hellmeier and Weidmann also find that pro-government mobilization peaked during the nuclear crisis in Iran at the beginning of 2006, during the Arab Spring in 2011 and 2012, after the controversial elections in Russia at the end of 2011, and during the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Here, about a third of pro-government mobilizations were held to counter opposition's mobilization. It should be noted that while their research shows a significant number of pro-

11 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*", *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 82.

12 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*", *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 82.

13 Stuart Williams, "*Thousands attend government-backed pro-hijab rallies in Iran*," Times of Israel, September 23, 2022.

14 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*", *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 85.

regime rallies, Hellmeier and Weidmann don't find an overall global trend towards increased mass mobilization during their 10-year observation period.[15]

Regarding regime types, Hellmeier and Weidmann find that single-party and military regimes display the highest levels of pro-government mobilization, followed by multiparty regimes. Amongst all, monarchies saw very few pro-government rallies.[16] Another interesting finding from their research is that rallies become significantly less likely when economic performance improves, meaning that regimes likely mobilize when they feel that the population is dissatisfied with the government. Further, regime rallies are more frequent in regimes with high coercive capacities during periods of regional unrest.[17]

In comparison to anti-regime rallies, Hellmeier and Weidmann point out that pro-regime rallies more often result in injured bystanders, opposition activists, or even police officers, and can less often be classified as nonviolent. However, there is no significant difference when it comes to property damage. Hellmeier and Weidmann hypothesize that this may be caused by authoritarian regimes' tendency to either encourage supporters to engage in violence against anti-government demonstrators, or at least signal that pro-regime supporters will face little to no state repression if they engage in violence. While security forces are frequently present in pro-government rallies, they are less likely to intervene. Even if security forces do intervene, they are less likely to use lethal violence against pro-government supporters. Linking to my research on right-wing nonviolence, which has shown that populist mobilizations are more likely to break the boundary towards violence, we might thus question if pro-government protesters have any form of ideological commitment to nonviolence in the first place.[18]

One prominent example of the use of violence by pro-regime supporters in 2024 is from Bangladesh, where the government mobilized pro-regime student organization Chhatra League to violently suppress the country's nonviolent student resistance.[19] In many cases, police and security forces stood by during those attacks, where scores of protesters were eventually killed.[20] As discussed in Dhania Salsha Handiani's chapter, the pro-government mobilization fortunately failed, and the Hasina regime was eventually overthrown by the student protest movement.

Not dissimilar, the tactic was seen during the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, with the government's deployment of the "Titushky" pro-government forces, who attacked protesters and passers-by, while supported by the anti-riot police units. Throughout the protests, some even disguised themselves as anti-government supporters and attempted to incite violence to es-

15 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*", *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 85.

16 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*", *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 90.

17 Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann, "*Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*", *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 97.

18 Daniel Petz, "*The Dark Side of Nonviolent Action? Right-wing Populism and the Use of Nonviolent Action*," *Populism*, no. 4 (2021): 221-244.

19 Redwan Ahmed and Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "*Bangladesh student protests turn into 'mass movement against a dictator'*," The Guardian, July 26, 2024.

20 Le Monde, "*Bangladesh protesters demand PM resign as death toll mounts*," August 4, 2024.

calate the situation. According to the Global Informality Project, Titushky groups consisted of unemployed or working-class young men, often with a criminal record, but also coming "from a number of backgrounds, like off-duty police officers and state security workers, members of more or less legal combat sports clubs, workers at industrial plants owned by pro-government forces, members of criminal gangs, and common convicts, and most likely also groups of football fans."[21] There is evidence that Titushky was funded by pro-government oligarchs.[22]

The above evidence shows quite an interesting picture of pro-regime mobilization in autocratic regimes in recent decades. Autocratic regimes seem to primarily condone and support mass mobilization when they feel threatened, with most instances of mass mobilization happening before elections, during times when there is a challenge by opposition forces, or when there are nonviolent maximalist campaigns in neighbouring countries that have a possibility of spilling over to the autocratic country. It is almost never spontaneous, and, at times, it is calculated as a means to avoid open repression. It fulfills important functions in signaling support for regimes, countering opposition movements (both nonviolently and violently), and deterring more neutral citizens from taking an anti-government position. Due to their non-ideological stance, such mobilizations largely have a low commitment to nonviolent discipline and might, at times, even be encouraged to provoke violence. We could thus argue that, in many instances, pro-government rallies mimic genuine nonviolent mass movements, provide the semblance of support for regimes, and fulfill important signaling functions toward different layers of society.

Pro-Government Mass Mobilization in Democratically Backsliding Countries

This section digs into examples from the United States under Trump (2017-2021), Brazil under Bolsonaro (2019-2023), Hungary under Orban (2010-present), as well as a number of other countries, where pro-government mass mobilization occurred in the face of democratic backsliding. While previous research has largely looked at rallies, I also look into the use of other methods of nonviolent action by pro-government supporters.

There are a number of significant differences between pro-government mobilization occurring in autocratic countries and in democracies that are backsliding. First, in democratically backsliding countries, it is more likely that security forces, like the police and military, while possibly sympathetic to the government, are not (yet) fully beholden to the orders of the ruling government. Second, checks and balances through political opposition, civil society, independent media, and independent courts might be much stronger than in already autocratic regimes. As a result, pro-government mobilization might face more challenges in such a setting, where backlash towards the government is also more likely, particularly if the mobilization turns violent.

21 Michal Pszyk, "*Titushky (Ukraine)*," Global Informality Project, May 11, 2020.

22 Michal Pszyk, "*Titushky (Ukraine)*," Global Informality Project, May 11, 2020.

USA and Brazil. There are many interesting parallels between Trump and Bolsonaro's reigns. Both relied on what McKenna and O'Donnel have called "satellite political movements,"[23] or grassroots movements/activists that are not necessarily tied to political parties that aim to maintain and return power to their leaders. These movements come with a number of advantages for right-wing populist leaders. By providing a continuous campaign for a leader outside the confines of the traditional political arena, they help recruit support from the radical right, including activists who are unenthused with formal politics, while giving said leader plausible distance from radical actions taken on their behalf by such groups.[24] Both presidencies also faced significant challenges linked to their problematic handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and both ended in electoral defeat and a failed insurrection.

The first Trump presidency saw significant levels of right-wing mobilization. One of the most contentious events were the rallies in 2017 by a coalition of white supremacists, neo-Confederates, neo-Nazis, and far-right militias. Describing themselves as the "alt-right," they protested the removal of a Confederate monument in Charlottesville, which led to violent street clashes and the killing of a counter-protester by a white supremacist. Trump's statement that there were "very fine people on both sides" showed his (not so) implicit endorsement of the alt-right and unwillingness to oppose actions by those groups.[25] The pinnacle of right-wing mobilizations is seen in 2020, where the American right rallied on three major stances: (1) protests against COVID-19 restrictions, (2) counter-protests against the Black Lives Matter movement, and (3) protests against the 2020 presidential elections, where Trump claimed that he only lost because of widespread voter-fraud.

Protests against the COVID-19 restrictions took place in many states throughout 2020. The protesters largely rallied against lockdown restrictions and mask-wearing mandates, professing them as limitations of their personal freedom. In one instance, spurred on by Trump, armed protesters entered Michigan's state capitol to demand an end to the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders issued by Michigan's governor. Meanwhile, in terms of the Black Lives Matter protests, (re)activists on the right primarily protested against the destruction of property, lawlessness, and what they labelled as the rise of the Antifa movement. Often, they staged counter-protests or assisted the police in protecting businesses and properties. Right-wing groups also supported Trump's reelection efforts. In late September 2020, for example, approximately 1,000 heavily armed Proud Boys and Trump supporters gathered in Delta Park in Portland, Oregon, to hold an "End Antifa" rally in support of Trump's re-election campaign and to call for an end to "domestic terrorism." After Trump contested the election, there were also a number of protests against "voter fraud," one of the most significant being the Million MAGA March in Washington, DC, that brought together several thousand protesters on November 14. We can argue that the whole build-up of right-wing action under Trump later culminated in what commentators

23 Elizabeth McKenna and Catharina O'Donnell, "*Satellite Political Movements: How Grassroots Activists Bolster Trump and Bolsonaro in the United States and Brazil*," *American Behavioral Scientist* 68, no. 13 (2024): 1782–1803.

24 Elizabeth McKenna and Catharina O'Donnell, "*Satellite Political Movements: How Grassroots Activists Bolster Trump and Bolsonaro in the United States and Brazil*," *American Behavioral Scientist* 68, no. 13 (2024): 1795.

25 Kenneth T. Andrews, Neal Caren, and Todd Lu, "*Racial, ethnic, and immigration protest during year one of the Trump presidency*," in *Racialized Protest and the State*, ed. Hank Johnston and Pamela Oliver (Routledge, 2020), 208-226.

called a "riot," "coup," "self-coup," or "insurrection," which featured the storming and occupying of the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on January 6, 2021. While it first began as a protest rally and march by Trump supporters, it ended with the disruption of the US Congress that was in the process of certifying president-elect Joe Biden's election victory. In the end, the insurrection failed, and scores of participants were indicted (including Trump) and convicted (Trump not yet).

Similar to Trump, Bolsonaro also saw lots of public backlashes against his policies, particularly those linked to his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic—one of which took the form of mass anti-government marches in June 2021. After the supreme court and congress started investigating Bolsonaro's conduct later that summer, Bolsonaro called for his supporters to rally for a "necessary counter-coup" against those institutions.[26] Amidst demonstrations in several major cities, Brazilian truckers rallied to Bolsonaro's help and instigated road blockades in 15 of Brazil's 27 states, where they held signs reading "Military intervention with Bolsonaro in power" and "Prison for the corrupt justices of the Supreme Court."[27] The blockades only ended after Bolsonaro asked the truck drivers to disperse, apparently out of fear that continuous blockades would have major negative impacts on Brazil's economy.

Similar to the USA under Trump, Bolsonaro also encouraged mobilization by right-wing groups, many of which—according to research by Neto—subscribed to a strategy of "Ukrainization." [28] These groups claim to be inspired by the important role that far-right groups played during the 2013/2014 Euoromaidan protests in Ukraine. For these groups, Ukrainization means the adoption of violent tactics as a form of generating tensions and promoting the purging of opponents from politics. Initiatives such as "300 Brazil" by far-right groups thus emerged to target supreme court justices. They mobilized around Article 142 of the Brazilian constitution, a clause they arbitrarily and mistakenly interpreted as allowing for military intervention in politics, to confront the legislative body and particularly to target the judiciary.[29] According to Neto, the main objective was to provoke a growing and unavoidable climate of tension, to pressure the incoming Lula government to invoke Article 142 (which would allow the armed forces to control public security), and to ultimately push the country ever closer to military rule.[30] On 8 January 2023, after Bolsonaro's electoral loss to Lula da Silva, thousands of his supporters consequently stormed the Brazilian presidential palace, congress, and supreme court, in an effort to overturn the election results.[31] The uprising failed, and hundreds of his supporters have since been arrested and prosecuted. Bolsonaro is under investigation and indictment himself, including for planning a military coup in 2022.[32]

26 Chris Jewers, "*Truckers block Brazil's freeways in support of embattled President Bolsonaro as he fires up his support base amid claims he could be preparing a military coup*," The Daily Mail, September 9, 2021.

27 Deutsche Welle, "*Brazil: Pro-Bolsonaro truckers end blockade*," October 9, 2021.

28 Odilon Caldeira Neto, "*Bolsonarismo, a Phenomenon of Brazil's Own Making?*", *NACLA Report on the Americas* 56, *no*. 1 (2024): 56-63.

29 Odilon Caldeira Neto, "*Bolsonarismo, a Phenomenon of Brazil's Own Making?*", *NACLA Report on the Americas* 56, *no*. 1 (2024): 59.

30 Odilon Caldeira Neto, "*Bolsonarismo, a Phenomenon of Brazil's Own Making?*", *NACLA Report on the Americas* 56, *no*. 1 (2024): 63.

31 Katie Polglase, Gianluca Mezzofiore, Tara John, and Rodrigo Pedroso, "*'Command your troops, damn it!' How a series of security failures opened a path to insurrection in Brazil*," CNN, January 14, 2023.

32 Diane Jeantet and Diarlei Rodriuges, "*Brazil observes anniversary of the anti-democratic uprising in the capital*," AP News, January 9, 2024; Amy Walker, "*Brazil police formally accuse Bolsonaro of alleged coup plot*," BBC, November 22, 2024.

Hungary. Under Orban, Hungary has seen a constant trajectory toward autocratization. Orban has undermined the rule of law by pushing through judicial and media reforms, backed up by government propaganda against immigrants and on LGBTQ issues, as well as positioning national sovereignty against EU institutions that were tasked with upholding human rights and democratic standards.

While there has been a number of widespread and nonviolent opposition to his government, Hungary also saw major instances of pro-government mobilizations. In the four years of their inquiry, Susánszky et al. (2016) find that there were pro-government protests with over 100,000 participants. Their study further shows a number of interesting data points. Firstly, pro-government supporters showed that they were largely satisfied with government policies, were politically and civically engaged (mostly through religious and nationalist civil society organizations), and were consumers of right-wing media without necessarily identifying themselves as being politically right-wing. Secondly, the movement's participants were "mass men," people who eschew their autonomy and are happy to follow the regime's guidance and narratives. Thirdly, while said pro-government protesters were largely swayed by government propaganda, there is little evidence to show that they participated based on coercion or financial incentives. Pro-government mobilization in Hungary can thus be seen as a "success," seeing that a referendum on EU migrant quotas in 2016 managed to gain an overwhelming majority (98%) while failing to pass the 50% threshold for participation, and Orban's government got overwhelmingly re-elected in 2018. Recently, Orban has been challenged by Péter Magyar. Despite the conduct of Peace Marches ahead of the 2024 European Parliamentary elections, FIDESZ fell to 44% of the vote, a considerably disappointing result for Orban's party.

Others. There are numerous other cases of pro-regime mobilization in autocratizing countries. In Serbia, in the aftermath of mass anti-government protests following mass shootings, President Aleksandar Vučić organized pro-government rallies in the capital to accuse the opposition of abusing the tragedy.[33] In Turkey, President Erdogan has throughout his reign used mass mobilization to further his political aims—which includes rallying the support of Turkish diaspora in European countries such as Germany and Austria.[34] In 2013, religious and government-affiliated groups led a large number of pro-Morsi protests to condemn the military coup in Egypt. This came out of the fear that the Turkish military itself might intervene (which once happened in the abortive 2016 coup attempt) and in response to the ongoing anti-government Gezi protests. In the run-up to the 2015 snap election, following a series of terror attacks in the country, Erdogan also held an "anti-terror" rally in Istanbul that drew more than 100,000 supporters.[35] A recent dataset by Kahvecioğlu et al. shows that while anti-government protests were more frequent than pro-government ones, between 2013 and 2016, there were hundreds of the latter held in the country.[36]

33 Dusan Stojanovic, "*Pro-government rally held in Serbia amid growing discontent after mass shootings*," AP News, May 27, 2023.

34 BBC, "*Thousands march in Germany in support of Turkey's President Erdogan*," July 31, 2016.

35 Agence France-Presse, "*More than 100,000 gather for pro-Erdoğan rally in Istanbul*," The Guardian, September 20, 2015.

36 Anıl Kahvecioğlu, Tijen Demirel-Pegg, and İlker Aytürk, "*Introducing the Turkey Protest, Repression, and Pro-Government Rally Dataset (TPRPGRD)*," Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 23, no. 2(2023): 385–408.

The examples from autocratizing countries above provide a number of important insights. First, there are clearly some similarities between pro-government mass mobilization in autocratic and autocratizing countries. In both scenarios, pro-government mobilization seems to be encouraged by autocratizing leaders to respond to anti-government mobilization when the government feels weak and pressured by other institutions—such as courts or the parliament—that try to enact checks and balances, or when the government is facing threatening events that arise in neighboring countries.

Second, there are also clear differences between the two. In terms of mobilization, both Trump and Bolsonaro have largely relied on satellite political movements or right-wing groups, as opposed to their own political parties or state resources. The surge of mobilization for both presidents further happened after they had lost the elections, defied to accept the electoral verdict, and hastily planned mass protests that quickly turned violent and ultimately failed. Meanwhile, the Orban government seems to have been more successful in organizing sustained pro-government mass mobilization. We should not underestimate that many autocratizing leaders, such as Orban in the early years of his reign, are quite popular and thus might manage to draw supportive crowds without needing to engage in carrot or stick approaches or to mobilize fringe right-wing groups. Here, autocratizing actors might have a clearer picture of their support, given that survey and election results might still be relatively representative in such regimes.

Third, in terms of repertoire, there seems to be relatively little creativity outside of rallies and marches, with the exception of Bolsonaro's truckers blocking major highways across the country. It would seem that the storming of government offices has similarities to nonviolent occupations that usually take place at the final stages of nonviolent maximalist campaigns. However, as I have already noted in my previous paper, the whole build-up of a mass movement and a mass-based campaign are missing in the case of autocratizing actors. It is as if these right-wing actors try to mimic what civil resistance movements do, but cannot be seen to have the will, stamina, or support to organically build such mass movements. Therefore, relying on fringe groups who are often inherently violent can be seen as a shortcut to achieve results quickly and painlessly.

Fourth, many autocratic and autocratizing actors have understood the power of nonviolent mass mobilization and, at times, aim to harness said power. However, given the challenges that mass mobilization can pose to autocratic and autocratizing regimes, we can see that this tool is rather used selectively, specifically in situations where the regime is uncertain of support or when they are under strain due to internal or external developments. As a result, they most frequently take place in pre-election periods and in the presence of nonviolent anti-regime mobilization.

While autocratic actors usually have tools to mobilize supporters through carrot or stick approaches, autocratizing actors have more limited means. In the cases of Erdogan and

Orban, mass mobilization in autocratizing regimes becomes possible when leaders are already in power, are relatively popular, and can draw upon a wide support base. Other leaders, such as Trump and Bolsonaro, failed to do so as they primarily relied on courting fringe social movements, which lack the critical mass base to overthrow their elected successor. The difference in strategies can possibly also be explained by the fact that both Orban and Erdogan emerged from mainstream conservative mass parties, while both Trump and Bolsonaro were populist political outsiders at the fringes of their respective parties, hence the latter's inability to seamlessly rely on a political mass base.

What next?

What lessons can we then draw from these data and discussions? There are at least five key takeaways.

First, as shown by Chenoweth's research, there has been a drop in the effectiveness of maximalist pro-democracy campaigns in recent years.[37] This can be partially explained by autocratic learning, where autocrats start to incorporate non-violent mass mobilization into their toolbox. Pro-democracy movements should thus study and anticipate mass counter-mobilization by autocratic and autocratizing actors.

Second, we should see mass mobilization by autocratizing and autocratic actors not as a sign of strength, but as a sign of weakness. Such mobilization shows that said actors feel challenged, but are not willing—or able to—engage in wide-scale violent repression for fear of lacking support or political backlashes.

Third, pro-democracy movements need to be careful of being coaxed into violence by pro-regime supporters, as this might provide regimes with pretexts for harsher repression.

Fourth, pro-autocratic mobilization is essentially a mirage, as it functions on mimicking pro-justice nonviolent movements. This can be seen in pro-regime movements' (lack of) stamina, mobilization power, and thus proclivity to either deliberately or non-deliberately engage in violent acts.

Fifth, as seen in the cases of Bolsonaro and Trump, pro-regime mobilization has not always proven successful in achieving the aims of autocratizing actors. Despite Trump's second term, said leaders once lost their presidential elections and failed in their insurrections to reclaim power. It will, of course, be interesting to observe if mass mobilization will be employed—and if so, how—during Trump's second term. Given that the ongoing wave of autocratization currently has no end in sight, understanding, studying, and countering pro-autocratic mass mobilization will only gain importance.

37 Erica Chenoweth, "*The Future of Nonviolent Resistance*", *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 3 (2020): 69-84.


WOMEN'S PROTECTION TEAM

Unarmed Civilian Protection: A Radical Idea or Common Sense?

Huibert Oldenhuis

In 2000, Amnesty International warned that it had become virtually impossible for human rights defenders to carry out their work in Aceh with any degree of security. "Anyone who reports on the human rights situation is being targeted and driven away to ensure that there are no witnesses to the excesses of the security forces."[1] As some human rights defenders found safety by going into hiding, others did the very opposite. They increased their security by making themselves more visible, by leaning forward instead of stepping back.

Part of their strategy was to invite international volunteers from Peace Brigades International (PBI) to bear witness to the threats they received. These volunteers sat in front of the offices of the human rights defenders, sometimes accompanying them around the clock for weeks. They provided a visible presence at meetings, trials, and demonstrations, or accompanied the defenders to remote areas where the defenders met with victims of violence and collected testimonies. The volunteers from PBI didn't join demonstrations or advocate for specific solutions to the conflict. Sometimes they deliberately sat outside the door while defenders discussed their action plans behind closed doors, giving a message that their role as outsiders was not to tell local actors how to solve conflicts.

But they were no passive bystanders either. They strategically positioned themselves in places of insecurity, sending a message to potential perpetrators of violence that acts of aggression would not go unnoticed and that there might be consequences. They proactively built relationships with security forces and influential actors to increase transparency and reduce suspicions. As a former PBI member recounts, "There were incidents when members of accompanied organisations had been arrested and their friends and family were unable to find where they were being held. PBI was able to locate them diplomatically and had them released."[2] These efforts of unarmed civilians protecting other civilians are carried out by groups all over the world and are generally known as Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) or Accompaniment.

Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) is the practice of unarmed civilians who provide direct physical protection to civilians through the use of nonviolent action. Rather than using weapons or relying on the threat of force, UCP practitioners use physical presence and visibility, networks of relations, community acceptance, and proactive engagement to protect civilians. Sometimes they are able to encourage conflicting parties to avoid harm to civilians by simply talking to them.

In the Philippines, teams of Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) have frequently intervened in situations where civilians were trapped in crossfires between government soldiers and armed

1 Amnesty, "*Human rights activists being 'swept out' of Aceh*," March 6, 2000.

2 Peace Brigades International, "*Our work in Indonesia 1999-2011*," 2011.

groups. By engaging both sides, these teams were able to negotiate a temporary ceasefire–sometimes as short as 30 minutes–to accompany civilians to safer areas. In Ukraine, the relationships NP has built with police and the accompaniments it provides have allowed civilians to pass through checkpoints without being subjected to extensive investigation (or harassment). In neither of these cases did armed actors deliberately target or intend to harass civilians. We are so accustomed to seeing news of police brutality, mass shootings, rape, and genocide, that we may forget that a lot of harm against civilians is not intentional and can be avoided through proactive and constructive engagement. This is where a lot of UCP actors start. And it's an easier place to start, as it doesn't require confrontation with difficult actors. Once UCP actors have built their networks and reputation and earned the trust of key actors, they may be able to put more pressure on those in power and lean a little deeper into sensitive issues of deliberate abuse.

But what do we do when perpetrators of violence just don't care or hurting civilians is their very purpose? This makes UCP more difficult, but not impossible. One way is to understand and leverage the sensitivities, sources of power, and points of leverage of a conflicting party. Some actors in power may worry about their reputation within the community, others may worry that accusations of human rights abuses will jeopardise their political careers, funding, or an international job they want. Sometimes they simply avoid engagement out of the discomfort of having to confront survivors of violence. Local UCP teams in Myanmar have often run into situations where a police chief or a military commander doesn't want to talk to them about a civilian who has been arrested. Sometimes these teams get access to the commander by mobilising the abbot of the monastery where the commander goes to pray.

One attempt is often not sufficient and UCP actors have found themselves knocking on many doors and windows before they found a way in. And it doesn't always work. But that hasn't stopped people from trying. UCP practitioners often surprise themselves when they achieve more than they thought themselves capable. Moreover, there are many instances where UCP actors failed to achieve their objective of preventing a violent incident, but still succeeded in making a meaningful contribution to the situation of civilians affected by conflict. It's because there is power in being present with people who are suffering, in showing solidarity and humanity. When you come all the way from a safe country and you sit for hours in a crowded bunker as rockets explode over the city, you create powerful connections. Thus, "unarmed" does not mean "without influence" or "defenceless."

Who can practice UCP? Everyone! Where is it being practiced? Everywhere! UCP is practiced in a variety of contexts, from inter-communal conflicts in South Sudan to militarised violence in Myanmar, at the frontlines of Russia's high-intensity war in Ukraine and in the low-intensity conflict in Southern Thailand, in remote villages in Darfur and in urban areas of the United States, plagued by gun violence. It is practiced by frontline communities protecting themselves and through formally established UCP organisations such as Nonviolent Peaceforce or Peace Brigades International. One study by Selkirk College estimates that over 60 formally constituted

UCP organisations are currently active around the world. This does not account for the vast range of community-level UCP initiatives, of which there are countless examples. For example, in South Sudan alone, there were 67 Women's Protection Teams active in 2021, with over 2,500 women and girls having been trained in the practice in UCP.[3]

UCP is a form of nonviolent action but it's not the same as civil resistance, even as both practices apply nonviolent strategies to reduce violence. Unlike practitioners of civil resistance, most UCP practitioners don't focus their efforts on disrupting or defending the status quo. They don't organise protest marches or challenge dictators. They would instead focus on monitoring the safety of people participating in those protest marches and proactively engage with police or support protest leaders in increasing their own security measures. UCP organisations have indeed supported civil resistance movements on several occasions by providing direct protection to civil rights activists, including protestors. Nonviolent Peaceforce and DC Peace Teams in the USA, for example, provided a protective presence at anti-racism protests, where they moved in and out of the protest space to accompany protestors and bystanders away from the demonstration at their request, while monitoring potential police violence and engaging with civilians harassing demonstrators.

For many UCP practitioners, nonviolence is more than just an unarmed alternative to force protection. It requires a shift in thinking about security, a shift in worldview. In our modern-day worldview, we are led to believe that we can (only) be safe by eliminating or isolating the source of the threat we face by separating ourselves from the thing or the person that threatens us. In this worldview, we need to acquire physical strength or technological superiority to overpower our perceived enemy. We may lock them up in a prison cell or build a wall around ourselves, locking us in. Either way, we use the means of separation to pursue safety: walls, fences, barbed wire, isolation cells, buffer zones, etc. In this worldview, we take refuge in technology over human connection. Dr. Martin Luther King called this "our thing-oriented civilization." And while it may serve its purpose in containing serial killers and hooligans, it is a rather bleak, limited, and unimaginative approach to security. It allows the privileged few to "enjoy" their safety in separation from a dehumanised other. Moreover, the examples where it doesn't work or has catastrophic impacts are all over the map. Israel's war in Gaza is among the latest examples that show the delusion of finding lasting safety and security by enclosing and eliminating the people who appear to threaten their (way of) life. Even where it does seem to work, it is not a sustainable strategy. Wars and military technology put a tremendous strain on the planet, accelerating climate disruption. How long can the wealthy and powerful live in islands of security, when the rainforests have disappeared, and the ice caps have melted? And what kind of security is that?

3 Nonviolent Peaceforce, "*Unarmed Civilian Protection: An Introduction*," 2022.

UCP actors challenge the dominant worldview on security and show that safety can be found in more meaningful ways through relationships and by getting closer to the people we fear. It presents a model of relational security. Even a superficial relationship can make it harder for a person to maintain their aggression, in the same way that it is more difficult to be rude to another driver on the road once you've established eye contact.

Instead of secrecy, UCP actors use transparency to achieve their goals and protect themselves. The PBI volunteers in Indonesia made sure that their movements were known to security actors. They would sometimes ask state security forces to support them in carrying out accompaniments, even when they suspected that those same forces were the source of threats. In this way, they reminded the security actors of their responsibility to protect, dissuaded them from carrying out threats, and denied them the option of putting up a smokescreen around potential attacks.

Other aspects of the relational model of security include the ability to separate acts of violence from the people who commit those acts of violence, and broadening participation in security. In UCP, everyone has the capacity to be a protector, everyone has a role to play. Democratising the process of providing security is important in today's world, as multilateral systems of human rights and humanitarian law seem to be losing their power, and communities in places such as Myanmar, Gaza, and Darfur are left to fend for themselves.

In response to the growing need for security and weakening protection systems, UCP actors are increasingly coming together to make a common cause and build strength through connection and collaborative action. In October 2023, 86 practitioners, partners, and researchers of 31 nationalities came together to establish a global community[4] and make the practice of UCP more widely available and accessible to communities affected by violence. By encouraging critical discourse, resource sharing, and comparative analysis, the community aims to inspire and challenge each other and create space for innovation to emerge.

Above all, there is a sense of urgency to come together in these trying times of surging authoritarianism, wars, and climate breakdown. As author and activist Naomi Klein articulates it: "We are on a knife's edge right now and we are going to need each other…We are at a moment in time where we cannot bear to be apart. We can only bear it together in the sturdiest, widely possible coalitions."[5] We can busy ourselves with lengthy debates that pit nonviolent approaches against force protection, point to all the places where nonviolence hasn't managed to turn things around, or scream into cyberspace, but it's not the time to get sidetracked by intellectual posturing or give into despair. It's time to get up, connect, and engage. Start where you are, learn, connect, and share. At the end of the day, UCP is about practical action to make civilians feel safer–right where they are, right now!

4 "*Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment Community of Practice*," UCP/A Community of Practice, accessed December 10, 2024.

5 Novara Media, "*Naomi Klein on Steve Bannon, The Failures Of The Left and her Doppelgänger*," video podcast, Youtube, 1:08.

This is exactly what a group of Israeli Arabs and Jews did after 7 October 2023. They got out in their community and started their own UCP initiative in Jaffa. NBC News detailed their story of forming an unofficial unarmed civil guard to prevent the type of urban unrest that has accompanied previous rounds of conflict between Israel and Hamas.[6] The group accompanied both Arab and Jewish Israelis who were scared to journey across other neighbourhoods, sent supplies to displaced Israeli communities, and dispatched volunteers to respond to incidents. NBC described it as a "radical" idea. It is exactly the type of initiative the UCP community aims to connect to, support, learn from, and inspire. By shining a light on these efforts, showing that UCP is taking place everywhere–even amid the most egregious violence–we can send a message of hope and encourage more people to reclaim agency. Perhaps one day it will no longer be a radical idea, just common sense.

6 Alexander Smith, "*A group of Jews and Arabs in Israel has a 'radical' idea — protecting one another as fear reigns*," NBC News, October 27, 2023.

Chaiwat Satha-Anand's "Mission: Impossible" as a Muslim Nonviolence Scholar Who Engaged Nonviolence with the State

Chayanit Poonyarat[1]

"Conflict is valuable for change.
Therefore, we must be careful not to let violence destroy conflict."

Professor Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand

The late Professor Dr.Chaiwat Satha-Anand was known in Thailand and the world as a renowned peace scholar who advocated knowledge-based nonviolence. Throughout his life, Chaiwat consistently challenged the misperceptions and demystified myths surrounding conflict and violence while proposing creative nonviolent alternatives. He was the founder and director of Thailand's Peace Information Center for several decades and was Chairperson of the Strategic Nonviolence Commission in Thailand. Chaiwat was also associated with several international peace and nonviolence organizations. For several years, he directed the International Peace Research Association's (IPRA) commission on nonviolence and served on the Scientific Committee of the International University for Peoples' Initiative for Peace in Rovereto, Italy. Chaiwat was named "Thailand's Best Researcher in Political Science and Public Administration" by the National Research Council in 2006. He also received the National Sri Burapha Distinguished Writer Award in Bangkok and the International El-Hibri Peace Education Prize in Washington, D.C. in 2012.

Whereas Chaiwat's contributions to the field of nonviolence studies and accomplishments are commonly known, what is less known to most people is how Chaiwat characterized his endeavors. Those close to Chaiwat knew too well that whenever the theme song from the movie "Mission: Impossible," which he used as his all-time personal cellphone ringtone rang, he was again about to embark on another "Mission: Impossible" of nonviolence in Thailand, if not the world. As a dedicated Muslim nonviolence scholar, Chaiwat or Qader Muheideen (Chaiwat's Islamic name) was known not only for his unique contribution to nonviolence studies through an Islamic perspective, but also for his exceptional approach to engaging nonviolence with the state, a total anti-thesis to the common Weberian conception that a state is a political institution that intimately associates with physical violence since its formation.

1 I have had the privilege to know and work with the late Professor Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand since 1998 as a student in his seminar on violence and nonviolence in politics and also as his student assistant at the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University. We also worked together at the Peace Information Center for several years since I joined Thammasat University's Political Science Faculty as a lecturer in 2007. He was my teacher, my colleague, and my mentor. His passing was not only a great loss for the academic world but also my great personal loss.

As a world-renowned Muslim nonviolence scholar, Chaiwat accentuated the Islamic nonviolence perspective across several of his research and publications, many of which have been translated and published in Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Korean. These publications include, for example, "Islam and Nonviolence" (1993), in which Chaiwat and his mentor Glenn D. Paige together explored and advocated for the non-alienation of nonviolence in Islam.[2] The book "The Life of This World: Negotiated Muslim Lives in Thai Society" (2005) is a collection of Chaiwat's writings over two decades on the lives and perspectives of the Muslim minority in the Buddhist-majority country of Thailand.[3] In "Nonviolence and Islamic Imperatives" (2017), Chaiwat offered his expertise as a nonviolence researcher to inform readers on the history and present application of Islamic nonviolent movements through contextual analysis of sacred texts, and contemporary examples of Islamic nonviolence in action.[4] In a world full of hatred and Islamophobia, Chaiwat dedicated his life to countering the false perception of violence in Islam and firmly advocated that nonviolence and Islam are inextricably related.

In addition to his unique contribution of Islamic perspectives to nonviolence studies, Chaiwat's "Mission: Impossible" also entailed engaging nonviolence with the state, a concept almost all political scientists and policymakers deem impossible. Chaiwat's quest to engage nonviolence with the state may have begun in the 1970s and 1980s while pursuing his doctorate at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Intrigued by the unique combination of political philosophy and nonviolence, Chaiwat wrote his doctoral dissertation on "The Nonviolent Prince" in which he shed new light on political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli's (in)famous work "The Prince." Published in the 16th century, the book is often interpreted as a guide to the ruthless nature of power and domination. Yet, Chaiwat in his doctoral dissertation proposed a re-interpretation of the book by exploring the possibility of nonviolence in politics and arguing that governance is possible without physical violence.[5]

After graduating, Chaiwat returned to teaching at the Faculty of Political Science at Thammasat University, where he also founded Thailand's first peace educational institution Peace Information Center in 1988. The center actualized Chaiwat's conviction in nonviolently addressing conflict and violence with knowledge. Teaching a seminar on violence and nonviolence in politics at Thammasat University and serving as director of the Peace Information Center, Chaiwat also became a voice of conscience for Thai society during times of conflict and violence for several decades. Grounded in his certitude that governance without violence is possible, Chaiwat spearheaded the ground-breaking Strategic Nonviolence Commission within Thailand's National Security Council in 2001. The commission, designated by former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra before he was ousted by a coup d'état in 2006, marks the pioneer institutionalization of nonviolent strategic planning and policies within Thailand's

2 Glenn D. Paige Chaiwat Satha-Anand, and Sarah Gilliatt (Eds.), *Islam and Nonviolence* (Honolulu: Center for Global Nonviolence, 1993).

3 Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *The Life of This World: Negotiated Muslim Lives in Thai Society* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International, 2005).

4 Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *Nonviolence and Islamic Imperatives* (Sparsnäs, Sweden: Irene Publishing, 2017).

5 See Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *The Nonviolent Prince* (Doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1982).

security sector, aiming to "monitor, assess the situation, warn, and make nonviolent conflict resolution recommendations to the government and Thai society."[6] The commission, which is made up of experts from both civic and state security sectors, not only sets in motion key national security policies, but also initiates dialogues and engagements, oftentimes in an informal manner, between various sectors–including those between civic and state security actors to address conflicts across the country,[7] ranging from conflict over natural resources, protracted political conflict between the royalist "yellow shirts" and Thaksin Shinawatra-supporter "red shirts," and deadly secessionist conflict in the country's southern border provinces. Among the committee's most fruitful undertakings include the Prime Minister's Order No.187/2546, which "mandate all government agencies to give priority to nonviolent conflict resolution" to "strengthen and restore the relations between people of differences as well as between the state and the people through nonviolence."[8] In addition, the committee commissions the 1999 National Security Policy on the Southern Provinces in opening a new path to recognize the minority Muslim-Malays in Thailand's southern border provinces–the region plagued with secessionist violence–as "people of culture" who are to "fully live as Muslims,"[9] as opposed to being assimilated by the state. The committee also successfully initiated backchannel talks, which laid a foundation for the ongoing peace talks between the Thai state and the Malay secessionist movements, in an attempt to end the deadly conflict in Thailand's southern border region.[10] But due to complex factors, the insurgency-based violence, which was thought to be resolved, re-erupted in the region in 2004, enabling the military hardliners to regain control of the security apparatus and the Strategic Nonviolence Commission dissolved in 2008. The commission is currently re-established as a think tank under the Thailand Research Fund and continues to monitor and make recommendations to concerned government agencies and Thai society on various national challenges, including the insurgency violence and the ongoing political conflict.[11]

In 2005, a year after the re-eruption of secessionist violence in the country's southern border region without any nonviolent resolution at sight, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra appointed the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) consisting of 50 members from across various sectors of the society, Chaiwat among them, to address the violent conflict in the southern border provinces. Chaiwat single-handedly prepared the first draft of the report, applying Galtung's triangle of violence, to address that violence erupted in the country's Muslim-Malay-dominated region is rooted in several aspects of structural and cultural violence. The report also makes several innovative nonviolent policy recommendations, ranging from immediate measures to measures that must be addressed at the structural and cultural levels.

6 Danai Moosa, "Santiwitee nai miti ngarn kwam munkong thai" (Nonviolence in the Thai security sector) (in Thai) in Chaiwat Satha-Anand, ed. Nonviolence Space Thailand Future: Knowledge, Secret, Memory. (Bangkok: Protestista, 2016): 253.

7 Interview of Mr. Pichai Rattanaphon, former chairperson of the Strategic Nonviolence Commission and former deputy secretary of the National Security Council, on May 3, 2023.

8 Prime Minister's Order 187/B.E.2546 regarding "Policy on nonviolent conflict resolution" (in Thai).

9 Office of the National Security Council, "Nayobai khwam mankhong haeng chat kiewkub changwat chaidaen phak tai B.E.2542-2546" (National security policy on the southern province, 1999-2003) (in Thai).

10 Interview of Mr. Pichai Rattanaphon.

11 Prachatai, "*"Yudtitham pue santipab" talaeng kudkan rut yokluek "kanakammakan yuttasat santiwiti""* ("Justice for Peace" opposes the dissolution of "Strategic Nonviolence Commission") (in Thai), October 27, 2008.

These recommendations include, for example, forming Shanti Sena or unarmed peace unit to undertake unarmed peacebuilding operations in the event of conflicts between the people and the state as well as people-to-people conflict; addressing natural resource management and justice through legislative amendments; improving the Islamic law system in the context of the southern border provinces; declaring Pattani Malay an additional working language in the southern border provinces; and promoting nonviolence as the main approach to resolve violence in the southern border provinces and across the country.[12]

Above all, Chaiwat was an extraordinary teacher. He started and taught the seminar on violence and nonviolence in politics, among other popular courses, at the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University for over three decades. When I was an undergraduate student at Thammasat University, I was privileged to be a student in this class together with several other students, many of who were neither even political science students nor Thammasat University students. It was commonly known that Chaiwat's classes were often participated by diverse individuals, some were graduate students, while others may not even hold student status. It is maybe because of this reason, those who consider themselves "Chawiat's students" are never limited to only political science students or Thammasat University students. In 2006, Chaiwat received Thammasat University's Kiratiyajaraya Distinguished Professor, which is given "to honor teachers with great morals, knowledge, and outstanding ability who dedicate themselves to teaching, research, and academic services to give back to society."[13] When I joined Chaiwat as a lecturer at Thammasat University's Faculty of Political Science, Chaiwat taught me two of the most valuable lessons. On the one hand, "any social activism I take part in must be based on and driven by knowledge." On the other hand, "an academic life allows us opportunities to engage in several interesting projects. Our priority should always be teaching and commitment to our students no matter what other commitment we engage it." Throughout decades of his teaching career, Chaiwat hardly missed any classes he taught despite his extremely busy schedule. As a student assistant at the Peace Information Center, I still vividly remember the students, and also non-students, regularly lined up outside Chaiwat's office to ask for his advice on academic projects and personal challenges, and Chaiwat always found time to guide these visitors, sometimes until late into the evening hours. These are the lessons and inspirations that I cherish to this day.

"More than all these achievements Chaiwat was a wonderful self-actualized human being who embodied nonviolence as a way of life…He was a wonderful human being, gentle caring and compassionate."[14] He saw the good in everyone and always treated everyone with respect and understanding. Chaiwat peacefully passed in the morning of 27th June 2024, surrounded by his family and friends. His funeral at Haroon Mosque was unusually attended by hundreds

12 See National Reconciliation Commission, *Overcoming Violence through the Power of Reconciliation: Report of the National Reconciliation Commission* (Bangkok: National Reconciliation Commission, 2006).

13 Prachathai, "*Pathakatha Kiratiyajaraya B.E. 2549: "Chaiwat Satha-Anand" yoot kor karn rai duay karn pen "nak rob muslim santi wathi"*" (The 2006 Kiratiyajaraya Distinguished Professor Keynote Speech: "Chaiwat Satha-Anand" Stop Terrorism by Becoming "Muslim Nonviolent Warrior) (in Thai), July 7, 2006.

14 These are the words Toda Peace Institute Director Kevin P. Clements wrote in "Obituary: Professor Chaiwat Satha-Anand." I think they are utterly beautiful and could not have said it better, therefore I quote it here. See Kevin P. Clements, "*Obituary: Professor Chaiwat Satha-Anand*", Toda Institute, July 8, 2024.

of people from all walks of life, near and far, with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Prime Minister of Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim also bid farewell to Chaiwat in his personal message: "Even as I bid farewell to this remarkable soul, I find solace in the legacy he leaves behind. May his memory forever inspire us to walk the path of peace, seek understanding in the face of adversity, and build a world where harmony and respect reign supreme."[15] Let us all honor the life of our beloved Chaiwat Satha-Anand by continuing his good work for a nonviolent Thailand in a nonviolent world.

15 Anwar Ibrahim, *Facebook*, June 28, 2024.

198 Methods of Nonviolent Action

METHODS OF PROTEST AND PERSUASION

#1 Public Speeches

#2 Letters of Opposition or Support

#3 Declarations by Organizations and Institutions

#4 Signed Public Statements

#5 Declarations of Indictment and Intention

#6 Group or Mass Petitions

#7 Slogans, Caricature, and Symbols

#8 Banners, Posters, and Displayed Communications

#9 Leaflets, Pamphlets and Books

#10 Newspapers and Journals

#11 Records, Radio and Television

#12 Skywriting and Earthwriting

#13 Deputations

#14 Mock Awards

#15 Group Lobbying

#16 Picketing

#17 Mock Elections

#18 Displays of Flags and Symbolic Colors

#19 Wearing of Symbols

#20 Prayers and Worship

#21 Delivering Symbolic Objects

#22 Protest Disrobings

#23 Destruction of Own Property

#24 Symbolic Lights

#25 Displays of Portrait

#26 Paint as Protest

#27 New Signs and Names

#28 Symbolic Sounds

#29 Symbolic Reclamation

#30 Rude Gestures

#31 "Haunting" Officials

#32 Taunting Officials

#33 Fraternization

#34 Vigils

#35 Humorous Skits and Pranks

#36 Performances of Plays and Music

#37 Singing

#38 Marches

#39 Parades

#40 Religious Processions

#41 Pilgrimages

#42 Motorcades

#43 Political Mourning

#44 Mock Funerals

#45 Demonstrative Funerals

#46 Homage at Burial Places

#47 Assemblies of Protest or Support

#48 Protest Meetings

#49 Camouflaged Meetings of Protest

#50 Teach-ins

#51 Walkouts

#52 Silence

#53 Renouncing Honors

#54 Turning One's Back

METHODS OF NONCOOPERATION

#55 Social Boycott

#56 Selective Social Boycott

#57 Lysistratic Nonaction

#58 Excommunication

#59 Interdict

#60 Suspension of Social and Sports Activities

#61 Boycott of Social Affairs

#62 Student Strike

#63 Social Disobedience

#64 Withdrawal from Social Institutions

#65 Stay-at-home

#66 Total Personal Noncooperation

#67 "Flight" of Workers

#68 Sanctuary

#69 Collective Disappearance

#70 Protest Emigration (Hijrat)

#71 Consumers' Boycott

#72 Nonconsumption of Boycotted Goods

#73 Policy of Austerity

#74 Rent Withholding

#75 Refusal to Rent

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#79 Producers' Boycott

#80 Suppliers' and Handlers' Boycott

#81 Traders' Boycott

#82 Refusal to Let or Sell Property

#83 Lockout

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#85 Merchants' "General Strike"

#86 Withdrawal of Bank Deposits

#87 Refusal to Pay Fees, Dues and Assessment

#88 Refusal to Pay Debts or Interest

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#90 Revenue Refusal

#91 Refusal of a Government's Money

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#94 International Sellers' Embargo

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Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part 2: The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Bedford: Porter Sargent Publishing, 1973).

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