REVOLUTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

SUCCESS FACTORS IN 'COLOR REVOLUTIONS': A REVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH IN REVOLUTION THEORY[*]

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The present article endeavors to provide a comprehensive review of contemporary research in the domain of success factors in 'color revolutions.' Despite the plethora of recent studies that seek to delineate the subsequent wave of research in the theory of revolutions, there is a paucity of literature that addresses the success factors in 'color revolutions' in conjunction with the mechanism of influence of these factors. This article aims to address this lacuna in the existing scholarship. A thorough analysis of contemporary works reveals that researchers worldwide, within the framework of the theory of revolution, have identified ten key factors contributing to the success of these events. Those factors encompass the role of unarmed revolutions, the 'power of numbers,' the impact of global democratization, the absence of violence, external influences, the erosion of loyalty among security forces, the role of the mass media, the duration of rule in an authoritarian regime / incumbent duration, the absence of natural resources, and the ethnic composition of the population.

Keywords: *socio-political destabilization, color revolutions, unarmed campaigns, success factors, unarmed revolutions.*

Despite the growing number of works devoted to the study of factors and causes of the theory of revolution, it should be noted that the majority of these works relate to either comparing current research in this area with the researches of the previous years (Goldstone 2024; Goldstone, Grinin, and Korotayev 2022a, 2022b; Lawson 2019), or to considering individual factors or causes (see the articles below). A comprehensive and systematic analysis and synthesis of all the new works of the so-called fifth generation in the study of revolutions is necessary (Beck *et al.* 2022; Beissinger 2022; Mako and Moghadam 2021; Goldstone 2024; Grinin and Korotayev 2024a, 2024b; Korotayev, Grinin, Ustyuzhanin, Fain 2025; Korotayev, Ustyuzhanin, Grinin, Fain 2025; Korotayev, Fain, Ustyuzhanin, Grinin 2025).

In this context, the primary objective of this article is to conduct a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the success factors in the 'color revolutions.' The analysis will include a review of the recent works in the field of revolution theory and an examination of the mechanisms of the identified factors.

A primary factor contributing to the success of 'color revolutions' is the unarmed revolutionary actions. This assertion is primarily supported by the development of empirical studies and the observation that there is a significantly higher success ratio for non-violent/ unarmed revolutionary episodes compared to armed/violent ones (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008; Belgioioso, Costalli, and Gleditsch 2021; Beissinger 2022; Chenoweth and Shay 2022). Within the framework of this factor, several research areas can be distinguished, which will be discussed below. They include: less damage compared to violent/armed revolutionary insurrections, greater political impact, and concessions on the part of the authorities, and better spatial conditions for influencing the incumbent regime.

For instance, Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. McCarthy Stephan undertook a systematic study of the strategic effectiveness of violent and nonviolent revolutionary episodes[**] (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008). According to prominent revolutionary theorists, large-scale non-violent revolutionary campaigns have proven more efficacious than violent resistance in a number of cases. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, non-violent campaigns pose a lesser threat to the individuals participating in them compared to violent ones. Secondly, mobilizing people to engage in non-violent protests is increasingly easier. Thirdly, such resistance campaigns get considerable support from the international community, which views them through the lens of violations of democratic rights and freedoms. This support manifests in various forms, including media advocacy and the imposition of sanctions against the ruling elite. Furthermore, statistical analysis reveals that the transition of security forces to the side of the resistance is also significantly more likely in the case of unarmed rather than armed revolutionary events.

The researchers' findings, derived from meticulous statistical analysis, are as follows:

Firstly, in the context of regime repression, non-violent/unarmed revolutionary campaigns are observed to be more than six times more likely to attain complete success compared to armed/violent uprisings that also face such repression.

Secondly, repressive regimes are found to be approximately twelve times more likely to make limited concessions to non-violent campaigns than to violent ones.

Thirdly, the probability of success for a revolution is shown to increase by more than fourfold when defections of military and security stuff are observed.

Fourthly, the likelihood of success for campaigns that have received external state support is more than three times higher when confronting a repressive adversary.

Fifthly, mobilization is identified as a critical factor in the determination of success, whereas the analysis indicates that effective opposition media and social media coverage of events represent the most significant means of increasing the number of protesters.

In another study, a group of researchers – Margherita Belgioioso, Stefano Costalli, and Christian Skred Gleditsch – conducted a comparative analysis of the effects of terrorist actions and those of unarmed revolutionary protests. According to their perspective, unarmed protest campaigns have the potential to yield more substantial political outcomes and concessions from authorities compared to terrorist actions (Belgioioso, Costalli, and Gleditsch 2021). The researchers present their argument as follows: they contend that terrorist activities can evolve into a substantial, intractable problem, particularly in the context of the escalation of moderate groups. In contrast, they assert that non-violent campaigns, characterized by hierarchical structures and centralized leader-

ship, are more amenable to negotiation, under certain conditions and without the involvement of military operations.

At the same time, a substantial role is attributed to the government, against which the people are mobilized. The primary responsibility of the government is to forestall the transition from non-violent conflict to violent conflict, while also ensuring sustainable and peaceful stabilization of the conflict.

Consequently, the concessions of the elite to non-violent campaigns become more appealing when the government anticipates that protest organizers possess sufficient capacity to impede the escalation of support for violent actors and subsequent intensification following concessions.

The examination of fifth-generation articles within the theoretical framework of studying revolutions should begin with one of the seminal works of Erica Chenoweth and Christopher Shay (Chenoweth and Shay 2022). Notably, these prominent researchers have documented a general trend towards an increase in the success rate of unarmed revolutionary actions after 1945. However, after the turn of the 2000s, a reverse trend emerged, with a decline in the success rate of unarmed revolutions from nearly 40% to just over 10% from the early 2000s to 2013.

Furthermore, researchers have identified a tendency for increased annual participation in non-violent campaigns, as evidenced by both the average campaign size per year and cumulative participation on a global scale. This observation underscores a consistent global preference for non-violent actions over armed violence, even in campaigns motivated by similar concerns, such as authoritarianism and foreign or colonial rule. This finding emphasizes the relative significance of non-violent / unarmed revolutionary action as both a political phenomenon and a subject matter.

A statistical analysis performed by Chenoweth and Shay reveals that participation in non-violent / unarmed revolutionary campaigns is associated with a significantly reduced risk of mortality for the average person when compared to campaigns involving the use of armed violence. This observation holds true even for campaigns related to the Arab uprisings, which did not face substantially elevated per capita risks when compared to other non-violent campaigns of the post-war era. The authors have demonstrated that the magnitude of reprisals against armed insurgencies poses a greater threat to non-participants than the reprisals typically employed against non-violent uprisings. Consequently, when dissidents resort to predominantly armed tactics, they can expose their communities to significant risk.

The researchers' most recent conclusion is that most unarmed revolutions are accompanied by a limited use of violence against the regime at certain points. A salient finding is that campaigns initiated since the year 2000 have exhibited a heightened propensity for random acts of unarmed violence (so-called 'violent flanks') occurring at the fringes of otherwise non-violent revolutionary episodes.

The underlying causes of this phenomenon remain ambiguous, but one possibility is that this tendency arises from a deliberate strategy to nurture these types of flanks. Alternatively, this phenomenon could be attributed to deficiencies in enforcing non-violent discipline. Regardless of the underlying cause, there appears to be no clear correlation between the presence of violent flanks and the outcomes of revolutionary campaigns.

The findings of Erica Chenoweth and Christopher Shay are consistent with a comprehensive study by Mark Beissinger (Beissinger 2022).

Mark Beissinger's research is predicated on the theory of urban revolutions as a novel trend of revolutionary regime changes. The close and compact presence of centers of power, wide streets, substantial central squares, rapid development of the Internet, combined with large-scale mobility and access to streets by population, are increasing effectiveness of non-violent revolutionary actions.

This shift in the dynamics of revolutionary confrontations changes the risks associated with regime change, shaping the nature of the revolutionary landscape and favoring certain tactics over others. Urban uprisings emerge in areas where the state's coercive power is most pronounced, rendering them highly susceptible to repression. Nevertheless, the strategic advantages of incumbent regimes in highly urbanized countries, stemming from their augmented repressive potential, are counterbalanced by the strategic advantages that oppositionists accrue due to their proximity to the command centers of power – the ultimate objectives of revolutionary regime change.

The concept of proximity has emerged as a focal point in scholarly inquiries into urban uprisings. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that proximity to the centers of state power can amplify the risks and challenges associated with revolution for insurgents and the regime alike. This phenomenon is particularly salient in the context of urban uprisings, which have been shown to pose a more direct threat to the regime than rural uprisings due to their proximity to the centers of state power (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Dahlum 2019; Edwards 2021; Butcher and Pinckney 2022; Gleditsch, Olar, and Radean 2023; Dahlum 2023; Gledhill, Duursma, and Shay 2022).The second group of success factors in 'color revolutions' can be identified as the mass factor. The efficacy of unarmed revolutionary actions is amplified when a greater number of citizens are mobilized in the streets (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Dahlum 2019; Edwards 2021; Butcher and Pinckney 2022; Gleditsch, Olar, and Radean 2023; Dahlum 2023; Gledhill, Duursma, and Shay 2022).

The following sub-factors can be classified in this group: the presence of a common opposition non-violent ideology, the participation of educated people, the resources of the social movement, and the probability of obtaining government concessions depending on the scale of protests, political dissent leading to an increase in the mobilization potential of unarmed protests, the role and significance of heterogeneity of protest coalitions in non-violent campaigns, and emotional and psychological reasons for people to join non-violent revolutionary protests.

According to the research conducted by Erica Chenoweth and Marie Stephan, contemporary non-violent revolutionary campaigns / revolutions exhibit a higher probability of achieving success in comparison to those involving armed insurrection (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Opposition, recognizing an alternative path for the country's development, can move to active non-violent attempts to change the government. These endeavors, in turn, garner support from both the general public and the opposition.

The researchers' primary contention is that non-violent campaigns tend to be more successful due to their capacity to garner significantly more support from the population. Non-violent resistance is characterized by a reduced presence of moral, physical, informational barriers to participation, in comparison to armed rebellion. An enhanced level of participation fosters the emergence of critical mechanisms that are instrumental for success, including enhanced resilience, augmented probability of tactical innovation, escalated civil unrest (thereby escalating the regime's costs of maintaining the status quo), and a shift in loyalty among former adversaries, including members of security

forces – a phenomenon that is also a distinct success factor in color revolutions. The mobilization of local supporters has been demonstrated to be a more reliable source of power than the support of external allies, which must be enlisted in many armed insurgencies to compensate for the lack of participants.

It is imperative to underscore an additional factor conducive to success in color revolutions: the presence of a common opposition ideology grounded in non-violent principles, complemented by the unity of the movement itself. The absence of unity among different groups of resistance participants can impede the establishment of a cohesive structure in the face of the incumbent government. The ensuing stages are pivotal in elucidating the mechanisms that facilitate this critical success factor of the revolution. Firstly, it is crucial to acknowledge that the scale and heterogeneity of participation fosters heightened levels of civil unrest, leading to mass non-cooperation. This, in turn, compels potential supporters of the incumbent regime, including security forces, to re-evaluate their interests and preferences, and more readily align with the resistance.

The fundamental human desire to survive and be on the winning side in a conflict is a compelling incentive for individuals to change their allegiances, particularly in the context of non-violent confrontation. The regime's repression of large non-violent campaigns is more likely to backfire on the perpetrator than when reprisals are used against armed insurgencies. Retaliatory measures, which are amplified for the reasons previously outlined, frequently result in increased mobilization, shifts in allegiance among the elites of the former regime, and sanctions against the offending regime.

Substantial civic engagement in campaigns has been demonstrated to engender meaningful support from the international community and cause opposing regimes to lose support from significant regional or international powers. This phenomenon has been observed to occur with greater frequency in the context of large-scale non-violent revolutionary campaigns. These campaigns have been shown to exhibit a higher degree of resilience in the face of regime repression. Furthermore, these revolutionary campaigns often demonstrate a greater capacity for developing tactical innovations, which facilitates enhanced maneuverability and adaptability to changing circumstances.

Furthermore, Sirianna Dahlum's research indicates that the involvement of educated individuals, particularly university students and graduates, in color revolutions has become a pivotal factor in the success of non-violent campaigns (Dahlum 2019). Educated individuals possess a deeper understanding of politics and complex social mechanisms, superior information processing skills, and a more nuanced appreciation for the strengths and limitations of the prevailing government. These competencies are especially pertinent for non-violent revolutionary protests, as their primary objective is to persuade fellow citizens and external actors. This necessitates some understanding of psychology, history, and politics; the capacity to collect and analyze opinion polls; and the ability to utilize existing research on effective resistance strategies. Educated groups, including professionals such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, university professors, and others, possess specialized knowledge and skills that are critical to carrying out key activities in society.

Furthermore, the high degree of specialization among the population renders it challenging to identify suitable replacements in the event of large groups ceasing to collaborate. Educated individuals frequently possess significant leverage due to their role in the bureaucracy and the judiciary. The cessation of cooperation from the bureaucracy results in the ruler's loss of potential for implementation. These considerations

indicate that the regime exhibits a heightened vulnerability to non-cooperation by educated individuals. An educated population possesses the capacity for effective mass non-violent resistance. When applied to protest movements, these findings and proposed mechanisms suggest a heightened likelihood of non-violent methods being employed by campaigns comprised of university students and graduates, potentially leading to the successful realization of their objectives.

Piers Edwards examines community movement resources (Edwards 2021). According to Edwards's theoretical framework, the capacity of a revolutionary campaign to generate written or broadcasted content that promotes its demands and swiftly disseminates messages to a mass audience wields considerable influence in non-violent campaigns, both to augment popular support and to exert pressure on states.

The enhancement of open political competition has the potential to amplify the accessibility of resources for non-violent mobilization campaigns. These resources may include organizations, networks, communication tools, and affiliations with international human rights organizations. Conversely, the availability of these resources can, over time, exert pressure on states to increase political competition and enable campaigns to engage in the political process. The interdependence of competition and resources poses a challenge for empirical assessment of their relationship to nonviolence, a topic that will be addressed in the following analysis. The following social movement resources – namely, organizations, networks, and the skills of participants – enable the establishment of connections within and between social groups, thereby stimulating the growth of unarmed revolutionary resistance.

A seminal study by Charles Butcher and his colleague Jonathan Pinckney examines the relationship between revolutionary protest size and government responses. Their findings indicate that larger unarmed revolutionary protests are more likely to result in government concessions compared to smaller campaigns (Butcher and Pinckney 2022).

The observations presented herein are predicated on the assumption that revolutionary demonstrations of a considerable scale tend to be more disruptive and impose greater financial burdens on governments, thereby serving as a more potent indication of popular discontent. The following conclusions have been drawn by Butcher and Pinckney: when mass revolutionary demonstrations occur, external observers are more inclined to infer that political change (or at the very least, government concessions) is inevitable. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that observers should consider the extent to which mass revolutionary protests depend on simple mobilization strategies that government decision makers are likely to anticipate.

On the other hand, Christian Skrede Gleditsch, Roman-Gabriel Olar, and Marius Radean have expanded the concept of the mass character of unarmed revolutionary uprisings (Gleditsch, Olar, and Radean 2023). According to these scholars, revolutionary protests pose a dual threat to incumbent leaders. Firstly, non-violent protests directly challenge the costs associated with governance, particularly in cases of citizen insubordination. Secondly, they increase the risk of elite defection from the ruling coalition. The effectiveness of unarmed political dissent in mobilizing people leads to an escalation in the scale of the revolutionary protest campaign, which, in turn, has the potential to exert a more destructive effect than violent actions.

Such nonviolent mobilization through dissent can lead to increased governance costs, thereby threatening the state's economic base and fueling divisions within the

elite. Non-violent revolutionary protest actions, when they take place in large-scale urban administrative locations, increase management costs.

In addition to this, Sirianna Dahlum has explored the role and implications of the diversity of protest coalitions in non-violent / unarmed revolutions (Dahlum 2023). According to her, a crucial factor in the revolutionary transition from an authoritarian regime to a more democratic system is the involvement of heterogeneous social groups in non-violent revolutionary campaigns. These groups possess a diverse array of resources, strategies, and influences over the government, potentially leading to a shift in allegiance among government officials and security forces. Concurrently, socially diverse movements are more likely to engender the establishment of democratic institutions in the short and long term, thereby suggesting that the potential of diverse revolutionary movements for the establishment of democracy is more promising.

Adopting a more diversified array of resources, competencies, and influences, socially diverse revolutions should be well positioned to employ a range of tactics, integrating strategies such as boycotts, demonstrations, rallies, petitions, and online campaigns. The implementation of a multifaceted revolutionary strategy can impose a wide range of costs on various sectors, including the obstruction of trade, transportation, and other industries; labor strikes; disruption of the public sector; agricultural strikes; and student sit-ins.

This array of tactics has the potential to increase the costs for the regime to maintain its hold on power, leading to its collapse. This can occur due to the personal costs incurred by the main leadership or due to key allies withdrawing their support due to the perceived high costs of supporting the regime. This underscores the significance of safeguarding not only the well-being of a substantial number of protesters, but also the engagement of diverse societal groups that wield influence over distinct sectors. When considered collectively, these groups pose a multifaceted threat to the regime, underscoring the need for a nuanced and coordinated approach to countering these challenges.

Analyzing various factors of success in color revolutions, some scientists also examine the emotional and psychological reasons for people's participation in unarmed uprisings. For instance, John Gledhill, Allard Duursma, and Christopher Wiley Shay have investigated factors that can lead to the emergence of a new motivation for people to take to the streets to support nonviolent revolutionary action (Gledhill, Duursma, and Shay 2022). They have proposed that, despite the risk of government repression, individuals possess the capacity to engage in non-violent actions through emotional mobilization. This emotional incentive, as proposed by organizers, can serve as a mobilization factor, fostering collective expression through events such as concerts, mass singing, or other forms of communal engagement.

The emotions evoked by these events, including feelings of empowerment, solidarity, catharsis, and joy, are primarily experienced by those in attendance at revolutionary campaign rallies. The implementation of these 'emotional events' fosters individual incentives for passive supporters to mobilize and actively participate in street-based unarmed uprising activities, thereby expanding the scope and scale of these movements.

Within the context of a dichotomy between the pursuit of material incentives and the threat of nonparticipation-related sanctions, emotional events emerge as a nonmaterial psychological and emotional factor that fosters revolutionary mass mobilization.

The third critical factor of success in 'color revolutions' is a relatively democratic character of the incumbent regime, specifically the success of non-violent revolution is

much more likely in partial (rather than full) autocracies (Bayer, Bethke, and Lambach 2016; Bethke 2017; Butcher, Gray, and Mitchell 2018).

In addition, these authors arrive at the following conclusions:

1. The success of non-violent protests in former dictatorships results in the establishment of democratic principles of governance.

2. A successful non-violent revolution increases the likelihood of a full transition to stable and viable democratic principles in the long term.

3. The participation and role of national trade unions are significant factors.

4. As a result of non-violent regime change, the benefits of political change are distributed among groups that have expended resources on protests.

The conclusions of Markus Bayer, Felix S. Bethke, and Daniel Lambach, affirm that the success of non-violent revolutions in former dictatorships establishes democratic principles of governance (Bayer, Bethke, and Lambach 2016). According to them, democratic regimes that emerge from non-violent / unarmed revolutions are less likely to collapse than those that result from armed uprisings or are established without any revolutionary movement. The researchers attribute this phenomenon to the adoption and extension of the organizational culture of color revolutions by subsequent democratic regimes, thereby engendering conditions conducive to the survival of democracy. The authors delineate the following primary mechanism:

1) Veterans of non-violent revolutions can participate directly in politics. After being elected to parliament or when holding government or administrative posts, they can utilize these positions to promote their ideals.

Secondly, non-violent revolutionary transitions have been demonstrated to engender a culture of cooperation and compromise, as well as regulatory and democratic legislation, thereby reducing political polarization and power struggles (Bethke 2017). Thirdly, non-violent revolutions have been shown to promote methods of non-violence and propagate the ideals of mass mobilization, which have the potential to promote peaceful resistance in the future (Bethke 2017). According to Felix S. Bethke, the success of a color revolution that is initiated in a non-violent manner would lead to a heightened probability of a complete transition to stable and viable democratic principles in the long term (Bethke 2017).

Felix S. Bethke's argument posits that non-violent revolutionary campaigns, by shaping a democratic transition, guide the subsequent regime on a path favorable to achieving a peaceful change of power in the future. In particular, the organizational culture of a non-violent campaign is conducive to the post-transition political environment. For instance, campaigns are typically characterized as large, inclusive, and diverse movements comprised of various societal segments, often fostering a culture of compromise to harmonize the divergent interests of campaign participants. This organizational culture fosters the development of democratic skills and expectations for accountable governance among participants, thereby contributing to the formation of a democratic political culture that values compromise and cooperation in the post-transition period. Consequently, non-violent revolutions can promote the emergence of robust opposition parties that are capable of challenging the incumbent government in elections, thereby facilitating a peaceful transition of power. Furthermore, non-violent revolutions can also limit the ability of ruling elites to deviate from democratic norms following an electoral defeat.

Charles Butcher, John Laidlaw Gray, and Liesel Mitchell, have demonstrated that participation in unarmed revolutions by national trade unions statistically significantly increases both the probability of success and the probability of significant democratization after a successful revolution (Butcher, Gray, and Mitchell 2018). According to the authors, trade union organizations provide a form of 'leverage' for civil resistance campaigns, thereby increasing the likelihood of major government concessions in the short term, reducing the chances of short-term failure, and enhancing the prospects for post-conflict democratization.

The mobilization infrastructure of trade union organizations is characterized by its strong links, which contribute to its durability. In contrast to the dissolution of production networks following conflict – such as that of disarming rebel group or dissolution of a temporary coalition of political parties – trade union networks persist. This persistence is due to their role in generating taxable revenues for the transitional government, as the structural basis of the economy is not expected to change during the transition period. Consequently, the mobilization infrastructure associated with trade union organizations retains a latent mobilization potential in the post-conflict period. As in civil wars, non-violent civil resistance campaigns employ pre-existing organizations and social groups to mobilize, and the nature of these organizations determines their ability to exert pressure on the regime in the short term, survive setbacks and repression, and generate long-term institutional change.

In the context of contemporary research on 'color revolutions,' the absence of violence by protesters has emerged as a fourth significant factor contributing to success (Chenoweth and Schock 2015; Tompkins 2015). In this domain of inquiry, it is posited that the presence of 'violent flanks' among the supporter base does not necessarily guarantee success for non-violent revolutions. In other words, armed struggle has been shown to be inversely associated with public participation, which in turn is associated with diminished prospects for success for unarmed revolutionary events. Concurrently, the escalation of violence heightens the probability of state retribution, which in turn exerts an influence on the diminution of mobilization subsequent to the implementation of repression.

Erica Chenoweth, and Kurt Schock investigate the role of violence in the success or failure of nonviolent revolutions (Chenoweth and Schock 2015). According to them, in a substantial number of cases, the presence of violent flanks does not exert a positive effect on the probability of success of non-violent revolutions. That is to say, armed struggle is negatively associated with mass mobilization and, consequently, correlates with a decrease in the chances of success of unarmed campaigns. Violent flanks tend to reduce mass participation in non-violent revolutions, which can actually reduce their chances of success. The repercussions of these actions are not confined to a specific group; rather, they have the capacity to diminish support among a diverse range of participants, irrespective of the associated risks.

Elizabeth Tompkins's examination of the role of violent flanks in non-violent revolutions and its implications for regime change (Tompkins 2015) is particularly noteworthy. According to the author, the presence of such a violent flank increases both the probability and the degree of state repression. The study further elucidates that such a violent flank is concomitant with a decline in mobilization subsequent to repression, without necessarily impeding the broader trajectory of the campaign.

The presence of a violent flank during a given campaign year has been demonstrated to be associated with a higher probability of the movement being suppressed by the state. Furthermore, it has been shown that the movement will gain momentum or lose it, rather than maintain the status quo.

This phenomenon of unarmed collective violence has been explored by Mohammad Ali Kadivar and Neil Ketchley (Kadivar and Ketchley 2018). The researchers conclude that such acts of unarmed collective violence by civilians are not only conceptually different from acts of violence committed by armed insurgents and cases of non-violent protest, but they can also have a positive impact on undermining authoritarian regimes and thus pave the way for democratization. The term 'unarmed collective violence' is defined as protective measures undertaken by unarmed civilians in response to state repression of the mobilization of the civilian population at the street level. This form of non-violent resistance does not inherently pose a threat to the regime's hold on power, as evidenced by the use of improvised weapons such as stones, Molotov cocktails, and sticks during these demonstrations.

At present, several significant consequences of this unarmed violence have been elucidated. Unarmed collective violence has been demonstrated to disrupt public order, thereby increasing the cost of governance for the prevailing regime. The presence of unarmed civilians engaged in confrontations with law enforcement personnel has been shown to provoke further protests, particularly in the aftermath of a crackdown. Furthermore, episodes of unarmed collective violence have been demonstrated to diminish the regime's repressive capacity, leading to a diversion of enforcement agents from their primary duties at protest sites. This, in turn, creates opportunities for revolutionary demonstrations in other locations.

The fifth area of research on success factors in 'color revolutions' is the role of external influence (Kalin, Lounsbery, and Pearson 2022; Cunningham 2023; Liou, Murdie, and Peksen 2023). In this context, the discussion centers on the introduction of sanctions, which have been shown to enhance the likelihood of success for unarmed revolutions. Additionally, it explores the involvement and role of major powers in specific conflicts, as well as the impact of external actors on security services. Ilker Kalin, Marie Olson Lounsbury, and Frederick Pearson explore the role of major powers in nonviolent conflicts within other states (Kalin, Lounsbery, and Pearson 2022).

A seminal study has identified three primary roles of major powers in relation to the current state of global politics. Firstly, these powers provide comprehensive support for the current elite, aiding in the maintenance of the status quo. Secondly, they refrain from participating in the processes of socio-political destabilization of their own allies, avoiding the further exacerbation of tensions. Thirdly, these powers seek to undermine the policies of the adversary states and their allies, particularly by offering support to unarmed campaigns.

In the first scenario, large states have strategic plans with the current authorities, while providing them with full support in deconflicting the conflict and undermining non-violent revolutionary movements. This support can manifest in various forms, including: political support for the regime, the absence of mentions of state repression in the international media, the obstruction of the activities of international non-governmental organizations, the lack of funding for protesters, and the absence of reaction from other external states to support non-violent protests. In this scenario, the probability of failure of non-violent protests is significantly increased.

In the absence of involvement in processes of destabilization, major powers maintain a distance from both active political circles and protest leaders. The third scenario pertains to the support of protest movements by major powers, which is primarily manifested through the following measures: provision of additional financial resources, imposition of sanctions against the prevailing regime, escalation of diplomatic pressure in the international arena, or overt expression of support for the protesters; direct influence on the nation's security forces. This scenario suggests that non-violent protests are more likely to achieve success.

Therefore, by analyzing the actions of major powers, it is possible to understand the external vector of cooperation of a country undergoing destabilization processes with major countries. This cooperation manifests in various forms, including strategic partnerships with representatives of the current regime or support for the opposition, potentially resulting in a complete transition of security forces to the side of the protesters. However, it is crucial to note that the actions of major powers may not always align with international norms and human rights obligations.

Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham advances a compelling thesis in support of non-violent protest methods. According to her theory, non-violent actions can garner increased international attention from external actors (Cunningham 2023). A statistical analysis of violent and non-violent revolutions reveals that non-violence can be an effective means of successfully obtaining concessions by protesters. In any given year, movements that use non-violence are twice as likely to secure concessions as those that simply make demands but do not use non-violent resistance methods. The author posits that international actors are capable of exerting influence or pressure on the government during non-violent uprisings through the following means:

– Public criticism through the media in connection with violations of human rights or democratic principles.

– The introduction of economic sanctions (*e.g.*, the suspension and curtailment of international loans from the World Bank, a downgrade of the credit rating, or bans on the export of national goods). Additionally, the author posits that the suspension of membership in international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the introduction of humanitarian interventions, can serve as effective means of exerting influence. Furthermore, the author observes that individual states and international organizations may condition international assistance on the peaceful resolution of non-violent protests or on an enhancement of respect for the fundamental rights of demonstrators.

Liou *et al.* explore complexities of sanctions and their consequences as regards success or failure of violent and non-violent uprisings (Liou, Murdie, and Peksen 2023).

According to them, sanctions have the potential to serve as an effective instrument for securing concessions from governments confronted with non-violent uprisings. The efficacy of sanctions in amplifying the prospects of success for non-violent revolutions is particularly pronounced when these sanctions are multifaceted, impose substantial costs, and are subject to human rights constraints. Furthermore, researchers contend that sanctions exert a significant influence on the success of unarmed uprisings, as evidenced by statistical analyses demonstrating the efficacy of sanctions as regards two primary mechanisms: (1) the defection of security apparatus or political elites aligned with the regime, and (2) the escalation of anti-government mobilization. In the context of an ongoing campaign, sanctions can serve as a potent indicator of a shift in the internal

negotiation environment, thereby signifying external support for the revolutionary campaign's maximalist objectives.

The authors of the study have found that the imposition of sanctions on a regime by other states can serve as an indication of the potential for more severe international ramifications resulting from the regime's actions. In instances where the revolution is predominantly violent, the regime interprets this signal as a warning, deeming it to be of no greater consequence, and proceeds with the suppression of the rebellion. Conversely, if the revolution remains predominantly non-violent, the presence of international support, as evidenced by economic sanctions, can shift the balance of power in favor of a civil revolutionary campaign. This information has the potential to compel even an intractable dictator to make significant concessions to the revolutionary campaign. When the revolution is non-violent, sanctions serve as a reliable omen of future actions by third states, thereby changing the terms of negotiations in favor of a revolutionary campaign. Multilateral sanctions that incur high costs or concern human rights will convey a stronger message and thus strengthen the international community's support for a non-violent uprising.

Furthermore, sanctioned governments may be reluctant to crack down on non-violent protestors to avoid antagonizing their international allies. The use of reprisals against non-violent uprisings is likely to have significant international implications. Sanctions designed to protect human rights are more likely to help internal campaigns achieve their goals. Human rights sanctions are a concrete signal of the international community's support for domestic dissidents, illustrating the potential for further support if no concessions are made. Additionally, human rights sanctions can provide regime leaders with information regarding the likely support that dissenters will receive if the situation continues to escalate. Moreover, sanctions in response to political repression may encourage more citizens to join anti-government revolutionary action or encourage the military and political elite to defect. Consequently, human rights sanctions are likely to increase the bargaining power of revolutionary movements against incumbent governments and force them to compromise.

In the context of the ongoing discourse on the role of external factors as regards the success of non-violent campaigns, it is imperative to address the issue of the loss of loyalty among security forces during non-violent uprisings (Lutscher 2016; Cebul and Grewal 2022; Dahl, Rivera, and Sagård 2024).

In this domain, the primary cautionary factors pertain to the fragmented or disjointed security apparatus, the role of conscripts in the security forces, and various forms of disloyalty.

Philipp Lutscher explores how fragmentation of security forces can affect the outcome of non-violent campaigns (Lutscher 2016). He proposes a hypothesis that, in the contexts characterized by non-violent revolutionary protests and a fragmented security apparatus, certain armed groups may perceive an opportunity to defect and align with the protesters. This, in turn, could diminish the efficacy of the countervailing forces if more potent armed organizations are present.

Lutscher's conclusions indicate that in the contexts marked by instability and the presence of no more than two armed organizations, the likelihood of desertion is significantly diminished. This phenomenon stands in contrast to scenarios involving a greater number of security organizations, where defection becomes more prevalent. The empirical findings indicate a curvilinear relationship between the number of effective security

organizations and the probability of defection in nonviolent uprisings. The probability of defection from a unitary and highly fragmented armed force is significantly higher compared to exactly two armed organizations.

On the other hand, Matthew Cebul and Sharan Grewal have investigated the role of the military in non-violent uprisings (Cebul and Grewal 2022). According to them, the success of non-violent protests depends, among other things, on the defection of the military to the side of the protesters. The researchers have formulated a theory, supported by an analysis of historical literature, which posits that military personnel conscripted for service are less inclined to engage in the suppression of mass demonstrations when compared with volunteer forces.

For instance, conscripts have more connections with relatives and friends who may end up taking part in a non-violent revolution. Given their limited service life, conscripts may identify more with the protesters than volunteers. Professional military personnel are more likely to have career incentives, which will not prevent them from using violence to disperse non-violent demonstrators. Consequently, non-violent revolutionary campaigners are more likely to engage in activities in states where conscripts are the majority of the military personnel, as opposed to states relying on voluntary recruitment. Furthermore, Cebul and Grewal underscore a notable consequence of the state's conscription army: it engenders awareness among the civilian population that conscripted soldiers are reluctant to engage in the suppression of mass protests. This is due to the fact that conscription typically involves a substantial number of recruits completing brief periods of service, resulting in a considerable proportion of eligible citizens being conscripted. These individuals subsequently return to civilian life with firsthand experience of conscription, including insight into conscript morale and potential internal tensions between conscripts and career officers. Consequently, conscription hinders the military's inclination to suppress, as well as the return of former conscripts to the civilian population, who possess a personal understanding of this dynamic. Concurrently, conscription amplifies the probability that civilians devoid of military experience will encounter former conscripts who have actually served, thereby facilitating the acquisition of knowledge regarding the disposition of conscripts.

In conclusion, it is argued that conscription has the capacity to strengthen broader and more profound connections between the armed forces and the populace, thereby engendering heightened awareness among the general public regarding the armed forces and their propensity to abandon their posts in the face of mass demonstrations. The public's interaction with conscripts and former conscripts fosters an anticipation of military defection, thereby encouraging further protest. Consequently, conscription has the potential to erode the regime's capacity to deter military repression. It is therefore recommended that the students of revolutions extend their research to investigate the influence of conscription on the selection of resistance tactics by activists opposing conscription armies. This research is particularly timely and relevant, as non-violent revolutions have been identified as a significant factor in the defection of military personnel.

In addition, Marianne Dahl, Mauricio Rivera, and Tora Sagrada have investigated the effects of changes in security forces' loyalty in nonviolent campaigns (Dahl, Rivera, and Sagård 2024). According to the researchers, the participation of individual security forces in protesting activities is a primary factor in the future success of non-violent

campaigns. The authors identify the following forms of disloyalty of the security forces in protest actions:

– evasion from work (refusal to comply with orders of repression);

– dismissal to the barracks (refusal to deploy to conflict zones or campaign sites due to illness or poor health);

– desertion (complete withdrawal from the security forces);

– going over to the side of the protesters;

– voicing one's position (criticizing the regime along with approving the protests);

– leaving the mode (refusing to support the mode);

– coups (overthrow of the regime).

The seventh factor in the success of revolutions is the presence of independent or partially independent media, which contribute to the rapid dissemination of information and solve problems of coordination and collective action (Gleditsch, Macías-Medellín, and Rivera 2023). It has been shown that partial media freedom can increase the prospects for mass non-violent expression of dissent by coordinating actions on the way to mobilization. This information reserve increases the effect of other factors that stimulate mass protests in autocracies.

Partial media freedom ensures good coordination, increasing the ability of dissidents to organize and overcome barriers to collective action. The information advantage that potential dissidents possess, even within imperfectly free media environments, can play a significant role in amplifying the influence of other factors that increase the likelihood of mass dissent. These factors include the spread of protests and the mobilizing effect of elections. Researchers have noted that revolutionary mass non-violent dissent is more probable in countries with greater media freedom and alternative sources of information compared to regimes without independent media.

Conventional forms of mass media, such as on-air radio and television, as well as print communication, maintain their relevance in the contemporary era for the expression of dissent and direct action. Autocracies with partially free media are more prone to encounter substantial dissent, as the dissemination of information enhances public awareness regarding the nature and foundations of regime power, the preferences of relevant actors, potential strategies to counter dissent, and the probability of success.

The role of partially free media in this regard is twofold: first, it can directly influence political mobilization by amplifying the impact of other events and factors that facilitate coordination and overcome barriers to collective action; and second, it can have an indirect influence on mobilization by doing so.

Free media has the potential to disseminate information regarding the inherent unfairness of autocratic elections, the incumbent president's intention to manipulate the electoral process, and the opposition's positions and strategies. This facilitates more effective mobilization against the regime, thereby amplifying the impact of elections on mass dissent (Sutton 2018).

The eighth factor pertains to a prolonged stay in power within an authoritarian regime. In this case, the focus is on the relationship between the autocratic leader and the elite (Sutton 2018). Jonathan Sutton examines the success or failure of non-violent demonstrations from the perspective of the process of authoritarianism within the regime (*Ibid*. 2018).

The author hypothesizes that an autocratic regime is more likely to prevail in non-violent campaigns if the autocrat has consolidated his personal control over the regime, thereby securing sole power (including for his own safety from internal coups). In this context, disgruntled members of the ruling elite, who have been stripped of their power, play a pivotal role. These members can support the people's non-violent uprising.

In scenarios where power is genuinely distributed among elites, with each individual recognizing their distinct responsibilities and safeguarding their own interests, such authoritarian regimes have a propensity to endure and fortify their cohesion in the face of civil resistance. This distribution of power serves to enhance the regime's cohesion, thereby fortifying its resilience in the face of external challenges associated with civil resistance revolutionary campaigns. Consequently, the likelihood that elites will withdraw their support from the ruling authority is reduced.

The author arrives at the conclusion that personal autocracies are distinguished by markedly distinct relations between the ruling coalition and the autocrat. In a power-sharing environment, members of the ruling coalition retain autonomous support bases and lateral connections with each other, which are facilitated by power-sharing institutions. These connections enable them to control the agreement and coordinate actions to remove the autocrat in the event of a power grab. In personal autocracies, by contrast, these ties are weakened to the point that the elite becomes largely atomized. This means that individuals remain in their positions and can still wield significant power within their own purview, but are unable to coordinate it with others. As a result, elites face a serious challenge of collective action, as an attempt to create a strong enough coalition to challenge an autocrat is likely to be met with harsh repression.

The author further posits that mass civil non-violent resistance functions as a coordinating mechanism, enabling the ruling elites to circumvent the challenge of collective action and repudiate support for the autocrat. Non-violent rebellion engenders an exogenous crisis, thereby eliminating the necessity for elites to initiate the rebellion themselves, thus circumventing the trailblazer problem that otherwise hinders internal challenges. By compelling the regime to respond, it engenders a space for debate, enabling elites to contemplate alternatives to the status quo and ascertain the existence of broader support for change within the ruling coalition. The opposition leadership functions as a partner in transition negotiations, while mass protests serve as a political resource that can be utilized to legitimize alternative claims to power and influence the perceived likelihood of subsequent withdrawal of support.

The ninth important factor pertains to the role of the ethnic factor in non-violent campaigns, namely, the question of whether representatives of the government and its opposition belong to the same ethnic group (Svensson and Lindger 2011; Pischedda 2020). The probability of success of the 'color revolution' increases if the current government and the opposition belong to the same ethnic group. Isak Svensson and Mathilde Lindgren examine the success of non-violent revolutions in three dimensions: firstly, the success of non-violent revolutions in the struggle for territorial changes or independence or against state power is examined, secondly, the ethnic component of the current government and the protesters is analyzed, thirdly, the homogeneity or polarization of society is assessed.

Svensson and Lindgren have determined that non-violent campaigns are more likely to succeed in the fight against vertical (state) power than in horizontal (territorial)

changes due to the difference in approaches. When fighting the vertical of power, the task is to change the entire regime. Unarmed self-determination uprisings, encompassing a spectrum of demands ranging from full independence to limited forms of autonomy, inherently challenge the horizontal legitimacy of the state. These uprisings aspire to attain a certain degree of self-government, thereby challenging the state's role as a representative of the broader community. Consequently, the territorial aspirations of unarmed uprisings have the potential to exacerbate societal polarizations, whether by reinforcing existing divisions or fostering new ones.

Another factor in the success of a non-violent revolution is the representation of a common ethnic group in both the government and its opposition (Pischedda 2020). Constantino Piscedda, an expert in the field of non-violent collective action with maximalist goals, has conducted extensive research on large-scale revolutionary campaigns. These campaigns have sought to achieve objectives such as the cessation of foreign occupation, the overthrow of an existing government, or the pursuit of self-determination through secession. Piscedda's research indicates that non-violent campaigns are unlikely to succeed when the contenders and the incumbent president belong to different ethnic groups.

The present state of 'ethnic conflict' has been demonstrated to suppress the principal mechanisms by which non-violent resistance can achieve success. These include the emergence of a critical mass of opponents, the defection of segments of the security apparatus and the regime's inner circle, and the development of a sense of sympathy for the opposition among key decision-makers in the government. The analysis further suggests that ordinary people belonging to the ethnic group that controls the state are unlikely to side with the 'other nationality' movement, which limits its growth potential and the corresponding ability to impose costs on the incumbent president.

Moreover, security forces and regime insiders are unlikely to sympathize and identify with rivals from other ethnic groups, which reduces the likelihood of concessions and defections, instead increasing the risk of crushing reprisals. The cumulative effect of this dynamic is that ethnic unarmed campaigns are much less likely to succeed than their non-ethnic counterparts. The argument about ethnic conflict suggests several causal mechanisms for the ineffectiveness of ethnic non-violent actions in comparison with their non-ethnic counterparts. These include: (1) the limited capacity of ethnic revolutionary campaigns to cause defections of security forces and regime representatives; (2) their tendency to attract fewer participants; (3) the willingness of governments to resort to large-scale and prolonged repression of ethnic rivals; and (4) the reluctance of governments to meet the demands of ethnic rivals due to distrust of other ethnic groups or the perception that concessions would be too onerous.

The present study hypothesizes that the probability of achieving success is contingent upon the presence of representatives from other ethnic groups, in addition to those who wield control over the state, within the non-violent movement. Ethnic issues are confronted with considerable challenges, primarily due to the limited participation and the concomitant inability to evoke sympathy, let alone garner support, from government entities.

The tenth success factor of 'color revolutions' is the lack of natural resources and material benefits from the use of these natural resources (Kirisci and Demirhan 2021).

Mustafa Kirisci, along with his colleague Emirhan Demirhan, has investigated the impact of natural resource wealth (particularly oil) on the success rate of non-violent campaigns (*Ibid.*).

Non-violent movements have been shown to be more likely to fail in states with higher levels of natural resource wealth (Griffiths and Wasser, 2019). The underlying reason for this phenomenon, as posited by Griffiths and Wasser (2019), is that resource-rich countries possess considerable leverage within both domestic and international spheres, thereby ensuring their success in suppressing non-violent revolutions. Within the domestic context, when confronted with non-violent resistance, these states can strategically utilize natural resource rents to bribe domestic actors who play a pivotal role in the success of the movement, including military leadership and influential civil society groups. In the international context, the presence of abundant natural resources can be employed as a diplomatic instrument to deter external states from providing support to non-violent resisters, particularly when these nations are already reliant on these resources. This reliance on resources may also influence other states to exercise caution in imposing sanctions in response to retaliatory actions against unarmed protesters.

The present article aims to systematically analyze the success factors in 'color revolutions' in recent studies of the theory of revolutions. It has categorized modern works into ten major blocks, each focusing on distinct areas of research and exploring their respective mechanisms of influence on the internal political process.

This research is ongoing, and it is part of a series that aims to analyze and systematize the causes of 'color revolutions' (Bilyuga and Kolesnikova 2024a, 2024b; Kolesnikova and Bilyuga 2024). The findings of this research will facilitate the analysis of the main phases of the process of socio-political destabilization, as well as the development of countermeasures to neutralize these factors.

NOTES

** In fact, they prefer to denote them as 'maximalist campaigns;' however, it has been shown that most 'campaigns' in their dataset (Non-violent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes / NAVCO [see, *e.g.*, Chenoweth and Shay, 2022]) are actually revolutionary episodes (Grinin and Korotayev 2022; Goldstone *et al.* 2023; Korotayev *et al.* 2024, 2025; Ustyuzhanin and Korotayev 2023a, 2023b; Ustyuzhanin *et al.* 2022, 2023).

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