

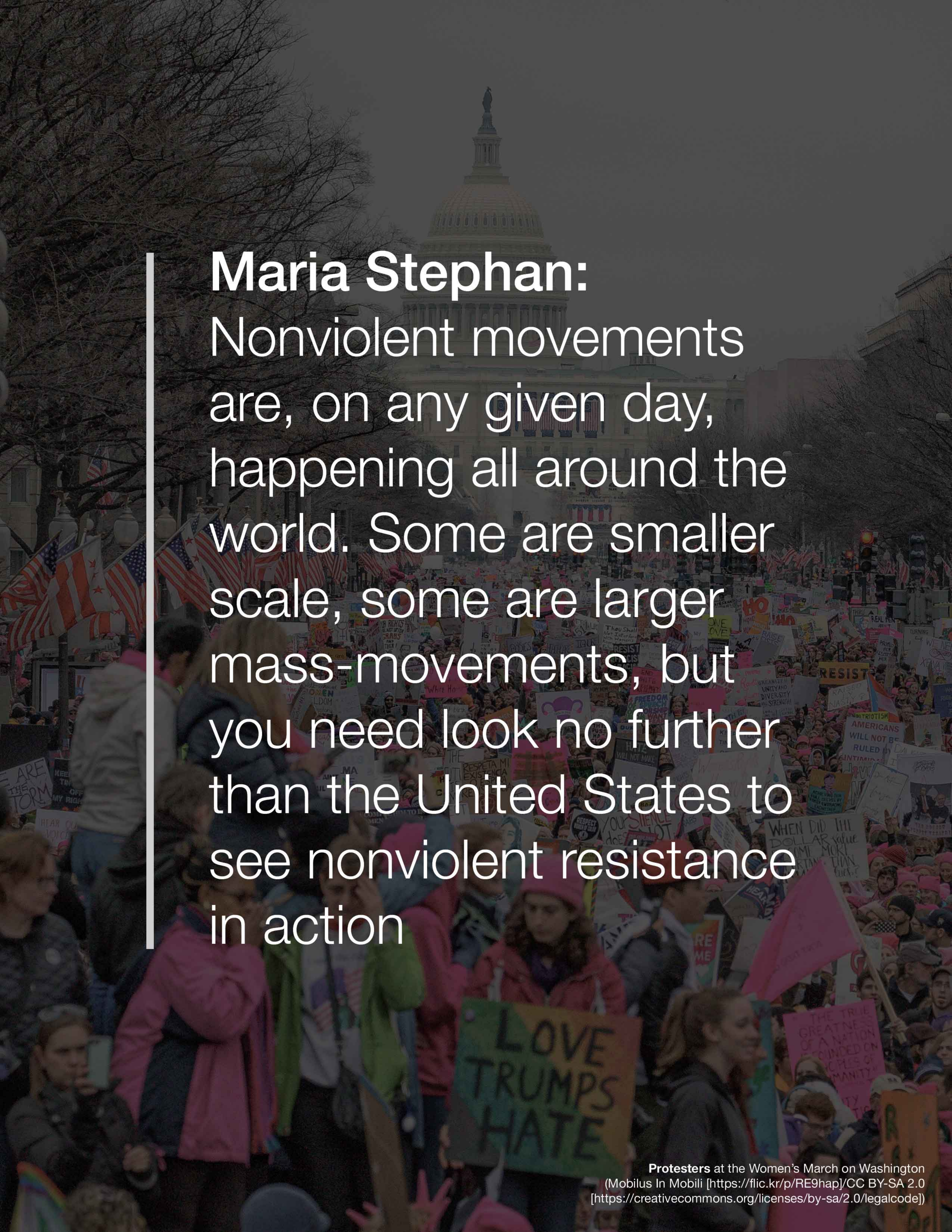
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Understanding Nonviolent Movements Today: A Conversation with Dr. Maria J. Stephan

Interviewed by Eli Stiefel

A large crowd of protesters is gathered in front of the US Capitol building. Many are holding signs and flags. The Capitol building is visible in the background, partially obscured by the crowd and trees. The scene is filled with people, many wearing pink hats, and a variety of protest signs are visible. The overall atmosphere is one of a large-scale public demonstration.

Maria Stephan:
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Understanding Non-Violent Movements Today

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Fletcher Security Review: Thank you very much for having me. It is amazing for me to see the space at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and to talk with you about this subject. I wanted to start with a more general question about civil resistance and nonviolent resistance movements around the world today. Where is the best example, where should those seeking to explain to others point, in order to show how nonviolent movements work?

Maria Stephan: Nonviolent movements are, on any given day, happening all around the world. Some are smaller scale, some are larger mass-movements, but you need look no further than the United States to see nonviolent resistance in action. For example, the Women's March, on the day after the inauguration, was the single largest demonstration in U.S. history. About 1.7% of the U.S. population participated in that mass demonstration, and since that time there have been follow-on marches demonstrations, strikes, and the like. There is a lot happening domestically to challenge certain policies and advance democracy.

Recently, in Romania, there was a mass mobilization targeting the government's corruption. Millions of people took to the streets. That pushed the government to go back on certain policies that were weakening anti-corruption work. It involved Romanians from across the country and it built on a lot of local organizing of protests and demonstrations that had been happening over the past years that finally culminated in a huge demonstration in the capital. Romania was one of the other recent examples, but all around the world really, on various issues ranging from women's rights, environmental, and democracy issues, we are seeing nonviolent action at work.

Last month in Sudan, for example, there was a civil disobedience campaign taking place in Khartoum and around the country. Rather than mass street protests and demonstrations, which in the past had gotten a lot of people killed by the security forces, they decided to use a different tactic. Through a stay-away boycott, this

campaign challenged certain government policies such as the lifting of subsidies and corruption. Everybody stayed home and closed shop. It was a symbol of defiance and a sign of resistance to the government policies in that country. Those are just a few recent examples.

FSR: What you said about changes in tactics – doing the stay-away rather than mass street protests – brings to mind the closing of space for civil actions such as this and the adaptation on both sides of new tactics, either in response to regime violence or after older tactics met with less success than expected. Could you talk more about how this adaptation and learning process works for the regime and for public and civic organizations?

MS: You can think of this as a chess match between the two sides. Both sides are adapting and changing tactics in a competition to see who is going to outmaneuver and out-innovate the other. In terms of the regimes, they certainly learn from historical usages of nonviolent resistance in their own country and others and adopt strategies from one another to effectively repress domestic dissent and civil society. They are constantly coming up with new techniques, whether it is surveillance technology, or other forms of repression, or cooptation. Looking on as outside observers, we tend to downplay the importance of buying people off and coopting them in order for these regimes to stay in power. However, it is not just brutal force and repression, but also that velvet fist approach that is extremely effective.

One thing we know from the research on what makes a successful civil resistance campaign is that those campaigns that innovate tactically, meaning they use different tactics ranging from methods of concentration (protests, demonstrations, sit-ins etc.), to methods of dispersion (things like the stay-away campaign, consumer boycotts, go-slow activities, and banging pots and pans across the country) are more successful. Being able to alternate tactics is one way to keep the opponent off-guard and engage new people and new constituen-



A protest sign at the Women's March on Washington (Keifer Chiang/FSR)

cies in the movement or in the campaign. It is also a way to sustain the momentum of the movement.

FSR: It makes sense to some extent that aspects of this adaptation process are organic, but on a large scale, such as across a movement or country, how do these adaptations take root?

MS: What matters is how organized a campaign or movement is. There are always spontaneous and organic elements – raw citizen energy – in these places, but what allows that energy to be channeled and what allows a campaign to really have power is local, national organizing. This takes different forms. In different campaigns there have been local civic groups that have helped provide structure and an organizational backbone for the campaign. The United Democratic Front and the Civics Movement in South Africa during the Apartheid era are a really good example of this. In the Otpor campaign in Serbia, the youth-led movement that toppled Milosevic in 2000, there were Otpor affiliates spread out across the country. Even in the United States now, we are seeing the proliferation of local organizing groups from the Indivisible groups to the Rise Stronger

group. What really matters is having organization in place and having it be decentralized enough so that a lot of people can take action and there is some cohesion and coordination between their activities. Organization is key.

FSR: Changing tack a bit, I would like to talk about a particular moment that you brought up in a lecture at The Fletcher School in the past. You mentioned the story of U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford and his choice to attend a peaceful rally in the city of Hama. If I understand correctly, there was some debate as to whether he received the proper permissions to go there. Could you tell me more about this case?

MS: It was a gutsy move on Ambassador Ford's part. Basically, he was defying Bashar al-Assad's directive that ambassadors should not travel outside of the capital. Hama is a significant place in Syria because it was also the site of a massive crack-down on Muslims in the 1980s when there was a mass slaughter and thousands of people were killed as a result of regime violence. When the U.S. Embassy learned at that time [2011] that there were going to be nonviolent demonstrations in

Hama to challenge the Assad regime, Ambassador Ford made the call that the right thing to do was to be there in order to show solidarity with the nonviolent protesters. The story he told me was that he arrived at Hama and was talking to people at a checkpoint who did not believe he was the American ambassador. He had to literally show his business card, which said Ambassador Robert Ford from the U.S. Embassy. While there, he met with a number of activists to get a sense of who was doing what, that kind of thing. It was a very good example of diplomatic engagement – literally using his diplomatic prestige and authority to demonstrate solidarity and to offer some type of protection. It's never foolproof when ambassadors and diplomats show up, but it's at least meant to be a deterrent against regime violence targeting civilians. Though it was only one moment, I remember hearing from Syrians in Turkey not too long afterward who said that it effectively helped change their image of the United States overnight. Of course, this was early in the revolution, so the perceptions of the United States have changed significantly over time. In that moment and in that period, however, it was a very significant choice. I laud Ambassador Ford and his team for taking this step.

FSR: For those interested in going into the Foreign Service, understanding the process that goes into these critical decision-making moments is important. Clearly, this choice by Ambassador Ford was a big move.

MS: Here [handing book to the interviewer]. I am giving you the Diplomat's Handbook. Though this is a hard copy, it is a living document. This is the third edition of the Diplomat's Handbook. I'm a huge fan of it, even when I was in the State Department. What I like about the Diplomat's Handbook is that it offers a toolkit for what diplomats, ambassadors, and embassies can do to support activists, dissidents, civil society, and democratic transitions. It includes various tips, ranging from how you write cables, who to meet with, how to diversify your contacts in civil society, and how to use your embassies as freedom houses and safe spaces for people to convene (this is particularly important in repressive environments), to how to show physical solidarity by marching in nonviolent protests and demonstrations, providing asylum for certain people in these contexts, and helping to coordinate donor assistance to civil society and the like. There are lots of different tools available to diplomats. The book has a series of country case studies, as well. Everything from Tunisia

to Russia, Cuba, Egypt, China, Ukraine, Belarus, Burma, Zimbabwe, Chile, and South Africa.

FSR: You said it was a living document?

MS: It is. For a time, they were collecting anecdotes from diplomats, but I don't know that they're keeping up with this. This is the third edition, and they've updated it repeatedly. It's got great stories and insights about things that diplomats can do that are sometimes out of the ordinary but very legitimate and authorized in terms of support for democratic actors.

FSR: Got it. That's fantastic. I'm going to have to pick up a copy.

MS: Yeah, and the inspiration behind the Diplomat's Handbook was Ambassador Mark Palmer. Ambassador Mark Palmer was the U.S. ambassador in Hungary during the 1989 Revolution. He had a very storied diplomatic career, though he passed away a couple of years ago. He was the kind of guy who walked the talk. He would have normal diplomatic meetings with the Communist regime officials during the day, playing tennis with them and the like, but then he would also meet with and welcome dissidents and oppositionists at the embassy and other places. He would march with them in the streets because he knew that these rabble-rousers, as they were probably thought of in Washington at the time, would eventually take power. And he was right. He was the one who inspired the Handbook project. It's not just for U.S. diplomats. Many of the stories and anecdotes are from diplomats from democratic countries around the world. It's a great resource for diplomats in this country and other foreign ministries around the world.

FSR: In terms of the Ford moment then, is it fair to say that people knew about what he was doing; in terms of the steps he was taking to support those rabble-rousers in Hama at that time? How were his actions received?

MS: I don't know all the details about who knew what when, and the potential issues with diplomatic security and the like, but Ambassador Ford had strong backing from the State Department. He was, and is, a trusted, seasoned diplomat. Maybe not everyone was in the loop on the communication, at least initially, but he had the backing. After the fact, I think it was probably assessed

that it was the right thing to do.

FSR: As someone who believes in supporting civil society movements and advocating for continued nonviolent actions, what might be the best way to convince someone who is less concerned with this and more focused on moving up the career ladder without ruffling any feathers that this sort of engagement and advocacy is worth it?

MS: First of all, it does help if you have superiors who get it, who recognize the importance of supporting democratic development. Taking some risk as a diplomat is nothing new. Our diplomats are taking risks every day working in conflict and war zones. In certain cases, however, it may be seen as controversial or different to engage with certain actors in civil society or the opposition. Diplomats are always having to dance a fine line between maintaining bilateral ties with governments, which diplomats are trained to do, while also representing the norms and values of the American people and supporting stable situations in other countries.

There's a link between governance, representation, and stability in human rights situations. You can make a strong national security case that by working to advance human rights, protecting human rights defenders, meeting with democrats (small d), is squarely in our national interests, and it's certainly in international interests. Places where the regimes are fundamentally violating the rights of their citizens, where they're closing down civic space, where their security forces are committing atrocities, these are not strong security partners for the United States. Their actions result in violent conflicts, refugee flows, mass migration, and all these things are antithetical to U.S. and international security interests.

FSR: What about in a context where the space for civic and nonviolent movements has been closed off, either by violent repression or through cooptation? How does the diplomat or NGO, or any outside actor get involved there on that kind of fine line?

MS: This phenomenon, closing space, is something that's being tracked closely by civic groups like Civicus, an international civil society alliance and International Center for Not-for-profit Law (ICNL), Doug Rutzen. These are prominent organizations that have been tracking the closing of civic space over time. The key indicators [of the closing of this space] are laws that

have been imposed to restrict freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, and laws that make it difficult for NGOs to register or that harasses them to the point that it is difficult to function and remain independent organizations. Various rules, regulations, and methods of targeting civil society actors and activists are parts of this troubling trend. It also involves the private sector, so it's very hard to invest in places where there are laws, rules, and regulations that restrict foreign funding of entities. It's not just the people focused on democracy and human rights who care about this. It's also the humanitarian actors who are encountering restrictions on being able to provide humanitarian assistance. It's private sector too, so it's not just a human rights issue. It involves a lot of people.

In terms of the U.S. response, up until this administration, the U.S. has been very outspoken on the negative consequences of closing space for civil society. It was actually President Obama who, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting three years ago, announced the launch of the new presidential initiative called Stand with Civil Society. Stand with Civil Society had a strong diplomatic component, which allowed it to coordinate diplomatic responses when regimes started cracking down on civil society and civic space. It also had a technical component aimed at helping governments be able to address things like terrorist financing while ensuring space for civil society and protecting civil liberties. A further programmatic component was establishing civil society hubs around the world. This whole initiative under Stand with Civil Society was a direct response to the closing of civic space around the world. This all goes to show that it has been taken seriously.

The options that U.S. diplomats and others have vary based on the state of bilateral relations with the government. For example, in certain places where the U.S. has a very strong security partnership with governments and where civic space is closing, we are able to theoretically, and sometimes in practice, use our security and military-to-military leverage to influence how governments are treating civil society and the restrictions that they're placing on civic actors. This is a military-to-military and security assistance tool. There are also foreign aid tools, such as making certain forms of assistance conditional upon preserving civic space. Diplomats and others can also speak out against it. Sometimes using a megaphone makes sense when you're a diplomat.

Sometimes it doesn't. It depends on which type of diplomatic engagement is most likely to yield results with a particular government. This will vary based on the context.

There are certain things that embassy diplomats can do to engage with a broad swathe of civil society. It's not always a good idea for U.S. diplomats to be seen hugging activists in certain countries, but in certain cases it makes a lot of sense. Civil society involves many different groups – labor unions, religious organizations, universities – so it's a very broad spectrum. These are the actors who in any country are the cornerstone of stability and of democratic development. So yes, diplomats have a number of tools and how they're used and the sequencing of engagement is going to vary based on the context.

FSR: OK. You mentioned the military-to-military relations...

MS: Yes, Admiral Dennis Blair, who was the former head of DNI, Director of National Intelligence, prepared the military version of the Diplomat's Handbook. It's called *Military Engagement: Influencing Armed*

Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions. This is a field manual of sorts for military officers and officials on all of the leverage points they have with the IMET (International Military Education & Training program) with military education, with mil-to-mil exercises, with personal and professional officer contacts etc. It deals with all the leverage points that military officers have to influence the behaviors, norms, and activities of fellow officers in non-democratic contexts. It's the military version/companion guide to the *Diplomat's Handbook*. This should be standard reading in all the military academies, certainly in the United States, but also in our partner academies around the world.

FSR: Is there any particular reason why it isn't?

MS: It's an investment. Dennis Blair, for a time, was certainly talking about the handbook. It's been out for a few years, so it may be used as a resource, but I don't know that it's a central part of curricula. This may be because it deals with democratic development, which is sometimes seen as not a core interest, though the handbook of Admiral Blair will make a firm case that supporting democratic development is squarely in our national interest, and that the military has a profound role



Former United States Director of National Intelligence
Admiral Dennis C. Blair (Richard L. Oasen/Public Domain)



Zimbabweans in Cape Town, South Africa protest in solidarity with the 2016 #ThisFlag Zimbabwe protests (Discott [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:This_flag_2016_Zimbabwe_protests_-_Cape_Town_1.jpg]/CC BY-SA 4.0 [<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>])

to play. This may not be conventional thinking within the military apparatus. It may be necessary to build that case before things like a guidebook become fully integrated in mainstream curricula. Dennis participated in our seminar at Fletcher last year about the future of authoritarianism, and he wrote a great chapter in my edited book *Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?* which kind of synthesizes some of the main approaches and tools in the Handbook.

FSR: I was wondering about legal systems and differences in approach between countries where there is a strong legal system. In theory, in countries like the United States, where the legal system is largely independent and stands up for the values that we have as a society and is a way that anybody who can get a lawyer and get a case together can protect their rights against the government or other members of society. I'm sure there is a massive difference in how movements are structured and how they grow depending on the relative strength and presence of the legal system.

MS: In all authoritarian contexts, the judiciary is not going to be independent. But an important thing to

keep in mind when it comes to judiciaries and legal systems, even in non-democratic countries, is that they're not monolithic entities. Within any of what we refer to in the civil resistance literature as *pillars of support*, including the judiciary, whether it's in Zimbabwe or whether it's any other country, you have individuals – lawyers, judges, and the like – who have varying degrees of loyalty to the regime. And many of them want to do the right thing. They have strong values, they believe in professionalism, they believe in justice, but they're kind of stuck in a corrupt system. From a movement and activist perspective, it's a mistake to write off an entire system and pillar as being not winnable because it seems like they're so closely linked to the regime.

An example is what we've seen recently in Zimbabwe with the spark of the #ThisFlag movement, which happened last year. This was a movement building on a lot of organizing that had been happening in Zimbabwe. A pastor named Evan Mawarire made a video of himself with the Zimbabwean flag draped around his neck where he basically was calling on Zimbabweans to reclaim the country. He gave a beautiful account of what the flag meant to him and the video went viral. People

started engaging in stay-aways, forms of nonviolent action, and it kicked off a series of nonviolent actions in the country that culminated in a general strike last year. This was the biggest nonviolent action that they'd had in a long time. What was interesting is that Pastor Evan was arrested, imprisoned, detained, and during his court appearance, hundreds of lawyers showed up. And they all volunteered to defend him, to represent his case. So they showed up en masse, and it was very clear that there were judges sympathetic to his cause who in some cases helped him to get out of prison. In certain situations, you can file court cases and it goes alongside a movement and you can count on the impartiality and professionalism of the courts. In others, you can't necessarily count on this. But you can bring some judges and members of the legal apparatus along when you have a strong movement. And by having a strong movement, and people on the outside organizing, you can incentivize good behavior, even in these pillars of support that may be formally allied with the regime.

FSR: Incentivizing good behavior is really interesting to think about.

MS: That's what a lot of movement building is about. There's this image sometimes that it's about mass protests and sticking it to the regime and regime change. A lot of what movement building is about is winning allies, even within pillars of support that are erstwhile aligned with the regime. The political analysts in a movement will know that there are varying degrees of loyalty within these pillars. So by organizing and by having a lot of pressure on the outside, people on the inside know that if they do something, if they whistle blow or if they do the right thing, they will have very strong backing from people on the outside. If you don't feel that, if you feel like you're alone, it's a huge risk to speak out, it's a huge risk to do something different within a bureaucracy.

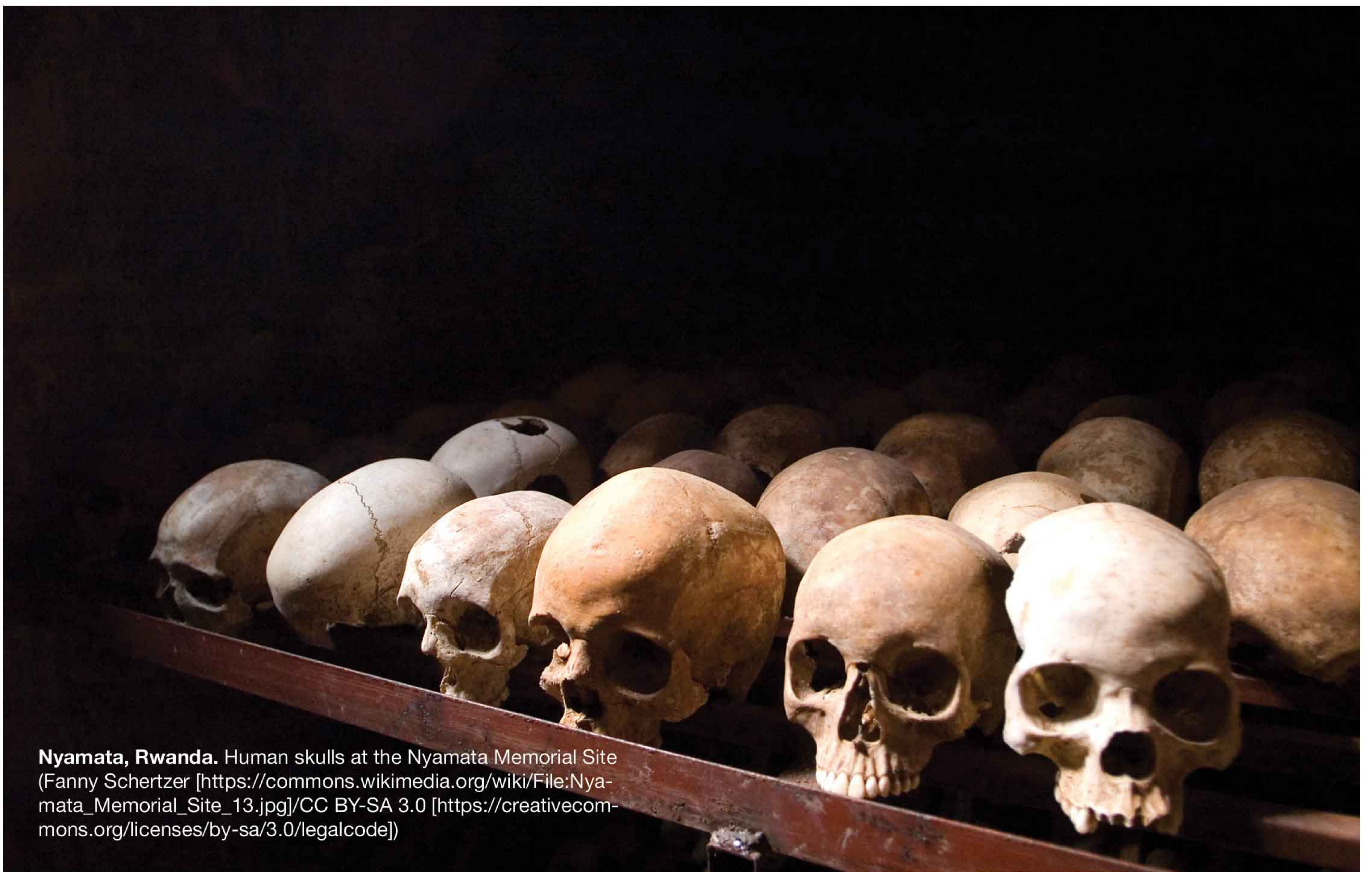
This is what I was getting at with the article I wrote for Open Democracy ("An Inside-Outside Strategy for Defending the U.S. Republic"). The point is: those who want to do the right thing inside government are strongly incentivized to do so when you have an active, robust, vibrant civil society organizing on the outside. That applies to non-democratic contexts as well.

FSR: That brings to mind another tactic that I've heard you and others mention: the tactic of saying "we are

watching." Diplomats, the UN, or any outside actor, even an NGO, someone just saying, "we're watching what you're doing," can be very powerful. I was going to ask you for examples of how that works in your experience, but it seems like this is a great example. Of course, having local civil society, the real actors in the situation, involved, must compound this, but the basic knowledge that notice will be taken of a government's actions is powerful in and of itself.

MS: Yeah. This is why it is such a big deal when ambassadors and diplomats show up for trials of political dissidents and activists who are imprisoned in their own countries. It's really important for the morale of the activists, and for the cause, to know that people have eyes on their case. This is where the Amnesty Internationals and the Human Rights Watches as well play a really important role in shining a klieg [bright light] on these human rights cases around the world. Diplomats in particular, when they show up and they stand up, and especially when they coordinate with each other – which is emphasized in the Handbook. This means not just the British ambassador or the Chilean ambassador, but 15 different ambassadors or political chiefs showing up for trials. It sends a strong message that a lot of people are watching and that a lot of capitals are paying attention. It's an important function. When it comes to nonviolent movements in very repressive environments, activists need to know that people are watching on the outside and paying attention. You can imagine the pressure to take up arms in these cases when it becomes easy to think "the nonviolence is not working and it's not bringing us results. Nobody cares and nobody's paying attention. They'll only pay attention if we take up arms." That's a very strong impulse in some of these conflict settings. So for that reason, being able to not only shine a light but publicize what's happening, to amplify the voices of nonviolent activists and organizers, is critically important to help them continue to fight a nonviolent fight, which as we know from research has a stronger chance of success.

FSR: A former U.S. Ambassador speaking at Fletcher told a story about her experiences advocating for intervention in the run-up to the genocide in Rwanda. From a State-side posting, she explained that she was sending letters to contacts she had in the government in Rwanda, basically saying, "we are watching" and other, similar things. For whatever reason she was being frowned upon from above for what she called 'being



Nyamata, Rwanda. Human skulls at the Nyamata Memorial Site (Fanny Schertzer [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nyamata_Memorial_Site_13.jpg]/CC BY-SA 3.0 [<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>])

too involved.’ She said, in the moment, she didn’t care, and kept sending letters and making phone calls to officials who she knew there. After the genocide, documentation of her calls and letters was found outside the capital. They had clearly been sent out as messages to the effect that someone was relaying to people on the ground, ‘hey this American State Department person is calling.’ She said what motivated her was an internal struggle where she decided, ‘I can’t stand by and watch this happen, I don’t know if this is making any difference, but I have to do it.’ I think that’s a struggle that a lot of people may face. It seemed to beg the question, how much of it is for you morally and personally and how much of it is for the people on the ground?

MS: It’s both. People come to careers as diplomats from different life experiences and personal and professional experiences, but for me, obviously, my time in the U.S. government was shaped by my work with civil society, with activists, this kind of thing. Prior experiences will always be what ground you and center the work that you do, the ideas that you have, and the approaches that you take as a diplomat. I’ve cared about social justice issues since growing up in Vermont and being involved in a lot of global organizing. Before writing *Why*

Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict with Erica Chenoweth and having the data to suggest that this method of struggle is effective, what inspired me were the massive nonviolent movements around the world where people just found a way to organize and mobilize to win, despite repression, and fear.

When you hear story after story after story it’s kind of like, ‘wow, damn! Well how does this work?’ From the diplomat’s perspective, and from the donor’s perspective, how do you help it? How do you assist without harming it, because everybody adheres, or they should, to this do-no-harm principle? It’s a question of, if we know that nonviolent movements have historically been, and are now, probably the single most important driver of social and political change, if we know that movements, and nonviolent organizing bringing people together is really powerful and can help install democratic systems, which are inherently more stable, then how can we, as outside actors, support this process? It’s always a mix of the personal and the professional. Yet as a professional, having data to suggest that this method is what works, that it does contribute to civil peace and democratic consolidation is very important. Beyond that, you still have to be motivated, even when

it's not necessarily the mainstream thinking or the conventional thinking on what to do as a diplomat. You have to have a strong enough sense of inner confidence to go forward and make the case. It's not about going rogue. It's about making a strong case for why you're doing what you're doing. It's easier when you have the backing of home authorities. That makes things a lot easier. But sometimes you have to be a squeaky wheel and make the case that different approaches are maybe going to bring better results. And that's one reason why Mark Palmer, the inspiration behind the Handbook, was one of my personal heroes. He was a mentor and the reason I entered the State Department, because that was his approach to diplomacy. Mark Palmer was also on the front lines of our Civil Rights Movement, walking and marching. His diplomacy was very much inspired by his personal activism here on the home front. That had a profound impact on how he saw the world and how he engaged with people in the countries in which he served. He's a great story.

FSR: I'd like to swing back and take a look at the internal situation in the United States after our recent presidential election. Do you think that it is important for the rest of the world looking in to know that we aren't all just going one way, that the United States isn't a monolith?

MS: Yeah, I think it's incredibly important, and I think that the Women's March and others have captured the imagination of people around the world. I mean, don't forget on the day of the Women's March, there were hundreds of other marches and demonstrations happening around the world. It absolutely matters that Americans are not remaining passive, that we've learned what's happened over the course of history, when populist demagogues come to power, and when you don't organize, when you don't take action, when you nor-

malize things, it usually doesn't have good results. There's been learning and there's a lot of energy. Our civil society is very feisty, which can be a good thing. But the challenge now is helping to channel all the new citizen energy and activism that's been spawned after the election, helping it to have a strategic focus, to have cohesion, to have structure, and to plan for the long term, not to plan as if Trump is going to leave power any time soon, but having a five-to-seven-year strategy for maintaining citizen mobilization and action, and working very locally.

Some of the most important work that's being done and has been done since the election is the spawning of all these local, self-organizing groups around the country. There are people getting involved in town halls, calling senators or representatives, and working on local issues, building upon the very local level to the state level to the national level. We've seen very interesting networks coming together to mobilize people when it mattered, such as the No Muslim Ban airport protests. This wasn't a spontaneous action: there had been planning by key immigrant-rights organizations for years to build trust between these organizations. They took action immediately after the election. They didn't wait for the executive order. And so when it came down the pipe, they were ready, they were prepared. Of course there were lots of people who were just showing up and protesting, but they knew how to channel it. They were organized and structured. So there's a lot that can be learned from the organizing that's happening now. There's a lot of work that we have still, but it matters that Americans are woke and stay woke and organize in strategic ways for the years to come.

FSR: Thank you Dr. Stephan for a detailed and wide-ranging discussion.

Dr. Maria J. Stephan

Dr. Maria J. Stephan is a senior policy fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace and a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, where she focuses on civil resistance, nonviolent movements and their relevance to conflict transformation and democratic development. At the Atlantic Council she co-leads the Future of Authoritarianism project. Previously, Stephan was lead foreign affairs officer in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), where she worked on both policy and operations for Afghanistan and Syria engagements. Earlier, Stephan directed policy and research at the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC), a private foundation dedicated to developing and disseminating knowledge about nonviolent struggle. She simultaneously taught courses on human rights and civil resistance at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and American University's School of International Service.