WHY DID NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE WORK IN GEORGIA DURING THE ROSE REVOLUTION?

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, **Gocha Vanadze**, candidate for the MA degree in Political Science declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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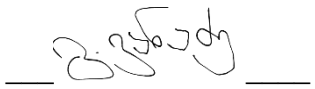

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Abstract

The thesis examines the reasons behind the success of nonviolent resistance during the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia. Its purpose is to test Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan's framework, which emphasizes the importance of mass participation in the success of resistance. The study explains how low physical, moral, social, and informational barriers to involvement in nonviolent struggle lead to mass participation and then trigger leverage mechanisms such as Coercion, Tactical Diversity, Resilience, International Support, Backfiring, and Loyalty Shifts. The research methodology includes semi-structured interviews with resistance leaders, discourse analysis of state media, and time series analysis of media rankings. The main finding suggests that in addition to low barriers to involvement in protest, the state of the information field/media and the movement's ability to find alternative communication channels should be considered. The case of the Rose Revolution proves that Chenoweth and Stephan's theory should take into account the role of the media as an integral part of the conflict and not as an isolated institution. With this adjustment, the dynamics of nonviolent struggle in cases where the information field is under regime control will be more accurately explained.

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Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, the post-Soviet republics of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were swept by a wave of revolutions known as color revolutions. One of the main distinguishing features of these revolutions was the use of non-violent resistance tactics by social movements. Inspired by the success of the Serbian "OPTOR," the organization "KMARA" (Enough!) was founded in Georgia in April 2003 based on the principles of nonviolent struggle. Together with other organizations and opposition parties, it played an instrumental role in the revolution of the same year (Kandelaki 2006). On November 22, 2003, protests triggered by rigged elections and corruption forced President Shevardnadze to resign. Subsequently, the opposition won by a landslide in the re-elections (Mitchell 2009).

Through observations of this and other case studies, a subfield of social movements, focusing on the nonviolent resistance, emerges but it has been systematically overlooked and is dominated by the practical guideline literature (Ritter 2015). There is a lack of research in this subfield of social movements, particularly regarding Georgia's Rose Revolution.

This thesis aims to explore the overlooked area by delving into the reasons behind the effectiveness of nonviolent struggle during the Rose Revolution. For this goal, I am using a framework built by the analysis of Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan and checking the internal validity of this study. In their influential text, Chenoweth and Stephan examine dozens of both violent and nonviolent struggle cases to understand "Why Civil Resistance Works." They argue that the success of nonviolent movements is largely determined by their ability to lead to mass participation. And mass participation itself can erode the main sources of power of the regimes. From their point of view, mass participation is not only about numbers, but it involves the rising of the diversity and strategic application of nonviolent tactics and other leverage mechanisms which can correlate with successful outcomes of social movements.

Building on the mentioned line of logic and the patterns identified by Chenoweth and Stephan, this thesis investigates if the low participation Barriers defined mass participation in the process of the Rose Revolution and what kind of leverage mechanisms were triggered by it. I analyze the factors that can accelerate mobilization in nonviolent campaigns, including law physical, informational, moral, and commitment-related barriers. I determine whether these barriers have been minimized by nonviolent action and how they have contributed to the mass participation needed for this movement's success. Furthermore, the thesis explores additional mechanisms, such as Coercion, Tactical Diversity and Innovation, Evasion and Resilience, International Sanctions and External Support, Backfiring, and Loyalty Shifts, activated by mass participation and the effects on the success of the movement.

Using the mentioned literature, I started the research with two main hypotheses:

1. During the Rose Revolution, mass participation was possible due to low physical, informational, moral, and commitment barriers.

The research shows that **low physical, informational, moral, and commitment barriers** indeed was the characteristics of the nonviolent movement in Georgia, yet based on the Rose Revolution case, I claim that it was not enough condition to reach mass participation. It turned out that the activism in pre-revolutionary Georgia was defined by violence and a corrupt party agenda, therefore it faced physical, moral, commitment and informational barriers. However, the nonviolent revolutionary movement redefined the nature of activism by introducing new forms of resistance, which were unfamiliar and awkward for the government to adapt. As a result, from the theoretical standpoint, mass participation should have been achieved due to the decreased barriers. However, during the research, an aspect was highlighted that was partially overlooked by Chenoweth and Stephan's theory. The authors emphasize the ability of nonviolent struggle to openly communicate information to recruit and mobilize people, due to

its structural transparency. They also stress the ability of non-violent resistance to attract media attention through the spectrum of creative and effective acts. In the case of the Rose Revolution, it was found that the movement expanded by using transparency, and the media attention was attracted too. The channel called Rustavi 2 was the main communication line. However, even though such cases are covered in the case study section, Chenoweth and Stephan's theoretical framework does not directly consider contexts where the regime controls the whole informational field and effectively directs media attention. In theory, the media is partly seen as an isolated institution and the direction and volume of its attention depends on methods used by the resistance. However, in the case of the Rose Revolution, it is evident that the media can play a crucial role either in supporting the government or the opposition. If the government fully controls the information flow, even though there are low physical, informational, moral, and commitment barriers to participation, widespread mobilization would be impossible without effective communication about these barriers. Resistance needs to break through the information field.

Attempts to suppress the activities of critical media were observed in the case of Georgia. Although the regime failed to suppress Rustavi 2, TV channel became an integral part of the resistance. The counter-campaigns against the regime were carried out and the resistance was positioned as a non-violent movement. Accordingly, the low barriers to participation were demonstrated.

I also found that after mass participation occurred, resistance broke through the regime 's-controlled information field and changed the narratives of the influenced media. This was observed on the state television Channel 1, the regime's main communication line and, shortly before the revolution, changed its narrative dramatically, towards objectivity. However, this was achieved after mass mobilization was already represented, and the Loyalty Shifts

mechanism, proposed by the authors, was activated. But my claim covers the period before the mass participation occurs. arrives, non-violent resistance should be able to spread information about its accessibility through oppositional media or alternative communication channels if media is not available. Only after this kind of communication is mass participation possible.

2. Mass participation led to the success of the revolutionary movement through additional mechanisms such as Coercion, Tactical Diversity and Innovation, Evasion and Resilience, International Sanctions and External Support, Backfiring, and Loyalty Shifts.

The analysis of interviews with protest leaders confirmed the second thesis. In the case of the Rose Revolution, mass participation activated all the specified mechanisms, in varying amounts. The only different trend from the theoretical pattern emphasized is the prioritization of the mentioned factors. Chenoweth and Stephan argue that of the listed factors, the crucial ones are domestic mechanisms, not external support. From the perspective of the leaders of the revolutionary movement, international sanctions and external aid may not be the primary factors, but without the financial backing of international organizations, even the existence of civil society would have been in doubt due to unclear alternative funding sources. Therefore, the infrastructure of the protest would not be built. The mass participation also triggered Loyalty Shifts, Backfiring, Tactical Diversity and Innovation, Evasion and Resilience and Coercion. Loyalty Shifts were observed in media under government control, police power structures, and cultural elites who were previously close to the government. Backfiring was seen in the government's failed attempt to shut down the popular channel Rustavi 2, which resulted in the resignation of the ministers. Tactical diversity was manifested in the emergence of private initiatives and in the diverse, dynamic, and massive gatherings from November 2, 2003 (the rigged elections) to November 22 (the official date of the revolution). Evasion and Resilience were expressed in the activists' and leaders' resistance to physical violence. And Coercion's

main driving factor was uniting a strong opposition and showing that governmental control and cooperation were possible from an alternative structure.

Key Concepts

I use NAVCO Dataset definitions of non-violent and violent resistance. **Non-violent resistance/struggle** is defined as a protest that does not directly threaten or physically harm opponents and uses any of the non-violent resistance tactics.[1]

Violent resistance/struggle involves the use of power to cause physical harm to opponents, and the campaign is organized around the use of physical force.[2]

"**Participation** is defined as the active and observable engagement of individuals in collective action.[3]" As such when maintaining campaign participation, it means the estimated counts of observed individuals.

Success is defined as the campaign's maximalist goal achieved as a direct result of the campaign.[4]

[1] Erica Chenoweth and Christopher Wiley Shay, "NAVCO 2.1 Dataset" (Harvard Dataverse, 2019), https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/MHOXDV.
[2] Chenoweth and Christopher Wiley Shay, "NAVCO 2.1 Dataset."
[3] Chenoweth and Christopher Wiley Shay, "NAVCO 2.1 Dataset."
[4] Chenoweth and Christopher Wiley Shay, "NAVCO 2.1 Dataset."

State of the art and Theoretical framework

Although theories of social movements and nonviolent resistance are related, their research was developed in isolation from each other (Ritter 2015). This may be due to the focus of the literature on nonviolent struggle on tactical aspects rather than theoretical concepts. The authors of nonviolent resistance studies aimed to create practical guides rather than structural explanations. However, texts of this category include fragmented discussions of the balance of power and factors determining the success of nonviolent struggle.

A good illustration of this type of reasoning is Gene Sharp's Theory of Power. Although the study on the success or failure of nonviolent struggle begins earlier, Sharp's three-volume work, The Politics of Nonviolent Action (1973), is the most prominent textbook on the subject. In his key texts, Sharp concentrates on the conduct of stakeholders in political change, their fundamental motivations, and apprehensions, and examines the foundation of political obedience. From his viewpoint, the primary benefit of nonviolent resistance is its capacity to delegitimize the rulers and decrease the consent of the population. For him, the concept of power is not integral or natural for individuals and political power comes from the consent and obedience of the governed individuals. This approach reinforces the hypothesis that mass participation in nonviolent struggle can significantly disrupt power institutions. Reflecting on historical instances of nonviolent action, from Gandhi's campaigns to the American civil rights movement, Sharp underlines the versatility and effectiveness of nonviolent resistance strategies across geographical and political contexts. However, he pays more attention to the tactical side of non-violent struggle and identifies hundreds of different tactics, each designed to target specific pillars of government and social groups.[5] Although his tactical analysis still dominates the field and many case studies and statistical analyses were developed based on Sharp's theoretical concepts, his theory of power has been repeatedly criticized for oversimplifying the

[5] Srdja Popovic, Slobodan Djinovic, Andrej Milivojevic, Hardy Merriman and Ivan Marovic, *Canvas Core Curriculum: A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle: Students Book* (Belgrade: CANVAS, 2007).

situation (Martin 1989, Bleiker 2004). Bleiker criticizes Sharp's approach by underscoring that the theory of power effectively outlines the mechanics of nonviolent resistance, but it represents the complex interplay between power and dissent as a simple concept (Bleiker 2004).

The criticism of Sharp is fair, since his theoretical concept oversimplified complex social dynamics. However, Sharp's main goal in developing this theory was to present a nonviolent approach as an alternative to armed conflicts and to promote the use of nonviolent methods as viable political tools. Jonathan Schell argues that during the 1970s and 1980s, there was a significant shift in the traditional understanding of power. He suggests that a critical transformation in global strategies took place during the Cold War, in response to the threat of nuclear warfare. This period highlighted the limitations of violent conflict and prompted a shift towards nonviolent tactics. According to Schell, this change was not solely a response to the nuclear threat but was also influenced by the success of nonviolent resistance movements worldwide. For instance, the U.S. civil rights movement and the Polish solidarity movement in Eastern Europe demonstrated that nonviolent struggle could erode authoritarian power and bring significant political changes with fewer casualties than violent resistance. (Schell, 2003).

After the color revolutions, researchers of social movements and revolutions became interested in the characteristics of non-violent struggle. This led to more structurization of the field. One representative of these innovative approaches is Kurt Schock, who, through several in-depth case studies, concludes that the strategic decisions of activists and their execution are the main factors that determine the success or failure of a movement. This passage highlights the significance of having a range of different strategies, as has been emphasized by previous authors. Schock's research involves a comparative analysis of strategic planning between South Africa and the Philippines and identifies contributing factors such as political opportunities and

the international geopolitical context (Schock 2004). It demonstrates the connection and mutual influence of individual decisions with the larger global geopolitical landscape.

A later study by Sharon Erickson Nepstad presents a similar quality of structural approach but different conclusions. She studied several revolutions and showed that the success of nonviolent resistance depends on the armed forces. If the police and military units refuse to repress activists, then non-violent regime change is achievable, and non-violent mass mobilization has the ability to attract solidarity from the armed forces. Daniel Ritter also conducted a study on nonviolent revolutions and observed that their success depends on complex historical processes (Ritter 2015). He focused on the authoritarian regimes of the Middle East and North Africa and found that non-violent resistance tactics tend to work well in these regimes that are integrated with Western trade, aid, and military infrastructure. The reason for this is that such regimes must maintain respect for Western values because a violent crackdown on non-violent struggle could lead to a loss of international and domestic support. Therefore, revolutionary movements sometimes take advantage of this situation and continue to grow until the change occurs.

The theories discussed so far rely on multiple case studies to support their claims. While these studies provide a detailed analysis of specific contexts, it can be challenging to prove the theories' universal applicability. That is why Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan's research on nonviolent resistance was an important breakthrough in the field. They analyzed 323 protest episodes from 1900 to 2006, both violent and non-violent, and used statistical analysis to answer the question of "Why civil resistance works?" As a result of Large-n analysis, they conclude that "critical source of the success of nonviolent struggle is mass participation, which can erode or remove a regime's main sources of power when the participants represent diverse sectors of society" (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 30). They do not deny the importance of other factors

as well, although they demonstrate that mass participation is a locomotive that drives the rest of the factors. Their statistical analysis indicates a strong correlation between the success of social movements and the participation of the masses. The degree of involvement and diversity, strategic and tactical diversity, are among the distinguishing factors. Also, they discuss the leverage opportunities gained during the process and their utilization by the protest leaders. However, the authors argue that it is mass participation that makes all these factors work, and the more people involved in a movement, the more creative approaches are born, and thus the tactical diversity rises. Also, under these conditions, the number of actively invested people and the number of diverse social groups involved are increasing. As a result, activists are gaining more leverage against the opponent.

If we acknowledge that the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance depends on the level of mass participation, then it becomes essential to understand how nonviolent resistance tactics can lead to it. The authors of this study explain that nonviolent resistance has a tactical advantage because of the low barriers to participation. The study identifies four main barriers that could hinder mass participation and need to be low:

Physical Barriers - Non-violent resistance is a more inclusive process than violent methods as it does not require any special physical ability, age, or skill.

Informational Difficulties - Nonviolent campaigns can communicate information and recruit more effectively since they can be transparent about tactical maneuvers.

Moral Barriers - Nonviolent resistance involves fewer moral compromises and dilemmas than violent resistance, making it more accessible to the population.

Commitment Problems - Nonviolent resistance allows for varying levels of commitment and risk assessment, providing participants the opportunity to calmly return to their daily lives, maintain anonymity, and engage in lower-risk activities.

I have chosen to test this theory due to its extensive coverage. Unlike other contextual studies, this theory covers as many contexts as possible. Therefore, it is important to verify validity, especially in the context of the Rose Revolution, one of the most overlooked cases of non-violent revolutions. My aim was investigating why the participation started. The main objective of this thesis is to assess the scale of the four obstacles mentioned during the Rose Revolution to determine whether non-violent resistance tactics were an accelerator of mass participation. The next step would be exploring additional mechanisms activated by mass participation and their effect on the success of civil society.

Research Design and Methodology

To verify the hypotheses, I used mixed research methods, combining qualitative in-depth interviews, discourse analysis and time series analysis.

In the research process, the first thesis was divided into four subcategories: low Physical, Informational, Moral, and Commitment barriers. To explore the physical, moral, and commitment barriers, I first identified the existing forms of activism in pre-revolutionary Georgia using secondary historical sources and then analyzed the tactics and symbolic acts of non-violent resistance documented from 1999 to November 23, 2003, to demonstrate how activism was redefined.

I researched informational barriers and the media environment using reports from Transparency International Georgia, the International Republican Institute, and The United Nations' National Human Development Reports from 1998 to 2009. The reports include media ratings, trust indicators, and media environment indicators. To analyze the government's narrative and

perspective on the Pre-election period and protests, I studied archive materials from the Georgian Public Broadcaster (Channel 1), specifically daily news releases and pre-election clips from October 1, 2003, to November 30, 2003. I also examined anti-protest propaganda by identifying its main messages and narrative. Additionally, I analyzed counter-campaigns by activists using the private archive of Nino Gogiberidze, one of the leaders of the Revolutionary movement, which contains all the counter-campaign clips and other materials by the organization KMARA. I aimed to determine if the government's narratives deter protest participants and explore the impact of the nonviolent tactics of the protest on the outcome.

To investigate the second thesis around the strategic advantage mechanisms triggered by the massive participation, I identified key moments when protest organizers had to make strategic decisions. Additionally, I conducted and analyzed a series of structured interviews and added interviews from an independent public source, Radio Liberty, with the leaders of the revolutionary movement (10 in total). I also investigated the public speeches made by Shevardnadze and his government officials in the 2 months before the revolution, as well as their reflections in the post-revolutionary era.

Chapter 1: Overcoming physical, moral and commitment barriers

Chenoweth and Stephan argue that the barriers to participation are lower in nonviolent campaigns compared to violent campaigns, physically morally and in terms of commitment. They suggest that violent resistance requires specific physical training and skills from participants, whereas nonviolent resistance does not have this obstacle due to its tactical versatility. The range of nonviolent tactics is vast and includes low-risk, low-demand actions, making it accessible to a wide range of activists. In terms of moral barriers, participation in violent resistance always involves moral reconsideration, regardless of an individual's certainty about their position. In contrast, nonviolent resistance "requires less soul-searching than joining a violent one."

The activism in pre-revolutionary Georgia was linked to violence and a corrupt party agenda, and it faced physical and moral obstacles. However, by using interviews with organizers, analysis of pre-election TV news broadcasts, and examination of nonviolent symbolic acts during protests, we can state that the nonviolent revolutionary movement redefined the nature of activism and reduced the obstacles. As a result, mass participation became achievable due to the decreased moral, physical and commitment barriers.

1.1 Pre-revolutionary activism - historical characteristics

Two main aspects of activism in pre-revolutionary Georgia can be distinguished. Firstly, activism did not exist outside the party context. The concept of an active citizen, who does not have any political interest and does not expect benefits but just wants to improve the community's state, did not exist. This could be attributed to the post-Soviet experience, when the state controlled all aspects of social life, and people were not used to self-organizing around social issues. As for post-Soviet Georgia, it can be argued that it was a failed state before the Rose Revolution as the authorities could not establish effective control. The economic

downturn was record-breaking and had severe social consequences. Income per capita shrank by 61 percent. In comparison, the same figure was 60 percent in Germany after the defeat in World War II.[6] After the fall of the Soviet Union, while many other post-Soviet countries began transitioning to democracy, Georgia and some other nations continued to be ruled by the Soviet elites.[7] Corruption rooted in all aspects of public life severely hindered the development of the economy. According to Ronald F. Inglehart, who studied the Dynamics of Values among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006, when society is focused on satisfying primary needs, activism is more materialistic in nature. In situations where society is vulnerable economically and in terms of security, there is a stronger emphasis on materialistic principles such as stability, economic growth, maintaining order, fighting inflation, ensuring jobs, and ensuring national safety[8] Based on the author's observation, an intergenerational shift towards the Post-Materialist View took place after the economic situation in the West was corrected and a sense of physical security was established. Consequently, people are more focused on emphasizing their autonomy, self-expression, and quality of life. Additionally, societies are prioritizing the values of freedom of speech, environmentalism, cultural diversity, and other related issues[9] New types of social movements emerged as a result. If we apply this paradigm to pre-revolutionary Georgia, it can be said that Georgia was in the preliminary stages of materialist views before and after the revolution. The post-Soviet experience mixed with materialism, makes activism an exclusively party phenomenon. The exact reasons behind this are the subject of a separate study, but it can be assumed that the concept of individual civil responsibility did not exist on a large scale.

[6] Beso Namchavadze, "Economic history of independent Georgia," Forbes Georgia, November 27, 2017, https://forbes.ge/damoukidebeli-saqarthvel/.
[7] Stephen F. Jones, *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors*, 1 edition (Routledge, 2014), 406.
[8] Inglehart Ronald, "Changing Values Among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006," *West European Politics - WEST EUR POLIT* 31 (January 2008), 130.
[9] Ronald, "Changing Values Among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006," 131.

The second aspect that characterized pre-revolutionary activism was violence. The synthesis of Georgian political activism with violence has an exceptionally long history. In Soviet Georgia, mass gatherings of young people often ended in heavy tragedies and casualties. Several specific events, such as the protest of March 9, 1956, are still alive in the collective memory of Georgians and have a significant impact on the formation of modern activism. The catalyst for this protest was Nikita Khrushchev's fight against the "Cult of Personality" and Stalinism, and some of the demonstrators demanded Georgia's independence. However, the Soviet government responded with sudden gunfire, and according to various sources, up to 100 young people were killed.[10] Violent backfires of activism were even more evident in 1989-91, while Georgia fought for independence. In 1989, Abkhazia, a region in the northwestern part of Georgia, initiated separation from the Soviet Republic of Georgia. This was due to a complex ethnic conflict fired by the Russian side, that eventually led to a full-blown war, with the separatists and Russian forces. Before the war, an attempt to secede led to large-scale protests in Tbilisi, led by the National Liberation Movement. The protest quickly turned into a demand for Georgia's independence. As the government officials realized they were losing control, they decided to take more severe measures. On the morning of April 9, 1989, the local authorities of the Communist Party were given the green light from Moscow to disperse the protesters. Army soldiers attacked peaceful protesters with poison gas and sharp military shovels. Also heavily armored fighting vehicles appeared on the main street of the country. As a result, 19 people died, mostly young women, and hundreds of people were injured.[11] This tragedy is still imprinted in the collective memory of Georgians, and analogs of this demonstration can be found in the narratives of any large-scale protests in independent Georgia.

[10] Jinsher Rekhviashvili, "The tragedy of March 1956," *Radio Liberty*, March 10, 2010, https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/1979067.html.
[11] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Indiana University Press, 1994), 322.

The first years of independence were completely engulfed in violence. A civil war was raging in Tbilisi against President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was eventually ousted by a military coup. After his overthrowing, Eduard Shevardnadze was invited from Moscow to become the head of the State Council of the Republic of Georgia and later the president. Meanwhile, Ghamsakhurdia left the country, and his supporters were subjected to persecution by the new government. At the same time, the military clashes initiated in the above-mentioned separatist region turned into a full-scale war, which ended with the occupation of Abkhazia by the Russian side (which continues to this day). Soldiers returning from the war and other types of formations became uncontrollable groups. In general, between the years 1991 and 1993, numerous tragic incidents occurred. February 2, 1992, was one of the most memorable and influential. Unknown groups open fire against a peaceful protest in support of the former president of Georgia. It is still unclear how many people were killed or injured, but this event is remembered as one of the most difficult and tragic nights in the history of Georgian activism and protest.[12]

These facts are a small list of traumatic events related to activism that have been determining the Georgian idea of activism before the revolution. Activism in pre-revolutionary Georgia this was explained by party interests and violence. Accordingly, there were both moral and physical barriers that prevented people from participating in any form of action. Even peaceful demonstrations were associated with control, narrow and selfish goals, and potential violence, limiting participation only to those who could take part in such action. The protest tactics only focused on gathering a large number of people and had a very limited range of strategies. As a result, people didn't have the opportunity to participate in diverse ways. This, with violence, corruption, and economic downfall also encouraged high commitment barriers for participants.

[12] Tea Tophuria, “"It seemed like a war " - how the rally was shot on February 2,” *Radio Liberty*, February 2, 2023.

1.2 KMARA Movement - Redefining Activism

Under the circumstances discussed, the main goal of the social movements that appeared before the Rose Revolution was to overcome the apathy and introduce a new perception of public responsibility, an active citizen.[13] In this new paradigm, citizens should work for change with personal initiatives, regardless of party affiliation.[14] The second goal was to introduce creative non-violent resistance formats due to the system's development of resistance against traditional protest methods. Redefining social activism was one of the main goals of the KMARA (translated as "Enough!") movement. This organization followed in the footsteps of the Serbian group OTPOR and as the leaders' underline, directly shared its experience.[15] However, academics often equate the role of KMARA and OTPOR in their respective contexts. But in the Georgian context, KMARA's role was relatively limited, as the opposition in Georgia was quite popular and coordinated, unlike in Serbia.[16] Also, in Georgia, the non-governmental sector was quite strong,[17] and at the same time, there was a compelling TV channel named Rustavi 2, which had wide coverage.[18] I will return to the analysis of these factors in later chapters. However, it is important to first understand how the concept of activism changed in pre-revolutionary Georgia.

The KMARA movement is often seen as a pioneer for a new kind of social movement, even though the organization was more of a result of ongoing changes than a starting point. A large, peaceful mobilization of students was documented as early as 2000, when students at Tbilisi

[13] Giorgi Kandelaki, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: A Participant's Perspective" (United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 8.
[14] *Rose Revolution*, Documentary (Formula, 2023), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjEYJ6uBglY.
[15] Giga Bokeria, (One of the leaders of the revolutionary movement, The secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia in the post-revolutionary government), interview by the author, May 10, 2024.
[16] Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, *Humor and Nonviolent Struggle in Serbia*, 2018, 11.
[17] Stephen F. Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence* (London; New York : New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 126.
[18] Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence*, 159.

State University, Georgia's main university, set up a self-government structure.[19] The student's main objective was to address the prevalent corruption and incompetence within the higher education system. They had to resort to bribery to pass even the simplest exams. Protests led to the formation of an elective body with over 2,000 students participating (The exact number is unknown).

"The first connection was established there," said Giga Bokeria, one of the prominent leaders of the revolutionary movement and the secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia in the post-revolutionary government. - "And the protest against [the attempt to close] Rustavi2 was the first natural test of this [connection] on a political topic outside [the university]."[20]

The quote's author refers to the next student protest in October 2001, and the failed attempt by the Shevardnadze regime to shut down the independent broadcaster Rustavi 2.[21] In October 2001, the first part of the story about Eduard Shevardnadze's connections with influential criminals was broadcast on TV, and the second, even more critical part was announced. Davit Dvali, one of the founders of the Rustavi 2 Recalls "The director of the broadcasting tower called us and said, 'Guys, they called me from below and said to turn off Rustavi 2."[22]

As a result, strong student protests began, and a group called the Student Movement for Georgia emerged.[23] This group initiated symbolic acts typical of non-violent resistance. Davit Dvali recalls one of the most notable events - a procession with coffins to illustrate the government's attempt to "bury the press."[24] In the end, the large-scale protest led to the resignation of the Cabinet of Ministers, with the corrupt minister of internal affairs, Kakha Targamadze, stepping

[19] Kandelaki, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," 6.
[20] Bokeria, Interview.
[21] Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence*, 137.
[22] Davit Dvali, (Founder of Rustavi 2), interview by Gogi Gvakharia, September 29, 2019.
[23] Kandelaki, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," 6.
[24] Dvali, interview.

down.[25] Giga Bokeria underscores: "That [event] was a major setback for the regime. It was a huge failure and shake-up within the regime. In my opinion, it played a determining role in shaping the events that followed by showing the vulnerability and even for small groups, demonstrating its true power."[26]

So, before the formal establishment of KMARA, student movements led the change in Georgian activism. The formation of KMARA marked the pinnacle of non-party activism, focusing on non-violent resistance tactics. This new stage of the movement emphasized the importance of civic responsibility and implemented the "Get out the Vote" campaign, drawing on the effective experiences of Serbia.

Shevardnadze's regime responded weakly to these developments. However, drawing from Milosevic's Serbian experience, they were aware of the potential dangers posed by such movements. Therefore, when KMARA emerged, the authorities launched an information campaign against them. The regime's standard message was that external forces controlled KMARA and its members were insincere paid activists.[27] The message box frequently changed its external controller. Sometimes it was attributed to Russian special services, other times to Armenian provocation, and most often to opposition parties, particularly the party of the future president, Mikheil Saakashvili, the National Movement.[28]

> As for statements that the opposition is ruling us, I think that this is insulting to the dignity of all human beings, as far as this implies that we do not have our own reasoning and that we must necessarily be ruled by somebody else. It is all the communist remnants that led us to this stage.[29]

[25] Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence*, 264.
[26] Bokeria, Interview.
[27] Kandelaki, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," 7.
[28] Kandelaki, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," 7.
[29] Gogiberidze, Nini, dir. 2003. KMARA - footage of activities. Tbilisi. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MlkTUF2L9A.

This is the answer of a KMARA activist in a TV interview when asked if the organization is run by opposition parties. One of the main challenges was changing the perception of activism as solely being associated with political parties. This change did not just stay in the realm of rhetoric; several impactful actions were particularly memorable, such as collecting books for schools and for prisoners.[30] and garbage collection from the space that was arbitrarily created as a landfill without the permission of the state. These activities, besides providing specific social benefits for the community, had several implications. Firstly, they highlighted the state's inability and the lack of effective control, even in trivial matters such as managing the city's garbage. Activists, in conversations with residents, emphasized that they had attempted to contact state authorities about these issues, but the authorities had avoided taking responsibility.[31] Secondly, activists were working to engage residents in similar activities and encourage them to improve the community's state. Participation in these actions was open to all social groups and did not require special physical capabilities, so even children could find their own role in them.[32]

1.3 Violence as counter-tactic of government

After the government falsified the elections on November 2, 2003, the leaders of the opposition united and became at the forefront of the protest movement. Unlike in Serbia, the opposition in Georgia did not need active pressure from civil society to unite and was quite popular. Their emergence as central figures in the movement against the backdrop of rigged elections occurred velvety. Giga Bokeria highlights that party leaders actively coordinated with civil society groups and adopted larger-scale non-violent resistance methods,[33] such as deporting people from the regions, announcing civil disobedience, boycotting the parliament, and picketing

[30] Kandelaki, "Georgia's Rose Revolution," 6.
[31] *KMARA - footage of activities*.
[32] *KMARA - footage of activities*.
[33] Bokeria, Interview.

government buildings. The protest maintained non-violent discipline, despite frequent attacks on opposition leaders and peaceful activists. The National Movement party actively used footage portray government-organized violence in their pre-election campaign to expose the government's methods. Roman Gotsiridze, one of the leaders of the National Movement said: "The election campaign was not as we imagine now. Sometimes it was like a war."[34]

The pre-election meetings of the National Movement leaders generated significant interest among the population without mobilization. These meetings were frequently targeted by violent groups, resulting in incidents. Stone-throwing, destruction of property, and physical attacks, were an integral part of the pre-election campaign, particularly against the National Movement. Violent methods were especially prevalent in Adjara, a region in southwestern Georgia with the status of an autonomous republic. Before the revolution, Adjara was ruled by the Soviet-style sole ruler Aslan Abashidze, who was known for being particularly harsh against protesters. "I, along with my colleagues, brought a serious increase in the rating, at a very low cost. I had a concussion, but the concussion went away in 2-3 weeks, and the increase of about 10 percent that our alliance received was very important."[35] - Says Davit Berdzenishvili, one of the founders of the Republican Party of Georgia which was part of the electoral alliance of the National Movement before the elections. He became a victim of severe physical violence in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara during the pre-election campaign.[36]

The opposition has successfully portrayed violence as a method of governing and has completely removed this form of resistance from its repertoire. This discipline was maintained until the last day of the revolution. The diversity and the availability of alternative forms of protest, among other factors, have transformed the commitment of activists, bringing together

[34] Gotsiridze Roman, (One of the leaders of the National Movement), interview by Keti Inashvili, November 23, 2023, Formula.
[35] Berdzenishvili Davit, (One of the founders of the Republican Party), interview by Keti Inashvili, November 23, 2023, Formula.
[36] *Rose Revolution*, Documentary.

a wide variety of people under the umbrella of one group. As a result, we can conclude that KMARA and its predecessor student movements were able to change the nature of activism in Georgia and demonstrate that it does not necessarily rely on violence or serve narrow corrupt party interests. Instead, activism can be directed toward a common, open goal. This was a key factor in the mass participation, and political parties effectively capitalized on this base to pressure the regime, which I will discuss in more detail in later chapters.

Chapter 2: Overcoming informational Barriers

According to the theory of Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, nonviolent resistance, as opposed to violent resistance, benefits from transparency in terms of actions, goals, resources, and the number of participants. In certain cases, nonviolent resistance may need to operate covertly, but its openness allows for more opportunities to recruit activists and increase the number of protestors. People are more willing to participate in a protest when they expect many participants.[37] As authors state, "Courage breeds courage" and the creative, humorous, emotional, symbolic, and festival-like atmosphere of non-violent resistance captures media attention. While violent acts may initially attract media coverage, their methods and organizational structure make it challenging to recruit and expand protests.

The authors did not analyze in detail, but, it is necessary to mention the effect of using violent methods by the protesters as a propaganda tool in the hands of the media affiliated with the regime. The obstacle to recruitment for violent struggle exists not only because of its secretive nature but also because violent acts are often used by the controlled media to portray the 'true goals of the opposition'. This was evident in the case of Georgia, during the Rose Revolution and afterward. Each violation of non-violent discipline becomes a valuable tool for the regime's propaganda machine to discourage recruitment and increase repressive measures without getting a backfire.[38]

The second issue that requires more fundamental attention is the capability of nonviolent resistance to penetrate government-controlled information channels. While various methods of nonviolent struggle can attract media attention, what happens when that attention is artificially manipulated and controlled by the regime?

[37] Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 36.
[38] Jonathan Pinckney, *Making or Breaking Nonviolent Discipline in Civil Resistance Movements* (International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2016), 11.

Examination of protests' informational barriers, In the context of the Rose Revolution, it is evident that, first, Shevardnadze's regime failed to fully control the information field despite its attempts. Secondly, activists discovered alternative communication spaces and placements that were not subject to the regime's control. By utilizing these alternative spaces and unrestricted media, they effectively countered the regime's propaganda. Thirdly, After the mass participation, the protest triggered the "Loyalty Shifts" emphasized by Chenoweth and Stephan, even in the regime-controlled media, Channel 1 (The Public Broadcaster).

I support these statements by analyzing accessible media ratings and reliability studies. I also observe the governmental TV propaganda, pre-electoral campaign (mainly pre-electoral video clips of parties), and counter-campaign by activists and opposition. I analyze the regime's main information and propaganda platform's (Channel 1 - public broadcaster) daily news program Moambe and observe the dynamics of their narratives of the last two months of the revolution.

2.1 The pre-election campaign, government narratives, and counter-campaign

The pre-election campaign for the November 2, 2003, elections was notable for several key features. Despite it being a parliamentary election with parties competing, the focus remained on individuals and their charisma. This was evident in the pre-election videos of the Burjanadze-Democrats party, which mainly featured interviews with voters praising Nino Burjanadze. Other opposition parties also employed similar methods, while the coalition supporting Shevardnadze used this approach the least. This could be attributed to the eclectic nature of the coalition and the presence of individuals associated with corruption and crime. Popular opposition figures, including Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, and Zurab Zhvania, were part of Shevardnadze's team until 2001, representing a wing of young reformists. However, after they departed from the government, older faces associated with less trustworthiness reemerged within Shevardnadze's coalition. As a solution, Shevardnadze's government coalition chose to "hide" the faces and to feature children prominently in their pre-

election campaign materials. They used family scenes focused on children as the cornerstone of the campaign. This approach was announced on October 10 during the presentation of the coalition "For New Georgia" gathered around Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze appeared alongside a child, Nika Nairashvili, who was the main face of the campaign. The child sat next to the president throughout the entire presentation. In response, The KMARA activists quickly and effectively responded to the clips on this topic via Rustavi 2. They shared a video showing the faces of the child featured in Shevardnadze's coalition election clips with the caption, "This is not their face," along with photos of high-ranking officials of the government and its allies who were prominent in corruption and organized crime, with the inscription "This is their true face." This and other similar effective counter-campaign elements were intensively broadcast on Rustavi 2[39], and the channel was also rebroadcast on small regional TV stations.

KAMARA activists conducted a noisy protest alongside the Shevardnadze coalition presentation meeting, using whistles and other loud instruments to disrupt the proceedings.[40] This is attention-worthy because technically, the protesters were not breaking any laws. Dealing with this form of protest seemed unfamiliar and awkward to the police. The state was unprepared to handle such new forms of protest at that moment, which was evident throughout the process.

Alternative communication methods used by KMARA activists proved to be highly effective due to the government's lack of experience. They used leaflets, catchy slogans, and ironic installations. Graffiti featuring the organization's logo and name, which also served as a slogan (KMARA means Enough!), was particularly prominent, especially on city administrative buildings and surroundings. According to activist leaders, these and other acts that may seem trivial from today's perspective were groundbreaking at the time.[41] Unfortunately, there is no

[39] *KMARA (Enough!) Shevardnadze*, 2003, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAZAYr7LV28.
[40] *KMARA - footage of activities*.
[41] Bokeria, Interview.

specific study that measures the virality of the alternative methods used by KMARA. However, from the organizer's perspective, the effectiveness of their actions was indicated by the fact that their acts were always in the political news.[42] The only exception was Channel 1, where news about KMARA was rarely featured, and when it was, it was only in a negative context.[43] The second main indicator confirming the effectiveness of the organizers' methods was a statement made by Shevardnadze himself at one of the party's congresses. During a conversation with journalists from the country's leading television stations, he mentioned that he had deliberately stopped his car to observe whether people were paying attention to the graffiti created by stating "Enough". And he shared his discovery that people were not paying attention to it. On this phrase Bokeria underscores that "There was no bigger advertisement back then... and if you want to measure the success of virality by something, there's no better measure than that." This was another symptom of the fact that the Soviet-style authorities and politicians could not adapt to new forms of protest. Instead, they tried to control the situation through repression and other traditional methods. “I did not think to pay serious attention to these young people running around with flags and drawing graffiti on the streets... I was wrong,” Recalled Eduard Shevardnadze, soon after the revolution.

2.2 Governments “Damage Control” campaign

An analysis of the prime-time newscast Moambe on the state-controlled Channel 1, between October 1 and November 30, 2003, reveals four main narratives of the government coalition. I refer to these narratives as the "Damage Control" campaign because they aimed to prevent a potential protest wave and hinder the formation of an alternative governmental structure, or to prevent the emergence of the idea that a strong opposition could create an

[42] Kandelaki, “Georgia’s Rose Revolution,” 6.
[43] “Claim of Ministry of Economy to KMARA,” *Moambe* (Tbilisi, October 6, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

alternative power structure, which would be free from external influences and capable of effective political management.

The first narrative line, which followed the pre-election period, is somewhat comical as it indirectly acknowledges that the government manipulated the legislative body elections on October 31, 1999. During these elections, Eduard Shevardnadze's Union of Citizens of Georgia party participated and won without forming a coalition. At that time, Shevardnadze's team included a group of young reformers, led by Saakashvili, Zhvania, and Burjanadze, who held top positions. However, due to events following the elections, including an attempt to shut down Rustavi 2, these leaders left the ruling party. According to the state television and Shevardnadze's coalition leaders, the blame for the 1999's election's flaws was placed on the leaders who had left the party. In a story published on October 2, 2003, journalists presented a scheme illustrating how the team that left Shevardnadze's party not only falsified the parliamentary elections but also rigged the elections for the chair of the parliament, which were conducted through secret voting among the deputies. At the beginning, journalists and representatives of Shevardnadze's eclectic coalition discussed the tendency of old members of the ruling party to manipulate elections.[44] However, Eduard Shevardnadze himself later joined this narrative, hinting about the opposition leaders' skill in manipulating election results.[45] But what is interesting is that they did not discuss this issue as a problem that had been resolved by "cleaning" the team. Government representatives and the chair of the election commission, Nana Devdariani, are discussing the attempt to falsify the elections as a potential threat of future election too[46] and that threat was coming from the opposition.

[44] "Election fraud techniques," *Moambe* (Tbilisi, October 2, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[45] "Misappropriation of Budget funds," *Moambe* (Tbilisi, October 11, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[46] "The government accuses the opposition of falsifying electoral lists," Kurieri (Tbilisi: Rustavi 2, 2003), Rustavi 2 Archive, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voDzgHXf6Wo&t=58s.

In this context, the issue of the voters' list in the Georgian elections was a major concern. There were various problems such as incorrect addresses, deceased individuals on the lists, disruption of the self-verification system, and missing recently eligible voters. The Ministry of Internal Affairs was responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the lists. The Minister, Koba Narchemashvili, claims that the electoral lists were accurate when handed over to the Central Election Commission. However, the Commission hired a company called IPS to digitize the lists, and errors occurred during this process. It was alleged that the organization heads, who were associated with opposition parties, intentionally delayed the process, and entered incorrect lists into the system. -[47] The list's finalization was delayed multiple times, and eventually it was confirmed just 2 days before the elections. This raised doubts about the validity of the lists and even the chair of the election commission was not shore and she was stating that the number of voters in the list was "close to the correct number[48] The Central Election Commission was explaining these flaws with the fraud of the previous commission members and preemptively blamed opposition parties for potential episodes of manipulation in upcoming elections.[49] In short, the message articulated was that while the mentioned team is no longer in power and has shifted to the opposition, they still pose a risk of committing election fraud in their favor despite not being in control of the Central Election Commission.

The second narrative of the official media and Shevardnadze's election coalition leaders within the Damage Control campaign aimed to expose the opposition's potential connections with Russia and uncover their planned destabilization efforts. Irina Sarishvili, who was in the top ten of the election lists of Shevardnadze's coalition, led this campaign. During the pre-election campaign, journalists often hinted at impending destabilization without citing sources. On

[47] *How did the "Rose Revolution" happen 20 years ago?* Documentary.
[48] "The electoral lists approved," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 30, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[49] "Unprepared lists," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 23, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

October 8, Irina Sarishvili spoke at a public press conference and claimed that one of the main leaders of the opposition, Nino Burjanadze, had connections with the Russian special services. She also spread the news, based on the Russian propaganda newspaper "Izvestiya", that the Burjanadze-Democrats were being helped by a group of specialists invited from Moscow in planning the campaign.[50] Then Sarishvili demonstratively went to the Ministry of State Security and handed over the materials, which, according to her, proved Burjanadze's connections with the Russian intelligence services.[51] However, no legal consequences resulted from this, and during the pre-election period, no specific materials were made public to confirm the accusations.

The second part of this story aimed to draw comparisons with the presidential elections in Azerbaijan on October 15, 2003. During these elections, Heydar Aliyev passed his power to his son, Ilham Aliyev. Channel 1 has been airing footage of protesters engaging in violent acts and being dispersed in the following days of the Azerbaijani elections. The media underlined the legitimacy of the elections and blamed the opposition for the physical confrontations that occurred in the streets of Baku.[52] The media emphasized that Aliyev was ahead in the pre-election polls, suggesting that the opposition's concerns about the election's fairness were groundless. They compared this situation to the Georgian elections, where they claimed that Shevardnadze and his coalition were also in the lead, indicating that any potential complaints from the opposition in Georgia would also be unfounded.[53] This narrative continued during the post-election period as well. When the opposition held its first protest rallies, government media emphasized that their prediction about the opposition parties' plan to destabilize had come

[50] "Burjanadze connections with Moscow," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 9, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[51] "Sarishvili's visit to the Ministry of Security," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 23, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[52] "Elections in Azerbaijan," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 16, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[53] "Elections in Azerbaijan."

true.[54] This was followed by more dramatization of the messages and footage of the post-election confrontations in Azerbaijan was replaced by footage of the Tbilisi civil war from the early 1990s.[55] Also, on November 4, there was a report about the discovery of a secret weapons warehouse, which the media linked to the planned provocations of the opposition, although the evidence was not presented in the story,[56] and there were no legal consequences. Along with appealing to these planned provocations, Channel 1 offered interviews with artists who talked about the need to not get involved in politics and concentrate on their own lives and activities.

During the pre-election campaign, the third narrative of state-controlled media was the West's trust in the election process led by the government. A notable event was the visit of Senator John McCain a few weeks before the election. The media coverage of this visit repeatedly emphasized that from the perspective of the American delegation, the factor of Eduard Shevardnadze was the guarantor of fair elections and that due to the presence of many observers, election rigging was impossible. However, in interviews with McCain or other delegation members, there were no direct references to these claims. The delegation only expressed hope for fair elections and noted receiving promises from officials to address a variety of systemic flaws.[57] In general, from the state media, this approach was common: a journalist first sets the context with a narrative introduction, framing the context, and then releases an interview that seems to confirm this narrative but does not. This tactic was often used against the opposition party leaders. Regarding close relations with the West, Shevardnadze himself actively emphasized this during the pre-election period, highlighting that Georgia was becoming a geopolitical player, which is important for Western partners. On the

[54] "Predictions of destabilization," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, November 4, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[55] "Consequences of destabilization," Moambe (Tbilisi: Channel 1, November 4, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[56] "Consequences of destabilization."
[57] "McCain is meeting parties," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 6, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

October 10 party congress, he said: "Earlier I was saying - Georgia needs NATO, now I say - NATO also needs Georgia, soon, in 2-3 years, I will say - Europe needs Georgia"[58]

The fourth narrative direction of the government television was focused on showing the divisions within the opposition and demonstrating that they have the main positions, which is why they are always at odds with each other, unable to reach consensus or deep agreement on any principles. Consequently, they were not a desirable alternative because they could not form an alternative vertical of power. This effort is confirmed by the fact that during the pre-election period, the opposition was limited and in the context of coverage of internal conflicts on the air of the main news channel. In this regard, the least amount of time was given to Mikheil Saakashvili's National Movement, whose pre-election meetings were only covered in the news if any violent act or other indicator of conflict was observed at these meetings. The media frequently discussed the allocation of candidates in the proportional electoral list of opposition parties. They suggested that the parties were unable to agree on the sequence, leading to a conflict.[59] In this context, the role of Aslan Abashidze's party Aghordzineba (Revival) in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara is quite interesting. There were frequent physical confrontations between the supporters of this party and the activists of the National Movement, which the media used to demonstrate the divisions on the opposition side. In the news on October 23, the journalist examines the connections between Zurab Zhvania and Aslan Abashidze, revealing Zhvania's insincere intentions and ties with Russia.[60] However, after the elections, the tables turned, and it was Eduard Shevardnadze who struck a deal with Aslan Abashidze and attempted to share power with him.

[58] "Congress of bloc 'For New Georgia,'" *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 10, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[59] "Controversy in the opposition," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 3, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[60] "Confrontation in Batumi," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, October 23, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

The state-controlled media during the 2003 elections used four main narratives to neutralize expected post-election protests. They tried to strong-arm the population by drawing parallels with the situation in Azerbaijan and warned about the danger of repeating the past civil war. This approach is truly relevant in modern Georgia as well. In the spring of 2024, the Georgian authorities reinitiated the law "On transparency of foreign influence," which severely limits the activities of civil society and non-governmental organizations, going against international human rights standards according to the Venice Commission. This led to a large wave of protests. To repress the protests, the government drew parallels between the mentioned demonstrations and the 2013-14 "Euromaidan" rallies in Ukraine, which resulted in casualties among civilians and police officers. High-ranking officials published footage from both events, attempting to relate activities in both cases and talking about potential victims, attributing the possible consequences to the irresponsibility of the opposition leaders. Even the terms "Maidanization" and "Ukrainization" were implemented in Georgian discourse.

On the one hand, this method could be seen as an attempt to intimidate the people and suppress the wave of protests. On the other hand, it could be viewed as a warning of potential repression, which we are partly witnessing in modern Georgia. It was evident that Shevardnadze tried to do the same when he declared a state of emergency, on the next day after the opposition's invasion of the parliament, but it became clear that the state apparatus no longer had the resources to maintain control, and the plan failed[61] However, as already mentioned, in 2003, the opposition successfully demonstrated itself as a peaceful movement by actively implementing non-violent resistance methods. This led to a mass participation that the government's campaign of potential and actual violence could not prevent.

State-controlled Channel 1 not only intimidated the population but actively sought to portray the opposition as incapable of forming an effective government if they won. However, shortly

[61] Lincoln A. Mitchell, *Uncertain Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy and Georgia's Rose Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 67.

after the election, the main opposition parties joined forces and continued to fight together. This unity quickly became a credible alternative power structure. The opposition's unification dismantled the government's previous narrative about divisions and internal conflicts.

As we have already mentioned, the communication channels for the counter-campaigns of the discussed narratives were the alternative informational spaces used by KMARA activists, and, most importantly, the Rustavi 2, TV station which revolutionized the country's information field and provided the resistance with a strategic advantage in the information war.

2.3 Information field dynamics in pre-revolutionary Georgia

According to historian Stephen Jones, under Shevardnadze's regime, the Georgian media was "harassed, under-resourced, and libelous," yet it still maintained the ability to criticize the government.[62] The United Nations' National Human Development Report shows that during Shevardnadze's rule, attacks on journalists were frequent.[63] However, the attempt to close Rustavi 2 in 2001 exceeded all limits and caused a strong wave of protest. In the same year, journalist Giorgi Sanaia, who was the host of the Rustavi 2 news program, was murdered under still-uninvestigated circumstances. The details are still unknown, although the founder of Rustavi 2 connects the murder with the political positions of the channel.[64]

Jones underscores that the authorities had significant legislative powers of repression, although the Georgian media still enjoyed one of the highest degrees of freedom in the region. According to a 2009 report by Transparency International Georgia, the media in post-revolutionary states were less free and pluralistic than before the Rose Revolution in 2003. Several circumstances can explain this attitude of the Shevardnadze regime. Until 2001 (When Rustavi 2, which was founded in a small industrial town, gained more influence, and relocated to the capital) it would

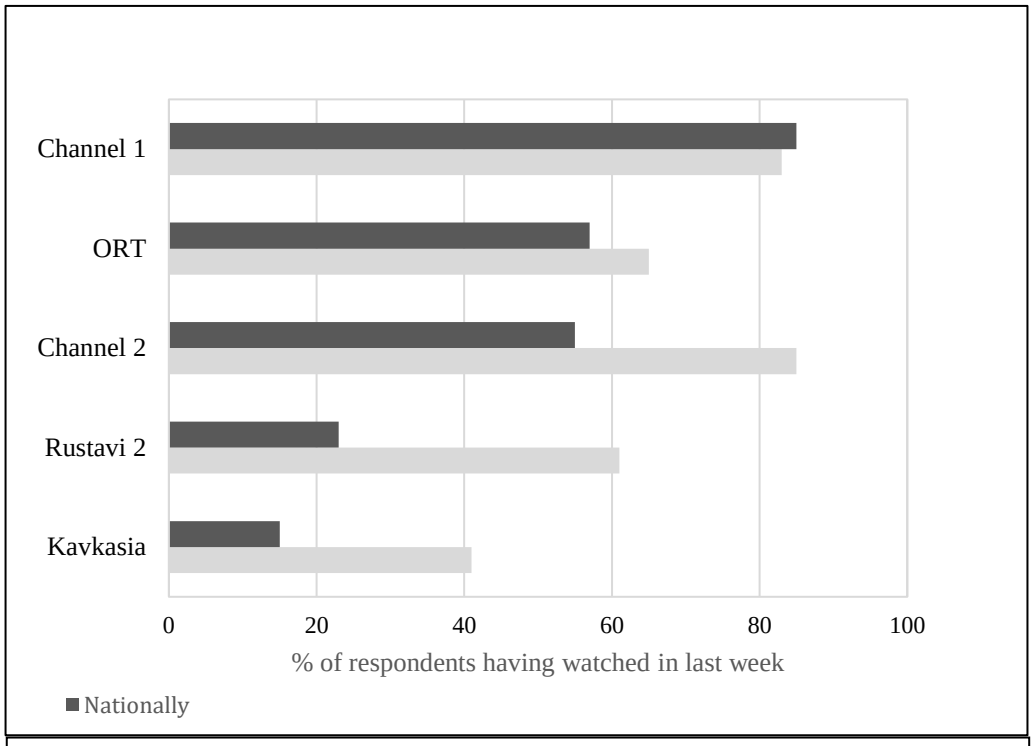
[62] Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence*.122.
[63] Marco Borsotti, and Oliver Weeks. "General Human Development Report of Georgia." Human Development Reports. New York: United Nations, 1998, 40.
[64] Dvali, interview.

not have been pragmatic for the authorities to fight with the media openly and radically. This is because the most powerful and popular TV stations operating in the country were the property of the state, therefore, they were under the control of the regime. This is confirmed by the TV ratings of 1998 (Graph 1). It should be considered that television was the most popular way of receiving information during this period among all other mediums.[65] Therefore, in this part, I concentrate only on television. The research shows that Georgian state-controlled channels (Channel 1 and Channel 2) and the Russian state-controlled channel ORT had the widest TV coverage in the country. During this time, Rustavi 2, with limited coverage, did not pose a threat until it moved to the capital city. However, about three weeks after it started broadcasting there, an attempt was made to shut it down. This attempt failed and instead hurt the government. According to the founder of Rustavi 2, after the public attempt to close the channel failed, Shevardnadze tried to buy the TV station with the help of Badri Patarkatsishvili, a famous businessman and media magnate.[66] Additionally, Shevardnadze was very mindful of his international reputation. It is important to remember that because of his connections dating back to the Cold War era, when he served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Shevardnadze was viewed as "an engine for democratization in Georgia."[67] Accordingly, in support of strengthening Georgian democracy, the state received significant financial aid over the years. From 2001 to 2003 alone, Georgia received $268.8 million from the USA, the highest amount among post-Soviet states after Russia and Ukraine.[68] Despite the widespread corruption, in which even Shevardnadze's family members were involved, and along with a dysfunctional state apparatus, Georgia was able to maintain some economic stability in the final years of Shevardnadze's rule. Given these circumstances, it was not in the interest of the United

[65] Borsotti, Weeks Human Development Reports, 36.
[66] Dvali, interview.
[67] Mitchell, *Uncertain Democracy*, 4.
[68] Mitchell, *Uncertain Democracy*, 4.

States to portray Shevardnadze as an obstacle to democracy, and Shevardnadze did not want to disrupt the existing relationship with the West.

Figure 1: Most popular television channels, in Tbilisi and nationally (1998)



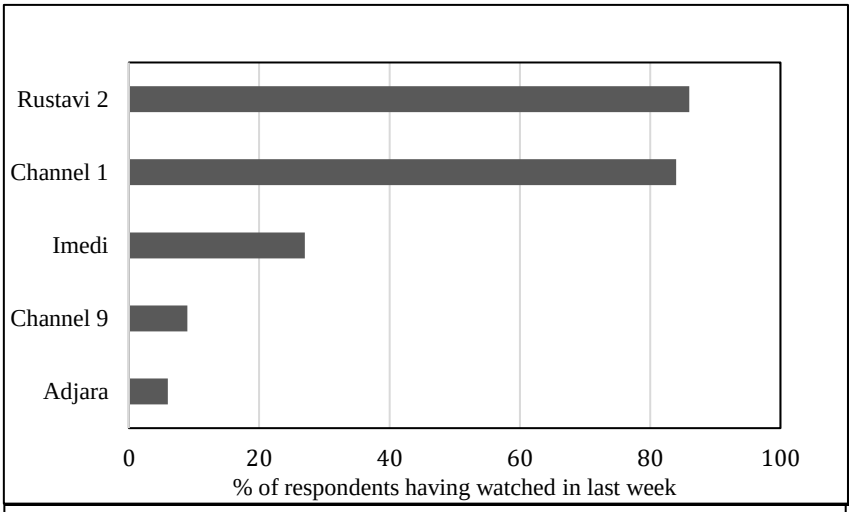
Source: Data from Marco Borsotti, and Oliver Weeks. "General Human Development Report of Georgia." Human Development Reports. New York: United Nations, 1998.

Considering the mentioned circumstances and the protest wave discussed above, Rustavi 2 did not come under the control of the regime and became very popular. According to the 2003 International Republican Institute's Georgian National Voter Study, Rustavi 2 was already the most popular TV channel in Georgia. The dominant state-controlled Channel 1, which previously held the top spot, dropped to second place (see Graph 2). Although the difference in ratings between these channels seemed small, the survey also measured trust in the channels, particularly in political and news topics, where a significant difference is visible (see Graph 3).

Before the revolution, trust in government-controlled and affiliated TV channels was incredibly low among the population. Rustavi 2 played a key role in the success of the revolutionary

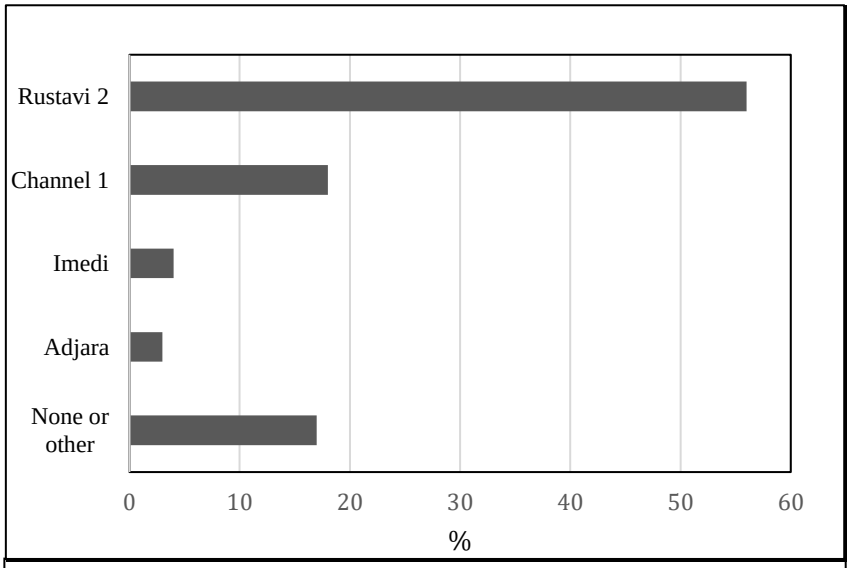
movement. It was a main source of mobilization and communication for the opposition before and after the elections, as well as during the period before the revolution. On election day, journalists uncovered many instances of election fraud. Most importantly, Rustavi 2 published the results of the Exit polls (see Table 1), which revealed the government's failure and became one of the main foundations of the protest movement.

Figure 2: Regularly viewed Georgian TV channels Nationally (2003)



Source: Data from "Georgian National Voter Study." Survey of Georgian Public Opinion, May 2003. Georgia: International Republican Institute (IRI), 2003.

Figure 3: Most trusted Georgian TV station news and political information Nationally (2003)



Source: Data from "Georgian National Voter Study." Survey of Georgian Public Opinion, May 2003. Georgia: International Republican Institute (IRI), 2003.

Figure 4: Exit polls announced on Rustavi 2 (By Country)

Party	Sora (Austria)	GSG (USA)
For a New Georgia	22.10%	12.90%
National Movement	13.20%	20.80%
Labor Party	13.50%	12.80%
Burjanadze-Democrats	16.40%	7.60%
New rightists	11.30%	6.00%
Revival	4.20%	6.20%
Industrialists	4.20%	2.50%

Source: Data from *How did the "Rose Revolution" happen 20 years ago?* Radio Liberty, 2023.

Finally, we can conclude that Shevardnadze's regime tried but could not fully control the flow of information. As the protests gained momentum, alternative voices grew stronger. This was driven by the effective counter-campaigns of social movements and the opposition against the Shevardnadze alliance. The Loyalty shifts observed before the revolution within the state-controlled television Channel 1 may be a useful indicator of the success of the information war. Here, the narratives mentioned above, and the limited coverage of the opposition changed. According to Chenoweth and Stephan, Loyalty shifts can be seen as a mechanism activated by mass participation, which became a powerful tool in the hands of the protest movement and its leaders. In the following chapter, I will delve into loyalty shifts that surfaced and the advantages they provided to the opposition, based on interviews with leaders of the revolutionary movement.

Chapter 3: Leverage mechanisms triggered by Mass participation – Movement leaders' perspectives

Chenoweth and Stephan argue that mass participation in nonviolent methods, made possible by low barriers to entry in protests, can trigger the leverage mechanisms that outweigh the regime's advantages. They use Kurt Schock's definition of leverage as the ability to either detach supporters from the opponent or intensify pressure on them through the channels on which the regime's power relies. This is possible when movement "imposes costs on the adversary for maintaining the status quo, or for retaliating against the resistance." The authors categorize these mechanisms into six subcategories: Loyalty Shifts, Coercion, Backfiring, Tactical Diversity and Innovation, Evasion and Resilience, and International Sanctions and External Support. They further classify these mechanisms into two categories, namely domestic mechanisms, and foreign support. The authors argue that domestic mechanisms play a more significant role in the ultimate success of nonviolent resistance than foreign support. They also note that while there are exceptions, active foreign intervention is not always necessary for the success of resistance. I partially confirm this observation with the case of the Rose Revolution, where the international sanctions against the regime were not the key factor. However, it is important to consider the abovementioned external restraining factors that influenced Shevardnadze's decision-making, while the regime attempted to shut down Rustavi 2. Also, the significant role of non-governmental organizations, funded by international institutions, should be considered. I analyze these and all the other listed mechanisms individually based on interviews with movement leaders and present their perspectives on how those mechanisms were used against the regime, leading to the revolution.

3.1 Loyalty shift

Chenoweth and Stephan distinguish loyalty shifts as a key leverage mechanism, among others. The resistance can generate sympathy and gain support from representatives of the

regime's power, economic, and other important institutions in society, and this shift may become a prerequisite for the success of the campaign. Mass participation can induce defections or noncooperation among supporters of a regime. To explore this, the authors examine security-force loyalty mobility and demonstrate that, even in this extreme scenario, nonviolent resistance can lead to a shift in loyalty.

In the context of the Rose Revolution, it can be argued that shifts in loyalty were reflected in the changing narratives of Channel 1. From the perspective of the movement's leaders, this trend was also evident among the cultural elite and the security forces.

Access to Channel 1's prime-time newscast "Moambe" was limited for the opposition during the pre-election period. Mikheil Saakashvili and his National Movement's pre-election activities were hardly covered, and if they were mentioned, it was mostly in a negative, confrontational, and conflict-driven context. The opposition leaders' comments were taken out of context and edited very briefly. The coverage of the New Right party was lenient, as their candidates' meetings were broadcast on the news. However, information about Mikheil Saakashvili's majoritarian candidates only made it to the broadcast when there was a physical confrontation or the appearance of armed persons on presentations. Coverage was also limited for the activities of the organization KMARA. From October 1st to November 4th, there were only two news pieces about the organization. One concerned mathematical inaccuracy found in their counter-campaign, to which the Ministry of Economy appealed. The second piece concerned KMARA's attempt to mobilize people after the elections, which the journalist claimed was unsuccessful. The coverage of the pre-election campaign summary meeting held by the party of Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania on October 30 is also noteworthy, with the main emphasis being placed on the small number of attendees and the conflict within the party. Throughout the entire pre-election period, underscoring the opposition's internal conflicts was relevant, with the main sources of information about these disputes being the representatives of

Shevardnadze's coalition. The opposition's responses were traditionally fragmented and taken out of context.

The approach changed dramatically after the elections when a mass participation occurred. After the Election night (November 2) the second crucial point which accelerated the process was November 6, when the election results from the Autonomous Republic of Adjara were sent to the Central Election Commission. According to the data, in this region, Aslan Abashidze's "Democratic Union for Revival" received 95% of the votes,[69] despite not having a pre-election campaign.[70] Based on this data, the party became the opposition leader nationwide with the votes of one region of the country. Some opposition leaders alleged that Abashidze's team received more votes in the elections than the region's total population.71 The leaders of the movement consider the publication of such results as one of the main catalysts in the entire revolutionary process.

Table 2: Official election results, reported on 20 November 2003 and Parallel Vote Tabulation

Party	Official results	Parallel Vote Tabulation
For a New Georgia	21.00%	19.00%
Revival	19.00%	9.00%
National Movement	18.00%	26.00%
Burjanadze-Democrats	12.00%	18.00%
New rightists	8.00%	10.00%
Revival	7.00%	7.00%
Industrialists	6.00%	5.00%

Source: Data from Lincoln A Mitchell. *Uncertain Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy and Georgia's Rose Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

[69] "History of parliamentary elections: 1990-2016," Radio Liberty.
[70] Zurab Karumidze, James V. Wertsch, and Zurab Karumize, eds., *Enough! The Rose Revolution In The Republic Of Georgia 2003* (New York: Nova Science Pub Inc, 2005), 7.
[71] Khatuna Gogorishvili, Story of Khatuna Gogorishvili - Birth of Georgia, interview by Iago Khvitchia, January 20, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zRh6OEtEpg.

Khatuna Gogorishvili, one of the leaders of the Burjanadze-Democrats and a member of the post-revolutionary parliament Stated: "The main falsification was that "Revival" had as many votes as there were voters in Adjara. This case destroyed everything, including the participants and percentages."[72] And Tina Khidasheli, the chair of the Association of Young Lawyers at that time added: "In essence, the fate of the Rose Revolution was decided by Aslan Abashidze."[73] After November 6, the opposition's briefings were regularly covered at the beginning of the Channel 1 news program. Information about their plans was spread without taking it out of context. Journalists from Moambe actively covered current events live and worked in parallel with the protests. Additionally, the Shevardnadze and Abashidze coalition organized counterdemonstrations, which were also regularly covered on television. However, a significant shift in loyalty was seen on November 14 when journalists on the main news channel expressed live protest regarding the arrest of the election observer of the Georgian Young Lawyers Association. An even more visible episode of this shift was when Eduard Shevardnadze openly accused the channel of "excessive" objectivity and called on them to work in favor of the government. November 19 he said: *"*Cover everything as needed. You cannot be on both sides. At least one channel should work for the government. ... I am not thankful to Channel 1 today. You are practically a governmental TV station, so be kind and act as it is in the interests of the state"[74] The announcement was followed by the resignation of the chair of television and radio broadcasting, Zaza Shengelia, on the same day. After Shevardnadze's announcement was aired on the Moambe, the channel's journalists' strong critiques followed the government's approach and emphasized that they work for the country, not the government. journalist Maya Lomidze

[72] Gogorishvili, Story of Khatuna Gogorishvili - Birth of Georgia.
[73] *How did the "Rose Revolution" happen 20 years ago?*
[74] "Emergency broadcast," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, November 19, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

responded to him: "Moambe" is immortal - we will survive many governments repeatedly because we are in the service of the country."[75]

Channel 1 example was a striking instance of a shift in loyalty, although the organizers talk about similar cases both in the cultural elite and, most importantly, in the police.

From the organizers' perspective, the social and economic background had already started to shake the loyalty of the policemen to the regime, and mass participation turned out to be the last decisive push that led them to finally shift it. Bokeria describes situation the terrible conditions of policemen's: "[Policemen's] loyalty to the vertical was shaken because of the demoralization when they didn't even get their salaries...we used to provide the food and water for them sometimes."[76] Journalist and later member of parliament Irma Nadiradze goes dipper on this sentiment:

> "Even here, you could feel where these policemen come from. They have families too, they do not have lights at home, and neither do you. They do not get a salary, and neither do you. It was clear that the people who stood here as police and over there as demonstrators were the same."[77]

In the given situation, the police did not intervene when the turning point occurred on November 22, 2003. This turning point happened two days after the Central Election Commission announced the final election results and the first session of the new parliament was held. The opposition chose to enter parliament and disrupt the session, which they were able to do without many obstacles. Activist and writer Lasha Bugadze describes the events of November 22 and the attitude of police forces. "They were calling us directly to push. I could not believe it. These soldiers who guarded the perimeter and wore helmets, they were directly telling us to push them harder".[78]

[75] "Emergency broadcast."
[76] Bokeria, Interview.
[77] *Rose Revolution*, Documentary.
[78] *Rose Revolution*, Documentary.

Eduard Shevardnadze was addressing the parliament with the opening speech, but he had to leave the building with security. Later that evening, he declared a state of emergency and ordered the clearing of protestors from the streets. However, it became clear that this order would not be followed. This event marked the final shift in loyalty, leading to the start of the power transfer.

3.2 Coercion

Chenoweth and Stephan argue that non-violent resistance can pressure a regime by undermining its economic, political, social, and even military support from the population. This can be achieved through mass participation, protests, and non-cooperation, effectively eroding the regime's backing from various organizations and institutions. loyalty shifts can be an integral part of this process, but it also requires the demonstration by the opposition that it represents a viable governing alternative.

In the context of the Rose Revolution, two main examples of coercion through alternative structures and non-cooperation stood out from the perspective of the resistance leaders, influencing the outcome significantly. First, the unification of the most popular part of the opposition led to the creation of an alternative power structure, with Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, and Zurab Zhvania at the helm. This union took place shortly after the elections, and it continued to fight with an even more radical and united front following the results from Adjara. In comparison, in Serbia, during the campaign against Slobodan Milošević, there was often a lack of an alternative power structure. However, this problem did not arise in the context of the Rose Revolution. Bokeria explains this trust with the experience of opposition leaders: "The fact that these opposition leaders were in the government and had power added persuasiveness to their management skills. Saakashvili was a star."[79]

[79] Bokeria, Interview.

However, outside of the united opposition, there were political parties that refused to join this alternative coalition. These parties included the Labor Party, the New Right, and the Industrialists. Their leaders opposed the protests following the elections and accused the united opposition of trying to destabilize the country. This is confirmed by their statements made on November 5-7. Shalva Natelashvili, the leader of the Labor Party, was one of the most popular politicians and his party received enough votes to give him a good base for the upcoming presidential elections.[80] Despite not being part of the united opposition, his team, along with other opposition parties, still joined the boycott of the parliament for the first parliamentary session on 22 November. Although the Shevardnadze and Abashidze coalitions soon reached an agreement, they needed to bring a few more deputies to the parliament to establish a quorum and create the legal basis for its work. The only party, apart from Shevardnadze's and Abashidze's alliances, that came to the parliament on the day of the election was the "New Rightists" and a quorum was established. Davit Gamkrelidze, the leader of the New Rightists defines their approach:

> "We had initially decided not to attend the parliamentary session. Then, Shevardnadze called me and suggested that we should come and conduct the first session. I explained that we could not attend because it would be, in a certain way, giving legitimacy to a parliament that does not reflect reality. I proposed that the only solution was to hold new elections. In response, he suggested conducting the first session to make this proposal and promised to give the majority support."[81]

Although, this version is less convincing because the leaders of this party had often underlined that they did not share the spirit of the protest. On November 21, one of the leaders of the New Rightists, Pikria Chikhradze, stated: "All members of the Parliament, who were elected by the population of Georgia, must attend the session. It is impossible to save the country otherwise. We support the process of going within the constitutional framework and giving legitimacy to the newly

[80] "Irresponsible opposition," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, November 5, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.
[81] *Rose Revolution*, Documentary.

elected parliament".[82] However, the expectation that a quorum would not be formed, and it happened only at the last second, further undermined the regime's positions. It was a clear example of political noncooperation, which, together with the alternative power structure of the United Opposition, created coercion.

3.3 Backfiring

Chenoweth and Stephan also believe that after mass participation occurs, the use of violence against nonviolent resistance can have a backfiring effect on the regime. This is the point at which the regime's actions become counterproductive and lead to losing supporters. As a result, the downward spiral of regime attrition continues. Among the lost allies, we can consider both local and international actors.

In the context of the Rose Revolution, activists and organizers highlight several incidents that backfired for the regime. The first one that stands out is the unsuccessful attempt to close Rustavi 2 and the resulting wave of protests in 2001. While these protests had an independent character and could be considered a separate cycle of non-violent resistance, from the leaders' perspective, it was a demonstration of the regime's vulnerability. It also led to numerous political failures for the regime, as we have discussed in previous chapters.

Resistance leaders are considering a series of violent incidents in western Georgia, particularly in the autonomous republic of Adjara, as another main episode of the backfiring. I have discussed above the impact of organized violence during the pre-election period. However, from the movement leaders' perspective, Shevardnadze's vulnerability became even more evident after the elections of his attempt to form an alliance with Aslan Abashidze and retain power through him. As Bokeria underlines, from the opposition leader's perspective, it was

[82] "Emergency broadcast," *Moambe* (Tbilisi: Channel 1, November 21, 2003), Archive of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

clear sign of weakness: "He needed Aslan, that is, he couldn't go anywhere. He does not have anything, and he needed Aslan's muscles. He did not consider that it was the last mark."[83]

The agreement with Aslan Abashidze legitimized the coercive tactics he employed in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. Following the agreement, Abashidze's supporters were brought to Tbilisi and took over the central avenue to delay the opposition's protests. Tina Khidasheli recalls the dynamics between two demonstrations:

> "People from Adjara were going to the rally in the morning as it was the job. It was their job to stand in front of the parliament, and then when the job was done, they would come and be with us the whole evening... This made the feeling of unity even greater."[84]

The gathering's purpose was to delay the protest and protect the parliament on November 22. According to movement leaders, there were armed individuals among the protesters organized by Abashidze. This is why Mikheil Saakashvili wore a bulletproof vest when entering the parliament building to disrupt the session - to protect himself from potential danger. Shevardnadze did not rule out radicalization. This is confirmed by the recording of a telephone conversation between him and Abashidze, which was later published, where he instructs Abashidze to threaten with Adjarian separatism and says: “It must be stated in the demands... that if there will be such people [referring to Saakashvili], I will leave [the sovereign control of] Georgia”[85] However, in the end, due to the activation of the leverage mechanisms described above, the state apparatus no longer had the mechanisms to enforce radicalization.

3.4 Tactical Diversity and Innovation

The authors argue that non-violent struggle has an advantage in generating tactical diversity by attracting a larger and more diverse group of participants. Diverse actors imply diverse tactical approaches. According to the theory, these methods can be divided into two

[83] Bokeria, Interview.
[84] *How did the “Rose Revolution” happen 20 years ago?*
[85] *How did the “Rose Revolution” happen 20 years ago?*

main parts: concentration tactics, such as mass gatherings, and methods of dispersion, such as strikes. New tactics are developed "on the margins of existing repertoires." In the repertoire of the social movements of the Rose Revolution, we can observe a variety of tactics of both types. Nini Gogiberidze, one of the leaders of KAMARA, explains the frame of the process: "The whole idea of this process is to enable as many people as possible to express themselves."[86]

In the initial stages of the movement, KMARA activists aimed to demonstrate the low barriers of social movements and provide diverse activities for people to participate in. Initially, the group was quite centralized. However, KMARA leaders noted that as signs of mobilization emerged, private initiatives also sprang up in various regions of Georgia. I have already mentioned the diverse tactics and campaigns used before the mobilization, however, after the elections, the leaders of the political parties took the lead in the movement, and the tactics and campaigns became more concentrated and focused on concentration methods. For example, the convoy of cars brought by Mikheil Saakashvili from the regions of Tbilisi became one of the main symbols of the revolution. The leader of KMARA emphasized that, at that time, the organization took on more logistical functions, ensuring the supply of mass gatherings and maintaining the protest energy. Gogiberidze adds: *"We were cooking buckwheat in the office and providing it [for the demonstrators], and grandmothers boiled eggs at home for us."*[87]
Nino Gogiberidze also stated that the archivists did not inquire about the specifics of each campaign, such as its effectiveness or justification. Their primary concern was ensuring that the process continued without interruption and remained dynamic. Gogiberidze explains the key components of dynamic activism and how overthinking can destroy the process:*"Civil resistance is being killed by overly knowledgeable people who try to tell you " This form is fine,*

[86] Nini Gogiberidze, (One of the leaders of KAMARA), interview by the author, May 30, 2024.
[87] Gogiberidze, interview.

that is not." The important thing is trusting the main idea, having organizational discipline, and following non-violent discipline."[88]

3.5 Evasion and Resilience

From the perspective of Chenoweth and Stephan mass participation also triggers the resilience of activists. A social movement can continuously maintain mobilization and recruit new members despite the regime's progressive repression. Nonviolent struggle responds to harassment and crackdowns in a variety of ways, and such actions by the regime do not always bring the movement to an end

In the context of the Rose Revolution, we can consider the activists' and leaders' resistance to physical violence as a good indicator of their resilience. All respondents remember being physically abused during activities, but they explained that this did not affect their motivation. From the perspective of Gogiberidze, it was quite comical too: "When beatings were not enough, they would put us in cars and drop us somewhere far away, and then we would have to walk back. In short, they were doing ridiculous things,"[89] The movement demonstrated its ability to continuously engage activists in the period after the election too. When the opposition prioritized concentration tactics and maintaining a consistent protest presence on the city's main streets, despite the typically harsh weather in November, a sizable number of protesters were consistently present on the streets, between the announcement of the election results and November 24.

3.6 International Sanctions and External Support

Non-violent resistance campaigns can gain leverage through diplomatic pressure, international sanctions, and external support. However, international sanctions can also have

[88] Gogiberidze, interview.
[89] Gogiberidze, interview.

negative effects by hurting citizens, although they can serve the function of deterring or coercing the regime. Another key factor is the provision of financial assistance by the international community and non-governmental organizations to local organizations and social movements. The authors emphasize in their theory that there is no general pattern according to which international factors are decisive in the success of the movement, and domestic factors are often more important.

The importance of international support during the Rose Revolution cannot be underestimated. Without the financial backing of international organizations, the existence of civil society would have been in doubt due to unclear alternative funding sources. According to the Global Nonviolent Action Database, local international organizations such as the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), the Georgian Young Lawyer's Association, and the Liberty Institute were financed with over $42 million by the George Soros Foundation. These organizations conducted election monitoring, protected the legal rights of activists, exposed high-ranking officials involved in fraud and corruption, and provided necessary resources to the organization KMARA.

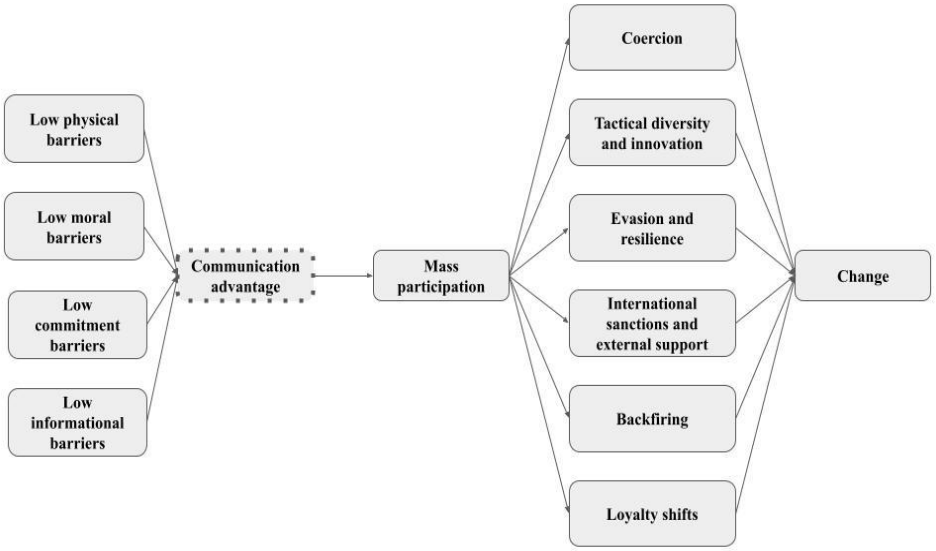
Regarding the use of official sanctions against the regime, no similar step was taken by the West during the Rose Revolution. However, the leaders of the movement emphasized the restraining role of the West, for example, in the case of Rustavi 2, when Shevardnadze was initially still considering the reactions from outside.

Conclusion

The Rose Revolution movement is a great example of how non-violent resistance can lead to significant political change. Using Chenoweth and Stephan's theoretical framework, I initially discussed the benefits of engaging in nonviolent resistance as opposed to violent one. I evaluated the low physical, informational, moral, and commitment barriers to participating in resistance one by one. I then examined whether these low barriers resulted in mass mobilization. After, I analyze the leverage mechanisms created by the rise of mass participation, through interviews with leaders. I found that low physical, informational, moral, and commitment barriers significantly contributed to mass participation. However, in the case of the Rose Revolution, the link between low barriers and mass participation was not directly causal. In my view, barriers to participation in resistance movements must go through an information field where, ideally, the media will be free from control, or, at worst, completely dominated by the regime. Nonviolent resistance would then need to establish alternative communication channels. Only after that, mass mobilization is possible.

I do not claim that the role of the media is neglected or not properly appreciated by the authors, although in my opinion, in their logical structure, the media is partially described as an isolated institution and the direction and volume of its attention depends on methods used by the resistance. However, often the media may not be an independent stakeholder at all and may be an integral part of the conflicting parties. That is why I believe the stage of the going through information field should be included in the theory's structure. Through existing opposition media or alternative communication channels, the low barriers to participation should turn into a communication advantage.

Figure 5: Argument map



Such a dynamic can be observed in the context of the Rose Revolution. The media environment in Georgia was considered relatively free until 2000. However, this was because the government already controlled the television stations with the largest coverage, so there was no need for repression. When the opposition channel Rustavi 2 gained strength in 2001, there was an immediate attempt to shut it down, which was unsuccessful. However, if the television closed, the government would have complete control over the flow of information. This would make it nearly impossible to discuss key aspects of the resistance movement, including the low barriers to participation. Nor would it be possible to cover the catastrophic irregularities observed on election day. Also, the publication of exit polls and showing the fraud that occurred during the vote-counting process. So, the entire chain of information that eventually became the main catalyst, may be lost. However, the KMARA movement proved that non-violent resistance could utilize alternative communication channels outside of traditional media, which can be a valuable tool in encouraging widespread participation in the movement.

The study also showed that mass participation activated the leverage mechanisms highlighted by the authors, which led to the result. Unfortunately, within the framework of the research, I

could not measure precisely which of these mechanisms played the most significant role. Although from the perspective of the resistance leaders, loyalty shifts, specifically in the main government television and security forces, stand out. Additionally, the attempt to shut down Rustavi 2 resulted in a significant backfiring effect.

Overall, the study of the Rose Revolution confirmed the main aspects of Chenoweth and Stephan's framework, while showing areas for additional research. The critical role of the media as a means of mobilization and as a battleground for informational control turned out to be decisive for the Georgian revolution. However, the most important thing for me is that even this limited research revealed valuable lessons for contemporary Georgian activism, which still is in combat with growing authoritarian tendencies.

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