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Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century (Oxford Studies in Culture and Politics)

Sharon Erickson Nepstad

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In the spring of 1989, Chinese workers and students captured global attention as they occupied Tiananmen Square, demanded political change, and were tragically suppressed by the Chinese army. Months later, East German civilians rose up nonviolently, brought down the Berlin Wall, and dismantled their regime. Although both movements used tactics of civil resistance, their outcomes were different. Why?

In *Nonviolent Revolutions,* Sharon Erickson Nepstad examines these and other uprisings in Panama, Chile, Kenya, and the Philippines. Taking a comparative approach that includes both successful and failed cases of nonviolent resistance, Nepstad analyzes the effects of movements' strategies along with the counter-strategies regimes developed to retain power. She shows that a significant influence on revolutionary outcomes is security force defections, and explores the reasons why soldiers defect or remain loyal and the conditions that increase the likelihood of mutiny. She then examines the impact of international sanctions, finding that they can at times harm movements by generating new allies for authoritarian leaders or by shifting the locus of power from local civil resisters to international actors.

Nonviolent Revolutions offers essential insights into the challenges that civil resisters face and elucidates why some of these movements failed. With a recent surge of popular uprisings across the Middle East, this book provides a valuable new understanding of the dynamics and potency of civil resistance and nonviolent revolt.

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