

Certain types of popular uprisings more successful than others: research

February 10 2011, By Isak Svensson

A new University of Otago study looking at the traits of unarmed insurgencies over six decades contains lessons which could equally apply today to countries such as protest-torn Egypt and Tunisia.

The research, conducted by Dr. Isak Svensson, who is at the University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, together with Ms Mathilda Lindgren, Uppsala University, examined the chances of success of unarmed challenges in undemocratic regimes. It has just been published on-line in the *European Journal of International Relations*.

Looking at what happened in 287 years of [protests](#) in 57 non-democratic countries between 1946 and 2006, the researchers found that campaigns that demand governmental regime change are more successful than campaigns for territorial changes.

They also found that if the insurgents are split along ethnic lines, their success is less likely, with a similar lack of success if society is highly polarised along ethnic lines.

“Our research shows that both the aim of the campaigns and the nature of the society in which they are carried out, significantly affect the chances for success. This is of course not a how-to-do-it-guide for the campaigners: we are trying to contribute to the theoretical discussion about how political legitimacy can be challenged,” he says.

“However, campaigners would benefit from knowing their relative

strengths and weaknesses in order to take any strategic measures to counter the structural problems which our study found.”

He rated the chances of Egyptian campaigners against their Government as “relatively high considering that these campaigns are challenging government power.”

“There are some religious-ethnic cleavages in Egypt between Christian and Muslims, and our study finds that ethnic divisions generally decrease the chances for success. However, it seems as though the campaigners are trying to build a cross-ethnic/religious basis in [Egypt](#), which could mitigate against such structural problems,” Dr. Svensson says.

In the study, drawing on a data-set from previous research, there were 88 nonviolent conflicts; of these, 19 ended in limited success and 47 in full success for their campaigns. Another 22 insurgencies ended in failure.

Provided by University of Otago

Citation: Certain types of popular uprisings more successful than others: research (2011, February 10) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-02-popular-uprisings-successful.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--