

RELEASE IN FULL

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To: H
Subject: Gene Sharp

One of my staffers, Peter Mandaville, wrote up the below on the Gene Sharp-Otpor-April 6 movement connections:

Following the uprising that toppled Hosni Mubarak in Egypt this past February, some observers pointed to links between some of the key protest groups and the ideas of Gene Sharp, an American theorist of nonviolent struggle. More specifically, a February 13 article in the *New York Times* detailed a connection between Egypt's April 6 movement and former leaders of Serbia's civic youth movement Otpor—a group heavily influenced by Sharp's ideas and funded by the NED, USAID, and IRI. In 2009 the U.S. democracy advocacy group and think tank Freedom House sponsored a brief visit by several April 6 activists to Serbia to exchange ideas and receive training in civic mobilization.

Further reporting in April focused on the Academy of Change (AoC), an organization based in Qatar founded by three Egyptian expats. AoC trainers had worked with some of the precursor civic networks in Egypt—such as the Kefaya movement in 2005—again, with a strong influence from Gene Sharp's writings. April 6 activists also forged ties to the Academy of Change, establishing a sort of local franchise in Cairo under the guise of the Egyptian Democratic Academy, which also received USG grants.

In order to assess the strength and significance of these influences and the role of Gene Sharp's ideas in the January 25 revolution, several members of the Policy Planning Staff (S/P) looked into the issue during a recent fact-finding trip to Egypt. They met with representatives of a wide range of protest groups—including the April 6 movement—major civil society organizations, and political parties.

April 6 activists acknowledged the influence of Sharp's ideas, but emphasized that he was simply one among many thinkers (including Mahatma Ghandi) they had studied. They also denied the exclusivity of their relationship with Otpor, citing additional mentoring links to Poland's Solidarity movement, as well as other activists in the Arab world from Lebanon to Tunisia. Moving beyond the April 6 movement, most of the young protestors with whom my staff spoke had never heard of Gene Sharp.

In sum, it appears that Sharp's ideas had a strong influence on one of the "hub" groups that played a key role in organizing and mobilizing the initial January 25 protests in Egypt. These events, however, soon took on a momentum that transcended the ability of any one group to control. The vast majority of Egyptians who participated in the extraordinary eighteen days

that culminated in Mubarak's stepping down on February 11 had never been exposed to Sharp's ideas.

In some respects, the earlier reporting on these purported ties to Gene Sharp now seems somewhat overblown. The *NYT*, for example, claimed to see Sharp's influence in the extraordinary organizational discipline evident in the protestors' ability to hold ranks and avoid violent retaliation when set upon by pro-regime elements in the first few weeks of the revolution. Most other analysts, however, credit this to the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, which by about the third day of the uprising had taken over responsibility for securing Tahrir Square and organizing the protest ranks.