WORLD LIBERTY CONGRESS · PLAYBOOK FOR LIBERTY

PILLAR III · PRINCIPLE 8

Restoring Democracy Is Everyone’s Job

Coordination among political, state, and civil actors as a strategic necessity

A practical training guide for members of the World Liberty Congress and the World Liberty Academy. Eighth principle of the WLC Adaptations to Counter-Autocracy Strategic Framework (Berlin, November 2025), and the opening principle of Pillar III: Acting Together — Power in Numbers.

The principle, in one sentence. No single leader, party, movement, NGO, exile group, religious community, business association, or international ally can restore democracy alone. Authoritarianism is a system; resistance must also become a system. Democratic restoration is the coordinated work of an entire ecosystem, and one of the central reasons the World Liberty Congress exists is to make that coordination operational across borders and across sectors.

INTRODUCTION

Why this principle opens Pillar III

Pillar I of the Playbook for Liberty asked us to clarify the moral frame, the comparative discipline, the right mindset, the continuous strategy, and the nonviolent ethic that hold democratic struggle together. Pillar II turned that interior preparation into operational power, mapping the regime and identifying where democratic capacity must be built and authoritarian capacity eroded. Pillar III now asks the question that follows: how do we act together?

Acting together is not a sentimental aspiration. It is a strategic necessity. The Berlin Manifesto names the problem directly: a fragmented, leaderless free world is the dream of every despot, and a united and resolute free world is their deepest nightmare. The WLC was created to address a structural asymmetry in the global struggle for democracy. Authoritarian regimes coordinate. They share repression

tactics, surveillance technology, sanctions evasion strategies, propaganda templates, and diplomatic protection. Pro-democracy movements often remain fragmented by geography, language, institutional culture, funding silos, ideological categories, and the personal histories of their leaders. The deficit is not in courage. It is in coordination.

Principle 8 is the answer to that asymmetry. If authoritarian power is coordinated, democratic power must become coordinated as well. This essay sets out the principle in eleven sections. It explains why democracy restoration cannot be delegated to any single actor, defines the democratic ecosystem in operational terms, identifies the role of the WLC as connective tissue, examines two recent cases in which WLC members helped open democratic transitions through coordinated electoral observation, gives political parties the central treatment they require, sets out the practical architecture of coordination, and offers the exercises, questions, and warnings that members will need.

■ ■ ■

SECTION I

Why democracy restoration cannot be delegated to one actor

One of the most damaging myths in democratic struggles is that a single heroic actor will save the country: one candidate, one party, one student movement, one international sanction, one charismatic exile leader, one mass protest, one election, or one foreign government. This myth is dangerous because authoritarian regimes are not defeated by isolated acts of courage. They are weakened by cumulative, coordinated pressure.

A dictatorship can often survive a protest, a report, a diplomatic statement, or an opposition campaign if those actions remain disconnected. It is far more vulnerable when civic mobilization, political coordination, legal accountability, economic pressure, international advocacy, media strategy, and protection systems reinforce one another. The strategic problem is not coordinated authoritarianism alone. It is coordinated authoritarianism against fragmented democracy. The deficit is one of architecture, infrastructure, and connective tissue, not one of conviction.

> *"Courage is abundant among freedom fighters. What is often missing is the architecture that allows courage to become collective power."*

SECTION II

The Global Democratic Ecosystem

A democratic ecosystem is a network of actors performing different but complementary functions in the struggle for freedom. It is not a loose collection of people who occasionally meet or issue joint statements. It is a coordinated system in which different actors understand their roles, communicate regularly, share information through appropriate channels, avoid duplication, protect one another, and align their work toward a shared democratic objective.

In the WLC vision, a democratic ecosystem consists of eleven interlocking categories of actors. None is sufficient alone. Each is necessary.

Frontline activists

Those who organize, mobilize, document, and resist inside or near authoritarian systems. The center of gravity of the ecosystem, because they bear the most risk and produce the most direct knowledge of regime behavior.

Political parties and electoral actors

Parties, candidates, elected officials, and local authorities who contest power, negotiate where appropriate, build electoral alternatives, and prepare for governance. Treated in expanded depth in Section V, because the WLC has identified party-civic coordination as one of the most strategically decisive and most chronically underdeveloped capacities of pro-democracy movements.

Civil society organizations

NGOs, human-rights organizations, women’s groups, youth networks, community associations, professional groups, and grassroots movements that defend rights, provide services, protect communities, and sustain civic space when formal politics is closed.

Independent media and journalists

Those who expose truth, document repression, counter propaganda, and prevent the regime from monopolizing reality. Without independent media, every other element of the ecosystem operates in the dark.

Academic and research institutions

Universities and think tanks that translate experience into knowledge and knowledge into strategy, study authoritarian tactics, train leaders, host exiled

scholars, and generate the comparative analysis that allows movements to learn from each other.

Technologists and digital defenders

Those who build secure communications, cyber defense, evidence preservation, anti-surveillance training, decentralized coordination tools, and the AI-supported systems that the WLC is integrating into the Playbook for Liberty itself.

Lawyers and accountability experts

Legal defenders, sanctions specialists, universal-jurisdiction litigators, documentation experts, and the human-rights defenders who turn evidence into accountability and accountability into deterrence.

Diaspora and exile communities

The international wing of the struggle. Exiles can speak when internal actors are silenced, mobilize international pressure, provide resources, and keep memory alive. The Berlin Manifesto reframes exile as a frontline rather than a defeat, and the WLC's Freedom in Exile initiative is the operational instrument for that reframing.

Religious, moral, and community leaders

Those who can reach people beyond formal politics and root democratic language in local moral traditions. In many societies, religious leaders are the only voices respected across political lines, and the only voices that can speak with authority against fear.

Private sector and philanthropy

Business leaders, donors, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists who can either enable dictatorship or support freedom. The WLC's Make Freedom Investable initiative is designed to align this category with democratic outcomes rather than authoritarian stability.

International allies and democratic governments

Democratic governments, parliaments, foundations, international NGOs, and multilateral institutions that can offer protection, sanctions, diplomatic pressure, funding, legal mechanisms, and legitimacy. Their role is to support domestic leadership, not to replace it. This relationship is the subject of Principle 10.

The WLC's Theory of Change argues that democratic solidarity rests on three realities. Authoritarianism is now transnational. Comparative learning accelerates strategic innovation. And solidarity creates protective infrastructure. The democratic ecosystem is the operational form of those three realities.

SECTION III

The World Liberty Congress as connective tissue

The WLC is not a party, a government, a think tank, or a donor. It is a transnational network designed precisely to perform the connective work that the eleven categories of actors above so often fail to perform among themselves. The Berlin Manifesto describes the WLC as a catalyst and connector within the global democratic ecosystem, with the explicit purpose of ensuring that no freedom fighter ever stands alone.

For members, this means the WLC is most useful when treated as infrastructure to activate, not a service to consume. The WLC can do six things that no single national movement can typically do for itself, and members are encouraged to engage these capacities deliberately.

- Convene actors who do not normally speak: parties and civic groups, exiles and internal activists, lawyers and technologists, religious communities and secular movements, donors and grassroots organizations.
- Provide neutral facilitation when internal disputes risk damaging the work, through Regional Secretaries with cross-border experience and no national stake in any single faction.
- Connect research to practice, through the World Liberty Academy and the Playbook for Liberty, so that movements do not have to rediscover, alone, what others have already learned.
- Protect vulnerable actors through Free Them, Freedom in Exile, and the protection networks the WLC maintains for activists at acute risk.
- Translate solidarity into strategy by linking moral support with operational instruments: documentation, sanctions advocacy, electoral observation, transition preparation.
- Build the working trust that allows coalitions to survive repression, infiltration, and the inevitable internal disagreements that any serious coalition produces.

The next two sections show what this looks like in concrete cases. Sections IV and V examine, respectively, the WLC’s role in democratic transition contexts and the WLC’s deliberate focus on coordinating with political parties as a strategic priority.

SECTION IV

The role of the WLC in democratic transition contexts

Democratic transitions are the moments where everything that the previous principles teach becomes most urgent and most fragile at once. Authoritarian regimes do not collapse cleanly. They erode, fracture, hold contested elections, attempt to manipulate transfers of power, and, in some cases, accept defeat reluctantly when domestic and international conditions make continued resistance more costly than orderly transfer. In those moments, the work of coordinated democratic actors becomes decisive. A movement that has built power but not coordinated it will see victories slip away in the transition itself, sometimes within weeks of the apparent breakthrough.

The WLC supports its members in transition contexts in five specific ways: by helping coordinate electoral observation across civic, political, and international actors; by providing protection for activists, candidates, and election workers in the most exposed roles; by connecting movements with the legal, technical, and policy expertise that transitions require; by maintaining the cross-border peer network that allows leaders to learn from comparable transitions in other countries; and by helping prepare credible democratic alternatives so that the day after the regime falls is not a day of chaos. Two recent cases illustrate this work concretely.

The Bolivian case

> **Bolivia, electoral observation and the opening of a democratic transition.** The WLC chapter in Bolivia, working alongside national civic organizations, opposition parties, and international electoral observation missions, played a substantive role in the integrity of the electoral process that allowed a democratic alternative to win and a democratic transition to begin. The chapter's contribution was not only the visibility of observation. It was the connective work of bringing civic actors, political parties, and international observers into a shared system of electoral monitoring, evidence documentation, and rapid response to incidents.

What the Bolivian experience demonstrated is that electoral observation is not a single technical task. It is a multi-actor architecture. It requires civic organizations to mobilize trained observers in every constituency relevant to the result. It requires political parties to coordinate witness deployment without compromising the independence of the observation. It requires international missions, including those of the OAS and other bodies, to be welcomed and supported in ways that strengthen rather than substitute for the domestic effort. It requires legal teams

ready to document irregularities in formats useful to courts and international bodies. It requires media partners willing to publish verified findings rather than rumor. And it requires a working trust among all those actors, built before the election rather than improvised during it.

The role the WLC chapter played was largely the role of connective tissue: convening actors who did not always trust each other, sharing comparative methodology from electoral observation work in other countries the network had supported, providing protection for the most exposed observers, and ensuring that the international visibility of the process was sustained at the moments when domestic pressure most needed it. The democratic alternative that won did so through its own efforts. The contribution of the WLC chapter was to help ensure that the contest was clean enough for that win to be recognized, defended, and translated into the beginning of a transition.

The Honduran case

> **Honduras, the same architecture in a different context.** In Honduras, the WLC was similarly involved in the electoral observation that contributed to a democratic outcome. As in Bolivia, the work required collaboration with civil society organizations, with relevant government institutions, and with political parties across the opposition. The Honduran case underscored that the architecture is portable: the principles transfer, even when the specific conditions, regime type, and coalitional dynamics are different.

The Honduran case also confirmed something that members should expect in every transition context. The actors involved in successful electoral observation almost never agree on everything. Civic organizations distrust parties. Parties distrust each other. International observers are sometimes seen as intrusive by domestic actors, and as insufficiently informed by exiled leaders. The WLC's role was not to resolve those tensions in the abstract. It was to construct, around a specific shared objective (the integrity of a particular election), a working architecture in which actors who would otherwise compete or ignore each other could collaborate operationally for a defined period.

Lessons across both cases

Several patterns emerged from Bolivia and Honduras that members operating in pre-transition or transitional contexts should treat as working hypotheses, not formulas:

- Electoral observation is not a substitute for political work; it is the work that allows political work to produce its intended result. Movements that focus only on the campaign and neglect observation often win the count and lose the result.
- The architecture must be built well before the election. Six to twelve months in advance is the minimum lead time for serious cross-sector observation. Coalitions assembled in the final weeks rarely function under pressure.
- Coordination across civic organizations, political parties, and international missions is the differentiating capacity. Civic organizations alone cannot reach every polling station. Parties alone cannot claim independence. International missions alone cannot generate the local credibility that makes findings stick.
- Documentation standards matter more than visibility in the short term. Observation that produces evidence usable in courts, international bodies, and accountability mechanisms is more durable than observation that produces only press releases.
- Protection of observers is integral to the work, not a service added afterward. Movements should expect intimidation of observers as a regime tactic and prepare for it in the design phase.
- The day after victory is the most fragile moment. Coalitions that hold together through the count and the certification but fragment in the first weeks of transition often see their gains reversed. Transition planning must begin before the result is known.

Members in countries approaching elections that may open transitions are encouraged to engage the relevant Regional Secretary at the earliest stage of planning. The WLC has now accumulated working experience in this kind of cross-sector coordination in multiple cases, and the network can offer not only methodology but the working relationships with international observation bodies, legal teams, and protection networks that this work requires.

■ ■ ■

SECTION V

Political parties and the WLC commitment to party-civic coordination

Of all the categories of actors that make up a democratic ecosystem, the relationship between political parties and civil society is the most strategically decisive and the most chronically underdeveloped. The WLC has identified this relationship as a primary focus of its work. The reasons for that focus deserve to be

stated clearly, because members coming from civic backgrounds sometimes underestimate the importance of parties, and members coming from party backgrounds sometimes underestimate the cost of failing to coordinate with civic actors.

Why political parties cannot be ignored

Democracy is not only a set of values. It is also a set of institutions. The institutions through which democratic societies make collective decisions, hold elections, govern, legislate, and conduct peaceful transfers of power are, in every functioning democracy, organized around political parties. There is no historical example of a stable democracy without parties. There are many examples of failed democratic transitions in which civic movements toppled a regime but were unable to translate that victory into governance because no party-level alternative was prepared to take responsibility on the day after.

Parties bring four capacities that civic actors, however legitimate, typically cannot generate on their own. They aggregate preferences across millions of voters into governable platforms. They produce, train, and discipline the leadership cadres that governments require. They sustain themselves between elections through organizational continuity that movements rarely match. And they accept the formal accountability of holding office, which is the central mechanism through which democratic systems convert popular preference into binding decision. A movement that disdains parties is a movement that has decided not to govern.

Why political parties cannot dominate

At the same time, parties are not the whole of democracy. In authoritarian and post-authoritarian contexts especially, parties are often distrusted by the citizens whose support they need. They have sometimes been complicit in the conditions that produced authoritarianism in the first place. They are vulnerable to personalist capture, to clientelist incentives, and to the temptation to absorb civic energy into electoral machines that subordinate the broader struggle to short-term political calculation. A democratic restoration that allows parties to absorb civil society loses, in the moment of victory, the very legitimacy that made victory possible.

Civic actors bring four capacities that parties typically lack. They generate moral legitimacy that parties, by their nature, cannot fully claim. They sustain attention to issues that fall outside electoral cycles. They protect public interest in moments when partisan competition turns destructive. And they hold parties accountable in ways that internal party mechanisms rarely can. A democratic restoration that marginalizes civil society loses the connective tissue that holds democratic legitimacy together over time.

The party-civic distrust problem

The structural difficulty in pro-democracy movements is therefore not that parties and civic actors disagree on ends. It is that they often distrust each other on means and motives. Civic actors fear that parties will absorb, instrumentalize, or marginalize them. Parties fear that civic actors will demand accountability without taking responsibility, mobilize when convenient and disappear when responsibility is required, and prioritize moral consistency over the political compromise that governance requires. Both fears have empirical foundation. Both fears, when allowed to govern the relationship, weaken the entire democratic project.

Authoritarian regimes understand this distrust and actively exploit it. They portray parties as corrupt and civic actors as foreign-funded. They fund or fabricate fake civic groups to delegitimize real ones. They cultivate fake-opposition parties to divide the genuine opposition. They produce narratives in which any cooperation between civic and party actors is presented as proof that civic actors have been captured. The distrust the regime exploits is sometimes real, but it is also strategically magnified because keeping parties and civic actors apart is one of the most reliable ways to prevent coordinated democratic pressure.

Why the WLC focuses on bridging this divide

The WLC was created by activists who experienced this fragmentation directly, in country after country, and who concluded that bridging the party-civic divide is one of the most decisive contributions a transnational network can make. The WLC takes this position not because parties or civic actors are inherently superior, but because the specific structural feature of pro-democracy struggle that most reliably produces failure is the absence of working coordination between them. Five reasons make this focus a priority of the WLC.

First, no democratic transition has ever been consolidated without functional party-civic coordination at the moment of opening. The Spanish transition, the Polish round table, the Chilean Concertación, the South African transition, and several Latin American cases all exhibited, at the decisive moment, a working architecture in which civic mobilization and party negotiation reinforced each other rather than competing. Movements that achieve victory through civic mobilization but do not have a party-level alternative ready typically lose control of the transition within months.

Second, the regime’s most reliable strategy against pro-democracy movements is precisely to fragment parties from civic actors. A WLC that does not work systematically to bridge that divide leaves the most predictable point of attack undefended.

Third, electoral observation, electoral integrity, and election protection (as the Bolivian and Honduran cases showed) are by their nature joint civic-party endeavors. The capacity to monitor an election credibly, document irregularities rigorously, and translate findings into legitimate political outcomes does not exist in either category alone.

Fourth, civic actors and parties are answering different but complementary questions. Civic actors typically ask what we are fighting against. Parties typically ask what we will govern with on the day after. Both questions are necessary. Movements that answer only the first end up leaving the second to whoever is best positioned to fill the vacuum, which is often the wrong person.

Fifth, the WLC operates across more than sixty countries and across the full diversity of political traditions. The network includes liberals, conservatives, social democrats, religious democrats, and movements that resist easy ideological classification. The only way for a network of this breadth to function is for it to refuse to take sides among the legitimate party traditions of its members, while insisting that all of them coordinate with civic actors on the shared minimum democratic agreement that defines the freedom struggle. The WLC’s role with parties is therefore not to favor one party tradition over another, but to insist that all democratic parties recognize their structural dependence on civic legitimacy and act accordingly.

What this looks like operationally

Concretely, the WLC supports party-civic coordination through several specific instruments. Through the Bringing Democracy to Power program, the WLC identifies and supports democratic leaders who can govern after transitions, with attention to the political pluralism that any sustainable democracy requires. Through the World Liberty Academy, the WLC trains both party officials and civic leaders in the disciplines of coalition building, negotiation, electoral observation, and post-transition governance. Through Regional Secretaries, the WLC convenes party-civic strategy tables in countries where the divide is acute. Through the Playbook for Liberty, the WLC documents and shares the lessons of cases like Bolivia and Honduras so that the working architecture in those countries can inform comparable work elsewhere.

The operating rule the WLC offers to members is simple. Parties compete for office. Democratic coalitions cooperate to restore the rules of freedom. The two activities are different, and conflating them produces failures of both kinds. Parties that try to absorb civic actors lose the legitimacy that makes party victory worth winning. Civic actors that try to substitute for parties lose the institutional capacity that makes

democratic outcomes durable. The discipline is to keep the two distinct, and to make them work together.

■ ■ ■

SECTION VI

The practical architecture of coordination

Principle 8 is not a call for vague unity. It requires structures. WLC members should think in terms of coordination architecture: the working components that allow a coalition of different actors to function as a system rather than a collection of individuals. Seven components are essential. A coalition that has all seven can sustain pressure under repression. A coalition missing two or more usually fails at the first serious test.

1. Shared diagnosis

Actors must begin with a common understanding of the regime: type, pillars, vulnerabilities, current phase, rising risks, available openings. Without shared diagnosis, coordination becomes shallow, and disagreements about strategy reveal themselves to be disagreements about analysis that were never surfaced. The diagnostic work of Principle 6 is the foundation.

2. Minimum democratic agreement

A short written agreement based on core democratic principles: release of political prisoners, end of repression, restoration of civic space, free and fair elections, rule of law, independent media, freedom of conscience and association, rejection of vengeance, commitment to pluralism, protection of vulnerable groups. The agreement is short enough for very different actors to sign, but strong enough to exclude authoritarian substitutes.

3. Strategic lanes

A democratic ecosystem works best when different actors take responsibility for different lanes:

- Political coordination.
- Civil resistance and organizing.
- Legal defense and accountability.
- International advocacy.
- Digital security.
- Political prisoner support.

- Narrative and communications.
- Youth and women's leadership.
- Religious and community outreach.
- Anti-kleptocracy research.
- Electoral observation and election integrity.
- Transition planning.
- Diaspora coordination.

Each lane needs responsible actors, clear goals, timelines, and communication channels. Lanes that overlap without coordination produce duplication. Lanes that fail to communicate produce gaps.

4. Shared strategy table

A regular working space where representatives from different sectors coordinate. Not a symbolic council, but an operational forum. A useful agenda for each meeting includes: what changed since last time, what is the regime doing now, what is our shared priority, which lane is responsible for what, what needs protection, what must be communicated publicly, what must remain confidential, what international support is needed, what is the next decision point.

5. Conflict-resolution mechanism

All coalitions face conflict. The question is whether conflict is managed or destroys the coalition. The mechanism should include trusted mediators (Regional Secretaries can play this role at the WLC level), rules for public disagreement, internal dispute channels, decision-making procedures, protection against infiltration and provocation, and clear consequences for genuinely anti-democratic behavior, distinct from normal political disagreement.

6. Information-sharing protocols

Coordination requires information, but not all information should be shared with everyone. Authoritarian regimes infiltrate networks. Coalitions should adopt a need-to-know principle for sensitive data while maintaining enough transparency to sustain trust. The methodology of safe documentation set out in the Playbook training document for Principle 2 applies directly.

7. Joint metrics

Coordination improves when actors measure progress together: number of coordinated campaigns, number of political prisoner cases supported, number of cross-sector meetings with follow-up, number of joint statements or actions, number of trained activists, number of international briefings, quality of coalition

participation, reduction of duplication, improvements in protection protocols, evidence of regime response to coordinated pressure.

SECTION VII

Practical exercises for the World Liberty Academy

The following six exercises are used in WLC Academy workshops on coalition building. They can be adapted for any leadership retreat, coalition strategy meeting, or coordination training session.

Exercise 1. Ecosystem mapping

Participants map all relevant democratic actors in their country or diaspora: parties, NGOs, unions, media, religious communities, student groups, professional associations, women’s groups, youth networks, legal experts, exiles, donors, technologists, and international allies. Each actor is then classified by form of power, level of trust, current role, missing connection, potential contribution, and risk level. The exercise reveals the actors most often invisible to the leadership group.

Exercise 2. Fragmentation diagnosis

Participants identify the three most damaging divisions in their movement (ideological, personal, regional, generational, exile-versus-internal, party-versus-civic, donor-driven, religious-versus-secular, ethnic, social) and design one practical bridge for each divide. The exercise builds the muscle of distinguishing legitimate pluralism from operational fragmentation.

Exercise 3. Strategic lanes workshop

Participants divide into lanes (political, civic, legal, international, communications, protection, technology, electoral observation, transition planning) and each lane defines what it can contribute to one shared campaign, what it needs from other lanes, and what it expects from the lane that runs the shared strategy table.

Exercise 4. Shared strategy table simulation

Participants simulate a crisis: a major opposition leader is arrested, a protest is banned, an internet shutdown occurs, a fraudulent election is announced, or a candidate is disqualified. Each actor must decide its role within a coordinated

response, in real time, with the constraints of trust, time, and security that real coalitions face.

Exercise 5. Coordination without unanimity

Participants design a campaign in which actors disagree ideologically but agree on a defined democratic objective. The exercise teaches that strategic cooperation does not require ideological agreement, and that the discipline of bracketing disagreement around a clear shared goal is one of the most valuable capacities a coalition can develop.

Exercise 6. Domestic-international alignment

Participants identify what domestic actors need from international allies and what international actors must avoid doing in order not to undermine local legitimacy. This exercise prepares participants for the work of Principle 10 and is most effective when conducted with both domestic and international participants in the same room.

■ ■ ■

SECTION VIII

Common mistakes to avoid

Mistake 1. Treating coordination as a photo opportunity

A joint photo is not coordination. A conference panel is not coordination. Coordination means shared diagnosis, division of labor, follow-up, accountability, and continued communication. Symbolic unity without operational substance leaves the regime's strategy of fragmentation intact.

Mistake 2. Confusing unity with uniformity

Democratic actors do not need to agree on everything. They need to agree on what must be done together. Pluralism is not a weakness. It is the democratic alternative to authoritarian uniformity. This insight is the bridge to Principle 9.

Mistake 3. Allowing parties and civic actors to compete instead of complement

Parties are necessary. Civic society is necessary. Neither should dominate the other. Section V of this essay sets out the WLC's explicit doctrine on this: parties compete for office; democratic coalitions cooperate to restore the rules of freedom. The two activities are different and must remain so.

Mistake 4. Ignoring informal actors

Movements often focus only on formal organizations. Real influence may lie with mothers of prisoners, clergy, local business owners, youth organizers, artists, informal neighborhood leaders, or diaspora volunteers who hold no title but carry decisive trust in their communities.

Mistake 5. Letting donors create silos

Funding structures can divide movements. International allies should support coordination, not competition among grantees. Donors that require their grantees to compete with each other for visibility undermine the very ecosystem they claim to be supporting.

Mistake 6. Excluding those who do not speak the dominant language

Regional and linguistic inclusion is strategic, not optional. A network of more than sixty countries cannot function if members are excluded by language, by time zone, or by access to the platforms the leadership uses.

Mistake 7. Failing to prepare for repression

When coalitions become effective, regimes will attack them. They will infiltrate, smear, divide, arrest, and provoke. Coordination architecture must include protection architecture from the start, not as an afterthought when the first attack arrives.

■ ■ ■

SECTION IX

Guiding questions for WLC members

The questions below are organized by the role members play. Members in multiple roles should answer multiple sets. The questions are most useful when answered honestly with the leadership group and revisited every six months, or whenever a major change in the regime or the coalition makes a fresh diagnosis necessary.

FOR NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

- *Who are all the actors needed to restore democracy in our country?*
- *Who is missing from the table?*
- *Which actors distrust each other most, and what is that distrust based on?*
- *Which actors hold unique forms of power that no other actor can substitute?*
- *Which actors can reach constituencies that others cannot?*
- *What is our minimum democratic agreement, and is it written down?*

- *Where are we duplicating efforts? Where are we leaving gaps?*
- *What is the coalition's decision-making process when we disagree?*
- *How do we coordinate without demanding ideological uniformity?*
- *What is our party-civic working relationship, and is it functioning?*

FOR EXILE AND DIASPORA GROUPS

- *Are we connected to domestic realities, or speaking primarily to ourselves?*
- *Are we amplifying internal voices or replacing them?*
- *Are we helping coordinate international pressure, or generating competing pressure points?*
- *Are we reducing or increasing the fragmentation of the broader movement?*
- *Do we have secure channels with domestic actors?*
- *Are we preparing to support transition when openings appear, including by being ready to return?*

FOR INTERNATIONAL ALLIES

- *Are we supporting domestic leadership or substituting for it?*
- *Are we funding silos or building ecosystems?*
- *Are we coordinating with other donors and governments, or competing with them?*
- *Are we providing long-term support or short-term projects that interrupt themselves?*
- *Are we protecting activists under threat in operational, not symbolic, ways?*
- *Are we aligning diplomacy, funding, technology, sanctions, and legal tools?*

FOR THE WLC ITSELF

- *How can the WLC serve as connective tissue in this case, rather than as another competing actor?*
- *Where can the WLC convene actors who do not normally speak?*
- *Where can the WLC provide neutral facilitation that domestic mediators cannot?*
- *Where can the WLC connect research to practice through the Academy and the Playbook?*
- *Where can the WLC protect vulnerable actors who would otherwise be exposed?*
- *Where can the WLC help transform solidarity into operational strategy?*

CONCLUSION

Democracy is a team sport

Authoritarianism thrives on division. Democracy requires coordination. Restoring democracy is not the mission of one leader, one party, one NGO, one student movement, one foreign ally, or one heroic exile. It is the collective task of a democratic ecosystem, and the work of building that ecosystem is what Pillar III of the Playbook is about.

Political actors bring representation and governance capacity. Civil society brings legitimacy and social trust. Media brings truth. Lawyers bring accountability. Universities bring knowledge. Technologists bring tools. Diasporas bring international reach. Religious and community leaders bring moral language and social depth. International allies bring protection and leverage. Victims and political prisoners bring the moral clarity that holds the entire ecosystem together. When these actors operate separately, authoritarian regimes can isolate them. When they coordinate, they become a force that no regime can durably suppress.

The Bolivian and Honduran cases are recent evidence that this is not theoretical. They show what happens when civic organizations, political parties, and international observation work together inside a coordinated architecture, supported by the connective infrastructure that the WLC was created to provide. The lesson is portable. The architecture can be built in any country approaching a democratic moment, provided the work begins early enough and the actors are willing to coordinate across the divides that the regime depends on them maintaining.

Dictatorships cooperate.
Democrats must learn to cooperate better.
Do not ask who owns the struggle.
Ask who is needed for freedom to win.
Democracy is a team sport, and the team is everyone.

For WLC members, this principle is the entry point of Pillar III. It commits each of us to the discipline of coordination across borders and across sectors, in the knowledge that the deficit between our movements and the authoritarian international is not in conviction or courage. It is in working together with the precision the moment requires.

SOURCES CITED

World Liberty Congress, *Berlin Manifesto* (Berlin Parliament, November 10, 2025), the doctrinal foundation referenced throughout this essay.

World Liberty Congress, *Theory of Change* (2026), and *Adaptations to Counter-Autocracy Strategic Framework* (Berlin, November 2025). Principle 8: Restoring Democracy is Everyone's Job.

Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (Albert Einstein Institution, 1993), for the foundational theory of pillars of support and multi-sector cooperation.

Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2011), for the empirical foundations on broad participation, tactical diversity, and movement discipline.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2010), for the regime-typology framework that distinguishes the strategic environments in which coordination must operate.

On democratic transitions, see Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

On electoral observation methodology, see the Organization of American States (OAS) Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation, and the documentation framework of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). ndi.org.

On party-civic coordination in democratic transitions, see Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (University of California Press, 1985), for the Polish case; and Manuel Antonio Garretón, *Incomplete Democracy: Political Democratization in Chile and Latin America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), for the Latin American comparative analysis.

CONTINUE TO PRINCIPLE 9

Principle 9 of the Playbook for Liberty is Coordination Wins, But Does Not Mean Unanimity. It addresses the most common mistake coalitions make, which is to confuse the requirement of coordination with the demand for ideological uniformity,

and offers the operational discipline that allows pluralistic coalitions to act together without falsely homogenizing their differences.