

Washington DC, June 6, 2013.

Questions for Dr. Maciej Bartkowski submitted after his webinar on [Recovering Nonviolent History: Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles](#).

Dr. Bartkowski's responses follow each question.

Q: You say victims are the true power holders. but how do you stimulate/ provoke this people power in a country or region where for decades people have been so terrified of any form of self-organization they are afraid to even say the word 'politics' out loud and they only associate it with terror? You mention 'cognitive liberation' - but what if in fact people are being physically harmed every time they attempt any non-violent action? How do you facilitate their actions in such conditions?

Maciej Bartkowski (MB): It is difficult to find an 'ideal' situation of a total repression that you refer to in which the people would be physically harmed "every time they attempt any nonviolent action." There is no regime that can or could oppress all people, all the time, and in all places. Even the Nazi or the North Korean (Stalinist) regimes had/has to rely on the voluntary rather than coerced obedience of some of their key supporters in the military, industry, bureaucracy and among a general public. At the same time, the repertoire of nonviolent actions is so broad that one talks really about an ideal state of totalitarian oppression (that does not exist) in which *every* nonviolent action is repressed. The question is also what *every* stands for. Often, when people say that they used all and every nonviolent actions and nothing worked and someone asked them to list those actions, they would name 5 or 10 of them (mainly demonstrations, protests, picketing, limited strikes etc.). Even if people named 100 nonviolent methods this would still not constitute all possible civic resistance actions. Then, the question is whether these methods were used strategically or not. Strategically, meaning if they were used with minimum risks for the movement and maximum costs for the adversary. Staying at home and boycotting elections, or the regime's holiday might be less risky but costly for the regime if only tens or hundreds of thousands are mobilized. Still, this more subtle form of resistance – e.g. symbolic actions like mass funerals, open or secretive celebrations of national opposition figures or events, cultural resistance in the form of songs, poems, jokes—although might not immediately weaken the control of the regime it hollows out its remaining legitimacy over a long time and educates people, shapes their awareness and reduces their fear and apathy. These actions would eventually help galvanize people to engage in more direct, mass-based actions once the opportunities arise in the future.

Any stimulus for moving people away from their life within the lie and in fear has to come from inside, from those (at the onset, a very few) who are part of that oppressed society. They will be leading the change. Ideas for resistance when fear dominates could be numerous. One can work slower or less competently in regime factories, one can write a humoresque or a graphic novel with anti-regime subtexts that is distributed/played/read underground or more openly depending on the repressive environment, one can organize a 'pro-regime' flash-mob where the 'celebration' of regime's achievements can be on display with a dose of irony and laughter. Some relatively independent organizations like church or religious groups, sport associations, arts organizations, or literary circles might be used to undertake a number of resistance-

awareness raising activities or even defiance actions depending on the degree of openness/brutality of the system.

Q: non-violent struggle as a force of transition is one thing. However, what happens after the transition - how do you make sure that this 'positive energy' of non-violent action contributes to the future creation of a stable political system?

MB: Movements – particularly those that develop in the authoritarian systems - have to prepare themselves for the transitions before the political breakthrough occurs. This preparation for transition has to happen during the resistance phase, as difficult and remote from the current developments that this might be. I have addressed this question in greater details during my webinar. Please review its Q/A portion.

You can also find my previous webinar and the Fletcher Summer Institute presentations on civil resistance and democratic transitions of relevance. They could be accessed by clicking on the links below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHauL6NkaUg>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOg-ParY738>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVUEVsYosQc&feature=player_embedded# (view from 27 min. 23s.)

Q: The Egyptian Revolution has been hijacked by Islamists even though it was nonviolent. Young democratic activists waged a NV struggle and have now been persecuted and jailed. What can be done to reclaim the true nature of the Egyptian Revolution?

MB: I do not think I would agree that the Egyptian revolution has been hijacked by Islamists - not yet. For one, the Islamists came to power – not through a coup (the word “hijacked” might inadvertently imply that) – but via parliamentary and presidential elections that were still – despite the problems -- the most democratic in the Egyptian history. The international community did not dispute the fairness of the elections as was the case during previous years under Mubarak. I think that Egypt is where it is – in a transition rather than under the military or Islamist authoritarian rule – because democratic activists – despite arrests – are still engaged on the streets, in their neighborhoods and organizations while the Egyptian civil society (trade unions, professional syndicates, university administrations, women’s organizations, independent media, etc.) remains vibrant, and vigilant. The true nature of the Egyptian revolution might not necessarily be reflected in who is currently in power but rather how the general elections in coming years will be conducted and where civil society will be at that time. Systemic transition is a process that on average takes 15-20 years. It is too early to say if what the Egyptian revolution stood for would be monopolized by anti-democratic factions. I think little credit is given to the autonomous nature of the Egyptian civil society that effectively resisted Mubarak and is now holding back the authoritarian tendencies both of the remnants of the regime and within some quarters of the new political elite.

Q: Why didn't the American colonialists recognize their effectiveness at the time? How can we ensure that we declare/identify victory (ies) when or while it is happening?

MB: They did not recognize the effectiveness of popular nonviolent struggle because no writing in popular press and no public discussions that would summarize or reflect on the strategic advantages of civil resistance (over a possible violent response) and share that widely with the local population had been done. But I do not think that the American colonists can be blamed for that. It took more than two centuries for the comprehensive study “[Why Civil Resistance Works. The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict](#)” to be published. It is the first ever analysis of the effectiveness of nonviolent versus violent campaigns over a longer time period (more than 100 years) with hundreds of cases to compare (323). Despite the Internet and instant communication, ‘rational’ violent insurgents have still major difficulties (as seen in Syria) in understanding that on average their violent resistance against a violent regime is likely to last longer and end in failure in comparison with civil resistance.

In order to recognize the victories and achievements where they really belong we need to insure that both social and mainstream media as well as NGO, academic and policy communities provide an exhaustive reflection on the use and impact of civil resistance as well as successes and failures in building resilient civic movements under a brutal oppression and contrast that with other possible options like violent insurrection, or negotiations, or dialoguing with repressive regimes. These verbal and written exchanges should be translated into local languages where the struggle takes place and distributed widely among the population - via text messages, leaflets, brochures, radio transmission, walkie-talkie networks, satellite communication, etc.

Q: What does Dr. Bartkowski think of the Occupy Wall Street Movement?

MB: Occupy proved to be equally productive as it was ultimately unsuccessful. There are many aspects of the ‘productive side’ of Occupy and a number of reasons for its relative ineffectiveness in reaching its goals. Two major weaknesses in Occupy were the internal conflict over whether to remain nonviolent in the face of police brutality (e.g. Oakland) and the widespread reliance on one method of struggle: occupation, over other methods of resistance (e.g. boycotts, alternative institutions building, civic strikes) in order to place greater pressure on the economic and political elites. Two major achievements of the Occupy were its power to mobilize and awaken the population, particularly younger generations, and its reverberations outside the United States that are likely to be felt for many years and that will eventually come back. Occupy has not ended. It is dormant but not dead. It will be awakened again.

Q: What does Dr. Bartkowski think of George Lakey's 5 Stage Strategic Framework of a Living Revolution to unseat corporate power and corrupt governments?

MB: One of the most important stages that G. Lakey identified is ‘conscientization.’ I do not think any sustained revolution (both in the struggle against an immediate injustice and later during the transition) could take place without grassroots, organic education of the population. This education is particularly effective if it takes place via the process of self-organization of the society. Through self-organization the society reclaims economic, social, cultural, and political space and builds civic institutions that represent the societal values and practices independent of or in contrast to the ones held by the regime or elites in power.

Q: You mentioned that you would address why the number of non-violent campaigns have increased over the years. Would you please provide the answer to why they have increased?

Q: I believe that there are probably many more examples of large scale nonviolent struggles in the past that we are still to uncover. Even so, I would like to hear your hypotheses about why large-scale nonviolent campaigns have increased in frequency over the course of the last 200 years.

MB: I have addressed this issue during the webinar Q/A. Please review the recording. In general, there is a relatively greater understanding than decades ago of how to conduct and win the struggle between the many who are deprived of their rights and freedoms and the few that monopolize violent means and economic resources. There is also greater knowledge about civil resistance and skillful ways of organizing against very repressive regimes, combined with a deeper appreciation of what violent conflict might mean for the society at large and for the unarmed activists in particular, that account for readiness of the civilian action-takers to devise civic campaigns and adopt nonviolent methods to challenge violent adversary.

Q: How important is de-centralized organization for the leadership and execution of a nonviolent struggle? In addition to alternative or parallel social and economic institutions, should the resistance movement itself be organized democratically?

MB: This question has also been addressed during the webinar Q/A. Please review the recording. To develop further - decentralization helps turn followers into leaders. There is still a need for a central strategy: a general agreement, for example, that the movement will remain nonviolent and that its goal is a free, open, tolerant society with an accountable and representative government and a more equitable distribution of wealth. The activists and supporters on various levels – village, town, city, or provinces – determine the type of actions and self-organization that they deem appropriate to advance the main goals of the movement. The democratically organized movement does not mean that the strategic decisions (e.g. whether to escalate the strikes or engage in negotiations with the adversary) are made via consultation with every member of the mass-based movement or via a popular vote. This is often not possible given physical restrictions and censorship – particularly in non-democracies. But the online, informal polling of the members can be arranged, discussions can take place and views can be heard. Eventually, a democratic movement in a non-democracy stands for its mutual-help and solidarity networks, open membership and voluntary involvement, ideas and discussions free of censorship, legitimate representation of shared grievances and societal diversity and its principled stance on mass, nonviolent participation in actions and campaigns. This is the nucleus of the future democracy before that democracy is won.

Q: Any thoughts on the current nonviolent movement in Palestine?

MB: [Recovering Nonviolent History](#) includes a chapter on Palestinian nonviolent struggle from the 1920s till 2012 written by Dr. Mary King. I encourage listeners/readers to review this excellent study as it provides an important historical perspective on the current developments in Palestine. I refer you to my graph on a two-level nonviolent battlefield that I presented in the webinar as this is particularly applicable to the Palestinian nonviolent resistance. This civilian-led struggle—in order to be ultimately successful – needs to go beyond the Palestinian

communities - and involve Israeli society, Jewish diasporas as well as societies of other countries. Palestinians need to develop strategies for self-organization and campaigns for self-rule that could appeal both to non-Palestinians as well as moderate Jews. Please refer to my model of a two-level struggle that I presented during the webinar.

*Q: Regarding denial, isn't it also the case that victims are preoccupied with survival and perhaps are feeling the effects of the "shock doctrine" before they are able to eventually come together? This comes from Naomi Klein's book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, where disasters are manufactured by those in power to transform economies but in fact ravage those economies for some time to come. The people then need to recover from the effects. Hope this helps.*

MB: It is true that victims are often preoccupied with their physical and economic survival. This might not necessarily be associated directly with capitalism but for example with violent non-state actors (gangs, paramilitary units). Regardless of the reasons for why people have to ensure their survival this drive for protection might help mobilize (rather than demobilize) whole communities and collectively repel the danger. I recommend the excellent ICNC webinar presentation by Oliver Kaplan where he talks about local communities in Colombia and the Philippines, among others, and their resistance-rooted protection strategies that turn them from victims into self-empowered liberators. <http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/index.php/learning-and-resources/educational-initiatives/academic-webinar-series/2672-how-communities-use-nonviolent-strategies-to-avoid-civil-war-violence>

Q: Could you say more about how you used the NAVCO Data Project (http://www.du.edu/korbel/sie/research/chenow_navco_data.html). What were the benefits of using a dataset like this? What were some of the limitations? What features do you wish existed in the dataset that aren't coded currently?

MB: Just recently my colleague, Erica Chenoweth, has released the NAVCO 2.0 Dataset. Together with her colleague Orion Lewis they published an article on NAVCO 2.0 in the special issue of the *Journal of Peace Research* published in May 2013. The article elaborates in detail on the content of that new dataset, including the limitations of its first edition – NAVCO 1.0 – that NAVCO 2.0 addresses. I recommend to review the article: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/50/3/415.abstract>

Q: Thanks for conducting the webinar. I wonder if there's a corollary between the relative historical neglect of nonviolent struggles and the relative neglect of nonviolent struggles, in comparison with violent ones, in the news media. Johan Galtung and Marie Holmboe Ruge put forward a theory of what news publishers value (summarized for example at <http://www.pgce.soton.ac.uk/ict/newsday/values.pdf>). This theory posits, among other things, that nonviolence is ordinary (Many more people hugged each other in Boston today than shot each other today, but which would be more likely to make the mainstream local news?) So, Galtung argues elsewhere, thank goodness that violence is considered "news" and nonviolence is not, because if it was the reverse we would live in a very sad society indeed.

MB: Resistance can take various forms—from a “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” as Asef Bayat termed it, small acts of defiance, symbolic and cultural resistance to more visible actions like occupation of public spaces, strikes and demonstrations. It is not necessary that all “nonviolence” is ordinary but a significant portion could be seen as less dramatic and spectacular (and thus less interesting for media) than violence. Sad? Perhaps, Galtung meant boring though I would also find it incorrect. I think we would be generally more happy, if not less alienated from politics, to live in the society where instead of violence we would rely on the use of nonviolent methods (that are ideally reported in the media) to achieve political goals that cannot be attained through the traditional or conventional politics because the latter is corrupt or/and monopolized.

Q: I'm interested in that transition phase between predominantly nonviolent resistance and large scale violent resistance - examining these cases, do you have ideas about how nonviolent resisters might help prevent the nonviolent nature of the struggles becoming overshadowed?

MB: I think it takes reasoning, persuasion and convincing—all important ingredients of any nonviolent organizing—particularly with those who are different than us. Often, the Internet helps us to get together but with people who are like us, think like us, were educated like us, come from the same socio-economic class as us. The formation of a mass-based nonviolent movement should be taking place among people, groups, organizations that are not similar. This not only helps to ensure a diverse representation within the movement but can be an effective instrument to prevent violent radicals to take charge of the resistance. I think the experience of the South African anti-apartheid struggle – where the African National Congress (ANC) as a violent resistance (as ineffective as it was) was successfully integrated into a mass-based, nonviolent movement led by the United Democratic Front – is very helpful here and offers interesting lessons and perhaps answers to the question above. I recommend the listeners/readers to review the presentation by Howard Barrell on ANC and anti-apartheid struggle delivered at Fletcher Summer Institute in 2012 (it comes together with another relevant talk by Kurt Schock on radical violent flanks that could be of interest):

<http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/index.php/learning-and-resources/educational-initiatives/fletcher-summer-institute/fsi-2012/2267-nonviolent-discipline-and-radical-flanks/#ndarf>

Q: The American Revolution case, I don't know if the chapter in the book quotes John Adams's line, "As to the history of the revolution, my ideas may be peculiar, perhaps singular. What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected from 1760–1775, in the course of fifteen years, before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington." Letter to Thomas Jefferson (24 August 1815), The Works of John Adams; he later expressed similar sentiments in a letter to Hezekiah Niles (13 February 1818).

http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Adams .

MB: Yes. This quote is featured in the [book chapter](#) on nonviolent resistance of the American colonists—in its introduction, p. 299-300.

Q: Are there acknowledgements from some of the other leaders of violent struggles you studied of the crucial role of nonviolent struggles? I know Matt Meyer, who wrote an essay in your book, in his book with John Sutherland, Guns and Gandhi in Africa, interviews a variety of post-colonial leaders in Africa regarding this question. Are there others?

MB: The African National Congress that fought violently (at least after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre) -though with little success - with the apartheid regime, later embraced nonviolent resistance and acknowledged its contribution to the successful anti-apartheid struggle. I think that Maoists in Nepal acknowledge that their shift away from violence towards nonviolent resistance brought down the monarchy – something that Maoists failed to achieve via sheer violence since the mid-1980s. Finally, the Zapatista movement embraced peaceful organizing and mobilization as a more effective weapon to further their cause than the past violence that launched the movement in 1994.

Q: I know you had a slide and addressed the second question, largely by saying that there is increasing knowledge about nonviolent struggle modalities, and increased knowledge about the effectiveness of nonviolent struggles. What do you think of Pinker's hypotheses (in the Better Angels of Our Nature) about the causes of long term reduction in violence, and whether some of these human rights and humanitarian revolutions, etc. might also have contributed to an increase in the use of large scale nonviolent campaigns?

MB: Pinker identifies three factors that have contributed to the decrease of political violence over a 10,000 year period: 1) the conquest of the foreign territories is no longer profitable as it used to be; 2) increasing economic interdependence between the nations raised the costs of any conflict between them; 3) emergence of the normative framework of human rights on the domestic and international levels. I would argue that human rights – far from being the source of nonviolent revolutions (most of nonviolent revolutions in [Recovering Nonviolent History](#) have taken place prior to the emergence of human rights norms as we know them today) - were in fact the outcomes of mass-based nonviolent resistance (e.g. women, labor, children, indigenous people's rights were all brought about by the popular actions that were part of the nonviolent resistance campaigns). I would also argue that the increasing reliance on the use of nonviolent methods contributed to the decrease in political violence that Pinker writes about—thus the recourse to the use of civil resistance methods could be the fourth explanation completing Pinker's analysis.

Q: Do you feel an important audience in communicating about the effectiveness of nonviolence is the military?

MB: Yes, military is an important audience. There is actually a book by Dennis Blair on influencing military (from non-democracies) to support democratic transitions by armed forces from democracies and civil resistance movements. The latter part is not as developed but it is a good start: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/books/2013/armed-forces-support-democracy> I think a lot of bloodshed might have been averted if the military had understood how people – through their collective nonviolent resistance – could effectively protect themselves (e.g. in Afghanistan or Colombia) without often counter-productive interventions of the allied military (Afghanistan) or government forces (in Colombia).

Q: At which point non-violent revolution ends and "occupy" or protests start like in Turkey. What's the nomenclature these days?

MB: Occupy and protest are just two among many *methods* of nonviolent revolution or nonviolent movement. They exist next to hundreds of other nonviolent tactics. The issue is not when nonviolent revolution ends and occupy starts but how the methods of occupy/protest propel the objectives/goals of nonviolent revolution. No nonviolent revolution succeeded based just on two methods of struggle. The movement needs to deploy many other methods, such as strikes, boycotts, noncooperation, building alternative media in order to leverage government's access to resources and its control over mainstream media. Nonviolent revolution may need 'occupy' and 'protest' but these two are unlikely to be sufficient to make a 'dent' in Erdogan's armory. The movement needs to mobilize other sectors of the society and come up with additional nonviolent methods that would increase costs on the government.

Review posts on Recovering Nonviolent History facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Recovering-Nonviolent-History-Civil-Resistance-in-Liberation-Struggles/165757723580581>

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Comments from the listeners:

- During the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in the US, the Chicago River was dyed red in protest in the 70's.
- The mainstream media follows the edict "if it bleeds, it leads."
- Indirect and subtle like the Danes all wearing the Jewish star, the Norwegians refusing to put up Hitler's picture in the classroom and not teaching in Norwegian. Global Nonviolent Database at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu> The Albert Einstein Institution at <http://www.aeinstein.org/> and "The Politics of Nonviolent Action"
- Sailing banned books to Namibia and South Africa, sending medical supplies to North Vietnam.
- Tunisia and Egypt tried armed struggle and failed before switching back. Wael Ghonim Revolution 2.0
- The basic idea is that so called "victims" are actually dormant power holders that hold the key to their own liberation.