

Recovering Nonviolent History

Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles

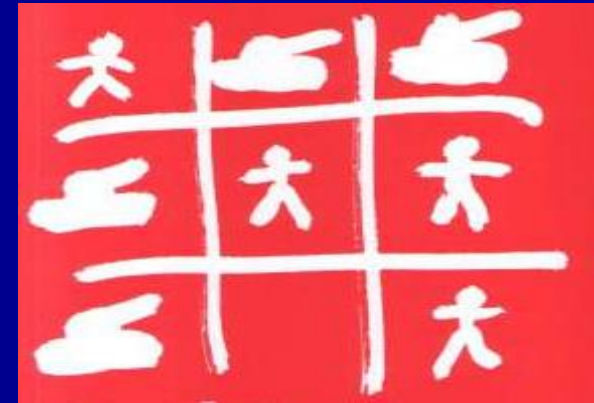
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WHAT IS CIVIL RESISTANCE?

SUSTAINED NONVIOLENT

ORGANIZING AND CONTESTATION LED BY ORDINARY PEOPLE AGAINST OPPRESSION

- ordinary people challenge seemingly powerful opponent (asymmetric)
- unconventional political contest for legitimacy between mobilized people and oppressive adversary (nonviolent)
- organized methods of disruptive and constructive actions (engaging in protests, noncooperation, and building alternative institutions)



Beginning of the Book Journey

- June 4, 2009, Cairo University Obama speech: futility of violence in the fight for the Palestinian statehood. Success of nonviolent resistance: US civil rights movement, antiapartheid movement, nonviolent-led democratization in South East Asia and Eastern Europe.
- Critics said there was a contradiction between Obama's criticism of violence in the struggle for statehood and the United States' own history of violent resistance against the British.
- However: Military struggle of 1775-1781 was not the real revolution. Civil resistance of 1766-1775 was that revolution.



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STRUGGLES

edited by MACIEJ J. BARTKOWSKI

Political power rests seemingly with those men



But the real power lies somewhere else....agency of ordinary people



Emergence of independent nation-states

Violence-centric perspectives:

- raise of violent nationalism,
- violent uprisings and revolutions
- wars and breakout of empires
- violent intervention

Structural accounts:

- urbanization
- migration
- industrialization
- universal conscription
- increase in literacy

Elite-driven change:

- political, economic, military elites and leaders



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No focus on the role and impact of nonviolent civil resistance during liberation struggles. Bringing in People's Agency

Victims are dormant power holders

Victims' behavior or inaction is part of the problem

- How did we participate in creating this monstrous system that has so much hate and fear of its own people? *Yahya Shurbaji, Syrian activist, early Sep. 2011 just before his arrest*
- Subjugated are often “the cause of what have been inflicted upon them and that they should blame neither foreigners nor fate but [their] ignorance, lack of endeavor and apathy” *Abd al Rahman al-Kawakibi, 19th century Syrian thinker*
- “They even corrupted heaven. Because we let them!” *from the Iranian graphic novel*
- “The English have not taken India; we have given it to them” *Mahatma Gandhi*

Victims can become their own liberators

- „No one else will free us but ourselves” *Aleksey Navalny, Russian anti-corruption activist, September 15, 2012*
- “No political miracle will help [oppressed people] if they do not help themselves” *Adam Michnik, Polish anti-communist dissident*
- “If the nation as a state fell, it was from its own guilt [and] if it raises it will be from its own work, its own reason, its own spirit” *Józef Szujski; 19th century Polish writer-philosopher*



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CIVIL RESISTANCE IN 'MAXIMALIST' STRUGGLES

1 nonviolent struggle – 18th century

6 nonviolent struggles – 1800-1899

8 nonviolent struggles – 1899-1950

65 nonviolent struggles – 1951-2000

50 nonviolent struggles – 2001-2011

Cases in the book :

Ghana: 1890s-1950s

Zambia: 1900s-1960s

Mozambique: 1920s-1970s

Algeria: 1830s-1950s

Egypt: 1805-1922

Iran: 1890-1906

Palestine: 1920s-2012

Burma: 1910s-1940

Bangladesh: 1948-1971

West Papua: 1910s-2012

Hungary: 1850s-1860s

Poland: 1860s-1900s

Kosovo: 1990s

United States: 1765-1775

Cuba: 1810s-1902

What comes to your mind?

- Vienna
- Utrecht
- Versailles
- Maastricht
- Camp David
- Dumbarton Oaks
- Potsdam and Yalta
- Osnabruk and Munster

What comes to your mind?

- revolts
- uprising
- revolutions
- insurrections
- liberation struggles
- anti-colonial struggles
- independence struggles
- anti-occupation struggles

Denial of civil resistance

Why does one hear so much about violent conflicts or peace efforts while little about civil resistance?

Three major denials of civil resistance:

- Has not been part of historical processes
- Is not legitimate means of political action
- Is not effective means of political action

Denial of existence

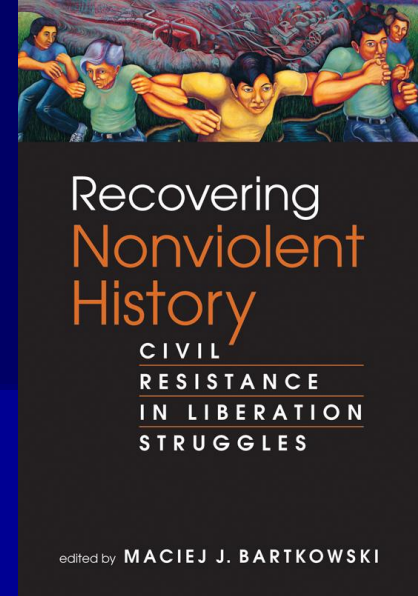


- Institutions, leaders, elites, legal norms drive political change (human rights, systemic transitions, fight with corruption)
- Civil resistance tends not to leave historical records
- Collective memory immersed in violent victimhood/glorified violent resistance
- Dominant method of struggle in conflicts is violence

Violence often hijacked and jeopardized what civil resistance achieved

- Civil resistance in some cases followed by armed struggle (Algeria, United States, Kosovo, Iran, Burma, Bangladesh, Egypt. Similarly to today's Syria)

“...many American colonists did not realize what had been accomplished, or understood what they had achieved by this point. They did not understand what could have been further achieved if they had continued using nonviolent resistance...”



Denial of legitimacy

Not legitimate

- Unpatriotic, too conciliatory actions, pacifism. It “is a disguised form of surrender...” (Kenneth Waltz, Just and Unjust Wars, p.331-333)
- Not courageous or/and masculine enough. Only for weaker part of the population
- Resolving a conflict not waging a conflict brings about a political (re)solution

Denial of effectiveness

Not effective

- Ordinary people are not holders of power
- Doomed to failure if faced with brutal oppression
- No planning visible in contrast to military training and preparation
- Nonviolent resistance does not beget peaceful society
- Small acts are not seen as powerful

Small acts of defiance are a weapon/ ant-like resistance

- Drzymala Caravan



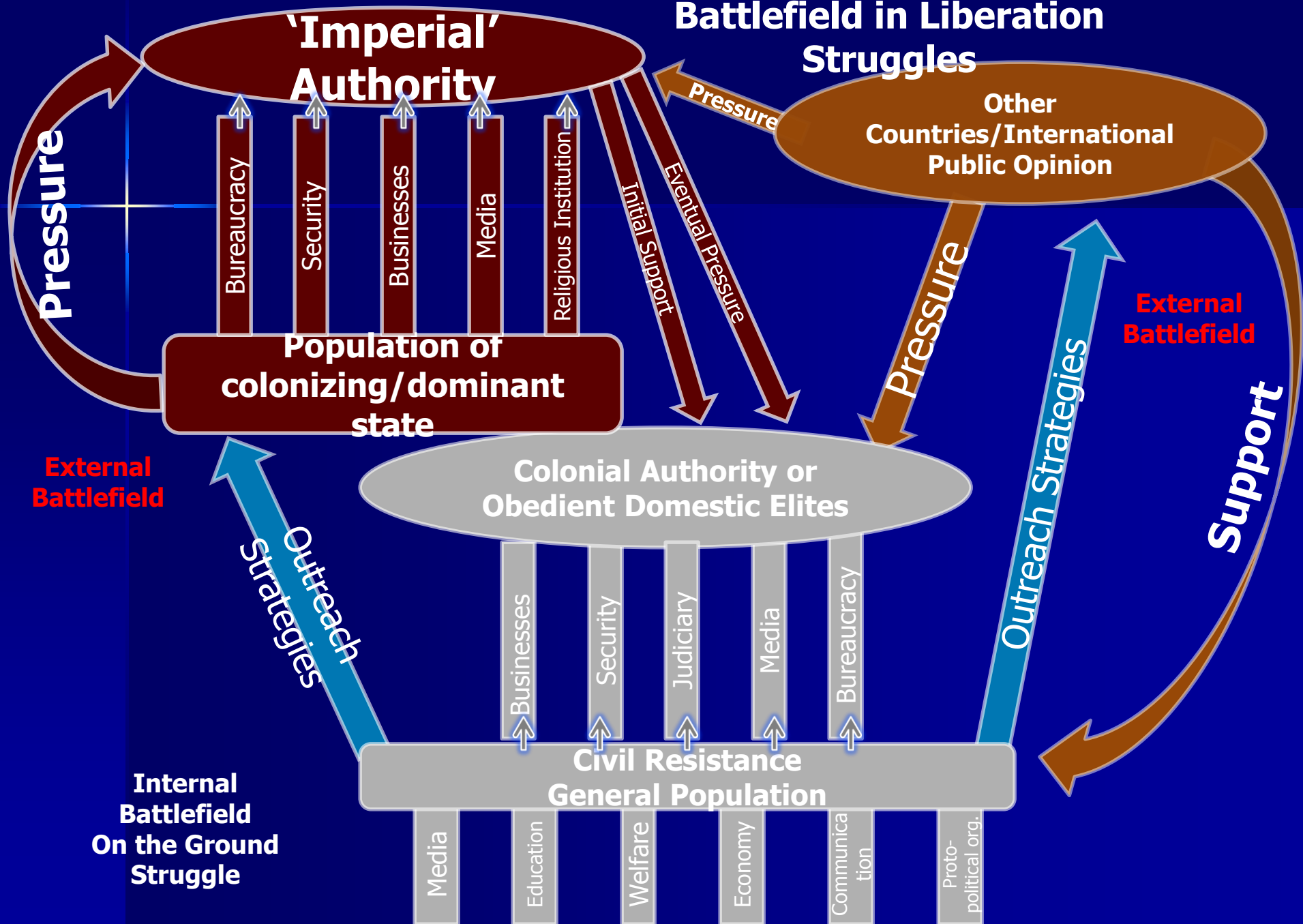
Nonviolent strategies of resisting foreign domination

1. Direct and visible: strikes, boycotts, protests, noncooperation. Fight is taken to the opponent.
1. Indirect and subtle: developing autonomous organizations. Fight is within the society. Nation is a social organism that needs nourishment.
 - *Socio-economic organizing* - community service organizations, educational institutions, libraries, reading rooms, informal economic cooperatives
 - *Cultural organizing* - music, arts exhibitions, satire, theater performances, commemorations, funeral processions, wearing home made cloths
 - *Political organizing* – semi-government structures, nascent political parties

Nonviolent/unarmed posture facilitated phenomenon of backfire:

- Winning domestic sympathy
- Winning international sympathy

Two-Level Civil Resistance Battlefield in Liberation Struggles



Diffussion of ideas about nonviolent resistance

- Hungary – Gandhi; Griffith
- Russia 1905 – Poland; Iran; Gandhi
- Gandhi and India – Ghana; Zambia
- 19th cen. Poland – anticommunist opposition of the 1970s/1980s

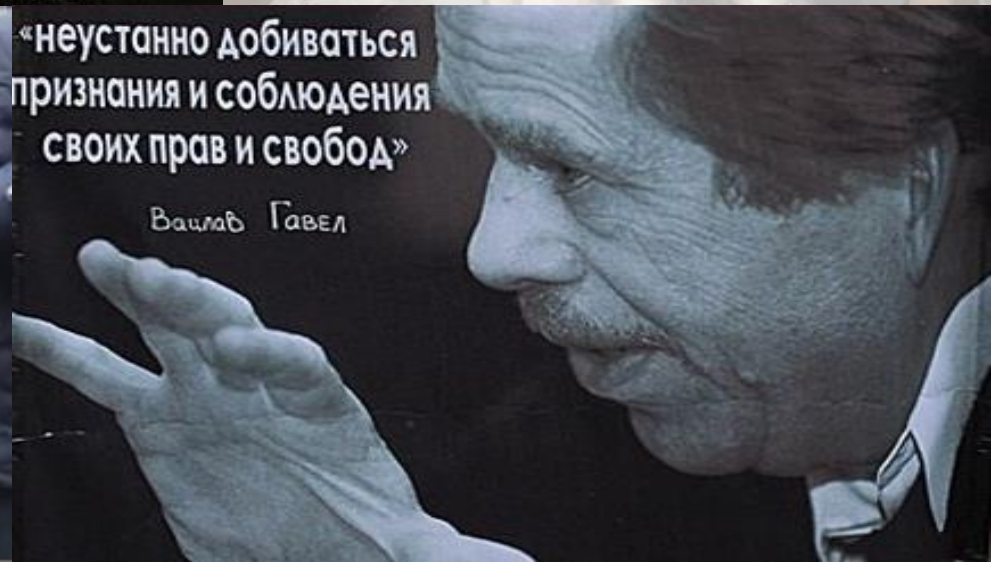
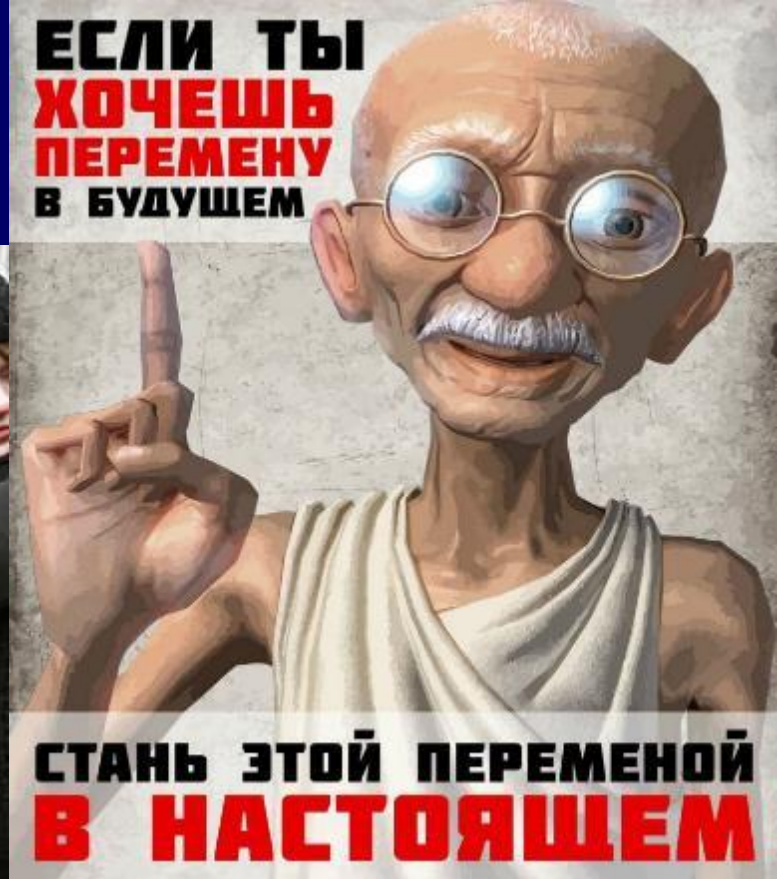
Other examples:

- Serbia-Georgia-Ukraine
- Tunisia-Egypt and other Arab countries

Another example



(с) Сус Елена 2011



Impact of Civil Resistance

- made people vividly conscious of their belonging, identity, language
- built autonomous socio-economic and political institutions prior to independence
- won independence in some cases; in others, quickened the pace of liberation



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