

Why Nonviolent Revolutions Sometimes Fail

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Insights from Civil Resistance Movements
in China, Panama, and Kenya, 1985-1992

Why Study Cases of Failed Civil Resistance?

- To gain insights into the types of internal movement challenges that can derail a struggle;
- To examine the counter-strategies that regimes use to retain power;
- To reflect on ways that civil resisters can anticipate and address these issues.

Three Failed Cases

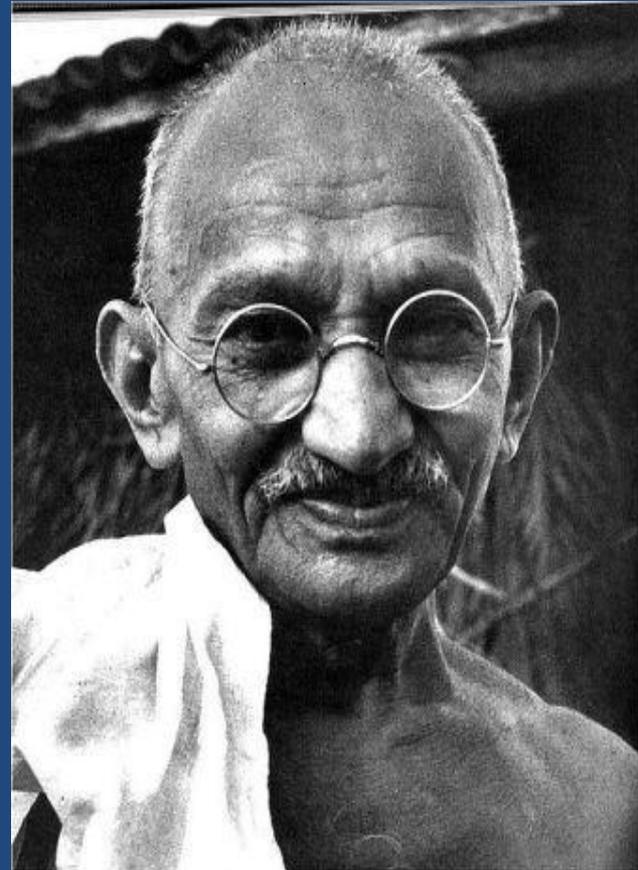
1. Tiananman Square Democracy Struggle in China (1989)
2. Panama's movement against General Manuel Noriega (1987-1989)
3. Kenyan struggle against President Daniel arap Moi (1985-1992)

The Strategy of Civil Resistance

Withdrawing consent & cooperation



Henry David Thoreau



Types of Civilian Power

(Gene Sharp)

1. Refuse to acknowledge rulers as legitimate
2. Refuse to cooperate with the state or obey laws
3. Refuse to use skills to promote government activities
4. Contest ideologies of obedience
5. Withhold material resources from the state
6. Undermine the state's sanctioning power

“When people refuse their cooperation, withhold help, and persist in their disobedience and defiance, they are denying their opponent the basic assistance and cooperation that any government or hierarchical system requires.... Subjects may disobey laws they reject. Workers may halt work, which may paralyze the economy. The bureaucracy may refuse to carry out instructions. Soldiers and police may become lax in inflicting repression; they may even mutiny. If people and institutions do this in sufficient numbers for long enough, that government or hierarchical system will no longer have power.... [I]ts power has dissolved.”

-- Gene Sharp

Missing pieces:

- What about the role of international factors?
- What about regime counter-strategies?

Chinese Democracy Movement, 1989



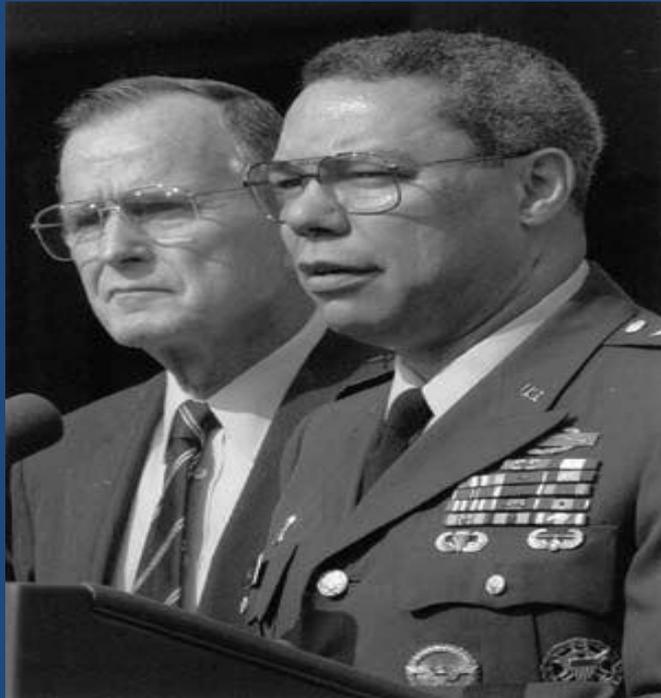
Massive Repression and the End of the Tiananmen Square Movement



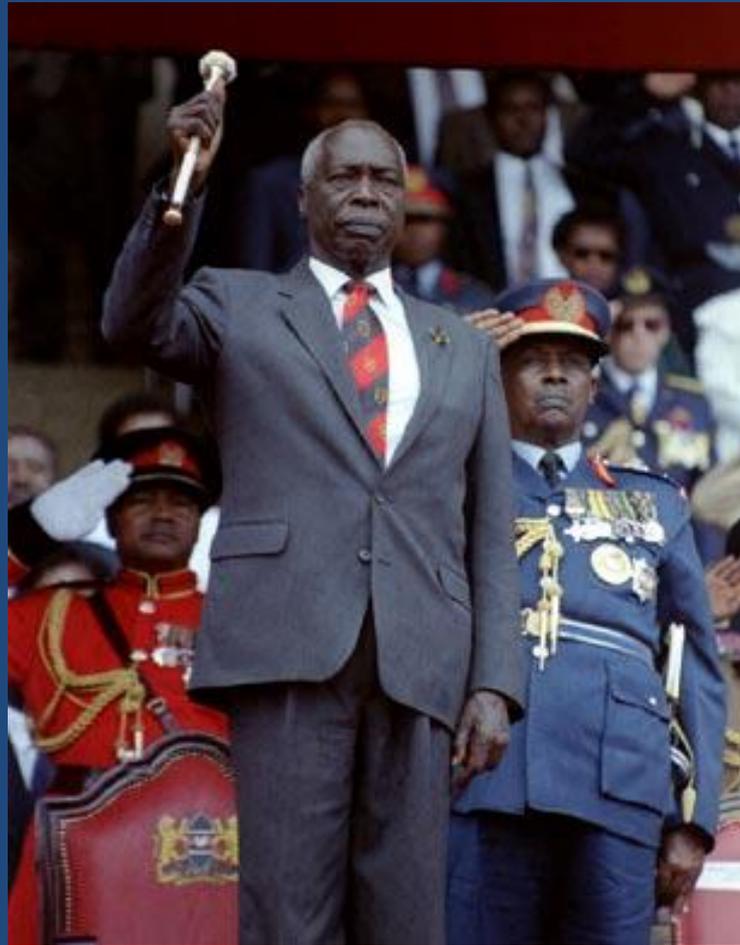
Panama's National Civic Crusade (1987-1989)



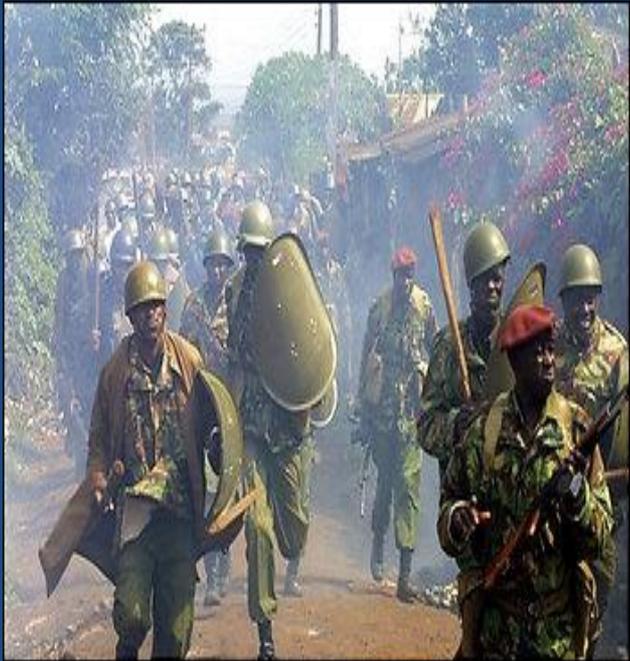
How Noriega Responded to International Pressures



Kenyan Struggle Against President Daniel arap Moi (1986-1992)



How Moi Retained Power



Common Regime Counter-Tactics

1. Dividing the opposition movement
2. Maintaining troop loyalty
3. Neutralizing international sanctions

Internal Movement Problems

1. Movement divisions and fragmentation
2. Inability to maintain nonviolent discipline

What Civil Resisters Can Do to Prevent these Problems

- To avoid internal divisions, emphasize what unites civil resisters: the desire for regime change
- Emphasize that coalitions are necessary to win
- To encourage security force defections, increase the costs of regime loyalty
- Be judicious about international involvement