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# Fighting for Statehood: The Role of Civilian-Based Resistance in the East Timorese, Palestinian, and Kosovo Albanian Self- Determination Movements

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## INTRODUCTION

National liberation movements have often resorted to guerilla warfare or terrorism in their struggles against colonial powers and foreign occupiers. During the 1960s and 1970s, violent revolutionaries captured media headlines, although the tactics they used produced more civilian casualties and material destruction than meaningful political change. Methods of violent insurgency became less successful in the latter half of the twentieth century for a number of reasons, including state expansion and improved counterinsurgency strategies, which shifted the balance of power away from armed insurgents and toward states.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, conflicts between national groups and states for control over territory did not entirely fade away as the period of decolonization ended.

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At the same time that armed insurgencies declined in effectiveness, a different form of popular struggle rose in prominence on the basis of very different tactics. Nonviolent, civilian-based resistance has emerged as a popular method for prosecuting conflict forcefully and effectively throughout the world, in various contexts and against different adversaries. Like armed struggle, however, this form of resistance is never guaranteed to succeed. This article focuses on the role of nonviolent, civilian-based resistance in three self-determination struggles.

The East Timorese, Palestinians, and Kosovo Albanians fought for sovereign independence against states that occupied, annexed, or otherwise ruled over the contested territories by force, without the consent of the majority population living there. Indonesia, Israel, and Serbia relied mainly on the support of their own internal constituencies, along with economic and military aid from foreign governments and multilateral institutions to maintain control over the territories. However, this control also required a certain degree of acquiescence from the occupied populations themselves. The East Timorese, Palestinian, and Kosovo Albanian populations were not powerless vis-à-vis their state adversaries, though their power did not necessarily come from bombs or bullets.

The popular and relatively nonviolent first Palestinian *Intifada* launched in the Occupied Territories achieved more political gains in a few months than guerrilla warfare and terrorism had achieved in decades. The *Intifada* involved the entire Palestinian population in a proactive form of resistance that challenged Israeli control over the Occupied Territories, legitimized the Palestinian national project, and pressured Israel to come to the bargaining table. The Kosovo Albanian nonviolent movement protected a vulnerable population from war for almost a decade while it built an intricate system of social, political, and economic institutions. In East Timor, after nearly one-third of the indigenous population was eliminated following Indonesia's invasion and occupation, the pro-independence movement developed a decentralized, civilian-led resistance movement. The proactive and disruptive nonviolent strategy employed by the East Timorese increased the costs of occupation for Indonesia, whose government eventually agreed to hold a referendum on East Timorese independence.

With these cases on mind, this article argues that nonviolent resistance can be used effectively against foreign occupations by raising the political, economic, and military costs of maintaining control over the territory. This article will begin with a brief overview of the role of power and consent in nonviolent civic resistance, and then compare how this method of struggle was used in three asymmetrical conflicts pitting nations against

states. The conclusions will focus on three variables that scholars of non-violent conflict have identified as being important to the overall effectiveness of nonviolent, civilian-based resistance—unity, nonviolent discipline, and strategic planning—and discuss their relevance to the three self-determination struggles.

### POWER, CONSENT, AND TARGETING THE OPPONENT'S SOURCES OF POWER

Mahatma Gandhi insisted during the struggle for Indian independence that the British Raj did not control India by force, but because so many ordinary Indians acquiesced to British rule. By paying taxes, buying British products, and serving in the colonial government and security forces, Indians made it relatively easy for a small number of British troops to control the territory and its indigenous population. Gandhi mobilized the population to withdraw support from the Raj in an organized, disciplined, and nonviolent fashion. According to the main theory of nonviolent action, all regimes or power-holders depend on the support of organizations and institutions made up of individuals whose skills, knowledge, and acquiescence

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prop up the regime. As a result, the regime's ability to control events is severely weakened if individuals and groups withdraw their support by launching strikes and boycotts, withholding taxes, disobeying orders, and engaging in other acts of civil disobedience and noncooperation.<sup>2</sup> The regime may even collapse altogether if its institutional pillars of support are sufficiently eroded.

In the cases analyzed in this study, however, the foreign occupiers did not depend entirely on the cooperation and acquiescence of the occupied populations in order to stay in power. They also relied on the moral and material support of domestic constituencies and external actors such as foreign governments, multilateral organizations, and diaspora communities. This power dynamic has important strategic implications for opposition leaders. One of those is that by extending the nonviolent battlefield and working with third parties, the local nonviolent movements can attain more direct leverage over the occupying government. Although external

pressure was not the sole explanatory variable in any of the three cases mentioned previously, it was indeed decisive in the case of East Timor, where active nonviolent civic resistance replaced armed conflict as the principal method of struggle for achieving independence.

#### **EAST TIMORESE INDEPENDENCE: TURNING OBSTACLES INTO OPPORTUNITIES**

East Timor, a half-island nation located 400 miles north of Australia in the southeastern end of the Indonesian archipelago, was a Portuguese colony from the sixteenth century until 1975, when it initiated but ultimately failed to complete the process of decolonization. With Indonesian troops massing on the border with West Timor, which was controlled by Indonesia, the left-leaning Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) declared East Timor's independence in October 1975. Two months later, Indonesian President Suharto ordered the Indonesian military to launch a full-scale invasion of Dili, the East Timorese capital.<sup>3</sup> Close to 60,000 East Timorese were killed or died from starvation or disease in the months following the invasion.

Two UN Security Council resolutions, 384 (1975) and 389 (1976), affirmed East Timor's right to self-determination and called on Indonesia to halt the invasion and withdraw its military forces without delay.<sup>4</sup> But nothing further was forthcoming from the UN Security Council, and Western governments, meanwhile, treated the 1976 annexation of East Timor as a *fait accompli*. With the support of East Timorese pro-integration leaders who had fought against Fretilin during a short civil war before the Indonesian invasion, the Suharto regime installed a puppet government dominated by the Indonesian military. Indonesia also created a vast security and intelligence apparatus that included East Timorese militia groups. As part of a strategy of "Indonesianization," almost 100,000 Muslim Indonesian settlers migrated to East Timor, whose indigenous population was overwhelmingly Catholic. From 1975 until January 1989, East Timor remained entirely closed off from the outside world, with the Indonesian government controlling the flow of information into and out of the territory and ruling the island with impunity.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***Armed Resistance and Creation of CNRM***

East Timorese independence supporters first fought against the Indonesian invaders using military means. From 1975 to 1978, the armed

wing of Fretilin fought a war against Indonesian troops using both conventional and guerilla tactics. By 1980, this resistance was mostly eliminated, along with nearly 200,000 East Timorese, or one-third of the island's indigenous population. Xanana Gusmao, one of the surviving commanders, led a transformation of the East Timorese resistance. In 1987, Gusmao stepped down as head of Fretilin and led the creation of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM), made up of three pillars: an Armed Front, a Diplomatic Front, and a Clandestine Front.<sup>6</sup>

The Clandestine Front was responsible for organizing nonviolent resistance operations. Inside East Timor, the youth-led Clandestine Front relayed messages, smuggled out reports and photographs to Indonesian and international human rights organizations, and launched a number of daring protests. The Clandestine Front was the link between the Fretilin guerillas in the mountains, commanded by Gusmao, and the diplomatic wing led from abroad by Jose Ramos-Horta, the CNRM foreign minister. The Clandestine Front also operated inside Indonesia itself. In 1989 a group of nine pro-independence East Timorese students who had received scholarships to study in Indonesia formed the National Resistance of East Timorese Students (Renetil).

Fernando "La'Sama" Aroujo, one of Renetil's founding members, said that Renetil devised three main strategies: isolating the East Timorese students from the economic, social, political, and cultural influence of the Indonesian regime; communicating the criminality of Indonesia's occupation to the outside world; and preparing East Timorese professionals to return and help build an independent East Timor.<sup>7</sup> Renetil played a major role in extending the nonviolent battlefield into Indonesia and internationally.

### *Political Opening and the Dili Massacre*

In November 1988, Suharto declared that East Timor was "open territory" and invited Pope John Paul II to Dili.<sup>8</sup> The East Timorese underground resistance used the Pope's visit and the large media presence to stage the first-ever public protest against the Indonesian occupation. During the Pope's mass, which was attended by thousands, a group of East Timorese youths ran up to the altar and began shouting: "long live the Pope" and "long live East Timor," and unfurled banners that read "free East Timor" and "Indonesia, get out."<sup>9</sup> The demonstration embarrassed the Indonesian government, showed the existence of an indigenous resistance movement to the outside world, and galvanized the East Timorese population. This pre-

pared the ground for subsequent campaigns, including a series of nonviolent protests timed to coincide with the visits of foreign delegations. The resistance also smuggled in an Australian journalist, who published the first-ever interview with Gusmao and the Falantil.<sup>10</sup>

On November 12, 1991, East Timorese youths transformed the funeral of a slain East Timorese activist into a massive pro-independence march involving thousands of East Timorese. When the crowd of unarmed protestors reached the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, Indonesian troops opened fire on them, killing more than 250 on the spot. Two American journalists and a British cameraman witnessed the massacre and their video was smuggled out of the country. The massacre was quickly broadcast around the world, causing international outrage and galvanizing an international solidarity movement.<sup>11</sup>

*Extending the Nonviolent Battlefield: Indonesianization and Internationalization*

The 1991 Dili massacre was a turning point in the East Timorese struggle. Former Renetil leader Domingos Sarmiento Alves said, "After the Dili massacre, we came to the understanding that the East Timorese and Indonesians had the same enemy, which was the Indonesian army (Tentara Nasional

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Indonesia, or TNI) and the Suharto dictatorship. We needed to bring Indonesians into our struggle because it was their struggle too."<sup>12</sup> After Dili, said Sarmiento Alves, the pro-independence movement adopted a dual strategy of Indonesianization and internationalization.

Indonesianization involved moving the struggle closer to the opponent's heartland by actively engaging with Indonesian intellectuals, political opposition leaders, and human rights activists.

East Timorese activists learned Bahasa Indonesian, studied at its schools and universities, cited from its constitution and state ideology, received financial support from Indonesian NGOs, and protested in its streets. As Renetil leader Virgilio da Silva Guterres put it, "We used Indonesia's weapons against it."<sup>13</sup> East Timorese activists worked closely with Indonesian civil society and human rights organizations including the Indonesian Legal Aid Society, the human rights NGO Solidamor, and the Institute for Human Rights Study

and Advocacy. New organizations were created to promote greater cooperation between Indonesian, East Timorese, and international activists.<sup>14</sup>

The second component of the post-Dili East Timorese strategy was internationalization targeting multilateral institutions and foreign governments. This strategy involved both traditional, elite-level diplomatic efforts led by Jose Ramos-Horta, who tirelessly pressed the case for East Timorese independence at the UN and to foreign governments, and a strong grassroots component orchestrated by East Timorese, who traveled around the world to participate in conferences and solidarity meetings focused on the situation in East Timor. The goal of the latter strategy was to encourage citizens from other countries to lobby their respective governments to put pressure on the Indonesian regime to respect the East Timorese right of self-determination.

In December 1991, the East Timor Action Network (ETAN) was created by a handful of activists in the United States in response to the Dili massacre. ETAN's goal was the cessation of U.S. military assistance to Indonesia in order to pressure the Indonesian government to end human rights abuses in East Timor and allow for meaningful self-determination.<sup>15</sup> In February 1992, ETAN launched a campaign to cut U.S. military aid (which came through the International Military Education and Training program) to Indonesia. It was also during this time that Xanana Gusmao was arrested by Indonesian forces and placed in prison in Jakarta. Despite a strong effort by Jakarta's corporate allies, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution cutting off IMET funding to Indonesia. ETAN, which consisted of human rights and faith-based groups, led a successful grassroots effort to force the State Department to block the transfer of F-5 fighter planes to Indonesia and pressured Congress to ban small arms sales in 1994.<sup>16</sup> Although the Clinton White House continued to sell weapons to Indonesia after the State Department ban, solidarity activists succeeded in making East Timor a central issue in U.S.-Indonesian relations.

International solidarity buttressed proactive, local East Timorese nonviolent resistance. Daring campaigns of East Timorese-led nonviolent resistance, both in East Timor and in Indonesia, served to inspire and maintain the motivation of international activists while keeping up pressure on the Indonesian occupiers. On November 12, 1994, during a major Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Jakarta, 29 Indonesian and East Timorese demonstrators scaled the wall of the U.S. embassy and refused to leave for twelve days. This dramatic action attracted the media and embarrassed the Indonesian government, which had tried to keep human rights off the agenda at the summit.<sup>17</sup> Outside the United States,

particularly in Australia and Europe, solidarity groups led powerful grassroots movements to pressure their own governments.<sup>18</sup>

The East Timorese pro-independence movement received a tremendous boost in December 1996, when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the leader of the Catholic Church in East Timor, Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo, and Jose Ramos-Horta for their efforts to bring about a peaceful end to the Indonesian occupation. Upon accepting the award, Belo and Ramos-Horta called on the international community to support a referendum on East Timor's political future. The political debate inside the United States about East Timor began to include self-determination as well as human rights abuses, "a shift that arguably would never have taken place without years of grassroots activism and congressional lobbying by ETAN and other groups."<sup>19</sup> In 1998, at the strong insistence of Gusmao, Timorese factions that once fought a civil war against each other united under a new pro-independence organization, the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT). The East Timorese could finally present a united front to the Indonesian government and international community.

### *Indonesian "People Power" and the Collapse of the Suharto Regime*

The referendum on East Timor's independence came about following a regime change in Indonesia. The Asian economic crisis in 1997, combined with mass mobilization inside Indonesia and intense international pressure, forced the resignation of President Suharto in May 1998.<sup>20</sup> East Timorese pro-independence activists demonstrated alongside Indonesian opposition activists to demand an end to the corrupt Suharto military dictatorship. Indonesian students, historically in the forefront of revolutionary changes in Indonesia, led the mass mobilization efforts that ultimately led to the defection of business elites and members of the security forces to the side of the political opposition.

Suharto's successor, interim President B. J. Habibie, quickly pushed through a series of political and economic reforms designed to restore stability and international credibility. There was tremendous international pressure on Habibie to resolve the East Timor issue, which had become a diplomatic embarrassment, not to mention a huge drain on Indonesia's budget. According to one U.S. official, "Everywhere Habibie went, he was hounded about East Timor."<sup>21</sup> In June 1998, Habibie offered East Timor special autonomy in exchange for recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor. This led to massive demonstrations inside East Timor, where youths demanded that a referendum on independence be held and



Xanana Gusmao be released from prison. In January 1999, Habibie announced that independence was an option if the East Timorese population rejected autonomy. On May 5, 1999, a tripartite agreement was signed by Indonesia, Portugal, and the UN calling for a UN-supervised referendum on East Timor's final status.

During the referendum, almost 80 percent of the East Timorese who voted opted for independence. Indonesian-backed militias then launched a scorched-earth campaign that led to mass destruction and displacement. During this post-referendum violence, Xanana Gusmao called on the Falintil guerillas to remain inside their cantonments and not resist by force. Gusmao later defended this decision, saying, "We did not want to be drawn into their game and their orchestration of violence in a civil war. . . . We never expected such a dimension in the rampage that followed."<sup>22</sup>

On September 14, 2000, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to authorize an Australian-led international force for East Timor.<sup>23</sup> One month later the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor was established. After a two-year transition period, East Timor became the world's newest independent state in May 2002, and Gusmao became the new country's first president. Agio Pereira, Gusmao's chief advisor, reflected, "We relied on ourselves when it seemed like the whole world was against us. We never used terrorism and never attacked Indonesian civilians."

### THE FIRST PALESTINIAN INTIFADA: POPULAR UPRISING

The first Palestinian *Intifada* was a collective response to two decades of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem (hereafter collectively referred to as the Occupied Territories). The largely nonviolent uprising involved Palestinians from all walks of life engaged in individual and communal acts of defiance. The *Intifada* (the word literally means "shaking off" in Arabic) posed a significant challenge to Israel's control over the Occupied Territories, ended a political stalemate, and helped legitimize Palestinian self-determination goals—but it failed to completely end Israeli control over the territories. As opposed to the East Timorese case, the Palestinian resistance did not adequately target the Israeli government's main sources of power—

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Israeli and American public opinion—and failed to unify around a common strategy and vision of the future. The turn to terrorism during the Oslo period, a tactic consciously avoided by the East Timorese, cost the Palestinian self-determination struggle both lives and legitimacy.

The *Intifada* was triggered on December 7, 1987, when four Palestinians were killed and several others injured in a traffic incident involving an Israeli military vehicle in the Gaza Strip. The deaths set off an explosion of pent-up Palestinian frustration with the Israeli occupation that, unlike earlier Palestinian protests that Israeli soldiers had easily suppressed with violent force, did not let up. The *Intifada* began with demonstrations and confrontations with Israeli soldiers. Youths hung Palestinian flags, blocked roads to prevent Israeli soldiers and settlers from using them, and confronted soldiers with stones or nothing at all. With the Israeli military unprepared to counter these tactics effectively,<sup>24</sup> the uprising quickly spread throughout the Occupied Territories, taking the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its leader, Yassir Arafat, by surprise. Before the *Intifada*, the PLO, which led a Palestinian government-in-exile in Tunis, had been strongly committed to a strategy of armed struggle, placing little hope on movements within the territories.<sup>25</sup> The *Intifada* forced the PLO, which nevertheless remained the most important symbol of Palestinian national aspirations, to change its strategy or risk irrelevance.

Within a few months after the outbreak of the *Intifada*, the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) formed clandestinely inside the Occupied Territories. UNLU was the local hub of the organized resistance and the link between local leaders and the PLO in Tunis. UNLU, whose central command consisted of leaders from the four main PLO factions in the West Bank and Gaza,<sup>26</sup> was led by a young, educated, nationalistic, and more democratic-minded group of Palestinians who were unwilling to wait for liberation from the outside. This “young guard” transformed Palestinian resistance; authority was decentralized, making it far more difficult for the Israeli government to halt the movement with a few key arrests.<sup>27</sup>

With the help of UNLU and the experience resulting from two decades of grassroots organizing inside the Occupied Territories, the spontaneous uprising soon became an organized movement. A series of numbered leaflets outlining the goals and strategy of the uprising appeared on street corners every couple of weeks. Initially drafted by UNLU, and later by the Islamic group Hamas, the leaflets enjoined Palestinians to actively resist the occupation. They called on Palestinians to organize local “popular committees” to meet the medical, educational, and social needs of a resisting population. They included instructions for boycotting Israeli

products, called on Palestinians to resign from the Israeli Civil Administration, and specified the days and times that Palestinian should organize symbolic protests, marches, and strikes. The leaflets, which occasionally reflected inconsistencies between the different Palestinian factions, had the force of law among Palestinians. Despite efforts by Israeli intelligence to thwart their production and dissemination, the leaflets "represented one of the most ambitious mass education efforts in nonviolent action in the twentieth century."<sup>28</sup>

Although the Palestinian groups Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) had earlier called for armed struggle and were not formally represented in UNLU, they agreed with the PLO leadership to ban the use of firearms. The *Intifada's* leaders had strategic reasons for these limits: the use of weapons would minimize popular participation, give the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) an excuse to engage in retaliatory violence using advanced weapons, and weaken the Palestinians' claim that they were David fighting against an Israeli Goliath.<sup>29</sup>

### *Force, Power, and Blows*

In 1988, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin authorized increasing levels of force to suppress the uprising. That February, CBS news footage showed Israeli soldiers breaking the limbs of four Palestinian youths with rocks and clubs.<sup>30</sup> Human rights organizations condemned Israel's response and members of the American Jewish community expressed rare public criticism.<sup>31</sup> The United States withheld its veto when the UN Security Council passed a resolution denouncing Israel's disproportionate use of force. Washington later supported another UN resolution condemning Israel's policy of deporting Palestinian activists, including local mayors and university presidents.

The early period of the *Intifada* had a profound impact on Israeli society. By mid-February 1988, more than 30 organizations in Israel were protesting the violent repression of the uprising.<sup>32</sup> Peace Now, the largest of these organizations, mobilized thousands of Israelis for rallies criticizing Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's policies and demanding a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More radical groups turned to civil disobedience. By June 1988 more than 500 military reservists had signed a petition refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories.<sup>33</sup> An organization named The Covenant of the Twenty-First Year called on Israelis to move from protesting the occupation to actively resisting it.<sup>34</sup> Israeli authorities, in turn, began to adopt measures designed to limit media coverage of

the situation inside the Occupied Territories by banning Palestinian newspapers and magazines, revoking the visas of foreign journalists, and arbitrarily denying access to the Occupied Territories.

Arab citizens of Israel also contributed to the first *Intifada* through solidarity protests and the provision of food and supplies.<sup>35</sup> Leaflets were printed in Palestinian print shops in East Jerusalem and transported to the Occupied Territories. In February 1988, the PLO coordinated with Palestinian citizens of Israel to organize a "Ship of Return" (*al-Awda*) campaign. The ship was supposed to transport roughly 130 Palestinian leaders who had been deported or exiled from their homeland since 1948 from Cyprus to Haifa, along with hundreds of journalists and prominent guests, but it was sabotaged by Israeli intelligence to prevent it from leaving port.<sup>36</sup> The nonviolent campaign nevertheless attracted significant media attention and put the Israeli government further on the defensive.

### *Jordanian Recognition: Unintended Victory*

After only a few months, the *Intifada* produced its first, albeit somewhat unintended, result. On July 31, 1988, Jordan renounced all administrative and legal claims to the West Bank. King Hussein recognized the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people and called for the creation of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories. A few months later, during a meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the legislative branch of the Palestinian national movement, PLO Chairman Arafat read the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. During a special UN General Assembly session in Geneva, Arafat recognized Israel's right to exist, endorsed a two-state solution, and rejected terrorism in all its forms. This declaration led to direct talks between the PLO and the United States, which had previously refused to recognize the PLO.

The prospect of negotiations did not end the Palestinian resistance. In 1989, the village of Beit Sahour, a small and mostly Christian Palestinian village near Bethlehem in the West Bank, launched six weeks of complete civil disobedience to the occupation. Everyone in the village burned their identity cards and refused to pay taxes to Israeli authorities. The IDF responded by laying siege to the village, destroying millions of dollars worth of property, and preventing medical supplies from entering. The village's nonviolent resistance attracted significant media attention and international solidarity activists slipped through checkpoints to join the village. Although the United States vetoed a UN resolution condemning the Israeli crackdown on Beit Sahour, the siege was lifted after six weeks.

### *The First Gulf War and the Madrid Conference*

By 1990, however, the *Intifada* had begun to lose momentum. No progress was being made on the diplomatic front, economic conditions inside the Occupied Territories were worsening, and Israeli censorship laws and restrictions on media access to the Occupied Territories were keeping the *Intifada* out of the headlines. Israel's policy of arresting, detaining, and deporting UNLU activists and other moderate Palestinian leaders effectively removed those Palestinians whose presence and leadership were needed to maintain nonviolent discipline. Palestinian factionalism intensified. Militant Palestinian leaders whose support for active nonviolent resistance had been weak filled the leadership vacuum. As Palestinians continued to sustain casualties, youths linked to the different Islamic and secular nationalist political factions increasingly turned to violence targeting fellow Palestinians and Israelis. By spring 1990, more Palestinians were being killed by fellow Palestinians than by Israeli soldiers.<sup>37</sup>

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At the same time, Arafat's opposition to the 1991 Gulf War and his public support for Saddam Hussein severely damaged the image of the *Intifada*. Footage of frustrated Palestinians cheering when Iraqi Scuds hit Tel Aviv led to feelings of betrayal in the Israeli peace movement and caused a financial crisis for the PLO, whose funding from Arab countries was seriously cut. But the most negative consequence of the Gulf War for Palestinians, according to activist Ghassan Andoni, was that "it encouraged Palestinian leaders to abandon the local struggle and to look to the outside for solutions to the conflict, hoping that an increasingly active United States would dictate a solution."<sup>38</sup>

### *Rabin's Election, Madrid, and Oslo*

The Palestinian *Intifada* had nevertheless broken the political stalemate. In 1992, Yitzhak Rabin became Israeli Prime Minister on a platform of bringing a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This would have been unthinkable without the mass Palestinian uprising.<sup>39</sup> After talks stalled in Madrid, the negotiations that led to the 1993 Oslo

Accords were conducted in secret. The PLO leadership in Tunis refused to grant local Palestinian leaders a significant role in negotiations with Israeli officials, which undermined the leadership of the *Intifada*. Oslo created a large Palestinian Authority (PA) bureaucracy dominated by leaders from the Fatah faction who had not set foot inside the Occupied Territories for almost 30 years.

The PA came to power promising to end the *Intifada* rather than to lead it.<sup>40</sup> Rampant corruption, cronyism, intolerance of dissent, and divide-and-rule policies became hallmarks of PA governance inside the Occupied Territories, while oppressive occupation policies continued without challenge from any organized Palestinian popular resistance. Meanwhile, in the post-Oslo period, significant amounts of U.S. aid to Israel was used to construct by-pass roads inside the Occupied Territories in order to connect Israeli Jewish settlements, carving up the future Palestinian state into non-contiguous enclaves.<sup>41</sup>

Although the first Palestinian *Intifada* did not force the withdrawal of Israeli troops, it shattered a political stalemate in the region and lent urgency and legitimacy to the Palestinian self-determination struggle. The power of the *Intifada* came from the fact that it represented the will of an entire population living under occupation. It changed the political calculation inside Israel about the occupation by making "land for peace" and negotiations with Palestinians a majority view amongst Israelis. The forcefulness and participatory zeal of the early phase of the *Intifada* was nevertheless lost, particularly after the first Gulf War when Palestinians leaders turned to Washington rather than their own people as main vehicle for achieving liberation.

Palestinian factionalism and the inability of the secular and religious movements to unite around a common strategy left the Palestinian movement vulnerable to Israel's divide-and-rule strategy. The mixture of violent and nonviolent tactics lowered the level of popular participation and caused Palestinians to lose the moral high ground. Palestinian youth energy and activism was not channeled into a strategy of nonviolent resistance that targeted specific occupation policies with a step-by-step approach to achieving independence. Absent a strategy to target public opinion inside Israel and in the United States, which provided the economic and material support necessary for Israel to maintain its occupation, the momentum created at the beginning of the first *Intifada* was largely lost.

## THE KOSOVO ALBANIAN SELF-DETERMINATION MOVEMENT

From 1988 to 1998, a time in which most of the former Yugoslavia was engulfed in civil war, Kosovo Albanians rejected war on pragmatic grounds and used a nonviolent strategy to promote the cause of national independence. The nonviolent movement helped generate international sympathy for the Kosovo Albanian cause, but it did not lead to victory, as it had shortcomings similar to those of the first Palestinian *Intifada*. Lacking a strategy that applied constant pressure on Belgrade, and thereby making it politically and economically costly for Serbia to maintain control of Kosovo, the peaceful movement led by the League of Democratic Kosovo (LDK) postponed but could not prevent violent conflict. Ultimately, the conflict deteriorated into guerilla actions by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), Serbian reprisals, and a NATO-led war that forced the withdrawal of Serbian troops but left no clear roadmap for meaningful Kosovo Albanian self-determination.

### *The Albanian Popular Uprising*

Unlike the cases of East Timor and the Occupied Territories, Kosovo was recognized internationally as a part of Serbia, having been designated an autonomous province of Serbia in Yugoslavia's 1974 constitution. Although the Albanian population of Kosovo had protested in previous decades against state-sponsored discrimination and Serbian domination, it was the collapse of Yugoslavia that crystallized Kosovo Albanian demands for independence.

The mass Kosovo Albanian uprising was triggered in 1988 after Serbian nationalist leader Slobodan Milosevic proposed constitutional amendments limiting autonomy for Kosovo and promised to strengthen Serbia's grip over the territory. In response, thousands of Albanian miners marched from the Trepca mines to Pristina in defense of autonomy. The miners' march, followed by a hunger strike, led to a general strike in Kosovo that brought the province to a standstill.<sup>42</sup> Serbia responded to the massive general strike by imposing martial law and jailing hundreds of Albanian activists and intellectuals.

Between 1990 and 1991, the Serbian parliament passed a series of laws designed to reshape the demographic, economic, and political balance of power in Kosovo.<sup>43</sup> Tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanian doctors, municipal officials, teachers, and industrial workers were sacked from their jobs, while ethnic Serbs were given economic incentives to live in Kosovo.

In response, a group of Kosovo Albanian parliamentarians secretly drafted a new constitution for the "Republic of Kosovo," which included provisions for a new assembly and elected presidency. In September 1991, the Coordinating Council of Political Parties organized a popular referendum on whether or not Kosovo should be independent. During the referendum, 99 percent of those participating—which did not include Kosovo Serbs—voted for independence.

The organizational force behind the nonviolent movement that followed was the League of Democratic Kosovo (LDK). Formed in 1989 in the wake of nonviolent revolutions in Eastern Europe, the LDK quickly grew to over 700,000 members, including ex-communists, clan leaders, and nationalist activists. The chosen leader of the LDK was Ibrahim Rugova, a philosopher, while another leader, Bujar Bukoshi, a practicing surgeon, headed a government-in-exile in Bonn, Germany.

### *Creating a Shadow State*

The LDK's strategy for achieving independence was to disengage completely from Serbia and to create a pseudo-state. Edita Tahiri, the LDK Foreign Minister at the time, said that the LDK's strategy was three-fold: "First, we wanted to ensure cultural survival and prevent ethnic cleansing. Second, we wanted to create a parallel system and build an independent democratic state. Third, we wanted to win international support for independence."<sup>44</sup> The LDK organized a boycott of elections in Serbia and refused to send delegates to Belgrade. Instead, parallel elections were held in Kosovo in May 1992 in which the LDK won a landslide political victory. Rugova, who ran unopposed, was elected president with 99.5 percent of the vote among the Albanian population.

The LDK declared independence for Kosovo—a declaration recognized only by Albania—and its leaders set about creating independent social, economic, and political institutions, including an elaborate underground school network and a highly functional medical system. Symbolic protests and demonstrations were launched to promote national unity and solidarity, including the drafting of a petition entitled "For Democracy, Against Violence," which collected 400,000 signatures and was presented to the UN Human Rights Commission. A grassroots campaign to abolish the blood feud tradition in Kosovo was another successful part of the defensive resistance. Meanwhile, the LDK government-in-exile conducted diplomatic efforts to promote Kosovar independence while collecting money from the large Kosovo Albanian diaspora.



From 1992 to 1995, Rugova insisted that the population avoid any behavior that could provoke Serbian retaliation. Whenever a violent episode involving Serbian police occurred, members of the Kosovar Youth Parliament and the Council for the Defense of Human Rights would go to the scene to document the incident and explain to fellow Albanians the rationale behind maintaining nonviolent discipline. Eventually, however, Kosovo Albanian patience with the LDK's passive approach broke down. The movement's leadership became increasingly authoritarian and refused to listen to those who advocated a more active form

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of nonviolent resistance or a different political strategy. The LDK lacked a strategy to influence either Belgrade or the international community, relying instead on boycotts and the hope of international recognition.<sup>45</sup> The LDK-controlled media, according to one journalist, "perpetuated a myth of independence and people believed it. The LDK never told the truth about what the rest of the world really thought about Kosovar independence."<sup>46</sup>

### *Dayton Disappointment and the Rise of Militancy*

The nonviolent approach advocated by the LDK eventually lost its appeal in the face of events. Economic conditions inside Kosovo worsened, Serbian police harassment continued, and there was a massive departure of Albanian youths and professionals from Kosovo. In 1993, a core group of influential Kosovo Albanian civil society leaders split from the LDK and formed an openly critical opposition movement. In November 1995, popular frustration reached its tipping point: the U.S.-brokered Dayton Accords, which stopped the war in Bosnia, left Kosovo off the agenda. This was a bitter disappointment for a population that had been led to believe that independence was just around the corner. After Dayton, the LDK lost its ability to control the masses.

In April 1996, after a Kosovo Albanian student was shot by a Serb civilian sniper in Pristina, a group of women defied LDK orders and organized a public protest. A few months later, the University of Pristina Students' Union began to organize a nonviolent campaign focused on the right to education and the reopening of school buildings to Albanian students.<sup>47</sup> Rugova and foreign diplomats discouraged the students from

launching the demonstrations, insisting that any form of provocation would empower Serbian ultranationalists. After Milosevic failed to implement the Agreement on Education he had signed with Rugova, the students ignored the LDK and launched a new phase of active protests. This began with nightly marches led by small groups of students who defied Serbian bans on group assembly and eventually grew to include thousands of Kosovo Albanians.

On October 1, 1997, roughly 15,000 youths began a nonviolent protest march but were met by police barriers, armored vehicles, and Serbian police. Hundreds of students were injured and their leaders arrested in the violent Serbian crackdown.<sup>48</sup> But the students had prepared for this eventuality and did not respond with violence. The student protests, which took place in six other cities in Kosovo on the same day, received significant media coverage. An Albanian student leader told reporters at the time, "Our protests will not radicalize the situation because they are nonviolent and peaceful. Between war and giving up, there is room to act, and that's what we are doing."<sup>49</sup> After the protests were broadcast, foreign embassies officially condemned Serbia's violent crackdown. The students received thousands of letters of support from around the world, including from students in Belgrade.<sup>50</sup>

While Kosovo Albanian youths were ramping up their protest activities, the pro-democracy movement in Serbia was mobilizing to remove Milosevic from power. When hundreds of thousands of Serbs took to the streets in Belgrade to challenge the Milosevic regime,<sup>51</sup> a handful of Kosovo Albanian leaders, notably women, advocated greater contacts with the Serbian opposition. However, the "LDK leadership as a whole simply did not project the concept of connections with Serbs or other groups in FRY as any part of its strategy."<sup>52</sup>

For active nonviolent resistance in Kosovo, it was a question of too little, too late. By 1997, the opportunity for nonviolent resistance had effectively passed. One month after the student demonstrations began, an armed Albanian guerilla movement calling itself the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) gave a press conference encouraging Kosovo Albanian people to take up arms. Following a financial meltdown in neighboring Albania, guns sold cheaply on the black market began to flood into Kosovo. Albanian diaspora funding and support shifted from the LDK to the KLA.<sup>53</sup>

KLA guerilla activity led to Serbian retaliation and accompanying reports of massacres and mass graves. NATO and the West moved to take decisive action. After Milosevic refused to sign the Rambouillet accords in 1999,<sup>54</sup> NATO launched a 78-day aerial bombing campaign that forced

the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo. A United Nations administration, the UN Mission in Kosovo, and a NATO protection force assumed control over Kosovo. UN Security Council resolutions left Kosovo's final territorial status indeterminate and violent counter-attacks against Kosovo Serbs further poisoned the relations between the two peoples after the war ended.

The nonviolent strategy that Rugova called "a necessity and a choice"<sup>55</sup> afforded Kosovo Albanians a buffer for almost a decade. However, the LDK's nonviolent approach, which featured complete disengagement from Serbia, failed to impose significant political and economic costs on Belgrade. There were signs of dissatisfaction with Milosevic's Kosovo policy among some Serbian pro-democracy groups, intellectuals, Orthodox religious leaders, and parents of Serbian soldiers, but this discontent was not exploited by Kosovo Albanian leaders.<sup>56</sup> Hydajet Hyseni, an ex-political prisoner and member of the Parliamentary Assembly, insisted that "there should have been more civil disobedience, more demonstrations, and attempts to convene the Parliament and risk arrest."<sup>57</sup> Student leader Albin Kurti agreed that "the time for mass demonstrations and civil disobedience was in the early 1990s; instead, we had five years of inactivity."<sup>58</sup>

The LDK's strategy did not challenge the opponent's control over the territory and there was no attempt to combine the pressure of nonviolent resistance with negotiations with Belgrade opposition leaders. As one Kosovo Albanian wrote,

No one is challenging the nonviolent peaceful approach but, given that it has resulted in not much but avoiding conflict, they would like to see a more realistic approach to negotiations with relevant factors, including Belgrade. People are coming to realize that Belgrade is one of the key players and you cannot simply ignore it saying you have your own independent whatnot republic.<sup>59</sup>

The proactive nonviolent resistance started by Kosovo Albanian students, which focused on specific, achievable goals, did not have time to develop or spread before it was overtaken by guerilla violence and war. As a result, the Kosovo Albanian independence movement lost the initiative in determining Kosovo's future with the international community.

## CONCLUSIONS

While there is no formula or blueprint for successful nonviolent, civilian-based resistance, the self-determination conflicts analyzed in this

study highlight the importance of unity, nonviolent discipline, and the planning of nonviolent campaigns that target the opponent's sources of power to the overall effectiveness of this method of struggle. Decentralized,

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*Decentralized, inclusive resistance movements appear to be best equipped to withstand opponent repression while promoting internal unity around a set of realistic goals and methods.*

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inclusive resistance movements appear to be best equipped to withstand opponent repression while promoting internal unity around a set of realistic goals and methods. Nonviolent discipline is a function of leadership, training, and effective internal communication; protestors must be made to understand the strategic importance of not responding to violence with violence.

Strategic planning involves the identification of those groups and institutions whose support the opponent needs to maintain power and the selection of nonviolent tactics designed to weaken or undermine those groups' support for the opponent. In cases where the adversary depends largely on sources of power outside the contested territory, this study suggests that the opposition should focus on extending the nonviolent battlefield to include groups and institutions with greater leverage over the adversary. Transnational efforts must be an extension of, and not a replacement for, local campaigns of disruptive, yet purposeful, nonviolent resistance.

The East Timorese pro-independence movement was able to overcome factionalism, thereby weakening Indonesia's divide-and-rule strategy, by creating a nonpartisan, nonideological organization in the form of the CNRT that brought together former warring factions around a common set of methods and goals. The youth-led Clandestine Front launched nonviolent resistance campaigns in East Timor, in Indonesia, and in countries whose governments supplied Indonesia with significant economic and military support. The East Timorese dual strategy of internationalization and Indonesianization helped them increase their leverage over the Indonesian government, which eventually agreed to a referendum on the island's independence. The East Timorese leadership explicitly prohibited targeting Indonesian civilians with violence, and the leader of the Timorese resistance, Xanana Gusmao, openly declared his aversion to senseless revolutionary violence during the popular struggle.

The power of the first Palestinian *Intifada* came from the fact that it was highly participatory and led by Palestinians living under occupation—

not by a militant vanguard on the outside. The *Intifada* placed Palestinian self-determination on the international agenda and paved the way to direct negotiations between the PLO and Israeli officials. The popular uprising began to lose momentum after many of its local leaders were imprisoned or deported, leaving a leadership vacuum that was filled by militant leaders of feuding political and religious factions. The rise in armed attacks against Israeli soldiers and settlers decreased the active participation of ordinary Palestinians, who continued to bear the brunt of Israeli counter-attacks. The negotiations that produced the Oslo accords were led by Palestinians from outside the Occupied Territories who promised to end the popular resistance rather than continue it by nonviolent means.

The Kosovo Albanian nonviolent movement began as a highly participatory movement. While the nonviolent strategy developed by Rugova and the LDK was not without its merits, it eventually lost mass support. The LDK became a centralized bureaucracy that looked to external intervention as the principal means to achieve independence. The Kosovo Albanian population eventually lost patience with a strategy of nonprovocation and political boycott of Serbia that was not leading to any tangible improvements in their daily lives. The student-led movement begun in 1997 was an example of how active nonviolent resistance could have been used to disrupt the status quo while increasing the cost to Belgrade of maintaining its grip over Kosovo. This form of resistance even won the support of groups inside Serbia, but such a strategy did not have time to develop before the rapid, violent escalation of the Kosovo Albanian resistance and the start of war. ■

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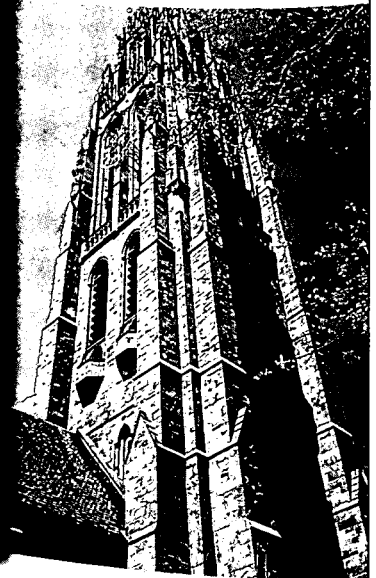
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