

Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Resistance

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By Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan

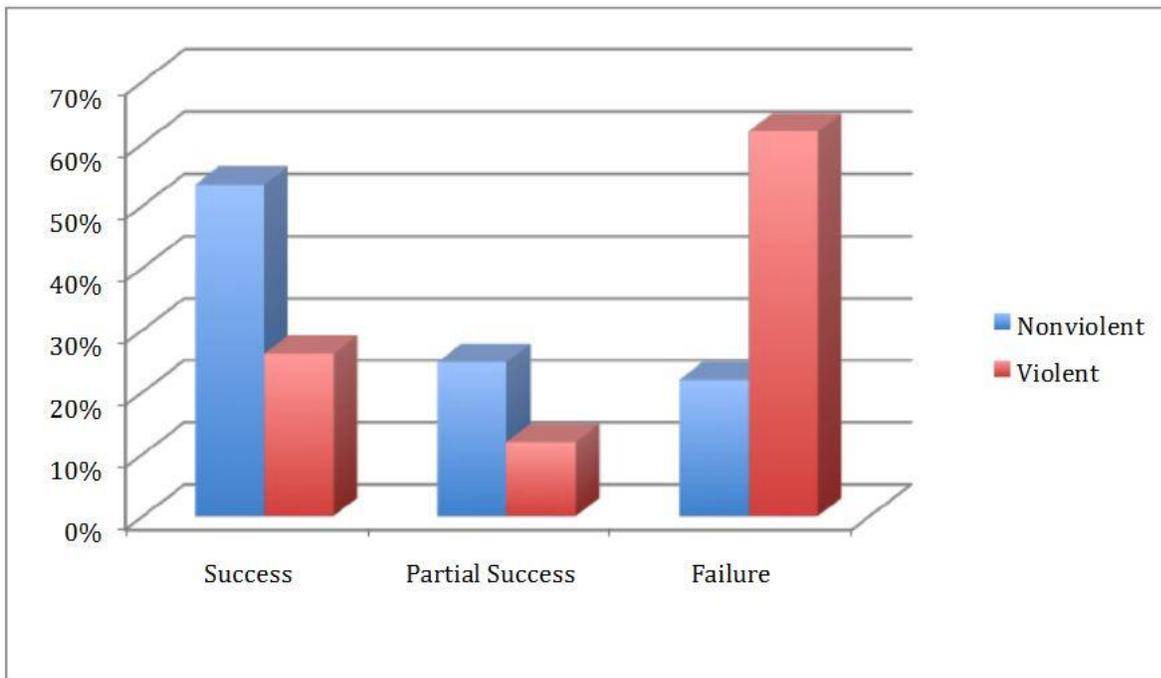
Debates about the strategic efficacy of different methods of traditional and nontraditional warfare have recently become popular in political science. Implicit in the debates, however, is an assumption that the most forceful, effective means of waging political struggle entails the threat or use of violence. For instance, a prevailing view is that opposition movements select violent strategies because such means are more effective than nonviolent strategies at achieving policy goals. Often violence is viewed as a last resort, or as a necessary evil in light of desperate circumstances.

Despite these assumptions, in recent years, organized civilian populations have successfully used nonviolent resistance methods including boycotts, strikes, protests, and organized non-cooperation to exact political concessions and challenge entrenched power. To name a few, autocratic regimes were removed from power in Serbia (2000), Madagascar (2002), Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004-05) after rigged elections, a foreign occupation was ended in Lebanon (2005), and a monarch was forced to make major constitutional concessions in Nepal (2006) as a direct result of sustained and systematic nonviolent sanctions.

In fact, among the 323 major violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns seeking regime change, anti-occupation, or self-determination between 1900 and 2006, nonviolent campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts.

This book investigates the reasons why - in spite of conventional wisdom to the contrary - nonviolent campaigns have been so effective, compared to violent campaigns, the reasons why some nonviolent campaigns have failed to achieve their stated aims, and the reasons why violent insurgencies sometimes succeed.

Figure 1: Rates of Success, Partial Success, and Failure



Our central contention is that the moral, physical, informational, and commitment barriers to participation are much lower for nonviolent resistance than for violent insurgency. Higher levels of participation contribute to a number of mechanisms necessary for success, including enhanced resilience, higher probabilities of tactical innovation, expanded civic disruption (thereby raising the costs to the regime of maintaining the status quo), and loyalty shifts involving the opponent's erstwhile supporters, including members of the security forces.

Moreover, we find that the transitions that occur in the wake of successful nonviolent resistance movements create much more durable and internally peaceful democracies than transitions provoked by violent insurgencies. On the whole, nonviolent resistance campaigns are more effective in getting results, and once they have succeeded, are more likely to be succeeded by democratic regimes with a lower probability of a relapse into civil war.

This book is the first work that systematically compares nonviolent and violent campaign outcomes over time and space, using sophisticated large-n analyses. It essentially debunks the myth that violence only occurs because it is necessary to achieve certain political goals. Contrary to this perspective, we find that violent insurgency is seldom justified on strategic grounds.

The Manuscript

The following nine-chapter manuscript develops our theoretical argument and tests it against evidence derived from statistical test and case studies.

PART I: Why Nonviolent Resistance Works

- **Chapter 1: The Success of Nonviolent Resistance Campaigns**

This chapter introduces the puzzle of the efficacy of nonviolent campaigns relative to violent campaigns. It devotes some space to defining outcomes (i.e. success, limited success, failure) within and proceeds by introducing an original dataset on nonviolent and violent insurgencies and some preliminary statistics on campaign outcomes. The chapter introduces the main general argument of the study, which is that nonviolent resistance campaigns are more successful than violent insurrections because they are more likely to (1) attract a larger number of more diverse participants than violent campaigns; (2) directly target and remove the opponent's key sources of political and economic power; (3) apply massive, sustained pressure that separates the opponent from its main pillars of support,(4) induce backfire effects when opponents attempt to repress the movements; and (5) generate loyalty shifts within the opponent's erstwhile supporters.

- **Chapter 2: The Primacy of Participation in Nonviolent Resistance**

All resistance campaigns - violent and nonviolent - seek to build the personnel bases of their campaigns. In this chapter, we argue that physical, informational, commitment, and moral considerations tend to give nonviolent campaigns an advantage in mobilizing participants. Mass mobilization is a critical aspect of successful resistance campaigns and is probably more reliable than the support of external actors, such as foreign government sponsors. Furthermore, the more diverse the participation in the resistance - measured in terms of gender, age, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic status - the more difficult it is for the adversary to isolate the participants and adopt a repressive strategy short of maximal and indiscriminating repression. Diverse

participation may afford a resistance campaign enhanced resilience while increasing the pressure points and enhances the leverage that the resistance achieves vis-a-vis its state adversary. We find that domestic factors - such as the size and diversity of campaign participation, loyalty shifts within security forces, and the backfiring or regime repression - tend to improve the odds of success for nonviolent campaigns. International factors, such as the support of an external state sponsor, are correlated with the success of violent insurgencies.

- **Chapter 3: Are Outcomes Driven by Circumstance, or by Strategic Choice?**

This chapter considers two potential critiques of the theory presented in Chapter 1: that outcomes of campaigns are driven by structural conditions rather than agency, and that the success of nonviolent campaigns is due to selection effects. To respond to these potential critiques, the chapter explores the possibility that regime features (i.e. regime type, government capacity, repression, and economic growth) may independently affect the outcomes of the violent or nonviolent conflicts. Alternative specifications of the statistics from Chapter 1 are presented, accounting for endogeneity as well as possible deviations in the data due to the stated goals of the campaigns, time periods, or regional effects. The chapter concludes that nonviolent resistance is not predetermined by the conditions in which these campaigns emerge, but rather are more a matter of the campaigns' ability to apply pressure to the regime. At the same time, we recognize that agency both influences and is influenced by environmental factors.

PART II: Case Studies

We open Part II by introducing the case studies we compare throughout the book. We compare nonviolent and violent resistance campaigns and their outcomes in Iran, the Palestinian Territories, the Philippines, and Burma. The case selection is explained in detail before the substantive chapters begin.

- **Chapter 4: The Iranian Revolution, 1977-1979**
- **Chapter 5: The First Palestinian Intifada, 1987-1992**
- **Chapter 6: The Philippines People Power Movement, 1986**
- **Chapter 7: Why Nonviolent Campaigns Fail: The Burmese Uprising, 1988**

PART III: What Do We Know About Nonviolent and Violent Resistance?

- **Chapter 8: After the Campaign: The Consequences of Violent and Nonviolent Resistance**

Since the majority of this study argues that nonviolent campaigns are more effective in achieving their objectives, the final substantive chapter explores violent insurgency success, which tends to depend on the ability of violent insurgents to establish and maintain external sponsorship. Based upon current knowledge and theory, this chapter draws on statistical evidence to determine the political and social costs of success for violent insurgencies. We demonstrate that when they are successful, countries emerging from violent insurgencies are more likely to backslide into

authoritarian regimes than nonviolent campaigns, which often result in more stable, peaceful, and democratic regimes.

- **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

The final chapter of the manuscript summarizes the key findings, highlighting how these findings make a contribution to existing literature. This section also argues for the incorporation of nonviolent conflict into security studies inquiry and suggests ways to hone the data set. The last section identifies the policy implications derived from this research.

- **Methodological Appendix**

This appendix details the variables and coding rules in the NAVCO data set. It also contains details about the full models and robustness tests used in the statistical tests throughout the book.