Chapter 8

Nonviolent Revolutions, Struggles for Political Recognition and Democratic Transition

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This chapter investigates the rising phenomenon of nonviolent revolutions -- or civil resistance[i] -- for political recognition where ordinary people organize to reclaim their rights and freedoms from a statist system, be it a domestic authoritarian government, a dominant group or a majority that formally rule the country, or an occupying power. A successful nonviolent movement driven by the infinite creativity of the agency of people with a long tradition of peaceful, civilian-based organizing not only brings about a breakthrough – an end to the repressive system – but it often institutionalizes a new defused type of political power, on the movement's own image, and redefines the relationship between the state and a politicized society.

Although the primary case study will be the Polish Solidarity movement, the chapter will also make brief references to a number of additional examples, including the 2011 Egyptian revolution, India, Russia, Iran, Basque country, and China. The richness of empirical cases will help to address a set of interrelated issues beginning with the agency-driven and structure-focused explanations for when nonviolent revolutions happen, why people choose unarmed resistance in the struggle against brutal oppression, what drives its effectiveness, and what constitutes successful nonviolent resistance. The chapter will also discuss specific movement-centric drivers that turn civil resistance into a powerful force, including a two-level battlefield strategy, the creation of alternative institutions, and small acts of resistance that are either undertaken by individuals, communities or on a larger, national scale. Finally, the chapter will

focus on how to conceptualize and better understand the role of civil resistance in the tumultuous processes of democratization and systemic transitions.

Structure-centered accounts of revolutions

In this chapter, nonviolent revolution is understood as a political conflict and an outcome of a civilian-based struggle. On one hand, revolution signifies a contentious exercise of political power by ordinary people but without recourse to arms. On the other, it represents an extra-constitutional change in the form of an overthrow of a political regime by peaceful non-institutionalized collective actions followed by a fundamental political transition.

The agency of ordinary people is always an inextricable driver of nonviolent revolutions; popular revolutions occur as the result of peoples' decisions. First tens and hundreds of organizers, followed by thousands of activists and finally mobilization of millions of supporters, through their disciplined actions, make revolutions possible and account for their eventual success. Consequently, this chapter argues that such upheavals erupt more because of the organized citizenry than because of the surrounding conditions, institutions or elites that typically oppose or hinder the change. Popular discourse about how revolutions happen has either highlighted the power of change-resistant oppressive regimes to instill fear, apathy and passivity in their societies or the force of change-inducing mega socio-economic processes and structures such as modernization, urbanization, rising class-consciousness or economic development, and crises that lay down fundamentals for major social upheavals. Both, the impossibility of revolutions and their historical inevitability, have been the main opposing perspectives on the occurrence of revolutions – all rooted in the power of everything but the ordinary people.

Prior to most nonviolent revolutions of the past century, few believed the upheavals could

happen at all or would happen when they did, and an even smaller number thought they would be successful. When nonviolent popular revolts ensued --the Russian revolution of 1905, the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1906, the anti-Shah revolt of 1978, Poland in 1980, the Philippines in 1985, Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon in 2005, to mention just a few--the majority of scholars and policymakers, including regional experts, were caught by surprise. In 2010, most political observers would have been equally astounded to learn that a year later seemingly irremovable authoritarian leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya would all fall from power. The dominant discourse was centered on the endurance and survivability of the authoritarian regimes rather than on how and why ordinary people could challenge them effectively (Gause 2011, pp. 81-90).

After the "impossible" revolution becomes a fact of life, suddenly the pendulum swings in an opposite direction. The newly emerging view is that the regime can lose its capacity to repress and a rebellion against it is, in fact, very likely. The argument that revolutions ignite when a regime's behavior changes (i.e. when its grip on power and society relaxes) suffers from two problems. First, it continues favoring regime-centric and structure-focused perspectives to account for the phenomenon that is of people's own making. Furthermore, past revolutions are often studied with today's knowledge; however, that knowledge and information was not available to the revolutionaries, those who stood against them, or the public in general. In fact, at the time of upheavals, participants of the revolutions and others affected by them have usually limited information about internal divisions within the regime or its depleting capacity to oppress. Often, a popular rebellion starts not because the authoritarian grip eases – that might not be either felt or known at a time of troubles - but because the society suffocates under unbearable oppression, which in turn produces a popular backlash.

Agency of popular revolutions

The explanations of either the impossibility of an uprising or the inevitability of rebellion due to structural factors ignore the power of agency of ordinary people and are ahistorical, as developments on the ground contradict their premises. In reality, the emergence of nonviolent resistance is neither impossible nor inevitable. Nonviolent rebellions come to life in places and times where few predict resistance to form, due initially to the work of committed organizers and later to the mobilization of participants. It is difficult to predict break-out, trajectories and outcomes of nonviolent revolutions precisely because they are not linked solely to rigid power structures, cultural traditions, economic conditions or monolithic elites, but rather to more illusive, unpredictable, and uncontainable human ingenuity and creativity.

Revolution that is waged by mobilized people through nonviolent methods of civil resistance is a political struggle. This is not a physical or material contest, as the outcome of nonviolent resistance does not depend on arms, wealth, or other material resources of its member-activists. It is a political contest because it depends on the power of ideas (DuVall 2013). Effective ideas propel the civilian-led struggle to develop and deploy strategies and skills of planning, organizing and mobilizing that are original and appealing to others while, at the same time, surprising to the opponent. They help increase the number of people engaged in noncooperation with the regime, while minimizing the risks for the movement and maximizing the costs imposed on the adversary. In contrast to violent struggle, anyone can be part of developing and implementing ideas, and consequently can join a nonviolent conflict and participate in open or tacit forms of civil defiance.

The political nonviolent struggle has a potential to create a virtuous circle of revolutionary mobilization -- a successful method or campaign of nonviolent resistance increases

the number of people who join the movement. The more people involved, the greater number of individuals available to undertake nonviolent actions, and the more diverse and enriched pull of intellectual potentials that can be called upon in order to devise a larger gamut of creative nonviolent methods. The more ways of waging nonviolent struggle, the more opportunities for an even greater assembly of participants to be drawn into resistance. In turn, participants bring in new ideas, boost creativity, and devise other methods for civic engagement.

These intellectual, participatory and method multipliers increase legitimacy and representation of the movement, help resistance overcome significant adversarial conditions, and allow activists to impose multiple pressures on the regime and its allies (Barrell and Bartkowski, unpublished paper). The breadth and quality of participants in the struggle help the movement to challenge simultaneously multiple relationships that the opponent has with different businesses, military, and religious institutions and other allies. The regime is then forced to spread its resources thin.

Why people choose nonviolent means to wage their revolutions

Revolutions are usually associated with "fundamental and violent change" (*The Columbia Encyclopedia* 2009, p. 4106). Often, the youth behind revolutions are thought to fuel radicalism that is more easily susceptible to armed rebellion rather than peaceful protests. But some studies show that many revolutions that were spearheaded by youth managed to remain in fact nonviolent. The youth strategically chose peaceful means to mount their extra-constitutional opposition (Nikolayenko in Schock forthcoming in 2014; Bounce and Wolchik 2011).

Generally, little attention in the literature on revolutions has been paid to the nonviolent nature of people's uprisings and to the strategic dimension of peaceful resistance with its coordinated and dispersed tactics.[ii] However, an impressive body of data on nonviolent

resistance campaigns in the seemingly most violent conflicts such as anti-dictatorship, anti-occupation struggles and self-determination campaigns (so-called maximalist struggles) has been accumulated. Not only did the number of these campaigns reach over 100 in the last two centuries, they have been also steadily on the increase; documented nonviolent upheavals against dictatorships, occupations and for self-determination include six nonviolent struggles in the 19th century, nine in the first half of the 20th century, 65 in the second half of the 20th century, and already 50 in the first decade of the twenty first century -- an increase by almost four times in comparison with an average decade of the previous 50 years.[iii]

The observed rise in the number, frequency as well as in the successful rate of nonviolent struggles and campaigns to achieve major political goals (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, p. 8) might also help to account for what Steven Pinker, a Harvard psychologist, argues is the decrease in political violence in the past and more recent human history. Next to economic interdependence, globalization, lower profitability of territorial conquest and the emergence of human rights norms that Pinker identified (Pinker 2011) as major factors that account for the decline in political violence, the rise in the use of mass-based nonviolent rebellions against state structures is an important factor that contributes to the decrease in political deaths and major atrocities in comparison with violent conflict.[iv]

Certainly, violence will continue, but its relative ineffectiveness and costs vis-à-vis its nonviolent alternative -- if only the latter is better understood and assessed -- may ultimately favor peaceful contestation as a preferred weapon of choice against oppressive systems. The current noticeable increase in the number of nonviolent insurrections and their growing effectiveness suggests that in the future, maximalist conflicts will include at least one party that uses methods of nonviolent actions.

Given a common sense proclivity to mount violent resistance (often depicted as armed self-defense) against a brutal regime, why would people choose nonviolent methods to challenge the unjust system? Several reasons can be identified. Sometimes people choose nonviolent methods of struggle because it is seen as their last resort. All other means had been exhausted with no resolution: e.g. the use of courts, elections, negotiations or violent actions. The supporters of violent uprisings like the ANC in South Africa in the 1960s and the 1970s or Maoists in Nepal eventually concluded that their military efforts had not brought about the expected results while other constitutional means of change remained unavailable to them. Consequently, the violent parties made space either to return to the only available alternative (like in South Africa in the 1980s) or to try the last remaining option (like in Nepal in 2006) -- that of a nonviolent political organizing, with an extraordinary degree of success (see Ackerman and DuVall, 2000 and Dudouet 2013, p. 407).

Nonviolent resistance might also be seen as a possible and available tool but before other means of pressuring the authorities are considered. As Nkrumah, the leader of the Ghanaian independence struggle, argued; "We had no guns but even if we had, the circumstances were such that nonviolent alternatives were open to us, and it was necessary to try them before resorting to other means" (Presbey in Bartkowski 2013, p.60).

Some groups choose nonviolent means to propel their revolution because they recognize that this is the most effective instrument for undermining undemocratic power that will help them reach immediate goals (end to political oppression) and longer term objectives (building an open and pluralistic society). Young Serbian leaders of the Otpor movement and their colleagues from the Georgian Khmara and the Ukrainian Pora! were known to have been exposed to trainings in strategic nonviolent conflict and/or educated themselves on this strategy by

reviewing relevant literature, including writings by Gene Sharp, and watching documentaries such as *A Force More Powerful* or *Bringing Down a Dictator* (Rosenberg 2011).

Furthermore, real-life learning from violent conflicts in the region can offer important lessons for the dissidents and organizers in other countries. Poles learned from Hungarians who rose up in 1956 that violent resistance against the Soviets was futile, and was likely to lead to a disaster for the society and its overall democratization dreams. As a result, the future leaders of the Solidarity movement rejected violence –- on the strategic and not pacifist grounds –- concluding they would be more effective in reaching their political objective with the use of peaceful though still coercive methods of mobilization and organizing.

Closely related to a learning process is imitation and diffusion of successful nonviolent uprisings. Ghanaians and Zambians learnt form successful nonviolent resistance led by Mohandas Gandhi in India against the same colonial power they were facing –- the British (Bartkowski 2013). Prior to their unarmed revolt against their president Shevardnadze, Georgians learnt from the young Serbs about their nonviolent struggle against Slobodan Milosevic. Ukrainians learnt their own lessons from Georgians and Serbs and challenged peacefully and successfully outgoing President Leonid Kuchma and his ally Viktor Yanukovych over the rigged presidential elections in the winter of 2004-2005.

There have also been imitation processes at play across historical periods within a single country. Solidarity leaders in Poland learnt from their 19th century nonviolent progenitors who used constructive programs in the form of organic work to defy the denationalization and deculturalization policies of the partitioning powers. Almost a century later, the Polish dissidents used the experience of their 19th century nonviolent compatriots to build parallel civic 'self-defense' institutions in order to break tight censorship imposed by the communist government.

Similarly, the organizers of the Free South Africa movement in the United States in the mid-1980s utilized the previous and rich experience of the civil rights movement to come up with innovative tactics in order to draw media attention and mobilize the American public and the US Congress to support the economic sanctions against the apartheid regime.[v]

Effectiveness and success of revolutions propelled by civil resistance

Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) in their path-breaking book on the effectiveness of civil resistance point to participation as the one necessary attribute of civil resistance movements that plays a crucial role in their ultimate success. The more people join nonviolent mobilization, the greater the chances for the successful outcome. The authors explain that the participation in nonviolent revolutions tends to be greater than in violent resistance because unarmed insurrections have relatively lower physical, moral, psychological and tactical barriers of entry. Physically, in contrast to violent insurrections, there is no need for bodily strength or combat training to participate in nonviolent revolutions; in fact, men and women of all backgrounds and ages, ranging from children to the elderly, have been leading activists of nonviolent rebellion.

Morally, in contrast to the orders to kill that may be given during armed resistance, possibly raising ethical inhibitions among many, the actions in nonviolent resistance are much less morally divisive and are thus acceptable to a larger number of people. By its nature, participation in an armed uprising requires readiness to die. Nonviolent revolutions are in fact much more about life than death and have a wide variation regarding the level of sacrifice or risk that one is asked to take.

Psychologically, it is easier to join civil resistance because it does not necessarily demand giving up one's life while its rich tactical repertoire allows people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds to choose among more or less risky actions, ranging from public protests and

strikes (with a greater exposure to immediate government repression) to stay-at-home

demonstrations, boycotts of government-organized events, or refusal to buy goods from

businesses controlled by the regime (with a reduced level of risk).

In addition to participation, a nonviolent movement's success depends largely on the

extent to which it remains resilient when faced with the regime's attempts to undermine its unity,

nonviolent discipline and organization. The regime may try to sow discord within the movement

and create or exploit existing divisions in a similar way the resistance wants to dislodge the

regime's pillars of support. The opponent may also infiltrate the peaceful actions with its *agents

provocateurs* in order to undermine nonviolent posture, and provoke or instigate violence. This

has the aim to brand the opposition as extremists or terrorists and use this as a pretext and

justification for greater violence to crash the resisters. Successful movements mange to counter

this by internalizing nonviolent discipline in their resistance methods, isolating and removing

violent radicals from the movement and publicizing violence and disproportionate use of force

by the security forces.

The regime may also attempt to undermine or ban any form of independent organizing,

including jailing dissidents and imposing legal, financial and social sanctions on movement

members to disrupt planning of anti-government campaigns and development of autonomous

institutions. In response to the government's repression -- often used under the cover of the

martial law and state of emergencies, civil resistance may choose to go underground, and, while

being less visible and exposed to the regime's repressive policies, it can try to regroup and

reorganize. The activists then extend their underground solidarity and mutual-aid networks to

those arrested, their families and those seeking shelter. They may also engage in planning for and

executing indirect cultural and symbolic actions that would slowly but inevitably hollow out the

remaining legitimacy of the regime.

The effectiveness of nonviolent revolutions, be it against a dictator, occupier or a majority that denies minority's rights, has to be measured against the outcomes that might not necessary be tangible, immediately apparent or easily assessed. In addition to the successes of nonviolent revolutionary movements in bringing down seemingly indestructible oppressive structures and liberating the societies from the domestic and foreign oppression, the positive outcome of these revolutions can be evaluated by a set of other no less important developments. Nonviolent revolutions, for example, prevented or delayed, at important historical moments, major calamities of violent struggle (e.g. cases of Kosovo, Ghana, Zambia in Bartkowski 2013). They also contributed to raising national awareness and shared identity, making possible an ideational revolution in the minds of divided people who began to see themselves as part of a larger collective, e.g. cases of Bangladesh, Poland, Egypt, Algeria, Zambia and Ghana (Bartkowski 2013). In other cases, nonviolent, civilian-led resistance built new autonomous organizations of the emerging national communities strong enough to sustain independence once it was won from the occupying or colonial powers, e.g. cases of Poland, Mozambique, Zambia or the United States (Bartkowski 2013).

Sometimes, in the protracted struggles against authoritarian regimes, the fact that revolutionaries self-limited their methods of resistance (preferring nonviolent over violent means and limited over maximalist objectives) or their goals (bringing down the system but making all people –- both opposition and opponents –- part of that change) helped pave the way to negotiated (also known as pacted) transitions. These types of transitions are initiated when powerholders and representatives of the popular movement come together to negotiate a historic agreement that opens up a political system and starts democratization.

Finally, a seemingly defeated or failed civil resistance movement might in fact endure in a hibernated form and continue constraining and containing action of the regime years into the future. For example, the apparent unwillingness of Ayatollah Khamenei to falsify the results of the 2013 Iranian presidential elections that led to the victory of the most liberal of the candidates, Hassan Rouhani, has been directly linked to the seemingly dormant Green Movement. At a time of increasing economic and social problems caused by international sanctions, Khamenei feared the repeat of the mass-based popular demonstrations that took place after the 2009 rigged presidential elections, which might have awakened a full-fledged civil resistance movement and thereby threatened the survival of the Islamic regime.[vi]

How nonviolent struggles for recognition are won

Successful struggles against foreign or domestic regimes require effective strategies to undermine various pillars of support. Activists may go beyond direct forms of nonviolent methods such as strikes, demonstrations, protests or civil disobedience to utilize other strategies and tactics. Indeed, the repertoire of nonviolent actions, particularly in very oppressive environments, may include the strategy of skillfully setting up and managing a two-level battlefield, as well as building alternative institutions, and waging the struggle through small acts of resistance.

Dependency and two-level battlefield

No political system, no matter how powerful and committed to the use of violence, can possess an unlimited capacity to oppress an entire population at all times and in all places. Even during the height of the Nazi power and its territorial expansion, the German military commanders in 1942 reported from Belarus and Russia to their headquarters in Berlin that "German forces could not exercise effective control without enlisting the [local] population" and

that they "… can master the wide Russian expanse (...) only with the Russian and Ukrainians who live in it, never against their will." (Summy in Kumar and Low 1996, p. 127). Consequently, instead of relying on cost-incurring violent coercion, the regime must continuously buy loyalties of important segments of society and ideally enjoy a degree of voluntary following. In the latter two cases, the regime builds (willingly or not) dependency relationships between itself and selected societal groups: the business community, security forces, religious establishments, and different professional syndicates. These dependency relationships are of a mutual benefit. However, the proximity or close social distances between these sectors create potential vulnerabilities for the existing system of rule that skillful resisters can exploit. As long as the parties see specific material advantages coming out of these relationships they continue supporting one another. But no sooner is the flow of the material benefits derailed -- the intentional result of skillful nonviolent actions -- the groups begin questioning the rationality behind their support for the regime. This, in turn, leads to internal splits within a seemingly monolithic system of rule and its eventual downfall.

At the same time, civil resisters are often forced to wage their struggle on two levels: domestic and international. This is because, in some cases, the social distance between them and the oppressor is relatively wide, meaning that the oppressor's powers do not depend on the cooperation of those whom it oppresses (e.g. Israel's occupation of the Palestinians). In other cases, social distance between regime and supporters is quite narrow because of the dominant unifying ideology across the society (e.g. a Nazi ideology and Hitler's regime, or a Chinese jingoistic rhetoric and the Communist government's policy towards Uyghurs or Tibetans), its single-ethnic composition and a strong affinity within the group (e.g. Syrian Alawites and the Assad regime) or because of a popular imperial culture (e.g. British public opinion that was

largely supportive of its monarchy and government's foreign policies throughout its colonial history).

In such situations, the nonviolent challengers often strategize their resistance around a 'two level game': trying to undermine the control of the repressive regime, be it indigenous or foreign, on a domestic level while, at the same time, broadening its campaigns beyond immediate borders onto the international level. The latter strategy would rely on reaching out to potential third-party allies –- be it other governments, the occupier's society, the political and business classes, or the international community in general –- who are seen as having some leverage over the opponent. Using the economic noncooperation based on nonexportation and nonimportation, the American colonists, for example, exerted their effective pressure on the British government indirectly through a third party –- the British merchants. The latter were losing considerable trade and profits because of the colonists' economic boycott and it was their intervention in the British parliament that was credited with the repeal of the British Stamp Act that the colonists opposed (Conser in Bartkowski 2013, pp. 311-312).

Likewise, in the early twentieth century, the nonviolent struggle of the Polish society for its independence helped unite the Polish community but it also popularized Poles' aspirations for their independent country abroad. The international press published stories of the Polish school strikes in Russian Poland and also reported on civil resistance against the German land grab that faced disproportionately repressive policies of the German authorities. This raised sympathy among the publics in Britain, France, and the United States and garnered international support for an independent state for Poles that was eventually articulated in President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points speech in 1918 (Bartkowski 2013, pp. 259-277).

Activists can also play the two-level game with the regime by exploiting the state's desire

to present itself as a responsible actor in international relations. Such an actor oftentimes commits itself to certain norms included in the international conventions that it voluntary signs. For example, the organizers of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia used the fact that the regime voluntary signed the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 to pressure the government to follow its international commitments with regard to human rights. Charter 08 and the people's network set up around the initiative put public pressure on the Communist government in China to comply with its international commitments contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the Chinese government signed in the 1990s. Similarly, the Egyptian anti-corruption campaign *shayfeen.com* used the government's signature under the UN Convention against Corruption to press it to implement its legal provisions that allowed the third parties to bring anti-corruption cases in front of the court.[vii]

Alternative institutions

Alternative institutions signify a variety of entities ranging from informal or illegal networks or associations of people that exist in a real or, now, in a virtual world, to more formal, semi-official, or legal organizations. Some examples of alternative institutions include schools; clinics; publishing houses; media outlets; political parties; financial, economic, and social institutions; agricultural cooperatives; governing institutions and community service organizations. In civil resistance struggles, alternative institutions are built by emerging opposition towards the status quo and are an important part of the resistance strategies. The resort to alternative institutions might be instinctive as a result of severe oppression or perceived impenetrability of the system. In such conditions, direct nonviolent actions are seen as being too risky or ineffective.

Oftentimes, society cannot engage in direct civil resistance actions until its conditioning is at the level that allows it to do so. The innocuous organizing through alternative institutions such as sport clubs, reading groups, or economic organizations provides for such conditioning by generating a powerful, long-term, politicizing force that initially might influence stronger communal bonds and networks, increase awareness of shared culture, history, common identity or destiny, or help more clearly articulate grievance frames, demands or solutions (what George Lakey calls "conscientization" in Lakey 1969). These developments can eventually broaden citizen participation and spawn direct collective methods and are thus an important predicate of effective political actions. For example, in the colonial Zambia, the seemingly apolitical indigenous welfare associations that worked for social and economic development of the black community at the same time raised awareness about discrimination, degrading treatment and a lack of opportunities because of the white settlers' actions and policies. The associations performed in fact proto-political functions, politicized local populations, honed organizational and professional skills of their participants, nurtured a new leadership of pro-independence Zambian leaders and led to the formation of a country-wide political party (Momba and Gadsden in Bartkowski 2013, pp. 76-77).

In the struggle against communism, alternative institutions played an extremely important role. From the mid 1970s, Poles built legal, semi-legal and illegal institutions including human rights organizations, informal workers' councils and professional associations, and a flying university that offered lectures about Polish history and politics free of censorship. They also set up publishing houses and a printing press that translated and published thousands of unofficial or banned works (including the translation of George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm,* and a popular booklet on "What to Do in Contacts with Police").

According to Wiktor Kulerski, one of the Polish opposition members, the liberation of the society through its self-organization and building of parallel institutions had a very strategic dimension and aimed at creating the situation in which "authorities will control empty stores, but not the market; the employment of workers, but not their livelihood; the official media, but not the circulation of information; printing plants, but not the publishing movement; the mail and telephones, but not communication; and the school system, but not education" (Stokes 1993, p. 106). The self-organized society, as Adam Michnik observed, was a liberating experience that created "a real, day-to-day community of free people" (Ackerman and DuVall 2000, p. 123). The long-term objective of self-managing society was simple –- to wrest gradually and tacitly the power from the authoritarian state or, in the words of one of the oppositionists, Stanislaw Fudakowski, "to confront the centralized power of the state without ever having to confront it directly. Little by little, authority will be transferred to the local level, until in the end the state will have lost most of its power" (Weschler 1982, p. 105).

Setting up alternative cultural institutions –- be they libraries, reading circles, art exhibitions, makeshift theaters, public performances and plays or concerts, networks of semi-legal or illegal schools, or organizational committees for commemoration or celebration– -- can be an effective instrument of resistance. These types of institutions formed and reinforced the national consciousness of many nations: Estonians, Lithuanians, Kosovars, West Papuans, Algerians, Egyptians, Ghanaians, Zambians and Poles, among others.[viii] As for the latter, in the second half of the 19th century, Poles rejected violent uprisings and embarked on a long-term, social engineering project known as "organic work." It was a resistance-driven philosophy of self-improvement that included establishment of indigenous financial institutions and social and economic cooperatives, alongside educational and cultural organizations. Through economic

growth and social development, organic work aimed to ensure national subsistence and self-sufficiency in the face of denationalization policies pursued by the occupiers. (Bartkowski 2013).

Alternative institutions serve often the purpose of everyday, collective self-defense and survival against generations-long oppression. Even in its protracted form, this type of struggle has a strategic dimension. Namely, alternative institutions ensure that getting through life -- even mere physical survival encompassed, for example, in the Palestinian saying "existence is resistance" --- becomes a strategic process of defiance (often on a subliminal level) against destructively centrifugal forces. The Palestinian notion of *sumud* (steadfastness) manifests itself, for example, in the Palestinian determination to stay on and cultivate the land no matter the hardship and oppression. This idea can be also represented by the life of political prisoners incarcerated in various undemocratic countries, including Burma, the Soviet Union, or China. Prisoners –- even in the most horrific conditions – often establish informal networks not only to secure and smuggle basic goods but to educate themselves, write, plan and strategize their defiance, even when lacking physical freedom (Fink 2009, specifically the chapter on Prison: 'Life University').

Box 8.1 Basque cooperatives as alternative institutions

Often, due to its seemingly amenable nature that substitutes direct actions and confrontation for the mundane work of self-organizing, alternative institutions might not be seen by authorities as a direct, tangible, menacing threat to its rule or, for that matter, as a form of resistance. This leads the adversary (and often external observers) to fail to comprehend the significance of this type of action. But in reality, alternative institutions can offer physical and psychological space for society to withdraw and strengthen their social fabric in order to fight its adversary in future confrontations.

One relevant example is the Basque society that between the 1950s-1970s initiated work on alternative institutions that aimed at economic development but also at preservation of Basque identity, culture and language under the yoke of the authoritarian regime of the general Franco. The Basque cooperatives were seen by the regime as rather non-threatening undertakings as they were linked with the Catholic Church, which made them acceptable for the Spanish right, while their cooperative philosophy was seen as corporativist enough to gain endorsement of the Falange party that constituted the backbone of Franco's regime. The cooperatives played an important role in teaching Basques' value of self-sustenance, self-reliance and self-organization and building solidarity across the economic classes.

Together with *ikastolas*, or underground schools, that taught Basque language, and political self-education in bars across the county, the Basque alternative institutions transformed the society from its ethnic-based roots towards a genuine political community (which also included Spanish immigrants that settled in the Basque country) – aware of its rights, inspirations and power (Kasmir 1996, pp.74-75; 99-100; 107-108).

In a digital age, the Internet and online social networks have opened opportunities to create new kinds of alternative institutions — the virtual or digital ones. An example is the work of Russian activists that set up an opposition coordination council by organizing mixed virtual and on-the-ground elections in October 2012 in which more than 80,000 cast their votes, the majority online. The coordination council is now largely a day-to-day virtual network of people, gathered mainly on the council's Facebook page,[ix] that mobilizes Russians and organizes protest actions.

Small Acts of Resistance

During protracted political struggles against undemocratic and violent regimes, activists

often impose indirect costs on the regime. They undermine its already weakened authority and legitimacy through various symbolic, cultural and humoresque actions, that also involve, somehow innocently, the public that would either watch or participate in subtly versed anti-regime performances. These actions reflect and reinforce the dissidence culture in the society. Small acts of resistance, similarly to alternative institutions, are the reaction of the society to either a high level of repression imposed by the state (usually in the form of emergency laws, including martial law), or a general apathy and fear that permeates the community, making it paralyzed and inactive. In such circumstances, the fighting part of the society submerges away from the direct view of the opponent. The organizers plan quietly their ways to reemerge at a time and place of their own choosing, and to organize specific actions, only to submerge again and to reappear with yet another campaign at a later time.

Box 8.2 Actions to highlight absurdities

One of the important goals of small acts of resistance is to keep bringing up to the people a striking contradiction between the state's rhetoric about living in a normal country and the reality. Activists often try to show the absurdity of the system that claims to rule according to ordinary laws by forcing it to act in a way that contradicts common sense and goes against an ordinary person's intellect.

For example, in February 2012, in the Siberian town Barnaul, activists assembled Lego people and other cartoon toys that held banners protesting the rigged 2011 parliamentary elections in Russia. The signs read: "I'm for clean elections," "A thief should sit in jail, not in the Kremlin," and "I am for honest elections" (O'Flynn 2012). The local police promptly arrested the toys, as they considered their protest an "unsanctioned public event." This was followed by the authorities' decision not to allow future protests of this kind because the toys were not

"citizens" and could not lead or participate in protests. The country that bans and arrests protesting toys exposes the absurdity of its own rule and laws –- which was the very goal of this small act of resistance.

In another case, in 2011, online activists called on Chinese citizens to engage in the subtle technique of resistance known as *san bu*, an innocuous stroll in public places. There would not be any shouting or banners but just an innocent walk and smile. This form of action allowed people to circumvent the ban on public protest while remaining anonymous and forced the authorities to use extraordinary and costly measures of closing down public areas next to the popular places for eating out in Beijing and other cities in China. These small actions of defiance were considered an effective psychological warfare against a paranoid authoritarian system trying now to chase shadows (Demick and Pierson 2011).

Likewise, in Russia, in May 2012, during growing repression against activists, 12 well-known Russian writers announced that they would take a simple stroll from one square in Moscow to a nearby city park. Usually a demonstration would require a permit from the authorities. A call for a stroll was an inventive small tactic that was to test the authorities' resolves to ban and impose fines on organizers of any public gatherings and people's rejection of such repressive actions. Eventually, an ingenuous stroll brought more than 10,000 people to the streets, turning a subtle defiance into an open display of opposition (Barry 2012).

Other small acts of resistance aim at expropriating the regime of its symbolic celebrations that are at the core of its ideology. One of the most important festivals in communist countries was Labor Day (May 1), the celebration of workers and their labor. In Poland, as well as in other countries of the Soviet bloc, the streets on that day were full of parades watched by the local and national communist dignitaries, usually from the elevated podiums. In the 1980s, Poland faced a

dire economic situation that deteriorated further with international economic sanctions imposed on the country after the martial law in 1981. Workers, whom communist propaganda placed at the vanguard of the communist system, could barely support their families. In one of the cities in Poland, the workers decided to expropriate May 1 from the regime and use it to show the misery of the Polish workers. They let their communist bosses in the factories know that unless they would be allowed to boycott the event they would go out on the streets to "celebrate" that day, but bare-footed. For the workers there was little, if anything, to rejoice about on their day. Faced with a real dilemma, the local communist party finally decided to let the workers boycott the communist holiday rather than have them walk without shoes in front of the communist officials (Crawshaw and Jackson 2010).

Similarly, the Orange Alternative –- a surrealist student movement in the Polish city of Wroclaw in the 1980s –- organized street theaters and satirical and humoresque enactments of the major holidays that were celebrated by the Polish communist regime, including Militia Day, Army Day and the day of the 1917 Great Socialist October revolution. On these holidays that were lionized by the regime, the members of the Orange Alternative would organize happenings that caricatured state propaganda and the nature of the regime's celebrations.[x] The idea of "taking back" public holidays, and using festivals as days for mobilization, has been evident in other movements as well, including in Iran and Egypt.

Civil resistance in democratic transitions

The notion that the way one fights determines the nature of the future rule has been encompassed succinctly and aptly in the words of Adam Michnik, the Polish political dissident, who in the midst of the struggle against the communist regime reminded his compatriots: "Those who begin by storming the Bastilles end up by building their own." Another resistance fighter,

and an iconic figure of the civil rights movement who worked side by side with Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. Reverend James Lawson, said during a meeting with a group of international activists and civil society professionals that "civil resistance is about resolving oppression after which its force continues to move the nation forward."[xi] The difference between these two political activists and a majority of scholarship on democratization is that the former instinctively felt that the practice of democracy begins well before that democracy is formally instituted, and that the legacy and practice of nonviolent resistance plays an indispensible role in democratization and democratic transition long after civil resistance against dictatorship ends. This view differs sharply, for example, from some of the established opinions that "democratic regimes that last have seldom, if ever, been instituted by mass popular action" (Huntington 1984, p. 212).

Indeed, most democratization theories focus on structures, the role of elites and macro-level forces of change such as modernization. The attention is thus given to building open and competitive electoral infrastructure, ensuring civilian control over the army, creating an independent judiciary, spreading political power among different branches of the government, introducing decentralization reforms or market reforms that strengthen the middle class, building political parties, or developing free media or independent civic organizations. Little attention has been given to the impact of popular nonviolent movements on trajectories of democratic transitions. Sidney Tarrow noted for example, that "most scholars of democratization have either ignored movements altogether or regarded them with suspicion as dangers to democracy (…) When [researchers] do turn to movements in less developed systems, it is frequently only to catalogue and condemn ethnic and nationalist movements" (Tarrow 1995, pp. 221-222).

Several studies try to rectify a general disregard for the impact of civil resistance on democratization. The Freedom House study on *How Freedom is Won* identifies 67 transitions between 1972-2005; 50 out of 67 transitions were identified as bottom-up transitions in which civil resistance was a major factor leading to the breakthrough after which transitions began. 14 were classified as top-down transitions led by powerholders or violent change and 3 cases were that of external interventions. 64% of bottom-up transitions are examples of countries that are classified by Freedom House as free. This fares much better than 14% of top-down transitions that boast free political systems (Ackerman and Karatnycky 2005). A complementary study that focused on economic growth showed that bottom-up transitions experienced moderate and high economic growth in 80% of cases, versus 50% for top-down transitions (Johnstad 2010). Another important study by Chenoweth and Stephan assesses the probability that a country will be democratic five years after successful nonviolent resistance to be at 84%, compared to 15% after a "successful" violent campaign (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, pp. 201-219).

These studies suggest that the force of civil resistance cannot be reduced to a formulaic technique of a regime change or a universal recipe for bringing down dictators as some detractors, including the Chinese and Russian governments, warn about. The impact of civil resistance has to be measured well beyond the proximate struggle of ending immediate oppression. The study as well as a genuine practice of civil resistance are in fact about wholesale transformation of the society that begins with a new political order that is being built already during the protracted nonviolent struggle, which redefines traditional power relations between ordinary people, state and elites.[xii]

One concept that might play an important role in re-conceptualizing civil resistance beyond a simplified view of the regime change is perhaps the illusive idea of "social capital."

Some view civil resistance as generating "social capital on steroids." (Chenoweth 2013). Others consider the impact of civil resistance in generating all types of social capital: from *bonding* (interacting with similar people), to *bridging* (getting together with people with entirely different views and backgrounds), and, finally, to *linking* (reaching out to and dialoging or negotiating with people in power to win them over) (Bartkowski 2009 and 2010). Civil resistance can facilitate formation of all three types of social capital.

Some methods of civil resistance can be more helpful in generating social capital than other tactics. For example, acts of commission -- doing something that the state authority outlaws (e.g. petitions, strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, occupation, building parallel institutions) -- might have a high index of social capital formation as it involves greater and denser human interactions, building and running organizations, and a considerable amount of human and material resources that need to be mobilized to sustain the actions. In contrast, acts of omission -- not doing something that the state authorities require or expect (e.g. conscription boycott, election boycott, tax refusal, boycott of official events) - might come with a relatively lower index of expected social capital as they might be performed by largely individual actions with a thinner web of human interactions required to produce them, little institutionalization and with less necessity for capital-intensive endeavors to implement them.

Many scholars note a positive impact of civil resistance on long-term democratic change by recognizing a pre-figurative role of nonviolent struggle. While civil resistance is ongoing people, "step outside of the old order and begin living in the new order as if it already existed" (King 2013, also Vinthagen 2011). In Poland for example, the engagement of the anti-communist opposition helped generate greater, denser and more propitious social capital needed to transform the system.

First of all, the Polish Solidarity movement managed to internalize within the psyche of the movement and socialize the general public in what some scholars refer to as the idea of a self-limiting revolution. This type of revolution emphasized the nonviolent nature of the popular revolt. The nonviolent discipline was encapsulated in the call of one of the opposition leaders, Jacek Kuroń, to "set up [people's] own committees instead of burning down party committees" (Smolar in Roberts and Ash 2009, p. 133). Another strategic self-limitation on the part of the opposition movement was its pragmatic goal of pushing for the establishment of free trade unions and professional associations rather than the outright democratization of Poland, even after more than 10 million Poles (or 80 percent of the country's work force) joined a legalized Solidarity trade union.

Another important element of a self-limiting revolution was its regular emphasis on openness to dialogue and negotiation with the regime once it acknowledged the legitimacy of the demands for democratization and recognized Solidarity as an equal partner to negotiations. Consequently, one of the first tangible impacts of civil resistance on democratization was setting up a stage for a grand bargain between the opposition and the regime, which took a concrete shape in the Round Table negotiations between the opposition and the government in February-April 1989. Eventually, the self-limiting nature of the Solidarity movement, combined with its potency to use powerful methods of resistance, helped bring about accommodation with the regime and impacted the transition that followed the 1989 accords. At the UN General Assembly in fall of 2012, the Polish President Komorowski gave due credit to the Polish self-limiting revolution and the 1989 accommodation by saying that, "In the long run, the ability to self-contain and the strength of a wise compromise make a much better solution than maximizing one's own demands and trying to advance one's own arguments by force."

Other important developments[xiii] in Poland after 1989 that were influenced by prior experience and practice of civil resistance can be seen in the effective organization of Solidarity's political campaign during the first free and open parliamentary elections in the country since 1946. A self-organizing experience that was mustered in the years of mobilizing and resisting gave Solidarity a clear advantage over the communists and ensured its electoral victory in June 1989 despite a relatively short time to prepare the campaign.

Soon after coming to power, Solidarity implemented one of the most important and arguably most successful changes: decentralization reforms. In fact, the nature of this technical reform was very much an ideational reflection of the Solidarity itself –- of its decentralized structures and its own understanding and practice of political power as an authority diffused throughout hundreds and thousands of autonomous entities close to ordinary people. As a consequence of this reform, 2,600 self-governing rural and urban communes were established and given considerable governing powers, including finances and legal status. The entity that was given the responsibility for training thousands of civil servants and local officials for the newly established structures was, not surprisingly, a civic education foundation independent of political affiliations.

Finally, the legacy of civil resistance during the Polish transition was vividly notable in what Ekiert and Kubik refer to as a "rebellious civil society" that emerged in Poland between 1989-1993 (Ekiert and Kubik 2001). The authors show that during the first years of transformation, Poland experienced the highest number of protests and strikes in Central Europe –- more than 6,000 strike actions each year –- but that their demands were also self-limiting. They did not question the democratic direction of the reforms and thus had a reformist rather than destructive or anti-democratic character. The mobilized civil society –- an inheritance of the

nonviolent resistance prior to 1989 -- reinforced democratization processes in the country and held the new political elite directly accountable to the public at a time when political parties and interest groups were weak and still forming.

There is a need for more rigorous studies on the long-term impact of civil resistance. It must be noted that the current literature on strategic nonviolent conflict (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Ackerman and Karatnycky 2005; Celestino and Gleditsch 2013) considers the impact of civil resistance on democratic transition while looking at the practice of civil resistance *prior* to the breakthrough and *prior* to the initiation of the transition itself. A major limitation of the studies is that their data excludes civilian-based mobilization and nonviolent actions *after* the breakthrough is achieved. At the same time, other studies that considered popular nonviolent mobilization *during* transition focused either on a single case (e.g. Poland in Ekiert and Kubik 2001), single methods of contention (e.g. strikes or demonstrations in Teorell 2010), or derived largely untested propositions about the impact that peaceful resistance has on the democratization process (Teorell 2010).

Conclusion

While referring to various examples, including a special emphasis on the case study of the Polish nonviolent resistance, this chapter highlights a number of relevant issues with regard to nonviolent rebellions that are waged for recognition of societies' rights and freedoms. In its first sections, the chapter points to the dominance of structural accounts in explaining popular upheavals or major political changes in the countries. More often than not, these approaches occlude the valuation of the role and force of the agency of ordinary people. And although the external conditions and structures are important and cannot be ignored either by the scholars or, for that matter, by the practitioners, they are not determinative for the emergence or success of

nonviolent movements (Marchant 2007).

Nonviolent movements against brutal regimes are on the rise and there are a number of reasons why people decide to resort to nonviolent resistance. In general, it is easier for the population to join a nonviolent movement rather than a violent struggle and make a meaningful and equally important contribution to the nonviolent mobilization regardless of one's skills, wealth, age or gender. Such diversity brings creativity and new ideas for actions, that ideally inspire still others to join the movement,

The chapter also stressed that the strategic approach to waging a nonviolent struggle combined with a thorough planning are crucial for the success of the movement. A reflection of the strategic approach to a conflict, as described in the chapter, can be the efforts on the part of activists to extend their battlefield beyond an immediate arena of struggle and reach out to potential international allies or societal groups in other countries to increase the pressure on the adversary. Other examples included building alternative institutions to ensure both resilience of the struggle and a societal development, laying down the economic, civic and psychological foundations for a protracted struggle and people's participation in direct forms of nonviolent collective actions. The reliance on small acts of resistance is yet another illustration of activists' strategic and creative adjustment to the oppressive environment in which they operate.

The success of civil resistance movements can be immediately visible –- a dictator leaving an office, an occupying power forced to grant independence or an ethnic group that wins its self-determination rights. The success of civil resistance can also take a form of more elusive and long-term impact such as common identity making, consciousness shaping, and institution building –- the consequences of which are not immediately apparent. In the context of the investigation into the long-term impact of civil resistance, this chapter made small but important

strides into still little explored area of the enduring impact of civil resistance on democratization once a major political breakthrough has been achieved. In its final part, the chapter showed the way future research could approach this subject: first, by looking at the propitious impact of nonviolent strategies and tactics to generate social capital during the civil resistance phase that will be, in turn, conducive to democratic transition after a dictator's fall, and secondly, by suggesting to consider the role of nonviolent mobilizations and actions once the transition process began.

Questions for discussion:

1 What advantages does civil resistance have over violent resistance in challenging oppressive regime?

2 How do you understand a concept of a two-level battlefield, and what examples of civil resistance struggles illustrate it?

3 How do you define success in a civil resistance movement? What outcomes of civil resistance struggle would you consider a success and why?

Suggestions for further research:

Bartkowski, Maciej. *Poland's Solidarity Movement: 1981-1989.* International Center for
　　　Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC). Available at www.nonviolent-
　　　conflict.org/images/stories/pdfs/bartkowski_poland.pdf.

Havel, Vaclav (1990) *The Power of the Powerless*, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Nepstad, Sharon Erickson (2011) *Nonvjolent Revolutions Civil Resistance in the Late 20ᵗʰ*
Century. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, Adam, and Timothy Garton Ash, eds. (2009) *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The*
Experience of Non-Violent Action from Gandhi to the Present. Oxford: Oxford University
Press.

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[i] In this chapter, I define civil resistance as an *organized nonviolent contestation* undertaken by

ordinary people either individually or en masse in order to challenge the status quo that deprives

them of their rights and freedoms and/or to oppose political or violent oppression. In the

contestation, people deploy various categories of methods of nonviolent actions that can either be

disruptive to the ruling system or constructive for organizing, sustaining the movement and

resistance, or both.

[ii] Despite vastness of the writings on revolutions the dominant view of these uprisings are shaped

by the literature on revolutionary wars. Nonviolent revolutions are either not recognized or seen

more as anomaly rather than a norm. Jack A. Goldstone, "Theories of Revolution: The Third

Generation," *World Politics* 32, no. 2 (1980); Jack A. Goldstone, Ted Robert Gurr, and Farrokh

Moshiri, ed., *Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991);

Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out. States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991,*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Patrick Van Inwegen, *Understanding*

Revolution, (London: Lynne Rienner, 2011); Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolutions. Theoretical,*

Comparative, and Historical Studies, (Wadsworth: United States, 2008); Fred Halliday,

Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power, (Durham, N.C.:

Duke University Press, 1999).

[iii] Author's own estimates combined with NAVCO 1.0 & 2.0 datasets. The figures are: 1801-

1900: 6; 1901-1950: 9; 1951-2000: 65 and 2001-2011: 50. The latter figure includes the 2011

nonviolent uprisings in the Arab world.

[iv] Does civil resistance reduce civilian deaths? http://maciejbartkowski.com/2013/10/31/does-

civil-resistance-reduce-civilian-deaths/ Accessed on Oct. 31, 2013.

[v] For an excellent documentary on the emergence of the Free South Africa campaign and the

involvement of former American civil rights activists see *Have You Heard from Johannesburg*?

[vi] Author's conversation with the Iranian political dissident, June 24, 2013.

[vii] Shaazka Beyerle and Arwa Hassan, Popular Resistance against Corruption in Turkey and

Egypt in Maria Stephan, eds., *Civilian Jihad. Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and

Governance in the Middle East*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): Chapter 18.

[viii] A numer of these nations and their nonviolent resistance are discussed in greater details in

Bartkowski (2013).

[ix] https://www.facebook.com/KSovetOppoziciiRF Accessed July 30, 2013.

[x] Orange Alternative on http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#army-day . Accessed July 1,

2013.

[xi] Fletcher Summer Institute on the Advanced Study of Nonviolent Conflict. June 27, 2012.

[xii] Although nonviolent popular risings that brought down oppressive rulers and led to the

establishment of liberal democracies might not have brought about radical social change which

many left-wing, anti-capitalist thinkers hoped for, they still were able to initiate an important

progress from closed to open societies with more political space and freedoms that would allow people for much easier and more effective organization to push forward with further more radical changes. (Author's conversation with Jeff Goodwin, American Sociological Association conference, Denver, August 19, 2012.)

[xiii] For more see Maciej Bartkowski, Poland's Solidarity Movement: 1981-1989. http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/images/stories/pdfs/bartkowski_poland.pdf. Accessed on Aug 1, 2013.