

The Success of Nonviolent Resistance Campaigns

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Nonviolence is fine as long as it works.

—Malcolm X

IN NOVEMBER 1975, Indonesian president Suharto ordered a full-scale invasion of East Timor, claiming that the left-leaning nationalist group that had declared independence for East Timor a month earlier, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin), was a communist threat to the region. Fretilin's armed wing, the Forças Armadas de libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (Falintil), led the early resistance to Indonesian occupation forces in the form of conventional and guerrilla warfare. Using weapons left behind by Portuguese troops, Falintil forces waged armed struggle from East Timor's mountainous jungle region. But Falintil would not win the day. Despite some early successes, by 1980 Indonesia's brutal counterinsurgency campaign had decimated the armed resistance along with nearly one third of the East Timorese population.²

Yet nearly two decades later, a nonviolent resistance movement helped to successfully remove Indonesian troops from East Timor and win independence for the annexed territory. The Clandestine Front, an organization originally envisaged as a support network for the armed movement, eventually reversed roles and became the driving force behind the nonviolent, pro-independence resistance. Beginning in 1988, the Clandestine Front, which grew out of the East Timorese youth movement, developed a large decentralized network of activists, who planned and executed various nonviolent campaigns inside East Timor, in Indonesia, and internationally. These included protests timed to the visits of diplomats and dignitaries, sit-ins inside foreign embassies, and international solidarity efforts that reinforced Timorese-led nonviolent activism.

The Indonesian regime repressed this movement, following its standard approach to violent and nonviolent challengers from within. But this repression backfired. Following the deaths of more than two hundred East Timorese nonviolent protesters at the hands of Indonesian troops in Dili in November 1991, the pro-independence campaign experienced a major turning point. The massacre, which was captured on film by a British cameraman, was quickly broadcast around the world, causing international outrage and prompting the East Timorese to rethink their strategy (Kohen 1999; Martin, Varney, and Vickers 2001). Intensifying nonviolent protests and moving the resistance into Indonesia proper became major components of the new strategy.

Suharto was ousted in 1998 after an economic crisis and mass popular uprising, and Indonesia's new leader, B.J. Habibie, quickly pushed through a series of political and economic reforms designed to restore stability and international credibility to the country. 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. During a 1999 referendum, almost 80 percent of East Timorese voters opted for independence. Following the referendum, Indonesian-backed militias launched a scorched-earth campaign that led to mass destruction and displacement. On September 14, 2000, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to authorize an Australian-led international force for East Timor.³

The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor oversaw a two-year transition period before East Timor became the world's newest independent state in May 2002 (Martin 2000). Although a

small number of Falintil guerrillas (whose targets had been strictly military) kept their weapons until the very end, it was not their violent resistance that liberated the territory from Indonesian occupation. As one Clandestine Front member explained, “The Falintil was an important symbol of resistance and their presence in the mountains helped boost morale, but nonviolent struggle ultimately allowed us to achieve victory. The whole population fought for independence, even Indonesians, and this was decisive.”⁴

Similarly, in the Philippines in the late 1970’s, several revolutionary guerrilla groups were steadily gaining strength. The Communist Party of the Philippines and its new People’s Army (NPA) were inspired by Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideologies and pursued armed revolution to gain power. State-sponsored military attacks on the NPA dispersed the guerrilla resistance until NPA encompassed all regions of the country. The Philippine government launched a concerted counterinsurgency effort, and the NPA was never able to achieve power.

In the early 1980s, however, members of the opposition began to pursue a different strategy. In 1985 the reformist opposition united under the banner of UNIDO (United Nationalist Democratic Organization) with Cory Aquino as its presidential candidate. In the period leading up to the elections, Aquino urged nonviolent discipline, making clear that violent attacks against opponents would not be tolerated. Church leaders, similarly, insisted on discipline, while the National Citizens’ Movement for free Elections trained half a million volunteers to monitor elections.

When Marcos declared himself the winner of the 1986 elections despite the counterclaims of election monitors, Cory Aquino led a rally of a million Filipinos, proclaiming victory for herself and “the people.” The day after Marcos’s inauguration, Filipinos participated in a general strike, a boycott of the state media, a massive run on state-controlled banks, a boycott of crony businesses, and other nonviolent activities.

A dissident faction of the military signaled that it favored the opposition in this matter, encouraging the opposition to form a parallel government on February 25 with Aquino at its head. Masses of unarmed Filipino civilians, including nuns and priests, surrounded the barracks where the rebel soldiers were holed up, forming a buffer between those soldiers and those who remained loyal to Marcos. President Ronald Reagan’s administration had grown weary of Marcos and signaled support for the opposition movement. That evening, U.S. military helicopters transported Marcos and his family to Hawaii, where they remained in exile. Although the Philippines has experienced a difficult transition to democracy, the nonviolent campaign successfully removed the Marcos dictatorship. Where violent insurgency had failed only a few years earlier, the People Power movement succeeded.

THE PUZZLE

The preceding narratives reflect both specific and general empirical puzzles. Specifically, we ask why nonviolent resistance has succeeded in some cases where violent resistance had failed in the same states, like the violent and nonviolent pro-independence campaigns in East Timor and regime-change campaigns in the Philippines. We can further ask why nonviolent resistance in some states fails during one period (such as the 1950s Defiance Campaign by antiapartheid activists in South Africa) and then succeeds decades later (such as the antiapartheid struggle in the early 1990s).

These two specific questions underline a more general inquiry, which is the focus of this book. We seek to explain two related phenomena: why nonviolent resistance often succeeds relative to violent resistance, and under what conditions, nonviolent resistance succeeds or fails.⁵

Indeed, debates about the strategic logic of different methods of traditional and nontraditional warfare have recently become popular among security studies scholars (Abrahms 2006; Arreguín-Toft 2005; Byman and Waxman 1999, 2000; Dashti-Gibson, Davis and Radcliff 1997; Drury 1998; Horowitz and Reiter 2001; Lyall and Wilson 2009; Merom 2003; Pape 1996, 1997, 2005; Stoker 2007). Implicit in many of these assessments, 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 among political scientists is that opposition movements select terrorism and violent insurgency strategies because such means are more effective than nonviolent strategies at achieving policy goals (Abrahms 2006, 77; Pape 2005).

Despite these assumptions, in recent years organized civilian populations have successfully used nonviolent resistance methods, including boycotts, strikes, protests, and organized noncooperation to exact political concessions and challenge entrenched power. To name a few, sustained and systematic nonviolent sanctions have removed autocratic regimes from power in Serbia (2000), Madagascar (2002), Georgia (2003), and Ukraine (2004-2005), after rigged elections; ended a foreign occupation in Lebanon (2005), and forced Nepal's monarch to make major constitutional concessions (2006). In the first two months of 2011, popular nonviolent uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt removed decades-old regimes from power. As this book goes to press, the prospect of people power transforming the Middle East remains strong.

In our Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) data set, we analyze 323 violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns between 1900 and 2006.⁶ Among them are over one hundred major nonviolent campaigns since 1900, whose frequency has increased over time. In addition to their growing frequency, the success rates of nonviolent campaigns have increased. How does this compare with violent insurgencies? One might assume that the success rates may have increased among both nonviolent and violent insurgencies. But in our data, we find the opposite: although they persist, the success rates of violent insurgencies have declined.

The most striking finding is that between 1900 and 2006, nonviolent resistance campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts. As we discuss in chapter 3, the effects of resistance type on the probability of campaign success are robust even when we take into account potential confounding factors, such as target regime type, repression, and target regime capabilities.⁷

The results begin to differ only when we consider the objectives of the resistance campaigns themselves. Among the 323 campaigns, in the case of antiregime resistance campaigns, the use of nonviolent strategy has greatly enhanced the likelihood of success. Among campaigns with territorial objectives, like antioccupation or self-determination, nonviolent campaigns also have a slight advantage. Among the few cases of major resistance that do not fall into either category (antiapartheid campaigns, for instance), nonviolent resistance has had the monopoly on success.

The only exception is that nonviolent resistance leads to successful secession less often than violent insurgency. Although no nonviolent secession campaigns have succeeded, only four of the forty-one violent secession campaigns have done so (less than 10 percent), also an unimpressive figure. The implication is that campaigns seeking secession are highly unlikely to succeed regardless of whether they employ nonviolent or violent tactics. We explore various factors that could influence these results in chapter 3. It is evident, however, that especially among campaigns seeking regime change or

liberation from foreign occupation, nonviolent resistance has been strategically superior. The success of these nonviolent campaigns—especially in light of the enduring violent insurgencies occurring in many of the same countries—begs systematic exploration.

This book investigates the reasons why—in spite of conventional wisdom to the contrary—civil resistance campaigns have been so effective compared with their violent counterparts. We also consider the reasons why some nonviolent campaigns have failed to achieve their stated aims, and the reasons why violent insurgencies sometimes succeed.

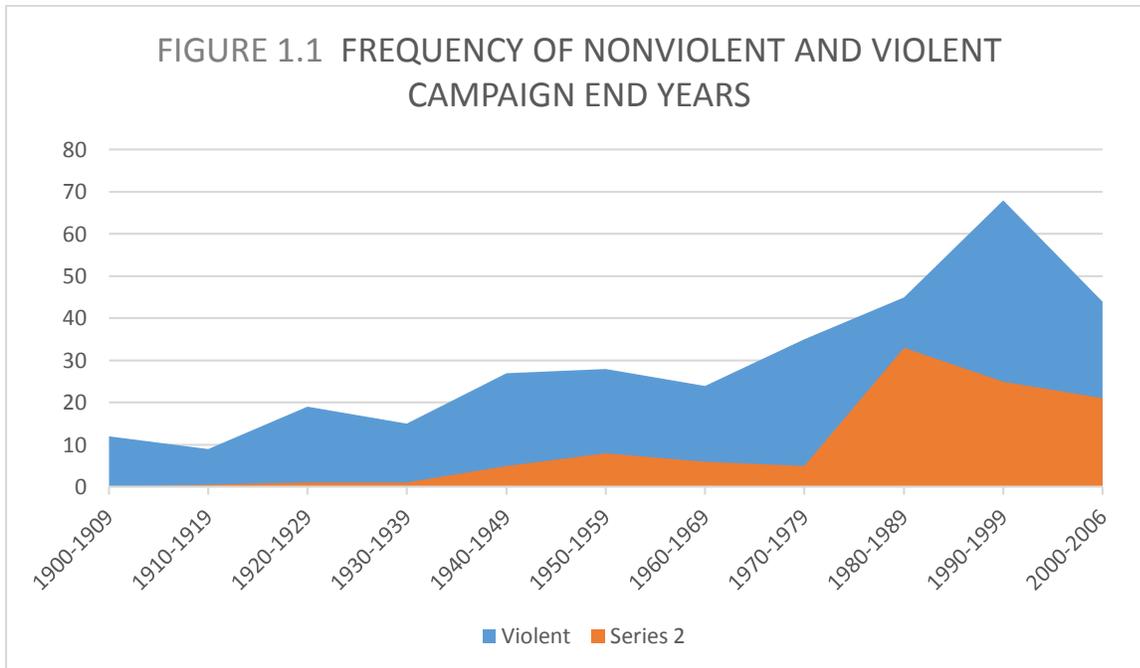


FIGURE 1.2 NUMBER OF NONVIOLENT CAMPAIGNS AND PERCENTAGE OF SUCCESSES, 1940-2006

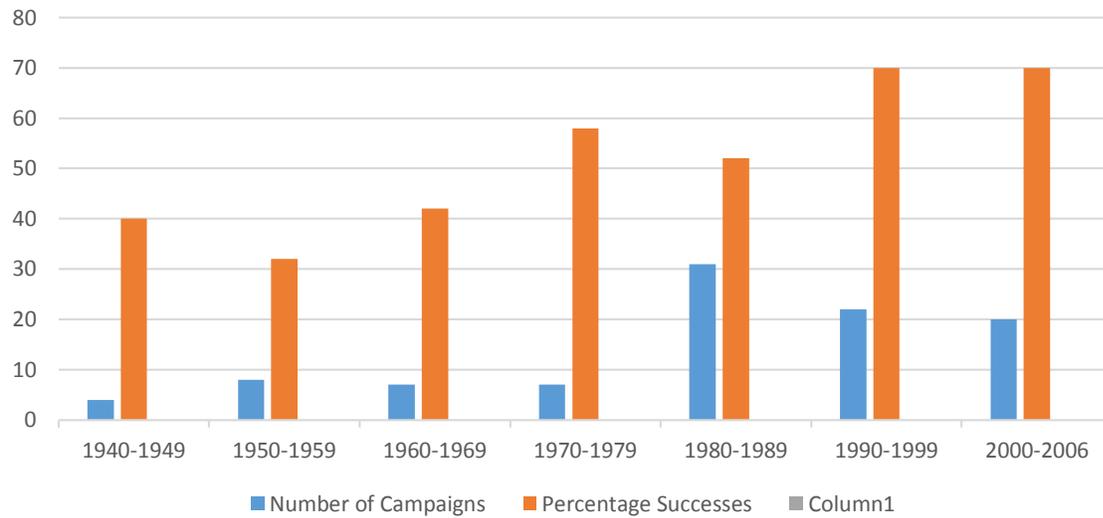


FIGURE 1.3 SUCCESS RATES BY DECADE, 1940-2006

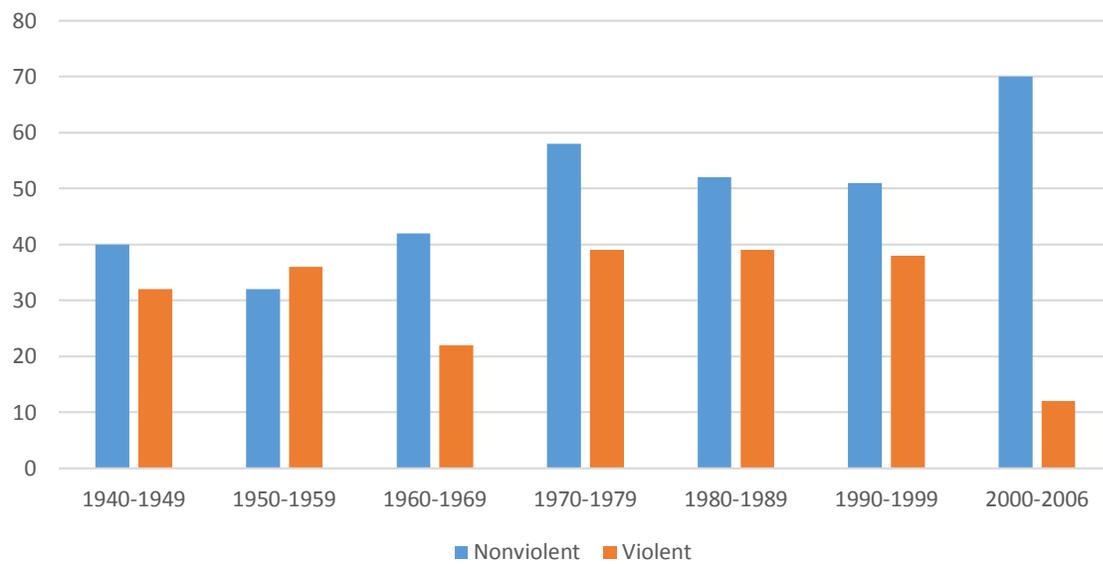


FIGURE 1.4 RATES OF SUCCESS, PARTIAL SUCCESS, AND FAILURE

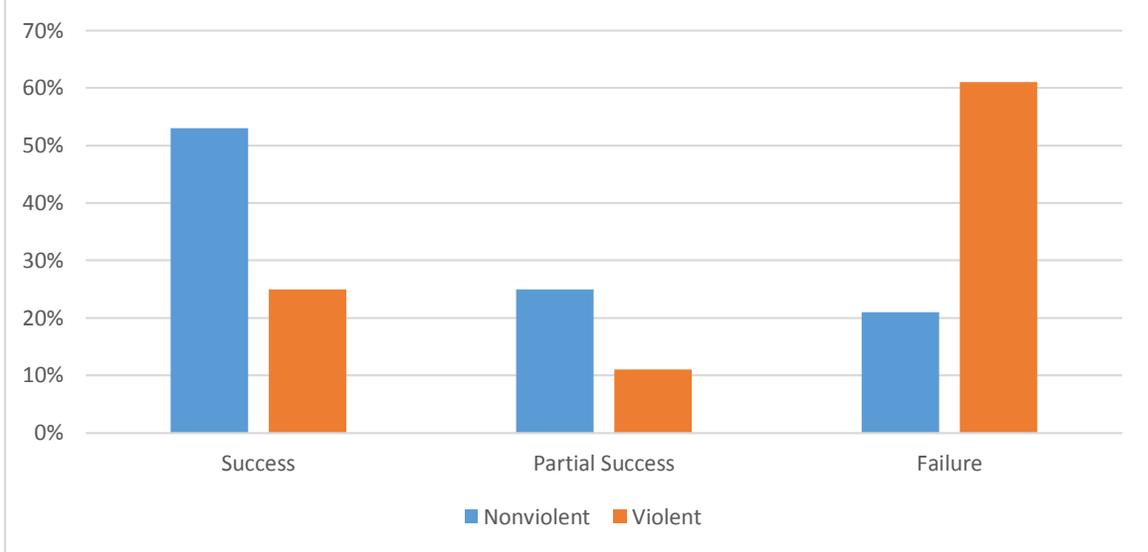
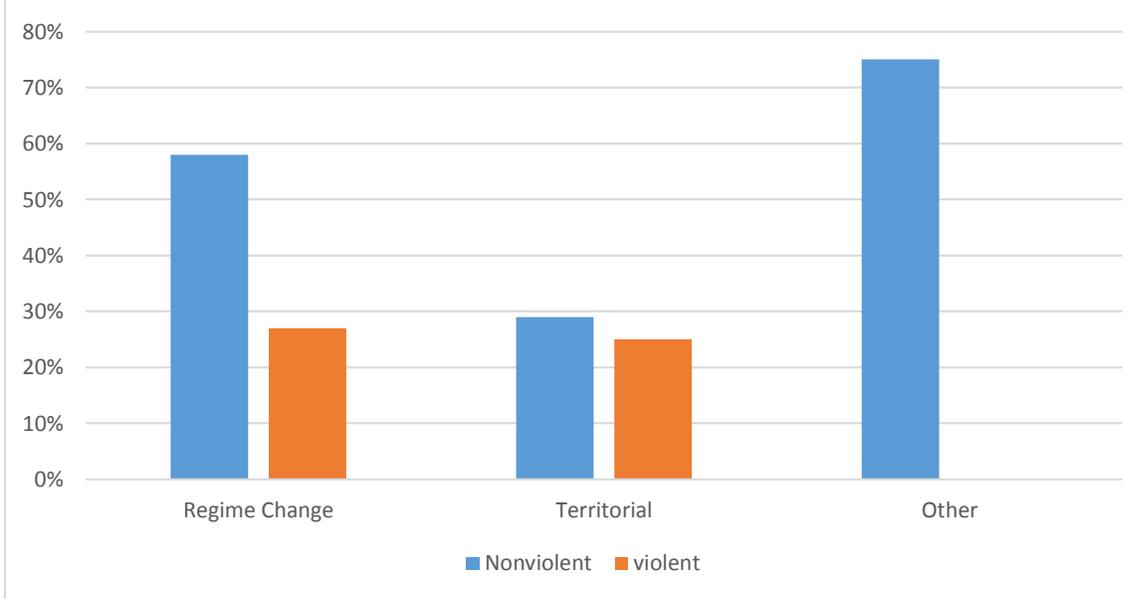


FIGURE 1.5 SUCCESS RATES BY CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE



THE ARGUMENT

Our central contention is that nonviolent campaigns have a participation advantage over violent insurgencies, which is an important factor in determining campaign outcomes. 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. Mobilization among local supporters is a more reliable source of power than the support of external allies, which many violent campaigns must obtain to compensate for their lack of participants.

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, more likely to establish democratic regimes with a lower probability of a relapse into civil war.

Nestling our argument between literatures on asymmetrical warfare, contentions politics, and strategic nonviolent action, we explain the relative effectiveness of nonviolent resistance in the following way: nonviolent campaigns facilitate the active participation of many more people than violent campaigns, thereby broadening the base of resistance and raising the costs to opponents of maintaining the status quo. The mass civilian participation in a nonviolent campaign is more likely to backfire in the face of repression, encourage loyalty shifts among regime supporters, and provide resistance leaders with a more diverse menu of tactical and strategic choices. To regime elites, those engaged in civil resistance are more likely to appear as credible negotiating partners than are violent insurgents, thereby increasing the chance of winning concessions.

However, we also know that resistance campaigns are not guaranteed to succeed simply because they are nonviolent. One in four nonviolent campaigns since 1900 was a total failure. In short, we argue that nonviolent campaigns fail to achieve their objectives when they are unable to overcome the challenge of participation, when they fail to recruit a robust, diverse, and broad-based membership that can erode the power base of the adversary and maintain resilience in the face of repression.

Moreover, more than one in four violent campaigns succeeded. We briefly investigate the question of why violent campaigns sometimes succeed. Whereas the success of nonviolent campaigns tend to rely more heavily on local factors, violent insurgencies tend to succeed when they achieve external support or when they feature a central characteristic of successful nonviolent campaigns, which is mass popular support. The presence of an external sponsor combined with a weak or predatory regime adversary may enhance the credibility of violent insurgencies, which may threaten the opponent regime. The credibility gained through external support may also increase the appeal to potential recruits, thereby allowing insurgencies to mobilize more participants against the opponent. International support is, however, a double-edged sword. Foreign-state sponsors can be fickle and unreliable allies, and state sponsorship can produce a lack of discipline among insurgents and exacerbate free rider problems (Bob 2005; Byman 2005).

THE EVIDENCE

We bring to bear several types of evidence to support our argument, including statistical evidence from the NAVCO data set and qualitative evidence from four case studies: Iran, the Palestinian Territories, Burma, and the Philippines.

It is appropriate here to briefly define the terms to which we will consistently refer in this book. First, we should distinguish violent and nonviolent tactics. As noted earlier, there are some difficulties with labeling one campaign as violent and another nonviolent. In many cases both nonviolent and violent

campaigns exist simultaneously among competing groups. Often those who employ violence in mass movements are members of fringe groups who are acting independently, or in defiance of, the central leadership; or they are agents provocateurs used by the adversary to provoke the unarmed resistance to adopt violence (Zunes 1994). Alternatively, often some groups use both nonviolent and violent methods of resistance over the course of their existence, as with the ANC in South Africa. Characterizing a campaign as violent or nonviolent simplifies a complex constellation of resistance methods.

It is nevertheless possible to characterize a campaign as principally nonviolent based on the primacy of nonviolent resistance methods and the nature of the participation in the form of resistance. Sharp defines nonviolent resistance as “a technique of socio-political action for applying power in a conflict without the use of violence” (1999, 567). The term *resistance* implies that the campaigns of interest are noninstitutional and generally confrontational in nature. In other words, these groups are using tactics that are outside the conventional political process (voting, interest-group organizing, or lobbying). Although institutional methods of political action often accompany nonviolent struggles, writes sociologist Kurt Schock, nonviolent action occurs outside the bounds of institutional political channels (2003, 705).⁸

Our study focuses instead on a type of political activity that deliberately or necessarily circumvents normal political channels and employs noninstitutional (and often illegal) forms of action against an opponent. Civil resistance employs social, psychological, economic, and political methods, including boycotts (social, economic, and political), strikes, protests, sit-ins, stay-aways, and other acts of civil disobedience and noncooperation to mobilize publics to oppose or support different policies, to delegitimize adversaries, and to remove or restrict adversaries’ sources of power (Sharp 1973).⁹ Nonviolent resistance consists of acts of omission, acts of commission, and a combination of both (Sharp 2005).

We characterize violent resistance as a form of political contention and a method of exerting power that, like nonviolent resistance, operates outside normal political channels. While conventional militaries use violence to advance political goals, in this book we are concerned with the use of unconventional violent strategies used by nonstate actors. These strategies are exhibited in three main categories of unconventional warfare: revolutions, plots (or coups d’état), and insurgencies, which differ according to the level of premeditated planning, protractedness, and means of overthrowing the existing order.¹⁰ The weapon system available to an armed insurgent is very different from that of its nonviolent analogue. Violent tactics include bombings, shootings, kidnappings, physical sabotage such as the destruction of infrastructure, and other types of physical harm of people and property. However, the cases we examine do not include military coups, since we are primarily interested in substate actors that are not part of the state. Both violent and nonviolent campaigns seek to take power by force, though the method of applying force differs across the different resistance types.

The list of nonviolent campaigns was initially gathered from an extensive review of the literature on nonviolent conflict and social movements. Then these data were corroborated with multiple sources, including encyclopedias, case studies, and a comprehensive bibliography on nonviolent civil resistance by April Carter, Howard Clark, and Michael Randle (2006). Finally, we consulted with experts in the field, who suggested any remaining conflicts of note. The resulting list includes major campaigns that are primarily or entirely nonviolent.

Violent campaign data are derived primarily from Kristian Gleditsch’s (224) updates to the Correlates of war (COW) database on intrastate wars, Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson’s (2009) database of insurgencies,

and Kyle Sepp's (2005) list of major counterinsurgency operations. The COW data set requires all combatant groups to be armed and to have sustained a thousand battle deaths during the course of the conflict, suggesting that the conflict is necessarily violent.

This study makes a further qualification. Nonviolent and violent campaigns are used to promote a number of different policy objectives, ranging from increasing personal liberties to obtaining greater rights or privileges for an ethnic group to demanding national independence. However, this project is concerned primarily with three specific, intense, and extreme forms of resistance: antiregime, antioccupation, and secession campaigns. These campaign types are chosen for several reasons. First, they provide a hard case for civil resistance. Antiregime, antioccupation, and self-determination campaigns are typically associated in the literature with violence, whereas civil rights and other strictly human rights movements are more commonly associated with nonviolent methods. However, in this study we argue that nonviolent resistance can be used to achieve political objectives most commonly identified with violent insurgencies.

Success and failure are also complex outcomes, about which much has been written (Baldwin 2000). For our study, to be considered a "success" a campaign had to meet two conditions: the full achievement of its stated goals (regime change, antioccupation, or secession) within a year of the peak of activities and a discernible effect on the outcome, such that the outcome was a direct result of the campaign's activities (Pape 1997).¹³ The second qualification is important because in some cases the desired outcome occurred mainly because of other conditions. The Greek resistance against the Nazi occupation, for example, is not coded as a full success even though the Nazis ultimately withdrew from Greece. Although effective in many respects, the Greek resistance alone cannot be credited with the ultimate outcome of the end of Nazi influence over Greece since the Nazi withdrawal was the result of the Allied victory rather than solely Greek resistance.

The term *campaign* is also somewhat contentious as a unit of analysis. Following Ackerman and Kruegler (1994, 10-11), we define a campaign as a series of observable, continual tactics in pursuit of a political objective. A campaign can last anywhere from days to years. Campaigns have discernible leadership and often have names, distinguishing them from random riots or spontaneous mass acts.¹⁴ Usually campaigns have distinguishable beginning and end points, as well as discernible events throughout the campaign. In the case of resistance campaigns, beginning and end points are difficult to determine, as are the events throughout the campaign. In some cases, information on such events is readily available (e.g., Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1999); however, in most cases, it is not. Therefore, our characterization of the beginning and end dates of campaigns is based on consensus data and multiple sources.¹⁵

Some readers may be tempted to dismiss our findings as the results of selection effects, arguing that the nonviolent campaigns that appear in our inventory are biased toward success, since it is the large, often mature campaigns that are most commonly reported. Other would-be nonviolent campaigns that are crushed in their infancy (and therefore fail) are not included in this study. This is a potential concern that is difficult to avoid.

We adopted a threefold data-collection strategy to address this concern. First, our selection of campaigns and their beginning and end dates is based on consensus data produced by multiple sources. Second, we have established rigorous standards of inclusion for each campaign. The nonviolent campaigns were initially gathered from an extensive review of the literature on nonviolent conflict and

social movements. Then these data were corroborated with multiple sources, including encyclopedias, case studies, and the bibliography by Carter, Clark, and Randle (2006).

Finally, we circulated the data set among experts in nonviolent conflict. These experts were asked to assess whether the cases were appropriately characterized as major nonviolent conflicts, whether any notable conflicts had been omitted, and whether we had properly accounted for failed movements. Where the experts suggested additional cases, the same corroboration method was used. Our confidence in the data set that emerged was reinforced by numerous discussions among scholars of both nonviolent and violent conflicts. Nonetheless, what remains absent from the data set is a way to measure the nonstarters, the nonviolent or violent campaigns that never emerged because of any number of reasons. Despite this concern, we feel confident proceeding with our inquiry for two main reasons. First, this bias applies as much to violent campaigns as to nonviolent ones—many violent campaigns that were defeated early on are also unreported in this data. Second, this study is not concerned primarily with why these campaigns emerge but with *how well* they perform relative to their competitors that use different methods of resistance. We focus on the efficacy of campaigns as opposed to their origins, and we argue that we can say something about the effectiveness of nonviolent campaigns *relative to* violent campaigns. We do concede, however, that improved data collection and analysis and finding ways to overcome the selection bias inherent in much scholarship on conflict are vital next steps for the field.

WHY COMPARE NONVIOLET AND VIOLENT RESISTANCE CAMPAIGNS?

Generally, scholars have eschewed the systematic comparison of the outcomes of violent and nonviolent movements. One notable exception is William Gamson, whose seminal work (1990) on American challenge groups discovered that groups employing violence were more successful than groups refraining from violent tactics (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, 14). Not only does he seem to conflate force with violence, but also his conclusions, while perhaps pertinent to certain types of groups within the American political system, do not necessarily apply to all countries during all times.

Hence scholarship on this question rightly investigates whether such generalizations are applicable to other places and periods. In attempting to understand the relationship between nonviolent and violent tactics and the outcomes of resistance campaigns, however, scholars have tended to focus on single case studies or small-n comparisons in what has become a rich accumulation of research and knowledge on the subject (Ackerman and Duvall 2000, Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Boudreau 2004; Schock 2005; Sharp 1973, 2005; Wehr, Burgess, and Burgess 1994; Zunes 1994; Zunes, Kurtz, and Asher 1999). What has been missing, though, are catalogs of known campaigns and systematic comparisons of the outcomes of both nonviolent and violent resistance campaigns, although this trend has begun to shift (Shaykhutdinov 2010; Stephan and Chenoweth 2008).

As one might expect, there are several good reasons why social scientists have avoided comparing the dynamics and outcomes of nonviolent and violent campaigns, including their relative effectiveness. First, the separation of campaigns into violent and nonviolent for analytical purposes is problematic. Few campaigns, historically, have been purely violent or nonviolent, and many resistance movements, particularly protracted ones, have had violent and nonviolent periods. Armed and unarmed elements often operate simultaneously in the same struggle. Still, it is possible to distinguish between different resistance types based on the actors involved (civilians or armed militants) and the methods used (nonviolent or violent).¹⁷ Scholars have identified the unique characteristics of these different forms of struggle, and we feel comfortable characterizing some resistance campaigns as primarily violent and

others as primarily nonviolent. We are furthermore careful to avoid characterizing a campaign as violent merely because the regime uses violence in an attempt to suppress the protest activity.

Second, security studies scholars seem to have eschewed the study of nonviolent action because nonviolent action is not typically viewed as a form of insurgency or asymmetrical warfare (Schock 2003). Groups deliberately adopting nonviolent tactics are commonly understood as doing so for moral or principles reasons (Howes 2009). Since some key authors promoting strategic nonviolent action have also been pacifists, this characterization has not been wholly unfounded. Nonetheless, among some security studies scholars, the idea that resistance leaders might choose nonviolent tactics as a strategic choice may be considered naïve or implausible. Although the topic of civilian-based defense, a type of unconventional defense involving civilian populations defending their nations from military invasions and occupations using organized noncooperation and civil disobedience, received the attention of security and strategic studies (including the RAND Corporation) during the Cold War, interest in the subject from the security studies community has waned since the fall of the iron curtain (Sharp 1990).¹⁸ Hence the serious study of strategic nonviolent action has remained something of a pariah within security studies despite decades of scholarship on the subject.

Finally, the question of interest in this book—whether nonviolent resistance methods are more effective than violent resistance methods and under which conditions civil resistances succeeds or fails—are by nature extremely difficult to study. It is not by accident that few authors have been able to compile large-n data sets on the subject despite important efforts to do so.¹⁹ The measurement of effectiveness itself is difficult to gather and defend, and the independent effects of resistance methods on the outcomes are not always easy to discern given the complexity of these contentious episodes.

Despite the challenges associated with studying this subject, we argue that the theoretical and policy implications of the research questions at hand are too important to avoid. Sidney Tarrow has argued that investigating the reasons why movements succeed and fail is one of the main foci of the entire contentious politics research program (1998). Our book demonstrates that scholars can take a reasoned look at the relative effectiveness of nonviolent and violent resistance, even if the measures of such terms are imperfect. We undertake such an exploration by examining 323 cases from 1900 to 2006 of major nonviolent and violent campaigns seeking regime change, the expulsion of foreign occupiers, or secession. This research is the first to catalog, compare, and analyze all known cases of major armed and unarmed insurrections during this period. From this data, we find support for the perspective that nonviolent resistance has been strategically superior to violent resistance during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Because the data are highly aggregated, we provide only a first look at these trends. But our findings point to a powerful relationship that scholars and policy makers should take seriously.

SCHOLARLY IMPLICATIONS

This research is situated among several distinct albeit related subfields of political science and sociology. We are explicit in conceptualizing civil resistance as a form of unconventional warfare, albeit one that employs different weapons and applies force differently. The literature on contentious politics has long explored the relationship between methods and outcomes. Recent scholarship in security studies has explored similar questions.²⁰ Others in the discipline deal with the concept of strategic effectiveness in an indirect, if somewhat peripheral, way. For instance, in his seminal work on the political economy of rebellion, Jeremy Weinstein (2007) argues that activist rebellions are more likely than opportunistic rebellions to achieve their strategic objectives. Activist rebellions, which are dependent on social

support, are more likely to target opponents selectively. Opportunistic rebellions target indiscriminately, thereby undermining their public support.

Wood (2000, 2003) argues that transitions to democracy are likely when insurgents are able to successfully raise the costs to economic elites of maintaining the status quo, a process that emerges when labor unions and worker parties strike over an extended period. DeNardo's work (1985) on mass movements also demonstrates that methods and outcomes of revolution are related, with disruption and mass mobilization being key determinants of revolutionary success. However, Weinstein (2007), Wood (2000, 2003), and DeNardo (1985) all remain agnostic as to how the methods of resistance—nonviolent or violent—could affect the outcomes of resistance campaigns.

Following those who have analyzed nonviolent campaigns through the lens of strategic theory, we are similarly interested in the relationship between strategy and outcome (Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Ganz 2010; Helvey 2004; Popovic et al. 2007; Sharp 1973). Our perspective does not assume that nonviolent resistance methods can melt the hearts of repressive regimes or dictators. Instead, we argue that as with some successful violent moments, nonviolent campaigns can impose costly sanctions on their opponents, resulting in strategic gains. We join a long line of scholars concerned with the strategic effectiveness of different tactical and operational choices (Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Sharp 1973; Zunes 1994). What is perhaps obvious is our voluntaristic approach to the study of resistance. In this book, we make the case that voluntaristic features of campaigns, notably those related to the skills of the resisters, are often better predictors of success than structural determinants. On the surface, this argument immediately puts us at odds with structural explanations of outcomes such as political opportunity approaches. Such approaches argue that movements will succeed and fail based on the opening and closing of opportunities created by the structure of the political order. As Tarrow has argued, "political opportunity structures are 'consistent dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action'" (Tarrow 1998, 18). Let us briefly discuss how our perspective differs from this approach.

In our study, a political opportunity approach might suggest that nonviolent campaigns succeed so often because the regime is undergoing a transition, signaling to the opposition that the time is right to go on the offensive. McAdam argues that "most contemporary theories of revolution start from much the same premise, arguing that revolutions owe less to the efforts of insurgents than to the work of systemic crises which render the existing regime weak and vulnerable to challenge from virtually any quarter" (1996a, 24)²¹

What we have found, however, is that the political opportunity approach fails to explain why some movements succeed in the direst of political circumstances where chances of success seem grim, whereas other campaigns fail in political circumstances that might seem more favorable. Such explanatory deficiencies leave us wondering how the actions of the groups themselves shape the outcomes of their campaigns.

For instance, a common misperception about nonviolent resistance is that it can succeed only against liberal, democratic regimes espousing universalistic values like respect for human rights. Besides the implicit and false assumptions that democracies do not commit mass human rights abuses, the empirical record does not support this argument. As Kurt Schock writes, the historical record actually points to the opposite conclusion.

In fact, nonviolent action has been effective in brutally repressive contexts, and it has been ineffective in open democratic polities. Repression, of course, constrains the ability of challengers to organize, communicate, mobilize, and engage in collective action, and magnifies the risk of participation in collective action. Nevertheless, repression is only one of many factors that influence the trajectories of campaigns of nonviolent action, not the sole determinant of their trajectories (Schock 2003, 706)

The claim that nonviolent resistance could never work against genocidal foes like Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin is the classic straw man put forward to demonstrate the inherent limitations of this form of struggle. While it is possible that nonviolent resistance could not be used effectively once genocide has broken out in full force (or that it is inherently inferior to armed struggle in such circumstances), this claim is not backed by any strong empirical evidence (Summy 1994). Collective nonviolent struggle was not used with any strategic forethought during World War II, nor was it ever contemplated as an overall strategy for resisting the Nazis. Violent resistance, which some groups attempted for ending Nazi occupation, was also an abject failure.

However, scholars have found that certain forms of collective nonviolent resistance were, in fact, occasionally successful in resisting Hitler's occupation policies. The case of the Danish population's resistance to German occupation is an example of partially effective civil resistance in an extremely difficult environment (Ackerman and DuVall 2000).²² The famous case of the Rosenstraße in Berlin protests, when German women of Aryan descent stood for a week outside a detention center on the Rosenstraße in Berlin demanding the release of their Jewish husbands, who were on the verge of being deported to concentration camps, is a further example of limited gains against a genocidal regime brought about by civil resistance. The German women, whose numbers increased as the protests continued and they attracted more attention, were sufficiently disruptive with their sustained nonviolent protests that the Nazi officials eventually released their Jewish husbands (Mazower 2008; Semelin 1993; Stoltzfus 1996). Of course, the civil resistance to Nazi occupation occurred in the context of an Allied military campaign against the Axis powers, which was ultimately decisive in defeating Hitler.

Regardless, the notion that nonviolent action can be successful only if the adversary does not use violent repression is neither theoretically nor historically substantiated. In fact, we show how, under certain circumstances, regime violence can backfire and lead to the strengthening of the nonviolent challenge group.

A competing approach, resource mobilization theory, suggests that campaigns succeed when resources converge around given preferences, allowing for mobilization to occur regardless of political opportunities. A resource mobilization approach would suggest that "the dynamics of a movement depend in important ways on its resources and organization," with a focus on entrepreneurs "whose success is determined by the availability of resources" (Weinstein 2007, 47). However, this perspective does not account for the success or failure of campaigns when they deploy their own resources to either counter or outmaneuver the challenge group.

[...]

Source: Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Columbia University Press, 2011 (pp. 3-29)

As you reflect on this introductory chapter from Chenoweth and Stephan, consider the following critical reading questions which we'll discuss in class:

1. What are the advantages of nonviolent campaigns have over violent insurgencies, according to Chenoweth and Stephan?
2. What are some of the difficulties in distinguishing violent and nonviolent tactics? How do the authors then make this distinction?
3. How do the authors define the “success” of a campaign or movement? Do you think their criteria are reasonable? Why/why not?
4. How doe Chenoweth and Stephan address the claims that nonviolent movements only succeed when the political situation is ripe for change or when the opponents are “liberal, democratic regimes espousing universalistic values like respect for human rights?”
5. What explains, in your view, the fact that many (perhaps most) researchers in the field of security studies are apt to treat nonviolence with greater skepticism and scrutiny than violence, thereby insisting on evidence to support the effectiveness of nonviolence while neglecting the need to support the effectiveness of violence while often ignoring the respective costs of violence and nonviolence?