

gong's book, where overseas students are highly valued and treated with respect for what they bring to our community, financially and culturally.

BORN TODAY

March 10

Morgan Tsvangirai (1952-), Prime Minister of Zimbabwe.

After suffering arrest, assassination attempts and torture, Morgan Tsvangirai persevered. Tsvangirai and President Robert Mugabe signed a power-sharing agreement and Tsvangirai became the second Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in 2009.



HISTORY

1862 - The US Government issues its first paper money.

1876 - US inventor Alexander Graham Bell makes the first telephone call.

1959 - The Dalai Lama leads a rebellion against Chinese rule. The revolt fails and the Dalai Lama flees to India.

2005 - Irish comedian Dave Allen (pictured) dies aged 68.



Might is not always right way

ON March 1, a group of students protested at military research being carried out at Wollongong University. They called for research funding to go instead to areas such as global warming.

But isn't military research needed for Australia's defence? Not necessarily. Nearly everyone assumes that defence means military defence, but actually, there are many possible ways to make Australia more secure, especially considering that it is one of the world's least likely countries to be invaded.

Funding could go into diplomacy, conflict resolution, poverty reduction and addressing social inequality. Stronger efforts in these directions would reduce potential threats to Australia.

There's a huge discrepancy in funding for these different options. Billions of dollars go into military hardware, personnel, training and research, but there's precious little funding for things like improving skills in international conflict resolution.

There are also neglected

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options for Australia's defence. One innovative approach is called non-violent defence, or social defence. It is based on grassroots non-violent resistance to aggression using methods such as strikes, boycotts, sit-ins and rallies.

These might seem ineffectual against a ruthless government, but appearances are deceptive. A recent study in the journal *International Security* documented that, in recent decades, non-violent methods have been more effective than violent ones in shifting authoritarian regimes in democratic directions.

In the past 15 years, non-violent action has been used

effectively against repressive governments in Indonesia, Serbia, Ukraine and Lebanon, among other countries. Armed struggle, in contrast, has been less effective.

Despite the successes of popular non-violent action, this option has received hardly any funding for research and development.

We need to know more about areas such as the psychology of resistance, the social dynamics of protest, and the use of communication technology in the face of repression.

Although militaries are commonly thought of as defending against external threats, actually they are more

likely to be used against the people they are supposed to defend. Citizens in places like Fiji, Burma and Rhodesia have been subjected to violence by their own militaries.

The most important use of non-violent strategies is against authoritarian actions by people's own governments. However, few governments want their citizens to develop the skills to be better protesters.

Australia is well placed to support non-violent alternatives and make available skills and technologies to support popular non-violent action.

The best way to improve Australia's security would be to enable people in countries such as Indonesia and China to act against their own militaries.

University of Wollongong students are protesting against military research on campus. They might also advocate for research on non-violent alternatives.

Brian Martin is professor of social sciences at the University of Wollongong and author of several books on non-violence.