Military-protester relations: Insights from nonviolence research

Brian Martin

bmartin@uow.edu.au

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6261-7677

School of Humanities and Social Inquiry, University of Wollongong, Northfields Ave, Wollongong NSW 2522, Australia

Abstract

Military forces are sometimes called out to confront unarmed civilian protesters, a contingency for which they may or may not be prepared. Studies of civil-military relations have focused on relations between civilian and military elites, with interactions between armed forces and civilian protesters given little or no attention. The objective here is to improve understanding of military-protester dynamics. Key relevant features of nonviolent action are outlined, including methods, campaign stages and theoretical assumptions, with a particular focus on interactions with troops. The implications for military-protester dynamics are spelled out with illustrations from several protest campaigns. When troops use force against non-resistant protesters, this sometimes creates more support for the protest movement, a process called political jiu-jitsu. An important method used by some protesters is fraternisation, namely trying to win over troops to their side. Commanders and troops, through their actions, can encourage or discourage protesters' use of nonviolent methods. Learning about military-protester dynamics is important for both strategists and practitioners.

Introduction

Military forces are trained and prepared to use force. Historically, the purpose of militaries has been seen as defence against enemies, and the canonical deployment is in wartime when armies clash with other armies. However, in the past century there has been a dramatic increase in engagements between troops and civilian protesters. Ever more frequently, protesters have been prepared, sometimes trained, in the use of nonviolent action, which includes rallies, strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, blockades, alternative government and a host of other methods (Sharp, 1973). Troops seldom have a deep understanding of or extensive preparation for encounters with protesters who use these sorts of methods.

In the Philippines, President Ferdinand Marcos ruled through martial law beginning in 1972. The rise of an opposition movement led Marcos to call a snap election, held in February 1986. Marcos claimed victory but opponents alleged electoral fraud. A million civilians poured onto the streets of the capital Manila, demanding that Marcos step down, and opposition leader Cory Aquino called for strikes, boycotts and delayed payment of bills. Some troops defected, supporting the opposition. Following a call for support, civilian protesters surrounded these troops, protecting them from attack: soldiers and pilots loyal to Marcos refused to attack the protesters. As the days passed and the massive rallies continued, more soldiers defected and international support for Marcos waned. He eventually fled the country and Aquino became president (Kerkvliet and Mojares, 1991; Mackenzie, 1987; Seagrave, 1988; Thompson, 1995; Zunes, 1999). Looking at the dramatic street confrontations from the point of view of soldiers, many of them had difficult decisions to make about whether to remain loyal to the regime, whether to use force against civilians and whether to obey orders.

Similar scenarios have occurred in numerous other parts of the world, especially in authoritarian regimes, for example China in 1989, East Germany in 1989, Indonesia in 1998, Serbia in 2000, Egypt in 2011 and Burma in 2021. In each case, troops confronted civilian protesters, most or all of whom were unarmed. In some cases, protesters were arrested, assaulted or killed. In others, troops avoided any bloodshed. What is significant about these and other such instances is that troops are put in situations for which they may have received little or no education or training.

Military personnel in some countries are given training in military aid to civil power (e.g., Ministry of Defence, 2016) and cautioned that they can be given orders that are intentionally harmful or counterproductive. Soldiers may be aware that should they make a mistake in the use of force or in following valid orders, they can be tried in a military or civilian court. On the other hand, troops in some countries are regularly deployed against civilian challenges, most obviously in countries with authoritarian governments. In the case of a military coup, soldiers may have conflicting loyalties. Likewise, when given illegal or questionable orders, they may be torn between obeying and disobeying.

Called out to confront protesters, most of whom are unarmed, only a few soldiers are likely to be familiar with the dynamics of nonviolent action or fully appreciate that there may be disagreements among protesters about goals and methods. They may not have had advance preparation in weighing up the competing commands and appeals of commanders, governments and social movement challengers.

There are no published surveys of what military personnel, at any level, understand about nonviolent action, so perhaps the best guess is that they rely on popular stereotypes, especially ones implicit in media coverage, that provide no discussion of the underlying dynamics. There is little analysis of protester strategy in military journals, and likewise

relatively little informed discussion in activist publications of military strategy in relation to protest. This is unfortunate, especially because misconceptions about nonviolent action are common (Schock, 2003, 2005, pp. 6–12).

The aim of this article is to give an overview of some of the key issues involved in military-protester relations, with a focus on protesters committed to remaining nonviolent. The next section briefly reviews what studies of civil-military relations have to say about military-protester interactions, which is not very much. The following section summarises the dynamics of nonviolent action and its relevance to troops. Subsequent sections address key challenges and dilemmas for military forces when encountering major protest actions, including fraternisation and foreign support for protesters. Several examples are introduced along the way to highlight the issues. The final section spells out some conclusions from this analysis.

The ideas presented here were drawn from a considerable body of writing about nonviolent action with which the author is familiar, with themes selected that are most relevant to military-protester relations, for example fraternisation and political jiu-jitsu. To illustrate these themes, various case studies, such as those in the Philippines, Czechoslovakia and Israel-Palestine, were selected out of a great many possibilities for being well documented and for being good examples. Among a range of possible themes and case studies, the ones used were chosen for their value in helping soldiers and strategists to understand the dynamics of nonviolent protest as it intersects with militaries.

It is tempting to look at military-protester relations as a confrontation in which each side seeks to win. However, there is another perspective, drawing on the observation that enlightened militaries and nonviolent activists have a common goal, a world without war, though they differ in their approaches to achieving it. The approach here is to highlight strategic considerations most relevant to the common goal of minimising violence in human affairs.

Civil-military relations – and protesters

The issue of engagements between military forces and civilian protesters seems like a natural topic to be addressed in the field of civil-military relations. However, this issue has received hardly any attention. To understand why, it is useful to turn to Huntington's foundational study *The soldier and the state*. Huntington states that "The principal focus of civil-military relations is the relation of the officer corps to the state" (Huntington, 1957, p. 3). In other words, the focus is on military elites and political elites. Nowhere does Huntington address engagements with peaceful protesters. Huntington (1957, p. 3) also states that "The social and economic relations between the military and the rest of society normally reflect the political relations between the officer corps and the state." The qualifier "normally" does not apply to civilian protest.

Huntington's approach has been subject to considerable criticism (e.g., Bruneau, 2013; Burk, 2002; Feaver, 1999), but this has not changed the focus of research on civil-military relations, which remains on military and civilian elites. For example, Janowitz's classic *The professional soldier* addresses "pressures of civilian control," (1971, pp. 347–371), assuming the civilians are "leaders," namely high officials in the state. In his epilogue, Janowitz talks about the US Army, in the early years of the republic, being used as a "constabulary force" to support the government. This might well have involved troops addressing civilian challengers to the government, but Janowitz does not examine the practice of strategic nonviolent action developed in the 1900s.

More recent scholars have questioned a number of Huntington's assumptions, and broadened the discussion of relevant issues (e.g., Bruneau and Matei, 2013; Bruneau

and Tollefson, 2006; Cimbala, 2012). Where Huntington normatively saw civilian elites and the military as separate spheres, others have pointed to their close interaction and entwinement. In addition, contemporary militaries now adopt quite a few roles beyond deterring and fighting foreign military forces, including disaster relief, involvement in internal wars, counterterrorism, crime control, peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention (Matei, 2013). These roles are increasingly important, but are engagements with peaceful protesters are not listed anywhere.

Some scholars have questioned the traditional emphasis on civilian control of the military. Bruneau and Matei (2013) argue that there are three important arenas to consider: civilian control, the operational effectiveness of military forces, and the efficiency of security institutions (which include the police, intelligence organisations and the military). Despite considerable innovation and divergence from the traditional focus on civilian control, Bruneau and Matei continue the assumption that civil-military relations are about relations between elites in each domain and make no mention of military interactions with unarmed protesters.

Other issues raised in the field include interactions between different sovereign states, the role of nongovernment organisations, for example for humanitarian intervention, and the role of private security companies (Burk, 2002). These are addressed with the same assumption that civil-military relations are between the military and civilian elites.

There is a related body of research potentially relevant to military-protester interactions: studies of people-power movements. For example, there are numerous studies of the 1986 people-power revolution in the Philippines, some of them cited above. Similarly, there are studies of various other nonviolent movements (e.g., Roberts and Ash, 2009). The so-called Arab spring uprisings in 2010–2011 led to numerous studies, including ones giving special attention to civil-military relations (e.g., Abul-Magd, 2017; Albrecht *et al.*, 2016; Droz-Vincent, 2014; Lutterbeck, 2013; Taylor, 2014). However, many of these studies have looked primarily at the relations between civilian and military elites, with military-protester interactions at most a secondary issue. Furthermore, hardly any such studies have drawn on writings about nonviolent action which are from the point of view of citizen activists and their strategies. Instead, they tend to approach the topic from the perspective of military leaders, e.g. addressing how their loyalty is or is not turned from the sitting government to challengers (e.g., Degaut, 2019; Lehrke, 2014). Many of these studies offer valuable insights, including ones useful for protest movements, but give little or no attention to the dynamics of military-protester interactions.

In summary, the field of civil-military relations is an obvious place to begin examining the dynamics of engagements between armed forces and civilian protesters, yet so far this topic has not been addressed in the field in any systematic way. This is similar to the way that the study of nonviolent action has been neglected by social movement researchers. It is to this study that we now turn.

Nonviolent action: Some key ideas

Nonviolent action involves methods such as rallies, marches, strikes, boycotts and sit-ins. Nonviolent action can be used in local and short-term campaigns, e.g. when employees work-to-rule to push for better wages and working conditions, or as the basis for major long-running campaigns, such as to overthrow the system of apartheid in South Africa.

People have used methods of nonviolent action for hundreds of years. There were major nonviolent campaigns in the 1800s. From about 1849 to 1867, Hungarian nationalists

sought independence from the Austrian empire using various methods of non-coopera-
tion, e.g. refusing to speak German, boycotting Austrian goods and refusing to pay taxes
(Csapody and Weber, 2007). From 1898 to 1905, people in Finland opposed the Russian
government's imposition of controls through means such as protest meetings and boy-
cotting conscription into the Russian army (Huxley, 1990).

These early campaigns developed intuitively. It was Mohandas Gandhi who turned non-
violent methods into a strategy based on his leadership of campaigns, first in South Africa
in the early 1900s, and then in India.

The term "nonviolent action" can be misleading when it suggests that it includes any ac-
tion not involving violence, e.g. voting or giving a speech. Gene Sharp, the pre-eminent
researcher the field, specified that nonviolent action is political action beyond what is
normal or routine, as well as not involving physical violence against opponents (Sharp,
1973). Therefore, in a dictatorship, circulating a petition counts as nonviolent action
whereas in a society where civil liberties are respected it does not.

There are some alternative terms, including "people power" (which came into currency
after the 1986 Philippines events), "civil resistance" (used by many scholars in recent
years) and "satyagraha" (the term used by Gandhi). Whatever the term, they all refer to
the same sorts of methods.

Nonviolence researchers often distinguish between "principled" and "pragmatic" non-
violence (Stiehm, 1968). Activists in the Gandhian tradition adopt nonviolent methods
because they are morally opposed to using violence. In contrast to this "principled" ap-
proach, "pragmatic" activists choose nonviolent methods because they are believed to
be more effective than using violence. Although some prominent activists, such as Mar-
tin Luther King, Jr., operated in the principled tradition, most activists in today's social
movements adopt nonviolence for pragmatic reasons. However, the distinction between
principled and pragmatic can be misleading. Gandhi morally opposed using violence but
was also a shrewd strategist (Sharp, 1979), and many activists are motivated by a combi-
nation of reasons. Furthermore, it is unfair to say that those in the pragmatic tradition
are "unprincipled."

Sharp (1973, pp. 109–445) classified methods of nonviolent action into three categories:
protest and persuasion, which includes speeches, petitions, rallies, marches and numerous
other ways of expressing concern symbolically; non-cooperation, which includes dozens
of different types of strikes and boycotts; and nonviolent intervention, which includes
vigils, sit-ins, fasts, alternative communication systems and a range of other methods.
Sharp documented 198 different methods of nonviolent action, giving historical exam-
ples of each one, and since then hundreds of additional methods have been identified.

On the surface, it might seem that nonviolent action cannot possibly prevail against an
armed opponent: protesters, refusing to use violence themselves, are sitting targets for po-
lice or troops. However, thinking solely in terms of physical force is misleading, because
nonviolent action works on another level. The assumption underlying its use is that no
ruler can survive if subjects withdraw their consent (Sharp, 1973, pp. 7–62). If everyone
in a society stops cooperating, political rulers become powerless. A key point here is that
this non-cooperation includes police and troops. If they refuse to obey orders, then a ruler
becomes impotent. Even police and troops lose their power if the rest of society refuses to
support them by providing food, shelter, energy and weapons. This helps to explain how
nonviolent campaigns can succeed against well-armed, repressive regimes.

In nonviolent campaigns, strategy is vitally important, just as it is in military campaigns, and some former military figures have contributed to thinking on nonviolent strategy (Helvey, 2004). Drawing on extensive study, Sharp (1973, pp. 449–814) developed his "dynamics of nonviolent action," a set of stages or aspects of a nonviolent campaign. The first stage is laying the groundwork, which involves building support for action. Then comes the initial use of nonviolent methods, presenting a challenge to the authorities, who typically respond by using repression, anything from arrests and beatings to killing and torture. In the face of repression, it is important that challengers remain nonviolent; this is called nonviolent discipline.

Nonviolent discipline is vital because many people think it is unfair when violence is used against someone who is behaving peacefully. As social historian Barrington Moore Jr argued, if a man hits another man who poses no physical threat, many observers will see this as unjust (Moore, 1978, p. 26). Protesters need to remain nonviolent to maximise the contrast between their behaviour and that of their opponents. It is for this reason that police sometimes use *agents provocateurs* who pretend to be protesters and urge the use of violence (Karmen, 1974; Marx, 1974). When both sides are seen as violent, this legitimises the use of violence by the side with overwhelming superiority.

When violence is used against peaceful protesters, this can sometimes result in what Sharp (1973, pp. 657–703) labelled "political jiu-jitsu." The unfairness of the attack on protesters causes an upsurge in activism by protest supporters and sympathisers, a shift in opinion by uninvolved third parties, and even a weakening in resolve by some of the protesters' opponents. The key to political jiu-jitsu is a perception of unfairness that affects those not directly involved in the confrontation.

One of Sharp's examples is the killing of hundreds of people on their way to join a peaceful protest in Russia in 1905. "Bloody Sunday" did not bring down the Tsar but it did cause an upsurge in discontent among the previously uninvolved peasantry and thus helped bring about the 1917 revolution.

A more recent example is the 1991 Dili massacre. After the 1975 invasion and occupation of East Timor by the Indonesian military, initially there was an armed resistance, leading to massive loss of life. In the late 1980s, the resistance movement Fretilin revamped its strategy, avoiding armed engagements and promoting peaceful protests in urban areas (Fukuda, 2000). On 12 November 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on marchers in a funeral procession that also served as a protest. Because Western journalists were present and witnessed and recorded the events, the massacre became a rallying cry for international opponents of the occupation and helped lay the basis for East Timorese independence in 2000 (Kohen, 1999, pp. 154–158; Nevins, 2005).

Military and government leaders are often intuitively aware of the damaging political effects of violence used against civilians, and therefore take steps to reduce public outrage. In the case of the Dili massacre, Indonesian authorities tried to prevent videotapes of the carnage leaving the country. They denigrated the protesters and claimed they were being violent. The death toll was initially announced as 19 and later raised to 50. A nongovernment investigation gave a figure of 271. The Indonesian government and military launched prosecutions of perpetrators – something not done for previous, less publicised massacres – and found a few individuals culpable, giving them short prison sentences. Finally, Indonesian troops launched a wave of assaults and killings among the population of Dili. All in all, the Indonesian government and military used five methods to reduce public outrage from the massacre. They covered up the action, devalued the target, reinterpreted what happened through lies and minimising consequences, set up official

processes that gave a superficial appearance of justice, and intimidated the opposition movement. However, these methods were insufficient to nullify the outrage that invigorated the East Timor international solidarity movement (Martin, 2007, pp. 23–33).

Political jiu-jitsu does not occur in every nonviolent campaign, but the possibility that it might poses a dilemma for commanders and troops confronted by peaceful protesters (Sørensen and Martin, 2014). One option is to refrain from attack. However, this may allow the protest to grow. Another option is to attack, accepting the risk that this could backfire against the authorities.

Since the 1990s, there has been an upsurge both in the use of nonviolent action and in research about it (Chenoweth, 2021). The overthrow of Serbian ruler Slobodan Milošević in 2000 through a long-running nonviolent campaign was followed by other "colour" revolutions including in Ukraine and Lebanon, and then by the Arab spring in 2011, with mixed outcomes. Researchers have brought attention to past nonviolent campaigns in countries across the world (Bartkowski, 2013), examined the connection between nonviolent campaigns and social movement theory (Schock, 2005), and developed new theoretical frameworks for understanding nonviolence (Vinthagen, 2015). The research with the greatest impact has been Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan's (2011) statistical analysis of 323 violent and nonviolent anti-regime, secession and anti-occupation campaigns from 1900 to 2006, showing that nonviolent campaigns were twice as likely to be effective and also to lead to more lasting improvements in freedom.

In summary, nonviolent action is widely used by contemporary social movements and is more likely to be effective than armed struggle, including against the most repressive regimes (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). Within social movements, there is an increasing understanding of the dynamics of nonviolent action, with considerable effort committed to sharing insights and information and preparing campaigners for the use of nonviolent methods (e.g., War Resisters' International, 2014). Despite this upsurge in interest in and use of nonviolent action, it receives minimal funding compared to military systems. Furthermore, in scholarly circles, nonviolent action has been a marginal pursuit for decades, so despite recent interest, there are many important topics that remain to be investigated.

Military-protester dynamics

In a confrontation between troops and peaceful protesters, there is an obvious mismatch of methods, organisation and goals. In a typical configuration, activists are protesting against a government's policies, infringements of civil liberties, corruption or human rights abuses. Troops are deployed when police are inadequate for maintaining control.

The mismatch of methods is most obvious. Troops use force or the threat of force to obtain compliance, whereas protesters in this scenario use a variety of methods that do not involve physical violence. To refer to "protesters" can be misleading, because in some scenarios there is no overt "protest" in the streets. For example, if miners and manufacturing workers go on strike, government leaders can send in troops to try to do the work themselves or, more likely, to threaten workers and their families with arrest and torture. Employers and the government can also threaten to dismiss striking workers and bring in replacements.

Troops are agents of governments or employers, but their loyalty is not guaranteed. When confronted by armed opponents, the commitment of troops is likely to be reinforced, but when confronted by unarmed civilians, the willingness of troops to impose force is less guaranteed, perhaps especially when protesters are polite, friendly and have goals with which soldiers are sympathetic.

The second mismatch concerns the way militaries and social movements are organised. Military forces are organised hierarchically, with a well-defined system of rules and command, embedded within the government system of bureaucracies, with their own rules, hierarchies and division of labour. In contrast, many social movements are primarily organised in the form of networks and coalitions of groups, with decisions being made by some form of consensus. Social movements may or may not have formal or charismatic leaders, but these leaders do not have the powers of command familiar to military personnel.

The third mismatch concerns goals. The goals of the protesters are typically social or political, and might include a demand for fair elections or for allegedly corrupt or abusive government leaders to step down. In contrast, the immediate goals of the troops are to maintain public order and to follow orders from their commanders. Although many individual soldiers have social or political commitments, in their role as soldiers confronting protesters these commitments may be secondary.

It can be useful for soldiers to understand the methods and goals of protesters, because there is a risk that physical attacks on protesters can trigger political jiu-jitsu. In this context, it is important to recognise that within the ranks of the protesters there can be divergent stances on methods and goals. In a typical scenario, most protesters are committed to nonviolence and/or remain nonviolent, but a minority adopt physically aggressive methods such as throwing stones or Molotov cocktails. The minority in this case is called a "radical flank," and it may help or hinder the movement overall (Haines, 1984). In quite a few anti-regime struggles, the main movement remains nonviolent but one or more groups use violence (Chenoweth and Schock, 2015).

A prominent example is the conflict in Israel-Palestine, which has involved both violent and nonviolent actions on both sides. News coverage gives the impression that the struggle is largely violent, because news media routinely highlight violence and are less likely to report on nonviolent actions.

Within the Palestinian community there has been a long-running divergence in methods and strategies. For years, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation used terrorism, with limited success. Then in 1987 there was a spontaneous popular uprising called the intifada. It is best described as an unarmed movement (Darweish and Rigby, 2015; Rigby, 1991). It involved throwing stones at Israeli forces – a violent method that was largely symbolic but occasionally caused injury or death – and a wide variety of nonviolent methods, including strikes, boycotts and setting up home-based education. Many Israelis focused on stone-throwing and saw the intifada as violent (Pressman, 2017). Some analysts have argued that Palestinians could be more effective if they renounced any violent methods, including stone-throwing (Dajani, 1994; King, 2007).

The Palestinian case is one of a number of examples in which campaigners differ about strategy and in which there is a push from some quarters to develop an entirely nonviolent campaign. In several parts of the world, armed opposition movements have transitioned to nonviolent methods (Dudouet, 2015).

When military forces understand that a movement may be internally divided about appropriate methods, they can encourage the nonviolent side of the movement by refusing to be provoked by violence. Alternatively, they can encourage a violent flank by responding with repressive measures, assaulting peaceful protesters in the hope that some of them will respond violently and thereby justify the assault. However, if the protesters maintain nonviolent discipline, the assault can be counterproductive, in the manner of political jiu-jitsu.

Fraternisation and loyalty contests

In August 1968, half a million Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia to put an end to the liberalisation of rule under the Czechoslovak Communist Party led by Alexander Dubcek, colloquially called "socialism with a human face." Czechoslovak military leaders decided not to resist, judging that their forces would be defeated within days. Instead, there was a spontaneous nonviolent people's resistance, coordinated by the country's radio network that counselled nonviolence and broadcast news of invader actions and resistance efforts. In Prague, for example, resisters took down street signs and removed house numbers so invading troops could not easily track down dissidents. When jamming equipment was brought in by rail, workers shunted the train onto a siding (Skilling, 1976; Szulc, 1971; Windsor and Roberts, 1969).

One of the resistance techniques was fraternisation, which basically meant Czechoslovaks talking to the invading soldiers, explaining why they were resisting the invasion and encouraging the soldiers to support their cause. This was quite effective. Soviet and other Warsaw Pact troops had been told they were there to stop a capitalist takeover only to discover from the locals that they were socialists too. These troops became "unreliable." (A different resistance technique, also used, was to ostracise the invaders, insult them and refuse to serve them.)

In what are called nonviolent revolutions, undermining or transforming the loyalty of troops is a key process (Binnendijk and Marovic, 2006; Lehrke, 2014; Nepstad, 2011). Loyalty can be shifted without personal contact: simply witnessing nonviolent protest, including protesters' willingness to suffer without retaliation, is sometimes enough to lead soldiers to question orders to attack. Another avenue for loyalty shifts is information conveyed via media, everything from leaflets to text messages. Sometimes, as in Czechoslovakia, resisters are able to speak directly to soldiers. Protesters may try to learn about the psychology of soldiers, for example drawing on studies of obedience, group solidarity and fear (MacNair, 2018).

Another influence on soldiers is relationships with military personnel in other countries. Dennis Blair, a long-time US naval commander, argues that servicemen and servicewomen from democratic countries should try to influence their counterparts in authoritarian regimes, encouraging them to support nonviolent campaigns for democratic transitions, or at least not to oppose them (Blair, 2013). This process can be thought of as a different sort of fraternisation.

Given that fraternisation is a key process that can affect soldiers, they need to be prepared. Soldiers can think for themselves and judge the merits of the issues raised by protesters. Governments and military commanders may try to convince soldiers to think of protesters as the enemy, but this can make them more susceptible to fraternisation when the discrepancy between image and reality becomes clear.

Irrespective of fraternisation, soldiers may decide to support the other side or to disobey their orders, especially during periods of contested authority. In 1961, French President Charles de Gaulle began negotiations with Algerian rebels in the bitter war in Algeria, then seen as part of France. French generals in Algeria – where most French troops were located – opposed the negotiations and staged a coup, called the Algerian Generals' revolt. There was a possibility of an invasion of mainland France. In response, there was popular opposition to the revolt, involving for example a strike and trucks driven to block runways in French airports and thereby prevent an invasion. De Gaulle belatedly broadcast a statement against the coup. The role of troop loyalty was most important within

Algeria. Some troops simply stayed in their barracks. Pilots used a more potent form of non-cooperation, flying their planes out of the country. The lack of support for the coup caused it to collapse in 4 days without a shot being fired in opposition (Roberts, 1975).

In 1991, there was a coup in the Soviet Union. President Gorbachev was detained in his dacha. Again, there was popular opposition to the coup, including printing of resistance newspapers, the non-cooperation of television personnel, and rallies. The symbolic centre of the opposition was led by Boris Yeltsin, who was ensconced in the Russian White House. Crack troops were instructed to attack the Russian White House, but their commanders disobeyed orders: the attack never happened. The coup failed, triggering the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, 1994; Pozner, 1992; Sixsmith, 1991).

In the cases of Algeria 1961 and the Soviet Union 1991, there was little overt fraternisation like that in Czechoslovakia 1968. Nevertheless, the lack of any armed resistance to the coups, as well as the legitimacy of the government under threat, led troops to refuse to use force against civilians.

During the French Revolution, troops were barracked in the homes of ordinary citizens and, as a result, were caught up in the revolutionary fervour sweeping the country (Chorley, 1943). Keeping troops separate from the population, in their own bases and barracks, helps prevent the "contagion" of popular movements infecting soldiers. However, with today's social media, it is difficult to prevent soldiers from becoming aware of sentiments in the wider population.

In summary, in quite a number of conflicts, nonviolent activists have sought to win support from troops, and researchers consider this vital for the success of nonviolent revolutions (Nepstad, 2011). However, there is little evidence that troops receive training for responding to attempts at fraternisation, nor is it obvious what such training might entail. As noted earlier, if soldiers are indoctrinated about the danger and seditiousness of popular movements, they may be more likely to question orders because of a perceived discrepancy between what they have been told and what they see and hear for themselves.

Protesters as proxies?

There is greater awareness in some parts of governments about the effectiveness of nonviolent action. One response, of more sophisticated rulers, is to back off from more heavy-handed forms of repression and instead to manipulate public discourse through such means as hindering opposition movements, censoring communications, circulating disinformation and providing limited opportunities for dissent (Dobson, 2012; Tufekci, 2017). These responses are in the tradition of what has been called "repressive tolerance," in which speech and action are allowed so long as they do not threaten systems of power (Wolff, Moore and Marcuse, 1969). For example, methods of nonviolent action, such as strikes, can be legalised but burdened with so many regulations that they have little capacity for disruption.

Another response to the power of nonviolent movements is to support them with money, training and recognition (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2021). An agency in the US government provided support for the Serbian resistance movement Otpor that led the successful challenge that toppled President Slobodan Milošević in 2000. In the film, *Bringing Down a Dictator* (2002), which showed the campaign against Milošević from the point of view of nonviolent strategy, US officials said they were willing to provide material support for Otpor and, perhaps counter-intuitively, were pleased that Otpor demanded control over all decision-making.

Although it might seem a humane policy to support nonviolent methods and movements rather than selling arms and training foreign troops, this is not standard practice. For a decade, there was a major nonviolent movement in Kosovo that received no foreign support or recognition (Clark, 2000). Instead, the US government recognised the terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army and thus helped undermine the nonviolent movement. The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia may have increased support for Milošević. It is a regular occurrence that governments undermine nonviolent movements through their support for or confrontation with armed movements.

Providing material support for foreign nonviolent movements may have mixed effects, because rulers can refer to this support to discredit the movement as being the tool of a hostile power. Furthermore, claims of foreign interference can be made even when there is little or no evidence to support the claims. Because governments so often make allegations of "foreign meddling" in domestic affairs, some groups that promote the use of nonviolent action, e.g. the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, are careful not to be advocates. Peace Brigades International, which trains teams that accompany activists in other countries who are under threat, does not take sides in conflicts and obtains permission from governments before sending teams.

The implication for members of the military is to be alert to the possibility of false or exaggerated claims about foreign influence. Even when there is foreign support for the use of nonviolent action, it can be useful to remember that this only increases the capacity for actions that pose no physical threat to soldiers or civilians. Basically, soldiers need to know they may be used as tools in a struggle.

Conclusion

For any party to a conflict, there is value in understanding the opponent, including understanding motivations, methods, organisation, goals and strategies. In the case of armed forces tasked with dealing with peaceful protesters, there is value in understanding the theory and practice of what is called "nonviolent action" or "civil resistance," in which methods such as rallies, strikes, boycotts and sit-ins are used, all of which exclude the use of any physical violence. The aim of this article is to present key ideas from nonviolence research relevant to military-protester relations. It seems that few of these ideas are studied in depth by military strategists or are used as central themes in military training.

Military forces are focused on fighting enemies, which are typically armed, whether conventional or irregular forces. Therefore, it is not surprising that soldiers receive relatively little training on how to deal with civilians who abjure the use of violence. Military planners and sociologists of the military likewise have given little attention to military strategy in relation to nonviolent protest movements. This neglect is surprising given the many times that troops in different parts of the world, especially in authoritarian regimes, are called out to break strikes and control popular protests and, more generally, to protect the state against popular challengers.

In some countries, such as the United States, there is an overlap between the functions of the police and military, with the military being used for traditionally policing functions and police being involved in traditionally military functions such as counterterrorism. Police are more likely to have training in interacting with protesters. This suggests that military strategists could learn from the experience of policing protests.

A plausible reason for the neglect of military-protester relations is that nonviolent action has not received attention corresponding to its widespread use. Historical studies have

neglected nonviolent movements while giving extensive treatment to wars. Media outlets give far more attention to violence than to peaceful events, so that an arrest or a scuffle at a rally may be used to portray an otherwise peaceful event as violent. Scholars likewise have given scant attention to nonviolent action as a mode of political action.

Given the continuing expansion in the use of nonviolent action by social movements, including movements aiming to overthrow governments, military-protester dynamics deserve increased attention. Soldiers, commanders and politicians need to understand the methods and dynamics of nonviolent action.

It is important to understand that there are ongoing struggles within movements about appropriate tactics, especially about whether to use methods potentially perceived as violent. Military forces can more readily understand and deal with advocates of armed struggle because they share assumptions about the mechanisms and goals of using force. However, within movements, there is significant and growing support for avoiding physical violence, often with the underlying assumption that the methods used should reflect the sort of society that campaigners seek to create.

Military-protester dynamics highlight questions of loyalty, values and goals. Government leaders, in using troops to defend their power, commonly characterise nonviolent opponents as dangerous, even terrorists, and expect military forces to follow their orders. Ordering troops to attack unarmed civilians runs the risk of causing a breakdown in military discipline and a questioning of loyalty, a process that can be furthered by fraternisation. Indoctrinating troops may not be effective when there is a gross discrepancy between what they are told and what they observe on the ground.

As noted, in the past few decades, there has been an increase in the use of nonviolent action to challenge repressive regimes, as well as to push for social reform in other polities (Chenoweth, 2021). In many campaigns, protesters are given training in nonviolent methods, including maintaining nonviolent discipline and a strategy for undermining the pillars of support for oppressive systems. In this context, the role of armed forces may be less about defending against foreign militaries or guerrilla movements, and more about protecting governments from unarmed citizen movements, a task for which few troops and commanders have done extensive preparation. This points to significant challenges for military strategy and training. Furthermore, military identity may be thrown into question when troops are called out to use force against their own citizens, especially ones showing compassion and restraint.

Government and military leaders have a choice of whether to encourage social movements to use nonviolent or violent methods. Choosing to encourage nonviolent options will reduce bloodshed and foster greater use of nonviolent methods for engaging in conflict.

References

Abul-Magd, Z. (2017) *Militarizing the Nation: The Army, Business, and Revolution in Egypt*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Albrecht, H., Croissant, A. and Lawson, F.H. (eds.) (2016) *Armies and Insurgencies in the Arab Spring*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bartkowski, M.J. (ed.) (2013) *Recovering Nonviolent History: Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Binnendijk, A.L. and Marovic, I. (2006) 'Power and Persuasion: Nonviolent strategies to influence state security forces in Serbia (2000) and Ukraine (2004)', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 39, pp. 411–429. doi: 10.1016/j.postcomstud.2006.06.003.

Blair, D. (2013) *Military Engagement: Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Bonnell, V.E., Cooper, A. and Gregory Freidin, G. (eds.) (1994) *Russia at the Barricades: Eyewitness Accounts of the August 1991 Coup*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Bringing Down a Dictator (2002) Documentary film, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, Washington, DC.

Bruneau, T.C. (2013) 'Impediments to the accurate conceptualization of civil-military relations', in T.C. Bruneau and F.C. Matei (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations.* London: Routledge, pp. 13–21.

Bruneau, T.C. and Matei, F.C. (eds.) (2013) *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations.* London: Routledge.

Bruneau, T.C. and Tollefson, S.D. (eds.) (2006) *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Burk, J. (2002) 'Theories of democratic civil-military relations', *Armed Forces & Society*, 29(1), pp. 7–29. doi: 10.1177/0095327X0202900102.

Chenoweth, E. (2021) *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Chenoweth, E. and Schock, K. (2015) 'Do contemporaneous armed challenges affect the outcomes of mass nonviolent campaigns?', *Mobilization*, 20(4), pp. 427–451. doi: 10.17813/1086-671X-20-4-427.

Chenoweth, E. and Stephan, M.J. (2011) *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Chenoweth, E. and Stephan, M.J. (2021) *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns: Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail?* Washington, DC: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.

Chorley, K. (1943) *Armies and the Art of Revolution*. London: Faber and Faber.

Cimbala, S.J. (ed.) (2012) *Civil-Military Relations in Perspective: Strategy, Structure and Policy*. Farnham, England: Ashgate.

Clark, H. (2000) *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*. London: Pluto.

Csapody, T. and Weber, T. (2007) 'Hungarian nonviolent resistance against Austria and its place in the history of nonviolence', *Peace & Change*, 32(4), pp. 499–519. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0130.2007.00464.x.

Dajani, S.R. (1994) *Eyes without Country: Searching for a Palestinian Strategy of Liberation*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Darweish, M. and Rigby, A. (2015) *Popular Protest in Palestine: The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance*. London: Pluto Press.

Degaut, M. (2019) 'Out of the barracks: The role of the military in democratic revolutions', *Armed Forces & Society*, 45(1), pp. 78–100. doi: 10.1177/0095327X17708194.

Dobson, W.J. (2012) *The Dictator's Learning Curve: Inside the Global Battle for Democracy*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Droz-Vincent, P. (2014) 'Prospects for "democratic control of the armed forces"?: Comparative insights and lessons for the Arab world in transition', *Armed Forces & Society*, 40(4), pp. 696–723. doi: 10.1177/0095327X12468881.

Dudouet, V. (ed.) (2015) *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation: Transitions from Armed to Nonviolent Struggle*. London: Routledge.

Feaver, P.D. (1999) 'Civil-military relations', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2, pp. 211–241. doi: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.211.

Fukuda, C.M. (2000) 'Peace through nonviolent action: The East Timorese resistance movement's strategy for engagement', *Pacifica Review*, 12, pp. 17–31. doi: 10.1080/132391000113664.

Haines, H.H. (1984) 'Black radicalization and the funding of civil rights: 1957–1970', *Social Problems*, 32(1), pp. 31–43.

Helvey, R.L. (2004) *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking about the Fundamentals*. Boston, MA: Albert Einstein Institution.

Huntington, S.P. (1957) *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Huxley, S.D. (1990) *Constitutionalist Insurgency in Finland: Finnish 'Passive Resistance' against Russification as a Case of Nonmilitary Struggle in the European Resistance Tradition*. Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society.

Janowitz, M. (1971) *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Karmen, A. (1974) 'Agents provocateurs in the contemporary U.S. Leftist movement', in C.E. Reasons (ed.), *The Criminologist: Crime and the Criminal*. Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear.

Kerkvliet, B.J. and Mojares, R.B. (eds.) (1991) *From Marcos to Aquino: Local Perspectives on Political Transition in the Philippines*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

King, M.E. (2007) *A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Nonviolent Resistance*. New York, NY: Nation Books.

Kohen, A.S. (1999) *From the Place of the Dead: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Lehrke, J.P. (2014) 'A cohesion model to assess military arbitration of revolutions', *Armed Forces & Society*, 40(1), pp. 146–167. doi: 10.1177/0095327X12459851.

Lutterbeck, D. (2013) 'Arab uprisings, armed forces, and civil-military relations', *Armed Forces & Society*, 39(1), pp. 28–52. doi: 10.1177/0095327X12442768.

Mackenzie, A. (1987) 'People power or palace coup: The fall of Marcos', in M. Turner (ed.), *Regime Change in the Philippines: The Legitimation of the Aquino Government*, pp. 1–57, Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.

MacNair, R. (2018) 'The psychology of agents of repression: The paradox of defection', in L. R. Kurtz and L.A. Smithey (eds.), *The Paradox of Repression and Nonviolent Movements*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, pp. 74–101.

Martin, B. (2007) *Justice Ignited: The Dynamics of Backfire*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Marx, G.T. (1974) 'Thoughts on a neglected category of social movement participant: The agent provocateur and the informant', *American Journal of Sociology* 80(2), pp. 402–442. doi: 10.1086/225807.

Matei, F.C. (2013) 'A new conceptualization of civil-military relations', in T.C. Bruneau and F.C. Matei (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*. London: Routledge, pp. 26–38.

Ministry of Defence (2016) '2015 to 2020 Government policy: Military aid to the civil authorities for activities in the UK', *GOV.UK*, 4 August.

Moore, B., Jr. (1978) *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*. London: Macmillan.

Nepstad, S.E. (2011) *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nevins, J. (2005) *A Not-So-Distant Horror: Mass Violence in East Timor*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Pozner, V. (1992) *Eyewitness: A Personal Account of the Unraveling of the Soviet Union*. New York, NY: Random House.

Pressman, J. (2017) 'Throwing stones in social science: Non-violence, unarmed violence, and the first intifada', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 52(4), pp. 519–536. doi: 10.1177/0010836717701967.

Rigby, A. (1991) *Living the Intifada*. London: Pluto.

Roberts, A. (1975) 'Civil resistance to military coups', *Journal of Peace Research*, 12, pp. 19–36. doi: 10.1177/002234337501200102.

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

Schock, K. (2003) 'Nonviolent action and its misconceptions: Insights for social scientists', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 36, pp. 705–712. doi: 10.1017/S1049096503003482.

Schock, K. (2005) *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Seagrave, S. (1988) *The Marcos Dynasty*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Sharp, G. (1973) *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston, MA: Porter Sargent.

Sharp, G. (1979) *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*. Boston, MA: Porter Sargent.

Sixsmith, M. (1991) *Moscow Coup: The Death of the Soviet System*. London: Simon & Schuster.

Skilling, H.G. (1976) *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sørensen, M.J. and Martin, B. (2014) 'The dilemma action: Analysis of an activist technique', *Peace & Change*, 39(1), pp. 73–100. doi: 10.1111/pech.12053.

Stiehm, J. (1968) 'Nonviolence is two', *Sociological Inquiry*, 38(Winter), pp. 23–30. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-682X.1968.tb00669.x.

Szulc, T. (1971) *Czechoslovakia since World War II*. New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap.

Taylor, W.C. (2014) *Military Responses to the Arab Uprisings and the Future of Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East: Analysis from Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thompson, M.R. (1995) *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tufekci, Z. (2017) *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Vinthagen, S. (2015) *A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works*. London: Zed Books.

War Resisters' International (2014) *Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns*, 2nd ed. London: War Resisters' International.

Windsor, P. and Roberts, A. (1969) *Czechoslovakia 1968: Reform, Repression and Resistance*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Wolff, R.P., Moore, B., Jr. and Marcuse, H. (1969) *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Zunes, S. (1999) 'The origins of people power in the Philippines', in S. Zunes, L.R. Kurtz and S.B. Asher (eds.), *Nonviolent Social Movements: A Geographical Perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 129–157.