



The Flag of “Otpor,” symbolizing resistance, is held up at a protest against President Aleksandar Vucic in Belgrade. PHOTO CREDIT: VISUAL INTERMEZZO / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Million man protest marches in Hong Kong, riots and rebellion in Caracas, continued rumors of widespread discontent in Tehran, sabotage in the face of unspeakable brutality in North Korea, sectarian civil war in Syria, and the unrelenting assault on liberal democracy by the dictatorial regime in Moscow—the headlines of today have their seeds in the inherent fear of tyrants. It is that fear on which America must capitalize and be prepared to use to our advantage. These disturbances reveal the critical role that America’s special warfare units play in the contemporary era of nation state competition and conflict, for it’s their own people that our enemies fear most. Will Irwin’s monograph is a timely and important contribution to what will eventually become canon for the American Way of Irregular War and the basis for the professional military education of its uniformed and civilian irregular warfare practitioners.

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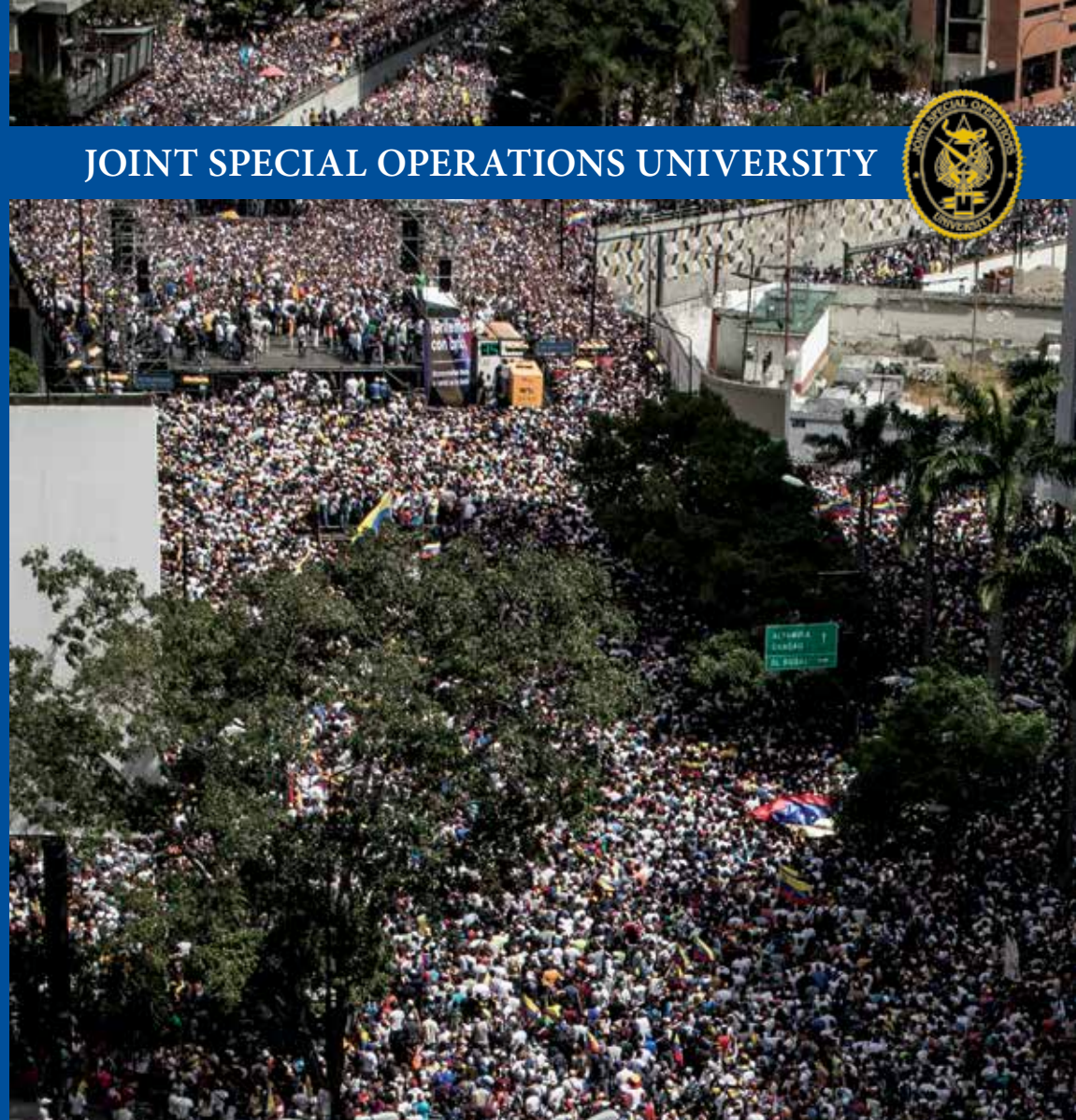


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JSOU Report 19-4

How Civil Resistance Works (and Why it Matters to SOF)

Irwin JSOU



JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIVERSITY



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Will Irwin

Foreword by Lieutenant General Charles T. Cleveland

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Joint Special Operations University and the Department of Strategic Studies

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U.S. Army, Ret.*

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On the cover. A huge crowd gathered on 23 January 2019 to protest against the government of President Maduro. During the protests, the head of parliament Guaido declared himself the transitional president of the South American country and openly challenged head of state Maduro. Now, the military is warning of a civil war. PHOTO CREDIT: RODOLFO CHURION/DPA/PICTURE-ALLIANCE/NEWSCOM

Back cover. The Flag of "Otpor," symbolizing resistance, is held up at a protest against President Aleksandar Vucic in Belgrade. PHOTO CREDIT: VISUAL INTER-MEZZO / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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From the Director

As Will Irwin reminds us in this extremely timely and well-written monograph, John F. Kennedy observed more than a half century ago that “those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.” This observation is reflected in United States Special Operations Command Joint Doctrine, which defines “organized effort[s] by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability” as “resistance.” While this is the second monograph by Mr. Irwin on resistance, it is part of a larger effort by the Department of Strategic Studies and the Joint Special Operations University Press going back several years, which includes other monographs on the topic, as well as articles in professional journals—including Mr. Irwin’s contribution (along with U.S. Army General (Ret.) Joseph Votel, U.S. Army Lieutenant General (Ret.) Charles Cleveland, and U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.) Charles Connett) to a Joint Force Quarterly article that began to probe the issue. In addition to these previous efforts, Mr. Irwin will soon be adding a third monograph on resistance, *Decision-Making Considerations in Support to Resistance*. If the first two installments are an indicator of the importance of Mr. Irwin’s research, the third volume will be just as important a contribution.

In this second monograph, Mr. Irwin covers the topic of resistance from triggering events through the typical lifecycle of resistance movements, including government response, the decision to pursue a violent or nonviolent strategy, and how security forces might be persuaded to remain in the barracks or join the revolution (for which he provides historical examples). But the monograph goes beyond the analysis of resistance and response and even exploitation—for if a decision is made to intervene, Special Operations Forces will be among the first-responders. Therefore, as Mr. Irwin concludes, “civil resistance is the progeny of armed revolution, and U.S. special warfare doctrine and capabilities must evolve to address it.” Anyone interested in special warfare—from academics to the warfighter—will be well-served by a close study of this monograph.

Colonel John D. Poucher, U.S. Air Force, Ret.
Director, Department of Strategic Studies

Foreword

Million man protest marches in Hong Kong, riots and rebellion in Caracas, continued rumors of widespread discontent in Tehran, sabotage in the face of unspeakable brutality in North Korea, sectarian civil war in Syria, and the unrelenting assault on liberal democracy by the dictatorial regime in Moscow—the headlines of today have their seeds in the inherent fear of tyrants. It is that fear on which America must capitalize and be prepared to use to advantage. These disturbances reveal the critical role that America's special warfare units play in the contemporary era of nation state competition and conflict, for it's their own people that our enemies fear most. Will Irwin's monograph is a timely and important contribution to what will eventually become canon for the American Way of Irregular War and the basis for the professional military education of its uniformed and civilian irregular warfare (IW) practitioners.

As he clearly explains and demonstrates in his case studies, civil resistance and armed revolution are inextricably linked and can be highly effective at forcing political change outside the use of traditional war. We would do well to ensure that we have deep knowledge and understanding of resistance and organizations designed to use it or defend against it.

The American security sector is in a headlong rush back to the tactics, strategies, and hardware of traditional war, driven by the growing existential threats from China and Russia and the danger to world stability posed by authoritarian regimes bent on obtaining weapons of mass destruction. Unlike the post-Vietnam era, today's adversaries include nonstate actors who have imposed tremendous costs on the U.S. and demonstrated the effectiveness of their brand of irregular war. Those lessons are not lost on our great power rivals. Today, proxy and surrogate wars have become the preferred ways and means of threatening the U.S. and the international system it shepherds. They understand the value of resistance and—being less constrained by conscience or law—are predisposed to foment it wherever it suits their interest.

It falls to United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to give America the IW capability it requires, starting with a deep understanding of the phenomenon of resistance, insurgency, and civil and hybrid war.

Beyond the physics of conventional war, USSOCOM and its special warfare units must be experts in the psychology, cultural, and historical drivers of resistance. They must ensure that the nation has an ability to inspire, encourage, and support the oppressed who yearn for freedom and be ready to extend a hand or fight alongside liberal democracies that are vulnerable to externally supported insurgent or terrorist groups.

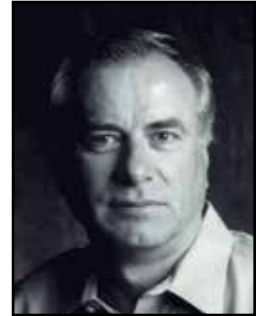
The horrendous costs of nuclear and conventional war have necessarily made great power conflicts increasingly indirect. While conventional and nuclear forces strengthen to deter, our IW capabilities will likewise need to improve to both threaten their regime's safety and to counter them in the most likely fields of conflict. Our enemies promote resistance for political, cultural, or religious reasons and often fight through proxies, to include in some cases, terrorist groups. They ultimately seek to destabilize and discredit liberal democracies and crush such movements in their own countries and in those in their orbit. They will ally themselves in this common interest against the U.S. and its allies, knowing they share the same vulnerability and are threatened by the ideals manifest in our way of life. As their peoples grow restless, their repression will increase, as will our opportunities to further weaken them or check their power.

As Mr. Irwin states, "No nondemocratic political entity ever has been permanent." We should be prepared to hasten their demise when it is in our interest.

Lieutenant General Charles T. Cleveland
U.S. Army, Ret.

About the Author

Mr. Will Irwin is a Resident Senior Fellow at the Joint Special Operations University's (JSOU) Department of Strategic Studies. He is a contractor employed by METIS Solutions in support of the JSOU mission. Since his retirement as a U.S. Army Special Forces officer, he has worked as a defense analyst, researcher, historian, instructor, and writer. His career included assignments throughout the United States, Europe, Central and South America, the Middle East, the Far East, Southeast Asia, and Southwest Asia. He is a subject matter expert in strategic intelligence, strategic and operational plans and policy, special operations, resistance, and political and irregular warfare.



Mr. Irwin culminated his 28-year military career at the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), where he was a weapons, munitions, and countering weapons of mass destruction (CWMD) requirements officer. Since his retirement from active duty, he has served USSOCOM as a contractor supporting the command's advanced technology program and later as a future concepts developer. He then supported the command as a CWMD-terrorism analyst and planner in the Defense Threat Reduction Agency USSOCOM Support Cell. Upon his return to the Tampa area, he served as an intelligence analyst at United States Central Command prior to joining the faculty at JSOU.

Mr. Irwin holds a master of military arts and sciences degree from the United States Army Command and General Staff College and a bachelor of arts degree in history from Methodist University. He has done additional graduate study at the University of Kansas and the University of Southern California, and has served as an Arroyo Center Research Fellow at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California. He is the author of *Abundance of Valor: Resistance, Liberation, and Survival, 1944–1945* and *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944*, as well as several classified and unclassified reports and articles. His previous JSOU Press Monograph, *Support to Resistance: Strategic Purpose and Effectiveness*, was published in April 2019. Mr. Irwin has served as a guest lecturer

on unconventional warfare at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

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As with my previous monograph, this work benefitted from research assistance provided by the staff of the JSOU Library at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida; the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; the National Archives and Records Administration II in College Park, Maryland; the archives at several presidential libraries; the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, California; and the Hillsborough County Public Libraries in Tampa and Valrico, Florida. The assistance provided by the staffs at these institutions helped immeasurably in the completion of this monograph.

Introduction

The strength and power of despotism consists wholly in the fear of resistance. - Thomas Paine

As witnessed throughout the world over the past century, and especially over the last four decades, civil resistance has proven effective as a way for oppressed populations to confront tyranny. For several reasons, the political, social, and economic conditions that have historically aroused civil resistance are becoming more pronounced in several countries around the world. Most of these states and potential movements will have marginal relevance to the United States in terms of security interests, but potential movements taking place on a significant scale in countries that are proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or prominent supporters of terrorism should be of concern.

Technology—from the printing press to the microchip, from gunpowder to nuclear weapons—has throughout history proven to be a disturber of world order. Today, big data analytics, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), and other emerging technologies, as this monograph shows, will have a profound effect on civil resistance, just as social media played an important role in the Arab Spring revolutions. These modern disturbers will affect how resistance begins, how it is conducted, how regimes respond to it, and how external powers support it. In countries that can afford the technology, AI provides regimes with powerful new tools for controlling populations and stifling dissent. In the free world, work must continue not only on technologies that provide internet access to those whose governments strive to block such access, but on technologies that furnish a means of weakening or countering the emerging tools of tyranny.

A second potential disturber of domestic and international order is the erosion of democracy and the trend toward more authoritarian and nationalistic forms of governance, reversing in some ways the benefits of years of globalization. As described in the National Security Strategy, revisionist powers and rogue states challenge world order with their expansionist doctrines, but they also imperil their own people through human rights abuse and deprivation of self-determination. These and other autocratic states have

learned from recent civil resistance history and are seeking ways to counter internal dissent, to mitigate the threat posed by civil unrest.

U.S. unconventional warfare (UW) doctrine might very well prove inadequate in meeting the new challenges associated with supporting resistance. Old doctrine gives way slowly, but simply recognizing that change is occurring is not enough. More must be learned about the ways of civil resistance—especially of how and when it might transition to violent conflict. More understanding is needed of a regime's pillars of support and the dynamics of power shifts. More expertise and creativity are required to conduct or support influence operations targeting military and security force leaders in anti-U.S. governments facing large-scale civil resistance.

What is meant by the term civil resistance? The term applies to nonviolent forms of collective political action on the part of an oppressed population, typically in opposition to an authoritarian regime or in protest of an unpopular or unfair policy. It is nearly synonymous with terms such as nonviolent resistance or people power. Another closely related term, civil disobedience, is sometimes considered synonymous with civil resistance but is more accurately viewed as a tactic or method used by civil resistance movements. Civil resistance is a way for societies to express disfavor with the ruling regime or occupying power or with one or more of its more oppressive policies. It expresses both to the regime and to the international community a perceived breach of the contract between a government and its people. In its more benign forms, civil resistance provides a means for applying pressure on government officials to bring about political or social reform. More aggressive and subversive approaches can undermine a regime's sources of power, resulting in a change in leadership or government.

Tactics employed by such movements include protest demonstrations, sit-ins, boycotts, noncooperation, ostracism of government officials or security force personnel, and strikes or work slow-downs. Disobedience can, for example, involve the flouting of certain laws or a refusal to pay taxes. More subversive approaches can include the infiltration of government offices and the formation of front groups.

Civil resistance is most effective when it exploits vulnerabilities in groups or organizations that support the regime and constitute a major source of its power. Actions can be taken that intensify internal power struggles or deepen existing rifts or cleavages in government branches or within the military or security force. In its most effective form, these actions can result

in defections, or shifts in allegiance on the part of police, military forces, the judiciary, and other government elites from the regime to the resistance. Sufficient weakening of these pillars of support can cause the regime to collapse.

Civil resistance can also encompass social or popular defensive measures in readiness for a possible invasion by an aggressive, expansionist neighboring country. As such, civil resistance readiness can contribute to an overall national deterrence strategy. Moreover, in the event of such an invasion and occupation, civil resistance can be carried out simultaneously with armed resistance, as was done by the populations of the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark during the Second World War.

Six related terms that appear in this monograph are social movement, resistance movement, social revolution, subversion, UW, and unconventional statecraft. Joint doctrine defines a social movement as “a collective challenge by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents, and authorities.”¹ A resistance movement is an “organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability.”² Social revolution is defined as “a rapid transformation of a society’s state and class structures, accompanied and in part accomplished through popular revolts.”³ Subversion involves “actions designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a governing authority.”⁴ Joint doctrine defines UW as “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.”⁵ Finally, international law scholars Michael N. Schmitt and Andru E. Wall have introduced the term “unconventional statecraft” when referring to “external support by one state to insurgents in another ... when the two states concerned are not involved in an international armed conflict.”⁶

How effective is civil resistance? A landmark study by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, the results of which were published in a 2008 article and in more expanded form in a 2011 book, indicates that nonviolent campaigns are twice as likely to achieve their stated goals than are violent campaigns.⁷ Some aspects of this work have been criticized, such as the authors’ judgements of the success or failure of particular campaigns and whether or not specific campaigns should be classified as violent or nonviolent. While

some of the authors' judgements are open to challenge, the overall findings are undoubtedly sound.⁸

As the 2011 uprisings throughout North Africa and the Middle East have shown, however, revolutions that are intended to follow a nonviolent strategy do not always remain nonviolent. The conflicts in Syria and Libya provide stark evidence of how resistance movements that begin as nonviolent civil resistance can quickly disintegrate into violent civil war. It is also difficult to reconcile the findings of earlier studies with the fact that five of the six Arab Spring nonviolent revolutions failed.⁹

Several states around the world are currently experiencing conditions of the kind that have historically spawned civil resistance. Former Jordanian Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Muasher recently observed that leaders in the Arab world experienced two perfect storms over the past decade—one political and the other economic. These were the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 and the significant downturn in oil prices in 2014, the latter “threatening the basic model of governance”¹⁰ upon which their power rests. In addition to sharply declining oil revenues, several countries in the region are burdened with rising debt, economic crises, and increasing unemployment—especially among young people. One result of this is that a major pillar of support for authoritarian leaders is now a vulnerability. They are no longer capable of funding patronage relationships—buying the loyalty of elites—to the extent that they once were. Regimes that weathered the 2011 uprisings have made largely symbolic changes, such as Saudi Arabia’s lifting of the ban on women driving, but such limited changes fall short of the rising expectations of the people and the demand for real political reform. Absent substantial change in governance in several Middle Eastern states, Mr. Muasher anticipates a second and more consequential wave of Arab Spring-like uprisings to come. If governments throughout the Middle East “continue to ignore the need for change,” he believes, “the havoc to come will bring change on its own.”¹¹

These conditions are not confined to the Arab world. Plunging oil revenues is one of several factors contributing to the collapse of Venezuela’s economy. The regime in Caracas faces increasing unrest among its enormously aggrieved population. The country suffers from a grossly mismanaged economy, rampant corruption, a food distribution quagmire that is bringing the population to the brink of starvation, the flight of skilled and educated citizens to neighboring countries, and defections within its armed

forces. China's leadership is beginning to experience some push-back from citizens wary of the increasingly Orwellian security measures decreed by a president now serving with no term limits. Countries elsewhere in Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America are host to a new wave of authoritarian leaders whose actions are placing limits on fundamental freedoms, violating human rights, and dispelling expectations of self-determination.

Why should any of this be of concern to U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF)? For the simple reason that the conditions described above have often spawned civil resistance movements, and there is a growing tendency among authoritarian regimes to swiftly and violently repress such movements. If such a crisis developed on a large scale in a rogue state, the stakes might be too high for the United States Government (USG) to remain on the sideline, hoping for the best. If a decision is made to intervene, SOF will likely be among the first forces called. This should provide an incentive for SOF to learn the early indicators of civil resistance, the typical life-cycle of such movements, how governments respond to the unrest, what actions or events foreshadow the emergence of a more violent conflict, how security forces might be influenced to remain in the barracks or even to actively support the resistance, and the ways in which SOF and other elements of the USG can contribute to operations designed to protect U.S. interests.

This monograph is organized in seven chapters, the first of which generally describes social, political, and economic preconditions that can lead to the onset of civil resistance and explains how such movements typically commence. The second chapter differentiates the approaches that a movement can choose to follow—violent, nonviolent, or a combination of the two—and further explores the diverse array of methods and techniques available to a civil resistance movement. Chapter 3 examines the ways in which governments seek to prevent civil resistance and how they respond to it when prevention fails, while the next chapter addresses how third-party states or non-state actors can facilitate or sustain civil resistance. Chapter 5 informs the reader on current internal social, political, and economic conditions and prospects for civil resistance in what the National Security Strategy of the United States describes as the four main state challengers to the United States—the revisionist powers of Russia and China and the rogue states of North Korea and Iran,¹² as well as other noteworthy countries. The sixth chapter lays the foundation for further discussion on possible roles for SOF

in supporting civil resistance in other countries. The report concludes with closing comments, observations, and recommendations in Chapter 7.

Civil resistance is the progeny of armed revolution, and U.S. special warfare doctrine and capabilities must evolve to address it. The purpose of this monograph is to prime that evolution and to promote and facilitate the attendant research, training, and education requirements. It seeks to inform a discussion on whether there is a significant role for SOF in unconventional statecraft and, if so, what that role might be. It may not uncover the answers, but it can perhaps provide a framework for debate.

1. Causes and Inception

When dictatorship is a fact, revolution becomes a right. - Victor Hugo

Current U.S. national security strategy centers on the reemergence of great power competition. States such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea are demonstrating a finely-tuned risk calculus that continually challenges U.S. interests. Russia belligerently works to expand its sphere of influence and control into former Soviet or Warsaw Pact territory to the greatest degree possible without triggering a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Article V response. Likewise, China knows that its assertive actions aimed at expanding its sovereignty in the East and South China Seas fall short of eliciting an armed response from the United States or its allies. According to a recent Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) assessment, Iran, in pursuing its goal of regional domination, continues to pose a threat to U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East.¹³ Meanwhile, North Korea balks at reducing or eliminating its development of WMD capabilities. These states steadily improve their military capacities and increasingly demonstrate an intent to expand their reach and influence, both regionally and beyond.

But these and other countries around the world are also becoming more assertive against what they view as internal threats—the demonstration by segments of their populations of a desire for democratic reform and self-determination. Population control measures, enhanced by AI technologies in some countries, potentially increase the likelihood of the emergence of some form of resistance. The result could be armed insurgency or, alternatively, a civil resistance movement preferring to follow a strategy of nonviolence.

Causes of Civil Unrest

A review of the historical record reveals a commonality in the social, political, and economic circumstances present in most countries that experience civil unrest. Preconditions or grievances that typically spawn some form of resistance are well-known—foreign occupation, human rights abuses, the oppression of ethnic populations, systemic corruption, rampant inflation and economic crisis, rising unemployment, sham elections and the denial of self-determination, the mismanagement of social programs and

public services, the arbitrary detainment and sentencing or disappearance of political opposition members and journalists, and institutionalized racial or gender discrimination. It is not necessary that all or even most of these conditions be present for civil unrest to appear.

Occupation by a foreign power is often met with violent resistance. In at least four Western European countries during the Second World War, non-violent civil resistance was carried on simultaneously with armed resistance.

Extensive human rights abuses and the deprivation of self-determination, evident today in countries like North Korea and Venezuela, often give rise to resistance. Civil resistance sometimes proves effective in bringing about change, as it did in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe during the 1980s, in Serbia in 2000, and in Tunisia in 2011. At other times and in other places—China in 1989, Burma in 2007, Iran in 2009—security forces resorted to extravagant levels of violence in quelling the unrest.

A common cause for civil unrest is political, social, and economic exclusion based on ethnicity, religion, gender, or social class. The oppression of ethnic populations within the borders of a state always spawns anti-regime sentiment and can result in civil resistance. Marginalized ethnic populations are often concentrated in the peripheral territories of a state. Today, for example, China includes large ethnic population groups in remote Xinjiang Province in the far western reaches of the country and in the expansive Tibet autonomous region in the southwest. Within both regions there is a growing awareness of injustice, heightened albeit frustrated expectations and ambitions, and demand for change.

Blatant, systemic corruption typically meets with resentment by the people who must live under such conditions. An estimated half-million protesters that took to the streets in cities throughout Romania at the beginning of February 2017, for example, were acting in response to the passing of a law that modified the criminal code to pardon some past crimes and changing provisions regarding the abuse of power, a move that appeared to deliberately weaken anti-corruption efforts. Perhaps the worst current offender is the regime of President Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, where former government officials estimate that “as much as \$300 billion may have been diverted from national coffers to private accounts.”¹⁴

Economic crises within a country can result in rampant inflation and skyrocketing prices, food and fuel shortages, and other devastating conditions that give rise to social turmoil. The major East Berlin uprising of

16–17 June 1953 began as a relatively minor demonstration by 5,000 people in protest of a government-imposed 10 percent work increase.¹⁵ In August 2007, the government of Burma ceased fuel subsidies, an act that resulted in widespread and significant price increases for diesel fuel and natural gas. Because of this, transportation and food prices also greatly increased. The toll on the urban poor was particularly devastating. Protest marches began immediately under the banner of the 88 Generation Students' Group. After most of that group's leaders were arrested, monks took up the cause by creating the All Burma Monks Alliance and organizing mass marches that came to be known as the Saffron Revolution. The unrest was violently crushed by the Burmese army and police.¹⁶ Currently, as will be shown in Chapter 5, a severe economic crisis and skyrocketing inflation is at the root of civil unrest in Venezuela.

Rising unemployment has caused civil discontent in the past and is likely to do so in the future as a result of advancing technology. Potential discontinuities resulting from advances in AI, for example, include the displacement of a large segment of the labor force, soaring unemployment, and increasing social and political unrest. Millions of workers, according to a recent RAND report, could be forced out of work over the next decade alone. In considering potential causes of dissension, "AI-induced mass unemployment" received the most votes among participants at a recent workshop on security-related conditions likely to prevail over the next two decades. These and other factors "could spark intrastate conflict"¹⁷ and could result in conditions that weaken liberal democracies politically, economically, and militarily, and work to the benefit of authoritarian regimes.

Stolen elections—regime electoral victories gained through gerrymandering or by the falsification of balloting results or the unlawful elimination of legitimate opposition—were a principle factor behind civil resistance movements in the Philippines in 1986, Chile in 1988, Slovakia in 1998, Serbia in 2000, and Iran in 2009. Sham elections continue to be one of the most common causes of civil unrest.

The arbitrary detainment and sentencing, disappearance, or murder of political opposition members and journalists often results in civil discontent. A successful nonviolent civil disobedience movement in East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) in March 1971, for example, was initiated over the arrest and confinement of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League, on false charges of conspiring with the government of India.¹⁸ More recently, the

governments of Russia and China routinely detain and jail leading opposition candidates.

In the above-mentioned RAND report on security-related conditions likely to materialize over the next two decades, some of the most notable issues concern increases in social inequalities. History offers many examples of civil unrest caused by race or gender discrimination. In the United States this has included the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the struggle for women's rights. South Africa's program of institutionalized racial discrimination brought about the successful anti-apartheid civil resistance campaign that led to the election of revolutionary leader Nelson Mandela to the presidency of that country.

Civil unrest may center on a perceived need for a redistribution of power, for a correction of what is seen (by at least a portion of the governed) to be an unfair distribution of power or wealth. The governing regime may exercise its control over a population through military might, through economic power and control of resources, through intimidating security force presence, by taking advantage of existing social stratification, or by any combination of these techniques. When the exercise of power fails to recognize or respond to the needs of the common people, dissident elements within the population might organize in some way to express their discontent and to call for change.

The Emergence and Growth of Opposition

Often, dissidence first appears in the form of a student movement that is passively supported by other population or interest groups. In time, these other groups might become more active supporters of the cause. This was the case in Serbia, in the former republic of Yugoslavia, during the rule of dictator Slobodan Milosevic following the Kosovo War. A student movement determined to oust Milosevic adopted the name *Otpor*, the Serbian term for resistance. Formed as an underground movement by a dozen college students in 1998, it grew to have a nationwide membership of over 70,000 by the fall of 2000, when Milosevic was eventually overthrown. In the months leading up to the collapse of the regime, miners and other labor groups joined in the movement.¹⁹

As demonstrations increase in frequency and size, spreading to other campuses and other cities, the movement grows. Most early large-scale

demonstrations are likely to be spontaneous. Later, as key leaders and coordinators emerge, the movement becomes more organized and widespread, and demonstrations can be planned and executed with more precision and effectiveness. Well-organized events might include first-aid facilities and standby legal representation for those who are arrested. The presence of pre-positioned port-a-potties could be an indicator of scrupulous planning.

Another characteristic is the bandwagon effect that often surfaces when a civil resistance campaign continues over an extended period. Sustained resistance by a movement that proves itself capable of withstanding government repression often results in the addition and coalescence of other causes and expansion of the list of grievances.

Triggering Events

As discontent builds, some government action or significant historical or social event often serves as the spark to ignite large-scale civil resistance. The wave of civil resistance in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 that came to be called the Arab Spring, for example, was triggered by the self-immolation of aggrieved Tunisian street vendor Tarek el-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010. In the case of the current Hong Kong protests, in their 16th week as of this writing, the triggering event was the introduction by the pro-Beijing Hong Kong government of a bill providing for the extradition of Hong Kong residents to mainland China.

Triggering events can take many forms. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, unsound economic policies resulted in widespread resentment by the population of Poland toward the communist government and Soviet domination.²⁰ The initiation of open civil resistance began with an event in 1979, when the spirit of resistance was awakened in Polish citizens by a Papal visit in June of that year. In a public rebuke of the communist system, Pope John Paul II told the people of his homeland that their faith should not be usurped by their blind devotion to the state.²¹ A year later, Lech Walesa led a strike by 17,000 dock workers at the Lenin Shipyards, an opening move that grew over the 1980s into a massive nationwide civil resistance movement that culminated with the fall of the communist government in Warsaw. The 1979 Papal visit to Poland is often cited as the trigger that ignited civil resistance in that country.

The tragic and deadly government response to the 1989 democracy movement in China shocked the world partly because it came at a time when

similar movements—Solidarity in Poland is perhaps the best example—were making tremendous progress in freeing people from communist rule. The 1989 movement in China began with demonstrations by idealistic students demanding democratic reforms and an end to corruption. The protests were triggered by the mysterious death of reform-minded Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yao-bang. For the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese adage “a single spark can start a prairie fire” took on a new significance with the sudden eruption of the ensuing pro-democracy movement.²² Soon the students were joined by workers protesting against inflation.

Organized civil resistance might abruptly surface in a country in the wake of a successful civil resistance movement in a neighboring state. In fact, a wave of pro-democracy movements is not unusual, the parade of Color Revolutions in Eastern Europe at the close of the Cold War and the Arab Spring movements of 2011 serve as cases in point. A recent RAND report noted that such movements “are appearing with increasing suddenness, frequency, and intensity, owing in large part to new means of social networking and political organization ... even firm authoritarian regimes may face serious opposition, much of it democratic in intent.”²³

The next chapter reviews the many forms that civil resistance can take and the vast array of tactics and methods at hand to be employed by these movements.

2. Approaches and Methods

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable. - John F. Kennedy

As described in Chapter 1, any of a wide range of preconditions and grievances can result in the emergence of organized resistance. The movement might decide to adopt a violent, armed resistance strategy, relying on methods such as sabotage and guerrilla warfare to reach its objective. Alternatively, it could opt for a nonviolent approach, placing their faith in the power of persuasion to gain popular local support and sympathetic world opinion, and hopefully compelling an unpopular or illegitimate regime to step down or to concede to reform. Currently there is a trend toward nonviolent civil resistance as the preferred approach, and for good reason. The previously mentioned 2008 study by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan—based on an analysis to 323 resistance cases between 1900 and 2006, where the objective was regime change or the expulsion of a foreign occupation force—found that “nonviolent resistance [movements] against authoritarian regimes were twice as likely to succeed as violent movements.”²⁴

Nonviolent civil resistance has a greater chance of succeeding for several reasons. First, movements following a nonviolent strategy attract much greater domestic support than do armed insurgencies or revolutions. Armed groups, apart from some of the larger World War II resistance movements, typically number in the tens of thousands. Nonviolent movements can attract a support base numbering in the hundreds of thousands and are much more likely to gain the backing of the international community.

Strategy

It is not enough for movements to know and articulate what they are against, although that is often what preoccupies their narrative and actions. To be truly effective in changing things for the better, the movement must have a vision; they must be capable of describing what they hope their actions will bring about. The uprising in Burma in 1988, for example, failed because it lacked unity and resources, but its leaders also failed to articulate their objectives, focusing only those things it was against. In Iran in 2009, the large

Green Movement whose protests were triggered by the apparent fraudulent reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad nearly succeeded in bringing about government reform and transition, but they fell short for a lack of unity and strategic planning. In the opinion of exiled Iranian dissident Mohsen Sazegara, Green Movement leadership “was not knowledgeable about civil resistance strategy and tactics and was therefore ill-equipped to decisively plan and implement a grand strategy.”²⁵

Leadership and Direction

Whether centralized in a charismatic figure or decentralized through several co-equal leaders, a movement’s leadership faces responsibilities unlike those of a military commander. In addition to providing a vision, encouraging activists, directing action, and sustaining the effort, a civil resistance movement’s leaders also must strive to generate and maintain the support of elite and influential citizens. An equally important but challenging responsibility for civil resistance organizers is maintaining control over those who are inclined to use violence.

Other Key Actors

Aside from the leaders, civil resistance movements require the coordinated efforts of several key specialists in order to be effective. Intelligence coordinators are needed to organize and maintain an ongoing assessment of the regime’s strengths and weaknesses and to identify vulnerabilities that might be exploited. These coordinators can be served by a broad network of collectors. “Social media,” in the words of Peter Singer and Emerson Brooking, “has turned almost everyone into a collector and distributor of information. All it takes is a smartphone and a few idle seconds. Anyone can do it.”²⁶

*All it takes is a
smartphone and a
few idle seconds.
Anyone can do it.*

Skilled communications professionals will need to be fully capable of effectively keeping leaders in touch with each other and with the movement at large. Whatever communication means are available will be needed to engage key actors involved in staged events. Communicators must be adept at exploiting mass media and should have mastered social media mechanisms. One of the most conspicuous aspects of the Arab Spring revolutions was their skillful use of social media as a means of rapidly coordinating and synchronizing

events. Large protester turnouts become possible on very short notice. Just as imperative is the ability to quickly disperse or relocate these crowds for the protection of participants and to keep a step ahead of security forces. Finally, communicators can play an important role in coordinating legal and medical support for protesters who are arrested or injured.

Other needed specialists are varied and situation dependent. Talented propagandists are often indispensable, and key personnel in future movements could include cyber operators.

Planning

Revolutions such as those of the Arab Spring and its predecessors are by no means as spontaneous as they appear to the outside world. Serbia's "Bulldozer Revolution" in 2000 that resulted in the overthrow of dictator Slobodan Milosevic, for example, appeared to be spontaneous and swift, but in fact was the result of two years of organization and planning. Those who executed the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt used the 2000 Serbia model as their template.

During the buildup of the Serbian resistance in 2000, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) hired retired U.S. Army Colonel Robert Helvey to assist the student-led movement in their planning. Helvey conducted a weekend workshop for the movement's leaders at a hotel in Budapest, Hungary. During the workshop sessions, Helvey stressed the importance of planning a nonviolent civil resistance movement by adhering to the same principles that military commanders follow in planning for war. This includes the necessity of a clearly defined and achievable objective, the importance of maintaining the initiative, massing forces at a decisive time and place, applying minimal strength to secondary efforts, remaining flexible and constantly maneuvering to place security forces in a disadvantageous position, preserving freedom of action, maintaining critically important unity of effort, exercising appropriate security measures, exploiting the element of surprise, and keeping plans simple to minimize confusion and misunderstanding.

Those involved in planning and conducting civil resistance can, of course, capitalize on the use of social media as an instantaneous coordination and synchronization tool, as was illustrated so effectively during the Arab Spring movements. Instantaneous communication allows participants to rapidly gather or disperse in large numbers, to coordinate and deliver legal

and medical assistance for participants, and to keep one step ahead of the authorities.

Methods and Techniques

The methods available to a nonviolent civil resistance movement are varied and many. The late Professor Gene Sharp, the most prolific writer and strongest proponent of nonviolent resistance, identified some 198 techniques that can be used in pursuit of a movement's goals. Sharp has likened nonviolent methods to the use of *jiu-jitsu* against an opponent, "throwing him off balance politically, causing his repression to rebound against his position, and weakening his power."²⁷ The oppressor will often prefer that the resistance movement take up arms and might even take action to provoke such a development in order to justify the application of violence by the forces of sanction in combatting the movement.

The selection of methods to be used by a movement depend on several considerations: the general political, social, and economic situation; the country's history, culture, traditions, and mores; the nature of the grievances; the goals and objectives sought by political action; the level of knowledge and experience of civil resistance by the activists; the degree of repression and the potential level of violence the government is willing and capable of exercising; the resources at hand; the actual and potential size of the movement; the background and experience of the movement's leaders; and the degree of popular support for the movement.

Professor Sharp classified the arsenal of nonviolent methods and techniques under three broad categories—protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and intervention.

Protest and Persuasion

The first of Sharp's categories includes actions that are largely symbolic and noninterventionist in nature, signifying that the activists are either for or against some particular policy, law, regime, foreign engagement, etc. Included are public speeches, signed statements, books or letters expressing support for or opposition to something, and the familiar collective actions of lobbying, picketing, protest marches, protest meetings or assemblies, pilgrimages, mourning vigils, the preparation and distribution of posters or leaflets, newspaper columns or editorials, radio or television programming,

declarations by institutions or organizations, and petitions. More symbolic methods include the wearing or display of symbols, flags, or banners; the use of slogans; the destruction of one's own property; the use of graffiti or skywriting; and walk-outs.

Noncooperation

Sharp's second category encompasses acts of deliberately withdrawing normal cooperation and obedience with representatives of authority or with laws or regulations.

Within this category, the sub-category of social noncooperation includes acts of social boycotting such as the ostracism of authority figures or other persons, a method used with great effect by the American colonials against British forces in the years leading up to the American Revolution. During the Second World War, the people of Denmark and Norway carried ostracism to a new level in their treatment of German occupation forces. Danes and Norwegians ignored German soldiers who spoke to them, looked 'through' them as though they weren't there, left stores or restaurants whenever Germans entered, got up and moved if a German soldier sat next to them on public transportation. These actions had such profoundly negative effects on the morale of occupation forces that German authorities issued edicts making some of them a punishable offense.²⁸ Social boycotting can be focused on a group of individuals, such as occupation forces, or it can be selective, aimed at a specific person.

Social noncooperation can also take the form of suspension of normal social events, customs, or sports activities. Social affairs such as concerts or banquets might be boycotted. Students can go on strike, refusing to attend classes. It can also include social disobedience, where the people reject or defy nongovernmental social institutions or social customs.

The second sub-category, economic noncooperation, includes national or local consumers' boycotts, rent withholding, workers' boycotts, producers' boycotts, and suppliers' boycotts. On the part of owners and management, it can take the form of traders' boycotts, lockouts, refusal to sell or lease property, or a merchants' general strike. Financial resource noncooperation includes the withdrawal of bank deposits, the refusal to pay fees or dues, the refusal to pay debts or interest, the refusal to pay any forms of taxes, the severance of credit, or the refusal to accept a government's currency. Protest

strikes can take the form of farm workers' strikes, prisoners' strikes, professional strikes, industrial strikes, slowdown strikes, and reporting-in-sick strikes. Strikes can be selective, limited, or general in scope.

Political noncooperation can take many forms—withdrawing or withholding allegiance, refusing public support, advocating and encouraging resistance, boycotting legislative bodies, boycotting elections, boycotting government service, boycotting government-sponsored organizations and institutions, refusing assistance to law enforcement officers or security personnel, refusing the acceptance or recognition of appointed officials, refusing to disperse a meeting or assemblage, organizing sit-downs, refusing compliance with conscription or deportation, and using false identities.

Intervention

Intervention—Sharp's third category of nonviolent methods of civil resistance—can be psychological, physical, social, economic, or political in nature. Psychological actions might include fasts, self-exposure to the elements, reverse trials, or nonviolent harassment. Sit-ins, stand-ins, ride-ins, pray-ins, nonviolent raids and invasions, and nonviolent obstruction or occupation constitute physical intervention measures. Social intervention refers to actions such as the overloading of facilities, stalling in the conduct of legitimate business, performing disruptive skits, and creating alternative social institutions or communication systems. Economic intervention methods—politically motivated counterfeiting or selective patronage, for example—are intended to disrupt the opponent's economy. Also included here are the establishment of alternative markets, transportation systems, and economic institutions. Acts of nonviolent political intervention might include the overloading of administrative systems, the identification of secret or undercover agents, the seeking of detainment or imprisonment in large numbers, or the formation of a parallel government.

Nonviolent civil resistance movements are not limited to the time-tested methods outlined above. Techniques are restricted only by the boundaries of creative ideation. One reason the Serbian student movement *Otpor* was so successful, and one of the reasons the U.S. Department of State agreed to support it, was the group's bold and innovative approach. The young activists' campaign made use of humor, satire, and ridicule to expose the corruption of the Milosevic regime and diminish the people's fear of it.²⁹ When the regime

tried to portray the young nonviolent activists—many of them still in their teens—as terrorists, few were impressed.

Culmination

Only efficient and thorough planning for an end state can ensure the lasting success of a resistance campaign, whether nonviolent civil resistance or armed insurgency. Ideally, the overthrow of a dictator will be followed by the installation of a parliamentary democracy, as was the case with the anti-Milosevic resistance in October 2000. A failure to prepare for success often results in a takeover of the government by the military, as happened when Egyptian Defense Minister Abdel el-Sisi took power in a coup that ended the brief but ineffective presidency of democratically elected Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. As one U.S. ambassador who has been involved in the overthrow of three dictators told this author, “democracy does not instantly emerge from the downfall of dictators. The fact is that the culture and history of the country is far more difficult to change. Bringing down a dictator is probably actually an easier step than truly changing the society that brought him to power. It is a first step with many difficult ones yet to follow.”³⁰

Civil Resistance and Subversion

Subversion can be just as effective as an element of nonviolent civil resistance as it is as a component of armed insurgency. In civil resistance, the primary subversive goal is to cause members of the regime’s military or security forces to defect, or to switch their allegiance from the government to the resistance. Although advocates of nonviolent civil resistance avoid using the term subversion, that is what it amounts to. In their landmark study on civil resistance, Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth found that “defections more than quadruple the chances of campaign success”³¹ of a civil resistance movement.

An effective subversion line of effort can include activities designed to exploit the inevitable political, ethnic, religious, or ideological fault lines that lie within all societies and governments. It can result in a weakening of the regime’s influence over government, military, or civil population groups by undermining a leader’s credibility and legitimacy. The regime’s ideology or policies can be discredited by countering government propaganda and

accentuating the regime's faults and weaknesses. Government propaganda messages can be hijacked and modified to make them less appealing to target audiences. Selected factions or splinter groups within the government can be influenced through persuasion, inducement, or coercion to act in ways that cause or amplify dissension within the regime's elite or within the ranks of the military and police.

While officers of general and flag rank have sided with civil resistance movements against corrupt regimes, the senior ranks often become patrons of the regime, with their loyalty bought by the granting of favors, promotions, or lucrative business arrangements. This ensures that these senior leaders have a staunch interest in keeping the current regime in power. On the other hand, field-grade and company-grade officers, along with members of the enlisted ranks, are more likely to view themselves as servants of the people and will share many of the same grievances as the civilian population. This can make them more susceptible to being influenced to switch allegiance to the resistance.

There are many examples of large-scale defections in civil resistance literature to illustrate the power of the phenomenon as described by Stephan and Chenoweth. It should be pointed out that use of the term 'defection' here is not meant to characterize the action of military and security forces joining the resistance as going over to the side of the enemy—the people are not the enemy. It is instead intended to describe an act of disaffiliation with a corrupt or illegitimate regime.

The nonviolent People Power movement in the Philippines during the 1980s received support by senior army officers and their followers that proved decisive in the overthrow of the eminently corrupt President Ferdinand Marcos. In 1986, President Marcos clearly stole an election from challenger Corazón Aquino. When two general officers shifted their allegiance to Aquino, two battalions of soldiers followed the generals as they barricaded themselves at military bases near Manila. President Marcos sent armored forces and other troops to attack the deserters, but the army forces soon backed down in the face of large crowds of unarmed civilians. When ordered to strafe the army camps, fighter pilots refused to do so for fear of inflicting casualties on the civilians. These actions by a small element of the armed forces triggered large-scale defections throughout the military, forcing President and Mrs. Marcos to flee the country within three days.³²

Demonstrations in the streets of Prague and other cities marked the beginning of Czechoslovakia's 'Velvet Revolution' on 19 November 1989. The police initially complied with orders to use force in quelling the uprising, but by the second day, as the crowds of protesters grew, the police backed off and refused to take further action. Both the army and the 20,000-man state security force known as the People's Militia refused to follow orders to attack the demonstrators. Forty-one years of communist rule ended when the party leadership resigned in early December.³³

During Romania's December 1989 revolution, security forces initially followed the orders of dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu to use force in countering protesters, but the army soon mutinied and joined the resistance. In protecting the protesters, army forces battled the government's feared state security police, which remained loyal to the regime. The regime collapsed within a week and Ceaucescu was apprehended and killed.³⁴

Just as in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Romania, security forces in the former republic of Yugoslavia initially used violence in repressing demonstrators in Serbia's 2000 'Bulldozer Revolution.' But senior military and police leaders who had become disillusioned with the policies of President Slobodan Milosevic soon began secretly meeting with opposition leaders. These leaders negotiated, via back-channel communications, with leaders of the Otpor student-led civil resistance movement and with a political opposition coalition. These resistance groups coordinated a nationwide march on the nation's capital by hundreds of thousands of citizens who knew that security forces would disregard orders to use violence in repressing them. The president resigned within 24 hours and was apprehended as a war criminal for human rights abuses conducted during the Kosovo War.³⁵

During Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' of 2003, which sought the overthrow of President Eduard Shevardnadze, some elite military forces joined the opposition within the first month. They were soon joined by high-ranking government officials, and Shevardnadze soon resigned.³⁶

In another example of high-ranking government officials defecting, the Parliament and Supreme Court of Ukraine joined the resistance during that country's 'Orange Revolution' in 2004. Backing demonstrators who sought the ouster of fraudulently elected presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich, senior military officers disobeyed orders to attack protesters, and Yanukovich was forced out.³⁷

Protesters in Lebanon's 'Cedar Revolution' of March 2005 demanded the departure of Syrian troops and an end to their 29-year occupation of Lebanon. The Lebanese Army ignored orders to use force in halting the mass demonstrations, and Syria withdrew its troops within a month.

More recently, longtime Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted by an immense civil resistance movement in January 2011, initiating what came to be called the Arab Spring. Tunisia's military leader, General Rachid Ammar, supported the resistance from its earliest days, ignoring orders to forcefully repress the protests. "Our revolution is your revolution," General Ammar reportedly declared to a crowd of demonstrators. "The army," he continued, "will protect the revolution."³⁸ The Egyptian army followed suit later that same month, opting to stand aside and await the outcome of the civil uprising in that country.

These examples illustrate the effectiveness of actions to encourage defection of military and security forces and coopting or neutralizing key civilian leaders, upsetting important power relationships. Such efforts result in disaggregation of the regime, weakening its pillars of support until the regime collapses. This dynamic is already appearing to some extent in Venezuela, where National Guard forces have proven themselves incapable of controlling protest mobs and the regular military is reluctant to use force against their fellow citizens, sometimes going so far as to declare their support for the opposition movement.³⁹

Members of the security forces and the military, while servants of the regime, also remain active members of a community with concern for the safety and well-being of family, friends, and neighbors. Colonel Helvey, who played an active role in supporting the Serbian resistance in 2000, has written of the importance of communicating the message to the police and the military that they are not viewed as the enemy, that they are not in danger, and that they will be needed in their current positions under a new government. Moreover, Helvey stresses the importance of planning such actions to subvert the regime well before the regime decides to employ the security and military forces against protesters.⁴⁰

Civil Resistance with Peacebuilding

There has been at least one occasion when a strategy combining civil resistance with peacebuilding was used successfully. It came at the end of

a ten-year civil war in Nepal in 2006. The conflict that resulted in 17,000 casualties was brought to a close when the Maoist insurgents successfully negotiated an agreement with political parties to carry out a campaign of civil resistance aimed at overthrowing the King. In the end, the civil resistance campaign and a follow-on peacebuilding effort succeeded where the armed conflict had failed.⁴¹

Civil Resistance with Armed Resistance

As mentioned in the Introduction to this monograph, the occupied countries of Scandinavia and the Netherlands executed a blended violent-nonviolent strategy against the German occupiers during the Second World War. Armed elements of the Danish and Norwegian resistance, supported by the British Special Operations Executive and the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, conducted a sustained campaign of sabotage in support of objectives laid down by the Allied high command. Meanwhile, nonviolent elements of the resistance effectively engaged in civil resistance activities, one example of which was the already mentioned widespread and sustained ostracism of German soldiers.

In the Netherlands, workers used civil resistance methods to express their disapproval of the treatment of Jews by occupation forces and of German attempts to acquire Dutch laborers to be sent to work in Germany. In February 1941, some 2,200 workers staged a strike that, although modest in scale, frightened occupation authorities and convinced them to rescind their demand for laborers. Ten days later, all streetcar workers and personnel of the sanitary and public works departments went on strike; they were followed by workers in industry and private businesses. By mid-day, offices and factories throughout Amsterdam were deserted as strikers gathered at a square in the old town area. The city had come to a standstill. Dutch police attempted to persuade the workers to disperse. German occupation forces, taken completely by surprise, soon arrived and fired over the heads of the strikers. As news of the strike spread, similar uprisings occurred throughout the country. By the time the strike was brought to a close, the Germans had gained a new respect for power of the unarmed Dutch people and the citizens had learned what could be accomplished through courage and unity. In September 1944, when the Dutch government-in-exile in London called for

a general strike in support of the Allied Market-Garden operation to seize a crossing over the Rhine in Arnhem, the people did not hesitate to comply.⁴²

The strike weapon was used effectively in other countries, as well. In August 1942, factory workers, miners, foundry workers, and shopkeepers in Luxembourg walked off the job to protest a German attempt to annex the country. Teachers and schoolchildren vacated schools and life in Luxembourg essentially came to a standstill. Occupation authorities responded with arrests and trials and the declaration of a state of emergency. But in the end, the Germans conceded and abandoned their vision of annexation.⁴³

As strikes became more widespread as a tool of civil resistance, German authorities often responded with fierce reprisals, but they found themselves unable to put an end to them. In Norway, strikers included schoolteachers and social organizations. In June 1944, 10,000 Danish shipyard workers walked off the job. An attempt by the Germans to break the strike by shooting eight hostages only resulted in calls for a nationwide total strike. Copenhagen was the scene of a total work stoppage on 30 June. By the eighth day the strike had spread to 20 provincial towns, and the Germans finally agreed to meet all of the strikers' demands.⁴⁴

The following chapter will describe the strategies followed by authoritarian regimes to prevent the occurrence of civil resistance and to deal with it in a timely manner when it does surface.

3. The State: Prevention and Oppression

Today oppression is fashionable again; the security state is back, and fundamental freedoms are in retreat in every region of the world.⁴⁵ - Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein

Authoritarianism is on the rise around the world, with states coming under the control of populist strongmen, one-party regimes, or military juntas. With this upsurge in authoritarian and even autocratic forms of government, several writers have signaled a global decline in democracy.⁴⁶ In what appears to be a growing 21st-century phenomenon, populist leaders are coming to power through democratic elections and are then dismantling the pillars of democracy and moving in the direction of autocracy. Major national news and current affairs magazines—*Foreign Affairs*, *Time*, and *The Atlantic*—have recently devoted cover stories or entire issues to this trend.⁴⁷ These articles identify several characteristics common to these newly emerging authoritarian regimes. Among them are purges disguised as corruption crackdowns or counter-drug campaigns, “polarization, conspiracy theories, attacks on the free press,” and “an obsession with loyalty.”⁴⁸ This chapter outlines strategies and methods these regimes follow to counter what they view as the internal threat.

Once he or she has gained power, the autocrat’s paramount challenge is to hold onto it, to ensure the survival of the regime. This is accomplished through well-established techniques such as the marginalization, detainment, or even murder of political rivals; vote tampering and falsification of election results to portray landslide victories; the emplacement of exorbitant controls on the legislative and judicial branches of government, thus eliminating checks on power and accountability; the stifling of all forms of protest or gatherings for political purposes; the intimidation and control of the media; and the quelling of freedom of expression. Added to these methods are newer measures such as the curtailment or blocking of internet access and the use of AI-enhanced technologies to more effectively monitor and control populations. The cumulative effect, in country after country, has been characterized as “a slow and steady approach to dismantling democracy.”⁴⁹

Populist strongmen sometimes conceive imaginative ways of retaining power. Russian President Vladimir V. Putin has described the Soviet Union's collapse as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."⁵⁰ Once in power, he began taking steps "to ensure that the ruling elite would never again risk losing power."⁵¹ He became acting president upon the resignation of Boris Yeltsin on 31 December 1999, was elected to the position three months later, and has adroitly found ways to remain in power for much of the past two decades. He handily won reelection in 2004 but, when constitutionally barred from a third term in 2008, was succeeded by First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, a close associate. In what was viewed by many as a power-switching strategy allowing Putin to maintain political dominance, newly elected President Medvedev appointed Putin prime minister the day following his election. After serving one term as prime minister, side-stepping the presidential term limit, Putin successfully regained the presidency in 2012. Throughout this period, according to most accounts, President Putin maintained a high approval rating among the Russian people. "Russia is an autocracy," wrote historian and political analyst Dmitri Trenin, "but it is an autocracy with the consent of the governed."⁵²

It is not at all unusual for autocrats such as President Putin to maintain popularity with the people, at least until conditions within the country become so burdensome on the population that the people begin to associate the country's problems with the leader. Even dictatorial leaders have been popular for a time, including Adolph Hitler in Nazi Germany and the Ayatollah Khomeini in revolutionary Iran.

Other regimes have taken a more blatant and direct approach to remaining in power. In October 2017 the Chinese Communist Party convened to award President Xi Jinping a second five-year term. Four months later, on 25 February 2018, the Beijing government announced the removal of term limits for the country's leader, opening the way for President Xi to remain in power for a third term and essentially enabling him to become president for life.⁵³ As in the case of Putin, Xi has remained popular with the people of China throughout this period. One Western reporter indicated at the time that President Xi enjoyed a higher than 80 percent approval rating.⁵⁴ But Xi's crackdown on free speech and pro-democracy movements, blocking of access to much of the internet, and media censorship makes it difficult to accurately gauge his popularity. Political scientists in the United States expressed concern over the direction China's government was taking,

believing that an authoritarian state will be unable or unwilling to meet the growing demands for free expression and other freedoms sought by the Chinese people. “Authoritarian governments,” one writer observed, “are, by definition, unaccountable.”⁵⁵

Venezuela’s government has become increasingly autocratic, with the country’s Supreme Court, loyal to President Nicolás Maduro, dissolving the opposition-dominated legislature on 29 March 2017. The result, according to one account, is a clear move from authoritarianism to “outright dictatorship.”⁵⁶

After 15 years in power, Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan joined the growing ranks of authoritarians by taking steps to broaden his powers after reelection in June 2018. President Erdogan has implemented several lengthy decrees vastly changing how the country’s government works, bringing more of it under his direct control and providing him with “the ability to exert control in nearly all areas of life with almost unchecked authority.”⁵⁷ He has abolished the office of the prime minister, gained greater control over the military, and now has far-reaching authority in the appointment of key leaders and bureaucrats in all branches of government, as well as banking and academia. None of these appointments requires confirmation, and the president can dismiss Parliament and call for elections at any time.⁵⁸

Even in relatively obscure Guatemala, President Jimmy Morales took steps in September 2018 to shut down the Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, an anti-corruption investigating committee, when it began looking into his own affairs. One report described the president’s intervention as “a backward slide into authoritarianism.”⁵⁹

Patronage Systems and Buying Loyalty

One powerful technique autocrats use to retain power is through a system of patronage, the appointment of political supporters to key positions and the maintenance of their loyalty through the granting of political favors or lucrative business arrangements. Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro assumed the office from socialist Hugo Chávez in 2013. Whereas his predecessor was popular—he served three terms as president through elections that were judged by the Organization of American States (OAS) to be free and legitimate—President Maduro is “deeply unpopular.”⁶⁰ In order to remain in power, he has had to resort to patronage to maintain the loyalty of political

elites and the military. Senior officers have been given control of the gold mining industry, as well as lucrative drug trafficking and food distribution enterprises, the latter opening the door to a profitable black market. An August 2017 *New York Times* article detailed the extent of this patronage system within the senior ranks of the military.

In a single day Mr. Maduro promoted 195 officers to the rank of general. Venezuelan generals, more than 2,000 strong, enjoy a range of privileges, from lucrative control of the food supply to favorable rates for exchanging dollars. Eleven of the 23 state governors in Venezuela are current or retired generals, along with 11 heads of the 30 ministries, giving them an extraordinary stake in preserving the government's control over the country. And the defense minister, Vladimir Padrino López, an army general, has been granted an even more lucrative arrangement, with expanded powers to control the country's ports, as well as parts of the oil and mining industries.⁶¹

According to political scientist John Polga-Hecimovich of the U.S. Naval Academy, Maduro is “completely dependent on them to stay in power; they have much to lose if he is gone.”⁶² Officers and soldiers at lower levels, however, are much closer to the economic problems and social issues that the average citizen faces and are more apt to question government policy. Military pay has been increased to a level well above that of civilian workers, but it has not kept up with inflation.

Controlling the Military

In a process that has come to be called ‘coup-proofing,’ many regimes organize their security forces and intelligence institutions in such a way as to prevent any one element from dominating the others and thus threatening the security of the regime.⁶³ It is a practice with a long history and one that Adolf Hitler used skillfully to remain in power from 1933 to 1945. In creating military and security organizations that must compete with one another in order to survive, the process makes it much more difficult for any group of officers to organize and carry out a coup d’état. A typical practice is to create an elite paramilitary organization composed of unquestionably loyal officers and troops—Hitler’s *Schutzstaffel* (SS) being the definitive example—to diminish the power of the regular military services and to closely monitor

their activities. Such organizations usually reside outside the normal military chain of command, reporting directly to the regime. They benefit from more technologically advanced equipment and typically include the country's special forces.⁶⁴

In Iran this parallel paramilitary organization is the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Special internal policing and intelligence units add to the regime's security by infiltrating opposition groups and monitoring suspected resistance leaders. In North Korea, the feared *Bowibu* performs much the same function.⁶⁵ In early January 2017, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro established an 'anticoup squad' under the direction of Vice President Tareck El Aissami. The unit's purpose is to confront anyone conducting crimes against the state.⁶⁶

Purges are another tool of the tyrant for gaining control of the military and was effectively used by both Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and Germany's Adolf Hitler. The practice still exists today, though not in such a brutal a manner as was employed by Stalin and Hitler. Turkish President Erdogan appointed new military leaders on 2 August 2017 after a government purge of officers and civil servants who had been suspected of taking part in a 2016 military coup attempt. Ergodan, declaring a state of emergency, also resorted to other methods of increasing his control over the Turkish armed forces.⁶⁷

Under a 2018 decree placing the military more firmly under his control, President Erdogan appointed as his first defense minister a former army chief of staff, loyalist General Hulusi Akar. General Akar had been placed under arrest by the group of rogue officers who attempted the 2016 coup, and it was he who oversaw the extensive purge within the armed forces since then. The same decree grants the president the authority to appoint, without confirmation, the chief of staff of the armed forces, as well as his deputy, along with senior commanders of all services. Furthermore, he makes all colonel and general officer promotions within the Turkish armed forces.⁶⁸

Eliminating Political Competition

Several authoritarian leaders throughout history have taken extreme measures to marginalize political competitors or to dispose of them altogether. A common tactic today is for a regime to eliminate political competition by running an aggressive anti-corruption or anti-drug campaign, under the guise of which they can have their potential rivals arrested and imprisoned.

This technique has been a favorite of China's President Xi Jinping and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who one writer characterized as "more like a mob boss than a president."⁶⁹ But even more extreme methods are not uncommon. According to one recent source, at least three dozen notable political opponents of Russian President Vladimir Putin have died under mysterious circumstances over a three-year period ending in 2017. Causes of these deaths have ranged from falls down elevator shafts to gunshots and even radio-active poisoning.⁷⁰ North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has conducted purges of North Korea's elites, including the execution of an uncle and the murder of a brother.⁷¹

Internet Control and Media Censorship

Authoritarians also use the control of information to retain power. Internet controls and media censorship are very effective methods for silencing dissent, controlling what information reaches the public, and inhibiting the efforts of groups forming and operating with the intent of undermining the government. The blocking of virtual private networks (VPNs) and encrypted messaging apps is "robbing dissidents of the ability to organize confidentially."⁷²

In November 2016 the Russian government took steps to increase its control of internet use in the country, adding LinkedIn to Google and Facebook as American social media companies banned from the country.⁷³ Mirroring a step taken by Iran's government, the Kremlin in May 2018 moved to block usage of the hugely popular instant-messaging app Telegram—which employs end-to-end encryption to allow its 200 million users to evade governmental scrutiny—for reasons of national security. Government attempts to block the app have resulted in protest demonstrations in Moscow.⁷⁴ The Kremlin also blacklists websites and increasingly monitors internet traffic, although the Russian government exercises nowhere near the internet controls that Beijing does.⁷⁵

China's internet control system, commonly referred to as the Great Firewall, continues to grow in effectiveness and pervasiveness as internet censorship efforts have greatly expanded under President Xi Jinping. On 8 November 2016 Beijing's Parliament approved measures to increase government controls over the internet, including mandatory storage of data in-country.⁷⁶ Four months later, VPNs, used by many Chinese to avoid

government censorship, were blocked by telecommunications companies on orders from Beijing. The government also directed that all websites featuring discussions on history, the military, and foreign affairs be shut down.⁷⁷ As a result, over 3,000 websites were closed down in the first half of 2018 alone.⁷⁸ The combined objective of these internet restrictions, in the words of Adam Segal, is “to stymie political mobilization and prevent the flow of information that could undermine the regime.”⁷⁹

Other countries also place severe restrictions on use of the internet and social media. Turkey, for example, has reportedly imprisoned citizens for a single re-tweet.⁸⁰ As part of a crackdown following a failed coup attempt in 2016, the Erdogan regime pressured Facebook into removing some of its content, while Wikipedia opted to leave the country to avoid similar action.⁸¹ The Egyptian government drafted legislation imposing harsh restrictions on social media that drew criticism from Amnesty International. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi ratified the law, intended to crack down on fake news, on 1 September 2018.⁸² In North Korea, severe restrictions on the use of the internet are in place, resulting in only 80,000 citizens out of a population of over 25 million having access.⁸³

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Government efforts to control information also extend to print and broadcast media. Censorship guidelines from the Xi government in Beijing, as of March 2018, arrive at publishing houses direct from the propaganda authorities, but they are not revealed to the public.⁸⁴ Sensitive about reports on China’s receding economy, the government sent journalists a directive on 28 September 2018 listing six economic topics that would henceforth be closely controlled by Beijing.⁸⁵ In Russia, the Kremlin has brought television stations back under state control in a return to policies of Soviet days.⁸⁶ The government of Iran, too, places strict controls on the media. Tehran continually monitors the media, in all its forms, and closely regulates its content.⁸⁷ Democracy seemed to be disintegrating in Kenya in early February 2018 when the government of President Uhuru Kenyatta closed television stations, threatened to jail journalists, and arrested opposition politicians.⁸⁸ Following the failed coup attempt against President Erdogan in 2016, the Turkish government stifled the media by closing around 150 television stations and other news outlets.⁸⁹

Population Monitoring and Control

Regimes also survive by keeping their populations under control and monitoring their activity. Technology has proven helpful in accomplishing this. Social media, which played such a critical role in organizing resistance in the Arab Spring movements, has become a tool of the state. Like the internet itself, it is now part of an increasingly sophisticated surveillance and control mechanism. Countries such as Russia, China, North Korea, and

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Iran have well-developed internal security and domestic intelligence capabilities, often including long-established and effective informant networks. Beijing relies on a vast network of ‘security volunteers’ or ‘security informants’ that employs everything from apartment building managers to taxi drivers to street peddlers. “One Beijing neighborhood,” according to one source, “reportedly boasts 2,400 ‘building unit leaders’ who can note any irregularity in minutes, with the going rate for pieces of information set at two yuan (about 30 cents). This system tracks criminal and terrorist threats along with political troublemakers, but dissenters are certainly among its prime targets.”⁹⁰

Other emerging methods, such as mass-surveillance systems enabled by AI technology, provide new tools to help those in power stay in power. Technology applications that enhance surveillance of a country’s population and its activities make centralized authority much more effective. Some of the most promising advanced surveillance systems rely on the accumulation of mass data on the movements and activities of people made possible by the use of monitors and cameras capable of face and gait recognition.⁹¹ Other technologies transform cell phones and computers into listening devices capable of locating people and monitoring their phone and email traffic. The hiring of computer programmers or the purchase of commercial spyware is now affordable to even poor governments.⁹²

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China has been making extensive use of advanced technology mixed with old-fashioned internment camp methods. Places such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, and the far western province of Xinjiang have been put on notice by President Xi, who has championed a strongly nationalist message. Promoting the ‘One China’ principle, the president proclaimed in March 2018 that

“not one inch of the territory of the great motherland can be carved off from China.”⁹³

The Chinese government is implementing a sophisticated and widespread surveillance system employing cameras and a variety of sensors to monitor and track the movements and activities of its citizens. The system is initially being installed and put into use in troubled Xinjiang Province to focus on the area’s large Muslim Uighur population, but eventual deployment nationwide is expected.⁹⁴ While advances in technology have catapulted globalization and become a means of spreading the concepts of democracy and freedom, Beijing has reversed their capabilities to contribute to greater control over the country’s population. A vast national surveillance system employs some 200 million surveillance cameras, enhanced by the latest AI and facial, clothing, and gait recognition technologies to track everything from heroin smugglers to petty criminals. AI-enhanced cameras monitor people on the streets, at train stations and airports, gatherings at special events, and even in hallways and common areas of office buildings. Automobiles, too, can be tracked. The number of cameras is expected to grow to 300 million by 2020. Facial images and names of jaywalkers and people unable to pay their debts are publicly shown on billboard-size screens. Facial recognition technology is even being built into experimental eyeglasses to be worn by police officers. Regardless of how effective such efforts are, the knowledge or even the perception of their widespread use tends to keep citizens in line. One expert has described China’s system as a revolutionary method of controlling all aspects of society, providing nothing less than “algorithmic governance.”⁹⁵

Personal communications and internet usage within China are also tracked. The government is making every effort to exploit AI capabilities to mine social media traffic in such a way as to not only discover but to actually predict the development of political movements.⁹⁶

Beijing has even instituted a system of social credits, which function in a manner somewhat similar to financial credit scores to provide a measurement of a citizen’s trustworthiness and loyalty to the state. Gleaning personal information from several sources to assess and track a person’s behavior, moral character, and loyalty to the regime, the system results in a score that is used in determining an individual’s eligibility for housing, education, or employment opportunities.⁹⁷ The evolving social credit system generates a trustworthiness score, based on 12 core socialist values, that is the latest step in gaining complete control over the lives of the Chinese people. Any form

of religious practice not approved by the state, for example, can result in a negative credit assessment. Beijing plans to have the system in operation nationwide by 2020.⁹⁸

Protest Restrictions and Crackdowns

As early as 1919, German sociologist Max Weber wrote of a state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force and how a regime can use that advantage to compel loyalty and compliance from its citizens. Authoritarian governments have shown no reluctance to using that force in cracking down on protests and other forms of organized dissent, and they are not ignorant of civil resistance methods. In fact, they have been going to school on civil resistance for several years, seeking all available material on the subject to aid them in developing countermeasures and in learning how to undermine such movements. In 2007, for example, the Iranian Ministry of Information ordered

Authoritarian governments ... have been going to school on civil resistance for several years

the entire collection of monographs and other writings on the subject of nonviolent revolution published by the organization founded by the late Gene Sharp, the Albert Einstein Institution in Boston.⁹⁹

The determination to employ force, and how much force to use, is a tough decision for governments because of the potential for backlash. But authoritarian regimes learned a lesson from the 1989 crackdown by the Chinese government on protesters in Beijing and other cities and by the response of the Iranian government to the 2009 Green Movement demonstrations. In both cases, the governments succeeded in quashing these movements through swift and violent measures. Both episodes met with immediate international condemnation, but media accounts were soon pushed aside for other breaking news stories. Some current leaders are adopting similar approaches.

After Russian President Putin's reelection in 2012, the gloves came off as the Kremlin rescinded its policy of tolerance toward political demonstrations and instituted an aggressive crackdown. Since that time, in the words of one author, "the Kremlin has grown increasingly intolerant of political and civic activism."¹⁰⁰ What began as a peaceful protest on 6 May of that year, the day before the inauguration, ended with a harsh police response that culminated in many arrests. Of those detained, around 30 received prison sentences of

several years. Outside the courthouse, sympathizers who assembled to protest the trials were themselves beaten and detained. This continued to be the pattern for police handling of unsanctioned protests for years to come. The government also launched an information campaign against the anti-Putin protesters, describing them as “pro-Western, unpatriotic, and immoral.”¹⁰¹ The Kremlin continues to discourage dissent largely through tactics of intimidation and by fostering the belief among the population that opposition to the government is “not just dangerous but also pointless.”¹⁰²

China was the site of one of the harshest crackdowns in recent history, the brutal crushing of the 1989 student pro-democracy movement previously mentioned. Unlike other civil resistance experiences, where the government’s security and military forces often tended to shift allegiance from the government to the resistance, the response from forces of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to the 1989 movement was swift, fierce, and deadly. While the Beijing government did its best to present a less severe picture of what happened to the outside world, first-hand accounts described the army’s use of tanks, the firing of live ammunition, and the fact that hundreds of citizens and soldiers were killed in early June 1989.¹⁰³ Voice of America reported that a total of as many as 3,000 people were killed and another 10,000 wounded by PLA soldiers in crushing the movement.¹⁰⁴

Having witnessed the growing strength and power of the Solidarity movement in Poland, as well as the People Power movement in the Philippines, the government of Deng Xiao-ping saw the student movement as a possible catalyst for much more widespread unrest that would threaten the very survival of the Communist Party. The initial group of student dissidents quickly grew into a mass movement that included workers, members of the media, intellectuals, and many residents of Beijing.¹⁰⁵ Student unrest itself was not the main concern. It was the spread of the movement to the working class members of Chinese society that deeply troubled the regime. “While the students were the spark,” as one writer explained, “it was the workers social power that immediately threatened Chinese leaders’ grip on the society.”¹⁰⁶

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Silencing Critics

Several governments routinely take action to silence critical journalists and activists. Methods range from intimidation to murder. The government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has proven itself extremely competent at silencing human rights activists and dissenters. According to a 2016 *New York Times* article, over a five-year period UAE human rights activist Ahmed Mansoor “has been jailed and fired from his job, along with having his passport confiscated, his car stolen, his email hacked, his location tracked, and his bank account robbed of \$140,000. He has also been beaten, twice, in the same week.”¹⁰⁷

In the Philippines, President Duterte’s war on drugs has reportedly expanded to encompass critics and political rivals, with the president instructing the police in August 2017, “If they are obstructing justice, you shoot them.”¹⁰⁸ Filipino journalists have long been a target of government enforcers with the National Union of Journalists estimating that 177 reporters and other media workers have lost their lives since 1986.¹⁰⁹

The Iranian government has been successful in keeping critics in check by threatening or using violence, torture, and imprisonment.¹¹⁰ Following the 2016 coup attempt against President Erdogan, the Turkish government jailed 120 journalists and charged another 3,000 citizens with the crime of insulting the president.¹¹¹ Most recently, the Saudi government has been implicated in the brutal murder and dismemberment of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey.

Election Fraud

Incumbent regimes, sometimes as an act of desperation, resort to election fraud to maintain their grasp on power. Tactics include stuffing ballot boxes, declaring a competing candidate ineligible, banning political parties from participating, and gerrymandering. Such practices can be highly risky, resulting in civil resistance, violent uprisings, and censure and isolation by the international community. Purloined elections were a key causal factor in the 1986 People’s Power Movement that ousted Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, the overthrow of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, and the Green Movement protests in Iran in 2009. Referendums are often used by leaders as a means of further expanding their powers.

Intimidation and Manipulation

Finally, an effective method that several regimes have relied on is the creation and sustainment of a climate of fear, intimidation, apathy, indifference, disorientation, submission, and total resignation to a life without hope of change. Authoritarian governments may create or exacerbate existing ethnic, political, religious, or economic divisions among the population and exploit those rifts to strengthen their supremacy. When necessary, regimes can provoke violence to justify harsher repressive measures. In Venezuela, a failed assassination attempt on President Maduro in early August 2018 provided an excuse to further increase repressive security measures.¹¹²

The Kim regime in Pyongyang survives by the uninhibited use of collective punishment and internment camps and through ubiquitous fear and repression and the cultivation of a ‘cult of personality’ around the Kim family.¹¹³ In the words of an author who succeeded in escaping and making her way to South Korea, “Ideological brainwashing happens on a daily basis, throughout the day, and has been happening for generations.”¹¹⁴ Many would not escape if given the opportunity for fear of endangering their families left behind.

Governments continue to seek ways of nipping organized resistance in the bud. Authorities in Venezuela strive to crush protests while they are still in the planning stages to avoid the outbreak of unrest they experienced in 2017.¹¹⁵ Myanmar, or Burma, has an approach that has proven effective. Retired U.S. Army Colonel Robert Helvey, associated with Gene Sharp’s Albert Einstein Institution, described the approach taken by authorities in that country in dealing with civil resistance movements in 1962, 1974, and 1988. “The military sits back and watches, identifies leadership at every level, and then they swoop in a 2:00 am, arrest the leaders—and the next day they crack down. So you’ve got all these people wandering around and the leadership’s gone.”¹¹⁶

In addition to monitoring the development or existence of dissident elements within its territory, an oppressive regime will also seek to uncover any support being provided to the activists by outside powers, the subject of the next chapter.

Authorities in Venezuela strive to crush protests while they are still in the planning stages to avoid the outbreak of unrest they experienced in 2017.

4. External Support to Civil Resistance

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. - Bishop Desmond Tutu

Civil resistance requires resources. Funds are needed to procure the services of lawyers to represent detained activists, to bribe government or security force officials, and to support the families of activists. Radios, cell phones, and computers are required for communications, as is assistance in gaining access to the internet and circumventing government efforts to block such access. Printers, copiers, and printing presses are needed produce and distribute information. First aid and further medical care might be needed for activists who are beaten during protests. Protesters and other members of the resistance may require food and water supplies. Finally, some form of training is usually required for a movement's members. Just as with armed insurgencies, civil resistance movements can benefit from external support to address these requirements.

Providing such support can offer an outside power the opportunity to leverage a social movement within a foreign country to protect its interests. Support is extended for very much opportunistic reasons—as a means of coercing a hostile government to take some action or change some policy, disrupting the activities of an adversarial regime, or enabling the overthrow of a hostile regime or forcing the withdrawal of an occupying power. These support efforts can be conducted overtly, with no attempt to hide the program, or planned and executed in a way that conceals the identity of the sponsoring government.

Legal Provisions

On the surface, the provision of such external support to civil resistance movements clearly violates a state's territorial integrity and undermines its sovereignty, thus impinging on the internal affairs of that state. But international law recognizes that conditions in a country can justify and even sanction such action. Sovereignty, according to many experts in international law, comes with certain obligations and responsibilities. One of the most important of these is the protection and promotion of human rights

and fundamental freedoms. According to Richard Haass, recognition of a state's right or even obligation to intervene in another country for reasons of human rights protection "reflects the emergence of a new perspective about the inviolability of state sovereignty."¹¹⁷ This concept was upheld by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.¹¹⁸

International law further extends this concept to include intervention for the purposes of protecting an oppressed population's right to self-determination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in December 1948, sees free and fair elections as the principal consideration in the establishment of a government's authority and legitimacy.¹¹⁹ This right of self-determination has been recognized by the International Court of Justice and is codified in Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1976.¹²⁰

Risks

Supporting a civil resistance movement entails political and personal risk to the beneficiary state. Political risk includes the danger of escalation or the possibility of criticism by the international community. There is personal risk to those individuals meeting with resistance elements within the country where the movement is operating or to American Embassy or Consulate staff and their families within that country. There can also be a risk to the civil resistance movement itself. Receiving support from a foreign country can cause the movement to lose some degree of authenticity and legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Threatened regimes commonly capitalize on these situations by declaring that the movement is the paid puppet of a foreign power.

Forms of Support

An outside power might provide support to a civil resistance movement via elements of the intelligence community, as is commonly the case in supporting armed insurgencies, but more likely will do so through its foreign affairs ministry. In the case of the United States, for example, the Department of State is well suited for the task because of the expert knowledge of a country's history and culture, political conditions, language skills, and current situational awareness that reside within the Foreign Service, and because of

the Department's network of influential contacts. The Department of State is also capable of coordinating and encouraging the cooperation of third-party states that might be needed as a base for support or simply for transit rights. In addition, the Department has invested heavily in the development of software that facilitates the circumvention of state internet control measures, the avoidance of censorship, and open access to the internet.¹²¹

Typically, civil resistance movements can benefit the most from externally provided funds. Material support can take the form of communications equipment, computers, printing presses, and supplies. Training might focus on the use of print and broadcast media equipment, how to most effectively organize the movement, and propaganda or narrative development. Other federal institutions such as the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) or NGOs can assist civil resistance movements by advising political candidates or opposition groups or training members to serve as election monitors to help prevent or uncover and document fraudulent elections.

In the case of U.S. support to a civil resistance effort, the economic instrument of national power might also be involved, indirectly supporting the movement by imposing economic incentives or disincentives to coerce the target government into making policy changes sought by the resistance or to discourage violent repression of the movement.

When a civil resistance movement results in regime change, governmental agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) might become involved in providing emergency humanitarian and civic assistance, working to improve health care and sanitation conditions and coordinating the provision of food and medical supplies. Humanitarian or other support might be provided or coordinated by an NGO, such as in the previously covered case of training provided to *Otpor* leaders by Colonel Helvey.¹²²

Intergovernmental organizations, or IGOs—the UN, NATO, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the OAS, and the African Union—can on occasion sanction the support of a civil resistance movement by other states.

Another area where significant support can be provided is in the conduct of influence operations. This can involve information campaigns to manipulate the adversary government's decision making and policy implementation. A primary target might be the regime's power base, the key individuals or groups that the regime relies on to maintain political control. This can

include political elites, key civic leaders, military and police officials, or anyone else involved in activities crucial to keeping a regime in power. One study identified five ways in which coercive influence can contribute to the erosion of a regime's power base: "threatening a regime's relationship with its core supporters; unrest—creating popular dissatisfaction with a regime; decapitation—jeopardizing a leadership's personal security; weakening—debilitating the country as a whole; and denial—preventing battlefield success (or political victories via military aggression)."¹²³

Another approach that has been effectively used is to conduct operations to influence the population at large or specific segments of the population with the purpose of heightening the level of unrest. Information operations can serve to inform the population of the true situation, countering the biased news broadcasts from the regime. An example of this was a 1999 NATO information operation known as "Ring Around Serbia." Intended to counter Slobodan Milosevic's state-controlled media, the operation employed a ring of FM transmitters allowing Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, and WorldNet to broadcast in the Serbian language from countries bordering Serbia. The use of as many as six transmitters broadcasting from different locations around Serbia minimized the effectiveness of efforts by the Belgrade government to jam the signals. The operation's objective was to wean public support from the Milosevic government and was later judged to have been instrumental in bringing about the eventual overthrow of the Serbian dictator.¹²⁴

U.S. Experience in Supporting Civil Resistance

Propaganda campaigns such as the one that met with such success in the former Yugoslavia can also be risky. During the 1950s, the policy of the Eisenhower administration was to roll back communism and to free the people of Eastern Europe. An aggressive propaganda campaign began with broadcasts by USG-funded Radio Free Europe. Despite Soviet jamming efforts, it was later estimated that as much as 80 percent of the Hungarian population listened regularly to broadcasts, which often almost openly encouraged revolt. Stirred in part by the American broadcasts, anti-government protests, demonstrations, and strikes began to take place—in East Berlin and Czechoslovakia in 1953 and in Poland in June 1956. Then, on 23 October 1956, the Hungarian uprising began—the first instance of a satellite

country openly revolting against the Soviet-backed Communist government. Stalin's statue was toppled and street fighting between revolutionaries and government troops spread throughout the capital of Budapest. On 4 November, the Soviet Army responded, surrounding the city with tanks and moving in to crush the revolt. The United States opted not to intervene—no troops were sent, no weapons, no financial aid. After 12 days, 2,500 revolutionaries and 700 Soviet troops had been killed. Some 26,000 Hungarian citizens had been arrested and 1,200 of those were executed.¹²⁵

The American radio broadcasts were toned down, but they continued. In March 1977, President Jimmy Carter requested that Congress fund an increase in the number of transmitters available to Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty to help overcome Soviet jamming efforts.¹²⁶ When the next major civil resistance challenge to the communist empire came in 1980 in the form of the Solidarity movement in Poland, the USG chose to support the movement.

Poland had experienced several protests and riots during the 1970s over wage cuts, rising food prices, and workers' rights. In August 1980, Lech Walesa led 17,000 shipyard workers on a strike over an increase in the price of meat. This marked the beginning of Solidarity, a movement that began as an organized labor union and grew into a nationwide civil resistance movement calling for political reform and improved living conditions.¹²⁷

President Carter's intelligence director, Admiral Stansfield Turner, sent the president an "Alert" memo on 19 September 1980 informing him that reports indicated that the Soviets were preparing to intervene militarily in Poland, just as they had in Hungary 24 years earlier. According to Director Turner, the Soviets viewed the Polish unrest and the potential for it to spill over into neighboring states to threaten the entire Soviet and East European communist system. Soviet leaders considered the Polish movement to be potentially contagious in that it had proven that such working-class movements could be effective in forcing concessions from a communist government. The threat might even spread to the Soviet Union itself.¹²⁸

In early December 1980, President Carter sent a Hotline message to Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, warning him that a Soviet invasion of Poland would result in "very grave consequences to U.S.-Soviet relations."¹²⁹ Communist authorities invoked martial law on 12 December 1981 and arrested Walesa along with thousands of other Solidarity members. The government also seized printing equipment used in the preparation of

pro-Solidarity propaganda. Because of the widespread beatings and jailing of citizens, Solidarity went underground.¹³⁰

The U.S. program to clandestinely support Solidarity from December 1981 to June 1989 had the objectives of promoting democratic reform in communist Poland and weakening the Soviet Union's control over its Warsaw Pact satellite states. Early in the administration of President Ronald Reagan, during a National Security Council (NSC) discussion on the U.S. paramilitary operation in support of the Mujahideen resistance against Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan, William Casey, representing the intelligence community, reportedly commented that the administration needed half a dozen Afghanistans. This concept of support to multiple anti-communist insurgencies and revolutions—an idea supported by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, National Security Adviser Richard Allen, and Secretary of State General Alexander Haig (U.S. Army, retired)—came to be called the Reagan Doctrine.¹³¹

Due to a lack of USG access into Poland, Washington worked through the Vatican, which was providing critically important information and contacts inside Poland by late January 1982.¹³² Support provided to Solidarity by the USG grew from \$2 million to \$8 million during the mid-1980s. Material support came in the form of copiers, printing equipment, fax machines, and other office equipment. With this, Solidarity was once again able to put its word out to the Polish people through the printing and distribution of leaflets and newspapers. The movement even established its own radio station and developed the capability to hijack the national Polish television network. Public broadcasting media such as the Voice of America provided a means of clandestinely communicating with Solidarity leaders through coded messages.¹³³

Solidarity won its struggle when the communists finally conceded to free elections in 1989. American aid to the Solidarity movement supported official U.S. policy for Eastern Europe, the goal of which was “to loosen the Soviet hold on the region and thereby facilitate its eventual reintegration into the European community of nations.”¹³⁴ The campaign to aid Solidarity in its fight for reforms and to undermine the oppressive oversight of the Polish government by the Soviet Union succeeded on both counts.

The end of the campaign, not by coincidence, coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Following Solidarity's victory, opposition to communism spread throughout Eastern Europe, with authoritarian governments

being overthrown in Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania by the end of 1989. Dissolution of the Warsaw Pact came in July 1991, and the Soviet Union completed its disintegration in December of that year.

The next USG experience in aiding nonviolent civil resistance came with an overt program, led by the Department of State, to support Serbian political opposition parties and a student-led organization called *Otpor* in the former Yugoslavia from March 1999 to October 2000. *Otpor*, the Serbian word for ‘resistance,’ began as a student movement but evolved into a nationwide grassroots movement by the fall of 2000. It organized large rallies, got its message out in the form of rock concerts, and effectively led the opposition in a strategy to oust Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic. When Milosevic attempted to steal an election in October 2000, *Otpor* organized a general strike and a march on the capital by tens of thousands of citizens from throughout the country. Crowds converged on the parliament building in Belgrade as the police stood by, refusing to follow orders to use force against the demonstrators. Lacking the backing of his security forces, Milosevic was forced to resign. Shortly after stepping down, Milosevic was taken into custody to be tried at The Hague on charges of war crimes stemming from the earlier Kosovo War. One U.S. State Department official later described *Otpor* as “the most effective element of the Serbian opposition.”¹³⁵

In the next chapter, current socio-political conditions within the four competitor states identified in the National Security Strategy are reviewed, along with a brief look at a few other countries where internal conditions could give rise to civil resistance.

5. Current Conditions and Prospects

Power is never so overwhelming that there's no room for resistance.

- Henry Giroux

A regime's political authority can be severely weakened under the strain of spiraling economic decline, widespread poverty, ethnic strife, demographic discord, and general unrest brought about by government mismanagement or oppression. Such unstable socioeconomic conditions can spawn grievances that have the potential to generate civil resistance. Internal disruption is not the only result; the conditions and the regime's approach to dealing with them can generate closer international scrutiny, criticism, and even isolation.

Authoritarian leaders enjoy largely unchecked power and those in illiberal democracies frequently use "the levers of democracy to vastly expand their authority."¹³⁶ Their authority is solidified through the implementation of population control measures and by chipping away at democratic programs and institutions. Populist strongmen are becoming today's most common authoritarians.

In the view of columnist Max Fisher, inflationary crises are particularly troublesome for the populist strongman form of authoritarian because of his relationship with the people. These leaders risk losing legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry for hardships that are often exacerbated by their own misdeeds—excessively printing money and otherwise mismanaging the economy. Political and military elites grow unhappy when patronage payouts become scarce. In Fisher's judgment, strongman regimes "are by far the likeliest form of government to collapse, more so than even the world's most oppressive states."¹³⁷

In estimating the level of civil unrest in a country and judging the degree to which such unrest poses a serious threat to the regime, it is helpful to remember that no non-democratic political entity ever has been permanent. A government becomes vulnerable to civil unrest, insurrection, or insurgency when the people view it as being indifferent and unresponsive in addressing grievances. The people lose faith in the government. The disgruntled or repressed begin to organize, begin to socialize their grievances

and their goals, and eventually resort to nonviolent civil resistance or armed insurgency when nothing else succeeds. The potency and potential effectiveness of a civil resistance movement depends to a great extent on its size—not only in terms of the total number of protesters, but also in terms of the number of cities in which it is active. Equally important are the duration, resilience, rate of growth and escalation, and apparent sustainability of the movement. Diversity in ethnic composition and causes can also be an important factor.

This section summarizes current internal political and socioeconomic conditions and levels of oppression in the four competitor states mentioned in the National Security Strategy and in other countries experiencing similar challenges. An assessment of the likelihood of significant civil resistance is included.

Russia

The regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin has faced occasional but limited civil unrest. Activists organized protests in 2004 when the president's reelection was uncontested due to an elimination of political competition, but the turnout was modest. Over the next four years 'Marches of the Discontented' were staged in Moscow and other cities, but these rarely drew more than a few hundred protesters. Putin was forced to step down in 2008 due to term limits, but he continued to wield power through his close associate and successor, Dmitry Medvedev.¹³⁸

During Medvedev's presidency, educated young professionals enjoyed greater freedom and prosperity, benefited from increased internet access, and adopted a Western lifestyle. They mostly ignored broadcasts by the government-controlled national television. Activism was on the rise by 2010, with causes ranging from protection of the environment to anticorruption. The Kremlin and Putin himself were often ridiculed on social media.¹³⁹

In 2011, election monitoring teams witnessed widespread fraud in local elections. The result was several mass protest rallies in Moscow and other large cities, which only grew in intensity when Putin announced his intention to seek another term as Russia's president. Protesters expressed growing disillusionment with Putin's "viselike grip on Russian politics."¹⁴⁰ Chants calling for a 'Russia without Putin!' however, proved to be an impotent slogan when the protesters had no alternative to offer.

By 2016, Putin had failed to fully reform the Russian economy as he had promised—mostly working-class Russians suffered the consequences—but by late 2017 there were indications that most citizens were enjoying a higher standard of living than in the past.¹⁴¹ It remains to be seen how average Russians will adjust their lives to meet the exigencies of a falling ruble and how their standard of living holds up under a struggling economy. The government can compound the problem by enacting burdensome policies such as those implemented in 2016 that include the propagation of several new fines and the introduction of severe penalties for participation in unauthorized rallies. President Putin appears to remain popular with most Russians, although public frustration could potentially increase with a politically catastrophic event or even sharper decline in the economy and standard of living. “It’s hard for a leader to preserve his charismatic authority,” observes one expert, “when his government turns into a glorified fine-collecting machine.”¹⁴²

On 12 June 2017, thousands of Russians in Moscow and more than 160 other cities—many of them young people—protested against corruption in “an extraordinary show of outrage.”¹⁴³ Once again, ‘Russia without Putin’ was a chant commonly heard among the crowds as protesters expressed disgust “at the gradual dismantling of democracy in Russia, and of any semblance of a real opposition.”¹⁴⁴ Police arrested more than 700 in Moscow and another 300 in St. Petersburg.¹⁴⁵ Among those detained was the protest’s organizer, a hopeful presidential challenger by the name of Alexei Navalny. The Russian president had chipped away at basic freedoms of expression to the point that “almost everything that aims at criticizing the government is a criminal offense.”¹⁴⁶

young people—protested against corruption in “an extraordinary show of outrage.”

Another potential concern for the state is a rise in radical political Islam. Russia is home to at least 16 million mostly Sunni Muslims who might be alienated to some extent by Russia’s backing of Shiite regimes in Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Some heavily Muslim-populated areas of the country are reportedly “seething with unrest and lawlessness.”¹⁴⁷

While local and even countrywide protests might continue to surface in Russia, it is unlikely that they will develop to a level where the regime is seriously threatened. Strong state security mechanisms, including, in some cases, informant networks that have been active for decades would be extremely

difficult to overcome absent a sizeable mutiny on the part of military or security forces.

China

The Beijing government, while undertaking a military buildup and displaying increasingly aggressive behavior in its efforts to establish control over the East and South China Seas, has been equally assertive in tightening control over its own citizens. The state has taken mass social and religious oppression to a level not seen in generations in what has been described as “China’s worst collective human rights abuse in decades”¹⁴⁸ Not long after coming to power in 2012, according to one New York Times correspondent, Communist Party leader Xi Jinping “ordered an offensive against liberal ideas that he said were eroding the Communist Party’s authority.” Liberal and democratic views quickly became officially unwelcome as Mr. Xi pushed for the reestablishment of strictly socialist values and unwavering political loyalty from its 1.4 billion people.¹⁴⁹

President Xi has called on Party officials to strongly enforce measures aimed at protecting China from foreign infiltration through religion. As a result, according to a Pew Research Center report, China is the most restrictive government against religious groups of the 198 countries represented in the study.¹⁵⁰ Actions taken to increase control and regulation over religion provide a stark example of the growing oppression in China. As part of a sustained nationwide campaign of harassment against Christianity, over a two-year period beginning in 2014, authorities used saws and blowtorches to remove crosses from nearly 2,000 churches in Zhejiang Province alone, sometimes having to violently push aside outraged worshipers to do so.¹⁵¹

Pressure on Christian congregations swelled over the next two years. Even Christmas parties have come to be viewed as subversive by the state.

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Because the Communist Party considers foreign religions subversive, even theology students traveling to study in other countries are closely monitored.¹⁵² Muslims and Buddhists are also subjected to severe restrictions by the state. Muslims must register with the police

and cameras enhanced by facial recognition technology are emplaced at mosque entrances.¹⁵³ The state routinely harasses and detains people of all

these faiths, destroys church property, and bans religious practices.¹⁵⁴ The transmission or sharing of religious content of any kind on the internet or social media is prohibited. There are an estimated 60 million to 70 million Christians in China; Muslims number more than 20 million, while the population of Tibet is predominantly Buddhist. By comparison, the Chinese Communist Party has around 90 million members.¹⁵⁵

The most egregious example of religious and ethnic intolerance is the ongoing treatment of the ethnic Uighur population of China's extreme western Xinjiang autonomous region. Uighurs are a Muslim people unrelated to the majority Han population of China. After decades of abuse and persecution by Chinese authorities, the state has now confined, according to a UN claim, more than a million Uighurs and other Turkic-speaking Muslim groups in a broad network of secret political and religious reeducation camps. The Xi regime, not surprisingly, disputes the claim. Each facility reportedly holds as many as 6,000 internees and features surveillance systems, barbed wire, and armed guards. In political indoctrination sessions, internees are forced to claim allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party while denouncing their own culture and religion. By November 2018 more than a million Han Chinese have been placed in the homes of Uighur families for indoctrination and monitoring.¹⁵⁶ "Beijing," observes one writer, has transformed "the Islamic extremist threat into a self-fulfilling prophecy by pushing the Uighurs into organized forms of militant resistance."¹⁵⁷ Continued mistreatment of major non-Han ethnic populations could trigger violent uprisings similar to those that occurred in Tibet in 2008 and Xinjiang in 2009.

President Xi has also initiated an aggressive campaign to discredit dissidents and human rights activists, whom he portrays as part of a Western-backed conspiracy aimed at unseating the Communist Party. Since coming to power, the Xi regime has used public show trials and other methods to pursue "a systematic offensive against Western liberal ideas."¹⁵⁸ Authorities detained prominent activist and lawyer Yu Wensheng on 17 January 2018 for advocating a change to the country's constitution to provide a more democratic approach to selecting the nation's leader. Liberal Chinese intellectuals who are successful in avoiding arrest and imprisonment are nonetheless marginalized, banned from university campuses, censored by the media, and are unable to publish or lecture. In July 2018 the independent think tank Unirule Institute of Economics in Beijing was shut down.¹⁵⁹

In the semiautonomous former British colony of Hong Kong, where civil liberties have enjoyed a higher level of protection than on the mainland, Beijing is becoming increasingly intolerant of pro-democracy activists. The state seeks to ban the Hong Kong National Party, which openly promotes independence for Hong Kong, while democracy advocate Lau Siu-lai, who has called for self-determination and independence for Hong Kong, was disqualified from running for the local government legislature in October 2018.¹⁶⁰

China has become a leader in innovative applications of propaganda to silence dissent. Rather than broadcasting news of internal unrest, defending unpopular policies, or refuting critics of the state, Beijing's propaganda machine floods the airwaves with pro-government 'cheerleading' content, thus drawing attention away from problems and contentious debate. The state manipulates the people by allowing "just enough criticism to maintain the illusion of dissent"¹⁶¹ and reserves a more harsh response for occasions when indicators point to looming mass protest or collective action.

As in Russia, sometimes sizeable demonstrations occur from time to time in China despite the bloody crackdown of 1989. Official reports document some 58,000 protests in 2003 alone.¹⁶² Protests for open democracy and free elections in Hong Kong in 2014 that came to be called the Umbrella Movement, or Occupy Central, included the blocking of major roadways by protesters for 79 days. Activists even called for the secession of Hong Kong from China. More than 900 people were arrested. Nine of the movement's founders were charged with incitement and conspiracy to commit public nuisance in March 2017, more than two years after their arrest.¹⁶³

Many activists and lawyers were arrested by Chinese authorities during a 2015 crackdown. Without the benefit of legal representation, several were later tried in court sessions closed to the public and then made to confess their crimes against the state before television cameras.¹⁶⁴

When two independence advocates elected to Hong Kong's legislature in November 2016 made disparaging remarks about the Beijing government during their swearing-in ceremony, China's government reacted swiftly, intervening to block the two from taking their seats. As Beijing continued its campaign to crush a stubborn independence movement in Hong Kong, protestors crowded outside China's Hong Kong liaison office chanting "Hong Kong independence."¹⁶⁵ The protests picked up again several months later, on 1 January 2018, when the new year in Hong Kong began with mostly peaceful

demonstrations by thousands of marchers—many of them middle-aged or older—calling for the government of China to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the semiautonomous former British colony.¹⁶⁶

During 2018, some observers reported “stirrings of internal discontent—if not yet outright opposition that could build over time.”¹⁶⁷ Recent university graduates from across the country met at the southern city of Huizhou in August 2018 to form labor unions for factory workers and to conduct protests calling for more protection for the workers. Chinese authorities quickly put an end to the actions, detaining as many as 50 of the activists.¹⁶⁸ Local police declared that the workers were acting under the influence of foreign NGOs. Authorities took a dozen or more of the activists in five major cities into custody in early November 2018. Some witnesses reported that activists, mostly recently graduated college students, were beaten and then thrown into cars and driven away in a crackdown that is part of President Xi’s efforts to quash dissent and to prevent political organizing.¹⁶⁹

But resistance by student groups has been relentless, and it has Chinese authorities deeply concerned. Aside from the fact that the regime has long feared student-led civil resistance, the current student activists come from some of the most prestigious Chinese universities and, in a tirade in late December 2018, openly criticized the government for straying from the teachings of Mao, Marx, and Lenin in their abusive treatment of workers.¹⁷⁰

China is considerably challenged with economic problems, which are worsened by U.S.-imposed tariffs. One result is that the country faces the likelihood of significant capital flight. Indications of a protracted trade war and the resulting economic problems make communist leaders uneasy as economic growth is needed to stave off instability and justify a growing military and security system. The undermining of economic confidence, in one author’s view, results in the Communist Party’s vulnerabilities rising to the surface.¹⁷¹

Perhaps Beijing’s greatest vulnerability is that the succession of reforms that the Chinese people have benefited from “has now stagnated, and may even be moving backward.”¹⁷² The increasingly authoritarian policies of President Xi will inhibit further evolution or reform. Any further reform in areas such as regime control of the economy and the court system, for example, could threaten the Communist Party’s grip on power. This slowing or termination of further change and granting of liberties to the people comes as the regime faces a younger, better educated, and more impatient

citizenry. Experts who have studied this younger generation—millennials with no first-hand memory of the brutal government crushing of the Tiananmen Square uprising—believe that it “lacks the instinctive fear of authority of older generations.”¹⁷³

Recent comments from a Hong Kong technology columnist reveal a possible complacency among Chinese citizens with regard to the Great Firewall and other burdensome electronic surveillance, censorship, and internet restrictions that are part of life in China. In a column published in the *New York Times*, Li Yuan wrote that “ordinary Chinese often feel powerless and fatalistic”¹⁷⁴ concerning these matters. She expressed a hope that is no doubt widely shared in China, that a company such as Google, Facebook, or Apple would develop a technology capable of circumventing the Great Firewall. “American tech giants,” Li writes, “could do something heroic: liberate hundreds of millions of people from information darkness.”¹⁷⁵

But Li Yuan has also criticized these American firms for “kowtowing to the Chinese government’s demands in order to gain access to the market.”¹⁷⁶ Eight years after withdrawing from China in protest of increased hacking and censorship, Google is now reportedly developing a search engine for the Beijing government that will facilitate its enforcement of restrictions on citizens’ access to banned websites.¹⁷⁷ This venture did not sit well with human rights activists or even with many Google employees, some of whom opted out of the work, transferring to other projects or simply leaving the company altogether. Some 700 of the company’s employees remain at work in China as of August 2018.¹⁷⁸

With growing unrest among abused, self-determination-seeking ethnic populations on the periphery—primarily the Tibetans and the Muslim Uighurs—a large and disgruntled Christian population, and a restless young generation, China could be in store for exciting times ahead. The harsh, barbed-wire encircled reeducation camps in Xinjiang could expand into other areas and “might spark substantial resistance.”¹⁷⁹ Working in the regime’s favor are the strong grip that it maintains on the PLA, at least some apparent degree of complacency on the part of the majority Han population, and the fact that bringing the many disparate ethnic, religious, youth, and working-class aggrieved populations together under one movement would represent a stupendous organizational feat.

Iran

In spite of the Iranian government's determined efforts to suppress organized opposition and resistance, several groups seeking political reform or regime change still survive. The Green Movement that gained global attention in 2009 has been weakened but it has not been terminated; it has simply been driven underground. The Green Movement that challenged the regime in Iran following an election that was widely viewed as rigged was not initially seeking regime change. Its goal at the outset was simply the reform of a corrupt system in which their votes apparently did not count. A failure on the part of the Iranian government to correct these faults ensures the survival of the Green Movement, although for the time being it must remain underground, biding its time. By unleashing severely repressive attacks on protestors by Iran's security forces, the Ayatollah Khamenei "revealed himself to be no better than Iran's deposed shah or any other common dictator."¹⁸⁰

The government of Iran began the new year in early January 2018 by quelling unrest that posed the strongest challenge to the state since 2009. For five days the confrontation between apparently leaderless demonstrators and the police grew increasingly violent, resulting in the deaths of 12 protesters and one police officer. Reports described the protests as being "stunning in their ferocity and geographic reach, spreading to far-flung towns and cities that are middle-class and working-class strongholds."¹⁸¹ Unlike the Green Movement of 2009, the unrest that began in late December 2017 was centered in the rural provinces, long considered a conservative bedrock of support for the Islamic republic. Protesters demanded better living conditions, an end to corruption, greater political freedom, more openness and transparency in government, better economic conditions, and lower prices. Some even called for regime change, chanting "Death to the dictator!"¹⁸² and encouraging security force personnel to join their ranks. On New Year's Day, government officials hinted that more serious control measures were imminent. Protesters arrested in Tehran numbered around 200, but many arrests were also made in provincial communities as the unrest spread to some 40 cities across the country.¹⁸³ Provincial towns saw their police stations and military installations attacked by mobs. As an indication of the temper of Iran's youth, most of those arrested were in their twenties. In a nation where people under the age of 30 make up more than half the population, unemployment for this age group has been estimated by experts to be close to

40 percent. Although the government continued to block social media apps such as Telegram and Instagram, protesters could communicate through software that was designed to work around government filters.¹⁸⁴

President Trump expressed his full support for the Iranian protesters. Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department encouraged the protesters to make use of VPNs to circumvent the government's social media blockages.¹⁸⁵ In Iran, the death toll from clashes between protesters and police had reached 21 by Tuesday, 2 January. Protester chants included calls for the death of both the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and President Hassan Rouhani. President Rouhani had triggered much of the anger by leaking a portion of the state's budget, which showed billions of dollars going to security forces and religious organizations that are a source of wealth for the clerical elite. Some reports indicated that the leak might have been intentional as a means of stirring up popular unrest. On 9 January 2018 the Ayatollah blamed the United States for instigating the protests that challenged the Iranian regime.¹⁸⁶

On 2 February 2018, 29 Iranian citizens were arrested for taking part in public protests against laws mandating that women wear a veil, or *hijab*, when in public. A law that once symbolized the 1979 Iranian Revolution is now viewed as outdated by half the population according to a recent report, and a growing number of people resent government interference in what they consider to be private matters.¹⁸⁷

With relations strained since the Trump administration's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement and the reinstatement of sanctions, President Rouhani on 23 September 2018 made the claim that a U.S.-allied Persian Gulf country was responsible for a deadly attack on a military parade. Twenty-five people were killed in the attack and another 70 were wounded.¹⁸⁸

Tehran also faces serious economic issues. Several large international companies have avoided business ventures in the country and the currency plunged in value during the summer of 2018. Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme leader, blamed President Rouhani for the economic crisis as protests were held over the economy and endemic corruption in the government.¹⁸⁹

In September 2018, the U.S. State Department's Iran Action Group released their report, *Outlaw Regime: A Chronicle of Iran's Destructive Activities*, that "accused Iran of a long litany of behaviors, including human rights abuses, that threaten U.S. interests."¹⁹⁰ Although hardliners remain in control of security forces and the military, civil unrest continues to erupt from time

to time. Any movements seeking regime change, according to a recent USG report, “presumably would take advantage of divisions and fissures within Iran, as well as evident popular unrest.”¹⁹¹

North Korea

The threat posed by the North Korean regime’s pursuit of nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles has been repeatedly described. According to one recent report published by the Congressional Research Service, “Pyongyang has evolved from a threat to U.S. interests in East Asia to a potentially direct threat to the U.S. homeland. Other U.S. concerns include North Korea’s illicit activities, such as counterfeiting currency and narcotics trafficking, small-scale armed attacks against South Korea, and egregious human rights violations.”¹⁹² Just as dangerous as the North Korean nuclear threat, though less well known, is the regime’s energetic development of biological and chemical weapons. According to Pentagon official Andrew C. Weber, “North Korea is far more likely to use biological weapons than nuclear ones.” Weber characterizes the Kim regime’s biological warfare program as “advanced, underestimated, and highly lethal.”¹⁹³ In the event of widespread civil resistance in North Korea, the USG must be prepared to intervene to prevent these WMD and facilities from falling into the wrong hands.

North Korea is ruled by perhaps the most oppressive regime in the world today. A vast network of surveillance technologies and human informants effectively maintains control of the population and strives to block its citizens’ access to information from outside the country. A floundering and inflexible centrally planned economy contributes to an abysmal standard of living that has not improved appreciably since the 1990s, when a widespread famine killed hundreds of thousands of people. As of 2013, the GDP per capita was around \$1,800 and the average monthly wage of a North Korean factory worker was roughly 3,000 won (50 cents American) at black market exchange rates.¹⁹⁴

But some things are changing. The main development in recent years that could eventually give rise to civil resistance is the unintended disintegration of the communication barrier. North Korean citizens are becoming increasingly exposed to news from the outside world that makes them question the contradicting propaganda they have been fed by the Kim family regime

for their entire lives. Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and other similar stations broadcast programs into North Korea on a regular basis, and indi-

North Korean citizens are becoming increasingly exposed to news from the outside world

cations are that a growing number of North Koreans secretly listen to them, regardless of the severe penalties incurred if caught—harsh interrogation at the very least and imprisonment or execution at the worst. People living in the far northern parts of the country are often able to obtain Chinese radios, while others purchase crude hand-made

radios from underground sources. The government persistently jams these broadcasts, but listeners have found ways to circumvent the jammers.¹⁹⁵

One very effective radio station uses North Korean defectors to broadcast programs into North Korea, with special emphasis on influencing the regime's armed forces. Many of the speakers, in fact, are former North Korean officers and soldiers who defected to the South. One such former officer has claimed that all North Korean officers have radios and, he believes, secretly listen to and are captivated by the foreign broadcasts. Many listeners to these programs discover that the regime's propaganda about defectors being killed upon reaching South Korea is a lie.¹⁹⁶ A vigorous influence campaign could conceivably gain significant yardage by exploiting this vulnerability.

An organization called the North Korean People's Liberation Front, composed of former members and officials of the North Korean military, works to inform elements within the country with the ultimate goal of regime collapse. The North Korean government has reportedly resorted to spreading disinformation by making bogus radio broadcasts, purportedly emanating from the South. Some defectors have turned this around, broadcasting messages criticizing the Kim regime and encouraging underground democracy activism, all the while claiming to be a dissident cell transmitting from within Pyongyang. Such broadcasts cannot be made by South Koreans because of the difference in dialect. Broadcasters must refrain from using terms such as 'human rights' that are meaningless to listeners in North Korea, where no such concept exists. While South Koreans contribute content explaining democracy, North Korean defectors are used as script writers to ensure that the vocabulary used will be understood in the North.¹⁹⁷ A continuing trickle of defectors can help keep the content in keeping with current conditions in the North. As recently as 1 December 2018, a North

Korean soldier fled south across the border and was intercepted and escorted to safety by soldiers of the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea).¹⁹⁸

Exposure to the outside world is not limited to radio. A growing black market for foreign media exists in North Korea, with smuggling and distribution rings providing DVDs, CDs, MP3 players, USB drives, and SD cards containing recorded South Korean, Chinese, and Western music, movies, and television dramas. Authorities are unrelenting in their efforts to track down both distributors and consumers, and the penalties for those apprehended are severe. People are required to register all electronic media equipment—radios, computers, and DVD/CD players—with the local police. Nevertheless, the growing demand for these items has caused the illicit network of traders to continually grow and become more sophisticated in its methods.

Smuggled cell phones allow people in the border areas to speak with friends and relatives in South Korea or China, providing another source of information from the outside. Internally, North Korea maintains one official cellular phone network, Koryolink, allowing domestic cell phone usage. Internet access, however, is prohibited and international calls are blocked. In the capital city, Pyongyang, an estimated 60 percent or more of citizens use cell phones and, as in any other country, it is viewed as a necessary item for young people. For those in the more underprivileged classes, these are often paid for with remittances from defectors. Since internet access is prohibited, it is believed that all apps on domestic cell phones are built in. Police are empowered to stop people on the street and search their cell phones for politically inappropriate material, and they can confiscate a phone at their own discretion.¹⁹⁹

Is civil resistance conceivable in North Korea? The chances for such a development are currently not very encouraging, but they might be higher than most would suspect in the not too distant future. The growing number of citizens who are aware of a different and far better life outside their country provide at least a trace of hope for organized resistance at some time in the future. As one prominent defector has written, “resistance movements begin not in the streets, but in individual minds. Turning their backs against the government is a crucial first step.”²⁰⁰ But rather than immediately turning listeners against the regime, defectors have reported that the foreign media influence is “more like a mental tug-of-war between pro-regime beliefs on one end, and disbelief and skepticism [of the regime] on the other.”²⁰¹ The

belief that what they are hearing is true grows over time, with one defector estimating that it takes about six months of listening and critical thinking for the average North Korean to accept the fact that the regime's propaganda is a lie.²⁰²

The occasional appearance of open signs of dissension—the graffiti message “Down with Kim Jong-un” on a wall in Chongjin, for example—are rare, but the fact that they appear at all is significant. Such a thing would have been totally improbable in the not too distant past. Some defectors have given indication of “discontent that is quietly brewing in big pockets of the population.”²⁰³

Generally speaking, the young generation are more capitalistic, more skeptical of state propaganda, better informed, and less apt to be blindly loyal to the state. They are more likely to accept risk than previous generations have been, to include risking severe sanction for listening to foreign radio broadcasts and viewing foreign films on various media smuggled into the country. Most defectors who have reached South Korea, according to one source, estimate that as much as 70 percent to 80 percent of the people in their home towns engage in such activity. Fewer and fewer of the people continue to believe the state propaganda.²⁰⁴ Retired U.S. Army Special Forces Colonel David S. Maxwell, however, reminds us that even if the North Korean regime fell, the people living there might resist unification with South Korea because of fears based on decades of indoctrination.²⁰⁵

Ironically, if civil resistance does someday emerge in North Korea, it might do so as a side effect or by-product of a large-scale mutiny within the armed forces. There have been reports of occasional rifts between senior military officers and the regime or among military officials, which could be “an important indicator of regime weakness.”²⁰⁶ Dissent within the military is not unknown. There is evidence that the North Korean 6th Corps mutinied in 1996, under Kim Jong-il,²⁰⁷ and he is believed to have had more influence with the military than his son has. Unlike his father, Kim Jong-un, according to one expert, “still has no real power base in the military. This may—may—be what brings him down.”²⁰⁸ Another important unknown is how long the shattered North Korean economy can sustain a 1.2 million-man military in a country with a population of 25 million.²⁰⁹

Countries outside North Korea might be able to sway senior officers to follow the pattern of those in other countries who have refused to comply with orders to violently repress civil unrest, but with the historically abusive

treatment of the civilian population by the North Korean military, this seems unlikely. But the military in the North, like the civilian population, is becoming more and more aware of the world beyond their borders and might be open to influence. Retired U.S. Navy Admiral Dennis Blair has echoed the thinking of Gene Sharp and Robert Helvey in writing that “it is very much in the interests of the established democracies to help military leaders in authoritarian or transition countries make the right choices.”²¹⁰

Gene Sharp advocate Robert Helvey has written of the importance of reaching members of an adversary regime’s military, especially those key leaders and other officers outside the regime’s patronage circle, with the message that their positions will not be compromised, and that they will be needed to continue to serve under a new government. David Maxwell has promoted this idea in advocating that the ROK government should make clear to the second-tier leadership in the North that “policies have been established that those leaders who do not attack the ROK, maintain control of WMD, and support unification will have a secure place in a unified Korea and be well compensated.”²¹¹ The same holds true for scientists in the North who are involved in the development of WMD. Maxwell also points out that this may require the development of innovative means of getting this message to the target audience.

Cell phone usage in North Korea might someday be capable of facilitating civil unrest as it did during the Arab Spring, but that day is far off. The country’s underdeveloped civil infrastructure is a major impediment to social mobilization. Effective and resilient civil resistance demands a somewhat sophisticated organizational capacity, the ability to frame a narrative, knowledge of methods and techniques, and the resources to sustain the effort. Leaders are most effective if they have some activist experience.

The country’s underdeveloped civil infrastructure is a major impediment to social mobilization.

Because of these requirements, such movements most often originate in social groups with a higher socio-economic background. While the domestic cell phones currently in use in the country allow citizens a basic communication tool, the aptitude and proficiency required for building networks capable of enabling large-scale civil resistance is probably lacking.

Added to this is the certainty of monitoring of conversations by authorities. There are indications that security authorities record many cell phone

conversations conduct some form of social network analysis based on phone usage. As one report has indicated, the use of cell phones to rally people with similar tastes for any purpose is rare.²¹²

North Korean authoritarians likely opened up the world of mobile telecommunications to its people with full confidence in their ability to control its usage. But the rapid growth of the business and the increasing influx of mobile devices from outside the country potentially could serve to undermine the regime's social control system.²¹³

Another troubling aspect of the possible collapse of the Kim regime has been raised by author Robert Kaplan. Writing about Kim in *The Atlantic*, Kaplan indicated that "there is evidence that he may be losing his edge. And that may be reason to worry: totalitarian regimes close to demise are apt to get panicky and do rash things. The weaker North Korea gets, the more dangerous it becomes."²¹⁴

Venezuela

An anti-U.S. dictatorship began developing in oil-rich Venezuela with the 1999 inauguration of President Hugo Chavez, whose socialist government became increasingly authoritarian and hostile to the United States. Under current President Nicolás Maduro the country remains a dictatorship under extensive Cuban influence. It is also the venue for what two *Foreign Affairs* essayists recently labeled the worst Western humanitarian crisis in memory.²¹⁵ The state government is often described as a kleptocracy, or criminal state, where a small but wealthy elite grows steadily richer by looting a country that once enjoyed a standard of living envied by many other South American countries. Virtually every industry and social activity in Venezuela has been taken over by the government and put in the hands of inept cronies incapable of managing them. Airports and schools alike are largely deserted and most store shelves are empty. Violence, corruption, and starvation are the norm, and drug trafficking has become a state-run enterprise. A cowed media abstains from criticizing the government for fear of reprisals.

President Maduro inherited a ravaged economy from Chavez, whom he followed as president in 2013, and has made the situation even worse. Black markets, corruption, street crime, and violence are prominent throughout the country. Lacking

the close ties to the military that Chavez had, Maduro must rely heavily on patronage, parceling out lucrative business enterprises—ranging from gold mining to drug trafficking—to his military leaders.²¹⁶

Many of Venezuela's wealthiest have been going into self-exile in Spain, forming a sizable diaspora community there. Every week thousands of less fortunate citizens flee to neighboring Colombia, Peru, and Brazil.²¹⁷ More than 150,000 people crossed into Colombia from Venezuela in 2016 alone.²¹⁸ Escalating unemployment and runaway inflation have driven fully 10 percent of the country's population to flee to neighboring states. Venezuela's hyperinflation—at a reported rate of one million percent per year—has caused prices to double every 25 days and has resulted in 61 percent of the population living under conditions of extreme poverty.²¹⁹

Two columnists who follow Venezuela closely recently reported that “the offices of the Treasury, the central bank, and the national oil company have become laboratories where complicated financial crimes are hatched” and “the lines separating the state from criminal enterprises have all but disappeared.”²²⁰

According to the human rights monitoring organization Penal Forum, the government of Venezuela jailed 433 people and arrested another 6,893 for political reasons during the first four years of President Maduro's rule.²²¹ The economic, social, and political instability in the country has devastating long-term consequences. General Motors pulled out of Venezuela on 11 April 2017, laying off 2,700 local workers, after the government illegally seized the company's vehicle assembly plant located there.²²²

As the economic crisis in Venezuela spirals out of control, the conservative leaders of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, and Peru, along with the Canadian prime minister, filed a complaint against President Maduro with the International Criminal Court on 26 September 2018. The court was asked to investigate Maduro for crimes against humanity; specifically, the charges accused Venezuela's security forces of “carrying out arbitrary arrests, murders, extrajudicial executions, torture, sexual abuse, and rape.”²²³ This marked the first time such a complaint had been filed against a country by other member states and was an especially severe censure within Latin America. The five South American governments, alarmed by Maduro's rising level of authoritarian rule, increasingly view Venezuela's economic unraveling as an unconstrained threat to the region and are finding their governments unable to provide for the massive exodus of Venezuelan

citizens. Indeed, the international court had already commenced a preliminary investigation of human rights abuses in Venezuela in February 2018. The Latin American governments have made efforts to create rifts within the Maduro regime, which could motivate the regime's inner circle to close ranks but might also prompt those "on the periphery of power to turn on the government."²²⁴

There have been occasional civil demonstrations or uprisings, though not on a scale that would threaten the regime. In 2014, a crowd estimated at one million in Caracas protested food shortages and demanded the resignation of President Maduro.²²⁵ That protest and another in 2017 met with harsh government responses, with thousands arrested and more than 130 protesters killed. Accounts included reports of severe beatings and even torture.²²⁶ Still, people resist, albeit in largely unorganized and poorly led ways. Hundreds of protests are held throughout the country every month. Even if a well-organized movement succeeded in unseating the Maduro regime, the task of putting the country back in running order again would be immense.

There were reports that a crowd of citizens complaining of hunger attacked and chased President Maduro through the streets in late March 2017.²²⁷ Years of mismanagement of the economy and falling oil prices have resulted in serious shortages of food and medicine, driving many Venezuelan citizens to the brink of starvation.

Unrest has not been limited to civilian activists. Members of the Venezuelan police were growing increasingly disenchanted with the regime by the middle of 2017. Loyalty to the regime is strained as police officers suffer from the same economic turbulence as do the protesters they face. One police officer, paid less than \$1.75 per day, said that she is "caught between a government she no longer believes in and a protest movement that has labeled her the enemy."²²⁸ The female officer realized that the protesters were struggling with the same problems she was. Police have been attacked by outraged citizens, with at least one policeman and one soldier being killed. More than 40 protesters have recently been killed.²²⁹ A rogue element of the national police attacked the Venezuelan Supreme Court and the government's Interior Ministry on 27 June 2017.²³⁰

Disillusioned police officers are not the only government forces of sanction experiencing wavering loyalty to the regime. A small group of armed and uniformed antigovernment rebels infiltrated an army base near Caracas on 6 August 2017, engaging in a three-hour battle with soldiers. According to

an announcement by the group's leader, two of the guerrillas were killed and another wounded. Seven others were captured, but the remaining 10 made a clean escape. Two of the rebels were identified as former army officers, apparently having deserted.²³¹ Those managing to get away carried captured weapons with them. The leader of the small group later proclaimed, "We declare ourselves in legitimate rebellion" against the Maduro regime. The attack came in the early morning hours and the rebels made directly for the weapons storage facility. The rebel leader, dissident and fugitive army Captain Juan Carlos Caguaripano, described their cause as a "civic and military action to re-establish constitutional order" and establish a "transitional government and free general elections."²³² During the 6 August attack on the army base, according to Venezuela's defense minister, the stolen weapons included high-powered assault rifles and grenade launchers. The rebels gained access to the weapons with the help of a lieutenant on base who had the necessary key. The armed forces are experiencing severe morale problems. Other officers are fleeing the country, seeking asylum elsewhere. But a growing number are taking up arms against the president.²³³ On 4 August 2018 an assassination attempt was made against President Maduro using an explosive charge delivered by drone as the president and his wife attended a ceremony.²³⁴

The armed forces are experiencing severe morale problems.

More recently, a group of Venezuelan soldiers broke into an arms room at a military stockade in a poor Caracas neighborhood. The army was able to halt the brief uprising and authorities arrested 27 dissident troops. This action spurred anti-government protests in the streets of the neighborhood by citizens who expressed support for the dissident soldiers with chants of "Liberty!"²³⁵

As Maduro's second inauguration approached in early January 2019, diplomatic representatives of 13 states—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and St. Lucia—issued a joint statement declaring the Venezuelan president's re-election to be fraudulent and announcing that they would refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Maduro's continuing rule.²³⁶

As this is written, there is an emerging grass-roots movement led by industrial engineer Juan Guaidó, who currently serves as president of Venezuela's opposition-controlled National Assembly and has a background as a student movement activist. Although the Assembly was stripped of much

of its power and authority by the Maduro regime in 2017, it remains a highly respected and recognized entity internationally. Guaidó's recent brief detainment by authorities while en route to a rally was condemned by U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and National Security Adviser John Bolton, who view the Maduro regime as illegitimate and praise Guaidó's courage.²³⁷

Guaidó has called for Maduro's ouster and has declared that, with the military's support, he would establish a caretaker government until elections could be held. The secretary general of the OAS has already recognized Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president and the USG has publicly referred to the National Assembly that he leads as the sole legitimate democratic body in Venezuela. Perhaps the most important development is the reported support for Guaidó by members of the country's security forces.²³⁸ A Latin America expert at a prominent Washington-based NGO has suggested to this author the possibility of at least a transitional dual presidency.²³⁹

Others

Turkey's currency continues in freefall, reaching its lowest point yet on 13 August 2018. The financial crisis results from soaring inflation—the Turkish lira falling over 20 percent during the second week of August alone and dropping to 40 percent against the dollar since the beginning of the year—and economic mismanagement. In defiance of the president's orders to lower interest rates in September 2018, the central bank instead raised the rates. The pace of price increases has been picking up and financial markets are suffering from shock. The lira's decline has only been worsened by U.S.-imposed sanctions.²⁴⁰

President Erdogan has adopted the script typically followed by cornered strongmen, blaming outside powers for the financial crisis, complaining that other countries are waging economic warfare on Turkey. In an apparent attempt to seek political support and mend fences, President Erdogan made an official state visit to Germany in late September 2018, as he began attempts at toning down his anti-Western bombast. Improved relations with Washington also rose to the top of his agenda in October 2018 as he ordered the release of Andrew Brunson, the American pastor who had been imprisoned as a spy following the 2016 coup attempt.²⁴¹

The economy has not been the only area of interest to President Erdogan. Like President Xi of China, religion is also a concern. Erdogan, an Islamist

with a conservative, working-class background, has begun a push to expand religious education as a way of molding the nation's next generation. Religious schools are taking the place of public schools that are shut down on short notice, generating protests from parents who hasten to move their children to more secular schools.²⁴²

Hungary has also been brought under the control of a populist strongman who has instituted undemocratic policies. Sunday, 16 December 2018, marked the fourth day of pro-democracy demonstrations by several thousand citizens in Budapest, with protesters shouting, "We've had enough!"²⁴³ By a wide margin, the European Union's parliament broke with tradition by voting on 12 September 2018 to condemn Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban for "potentially breaching democratic norms." It now falls to the leaders of the 28 EU member states to determine if Orban is responsible and what form of sanctions or other punishment, if any, is called for. Orban had advocated legalizing the "death penalty—banned by European Union convention—and for an end to liberal democracy."²⁴⁴

Poland is another country that has been drifting away from democracy and the rule of law, generating a disputatious relationship with the European Union. Protesters permeate the streets of Warsaw and other cities on a weekly basis.²⁴⁵

In early February 2017, after a new government in Romania passed legislation decriminalizing some minor forms of corruption, the country witnessed the largest protest demonstrations of the last quarter century. Crowds estimated at half a million protested in Bucharest and elsewhere throughout the country. These demonstrations continued for two weeks, as the people demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu and other high government officials. Only the minister of justice resigned.²⁴⁶

The government of Egypt, under authoritarian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, has cracked down on dissent of any kind, arresting prominent journalists, free speech advocates, and human rights activists who often receive sentences of up to 10 years in prison imposed by military courts.²⁴⁷

Mass protests in at least 10 towns throughout Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began some seven years earlier, flared up in January 2018 after the government raised taxes on many goods and services. Several demonstrations turned violent, including the burning of two police stations and at least one death.²⁴⁸

In Sudan in mid-January 2018, thousands of peaceful protest marchers demanded an end to rising prices. The government of longtime President Omar Hassan arrested seven journalists and warned newspapers not to cover the protests.²⁴⁹

On 4 August 2017, the government of Rwanda announced that President Paul Kagame had won re-election for a third seven-year term by a 99 percent vote margin. No opposition exists because “dissenting views are frequently silenced.”²⁵⁰

On 29 July 2018, the Cambodian People’s Party and its leader Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed victory in an election, widely recognized as a sham, designed to keep Asia’s longest-serving leader in power. Hun Sen is a former Khmer Rouge cadre. The strongest opposition party was banned by the courts nine months earlier.²⁵¹ The opposition leader, jailed for a year on a treason charge in the fall of 2017, was only released on bail on 9 September 2018. The regime thus succeeded in neutralizing him during the election year.²⁵²

University students from several campuses in Bangladesh clashed with police during protests over road safety over a nine-day period in early August 2018. The government showed patience initially but began using force on 4 August.²⁵³

Young Nicaraguans, leaderless and unorganized, staged a spontaneous nationwide protest in April 2018, calling for the ouster of President Daniel Ortega. The uprising began after the government cut funding to the nation’s social security program. After two students were killed by police, the protesters made an attempt at organizing themselves, creating what they called the 19th of April Student Movement, marking the date of the student deaths. Ortega agreed to repeal the social security cutback and to release demonstrators who had been jailed.²⁵⁴ The popular uprising grew, however, with reports of as many as 322 protesters being killed and another 565 jailed as the result of a government response to crush the spontaneous unrest.²⁵⁵

Popular support for Rodrigo Duterte, current president of the Philippines, could wither as his brutal anti-drug campaign has now claimed the lives of more than 5,000 Filipinos—some estimates range as high as 12,000 and include 56 children—many of them the victims of unofficial militias and ‘death squads.’ Duterte is under preliminary investigation by the international criminal court for possible crimes against humanity.²⁵⁶ “There are already signs of unrest,” says civil rights activist Joan Carling, “People are

saying enough is enough.”²⁵⁷ Already there are some indications that nascent organized civil resistance is gaining momentum, particularly in the form of The Movement Against Tyranny, a group organized by several lawyers, academics, and others. The Philippines could be nearly as close as Venezuela to large-scale civil resistance aimed at regime change.

6. What it Means for SOF

Nonviolence is fine as long as it works. - Malcolm X

United States Army Special Forces first deployed in response to a civil uprising in its second year of existence. The first operational Special Forces unit, the 10th Special Forces Group, was activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in May 1952. Because the group's mission was to organize and enable partisan warfare in communist-occupied territory in the event of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, the Pentagon planned to forward deploy the new unit to Germany. Those plans were accelerated when construction workers in communist East Germany, protesting working conditions, rose up against the government in East Berlin in June 1953. The unrest quickly spread to other East German cities, challenging the communist government's ability to contain it. Grasping the opportunity, the Pentagon forward deployed the 10th Special Forces Group to West Germany in late November 1953.²⁵⁸

As would be the case in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the East German uprising was brutally crushed by Soviet forces. When Poland's Solidarity civil resistance movement gained momentum during the 1980s, imminent Soviet armed intervention was prevented only by personal warnings delivered to the Soviet leadership by U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Those earlier crises and the 21st-century conflicts in Libya and Syria, nonetheless, illustrate an important point. Belief in the idea that the adoption of a nonviolent strategy of resistance ensures the avoidance of violence is an exercise in self-delusion.

One contributing factor to the failure of many of the Arab Spring movements to result in more democratic forms of government could be that the liberal democracies of the world, at least until Libya, stood by and failed to act in support of the movements. Could accurately anticipated, properly planned, and well-timed support engagements have made a difference in the Libyan and Syrian civil resistance cases before they descended too far into full-scale civil war? A well-designed and implemented support effort aimed at altering internal power relationships and further weakening the regimes' pillars of support might have made a difference. An effective influence campaign might have amplified the initial trickle of defections to a scale beyond

the ability of the regime to contain. Prudent and thorough unconventional statecraft campaign design and operational planning should improve the ability to respond to such rapidly emerging opportunities. As participants at a 2014 Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) and Joint Special Operations University (JSOU)-sponsored UW seminar at the Baltic Defence College noted in their findings, resistance can be armed and violent or it can take the form of unarmed civil resistance, and prudent planning must account for both possibilities.²⁵⁹

In some scenarios, the United States could seek a low-visibility, small-footprint means of intervention, providing effective and positive influence while avoiding escalation to large-scale armed conflict. In those cases where civil resistance movements fail to achieve their goals through a strategy of nonviolence and targeted regimes employ violence in repressing dissension, groups may seek assistance from the United States. In such cases, SOF will likely be among the first responders. This approach capitalizes on the special warfare trait of employing indigenous mass—influencing and lever-

In such cases, SOF will likely be among the first responders.

aging local forces—thus avoiding the commitment of a large U.S. force presence. By grasping the opportunity to support a pro-democracy movement, the United States can corral and guide this indigenous political and social energy in ways that advance U.S. interests. While current joint UW doctrine describes the flexibility inherent

in such an application of SOF, as well as the inherent limitations involved in leveraging a social movement, it fails to conceptualize the role of SOF in supporting such movements.²⁶⁰

The potential use of SOF in this role will be far from routine. As long as a civil resistance movement is able to maintain a nonviolent strategy and remain resilient in the face of government repression, military support is inappropriate. But authoritarian governments have shown interest in ways to counter nonviolent civil resistance, and success in dealing with these regime threats too often comes through indiscriminate violence. In certain circumstances, where the stakes in a country experiencing civil unrest are unusually high, intervention by other governments could be critical. North Korea continues to accumulate and threaten the use of nuclear and biological WMD, and widespread civil unrest could put the control of these weapons at risk. Iran continues to nurture militias and terrorists in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, undercutting U.S. interests throughout the region. A positive

change in leadership or political reform there could pay enormous dividends. Venezuela is increasingly a source of instability to neighboring countries. While a civil resistance effort in that country would benefit from external support, the United States, for historical reasons, would be wise to follow the lead of other OAS member states.

When the USG provides support to a resistance movement, including those following a nonviolent strategy, it does so with the expectation that the resistance organization, if successful in bringing down a tyrant or ousting a foreign occupation force, will take control of the government or at least support an appropriate leader. One potential risk associated with successfully enticing key segments of the military or police to defect to the cause of the resistance is that they decide to assume control of the government themselves, as has happened in places such as Egypt and Thailand. Communication and negotiation are important in resolving issues of succession of power. The United States could be asked by the new government to assist in establishing order, calling for a rapid transition to some form of stability operations or security force assistance. Foreign internal defense (FID) operations, in particular, might be necessary to help prevent a period of unrest or lawlessness or to protect the new government from attempts at regaining power by the former regime.²⁶¹

SOF must engage in some creative conceptual thinking on how to contemporize our UW capability to meet the requirements of gray zone challenges such as supporting foreign civil resistance movements. Research and education should contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of civil resistance and popular mobilization, the intricacies of influence operations, the potential of subversion and political warfare in undermining repressive systems, and the value of negotiation and mediation skills in unconventional statecraft. Included should be the ability to recognize the preconditions that lead to civil resistance, the ability to recognize indicators of nascent organizing efforts, and a process for conducting a continuous assessment of the movement, determining its objectives and alignment with U.S. interests, and forecasting its prospects for success. Topics worthy of further study by SOF include popular mobilization and network development via social media, persuasion theory and science, clandestine communications and tradecraft

SOF must engage in some creative conceptual thinking on how to contemporize our UW capability

adaptations, cyber pilot team operations,²⁶² regime support mechanisms (pillars of support) and motives for disaffiliation, ways of encouraging reform orientation and inspiring dissidence among elite elements of a regime, and non-standard supply operations. A theme that should not be overlooked is the application of the principles of war to civil resistance.

In his seminal 2012 *Special Warfare* article, author Brian Petit encourages improved understanding of concepts such as borderless social mobilization, hyper-accelerated social organization, swarming, digital undergrounds, and the phenomena of digital mass. “Our UW proficiency,” writes Petit, now a member of the JSOU faculty, “will depend on revised authorities, uncomfortable risk calculations, and social-media aptitudes that are not normally associated with the military action.”²⁶³

Conclusion

We were more afraid of the people than the people had reason to be afraid of us.²⁶⁴ - Member of Stasi, the East German State Security Service, 1989

Recognizing that U.S. support to foreign civil resistance movements is a foreign policy tool that should be used sparingly, there are cases where the stakes are high enough that opportunities to affect the outcome should be anticipated and prepared for. The U.S. armed forces, and especially SOF, can contribute to the ability of the USG to respond to these contingencies by taking steps to improve its readiness.

But readiness for this important potential task requires upgrading some aspects of U.S. doctrine for UW to bring it in line with contemporary resistance. For decades our UW doctrine has portrayed resistance and associated support campaigns as being very protracted affairs, measured in several years. Indeed, that remains true in some cases, particularly in instances of armed resistance. But today's civil resistance movements often succeed or fail within a matter of days or weeks. Only those that devolve into armed civil war drag on for years. A competence for expeditious support to a movement at the critical time will call for a quick-reaction-force mentality and an agile capability. Upgrading UW doctrine and furthering the concept of unconventional statecraft in ways that account for timely support to civil resistance will demand truly disruptive thinking. It could be accomplished by following a process that sets the research and learning agenda, learns from previous experience, is prepared to adjust and innovate, and finally gets the concept and vision right.

This can be done through interagency discussion forums and workshops exploring the dynamics of civil resistance and the specific ways in which the USG might support such a group without compromising the movement's legitimacy. Follow-on work could result in the development

furthering the concept of unconventional statecraft in ways that account for timely support to civil resistance will demand truly disruptive thinking.

of civil resistance-focused gaming and simulation methods capable of identifying SOF unconventional statecraft capability gaps.

USSOCOM might also benefit from exploring predictive analytics technology. Platforms such as *Predata* claim to be capable of enabling users to anticipate global events through alternative data and machine learning technology. *Predata* processes high volumes of internet browsing behavior data to generate predictive indicators capable of telegraphing geopolitical security and market events, allowing its users to be proactive in managing risk and preparing for contingencies.²⁶⁵

Lastly, research on the deterrent value of civil resistance support readiness is merited. Many Russian elites, President Putin among them, remain convinced that Washington orchestrated the color revolutions that brought down communist governments in several former Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War. Many, in fact, harbor suspicions and fears that the eventual goal of the USG is to bring about regime change in Russia as well.²⁶⁶ Can knowledge of an enhanced U.S. civil resistance support capability provide deterrent value in great power competition?

For many reasons, the government of the United States can benefit from harnessing the energy of civil resistance, and SOF can serve as a key facilitator in this venture.↑

Acronyms

AI	artificial intelligence
CWMD	countering weapons of mass destruction
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
FID	foreign internal defense
IGO	intergovernmental organization
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NSC	National Security Council
OAS	Organization of American States
PLA	People's Liberation Army
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
SOCEUR	Special Operations Command Europe
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SS	Hitler's Schutzstaffel
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	unconventional warfare
VPN	virtual private network
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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