Militarization of the Syrian revolution: was this the wrong choice?

Armenak Tokmajyan

Armenak Tokmajyan is a Junior Research Assistant, based at Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland.

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to question the effectiveness of violence, armed rebellion in this case, as a means to topple oppressors. It takes the Syrian armed rebellion as a case study.*

Design/methodology/approach – *This paper empirically examines arguments about nonviolent actions and their effectiveness and how violent action harmed the Syrian revolution. The paper adopts the Syrian revolution as a case study.*

Findings – *The paper finds that the shift from nonviolent to violent action harmed the revolution. However, the Syrian case remains hypothetical because the uprising tuned violent already in late 2011. Nevertheless, based on statistical and academic observations the paper finds that the impact of the militarization has been destructive without fulfilling the uprising's goals.*

Research limitations/implications – *Because the Syrian conflict is a recent one, still ongoing, and there is a time lag in the publication of academic papers and books, this paper necessarily draws on newspaper articles and online sources in presenting the case study.*

Originality/value – *The paper looks at the developments of the Syrian conflict from a different angle than the mainstream narratives. Furthermore, it contributes to the field of nonviolence studies by investigating the new Syrian case, which has not been well-systematically researched from this perspective.*

Keywords *Strategy, Conflict, Violence, Syria, Militarization, Nonviolence*

Paper type *Case study*

1. Introduction

Throughout history, human beings have developed various strategies about how to wage war. By using and developing these strategies, empires, nations and tribes tried to enlarge their territories and dominate other political units. Similarly, our ancestors developed peaceful and nonviolent tactics to achieve their objectives. While the former receives a great deal of attention, we do not hear much about the latter; the daily news that we read certainly concentrates more on violence than on nonviolence. Is this because there is more violence surrounding us or because we do not want to see the peaceful characteristics of the phenomena?

One of the reasons that violence is used is due to the distrust toward the power of nonviolence and its methods. The distrust in this method, as Gene Sharp (2011a) argues, is because the achievements of nonviolent strategies have been regularly ignored and dismissed. There has been little attention granted by the historians to nonviolence as an instrument for change (Ash, 2011, p. 371). Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Syrian conflict became violent in late 2011; the masses did not realize the power that they could have had by using nonviolent techniques to achieve the grand strategy. Instead, the anti-governmental movement turned violent believing that violence is more effective. Despite the confidence of the international community that President Basar Al-Assad's days were limited, despite their sureness that Syria's "liberation" was close, now, at the beginning of 2014, President Al-Assad is still in power, and rather than being "liberated," Syria is destroyed.

According to the latest estimates, the damages done in Syria because of the war are massive, with reconstruction costs alone being estimated at $100 billion (Al-Makki, 2014). While the UN officially ceased updating the Syrian death toll (Gander, 2014), other sources put the numbers above 130,000 (*Daily Nation*, 2014), excluding the detainees and missing personnel. At least 2000 years of history, culture and architecture are being destroyed by both sides. These facts lead to the following question: was taking-up arms against the government a wise choice? This paper investigates how the militarization of the conflict harmed the revolution. It illustrates and demonstrates the effectiveness of nonviolent methods in contrast to violent methods if used by the revolutionaries to achieve change.

2. The nonviolent action

Often, the concept of nonviolence is misunderstood. In contrast to conventional wisdom, nonviolence is not inaction; it is not cowardice, avoidance or passivity. It is an action, a method. It is important to distinguish between pacifism as an ideology and nonviolent action as a method. Howes (2013, p. 430; also see Roberts, 2011, pp. 2, 8) makes a distinction between pacifism, which he defines as an "ideological and principal rejection of war and violence," and nonviolence which "refers to methods of political action that eschew violence." The nonviolent methods are many; Sharp (2010, pp. 79-86) identifies at least 198 methods of nonviolent action organized in six different categories.

In fact, before Sharp and Howes, Mahatma Gandhi had already discussed the difference between passive resistance and nonviolence. Thus, Gandhi rejected the concept of *nishkriya partirodha* – passive resistance – as a synonym to the nonviolence. Instead, he developed the term *Satyagraha* that refers to an action which is nonviolent. Gandhi was not just a thinker; he did not merely develop these concepts and understanding, but he implemented them in South Africa against the Apartheid. As he put it, the struggle against the Apartheid was an active resistance against the oppressor; it was nonviolent action (Gandhi, 2005, p. 78). Gandhi's experience in nonviolent actions is rich. In 1915, he returned to India where he started his peoples' struggle against British colonialism.

Even though Sharp and Gandhi agree that nonviolence is an action, they do not exactly share the same perspective concerning the nature of this action. Sharp claims that nonviolence is a war strategy, it requires tactics, sacrifies, commitment and bravery; it does not refer to "good" things (Sharp, 2010, pp. 248-9). Further, it is a pragmatic and strategic approach, "based on reality, and not belief," albeit both can be mutually compatible (Sharp, 2009, p. 7). Gandhi, by contrast, saw a central place for love, faith and compassion in the action of nonviolence.

Often nonviolent movements start spontaneously and remain unorganized. To achieve success it is important to strategize; without a well-planned strategy, the movement is likely to fail (Sharp, 2010, pp. 26-7). Interestingly, using military and nonviolent strategies entails similar processes. As Farel (2010; also see Baylis and Smith, 2010) explains, the grand strategy of a war highlights the objectives and the allocation of resources that will be used. The grand strategy consists of sub-strategies with narrower goals, which in turn are built upon specific tactics. Similarly, in reference to nonviolence, Sharp (2010, pp. 43-5) elucidates what a nonviolent action plan should consists of: a grand strategy, strategies, tactics and methods. As in war, miscalculations in the mapping and implementation of strategies, tactics and methods can lead to drastic consequences.

DuVall (2005, p. 257) agrees with Sharp about the necessity of pre-action calculations and planning. He adds that people struggling for democracy should overcome their ethnic and ideological differences and focus on the supreme goal: toppling the dictator. To do so, they need to calculate their risks, reduce the casualties and organize strikes and boycotts. Hence, demarcation is pivotal to the success of the nonviolent action; mere peaceful gatherings and unnecessary scarifies can harm the movement. To fulfill the grand objective, however, nonviolent tactics should not merely be defensive but also offensive. From strategic perspective, any violent or nonviolent action should contain both defensive and offensive tactics, because without offense it will not realize the objectives (A Force More Powerful, 1999).

Gandhi emphasized the role of religion, love and moral judgment in the action of nonviolence. A *Satyagrahi* for Gandhi (2005, p. 78) "does not inflict pain on the adversary, he does not seek destruction." Thus, *Satyagraha* is "pure soul force. Truth is the very substance of the soul […] the soul is informed with knowledge. In it burns the flame of love." The basic difference between the nonviolent protesters and the "beasts" is that God dwells in formers' hearts unlike the latter (Gandhi, 2005, p. 81). Gandhi, however, is also understood as a strategist. Karuna Mantena (in Howes, 2013, p. 437), argues that Gandhi's genius was to move beyond the traditional pacifism and offer a strategic response to the problem.

"People power" or nonviolent resistance played a deterministic role in removing Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 (Mendoza, 2011, pp. 191-4). The role of Christianity as a faith and the church as an institution was evident (Mendoza, 2011, p. 188). Corazon Aquino, a leader in the nonviolent movement against Ferdinand Marcos in the 1980s, claimed that there is a difference between faith-based nonviolent action and nonviolence as a mere strategy (Deats, 2005, p. 319). Bishop Francisco Claver says, "[w]e choose nonviolence not merely as a strategy for the attaining of the ends of justice, casting it aside if it does not work […] We chose it because we believe it is the way Christ himself struggled for justice" (Deats, 2005, p. 318).

Some Islamic scholars have also recognized nonviolence as this "force more powerful" than violence. Sheikh Jawdat Said, a Muslim Charkas religious figure, established a new trend of Salafism in the early 1980s called *Al-Salafiya Al-La'onfiya* – nonviolent Salafism (Al-Haj, 2013). In his book, Sheikh Said (1977) opposes the use of violence to achieve goals and opposes the mainstream Salafism, which relies primarily on violence. He depends on contemporary examples of nonviolent movements and uses Quranic phrases to support his arguments.

One of the articles on his web site compares violent and nonviolent struggles around the world and concludes that nonviolence is more effective (Said, 2007). He also argues that people should stand up against dictatorships and actively demand their rights, but without using violence. Furthermore, he is a scholar and a practitioner of nonviolence; in a speech of his, he accepted the "Damascus Declaration" which demanded nonviolent democratic change in Syria[1].

Combining the theoretical and practical contributions of these scholars gives insights about nonviolent resistance against oppressors. The next section considers specific nonviolent resistance methods used during the Syrian uprising that started in 2011 as a peaceful protest against the ruling authorities.

3. The Syrian uprising: from nonviolent to violent action

a. Identifying oppressor's weaknesses

Any nonviolent movement is likely to take time, especially if the dictatorship is well established. Nevertheless, even the strongest dictatorships have vulnerabilities. Therefore, one of the main tasks of the strategists is to find the weak points of the regime. In parallel, the nonviolent leaders should also identify the main pillars of the regime. After this identification phase, they should focus on the weak points. Sharp (2009, 2010, pp. 25-8) identifies 17 common weaknesses – so-called Achilles' heels – among dictatorships. He proposes that strategies should address the weaknesses instead of the strong segments of the regime otherwise the resistance is likely to fail.

At the beginning of the Syrian uprising, it was possible to observe some segments of this tactic. The mushrooming peaceful protests were a major threat to the legitimacy of the Syrian authorities. President Al-Assad, claimed that his country was immune to the Arab Spring, since the ruling elite is the reflection of the people will (Karam, 2011). Syrian nonviolent protests, however, proved him wrong and shook his legitimacy. It is difficult to say whether the nonviolent protestors' challenge to Al-Assad's legitimacy was planned. In any case, the legitimacy was certainly one of the regime's weak points since the president simply inherited the rule from his father.

The nonviolent actions used by the protestors also delegitimized the violent actions of the security forces in Syria (see Stephen and Chenoweth, 2008, p. 11). When the protestors were

nonviolent, the general image about Syria was that a government was brutally killing innocent people. One of the most common slogans, which referred to President Al-Assad, was: "who kills his people is a traitor." Hence, the pressure was on the side that used violence. Once the protestors also started engaging in violent acts, albeit on a smaller scale, the image of "killer" and "victim" became increasingly blurry. When the uprising turned to an armed rebellion, the equation changed entirely becoming "killer" against "killer." Even though it is not reasonable to accuse both sides in using the same level of violence, in principle, however, the opponents who chose violence over nonviolence lost their legitimacy because they adopted the same method as the oppressor.

By resorting to violence, the revolutionaries shifted from fighting regime's weak points and started targeting its strengths – the military and the security forces (see Zunes, 2013). These two institutions are known for being under the tight control of the ruling elite (Holliday, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2011). Thus, by militarizing the uprising, the opposition declared war against two the strongest and most loyal institutions of the state, which were significantly more organized and superior with firepower.

In this manner, the government, which successfully triggered violence, trapped the opposition because "[b]y placing confidence in violent means, one has chosen the very type of struggle with which the oppressors nearly always have superiority" (Sharp, 2010, p. 4). Gandhi faced similar problem in his struggle against Great Britain, yet unlike the Syrian opposition he did not confront Britain's strong military capacity; rather, he stated, "[i]t is certain that India cannot rival Britain or Europe in force of arms. The British worship the war-god and they can all of them become, as they are becoming, bearers of arms" (Gandhi, 2005, p. 79).

In short, when the Syrian struggle was nonviolent the protestors were perceived as more legitimate than the government; they did not violently confront the military and security apparatuses, which were tightly controlled by the government; they were not accused of killing. With the militarization, all these aspects changed. The opposition increasingly lost its legitimacy, started confronting the army and became regime's killing partner. Furthermore, as basic statistics show, this shift in the strategy did not bring any success to the revolutionaries, at least thus far.

After three years of devastating war, it is not clear who is the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Both, the political and armed oppositions, are fragmented; they have no unified operating system and they have lost much popular support. Today the armed rebels, who are estimated to be around 100,000 (*BBC*, 2013; Kelley, 2013), with up to 11,000 foreign fighters from more than 70 countries (Zelin, 2013; Al-Tamimi, 2013) and dozens of foreign financers (Reuters, 2012; Zelin, 2013; Abouzeid, 2012; Chulov, 2012), are not able to defeat the governmental forces. This shows the ineffectiveness of using violence against the government. Sharp (2012) summarized the situation in one sentence, "it is 'suicidal' for Syrian protesters to fight the government's army with weapons."

b. Securing defections in the army

Defection from state ranks is crucial but not alone sufficient to the success of the nonviolent resistance. It is also little know about the motive of the defection (Nepstad, 2011, p. 14). However, in her book, *Nonviolent Revolutions,* Nepstad (2011, p. 129) finds empirical evidence that troops are less willing to repress when the protestors are nonviolent. Evidently, most of the soldiers or security personnel are not foreigners; they are regular citizens who are serving in state institutions. Gandhi proposes democratic movements should gain the hearts of these soldiers instead of fighting them, because *Satyagraha* does not aim at the destruction of the other. Similarly, Sharp (in Helvey, 2004, p. 11) argues that securing the defection of regime personnel is crucial to the movement's success. At least two principles are important: first, making careful study of a regime's military and security apparatuses and second, not threatening their lives in anyway.

These principles have been successfully implemented in various nonviolent movements. During the uprising against Milosevic's and Ferdinand Marcos' rule, nonviolent protesters successfully and gradually managed to shift the soldiers to their side by not attacking them (Vejvoda, 2011, pp. 301, 307-9; Nepstad, 2011, pp. 122-3). The struggle for democracy in the Philippines had

similar successes as soldiers "felt goodwill, rather than fear and disgust, from the people. In increasing numbers they defected" (Deats, 2005, p. 320). The previous few decades witnessed proliferation of nonviolent pro-democracy movements, despite undermining the power of nonviolence (see Table I). The Syrian uprising provides similar stories during the stage of nonviolent struggle.

The protestors in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya also served as recent examples of largely nonviolent uprisings for the Syrians. In these countries, the waves of protest occurred before those in Syria, and in Egypt and Libya the reaction of their Armies was noteworthy. The Egyptian Army took a relatively neutral position and facilitated power transition from President Mubarak to the Muslim Brotherhood, who won the elections in 2012. In Libya, the confrontation against the government turned to a civil war for central control where defectors from the regular army played a decisive role in removing Colonel Qaddafi. A similar scenario was expected for Syria.

There have been many high-level defections from the Syrian Security Forces and the National Army since the beginning of the uprising. One of the first slogans of the uprising showed solidarity between the demonstrators and the soldiers: "Soldier, son of my country; general, son of my country; police, son of my country." According to many reports, the soldiers refused to shoot the protestors because they were unarmed (*The World*, 2011; McLatchy, 2012). These factors had played important role at the beginning of the uprising when many low ranking soldiers defected. During 2012, the hope that there will be a major defection from the army still existed; most of the individual high-level defection cases happened during 2012 and the beginning of 2013 when there were still large-scale nonviolent protests. Arguably, nonviolent movements provided a motivating factor for the soldiers to defect. The empirical evidence provided by Stephen and Chenoweth (2008, pp. 11-13, 21; also see Howes, 2013, p. 434; Zunes, 2012) illustrates that members of a regime, including security forces, are more likely to shift their loyalty when the movement is nonviolent.

In contrast to 2011 and 2012, the beginning of 2013 was not compromising for the rebels for many reasons: Islamic radical movements such as Ahrar al-Sham and Jabhet al-Nusra dominated the armed opposition, flux of foreign fighters, lawlessness in the "liberated" territories, fragmentation and poor organization of rebel groups. All these problems were associated with violence and were the result of the militarization of the revolution. These developments coincided with the decrease of defection rates. A close look at the interactive map of defectors, lunched by *Aljazeera English*, shows that the latest three major defections were in March and April of 2013 (*Aljazeera English*, 2013). However, As Nepstad (2011, p. 14) argues, there is still substantial need to study the causes and the motives that encourage the soldiers to defect. In the Syrian case, more details could be known about the real reasons for defection.

Table I Examples of nonviolent social movements

Nonviolent movements	
Iran (1977-1979)	Philippines (1986)
Haiti (1986)	Korea (1987)
South Chile (1983-1989)	Bangladesh (1989-1990)
Nepal (1989-1990)	Mali (1992)
Taiwan (1992)	South Africa (1984-1991, 1993)
Madagascar (1991-1993)	Indonesia (1998)
Serbia (2000)	Peru (2000)
Georgia (2003)	Ukraine (2004)
Lebanon (2005)	Nepal (2006)
Soviet Bloc	
Czechoslovakia (1989)	East Germany (1989)
Poland (1989)	Estonia (1991)
Latvia (1991)	Lithuania (1991)
USSR (1991)	Yugoslavia (1991)

Sources: Kurtz (2008); Stephen and Chenoweth (2008)

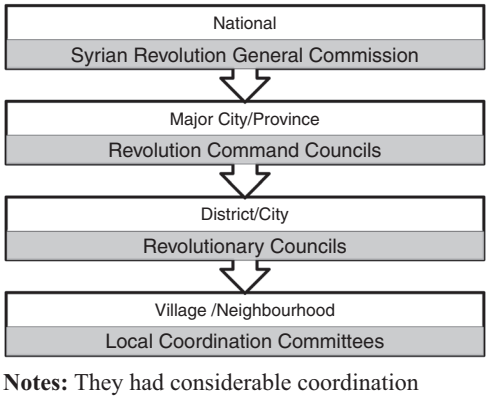
Patience and organization. Can people continue a nonviolent struggle until the collapse of a regime? It depends on the strength of the pro-democracy movement (Sharp, 2011a). As DuVall emphasizes in the documentary "A Force More Powerful" (1999), if protestors are prepared and organized, they should be able to resist until the oppressor collapses. Usually, the armed opposition justifies its militarization strategy claiming that there is no other way to fight such brutal regime (Sharp, 2011a).

It is possible to track these scholarly observations in the Syrian crisis. When the Ba'ath Party came to power in 1963, it established one-party-rule. During Hafez Al-Assad's rule, there was intolerance for power sharing. One of the outcomes of this policy was the Hama uprising in 1980 to which Hafez al-Assad responded with an iron fist. When Bashar Al-Assad took the lead, even though the country opened up, political reforms remained very limited. In short, there were no organized opposition groups to lead the uprising against the government. Furthermore, the opposition coalitions that have been shaped outside Syria after the uprising proved to be very dependent on foreign actors such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, France, UK and USA. This dependency had a paralyzing effect on the uprising, since each country had its own agenda regarding Syria's political future.

Nevertheless, during the Syrian uprising, the internal opposition, within a short time, managed to build wide and complex network across the country. This network should not be perceived as a traditional opposition party but rather as an underground network whose main role was to organize peaceful demonstrations and to assist with logistics. One interesting example is the so-called *Lijan Al-Tansiq Al-Mahaliya* (Local Coordination Committees), which is part of a complex hierarchy of five levels that had many activities including organizing protests across the country (Figure 1)[2]. This network had considerable level of organization (O'Bagy, 2012). The committees had their own media outreach, elections, local and regional leaders and an effective humanitarian aid system.

The foremost task of these committees was organizing nonviolent protests in as many places as possible. Until April 2012, the number of the Local Coordination Committees alone was at least 400 (O'Bagy, 2012, p. 22). On January 20, 2012, for instance, this web was able to organize 42 protests in Homs alone (O'Bagy, 2012, p. 26). Even though they lacked experience at the beginning, they started developing vision and strategy. In December 2011, for example, the Committee organized a nationwide strike that caught the attention of the world because of

Figure 1 The Syrian political activists performed through such a hierarchy



Notes: They had considerable coordination especially in big cities such as Homs. Most of their activities were nonviolent, though the coordination with the armed opposition increased after the militarization of the Syrian revolution

Source: Adapted from O'Bagy (2012)

the brutal repose of the government[3]. Moreover, even when the violence took over the general scene, and even when the media diverted attention from the peaceful grassroots movement, the Committee continued its activities. For instance, in June 2013, the Syrian Nonviolent Movement published an interactive map of nonviolent activities across the country where the Coordination Committees were only one type of network among many others (Al-Harak, 2013).

Many of the opponents of the government did not have the patience to see the benefits of nonviolent actions. Gandhi's nonviolent struggle against the British authorities in India took more than 17 years to succeed. Correspondingly, Ash (2011, p. 389) concludes that the experience in the past 60 years indicates that nonviolent action can take a long time before it succeeds. In Syria, some opponents lacked patience, claiming that the government would collapse only with the use of violence. After almost three years of violent armed struggle, the outcome is catastrophic for Syria according to the statistics cited above.

c. Violence and the foreign combatants

There was no foreign involvement when nonviolent protests were dominating the Syrian scene. The influx of foreign combatants into Syria began in 2012 after the conflict had already entered the civil war phase. One of the catastrophic outcomes of the transformation from nonviolent to violent struggle was Islamic extremism and religiously driven foreign involvement (Manna in Zunes, 2013). Currently, most of the foreign combatants on both sides are religious fundamentalists with agendas that extend beyond the Syrian borders. Muslim Sunnite extremists (Salafis) joined the rebels in Syria whereas Shiite militias from Iraq and troops from Hezbollah joined the governmental forces (Colombo, 2013; Cowell and Barnard, 2013; Zelin, 2013; Al-Tamimi, 2013). The complication posed by foreign combatants is certainly one of the complex problems that Syrians need to deal with in order to achieve peace.

Al-Haj (2013) states that during the history of Islamic though, extremist Salafis has been interested in armed struggle. Moreover, the salafis in general, foreign or local, had little initial interest in the Syrian revolution because at first it was largely nonviolent in nature (Mustafa, 2013, p. 7). The militarization of the conflict encouraged foreign and local jihadists to join the struggle (Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 2014). Therefore, 2012 witnessed the establishment of many local and foreign extremist armed groups, which are a key hindrance for any peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict.

When the violence escalated in Syria, the Syrian government sought the help of loyal militias in Iraq and Lebanon. The existence of foreign jihadists helped the government to mobilize these foreign troops. These religiously driven combatants gave an increasingly sectarian flavor to the conflict. Given Syria's ethnic and religious composition it is easy to predict how catastrophic the sectarian-based clashes could be. Thus, although the war is not a religious war, the conflict has contributed to the division of Syrians on religious and ethnic lines.

Before the militarization of the conflict, it was possible to see Arabs and Kurds, Muslims and Christians, and secular and religious, protesting together. After the militarization, the picture dramatically changed (see Manna, in Zunes, 2013). The rebels are predominantly Sunni Arabs, the Kurds are concentrated in the north with their own militias, and Christians moved to predominantly Christian areas. This reflects Chenoweth and Stephan's argument that when the struggle is nonviolent it attracts "high levels of diverse participation" (in Howes, 2013, p. 434). Undoubtedly, in the Syrian case, there were many other contributing factors to this division, yet turning to violence would seem to be one of the major ones.

Even some of the Salafis proposed a different approach at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, a nonviolent approach. Al-Haj (2013) points out that the ideas, slogans, tactics and strategies were present already in March 2011. This was a golden era of Sheikh Said's nonviolent ideas and it was a ready alternative for violence-based Salafism. Despite the success that Sheikh Said's followers had achieved, the militarization of the conflict derailed the nonviolent struggle against the oppressor.

4. Conclusion

In October 2012, Steele (2012) wrote that Aleppo, the largest city in Syria, has "fallen victim to the worst destruction of any major city in the world since 1945." Although the international community blames President Al-Assad for the destruction, the opposition bears responsibility because of their irresponsible mapping of the revolution. Instead of offering change to Syria, the opposition copied the regime in its violence and brutality (Tokmajyan, 2012). Moreover, it facilitated the infiltration of foreign fighters who oppose democracy in principle. In short, the opposition should have chosen more effective and least costly way to overthrow the regime.

January 22, 2014, when the Geneva II conference took place, became an important date in the modern history of Syria. The occurrence of these talks between the government and some of the representatives of the opposition was an acknowledgment that there could not be any military solution to the Syrian conflict. Even though the foreign major powers like the USA and Russia continue to back their favored side in the Syrian dispute, the international actors have lost confidence in a military approach. It is clear that there are multiple armed actors in Syria, which itself is a hindrance to peace. Furthermore, taking Iraq and Afghanistan as examples, it is likely that terrorism and armed activities will continue even if the major conflicting parties in Syria stop fighting.

Would the nonviolent struggle have been a better choice for the Syrians? It is difficult to be sure, yet scholars such as Gene Sharp and Gandhi insists that nonviolence is a better option. Stephen and Chenoweth (in Howes, 2013, p. 432; see also Stephen and Chenoweth, 2008, p. 24; see: Zunes, 2014) examined 323 cases of armed insurrections from 1900 to 2006 and concluded that nonviolence greatly enhances the rebels' chance of successfully ousting regimes.

The data presented here indicates that there was fertile ground for nonviolent activists to approach their goals with less possible casualties and destruction. Even the Salafis had an alternative to the use of violence. Although the Syrian case does not show the success of nonviolence, many cases, listed in the Table I, show that nonviolence can be more effective if people do not give up easily. The Syrian case seems to be a tragic example of the observation that "People try nonviolence for a week, and when it 'doesn't work' they go back to violence, which hasn't worked for centuries" (Roszak in Stoner, 2011).

Notes

1. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUdNAUgE3mg the video link is taken from Jawdat Said's official web site, available at: http://jawdatsaid.net/index.php?title=%D8%A3%D9%81%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85 (accessed 7 February 2014).
2. In line with the militarization of the revolution, some of the bodies in the hierarchy started also to coordinate with the armed opposition. Nevertheless, the nonviolent acts make up the bulk of the hierarchy's activities.
3. This strike was organized via Facebook (see www.facebook.com/karamah.Dignity.Strike?sk=wall&filter=2 (accessed 7 February 2014).

References

Abouzeid, R. (2012), "Syria's Secular and Islamist Rebels: who are the Saudis and the Qataris arming?", *Time,* 18 September, available at: http://world.time.com/2012/09/18/syrias-secular-and-islamist-rebels-who-are-the-saudis-and-the-qataris-arming/ (accessed 7 February 2014).

A Force More Powerful (1999), A Force More Powerful Production, Directed by Steve York.

Al-Haj, A. (2013), "Salafis and the Salafism in Syria: from reforms to Jihad [الإصلاح إلى الجهاد السلفية و السلفيون في سورية: من]", *Aljazeera Centre for Studies*, 26 May, available at: http://studies.aljazeera.net/reports/2013/05/2013520105748485639.htm (accessed 7 February 2014).

Aljazeera English (2013), "Interactive: tracing Syria's defections", *Aljazeera English*, 11 May, available at: www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/syriadefections/ (accessed 7 February 2014).

Al-Makki, M. (2014), "Syria interim minister: $100 billion needed for reconstruction", *Al-Monitor*, 20 January, available at: www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/01/syria-interim-minister-interview-reconstruction-aid.html# (accessed 7 February 2014).

Al-Tamimi, A.J. (2013), "The Syrian rebel groups pulling in foreign fighters", *BBC,* 24 December, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25460397 (accessed 7 February 2014).

Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies (2014), "Confrontation with 'da'ish' before Geneva II [المواجهة مع "داعش" على أبواب جنيف انطلاق]", 19, January 2014, available at: www.dohainstitute.org/release/cdbee336-5cce-40e7-a5d3-c9e780c6c67e (accessed 15 June 2014).

Ash, T.G. (2011), "A century of civil resistance: some lessons and questions", in Robert, A. and Ash, T.G. (Eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, pp. 371-90.

Baylis, J. and Smith, M. (2010), "The control of weapons of mass destruction", in Baylis, J., Wirtaz, J.J. and Gray, C.S. (Eds), *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, pp. 227-46.

BBC (2013), "Syria crisis: guide to armed and political opposition", *BBC*, 13 December, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24403003 (accessed 7 February 2014).

Chulov, M. (2012), "France funding Syrian rebels in new push to oust Assad", *The Guardian,* 7 December, available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/07/france-funding-syrian-rebels (accessed 7 February 2014).

Colombo, V. (2013), "Sunni and Shia Jihad in Syria", *The Commentator,* 13 June, available at: www.thecommentator.com/article/3772/sunni_and_shia_jihad_in_syria (accessed February 10, 2014).

Cowell, A. and Barnard, A. (2013), "Hezbollah chief says his forces will stay in Syria", *The New York Times,* June, available at: www.nytimes.com/2013/11/15/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=2& (accessed 10 February 2014).

Daily Nation (2014), "Syria death toll tops 136,000, future talks uncertain", *Daily Nation*, 2 February, available at: www.nation.co.ke/news/world/Syria-death-toll-tops-136-000--future-talks-uncertain/-/1068/2169708/-/uayeq7z/-/index.html (accessed 7 February 2014).

Deats, R.L. (2005), "'Lithuania's Nonviolent Struggle' and 'Nonviolence In theory and Practice'", in Holmes, R.L. and Gan, B.L. (Eds), *Nonviolence in theory and Practice*, Waveland Press Inc., IL, pp. 218-322, 336-9.

DuVall, J. (2005), "Liberation without war is there a nonviolent way to overthrow dictators and achieve democracy", in Holmes, R.L. and Gan, B.L. (Eds), *Nonviolence in theory and Practice*, Waveland PressInc, IL, pp. 256-60.

Farel, T. (2010), "Humanitarian intervention and peace operations", in Baylis, J., Wirtaz, J.J. and Gray, C.S. (Eds), *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, pp. 308-28.

Gander, K. (2014), "UN to stop updating death toll in Syria conflict", *The Independent,* 7 January, available at: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/un-to-stop-updating-death-toll-in-syria-conflict-9045096.html (accessed 7 February 2014).

Gandhi, M.K. (2005), "From passive resistance to direct action: on Satyagraha", in Holmes, R.L. and Gan, B.L. (Eds), *Nonviolence in theory and Practice*, Waveland PressInc, IL, pp. 77-83.

Helvey, R.L. (2004), *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict*, The Albert Einstein Institute, Boston, MA.

Holliday, J. (2013), "The Assad regime: from counterinsurgency to civil war", *Institute for The Study of War,* available at: www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/TheAssadRegime-web.pdf

Howes, D.E. (2013), "The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence", *Perspective on Politics*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 427-46.

Human Rights Watch (2011), "By all means necessary", *Human Rights Watch,* available at: www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/syria1211webwcover_0.pdf (accessed 15 June 2014).

Karam, Z. (2011), "Assad says Syria immune from unrest roiling Egypt", *The Guardian,* 31 January, available at: www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/9477669 (accessed 7 February 2014).

Kelley, M. (2013), "Here's the extremist-to-moderate spectrum of the 100,000 Syrian rebels", *Business Insider,* 19 September, available at: www.businessinsider.com/graphic-the-most-accurate-breakdown-of-the-syrian-rebels-2013-9 (accessed 7 February 2014).

Kurtz, L. (2008), "Gandhi and his legacies", in Kutz, L. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, pp. 837-51.

McLatchy (2012), "In a rare interviews, Syrian ex-soldiers talk of killing civilians", 2 April, available at: www.mcclatchydc.com/2012/04/02/143894/syrian-military-kills-civilians.html#storylink=cpy (accessed 8 February 2014).

Mendoza, J.A. (2011), "'People power' in the Philippines, 1983-86", in Robert, A. and Ash, T.G. (Eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, pp. 179-96.

Mustafa, H. (2013), "Jabhet al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham: from foundation to division [من التأسيس إلى الانقسام جبهة النصرة لأهل الشام:]", *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies*, available at: www.dohainstitute.org/release/331736fa-9bc7-4e05-a232-2ed07f9c1cd2

Nepstad, S.E. (2011), *Nonviolent Revolutions*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

O'Bagy, E. (2012), "Syria's armed opposition", *Institute for the Study of War,* March, available at: www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syrias_Political_Opposition.pdf (accessed 8 February 2014).

Reuters (2012), "Saudi Arabia and Qatar funding Syrian rebels", 23 June, available at: www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/23/us-syria-crisis-saudi-idUSBRE85M07820120623 (accessed 7 February 2014).

Roberts, A. (2011), "Introduction", in Roberts, A. and Ash, T.G. (Eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, pp. 1-24.

Said, J. (2007), "Nonviolent struggle against tyrants [مذهب ابن آدم الأول، مشكلة العنف في الإسلامي / جودت سعيد محمد]", available at: http://jawdatsaid.net/index.php?title = %D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AA_%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9_%D9%81%D9%8A_%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%87_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%BA%D9%88%D8%AA (accessed 7 February 2014).

Sharp, G. (2009), *Self-Liberation*, The Albert Einstein Institute, Boston, MA.

Sharp, G. (2010), *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 4th ed., The Albert Einstein Institute, Boston, MA.

Sharp, G. (2011a), "The Syrian revolution as I see it", *Global Post,* 21 August, available at: www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/110820/the-syrian-revolution-i-see-it (accessed 8 February 2014).

Sharp, G. (2012), "'Suicidal' for Syrians to use weapons", *Channel 4 News, 5* February, available at: www.channel4.com/news/gene-sharp-people-power-is-syrias-weapon (accessed 8 February 2014).

Steele, J. (2012), "A permanent ceasefire is the only hope for Syria", *The Guardian,* 28 October, available at: www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/28/permanent-ceasefire-only-hope-syria (accessed 8 February 2014).

Stephen, M. and Chenoweth, E. (2008), "Why civil resistance works", *International Security*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 7-44.

Stoner, E. (2011), "Is there no other way in Libya?", *Waging Nonviolence*, 25 March, available at: http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/is-there-no-other-way-in-libya/ (accessed 8 February 2014).

The World (2011), "Syrian military defectors report executions for refusing to shoot civilians", *The World*, 27 September, available at: www.theworld.org/2011/09/syrian-military-defectors-report-executions-for-refusing-to-shoot-civilians/ (accessed 8 February 2014).

Tokmajyan, A. (2012), "Unproductive stability or chaos? Difficult choice in contemporary Syria", *Eurasian Review: News and Analysis,* 3 July, available at: www.eurasiareview.com/03072012-unproductive-stability-or-chaos-difficult-choice-in-contemporary-syria-oped/ (accessed 8 February 2014).

Vejvoda, I. (2011), "Civil society vs Milosevic: Serbia 1991-2000", in Robert, A. and Ash, T.G. (Eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, pp. 296-316.

Zelin, A. (2013), "Up to 11,000 foreign fighters in Syria; steep rise among Western Europeans", *The Washington Institute,* 17 December, available at: www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy- analysis/view/up-to-11000-foreign-fighters-in-syria-steep-rise-among-western-europeans (accessed 7 February 2014).

Zunes, S. (2012), "Unarmed resistance still Syria's best hope", *Reporter,* 26 January, available at: http://ncronline.org/news/global/unarmed-resistance-still-syrias-best-hope (accessed June 15, 2014).

Zunes, S. (2013), "Supporting non-violence in Syria", *Truthout,* 8 January, available at: http://truth-out.org/news/item/13774-supporting-non-violence-in-syria (accessed January 15, 2014).

Zunes, S. (2014), "Why nonviolent resistance wins", *ZY,* 22 March, available: www.ozy.com/c-notes/a-force-more-powerful-than-war-nonviolent-resistance/30051.article (accessed June 15, 2014).

Further reading

Dixon, H. (2011), "Can nonviolent struggle bring down Syria's Assad?", *Reuters*, 1 August, available at: http://blogs.reuters.com/breakingviews/2011/08/01/can-non-violent-struggle-bring-down-syrias-assad/ (accessed 7 February 2014).

Nonviolence: an introduction", available at: www.nonviolenceinternational.net/seasia/whatis/book.php (accessed 8 February 2014).

Said, J. (1993), *The Doctrine of the First Son of Adam: the Problem of Violence in the Islamic Work*, 5th ed., [المعاصر دار الفكر](Figure 6) Dar Al-Fkr Al-Mua'ser, [مواجهات سلمية في وجه الطاغوت], Beirut.

Sharp, G. (2005), "'Nonviolent action: an active technique of struggle' and 'The technique of nonviolent action'", in Holmes, R.L. and Gan, B.L. (Eds), *Nonviolence in Theory and Practice*, Waveland Press Inc., IL, pp. 247-55.

Sharp, G. (2011b), "Choices for defecting Syrian soldiers", *Waging Nonviolence,* 1 December, available at: http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/choices-for-defecting-syrian-soldiers/ (accessed 8 February 2014).

About the author

Armenak Tokmajyan holds a Master's Degree in Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research, University of Tampere, Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), Finland. Tokmajyan has worked as a Research Assistant at the Crisis Management Centre in Finland. He previously studied at the University of Van Amsterdam, Sciences-po Paris and University of Kalamoon, Syria. Before joining the MSSc Program, he was working at UNHCR, Aleppo Field Office, in the Protection Unit. Tokmajyan is the author of articles in journals such as: *The Washington Review: Journal of Turkish and Eurasian Studies*, *Al-Mashriq Quarterly: Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Fragile States Resources Center and Middle East Monitor*. Tokmajyan is a contributor to *Middle East Online*, *Your Middle East*, *The Armenian Weekly*, *World News* and *Eurasian Review: News and Analysis*. Armenak Tokmajyan can be contacted at: armenak.tokmajyan@uta.fi