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The failure of strategic nonviolent action in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria: 'political ju-jitsu' in reverse

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This article seeks to advance understanding of strategic nonviolent action through providing a more comprehensive assessment of the factors that may contribute towards the failure of nonviolent campaigns than has been undertaken to date. It disaggregates the wide range of international and national circumstances relevant to the failure of nonviolent action, illustrated with reference to experience of nonviolent action in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria since 2011. Through exploring these cases, the article proceeds to reveal how adherence to the assumed principles of nonviolent strategy may be insufficient in contributing towards success. It concludes by outlining four pathways by which nonviolent strategy may contribute towards its own failure, including its supersession by armed conflict.

Keywords: strategic nonviolent action; 'Arab spring'; civil resistance; nonviolence

Introduction

Recent years have seen renewed interest in strategic nonviolent action.[1] Chenoweth and Stephan's conclusion that 'nonviolent resistance methods are

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[1] See, for example, Peter Ackerman and Berel Rodal, 'The Strategic Dimensions of Civil Resistance', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 50, no. 3 (2008): 111-126; Maria J. Stephan and Erika Chenoweth, 'Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict', *International Security* 33, no. 1 (2008): 7-44; Maria Stephan and Erika Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press 2011); Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston, MA: Extending Horizons, 2005); Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Nonviolent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 and 2011); Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Nonviolent*

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likely to be more successful than violent methods in achieving strategic objectives'[2] may be becoming the new conventional wisdom on the subject. In work on the Arab uprisings since 2010, for instance, it has been argued that 'Arab opposition movements … would never have achieved what they have today had they resorted to violence or had they been drawn into using it in their bid to achieve their demands'.[3] It has further been argued that 'the methods of peaceful resistance of 1989, and in subsequent opposition movements in other states and continents … [are] … becoming the "default" model of how to deal with dictatorial regimes and foreign occupations … not just for Europe, not just for the Arab world, but also more generally'.[4]

The recent wave of literature on strategic nonviolent action has put forward a number of claims with respect to the factors facilitating its successful use. A common claim is that consistent adherence to the use of nonviolent rather than violent methods – 'the maintenance of non-violence discipline' – is critical in delegitimating opponents' justifications for repression.[5] Linked to this is Gene Sharp's notion of 'political ju-jitsu' by which violent repression of nonviolent resistance is said to have the potential to strengthen rather than to undermine that resistance by generating 'widespread revulsion' and in turn greater support for

the resistance movement.[6] In the case of nonviolent resistance to governments, it has been emphasised that the ability of a resistance movement to convert members of the armed forces has been critical in successful instances of nonviolent action.[7] In addition, 'widespread, cross-cutting, and decentralized mobilization' is said to be vital, as is 'systematic planning' by a broadly representative leadership with realistic goals.[8]

Although there are a few notable exceptions,[9] examinations of cases of failed nonviolent resistance movements are sparse in comparison with analyses of successful instances. Evaluation of factors responsible for failure is also rare in comparison with evaluation of factors responsible for success.[10] This article aims to address both deficits through its examination of nonviolent action in the uprisings in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria since 2011. In so doing, this article will challenge much of the new conventional wisdom about strategic nonviolent action outlined in the preceding two paragraphs.

It is first necessary to delineate what is meant in this article by nonviolent action and by the distinction between success and failure. Resistance movements are rarely exclusively nonviolent or exclusively violent in respect of the methods deployed by protesters. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish between

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[6] Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 47.

[7] Stephan and Chenoweth, 'Why Civil Resistance Works', 42; Binnendijk and Marovic, 'Power and Persuasion'; Sharon Erickson Nepstad, 'Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring: The Critical Role of Military-Opposition Alliances', *Swiss Political Science Review* 17, no. 4 (2011): 485–491; Sharon Erickson Nepstad 'Mutiny and Nonviolence in the Arab Spring: Exploring Military Defections and Loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain and Syria', *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 3 (2013): 337-349.

[8] Stephan and Chenoweth, 'Why Civil Resistance Works', 42; Ackerman and Rodal, 'Strategic Dimensions of Civil Resistance', 117-118.

[9] See, for example, the examination of Burma in Stephan and Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works;* and of Northern Ireland, China, Kosovo and Burma in Roberts and Garton Ash, *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*; and Brian Martin, Wendy Varney and Adrian Vickers, 'Political Jiu-Jitsu against Indonesian Repression: Studying Lower-Profile Nonviolent Resistance', *Pacifica Review* 13, no. 2 (2001): 143-156.

[10] Stephan and Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, for example, dedicates one chapter to explanation of a failed case, but three chapters to successes.

movements for which nonviolent methods are the principal approach, and those for which violent methods are predominant.[11] In this article, it is argued that – at least in the initial stages of the uprisings – each of the Bahraini, Egyptian, Libyan and Syrian cases evaluated here were predominantly nonviolent. Whereas a nonviolent approach remained primary in the Bahraini and Egyptian cases in the periods evaluated here, the Libyan and Syrian cases were to transform from predominantly nonviolent to predominantly violent mobilizations.

Following Chenoweth and Stephan, the focus of this article is on campaigns – defined as 'a series of observable, continual tactics in pursuit of a political objective' – rather than particular groups or organizations.[12] Despite the great variation in objectives put forward amongst protesters in the four cases considered here, each of them may be classified as anti-regime campaigns. In Bahrain, the campaign is considered to have been 'anti-monarchist' following an initially reformist phase; in Egypt the pre-eminent demand from January 2011 was 'the fall of the regime'; while in Libya and Syria the Gadhafi and Assad regimes were targeted respectively.[13]

Just as the distinction between violent and nonviolent campaigns is rarely clear-cut, the boundary between success and failure is also far from immediately self-evident. For Chenoweth and Stephan, success for a nonviolent campaign is defined as achievement of objectives within two years, having had 'a discernable effect on the outcome', whereas failure constitutes non-achievement of objectives

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[11] Stephen Zunes, 'Unarmed Insurrections against Authoritarian Governments in the Third World: A New Kind of Revolution', *Third World Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1994): 403-404; Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 12.

[12] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 14.

[13] James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 45, 81, 103, 135.

or failure at least to 'obtain significant concessions' from the opponent (which for them constitutes 'partial success').[14] This article adopts a broader interpretation of failure, by which transformation from a predominantly nonviolent to a predominantly violent campaign is also interpreted as failure, even if the campaign's political objectives are achieved. Achievement only of superficial concessions is also interpreted as failure in this article.

Defining success and failure in respect of achievement of campaign objectives is highly problematic. Those using nonviolent methods may have a wide variety of goals, sometimes contradictory. The diverse array of actors involved in the protests since 2011 in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria cannot be understood to have been pursuing identical objectives, whether we consider events within each country individually or in all of these states considered together. Nevertheless, the broad objective of regime change is one that became central to all four cases examined here. Another issue, as Garton Ash has argued, is that 'the timescale for success of nonviolent action can be very long'.[15] Nevertheless, the evidence of some of the Arab uprisings since 2011 would appear to provide effective examples of different forms of failure (at least in the short term) through which the factors responsible for failure can be examined. The forms of failure explored in this article range from governmental suppression of nonviolent resistance, which has been notable in Bahrain, to substitution of predominantly nonviolent action by the use of predominantly of violence in Libya and Syria, to failure to achieve the objective of regime change despite superficial concessions

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[14] Stephan and Chenoweth, 'Why Civil Resistance Works', 17.
[15] Timothy Garton Ash, 'A Century of Civil Resistance: Some Lessons and Questions', in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Nonviolent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 389.

in the Egyptian case. Whereas in the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes Dataset success is understood to require 'full achievement of … stated goals … within a year of the peak of activities',[16] in the four cases studied here more than three years have now passed since the peaks of the campaigns in 2011.

The four cases have been selected because they are illustrative of contrasting forms of failure: suppression, transformation into armed conflict, and non-achievement of objectives despite superficial concessions. They are also widely considered in literature on nonviolent action to constitute exemplars of nonviolent action, despite some deviation from nonviolent discipline.[17] With respect to periodization, this article concentrates in each case on the timespan from the onset of campaign mobilization through to the consolidation of the outcome constituting failure, which varied considerably between cases. In the Bahraini case, the key period referred to in this article is from the 14 February 2011 'Day of Rage' through to the effective suppression of the protests on 15-18 March 2011, culminating in the demolition of 'Pearl roundabout'. In the case of Libya the focus is on the period from the 17 February 2011 'Day of Rage' through to the external military intervention on 19 March 2011; and in Syria the key period considered is from the 15 March 2011 'Day of Rage' through to the establishment of the Free Syrian Army on 29 July 2011 from which point the conflict is widely considered to have become a civil war. In the Egyptian case, the focus is on the period from the 25 January 2011 'Day of Rage' through to the 3 July 2013 coup which made evident that the deposition of Mubarak represented a tactical

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[16] Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 14.
[17] See, for instance, Nepstad, 'Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring'; Roberts and Garton Ash, 'Foreword'; and Stephen Zunes, 'Nonviolent Revolution in the Middle East', *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 23, no. 3 (2011): 396-403.

concession rather than a change of regime away from military rule.[18] Since the outcome in the Egyptian case was unclear before this point, a longer period is considered in this case than in the other cases.

This article concentrates on failure in each of the four cases examined rather than success, since its purpose is to illustrate the dynamics which may contribute towards failure, which have been greatly less thoroughly explored than those which facilitate success. Comparisons with the already rich existing work on successful cases are made throughout the text. Effective strategic analysis requires consideration of the factors which may contribute towards failure as much as the factors which may contribute towards success, and it is the objective of this article to help redress the balance, which to date has been skewed towards consideration of successful cases.

Existing explanations of failures of nonviolent action have tended to concentrate on the absence of factors which are said to facilitate success. In one of the most rigorous treatments of the issue to date, for example, Chenoweth and Stephan claim that failure of nonviolent action in Burma can be attributed to the campaign's failure to 'create or maintain strong, cohesive, and decentralized networks with diverse membership', inability to 'separate the regime from its sources of power', and absence of adequate international pressure on the opponent.[19] Martin, Varney and Vickers, in their earlier study of failed campaigns

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[18] With the coup, Egypt returned to 'Not Free' in the Freedom House 'Freedom in the World' index, marking a return to its status under the Mubarak regime: Freedom House, 'Egypt, Freedom in the World 2014', http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/egypt-0#.U1ZWbRyQARB (accessed April 22, 2014).
[19] Stephan and Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works,* 184-191.

against repression in Indonesia, emphasise the absence of a 'potentially sympathetic audience with access to information'.[20]

The variety of factors that have been put forward as contributory towards the success of a nonviolent action campaign, and the absence of which by implication may be considered to contribute towards failure, extends considerably beyond those put forward by Chenoweth and Stephan. The first part of this article will therefore explore the role that the absence of a broad range of external factors played in the failures of nonviolent action in the four uprisings examined here. The subsequent parts of this article will go one step further by revealing how adherence to principles of strategic nonviolent action may be insufficient in contributing towards success, and how, in contrast to the assumptions of the 'political ju-jitsu' model, nonviolent strategy itself may contribute towards failure.

1. Explaining the failure of nonviolent action: the conventional approach

Given the wide array of factors that the existing literature on nonviolent action has put forward as potentially explanatory of success, a logical first step towards understanding instances of failure of nonviolent action is to explore the role of the absence of these factors. This section of the article explores the role of the absence of factors external to nonviolent action campaigns in the failure of nonviolent action.

Factors external to a nonviolent resistance campaign include international and national aspects. Significant recent work has laid considerable emphasis on

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[20] Martin, Varney and Vickers, 'Political Jiu-Jitsu against Indonesian Repression', 155.

the international dimension: in respect of the studies of the Oxford University project on Civil Resistance and Power Politics, for instance, it has been claimed that 'almost every author emphasises the importance of the international context'.[21] The international factors that may influence the outcomes of nonviolent action are very diverse. They include the involvement of foreign governments, intergovernmental organizations, and nonstate actors including transnational media. They extend also to broader aspects of the international context, such as the international balance of power, the state of the world economy, and the stability of international relations.

It has been claimed that the support of foreign governments for nonviolent action campaigns has been a contributory factor towards successful nonviolent action. Suggested examples have included financial assistance to Polish Solidarity by Western governments in the 1980s, and the role of the United States in the 'People Power' revolution in the Philippines in 1986.[22] One would therefore expect absence of effective support from foreign governments to be a possible contributory factor in instances of failure.

The experience of nonviolent resistance in Bahrain in 2011 is illustrative of at least three significant ways by which absence of effective pressure from foreign governments in support of a nonviolent resistance movement can operate. The first dynamic is active opposition on the part of foreign governments to the nonviolent resistance movement, in this case the neighbouring monarchical states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates contributed troops at the

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[21] Garton Ash, 'A Century of Civil Resistance', 384.
[22] Garton Ash, 'A Century of Civil Resistance', 386; Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*, 155; Amado Mendoza, '"People Power" in the Philippines, 1983-86' in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Nonviolent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 190.

invitation of Bahrain's royal family, and according to the International Crisis Group 'provided cover for the king to impose a state of emergency on 15 March and unleash a wave of repression, which put a stop to the protests.'[23] The second aspect is equivocation on the part of foreign governments, illustrated in this case by the actions of the United States government, which with its Fifth Fleet stationed in Bahrain, close relationship with the royal families of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and concern that Bahrain's armed forces would not abandon their leadership, 'produced an equivocal position … acknowledging the legitimacy both of [Bahrain's] concern for law and order and of its fears of potential Iranian meddling'.[24] This leads on to the third dynamic, which is the way in which external support for nonviolent resisters from certain foreign governments can be counterproductive: despite a lack of evidence for direct Iranian involvement, the mere potential for this was important in the efforts of Bahrain's government to challenge the legitimacy of the protesters.

The examples of Libya and Syria, for their part, reveal at least two ways by which foreign governments may contribute towards the transformation of a nonviolent movement into a violent campaign. The first of these is indirect, through the provision of resources to those advocating the use of violence. In respect of foreign governments providing resources to armed groups in Syria, a division developed between those including Great Britain and the United States which chose to supply predominantly non-lethal support such as communications technology and intelligence, and those including Qatar and Saudi Arabia which provided armaments. The second aspect, direct intervention, is illustrated by

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[23] International Crisis Group, 'Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VIII): Bahrain's Rocky Road to Reform', *Middle East/North Africa Report* 111 (July 28, 2011): 1.
[24] Ibid., 21.

Operations Harmattan, Ellamy and Odyssey Dawn by France, Great Britain, and the United States respectively in Libya in March 2011.

Beyond the role of foreign governments, the influence of intergovernmental bodies has also been credited as significant in some apparently successful instances of nonviolent action. European Union funding for civil society in Georgia, for instance, is said to have been significant in the 'Rose Revolution' of 2003.[25] Absence of effective support from intergovernmental organizations for nonviolent resistance movements may therefore be a factor in unsuccessful cases.

Each of the five dynamics referred to in the discussion of foreign governmental influence in the failure of nonviolent action also involved intergovernmental bodies. Intergovernmental organizations have been significant in the legitimation and co-ordination of foreign government involvement which has facilitated either suppression of nonviolent resistance or contributed towards the transformation of nonviolent resistance into armed conflict. When the royal family of Bahrain invited Emirati and Saudi troops into its territory in March 2011 it used the Gulf Cooperation Council to do so. It has further been claimed that UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 preceding the NATO bombardment of Libya in 2011 have suggested 'the emergence of a doctrine that killings of peaceful demonstrators are unlawful, and … may provide a legitimate pretext for an international military response'.[26]

External actors that have been said to have been influential in successful instances of nonviolent action extend beyond governmental and

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[25] Stephen Jones, 'Georgia's "Rose Revolution" of 2003: Enforcing Peaceful Change', in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Nonviolent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 329.

[26] Roberts and Garton Ash, 'Foreword', viii.

intergovernmental actors and include nonstate actors such as media organizations. Transnational media have been cited as significant in the diffusion of ideas, information and resistance strategies in numerous cases, including the 'velvet revolutions' of 1989 and 'colour revolutions' of the early twenty-first century.[27] As with foreign governments and intergovernmental bodies, one would expect the indifference or opposition of external nonstate actors including media organizations to nonviolent resistance movements to be potentially significant in unsuccessful cases.[28]

It has widely been claimed that transnational media, especially new social media such as Facebook and Twitter, have been important in the diffusion of information and communications among nonviolent resistance groups in the Arab uprisings since 2010.[29] In the case of nonviolent resistance in Bahrain, however, television media which had devoted extensive coverage to protests elsewhere, such as Al Jazeera Arabic, dedicated comparatively little attention to protests in Bahrain, leaving campaigners to rely to a greater extent on Shiite news sources – a dependence which the government used in discrediting the movement in its claims of Iranian influence on the protests.[30]

The external context of nonviolent action extends beyond particular actors to dynamics such as the balance of power and international economic relations. With respect to the balance of power, Michael McFaul has argued that the transition from Cold War bipolarity to post-Cold War uni- or multi- polarity is the

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[27] Mark Kramer, 'The Dialectics of Empire: Soviet Leaders and the Challenge of Civil Resistance in East-Central Europe, 1968-91', in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Nonviolent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 107-108; Jones, 'Georgia's "Rose Revolution"', 330-331.
[28] Martin, Varney and Vickers, 'Political Jiu-Jitsu against Indonesian Repression', 155.
[29] See, for instance, Halim Rane and Sumra Salem, 'Social media, social movements and the diffusion of ideas in the Arab uprisings', *Journal of International Communication* 18, no. 1 (2012): 97-111.
[30] International Crisis Group, 'Bahrain's Rocky Road', 6.

single most important explanation for the greater role for nonviolent resistance activity in post-Cold War democratic transitions compared with the Cold War era.[31] At the regional level, however, the balance of power may present characteristics inhibitive of nonviolent action. Again, the example of Bahrain is instructive, situated in the context of what has been described as a 'Gulf Cold War' between Iran on the one hand and the monarchies alongside Bahrain in the Gulf Cooperation Council on the other.[32]

The role of 'the forces of international economics and finance' has been cited as significant in apparently successful instances of nonviolent action, such as the influence of indebtedness in the susceptibility of regimes in central and eastern Europe to nonviolent action in the 1980s.[33] It has commonly been noted that Burma's comparative lack of economic dependence on other countries has been a factor in its government's ability to suppress nonviolent action.[34] In Bahrain, the international economic context appears to have operated somewhat differently: with its revenues heavily dependent on oil exports, its economy cannot be described as self-sufficient, but given the dependence of other states on it for oil, this limits the potential for effective sanctions in support of nonviolent resistance movements there.

Exploration of the role of external international factors in nonviolent action has been more common in recent than in earlier work, which laid greater emphasis on external factors within the countries in which nonviolent campaigns

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[31] Michael McFaul, 'External Dimensions of Democratic Breakthroughs', paper presented at the Conference on Civil Resistance and Power Politics, University of Oxford, 14-18 March 2007.
[32] Richard Rousseau, 'The Gulf Cold War - Analysis', *Eurasia Review*, February 15, 2012, http://www.eurasiareview.com/15022012-the-gulf-cold-war-analysis/ (accessed February 4, 2013).
[33] Garton Ash, 'A Century of Civil Resistance', 385.
[34] Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections,* 155.

take place. Aspects of the national context that have been claimed as significant in successful nonviolent action include 'physical geography, through economic, political and military structures.'[35] Physical geography may have contributed towards the failure of nonviolent action in Libya and Syria. In both cases a significant component of the transformation from nonviolent resistance into armed conflict took place after nonviolent resistance concentrated in peripheral locations such as Benghazi in the case of Libya, and Daraa in Syria, which became targets for military action by the regimes in each case.[36] The military operations against the resisters in Benghazi and Daraa provided in turn the context for defections from the respective armed forces which were to become a significant component of the armed resistance to the regimes that was to supplant the previously preponderantly nonviolent movements.[37]

A frequent theme in literature on successful instances of nonviolent action is the role of regime openness, and of reforms being made by previously more closed regimes. Amongst the most commonly cited examples is the role of Gorbachev's reforms in transforming the responses to nonviolent resistance by the Soviet Union in the 1980s.[38] Similarly, literature on successful social movements emphasises the significance of open political opportunity structures.[39] One would expect the absence of reforms to contribute towards the failure of nonviolent action. In each of the cases under examination here of nonviolent action transforming into violent conflict, and of governmental

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[35] Garton Ash, 'A Century of Civil Resistance', 388.
[36] Dafna Hochman Rand, *Roots of the Arab Spring: Contested Authority and Political Change in the Middle East* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 12.
[37] Derek Lutterbeck, *Arab Uprisings and Armed Forces* (Geneva: DCAF, 2011), 33; Gelvin, *Arab Uprisings*, 81-2, 103-6.
[38] Kramer, 'Dialectics of Empire', 101.
[39] Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*, 30.

suppression of nonviolent action, political reforms in the period preceding the protests in Bahrain, Libya and Syria in 2011 had been insubstantial; political reforms in Egypt from 2004 were more extensive, but had fallen into reverse from 2006.[40]

A significant dimension to the political opportunity structure in each of these three cases relates to the capacity and will of the regimes to exploit societal divisions in their populations. In Egypt, for instance, the military has effectively implemented a 'divide and rule' strategy to perpetuate its dominance following the deposition of Mubarak, exploiting the reluctance of Islamist and other parties representing different sectors of the population to cooperate with one another.[41] In Syria, beyond the commonly cited role of Alawite support for the regime and Alawite preponderance in its armed forces, the opposition has suffered notable divisions between Kurdish and Islamist groups.[42] Gadhafi, too, has been accused of 'divide and rule tactics', and his family attributed the transformation to violent resistance in the country to its 'tribal character'.[43] Given the contrast between Bahrain's Sunni ruling family and its predominantly Shiite population, the sectarian dimension of Bahrain's uprising has also been frequently noted.[44] In each case, the regimes' exploitation of divisions in their populations has played a

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[40] Ellen Lust-Okar, 'Reform in Syria: Steering between the Chinese Model and Regime Change', in Marina Ottaway and Julia Choucair-Vizoso (eds), *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab World* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), 72; Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, 'The Ups and Downs of Political Reform in Egypt', in Marina Ottaway and Julia Choucair-Vizoso (eds), *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab World* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), 17.

[41] Ewan Stein, 'Revolution or Coup? Egypt's Fraught Transition', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 54, no. 4 (2012): 52.

[42] Christopher Phillips, 'Syria's Torment', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 54, no. 4 (2012): 74.

[43] Saskia van Genugten, 'Libya after Gadhafi', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 53, no. 3 (2011): 68; Gelvin, *Arab Uprisings*, 83.

[44] Magdalena Karolak, 'Escalation of Social Conflict during Popular Upheavals: Evidence from Bahrain', *CEU Political Science Journal* 2 (2012): 173-195.

critical role in limiting the leverage of the nonviolent resistance movements in relation to the regimes and their supporters.

Of the factors external to nonviolent action significant to its success amongst the most widely cited is the role of divisions in the regime, and especially the separability of the armed forces from the government. According to Chenoweth and Stephan a key distinguishing feature of nonviolent from violent campaigns is their greater capacity to divide regimes from their 'pillars of support', particularly through encouraging 'loyalty shifts among security forces'.[45] This builds on the earlier work of authors such as Sharp, Helvey, and Ackerman and Kruegler, which has emphasised the centrality to nonviolent strategy of targeting a regime's capacity to deploy armed forces.[46]

It has been argued in support of this claim that in respect of the uprising in Tunisia, 'when Army Chief Rachid Ammar refused orders to shoot civilians, Ben Ali realized that he had no means of enforcing his rule and thus he fled to Saudia Arabia on January 14'.[47] The dynamics in Egypt leading up to the deposition of Mubarak are thought to have been similar, and have been viewed as a further case in which 'the military as an institution shifted allegiance from the state to the opposition'.[48] A strategy of the protesters in Cairo was to chant 'the army and the people are one', and this is thought to have contributed towards 'a measure of cooperation from the armed forces'.[49] However, the extent of this cooperation was to be highly limited. Stein, for instance, has argued that Egypt's Supreme Council

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[45] Stephan and Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works,* 193.

[46] Binnendijk and Marovic, 'Power and Persuasion', 412; Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973); Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century* (Westport: Praeger, 1994); Robert Helvey, *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict* (Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2004).

[47] Nepstad, 'Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring', 487.

[48] Ibid., 488.

[49] Roberts and Garton Ash, 'Foreword', vi.

of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was 'able to exploit the opportunity offered by the mass action of January 2011 to settle some old scores' with rival factions in the regime, before shifting its priority to returning Egyptian political life 'to normal', retaining its preponderance.[50]

In Bahrain, in contrast, the suppression of nonviolent action appears to have been facilitated in part by the failure of the nonviolent resistance movement to achieve significant loyalty shifts in the armed forces, with the regime exploiting factors already mentioned such as societal divisions and external military assistance. As Nepstad has noted, Bahrain's monarchy had recruited to its armed forces Sunnis from other countries, who had 'a political stake in' and 'individual level incentives to remain loyal to the regime', given their 'sectarian political privileges and naturalized citizenship'.[51]

The transformation from nonviolent to violent resistance in Libya and Syria displays a very different dynamic with respect to the relationship between nonviolent resistance and the role of the armed forces to that traditionally put forward in the literature on nonviolent strategy. Rather than convincing the governing structures of the armed forces to shift loyalty, the nonviolent protest movements instead were joined by defectors from the armed forces, which were to help transform the resistance from predominantly nonviolent protest into civil war. Again, societal divisions played a role: in Syria, for instance, much of the rank-and-file of the armed forces consisted of Sunni conscripts, and many of the defections have been attributed to their closer identification with Sunni civil resisters than the predominantly Alawite state.[52]

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[50] Stein, 'Revolution or Coup?', 47.
[51] Nepstad, 'Mutiny and Nonviolence', 343-344.
[52] Ibid., 344.

The international and national factors which contributed towards the failure of nonviolent action range from general characteristics of the balance of power and global political economy, to the policies of external governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental actors, to particular geographical, demographic and institutional characteristics of each national context. As the third section of this article will highlight, different combinations of these factors helped to provide facilitative contexts for the different pathways for the failure of nonviolent action in each case.

2. The failure of nonviolent strategy

So far the discussion in this article has concentrated on external factors which may have contributed towards the failure of nonviolent action, at both international and national levels. The literature on nonviolent strategy, on the other hand, has generally tended to focus more on the characteristics of the nonviolent resistance movement itself and its strategies. As with the external factors, existing literature has focused for the most part on specifying the factors that are thought to contribute towards success. Whereas the preceding section explored the role of absence of the external factors thought to contribute towards success in the failures of nonviolent action in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria, the following paragraphs will reveal how possession of many of the attributes associated with successful nonviolent strategy may have been insufficient in producing a successful outcome in these cases. It will build towards the discussion in the third section of the pathways by which nonviolent action may contribute towards its own failure.

Among the key characteristics of successful nonviolent resistance campaigns is assumed to be 'organizational strength' including leadership that 'represents the breadth of the nation', widespread and diverse participation, and 'access to critical material resources' including 'swift and accurate communications'.[53] There were some limitations to the organizational strength of the nonviolent resistance movements under consideration here: for instance, it has been argued that a common theme to the Arab uprisings of 2011 was their apparently 'leaderless' quality, without single identifiable individuals spearheading nonviolent action.[54] However, the most recent work on successful nonviolent strategy has tended to emphasise the way in which 'overreliance on a single personality for leadership in a movement is likely to constrain the campaign in key ways'.[55] In Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria, the nonviolent movements may have lacked single personalities, but in some cases leadership in the promotion of nonviolent methods was provided such as by youth groups including Egypt's 6 April Youth Movement and the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights.[56]

Beyond leadership, other aspects of organizational strength appear to have been present. Rapid communications facilitated by new information technology including social media, for instance, are amongst the most widely popularised characteristics of the 2011 uprisings.[57] Despite being limited by the national contextual factors explored in the preceding section of this article, the nonviolent

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[53] Ackerman and Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict*, 26-7; Ackerman and Rodal, 'Strategic Dimensions of Civil Resistance', 117; Stephan and Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works,* 192.

[54] Andrea Teti and Gennaro Gervaiso, 'The Unbearable Lightness of Authoritarianism: Lessons from the Arab Uprisings', *Mediterranean Politics* 16, no. 2 (2011): 324.

[55] Stephan and Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works,* 197.

[56] Emma C. Murphy, 'Problematizing Arab Youth: Generational Narratives of Systemic Failure', *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 1 (2012): 11.

[57] Simon Cottle, 'Media and the Arab Uprisings of 2011: Research Notes', *Journalism* 12, no. 5 (2011): 647-659.

movements in Bahrain and Egypt could claim considerable participation. Although the nonviolent protests in Bahrain have been dominated by the country's Shia population, participation in marches in January 2011 is estimated to have included 40% of the population.[58] It has been claimed that mobilization in the nonviolent protests in Egypt in January 2011 was particularly broad, encompassing 'men and women, Christian and Muslim, young and old, workers and intellectuals, poor and middle-class, secular and religious' participants.[59] Where nonviolent action was to be followed by civil war in Libya and Syria, participation in the nonviolent movement had been on a less considerable scale.

Works on nonviolent strategy have emphasised the role of 'functional objectives' including 'clear and limited goals' in successful instances of nonviolent action.[60] The clear and limited objective of removal of a leader from office was central to all of the instances of nonviolent resistance under consideration here.[61] However, this was to be far from a sufficient condition for 'successful' nonviolent action. Unity around this objective in the Egyptian uprising helped ensure that a diverse array of religious and secular, middle and working class participants took part in the protests of January 2011. However, the absence of unity around subsequent aims has, as was discussed in the preceding section, been exploited by the military command in Egypt in limiting the subsequent political reforms. In Bahrain, the existence of considerable opposition to the objective, reflected in substantial pro-government protests such as the 21 February 2011 'Gathering of National Unity' and the failure of the armed forces to shift loyalty, was to

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[58] Stephen Zunes, 'America blows it on Bahrain', *Foreign Policy in Focus*, March 2, 2011, http://www.fpif.org/articles/america_blows_it_on_bahrain (accessed February 10, 2013).

[59] Zunes, 'Nonviolent Revolution in the Middle East', 398.

[60] Ackerman and Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict*, 24; Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*, 164.

[61] See the discussion in the fifth paragraph.

contribute towards failure. In Libya and Syria, the objective was to unite armed as well as unarmed resistance.

Given the insufficiency of clear and limited objectives to successful nonviolent action, strategists of nonviolent conflict have also laid emphasis on tactical factors such as 'systematic planning' aimed at separating a regime from its 'pillars of support'.[62] Relative absence of systematic planning among nonviolent protesters may have been significant in the transformation of the 'comparatively unorganised' resistance in Libya and Syria from nonviolent into armed conflict.[63] On the other hand, the systematic efforts of groups such as 6 April Youth Movement and the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights towards inducing loyalty shifts in the armed forces in Egypt and Bahrain respectively were to have only limited short-term effects such as contributing towards deposition of Mubarak in the case of Egypt, and were unsuccessful in bringing about separation of the regime from its 'pillars of support' in Bahrain.

Further tactical factors emphasised in the literature on nonviolent strategy include use of 'multiple channels of resistance' and 'multiple methods of nonviolent action', 'wide dispersion' of nonviolent methods, ability to 'shift between methods of concentration and methods of dispersion', 'tactical diversity' and 'strategic creativity and innovation'.[64] All four of the cases discussed in this article involved the use of multiple channels and methods, concentration and dispersion, and innovation. The uprisings in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria have

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[62] Ackerman and Rodal, 'Strategic Dimensions of Civil Resistance', 118.
[63] International Crisis Group, 'Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (V): Making Sense of Libya', *Middle East/North Africa Report* 107 (June 6, 2011): ii; International Crisis Group, 'Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VII): The Syrian Regime's Slow Motion Suicide', *Middle East/North Africa Report* 109 (July 13, 2011): 20.
[64] Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections,* 165-7; Ackerman and Rodal, 'Strategic Dimensions of Civil Resistance', 118, Ackerman and Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict,* 37; Stephan and Chenoweth, *Why Civil Resistance Works,* 193-4.

all been celebrated for their strategic innovation, particularly with respect to use of social media such as YouTube to mobilise widespread support through documenting and publicising government abuses, and Facebook and Twitter to facilitate implementation of nonviolent protest methods at short notice.[65] The variety of nonviolent methods used was considerable, including the 'methods of protest and persuasion' such as the 'days of rage', demonstrations and marches seen in all four cases explored in this article, as well as 'methods of non-cooperation' such as the strike actions in Bahrain, Egypt and Syria, and 'methods of nonviolent intervention' such as the occupations of public spaces including Tahrir Square and Pearl Roundabout.[66] Concentrated actions such as these were accompanied by widely dispersed nonviolent action, with protests in locations encompassing population centres from Al Dair to Dar Kulaib, Alexandria to Aswan, Zawiya to Tobruk, and Daraa to Qamishli. Tactical innovation, diversity, concentration and dispersal were all insufficient in contributing towards successful nonviolent action.

3. 'Political ju-jitsu' in reverse: four pathways

At the centre of discussions of nonviolent strategy, a recurring claim has been that 'essential to strategic success' is 'nonviolent discipline', which 'is the ingredient that turns confrontations between adversaries into victories that serve the ends of strategies'.[67] The rationale for this argument is provided in Gene Sharp's concept of 'political ju-jitsu' by which a regime's violent response to nonviolent

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[65] See Rane and Salem, 'Social media, social movements and the diffusion of ideas'.
[66] Kamal Eldin Osman Salih, 'The Roots and Causes of the 2011 Arab Uprisings', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 35, no. 2 (2013), 184-185.
[67] Ackerman and Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Action*, 42-43.

action 'is not met by counter-violence, but instead with nonviolent defiance' that 'can cause their violent repression to rebound against their own position'.[68] This rebound is said to operate on account of 'widespread revulsion against the opponents [in the regime] for their brutality' which may lead to more people taking part in the resistance, greater support for the resistance from third parties, and conversion of the armed forces away from the regime.[69]

Sharp acknowledges that 'various important factors' may determine whether or not the process of political ju-jitsu operates successfully, such as the nature and actions of the regime and third parties.[70] Martin, Varney and Vickers have emphasised that for political ju-jitsu to be successful 'third-party audiences need to know about what is happening and be potentially concerned'.[71] The ways in which political ju-jitsu may fail merit further investigation. The cases explored here illustrate four different models for the failure of political ju-jitsu. Furthermore, the following paragraphs reveal ways in which nonviolent strategy may have not only failed to succeed, but also been counterproductive.

It might be argued that the cases under consideration here fail fully to meet the criterion of movements that adhered to the principle of nonviolent discipline. Elements of the resistance in Egypt, for instance, are reported on 2 February 2011 to have used methods such as stone-throwing and arrests of violent pro-regime counter-demonstrators which had attacked them.[72] Resistance in Libya in mid-February 2011, before the transformation into civil war, also featured violent methods. However, instances of violence have been present in many of the most

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[68] Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 406.
[69] Ibid., 47.
[70] Ibid., 406, 411-412.
[71] Martin, Varney and Vickers, 'Political Jiu-Jitsu against Indonesian Repression', 155.
[72] Roberts and Garton Ash, 'Foreword', vi-vii.

paradigmatic examples of nonviolent resistance campaigns,[73] and they have not precluded the Bahraini, Egyptian, Libyan or Syrian cases from being considered among them, with the Libyan and Syrian cases being limited to the period preceding defections from the armed forces and transformation into civil war.[74] In the Libyan case, this period is somewhat short, but the first week is considered to have been 'overwhelmingly nonviolent'.[75]

Each of the four cases explored in this article represents a different pathway for the failure of political ju-jitsu to operate. Furthermore, each case may represent a pathway by which nonviolent strategy itself may contribute towards failure. As the ensuing discussion will highlight, nonviolent strategy interacted with key external international and national factors to bring about each pathway.

The first pathway may be illustrated by the case of Bahrain. In this model, nonviolent strategy fails to succeed in conversion of the armed forces or sufficient external actors in support of the purposes of the movement, and the movement is subdued by the national armed forces. Contextual aspects explored in the first section of this article such as geopolitical rivalries and the regime's exploitation of societal divisions contributed towards the operation of this model in Bahrain. The case would appear to provide evidence for the operation of the dynamics highlighted by Martin, Varney and Vickers: 'the presence of a potentially sympathetic audience with access to information'[76] was limited in this case at both national and international levels. As the first section of this article has highlighted

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[73] See the case studies in Roberts and Garton Ash, *Civil Resistance and Power Politics* for plentiful examples.

[74] See, for instance, Nepstad, 'Nonviolent Resistance in the Arab Spring'; and Zunes, 'Nonviolent Revolution in the Middle East'.

[75] Zunes, 'Nonviolent Revolution in the Middle East', 400.

[76] Martin, Varney and Vickers, 'Political Jiu-Jitsu against Indonesian Repression', 155.

while the strategic role of Bahrain in relation to Iran played a role in limiting the sympathy of international actors to the nonviolent protest movement, the regime's provision of sectarian privileges to Sunnis its armed forces limited the operation of sympathy at the national level.

Explanations looking only to the role of external factors, however, are insufficient to understanding the failure of nonviolent action in Bahrain. A further dynamic worth noting relates to the role of nonviolent strategy itself in this process. Where a regime has the capacity and the will to repress and there are limitations to the sympathy of third parties, a nonviolent campaign is liable to provide a highly vulnerable target for violent suppression. In Bahrain the capacity and will to repress was assisted by the active opposition of some external third parties, and the violent suppression of the nonviolent protests from 15 March 2011 following arrival of Gulf Cooperation Council forces took just three days to implement.

The sequence of events in Egypt may be illustrative of a second pathway for the failure of political ju-jitsu. In this model, nonviolent action contributes towards cosmetic reforms, but fails to result in changes which satisfy many of the protesters' objectives. In this case, despite the removal of Mubarak from office, military dictatorship persisted. As discussed in the first section, external factors such as the military command's capacity and will to exploit divisions between Islamist and secular factions contributed towards the operation of this model in Egypt. In contrast with the Bahrain case, the splits exploited by the military command in Egypt were between different sectors among the opposition, rather than between members of the armed forces and the protesters. In common with the Bahrain case, the sympathy of international audiences was limited by

geopolitical factors, with the United States resuming military assistance to Egypt in 2012, when Hillary Clinton waived a Congressional requirement to certify protection of human rights in the country on account of 'Egypt's enduring role as a security partner and leader in promoting regional stability and peace'.[77]

As with the first model, the second model of nonviolent action failure illustrated by the Egyptian case cannot be attributed to the role of external factors alone. Nonviolent strategy also contributes towards operation of this model, whereby control over legitimate use of violence remains concentrated in the military command, which in the absence of powerful alternatives may be able to shape reforms in response to nonviolent action as it sees fit, and potentially to the furtherance of its own preponderant position. A key component of nonviolent strategy deployed in the Egyptian case was for protesters to emphasise common cause between the armed forces and nonviolent protesters embodied in slogans such as 'the army and the people are one', which while facilitative of divisions between the military command and Mubarak in the short term, in the long term helped legitimate the pre-eminence of the military in Egypt's governance following Mubarak's demise.

A third pathway for the failure of political ju-jitsu may be evident in the sequence of events in Syria. In this model, adherence to methods of strategic nonviolent action by the resistance movement may succeed in converting segments of the armed forces to the opposition, rather than converting the armed forces as a whole, resulting in a split in the armed forces which contributes towards escalation into a civil war. In the Syrian case, the role of contextual factors

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[77] Steven Lee Myers, 'Once Imperiled, U.S. Aid to Egypt Is Restored', *New York Times*, March 23, 2012.

explored earlier in this article such as societal divisions appears to have been significant in the conversion of only segments of the armed forces by the nonviolent resistance movement. Whereas in Bahrain the key societal division was between the armed forces and the protesters, and in Egypt it was between differing components of the opposition, in Syria the key splits were within the armed forces, with Sunni conscripts forming the majority of defectors from the Alawite-dominated military command in summer 2011.[78] The development of competing armed factions in Syria was exacerbated by foreign military assistance from Saudi Arabia and Qatar to armed defectors, while the Syrian regime was provided with military assistance from Russia (whose sole naval base beyond the former USSR is in Syria).[79]

As with the first two models, external factors alone do not fully explain the operation of the third model illustrated by the Syrian case. The role of nonviolent strategy itself is also important to consider. Following the logic of political ju-jitsu and the claims in the literature on nonviolent strategy, 'nonviolent campaigns are more likely to produce loyalty shifts' in the armed forces than violent campaigns.[80] By implication, nonviolent action may be more likely to contribute towards loyalty shifts among only a segment of armed forces that may play a part in the transformation of a conflict into civil war. As Nepstad notes, 'in contrast to nonviolent researchers' claims, not all defections are productive for civil resistance struggles'.[81] In the Syrian case, a sympathetic audience to nonviolent

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[78] Nepstad, 'Mutiny and Nonviolence in the Arab Spring', 344.

[79] Mariam Karouny, 'Saudi edges Qatar to control Syrian rebel support', *Thomson Reuters* (US edition), May 31, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/31/us-syria-crisis-saudi-insight-idUSBRE94U0ZV20130531 (accessed April 27, 2014); Andrew E. Kramer, 'Russia Sending Warships on Maneuvers Near Syria', *New York Times*, July 10, 2012.

[80] Stephan and Chenoweth, 'Why Civil Resistance Works', 42.

[81] Nepstad, 'Mutiny and Nonviolence in the Arab Spring', 345.

protesters was to be found not among the armed forces as a whole but among only sectors of the armed forces, whose defections were to play an important part in the transformation into civil war.

The fourth model of the failure of political ju-jitsu may be illustrated by the sequence of events in Libya. Here, too, there were splits within the armed forces, and the logic of the third model appears to have developed in a similar fashion to the Syrian case. However, the Libyan case also illustrates a further set of dynamics, in respect of which the role of external actors is of greater significance than in the third model. Geopolitical considerations in Libya were the inverse of those in the cases of Bahrain and Egypt: despite détente in the 2000s, relations between NATO member states and Gadhafi's regime were historically tense (Gadhafi's reputation as the 'mad dog of the Middle East'[82] proved hard to shake off), and in comparison with Syria, the Russian strategic interest in Libya was limited.

As with the other three pathways, external circumstances such as these are only part of the explanation for the sequence of events in Libya. It is also important to look at the role of nonviolent strategy. In the fourth model, like in the third, the logic of political ju-jitsu operates as intended, with the nonviolent discipline of the movement assisting in the conversion of third parties to its cause. Also like in the third model, in the fourth model the means used by the third parties in support of the movement's goals escalate the role of violence in the conflict. However, whereas in the third model a sympathetic audience is to be found among internal violent actors, in the fourth model it is to be found in external progenitors of violence. In the period leading up to NATO-led intervention in Libya, the use of

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[82] Ronald Reagan, cited in Gelvin, *Arab Uprisings*, 82.

armed force by the regime against apparently peaceful protesters was significant in the legitimation of subsequent military intervention by foreign governments. This is evident in the texts of the UN Security Council resolutions preceding Operation Unified Protector, with resolution 1970 condemning 'the repression of peaceful demonstrators' and resolution 1973 authorising 'all necessary measures … to protect civilians'.[83] The use of nonviolent methods on the part of the resistance movement may therefore facilitate the legitimation of the use of armed force by others, and in turn contribute towards the perception that nonviolent action may be a tool exploited by external actors.

The operation of the four pathways of failed nonviolent action illustrated in this article has been argued to have taken place in the context of differing national and international circumstances and to have involved different dynamics of nonviolent action in each case. While some of the factors inhibiting successful nonviolent action (such as limited regime openness and reforms) were common to the four cases, there were a number of key distinguishing features among the cases which help to explain the operation of the four distinctive pathways. These contrasting characteristics are summarised in Table 1. They include the role of external geopolitical interests, societal divisions among the armed forces and protesters, and the role of nonviolent strategy.

[Insert Table 1 approximately here (Table 1 is provided at the end of this document on page 32)]

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[83] Roberts and Garton Ash, 'Foreword', viii.

Conclusion

Through its evaluation of the experience of nonviolent action in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria, this article has explored four potential avenues by which nonviolent action may fail: suppression, reforms that fail to meet resisters' expectations, transformation into international armed conflict, and transformation into civil war. In exploring these cases, a much wider range of factors that may contribute towards the failure of strategic nonviolent action have been evaluated in this article than have traditionally been assessed. These include external factors at both international and national levels.

Foreign governments may inhibit achievement of a nonviolent campaign's objectives through active opposition, equivocation, or contributing towards perceptions that the campaign is serving foreign interests. They may also play a role in the transformation of nonviolent conflict into armed conflict through assistance to armed factions, and through direct intervention. Intergovernmental bodies may facilitate the legitimation of each of these roles of governmental actors. Absence of effective assistance from nonstate actors including foreign media may also be significant, as may wider aspects of the international context, such as the regional balance of power and economic interdependencies that may influence the decisions of external governments.

At the national level, the factors relevant to failure may include both properties of the territory and population, and properties of the regime targeted by nonviolent action. A regime's exploitation of societal divisions may play a critical role in inhibiting loyalty shifts in the armed forces from the regime to the nonviolent resistance movement, and may contribute towards splits in the armed

forces that can contribute towards the transformation from unarmed resistance to civil war.

Beyond disaggregating international and national circumstances which may influence the failure of nonviolent action, this article has also explored how adherence to some of the most widely-acknowledged principles of nonviolent strategy may be insufficient in contributing towards a successful outcome. Possession of resources such as widespread participation and rapid means of communication, as well as limited objectives, systematic planning, and multiple methods and channels of resistance may be insufficient in contributing towards success in the context of inhibitive national and international circumstances.

Furthermore, this article has explored four pathways by which strategic nonviolent action, rather than undermining the target of the nonviolent campaign as assumed in the 'political ju-jitsu' model, itself may be counterproductive. Nonviolent action may provide a highly vulnerable target for a regime with the will and the means to repress, it may help legitimate the concentration of power in the hands of a military command that may constrain regime responses, it may contribute towards splits in armed forces that in turn help facilitate transformation of a conflict into civil war, and it may be used by external actors to justify armed intervention. While this article has found support for Martin, Varney and Vickers' claim that the presence of an informed and potentially sympathetic audience is significant to the operation of political ju-jitsu, this article has argued that where that sympathetic audience consists only of segments of national armed forces or of international actors prepared to use violence, the logic of political ju-jitsu plays a part in the transformation from nonviolent into violent conflict.

If the dynamics facilitating the failure of nonviolent action are to be avoided, it is important for strategists of nonviolent action to address the national and international circumstances which facilitate their operation. In its synopsis of differing circumstances that operated in the four cases examined here, it is hoped that this article has provided an indicative set of factors with the potential to be tested in other contexts.

Table 1: Key contrasting characteristics of the failure of strategic nonviolent action in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Syria

Case	Form of failure	Key geopolitical interests	Key societal divisions	Role of nonviolent strategy in failure
Bahrain	Suppression	Pro-regime (role in balancing Iran)	Between armed forces and protesters	Vulnerability of protesters to military repression
Egypt	Superficial concessions	Pro-regime (SCAF a 'partner … promoting regional stability')	Within protesters	Legitimation of armed forces' pre-eminence ('the army and the people are one')
Libya	International armed conflict	Anti-regime (Gadhafi's 'mad dog' reputation)	Within armed forces and protesters	Provokes sympathy of external violent actors
Syria	Civil war	Pro-regime (Russia) & anti-regime (Qatar & Saudi Arabia)	Within armed forces and protesters	Provokes sympathy of internal violent actors