Strategic non-violence

• People power

• Definition
  – The quality of strategic choices made by nonviolent protagonists matters to the outcome of the nonviolent struggle (2).
  – Conflict is inherently adversarial process involving the direct exchange of sanctions with a view to inflicting costs on one’s opponents.
  – Note the contrast with a “conflict resolution” approach.
Examples

- economic sanctions: strikes, boycotts, tax withholding
- political sanctions: protest, mass assembly, civil disobedience
- Parallel institutions
- everyday forms of resistance: jokes, satire, non-compliance, “work slow”
Two theories of non-violence

• A change of moral conscience
• The use of non-violent instruments of power
Sources of conflict

- economic conflicts
- political conflicts
- conflict over resources
- ideological / cultural / religious conflicts
- conflicts over rights and the exercise of rights
Social explanations

- Structural explanations
- Agency explanations
Goals of non-violence

• Social justice
• Democracy
• Extension and protection of labor rights
• Resistance of colonial power
• Resistance of an occupying military power
Incentives toward non-violent strategies

- risks of the turn to violence
- asymmetry of the instruments of violence
- moral conviction and political culture
Problems of collective action

- public goods problems; public goods and private costs; prisoners’ dilemmas
- conditional altruism
- centrality of coordination and leadership
- Assurance game
- Strains on unity
The logic of resistance: the powerless

- The coercive power of the state and the powerful
- Communications and coordination
  - Gdansk, Tienaman Square: fax, telephone
  - Savak / Iranian secret police
- Motivation: self-interest and collective interest
The logic of resistance: the powerless

• Importance of organization and leadership
  – Church
  – Unions
  – Family networks
The logic of resistance: the powerful

- Divide and conquer
  - Race, nation, gender

- The use of force and repression
  - Limits, scope
  - Availability of the threat of reprisal
Principles of strategic non-violence

- Objectives, organizational strength, material resources, external assistance, repertoire
- Attack opponent’s strategy; disable instruments of violence; isolate the opponent; maintain nonviolent discipline
- Assess and revise strategies; adjust offensive and defensive moves; sustain continuity between sanctions, mechanisms, and objectives
Assessment

- These are a series of recommendations like those offered by Sun Tzu: how to intelligently take advantage of the opponent’s strategic weakness.
- Implications for modern states and peoples.
- Implications for inter-group conflict.