

The Power of the People: Civil Affairs and Civil Resistance

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Civil resistance (otherwise known as nonviolent resistance) is a widely practiced and studied social movement strategy, with an arguably higher rate of success than armed campaigns. Its uses reach across geography and history, from long-term political struggles like the U.S. Civil Rights Movement to nonviolent components of resistance against occupying forces during conventional wars, such as Norway during World War II and parts of Ukraine today. However, military scholars have largely subordinated civil resistance to a supporting role of armed elements, ignoring its potential as a standalone means to achieve U.S. national security objectives across the spectrum of conflict.

The *2021-22 Civil Affairs Issue Papers* volume points to the advantages that having strong civil-military networks may bring in a variety of contexts, to include large-scale combat operations (LSCO), irregular warfare (IW), and great power competition (GPC). Civil resistance supports all three, and indeed can answer the question of how those advantages are delivered in support of integrated deterrence. Civil Affairs (CA) forces must recognize both this potential and the opportunity for the CA Corps to establish itself as subject matter experts.

By serving as the Army's "moral warriors who gain, maintain, and deny political, narrative, and perceptual positional advantages," CA forces are uniquely positioned to become as adept at supporting civil resistance campaigns as Special Forces (SF) are at supporting "traditional" unconventional warfare campaigns. Civil resistance has extraordinary untapped potential to disrupt adversarial political or military objectives, and therefore should be a dedicated area of focus for CA forces supporting special operations.

This paper highlights the core elements of civil resistance, including historical examples in which similar campaigns have succeeded in disrupting foreign occupation, toppling authoritarian regimes, and blocking destructive development projects. The paper then discusses the potential role for CA forces in supporting such movements, before concluding with proposed changes to doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy (DOTMLPF-P) that can initiate this transformation.

The author contends that understanding civil resistance and developing the abilities of CA to support it truly represents a major means to "win without fighting." Dedicating the time and institutional energy to master this topic not only offers additional options for military commanders, but also stands to produce CA forces that are far more attuned to the civil environment and the ways in which it is struggled for.