From Instability to Civil Liberties: Nonviolent Resistance in Afghanistan

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From Instability to Civil Liberties:
Nonviolent Resistance in Afghanistan

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Nonviolent Resistance in Afghanistan

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Abstract

When people have a fundamental issue at stake, giving in is not an option. For these types of conflict, when people’s rights are being violated, when their countries are occupied, or when they are oppressed and humiliated, they need a powerful way to persist and fight back. Oftentimes when people are left with no choice they will use the terrible and destructive nature of violence. For decades nonviolent resistance (NVR) movements have been associated with Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but people have been using nonviolent action for years. In fact, NVR has been a part of political life for millennia. From the time of 11th-century conqueror Mahmud of Ghazni to Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a Pakistan born proponent of nonviolence, to social change created by modern Afghan women's resistance groups, nonviolent revolution has been a part of the rich history of the Kingdom of Afghanistan (Pal, 2002 & PBS News Desk, 2021). Historically there have been numerous case studies of groups that rose to challenge corruption by authorities, demand social reforms, and demonstrate against violent and authoritarian regimes.

The following thesis aims to focus on the historical antecedents of the Afghanistan government and use comparative research of violence and nonviolence both in and out of the country. Data from foundational research in the field of nonviolence will be used to support the claim. This is used to both understand the ongoing oppression and direct evidence gathered to understand actions that have pushed back against these rules. The data collection organizes evidence of acts of nonviolence and civil resistance in the country. The data gathered will be organized into qualitative and quantitative graphics. Qualitative data can be broken down by category and attributes of the nonviolent tactics used and quantitative data aims to translate these to maps and charts to show where and how effective these campaigns are over time.
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Introduction

In recent years the number of NVR movements has increased in Afghanistan. Perhaps this is because people have become more concerned with the amount of violence in the State or perhaps this is because of the increased success in transitioning the cause of human rights and dismantling repressive regimes. For the last 30 years, nonviolence has been greatly utilized as a conscious movement for social change in Afghanistan. Starting in 1979 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan sparking a decade-long resistance by Afghan mujahideen groups, resistance against the Soviet occupation was characterized by the mobilization of various factions and groups, including tribal militias and local communities (Rubin, 2002). This period marked the rise of Islamist ideologies and groups that later became influential actors in Afghan politics (Marsden, 1998). By 1996 the Taliban, an Islamist militant group came to power in most parts of Afghanistan. Their rule was marked by strict interpretation of Islamic law and significant restrictions on women’s rights and civil liberties. Under the Taliban, social changes included the imposition of a rigid social order, restrictions on education for girls, bans on certain forms of entertainment, and limitations on personal freedoms (Rashid, 2000, Giustozzi, 2009). The post-Taliban transitions started in 2001 following the fall of the regime. During this time the Bonn Agreement established a roadmap for political reconstruction and social development within the transition period (Goodson, 2001). Efforts were made to reintroduce education for girls and women, rebuild infrastructure, and provide basic services to the population. This included initiatives in healthcare, education, and access to clean water. Various social and political groups, including the development of women’s rights organizations, civil society actors, and international organizations played a crucial role in advocating for social changes and supporting the reconstruction process (Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2023). Since 2004,
Afghanistan has seen the establishment of new political systems and witnessed varying degrees of human rights. Afghan women have gained greater visibility through their participation in this civil resistance, however significant challenges persist, such as limited access to education and healthcare, cultural barriers, ongoing violence and conflict (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Afghanistan has seen the emergence of a civil society sector, including non-governmental organizations, grassroots organizations and advocacy groups. These organizations as well as individual civil society actors have played a crucial role in advancing peacebuilding. This thesis will aim to highlight the agency of current actors who are resisting autocratic government power seizures. I will begin by analyzing the current research in the field of nonviolent resistance, the historical antecedents that inform Afghanistan's government, and the State’s political climate. I will follow my literature review with an explanation for my respective research. Using a mixed-methods approach I will measure agency with the goal for this thesis to find a balance between reexamining a topic through a new lens and adding to the body of work that exists in the field already. This research will highlight the actors’ ability to use measurable forms of nonviolent rebellion that can create change even in a country that has seen nothing but perpetual violence.
Definitions

Violence vs. Nonviolence

Nonviolent insurrections are different from armed conflict in that they are intentionally carried out by individuals who have mobilized and who consciously abstain from weapons or see the ineffective nature of taking up arms. Actors within NVR movements use tactics outside the normal political process such as “formal statements, communications with a wider audience, group representations, noncooperation with social events, customs, & institutions, or actions by consumers” (Sharp, 1973, 8). Nonviolent conflict does have much in common with violent conflict however, differences between the two are determined by the means and outcomes of conflicts. Modern theoretical research notes that the success of NVR movements suggests that elite driven power is “fragile because it depends on many groups for reinforcement of its power sources” (Sharp, 1973, 8). Furthermore, nonviolent action “cuts off sources of power rather than simply combating the final power products of these sources” and suffocates a regime's authority (Sharp, 1973, 454). Contemporary research, from scholars Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephen, suggest that “nonviolent resistance presents fewer obstacles to moral and physical involvement, information and education, and participator commitment and ultimately creates higher levels of participation that contribute to enhanced resilience, a greater probability of tactical innovation, increased opportunity for civic disruption” (Chenoweth, 2011). Essentially what this means is that power given to authority lies in the hands of the people and is determined by the degree to which a subject wishes to obey these orders.
Review of Related Literature

I. History of Nonviolence

The dynamics of nonviolent struggle are always changing. Gene Sharp introduces the idea of nonviolent civil resistance as an operation that never ceases and is always developing (Sharp, 1973). This is the foundational research on which my thesis will rest. Sharp suggests that violence and nonviolence do have some similarities, but their division lies in war, combat, and guerilla warfare. Nonviolent action differs from violent means of conflict in the preparation, leadership, and openness of the operation. Similar variables that future studies such as Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth will apply in their research. In laying the groundwork for nonviolent resistance the operation simultaneously begins to weaken the opponents’ framework (i.e. institutions). Sharp does acknowledge that with any type of movement there are risks. Not only is the outcome of resistance not guaranteed, but it also comes with “insecurity and danger” to those who partake in resistance (Sharp, 52). Essentially civil resisters must have so much security in their cause that the casting off of fear will allow them to build confidence in the movement. Arguably this emotional variable may be harder to quantify. Donatella della Porta does attempt to use emotion as a factor in her research (della Porta, 2016). This also must be strategic because the kinds of NVR that are determined to be used must match the ability of the participants. This text helps us understand that nonviolence takes more bravery than violence in the sense that confidence, moral valor, and justice remain the most important weapons in the cause. Similar to violent resistance, a hierarchy of power exists in NVR. It is important to know the same dynamics of leadership still exist in civil resistance. The difference between the monolithic model of the common autocracy and civil resistance groups is the knowledge that the
leader has is spread throughout the movement. By spreading ideas to everyone not only is the movement more cohesive but it cannot be eliminated.

In their research, Celestino and Gleditsch apply empirical analysis to argue that protest and direct action promote democracy while reflecting on the neglect of conflict and popular direct action (Celestino, M.R., & Gleditsch, K.S., 2013). Their experiment spans roughly 100 years, which is about the same time frame as other studies (Lambach, 2016). A significant difference however is that previous studies have only focused on direct action when it accompanies transition, not exclusive to democratic government changes. They hypothesize that nonviolent action leads to democracy due to effects on dispersing power and increasing influences for comparison and concessions while linking incentives to a regional context. Their sections on nonviolent conviction and actor constellations discuss that violent campaigns have a limited pool of participants while non-violent direct actions have an expansive recruiting pool (Celestino, M.R., & Gleditsch, K.S., 2013). Essentially repression against a large group of nonviolent protests comes with logistical challenges and often disproportionate responses for crowd control. Results suggest that nonviolent campaigns make transitions to democracy more likely. Furthermore, transitions are more successful when an autocracy has democratic neighbors. The authors also aim to challenge the elite-driven perspective that democracy emerges from elites' pacts (i.e.: direct action from above), and introduce non-elite actors (i.e.: direct action from below) as significant role players in regime changes. This is different from other studies that focus on the basic success of democratic transitions from autocratic regimes (Bethke and Pickney, 2016). This adds another layer of research that can be found in newer studies such as those from Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (Chenoweth, 2011), George Lakey (Lakey, 2018), and the Engler Brothers (Engler & Engler, 2016).
Pelter Grahl Johnstad argues that civic transitions to democracy result in significantly stronger economic growth than transitions driven by power holders. He also claims that violence during transition periods increases the chance of post-transitional violence. The author reflects on past studies acknowledging the third and fourth waves as disregarding factors within the context of democratic prosperity. Johnstad cites past studies by Maria J. Stephen & Erika Chenoweth, Gene Sharp, and Karatnycky & Ackerman, suggesting that what is left to investigate is whether the successfully implemented government and economy remain constant over time according to the statistical significance of this finding (Johnstad, Petter Grahl. 2010). This means if the findings of the study are positive, newly installed democratic governments can develop.

Johnstad uses data from the World Bank and the Penn World Table to analyze the economic growth on a per capita basis (low growth; moderate to high growth). The findings suggest that civic and even mixed means transitions result in a higher score than transitions by powerholders. This seems to be the basic evidence that most studies are using and I am curious if other sources would be better suited for this application. Bethke and Pickney disregard the Freedom House Scores altogether and instead use Polity IV and the Economist Intelligence Unit as data for their study (Bethke and Pickney, 2016). Adam L. Resnick argues that post-transition investment increases foreign direct investment flows (Resnick, 2001). Does this mean that investors see the opportunity to vote as an opportunity for successful democratic transition or are investors looking to vote with their checkbook? A point of critique in the discussion is a question about the lack of discernible impact of transition violence on post-transition economic growth. The author cannot speak to why this is. The study becomes highly limited in part because of the data the author chooses to use but because the independent factor of foreign investment is overlooked. He does suggest that despite representing findings in several studies there is an
instinctive belief that violence will achieve the ideal result. He further recommends the support of educational programs and shares tactics of nonviolent civic action.

There are several steps in a transitional government's survival success. After their initial discharge of dictators and dictatorial regimes societies then enter into the transition step. Essentially Markus Bayer, Felix S. Bethke, and Daniel Lambach argue that the main components that drive nonviolent resistance translate to the democratic regime that follows (Lambach et al., 2020). In the study that follows, the authors question the effectiveness of NVR movements on the longevity of reciprocal democratic governments. In other words, the authors are looking at the shelf life of newly formed democracies. Their approach uses a systematic data collection that analyzes the entire process of democratic survival while using survival analysis to account for variables and confounding cases. This study differs from previous studies in that they account for some confounding factors and look at the level of democracy over some time instead of a fixed point in history. They also aim to explicitly link the path-dependent process of NVR to the prosperity of democratic regimes.

The authors distinguish between regimes that transitioned without a resistance campaign, transitions that were induced by violent campaigns, and transitions that were induced by NVR. This is applied using 112 examples. This is a much larger number than Celestino and Gleditsch which looked at a time frame instead of several examples (Celestino, M.R., & Gleditsch, K.S., 2013). In this study, their confounding variables include military legacy, previous instability, neighboring democracies, total population, and urbanization. They test the robustness of their findings by matching estimates. It will be important for this thesis to regard levels of democracy in the analysis since stability seems to be more appropriate in Afghanistan. One might question if one will follow the other. These authors are looking at the length of time that democracy will
survive and disregard its quality. Bethke and Pickney on the other hand used quality as a confounding factor in the time that democracy will last. They suggest that democracies that allocate certain freedoms to the people have a higher chance of long-term survival.

Bethke and Pickney use this study to expand on the previous research and focus on categories of democracies. In past studies, this has only been broken down into low level and moderate to high levels of democracy. The authors analyze more than just the degree of democracy but specific qualities and character. Of 101 samples Bethke and Pickney’s variables include research & elected officials, free & fair elections, freedom of expression, associational autonomy, and include citizenship. These are based on Teorell et al.’s five categories: trustworthy, reliable, impartial, uncorrupted, and competent government institutions. Teorell’s categories expanded to include a litany of factors that could influence the quality of government. In saying that this study either could not expand on all of these factors or has not been updated since the recent republishing of new factors. Teorell et al. subdivides these categories and includes religion, welfare, gender equality, education, etc. Notably, their study uses Johnstad’s research and Polity IV & Economist Intelligence Unit instead of the Freedom House data.

Their findings suggest that democratic regimes that transition from NVR have a more developed civil society post-transition. This is arguably reciprocal data from all the other previous studies. Furthermore, post-transitional democracies may also be better equipped to create democratic legacies. Although the authors find most of the variable dimensions unaffected in the final result, the presence of NVR pre-transition and increased freedom of expression post-transition were highly related. I would argue that the variable dimensions should be affected in the final result if democracy was successful. After this study, the authors would further research unsuccessful cases of democratization. This is important as a comparison technique that
has been used by other researchers. These authors might also want to look at their quality of life variable concerning successful autocracies. They also critique their estimation procedures and recommend applying different matching procedures. Finally, their variables take on a more quantitative relationship and perhaps should be expanded on their qualitative indicators. I did not plan on focusing quite so much on numbers/tables/graphs, but that could be important to reach an audience that wants more logo-focused analysis.

In the following study, the authors expand on previous research done by Bethke and Pickney arguing that the quality of democracy is also important. Lambach et. al argue that they “want full, consolidated, high quality democratic systems” and expect nonviolent resistance will be necessary to achieve this (Lambach et al., 2016). To achieve a high-quality democracy the authors require four balanced components between the government, opposition, security forces, and citizens. This is different from Bethke and Pickney and Teorell et al. which look at five categories of democratic prosperity. Because this is the first long term study, Lambach et. al estimate the success of nonviolent resistance campaigns using three different measures. These include democratic survival, accomplishing the two turnover tests, and quality of democracy.

Unlike other studies that are looking at human prosperity scores, the authors use the Kaplan-Meier survival function to estimate lifetime data of the proportion of regimes that fail after the transition. I would question if regression analysis can effectively analyze human subjects. Will this be a precise outcome, or will the results leave us with more estimations? This practice was used to test the survival functions of regimes with NVR campaigns as opposed to regimes without campaigns and those with violent campaigns. According to Figure 3.1, it seems that median survival is approximately 11 years with NVR campaigns lasting longer (Lambach et al., 2016). No other study has successfully found numerical values for democratic longevity.
Their studies also apply confounding factors in their comparison with NVR regimes and violent regimes. Independent variables include legislative restraints of the executive, freedom of association and expression, and political environment. After these deviation studies, the authors also looked into the probability of coups and their success rates. I find that this study is limited because there is a small subject pool despite the long-time frame; however, their concluding results would be well targeted to students and pro-democratic attitude activists.

Unlike other researchers such as Lambach et al, Bethke and Pickney, and Johnstad who see the transition to democracy as steps that are followed through the course of nonviolent resistance, Donatella della Porta’s research suggests the existence of an in between (della Porta, Donatella. 2016). The following research analyzes different forms of resistance and their effects on forming politics in the transition to democracy. The author will also apply her findings to democratic consolidation and deepening. This is more like Bethke and Pickney as della Porta will look at the quality of democracy.

She aims to differentiate between the impact of different actors during the transition and how this affects the qualities of forming democratic regimes. Her research differs from previous studies that broaden the quantitative scope of democratic regimes. She will not apply counting factors that relate to the success or failures of the democratization process. Della Porta will investigate how protestors can develop their resources during times of action. She further expands on her previous research that suggests protests are transformative in the process of democratization, but not necessarily the reason why a democratic transition begins. Her study further diverges from other studies as she will not differentiate between bottom up and top down formed democracies. She had singled out cases of democratization in which protestors interact
with elites and utilize protesting as a bargaining tool. She suggests that protests steer change but do not make a change.

Della Porta uses a contentious political approach in lieu of focusing on structural determinants, thus allowing her study to focus on the mechanisms between structure and action (della Porta, Donatella. 2016). She also applies comparative studies and historical analysis to her findings. Most interestingly she also used oral histories of activists contributing an emotional aspect to her evidence. It is unclear if other researchers have been able to measure emotional variables. She uses the term “eventful democratization” to define intense protests that lead to the dismantlement of authoritarian regimes (della Porta, Donatella. 2016). Two notable paths that the author points out arise from opportunities that come from the alignment of elites. “Participated pacts” could jeopardize a civil society’s change at democratization in the event repressive regimes block the opportunity for a self-association, while also creating a situation of insider knowledge. This is similar to Resnick’s critique of the impact of investors on newly formed democracies. Essentially her research focuses on the actors' agency, giving particular leverage to their ability to influence external reality and in turn, create an effect on existence. Some of the independent variables that she suggests influence the democratic transition include military position, structural influence, and policy. In conclusion, her study finds that socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions do inform the choice of actors in protests. It is imperative that this thesis formulates ideas and analysis that have worked for Afghanistan or it could be interpreted as foreign intervention and not beneficial foreign aid.

In their publication, “Preventing Mass Atrocities: From a Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) to a Right to Assist (RtoA) Campaigns of Civil Resistance,” authors Peter Ackerman and Hardy Merriman propose a shift in the approach to preventing mass atrocities. Whereas previous
publications note the individual government’s responsibility to prevent human rights atrocities, the Responsibility to Protect is a concept that “calls upon the international community to take collective action to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.” Ultimately it places the responsibility on states to protect their populations, and if they fail to do so, then this allows for intervention by the international community.

Ackerman and Merriman do suggest that the Right to Protect approach is limited in its effectiveness, but recommend leaning on the Right to Assist which emphasizes “empowering and supporting civil resistance movements in countries facing potential mass atrocities” (Ackerman, 2009). The model proposes providing assistance to these movements, both internally and externally to strengthen their ability to resist oppressive regimes peacefully. This approach ultimately favored the role of civil society and grassroots movements in safeguarding human rights.

II. Afghanistan’s Political Climate

Texts represent the history of Afghanistan as followers: its origin story, religious history, and tribal influence. These elements will be confounding variables that will build on nonviolence studies. Although its rulers were largely Pashtun, the country was highly diverse with no single group holding a majority. Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and Hazaras were the largest groups, with micro groups such as Baluch, Pasahi, and Nuristanis (UN Mapping, 1978). The state was overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim and recognized Hanafi and the source of law. At this time the government was also largely centralized. Historically this is representative of many nations in the 16th century but accounts for a large number of ethnic strife amongst the present-day tribes in Afghanistan. A series of rulers refined as constitutional monarchs followed by assassinations, military coups, and fragile systems claiming a “New Democracy” during the “Decade of
Democracy.” These did not represent high quality democracies. The new government dominated by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan was divided into factions: the Parcham and the Khalq. Afghanistan’s allegiances were also divided, with ties to the US allied neighbor Pakistan and a military trained and equipped by the USSR (UN Mapping, 1978). The connections to tribes, claims of Democracy, and influence of allied countries shaped the country’s divided foundations.

Rubin suggests the interdependence that the state had was on the US/Soviet rivalry, during the Communist coup and the Soviet invasions, and the way that Pakistan sent aid from the United States and Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan. Once all of these assets had been removed from the country it was highly unstable with a “floodtide of weapons, cash, and contraband” that could risk finding their way outside of the state. A “failed state” with a humanitarian crisis framed the charitable nature of Afghanistan, post 2001. Countries, such as Pakistan and the United States, began to use this country as a source of potential manipulation and exploitation (Rubin, Barnett R., 1995). A month after 9/11, Bush planned to work towards “a stable Afghanistan,” with stability dependent on unknown factors. Around this time Afghanistan ranked at the bottom of all measures of human welfare, crippled by both violence and polio. Survival correlated with illicit activities. This is shown in Table 1, sourced from UNOCHA. During the time of Afghanistan’s tribal divide (post 1992) Pakistan saw a new opportunity to secure Afghanistan from the Taliban.

In 1994 the Taliban was a group that appeared in the South (Rubin, Barnett R., 1995). Pakistan saw this as an opportunity to control the Pashtuns under the Taliban: a purely religious group with total disregard for nationalist demands. Largely rural and “neighboring Pashtun-populated areas of Pakistan” proved to be a rich source of recruitment for the jihad previously
From this rural madrasas (schools) provided education when the country's educational system collapsed. As seen in previous studies on determinants of a successful democracy, education is necessary (Celestino, M.R., & Gleditsch, K.S., 2013). Although this is a positive attribute to the state’s prosperity, it meant that during this time the Taliban was mostly supported by students. Essentially the Taliban’s attitude toward a centralized government is not in the name of tradition but as a result of foreign ideological trauma. The madrasas helped to cultivate the Taliban while the religious motivation was supported and easily mobilized by the network of mosques. The Taliban’s birth, networks, and opposition formed key leaders and transformed events in the Taliban’s history. This is critical to understanding their tactics. It is noted that Afghan allies admired the resistance to modernity because they thought that these revolutionaries were ahead of their time when they were still recovering from the past (Rubin, Barnett R., 1995).

The new question begs “how quickly and how violently, and under whose sponsorship, to force or invite them into modernity?” (Rubin, Barnett R., 1995). This will be an essential question to be answered in my thesis. This can be broken down into three parts. First: how quickly and how violently. Violence, as seen by the 100+ years of failed revolution in Afghanistan is never quick. Current research on nonviolence spans roughly 100 years (Celestino, M.R., & Gleditsch, K.S., 2013; Lambach et al, 2016). Under whose sponsorship? Yes, foreign aid will be vital in helping move nonviolent campaigns forward. Funding, time, and organization will need to be sponsored, but be wary of foreign investors who are not looking for a stake in democracy. But who decides or rather who will force or invite them into modernity? The people of Afghanistan. Foreign intervention from Russia, the US, Pakistan, or any other nation will not breed a stabilized state. It will be important that this thesis clarifies the difference between
foreign aid and foreign intervention and the effect on the outcome of violent or nonviolent campaigns.

Modern warfare, aid from foreign powers, and the participation of Islamist activists transformed the mujahidin movement. The aid had flowed into the movement in the late 1970s but around 1981 the aid began to “have decisive political effects” (Rubin, Barnett R., 1995, 104). The Kabul-based authority of the 1970s lacked the organizational structure that could lead to a powerful movement and maintained heavy dependence on a society that had no link to political parties or the market. The Islamist activist, on the other hand, had established bases in Pakistan and “a network of underground activists inside Afghanistan” (Rubin, Barnett R., 1995, 105). At this point the mujahideen did not have enough representatives to start a successful movement. They were also divided into separate factions and different ethnicities. There is no way that they could unify into the successful backbone that supports larger coalitions. The author maintains that it was the tradition of jihad that provided the basis for organization and mobilized people. This same influence can create new organizations of nonviolent civil resistance. During this time women were also praised by the jihad. Intellectuals, religious leaders, women, and children were all participants in the revolts against the governments. A sense of unity has been shown to exist amongst the historically divided tribes of the state. Previous research on successful nonviolent campaigns encourages mobilization but enforces the need for organized and unified campaign building.

There were two major obstacles that the resistance faced when forming a national leadership. The political vacuum and the social fragmentation left by the old regimes, and the necessity of forming that national leadership on foreign soil. Afghan leaders were dependent on Pakistan for the protection of their leaders and provided easy access to international networks of
communication. Pakistan also played a vital role in providing insurgents with arms from sources in the country during the time of Pakistani support for Hizb-i-Islami and other mujahidin groups in the 1980s. Because resistance fronts were relatively unorganized and none of the revolts led to an established political leadership.

III. Afghanistan's Historical Antecedents

This thesis will also aim to answer how Afghanistan can maintain peace and move forward with political and ideological development. Arguably Marxism has influenced Afghanistan and was most successful between 1973-1992. The “Young Afghans” movement wanted a “new culture” and a leader that would help modernize the country (Magnus and Baby, 1998). Mahmud Tarzi helped to spread Islamic modernism. He suggested that there was no incompatibility between nationalism and modernism. During the time of King Amanullah, Tarzi became a foreign minister and created progressive social measures that highly involved women’s rights. Amanullah however, did not follow his father’s cautious approach which led to the failure of the first reformist period. Under King Zahir Shah, who came to power in 1933, a Pashtun led monarchy returned to power. Research on successful democratic transitions can credit their social rights efforts but point to their failures as an ununified centralized government. This was the first that illustrates the wide divergence amongst Afghans concerning social reform. The country still held many democratic values that were the foundations of the liberalist democratic movement (mostly made up of students from the university in Kabul) and the views of Amanullah of the 1920s. The Pashtun movement on the other hand began to become disregarded as “servants of imperialism” and not “servants of God” (Magnus and Naby, 105). After a few years of Marxist ideology ruling the state, the USSR occupied the nation. The Kabul regime could survive only Soviet Aid alone. Without the USSR, the Marxist parties would never have
seized power at all. Although the Taliban did not come into power until after the Marxist were overthrown and after the collapse of the Communist regime, this not only contests the claim that modernism and nationalism were dependent on one another but the chance that the Taliban was at once a people’s party.

The war against the Soviet Union introduced the world to the “mujahid”. Muslims who fought against non-Muslims in honor of Islam were considered “holy warriors” in a Western context or “defenders of the faith” (Magnus and Naby, 1998). The Eastern perspective respects the jihad as defensive and not aggressive. At the end of the 20th century, Muslims who came from Algeria, Chechnya, and Bosnia could not be unified under one group. An essential element to any successful movement. The concept of jihad implied defensive action and not brutal conquest. This suggests that members of the jihad extend to political activists, writers, or women who helped to care for mujahidin bands, and not just the men who fight for as interpreted in the West.

This text further describes how the mujahidin split into three parts: the political branch, field commanders, and the intellectuals and administrators of the mujahidin. Despite being largely undeveloped, the mujahideen of Afghanistan successfully drove out the Soviets and their native protectors. It is also noted that this group has paid the heaviest price of all for “destruction, death, disabled bodies, and disunity” (Magnus and Naby, 1998, 157). The generation of warriors between 1970 and the 1990s were never able to recover from their losses. This thesis looks at the roots of instability and the mindset of the Mujahidin pre and post war and the influence on unified movements applied to the future of civil resistance.

In 2002 many argued that reconciliation would only be possible if the Taliban separated itself from Al Qaeda. Rubin notes that, Afghanistan had a “dramatic increase in life expectancy
and decrease in child/maternal mortality rates, elections for President parliament and provincial councils, distributed millions of cell phones, construction of office and commercial towers, roads, and airports, and the spread of education” (Rubin, 2002, 2). Despite all this progress, Afghanistan still relied on foreign aid for 2/3s of its budget and all developing projects as of 2002. Rumsfeld himself said that there would be no negotiated solution. Evidence later showed that the power in Afghanistan came from operational and financial links to the US and not from legal authorities. It also discusses the players involved not limited to Pakistan, Iran, China, US, and the CIA. Although this thesis is largely focused on Afghanistan this paper will acknowledge why the country has made no forward progress towards political stability before arguing for methods of peace.

Rubin divides conflict into categories “ethnic conflict, failed state, humanitarian emergency, genocide, civil war, and/or transnational war” (Rubin, 2002, 100). The author assumes that reducing violent conflict is possible and that it starts by reframing and the responses to how it develops. Conflict prevention itself can strengthen governments especially when it emphasizes non-violent (democratic) transitions. The author claims that violent conflict is more likely to coalesce in impoverished, poorly educated, and polarized societies with weakened resources that can be looted (Rubin, 2002, 19). This suggests that it is not the actors that favor violence, but the structural mechanisms that are in place that lean towards violent means. This thesis will agree with this claim and follow with examples of the structural inequalities that exist in Afghan political, civil, and socioeconomic society but will disagree with the ideas of systemic prevention, structural prevention, and operational prevention. This cannot be considered nonviolent alternatives as ‘prevention’ can often be double-sided with good intentions countering non-impartial external actors and the chance at an ‘end state.’ This approach looks for
management and potentially not nonviolent action. Unfortunately, the author does see that as a project rather than a reality. This source will act as a perspective of where potential opposition might sit on the success of nonviolent outcomes in Afghanistan—as more of a political phenomenon.

Following the US elections of 2008, newly elected President Barack Obama was tasked with choosing between escalating a longstanding conflict or abandoning Afghanistan as had his predecessors previously done after the overthrow of the Communist government in the early 1990s. Khushal Arsala and Stephen Zunes discusses the United States’ involvement in Afghanistan over the past three decades and highlights the consequences of U.S. policies during the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s, when the U.S. supported extremist elements in the resistance against the Soviet Union (Arsala, et al., 2009). The text explains that this support led to the radicalization of Afghan society and the rise of groups like the Taliban.

The authors argue that the United States must learn from mistakes made in the past and create resolution by exploring new methods in an effort to avoid repeating them. Furthermore, they stress that Afghanistan’s future should be determined by its own people and that “short-term alliances should not be prioritized over long term stability” (Arsala, et al., 2009). Ultimately U.S. involvement in Afghanistan has contributed to the country’s devastation and calls for a more thoughtful approach to addressing the ongoing tragic situation in the region.
Methods

This exploratory research aims to examine the main aspects of Afghanistan’s civil resistance movements. Ultimately the deductive and mixed methods approach will create a clearer picture of the progress of nonviolent resistance movements in the State. This approach will use the following qualitative and quantitative methods to highlight the agency of the collective participants: case studies, interviews, diary studies, qualitative and quantitative data organization, scholarly articles, and discourse analysis.

Measuring agency case studies will allow for analysis of even the smallest acts of resistance. In doing so this method will create a multifaceted understanding of real life examples. Because there have only been a few records of complete and holistic case studies on this topic, many examples will be embedded and examine just some aspects of cases. These studies will look at subjects, events, and organizations to analyze power dynamics and gather data that will then be organized into data visualizations. The use of multiple and collective case studies will allow the research to pick up on any themes or patterns that have not previously been identified.

Interviews will present primary sources of opinion, behavior, and experiences in social movements both in and out of the country. The aim is to create a more in depth understanding of the personal phenomenon of violence and nonviolence in Afghanistan. Using semi-structured interviews will allow for a general plan for what will be asked but generate a more open and fluid discussion and response. Questions will follow a predetermined thematic framework but allow for flexibility. When interviews are in short supply I will gather a nuanced understanding of the political experiences from diaries and primary journals. Arguably this choice may seem less favorable than asking direct questions and receiving immediate feedback. On one hand, the diary and journal authors may intend for one meaning while the research will find another. It will
be important to find resources that do not differ substantially for generalizability and validity of final results.

Graphs will organize the qualitative and quantitative evidence of methods, tactics, and movements. This will include the number of participants and note whether it was a success or failure. Due to the fact the data is still limited on this topic, data software that runs large data sets like Tableau will be less helpful than software like Google My Maps that can turn unrelated sources of data into coherent and visual insights on a smaller scale. For this research I will categorize the data collected by theme, patterns, and key variables related to nonviolent resistance. I will employ the data organization of the Nonviolent International’s Tactics Database (Figure 1). The nonprofit, spearheaded by Michael Beer, created this chart to organize Gene Sharp’s original list of 198 tactics, but has since grown to a collection of over 300 nonviolent tactics, or discrete methods deployed to achieve a limited goal (Nonviolence International, 2023).

Several analytical frameworks have been used to analyze civil resistance. In this thesis I will include theories on power dynamics, social movements, strategic nonviolent action, frames and discourses, dynamics of repression, democratization and regime change, and comparative case studies. The framework of power dynamics focuses on the distribution of power within a society or opposing groups. It examines how power is wielded, challenged, and transformed through nonviolent resistance. Theorists may use this framework through a lens of sources of power, power asymmetry, and power relationships. Social movement theory provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of collective nonviolent action. It explores how social movements form, mobilize, and sustain themselves. This can also include the strategies and tactics movements employ. Applying this framework helps analyze the structure,
organization, and dynamics of movements. Frames and discourse examine the construction and dissemination of narratives that shape public understanding and support for nonviolent resistance. The discourse analysis in this paper will provide an in-depth conversation on nonviolent revolution, political conditions, and the history of Afghanistan. This analytical framework will create a deeper understanding of written or spoken information concerning the social context of the State. Discourse analysis will also be used to examine individual statements, identify cultural references, and identify linguistic references. This method could be highly critiqued since no writing was self-translated and I did not travel to the location to directly speak with Afghans who are leading the movement. Using critical analysis will allow the research to check who, what, and how the characters in that discourse fragments are direct and indirect speech. By framing elements of the data collection around the dynamics of repression this thesis will also look at the response of those in power. This will allow this thesis to analyze the strategies and tactics used by governments, authorities, or opponents and examine the impact of repression on movement dynamics, including the response of developing resistance. Democratization and regime change will help to explore the relationship between nonviolent resistance and political change, particularly in contexts of authoritarian or repressive regimes. Evidence gathered will support the claim that nonviolent resistance can contribute to processes of democratization and regime change, and acknowledge its ability to create small shifts in power structures. Lastly, comparative case studies involve analyzing multiple cases of nonviolent resistance movements to identify patterns, commonalities, and differences. Using this approach allows for cross-contextual analysis, highlighting factors that contribute to success or failure across different movements within Afghanistan. Keeping in mind that these frameworks are not
mutually exclusive, and this research will combine elements from multiple frameworks to gain a more comprehensive understanding of civil resistance.
Figure 1: Categories Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Penalty/Confrontational (coercive)</th>
<th>Reward/Constructive (persuasive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saying</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Acts of Expression)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>Communicative actions to criticize or coerce (example: a march)</td>
<td>Communicative actions to reward or persuade (example: a teach-in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not Doing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Acts of Omission)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncooperation</td>
<td>Refusal to engage in expected behavior by acts of omission (examples: strikes and boycotts)</td>
<td>Halting or calling off a planned or ongoing action to reward or persuade (example: suspending a strike)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doing and Creating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Acts of Commission)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive intervention</td>
<td>Direct action that confronts another party to stop, disrupt, or change their behavior (example: a blockade)</td>
<td>Creative intervention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

Nonviolent conflict resolution has been gaining momentum as a viable alternative to violent conflict resolution in Afghanistan. Nonviolent conflict resolution is a process of resolving disagreements, disputes, or conflicts between parties. It involves finding peaceful solutions through dialogue, negotiation, mediation, or other coercive means. The goal of nonviolent conflict resolution is to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome that addresses the interests and concerns of all parties involved. Civil resistance involves using nonviolent actions, strategies, and tactics to challenge regimes, unjust systems, or other sources of authority. It is a form of action taken by a group of people seeking social, political or economic change.

Nonviolent conflict resolution has been used in Afghanistan in various contexts, including community-level disputes, intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts, and negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban. These efforts have involved a range of actors, including civil society organizations, the Afghan government, and international organizations, and have taken place at different levels of society. The following findings will be organized into three sections: Acts of Expression, Acts of Omission, and Acts of Commission, and by date according to the time periods of the regimes in power. It is important to note that acts of expression, acts of omission, and acts of commission are not mutually exclusive. In many nonviolent resistance movements, these types of actions are combined or used in conjunction to maximize their impact and effectiveness. The choice of tactics depends on the specific context, goals, and strategies of the nonviolent movement.
I. Acts of Expression

Acts of expression involve actively communicating a message or expressing dissent through various means, such as peaceful protests, rallies, sit-ins, speeches, art, music, puppeteering, or other forms of creative expression (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). These actions aim to raise awareness, mobilize public support, and challenge the status quo by highlighting injustices or advocating for change. Acts of expression can be powerful tools for nonviolent resistance, as they attract attention, inspire solidarity, and put pressure on those in power to address grievances.

A. Afghanistan 1977-1992

This period was marked by the Soviet Afghan War and its aftermath. During this time various protests and demonstrations took place in Afghanistan, expressing opposition to the Soviet intervention and later the communist government. Afghan civilians, students, and activists took to the streets to voice their dissent and demand an end to foreign occupation. Afghan artists, writers, musicians, and poets played a significant role in expressing dissent and resistance during this time. They used their creative works to convey messages of national identity, resilience, and opposition to the Soviet backed regime. Poems, songs, and artwork became powerful mediums to inspire and unite people against the occupation. Despite strict censorship and limited freedom of expression, underground publications emerged as a means to disseminate alternative viewpoints and critiques of the government. These publications often operated covertly and shared stories, poems, essays, and news that were censored by the authorities.
The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, RAWA, which was established in 1977 continued its activities during this period, advocating for women’s rights, education, and democracy. They documented human rights abuses, published underground magazines, and organized protests, expressing resistance and highlighting the plight of Afghan women. It is important to note that most of RAWA’s activities have since taken place underground due to the repressive nature of the current Taliban regime and the risks associated with their work, however the group continues to be outspoken about their humanitarian assistance and documentation of human rights abuses. They continue to advocate for women’s rights, awareness and education.

Rawshan Jamil, an Afghan poet, composed powerful verses that expressed the pain and resilience of the Afghan people during the Soviet-Afghan War. Her poetry highlights the suffering caused by the conflict and conveyed messages of hope, unity, and resilience. Khaliliullah Khalili, a classical poet laureate and Afghan native, sought asylum in foreign countries following the communist coup in April of 1978. He was a prolific writer and wrote much of his powerful poetry about the war in his native land. His celebrated works include “Aškhā wa Ḥūnhā” ("Tears And Blood"), composed during the Soviet occupation, and "Ayyār-e az Ḥorāsān" ("Hero of Khorasan") (Khalīlī, 1981).

The Artists' Union was established in 1980 and “includes six affiliated unions - Film, Theatre, Music, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. It has 3,000 members and is responsible for defending the rights of artists, improving their knowledge and coordinating performances and other arts activities" (Hakimyar,
At the time of their genesis, the USSR backed Afghan Army, confiscated their premises and they lost all their property, however. In 1982 the Union held a film festival in Kabul. The Artists Union was part of a movement in Kabul, known as the “Kabul Spring.” This period was characterized by increasing intellectual and cultural activities despite the ongoing conflict. Afghan intellectuals continued to organize literary gatherings, art exhibitions, and public discussion. In turn the Kabul Spring provided species for creative expression and the exchange of dissenting ideas.

Independent radio stations operated from neighboring countries, such as Pakistan, providing an alternative source of information and dissenting voices. Furthermore, radio broadcasts allowed Afghans to access news, commentary, and discussions that challenged the official narratives and provided a platform for hearing different perspectives. Radio Television Afghanistan, the state-run broadcasting organization played a role in expressing Afghan nationalism and resistance during the Soviet-Afghan War. Despite government censorship, RTA aired patriotic songs that promoted Afghan culture, identity, and the spirit of resistance against the soviet occupation. “The Afghanistan service began broadcasting just months after the Soviet invasion of the country in 1980, with a daily 15-minute Dari language radio program. Two years later, the service launched a 30-minute Pashto language radio broadcast into the region” (VOA, 2015). During this time there were large Soviet efforts to jam the broadcast, however millions of Afghans continued to tune in for the latest news.
The 3 Hoot Uprising refers to a week of major civil unrest in Kabul in the 1980s. The resistance occurred for two months following the Soviet Intervention. “Protests and rioting against the Babrak karmal-led Democratic Republic of Afghanistan government was triggered” by a series of mass arrests by the regime (Amtstutz, 1994). In response students at Kabul University were active in expressing their opposition to the Soviet occupation. They organized protests, demonstrations, and strikes, demanding an end to the foreign intervention and establishment of a free and democratic Afghanistan (Branigin, 1980).

B. Afghanistan 1992-1996

Acts of expression continued despite the challenging circumstances in Afghanistan from 1992 to 1996 during Mujahidin rule. The use of these tactics demonstrated the resilience of Afghan journalists, artists, musicians, poets, and organizations in expressing dissent, promoting culture, and advocating for freedom and human rights during a period marked by civil war and Taliban rule.

The period from 1992 to 1996 witnessed the emergence of independent print media outlets in Afghanistan. Newspapers such as “Kabul Weekly,” “Payam-e-Mujahid,” and “Afghanistan Times” provided platforms for journalists, writers, and intellectuals to express their views, report on current events, and engage in critical discussion on social, political, cultural issues. These examples demonstrate how Afghans persisted in expressing their thoughts, emotions, and experiences through various forms of artistic expression, media outlets, and oral traditions during a period marked by Taliban rule. The Afghanistan Times, an English-language newspaper, provided a platform for
activism and expression through its coverage. The paper has upheld the principles of freedom of speech and freedom of press by providing a space for diverse voices and opinions to be heard (Afghanistan Times, 2023). It has facilitated public discourse and played a role in raising awareness about human rights abuses and social injustices in Afghanistan. It has reported on violations and shed light on inequities and access to justice. The publication has covered “activism and initiatives of various activist and civil society organizations” throughout the region (Afghanistan Times, 2023). It has reported on protests, advocacy campaigns, and community-driven projects amplifying the voices and efforts of those working for positive change in the country.

C. 1996-2001

Afghanistan activism through acts of expression continued to diversify, demonstrating the creativity, resilience, and activism of Afghan individuals and communities in utilizing different mediums to express their thoughts, experiences, and aspirations as a democratic nation.

Despite restrictions imposed by the Taliban, Afghan music continued to thrive as an expression of cultural identity and resistance. Musician such as Farhad Darya and others composed songs that convey messages of hope, unity, and resilience, providing solace and inspiration to the Afghan people. Darya has played a significant role in preserving and promoting Afghan music. He has worked to revitalize traditional Afghan music genres, incorporate Afghan instruments into his competitions and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Afghanistan through his performances. Darya has been an advocate for peace
and reconciliation in Afghanistan. He has used his music to spread messages of unity, tolerance, and understanding among different ethnic and religious groups within the country. His efforts to address social issues in Afghanistan through his music have touched upon poverty, war, displacement, and the struggles faced by everyday people. His song “Kabul Jan” (Beloved Kabul) was the first song to be played in Kabul when the Taliban were forced to leave the city in late 2001 (Quazi, 2002).

Despite challenges faced during this period, Afghan artists continued to express themselves through various art forms. Artists such as Mohammas Yousef Asefi, created paintings and sculptures that reflected their experiences, emotions, and perspectives on the social and political changes happening in Afghanistan. According to a 2002 New York Times article, when the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 1996, they banned the depiction of living creatures in paintings and drawings. This included people and animals. “For Dr. Asefi, a physician and a prominent Afghan artist, it was a creative death sentence. He was forbidden to paint the horses and other animals that animate his landscapes, and hundreds of his paintings hanging in the National Gallery, the Foreign Ministry and the presidential palace were also in danger of being destroyed. Over the five years of Taliban rule, he painstakingly altered 120 oil paintings, blotting out the offending creatures with watercolor,” (Landler, 2002). His alterations were not always subtle and in some cases the effort to obscure living creatures was comically obvious (Landler, 2002).

D. 2001-2021
The rise of social media platforms has provided Afghans with new avenues for expression and activism. Afghan citizens, activists, and organizations have used platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to raise awareness, share stories, organize campaigns, and advocate for various causes, including human rights, women’s empowerment, and peace.

The Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) was formed in the early 2000s and played a crucial role in promoting independent journalism and freedom of press in Afghanistan. Journalists associated with AIJA expressed dissent, reported on human rights violations, and provided alternative narratives during the turbulent period of civil war and Taliban rule. AIJA prides itself on being the first inclusive association which follows all regional adopted standards and principles of journalistic writing. “The majority of Afghan journalists come from all provinces of Afghanistan, media outlets, different [ethnicities] and regions with diversified perspectives have been involved in establishment and management” (AIJA, 2022). 2001 was the first time, when Afghan journalists were put under pressure, censored, restricted and threatened by “warriors involved in power” (AIJA 2002). Under the influence and power of Jihadi commanders and government officials, none of the current defending organizations existed, but with the help of independent Afghan revolutionaries and international media outlets AIJA was established.

Following the incidents of violence against women, including the killing of prominent Afghan women’s right activist Farkhuna Malikzada in 2015, the hashtag #EnoughIsEnough gained traction on social media. Farkhunsa was falsely
accused of burning the Quran by a local cleric. The accusation quickly spread and led to an angry mob confronting the young teacher. She was beaten, torn of her clothes, and subjected to sustained and brutal assault. The footage, captured on phone cameras, was widely circulated. “Farkhunda went from being a figure of loathing to a martyr. More than 1,000 people gathered for her funeral. In an unprecedented act for a country where burials are often male-only events, her coffin was carried to the grave by women” (Kargar, 2015).

In 2017, Afghan women launched the #MyRedLine campaign on social media to advocate against violence and harassment. MyRedLine “aims to bring the voices of the Afghan people -- particularly their RedLines during the ongoing peace talks between the Taliban, and the United State and Afghan Government -- to the fore. The activist group uses their digital platform to preserve the achievements of the past two decades while allowing people to vocalize their own limitations in terms of making peace with a group who has caused so much death and destruction in their country” (MyRedLine, 2021).

Street art and graffiti have emerged as forms of expression in Afghanistan's urban centers. Artists have used public spaces to convey messages, depict Afghan culture, raise awareness about social issues, and create visually striking murals that engage the public. The Kabul Street Art Project, founded in 2014, aims to transform public spaces in Kabul through vibrant murals and graffiti. Local and international artists collaborate to create colorful and thought-provoking artworks on buildings, often with themes of hope and resilience. “Contemporary street artists in Kabul use the ruins of blasted city walls
and bombed-out buildings as their canvas, slowly transforming the city from the shell of a warzone to an open-air art gallery. However, the goal of this gallery is not simply beautifying the city’s rubble-strewn streets but actually inciting social change for Afghanistan” (Borgen Project, 2021). Street art in the region frequently addresses political and social issues.

Artists use their works to critique corruption, violence, war, and the impact of conflict on Afghan society. “One such group calls itself the ArtLords. The organization consists of volunteers and artists seeking a future for their battered homeland. The ArtLords believe that while there are many things it cannot control, it can begin to alter the country’s narrative and express the people’s desire for peace. By visually bringing social issues such as women’s empowerment, terrorism and corruption to a public space where people cannot ignore them, artists hope to change the future of Afghanistan” (Borgen Project, 2021).

E. 2021-Present

Street art and graffiti can serve as acts of resistance against oppressive forces and cultural restrictions. Artists who challenge societal norms advocate for marginalized groups and assert their right to freedom of expression. The appealing nature of this type of resistance has gained visibility beyond the physical spaces they occupy. Artists and art enthusiasts share photographs and stories of these artworks on social media platforms, showcasing their talent and creativity emerging from the Afghan street art scene. Shamsia Hassani is a prominent Afghan street artist known for her captivating murals and graffiti. She
gained international traction for her powerful artwork that often depicts strong female figures in her pieces, challenging gender stereotypes, and advocating for women’s rights. According to her website “her art gives Afghan women a different face, a face with power, ambitions, and willingness to achieve goals. The woman character used in her artworks portrays a human being who is proud, loud, and can bring positive changes to people’s lives. During the last decade of the [post-war] era in Afghanistan, Shamsia’s works have brought in a huge wave of color and appreciation to all the women in the country” (Hassani, 2023).

The Afghan film industry has played a significant role in promoting social activism and raising awareness. Filmmakers have produced movies that tackle a wide range of social issues, including women’s rights, human rights, education, cultural preservation, and the impact of war and conflict on society. These films serve as a medium to shed light on these issues, ignite discussions, and challenge injustices. The movie making industry in the region has been instrumental in highlighting the struggles, achievements, and aspirations of Afghan women. Films such as “Osama” and “A Thousand Splendid Suns” have brought attention to the gender inequities in Afghanistan. These films humanized the experiences of ordinary Afghans by portraying their daily lives. In presenting authentic narratives these movies challenged stereotypes and pushed for Afghan voices to be heard and understood globally.
II. Acts of Omission

Acts of omission involve intentional abstention or refusal to comply with certain actions or demands as a form of resistance. It is a deliberate choice to withhold participation in activities that support or perpetuate an unjust system. This can include refusing to “pay taxes, boycotting goods or services, or engaging in civil disobedience by reducing to follow certain laws or regulations” (Sharp, 2013). It is important to note that acts of omission can have different motivations and consequences, ranging from deliberate nonviolent resistance to instances of negligence of apathy. The significance and ethical implications of acts of omission depend on intentions and impacts.

A. Afghanistan 1977-1992

During the Soviet occupation, acts of omission included the deliberate noncooperation with Soviet authorities by Afghan civilians. This involved refusing to collaborate with the occupying forces, avoiding participation in pro-soviet initiatives, or abstaining from activities that supported the Soviet regime (Payind, 1998). Ultimately one-third of Afghanistan’s pre-war population fled the country.

Many Afghans were outraged by the new reforms that served to “ignite strong opposition from most of the deeply traditional and Islamic population. The security of rural women, for example, often depended on a sizable dowry, which was significantly reduced under new marriage laws. The land reforms, which were meant to help small farmers, were opposed by many for having alienated them from their former landowners, on whom they had always relied for help in
growing and selling their crops. A number of disenfranchised landowners along with many religious leaders…left the country” (Rubin, 1995).

Many Afghans had chosen to omit their support for the new government led by Babrak Karmal, by refusing to join the government or take up positions in the administration. Other dissidents helped lead the charge against the Kabul government, including numerous commanders in the Afghan mountains, like Ahmad Shah Masoud. The Peshawar Seven, however, who would grab the world’s attention, partly because the government of Pakistan, the host to most rebels and refugees and the foreign journalists writing about them, chose to recognize their parties as the only legitimate ones (Rubin, 1995). The Peshawar Seven, also known as the Peshawar Seven Alliance or Mujahideen Seven, was a coalition of Afghan mujahideen factions formed in 1985 during the war. The alliance was created with the goal of coordinating efforts to stop recognition of the Soviet backed pseudo-government. “Opposition to the Soviet occupation and its puppet government coalesced around the mujahideen—an Arab term for those waging jihad. Most of the resistance was affiliated with one of the “Peshawar Seven” mujahideen commanders’ networks, based in Peshawar, Pakistan. The Peshawar Seven depended to varying degrees on support…which provided funding and sanctuary”. This refusal indicates their non-recognition of the regime's legitimacy.

During the Soviet occupation, various boycotts took place as acts of resistance against the new government. Students and teachers boycotted schools and educational institutions to protest against the soviet imposed education
reforms. These reforms aimed to indoctrinate Marxist ideology into the curriculum which was met with resistance. Many students and educators chose to stay away from schools leading to disrupted educational activities and a significant decline in attendance. During the “Children's Revolt” many high school and university students were boycotting classes. “The uprising reached a peak April 29, 1980 at Kabul University with the girls taking the lead, taunting the boys to join them against the Babrak government and the Soviets. It spread from there to nearby high schools, where groups marched and Afghan schoolgirls pulled off their scarves and veils and shouted "You wear these!” (Auerbach, 1980). The boycotts aimed to undermine occupation forces, challenge the regime’s legitimacy, and assert the Afghan people’s desire for self-determination and freedom.

B. Afghanistan 1992-1996

Acts of omission were used as forms of non-cooperation and resistance against the Taliban regime. Afghans who opposed the Mujahideen would intentionally omit collaboration or support for their politics, institutions, or directives. Many refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Mujahideen regime and denied any form of endorsement or acceptance. Frequently this looked like non-compliance with their new laws, refusal to participate in government, or disregarding their authority. During this time individuals refused to comply with the Mujahideen’s restrictions on cultural expressions. This included continuing to engage in banned artistic activities, oftentimes in underground or clandestine settings. The Mujahideen’s severe restrictions on women’s rights led to acts of
omission on compliance with discriminatory laws, such as the ban on education for girls or restrictions on women’s mobility. Local government structures continued to exist where the Taliban exerted control in 1995. Communities operated based on local systems and traditions, and particularly refused to participate or acknowledge the Taliban’s harsh interpretation of Islamic Law. Many refused to participate in or acknowledge the legitimacy of the Taliban’s court system and instead resolved disputes through alternative channels.

C. 1996-2001

In certain regions and among certain segments of the population, there have been boycotts of elections organized by the Afghan government. These boycotts often stem from concerns over the legitimacy or transparency of the electoral process. Communities and individuals continued to boycott extremist groups and insurgent organizations. Afghans have employed cultural boycotts and strikes to express dissent or opposition to specific practices, policies, or individuals.

Women were particularly targeted by the Taliban rule. According to a 1997 Human Rights Watch report they “were not allowed to move outside their homes unless completely covered in a head-to-toe garment called a burqa and accompanied by a male relative. Those caught violating these requirements were beaten. As a consequence of these restrictions, women were sometimes unable to seek medical care” (Human Rights Watch, 1997). During this time, however, the cultural practice of “bacha posh” assumed a new cultural practice of increasing women’s mobility and participation in public life. Translated from Dari bacha
posh means “dressed up like a boy.” Traditionally bacha posh is a cultural practice in which families with no sons dress one of their daughters as a boy and treat her as such, allowing her to temporarily assume a male gender role and enjoy certain freedoms and privileges traditionally reserved for boys (Nordberg, 2014). Arguably this practice provided temporary freedoms for some girls, but did not address the underlying gender inequality and discrimination of restive gender roles in Afghan society.

D. 2001-2021

Many Afghans, particularly those who opposed the Taliban’s harsh interpretation of Islamic law, refused to participate in the Taliban's courts, opting for alternative routes to justice. Non-participation in violent activities or conflicts can also be a form of resistance. Afghans who choose not to engage or strike against acts of violence also participate in acts of omission. Healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and other medical staff have gone on strike to highlight wages, lack of resources, and inadequate infrastructure. In 2014 doctors in the city of Herat “launched a strike over the alleged beating of a pediatrician by the city mayor and the mayor’s son” (Radio Azadi, 2014). Doctors at the state-owned hospital demanded that Mayor Mohamma Salim Taraki and his son be arrested.

In the presidential elections held in 2009 and 2014, the counter democratic groups demanded that Afghans boycott the elections due to concerns over fraud, corruption, or dissatisfaction with the political process. Sameer Patil, associate national security fellow at Gateway House said that a successful election will
damage the credibility of the Taliban. “Although the Taliban has boycotted the Afghan election calling it a sham, reports suggest that the voter turnout has been good despite threats of violence. A free and fair election in Afghanistan will go a long way in weakening Taliban’s propaganda about the administration in Kabul being a puppet regime set up by the international community. A successful election in Kabul will also go a long way in lifting the morale of the Afghan security forces which now bear the onus of carrying out a successful security transition. Hopefully the election will produce a stable government which has the capacity to face the challenges that lie before Afghanistan” (Urquhart, 2014). A high turnout in large cities surveyed suggests that the voting was busy in many parts of the country as large numbers of an estimated electorate of 12 million arrived at almost 7,000 polling stations. After the success of this election Afghanistan rallied behind women candidates and looked to the next president to move forward with legislation that ensures the rights of Afghans.

E. 2021-Present

Less than a month after reclaiming power in 2021, the “Taliban… named an all-male government for the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" that is dominated by veteran militants vowing a return to strict Shari'a law, in a stark blow to Afghan and international hopes that the Taliban’s second reign will prove less restrictive than two decades ago” (Radio Free Europe, 2021). Within its first day of power the illegitimate government installed by the Taliban outlawed protests. The leadership of the Interior Ministry announced that demonstrators “disturbed the civil order and caused harassment.” In an effort to defy pressure to
stay at home, demonstrations took to the streets chanting slogans such as “We want freedom” near the embassy two days after the order went into effect (Radio Free Europe, 2021). Demonstrations were also held in Parwan, Nimruz, Kunduz, and Kapisa Provinces.

Students in Afghanistan have used boycotts and strikes to advocate for their rights, address issues related to education, and demand improvements with the education system. The frequency and scope of student strikes may vary depending on the security situation, socio-political factors, and specific grievances. As the Taliban authority banned university education for girls, male students in the country began to boycott their classes and criticized the suspension of higher education for women. The male students have put forward a strong opposition to attending classes until they are open for female students as well. Muzamel, a student said, “We will continue our boycott and if the female classes are not reopened we will also boycott our lessons and will not continue education.” Another student was quoted saying that if universities are closed for their sisters then they would refuse to go to university as well. Furthermore, a professor at Kabul University also called out the Taliban telling them “to reconsider their decision, saying the closure of the education institute is unfortunate” (AP, 2022). From this boycott came a social media storm when many users employed the hashtags #LetHerLearn and #LetAfghanGirlsLearn to express their support for the right to education.
III. Acts of Commission

Acts of Commission involve actively engaging in actions that challenge or disrupt the functioning of an oppressive system or regime. These actions are aimed at obstructing or undermining the operations or policies of those in power. Acts of commission can include sit-ins and occupations. A distinction between acts of omission and acts of commission is that the latter is more likely to include actions that are proactive and typically involve engaging in specific activities to challenge or disrupt oppressive regimes. Acts of commission can vary widely but frequently include demonstrations and protests (Nonviolence International, 2023). Demonstrations and rallies are done in the eye of the public to raise awareness, express dissent, and demand change. Public gatherings, speeches, or symbolic acts are used to disrupt and challenge the status quo. Street theater, art installations, or puppeteering aim at capturing the public's eye. In some cases, acts of commission may involve sabotage or disruption or specific infrastructure or systems associated with oppression. This can include occupying bridges, disabling or damaging property used for repressive purposes, and disrupting operations that support repressive regimes (Nonviolence International, 2023). The use of technology has also been used to dismantle digital infrastructure.

A. Afghanistan 1977-1992

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, various nonviolent resistance movements and opposition groups adopted different tactics, including sit-ins and protests as part of their overall strategy. Afghan students, intellectuals, and activists often organized sit-ins at government buildings, public squares, and public spaces to protest the occupation and voice their demands for freedom and self-determination.
In March 1980, a large-scale protest took place in Kabul, organized by various Afghan political groups and factions. The protest denounced the Soviet invasion and called for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the region. The Afghans were worried that if the north dominated their country, not only would they lose their independence, but their land might become a Soviet republic. This explains why, with the exception of “pro-Moscow communists and the small group of the Sitam-e-Milli, the bulk of Afghans opposed the invasion. The opposition was shown throughout the country in a form and to a degree that has not been shown before. Except for pockets of the regime’s supporters here and there, every group—religious, ethnic, and social—rose in protest. Even the religious minorities of Sikhs and Hindus covertly assisted the mujahideen” (Kakar, 1982). Demonstrators carried banners, chanted slogans, and expressed their opposition to the occupation.

In March 1986 thousands of students from Kabul University were preparing to stage civil disobedience against the Soviet-backed regime. The students worked in conjunction with a council, but “did not favor open demonstrations on the grounds that by holding rallies students exposed themselves. They stood instead for strikes and boycotts” (Kakar, 1982). Within a month's time, students at various institutes in the city distributed anti-government leaflets. One of these, “Falah (meaning "salvation"), demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops and called for a united front between ideologically different students” (Kakar, 1982). The first major student protest took place on April 21, 1980, during a flag ceremony honoring the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.
Students of Soriya Senior High School, a girls' school, organized a large rally one week later. “They united with students of other schools marching to Kabul University, shouting "liberty of death", calling for Russians to leave, and shouting death chants against president Karmal” (Kakar, 1982). Unlike the 3 Hoots Uprising, these student-led forms of resistance were organized and would continue to have momentum through the following months.

Following the signing of the Geneva Accords, which included components of a bilateral agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan on the “Principles of Mutual Relations in particular on non-interference and non-intervention signed by Pakistan and Afghanistan,” protests erupted in several major cities (Shahi, 2008). Afghans expressed their dissatisfaction with the agreement, claiming that the “agreement reached between the representatives of Pakistan and the Kabul regime on a phased withdrawal of the Soviet forces” did not guarantee a complete withdrawal of Soviet troops (Shahi, 2008). Protestors demand full and complete independence and the restoration of peace in the nation.

B. Afghanistan 1992-1996

During the period of 1992-1996, Afghanistan experienced a civil war characterized by armed conflict and violence. While the majority of resistance efforts during the time were armed in nature, there were instances of nonviolent resistance.

Civil protests and demonstrations continued against various factions involved in the war. The protests called for peace, an end to violence, and protection of civilian lives. In conjunction with protests, nonviolent efforts were
made to engage in peace negotiations between different factions to find a resolution to the conflict. At times, local elders and community leaders played roles in mediating between conflicting parties to seek ceasefires and de-escalation of violence. Peace talks between tribes would eventually lead to discussions for a ceasefire between “Massoud and Hekmatyar [where] the government agreed to name Hekmatyar as prime minister” (HRW, 2005). Although the treaty was short lived, grassroots peacebuilding initiatives made efforts to promote reconciliation and foster dialogue between opposing groups. These initiatives aimed to reduce tensions and find common ground for coexistence.

C. Afghanistan 1996-2001

Due to the violent political situation in Afghanistan, protests were often influenced by factional and regional dynamics. They were affected by the ongoing armed conflict and hanging power dynamics within the country. As this thesis continues, it is important to note that the protests during this time frame were not limited to major cities alone. Given the widespread opposition to ongoing occupation and the diverse nature behind successful resistance movements, it is likely that demonstrations and protests occurred in various other rural regions of Afghanistan.

As part of the ongoing conflict and political developments of unstable governments, the Hazara minority community in Afghanistan held significant protests in response to the killing of Hazara civilians by the Taliban. “The political situation for the Hazara of Afghanistan changed radically with the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 by U.S.-led forces. Since the establishment of
the Karzai government, Hazaras have been included in the central government” (MAR, 2006). These protests aimed to highlight the persecution and discrimination faced by the Hazara community and to demand justice and protection. “A few protests have been reported [since the governmental changes] demanding political change and could increase as a response to Hazara grievances which are not being addressed because the central government remains ineffective outside Kabul” (MAR, 2006).

Opposition to the War in Afghanistan stemmed from numerous factors, including the view that the United States occupation was illegal under international law. After decades of conflict and instability there were hopes, among some Afghans, that the US invasion would bring stability and the opportunity for the country to rebuild. While some were optimistic, others had reservations and expressed concerns about how the intervention could lead to further conflict and unnecessary casualties. Then there were those who expressed their frustrations through pickets, protests, and occupation of government property. These Afghans continued to shed light on the influences and abuses committed by US factions and demanded accountability and justice. In 2001, “anti-US protests spread across the country over reported abuses of the Qur’an by US officials” (Guardian, 2001). Demonstrations took place in Khogyani, Jalalabad and the Wardak province of Kabul. Thousands of anti-US protestors raged against police and paramilitary troops and leaders of the protests promised to occupy the “airbase and take action’ (Guardian, 2001). Daily demonstrations took place outside the US embassy in an effort to “expel westerns” (Guardian, 2001).
D. 2001-2021

Civilians bore the brunt of violence and were deeply affected by the ongoing conflict. The presence of the US troops, coupled with the harrowing influence of the Taliban and the threat of imposing another puppet government, left the various ethnic and tribal groups more disconnected. Many Afghans communities began to voice their concerns, demanding an end to the violence and advocating for people. The country called for dialogue, reconciliation, and a democratic solution to bring stability and safety to the country. During this time society began to witness a growth of nonviolent resistance. Activist, grassroots movements, and underground organizations organized demonstrations, sit-ins, and peaceful protests to voice their grievances and shed light on the human rights atrocities that had devastated the nation. At the local level, grassroots peace initiatives involved traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. These initiatives used “jirgas” (councils) and “shuras” (consultative bodies) to facilitate dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation among conflicting parties (Noelle-Karimi, 2013).

The confounding factors of rising youth expectations and declining opportunities, shaped the Afghan youth protest movements. Following the 2014 presidential election, moments were driven by political activism of young Afghans. Motivated primarily by government failures, a series of youth and civil society group led rallies responding to the failures of foreign aid and legislative action. The “Tabassum movement was organized in protest to the killing of seven civilian Harazaras by a group of insurgents” in the Zabul province (Bose et.al., 2019). Among the victims was a nine-year-old, Shukria Tabassum, whose name
inspired the movement. Young activists transferred the coffins of the victims from Zabul to Kabul and organized a protest outside the Presidential Palace. “Several thousand protesters included activists from all major ethnic groups of the country” and was a unifying movement that expressed the collective dissent of safety and security in the country (Bose et.al., 2019). The following year the Junbish-e Roshnayi-e Movement, also known as the Enlightenment Movement, was formed in response to the government's decisions “to reroute an important power line from Turkmenistan” which bypassed large swaths of Hazara-dominated territories (Bose et.al., 2019). This movement was originally named as TUT-AP, an acronym to recognize all of the participating countries: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Protestors “alleged that the new route was yet another deliberate attempt by Pashtun leaders to systematically discriminate against Hazara by depriving them of the benefits of an economic development project” (International Crisis Group, 2017). The protest was organized in Bamyan to protest reports of a government decision to reroute the line. Within two days the Afghan government announced a “technical commission to assess the pros and cons of the route” (Bose et.al., 2019). Five months later, the TUTAP movement had its first mass rally in Kabul, where they occupied all roads outside the Presidential Place, forcing the government to respond by “erecting walls made of storage containers” (Bose et.al., 2019). The following year, another youth led movement known as Uprising for Change, formed in response to a series of militant attacks in the country’s capital. The movement had its initial rally following a “truck bombing in Kabul’s Zanbaq Square,” one of the deadliest
attacks of its kind in the region that killed 150 people (Bose et.al., 2019). Youth protesters chanted “Khasta az marg ba soy-e arg” (tired of deaths and forward to the [Presidential Palace]). The Uprising for Change movement met one month following their initial protest. Protestors “set up an occupied a series of tents in Kabul…, Baghlan, and Takhar” (Bose et.al., 2019). The sit-ins and occupations attracted significant media attention and caused major disruptions to Kabul’s traffic impeding major roundabouts that fed traffic in and out of the city. Youth led movements continued to express grievances with Afghanistan's elite and political powers.

The Heland province has been heavily affected by the conflict. The presence of armed groups and military operations led Afghans to bear witness to significant violence and displacement. The Helmand Peace March, also known as the Helmand Peace Convoy or the People’s Peace March, was a movement led by activists and tribal leaders to advocate for an end to the ongoing conflict. After a suicide car bomb hit a stadium in Lashkar Gah, dozens of fans who had gathered in the stadium to watch the game were killed. Immediately after the bombing, a number of civilians sat in protest to criticize the attack. They occupied the area with protest tents and observed a hunger strike. The demonstrators also made specific demands including: “observing ceasefire during Ramadan, relaunching ceasefires, bringing into existence a political setup that is acceptable to all sides, starting the intra-Afghan dialogue that can result [in] in a timeline for the withdrawal of international military forces” (Archival, 2020). After the month-long sit-in in Lashkar Gah, marchers continued to hold formal meetings
with youths, tribal chiefs, religious schools, and people from the province. Two months following the car bombing at the stadium, marchers made the 700-kilometer journey enduring “104 degree weather, unfavorable geography, and risks of being attacked by armed opposition” (Archival, 2020). Once protests arrived in Kabul, they set up tents and issued press releases that drew international media attention. They then continued their march to Balkh followed by Mazar-i-sharif. The People’s Peace March was able to overcome ethnic and linguistic barriers that have challenged previous peace negotiations. The intersectionality of movement allowed for diverse voices to participate including that of societally disregarded women and children. The march continues to grow into a sustained movement as it develops new support and long term goals.

E. 2021-Present

While 2022 brought orders from the self-declared Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to ban women from attending universities until further notice and orders barring women from working with Non Governmental Organizations and humanitarian groups, attempts at erasing women from public life have failed as sections of Afghan society publicly pushed back against the Taliban.

Intersectionality of groups have begun to align and stand in solidarity with the growing nonviolent movements across the country. Many male students refused to sit for their university exams in Kandahar University and at the Nangarhar Medical Facility. The students who were allowed to continue their education at the time staged a walkout and spread their act of resistance throughout Twitter saying “Either all of us, or none of us” (Shekhawat, 2023).
This resistance extended beyond young students, as male professors and lecturers also rallied for a policy reversal, resigning from their jobs or performing symbolic acts of protest to register their discontent. Muzamel, a student at a Kabul University said, “We will continue our boycott and if the female classes are not reopened we will also boycott our lessons and will not continue education” (NDTV, 2022). The unification of students and lecturers led to solidarity beyond Afghanistan, receiving widespread support from the international community.

Since the Taliban took over power in August 2021, Afghan women have been on the front line of resistance to Taliban oppression. Women have unified with supporting groups holding peaceful protests, demanding equality, rights, justice, and peace. Their protests are unified with a chant calling for “bread, work, and freedom” marking August 15, 2021, the day the Taliban regained control of the country as “a Black Day” (O’Donnel, 2022).

Protests are frequently accompanied by songs, signs, and slogans. In a recent march, women who were led by activist Wahida Amiri of the Afghanistan’s Women Spontaneous Movement, began protests to demand their legal, social, and political rights marched on the streets of Kabul and called out the Taliban saying: “Taliban -- violators of human and women rights. We don’t want your puppet regime. You rose to power by killing dozens of people. Your regime is illegitimate. We want a legitimate government based on the people’s votes” (Amiri, Wahida, 2022). The unification amongst social and tribal groups, plus the expansion through social media has increased awareness and connectivity amongst peacekeeping movements.
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<td>“Bread, Work, and Freedom” Afghanistan’s Women Spontaneous Movement</td>
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Figure 3 & 4- Acts of Expression in Afghanistan, 1977-Present

Acts of Expression in Afghanistan, 1977--

- RAWA
- Khaliullah Khalili
- Artist's Union
- Kabul Spring
- Radio Television Afghanistan
- 3 Hoot Uprising
- Afghanistan Times
- Kabul Weekly
- Payam-e-Mujahid
- AJUA
- Farhad Darya
- Dr. Mohammad Yosef Asefi
- Farkhuna Malikzada, #EnoughisEnough
- #MyRedLine
- Kabul Street Art Project
- Shamsia Hassani
- Afghan Film Industry

Figure 3

Figure 4
Figure 5 & 6: Acts of Omission, 1977-Present
Figure 7 & 8: Acts of Commission, 1977-Present

- Kabul Communist Protests
- Student Strikes
- Student Strikes
- Geneva Accords Protest
- Tribal Peace Talks
- Hazara Protests
- Khogyani Demonstrations
- Jalalabad Demonstrations
- Wardak Demonstrations
- Grassroots "jirgas"
- Tabassum Movement
- Junbish-e Roshni Movement
- Junbish-e Roshni Movement
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- Junbish-e Roshni Movement
- Junbish-e Roshni Movement
- Junbish-e Roshni Movement
- Helmand Peace March
- University Walk Outs
- University Walk Outs
- Afghanistan's Women Spontaneous Movem...
Figure 9: Acts of Resistance, Afghanistan 1977-Present
Analysis

In the following data analysis, I will be conceptualizing the presence of civil resistance in Afghanistan. My standard variables that remained unchanged throughout my research include the following: the location by which acts of resistance can be assessed, the types of resistance focused in this thesis (acts of expression, acts of omission, and acts of commission), and the dates for which resistance was performed. For this thesis I organized my research by type, as well as the time frame. This analysis will be a critique of civil disobedience beginning 1977 and spanning to the current state. This will give me an expansive data collection for over fifty years. It is also important that I define “civil resistance” and discern between violence and nonviolence. For the purpose of this analysis I will use Gene Sharp’s 1973 definition of nonviolent resistance as being intentionally carried out by individuals who have mobilized and who consciously abstain from weapons or see the ineffective nature of taking up arms. Actors within NVR movements use tactics outside the normal political process such as “formal statements, communications with a wider audience, group representations, noncooperation with social events, customs, & institutions, or actions by consumers" (Sharp, 1973, 8). The differences between the two are determined by the means and outcomes of conflicts.

There are several dependent variables that will affect nonviolent social movements and the availability of data. The first of which being government legitimacy and recognition. This value is dynamic in conflict zones or in areas who see other structural needs as more valuable are denied basic access to the pillars of a democratic system. Furthermore, and especially in regard to the inhospitable geography, specific groups of people who are geographically less accessible will not have access to see public campaigns. Conflict zones, during times of armed conflict, revolution may be interrupted by security threats. Communities being attacked, military use of
educational facilities, or infrastructure being destroyed will all directly affect when civil disobedience can occur. Violence creates conditions that are not suitable for public demonstrations or other forms of acts of resistance. It is important to note that resistance is only effective if it has regularity over long periods of time. Disruption in movements will inadvertently lead to high dropout rates. This is directly correlated to how much momentum a movement has both directly from activists and institutions. This operationalized concept will be most noticeable when analyzing data on location and types movements. Another dependent variable will be reflected in the lack of support for secondary and tertiary waves of a movement. I originally hypothesized that data for acts of omissions will become increasingly less exclusive as violence increases. The fifth variable will compare movements in urban cities where a disproportionate number of individuals live versus the rural, tribal areas of Afghanistan. Lastly, I will look at the politicization of violence and how institutions restrict access and resources as a bartering tool to establish power.

As organized in Figure 2, acts of expression and acts of commission are the dominant methods employed by resistors during the surveyed timeframe. During the period between 1977-1992, acts of expression used primarily art, poetry, cinema as political tools, whereas acts of omission frequently took place outside the country. The Children’s Revolt was the only data point within acts of omission that occurred in the country during this time, however protests denouncing Soviet occupation, the creation and distribution of anti-government leaflets, and protests against the Geneva Accords proved to be effective forms of acts of commission. By the years 1992-1995, activists preferred to use print media through newspapers and journalism, as Bacha Posh was a seemingly limited act of resistance. Still during this time, protests continued against governmental and interstitial violence, though many movements were met with violent
resistance and quickly dissolved. In the years leading up to today movements Afghan’s used acts of expression through digital platforms to create social media campaigns and movies. During this time artists, such as Shamsia Hassami, were spreading their art through websites and commissions. Boycotts and strikes were also used as more effective forms of resistance by doctors, students, and members of the electorate. Arguably the most successful movements utilized varied forms of acts of commission from the years 2001-present. Activists used funerary processions, protests, occupations, sit-ins, tent-ins, marches, hunger strikes, disruption of infrastructure, and media to sustain movements and gain local and international support.

Consistently across all types of resistance, most forms of civil disobedience took place in larger cities. If the resistance was through media or a digital platform it was likely to come from a part of Afghanistan that was not urban, however protests, marches, and occupations most often would happen in Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, or Mazar-i-Sharif. Furthermore, if the genesis of the act did not start in a major city, the movement would oftentimes move to one. The maps, accompanied by their respective data sets, clearly shows that rural success in social movements is much less likely compared to urban acts of resistance.

All of this data, including graphs, maps, and tables that are not represented in this report have limitations. There are numerous confounding factors that will directly affect the outcome of the success of social movements. I also believe that many numbers, in regard to population, are underrepresented. Movements in high conflict zones will inevitably be underrepresented as access to media is limited and frequently restricted. For the sake of this piece it should also be noted that the represented data does not include all marches, movements, and protests during the respective time frames. If providing basic democratic rights to the people of Afghanistan is low amongst the government's priorities, then collecting data on this will be even less of a priority.
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