



Language

The mainstream literature on civil resistance and nonviolent action tends to focus on widespread unarmed resistance against internal or external repression, or on major social movements. It has paid less attention to small scale and indirect forms of resistance, although these may be described in the context of the evolution of particular movements. In recent years there has also been growing interest in how ordinary people maintain and express resistance to domination over long periods at either an individual or communal level. Some forms of indirect or small scale resistance can either be a prelude to mass open confrontation, or occur after an unarmed revolt has been (at least temporarily) crushed. In extremely repressive circumstances indirect resistance may be the only possible strategy for a long period: the aim may be to maintain a culture under threat, maintain morale, for example through forms of symbolic action or oblique ridicule of the regime, and to undermine the scope and efficiency of repressive rule. Such resistance can either be highly organised or largely unorganised, and may use official public occasions to make a point, spring out of communal activity such as street parties, or be an individual gesture.

Some of the works below examine indirect or hidden forms of conscious political resistance. But there is also a literature that focuses on largely apolitical 'everyday resistance' to various forms of social oppression by peasants and workers, or by women in patriarchal societies. J.C. Scott (listed below) is particularly associated with this approach. Social scientists influenced by Foucault may also study forms of apolitical 'resistance'. It is not always clear whether dissident subcultures and behaviour are means of making domination tolerable or a prelude to outright political resistance – Scott discusses whether and how the first might mutate into the second. 'Everyday' resistance, which may involve contempt for the official laws, can also shade into behaviour that might be categorised as 'criminal'.

Aouragh, Miriyam, [Everyday Resistance on the Internet: The Palestinian Context \[1\]](#), Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research, Vol. 1, issue 2 (Nov), 2008, pp. 109-130

Explores how internet links Palestinians in Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, creates a Palestine in cyberspace, and has an impact on manifestations of resistance, for example through street candle vigils and 'lighting a candle' on the internet.

Crawshaw, Steve ; Jackson, John, [Small Acts of Resistance: How Courage, Tenacity and Ingenuity can Change the World \[2\]](#), Preface by Vaclav Havel, New York, Sterling Publishing Company, 2010, pp. 240

Interesting range of examples of ingenious forms of indirect or symbolic resistance at individual and group level, as well as more open defiance and protest.

Davenport, Christian ; Johnston, Hank ; Mueller, Carol, [Repression and Mobilization \[3\]](#), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2005, pp. 258

Explores varied forms of repression and means of response drawing on a wide sociological literature. Particularly relevant is Hank Johnston, 'Talking the Walk: Speech Acts and Resistance in Authoritarian Regimes' (pp. 108-37), exploring underground humour, graffiti, hit and run tactics, informal opposition networks, 'duplicious organisation' – using official status for opposition, and role of recreational, cultural and religious groups. Johnston also notes how official political and cultural events can be subverted. (Strong overlap with ch. 4 in Johnston, [States & Social Movements \[4\]](#) ([A. 6. Nonviolent Action and Social Movements \[5\]](#)) .)

Flam, Helena, [Anger in Repressive Regimes: A Footnote to Domination and the Arts of Resistance by James Scott \[6\]](#), European Journal of Social Theory, Vol. 7, issue 2, 2004, pp. 171-188

Argues against Scott's thesis that long suppressed anger will one day explode, and suggests instead (drawing on Central European examples after 1980) that protest took indirect, satirical and carnivalesque forms.



Garreton, Manuel Antonio, [Fear in Military Regimes](#) [7], In Corradi, Weiss Fagen, and Garreton, eds., Fear at the Edge (719, E.IV.1), Berkeley CA, University of California Press, pp. 13-23

Distinguishes between phases of military regimes: the first of terror not a time for direct confrontation but for survival and assistance to others, although human rights activists may link up with international networks. In the second phase the opposition have more scope for promoting organisation and indirect forms of resistance.

Hollander, Jocelyn A. ; Einwohner, Rachel L., [Conceptualizing Resistance](#) [8], Sociological Forum, Vol. 19, issue 4, 2004, pp. 533-554

Discusses possible confusion in meaning of 'resistance' in recent sociological studies and suggests a typology of intended and unintended 'resistance'. Many references to gender-based resistance, and forms of indirect resistance by slaves, peasants, workers and the unemployed, as well as the direct resistance of the US Civil Rights Movement.

Johnston, Hank, [Tales of Nationalism: Catalonia, 1939-1979](#) [9], New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1991, pp. 261

Much-cited in the social movement literature on 'framing', Johnston analyses the contribution of resistant sub-cultures under Francoism to the eventual resurgence of Catalan opposition.

Nafisi, Azar, [Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books](#) [10], [2003], London, Harper Perennial, 2008, pp. 347

A study of quiet resistance through a women's group reading forbidden western literature. Also includes autobiographical insights into the 1977-79 Iranian revolution – its early stages and aftermath.

Richter-Devroe, Sophie, [Palestinian Women's Everyday Resistance: Between Normality and Normalisation](#) [11], Journal of International Women's Studies, Vol. 12, issue 2 (special issue), 2011, pp. 32-46

Focuses particularly on women crossing Israeli-imposed borders to maintain their sense of autonomy and freedom, and argues that although these actions are 'framed' as resistance to occupation they also covertly challenge patriarchal controls..

Rings, Werner, [Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe, 1939-45](#) [12], New York, Doubleday, 1982, pp. 352

Explores differing forms resistance can take through symbolism and speech and defensive support of those targeted by regime, as well as open 'offensive' resistance. Andrew Rigby has argued that creating autonomous organisations from below can be a sixth form of 'constructive resistance' that does not necessarily directly challenge the regime: Rigby, [Palestinian Resistance and Nonviolence](#) [13] ([E. V.A.3. Palestine](#) [14]) , pp. 3-6.

Roitman, Janet, [Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa](#) [15], Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. 216

Anthropological study of resistance to fiscal regulation starts from the open and organised villes mortes campaign in Cameroon in 1992-93 (see E.I.2.1b.i). Main focus is on non-political forms of evading fiscal regulation, such as smuggling across borders.

Scott, James C., [Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts](#) [16], New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 251



Much-cited analysis of forms of hidden and indirect resistance, as opposed to overt organised opposition. Develops at a more general level ideas explored in his *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985). Scott discusses how everyday resistance might turn into open revolt: an aspect of his analysis that has been critically examined.

Thalhammer, Kristina E. ; O'Loughlin, Paula L. ; Glazer, Myron Peretz ; Glazer, Penina Migdal ; McFarland, Sam ; Shepela, Sharon Toffey ; Stoltzfus, Nathan, [Courageous Resistance: The Power of Ordinary People](#) [17], Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 224

Discusses examples of individual and group resistance, with an emphasis on defensive resistance (trying to protect key targets of repression) with a number of examples from World War Two and Nazi Germany; but it also includes the open challenge by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, and communal struggles to preserve the local environment.

Vinthaghen, Stellan, [The Journal of Resistance Studies Interview with James C. Scott](#) [18], *Journal of Resistance Studies*, Vol. 6, issue 1, 2020, pp. 136-155

Vinthaghen provides a useful brief introduction to Scott's pioneering work on forms of small scale or 'hidden' resistance by subjugated classes. The interview then seeks clarification about the development of Scott's research and key elements in his theory.

See also:

Maciej J. Bartkowski, [Recovering Nonviolent History: Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles](#) [19], ([A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [20]), especially Maciej Bartkowski, 'Poland – Nonviolent Resistance in Partitioned Poland', pp. 259-278

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Links

- [1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2008/everyday-resistance-internet-palestinian-context>
- [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2010/small-acts-resistance-how-courage-tenacity-and-ingenuity-can-change-world>
- [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2005/repression-and-mobilization>
- [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/states-social-movements>
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- [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2004/anger-repressive-regimes-footnote-domination-and-arts-resistance-james-scott>
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- [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2004/conceptualizing-resistance>
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- [10] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2008/reading-lolita-tehran-memoir-books>
- [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/palestinian-womens-everyday-resistance-between-normality-and-normalisation>
- [12] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1982/life-enemy-collaboration-and-resistance-hitlers-europe-1939-45>
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- [16] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1990/domination-and-arts-resistance-hidden-transcripts>



[17] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2007/courageous-resistance-power-ordinary-people>

[18] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2020/journal-resistance-studies-interview-james-c-scott>

[19] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/recovering-nonviolent-history-civil-resistance-liberation-struggles>

[20] <https://civilresistance.info/taxonomy/term/7>