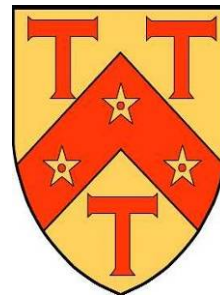


**CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES**

DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICS AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



**EUROPEAN
STUDIES
CENTRE**

ST ANTONY'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

CONFERENCE ON CIVIL RESISTANCE & POWER POLITICS

St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 15-18 March 2007

REPORT

Sponsors:

**International Center
on Nonviolent Conflict**



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**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
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Foreign Affairs and
International Trade Canada
Human Security Program

1. Background to the Conference

The conference on ‘Civil Resistance and Power Politics: Domestic and International Dimensions’ was the keynote event of a project of the same name that had been established in academic year 2005-06 in the University of Oxford under the joint auspices of the Centre for International Studies in the Department of Politics and International Relations and the European Studies Centre at St Antony’s College. The project aims to assess the nature and significance of civil (i.e. non-violent) resistance, especially, though not exclusively, in the period since the 1960s. It aims to raise the level of both academic and general public debate on the subject. Civil resistance has been of demonstrable importance in the past hundred years and more, yet there has until now been too little serious study of many of its aspects. A focus on this phenomenon challenges the view that only the exercise of power by military means can bring about fundamental political and social changes. On the other hand, civil resistance cannot be seen as simply replacing violence in ever-expanding spheres of action. There has been a complex set of interactions between civil resistance and other dimensions of power – military, economic and ideological. The project explores these interactions in a rigorous and open-minded way, asking hard questions that are often avoided, and exploring a wide range of relevant historical evidence.

2. Overview of the Conference

The major international conference on Civil Resistance and Power Politics took place from 15 to 18 March 2007 at St Antony’s College in the University of Oxford. The conference brought together leading academic experts and prominent participants in and observers of the principal cases of civil resistance since 1945. The complete programme as finally implemented, including a list of the questions addressed in the project, is available on the project websites:

- 1) http://cis.politics.ox.ac.uk/research/Projects/civ_res.asp
- 2) <http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/esc/esc-civil-resistance.shtml>

The conference was very well attended, with 186 participants (more than twice the number originally anticipated) from academia, research institutes, governments, international organizations, and social movements. The vast majority of participants took part for the full duration of the conference.

Preparations for the conference began eighteen months before the conference took place, and a major activity in the planning phase was a workshop with thirty specialist participants that took place in Oxford on 10 March 2006. To ensure that the conference focused effectively on the interconnections between civil resistance and power politics, we laid out a clear set of questions that paper-givers and participants were to address, and we updated these as and when additional dimensions became evident.



Figure One: April Carter, Steve York, Gene Sharp, Adam Roberts and Mary King on the opening day of the conference.

Information on the progress of our plans was publicly available throughout at the project websites.

3. Conference Organization

The Organizing Committee for the project was chosen to be as representative as possible of different departments and faculties of the University of Oxford with expertise in this field. The Committee played a very active role in planning the

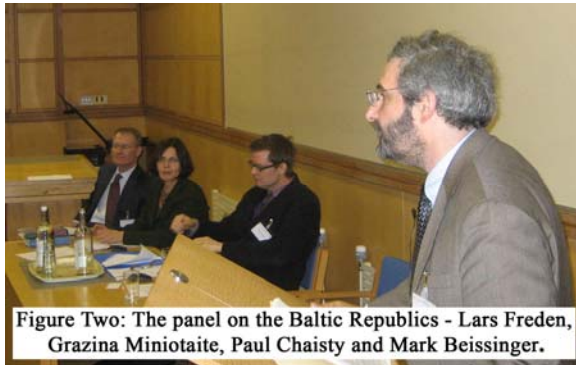


Figure Two: The panel on the Baltic Republics - Lars Freden, Grazina Miniotaite, Paul Chaisty and Mark Beissinger.

conference and setting its agenda and enabled the conference to draw on a wide range of highly qualified expertise both within the University and more generally in the UK and internationally.

The employment of a Research Associate (Dr Thomas Davies, who took up this position on 1 February 2006) was essential to carrying out this project and to ensuring that the intellectual as well as organizational preparation for the conference was both efficient and responsive. In the immediate run-up to and duration of the conference, the employment of secretarial assistance and of graduate student assistants was also vital to the smooth running of the conference.

The employment of a Research Associate (Dr Thomas Davies, who took up this position on 1 February 2006) was essential to carrying out this

Women played an important part in both the organization of the conference and in the conference proceedings. Women featured prominently in the conference organizing committee, the planning workshop, the panels, and general participation. Furthermore, many important lessons for those who participate in campaigns for women's rights were drawn from the content of the conference deliberations on the methods of civil resistance. We note that in the feedback forms there was a suggestion that a more prominent role for women in the project would be desirable.

4. Results

The conference debates were without exception well attended, lively and productive. The conference discussions showed an even broader set of connections between civil resistance and power political issues than we anticipated. Issues that were particularly illuminated by the conference include: the nature of civil resistance; the reasons for using civil resistance; the interaction between the methods of civil resistance and external conditions, including power-political factors; the interrelationship between nonviolent and violent methods; the role of external actors; the nature of success and failure; and the contribution of civil resistance to liberal outcomes such as democratic governance.



Figure Three: Monika MacDonagh-Pajerova addressing the conference.

Innovative ideas and approaches were central to the conference. There has never before been a conference investigating the multiple and complex interconnections between civil resistance and power politics. The project's multidisciplinary approach was also impressive: political scientists, historians, and sociologists were included amongst the paper-writers. Furthermore, the unprecedented combination of academics, policy-makers and activists on the conference programme contributed greatly towards the success of the conference in enhancing understanding of civil resistance and its relationship with power political factors.



The first twenty-two of the twenty-four conference sessions began with presentations of academic papers by leading experts. These papers were distributed to all participants on a CDROM and were made available to conference participants on the website <http://www.weblearn.ox.ac.uk/site/colleges/sant/esc/crp/>. The most relevant case studies and certain other papers will be revised for publication in a major scholarly edited volume to be published by Oxford University Press. A map and timeline of selected cases of civil resistance since 1945 was also distributed to all conference participants and will be included in the book. A copy of the map and timeline can be downloaded from the conference websites.

In addition to the book, the conference has resulted in plans for many follow-on activities, including a conference in Prague in 2008, and possible regional conferences, such as a conference concentrating on Asian case studies which could be held in Manila. There will also be enhanced web resources, which will disseminate selected conference materials to as wide an audience as possible.

A project on international norms – which will attempt to set out principles governing international involvements in a state, including in matters relating to funding of political parties, election monitoring, and support for social movements – also moved forward as a result of the conference. The Salzburg Seminar has offered to be a focus of work in this area, and this offer was widely appreciated at the conference. In addition, a number of spin-off projects were taken forward informally by participants at the conference, including plans for a dictionary of non-violent action.



5. Feedback

The conference received an overwhelmingly positive response from all who participated. This was reflected in participants' comments during the conference itself, in the feedback forms that delegates were asked to complete, and in the many letters and emails of congratulation sent to us by participants after the conference. A

report on the feedback received during the conference is provided in the appendix at the end of this document, prepared by Ms. Emily Speers Mears, who was the principal graduate student assistant working on the conference.

The conference also elicited a positive reaction in the international press, encapsulated in Edward Mortimer's article, 'The Politics of Peaceful Change' published in the *International Herald Tribune* on 22 March 2007.

6. Funding and Institutional Support

The conference was generously supported by the British Academy; the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Conflict Issues Group and Research Analysts; the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Human Security Program; the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict; the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Rockefeller Brothers Fund; the United States Institute of Peace; and the Zeit Foundation. This support was acknowledged in all conference publications, on the conference folders, and on the conference websites.

The Organizing Committee sent a version of this report on the conference to the eight institutions that have provided funding for the project, and also to the European Studies Centre at St Antony's College, and to the Centre for International Studies in the Department of Politics and International Relations in the



Figure Six: Chris Patten and Timothy Garton Ash speaking in the closing session of the conference.

University of Oxford – the two bodies under the auspices of which the conference was held. Representatives of both of these bodies – including their respective Heads – attended the conference. Representatives of funding bodies were invited to attend and in many cases did so. The support of all these bodies was essential to the success of the conference, and we are very grateful for it.

A final accounting of conference costs will be made after the last invoices have been received and settled, which may take some months. The accounts will be available for inspection by anybody who wishes to see them.

Adam Roberts
Montague Burton Professor of International Relations
& Chairman of the Organizing Committee
2 April 2007

APPENDIX: ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK

The conference on Civil Resistance and Power Politics at St. Antony's, 15-18 March 2007, received an overwhelmingly positive response from those involved, both by way of feedback forms, and from individual participants' comments. As one of the forms put it, "You gave us no reason to resist your authority".

Of the 186 participants that attended the conference, 62 returned feedback forms. These forms asked respondents to assess all aspects of the conference, from programme content to conference facilities, and rate them according to a sliding scale of quality. The questions were:

1. How was your overall experience of the conference?
2. How did you find the quality of the written papers?
3. How did you find the quality of the comments by respondents and the discussion?
4. Was the information with which you were provided prior to your arrival helpful?
5. Were you able to find the information you needed at the reception desk and/or in your conference packs?
6. If you were staying in conference-provided accommodation, how would you rate its quality?
7. How did you find the conference facilities at St. Antony's, i.e. the lecture theatre, catering, etc.?

Results were as follows:

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Poor</u>
1.	41½ (67%)	17½ (28%)	3 (5%)	-	-
2.	24 (44%)	23 (43%)	7 (13%)	-	-
3.	26 (43%)	27 (45%)	5 (8%)	2 (3%)	-
4.	39 (65%)	11 (18%)	8 (13%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
5.	41 (68%)	13 (22%)	5 (8%)	-	1 (2%)
6.	8 (22%)	11 (30%)	10 (27%)	6 (16%)	2 (5%)
7.	25 (40%)	22 (36%)	8 (13%)	5 (8%)	1 (2%)

Respondents were also invited to give their general comments about the conference. These comments can be arranged according to several broad categories: comments of general appreciation; critiques of the conference's structure and composition; comments regarding accommodation and facilities; and suggestions for how to follow up.

As can be seen from the high number of “Excellent” and “Very Good” evaluations, especially for question one (which assessed the participants’ overall experience of the conference), as well as from the number of comments of general appreciation, the conference was considered to have been of high quality, and an excellent experience. Comments included “Excellent conference—learned a great deal. Thank you!” This was corroborated by a large number of casual remarks of thanks and appreciation made to the organisers and student helpers. “An excellent conference, reflecting the thought and planning that preceded it”.

Even many of the comments of criticism were couched in acknowledgement of the time and consideration that had gone into planning the conference. Thus “An excellent mix of academics and practitioners! Only comment is that a bit more unstructured time for interaction would improve the cross-pollination/comparing of notes going on. But given the amount of material to cover, that would be tough to enable”. And “The schedule was quite intense, but otherwise everything was excellent”. These two comments touch upon an issue that came up repeatedly: that of time—the conference schedule was largely considered “intense”, and one of the days lasted 13 hours. Most comments frequently acknowledged, however, that it would have been difficult to conceive of a better way to pack in such an immense amount of material. Some suggested parallel sessions, while others were in agreement with Professor Garton Ash, who noted in the conference’s concluding session that this would have splintered the conference and inhibited cross-case analysis.

Time considerations also lead to comments regarding for how long session participants spoke. One respondent wrote “Chairs were generally excellent. Many speakers were, nevertheless, too prolix!”, and another called for “more space for public discussions”, even at the expense of the time given to the panel. However, another wrote “More time needed for discussants, less time for questions from the floor”. The structure of the sessions was nevertheless thought on the whole to be good, and the strict time-keeping of the chairs appreciated.

Views also varied regarding the balance between activists and academics, and the choice of attendees overall. Some felt that the conference was too much weighted toward academics: “While the potential existed to lessen the historical and ongoing tension between academics and activists, there were some notable moments when the academics—clearly the hegemon here—managed to profoundly disrespect and dismiss those of us who are first activists and possibly borderline academics”. But for every reaction there existed an equal and opposite: “As an activist and an academic, I appreciated greatly the balance on each panel”. And it was widely agreed that the format “of having an analytical presentation followed by respondents, often by people who had been directly involved in the events in question”, was instructive.

There was, however, significant criticism of the conference’s perceived Anglo-American bias. It was noted that while women were mentioned often during the sessions they were under-represented on the panels; the conference was also felt to be lacking in African scholars (in favour of academics drawn from Oxford) and participants from the Southern Hemisphere, and a similar criticism was offered regarding case study bias: “I think the participants, attendees, and presenters could have represented a more diverse group geographically, institutionally, age-wise, and

practically. The majority of the crowd was late to post-career, in their lives and came from the Western or ‘developed’ world”.

Regarding the facilities, the lecture theatre was described by one as “claustrophobic”, and another requested “Just a little more lighting on the steps and slopes for those who are not so fleet of foot”. The tendency of the lecture theatre to overheat was the source of much vocal criticism during the conference, although it was not commented on in any of the feedback forms. There were also a number of requests for more laptop facilities and wireless access. The food was largely considered to be of passable quality, but the vegetarian food at dinner was felt to be sub-standard. The views of those who paid for their accommodation could be summed up by the following comment: “Too expensive in comparison with quality of service”. However, only two out of 37 thought it had been poor. Many compliments were received by the student helpers regarding the organisation of the conference, and they were also thanked in the forms.

A number of comments referred in anticipation to the conference’s follow-up and the project at large. “Unique gathering. Extraordinarily well-planned. Terrific idea to mix academics and activists. Now the follow-up must be of equal excellence”. There was also one request for a summary of the conference to be distributed.

Suggestions for possible ways of improving the conference included offering print-outs of papers and having the session-chairs attend the whole conference and therefore be able to inter-relate issues, as well as scheduling sessions to reflect on and improve case study questions. A few participants suggested there might have been more examples of practical contemporary applications, as well as more attention to philosophical issues, “e.g. what *is* civil resistance, non-violence, success, defeat”. However, as one respondent concluded, after offering her views, “Having said this, I believe [the conference] offered an extraordinary opportunity to plumb important questions, and with high-quality presentations”.

—Emily Speers Mears
20 March 2007