



Nonviolent Struggle in Africa: Essentials of Knowledge and Teaching

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Nonviolent struggle, also called civil resistance or nonviolent resistance, is often misunderstood or goes unrecognized by diplomats, journalists, and pedagogues not trained in the technique of nonviolent action; to them, events 'just happen'. To the contrary, however, nonviolent struggle requires that practitioners, who take deliberate and sustained action against a power, regime, policy, or system of oppression, consciously reject the use of violence in doing so. The technique of nonviolent action has been employed successfully in diverse conflicts—such as abolition of the trade in human cargo, establishment of trade unions and workers' rights, voter enfranchisement, colonial rebellions and national independence, interstate strife, and religious conflicts—all without resort to violent measures, guerrilla warfare, or armed struggle. Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr, were emboldened by the collective nonviolent action of Africans in Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, and elsewhere, in the nationalist drive for independence. If violence is to be significantly reduced or abandoned in acute conflicts today, a realistic alternative must be presented, accepted, and understood. Contemplated in this article is the need for study, documentation, and teaching of nonviolent strategic action as a technique for securing justice that lends itself to a host of applications. As Gandhi and King learned from the African nonviolent struggles of their times, and relied on observations of African campaigns to improve their sharing of knowledge, so can the rest of today's world.

BY THE LATTER PART OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, Africans were opposing colonialism and challenging imperial powers by resistance to taxation policies, contesting the lack of channels for representation, fighting to improve working conditions for labourers, and disputing the alienation of settled peoples from their traditional ownership of ancestral lands. Standing up and defying colonial hegemony through various forms of nonviolent demonstrations, their protest marches enjoyed great popularity. Kings, paramount chiefs, educated Africans, local news media, and persons from all walks of life participated in collective nonviolent action. Often carefully planned, such popular dissent took the form of petitions, boycotts, delegations, parades, and marches. By the

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mid-twentieth century, Nigerians with leadership from journalist Nnamdi Azikiwe, and in the Gold Coast (later Ghana) guided by Kwame Nkrumah, were fighting for their independence from European colonialism with nonviolent methods. In Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia the nationalist pressure for independence from British colonialism manifested itself in largely nonviolent movements that sought self-rule with free elections.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, closely watching the African struggles, explained, 'If there had not been an Nkrumah and his followers in Ghana, Ghana would still be a British colony':

Nkrumah says in the first two pages of his autobiography . . . that he had studied the social systems of social philosophy and he started studying the life of Gandhi and his technique. And he said that in the beginning he could not see how they could ever get aloose from colonialism without armed revolt, without armies and ammunition, rising up, then he says after he continued to study Gandhi and continued to study this technique, he came to see that the only way was through nonviolent positive action. And he called his program 'positive action'.¹

The nonviolent struggles of Africans that caught King's eye had in an earlier period drawn the studious attention of Mohandas K. Ghandi, who in 1905 in South Africa, where he worked for twenty-one years, was closely observing and writing about the nonviolent struggles of Africans there.² Leaders such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, and Chief Albert Luthuli of South Africa would subsequently express their indebtedness to the work of Gandhi. Both Gandhi and King were emboldened in the movements they led by the collective nonviolent action of Africans.

In parts of Africa, yesterday and today, individuals and groups have used (and continue to use) 'positive action'—Nkrumah's phrasing—to refer to the technique broadly termed 'nonviolent struggle', 'nonviolent resistance', or 'civil resistance'. The 'methods', or action steps, employed in the technique include boycotts, demonstrations, strikes, and vigils, among others. When combined with proper planning, it is possible for people, groups, and societies to use this repertoire of methods to protect liberty, achieve free elections, fight for human rights or reform, end totalitarian bureaucracies, and even dismantle despotic regimes, all without resort to violent measures, guerrilla warfare, or armed struggle.

BACKGROUND

In considering nonviolent civil resistance, nonviolent struggle, collective nonviolent action, or nonviolent strategic action, the discussion is actually about a technique for social and political change that utilises nonviolent sanctions, rather than military

1. Martin Luther King, Jr, 'The Birth of a New Nation', sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, King Library and Archives, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia.

2. K. Swaminathan (ed.), *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter CWMG) (100 vols., New Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958–1984), as cited in Gene Sharp, 'Origins of Gandhi's Use of Nonviolent Struggle: A Review-Essay on Erik Erikson's Gandhi's Truth' in Gene Sharp (ed.), *Gandhi as a Political Strategist, with Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston, Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979), 27, 34, 41n24.

weaponry. Nonviolent movements have developed throughout history as an alternative to violence and passivity. From the late eighteenth century through the twenty-first century, the technique of nonviolent action has been employed in diverse conflicts, such as abolition of the trade in human cargo, establishment of trade unions and workers' rights, voter enfranchisement (including transnational campaigns for women's suffrage), colonial rebellions and national independence, interstate strife, and religious conflicts. Among the significant developments of the twentieth century was the securing of basic human rights for much of the world's population, through women's suffrage, anti-colonial, civil rights, and democracy movements that purposely rejected the use of violence. This form of struggle has been utilised to secure collective bargaining and the right of labourers to organise, realise economic advances, gain national independence as well as to defy foreign occupations and coups d'état, resist genocide, overturn laws enshrining discrimination, and obtain rights for women. Ordinary persons were able to change their societies through action methods deliberately chosen because they do not accomplish their goals through harm, injury, or threat of physical assault. Frequently with meagre resources, relying on themselves, they were able to make their situation more just without creating new forms of oppression or instances of injustice.

In 1956, coterminously with the African nonviolent independence struggles, Martin Luther King, Jr, emphasised that this technique did not accept or represent passivity or submission:

There is another method which can serve as an alternative to the method of violence, and it is a method of nonviolent resistance. . . . A method that all of the oppressed peoples of the world must use if justice is to be achieved in a proper sense. . . . The first thing that can be said about this method is that it is not a method of submission or surrender. And there are those who would argue that this method leads to stagnant complacency and deadening passivity, and so it is not a proper method to use. But that is not true of the nonviolent method. . . . [T]he first thing about the method of . . . nonviolent resistance, is that it is not a method of surrender, or a weapon, or a method of submission, but it is a method that is very active in seeking to change conditions.³

In the decades to follow, countless manifestations of this technique arose: Poland became the first democracy to be achieved in postwar, communist Eastern Europe through the strikes conducted by the Solidarity union from 1980 to 1989; the Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo in Argentina, 1977–1983 brought to justice those in the military generals' 'dirty war' who had 'disappeared' their children; the dictator Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in the Philippines in favour of democracy in 1986; movements against political oppression in Serbia in 2000 and Ukraine in 2004 brought about free elections and regime change; and recent reform and liberalisation movements in Iran,

3. Martin Luther King, Jr, 'Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony', address delivered to executives of the Home Mission Societies of Christian Friends, Green Lake, Wisconsin, 23 July 1956, in Clayborne Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), 321–28, as cited in Mary King, *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr: The Power of Nonviolent Action* (Paris, UNESCO, 1999; 2d edn, New Delhi, Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Mehta Publishers, 2002), 244–45.

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Lebanon, Thailand, and Zimbabwe have pressed for clean government and reforms. Such instances signify that nonviolent struggle has become a formidable force for justice and human rights.

One reason for the extraordinary blind spots in the documentation and comprehension of the technique, despite its historically successful accomplishments, may be that it inherently questions premises of an exclusive role for the nation-state in directing political change; the history of wars is taught, but the nonviolent transformation of conflict is not mentioned or recognized. This is in part due to the failure of news media, policymakers, and social scientists (including historians) to study and grasp the power of nonviolent action. In a number of instances, nonviolent struggles that have generated or achieved national independence, including in African countries, have been trivialized or ignored or, at best, forgotten. Perhaps the later devolution into one-party autocracies, as for example happened in Ghana and Kenya, is partly to blame for the obscured record on nonviolent resistance. What had been a potent tradition throughout Africa became submerged, as the voices of ideologists for armed struggle rose above those advocating this alternative approach.

In 2002, Yonah Selethi, an historian at the University of Natal, in Durban, South Africa, implored a visiting delegation from the University for Peace (UPEACE) to focus on the 'strong, indigenous tradition of nonviolent resistance—the tradition of Mohandas K. Gandhi, Chief Albert Luthuli, and Steve Biko' in shaping programmes and activities. He saw the technique as *indigenous* to Africa. Responding to this and other guidance, the Africa Programme of UPEACE conducted two training initiatives for young civil society organization leaders, in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in November 2005 and in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in February 2007. The latter was attended by leaders from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. A dearth of teaching materials on the topic led the Africa Programme in 2006 to produce four publications, which are distributed via internet free of charge.⁴

Although the technique of nonviolent struggle has been widely utilized in Africa, this does not mean that it is well comprehended there. Misperception is common. Collective nonviolent action is not a creed and does not require religious belief or spirituality. An important and often misunderstood point is that the behaviour of participants defines nonviolent action, not their convictions or adherence to a credo. It is a choice of pragmatism, not idealism. In addition, if nonviolent struggle is allowed to be coloured by perceptions of weakness, passivity, pacifism, idealism, or lumped in with rioting or guerrilla warfare, people may not perceive it as the alternative method of struggle that it is or even be interested in learning about it. Nonviolent struggle is not a form of idealism and pacifism, although individual adherents may consider themselves philosophical idealists and others may personally be pacifists. The desig-

4. Mary E. King and Christopher A. Miller, *Teaching Model: Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict* (Addis Ababa and Geneva, University for Peace, 2006); Christopher A. Miller, *Only Young Once: An Introduction to Nonviolent Struggle for Youths*, Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict—Africa (Addis Ababa and Geneva, University for Peace, 2006); Desmond George-Williams, 'Bite Not One Another': *Selected Accounts of Nonviolent Struggle in Africa*, Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict—Africa (Addis Ababa and Geneva, University for Peace, 2006); Christopher A. Miller, *Strategic Nonviolent Struggle: A Training Manual*, Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict—Africa (Addis Ababa and Geneva: University for Peace, 2006). See www.africa.upeace.org.

nation of nonviolent resistance as pacifism was discredited in the early 1970s in a sweeping study of nonviolent struggle by the scholar Gene Sharp in the three-volume *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, which is based on the analytical work of respected political theoreticians. In this 'first major theoretical analysis that goes beyond the Gandhian literature',⁵ Sharp found that he could count on two hands the number of cases, out of eighty-five studied, in which the leadership of a nonviolent movement had actually been a pacifist.⁶

Nonviolent struggle is an active response in which the taking of action is not violent. It is not the same as the absence of violence, which can be accounted for by numerous causes and explanations. It does not infer passivity—which alters nothing and may even constitute acceptance of hostile violence—nor does it refer to the values of tolerance and virtues of nonviolent interaction that in modern political thought constitute civil society. Rather, it stands as a technique for achieving social and political justice, in contrast to conventional warfare, armed struggle, and guerrilla warfare, which seek to achieve their goals through producing fear or capitulation (because injury to life and limb demoralizes an opponent) or through expressly violent subjugation. The technique employs strategies for applying nonviolent sanctions to bring about results; put simply, it does not seek to accomplish its goals through physical harm, injury, or killing.

Since 1973, Sharp's typology and classification of nonviolent methods in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (often referred to as the *Politics*, or Sharp's trilogy) has percolated throughout the world and has been translated into two dozen languages. In a field plagued by scant documentation and poor historiography, Sharp's delineation of three fundamental categories of nonviolent methods, or action steps—protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent intervention—has never been seriously challenged or displaced. His conceptualization of classic psychological, social, economic, and political methods has stood the test of time. One is likely to encounter Sharp's list of 198 methods wherever groups gather to discuss how to fight with concern for the connexion between the means and ends.⁷ Sharp subsequently abandoned the categorising of methods (for example, picketing, marches, strikes, boycotts, vigils), as it became unrealistic to tabulate ever-changing action steps, which often derive from specific contextual, cultural, or endogenous traditions.

Most important, Sharp's *Politics* shows that although power is comprised of a number of organisational, material, and sociopolitical elements, political power rests ultimately on the cooperation of the ruled, and it can be withdrawn. He shows that power is the basis of the enduring technique of nonviolent resistance as a means of engagement in conflicts and that such resistance is a practical and realistic substitute for armed struggle, guerrilla war, and violent strategies. Perhaps his most important crystallisation is his discernment that systems and governments must ensure for themselves a steady supply of political power and that the stock of power that sustains state

5. This description is by April Carter, in response to a paper by Gene Sharp, 'The Politics of Nonviolent Action and the Spread of Ideas about Civil Resistance', prepared for the 'Conference on Civil Resistance and Power Politics', St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 15–18 March 2007.

6. See Gene Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action* (3 vols., Boston, Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973).

7. The list can be found at www.aeinstein.org/organizations103a.html. A number of publications from the Albert Einstein Institution can be downloaded free of charge from www.aeinstein.org.

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authority is not intrinsic to its wielders and by no means guaranteed. The people's power can be withdrawn. Sharp's work demonstrates that nonviolent strategic action achieves its political objectives by altering the power configurations among groups or persons, usually by the withholding of cooperation.

NONVIOLENT AND VIOLENT STRUGGLE CANNOT BE MIXED

Violent struggle and collective nonviolent action work in different ways; the two are not supplementary or complementary. Injecting violence into a struggle destroys the potential for involving an entire people in self-reliant civil resistance. It affects mobilization and recruitment and mitigates against the development of a nonviolent mass movement through which the oppressed themselves can be uplifted, empowered, and potentiated. Mixing the two approaches defeats the strategic advantage of a disciplined nonviolent movement, which gains a potential advantage when its restraint stands in sharp contrast to violent reprisals employed by the target group; when an adversary reveals its brutality, it creates a situation in which splits can occur within its ranks. External third-party solidarity groups respond affirmatively to nonviolent discipline, but not so to a hodge-podge approach of 'now we'll try this, now we'll try that' involving violent and nonviolent methods.

Today across Africa, a dominant discourse holds that 'what is taken from us by violence must be retrieved by violence'. This refrain reverberates throughout the continent, despite clear evidence that when a group chooses violent means of contention, it has selected a means of struggle in which the oppressive forces nearly always possess superiority, through technical military artilleries, extended security apparatuses, and police and prison systems that can crush any armed or violent struggle. Violence as a chosen technique of struggle is counterproductive, because it prolongs and complicates disputes and can turn them into acute conflicts, while raising social and economic costs. It reduces or destroys the likelihood of a democratic environment at the conclusion. Social philosopher Hannah Arendt observes, 'the practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world'.⁸ Of importance, bloodshed creates a quest for retaliation and thirst for revenge that may last for generations or centuries, even millennia. Despite the absence of evidence that responding to violence with more of the same is effective, ideologists of armed struggle are not known for encouraging self-criticism. Ideology overrides facts. Evaluations are not conducted on the actual efficacy of armed struggle.

Studies after World War II of German military generals revealed that commanders had found it difficult to cope with the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance as practiced in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway. 'It was a relief to them when resistance [became] violent, and when nonviolent forms [were] mixed with guerrilla action, thus making it easier to combine drastic suppressive action against both at the same time'.⁹ The greatest contaminant when using the technique of nonviolent struggle is violence, according to former colonel Robert L. Helvey, who has applied his knowledge

8. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York and London, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1970), 80.

9. B. H. Liddell Hart, 'Lessons from Resistance Movements—Guerrilla and Non-violent' in Adam Roberts (ed.), *Civilian Resistance as a National Defense* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Stackpole Books, 1968), 205.

of military strategy to consideration of strategy in nonviolent action.¹⁰ Acts of violence offer pretexts for reprisals and can lead to categorization as a terrorist organization. When violence begets terrorism, repressive measures intensify, and sympathy dissipates, rendering the success of a popular movement almost impossible.

Violence can change the nature of a conflict from one of asymmetry, in which nonviolent challengers are unarmed against the military superiority of security systems provisioned with violent weapons—a situation that can be beneficial for the nonviolent protagonists—to a symmetrical affray in which both sides utilize violent weaponry—offering the advantage to the attackers with military weaponry. Nonviolent sanctions offer a practical substitute for violent struggle and can gradually replace deadly conflict if organised around particular needs and specific purposes. This does not reference conflict resolution, although it may well be one outcome of a nonviolent struggle. Some students of conflict have been persuaded that deadly discord can be mediated, eradicated like infectious diseases, negotiated away, will disappear if and when peace research improves, or addressed through arms control. Contemporary political thought emphasises peaceful alternatives to war through arbitration, compromise, conciliation, dialogic methods, diplomacy, mediation, negotiations, and other tools in the field of conflict resolution. Each such approach rests on specific truths, and the tools used represent an advance over a presumptive ‘superiority’ of military responses. Increasing research and study of the paraphernalia of prevention, management, and resolution of conflict is important. Yet these pursuits do not represent the full range of alternatives to violent struggle. If such beneficial interventions are pursued apart from recognition of the significant body of knowledge on the historic technique of nonviolent struggle, they cannot contribute significantly to a diminution of reliance on violent strategies. Furthermore, in going to the roots of deep and fundamental issues—where ethical principles, basic human rights, and justice are involved—advocacy of approaches fundamentally based on compromise may not be desirable in principle, achievable, or even pertinent.

The nonviolent technique of fighting for social justice—older and more deep-seated in history, whether written or oral, than peace studies dating to the nineteenth century in Scandinavian universities, or the twentieth-century study of conflict and its resolution—does not presume that all conflicts can be resolved by mediation or arbitration methods. Indeed, without employment of nonviolent struggle, negotiations may eventuate, but might be ineffective on their own. Negotiating with a dictator is hollow absent fundamental power shifts and alterations in the tyrant’s perception of vulnerability to popular consent.

When disputing parties possess severely asymmetrical power, the smaller or weaker side may find it difficult to obtain a hearing apart from staging a nonviolent struggle, which can bring parity between the sides of an otherwise unbalanced relationship. Nonviolent resistance may be in such instances the *only* way to reach negotiations. This insight animated aspects of the 1960s U.S. civil rights movement, for example when uneducated sharecroppers in remote rural areas appreciated that nonviolent struggle would be the only way to reach the stage of negotiations with what they called

10. Robert L. Helvey, *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking about the Fundamentals* (Boston, Albert Einstein Institution, 2004), www.aeinstitution.org/organizations/org/OSNC.pdf.

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the 'power structure'. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, articulated this basic proposition in 1963: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.¹¹ King's 1968 death in Memphis, Tennessee, occurred after he had travelled to the city to support a local sanitation workers' strike, as a favour to local clergy, who had hoped that his presence there would force the mayor to begin bargaining. No one had the illusion that negotiations could take place without the pressure imparted through collective nonviolent action.¹²

Seeking compromise is a reasonable principle in settling disputes that do not involve deep-seated questions of beliefs or ominous issues of social inequity. Some disputes demand the full threshing of engagement before reaching the stage of searching for options of resolution. The conflict resolution approach calls for a collaborative attitude, yet its strategies fail as realistic options if the cause of distress is so profound or egregious that shifts are obligatory in the positions of the opposing sides in order to create the conditions that allow for consideration of settlements or solutions. Some strife results from grievances of such depth and acuity that no solution is possible until underlying causes of the conflict have been fully addressed. In fact, prematurely introducing conciliatory interventions can weaken prospects for durable resolution. Peace will remain out of the question in some conflicts until the depths of humiliation and pain have been addressed to the satisfaction of the aggrieved, which may be one or both or several parties.

The methods of conflict resolution are more consensual in their properties than is the technique of nonviolent resistance, and thus are not suitable for addressing all conflicts at every stage. To presume that all acute conflicts can be negotiated or 'resolved' is as analytically weak a presumption as is the notion that violence represents the 'strongest' force.

Would the slave trade have ceased by introducing conciliation methods between captors and captives? Would European colonialism have been ended through mediation between imperial powers and the colonized? Would labour unions and collective bargaining have been established through using dialogic methods with the captains of industry? Could the ballot have been won for women in country after country through negotiations?

Entitlements now considered universal human rights had in many instances first to be fought for and institutionalised through nonviolent struggles. Instructors in human rights often do not explain that nonviolent resistance was necessary to win the entitlements about which they teach, yet their subject matter of laws and international conventions may have required massive social movements for establishment. From the eighteenth century onward, the technique of nonviolent struggle was coherently developing worldwide, its body of knowledge 'globalising' long before the current interest

11. Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail' (written 16 April 1963) in Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd (eds.), *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1995), 254.

12. Kevin Boyle, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York, Norton, 2007).

in globalisation. It is thus important to analyse and understand the historical properties of nonviolent struggle, even if the doctrinal champions of the supremacy of violence deny its efficacy.

NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE ALTERS POWER CONFIGURATIONS

Nonviolent strategic action achieves its political objectives by altering power configurations among groups or persons. These new formations create the political space in which social change can occur, without threatening the lives or harming the well being of the target group. Study, strategy, planning, and preparation are critical, as the nonviolent protagonists must choose the appropriate methods, and a sequence for applying them, in the effort to achieve their goals. Valuable study materials are increasingly available on how to wage nonviolent struggle.

Throughout the annals of nonviolent struggles echoes a consent theory of power in which all political relationships and systems rely on the obedience, cooperation, or acquiescence of individuals, organizations, and groups. Popular sovereignty was an essential insight even in the Middle Ages and the premodern period. Until recently, however, power was viewed in the context of established structures and institutions, and theories of political obligations and social control emphasized supervision by potentates, governments, and states. During recent decades, the *institutional* perspective, which sees political power as vested in nation-states and governmental institutions, has given way to an *instrumental* view, which sees politics as relations of power. Contemporary thinking has moved away from static institutional structures, and concepts of domination and coercion, to perceiving power as relational, interactive, transactional, and contingent.

When cooperation from the ruled derives from cruelty or duress, it requires constant control from intelligence agencies, military forces, police, and security services. 'The power that governments inspire through fear remains under constant challenge by the power that flows from people's freedom to act in behalf of the interests and beliefs,' observes Jonathan Schell. '[I]t has over and over bent great powers to its will'.¹³

Scholars have increased awareness and understanding of how interactive political power can be affected by the collective action of nonviolent struggle. Noncooperation, or the refusal to obey, is central to its theories and methods. Recognition that consent can be given or denied is acknowledged in the use of nonviolent sanctions. 'The most important single quality of any government, without which it would not exist, must be the obedience and submission of its subjects,' Sharp asserts; 'obedience is at the heart of political power'.¹⁴ It is increasingly understood that governments must continuously exact fresh supplies of political power rather than attempt to assert monolithic predominance, imposing power from above. The capability of all systems is vulnerable to the specific forces that are its fountainhead. Sharp categorizes such sources of power as follows: authority (legitimacy), human resources, skills and knowledge (including technology), intangible factors that contribute to or inhibit obedience (such as religious

13. Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2003), 387.

14. Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, vol. 1: *Power and Struggle*, 16.

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beliefs, cultural values, psychological and ideological factors, or habit), material resources (including property and finances), and the capacity to enforce sanctions. These foundational bases of power depend on obedience and cooperation.¹⁵

Compliance is encouraged by economic factors, laws and regulations, pressures of conformity, moral norms and cultural symbols, and forms of intimidation, repression, and patriarchal hegemony. Cooperation functions best when reciprocal, yet it can be intentionally and strategically denied to a ruler, government bureaucracy, system, or employer. Nonetheless, it is also true that deeply entrenched systemic obedience, oppression, conditioning, and exclusions cannot easily be dislodged, and thus, in any consideration of employment of nonviolent struggle, a rigorous effort is essential in order to comprehend the conditions under which noncooperation may affect power alignments. Gandhi considered it a right and duty to exercise withdrawal of such support to tyrannical governments:

Most people do not understand the complicated machinery of the government. . . . [E]very citizen silently but [nonetheless] certainly sustains the government of the day in ways of which he has no knowledge. Every citizen therefore renders himself responsible for every act of his government. And it is quite proper to support it so long as the actions of the government are bearable. But when they hurt him and his nation, it becomes his duty to withdraw his support.

It is true that in the vast majority of cases, it is the duty of a subject to submit to wrongs on failure of the usual procedure, so long as they do not affect his vital being. But every nation and every individual have the right, and it is their duty, to rise against an intolerable wrong.¹⁶

Power is upheld, in Sharp's influential analysis, by pillars of support that sustain the specific institutions and organizations of a society, community, or nation-state, and which allow persons and groups to maintain and exert power.¹⁷ Although every society is unique, common bulwarks include the civil service, labour unions, news media, police systems and security apparatuses, schoolteachers, and university faculty and students. When the supply of the necessary sources of power that sustain authority is constricted or withdrawn, it can disclose the basic power of nonviolent struggle, which may be applied under varying circumstances and for wide purposes. Sharp makes a strong case that in applying it, those involved should follow a strategy in some ways comparable to military strategy, with the stress on planning, discipline, organization, timing, and the sequencing of appropriate tactics.

Action Methods of Nonviolent Struggle

Nonviolent struggle is indeterminate in the sense that neither the procedures for reaching its conclusion nor the final results are specified in advance.¹⁸ Although the outcomes

15. Gene Sharp (ed.), *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston, Massachusetts, Porter Sargent Publishers, 2005), 30–32.

16. Gandhi, *Young India*, 28 July 1920, as cited in King, *Gandhi and King*, 291.

17. Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 35–36.

18. See Douglas G. Bond, 'Nonviolent Action and the Diffusion of Power' in Paul Wehr, Heidi Burgess, and Guy Burgess (eds.), *Justice without Violence* (Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishing, 1994).

of institutional political action are defined and prescribed by procedures or practices, the results or effects of the noninstitutional political action of nonviolent struggle cannot be known because they derive from contentious interaction between the nonviolent challenger and the target group. Sociologist Kurt Schick explains, 'the power of noninstitutional politics inheres in its indeterminateness and disruptiveness'.¹⁹

A virtually inexhaustible array of action practices is available for nonviolent sanctions. By intentionally ignoring the immediate social or political context, and looking for similarities or distinctions in the actions that are organized, it is possible to discern a large inventory of forms of nonviolent struggle that transcend the boundaries of place and time and have been developing for centuries worldwide. Action methods fall into three broad categories, in Sharp's widely accepted categorisation: protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent intervention.

- *Protest or persuasion* action methods send a message, and include assemblies, banners, displays of flags, leaflets, marches, mock funerals, painting as protest, parades, petitions, symbolic lights or sounds, teach-ins, vigils, walk-outs, and wearing of symbols.
- *Noncooperation* action methods suspend cooperation and assistance, and encompass boycotts of elections, civil disobedience, consumer boycotts, prisoners' strikes, resignations from jobs, sanctuary, strikes, slowdowns, and withdrawal from the social system.
- *Nonviolent intervention* action methods intentionally disrupt, and include alternative or parallel social and political systems, defiance of blockades, dual sovereignty and parallel government, hunger strikes, and sit-ins.²⁰

Strikes comprise a subclass of their own under economic noncooperation and appear throughout recorded history. The strike involves a refusal to continue economic cooperation through work. Withdrawal of labour can occur wherever and whenever persons work for others. Strikes occur in various forms and range from peasant strikes to sympathy strikes. In a bumper strike, only one firm in an industry is struck at a time. Lightning strikes last a few minutes or hours. In a slowdown, rather than halting all work, employees measure the rate of their work, dramatically reducing productivity. In a limited strike, also called a running-sore strike, workers continue to function in their normal capacity, but refuse to carry out certain specified marginal tasks or refuse to work on certain days.²¹ A reverse strike, performing work illegally as a form of resistance, was perfected in Sicily in 1955, when the government would not fund a badly needed road while prohibiting the building of one. Danilo Dolci organized unemployed labourers to construct the road without compensation, a court case eventuated, and the workers were paid.²²

19. Kurt Schick, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 15.

20. Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 51–65, updating Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*.

21. On the action method of the strike, with historical examples, see Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Struggle*, vol. 2: *Methods of Nonviolent Action*, 257–80. Strikes warrant a complex, dual classification, as they are often combined with other forms of economic noncooperation. *Ibid.*, 258.

22. Danilo Dolci, *Outlaws of Partinico*, trans. R. Munro (London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1960).

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A general strike can bring economic life to a halt and take place at the local, municipal, district, regional, national, or international level. In 1905 general strikes spread like wildfire across Russian cities during the Russian Revolution; the most significant was the Great October Strike of 1905. Gandhi, while in South Africa, followed the strikes in Russia:

The present unrest in Russia has a great lesson. . . . The Russian people [who have] suffered . . . have found another remedy which, though very simple, is more powerful than rebellion and murder. The Russian workers and all the other servants declared a general strike and stopped all work. They left their jobs and informed the Czar that, unless justice was done, they would not resume work. What was there even the Czar could do against this? It is impossible to exact work from people by force.²³

Palestinian Arabs held strikes with frequency in the 1920s and 1930s. They were contesting the Balfour declaration imposed by Britain in 1917 that without consultation with them established in Palestine a national home for world Jewry. The Palestinians conducted a general strike in 1936 that lasted for 174 days, possibly the longest strike in recorded history. They revived use of the strike in the first *intifada*, from 1987 to 1990, with prisoners' strikes, strikes by resignation, and strikes by professionals.

Civil Disobedience: An Advanced Method of Political Noncooperation

Africa has seen a great deal of civil disobedience. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato judge that civil disobedience is a critical component of modern civil societies, because it keeps alive the vision of a just and democratic civil society. Civil disobedience, they say, may actually constitute civil society.²⁴ Although concerned chiefly with constitutional democracies—with already established entitlements, rule of law, and democratic institutions—Cohen and Arato conclude by deduction that the use of noncooperation for purposes of establishing rights under authoritarian and nondemocratic circumstances can be part of a normative process leading to the formation of such representative institutions.

The term *civil disobedience* is often credited to the American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, yet although widely lauded for his 'Letter on Civil Disobedience', Thoreau did not, so far as anyone knows, use the term. Prior to Thoreau, civil disobedience had been considered a way of remaining true to one's beliefs; individuals and groups used it as personal witness, without any intention of bringing about political alterations. Thoreau's withdrawal of cooperation was an exertion of personal conscience against slavery.²⁵ Yet civil disobedience rests on the consent theory of power, in which any system relies on popular obedience.

Thoreau spent a night in the Concord, Massachusetts, jail in 1846 (or possibly 1845) for refusal to pay a poll tax that supported a U.S. government that he considered illegitimate, because it condoned slavery and sought to expand slave territory through

23. CWMG, chap 5, 7–8.

24. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory: Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994), 566, 567.

25. Joseph Wood Krutch, *Henry David Thoreau* (London, Methuen and Company, n.d.).

war with Mexico. To Thoreau's displeasure, he was released on bail paid by a relative; Thoreau had *wanted* to express his opposition by serving time in jail. In February 1848, he gave a lecture, 'The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government', a discourse on having been jailed. Written in the same year as Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, it appeared a year later as 'Resistance to Civil Government' and received little attention. 'Unjust laws exist', wrote Thoreau, asserting a right to refuse allegiance to a tyrannical government, 'shall we transgress them at once?'²⁶ Much later, the essay came to be known as 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'.

Gandhi encountered Thoreau's essay, although his writings probably reinforced views that Gandhi had already come to hold, formed during more than two decades in South Africa. Gandhi's application of the consent theory would make it become an instrument of mass enactment aimed at political change. One source for such analysis of power—almost certainly studied by Gandhi while reading for the law in London—is the sixteenth-century French writer Étienne de la Boétie, whose *Discours de la Servitude Volontaire*, also known as *Contr'un*, or *Anti-Dictator*, was significant in the history of ideas in the early modern period in establishing a justification for resistance to authoritarian rule. Written in 1552, Boétie's short polemic argues that persons can refuse to be governed by those who dominate them.²⁷ The voluntary servitude of the title refers to domination by the tyrant when accepted by the people. Boétie describes the ruler as a branch of a tree that dies when the roots (popular assent) are severed. Thus withdrawal of cooperation can occur at any time and can have the effect of disempowering the despot. Reflecting a deep conviction in the agency of ordinary individuals to be instrumental in social change, Boétie asserts that no government can survive without the obedience of the populace.²⁸ Scholars do not know with certainty whether Thoreau read Boétie, but his close friend Ralph Waldo Emerson was clearly aware of Boétie.²⁹

Boétie's influence on Count Leo Tolstoy, and through him on Gandhi, is clear, because Tolstoy quotes Boétie. Tolstoy's writings so affected Gandhi that he and the Russian began a correspondence. If only through Tolstoy, Boétie's perspective that no government can survive without the cooperation of the populace was persuasive with Gandhi in South Africa: 'By 1905 Gandhi had already grasped the essentials of the theory of power which views all governments as constantly dependent on the obedience and cooperation of the ruled.'³⁰ Together, Tolstoy and Gandhi transformed an abstraction defending the withdrawal of consent by individual witness into coherent mass

26. Henry David Thoreau, 'Civil Disobedience' in Lynd and Lynd (eds.), *Nonviolence in America*, 28.

27. Étienne (or Éstienne) de la Boétie, 'Discours de la Servitude Volontaire', *Oeuvres Complètes d'Étienne de la Boétie* (Paris, J. Rouam et Cie, 1892); for an English version see, *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, trans. Harry Kurz (New York, Free Life Editions, 1975). Whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, Boétie's propositions form the context for writings on civil disobedience by Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, King, Václav Havel, Aung San Suu Kyi, and others.

28. For more on Boétie's role, see Roland Bleiker, *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 51–95, esp. 87–93. Bleiker considers the continuing influence from Boétie's treatise in the history of ideas at pages 51, 54–65, *passim*.

29. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Étienne de la Boèce' in *The Complete Works*, vol. 9 (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 82; *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. 9: 1843–1847 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1971), 28, as cited in Bleiker, *Popular Dissent*, 82n17.

30. Sharp, 'Origins of Gandhi's Use of Nonviolent Struggle', 27. Also see Leo Tolstoy, *The Law of Violence and the Law of Love* (London, Unicorn Press, 1959); *idem*, *Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence* (London, Peter Owen, 1967).

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political action with global consequences for today's world. Gandhi's experiments would show that the intangible idea of withholding obedience is in fact practicable on a large scale, as he lifted the rhetorical notion of human agency into concrete political substantiation.

Perception of an inherent connection between the means and ends is a powerful tributary of thought that courses through nonviolent struggles. Actions should reveal the ultimate purpose, Johan Galtung stresses: the way is the goal.³¹ That is, to achieve a certain state of affairs, the process should embody the aim, with the steps to attain it implicitly implementing the goal. Even if the action and the goal are separated by time, the means and ends should nonetheless be consistent. If practicing the goal today does not result in the desired effect immediately, the purpose has at least been lived, if only briefly. When the means are violent, the aspiration has never been realized, not even for a moment. Rejection of any notion that the ends justify the means includes the impulse to fight with 'all means of struggle', which, although long argued by ideologists of armed struggle, has been offered as a matter of dogma rather than based on objective evaluation of success or failure.

Further in regard to consistency in action and outcome, gender is also organic to non-violent struggle. Gendered exclusions would be incompatible with the desired ends if the action chosen is to be consistent with the state of affairs sought after a situation has been rectified or conflict resolved by adopting nonviolent struggle in pursuit of liberty, freedom, justice, or democracy. Although nonviolent struggle is un-gendered in its presumptions of power, experience with the technique can shed light on societally gendered distributions of power. At a workshop in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in February 2007, the salience of nonviolent action for issues of gender was clearly disclosed.³² Of the thirty-seven participants from the West African countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, eleven were women, meaning three-quarters were men. In an exercise on recruitment strategies and developing slogans, attendees formed groups based on their country. Each group was asked to pick a local grievance or wrong that could be susceptible to alteration by a nonviolent campaign, the group's task being to devise a recruitment plan and message. No guidance was offered on content. When the groups reported, all four had picked local injustices for a mobilisation related to gender:

- Côte d'Ivoire targeted the international community. At issue was ending sexual abuse of young girls in the Ivory Coast by UN peacekeepers.
- Sierra Leone targeted the chiefs, heads of secret societies, and the broader community. The purpose of the campaign and the message was a demand that women be installed as paramount chiefs.
- Liberia targeted the wider community, including perpetrators of rape in Bong country.
- Guinea targeted young girls and all village members to press for guaranteed access by the girls to immunizations, including vaccinations against tetanus, unfettered by interruptions from religious leaders.

31. Johan Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal: Gandhi Today* (Ahmedabad, Gujarat Vidyapith, Peace Research Centre, 1992), 78, 79.

32. The Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict Workshop, Freetown, Sierra Leone, was jointly conducted by UPEACE and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

The significance here is not that nearly thirty particular men were sensitive on matters of gender, which would not necessarily be true. Rather, when asked to analyse power relations at the local level, the gendered nature of local power formations and ways to combat imbalances became clear and important to them.

APPLICATIONS OF NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE

Nonviolent action can work under myriad circumstances to realise major, positive social change with the possibility to transform conflicts and nations or to interrupt a cycle of vengeful violence. Nonviolent methods may be used pre-emptively and also to prevent severely disruptive strife. Knowledge of civil resistance can be a prime constituent of managing conflicts. With widening application of the technique, an evolution of thinking and practices is under way toward notions of waging conflict constructively, signifying the normality of human conflict and the expectation that it can knowledgeably be fought without violence, often with positive results for all parties.

Transformation of Conflict

The technique of nonviolent struggle has demonstrated that it is possible to interrupt the cycle of retaliatory violence while accomplishing major, positive social change with transformative possibilities. Nonviolent sanctions can be used pre-emptively, to prevent severely disruptive strife, and as a prime constituent of managing crisis. An example of preventing the outbreak of deadly violence would be the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from settlements (considered illegal under international law) in the Palestinian Gaza Strip in 2005. The settlers' evacuation was planned by Israeli police and soldiers to avoid escalation into violence through a process guided by Israeli military generals and clinical psychologists who had studied the literature and technique of nonviolent strategic action.³³

To speak of transformation of conflict is to go beyond the resolution of concrete problems, appreciating Gandhi's perception of conflict as an opportunity to rearrange the basic pieces of the underlying dispute. In the post-apartheid South African context, transformation of conflict has been described as 'a continuous aspirational progression', and 'multi-level phenomenon that is dependent on different levels of structural change, . . . as well as the relationship that ordinary citizens have with structural changes'.³⁴ In seeking to influence the behaviour of the opponent, elicit responses, and activate accommodation with the point of view of the nonviolent protagonists, nonviolent struggle is at its essence relational in altering the relationships involved in the underlying dispute. Nonviolent movements have experienced better odds for transforming authoritarian domination in the contemporary era than

33. Nahi Alon, thirty-minute personal communication with the author, Bethlehem, 30 December 2005; Albert Einstein Newsletter, spring 2006, 9. Also see Nahi Alon and Haim Omer, *The Psychology of Demonization: Promoting Acceptance and Reducing Conflict* (Mahwah, New Jersey, and London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).

34. Brandon Hamber, 'Transformation and Reconciliation' in John Darby and Roger MacGinty (eds.), *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes* (Basingstoke, England, and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 228. Although focusing on truth recovery processes in South Africa, rather than nonviolent action, Hamber's insight is compatible with consideration of transformation of conflict.

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in the past, partly as a result of the increasing diffusion of power systems and ability of mass media to activate global responses to what in an earlier period might have been a remote local campaign.

Social Justice and Reform

In confronting established authority to seek reform, nonviolent strategies can accelerate a search for social equity by equalizing the parties. Trade unions historically have been maximal users of nonviolent sanctions, with notable results in reaching the stage of negotiations and collective bargaining with management. Majorities can exercise overweening power on minorities, but parity between two lop-sided constituencies can sometimes eventuate with nonviolent struggle. The 1960s U.S. civil rights movement's choice of nonviolent resistance enabled it to put the black community on equal footing with the established, powerful, and numerically greater racist oligarchies. A right to civil resistance is essential when the laws themselves, and the judicial rulings interpreting them, deny basic human rights.

Governments are often afraid of the technique of nonviolent struggle, because they suppose that it gives rise to political conflict. This supposition is naïve. The causes of strife are already present, leaving the question of how and with what means to seek goals, especially if institutionalised political action has failed. *Within* given governments or bureaucracies, nonviolent action may be used to send a message or disclose a problem, as when civil servants mount petition drives or apply pressure on government ministers, in what sociologist Ronald M. McCarthy calls 'constitutional' action.³⁵ Civil servants may resign from their jobs in noncooperation. In the United Kingdom in 2007—in a one-day national strike to contest wage adjustments—civil servants, the coast guard, customs, passport office, tax collection, and justice systems brought government offices to a standstill.³⁶ The technique can be advantageous in revising national priorities in recognition of minorities' claims. In Iran in 2004, reformist parliamentarians conducted sit-ins and fasted for two weeks in pressing for changes to the electoral system that had been rejected by the religious authorities.³⁷

Even elected officials sometimes support nonviolent action. In 2004 the mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom, was frustrated by the deadlock between labour unions and hotel managers over a new contract's health care premiums, wages, and time of expiration. Absentee owners of the city's grand hotels and the management companies they employed to operate them had locked out 4,000 striking hotel workers. Newsom feared the threat posed to the city's tourism. The mayor joined union members on the picket lines, calling for a boycott of fourteen of the largest hostellers.³⁸

35. 'We can broadly call the use of governmental institutions to oppose the actions of government the "constitutional" technique of action.' Ronald M. McCarthy, 'Resistance Politics and the Growth of Parallel Governments' in Walter H. Conser, Ronald M. McCarthy, and David J. Toscano (eds.), *Resistance, Politics, and the American Struggle for Independence, 1765–1775* (Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986), 481.

36. Andrew Taylor, 'Civil servants plan one-day strike in May; benefits and courts would be disrupted; cabinet office to suspend talks', *Financial Times* (London), 23 April 2007, 2; 'Row over national strike impact', BBC, 1 May 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6610379.stm>.

37. Dan de Luce, 'Iranian hardliners refuse to back down', *Guardian* (London), 19 January 2004.

38. George Raine, 'Newsom joins picket line, vows boycott of hotels', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 October 2004, A1 and www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2004/10/27/MNGLE9H2T11.DTL

Environmental preservation, disputes over the handling and manufacture of toxic wastes, and environmental cleanup have been successfully fought with nonviolent sanctions. Indeed, environmental movements in many parts of the world show precision in their utilization of nonviolent action. In China alone, the past few years have seen more than 200 major instances of popular nonviolent action concerning environmental degradation.³⁹ Around the world, insights from nonviolent theories and methods are on their way to becoming norms for settling neighbourhood disputes and managing discord in conflict-ridden societies. Police services are increasingly trained in nonviolent methods, prevention of riots, crowd control, nonviolent practices for handling criminals or stopping street fighting, as well as mediation.

National Defence

One area of nonviolent struggle concerns the employment of civilian strategies for national defence. It would be hard to deny the necessity for a military solution to end Nazi aggression in World War II, yet it must equally be acknowledged that a significant political factor in Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands were the diverse resistance movements of Nazi-occupied Europe that used noncooperation to deny Hitler the ability to accomplish some of his goals. After Germany invaded Norway on 9 April 1940, some 8,000 to 10,000 of the country's 12,000 schoolteachers openly defied the Quisling puppet regime installed by the Nazis.⁴⁰ As an expression of their refusal to cooperate with Quisling, Norwegians wore paper clips in their lapels, a sign of 'keeping together'. In classrooms, students wore necklaces and bracelets of paper clips; the simpler and more ubiquitous such emblems, the better. Teachers formed the backbone of the Norwegian resistance, and without a single gun, fought Quisling to defeat. Had the Norwegians used military weaponry to resist, the probable result would have been bombing raids to devastate their small country. Similar nonviolent nullification of Nazi efforts to implement 'final solution' measures in the Nazi-allied or Nazi-occupied nations of Bulgaria, Denmark, France, and Italy resulted in large numbers of Jews being saved.⁴¹

Subjugation by an invading or occupying army can be made extremely difficult, if not impossible, when civilians collectively resist nonviolently with prior preparation. Civilian-based defence requires that a large percent of the population be trained in advance in a coordinated and disciplined effort. In the Baltic states, civilian-based defence preparations culminated with their independence in 1991 from the Soviet Union. In 1990, the defence ministries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—small nations

39. Carl Pope, 'Saving Our Natural World through Nonviolent Action', lecture presented at the 'International Conference on Celebrating Nonviolent Resistance', Bethlehem, West Bank, 29 December 2005.

40. Gene Sharp, 'Tyranny could not quell them', *Peace News* (London), 1958, 9.

41. Regarding nonviolent resistance to Hitler, see Jacques Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe, 1939–1943*, trans. Suzan Husserl-Kapit (Westport, Connecticut, and London, Praeger, 1993); Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, Viking Press, 1963). On German resistance to save Jews in Berlin in 1943 during what the Gestapo called the Final Roundup of Berlin Jews, see Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York and London, W. W. Norton, 1996); idem, 'Saving Jewish Husbands in Berlin—1943' in Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 143–48. The social philosopher Hannah Arendt relied on nonviolent resistance as a prototype for exploring threats to direct democracy and free political action.

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vulnerable to what is once again called Russia—prepared extensive guidelines, in conjunction with quasi-governmental and civil society organizations, on how to withhold cooperation and employ noncooperation measures. The guidelines were widely disseminated to the citizenry of the three republics. The citizens respected the procedures on how to withhold cooperation from the Soviet military and remain nonviolent. In one of the most dramatic moments of the late 20th-century democratic transitions of former Soviet states, Lithuanians in January 1991 without weaponry defended the country's main television tower and parliament building from Soviet soldiers and tanks, rendering abortive a Soviet military coup. To the journalist-historian Anatol Lievan, 'The solidarity and the courage of the peaceful, unarmed crowds . . . , convinced that they were about to be attacked, but standing their ground, is indeed one of the most moving political images of modern times.'⁴² Lithuania became the first of the three republics to have its independence and statehood recognized by the international community and Soviet Union in 1991.⁴³ It is possible to discern the *pre-emptive* use of civilian-based defence from this example.

The technique of nonviolent action can help a people stand up against organized mass violence. A small volume entitled *The Anti-Coup* analyses how military or political usurpation of power can be blocked by noncooperation and includes recommended steps for governments and civil society institutions.⁴⁴ Reading it, one wonders whether a population could be prepared to resist mass killings. In Rwanda in 1994, the organized killings that began in Kigali, the capital, were delayed in the prefecture of Butare, home to the National University, because the governor of the province refused to cooperate and give orders to kill. He also encouraged the people of the province not to obey instructions coming from the capital. It took a visit by and the active propaganda of President Théodore Sindikubwabo for the killings to be carried out in full swing in Butare. The murders began with the assassination of the governor of the province who had urged noncooperation. 'As long as the governor resisted, and encouraged the people of Butare not to cooperate, and as long as he was alive, there were in fact no killings in Butare', observed Jean-Bosco Butera, who later returned home from elsewhere in the region and became academic vice rector of the National University of Rwanda in 2002.⁴⁵

Self-Rule and Nation Building

A decisive element in collective nonviolent action is the requirement of cohesion and unity—factors that intrinsically favour popular involvement in the making of decisions. Knowledge of how to struggle without bloodshed can shape the social, political,

42. Anatol Lievan, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1993), 254.

43. During this period, approximately 25 deaths occurred, with 935 injured, all in 1991, as, eventually, the Soviet military backed down. Mark R. Beissinger, 'Non-Violent Civil Resistance in the Baltic: Explaining the Intersection of Ethnic Nationalism with People-Power Tactics', paper delivered at the conference 'Civil Resistance and Power Politics: Domestic and International Dimensions', Oxford, England, St Antony's College, 15–18 March 2007, 4.

44. Gene Sharp and Bruce Jenkins, *The Anti-Coup* (Boston, Albert Einstein Institution, 2003).

45. Jean-Bosco Butera, personal one-hour communication with the author, Butare, Rwanda, 22 April 2002. He is now director of the Africa Programme of the University for Peace, Addis Ababa.

and economic institutions that evolve for governance as a result of a nonviolent struggle. Although ending British rule in India was central to the independence campaigns on the subcontinent, Gandhi believed the bigger issue was preparation of a colonized people for self-rule. He considered that training an entire population in noncooperation methods constituted training for self-rule.⁴⁶ Although under-studied and under-theorized, such preparation of unanimity and mass involvement can powerfully influence the subsequent emergence and formation of democratic institutions.

Although increasing recognition is given to the convergence of peace with justice—acknowledgment that negotiated settlements are only part of the complex processes of building peace—more study is needed on the links between building peace and addressing grievances through nonviolent action. This rings particularly true in Africa, because nonviolent strategic action can not only achieve political objectives, but can lead to more stable and equitable long-term results that benefit all parties to a conflict, improving the odds for reaching negotiations, transforming the conflict, and laying the groundwork for reconciliation.

WHY TEACH NONVIOLENT ACTION?

Placing a premium on the value of nonviolence as a normative construction is not the same as learning how societies no longer need to be passive or acquiescent when facing tyranny or despotism. The normative context is important, yet the learning of values and norms is closer to the domain of early childhood socialization and primary education than to higher education. Contemplated here is the need for study, documentation, and teaching of nonviolent strategic action as a technique for securing justice that lends itself to a host of applications.

Although political, economic, and social conflicts are not likely to disappear, *how* people engage in the presence of discord can change. Of course, it is no trifling matter for people to take responsibility for modifying their condition. Mobilising against poverty, for fair governance, to remove oppression, gain justice, and for rights is not simple or without risk and danger. Cries for justice go frequently unheeded. Institutionalized political instruments—such as elections, referendums, representative bodies, and lobbying—can be persistently ineffective.

Within Africa's 800 or more universities, concern is often expressed about how best to socialize young people to reject violence as a way of trying to solve problems. Academicians know it is pointless merely to declare 'no violence'. People are not going to *not* fight for justice. Indeed, quite the opposite is the case; more and more persons and groups today feel entitled to assert themselves. Therefore, if violence is to be significantly reduced or abandoned in acute conflicts, especially where ideologies of armed struggle have predominated, a realistic alternative must be available and understood in order to have a chance of success. The comprehension that comes from study of the field of civil resistance in institutions of higher learning is vital, particularly in Africa, where local and national conflicts are widespread, but the means of contestation are assumed to be limited. This is ironic, because when Gandhi was in South

46. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York, Harper and Row, 1950), 231; Asha Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle* (New Delhi, Shree Publishing House, 1981), 321.

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Africa, he learned a good deal about tax resistance—a form of economic non-cooperation—from Africans who refused to pay a new poll tax.⁴⁷

For young democracies in Africa, it is critical to realize that protection of representative government when constitutional measures fail actually *demand*s a corrective capability that can work without violence. If liberal democratic principles are threatened, and institutionalised political systems fail, it is crucial for the populace to know that they have the option of turning to a technique of extra-parliamentary nonviolent sanctions, such as demonstrations, picketing, civil disobedience, strikes, and tax resistance, which have worked in the past. Democratic societies must be able to address shortfalls without bloodshed when legal or parliamentary methods of seeking redress seize up, as the law fails to protect injustice, governments falter in protecting minorities, and institutions dedicated to justice become hostage to corruption and special interests. Collective nonviolent action is actually fundamental to democracy: it can function in democracy's absence, but also act as a means of democratic empowerment.⁴⁸ Michael Randle insists that respect for guarantees of fundamental human rights may be more significant for democracy than is majority rule: 'To resist the encroachment of basic rights by a duly elected government is not to deny democracy but to uphold it'.⁴⁹

Nonviolent resistance—based on political armaments, but not on war matériel and munitions—could scarcely be more important than it is today, when social and political change often arises from within the growing sphere of civil society. This is particularly so because it is also from this domain that upsurges of armed struggle, paramilitary militias, child soldiers, crimes against humanity, and suicide attacks arise. Notwithstanding the depth and breadth of African experience with nonviolent struggle, recurring surveys of peace and conflict studies in Africa conducted by the University for Peace Africa Programme since 2003 reveal that few courses in the still older field of nonviolent resistance are being offered by African universities.⁵⁰ This may partly be because universities set in war-torn regions recovering from armed hostilities have justifiably placed emphasis on re-establishing critical core subjects. It may also reflect the fact that in the last two decades, African universities have been weakened by structural adjustment programmes that siphoned off needed resources from higher education, resulting in a focus on traditional disciplines.

Where peace and conflict studies have been institutionalized, emphases may be placed on sociological, cultural, ethnic, and interfaith approaches; multilateral diplomacy; organizational dynamics and development; or on the mechanics, gadgetry, and mathematics of interventions. Some degree programmes in peace and conflict studies do not include courses on the theories and methods of nonviolent struggle, despite the fact that some of the deepest insights in peace and conflict studies—the fastest-growing of the social studies worldwide—have come from the pre-existing field of nonviolent strategic action. One example of an insight cut from the cloth of nonviolent struggle and sewn intact into peace and conflict studies is the necessity to separate the

47. This was not a tax on voting, but a 'head tax'. Gandhi, *Indian Opinion*, 6 October 1906, vol. 5, 462, in CWMG, 140–41, as cited in Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, 34, 41n25.

48. April Carter, *Direct Action and Democracy Today* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005), 2.

49. Michael Randle, *Civil Resistance* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), 183.

50. For the surveys, see the Africa Programme's Web site, www.africa.upeace.org.

antagonist from the antagonism; in other words, isolate the target of the wrong from the human beings involved. This is but one of the contributions from Gandhi's experiments, starting in South Africa.

Emphasis in the contemporary era in peace and conflict studies was placed first on *resolution* of conflict, rather than the more urgent requirement to understand *management* of conflict, under which Gandhi might have located nonviolent resistance. (Equally, he might have placed peace and conflict studies under nonviolent strategic action.) 'Nonviolent struggle' is clearly a form of conflict transformation and perhaps a more accurate term than 'conflict resolution', since actual resolution of conflicts is rare and transient. Nigerian sociologist Onigu Otite might have been describing the technique when he wrote, 'Conflict transformation is a summary term for a complex web of interdependent factors—the parties concerned, social relationships, the changing positions and roles of interveners, and the moderation of planned or unintended consequences.'⁵¹ Nonviolent struggle is inherently *transformational*, in the sense that it seeks a transactional alteration in the power relationship between the parties, and its presumptions of power are relational.

Contemporary political thought—which encourages arbitration, compromise, conciliation, dialogic methods, diplomacy, mediation, negotiations, and resolution of conflict—may, with the exception of diplomacy, tend to address symptoms, which might be called disputes, rather than fundamental causes. Such rationalistic corrective methods are built on assumptions that a solution can be found within the institutional and structural framework available. To focus on a way out of conflict may be premature when the undergirding grievances or injustices are so heinous that they demand full engagement. Deep-rooted historical grievances may make it necessary first to reach parity in political power, so that negotiations or a political solution may ensue.

Bipan Chandra, an historian of modern India, stresses, 'The leaders of the national movement understood from the beginning that Indians did not possess the material resources necessary to wage war against such a strong state. In nonviolent struggle, . . . mass support [counts] and here a disarmed people are not at a disadvantage. In other words, nonviolence is also a way of becoming equal in political resources to an armed state in a war of position.'⁵² Participation in nonviolent struggles is an option not solely for specialists or experts, but for all. Jacques Semelin contends that 'it is no longer appropriate to analyze partial forms of opposition—moral, political, military, or others—but instead to study the way that the whole social body—civilian society—reacts against aggression.'⁵³ The aggrieved can become empowered through involvement in nonviolent resistance against injustice.

One explanation for the absence of academic courses on this topic may have to do with indistinct definitions. Ambiguities in the meanings of the terms *nonviolent* and *nonviolence* must be addressed by anyone teaching in this field, especially since innumerable languages have no words for these terms. Strong arguments have been made

51. Onigu Otite, 'On Conflicts, Their Management, Resolution and Transformation' in Onigu Otite and Isaac Olawale Albert (eds.), *Community Conflicts in Nigeria: Management, Resolution and Transformation* (Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 1999), 10.

52. Bipan Chandra, Indian History Congress Presidential Address, Amritsar, 1985, 24ff, in Shiri Ram Bakshi, *Gandhi and Ideology of Non-Violence* (New Delhi, Criterion Publications, 1986), 11, 12n33.

53. Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler*, 26.

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against the use of the word *nonviolence*, because it confuses forms of mass popular action with normative, ethical, or religious beliefs in nonviolence.⁵⁴ Rather than use the terms of *nonviolent struggle*, *nonviolent direct action*, *nonviolent resistance*, *civil resistance*, or *nonviolent strategic action*, certain groups prefer appending to the word *nonviolence* a modifier signifying action, for example, *active nonviolence*, *militant nonviolence*, or *revolutionary nonviolence*. Some scholars favour still broader terms, such as *civil resistance*, *contentious politics*, or *popular dissent*, although these terms do not delimit disciplined proscription of violence. Whatever the term or language, the choice of exclusively nonviolent means is its core specificity. Nonviolent sanctions attack the power of the opponent, yet do not harm the well-being or lives of the adversary. Thus we are not here considering spiritual, religious, interpersonal, or familial nonviolence. Nor are we focusing on normative nonviolence or values underpinning nonviolent norms.

A mistaken view of nonviolent resistance as the absolute opposite of violence or an exact substitute for it overlooks the fact that both violent and nonviolent struggle are means of contention. A simple dualism of violence as the opposite of nonviolent struggle is a serious distortion of reality, because responses to conflict more properly fall into categories of action or inaction. Nonviolent action is one type of active response, which, by definition, cannot take place without replacing submissiveness with struggle.⁵⁵ Disruption or constriction of the sources of power of the target group, rather than violence, is most likely to create its success. Nonviolent struggle generally requires greater strategic *savoir faire* than does military strategy, and its moves and countermoves demand more astute calibration.

If journalists write the rough drafts of history as claimed, an additional reason for teaching the history of nonviolent struggle is so that future reporters, broadcasters, and analysts will be able to recognize and accurately report the impact and role of nonviolent strategic action. The same is true for the diplomatic corps, which report events to their foreign ministries, generally with no recognition of nonviolent struggle or the strategic thinking that underlies it. A demonstration is not a riot. Often the only methods recognized from a huge inventory of action steps are civil disobedience or boycotts.

Although indeterminate in outcome, action methods cannot be used in a vague *mélange*. The choice of steps needs to be strategic and related to the political purpose, with the ends and means linked, and the goals and targets manifested in organization, discipline, planning, leadership, and logistics. Human resources must be preserved, because they are *the* resources. The simplest methods are used first. Sequencing should be intricately conceived, perhaps ranking the progression of action steps according to the severity of the likely penalties. Results are not always auspicious.

54. Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 20–21. The volume considers twenty-three case studies. The difference between hyphenated and the non-hyphenated styles of the word nonviolent, or nonviolence, is not a prim spelling detail, because of the predicament that ‘nonviolent action’ could be construed as meaning solely the negation of violence. If so, hyphenating the word accentuates a negative connotation. Without a hyphen, the word becomes a direct affirmation, because violence itself—whether that of the warrior, machinery controlled by the nation-state, structural violence in the girders of a society, or cultural violence as in so-called honor killings—is inherently negative. It either ends life or compromises its possibilities.

55. Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, vol. 1: *Power and Struggle*, 64–77. See especially the chart ‘Six Classes of Action in Conflicts’, 66.

In 1995 in the oil-producing Niger Delta of Nigeria, writer Ken Saro-Wiwa was hanged in a judicial killing alongside eight other activists. Saro-Wiwa had led large non-violent demonstrations to protest the environmental damage being done to the delta's nine states by oil extraction, and of importance, without comparable reinvestment in the communities from which it came.⁵⁶ In Kenya, Wangari Mathaai was repeatedly arrested and beaten for planting trees in a thirty-year fight over the country's environmental policies and in opposition to official corruption. Having founded the Green Belt movement that engaged poor women in planting 30 million trees, this women's mobilization developed into a major force in Kenya for clean democracy and free elections. In 2005 Mathaai would be awarded the Nobel peace prize and become a minister of government, yet her multi-decade nonviolent movement had faced continual threats. Nonviolent struggle involves risks; hence knowledge of strategy is imperative.

According to Philip B. Heymann's analysis of South Africa's protracted struggle against apartheid, success in nonviolent action can be affected by a three-way relationship among the nonviolent challengers, the adversary, and the military or security services. If at all possible, Heymann concludes, the nonviolent protagonists should clarify their grievances, objectives, purposes, and demands, so as to minimize obstruction or interruption by the other two. This means obtaining insights in advance not only into the actions of the nonviolent protagonists, but also examining the objectives, goals, and actions of the target group and police.⁵⁷

NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE AND PEACE-BUILDING

In Africa, the field of peace studies is rooted in the annals, memories, traditions, cultures, and social realities of the continent and in its global heritage and in traditions of the field worldwide. Nonviolent struggle is indebted to knowledge transmitted from the East, yet cannot be labelled Western or Eastern. To Yonah Selethi, it is indigenous to Africa. It antedates recorded history and is not the preserve of the political left or right or of any ideology.

The idea of building peace has gained acceptance since the concept was initially conceived during UN operations in Namibia in 1978. Initially viewed as a type of postconflict reconstruction relating to plans for reinforcing the peace after an accord had been secured, conceptualisations of how to build peace have steadily expanded, as can be seen in the 1992 and 1995 editions of former UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace*. Although speaking to situations following upon acute conflicts, Boutros-Ghali cited a range of peace-building approaches, including 'co-operative projects . . . that not only contribute to economic and social development but also enhance the confidence that is so fundamental to peace.'⁵⁸ The concept has grown rapidly in popularity to include diplomatic, political, socioeconomic, and

56. Jeevan Vasagar, 'Militants threaten Nigerian oil stations after leader's arrest', *Guardian* (London), 24 September 2005, 18.

57. Philip B. Heymann (ed.), *Towards Peaceful Protest in South Africa: Testimony of Multinational Panel Regarding Lawful Control of Demonstrations in the Republic of South Africa* (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council Publishers, 1992).

58. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, 2d rev. edn (New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995), 15, 85.

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security aspects. An extremely broad concept—encompassing democracy, development, gender, human rights, and justice—peace-building can be thought of as a bridge that crosses from conflict resolution to ‘positive peace’. Yet since positive peace is more than merely the absence of war, the umbrella of peace-building must include the merits of learning to employ nonviolent sanctions for addressing and resolving present and future conflicts, especially if institutionalised political action fails. This points back to the question of teaching the technique of nonviolent resistance.

VALIDITY OF THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

Case studies of nonviolent struggles make premier tools for coursework, scholarship, and training on nonviolent sanctions as a realistic alternative to armed struggle. They provide an invaluable tool, because they act as a link between evidentiary analyses from actual historical struggles and the building of theory.

Concrete steps can be taken to improve the historiography of nonviolent resistance by instructors and lecturers stimulating student research on local nonviolent struggles. Lecturers may encourage pupils to go into their home communities or neighbouring areas to document current nonviolent campaigns or drives. Nongovernmental organisations are eager to have their successes documented and openly seek help in recording their innovations, yet they do not always have the methodological capacity to analyse key factors. Engaging students in the writing of case accounts combines theory with praxis, connecting pupils with real-life nonviolent struggles, while doing research in an actual setting and with multiple methods.

Students will learn how widespread is the technique of nonviolent action, as they start critical reading to develop a conceptual framework. A number of the fundamental works on this topic are available free for download. As students sharpen their research questions before gathering evidence, instructors can clarify fundamental theories and methods. When they embark on collecting data, and conducting and recording interviews, they will be doing real-life research. Taking advantage of African interest in oral history, they will be able to capture historical accounts otherwise lost. When they collect documentation and artefacts—fliers, leaflets, banners, buttons, armbands, internal guidelines, or instructions for marches—the differences between various action steps will become more discernible. As they discuss events and actions with participants and observers alike, collect and interpret data, reflect on differing accounts, think about the import of their case, and draw their conclusions, they will be able to comprehend nonviolent action at a deep level and grasp the meaning of the technique.

Teaching through the writing of case studies also compensates for a lack of textbooks on theory and history of such struggles. If embarked upon as a class project, a book of local case accounts may result, or even a publishable study, which can contribute to the literature. To return to Guinea, a case study would be profitable on nationwide general strikes in January and February 2007 that were instituted by the country’s labour congress in conjunction with civil society groups. President Lansana Conté had held power for twenty-four years and become deeply unpopular. Three demands were made in the widely supported noncooperation action, in return for which the January general strike would cease: appointment of a civil servant as prime minister, parliamentary elections, and a presidential election in 2010. In addition, wage

demands were proffered and calls were made to bring to justice two ministers of government that the president had pre-emptively released from prison.

Security forces killed fifty-nine or sixty persons in response to the general strike, which is always a difficult nonviolent method to implement because it tends to be indiscriminate in targeting and difficult to sustain. Unconfirmed reports suggest that when the president told air force commanders to give orders to fire on demonstrators from military aircraft, they refused to do so. A case study on this Guinean national general strike, and on another that followed a few weeks later in February, could be revealing. It may disclose the limits of general strikes as a nonviolent sanction, given that the president soon after imposed martial law, or might document the potential in such a situation for nonviolent struggle to alter power configurations.

Major issues in the field of nonviolent struggle, such as how to use asymmetry to one's advantage and how to institutionalize the alterations manifested by nonviolent struggles, cry out for serious research. Other queries are of great concern, yet little studied: how to prevent subsequent dictatorships from coming into being; how to help groups plan struggles for protracted periods, such as ten years or more.

An unexplored argument in favour of nonviolent struggle has to do with its tendency to act as a predictor of democracy. While civil resistance does not guarantee the emergence of democracy, nonviolent movements historically have tended to lead to democratic institutions and governance. This may be related to the arduous processes involved as groups decide strategy or the rigours demanded as individuals make personal choices to take risks and suffer the penalties that accompany nonviolent struggle. In analysing transitions among regimes, one study found that democratisation was more likely in nations where citizens had engaged in nonviolent action, in comparison to countries where violence was utilised by the citizenry, or the transition was driven by elites.⁵⁹ An outcome of democracy is not a matter of ideology; nonviolent movements tend to select democratic results, and the leaders that emerge are inclined and predisposed to be democrats. In contrast, one of the consequences of authoritarian structures within armed movements is that they often lead to coercive systems. Such issues can benefit from the case-study approach.

CONCLUSION

A technique for sociopolitical change that offers a realistic alternative to violent struggle and armed conflict, nonviolent resistance as a chosen means of engagement can lead to outcomes in which all the parties profit, disconnect cycles of intergenerational violence, enhance negotiations, heighten prospects for reconciliation, and favour outcomes with a democratic ethos—without bloodshed or physical and economic destruction. Yet nonviolent struggles in pursuit of social equity, justice, reconciliation, and human rights remain largely undocumented and often misunderstood.

Deeper comprehension of how nonviolent sanctions work will spur more extensive analysis of success, and as improved chronicling spreads knowledge, more and more

59. Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman, *How Freedom Is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy* (New York, Freedom House, 2005), www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/29.pdf.

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can understand its dynamics and why it is important. The young democracies of Africa can benefit from intensified study, documentation, and teaching of collective nonviolent action as a technique for securing justice that can lend itself to a host of applications. Denunciations of violence or blandishments against armed struggle hold little prospect for impact unless a substitute for violent struggle can be understood and comprehended, thereby allowing people, groups, and societies to grasp a way to fight for reform and justice without the debilitating, intergenerational quest for revenge that results from bloodshed.

When a conflict is structural, or indispensable human needs are at stake, it is possible that no solution can be developed until its causes have been addressed and the parties have equalised themselves to the point where negotiations or conciliation methods stand a chance. The most humane way to change the balance of forces may be nonviolent struggle. In a global search for plausible alternatives to military intervention, and the need for legitimate challenges to the mentality of armed cadres and weaponised militias, a shift in the larger discourse to recognising the potency of collective nonviolent action is worthy of study. Such an alteration can occur, but it starts with introducing the teaching of nonviolent struggle and recognising that it is a fundamental dimension of building peace.

To be an effective element in peace-building, the technique must be better understood both theoretically and in its practical applications. Disparities in historic understandings can be addressed by African academicians as part of their pedagogy, while filling gaps in documentation. With improved understanding, nonviolent struggle can become 'mainstreamed' into situations of strife. It is a matter of urgency to accelerate the studying, documenting, and teaching of the dynamics, mechanisms, and strategies of nonviolent struggle. This is important for Africa. Just as King and Gandhi learned from the African nonviolent struggles of their times and relied on observations of African campaigns to improve their sharing of knowledge, so, equally, can the rest of the world today.