

NO MATTER OF DIET

Ahimsa is not a mere matter of dietetics, it transcends it. What a man eats or drinks matters little; it is the self-denial, the self-restraint behind it that matters. By all means practice as much restraint in the choice of the articles of your diet as you like. The restraint is commendable, even necessary, but it touches only the fringe of ahimsa. A man may allow himself a wide latitude in the matter of diet and yet may be a personification of ahimsa and compel our homage, if his heart overflows with love and melts at another's woe, and has been purged of all passions. On the other hand a man always over-scrupulous in diet is an utter stranger to ahimsa and pitiful wretch, if he is a slave to selfishness and passions and is hard of heart. (YI, 6-9-1928, pp300-1)

ROAD TO TRUTH

My love for non-violence is superior to every other thing mundane or supramundane. It is equaled only by my love for Truth, which is to me synonymous with non-violence through which and which alone I can see and reach Truth. (YI, 20-2-1930, p61)

... Without ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth, unstamped, metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question. (FYM, pp12-3)

Ahimsa is not the goal. Truth is the goal. But we have no means of realizing truth in human relationships except through the practice of ahimsa. A steadfast pursuit of ahimsa is inevitably bound to truth—not so violence. That is why I swear by ahimsa. Truth came naturally to me. Ahimsa I acquired after a struggle.

But ahimsa being the means, we are naturally more concerned with it in our everyday life. It is ahimsa, therefore, that our masses have to be

educated in. Education in truth follows from it as a natural end. (H, 23-6-1946, p199)

NO COVER FOR COWARDICE

My non-violence does not admit of running away from danger and leaving dear ones unprotected. Between violence and cowardly flight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice. I can no more preach non-violence to a coward than I can tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes. Non-violence is the summit of bravery. And in my own experience, I have had no difficulty in demonstrating to men trained in the school of violence the superiority of non-violence. As a coward, which I was for years, I harboured violence. I began to prize non-violence only when I began to shed cowardice. Those Hindus who ran away from the post of duty when it was attended with danger did so not because they were non-violent, or because they were afraid to strike, but because they were unwilling to die or even suffer an injury. A rabbit that runs away from the bull terrier is not particularly non-violent. The poor thing trembles at the sight of the terrier and runs for very life. (YI, 28-5-1924, p178)

Non-violence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave. Exercise of non-violence requires far greater bravery than that of swordsmanship. Cowardice is wholly inconsistent with non-violence. Translation from swordsmanship to non-violence is possible and, at times, even an easy stage. Non-violence, therefore, presupposes ability to strike. It is a conscious deliberate restraint put upon one's desire for vengeance. But vengeance is any day superior to passive, effeminate and helpless submission. Forgiveness is higher still. Vengeance too is weakness. The desire for vengeance comes out of fear of harm, imaginary or real. A dog barks and bites when he fears. A man who fears no one on earth would consider it too troublesome even to summon up anger against one who is vainly trying to injure him. The sun does not wreak vengeance upon little children who throw dust at him. They only harm themselves in the act. (YI, 12-8-1926, p285)

The path of true non-violence requires much more courage than violence. (H, 4-8-1946, pp248-9)

The minimum that is required of a person wishing to cultivate the ahimsa of the brave is first to clear one's thought of cowardice and, in the light of the clearance, regulate his conduct in every activity, great or small. Thus the votary must refuse to be cowed down by his superior, without being angry. He must, however, be ready to sacrifice his post, however remunerative it may be. Whilst sacrificing his all, if the votary has no sense of irritation against his employer, he has ahimsa of the brave in him.

Assume that a fellow-passenger threatens my son with assault and I reason with the would-be-assailant who then turns upon me. If then I take his blow with grace and dignity, without harbouring any ill-will against him, I exhibit the ahimsa of the brave. Such instances are of every day occurrence and can be easily multiplied. If I succeed in curbing my temper every time and, though able to give blow for blow, I refrain, I shall develop the ahimsa of the brave which will never fail me and which will compel recognition from the most confirmed adversaries. (H, 17-11-1946, p404)

Inculcation of cowardice is against my nature. Ever since my return from South Africa, where a few thousand had stood up not unsuccessfully against

heavy odds, I have made it my mission to preach true bravery which ahimsa means. (H, 1-6-1947, p175)

HUMILITY ESSENTIAL

If one has . . . pride and egoism, there is no non-violence. Non-violence is impossible without humility. My own experience is that, whenever I have acted non-violently, I have been led to it and sustained in it by the higher promptings of an unseen power. Through my own will I should have miserably failed. When I first went to jail, I quailed at the prospect. I had heard terrible things about jail life. But I had faith in God's protection. Our experience was that those who went to jail in a prayerful spirit came out victorious, those who had gone in their own strength failed. There is no room for self-pitying in it either when you say God is giving you the strength. Self-pity comes when you do a thing for which you expect recognition from others. But there is no question of recognition. (H, 28-1-1939, p442)

It was only when I had learnt to reduce myself to zero that I was able to evolve the power of Satyagraha in South Africa. (H, 6-5-1939, p113)

Gene Sharp

SEEKING A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF WAR

Could nonviolence be applied, as a practical matter, to the defense strategy of modern governments? One of the most seriously considered applications involves civilian-based defense, or CBD, which embraces a variety of nonviolent techniques intended to make it very difficult, if not impossible, for a conquering state to govern another and to gain any benefit from its "victory." CBD must be distinguished from "civil defense," the much less realistic government plan for protecting citizenry in the event of nuclear war, widely derided as neither civil nor defense. CBD is also different from so-called nonprovocative defense, which emphasizes "defensive defense" via such armaments as antitank devices, antiaircraft munitions, and mobile infantry, as opposed to potentially provocative, offensive weaponry such as bombers, tanks, and other "power-projecting" technology. Nonprovocative

defense is a potential way of helping countries avoid the "security dilemma" whereby the pursuit of military security by one country induces insecurity on the part of others; nonetheless, it clearly fails the test of true nonviolence.

The major theorist of CBD, Gene Sharp, has identified specific tactics of nonviolent action. Civilian defenders would not violently resist the occupation of their country; moreover, they would willingly expose themselves to the possibility of substantial hardship, suffering, and even death. But traditional military defenders, too, must anticipate great hardship and suffering, and sometimes death, even in a "successful," violent war. Advocates of CBD emphasize that substantial training of committed citizens would be required. But again, traditional military training in the ways of violence also requires time, effort, and sacrifice as well as commitment. Moreover, most efforts at nonviolent resistance—Hungary in the mid-nineteenth century, Norway in World War II, Eastern Europe in 1989—were spontaneous, unplanned, and largely leaderless. Serious CBD, well rehearsed and supported by material resources, has never been tried. Given its impressive track record as a form of resistance when it was essentially extemporized, the future of CBD might be bright indeed if it were ever actually carried out by a well-trained populace. And the prospect of facing a determined and highly disciplined citizenry, committed to denying the invader virtually all fruits of conquest, might deter invasion no less effectively than the amassing of military forces and at substantially less cost and risk of provocation.

As weapons become ever more destructive, doctrines of national security based on traditional military techniques offer less and less prospect of defense. During the Vietnam War, for example, a U.S. major claimed that the village of Ben Tre "had to be destroyed in order for us to save it." Gene Sharp has pointed out that by contrast, CBD alters this dynamic in a crucial way, because it would seek nonviolently to "deny the attackers their objectives and to make society politically indigestible and ungovernable."⁵

A reexamination of the problem of war and the possible means for its solution must begin with a recognition of the failure of past movements and proposals for the abolition of war. These have failed despite the widespread understanding of the destructiveness of modern war. Hardly anyone believes that we are on the way to end war. Military technology stands at its highest stage of development ever. During this decade and the past, military institutions in many countries have been, for a period which is not one of world war, the most powerful ever in comparison to civil branches of government and to the rest of society. Except for world wars, a

higher proportion of resources has been devoted in this period to military purposes than ever before. A larger number of lives can now be threatened and destroyed more quickly than earlier imagined.

Defenders of the status quo are not the only practitioners and supporters of war and other political violence. Political movements, parties, and governments which espouse change are often equally committed to military means—as was the case in the war in Vietnam. Nor are we on the verge of a popular rebellion against war as such. The time when the general public might have been capable of significant shock and revulsion at the nature of modern

⁵ Gene Sharp, *Making Europe Unconquerable: The Potential of Civilian-Based Deterrence and Defense* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1985). from Gene Sharp, "Seeking a Solution to the Problem of War"

weaponry to rebel against it—as in its early atomic and thermonuclear forms in the late 1940s and the 1950s—has gone.

True, there are antiwar groups. For example, some people object to all war, perhaps even more now do so than previously: the perpetually small minority which witnesses against all war by a refusal to participate in it. Many other people may oppose a particular war, as that in Vietnam, when it is perceived as especially unjust or inhuman.⁶ (Some of the opponents of the United States' actions in Vietnam were, however, silent about, or even supported, the war effort of the other side.) Still other people, and even governments, support more limited measures and seek to limit the development, manufacture, spread, and use of certain military weapons while accepting that serious disarmament is outside the realm of reality.

But, with very few exceptions, the dream in which many people only a few decades ago firmly believed—that war, along with certain other objectionable aspects of society, could and would be abolished—is for the most part no longer even dreamed. The few persons who still believe in and voice that dream are perceived as out of touch with political reality. If ever in world history awareness of the destructiveness and brutality of war and of the relative power of military systems might have been expected to increase efforts to abolish the military system and to enhance the prospects for doing so, it should have been by now. Instead, we have witnessed the demise of even major efforts to end war.

REEXAMINING THE PROBLEM

It is, of course, possible that one or several of the previously proposed solutions to the problem of war have been partially or largely valid. In any case, those more orthodox approaches will continue to receive attention, as they generally should. However, our further examination of the problem of war should

⁶ On the varieties of pacifism and on selective nonviolence, see Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist, with Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979), Chapter Ten, "The Types of Principled Nonviolence."

not be limited to those past approaches. It is not reasonable to presume that the answer to it must lie in an existing proposal, or course, or system, which has not yet moved us perceptibly closer to the resolution of that problem. A careful and critical reexamination of those earlier proposals to ensure peace and to abolish war is impossible here, although it is important that it be done. Since the past proposals have not yet worked, we shall here instead concentrate on developing a different analysis of the nature of the problem of war which will point the direction toward a possible alternative policy and solution. We are unlikely to find a solution to the problem of war if we do not adequately understand the nature of that problem. We need to examine afresh whether war might be abolished for particular societies, or generally—and, if so, how this might be done.

DISTASTEFUL "GIVENS"

A new effort to abolish war requires a prior rejection of any romantic illusions we may have about such abolition; the effort also requires a willingness to recognize certain facts which are often distasteful to exponents of peace. It is assumed here:

- that there will always be intra-societal and inter-societal conflicts;
- that in any such conflict, some type of power will always be present and needed, on both sides;
- that what is crudely called "human nature" need not, and most likely will not, be changed;
- that people and governments will not, and should not be asked to, sacrifice either freedom or justice for the sake of peace;
- that peace is not identical with maintenance of the status quo, nor with revolution;
- that individual conversions to pacifism are not going to happen by the hundreds of millions, and world peace will have to come in a different way;
- that there is no break in the spiral of military technology within the context of military technology and military assumptions;
- that there have been, and are, brutal dictatorships and oppressive systems in the world, which may continue and recur, use new forms

of control, and may expand against other countries in various ways;

- that the abolition of capitalism does not produce the abolition of war (the military system is more powerful now in noncapitalist States than before the change, and military action is threatened and used by noncapitalist States against each other);
- that negotiation is not a substitute for the capacity to wage conflict and wield sanctions (a capacity which itself is a crucial factor in negotiations);
- that unilateral "disarmament" (understood as the major reduction or abandonment of defense capacity) is not possible (for reasons which will be discussed);
- that major multilateral disarmament is nearly as unlikely because of the fear of every country to be at a relative disadvantage, and also because of the constantly changing nature of the international situation;
- that national independence is *not* the origin of war, but instead reliance on military means as the ultimate sanction of the independent State;
- that peace through world government is either a dangerous illusion because it is unrealizable, or, if achievable, would constitute a severe danger to world peace (likely to produce a world civil war), to freedom (if capable of preventing war it would be capable of tyranny), and to justice (who would control, to what ends, and how could shifts of control and ends be prevented?).

Other such factors may also need to be recognized. Our search for an understanding of the problem of war, and for a solution to it, must not rest on utopian illusions. Neither must our search be naive concerning the political intentions of protagonists to international conflicts.

Nor can we neglect the role of the basic nature of certain social and political systems. The recognition of this role does not require agreement that any particular system be identified as the "devil." Critical analyses of any and all such systems are desirable; but it is unnecessary and dangerous to gloss over their unsatisfactory characteristics in order to

contribute to peace. However, this attention to social and political systems should not lead us to neglect the military system itself. It has its own major requirements and structural consequences; without elimination of reliance on military means, structural or systemic change is unlikely to be very significant, and the new system is likely to find itself distorted or controlled by the military system it has accepted.⁷

FUNCTIONAL ALTERNATIVES

One possible approach to the problem of war has rarely been applied: analysis of the military system's capacity to wage war in terms of its function of providing defense (either in reality, or belief that it does), and exploration of whether or not defense could be provided in some other way. Functional analysis is sometimes dismissed as a status quo approach, but it is utilized here as a tool precisely because it may provide insights making possible fundamental change which may otherwise not be possible. Here the sociological terminology of "function" and "structure" will be used, which might instead be called "need" or "task" and "instrument" or "institution" for the particular purposes of this discussion.⁸

A.R. Radcliffe-Brown defined function as "the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity."⁹ John Bennett and Melvin Tumin wrote that to ask the function of something is to ask "What does it 'do for' people and groups."¹⁰ The recognition that human institutions have functions and perform certain jobs for society in no way blocks the way to change, even fundamental change. Instead, examination of the existence and

⁷ See Chapter Eleven, "The Societal Imperative," and Chapter Twelve, "Popular Empowerment, subchapter Sanctions and Society.

⁸ Here I will in part repeat and enlarge upon a portion of the discussion in Chapter Nine, "The Political Equivalent of War—Civilian-Based Defense." See also the discussion on functions and structures in Chapter Twelve, "Popular Empowerment."

⁹ A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952), p. 180.

¹⁰ John Bennett and Melvin Tumin, *Social Life: Structure and Function* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 245.

possibilities of "functional substitutes," or "functional equivalents," or "functional alternatives" opens the way for basic change. Functional substitutes have been referred to by various analysts and theorists, including Theodor Newcomb,¹¹ Talcott Parsons,¹² Parsons and Edward A. Shils,¹³ Lewis Coser,¹⁴ and especially Robert K. Merton.¹⁵

Merton pointed out in 1949 that the existing social structures—that is, patterns of action, institutions, instruments, or "means" to a social goal—are not the only possible ones. There also exist other ways of fulfilling the function served by the present structure. The specific existing social structures, he insisted, are *not* functionally indispensable. Merton offered "as a major theorem of analysis": ". . . the same function [may] be diversely fulfilled by alternative items. Functional needs are here taken to be permissive, rather than determinant, of specific social structures."¹⁶ In fact, alternative social structures have served the functions necessary for groups to continue to exist.¹⁷ This, he wrote, "unfreezes the identity of the existent and the inevitable."¹⁸ Since there may be a range of ways in which a particular functional need may be fulfilled, we should look for functional alternatives. He insisted that this was relevant to conscious efforts to produce social change, and offered also as "a basic theorem":

. . . any attempt to eliminate an existing social structure without providing adequate alternative structures for fulfilling the functions previously fulfilled by the abolished organization is doomed to failure.¹⁹

¹¹ Theodor Newcomb, *Social Psychology* (New York: Dryden Press, 1950), p. 351.

¹² Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory, Pure and Applied* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949), p. 58. Also, Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Press, 1951), p. 210.

¹³ T. Parsons and Edward A. Shils, *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 5.

¹⁴ Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (London: Collier-Macmillan, and New York: The Free Press, 1956), p. 50.

¹⁵ Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949), pp. 35–36, 52 and 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35. Italics are Merton's.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79. Italics are Merton's.

Parsons similarly wrote: "There must be a development of 'functional alternatives' to the structures which have been eliminated."²⁰ And Coser, too, argued:

In realistic conflict, there exist functional alternatives as to means . . . [T]here are always possibilities of choice between various forms of contention, such choice depending . . . on an assessment of their instrumental adequacy.²¹

FUNCTIONS OF WAR

War is such a prominent institution of modern society that if these theoretical views are valid they must apply to the military system which wages war. Let us therefore explore the application of this functional substitute theory to war.

Such a complex and diverse structure as the military system has doubtless served many purposes or functions. A careful analysis of *all* of them is needed (a task which is not attempted here), including examinations of alternative ways of fulfilling those functions which seem lasting, and exploration of whether some of the functions of the military—especially those deemed undesirable—may be required only under specific conditions and not universally, and may hence be removed, reduced, or dealt with in some other way.

We shall here identify four functions of a military capacity which are primarily political and are associated with national policy of the governments:

Attack: especially international aggression, motivated or justified variously, including the desire for: economic benefit, power expansion, ego-centric aggrandizement of rulers, "liberation," extending "civilization," seizure of territory, and extermination of "inferiors." Sometimes the attack is internal, against the governmental system of that very country, or against another part of the society, as in a coup d'état or civil war.

Domination: control and oppression of the home population, or foreign populations and countries, or both, also with diverse motivations remarkably similar to those just listed.

²⁰ Parsons, *The Social System*, p. 167.

²¹ Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, p. 50.

Deterrent: that is, prevention of attack by possession of sufficient capacity to cause the potential attacker to anticipate greater losses than gains, or that the attack will fail, and hence to decide against initiating the venture.

Defense: that is, "defense" in the literal sense of the term, as warding off, protection, resistance against attack, denial of the objective of the attacker, and upholding or maintaining one's own objectives against the attacker. This includes both defense against genuine attack and preparations to defend in case of attack. Also at times the excuse of "defense" is used to assist in internal domination or is used to disguise for the home population what is in fact an attack on another country. (This last point is very important, and the following analysis is by implication relevant to it, although that specific kind of situation requires separate analysis.)

The relative importance of each of the several functions of war may vary from case to case, culture to culture, and time to time, although certain ones may be both far more persistent and perceived to be more generally justifiable than others. Let us now look at these four functions more closely, in two groups.

FUNCTIONS OF ATTACK AND DOMINATION

It appears that the functions of attack and domination may be dealt with in other ways than by providing substitute nonmilitary means of attacking and dominating, functions which are in any case undesirable. These functions might be removed, or attempts to carry them out might be frustrated, and thus the functions in practice are finally drastically reduced in two ways:

1. Changes may be carried out in the society which is, or potentially is, the origin of an attack, to reduce or eliminate both motives and ability to attack, by changes in its social institutions, distribution of power, economic system, beliefs and attitudes as to legitimacy, acceptable policies, and the like. Those social

changes require separate attention, which unfortunately is not possible here.²² If attacks can be reduced or eliminated by social changes which remove the "need," functional alternatives are not required here.

2. The capacity of the attacked society to defend itself by some means might be increased, so as effectively to deter attacks, to defeat attacks if they occur, or to liberate itself from the oppression caused by past attacks. Successful and repeated defense (and liberation) to such internal or external attacks, denying the objectives to the attackers is likely to reduce the frequency with which military systems are used to attack, *provided that* the defense is by means which do not confirm the attacker's belief in the omnipotence of the military system to gain ends. In other words, in the case of this function, it may not be a functional substitute means of *attack* which may be required, but a functional substitute means of *defeating* the attack. There are very important reasons (which are developed elsewhere) why such deterrence and struggle against internal or external attacks may be more advantageously and effectively achieved

²² However, the view that institutional or systemic changes (with or without accompanying attitude changes) will lead to the abandonment of the military system without specific attention to that abandonment is rejected here. In fact, social changes and social revolution may *increase* the military system, and popular support for it, because of a perceived greater need to defend the changes against counterrevolutionary threats (domestic or foreign), or because the society is perceived to be more worthy of defense, and the like. If violent struggle has produced the social revolution, the relative role of the military system in comparison to civil branches of the government and other institutions is likely to increase. If the struggle was largely nonviolent but with confidence remaining in military means for defense, an increase in the military system is also likely, only to a lesser degree. Almost without exceptions, countries which have undergone avowed social revolutions possess stronger military systems after the revolution than they did under the old order. Attention is therefore needed to other means of abolishing war than changes in the social system unaccompanied by abandonment of the military system. See the fuller discussion of these points in Chapter Twelve, "Popular Empowerment," subchapter Sanctions and Society.

by means *other than* the military forms of conflict.²³

FUNCTIONS OF DETERRENCE AND DEFENSE

Military systems also are widely used to deter and to defend. The reasons offered by most people, policy-makers, and government spokesmen for keeping and relying upon the military system even today are that a strong military capacity can, better than anything else, deter an attack, and defend against an attack. In the face of these perceived functions of military systems, pleas to abandon military capacity on moral, religious, humanitarian, or political grounds have historically been accepted by only a small minority, while the general population has, with few exceptions, rejected the antimilitary pleadings. War may be brutal, immoral, and even suicidal, but people have perceived that it provided an ultimate sanction and means of struggle for which they have perceived no alternative. Even where deterrence and defense are *not* the real motives for military systems, popular support for those systems and war efforts will be forthcoming even for aggressive purposes, as long as people believe they have no alternative means of defense.

Whether to be held in reserve to back up one's position in international negotiations, to deter attack by adequate preparations, or to defend in case of attack, military systems have been believed necessary since no other way to fulfill those functions of deterrence and defense has been believed to exist. It has been commonly assumed that the alternative to war is impotence, cowardice, and passive submission, and that perception of "ordinary" people has been shared by statesmen, policymakers, intellectuals, and academics. Even nuclear and similar weapons have not changed this, for people believe that, although nuclear weapons normally ought not to be launched, their existence will prevent attack, and thus provide safety and avoid helplessness.

All of this analysis is fully compatible with the application of Merton's "basic theorem" to the

problem of war, for Merton postulated that efforts to remove a basic structure without providing an alternative structure for fulfilling its function would be doomed to failure.²⁴ The need for defense of a society, its populace, its institutions, way of life and the like, is such a basic societal need that in conditions of perceived and actual threats of attack, the military system will not be abandoned when it is understood that this will leave the society helpless and defenseless in meeting real or imagined dangers. This is, however, precisely what proposals for abandonment of war and the military system have almost always meant or been perceived to mean.

SEPARATING STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

Peace movements and most peace proposals have in their assumptions and analyses often confused structure and function, or, putting it in other ways, confused institution and job, or instrument and task. Exponents of peace have largely accepted the identity of the structure (the military system and war) with its perceived most justified functions (deterrence and defense), just as have the exponents and practitioners of the war system itself. It has been assumed that effective defense and strong military capacity are synonymous. Whether judged by Merton's theorem, by statements of political officials, or by the views of "ordinary" people, it was predictable and inevitable that past efforts to abolish war would fail. This also explains why present and future efforts which are primarily antimilitary and antiwar cannot succeed.

The simple distinction between structure and function, or instrument and task, applied to war and defense may free us from the axiomatic presumption of the identity of defense with the military system. The distinction between defense and the military system enables us to ask whether there can be alternative means of defense which are not military—a question which to most people has been inconceivable.

This ought not to be as ludicrous a question as it might appear to others, since, even with present

²⁴ A longer discussion of some aspects of this exploration is contained in Gene Sharp, "The Need of a Functional Substitute for War," *International Relations* (London), vol. III, no. 3 (April 1967), pp. 187-207.

²³ See Chapter Nine, "The Political Equivalent of War"—Civilian-Based Defense."

policies, defense and military capacity are not identical. First, the growth and development of military technology means that in its extreme forms the actual use of military means can in some cases provide only vast destruction and death, *not* actual defense. Second, in some cases, the advance perception of such possible destruction, or of overwhelming military capacity by the attacker, may lead to a realization that military resistance for defense is futile and hence to a decision not to attempt it. Third, and most important, in some international conflicts, nonmilitary means of resistance have already been improvised and used for national defense purposes. Also, such nonviolent means of struggle, in crude and undeveloped forms, have been widely used and often highly important in internal conflicts.

The analysis in this section of the chapter has pointed in this direction:

The path to the abolition of war may lie through the substitution of nonmilitary means of defense, if these exist, can be created or refined, and if they are, or can be made to be, at least as instrumentally effective as military means of defense have been and now are.

NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE

The world, much less politics, is not divided neatly into categories of "violence" and "nonviolence." There are many intermediary phenomena which are neither violent nor nonviolent. But in terms of ultimate sanctions and means of struggle, which are used when milder means are judged inadequate or have failed, there do appear to be two broad techniques, one violent action—which includes several types of violent conflict, among them conventional and nuclear war—the other, nonviolent action—which is also a broad and diverse technique. It is to the nature and potential of this nonviolent technique of struggle that our attention now turns.

Our awareness and understanding of the non-violent counterpart of violent struggle is generally sharply limited and filled with many serious distortions and errors of fact. Therefore, an initial effort is usually required to free our minds from inaccurate perceptions of this type of struggle which we have accumulated from a culture in which belief in violence as the ultimate form of power and as the most

significant single fact in history—both of which are now challenged—are fundamental axioms. This belief in the omnipotence of violence, and ignorance of the power of popular nonviolent struggle, may have also been compatible with the interests of past dominating elites who did not want people to realize their power potential.

Because of preconceptions, it is necessary to indicate some of the things that nonviolent action is *not*. This technique is the opposite of passivity, submissiveness, and cowardice. Nonviolent action uses social, economic, psychological, and political power in the matching of forces in conflict, and is not to be equated with verbal or purely psychological persuasion. This means of struggle does not assume that humans are inherently "good." This is not "pacifism"; in fact, this technique has been predominantly used by "ordinary" people who never became pacifists, and also some pacifists find it offensive. Nonviolent conflict may operate even in cases of extreme social distance between contending groups. The technique may be more "Western" than "Eastern," and certainly is not the reverse. It is designed to combat a violent opponent, and does not presume a nonviolent response to the nonviolent challenge. This technique may be used for both "good" and "bad" causes, though the social consequences of its use for "bad" causes differs sharply from those of violence.²⁵ While violence is believed to work fast, and nonviolent action slowly, often violence takes a great length of time and nonviolent struggle may operate extremely quickly. Finally, and most importantly for this chapter, nonviolent action is not limited to domestic conflicts within a democratic system; it has been used widely against dictatorial regimes, foreign occupations, and even totalitarian systems,²⁶ and it has already been applied without advance preparations internationally, even in improvised national defense struggles.

Our recent studies of this technique have revealed it to be infinitely richer, more variable and

²⁵ See the discussion on this point in Chapter Twelve, "Popular Empowerment."

²⁶ See Chapter Four, "Facing Dictatorships with Confidence."

powerful than hitherto dreamed.²⁷ It has been widely thought that, for the most part, politically significant nonviolent struggle began with Gandhi. We now know that it has a rich and vast history which we are only beginning to piece together which goes back at least to several centuries B.C., and ranges over many cultures, continents, countries, historical periods, issues, types of groups, and opponents. Instead of the list of specific methods, or forms of action included within this technique being relatively few (a dozen or so as was once thought) we now know that even with a partial listing the number is at least 198, arranged in three main classes of non-violent protest and persuasion (the milder forms), noncooperation (including boycotts of social relations, economic boycotts, strikes, and political non-cooperation), and nonviolent intervention.

It was thought by some that conversion of the opponent by the sufferings of the nonviolent actionists was the only, or at least the best, way in which nonviolent action produced change. We now know that this is not true, and that nonviolent struggle can also be coercive, possibly even more so than violence against an obstinate opponent. This is because nonviolent struggle is capable of severing the various sources of the opponent's power, as by massive civil disobedience of the population as a whole paralyzing the political system, strikes by workers and noncooperation by management paralyzing the economic system, noncooperation by civil servants paralyzing the governmental structure, mutiny by soldiers destroying the repressive capacity, and in many other equally important but more subtle ways.

COMPARISON WITH VIOLENT STRUGGLE

A survey of the knowledge we now have of the history of nonviolent action would facilitate our

consideration of this largely neglected socio-political technique, but that is not possible within the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that it is a remarkable history which when more fully revealed will require and produce major reexaminations of not only social but political history, and fundamental reinterpretations of very significant historical cases where violence is widely presumed to have been the only form of struggle, or the only possible successful one. In this, the American Revolution,²⁸ the Russian Revolution, and struggles against Nazism are only three of the more dramatic such cases.

This new understanding and information about the nature, history, dynamics, and existing capacities of nonviolent struggle is of a magnitude to require major reevaluation of the judgements which have been made or assumed about its effectiveness and potential in comparison with violence. That is but the beginning, however.

Nonviolent action has almost always been improvised without significant awareness of the history of this type of struggle. It has usually been waged without qualified leadership, or without compensating wide popular understanding of the technique, without thorough comprehension of its requirements for effectiveness, without preparations and training, without analyses of past conflicts, without studies of strategy and tactics, without conscious development of its "weaponry," and often without a consciousness among the actionists that they were waging a special type of struggle. In short, the most unfavorable circumstances possible have accompanied the use of this technique. It is amazing that the significant number of victories for nonviolent struggle exists at all, for these conditions of the lack of knowledge, skill, and preparations have been to the highest degree unfavorable. In contrast, for many centuries military struggle has benefited from conscious efforts to improve its effectiveness in all the ways which nonviolent action has lacked.

²⁷ See esp. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1973). This is a comprehensive presentation and analysis of the nature of nonviolent struggle. Discussion in this chapter of that technique is documented in that book. It does not contain, however, discussion of the "civilian-based defense policy," although it provides the necessary groundwork to that policy. On Gandhi, see Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist, with Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979), esp. Chapters One, Two, and Three.

²⁸ See Walter Conser, Ronald McCarthy, Gene Sharp, David Toscano, and Kenneth Wadoski, eds., *To Bid Defiance to Tyranny: Nonviolent Action and the American Independence Movement 1765-1775* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1981).

INTERNATIONAL RELEVANCE

Some people assume that means of conflict which have predominantly been used in domestic conflicts—as nonviolent action—are intrinsically limited to that range of conflict situations, while military struggle is the means obviously appropriate to the international level. On closer reflection it becomes obvious that this distinction is by no means as clear-cut as is often assumed. Violent action, of course, is also widely used internally—in repression, resistance, coups d'état, revolution, guerrilla war, civil war, and the like. Also, certain forms of nonviolent action are used internationally far more frequently than is usually recognized—such as embargoes, freezing the assets of another country, economic boycotts, cancellation of planned conferences and diplomatic visits, and refusal of diplomatic recognition. Other forms—which are far more relevant to our analysis—are the cases of widespread civilian resistance against invasion forces and occupation regimes.

The reality may be that whether a given technique is applicable to domestic or international conflicts is not determined by whether it does or does not use physical violence but by whether people have tried to adapt it as effectively as possible to that particular type of conflict situation. The presumption that nonviolent struggle is only appropriate to domestic conflicts is not valid.

Nonviolent struggle has already been applied in international politics *without planning or preparations and at times even without advice decision* (all of which are regarded as essential for maximum effectiveness). These international struggles do not refer to international economic boycotts and embargoes. Contrary to Thomas Jefferson, who saw those economic weapons as the basis for a substitute for war, they are probably not models, or even primitive prototypes, upon which to build a nonviolent functional substitute for war. Other cases exist which, although not models, might be early prototypes upon which to build more successful prepared and trained nonviolent defense capacities.

The resistance of Czechoslovakia in 1968–69 is the closest to what is envisaged. This was a nonviolent war of resistance to invasion and occupation, a

war which in the end was lost. We learn from lost military wars, however, and we can learn from lost nonviolent wars. According to some reports, the Russians anticipated military resistance from the able Czechoslovak army, and expected they could overcome it and install a puppet government within four days. Despite very considerable Czechoslovak military capacity based on years of preparations and training, the obvious futility of military resistance in face of five invading armies, including that of the Soviet Union, produced a decision not to resist with military force.

Instead, an unprepared, improvised nonviolent resistance occurred. Despite serious problems, and apparent major strategic errors, and sometimes without adequate assistance from the official leadership, this resistance managed initially to frustrate completely the Russian efforts to install a puppet government in spite of the distribution of troops throughout the country. This resistance also forced the Soviet Union to negotiate with Czechoslovak leaders (some of whom, as Dubcek, already had been arrested and kidnapped). All this was produced by people whose country was already totally occupied and whose army had never entered the field, conditions under which negotiations should not—by conventional views—have been required or expected!

Even after those negotiations, such resistance in less dramatic forms in fact maintained the Dubcek regime, so hated by the Russians, in power (after their release from arrest and imprisonment) until April of 1969—eight months! Even then, it can be argued, the demise resulted more from the collapse of resistance by the Government and Party at a time of anti-Russian riots (a break in the nonviolent discipline, possibly caused by *agents provocateurs*) than it did from any intrinsic weakness in the means of resistance.

That initial week of unified nonviolent resistance and complete denial of political victory to the Russians, and the eight-month life of the very regime which was the stimulus for the Russian invasion, are achievements of immense proportions. This is especially true considering that this nonviolent resistance capacity was *unprepared*, and hence probably less effectual and certainly less reliable

than if it had been adequately prepared. Had unprepared military struggle against such odds held off the Russians for eight months it would have been hailed as victory even in defeat, with courage and historical significance comparable to Thermopylae.

There have been other cases, such as the struggle in the Ruhr against the French and Belgian occupation in 1923 in which nonviolent resistance was launched as official German Government policy. (The situation became mixed with sabotage later with detrimental effects for the German cause.) This case is widely regarded as a complete German defeat. Nevertheless, it led to an end of the occupation, and disastrous economic consequences for France (as well as Germany), and the French people's revulsion against the French Government's repression policies of their former enemies. This revulsion is said to have contributed to the unexpected electoral defeat of Prime Minister Poincaré's Government in the next election—achievements which Germany was militarily unable even to *attempt* at the time.

Significant other cases of nonviolent resistance can be classed as nonviolent struggle for national defense. These include the Hungarian struggle against Austria for home rule from 1850 to 1867, and Finland's struggles against Russification, especially from 1898 to 1905. Even the Gandhian struggles in India against British rule were those of an occupied country seeking restoration of independence—surely an international conflict. (Gandhi was far from the first Indian nationalist to advocate or organize nonviolent struggle for independence.) During the Second World War, Norwegian, Danish, and Dutch resistance against the Nazi occupations and certain other anti-Nazi struggles, including limited efforts to save Jews, produced some modest but significant victories. Some of these actions had the support of, or were even initiated by, the Government-in-exile.

A BASIS FOR A SUBSTITUTE FOR WAR?

Nonviolent action generally, and its use for national defense purposes specifically, has never even yet received systematic efforts to develop its capacity, to increase its effectiveness, and to expand the areas of its utility. The nonviolent technique is thus an

underdeveloped political technique, probably at the stage comparable to violent group conflict several thousand years ago. Hence, nonviolent struggle as waged to date may only have revealed a small fraction of its potential fighting power and effectiveness.

The challenge now is to bring to nonviolent struggle research, analysis, experimentation, planning, preparations, and training, with the objective of attaining greater knowledge and understanding, facilitating our ability to evaluate it fairly, increasing the effectiveness of this technique, and, finally, exploring its progressive extension to serious conflict situations where most people have presumed that only military, or other violent, conflict was adequate.

Specifically, the question is this: can a national defense policy, for both small and large countries, be created by the capacity of the civilian population, trained, prepared, knowledgeable, to wield nonviolent struggle? Can this policy make the consolidation and maintenance of control by an invading force or a coup d'état impossible? Even cursory examination of strategies for civilian-based defense lies outside this chapter. We note only that they are diverse, and flexible, and always need to be related to the specific situation and the objectives of the attacker in order to defeat his specific aims as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Also, the question arises as to whether such preparations can be perceived as sufficiently effective to deter invasions and coups. Finally, can this policy be relevant to the present nuclear powers? Would such a country which (1) had gradually built up its capacity to wage civilian-based defense, and then (2) had by unilateral action or negotiated agreements gradually phased down and dispensed with its military weaponry, including its nuclear capacity, as unneeded, be likely to be threatened or attacked with nuclear weapons? (This needs careful attention even though today it is generally the nuclear powers that fear attack, while the nonnuclear powers generally do not expect it.)

In comparing nonviolent struggle with military struggle for defense capacity the same criteria must be used in evaluating both, in terms of the degree of risk, what is risked, the costs if it comes to an open clash, the nature of failure and success in such a clash, and the possible gains in case of success.

IS IT POSSIBLE?

This type of policy is called "civilian defense," in some countries, "social defense" in Germany and the Netherlands, and increasingly "civilian-based defense" in the United States. It is direct defense of the society, its principles, people, way of life, chosen institutions, right to maintain or change itself, by action of the civilian population as a whole, and their institutions, using civilian (nonmilitary, nonviolent) means of struggle. It should go without saying that this is not a panacea and other diverse programs are needed to help meet many other needs.

This approach on a serious policy level began only in 1957. It has thus far received the most respectful attention from people regarded as hard-headed realists, strategists, defense analysts, planners, and military officers, as well as others interested in social change and world peace. The response is as yet small, but it includes limited governmental interest in several European countries. Books and other publications now exist on the subject in several European languages and Japanese. Thus in the relatively few years since 1957 this idea has been transformed from a vague conception into a strategic proposal receiving serious thought from the most unlikely people.

Some people still see this as a romantic conception unassociated with the real and the possible. Yet, there is profound truth contained in what Kenneth Boulding calls "Boulding's First Law": "What exists, is possible."²⁹ Nonviolent action exists. It has occurred in human history on a scale, seriousness, and with a degree of success (nothing is ever always successful) which has hitherto been unrealized (despite the noted lack of understanding). Nonviolent struggle has even been applied against ruthless tyrants, and as we observed has already been used for national defense. Social science research, policy development, and strategic analysis also exist and can be applied to this phenomenon. We have more evidence today that a civilian-based defense policy is possible, and, if adequately prepared, could work

²⁹ Kenneth Boulding, quoted in Jerome D. Frank, *Sanity and Survival: Psychological Aspects of War and Peace* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1968), p. 270.

more effectively than military means for real defense at this stage of history, than there was in August 1939 that atomic bombs were possible. That was the date when Dr. Einstein wrote the famous letter to President Roosevelt saying that *maybe* a new highly explosive bomb could be made from atoms.

It is popular today to pronounce that war is inevitable because of the aggressive nature of human beings, and hence some people conclude that this nonviolent "thing" is all nonsense. That is not the view of significant writers on human aggressiveness. Konrad Lorenz has insisted that: "modern war has become an institution and . . . being an institution war can be abolished."³⁰ Robert Ardrey, no less, has asserted: "We must be nonviolent. Yes, we can do it—but are we going to have to work at it."³¹

Civilian-based defense is set forth for study and research as a possible functional substitute for war, as a means of abolishing war while providing real defense by nonviolent means against tyrants and aggressors. If it could be made to work at least as well as military means, it would be possible for individual countries, alone or in groups, without waiting on others, to "transarm," that is to change over to this defense system. This would be possible (in contrast to disarmament) because if it does work, civilian-based defense will maintain or increase defense capacity while making possible abandonment of military means as unneeded. It would thus by-pass the most serious blockage to disarmament proposals, fear of reduced fighting capacity, or an unfavorable relative fighting capacity for providing defense against attack.

FOUR TASKS

A vast amount of research, analysis, and problem-oriented investigation is required to examine whether this approach to provide a functional substitute for

³⁰ Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 284.

³¹ Louis S. B. Leakey and Robert Ardrey, in a dialogue, on "Man, the Killer," *Psychology Today*, vol. 6, no. 4 (September 1972), p. 85.

the military system and defensive military warfare is indeed a fruitful one, and whether, and if so how, the multitude of difficult problems associated with it can be solved. These problems include such questions as the means of training and preparations, how to handle the transarmament period, ways to meet the particular defense needs of individual countries, and the potential of this policy (compared with violence) in confronting successfully the most extreme and ruthless regimes.

Four tasks now urgently need to be tackled simultaneously to determine whether the approach to the problem of war presented in this chapter contains the basis for its solution.

First, a major program of research, analysis, and problem-oriented investigation, involving thousands of scholars of many disciplines, analysts, and other specialists. Outlines of some general research areas which might be tackled have been already proposed,³² and others are needed. Dozens of research centers and programs are required.

Second, public and private discussion and evaluation of this substitute-for-war-policy, the problems with which it attempts to deal, existing knowledge relevant to whether it could work, and the difficulties which must be overcome if the policy is to be viable, and its potentialities and possible consequences.

Third, serious investigation and evaluation of this policy by civilian governmental bodies, defense departments, private institutions and groups, organizations, institutions, and individuals.

Fourth, high school, college, university, and general public education courses on the nature of nonviolent action, its potential as an alternative to domestic violence, and on the potential and problems of civilian-based defense as a substitute for war.

Each of these four tasks will require major resources and personnel. Considering the seriousness of our problems, this is a very modest proposal.

Joseph S. Nye Jr.

SOFT POWER

It goes without saying that when self-styled "realists" consider the question of international "power," they mean military power or occasionally, economic power. Partisans of *Realpolitik* consider, as well, that the goal of a country's international relations is to maximize its power—as defined above—and thus, its ability to orchestrate international affairs for its own benefit. Rarely considered is the notion that a country's benefit may be ultimately achieved in the context of "win-win solutions" in which the payoff to each participant, rather than requiring a negative outcome for others, actually derives from maximizing the payoff for all and that, unlike a military confrontation, relations among

³² Gene Sharp, *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1970), pp. 73–114, and Gene Sharp, "Research Areas on the Nature, Problems, and Potentialities of Civilian Defense," in S. C. Biswas, ed., *Gandhi: Theory and Practice, Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance: Proceedings of a Conference* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1969), pp. 393–414.