# GANDHI'S ANSWER:
## Neither peace nor war but nonviolent struggle*

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In a world that often seems filled with violence and oppression, it is relevant to recall that a hundred years ago the Indian minority in South Africa at the Empire Theatre protest meeting in Johannesburg on September 11, 1906 resolved to disobey the draft Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance by means of nonviolent defiance. Their actual struggle began after the bill became law in July 1907.

It is also appropriate that this anniversary observance conference is sponsored by the Indian National Congress. It was the Congress that led the predominantly nonviolent Indian struggle for independence from the most vast empire that the world had ever seen, and won.

It is important both that the Congress itself remembers, and that it calls attention to that struggle a hundred years ago. Its lessons are very relevant to the peoples of the twenty-first century.

It sounds easy to call attention to these struggles, and it can be done and should be done. However, paying attention to their importance for the twenty-first century, beyond mere recognition of their historical occurrence, is unlikely to be easy, and may even be painful. The easy path is to comfort ourselves by standing amazed at those movements and those that followed, not only in South Africa but also very importantly in India herself.

As we reflect on those movements, it is not difficult to be humbled before the memory of the remarkable man who played such an important

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role in those movements. However, in honoring Mohandas K. Gandhi, there is a danger that we revere him without taking seriously his insights and example. They are of extreme importance.

### *Neither war nor peace*

Modern thought widely assumes that the peaceful alternatives to violence and war consist of negotiations, dialogue, diplomacy, negotiations, compromise, conciliation, and other tools of conflict resolution.

Those are all good and useful tools in many situations and they need to be explored and developed further. However, that list does not include the full range of alternatives to violence. It does not give recognition to Gandhi's views and experience in the development of satyagraha and the important wider historical practice of nonviolent struggle in social, economic, political, and international conflicts.

Gandhi's important contributions about how to deal with conflicts do not fit smoothly into established modern thought and practice. The assumption usually is that in serious conflicts one ultimately must choose between surrender, using violence, and refusal to participate on pacifist grounds.

Gandhi was no advocate of surrender to oppression, but neither was he a supporter of violence and war, nor was he a simple conscientious objector. He was a crucial contributor to the continued development of what Krishnalal Shridharani called "war without violence."[1]

Gandhi's views differ significantly from the answers to conflict espoused by those who rely on war and other violence in extreme conflicts. His views also differ significantly from the answers offered by most practitioners of Western conflict resolution, peace research, and pacifism.

The contributions of conflict resolution and peace research are important for some conflicts, especially those with issues of secondary significance. However, those contributions are inadequate when dealing with acute conflicts.

### *Gandhi's answer*

Gandhi's answer was to identify those conflicts where the issues are fundamental. Those are the conflicts when moral principles, human rights,

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[1] Krishnalal Shridharani , *War Without Violence: A Study of Gandhi's Method and Its Accomplishments*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939. London: Victor Gollancz, 1939. New York: Garland, 1972. Revised edition: Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962.

and justice are at stake and when compromise is not possible or desirable. Then the primary task of the exponent of nonviolent means is to assist the oppressed people to become empowered by learning how to apply satyagraha, or nonviolent struggle, to change their situation, as Gandhi insisted.

Most Western conflict resolution advocates, pacifists, and peace researchers have not yet fully grasped this great contribution to the resolution of acute conflicts.

### *Gandhi on power*

We need to remember that Gandhi was no naïve romantic playing at politics, imagining the world to be one of sweet harmony, gentleness, and love. The times in which he lived and worked had many of the characteristics of our own times, with some variations. Those characteristics include the existence of acute conflicts, dictatorships, great violence, mass killings, and communal and racial hatreds.

We often forget that Gandhi was tough and realistic. He fully recognized the role of power in political conflicts. Indeed, it seems that he understood power far better than those alleged statesmen of today who dogmatically believe that violence and military might are the only real source of political and international power.

In the January 23, 1930 issue of his journal *Young India*, Gandhi wrote: "The British people must realize that the Empire is to come to an end. This they will not realize unless we in India have generated power within to enforce our will."[2]

"The English Nation responds only to force . . . " Gandhi wrote at the beginning of the 1930-1931 civil disobedience campaign.[3]

On March 2, 1930, Gandhi wrote a letter-ultimatum to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, rejecting the idea that the issues between India and Britain could be resolved by a conference. He wrote:

“It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interest by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death."[4]

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[2] Gene Sharp, *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1960), p. 52; *Young India*, January 23, 1930, p. 28.

[3] Gene Sharp, *Gandhi Wields he Weapon of Moral Power,* p. 67; Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress,* Vol. I (1885-1935), p. 638. Madras: Working Committee of the Congress, 1935.

[4] Gene Sharp, *Gandhi Wields he Weapon of Moral Power*, p. 64; *Congress Bulletin*, No. 5, March 7, 1930.

This was possible because Gandhi understood political power very well. He wrote that ". . . [N]o Government—much less the Indian Government—can subsist if the people cease to serve it."[5]

"Even the most despotic government cannot stand except for the consent of the governed which consent is often forcibly procured by the despot. Immediately the subject ceases to fear the despotic force, his power is gone."[6]

### *A humble learner*

This was the insight into the basic nature of political power and all governments on which Gandhi developed the political aspect of satyagraha, his application of nonviolent struggle. He had already grasped this insight by 1905. Noncooperation and disobedience as means of struggle to achieve liberation were rooted in his insights into political realism, not primarily in the political application of *ahimsa*.

Gandhi was humble enough not to think that he had no need to learn from the experiences of others. Gandhi was also wise enough not to think he could originate everything that was important concerning how to respond to serious conflicts, and that he could do everything himself. He also understood that the participation of the masses of people suffering under oppression was needed to lift the burden of oppression from society. By participating in nonviolent struggles against the injustices, the oppressed could become empowered.

### *Continuing relevance*

Gandhi's insights and the experiences of those movements have great relevance today and for the centuries ahead of us. Humanity has not yet solved the problems of violence and war, oppression and dictatorships. Despite some gains, we still face them. Past peace movements and programs to achieve greater freedom and social justice have not been adequate to remove these conditions. This may be because many peace and reform advocates have offered hopes and dreams instead of effective means actually to produce a better society.

Today's realities differ only in degrees from those that confronted Gandhi, and everyone else, in South Africa, India, and elsewhere.

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5 Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist with Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979) and New Delhi, India: Gandhi Media Centre, 1999), p. 44; *Young India*, May 5, 1920, quoted in M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951, p. 116.

6 Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, p. 44; *Young India*, June 30, 1920; quoted in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1948), p. 116.

Gandhi's response to these realities was not simply to be peaceful. He did not advise infinite patience by the oppressed.

In acute conflict situations he did not merely seek more skillful ways to negotiate, nor did he search for a "win-win" solution with the perpetrators of violence and oppression. Gandhi did not deny the reality of the power of oppressors, but he did not ignore either the plight of the suffering powerless nor their potential for self-liberation. He recognized that there were relevant insights and experiences elsewhere that could help in formulating wise and responsible ways to move forward in the current situation.

### *Viewing Gandhi in historical context*

We can gain greater understanding into Gandhi's significance and the potential of his insights and experiences if we view him and the struggles in which he was so important in historical context.

It is obvious from Gandhi's own account of the Empire Theatre meeting on September 11, 1906 that the attendees were already familiar with earlier nonviolent protests and resistance by the Indian minority in South Africa. In his journal *Indian Opinion* on October 6, 1906 Gandhi reminded his readers of their earlier resistance. They had refused to move to the assigned Location, and had also rejected the demand that they carry passes: "The Indian people refused to accept the passes . . . and the Regulation had to be withdrawn,"[7] he wrote. Gandhi was also familiar with previous instances of African and mixed-race resistance: "The pass law applies to them as well, but they do not take out passes," he said two days before the Empire Theatre meeting, speaking at the Hamidiya Islamic Society.[8] He also cited the African refusal to pay taxes to the European oppressors.

### *Chinese, Russian, and other models*

Equally importantly, Gandhi was aware of the use of nonviolent resistance methods in other parts of the world. He saw such cases to be relevant to the current plight of Indians in South Africa. Gandhi had previously referred to the Chinese use of the economic boycott more than a year earlier on August 19, 1905 in an article concerning Lord Curzon's proposal for the partition of Bengal. Gandhi wrote that if the proposal were

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[7] Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* p. 34; *Indian Opinion*, October 6, 1906; M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, hereafter *The Collected Works* ) Vol. V, p, 462.

[8] Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* p. 34; *Indian Opinion*, September 2, 1906; Gandhi, *The Collected Works,* Vol. V, p. 418.

not changed, “Indian merchants should stop all trade with Great Britain. We must admit that our people have learnt these tactics from China.”[9]

The year-long Russian 1905 Revolution was predominantly, but not completely, nonviolent. Gandhi referred to that vast struggle, especially by implication the Great October General Strike that had forced the tsar to grant a limited parliament. He compared this strike to earlier Russian violence: “This time they 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.” He later continued in the same article: “We, too, can resort to the Russian remedy against tyranny.” Gandhi compared the Russian strike movement to the anti-partition movement in Bengal: “The governance of India is possible only because there exist people who serve. We also can show the same strength that the Russian people have done.”[10]

Gandhi referred to the “strong movement” in Bengal against partition that was using the boycott of British goods and the consumption of only Indian produced goods (*swadeshi):* “The movement in Bengal for the use of *swadeshi* goods is much like the Russian movement.” Gandhi also had paid much attention to the Irish resistance movements, including boycotts and rent strikes.[11]

Gandhi also referred to cases of individuals practicing religious disobedience and tax refusal in England and the earlier objection of American colonists to English taxation.[12]

All this indicates that Gandhi was eager to learn from both past and current nonviolent struggles. In counseling how to proceed and in helping to lead nonviolent struggles in South Africa and India, he recognized that he and his contemporaries could draw on the experiences of nonviolent struggles by others who had come before.

Gandhi and the Indian minority in South Africa clearly knew of all these cases of nonviolent struggle well before the important Empire Theatre meeting. Gandhi’s own article in *Indian Opinion* referred to the nonviolent resistance and revolutionary movements in China on August 19, 1905, in Russia on November 11, 1905, in Bengal on September 16, 1905, in the American colonies on September 30, 1905, and in South Africa by Africans on November 25, 1905. These references range between nine-and-a-half and thirteen months *before* the Empire Theatre meeting of

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[9] Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* p.28 (see also p. 30); *Indian Opinion*, August 19, 1905; M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 44.

[10] Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* p.29; *Indian Opinion,* November 11, 1905; *The Collected Works, Vol. V,* pp. 131-132.

[11] Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* pp. 31-32; Gandhi, *The Collected Works,* Vol. V, p. 132.

[12] Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* p. 32.

September 11, 1906. Knowledge of the other cases of nonviolent struggle also was clearly antecedent to calculations by the Indians on how to respond to the draft Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance.

Further, Gandhi recognized that various individual methods of nonviolent action—economic boycotts, strikes, and disobedience—had a great deal in common with each other. They were parts of a broad approach to the conduct of serious conflicts.

### *Reasoning from political to political*

It should be noted that Gandhi's own reports of these conflicts demonstrate that at this time he was not calculating how to apply *ahimsa* to political conflicts. He was reasoning from several previous pragmatic nonviolent struggles to current and future applications of nonviolent struggle in South Africa. Said another way, Gandhi was reasoning from political applications of nonviolent struggle in other countries to its prospective political application in South Africa.

Gandhi also clearly viewed satyagraha, or nonviolent struggle—to the development of which he contributed so much—as a technique of great importance, not only in the immediate situation but beyond his lifetime. He anticipated its further development and practice in other parts of the world. This is what has happened.

### *Some historical examples*

A comprehensive history of the practice of nonviolent struggle throughout the world does not exist. However, it is important to try to place Gandhi and his "experiments" in historical context.

There may never have been a beginning to nonviolent struggle. Its basic operation is extremely simple. It seems to be primarily based on human stubbornness, refusal to do what one is supposed to do and doing what it is forbidden.

We do know, however, that from the late eighteenth century through the twentieth century, the technique of nonviolent action was widely used in highly diverse conflicts: colonial rebellions, international political and economic conflicts, religious conflicts, and anti-slavery resistance.

During the years up to the present this type of struggle has been used to gain national independence, to generate economic gains, to resist genocide, to undermine dictatorships, to gain civil rights, to end segregation, and to resist foreign occupations and coups d'état.

American colonists conducted three strategically planned nonviolent struggle campaigns against British regulations, taxation, and rule from 1765 to 1775.

In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in various countries workers widely used strikes and economic boycotts to gain trade union recognition and economic gains. Similar methods were also used in various other conflicts.[13]

For example, Chinese boycotts of Japanese products occurred in 1908, 1915, and 1919.

In 1920 massive noncooperation by Germans defeated the Kapp Putsch, a pro-monarchist coup d'état against the new Weimar Republic. Germans in the Ruhr in 1923 resisted by noncooperation the French and Belgian occupation of the region with major effect.

From the 1920s to the 1940s, Indian nationalists used nonviolent action in their struggles against British rule, often under the leadership or inspiration of Mohandas K. Gandhi. Contemporaneously, but independently, with the struggles in India that Gandhi led or inspired, a remarkable predominantly Muslim nonviolent struggle movement developed in the North-West Frontier Province of British India. It was led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and shook British control of that region.

At the same time that satyagraha was being practiced in South Africa and later in India, methods of nonviolent struggle were being used on large scales in other countries.

In several countries methods of nonviolent action were used in Europe to achieve universal manhood suffrage. Later, especially in Britain and the United States, strong women's movements struggled by such means and other peaceful methods to get women the right to vote also.

Gandhi clearly saw that nonviolent struggle would spread to other parts of the world. In 1936 he told a visiting African-American scholar that it might be through their community in the United States that the message of nonviolent action in conflicts might be spread to the world.[14]

From 1940 to 1945 in various European countries, especially in Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands, the populations used nonviolent struggle to resist Nazi occupation and fascist rule. The Norwegian

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[13] For bibliographies of many of these struggles see Ronald McCarthy and Gene Sharp, with Brad Bennett, *Nonviolent Action: A Research Guide*. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994) and April Carter, Howard Clark and Michael Randle, *People Power and Protest since 1945: A Bibliography of Nonviolent Action.* London: Housmans Bookshop, 2006.

[14] Homer A. Jack, editor, *The Gandhi Reader* (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1956), p. 316.

resistance during the Nazi occupation is one of the most significant cases, especially the teachers resistance. Clergymen, sportsmen, trade unionists, and others also participated.

Other important cases include major aspects of the Danish Resistance 1940-1945, including the successful general strike in Copenhagen in 1944, major aspects of the Dutch Resistance 1940-1945 including large-scale strikes in 1941, 1943 and 1944. Nonviolent action was used to save Jews from the Holocaust in Berlin, Bulgaria, Denmark, and elsewhere.

The military dictators of El Salvador and Guatemala were ousted in brief nonviolent struggles in the spring of 1944.

After India's independence, her example of how to escape the British Empire inspired Nigerians under the leadership of Nnamdi Azikiwe and Africans in the Gold Coast (later, Ghana) led by Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah urged people to struggle for their freedom by "positive action" (by a combination of nonviolent resistance, education, and electoral politics).

Since Gandhi's passing, nonviolent struggle has continued to spread and increase in power and potential.

The American civil rights struggles against racial segregation and discrimination, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, with the participation of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and many others changed laws and long-established segregation policies, especially in the United States South.

In April 1961 noncooperation by French conscript soldiers in the French colony of Algeria combined with popular demonstrations in France and defiance by the Debré-de Gaulle government defeated the military coup d'état in Algiers before a related coup in Paris could be launched.

### *Facing extreme dictatorships*

Contemporary with the spread of Gandhi-inspired nonviolent action in other parts of the world, there emerged in Communist countries independent demonstrations of the technique under exceedingly difficult circumstances.

The East German Rising of June 1953 included women in the city of Jena sitting down in front of Soviet tanks; strikes occurred in Soviet political prisoners' camps also in 1953, especially at Vorkuta; and major aspects of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956-1957 were nonviolent struggle.

In 1968 and 1969, following the Warsaw Pact invasion, Czechs and Slovaks held off full Soviet control for eight months with improvised nonviolent struggle and refusal of collaboration. From 1953 to 1991 dissidents in Communist-ruled countries in Eastern Europe, especially in

East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania used nonviolent struggles for increased freedom.

Nonviolent struggle brought about the end of Communist dictatorships in Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1989 and in East Germany, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 1991. The Solidarity struggles in Poland began in 1980 with strikes to support the demand of a legal free trade union, and concluded in 1989 with the collapse of the Polish Communist regime. The attempted "hard-line" coup d'état in Moscow in 1991 was defeated by noncooperation and defiance.

In South Africa nonviolent protests and mass resistance were highly important in undermining the *Apartheid* policies and European domination, especially between 1950 and 1990

In July and August 1988 Burmese democrats protested against the military dictatorship with marches and defiance, and brought down three governments. Finally, the struggle succumbed to leadership problems, a new military coup d'état, and mass slaughter.

In 1989 Chinese students and others in over three hundred cities (including in Tiananmen Square, Beijing) conducted symbolic protests against government corruption and oppression, but the protests finally ended following massive killings by the military.

The Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines was destroyed by a nonviolent uprising in 1986. In early 2001 President Estrada, who had been accused of corruption, was ousted by Filipinos in a "People Power Two" campaign.

During parts of 1991 and 1992, the Thai population in various parts of the country waged a vigorous struggle by mass marches, occupations of many thousands of people, and individual hunger strikes blocked the establishment of a new military government despite deaths and injuries caused by repression.

Starting in November 1996 Serbs conducted daily parades and protests in Belgrade and other cities against the autocratic governance of President Milosovic, and secured correction of electoral fraud in mid-January 1997. Serb democrats, however, at the time lacked a strategy to continue the struggle, and failed to launch a campaign to bring down the Milosovic dictatorship. Serb democrats rose up against Milosovic in early October 2000 in a carefully planned nonviolent struggle led by Otpor, a movement of mostly young people, outside of the political parties, and the dictatorship collapsed.

In Kosovo the Albanian population between 1990 and 1999 conducted a noncooperation campaign against repressive Serbian rule. When the de facto Kosovo government lacked a nonviolent strategy for gaining de jure independence, a guerrilla Kosovo Liberation Army initiated violence. This was followed by extreme Serbian repression and massive

slaughters by so-called “ethnic cleansing,” which led to NATO bombing and intervention.

Remarkable additional struggles to oust authoritarian regimes succeeded following Serbia in 2000, in Georgia in 2003, and in Ukraine in 2004. There have been a large number of additional important cases. This review has only been a brief sampling.

Such struggles of the past need to be studied and analyzed carefully, but they ought not to be simply imitated. Many of these serve as firm evidence that a record of major achievements of nonviolent struggle exists, although some doctrinal believers in the omnipotence of violence try to deny it.

### *Uses of new knowledge*

Of course, not all attempts to use nonviolent action in conflicts have succeeded in gaining the objectives sought. Neither do all attempts to struggle with some form of violence. Additionally, nonviolent actionists in earlier conflicts have usually been improvising their struggles. They have lacked significant understanding of the means of conflict they were using. They had no handbooks on this technique, no guides to action, and no instructions on how to plan strategies to make their efforts more effective.

The dynamics of how this type of struggle operates have been little understood, and the range of available nonviolent methods and tips on how to use them effectively were generally not known. There were no lists of the factors that contribute to success or failure. Additionally, there was only limited knowledge of the experiences of others who had struggled by related means.

Not only has there been a lack of availability of important information and guidance on nonviolent struggle, but there also have been an abundance of misconceptions and misrepresentations. Nevertheless, a remarkable percentage of these nonviolent struggles contributed significantly to gaining the intended goals.

### *Increasing effectiveness*

Most past cases of nonviolent struggle—before Gandhi’s involvement, independently during his lifetime, and since his passing—did not have the benefit of Gandhi’s natural strategic acumen. Also, most of those past cases were improvised rather than carefully planned and prepared. The fact that despite these limitations highly important successes have nevertheless occurred is remarkable.

Although these successes have often been impressive, greater effectiveness at lower cost is desirable. Success in nonviolent struggles

does not occur by chance, nor is it determined by purity of beliefs. Instead, the results are in part tied to the existence of favorable external conditions, to the presence of a wise strategy, to changes in the conflict situation produced by the resisters, and to the pre-conflict relative strengths of the contending groups. In the future the nonviolent resisters can have an impact on all these conditions and can change the established power relationships.

However, the fact remains that the past lack of planning and of preparations meant that the participants were unprepared for the future situations they would face and the roles they might play in the conflict. Very often, neither the actionists nor the leaders (if any), understood even the major characteristics of the technique of action they were employing, and what was required if they were to have a chance of success.

While spontaneity has some positive qualities, more often it has had disadvantages. Frequently, the nonviolent resisters have not anticipated the brutalities inflicted by their opponents so that they not only suffered gravely but also sometimes the resistance collapsed. At times the lack of planning has left crucial decisions to chance, with disastrous results. Even when the oppressive system was brought down, the absence of planning on how to handle the transition to a better system has contributed to the emergence of a new dictatorship or other oppression.

Past resisters have usually launched nonviolent action without careful strategic planning that could have made the resistance more effective. Poor planning, lack of carefully developed strategy, and unwise actions and use of resources, have reduced the chances of success in many past nonviolent struggles.

Nevertheless, increasingly, this technique is being recognized to be a type of action requiring understanding, courage, tenacity, discipline, organizational capacity, and great strategic skill. All these qualities were emphasized by Gandhi and he contributed greatly to the recognition of their importance and to the capacity of people to achieve them.

### *The role of wise strategic planning*

There is another option in place of improvisation and spontaneity: deliberate steps to increase the effectiveness of nonviolent action. This option requires increased understanding of its major characteristics, capacity, requirements, and strategic principles. This makes possible wise strategic planning—that is identifying the characteristics of the present situation, what needs to be done, why, when, and how to do it, and how to counter the opponents' actions and repression.

Beneficial changes in the conditions of the conflict, and in the relative power of the contending groups, can be produced by actions of the

nonviolent struggle group. These can be achieved principally through the skillful choice and application of wise strategy. Wise strategy can greatly increase the effectiveness of nonviolent struggle and its capacity to undermine oppression.

Strategic nonviolent struggle can be targeted to apply the strengths of the population against the weaknesses of the oppressors in order to change power relationships. The oppressed population can be strengthened, the domination can be undermined, and even highly repressive regimes can be weakened, and even disintegrated. As the population's strength grows, it becomes possible for them to move from initial small victories to large successes.

Already this technique has moved far from its role In politics when Gandhi began his experiments with it in South Africa and years later in India.

Now, some social scientists and strategists operating with the most meager resources—this is a problem—are attempting to study this technique and to learn of its nature, its dynamics, the requirements for success with it against various types of opponents, and to examine its future potentialities to resolve individual grave problems realistically.

Most past cases appear to have been independent developments, sometimes stimulated by comparable movements in neighboring countries or by news of the power of this technique. However, directly and indirectly, there have been influences from Gandhi's thought and actions on various of these cases. In turn, some of these more recent struggles have contributed, simply by their existence to the development of additional applications of nonviolent struggle.

### *Assisting empowerment*

Gandhi was well aware that participation in nonviolent struggles can contribute to empowering the powerless victims of oppression and injustices.

True, Gandhi believed that "pure" nonviolent individuals could wield such immense power that could make organized mass nonviolent struggles unnecessary. However, he was also convinced that the community as a whole ought to learn how to use nonviolent action. This would make the community conscious of its collective strength and enable it to solve problems through its own efforts. Therefore, even if a pure satyagrahi existed, such a person's responsibility was to educate the

masses in the use of satyagraha.[15] They needed to be shown how they could act despite difficulties and in face of the power of their opponents.

It is also true that Gandhi saw serious problems with the practice in Indian nonviolent struggles and the disaster of massive migrations and killings following the partition at the time of independence. However, this did not mean that Gandhi concluded that he should have taken a different course and instead should have sought believers in nonviolence as a moral principle instead of counseling political nonviolent struggle. To the contrary, Gandhi remained convinced that ". . . I did well to present to the Congress non-violence as an expedient," he wrote in 1942, "I could not have done otherwise, if I was to introduce it into politics."[16]

Gandhi long insisted—especially in his later years—that the "nonviolence of the brave" did not contain the weaknesses he saw in the Indian practice. The impression is widespread that this type of nonviolence can be equated with belief in nonviolence as an ethical or religious principle. An examination of Gandhi's own descriptions of the "nonviolence of the brave" does not confirm this simple interpretation however.[17]

The truth is more complex and more significant for the future. Gandhi was an innovator in politics. He had very considerable understanding of political realities. He relied on this and his intuition, as well as his constant experiments. His important insights and experiences can give us important understandings to help us now and in the future. Gandhi did more to advance the development of nonviolent struggle than any other single person in the twentieth century. He and the movements in which he was so important also contributed immeasurably to the world-wide recognition of the existence and potential of nonviolent struggle against oppression.

During Gandhi's lifetime, and certainly more so in recent decades, significant research has been underway that greatly help this process. Historical accounts, analyses of the dynamics of this type of conflict, and strategic development are all important.

These make possible the deliberate refinement of nonviolent struggle to make it more effective than the improvised cases of the past, and even the independent planned cases during and since Gandhi's lifetime.

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15 Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, pp. 92-93; *Young India*, Vol. I. p. 262; *Harijan*, August 18, 1940 and September 8, 1940; Gopi Nath Dhawan, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, (third revised edition, Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1962), pp. 165-166.

16 Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, p.103; *Harijan*, September 29, 1940; Dhawan, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 165.

17 Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, p.105-106.

### *The potential of continuing studies*

The several major elements of these studies need to include the following:

1. Recognition, discovery and dissemination of the realization, that satyagraha, nonviolent struggle, is an important contribution of world significance when people face acute conflicts.

Negotiations, dialogue, compromise on lesser issues, the tools revealed by studies of international relations, social conflicts, peace research, and conflict resolution studies are important. However, in cases of crucial issues, some means of pursuing those issues in open conflict is needed. Apart from violence, nonviolent struggle is the clear option.

Condemnations of violence and repetition of moral precepts have done little or nothing to remove violence. People will not give up reliance on violence unless and until they see that there exist powerful nonviolent alternative means of struggle that can be effective. Gandhi understood this very well.

2. Research and analysis can give us increased understanding of the workings and dynamics of nonviolent struggle. These studies can reveal both that violence is not needed and that it can contribute to defeat of the people struggling for greater justice and freedom.

Instead, there exists a vast history of nonviolent struggle, under various names, that, if wisely applied, can be substituted for violence for meeting a variety of needs and be used in extreme crisis situations.

3. Gandhi was a master pioneering strategist. His work and insights point toward the importance of strategic analysis and planning to make an anticipated nonviolent struggle as effective as possible. They also point to some of the strategic principles and insights that if applied can be incorporated into the preparations of strategies for future nonviolent conflicts.

4. Policy studies are now also needed for dealing with several important types of conflict situations. The planned and prepared substitution of nonviolent action for violent means has been recommended for the following purposes:

- Dismantling dictatorships;
- Blocking new coups d'état and preventing new dictatorships;
- Defending against foreign aggression and occupations;
- Lifting social and economic injustices;
- Developing, preserving and extending democratic practices and human rights;
- Incorporating in additional ways nonviolent means into democratic societies; and

- Preserving the existence and ways of life of indigenous peoples.

Major progress has already been made in developing such policies and the broad means of action required for them, such as civilian defense (civilian-based defense), blocking coups d'etat, and disintegrating dictatorships. Pioneering struggles have also occurred on additional issues.

### *The responsibility continues*

In the future, as in the past, nonviolent struggle may be used for objectives that many of us would not support. Even that is a major advance. Would we prefer that those same objectives were supported by violence?

As nonviolent struggle spreads, it is replacing reliance on violence and war and also is empowering people who have often felt helpless before the violence of their oppressors.

Much has already been done in the past hundred years since the Empire Theatre meeting to advance the application of nonviolent struggle to which Gandhi contributed so powerfully. A great deal more remains to be done.

Now that we are at this point in history, what are we to do?

A heavy responsibility continues to rest on all of us who respect Gandhi and take his insights and example seriously.

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***Other publications by the author and others and many translations are available on the website, www.aeinstein.org***