

Appendix A

PREPARING A STRATEGIC ESTIMATE FOR NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE

Before attempting to plan an overall grand strategy for a long-term phased nonviolent struggle, or limited strategies for individual campaigns within that struggle, it is necessary first to gather and analyze much information about the context in which the impending conflict will occur.

It is insufficient simply to be familiar with the technique of nonviolent struggle and understand how it operates, although this is a vital prerequisite. Rather, in order to make the application of nonviolent struggle as effective as possible in a given set of circumstances, strategic planning is also essential.

It is impossible to develop a wise strategy for the conduct of a particular struggle if the planners are not intimately familiar with the “conflict situation,” or the context in which the struggle will take place. It is essential to know and compare the characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses (actual and potential) of the groups that will be contending in the future conflict, as well as of those groups that will not initially be directly involved. Geographic, social, economic, political, cultural, climatological, and other factors also need to be examined.

The preparation of a strategic estimate can provide this needed knowledge. This, in turn, will increase the ability of strategists of the nonviolent struggle to prepare a wise strategy that will maximize the chances of achieving their objective.

The aim of this essay is to provide guidelines for preparing this strategic estimate. We will first explain what the strategic estimate is. Then, we will survey factors that need to be taken into consideration when gathering relevant information and preparing that analysis. Finally, we will comment on the role of the strategic estimate, its uses and limitations.

This appendix is based on the work of Robert Helvey, President of the Albert Einstein Institution.

The importance of a strategic estimate

Military planners usually prepare a strategic estimate prior to developing plans for their campaigns. The information produced by this process is extremely useful for nonviolent struggles as well. So far as is known, however, a deliberate and thorough examination of the conflict situation of the type required for preparing a strategic estimate has never been done in preparation for past nonviolent struggles. Instead, past nonviolent struggle leaders have, at best, relied on less rigorous impressions of the impending conflict situation. Past struggle groups have therefore often been less prepared than they could have been for developing a course of action to increase their chances of success. The proper use of a strategic estimate can help to prepare them more adequately, as well as to reduce the likelihood that they will overlook important facts in planning a nonviolent struggle.

At its most basic level, a strategic estimate is a calculation and comparison of the strengths and the weaknesses of the nonviolent struggle group and of that group's opponents, whom we shall call the "opponent group." In some conflicts, the opponent group may be the government itself or a specific part of the ruling regime. In other cases, the opponent group could be a nongovernmental body, such as an educational institution, an economic organization, a religious body, a transportation system, or some other type of institution. A nongovernmental opponent group may have the backing of the current government, with its means of control and repression, or it may not. The proper identification of such relationships is, in fact, one of the first tasks in preparing a strategic estimate.

Of particular value to those involved in strategy development would be the sections that contain analyses regarding the pillars of support of both the opponent group and the nonviolent struggle group, as well as other political considerations. Also, those responsible for propaganda would find demographic considerations quite useful. Information regarding military units, such as locations and capabilities, would be quite useful to operational planners in anticipating military responses to applications of nonviolent resistance. Other components of the strategic estimate will be relevant to other elements of the chosen strategy.

In order to gain the relevant information for the strategic estimate, however, it will take time and energy. While this information can be very valuable, strategic planners must also remember that the strategic estimate is not the only important factor in developing strategies and supporting plans for a future struggle. Therefore, it needs to be kept in perspective. Strategic planners need to avoid becoming bogged down in the minutiae of the situation and need to keep the strategic estimate within the context of other important elements in the development of strategies and the formulation of plans for their implementation. In this regard, one should be mindful of the advice given by Carl von Clausewitz that "strategy forms the theory of using battle for the purposes of war." In other words, using in part the analysis of information gathered for the strategic estimate, the strategist determines objectives, times and places for campaigns, while those who will wage these battles prepare their own supporting plans.¹ They, in turn, may draw upon the strategic estimate to complete their own estimate of the situation. The emphasis placed upon some portions of the strategic estimate provides an indication of the importance to the planners in determining both the strategy and also how this information should influence supporting plans.

The strategic estimate of the conflict situation is perhaps the most fundamental document on which a strategic planner relies. It is the product of intense, structured, and focused intellectual scrutiny that contributes to greater understanding of the situation in which the struggle will be waged, and the selection of the most effective courses of action to achieve the objectives of the conflict. Since the strategic operational plan is based heavily on the strategic estimate, both the quantity of information analyzed and the quality of the analysis itself help to determine the quality of the developed strategy. Ideally, this document should be critically reviewed in draft form, so that others can challenge the accuracy of facts and the quality of analyses.

Inaccurate or unrealistic views of the strengths, the weaknesses, and the capacities of the contending parties will produce unwise strategies and will likely spell defeat. Although it may at

¹ *Neue Bellona* 9 (1805), p. 271. Quoted from Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 190.

times be necessary to make assumptions about the contending parties when facts cannot be obtained, no assumption is as good as a fact. So it is important to make as few assumptions as possible. If assumptions are used, extra care should be taken to ensure their probable validity. Of course, it is far better to use facts wherever possible.

Needed information

There are seven subject areas about which the persons preparing the strategic estimate should seek solid information. These are:

1. The general conflict situation
2. The issues at stake and the objectives of both parties to the conflict
3. The opponent group
4. The nonviolent struggle group (and the wider grievance group)
5. Third parties (friendly, hostile, and neutral or uncommitted)
6. Dependency balances

On the basis of the information and the understanding produced by such an examination, the nonviolent struggle group will be better equipped to prepare wise strategies to guide the conduct of the conflict.

The strategic estimate serves multiple purposes. The strategic estimate process will greatly assist in identifying strategy options. Additionally, it becomes an important reference document for developing supporting plans to implement the chosen strategies. The strategic estimate is also useful when developing policies and responding to crises, and for providing organizations with a source of sound and thoughtful analysis and factual data.

As you review the following information requirements contained in a strategic estimate, it may appear quite daunting—and it is, indeed. But rather than visualizing one person attempting to gather and analyze all this information, you should be thinking, Who knows about this particular topic and can that person or

persons provide information to me? Once information is received from subject experts, that which is directly relevant to the estimating process can be included in the strategic estimate.

1. The general conflict situation

It is useful to list here in some detail some of the many categories of information about the general conflict situation in which the nonviolent struggle will be conducted. These may provide extensive and in-depth knowledge of the conflict situation. It is highly desirable to be familiar with all factors that could have a conceivable impact either on the opponent group or on the nonviolent struggle group. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Terrain and geography**
(including land forms and waterways, and how they may assist or impede one or the other side in the conflict)
- **Transportation**
(including all available means of transportation for either side in the conflict, local and national transportation infrastructure, alternative routes, and how these might impact the capabilities of either side)
- **Communications**
(all types, access, extent of controls, surveillance, issues of privacy, etc.)
- **Climate and weather**
(including seasonal variations and their possible impact on transportation, communications, food and agriculture, and activities of either side)
- **Political system and governing regime**
(including their characteristics and capacities on various levels, from the top echelons down to small units; any variations in central control or local initiatives; and who controls the State and the roles or functions of the State, political parties, and controlled subordinate organizations)
- **Economic system**
(including both type and condition of the economy, strength and degree of independence of unions and business sectors, and degree of State intervention in the economy)

- **Judicial system**
(especially the degree to that this remains independent of the control of the State or of the opponent group)
- **Demographics**
(information about both the total population and the segment of the population related to the conflict, including statistical breakdowns by age groups, gender, population growth and death rates, population densities in varying locations, and literacy rates)
- **Population strata**
(including socioeconomic classes, ethnicities, religion, language, culture, status of indigenous and immigrant populations, etc.; geographical distribution of such; any variations or differences in these groups in satisfaction, loyalties, or economic interests; and also any conflicts between or among different population groups, whether or not the reasons for such conflicts are related to the non-violent struggle)
- **Control of economic resources and life support**
(fuel, food, water, etc., and consequences for dependency of one side on the other)
- **Status of civil society**
(extent and condition of nongovernmental organizations and social life, including degree of organization and autonomy from the State; and status of other aspects of social life and organization that lie outside control of the political system and/or the regime)

In addition, it is important to examine the immediate general political situation. Are special controls, such as martial law or other means of serious repression, in effect? What are the current political and economic currents and trends?

2. The issues and objectives of the contending groups

It is very important to identify or develop accurate and clear statements of the issues at stake in the conflict from the perspectives of both the opponent group and the prospective nonviolent struggle group. These statements may often be based on declarations by each group, but sometimes additional information from other sources, independent observers, or other groups may be required.

Also, it is important to identify and recognize the differing objectives of the two groups. To what degree are these objectives compatible or incompatible? The stated objectives are not always the full story. Both groups may have not only short-term objectives but also long-term goals that may not be avowed at the time. Both types are significant in preparing strategies for the nonviolent struggle group.

Clear objectives for the nonviolent struggle group are prerequisites for developing strategies and supporting plans for their implementation. If objectives have not been stated at the time the strategic estimate is being prepared, it would be appropriate to make very careful assessments about the aims of both the opponent group and the struggle group.

The issues and objectives of the two contending groups, and how fundamental each side believes them to be, are likely to have important consequences on the actions of both sides during the conflict. These issues and objectives will likely influence the degree to which the opponent group is determined to resist or repress the resistance. The issues and objectives will also likely influence the tenacity of the nonviolent struggle group to persist in the struggle despite repression. Additionally, the degree to which third parties or the general population are willing to side with the nonviolent struggle group will often also depend partly on how such sectors view the issues at stake in the conflict.

3. The opponent group

Full and detailed knowledge of the opponent group that the nonviolent struggle group will face in the pending conflict is extremely important. Such knowledge should focus on the opponents' capabilities rather than on their statements of intent or on assumptions about their interests or intentions. Detailed responses to the following questions about the opponent group are required:

- What is their political system?
- What is their social and cultural system?
- What is their economic system?

- Are these systems independent of each other, or closely interrelated? Are they dependent in any way on the political, social, or economic systems of the potential nonviolent struggle group?
- To what degree are these respective systems controlled by the State structure?
- What is the nature and importance of any religious, moral, ideological, or other doctrinal beliefs and commitments of the opponent group?
- What are the demographics of the opponent group? (age, gender, birth and death rates, literacy, educational standards, and geographical distribution, etc.)
- What is the degree of support for the opponent group's system or regime among the general population and institutions?
- What is the ideological situation (the degree of doctrinal support for the opponent group and/or regime, or for the resistance to its policies and controls)?
- To what degree does the opponent group rely on each of its potential sources of power?
 - Authority or legitimacy
 - Human resources
 - Particular skills or knowledge
 - Psychological or ideological factors
 - Material resources
 - Ability to apply sanctions
- What are the pillars of support of the opponent group (people, groups, and institutions) that supply the needed sources of power? Some of these pillars will require detailed examination. The pillars may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Moral and religious leaders and groups
 - Labor groups
 - Business and investment groups
 - Civil servants and bureaucrats
 - Administrators
 - Technicians
 - Police
 - Prisons

- Military forces
- Intelligence services
- Media
- Foreign investors
- Particular classes or ethnic groups
- To what extent are the pillars of support influenced, or actually or potentially controlled, by the opponent group itself? Are any influenced or controlled by the broad grievance group or the potential nonviolent struggle group? Which pillars are the strongest and most durable? Which pillars are the weakest and most vulnerable?
- Who are the opponent group's internal (domestic) allies, and what is their extent and reliability?
- Who are the opponent group's external (foreign) allies and what is their extent and reliability?
- Can any of these be considered "natural allies" of the opponent group? (If the opponent is a government or a regime, these might include the army, intelligence services, civil servants, the business community, settlers, foreign governments, certain political parties, etc.)
- Who are the "natural enemies" of the opponent group? (Examples may include repressed minorities, disaffected youth, the unemployed, workers, political parties, the lower, middle, or upper classes, etc.)
- Is there any potential or actual support or sympathy for the nonviolent struggle group from within sectors of the opponent group itself?
- What is the organizational structure of the opponent group (administration, organizational branches, complexity, efficiency, reliability, degree of initiative, degree of centralized controls, etc.)?
- What is the opponent group's military capacity? Necessary information includes the following:
 - Strength, number, size, structure, and types of units
 - Locations of units
 - Opponents' military capabilities to counter resistance, impose repression and restore control, including their capacity and willingness to inflict brutalities

- The speed with which the military forces can arrive at specific locations where quick demonstrations might occur
 - Commanders of the important units and their characteristics
 - Personality profiles of select officials and commanders
 - Efficiency, reliability, and morale among troops
 - General profile of military personnel, including education, class, religion, politics, motivation, ethnic group, age range, and possible reasons for disaffection
 - Logistics of troop movements and operations, location of supply lines, and means of re-supply
- What is the opponent group's police capacity? (The same type of information obtained about military forces—as described above—needs to be obtained for police and other security forces as well.)
 - What intelligence organizations, if any, does the opponent group have at its disposal? What are their characteristics, including their known activities and their resources?
 - What is the level of the opponent group's strategic skill?
 - To what degree does the opponent group have competent leadership?
 - What means of nonmilitary control are wielded by the opponent group? Examples may include the following:
 - Censorship
 - Ownership of radio, television, and print media
 - Control of education
 - Financial means to influence behavior
 - Control of private industry or State enterprises
 - International recognition
 - Control of communications technology
 - Control of the judiciary
 - What are the political fissures, internal conflicts, and other weaknesses in the opponent group, such as within the leadership group and supporting organizations, institutions, or population groups?

- Are there any organizations or institutions that normally support the opponent group but might be targeted for transfer of loyalties or for organizational destruction?
- Is the present leadership of the opponent group disputed or contested from within, through rivalries, power struggles, or other reasons?
- What other vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the opponents can be identified? These may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Vulnerabilities and internal conflicts
 - Incompetent leadership or governing ability
 - Being despised by, or leaving a generally unfavorable impression on, the population
 - Lack of trained strategists
 - Ideological bankruptcy
 - Economic crisis
 - Corruption
 - Lack of ability to withstand foreign diplomatic or economic pressure
 - Overreliance on repression or military means as a means of control

4. The nonviolent struggle group (and the wider grievance group)

Full and detailed knowledge of the nonviolent struggle group and the “grievance group” (defined as the wider population that suffers from policies and actions of the opponent group) and other potential or actual sympathizers is just as important as knowledge about the opponent group. The interests and intentions of the nonviolent struggle group are not very useful for this part of the strategic estimate (though they should be recorded when examining the issues and stake and objectives of the contending sides, as described above). Rather, attention should be focused here only on the group’s actual condition and capabilities.

Detailed responses to the following questions about the nonviolent struggle group are therefore required:

- What are the demographics of the nonviolent struggle group and its potential or actual sympathizers, including

the general grievance group (age, gender, geographical distribution, literacy rates, and educational levels, etc.)?

- What is their political system?
- What is their social and cultural system?
- What is their economic system?
- Do these systems operate independently of each other, or are they closely interrelated? To what extent are they identical to, integrated with, or independent of, the political, social, or economic systems of the opponent group?
- To what degree are these respective systems controlled by the State structure?
- What is the nature and importance of any religious, moral, ideological, or other doctrinal beliefs or commitments of the grievance group and the nonviolent struggle group?
- What is the broad ideological situation (the degree of doctrinal support for the nonviolent struggle group, and its ideas, positions, or platforms)?
- What is the actual and potential degree of support for the nonviolent struggle group from the general grievance population, specific groups, institutions, and contact networks? Which groups can really help?
- What sectors of the population are most or least likely to provide support or sympathy to the nonviolent struggle group over the course of the conflict?
- What is the actual and potential degree of support for resistance from third parties or previously “neutral” sectors?
- Who are the “natural allies” of the nonviolent struggle group? (e.g., students or youth, political parties and associations, religious, ethnic, or minority groups, etc.)
- Who are the nonviolent struggle group’s current and potential internal and external allies?
- What are the internal conflicts, rivalries, or power struggles within both the grievance group and the nonviolent struggle group (e.g., groups with differing ideological positions or long-term objectives)? Are there any rivalries between important sectors of the grievance group and the nonviolent struggle group?

- Is there any potential or actual support or sympathy for the opponent group from within sectors of the general grievance group or the nonviolent struggle group?
- What are the operative or potential sources of power of the nonviolent struggle group? What are the operative or potential sources of power of the general grievance group?
 - Authority or legitimacy
 - Human resources
 - Particular skills or knowledge
 - Psychological or ideological factors
 - Material resources
 - Ability to apply sanctions
- What are the pillars of support (people, groups, and institutions) that serve to supply those sources of power? Some of these pillars will require detailed examination. Examples may include
 - Moral and religious leaders and groups
 - Labor groups
 - Business and investment groups
 - Civil servants and bureaucrats
 - Administrators
 - Technicians
 - Media
 - Dominated classes or ethnic groups
 - Youth and/or student organizations
 - Other societal institutions
- To what extent are such pillars of support for the grievance group or the nonviolent struggle group influenced, or actually or potentially controlled by, the nonviolent struggle group, or by the opponent group?
- Which pillars are suitable for use in resistance activities? Which ones need to be strengthened? Do any new ones need to be created?
- What other vulnerabilities and weaknesses can be identified? Can any of these be rectified through deliberate efforts?
- Does the nonviolent struggle group currently exist as a coherent movement or organization? If so, what is its or-

ganizational structure (administration, organizational branches, complexity, efficiency, reliability, degree of initiative, degree of centralized controls, etc.)? Does it have capable and competent leadership?

- What is the strategic skill level of the nonviolent struggle group and its leaders?
- Who among the nonviolent struggle group has knowledge of the theory, methods, and practical dynamics of nonviolent struggle?
- Does the grievance group as a whole, parts of that group, or the nonviolent struggle group have prior experience in using nonviolent struggle?
 - Where has it occurred in the past?
 - What population sectors were involved?
 - How competently were such struggles carried out?
 - What were the results?
 - What lessons can those past struggles bring to the present situation?
 - Is the recollection of such struggles remembered reasonably accurately, or has a mythology about them been perpetuated? What are the consequences of this?
- What preparations have already been made for the application of nonviolent struggle in this conflict?
- What means of nonmilitary control, if any, are already wielded by the nonviolent struggle group or its sympathizers? Examples may include the following:
 - Ownership of radio, television, and print media
 - Ownership or control of electronic media sources
 - Control of education (through school administration, teachers, professors, alternate schooling, etc.)
 - Control of private industry
 - International recognition of legitimacy
- What is the information and intelligence capacity of the nonviolent struggle group?
- What economic resources are at the disposal of the nonviolent struggle group?
- What are the communications capacities of the resisters?
 - How are communications transmitted?
 - How secure are these means?

It is necessary, finally, to provide a general assessment of the struggle capacity of both the nonviolent struggle group and the general grievance group, based largely on the above information. Wise strategists will not plan a campaign that requires a struggle capacity beyond the current abilities of the nonviolent struggle group. If an expanded struggle capacity is needed, attention must be devoted to the means required to develop this increased strength.

5. Third parties

It is very important to assess the potential roles of third parties on behalf of either of the two sides over the course of a conflict. “Third parties” are defined here as any group, institution, or sector, internal or external, that is not initially a direct party to the conflict. Third party roles may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assisting public relations (for either side)
- Providing diplomatic assistance or exerting diplomatic pressures (for either side)
- Supplying financial assistance (for either side)
- Providing police and military assistance (for the opponent group); (police or military action intended to assist the nonviolent struggle can instead undermine it)
- Providing educational and technical assistance (for either side)
- Providing safe areas (usually for the resisters but sometimes for the opponent group)
- Applying economic pressures (on either side)
- Providing knowledge about nonviolent struggle (primarily to the resisters)

It is also necessary to assess which third parties could potentially provide such assistance to either side, and also to determine which groups already serve as pillars of support to one side or the other. Strategists will later need to determine which third parties should be courted for possible future assistance and which groups should be undermined.

6. Dependency balances

In the development of strategies for the struggle, it is important to determine which of the two contending sides is dependent on the other, in what ways and to what degree. These calculations should include the following:

- The degree of dependency of the opponent group on the resisting population and on the wider grievance group for meeting identified needs
- The degree of dependency of the resisting population and the grievance group on the opponent group for meeting identified needs
- The degree of actual and potential independence of the opponent group from the resisting population and general grievance group for meeting identified needs
- The degree of actual and potential independence of the resisting population and grievance group from the opponent group for meeting identified needs

Conclusion

After preparing a strategic estimate, it will be necessary to update it as changes occur in the conflict situation. A strategic estimate for a specific conflict that has been well prepared on the basis of accurate and complete information will make it possible to think clearly and make wise decisions about how to act, even in the face of serious pressures and difficult circumstances. This document, with a structured format, allows the reader to find information quickly that is both general and detailed.

This estimate will be of great assistance when choosing specific types of methods for use during the conflict. For example, if the opponent group is heavily dependent on the grievance group for meeting certain needs, methods of noncooperation may prove to be highly effective. However, if there is no such dependence, noncooperation is unlikely to be useful.

If the strategic estimate reveals that the nonviolent struggle group is weaker than required for a major struggle with the prospective opponent group, then the former should not at that time launch a struggle that requires great strength. There is no substi-

tute for, or shortcut to, strength in a movement of nonviolent struggle. If the group is weaker than needed, the action should initially take only limited forms, perhaps symbolic ones, that can make some impact without great strength. More ambitious action should at the time be postponed until effective means have been taken to strengthen the nonviolent struggle group relative to the opponent group. Clearly, major efforts should in this situation be placed into strengthening the population and the institutions that are primarily affected by the grievances and into developing the group's capacity to wage stronger nonviolent struggle in the future.

Additional factors also require attention before focusing on specific steps that may be helpful in preparing a strategy for the coming struggle. One of the most important factors, of course, is knowledge of the technique of nonviolent action that is to be used. Deliberate steps can be taken to gain and disseminate that knowledge.

Once that knowledge is obtained, however, it is the development and implementation of wise strategies, not simply the use of nonviolent methods, that will allow the nonviolent struggle to become as effective as possible. The ability to develop such strategies rests on an adequate understanding of the whole context within which the struggle is to be conducted. The primary purpose of the strategic estimate is to provide this understanding.

With much detailed information readily at hand, planning can be accomplished quickly to exploit new opportunities that may arise during campaigns.

