


Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

1. Introduction	2
2. Definitions and Scope of Analysis	3
2.1 Nonviolence as Resistance to Violence in all its Forms	3
2.2 Nonviolence as Contentious and Direct Action	4
3. Theoretical and Empirical Developments since 1945	6
3.1 Conceptual Developments: Principled and Pragmatic Nonviolence	6
3.2 Developments in Practice: The Rise of People Power	8
4. Nonviolent Resistance as a Strategy to Redress Structural Asymmetry	13
4.1 A Strategy for Self-empowerment	13
4.2 Winning Over the Opponent	15
4.3 Leverage Through Third-party Advocacy	17
5. Constructive Confrontation as a Basis for Reconciliation and Peacebuilding	18
5.1 A Self-limiting Conflict Strategy Conducive to a Cooperative Future	18
5.2 A Constructive Programme Leading to Democratic Practices	20
6. Conclusion	20
7. References	22

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Véronique Dudouet

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

Véronique Dudouet **1.** Introduction

“The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world” (Arendt 1969, 80).

The history of the 20th century is full of examples which demonstrate that violent resistance against unjust power systems, dictators or external occupation is likely to generate further violence (as seen, for example, in the Russian and Chinese revolutions or decolonisation wars in Africa and Asia). But it has also been characterized by many powerful nonviolent struggles. Some of these are widely known (e.g. Gandhi’s struggles in India and South Africa, Martin Luther King Jr.’s civil rights campaign in the US), while many others are still largely ignored by the wider public and research community. Although the power of nonviolent resistance does seem weak and inefficient in the face of acute power asymmetries, it has proven to be a very strategic tool in the hand of marginalised communities to redress structural imbalance and claim rights to justice or self-determination. A question which has not been analysed extensively so far, which this article seeks to address, is in which context and under which conditions nonviolent resistance can contribute to successful and sustainable conflict transformation processes. **2**

Nonviolent resistance and conflict transformation¹ strategies share a common commitment to “social change and increased justice through peaceful means” (Lederach 1995, 15). In fact, the discipline of conflict management/resolution originally arose from peace movements and social justice activism (Dukes 1999, 169). However, one can argue that there has been since then a sharp divorce between the ‘revolutionary’ and ‘resolutionary’ camps, which seem to have grown in mutual ignorance – developing their own and distinct sets of activists and practitioners, theories and scholars, interpretative frames and ranges of techniques, research centres and education programmes, organisations and forums, constituencies and institutional allies.

This article argues that nonviolent resistance should instead be seen as an integral part of conflict transformation, offering one possible approach to achieving peace and justice, alongside other methods of conflict intervention focusing on dialogue, problem-solving and the restoration of cooperative relationships (e.g. mediation, negotiation, restorative justice, etc.). It is especially relevant for the early transitional stage of latent asymmetric conflicts, as a strategy for empowering grievance groups (oppressed minorities or disempowered majorities) looking for constructive and efficient ways to attain justice, human rights and democracy without recourse to violence.

While nonviolent techniques have been widely used by single-interest groups such as trade unions and anti-nuclear, indigenous or environmentalist movements, this article refers primarily to

1 This paper adopts the Berghof in-house definition of conflict transformation as “a generic, comprehensive term referring to actions and processes which seek to ... [address] the root causes of a particular conflict over the long term. It aims to transform negative destructive conflict into positive constructive conflict and deals with structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of conflict. The term refers to both the process and the completion of the process. As such, it incorporates the activities of processes such as Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution and goes further than Conflict Settlement or Conflict Management” (www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/glossary_handbook.pdf [accessed 22 July 2008]).

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Véronique Dudouet

nation-wide campaigns by identity or national groups who are challenging internal oppression or external aggression and occupation, and seeking either self-determination or civil rights in a truly democratic and multicultural state. Although nonviolent action has also been advocated as a national strategy of civilian-based defence and dissuasion against external aggression (e.g. Roberts 1967; Drago 2006), this article focuses more specifically on ways it has been applied by non-state actors such as social movements and grassroots organisations.

The article is structured as follows: *Section 2* defines the concept of nonviolent resistance, its aims and methods, and compares its main characteristics with those of other approaches to conflict transformation. It also provides a brief overview of a range of terms usually associated with nonviolence, and their implications for theory and practice. In this article, the term “nonviolent resistance” (henceforth also NVR) refers both to the process of social change through active nonviolence and to a specific set of methods of action for effecting change.

Section 3 addresses the conceptual and empirical developments in the field of nonviolent resistance. It draws a distinction between two types of arguments, the so-called ‘principled’ and ‘pragmatic’ trends, which are often handled as polar opposites in the literature, but are treated here as complementary. When combined, they present nonviolent action as both an ethical and efficient strategy to effect socio-political change. The most significant nonviolent campaigns since WWII are also briefly listed, as well as recent developments in NVR training and uses of nonviolent techniques for third-party conflict intervention.

The remaining two sections of the article offer a closer analysis of two processes of constructive conflict transformation through NVR, arguing that nonviolent struggles might support the goals of peacemaking and peacebuilding by transforming unbalanced power relations in preparation for conflict negotiations (*Section 4*), and by using self-limiting conflict strategies which reduce inter-party polarisation and encourage democratic practices (*Section 5*). Empirical **3** illustrations of these dynamics are provided through a case study of the first Palestinian intifada against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip (1987-1993).

2. Definitions and Scope of Analysis

The purpose of this section is to define more precisely the concept of nonviolent resistance, its aims, methods and terminological boundaries. It also seeks to compare the main characteristics of NVR with those of other approaches of conflict transformation which emphasise attitudinal change and problem-solving processes through negotiations, mediation or dialogue encounters.

2.1 Nonviolence as Resistance to Violence in all its Forms

The basic principles of nonviolent resistance encompass an abstention from using physical force to achieve an aim, but also a full engagement in resisting oppression, domination and any other forms of injustice. It can thus be applied to oppose both *direct* (physical) violence and *structural* violence.

(a) Opposition to direct violence

Gandhi, whose ideas and actions have most crucially influenced the development of NVR in the twentieth century, described his moral philosophy through the religious precept of *ahimsa*, which means in Sanskrit the complete renunciation of violence in thought and action. Nonviolence is indeed usually defined in opposition to physical violence, which could be described as “the use



Véronique Dudouet

of physical force against another's body, against that person's will, and that is expected to inflict physical injury or death upon that person" (Bond 1994, 62).

This definition does not imply, however, that all actions without violence have to be nonviolent. Nonviolence might be described as a direct substitute for violent behaviour: it implies deliberate restraint from expected violence, in a context of contention between two or more adversaries. One advantage of the term *nonviolent resistance* over the more general *nonviolence* is this emphasis on conscious and active opposition to violence. The label *civil resistance* is also widely used in reference to the unarmed, non-military character of nonviolent movements (Sémelin 1993, 27).

(b) Opposition to structural violence

Conflict transformation seeks to address direct and attitudinal manifestations of conflicts, as well as their deeper structural sources (Lederach 1995, 18). However, its techniques are not always adapted for situations of structural violence in the absence of overt war, often referred to as "latent conflicts" (Curle 1971). By contrast, the goals of NVR have historically been concerned with a direct engagement in resisting oppression, domination and any other forms of injustice. It is especially appropriate for situations of power asymmetry between dominant (power-holders) and dominated groups, whereas the techniques of 'creative conflict resolution' are better suited for relatively symmetrical power disputes (Francis 2002).

Because it defines conflict as a structural problem that requires structural change, NVR theory is based on a strong analysis of the socio-structural contexts that organise and institutionalise power relationships, and social patterns that explain the origins and perpetuation of injustice or authoritarianism. The nonviolent "theory of consent", first formulated by the French philosopher Etienne La Boetie (1530-1565) and further developed by early European and American NVR proponents (e.g. the Quakers, Thoreau, Tolstoy), stipulates that the authority of any ruler or regime rests on the continued voluntary obedience of its subjects. Therefore, the essence of NVR rests on withdrawing this consent through non-cooperation or civil disobedience towards unjust laws (e.g. boycott, strikes, tax resistance), so that governments can no longer operate.

2.2 Nonviolence as Contentious and Direct Action

Conflict transformation theory defines conflict as a positive agent for social change (Lederach 1995, 17). However, most of its instruments are "based on the notion of impartiality and quiet diplomacy, and the idea of resolving conflict through a process of dialogue and problem-solving designed to address the needs of all parties" (Francis 2002, 6). In other words, they emphasise conflict mitigation or de-escalation.

By contrast, NVR offers contentious techniques for the prosecution of necessary conflicts, to the point of resolution. McCarthy (1990, 110) describes its effect on societies as “creative disorder”, meaning that it magnifies existing social and political tensions, by imposing greater costs on those who want to maintain their advantages under an existing system. Nonviolent scholars argue that “conflict transformation can require shifts in power, and that it can be a sign of progress when a latent conflict moves into a phase of overt confrontation” (Clark 2005, 2; Curle 1971). For these reasons, some authors also prefer to use the terms *nonviolent struggle* or *nonviolent confrontation*.² However, it should be stressed that the effects of NVR on its users, their adversaries and the conflict

² The phrase “passive resistance”, used by early practitioners and theorists of nonviolence (e.g. Tolstoy or the suffragette movement) was later rejected by Gandhi because it does not render justice to the daring and risk-taking course of action undertaken by nonviolent activists. Because it belongs to the world of action, nonviolent resistance should not be equated either with *pacifism*, an ethical principle which does not necessarily involve political action. As noted by Lakey (1987, 87), “most pacifists do not practice nonviolent resistance and most people who do practice nonviolent resistance are not pacifists.”

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries



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Véronique Dudouet

environment are more constructive than those of armed activities. Fisher et al. (2000, 5) establish a distinction between conflict intensification, which they define as “making a hidden conflict more visible and open for purposive, nonviolent ends”, and conflict escalation, a “situation in which levels of tension and violence are increasing”. *Figure 1* below summarises the relations between various methods of conflict intervention along these different dimensions.

Destructive change Constructive change

Conflict intensification Conflict mitigation

Figure 1: Dimensions and Purposes of Conflict (Dudouet 2006)

NVR is also often described as a form of *direct action*, due to its unconventionality and the risk of sanctions incurred by the activists (Rigby 1995). The key feature of direct action is that it involves a challenge to established methods of exercising social change and settling conflicts (such as courts, legislature, lobbying, mediation, negotiation or elections). In this framework, conflict resolution techniques can be described as “routine actions”, following regular channels provided by society ⁵ for the conduct of conflict, while nonviolent direct action is disruptive of public order and poses a

radical threat to the status quo (Bond 1994, 62).

Historically, nonviolent conflicts have been waged with various methods of contentious

and/or direct action. In his seminal 1973 manual, Sharp documented 198 different forms of nonviolent action, classified into three categories according to their strategic function (*Box 1*).

Warfare	Nonviolent resistance
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Box 1: Methods of Nonviolent Action

• *Nonviolent protest and persuasion: 54 methods*

These include symbolic gestures and actions intended to voice peaceful opposition to a policy or a law, or to persuade others (among the opponent or the grievance group) to particular views or actions, such as:

- Formal statements (e.g. public speeches, petitions)

- - Communication (e.g. slogans, posters, pamphlets, radio and TV)
- - Symbolic public acts (e.g. displays of flags and colours)
- - Pressure on individuals (e.g. fraternisation, vigils)
- - Public assemblies and processions (e.g. marches, protest meetings)

• *Non-cooperation: 103 methods*

These are denial actions which deliberately aim to restrict, discontinue, withhold or defy certain existing relationships.

- Social: e.g. non-cooperation with social events and institutions, student strikes, withdrawal

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries



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Véronique Dudouet

from social institutions, stay-at-home protests

- Economic: e.g. labour strikes, boycotts by consumers, workers, owners, and foreign

governments

- Political: e.g. rejection of authority, political boycott, civil disobedience towards illegitimate

laws, mutiny, severance of diplomatic relations

• *Nonviolent intervention: 41 methods*

These involve direct physical obstructions to change a given situation, either negatively (by disrupting normal or established social relations) or positively (through creative actions forging new autonomous social relations). They can pose a more direct and immediate challenge to the opponent and thereby produce more rapid change, but they are also harder for the resisters to sustain and can provoke more severe repression. They include:

- Psychological intervention (e.g. self-inflicted suffering such as fasts)

- Physical intervention (e.g. sit-ins, nonviolent invasion, obstruction and occupation) -“Constructive programme”: establishing alternative practices, social relations and institutions

(e.g. underground education systems, alternative markets, parallel governments).

(Adapted from Sharp 1973)

3. Theoretical and Empirical Developments since 1945

The theory and practice of nonviolent resistance have developed in parallel, and this section presents both the main research themes in the literature as well as the increase in NVR campaigns ⁶ since 1945, which has been accompanied by a similar growth in organisations providing training for nonviolent activists or engaging in cross-border conflict intervention in the spirit of nonviolence.

3.1 Conceptual Developments: Principled and Pragmatic Nonviolence

The overall field of nonviolent theory is generally divided between two tendencies or sub-schools. The label “principled nonviolence” refers to the approach which advocates the recourse to NVR for religious, moral or philosophical reasons or, in other words, by conviction rather than by expediency. Violence is condemned because it causes unnecessary suffering, dehumanises and brutalises both the victim and the executioner, and only brings short-term solutions (Boserup/Mack 1974, 13). Furthermore, the refusal to harm one’s opponent does not come from the absence of alternative options, and would still be advocated even if violent means were available.

The key elements of principled nonviolence were most clearly formulated by Gandhi, and further in his interpreters’ work (Bondurant 1958; Naess 1958; Gregg 1960; Lanza del Vasto 1971). He coined the word “satyagraha” to describe the theory of conflict intervention which could best accommodate his moral philosophy (Gandhi 1928). It is made up of an amalgamation of two Gujarati words, *Satya* (truth) and *Agraha* (firmness), and has most commonly been translated into English as ‘truth-force’. Although the term satyagraha now tends to be employed in reference to all forms of social or political opposition without violence, its original meaning encompassed much more than a simple technique of action against social and political injustice.

Gandhi believed in the unity of means and ends, and upheld nonviolence as a goal in itself, as the only way to live in truth. Therefore, the success of any particular satyagraha campaign should not be solely measured by objective criteria such as the degree of social and political freedom

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries



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Véronique Dudouet

achieved by activists, but rather focus on spiritual, even existential elements such as the search for truth and self-realisation (Naess 1958). Contemporary approaches to principled nonviolence (e.g. Burrowes 1996; Weber 2001, 2003) have clarified the linkages between Gandhian theory and the integrative goals of conflict transformation, arguing that satyagraha provides a technique for conflict prosecution that simultaneously fights injustice, resolves disagreements and brings about mutually satisfactory solutions. These elements will be described further in *Section 5*.

Among the proponents of principled nonviolence, one also finds religious and spiritual organisations such as the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi and the North American peace churches (e.g. Quakers and Mennonites). In fact, churches and religious leaders (among them Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu, Dom Helder Camara) have played an important catalytic and mobilizing role in numerous nonviolent campaigns such as the US civil rights movement, the South African anti-apartheid campaign, the 1986 “People Power” movement in the Philippines, the Eastern European revolutions in 1989-91 and Latin American social movements.

If Gandhi is the philosopher of nonviolence, Gene Sharp embodies the pragmatic, strategic, or technique-oriented approach to NVR, which is why he is often nicknamed the Clausewitz of nonviolent struggle. He justifies the recourse to civil resistance on strategic grounds, as “one response to the problem of how to act effectively in politics, especially how to wield power effectively” (Sharp 1973, 64). According to the pragmatic school of nonviolent action, empirical evidence shows that in most registered cases of NVR in recent history, the protagonists were not motivated by a principled commitment to the avoidance of bloodshed. Instead, they selected this strategy in order to defeat a particular opponent with the most effective and least costly means at hand (Ackerman/Kruegler 1994, 17), or for the lack of better alternatives, because a viable military option was not available (Sémelin 1993, 30).

This approach in fact shares more similarities with the academic field of strategic studies **7** than with the conflict transformation school, and it has variously been described as “a war by other means” or a “functional equivalent to asymmetric [e.g. guerrilla] warfare”, the only difference lying in the absence of physical violence on the part of the unarmed activists (Curle 1971, 184). It involves the waging of “battles”, requires wise strategy and tactics, employs numerous “weapons”, and demands courage, discipline and sacrifice of its “soldiers” (Weber 2003, 258). There is no room for problem-solving in pragmatic nonviolent action, which integrates the realist principle of incompatibility of interests, and defines conflict as a win-lose struggle for ascendancy of one group over another (Boserup/Mack 1974, 13).³

The approach originally stems from the writings of young scholars during the inter-war and early post-WWII period (e.g. Clarence Case, Adam Roberts), and became strongly influenced by the work of Sharp and his colleagues, who founded a Program on Nonviolent Sanctions at Harvard University as well as the Albert Einstein Institution in Boston. These institutions have sought to establish contact with the political, strategic and military communities, and in fact one of its leading trainers, Robert Helvey (2004), is a former US Army Colonel.

Spreading since the 1990s, a new pragmatic research agenda now focuses on improving the marginal utility of nonviolent struggles by using prior knowledge and careful planning of strategy and tactics. The literature offers a wide range of comparative analyses of past campaigns (e.g. Sémelin 1993; Ackerman/Kruegler 1994; Zunes et al. 1999; Ackerman/Duvall 2000; Sharp 2005; Schock 2005) or statistical studies (e.g. Bond 1994; Karatnycky/Ackerman 2005; Stephan/

³ It should be acknowledged that the strategic NVR community is starting to recognise the possible contributions of conflict resolution methods within nonviolent struggles: for instance, in 2005-6 the Albert Einstein Institution and the Program on Negotiation at Harvard University organised a series of joint scholarly events to explore the linkages and complementarity between negotiation and nonviolent action (some of the findings are presented in Finnegan/Hackley 2008).



Veronique Dudouet

Chenoweth 2008), which have drawn out a certain number of conditions facilitating the success of unarmed rebellions, as well as factors of vulnerability.

Schock (2005, xviii) notes the general tendency for strategic nonviolent scholars to overstress the role of agency in promoting political change. In other words, they put primary emphasis on internal, organisational factors of effectiveness as opposed to the external conditions in which the activists operate. The most frequently cited variables include the level of mobilization, social cohesion and unity of the movement, the degree of legitimacy and popular support which it receives, the range of tactics and types of methods selected, the presence of effective leadership, and the degree of nonviolent discipline. In particular, most studies argue that when nonviolent techniques are mixed with violent tactics, the power and effectiveness of resistance are undermined.

The role of external factors affecting the outcome of nonviolent campaigns has recently been reasserted by scholars who integrate social movements theory into the study of NVR (McAdam/ Tarrow 2000; Schock 2005), as well as by the organisers of the Oxford conference on “civil resistance and power politics” in March 2007 (Roberts 2007). Such variables include the means of control and repression by the regime, the level of active support from outside powers, the degree of media coverage of the campaign, the social distance between the adversary parties, the degree of loyalty within the state bureaucracy and security forces, or the broader geopolitical context.

Despite the dissimilarities and tensions between the ‘Gandhian’ and ‘Sharpian’ theories described above, it seems that the principled and pragmatic arguments do not exclude each other, but should rather be treated as complementary. For example, key methods such as non-cooperation and civil disobedience are advocated by both schools, and in the end, in practice, “the pragmatics and the believers unite in most situations” (Fisher et al. 2000, 97). Gandhi and King used both types of arguments in their civil disobedience campaigns, which were regarded as leading both to an increased level of truth and an efficient reversal of power balance. The term nonviolent resistance **3** must therefore be understood in this article as a combination of the two strands, which complement each other by providing a framework to guide the efforts of people who wish to resist structural violence effectively (see *Section 4*), but also do this in a way which is the most likely to lead to a satisfactory resolution of the underlying conflict (see *Section 5*).

3.2 Developments in Practice: The Rise of People Power

(a) Nonviolent Campaigns Across the Globe

Nonviolent action is not a 20th century invention and there are some scholarly accounts of early uses of its techniques, starting with Jewish and Christian civil disobedience towards the Roman Empire (King 2007, 13). However, it only appeared as a strategic and conscious method of collective political action with Gandhi’s satyagraha campaigns in South Africa (1906-1914) and India (1919-1948). His methods have subsequently been emulated and adapted to various national contexts, and have achieved worldwide success through the productive demonstration of “people power” on all continents.

Empirical research on NVR provides detailed documentation on most of these unarmed insurrections,⁴ as well as tables and timelines (Schock 2005, 4; Stephan/Chenoweth 2008) listing the main cases of

successful and failed movements, grouped by themes or regions. *Box 2* below presents the most-cited cases, classified according to their primary political objectives.

4 For bibliographical works listing and classifying the empirical literature on NVR, see Sharp/McCarthy (1997) or Carter et al. (2006). Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

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Véronique Dudouet

Box 2: Most Significant Cases of Nonviolent Resistance Campaigns since 1945

- Pro-democracy movements - resistance against authoritarian/semi-authoritarian regimes: Portugal 1974, Argentina 1977-81, Iran 1978-9, Philippines 1986 (People Power movement) and 2001 (People Power II), Chile 1983-9, Poland 1983-9, Haiti 1985, Burma 1988 and 2007 (Saffron Revolution), China 1989, Czechoslovakia 1989 (Velvet Revolution), East Germany 1989, Hungary 1989, Mali 1989-92, Nepal 1990 and 2006, Thailand 1992, Serbia 2000, Georgia 2003 (Rose Revolution), Ukraine 2004 (Orange Revolution), Kyrgyzstan 2005 (Tulip Revolution)
- Demands for civil rights in a multicultural state: Black people in the USA (1950s and 1960s) and South Africa (1950-1990)
- Movements seeking national self-determination or resisting external occupation: India 1919-1945, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Tibet 1987-9, Palestine 1987-93 (first intifada), Kosovo 1990-99, East Timor 1988-99, Lebanon 2005 (Cedar Revolution).

In recent years, nonviolent struggles have reached global attention thanks to the so-called “colour revolutions” in South Eastern/Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where massive street protests followed disputed or rigged elections and led to the resignation or overthrow of leaders considered by their opponents to be corrupt or authoritarian. These events closely followed each other, and were strongly influenced by a spillover or imitation effect, as the strategies employed in the peaceful revolution in Serbia in 1999 were emulated a few years later by activists in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Lebanon. Earlier, Gandhian campaigns in South Africa and India had greatly inspired black American activists in the US Civil Rights movement, and pro-democracy protests in Chile were influenced by the 1983 film *Gandhi* and the Polish workers’ movement Solidarity ⁹ (Ackerman/DuVall 2000, 291). The development of new decentralised communication technologies has also accelerated these dynamics, by facilitating the spread of information and permitting direct communication between activists within and between countries (Schock 2005, 18).

Nevertheless, nonviolent struggles are not always successful, and some of the campaigns listed in *Box 2* were brutally crushed by the regime or occupiers, and failed to effect major socio-political change (e.g. Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, the Tiananmen Square protests in China, Tibet, Burma). Other campaigns were only partly successful, such as the Palestinian first intifada (see *Section 4*) or the US civil rights movement, which contributed to ending official segregation in the Deep South but did not change the economic and social discrimination suffered by African Americans (Carter et al. 2006, 3).

Finally, very few nonviolent campaigns have remained entirely consistent with a strict nonviolent discipline. In most cases, NVR has been used to various degrees in combination with more classical styles of asymmetric struggle (although this section only presents cases where it has contributed significantly to

the overall strategy). For instance, in Burma, Chile, the Philippines and Nepal, armed and nonviolent resistance proceeded in tandem. In South Africa especially, the violent strategies of the African National Congress (ANC) were considered part of and complementary to the struggles being waged, largely through nonviolent methods, in the townships (Schock 2005, 158). Moreover, there is a common pattern among several major nonviolent campaigns of resorting to guerrilla tactics when NVR is deemed unsuccessful. This was the case in Palestine (see *Section 4*) as well as in Kosovo, where a major civil resistance campaign throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s was completely eroded with the rise of the Kosovo Liberation Army, which led to changes in policy by the Yugoslav government and the international community.

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries



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(b) Training for Nonviolent Movements

Some of the factors of effectiveness of NVR highlighted in *Section 3.1* (e.g. discipline, skills, strategic planning, leadership) underline the importance of preparatory training for nonviolent activists. Many campaigns were preceded or accompanied by such programmes, such as the ‘schools’ for *satyagrahis* (practitioners of *satyagraha*) set up in Gandhi’s ashrams, James Lawson’s workshops during the US Civil Rights movement (Ackerman/DuVall 2000) or the training sessions which prepared Filipino activists for their successful campaign against President Marcos (Francis 2002, 15).

Nowadays, there is a plethora of North American or West European organisations offering training programmes in nonviolent action, but they are mostly oriented towards activists in social, environmental, global justice, anti-nuclear or anti-war movements.⁵ Others are designed for international volunteers leaving for third-party nonviolent intervention (TPNI) missions, another form of nonviolent action which will be described further below.⁶

A few of these focus more specifically on offering third-party technical and strategic support and providing generic educational material to local activists engaged in NVR campaigns against authoritarianism or external occupation, such as Nonviolence International and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict in Washington, the Albert Einstein Institution in Boston, the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategy (CANVAS) in Belgrade, Servicio Paz I Justicia (SERPAJ) in Latin America, or the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR).⁷ These organisations disseminate knowledge and professional assistance to local nonviolent activists through complementary activities, such as:

- Supplying literature and handbooks about the theory and practice of nonviolent struggle: abridged and adapted versions of Sharp’s 1973 manual *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* have been translated into over twenty languages and used by movements for democracy and human rights across the globe. ¹⁰
- Producing and disseminating films that document the successful application of nonviolent struggle in various contexts: the US filmmaker Steve York has produced many such

documentaries, and his film *Bringing Down a Dictator* on the peaceful revolution in Serbia was translated into 9 languages and shown on public television during the colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine.⁵

- Offering, on request by local recipient groups, general advice on how to conduct strategic planning for nonviolent action: for instance, veterans from the Serbian student movement Otpor, which co-led the 1999 revolution, founded the organisation CANVAS to pass on their experience and skills to activists from Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Iran, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Burma, Tibet, Nepal, Vietnam, Palestine, etc (Popovic et al. 2007).

These approaches to cross-border nonviolent training are based on the assumption that although only local movements can decide which methods and tactics fit best within their own cultural and geopolitical situation, there is a generic set of analytical and strategic tools which can be transferred

5 These include for instance Turning the Tide in the UK; Training for Change and the War Resisters League in the US; Les Désobeissants in France; the Change Agency and the Nonviolence Training Project in Australia; as well as transnational networks such as War Resisters International.

6 Such programmes are offered by organisations like Peaceworkers UK, the Comité d'Intervention Civile de Paix (ICP) in France, Kurve Wustrow in Germany, or Centro Studi Difesa Civile in Italy. The US-based organisation Training for Change has compiled

a detailed training curriculum for nonviolent intervention (Hunter/Lakey 2003). Most TPNI organisations (e.g. Peace Brigades International, Nonviolent Peaceforce, etc.) also run their own preparatory seminars for their members.

7 The Africa Programme of the University of Peace (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) has also developed some nonviolent training material more specifically adapted for African civil society activists (Miller/King 2006).

8 For more information, see www.yorkzim.com [accessed 8 September 2008].

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

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Véronique Dudouet

from other contexts. However, this argument has also generated a number of controversies, and has particularly been criticised on the grounds that “civil resistance emerges from, and adapts in light of, the particular social forms, historical experiences and ethics of different societies”, and it can therefore be dangerous “if [it] is applied mechanically to different situations” (Roberts 2007, 3). Moreover, in many parts of the world, local activists regard NVR as a strategy imported from the West (or the Indian East) rather than as a way of thought and action consistent with their specific environment, culture or religion. It has also been argued that some of the basic precepts of NVR (such as the theory of consent) need some theoretical and strategic refinement to account for patterns of power relations in non-democratic and non-Western countries (Martin 1989; Burrowes 1996; Carter 2007). Finally, externally-generated strategic support for pro-democracy activists has often been denounced by the targeted regimes and their ‘patrons’ (e.g. China, Zimbabwe, Russia, Iran) as “efforts by the Bush administration and its allies to instigate ‘soft coups’ against governments deemed hostile to American interests and replace them by more compliant regimes” (Zunes 2008, 1; see also Carter et al. 2006, 4).

To counter these allegations, it can be argued that successful nonviolent insurrections necessarily have to be home-grown and developed over the course of several years, and that the role of outside assistance in these victories can only be marginal and secondary. Furthermore, the US-based NGOs tagged as ‘agents

of the Bush administration' have also provided similar technical support to organisations struggling against repressive US-backed governments in Egypt, Palestine or Guatemala (Zunes 2008). Nevertheless, these debates reassert the need for serious further examination on the varied role that outside actors play in nonviolent revolutions.

(c) Third-party Nonviolent Intervention

Nonviolent action has also been increasingly used as a technique of cross-border **11** intervention by third parties (most often transnational grassroots networks or NGOs) in order to prevent or halt violence, or bring about constructive social change, in acute conflict situations. This empirical trend has been accompanied by a scholarly recognition of the specificities of this mode of intervention (Nagler 1997; Moser-Puangsuwan/Weber 2000; Hunter/Lakey 2003; Schirch 2006; Müller 2006; Clark 2009).

A crucial distinction should be made here between third-party roles in the conflict transformation and nonviolent traditions, according to their ethical stance vis-à-vis the conflict parties. Whereas the former always emphasises the need for impartiality (or “multipartiality”) on the part of external actors, most nonviolent advocacy interveners deliberately work on the sides of the victims or the low-power group, to assist them towards empowerment and the reduction of imbalance in the conflict, even if some nonviolent organisations (e.g. Peace Brigades International) insist on non-interventionist and non-partisan approaches.

Cross-border nonviolent advocates also place an important emphasis on the concept of “local ownership” in effecting social and political change. This is highly compatible with the conflict transformation stance of “elicitive” action, according to which indigenous protagonists should be the primary drivers of social change (Lederach 1995). Whereas external third-party opinion and action can act as a powerful supporting force, the primacy of action should belong to internal civil society activists (Sharp 2005, 412). For this reason, most authors reject the terminology of “assistance” (which might have connotations of victimisation of local populations), referring instead to cross-border support or accompaniment (Muller 2005, 187). An ideal-typical set of roles for internal and external actors is visualised in *Figure 2* below.

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries



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Multipartiality Pro-justice stance

Bridge-builder	(Nonviolent) Activist
Mediator	(Nonviolent) Advocate

Internal action External intervention

Figure 2: Complementary Roles in Conflict Transformation (adapted from Dudouet 2005)

The main types of third-party nonviolent advocacy⁹ can be described as the following:

- *Off-site nonviolent campaigns* consist of taking nonviolent initiatives in support of a struggle in another country. The goal can be either to try to halt violence or injustice directly by launching nonviolent sanctions against repressive regimes (e.g. an economic or cultural boycott), or, indirectly, to exert pressure on Western governments to reverse policies which support these regimes. Between the 1950s and 1990s, many groups and individuals across the world attempted to put pressure on the South African government to end apartheid, by organising consumer boycotts of South African exports, and campaigns to persuade foreign governments and corporations to stop supplying finance, oil and weapons to the apartheid regime. Transnational protest or “public shaming” activities are also carried out by organisations such as Amnesty

International, Human Rights Watch or the recent online petition resource Avaaz.

- *Mobilization actions* are primarily geared towards exerting cross-border pressure for change by drawing international attention to acts of violence and injustice. Diasporas often play a **12** crucial leading role in organising such campaigns, as well as transnational solidarity networks (e.g. Guatemala Solidarity Network, Free Burma Coalition, etc.).
- *Nonviolent accompaniment* refers to on-site activities carried out in conflict areas in order to create a safe, localised political space where activists can engage in nonviolent activities. Organisations such as Peace Brigades International (in Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Mexico, Aceh), Christian Peacemakers Team (in Haiti, Palestine, Colombia, Iraq), the Balkan Peace Team (in former Yugoslavia), and Nonviolent Peaceforce (in Sri Lanka and the Philippines) accompany threatened local human rights activists in their daily work, acting as unarmed bodyguards. Their effectiveness stems from the reluctance of armed forces or paramilitary groups to risk upsetting Western governments by attacking foreign volunteers during their protection missions. Protective accompaniment also encourages civil society activism, by allowing threatened organisations more space and confidence to operate in repressive situations (Mahony/Eguren 1997).
- *Nonviolent interposition*, finally, is performed by unarmed activists placing themselves as a ‘buffer’ force between conflicting parties (or between a military force and its civilian target), to help prevent or halt war. The Christian organisation Witness for Peace claims that its interposition activities in Nicaragua during the 1980s, sending 4,000 US activists to live in war zones across the country, significantly reduced the number of attacks on the Nicaraguan people by the US-sponsored Contras (Burrowes 2000, 64).

⁹ There is some terminological variation regarding the generic term employed for nonviolent action by third-parties in conflict areas (cross-border nonviolent intervention, peace teams, civilian peacekeeping, etc.) and its sub-modes of action (presence, accompaniment, interposition, solidarity, advocacy, monitoring, etc.); the classification adopted here is largely inspired by Burrowes (2000), while the distinction between off-site and on-site intervention is drawn from Rigby (1995).

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

Nonviolent interposition is easy to organise on a small scale, but it is much more difficult to apply as a mass-based strategy, and it becomes highly dangerous and problematic when the imbalance between the nonviolent ‘troops’ and warring armies is too strong. In fact, it should be acknowledged that on the whole, the level of external assistance received by contemporary nonviolent struggles has been very limited, and the proportion of successes among past cases of international nonviolent intervention remains extremely small (Sharp 2005, 412).

4. Nonviolent Resistance as a Strategy to Redress Structural Asymmetry

“Negotiation ... is the purpose of nonviolent direct action. ... Nonviolent action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks

so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored” (King 1964).

Building on Martin Luther King Jr.’s description of the purpose of his struggle for racial equality in the United States, this section presents NVR as a precursor, or catalyst, to conflict transformation. If “negotiation is only possible when the needs and interests of all those involved and affected by the conflict are legitimated and articulated” (Lederach 1995, 14), then nonviolent struggle is its necessary complement, by helping marginalised communities to achieve sufficient leverage for an effective negotiation process.

These dynamics can be illustrated by the case of the Palestinian people, who, through **13** unarmed resistance during the first intifada (1987-1993), gained recognition by Israel and their neighbouring countries as a true nation with legitimate rights to claim, although they ultimately failed to reach their self-determination goal. The intifada is not a well-recognised case of civil resistance, although it has been quantitatively assessed that at least 90% of its methods of insurrection were nonviolent (Sharp 1989), spreading across Sharp’s three categories of nonviolent action (see *Box I*).¹⁰ Based on insights from scholarly analyses of Palestinian NVR during the first intifada (Sharp 1989; Galtung 1989; Rigby 1991; Awad 1992; Dajani 1999; Dudouet 2005; Stephan 2006; King 2007), this section examines conceptually and empirically the power shifts which can occur through nonviolent conflict. Insights are grouped and presented here according to three variables: effects on the resisters and the wider grievance group (*power to*), effects on the opponent group and its constituency (*power over*), and effects on external third-parties.

4.1 A Strategy for Self-empowerment

It is assumed in the literature that the very act of nonviolent action produces a change in the participants, correcting their lack of self-confidence as former subordinates, and, through the development of self-reliance and fearlessness, giving them a sense of power-over-oneself (Burrowes 1996, 117). The recurrent label “power of the powerless” refers to this capacity of NVR to enable oppressed and disadvantaged communities to take greater control over their own lives. The first stage of self-empowerment, variously described as education (Curle 1971), conscientisation (Freire

¹⁰ However, at least two indisputably violent acts – the use of Molotov cocktails and the punishment of collaborators – were explicitly sanctioned and encouraged by the leadership, making them official acts of the intifada. And from 1990 on, as the insurrection developed and repression intensified, some groups (i.e. Islamic Jihad and Hamas) began to call for violent actions, and carried out a number of attacks on Israelis.

Véronique Dudouet

1972) or awakening (Francis 2002, 44), refers to the creation of political awareness about the nature of unequal relationships and the need for addressing and restoring equity.

It is followed by a second stage of group formation and mobilization for direct action (Francis 2002, 49), which usually begins with a core of activists (such as university students or trade unions), who very quickly manage to rally support from other walks of life, especially among those previously not committed to the cause (Ackerman/DuVall 2000, 497). Nonviolent popular initiatives indeed facilitate a wider participation than other forms of asymmetric conflict, providing ways for all citizens to take responsibility for changing the situation (Clark 2005).

In practice, a number of collective forms of action are designed to reinforce the power and the will of the resistance movement. For example, “symbolic actions” (Boserup/Mack 1974) such as large-scale demonstrations and protests help to raise mobilization and cohesion among the activists. Envisioned by Gandhi as the strongest form of satyagraha, the “constructive programme” that is part of many civil resistance movements (e.g. alternative or parallel media, social services, tax systems, elections, institutions) is another identity-producing dynamic that supports self-transformation at the individual and collective levels (Wehr 1979, 64; Ebert 1981, 37). The empowering role of constructive actions will be analysed further in *Section 5*.

Box 3: Palestinian Empowerment during the First Intifada

An organised community:

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, numerous charitable societies, professional and cultural associations appeared throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, mobilizing whole sectors of Palestinian society, and cultivating the values of solidarity across traditional social and class affiliations. This process of empowering Palestinians by organising the structure of their civil society, together with the increasing pressure of the Israeli occupation, was a very important factor that made the intifada possible.

An organised leadership:

As soon as the intifada erupted in December 1987, a multi-party central leadership (the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising) was put in place to coordinate the resistance, accompanied by decentralised structures on all levels of society. Sectorial popular committees were set up in each community to address the daily needs of the population: medical relief, food distribution, strike forces, agriculture, trade, public safety, education, information, solidarity with families of martyrs and prisoners. However, no central individual leader or “Palestinian Gandhi” clearly emerged, although King (2007) highlights the strategic role played by a small group of intellectuals from East Jerusalem in preparing and inspiring the struggle in a spirit of nonviolence.

Empowering effects of civil resistance:

Individually, the very act of resistance transformed the resisters, giving them a sense of restored pride, dignity and identity. Collectively, the use of nonviolent tactics in the intifada enabled a transfer of power from the minority of militants and guerrillas to the Palestinian people themselves, allowing all sectors of society to participate in the resistance, in a genuine people's struggle. Popular participation in demonstrations and civil disobedience increased the unity of the resistance, creating connections across factions, age groups, social and geographical divisions. However, in the wake of severe repression and an escalation in violence after 1990, some of the old social and political divisions reappeared.

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

14

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Véronique Dudouet

4.2 Winning Over the Opponent

Gene Sharp's "mechanisms of change" (1973) form an important part of NVR theory. They describe what happens to the opponents (be it an oppressive regime or an external occupier) in the course of a nonviolent struggle, and the nature of their decision to give power away.

Proponents of principled, Gandhian NVR favour the process of *nonviolent conversion*, whereby the adversaries come to embrace the point of view of the challengers. It is assumed that "the potentiality for good exists in every living person" (Gregg 1960, 117), and therefore a sense of justice can be awakened in the opponent by the force of good argument. However, it seems rather unrealistic to apply this process to acute political conflicts, such as interethnic rivalries with high levels of polarisation and antagonism. Conversion is more likely to occur in conflicts arising out of misperceptions (Boserup/Mack 1974, 22). But when human needs are involved, rulers are unlikely to yield to persuasion (Curle 1971, 198). Moreover, conversion is an inter-individual mechanism, which is difficult to translate to large-scale conflicts, where it would require the conversion of all the opponent's troops, supporters and elites (Sharp 1973, 732).

On the contrary, the label *nonviolent coercion* (Case 1923) refers to the mechanism of change that occurs in negative conflict processes. When successful, nonviolent coercion is achieved without the consent of the defeated opponent, whose mind has not been changed on the issues and wants to continue the struggle, but lacks the capability to choose a viable alternative. The demands are consequently agreed by force rather than by conviction (Burrowes 1996, 118).

However, in practice, the most common mechanism of change in successful nonviolent campaigns is an intermediate process labelled *nonviolent accommodation*. In this model, opponents resolve to grant the demands of the nonviolent activists without having changed their minds about the issues involved (nonviolent conversion), and without having lost the physical possibility of continuing the conflict (nonviolent coercion). They just realise that the balance of forces is shifting against them, **15** and find it politically wiser to negotiate, because it is cheaper or easier than holding firm.¹¹

In order to understand better how these mechanisms operate, it is necessary to elucidate the power shifts which might occur through NVR. In the pragmatic literature, planning a nonviolent uprising is fairly similar to devising a military campaign: it starts by identifying an opponent's "pillars of support" (Helvey 2004) and areas of vulnerability. However, whereas classical strategic studies have a tendency to equate power with military capabilities, nonviolent struggle emphasises political and psychological factors of power, such as undermining the opponent's sources of authority, and increasing division in its base of support.

There are different types of action to weaken the power positions of the targeted regime or occupation forces. "Denial actions", such as civil disobedience, express citizens' refusal to cooperate with the regime they oppose, while "undermining actions" aim at promoting dissent and disaffection within its ranks, especially within key political and military groups without which it is unable to carry on its aggression (Boserup/Mack 1974). In comparison with armed rebellion, NVR is indeed more likely to generate active sympathy in sections of the population whose support the regime had earlier enjoyed (Randle 1994, 105), and provoke loyalty shifts among its enforcement agents, e.g. police, army, public servants (Stephan/Chenoweth 2008).

Furthermore, violent repression against NVR is likely to "rebound" against the attackers, by weakening their power position while for the nonviolent group both internal determination and external support become stronger (Sharp 2005, 406). This process has been variously described as "moral jiu-jitsu" (Gregg 1960) or "political jiu-jitsu" (Sharp 1973), and was recently re-examined through the theory of "backfire" (Martin 2007).

11 A fourth mechanism of change which is sometimes added on to this model, *nonviolent disintegration*, occurs when the government breaks down in the face of widespread nonviolent action (Sharp 2005, 418).

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries



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Véronique Dudouet

However, these claims should be greeted with caution. For instance, the differences in the adversaries' cultures are likely to influence the outcome of NVR: if they are too far apart, the subordinate nonviolent group might be seen as foreign, sub-human or uncivilised, and violent repression may be seen as merited or acceptable by the wider public. Therefore, nonviolence works better the shorter the social distance involved (Galtung 1989, 19). A non-democratic context can also limit the effects of a nonviolent strategy, because oppressive regimes do not govern by popular consent and can repress with more impunity (McAdam/Tarrow 2000, 151). Some nonviolent campaigns have proven vulnerable to military and police repression (e.g. China, Kosovo, Burma), and the probability of success of civil resistance against brutal and "extremely ruthless opponents" has been called into question (Summy 1996). In extremely asymmetrical situations, particularly acute in ethnic conflicts, nonviolent strategies might not have sufficient leverage to bring about necessary changes.

This argument is often heard across the Palestinian occupied territories, where local activists argue that if they embark on a massive campaign of civil disobedience (such as curfew defiance or peaceful marches on the settlement blocks), they will be massacred. Opinion polls convey the same scepticism: according to

a 2002 survey, 62% of Palestinians felt that “Israelis are so stubborn that mass nonviolent action will have no impact on their behaviour” (Kull 2002).

Box 4: Impact of the Palestinian Intifada on the Israeli State and Public

Successes:

The intifada managed to raise certain costs for Israel, serious enough to warrant recognition that the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip was no longer profitable and sustainable.

- The use of stones by Palestinian youth embodied this principle of turning the opponent’s superior force to one’s own advantage. Strategically, the Israeli army was not trained for such a type of non-lethal guerrilla warfare. Symbolically, the battle of stones against tanks and automatic weapons represents an unfair fight: the massive Israeli retaliation upset the status quo by damaging morale in the army’s troops and increasing public sympathy for the Palestinians.
- The Palestinian strategy of unlinking the West Bank and Gaza strip from their dependency on the occupier through economic self-reliance had some negative effects on the Israeli economy. For instance, the boycott of Israeli goods resulted in a 40% decline in exports to the occupied territories in 1988, and a \$300 million loss for Israeli businesses. Also, as a result of tax revolt in parts of the West Bank in 1988, the tax collection in the Palestinian territories was down 32% from the previous year.
- Some segments of the Israeli public became converted to the resisters’ cause, mobilizing into an active peace movement, and the regime was enticed into adopting accommodation strategies, exemplified by the Oslo peace process and 1993 Washington declaration recognising the Palestinian right to statehood.

Limits:

However, Palestinians were ultimately unable to raise the costs of continued occupation to a level necessary to force their occupier to withdraw.

- The Israeli government was so committed to holding on to the West Bank and Gaza Strip

that it was prepared to pay an exceptionally high price to sustain its rule. An important element for understanding this equation is the fact that “Israel wants to rule the *land* of Palestine, it does not want the *people*” (Rigby 1991, 196). For this reason, the regime

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

16

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Véronique Dudouet

was ready to live with non-cooperation and defiance of the intifada, hoping that increased repression would cause Palestinians to despair and emigrate, leaving more land free for Israeli settlements.

- The economic costs of the intifada became less significant when the Israeli market discovered new ways of reducing its dependency upon Palestinians as a source of labour and as a captive market for its products. Moreover, commercial and labour strikes were not effective enough in damaging Israeli capabilities since the Palestinian contribution to the Israeli economy is only marginal.
- Due to a high degree of inter-party polarisation and social distance, the uprising failed to provoke a sufficient degree of defection within the occupation forces for the government to radically alter its occupation policy. The number of army objectors ('refuseniks') and deserters remained very limited.

4.3 Leverage Through Third-party Advocacy

When the power differential or social distance between the activists and their opponent is too big, or where the "consent theory of power" does not apply, a new dependency relationship must be created between the targeted regime and its nonviolent challengers. Galtung (1989, 20) advocates the recourse to a "great chain of nonviolence" through nonviolent action by people other than the victims themselves; more precisely, by "those whose active or passive collaboration ... is needed for the oppressor to oppress". Schock (2005, 20) also describes the "boomerang pattern" whereby "challenging movements within non-democracies exert pressure on their own states indirectly through ties to transnational social movements that mobilize international pressure against the target state to help them achieve political change at home". ¹⁷

This role is most often played by individuals or organisations from powerful countries on which the regime depends. But it might also be performed by members of the opponent group (e.g. opposition in Britain during the Indian decolonisation struggle, Israeli anti-occupation groups during the intifada).¹²

Box 5: External Effects of the Palestinian Intifada

Successes:

- Regionally, the intifada refocused the attention of the Arab community on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, and forced Jordan to give up its nominal administrative authority over the West Bank and to endorse Palestinian self-determination to an unprecedented degree.
- In the international arena, brutal Israeli retaliation to the intifada was strongly condemned (especially by the UN) and resulted in an increasing moral and political isolation of Israel abroad. In parallel, the Palestinian right to statehood was largely endorsed: the November 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence was already recognised by 169 countries in March 1989, while Israel, founded in 1948, was still only formally recognised by 80 states.
- Informed foreign citizens also started to mobilize in support of the Palestinian struggle for independence, especially in Western peace movements who had for a long time considered the Palestinian issue to be taboo.

¹² Various forms of third-party nonviolent advocacy, ranging from off-site nonviolent campaigns to nonviolent interposition have been reviewed in *Section 3.2*.

Véronique Dudouet

Limits:

- Beyond these declarations and gestures of solidarity, Palestinians sensed a lack of effectiveness and tangible support in the world's response to their plight. No real sanctions were launched against Israel.
- No meaningful grassroots mobilization in support of Palestinian NVR took place. This should be contrasted with the numerous cross-border initiatives which have emerged since the outburst of the second intifada in 2000, by diverse and complementary organisations such as the International Solidarity Movement, Christian Peacemakers Team, or International Women's Peace Service (see Dudouet 2005, 2009).

5. Constructive Confrontation as a Basis for Reconciliation and Peacebuilding

In *Section 4*, NVR was presented as an effective strategy for the empowerment of marginalised groups and the elimination of structural violence by peaceful means. But its complementarity with conflict transformation goes even further, since in comparison to other forms of asymmetric struggle, NVR can also lay the grounds for a cooperative post-conflict situation, both on the levels of behaviour and attitudes (reconciliation) and structurally (democracy and human rights).

5.1 A Self-limiting Conflict Strategy Conducive to a Cooperative Future

Many protracted conflicts do not pit a civil population against a dictatorial elite, but **18** rather dominant versus dominated ethnic, communal or national groups, that have to learn to live together once the conflict is settled. Therefore, post-conflict reconciliation is a crucial component of a sustainable peace. The integrative techniques of action advocated by the proponents of principled nonviolence, and adopted in various degrees by contemporary civil resistance movements, are likely to facilitate cooperative relationships between the conflict parties. Due to its deliberate rejection of violence, NVR is by its very nature a self-limiting style of struggle, which possesses built-in devices to keep the conflict within acceptable bounds and to inhibit violent extremism and unbridled escalation (Wehr 1979, 55). It also softens feelings of humiliation, hatred and desire for revenge, which may be seeds for future conflicts (Randle 1994, 113). Therefore, it is argued that the results achieved through NVR are likely to be more permanent and satisfactory than those achieved through violence.

The emblematic leaders of principled NVR, Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., held a positive view of conflict, seeing it as an opportunity to meet the opponent, to transform society and the self (Weber 2001, 494). For instance, Gandhian theorists envisage conflict as a temporary, but necessary disruption which enables deeper inter-party unity and cooperation in the future (Gregg 1960, 85). While winning is not totally rejected (after all, Gandhi wanted his immediate goal of freedom for India to prevail), the final aim is to reach mutual gains where there is no sacrificing of position, no lowering of demands, but a higher

level of adjustment (Weber 2001, 506). Likewise, for King (1957), NVR “does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent but to win his friendship and understanding. ... The aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation and the creation of a beloved community”. This vision of NVR bears striking similarities to problem-solving theories where parties must work towards mutual gains and integrative outcomes, and where final victory is less important than the quality of the process that produces it.

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries



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Véronique Dudouet

Moreover, nonviolent rules and techniques of action present in both the principled and pragmatic literature help to break the spiral of destructive relations and offer reassurances to the opponents about their status in the post-conflict situation, anticipating inter-group reconciliation (Wehr 1979; Miller/King 2006, 121). For example, tactics such as limiting demands to initial aims in order to avoid the generalisation of conflict issues, separating people and problems (“hating the sin and not the sinner”), being ready to make concessions on non-essentials, seeking fraternisation with the opponent’s troops, maximising inter-group contact and communication, are all aimed at preventing conflict polarisation and countering misperceptions. The principle of reversibility present in most nonviolent techniques of action also means that they inflict costs that can be withdrawn when a settlement is reached, without leaving permanent damage. “No one can take back the wounds of violence, the lost years of imprisonment, or the pain of exile – but workers can return to the factory after a strike, boycotters can begin trading at shops again, and mass meetings and marches can be called off” (McCarthy 1990, 115). The techniques of self-suffering (through civil disobedience, boycott, and particularly fasting) were especially recommended by Gandhi or King as a “test of love in action”, a method of dramatising injustice, a demonstration of sincerity, and an appeal to the opponent’s conscience (Burrowes 1996, 111).

In practice however, it is difficult to apply these principles of empathy, trust and respect for the opponents to the scale of nation-wide campaigns, since it would require an excessive amount of training and preparation (Sharp 2005, 417). As argued earlier, very few nonviolent struggles have effectively resulted in the conversion of opponents and the achievement of win-win solutions. Instead, accommodation strategies were adopted, whereby NVR provided the grievance group with some bargaining power at the negotiation table, without necessarily resolving the attitudinal oppositions or leading to cooperative relationships. Therefore, process-oriented conflict resolution mechanisms remain a necessary complement to nonviolent struggles for justice and democracy. 19

Box 6: Ends and Means of the Palestinian Intifada: Conversion or Coercion?

- In their 1988 Declaration of Independence, Palestinians sought to make the prospect of negotiation more appealing to their opponent by unequivocally recognising Israel’s right to exist and limiting their own demands to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- They also demonstrated this cooperative attitude through symbolic gestures during demonstrations and other nonviolent actions (e.g. by carrying the Palestinian flag in one hand and olive branches in the other), and through the leaflets prepared by the United Leadership of the

Uprising (e.g. a declaration of willingness to negotiate, and an assertion that Palestinians did not seek the destruction of Israel).

- However, the indiscriminate and deliberate force used by Israeli soldiers and police created a situation of mutual hatred and distrust, and one also finds accounts of negative Palestinian attitudes towards their adversaries, such as “verbal and physical abuses, hate-filled eyes, inscriptions everywhere making it very clear where the Palestinians want the Israelis to end up: in hell. Of fraternisation, there seems to be very little” (Galtung 1989, 64).
- Rigby (1991, 197) also noted the counter-productivity of the (albeit limited) use of modes of resistance intended to inflict physical injury upon the Israelis (e.g. throwing of stones and firebombs), which prevented their conversion and reinforced the ‘siege mentality’ among the Israeli public.

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Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

Véronique Dudouet

5.2 A Constructive Programme Leading to Democratic Practices

In situations of structural injustice, evicting the former oppressors is not a sufficient condition for bringing about positive changes. Nonviolent revolutions must also guarantee the necessary structural conditions for stable and peaceful societies.

According to Sharp (2005, 427), the choice between political violence and NVR helps determine the future capacity of that society to exercise popular control over any ruler or would-be-ruler. He describes the tendency for violent revolutions to be followed by an increase in absolute power of the state (e.g. Russia, China, Cuba). In contrast, nonviolent movements are more likely to promote democratic, decentralised and participatory practices in the post-revolutionary phase (Randle 1994, 9). Being participatory rather than hierarchical, NVR is conducive to a diffusion of power within society. The constructive programmes that are part of many popular resistance movements are also facilitating more participative forms of democracy, since they involve embryonic parallel institutions which give expression to this tendency, such as 1989’s forums in Eastern Europe, Gandhi’s self-sufficiency programme in India or the “zones of peace” created by peace activists amidst the violent wars in Colombia or the Philippines (Hancock/Mitchell 2007). Quantitative analyses also demonstrate that nonviolent protest is more likely than violent rebellions to be positively related to greater freedom and democracy (Karatnycky/Ackerman 2005).

Despite these general tendencies, campaigns which use nonviolent methods do not guarantee that a spirit of nonviolence will prevail once the cause is won, especially if the majority of activists adopt them for purely tactical reasons. In many instances, people power has been decisive in securing a transfer of power, but has then fallen short of achieving a social transformation to a more participatory society (Clark 2005). Indeed, several successful nonviolent movements have precipitated the emergence of new versions of the old system (e.g. Iran 1979, Philippines 1988, Ukraine 2005). Even the Gandhian decolonisation movement on the Indian subcontinent was **20** followed by massacres arising out of partition to create a separate Muslim Pakistan, and increasing corruption

within the ruling Congress Party that was formerly associated with Gandhi (Carter et al. 2006, 3). In Palestine, the popular empowerment resulting from the intifada was undermined during the subsequent peace process, when instead of keeping the initiative in their own hands, residents of the occupied territories let the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in exile negotiate on their behalf. Since its inception, the Palestinian Authority has proceeded to build centralised, bureaucratic, and often ruthless mechanisms that have fostered dependence and crushed most grassroots initiatives, resulting in a ‘demobilisation’ of the population and its deepening alienation from political action (Said 2002, 91). These examples illustrate the problems of political victories that are not accompanied by wider social and attitudinal change.

6. Conclusion

This article has presented the theory and practice of nonviolent resistance as a necessary component of conflict transformation in acute asymmetric power relations. It is particularly appropriate at the early stages of latent conflicts rooted in structural violence, as a tool in the hands of marginal or disenfranchised communities to struggle effectively for justice and democracy, thanks to its potential to encourage popular empowerment, put pressure on the opponent, and win over the sympathy of powerful third-parties, thus providing a stronger position from which to negotiate concessions. While the limits of nonviolent strategies in extremely violent situations such as mass slaughter and genocide need to be acknowledged, in most contexts of oppression and exploitation it might well be the only

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Véronique Dudouet

way to struggle for justice and democracy in a peaceful and constructive way. Indeed, NVR’s capacity for simultaneously transforming power relationships and human

relationships makes it unique as a method of political action, through its dual process of dialogue and resistance – dialogue with the people on the other side in order to persuade them, and resistance to the structures in order to compel change. Although it involves activism and advocacy of a particular point of view, it is deemed highly consistent with efforts at conflict resolution and consensus building, by providing means of waging conflicts that would at the same time suppress direct and structural violence, and prepare the society for positive (behavioural, attitudinal, structural) peace.

However, in practice, nonviolent struggles seldom lead by themselves to win-win solutions and post-settlement cooperative relationships across the conflict lines – the ideal conditions that would enable such a dialectic process are all too rarely present. The Palestinian illustrations provided in *Sections 4 and 5* indicate that when conflicts involve highly polarised communal groups opposed over non-negotiable issues, positive peace does not automatically emanate from the achievement of relative power balance, and nonviolent struggles are not always effective at preventing inter-party misperceptions and hatred. In such situations, negotiations and process-oriented conflict resolution remain necessary so as to facilitate the articulation of legitimate needs and interests of all concerned into fair, practical, and mutually

acceptable solutions. Therefore, NVR and peacemaking mechanisms should be seen as complementary and mutually supportive strategies which can be employed together, consecutively or simultaneously, to realise the twin goals of justice and peace. Highly polarised conflicts can only be transformed through multiple forms of intervention, from negotiation, bridge-building (e.g. grassroots dialogue encounters) and external mediation to nonviolent activism and cross-border advocacy.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, these complementary activities were never pursued, neither consecutively nor simultaneously. For instance, unarmed resistance during the first intifada ²¹ failed to attract tangible forms of third-party support, and the subsequent mediated negotiation process failed to build on the successes of the Palestinian uprising. On the contrary, the second intifada has been characterized by numerous cross-border solidarity initiatives, but the active nonviolent resistance of Palestinian villages threatened by the so-called ‘security barrier’ is still overshadowed by the armed strategies of the militant groups, and so far, it has not led to any significant peacemaking or peacebuilding initiatives.

Additional empirical research on these linkages might thus help to identify more precise respective entry-points for nonviolent and peacemaking interventions in asymmetric conflicts, both by conflict parties and outsiders seeking to support and facilitate these complementary processes.

For instance, in the field of nonviolent resistance, it would be interesting to examine further the post-struggle trajectories of nonviolent leaders and activists, and to explore whether NVR strategies and tactics can also play a role in post-war processes, to support the goals of peacebuilding and democratic consolidation. In order to help prevent inter-party polarisation and ensure that nonviolent revolutions against oppressors do not precipitate the emergence of new versions of the old system, it might also be useful to integrate negotiation and conflict resolution mechanisms within preparatory nonviolent training programmes for indigenous activists. There is also a need for further examination on the varied role that outside actors might play in nonviolent revolutions, as well as in conflicts where all parties primarily use violent strategies, as illustrated by the context of the second Palestinian intifada. Besides protection and solidarity activities, it then becomes the task of foreign actors to find ways to encourage and inspire local civil society activists to actively resist the occupation by nonviolent means, without running the risk of being perceived as imposing external models or trying to ‘pacify’ local activists.

Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries

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Véronique Dudouet

In the field of conflict transformation, this article might encourage scholars, practitioners and policy-makers to think more comparatively across the spectrum of conflict intervention strategies and pay more attention to the phenomenon of nonviolent resistance. Possible research questions include for instance: which conflicts are “unripe” for resolution by traditional negotiation or mediation approaches; and, conversely, at which stage of a nonviolent campaign does negotiation become possible and desirable? Can the same third-party actors combine the roles of impartial facilitator and pro-justice advocate? Although some conflict transformation trainers have started to recognise the need to support constructive conflicts alongside trust-building and dialogue (Curle 1971; Lederach 1995; Fisher et al. 2000, Vukosavljevic 2000, Francis 2002, Mischnick 2007), they have not yet given enough credit to the whole

range of methods available for waging conflicts creatively (Clark 2005). Finally, researchers and practitioners alike should integrate the identification of structures of oppression and power asymmetry, legacies of nonviolent resistance and local self-empowerment strategies into their conflict mapping exercises and intervention scenarios, in order to design and support more sustainable and home-grown peacemaking and peacebuilding processes.

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