
Gene Sharp and Social Movements

Contributions and Legacies

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MIKAYLA NOVAK

Gene Sharp significantly contributed to both the intellectual and practical advancement of nonviolent approaches to conflictual activity against oppressive sources of power. His seminal statement, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, published fifty years ago, articulated the thesis that contentious nonviolent actions—such as public protests, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and other kinds of civil resistance—reveal a lack of uniform and consensual public obedience toward political authority. In doing so Sharp drew upon libertarian intellectual heritage, most notably in the form of Etienne de la Boétie’s sixteenth-century writings questioning the merits of voluntary political servitude. Outlining the strategic, as opposed to strictly moral, nature of nonviolent action, and cataloguing an impressive array of resistance activities against the state throughout history, Sharp’s book has inspired a globalized array of social movements from the 1980s anticommunist uprisings through to the 2010s’ Arab Spring, and beyond. The practical influence of his legacy has been the subject of a wide-ranging scholarly literature in fields such as social movements studies, peace research, and collective action theory (e.g., McCarthy and Kruegler 1993; Ammons and Coyne 2018, 2020; Chenoweth 2021).

Mikayla Novak is a senior fellow in the F. A. Hayek Program for Advanced Study in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, Mercatus Center at George Mason University.

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I draw directly from Sharp’s fifty-year-old contribution to identify *nonviolence* as a “generic term covering dozens of specific methods of protest, noncooperation and intervention, in all of which the actionists conduct the conflict by doing—or refusing to do—certain things without using physical violence” (Sharp 1973, 64). *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* not only articulates the conceptual case for nonviolence as a mode of action to effect societal change. The book also outlines how nonviolence can be practically deployed as a tactic to counter adversaries and win key political concessions. Cataloguing 198 tactical methods of protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent intervention, Sharp illustrates how collectives wishing to instigate change can adopt nonviolent tactics in a disciplined manner, jiu-jitsu style, to unbalance larger, more powerful political opponents and undermine repressive tendencies on the part of the latter. As stated, Sharp’s ideas have been widely adopted by social movements, classified as collective entities aiming to effect societal change through counter-hegemonic, or extra-institutional means, that may assume disruptive dimensions to existing modes of order (della Porta and Diani 2015; Novak 2021).

To fulfill an objective of understanding the key contributions and legacies of Gene Sharp’s book, I pursue two fields of inquiry. The first is to situate *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* within the context of social movement theorization, considering not only the time that Sharp wrote his book but also subsequent theoretical developments. The analysis is anticipated to help us better understand how factors affecting the balance between individual agency and cultural and institutional structures shape the selection of tactical dispositions by social movement participants. The second objective is to appraise the effectiveness of nonviolent tactics versus violent ones from an empirical perspective. As part of this appraisal I have drawn on a range of recent studies examining national and international bouts of activism. The pursuit of this objective is aimed at making some judgments about the veracity of Sharp’s statements about what kinds of movement tactics tend to work in the real world.

The structure of the paper is as follows: The next section articulates the key theoretical values of Sharp’s *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* for social movement theory. This is followed by a discussion of key empirical studies addressing the question of nonviolent versus violent tactical effectiveness. A summary of arguments concludes the paper.

Sharp’s Contributions to Movement Theory

Gene Sharp’s *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* is celebrated as a foundational statement concerning nonviolent approaches toward civil resistance against authority figures, especially the wielders of tyrannical political power. Contemporary scholars identify Sharp as having provided a theoretical account of a specific aspect of social movement activity—being, of course, nonviolent techniques adopted by activists and their supporters (Nepstad 2013, 2015). Sharp’s nonviolence theorization is identified

as heavily informed by the pragmatic, even strategic, dimensions of nonviolent action, which has been seen by some as a forerunner to a “grounded theory” that is informed by data (Martin 2013). It is not surprising that scholarly attention has been drawn to the notion of a nonviolence praxis, given Sharp’s early encounters with the Gandhian case of British colonial resistance, his conscientious objection to the Korean War and, later in life, his support for a range of protests and uprisings around the world.

Although some exceptions do apply (e.g., Martin 1989; Ammons and Coyne 2020), the broader connections between Sharp’s contribution and developments in social movement theory have generally attracted insufficient attention. To the extent that Sharp is seen to have produced theoretical value, some scholars have claimed it has been overly restricted to a positivist, or rational-choice, account of movement goals, ways, and means (Chabot 2015). A more well-rounded account of Sharp’s legacy would go further to note that *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* was published during a time of considerable innovation in social movement theory. The decades-long accounts of “collective behavior” theory, suggesting that movement activity and participation reflects irrational impulses by crowds of people swept up in gales of contention, gave way to new ideas from the 1970s onward. Rational-choice interpretations of activism, among other things, emphasized the criticality of resource accumulation toward movement success (McCarthy and Zald 1977) and, broadly, estimated the relative costs and benefits of contentious action. Not long thereafter, a new wave of institutionally aware approaches stressing political opportunities for movement dissent appeared (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982), followed by theoretical ideas emphasizing how the likes of persuasive rhetoric (or “framing”), culture, and emotions shape movements (Snow et al. 1986; Buechler 1995; Jasper 2011).

In key respects Sharp explicated notions that either would be familiar to social movement theorists, or would serve as a precursor for a range of theoretical accounts of social movements found in the literature today. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* exhaustively articulates the role of strategic behavior informing nonviolent activities. The individual participants of a social movement make their choices and, as Sharp described, do so through a strategic process involving deliberation, negotiation, and (arguably precarious) agreement among activists wishing to challenge existing societal institutions, operations, and practices. As Sharp (1973, 48) indicated, “Generalized obstinacy and collective stubbornness are not effective enough. General opposition must be translated into a strategy of action, and people need to know how to wage the struggle which will almost inevitably follow their initial act of defiance. This includes how to persist despite repression.” The necessity for nonviolent strategy on the part of movement participants consists, in part, in intelligently countering the highly organized resistance to contention to be expected from political actors, and especially military and police forces.

The Sharpian emphasis on strategy, which encompasses tactical decisions applicable to specific circumstances within the broader conflict between activists and authorities, may fulfill several functions. It is speculated that Sharp’s focus on

strategy was part of an intellectual pivot to illustrate an alternative to the idealistic character of nonviolence motivation that arguably predominated previous literature (Sharp 1973, 494). Substantively, Sharp views strategy as a condition to facilitate the coordination of multiple activists, each with their own commitments, preferences, and values, in the direction of achieving a common social movement objective (492–510). Of significance is that the strategy that Sharp refers to has come to be regarded as a constituent feature of individual agency; according to James Jasper (2004, 4) strategy is a “fundamental dimension of protest alongside physical resources, culture, and biography.”

The Politics of Nonviolent Action showcases a strategic framework for nonviolent action, but does this showcasing come at the expense of other important attributes of activism and movement participation? Following the previously stated point about Sharp’s nonidealistic alternative approach, does strategy entirely displace the role of emotions in nonviolent contentious settings? Answers to these questions are of great importance, given the recognition in modern social movement literature about how shared feelings of moral shock or outrage at perceived injustices, and the broad sense of group identity commonly experienced by activists, can help propel movements toward achieving their desired societal change (Goodwin et al. 2001). In contrast, certain scholars view Sharp’s efforts at “secularizing” nonviolence (Gurashi 2019) as having come at the expense of the emotional engagement now seen as necessary for contentious mobilizations. In a broad-ranging critique of Sharp’s works, including of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Chabot (2015, 231) raises the point that Sharp “reflects a positivist approach to knowledge that favors universal truths, fixed binaries, and instrumentalist assumptions about actors, goals, choices, and outcomes.” Chabot suggests that Sharp’s referrals to the *strategic* element of nonviolent tactics logically flow from his *rationalistic* epistemology.

The argument advanced here is that Sharp offers a complex theorization that does not exclusively rely on the exercise of rational, or dispassionate, reasoning on the part of movement participants. For a start, the book provides an elaborate account as to how political power is partially maintained by “psychological and ideological factors, such as habits and attitudes toward obedience and submission, and the presence or absence of a common faith, ideology, or sense of mission” (Sharp 1973, 11). In terms of activist challenges to power, Sharp demonstrates that emotions may be aroused by movement leaders to motivate activism and a maintain persistent sense of movement solidarity. As an interesting aside, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* also chronicles how authorities may respond to nonviolent movement tactics *emotionally* (530–31). To be sure, for some movement scholars a sharp dichotomy may not exist between emotionality and strategy, the latter being frequently attributed to Sharp’s thinking: “Emotions, often overlooked, permeate all stages of strategic action, including initial engagement, the formulation of goals, the loyalties of social networks, the choices made, sacrifices accepted, and outcomes” (Jasper 2004, 6).

In any event, the repeated references to terms such as *emotion*, *feeling*, *passion*, and so on, should cast doubt on an affectively antiseptic narrative on Sharp's part.

Gene Sharp offers a strategic approach to nonviolent action, and this need not imply theorization that excludes emotional factors underlying movement involvements. However, another critique has emerged: that Sharp is unable to adequately account for failed contentious episodes that are typically characterized by a lack of action. "Concerning absence of action," say Martin and Varney (2003, 122), "Sharp's framework gives little help. His major works focus almost entirely on nonviolent action, with relatively little attention to explaining why action might not be occurring, except when he examines obedience, a central concept in his theory of power." Among the numerous theoretical achievements of the sociologist Mark Granovetter is his formulation of a "threshold model" of collective participation (Granovetter 1978; Granovetter and Soong 1983), indicating that the propensity of any given individual to participate is dependent on the number of others who do likewise. In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, a participatory threshold is elaborated that arguably predates the formal mechanism outlined by Granovetter:

The strength of the nonviolent group will be strongly influenced by the people who are actually carrying out the action: the men and women who refuse to work in a strike, the volunteers who disobey laws in a civil disobedience campaign, the people who refuse taxes, who parade in the streets, and who leave boycotted goods on the shelves. If they participate fully, and persist despite the punishments meted out to them, the nonviolent movement is likely to be strong. If significant numbers of the nonviolent actionists decide, however, not to continue to take part, then the nonviolent movement will be weakened. (Sharp 1973, 459)

Sharp applies a similar logic in respect of personnel charged with upholding coercive political authority, noting that another contributing factor to social movement success is the ability of activists to weaken the morale and, ultimately, the participation of law enforcement personnel and others involved in governmental offices and roles. A tactical ploy that may be adopted here is for movement participants to fraternize with troops, police forces, and administrative personnel in a process of converting political agents to the movement's cause (Sharp 1973, 732–33).

A commonly recognized feature of Sharp's theoretical system is his stress on the basis of political power. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* specifies a "consent" model with respect to the relation between citizen and state, in that the panoply of governmental activities (including the arrangement of public agencies and offices) is said to reflect the agreement of citizens who are governed under such systems. In short, "all government is based upon consent" (Sharp 1973, 28; italics removed). This is not to suggest that consent is necessarily freely given by the citizenry, given the existence of "inducements, pressures, and even sanctions," but, nevertheless, "obedience remains

essentially voluntary” (28). In this regard, and as was briefly noted in the introduction, Sharp draws on long-standing libertarian philosophical assessments regarding the nature of observed servitude on the part of the masses toward the holders of political leadership.

Sharp’s critics have questioned the generalizability of Sharp’s conception of political power, said to be reflected in a monolithic, leviathan-like (Brennan and Buchanan [1980] 2000) structure of government. The critics suggest that this configuration of political authority envisioned by Sharp runs the risk of ignoring alternative patterns of distributed, polycentric political power, as well as the existence of nonstate forms of power such as patriarchy (McGuinness 1993; Martin and Varney 2003). Although Sharp’s book does cover numerous cases of nonviolent actions taking place within the likes of federal political systems, it may be reasonably argued that opportunities remain to formally apply Sharpian nonviolence theory to an even broader range of diffuse power settings.

There is another aspect to Sharp’s power theory that seems underappreciated by the critics, and that is the manner in which nonviolent actions dramatically reinforce the *contingent* character of political obedience within a liberal-democratic polity. Although there is no question, as is recognized in Sharp’s book, that nonviolent actions are not cost-free, the ability of social movements to implement their tactics—and to articulate dissenting, and typically minoritarian, viewpoints—provides another outlet for expression that complements (and, yet, goes beyond) conventional mechanisms such as voting, undertaking legal actions, and standing for political office. This insight aligns well with the Austrian economist Don Lavoie’s vision of a radical liberal democracy, which is not merely “a quality of the conscious will of a representative organization that has been legitimated by the public, but a quality of the discursive process of the distributed wills of the public itself” (Lavoie 1993, 111). Sharp’s contentiously nonviolent strain of political action could be interpreted as a practical instantiation of the principle of political openness that was espoused by Lavoie.

Sharp’s Approach: Empirical Validations and Challenges (Old and New)

Gene Sharp not only presented a theory of nonviolent action. He also embraced an approach to the study of nonviolence, chronicling an impressive array of examples and case studies illustrating the strategic and tactical decisions made by social movements, the forms of bilateral conduct between activists and their opponents, and, finally, rendered judgments with respect to the successes (or otherwise) of movement campaigns over time. In promulgating this applied approach, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* exposed—“hiding in plain sight,” as it were—an astonishing range of novel nonviolent actions that could be studied, and potentially emulated, by practitioners of contentious politics. Again, it is observable that Sharp’s work demonstrated

a momentous shift in the study of social movements from ethics and norms to strategies and techniques (Gurashi 2019; Lambelet 2021).

Sharp was motivated to highlight the nuances of nonviolent action because he was convinced that nonviolence *can* achieve contentious objectives, including those that stand in opposition to highly organized, lethal political power. It has been supposed that “Sharp advocated a utilitarian model, proposing that strategic nonviolence is simply more effective than violence. He argued that violence is not necessary if citizens recognize the various forms of power that they possess, such as the capacity to withhold their cooperation, skills and labor, and material resources” (Nepstad 2015, 417). The themes conveyed in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* are held to advance the strategic case *favoring nonviolent action over violent action*. This dichotomy between these two modes of action is explicitly acknowledged by Sharp himself (1973, v–vi; 451–54; 551–52), and recognized by others as key to appreciating the ongoing salience of Sharp’s insights (e.g., Caplan 1994, 6).

An obvious problem confronted by theorists and practitioners of strategic and tactical nonviolence is that other options, even unedifying ones, are available. Although Sharp identified a litany of benefits surrounding the conscientious pursuit of nonviolent action, it is observable that certain social movement activists, and their key supporters, do pursue violent tactics to coerce gains from their political (and other) targets. Acts of violence involve actual physical harm, or threats of harm, to persons, examples of which may include rioting, terrorism, civil war, and conventional military warfare. In addition to violent measures meting actual physical harm to persons, property damage and theft can cause great damage to the interests of property owners and communities in general.¹

Why might violence occur? Subjective variations in tactical preferences, and differences in perceived costs attached to differing tactics, as held by individual activists could help explain why movements sometimes fracture into “moderate” (tactically nonviolent) and “radical” (tactically violent) factions, or what is referred to in the literature as “flanks” (Freeman 1975; Haines 1984, 1988). Arguably one of the more forthright critics of nonviolence, or at least certain aspects of nonviolent tactical dispositions, is presented by Peter Gelderloos (2007, 2013). In effect, Gelderloos presents a few elements of what may be described as the “pacifist’s dilemma,” whereby the conduct of certain nonviolent tactics appears impotent in shifting the balance of political power away from the dominating, repressive mode of statism. He is critical of moderate social movement organizations that are viewed as denying “people the right to self-determination in directing their own struggles” (Gelderloos 2007, 59). Taking the option of violence off the table, according to Gelderloos, limits the ability

1. Regarding property destruction, Sharp considered acts that destroy one’s own property in protest to be examples of nonviolence (1973, 140). By contrast, sabotaging someone else’s property was viewed by Sharp as being outside the scope of his person-centric definition of violence (608). Novak (2021) outlines the economic harms associated with property damage, looting, and similar actions that unjustly prevent the exercise of property rights.

of a movement to draw upon the full array of tactics available to them: “All social struggles, except those carried out by a completely pacified and thus ineffective people, include a diversity of tactics” (22).

A movement can embrace nonviolent or violent actions. It is, thus, an empirical question to establish the extent to which nonviolence is effective in overturning political authoritarianism and effecting societal changes more generally. Over the past decade a wave of empirical literature has identified nonviolent tactics as being *more* effective than their violent counterparts in effecting change in directions preferred by social movements. These studies refer to a variety of factors lending support to the effectiveness of nonviolence over violence—including the capability of large numbers, and diverse segments, of the population to become involved in nonviolent tactical action (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011); the incompatibility of violence with deep-seated ethical norms held by members of the public (Feinberg et al. 2020); and the potential for politicians to exploit movement violence to gain electoral support (Wasow 2020). The subjectivist orientation underpinning the tactical possibilities framework implies that movements may have nonviolent and violent elements operating simultaneously, reflecting heterogeneous preferences on the part of individual activists; however, Chenoweth and Shock (2015, 446) found “no evidence that violent flanks positively impact the success rates of nonviolent campaigns.” In effect, these and similar studies vindicate Sharp’s original position preferencing nonviolent action as the means for movements to engage with their political opponents.

Tactical choices tend to correlate with ideological and behavioral preferences with respect to change, but it is important to note that choice is not costless. Social movement participants need to select for their preferred tactic, which contends with the perceived trade-offs and tensions between nonviolence and violence. An enduring legacy of Sharp’s contribution is his detailed exploration of the major costs associated with violent tactical action. Two cost categories attributed to violent tactics are, first, those of *public antagonism* in response to any resort to violence by a social movement, and second, *counterrepression* by law enforcement and other agents of the state to quell violent tactical pursuits.

In respect of the public antagonism thesis, it is supposed that selecting violent tactics is more likely to have the effect of undermining popular support for the movement. Sharp (1973, 526) wrote that “if violence is used by or on behalf of the activists the tendency toward both a relative and an absolute increase of their strength and support seems to reverse.” As noted by Sharp and subsequent generations of social movement researchers, one of the key advantages of nonviolent action is that such conduct fosters “the maximum degree of active participation in the struggle by the highest proportion of the population” (596). To reverse this line of action in favor of violence against an opponent is, in turn, likely to impose severe limitations on the capacity of the movement to accumulate resources, and to encourage the involvement of additional activists and volunteers (460). As Sharp noted, the considered ineffectiveness of violence is an important part of the reason that opponents attempt to cast

social movement tactics, even demonstrably nonviolent ones, as violent, or that they perversely (and in clandestine ways, say, through the infiltration of agents provocateurs) seek to foment violent responses by certain movement participants.

This is not to suggest that nonviolent tactics are necessarily met with unanimous approval from the broader population. Gene Sharp noted that nonviolence may involve suffering and other harms for activists conducting tactics such as street protests, sit-ins, strikes, and so on, and this may be publicly received with a degree of discomfort and consternation. He saw that, rather than remaining passive in the face of oppression, movement participants need to remain disciplined and to embrace ethical values such as bravery, courage, and fearlessness, even in the face of disapproval from authorities and an obedient general public. To uphold nonviolent discipline, Sharp (1973, 467) saw the exercise of quality leadership as instrumental “in developing the movement along sound lines, gathering support, maintaining confidence, keeping up morale, and guiding it directly or with prepared plans through difficulties to a successful conclusion.” Anticipating theoretical developments in sociology, he also saw persuasive issue framing as key to legitimize, and hopefully build, public support for nonviolent movements. All things considered, Sharp believed that “the nonviolent group may be able directly and indirectly . . . to encourage . . . sympathy and support . . .; all this to a far greater degree than would be possible if the nonviolent group had used violence” (461).

Another cost is that the promulgation of violence by a social movement will be met with violent repressive responses by the state, which not only undermines movement support but feeds a deeper cycle of societal violence. A classical liberal rationale for governmental countermeasures against highly disruptive, if not violent, social movement tactical activities may be advanced. To maintain public order, the state may be charged with preventing nonstate actors from restricting the capacity of others in peacefully conducting their affairs. As Davidson (2014, 283) remarks, “Government has a role to play in reducing private disorder when private solutions are unavailable, or too costly—subject, of course, to not imposing too high dictatorship costs itself.” It is typically the case that “the nonviolent group may find arrayed against it the government’s troops, police, prisons and the like” (Sharp 1973, 451–52), but as long demonstrated by the historical annals of societal contention, governments have been prone to respond to movement challenges to public authority in a repressive, even violent, manner. The deployment of statist repression even against nonviolent movements not only aims to quell contemporary disobedience, but to “inhibit future disobedience by other persons” (12).

Although it is imaginable that state repression of violent social movement tactical maneuver might meet with the approval of a public (or some elements thereof) desiring public order, Sharp contends that there are significant costs potentially borne by *governments* seeking to meet social movement *nonviolence* with statist *violence*. In the face of repression, “disobedient subjects may still refuse to submit and may be willing to endure the repression and to continue their resistance in order to

achieve some overriding objective” (Sharp 1973, 35). The risk is that violent counter-responses by law enforcement and other relevant political actors might elicit public sympathy toward the movement’s cause and in favor of the activists. Allegiances to the state may be undermined to such an extent that the power foundations of the existing political order crumbles: “The change in the subjects’ wills may lead to their withdrawing from the ruler their service, cooperation, submission and obedience. This withdrawal may occur among both the ordinary subjects and the ruler’s agents and administrators” (31). A good example of this political jiu-jitsu was the peaceful mass demonstrations by ordinary citizens in the lead-up to the fall of communism in Europe and central Asia in the late twentieth century.

It is argued that Sharp provides a strong, and influential, case for nonviolent action on the part of social movements. But the case does not conclude at this juncture. Not all social movements, or bouts of nonviolent action, achieve the change objectives they seek—even if we assume that activists share a coherent understanding of why they engage with contention. The proposition that movement activists be highly disciplined and well resourced, even to a degree approximating that of their statist opponents, poses for many dissenters an extraordinarily difficult benchmark to achieve. Then there are the complexities associated with the variable nature of counter-responses by movement opponents, and the possible responses, if any, to violent repression from government forces and their supporters.

The availability of digital technologies, such as the internet and its myriad applications (e.g., social media), personal computers, and smartphones, has produced a litany of new opportunities and challenges. Sharp (1973, 400) considered the establishment of alternative communications systems as a nonviolent tactic, but scarcely would have predicted the profound effects of the digital age for movement mobilization. Several studies have indicated that online facilities appear to have mobilized numerous, and diverse kinds of, participants to be involved in movement tactical schemes, including nonviolent protests and other contentious activity (Earl and Kimport 2011; Tufecki and Wilson 2012; Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Earl et al. 2015). The status of the internet and its offshoots as general-purpose technologies has, on the other hand, reduced the costs of surveillance and online repression on the part of governmental authorities (as discussed in Novak 2021).

To what extent the internet and associated digital innovations will allow movements to effectively organize nonviolent actions remains to be seen. As discussed by Tufecki (2017), certain digitally enabled movements have exhibited both organizational and tactical fragmentation that have resulted in violent offshoots. Researchers have more recently examined the extent to which online collaborations facilitate the emergence of disruptive, and even violent, “flash mobs” that congregate in a certain location (e.g., a public space, or a corporate or political location) and then quickly disperse (Al-khateeb and Agarwal 2021). Consistent with Sharp’s sentiments, the onset of the internet and its manifold applications has yet to render

obsolete the need for the strategic and disciplined conduct of nonviolent tactics, which may include efforts to dispel intragroup demands to commit violence against opponents.

Conclusion

The work of Gene Sharp indicates that movement organizers, activists, and their supporters are able to devise a range of tactical ploys, including those deployed by other movements in the present or the past. These tactics aim to provoke public awareness about movement grievances and demands, and to persuade decision makers in politics, business, and civil society more broadly about the merits of movement narratives and claims. One stands in admiration not only of Sharp's careful identification and descriptions of a vast range of social movement tactics in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, but also of his unflinching dedication to the quest to promulgate societal change through the application of nonviolent tactics.

Sharp provides a rich, nonreductive theory of nonviolent action that should be appealing not only to students of sociology, but also to those in such fields as political science, political economy, and history. Although *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* has been adjudged by some to contain a largely anti-moralistic picture of nonviolent action that leans heavily on strategy and tactical choice, Sharp is regarded in this paper as providing a balanced view that dually recognizes the presence of agency and cultural, institutional, and structural contexts that influence social movement activities in a variety of case-specific ways. Similarly, resources accumulated by activists are important to propel contentious action of a nonviolent character, but Sharp also appreciates that emotional solidarity, rhetorical persuasion, and related manifestations of affect are needed to motivate participation against seemingly overpowering authority.

In examining the legacy of Gene Sharp's magnum opus, I have found that modern empirical literature vindicates the Sharpian position that nonviolence is more effective than its violent tactical counterpart in engendering societal change. Nonviolent social movements are also able to draw in larger, more diverse support from the community, and they are less likely to create animosity among the broader public who, at best, may be only tangentially interested in the movement's cause. Sharp's framework realistically appreciates that not all movement participants will campaign nonviolently, but that the costs of violence are likely to be multiple as well as relatively greater in extent than comparative movements looking to advance nonviolently. How the balance of nonviolent versus violent action will reveal itself in the coming years, as technological and other developments continue apace, is to be determined. What does not change, however, is the originality and enduring relevance of Gene Sharp's *Politics of Nonviolent Action* in describing the powerful changes that nonviolence springs forth.

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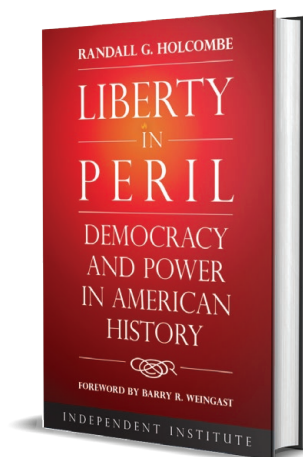
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