

ETHICS OF NONVIOLENT POLITICS
-A CRITICAL 21st CENTURY ANALYSIS
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Abstract

There has been extensive literature written on nonviolence as a strategy for securing political change. The general tenor is that nonviolence is considered ethically preferable due to the absence of direct violence. To what extent is this assumption valid, and is it right to believe that nonviolence is always ethically unproblematic and, therefore, justifiable? The existing literature concentrates mainly on the feasibility and achievements of nonviolent actions, leaving sufficient room for debates on ethics, morality and the concept of power in nonviolent theory in politics. Also, the discussions and works surrounding violence and nonviolence often treat the topics as separate entities. The research explores whether violence and nonviolence are entirely different things or similar under certain circumstances. The existing differences or similarities will be elucidated. Further, this research will explore the ethical questions concerning the moral legitimacy of nonviolent actions using coercion, manipulation and control. An ethical framework to address the morality of political actions will be proposed.

The thesis does not research the success or failure of political goals using nonviolent actions as a political strategy. Neither is it an examination of whether violence or nonviolence is preferable for certain kinds of goals. Instead, the presented research solely explores the motivations behind actions defined as ‘nonviolent politics’ and discuss morality and ethics regarding these actions. This thesis shall analyse the concepts of violence and nonviolence and study real-world examples to see whether they are distinct. The concept of power and coercion in terms of violence and nonviolence will illuminate how violent and nonviolent political actions resemble each other. Moreover, this research will examine 21st-century political circumstances and apply nonviolence theories to determine whether and how advanced information technology has shifted the ethics of nonviolent politics.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Table of Contents	3
Table of Figures	6
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Context.....	1
1.2 Literature Review	8
1.3 Research Aims, Objectives and Questions	17
1.4 Research Methodology	18
1.5 Scope of the Research.....	22
1.6 Research Contribution	24
1.7 Organisation of the Research.....	26
Chapter Conclusion	29
2. Defining and Conceptualizing Violence and Nonviolence.....	31
2.1 Analysing the Definitions: Towards Constructive Pluralism.....	32
2.2 Violence and Nonviolence in Context	51
2.2.1 Poisoning	52
2.2.2 Self-Immolation.....	54
2.2.3 Fasting unto Death	55
2.2.4 Property Damage	57
2.3 Influence of Language	59
2.4 My View on Definition.....	64
Chapter Conclusion	67
3. How Distinct is Nonviolence? – Historical Perspective	69
3.1 The Origin of Nonviolence.....	70
3.2 Nonviolence in the Modern World	75
3.3 Contemporary Nonviolence: Strategy or Belief?	87
3.3.1 Feminist Approach	99
Chapter Conclusion	104
4. How Distinct is Nonviolence? – Analytical Perspective	107
4.1 Theorising Nonviolence.....	108

4.1.1	Nonviolence as a Philosophy.....	110
4.1.2	Nonviolence as a Behaviour	113
4.1.3	Nonviolence as a Mass People’s Power	116
4.2	Violence and Nonviolence as Instruments.....	120
4.2.1	Manifestation of Power.....	122
4.2.2	Manifestation of Coercion	129
	Chapter Conclusion	139
5.	Moral Justification for Nonviolent Methods.....	141
5.1	Link between Nonviolent Means and Just Ends.....	142
5.2	Morality of Nonviolent Actions	152
5.2.1	Is Civil Disobedience Inherently Justified?	155
5.2.2	Nonviolent Methods Use Power over People	163
5.2.2	Nonviolent Methods Cause Harm	170
5.2.3	Nonviolent Methods and Tension with Democracy.....	172
	Chapter Conclusion	179
6.	Shift in Theory and Practice due to Technological Revolution	182
6.1	Is Virtual Nonviolence Possible?	183
6.1.1	Virtual Nonviolent Mechanisms.....	184
6.1.2	Civil Resistance in the Modern World.....	188
6.2	Cyberattack, Cyberwar and the Notion of Nonviolence	194
6.2.1	Paradigm Cases	195
6.2.2	Scepticism about Cyberattack being Violence	199
6.2.3	Arguments for Cyberattack being Violence	202
6.2.3	Critical Analysis.....	205
6.3	Artificial Intelligence: A nonviolent weapon?	210
	Case study 1: use of drones.....	212
	Case study 2: use of bots.....	213
	Chapter Conclusion	218
7.	Ethics of Political Actions in 21 st Century	220
7.1	Justifying Political Actions	221
7.1.1	Traditional Approaches to Ethics in Political Action	222
7.1.2	The Concept of Just Political Action	226
7.1.3	An Ethical Framework	231

7.2	Application of Just Political Action Framework.....	242
7.2.1	Some Paradigm Cases	243
7.2.2	Virtual World	248
7.3	Way Forward	255
	Chapter Conclusion	257
8.	Conclusion and Future Research Directions	259
8.1	Synthesizing the Findings	259
8.2	Reflections.....	264
8.3	Broader Discussion and Future Research.....	266
	Bibliography	269

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Structure of Thesis.....	26
Figure 3: Historical development of nonviolence.....	104
Figure 4: Key Arguments and Findings.....	264

1. Introduction

To begin is the most important part of any quest and by far the most courageous.

~ Plato

Nonviolence gained considerable attention in the last century because of well-known figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., who practised and preached nonviolence. In the academic literature, Gene Sharp became one of the notable scholars to advance the theory of nonviolent action. Yet, the topic stays undertheorised when ethical perspective and technical development are taken into consideration. This thesis sets out to show that seemingly nonviolent political actions have more in common with violence than their proponents appear to recognise and hence require, in many circumstances, a justification akin to the type of justification that avowedly violent acts need before they can be considered permissible. This thesis will demonstrate that violence and nonviolence are complicit in one another, like coercion, power, intention, and instrumentality. This research investigates the implications of technological advancement and new developments like cyberattacks for justifying political actions.

This chapter will introduce the thesis by first discussing the background and context, followed by the literature review, the research aims, objectives and questions, the methodology, the scope of the research, the research contribution and finally, the organisation of the research.

1.1 Background and Context

The literature on nonviolence has proliferated over the past century. The importance of nonviolence has grown for two reasons: (1) People were wary of wars in the last century and

were in pursuit of peace. (2) The topic of nonviolence, especially in the form of civil disobedience, started taking space in the political arena. Because of these two vital factors, nonviolence is still sought after in both theory and practice. Civil disobedience has become a nonplus ultra tool for social and political activists worldwide to fight against injustice. The continued discourse on nonviolence in politics is important for deepening our understanding of violence, which is often seen as an essential part of politics due to the perpetual wars in which the states are involved.

Prior research on nonviolence has concentrated on civil resistance or civil disobedience from the view of challenging the state and regime change. Interestingly, almost all arguments focus on the effectiveness of the methods involved.¹ There are three fields in which further research is conducive: 1) Justification for nonviolent methods, 2) Interlink between violence and nonviolence, and 3) The effect of technological advancement. In the following paragraphs, I outline the context of the thesis by reviewing the stated areas of the research. I examine these further in depth in the literature review section.

There is still limited research on the ethical and moral considerations for choosing nonviolence in political actions. The literature covers the topics of violent and nonviolent political actions as two different fields.² While the major discourse in the literature on violent political actions revolves around the justification for violence, the discourse on nonviolent actions is primarily concerned with how nonviolent methods have led to peaceful political and social change. For example, the just war tradition considers cases where violence in the form of war is necessary and justified. Michael Walzer is of the opinion that “War is hell, ..., even

¹ See, for example (this list is not exhaustive), *Why Civil Resistance Works* by Stephan and Chenoweth (2012), *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* by Ackermann and DuVall (2000), *How Freedom is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy* by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005) and *Civil Resistance & Power Politics* by Roberts and Garton Ash (2009). Further, the website <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/resource-library> provides an extensive list of literature on civil resistance and civil disobedience.

² There is a host of literature on civil resistance and an impressive body of literature on violence, war or just war theory. The interrelationship between violence and nonviolence (civil resistance) in regard to ethical justification is largely missing.

when the rules are strictly observed” (Walzer, 1992, p. 45), but still insists that armed intervention is not always unjust or morally wrong, for instance, in the case of “humanitarian intervention.” When nonviolence is considered, the assumption is that its justification is a priori given due to its moral permissibility. Existing research frequently attributes the success of nonviolence, especially peaceful protests and nonviolent civil resistance, as the reason for choosing nonviolence. For example, Gregg (2018, Chapter 1) gives modern examples of nonviolent resistance, including Hungary, South Africa, India, Denmark, Norway and the United States, to underline his argument that many successful nonviolent resistances took place in history. The questions raised are almost always only about how and why nonviolence works better, particularly in comparison to violence (e.g. Stephan and Chenoweth (2012) and Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005)).

Existing studies have not addressed the internal relationship between violence and nonviolence adequately when it comes to the concepts of power, coercion and instrumentality.³ This thesis will argue that power plays a significant role in both violent and nonviolent political action. Further, in the struggle with the government or state, power is the main issue, and violence or nonviolence is just a ‘tool’ or an ‘instrument’ used to achieve this. According to Holmes (2017), it is “prima facie wrong to harm or kill persons” and “killing persons is presumptively wrong.” This research deals with questions of morality, such as whether actions that cause harm or kill, even if perceived as nonviolent, are morally wrong.

³ The relationship between violence, power and coercion has been studied widely (e.g. Arendt, Foucault). Similarly, Gene Sharp has theorised nonviolent methods using power. However, the comparative conceptual study of violent and nonviolent methods regarding whether and how they are similar concerning the concepts of power, coercion and instrumentality is largely missing. Nevertheless, there have been many scholars who have grappled with the distinction between violence and nonviolence. This is discussed in Chapter 2.1.

The presumption of moral permissibility in nonviolent cases involving coercion is also ambivalent. According to Sharp (1973)⁴, ‘nonviolent’ coercion and psychological intervention (e.g. hunger strikes) are accepted methods of nonviolent political action. On the other hand, psychological harm is defined as violence by many scholars (see Galtung 1969; Wolff 1969; Holmes 2017). An embargo is a case of ‘nonviolent’ economic coercion, which is controversial. On an individual level, defamation and stalking could cause psychological harm. However, Sharp writes, “The actions which may be used to produce nonviolent harassment include stronger and more persistent use of “haunting” (constantly remaining near the person) and “taunting” (name-calling and accusations) ...” (Sharp, 1973b, p. 369). This suggests that psychological harm can be an acceptable means of nonviolent action. It is true that “violence is, of course, one way of coercing, but only one” (Coady, 2007, p. 39).

The impact of socio-cultural factors on nonviolence has not been entirely studied within the discourse of violence and nonviolence. This thesis will contend that means of dominance are inherent in both violence and nonviolence. Thus, whether the concepts of consent and disobedience are used to describe nonviolence or the threat of punishment is used as a part of violence, it involves social relationships. A transient manipulative relationship is at work in the study of the civil rights movement, as this thesis will show that, strategically speaking, it is a means of planned domination. Both topics can only be analysed by considering the social context. The act of tilling land is neither inherently violent nor nonviolent. However, tilling the land by the landless people during Brazil’s landless workers movement (MST⁵) as protest activism is considered nonviolent political action. Vinthagen (2015, p. 13) asserts that the act of growing vegetables in itself is neither a nonviolent action

⁴ Sharp’s book *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* consists of three parts. I refer to the year 1973 to reference the entire work. The individual parts are referenced as 1973a, 1973b and 1973c.

⁵ Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra

nor a political act, but when landless people have to starve, growing vegetables, as the activists in Brazil's MST did, becomes an act of resistance.

The advent of technology has also altered how the ethics of violent or nonviolent political actions should be understood. Whereas a state had to resort to military force to effect regime change in another state until the late 20th century, nowadays technology has opened up new possibilities. Cyberwarfare or cyberattacks pose several ethical questions, as there are currently no overarching international laws governing these activities. Additionally, it is easy for governments or states to deny any involvement in such attacks, as they can claim that the attack might have originated from their territory but refuse to take responsibility. Cyberwarfare knows no state boundaries. The cyberworld is a new and complex domain—a phenomenon of the 21st century. As McReynolds (2015) noted, “In cyberwarfare it is often information that is more powerful than any kind of physical military advantage” (p. 439). Against this backdrop, this research studies what implications cyberattacks could have on the notion of nonviolence.

Another significant impact of technology has been on mass communication through the Internet. In the 20th century, people relied on newspapers, televisions, and radios, and it could take weeks or months for information to reach them. Now, with the widespread penetration of mobile phones and social media, even in poorer countries, disseminating photos, videos, and messages has become possible within minutes. The downside of this rapid dissemination of information is the ease with which fake news can be propagated. Although the media outreach is vast, digital literacy levels are comparatively low. As Bjola (2018) noted, “Simply put, whether by fomenting political discontent, influencing electoral results, or weakening state authority, digital propaganda has now reached a point at which its long-term impact on state functioning can arguably be as great as a conventional military attack” (p.

308). Therefore, the comprehension of nonviolence or violence requires serious re-evaluation in the digital age.

The topic of nonviolence cannot be discussed without addressing the issue of violence. After all, the word ‘nonviolence’ itself contains the word ‘violence’. Vinthagen (2015) asserts that “nonviolence always engages with certain aspects of violence and cannot occur where violence does not exist” (p. 62). This research will engage with the following questions: Are violence and nonviolence conceptually interlinked and bound up with one another, or is it more a question of them being empirically interlinked? Or is it both? The following steps will be taken to address the issues and questions raised in the previous paragraphs: analysing the ambiguous definitions, investigating the underlying social and technological context, utilising hypothetical examples, studying historically informed or current exemplary cases, and developing an ethical framework.

We cannot understand the ethics of nonviolent methods—the question of whether and in what circumstances these methods can justifiably be used—without deciding whether these methods are morally preferable (*ceteris paribus*) to violent methods. For nonviolent methods to be considered morally preferable, all else being equal, they must be sufficiently distinct from violence and not carry the moral opprobrium associated with violence. This is where my research is located, which challenges the widely accepted assumption that nonviolent political methods are always ethically better than violent methods by arguing that nonviolent political activities are not always as nonviolent as they might seem in theory.

By showing that, contrary to commonly held notions, moral justification is not a priori given in non-violent political activities, this research will contribute to the political theory of violence and nonviolence. This includes:

- (1) Analysing existing definitions and concepts and showing the ambiguity in the demarcation between violence and nonviolence.
- (2) Showing how violence and nonviolence share similar morally problematic characteristics.
- (3) Illustrating how technological development further blurs the distinction between violence and nonviolence.
- (4) Providing exemplary cases of nonviolence that show many troubling features so that they are not entirely free from the need for special moral attention and careful justification typical of violent acts.
- (5) Working out the consequences of the answer to the first three questions for understanding the ethics of nonviolence.

Since ‘soft war’ or ‘alternatives to war’ (a term coined by James Pattison), such as ‘cyberwar’ is becoming more prevalent, it is essential to understand how this differs from nonviolence. As another key area of investigation, my research will discuss paradigmatic cases of cyberattacks.

The caveat I want to make is that I do not deny the existence of either violence or pure nonviolence. I am concerned with the ethics of political activities or actions that are termed or known as ‘violent’ or ‘nonviolent’ methods. Political actions, in general, could be both violent and nonviolent; normally, they are a combination of both. I define political action as any action performed to achieve a political goal. By political goals, I refer to objectives that are associated with politics and the state. These goals are sometimes pursued by non-state actors, but more often than not, their aim is to change the direction of the state or take it over, e.g. through civil resistance, civil disobedience, and revolutionary action. As Carl von Clausewitz famously said, “War is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means” (von Clausewitz, 1976, 87);

even war is a political action. In this research, the focus is on nonviolent political actions and the justification of political actions in general.

1.2 Literature Review

This preliminary assessment of the literature is about the contextual positioning of this research within the broader scholarly works. Critical analysis of the relevant work is done in the chapters where the subject in question is discussed. I begin with a general discussion of the relevant literature. Then, I discuss the literature and the gap by referring to the three previously mentioned under-researched areas.

Among political and social scientists and scholars, the ongoing debate is predominantly about the achievements of nonviolence (mainly civil resistance) or how it has failed. Several works (e.g. Stephan and Chenoweth (2012); Nepstad (2015); Chenoweth (2021)) have covered the success stories of nonviolence. Nonviolent proponents include, among others, Gene Sharp (1973, 2005), George Lakey (1987), Peter Ackermann and Christopher Kruegler (1993), Peter Ackermann and Jack DuVall (2000), Todd May (2015b), Brian Martin (2009, 2015) and Robert Bartlett Gregg (2018). Gene Sharp discussed the merits and strategies of nonviolence in his three volumes of seminal work, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Peter Ackermann has elaborated on the effective use of nonviolent actions in powerful movements. While Todd May (2015b) takes a philosophical approach to nonviolent activities, especially regarding the values of ‘dignity’ and ‘equality’, Brian Martin sees nonviolence as a tool. Martin appeals to apply the ideas from nonviolent actions to different arenas. Another notable scholar is Howard Zinn (2002), an advocate of peace and nonviolence who, besides authoring several works, was also a social activist.

The nonviolent approach has not been without critics. George Orwell contends that “without a free press and the right of assembly” (Orwell, 1949), Gandhi’s nonviolent methods

would be virtually impossible. Howard Ryan (2002), who is per se not against nonviolence, is sceptical about whether nonviolence alone “has the potential to oust a ruling class” and to bring about fundamental change. He calls for adaptation to different movements and changing circumstances. Ryan argues that “popular movements usually resort to arms only when harsh repression threatens a nonviolent movement” (Ryan, 2002, p. 29). He gives an example of El Salvadorans for whom continuing their struggle for justice non-violently under intense attack seems neither realistic nor humane. Ward Churchill (1998) regards pacifism as the ideology of nonviolent political action and offers several examples to support his argument that pacifism is counterrevolutionary or preserves the status quo at best. Contemporary criticism comes from Peter Gelderloos, according to whom nonviolence is ineffective, racist, statist, patriarchal, tactically and strategically inferior, and deluded (Gelderloos, 2007). He further states that “nonviolence has lost the debate” and “nonviolence has failed on a global level”, arguing that many social movements and rebellions against oppression and exploitation in the past 20 years have not worked (Gelderloos, 2013).

The supporters of nonviolent movements are mainly concerned with their success, and the critics draw attention to their failure. The empirical study on the success of nonviolent resistance campaigns by Stephan and Chenoweth (2012) is beneficial in identifying the comparative effectiveness of violent and nonviolent campaigns. Work by Nepstad (2015) that gives an overview of the topic of nonviolence, such as the difference between nonviolence and pacifism, different kinds of nonviolence, dynamics, and outcomes of nonviolence, is also helpful. My focus in this thesis aligns more with the arguments put forward by many scholars, such as Churchill and Gelderloos, who believe that nonviolent movements are rarely entirely violent or nonviolent. However, unlike Churchill and Gelderloos, I do not doubt the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance. Instead, I raise the question of whether nonviolent

resistance is genuinely nonviolent to the extent that it is often claimed to be. Consider the following two statements by Stephan and Chenoweth:

Few campaigns, historically, have been purely violent or nonviolent, and many resistance movements, particularly protracted ones, have had violent and nonviolent periods.

Scholars have identified the unique characteristics of these different forms of struggle, and we feel comfortable characterising some resistance campaigns as primarily violent and others as primarily nonviolent. (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2012, p. 30)

Stephan and Chenoweth acknowledge that historical (empirical) campaigns are typically mixed between violent and nonviolent cases. They assume that violence and nonviolence are sharply distinguishable enough to conceptually differentiate violent campaigns from nonviolent ones⁶. While I accept their empirical observation, I challenge the underlying conceptual assumption that violent and nonviolent resistance are fundamentally distinct. My research explores this gap or territory through an ethical lens, focusing on conceptual theory backed by some exemplary instances rather than quantitative empirical research.

In the last two decades, numerous works have been published on civil resistance, civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance, which are considered a part of nonviolent action. Broadly speaking, the general agreement is that these methods work without violence, and even ordinary people can use them. Some of the notable works are *Civil Resistance and Power Politics* (2009) by Roberts and Garton Ash, *A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works* (2015) by Stellan Vinthagen, *Civil Disobedience: Protest, Justification, and the Law* (2013) by Tony Milligan, and *Ripples of Hope – How Ordinary People Resist*

⁶ They conceptualize civil resistance as a type of unconventional warfare characterized by the use of various weapons and the application of force differently. (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2012, p. 31)

Repression without Violence (2015) by Robert M. Press. These works typically deal with protests and social movements that are carried out peacefully. Some works discuss theory, but more often, the themes are activism, methods, and several examples depicting civil resistance movements around the world. The ethical and moral questions concerning these activities are rarely raised. To provide a broader perspective, I will briefly examine the three aforementioned literary works to sketch a general outlook.

Roberts and Garton Ash (2009) present a comprehensive overview of civil resistance in different leading cases up to that time. Several other factors, like international influence and the media, played a significant role in all cases. The question arises as to whether positive outcomes, such as regime change, were rather the result of chance or whether civil resistance was causally linked to them. To define the success of civil resistance solely in terms of regime change is somewhat limited. Vinthagen (2015) provides a conceptual framework for nonviolent action. His definition of nonviolence, which comprises two factors: “without violence and against violence”, argues that four dimensions of nonviolence must be understood. He states, “The conceptual elements of the term ‘nonviolence’ are contradictory and challenging – philosophically and ideologically as well as practically and organisationally” (p. 71). He acknowledges the ambiguity of the concept but does not question it from an ethical perspective. Press (2015) offers another empirically based work on nonviolent social movements. The case studies in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Kenya are helpful to understand the resistance movement in Africa. The study argues that in all three countries, nonviolent resistance was a crucial factor in bringing about change. The work shows the dynamics of social resistance movements, including individual activism, organisational activism, and mass resistance. However, it does not offer much on the basis of

nonviolent methods or theory vis-à-vis violence, let alone the ethical aspects of nonviolent resistance.

There is also confusion or a missing differentiation between pacifism, peace studies, conflict reconciliation, works on civil disobedience, and philosophical works based on religion. All of these engage with peace or nonviolence, but they are different with respect to their origin, ideology, and purpose. For example, some people associate Nelson Mandela with nonviolence because he received the Nobel Peace Prize. His struggle for freedom from apartheid was tremendous, and he was indisputably an extraordinary leader. However, Mandela and his party, the African National Congress, used violence (weapons) in the late 1940s and early 1950s to fight the apartheid regime (HLS News Staff, 2014). Mandela was also a founding member of the armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. Further, the source of nonviolence is often rooted in religion and has a significant presence in various religious, philosophical, and spiritual activities. There are several literary works that explore these topics. My concern, however, is the political aspect of nonviolence, especially the morality part, and how it can be viewed through a contemporary lens. It is crucial to differentiate between these various concepts to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Justification for nonviolent methods

In justifying nonviolent methods, there exists literature on the justification of civil disobedience. Among the authors who have penned the justification are Kimberley Brownlee (2012) and Candice Delmas (2018a). While Brownlee defends the moral and legal merits of civil disobedience based on conviction and conscience, Delmas' defence is based on different kinds of duties. However, both works focus only on defending civil disobedience. Holistic discussion and justification for nonviolent methods, including other forms beyond civil

disobedience, are lacking. Civil disobedience might be the best-known form of nonviolent political method, but it is not the only one⁷.

Recent literature has explored the concept of whistleblowing (e.g. Santoro and Kumar, 2018; Delmas, 2018a; Scheuerman, 2021). The range of the study encompasses discussion on whether whistleblowing is civil disobedience, how and why civil disobedience and whistleblowing are justified, how to conduct whistleblowing correctly, and how whistleblowers could be protected. An overarching theory for the justification of actions or applied methods is missing. There can be several types of civil disobedience, and whether all of them can be justified with the same metric is questionable. For instance, some scholars consider whistleblowing (Boyd, 2013; Stanger, 2021) and hacktivism as forms of civil disobedience⁸, but the question that needs attention is on what grounds they are justified. Further, the debate on justification should not overlook other kinds of nonviolent political methods that are not necessarily acts of civil disobedience (e.g. hunger strikes and self-immolation).

This thesis aims to address this gap in the literature by studying the ethics and morality of nonviolent methods in the context of associated harm. Chapters 4, 5 and 7 investigate this area.

Interlink between violence and nonviolence

Scholars are still dealing with the debate about what constitutes violence and nonviolence. The primary focus of this discourse is the definition and interpretation of violence, with various scholars presenting their views (e.g. Wolff, 1969; Galtung, 1969; Honderich, 2003).

⁷ Delmas (2018a) has argued that we should not be limited by King's or Rawls' idea of 'civil disobedience' and should be prepared to consider a duty to resist using 'uncivil' methods that might include violence.

⁸ The scholars are divided. Boyd (2013) believes that whistleblowing is the new civil disobedience. Stanger (2021) believes that "whistleblowing is a cousin of civil disobedience, but they are not one and the same". For Samuel (2004, p. 239), hacktivism is located in civil disobedience, whereas according to Delmas (2018b, p. 79), "hacktivism should not be considered the new civil disobedience".

An attempt to define nonviolence is primarily based on effectiveness or technique-oriented (Sharp 1973)⁹. Galtung (1965) has presented a survey of nonviolent techniques of influence. By and large, the study of the relationship between violence and nonviolence is missing. While analysing what “nonviolent force” entails, Trudy Govier (2008) ponders:

The following fundamental presumptions behind this account need further exploration (p. 62):

1. We know what violence is.
2. We know what nonviolence is.
3. In the pursuit of political goals, nonviolent means are generally morally superior to violent means.

She, however, had no answer. She discussed the violence proposed by Galtung, Wolff, and Holmes in detail and, at two points, mentioned that a broad definition of violence leaves no room for nonviolence. She barely discussed nonviolence. In the end, she reflects that “context and intent matter” and suggests we “begin our re-examination of violence by considering its moral significance” (p. 79).

This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the similarities and differences that exist in the concepts of violence and nonviolence. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 investigate the relationship between violence and nonviolence.

Effect of technological advancement

Over the last decade, there has been a rise in academic works that concern the ethical implications of cyber conflict, often referred to as ‘cyberwarfare’ or ‘soft war’. Some of the recent contributions to this field include McReynolds’ work (2015), George Lucas’ research

⁹ Sharp’s further works in multiple languages are available at <https://www.aeinstein.org/digital-library>.

(2017)¹⁰, and the volume on *Soft War – The Ethics of Unarmed Conflict* (2017) with a collection of essays edited by Michael L. Gross and Tamar Meisels. These literary writings treat the subject as a novel and distinct area of study, without considering the nonviolent nature of the methods employed. Thus, there is a need to rethink what nonviolent politics in the 21st century and its ethical consequences represent.

At least in liberal democracies, there is constant tension between the legitimate democratically elected government and the rights of the citizens to protest or dissent. It is understood as the state's duty to maintain peace, law and order. At the same time, the citizens have the right to voice their disagreement, either individually or collectively. In such a case, a conflict arises when the interests of these two parties mismatch. A few examples of such conflicts are the Gorkhali in India, the Kurds in Turkey, and the Catalans in Spain. I do not intend to propose a solution to these conflicts. Instead, I aim to highlight the specific political goals that each uprising seeks to achieve. Hence, the discussion on power relations and topics of nonviolence should also engage in the justification of actions, regardless of who carries them out. This discourse needs to be included in the current literature. This is important because cyberattacks can be executed by states, non-state actors, and individuals alike.

Literature on violence, war, power, and just war theory is abundantly available. My strategy has been to choose selected readings that I can accommodate in my work on discussing violence. I focused on more recent works that encompass topics in the ethics of war, including the conflict in the virtual world. However, there is a substantial amount of work on cyberattacks, cyberwar, and hacking. In the meantime, a fair number of works about hacktivism are at one's disposal. I have chosen to concentrate on works that deal with the justification of cyberwar, like those by Thomas Rid (2012, 2013) and George Lucas (2017),

¹⁰ I refer to the year 2017 to reference the entire work *Ethics and Cyber Warfare: The Quest for Responsible Security in the Age of Digital Warfare*. The individual chapters are referenced as 2017a and 2017b.

because my topic is primarily about ethics and morals. These works all share the commonality of treating the cyber domain as a distinct field with no connection to the physical world. My idea of looking at the justification of nonviolent political actions from a bird's-eye view and its comparison with violent methods is largely missing in the current literature. This thesis aims to fill this gap by evaluating the concept of nonviolence from a broader perspective of treating political actions as one domain. Chapters 6 and 7 will investigate this area.

Overall, the current discourse on nonviolence typically concentrates on the diversity of tactics or different modes of struggle that successfully lead to the goal, so the ethics regarding the methods themselves remain mostly neglected. The question of whether nonviolent tactics are ethically justifiable, especially in comparison to violent actions, has yet to be explored. The assumption of moral permissibility in nonviolence requires serious re-evaluation. Moreover, since the wars in the 21st century can be fought virtually and no blood or dead bodies exist to define the conflicts as violent or nonviolent, it becomes necessary to take a closer look, which reveals in many cases that the nonviolent movements are, especially in ethical terms, violent.

In summary, (1) The subjects of violence and nonviolence are treated as two distinct fields. The existing literature engages either violence or nonviolence, but mostly not together. (2) The ethical questions regarding them as a whole are not raised fully. (3) Technical advancement is not taken into consideration. Therefore, my research project will respond to this gap and explore the ways in which violent and nonviolent political activities are different or similar in order to answer the related ethical questions. It will show that even nonviolent political actions can be violent or harmful at a certain level. Therefore, it is necessary to justify nonviolent political actions. I will develop an ethical framework to address the justification of political actions in the contemporary world.

1.3 Research Aims, Objectives and Questions

I will contend that the ethics of nonviolence are much more ambiguous than commonly believed because the distinction between violence and nonviolence is ambiguous and arbitrary. They share many morally troubling features.

Central research question:

Are nonviolent methods of political action always ethically superior (*ceteris paribus*) to violent methods, e.g. in the context of protest and resistance?

Sub-questions:

- i. Are nonviolent methods genuinely nonviolent (e.g. self-immolation)?
- ii. Are nonviolent methods distinct from violent methods?
- iii. In what circumstances are paradigm cases of nonviolent methods justifiable?
 - a. Is it still nonviolent politics if the action provokes the other party to use violence?
 - b. How far is it justifiable to violate 'democratic' rules and regulations even if the nonviolent method is used?
- iv. What ethical objections are there to using nonviolent methods? What moral worries do they raise?
 - a. Are not violence and nonviolence similar regarding the use of power (through coercion or strategy) in achieving political goals?
 - b. Is it ethical to involve the general public or onlookers in nonviolent political actions without their explicit consent?
 - c. Is it ethical to use violence against oneself, even if it is willingly done?
- v. Is cyberwarfare or cyberattack a nonviolent form of politics?

My central claim is that nonviolent political activities are not as nonviolent as they might seem and those who employ them confront similar justificatory hurdles to those faced by the users of violent methods. The objective shall be achieved by analysing the topic from different perspectives: *definitional, conceptual, historical, theoretical, analytical, empirical, and contemporary development*. The ethical lens is adopted while comparing and contrasting violent and nonviolent methods. The proposed ethical principles for justifying political actions will be derived from the existing normative ethics bound within a framework.

1.4 Research Methodology

This qualitative research will be a blend of theory-analysing and theory-proposing dissertation. Within the discipline of political theory, I follow the analytical philosophical tradition. From the five principles of analytical political theory (quoted in Blau, 2017)¹¹, my research follows to some extent: “(b) it involves conceptual clarity and argumentative rigour, (c) it is normative, and (d) it addresses a plurality of competing values” (p. 7). The empirical examples will aid in understanding the subject matter through observations in practical application. In essence, I triangulate two approaches:

- 1) conceptual analysis and
- 2) observation and analysis of empirical examples.

Theoretical Approach:

Using the methodology of analytical political theory, I analyse the existing works on violence (e.g. Coady, 2007; Bufacchi, 2007; Galtung, 1969; Finlay, 2017) and nonviolence (e.g. Attack, 2012; Butler, 2020), Sharp’s theory of nonviolent action (1973), and the philosophical view

¹¹ “Miller and Dagger (2003: 446–9) outline five principles of analytical political theory: (a) it is essentially separate from deep metaphysical questions about the meaning of human life, (b) it involves conceptual clarity and argumentative rigour, (c) it is normative, (d) it addresses a plurality of competing values, and (e) it ‘aims to serve as the public philosophy of ‘a society of free and equal citizens who have choices to make about how their society will be organised.’”

on nonviolent resistance (e.g. Gregg 2018) to determine to what extent and under which circumstances nonviolent actions are violent according to a certain definition. Theories of nonviolence, especially in the context of political theory, also in relation to power, religion, and philosophy, are explored and analysed. I studied Mahatma Gandhi¹² and Martin Luther King Jr.¹³ and their literary works and activism. I have employed them extensively in this thesis.

Empirical Examples:

I explore several examples in the 21st century, such as Satyagraha (hunger strike), self-immolation (in the Tibetan community), civil disobedience (whistleblowing), economic blockade or sanctions, and cyberattack (hacking), to determine the morality and ethics involved in such political actions. These examples were selected because they are typically perceived or defined as nonviolent but are either ethically questionable and/or have the potential for violent outcomes in the long run. The cases in the cyber world are especially interesting since they could be marked as nonviolent at first glance, but upon studying them closer, they have many characteristics of real-world violence, such as well-planned murder (e.g. poisoning). The examination of the cases was done largely through observations and literature assessments.

Research data is based on observations through literature as well as studying various nonviolent activities both online and offline. I utilise the findings of the theoretical analyses and observation outcomes to develop an ethical framework for nonviolent politics in the 21st century. The framework is underpinned by the tenets of traditional normative ethics and just war theory, which are used to scrutinize ethically problematic issues in the context of nonviolence. I briefly analyse the application of just war theory in the context of

¹² Fischer (2006)

¹³ The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1998), Colaiaco (1988)

cyberwarfare. Though some international laws and other works, such as the “Tallinn Manual”, exist, they will not be discussed in detail.

The choices of empirical examples for in-depth discussion follow two broad generic categories: civil disobedience/resistance and cyberattack. Under these themes, I discuss subcategories and specific examples. For instance, I see whistleblowing and self-immolation as subcategories of civil resistance/disobedience and doxing as a subcategory of cyberattack. To clarify these themes, I use real-world cases. For example, Stuxnet is an illustration of a cyberattack. As a third category, I use examples that are considered nonviolent political actions that do not fall under the previous two categories. Economic sanctions are a case in point. In some cases, I use hypothetical examples or an analogy to clarify the argument.

Generic categories	Civil Disobedience/ Civil Resistance	Cyberattack	Other nonviolent methods
Generic subcategories	e.g. whistleblowing, self-immolation, fasting	e.g. doxing, Denial of Service attack	e.g. economic sanction
Empirical Examples	e.g. the case of Mohamed Bouazizi, the Otpor movement, the Occupy movement, the Arab Spring, and other mass protests and movements	e.g. Stuxnet, Ransomware	e.g. the case of Iraq

Since I am challenging the common assumption that “nonviolence is, *ceteris paribus*, always ethically superior to violence”, I intend to show that the popular belief of an a priori moral justification for nonviolence is not true. This popular belief comprises the following components:

1. Morally superior methods of interacting with others should always be chosen, all else being equal, in preference to morally inferior methods.
2. All else being equal, a nonviolent method of interacting with others is morally superior to a violent method.
3. Therefore, nonviolence should always be chosen in preference to violence, all else being equal.

The reason people often accept the above assumption number two implicitly is because it is also widely assumed that:

1. Nonviolence is peaceful and causes no physical or mental harm, whereas violence always involves some kind of damage or harm.
2. Nonviolence does not use power or coercion, whereas violence is usually coercive and often uses institutional power.
3. Nonviolence has a noble intention (achieving social or political goals through peaceful means), whereas violence is intentionally destructive.

The methodology and research design have been chosen to answer the raised questions (question-driven and problem-driven approach). It was necessary to have different perspectives to analyse the complex relationship between different concepts (e.g. power, violence, and nonviolence). I am not a historical institutionalist, but history is an important variable, hence the historical analysis in Chapter 3. Although I do not strictly follow the method of reflective equilibrium, the ideas have helped develop the principles in Chapter 7.

1.5 Scope of the Research

Even though there is a subtle difference between ethics and morals, this study will consider them to be nearly the same. While morals suggest the behaviour of a person or a group, ethics implies the overall picture of how a person or a group acts. So, if a person has high morals, his or her actions are ethical. This further implies that any action that is morally or ethically sound can be considered morally and ethically justified. Hence, discussion on the ethics of political actions entails making choices and giving reasons for choosing to take that particular action. The thesis will explore the traditional normative ethics to the extent necessary to establish the proposed ethical framework based on a means-end approach.

The primary focus of this research is on nonviolence and nonviolent political actions, although violence will be discussed as necessary, and the first chapter will cover a significant amount of material on violence to better understand and demarcate nonviolence. However, this work does not go into the success or failure of nonviolent methods. The objective is to identify the salient ethical issues that are silently accepted because we think this is nonviolent. The thesis will concentrate mainly on political methods and goals, but sometimes it is not straightforward whether a particular action is political or social, especially when it comes to fighting injustice. They are interrelated and are to be comprehended as such. In some cases, broader and more general examples are also utilised to clarify the subject matter.

My focus is not ethics of violence. However, a fundamental understanding of the topic is a prerequisite. I presuppose that the reader understands why violence is generally *prima facie* or *pro tanto* wrong and the need to justify it. A basic understanding of just war theory and normative ethics is also necessary. I discuss just war theory in Chapter 7 but do not delve into the topic in detail. Instead, I refer to the principles without providing further explanation. Similarly, I refer to the concept of power but do not go into detail. These topics are examined

only to the extent that they support understanding the ethics of nonviolence and justifying political actions in certain contexts. This approach was necessary due to the limited space.

Further, this thesis employs the terms ‘violence’ and ‘nonviolence’ as concepts, whereas ‘violent’ and ‘nonviolent’ are used to signify certain actions having the characteristics of violence or nonviolence as given by the definition or relevant concept. For instance, the act of fasting may be ‘violent’ according to one definition, but ‘nonviolent’ under another definition. Therefore, these terms are to be understood within a specific context and not universally. Further, I do not use the term ‘not violent’ in this thesis to avoid confusion. The term ‘not violent’ would denote any activity whereas ‘nonviolent action’ or ‘nonviolent political action’ implies a certain political or social goal. For example, sending email per se is not violent. However, sending mass emails requesting people to attend an upcoming demonstration against the regime is a part of nonviolent political action.

The important concepts in this dissertation are violence, nonviolence, power, coercion, normative ethics and just war theory. Other major topics are cyberwar, cyberattacks and hacktivism. In the current literature, many terms like civil disobedience, civil resistance, nonviolent resistance, nonviolent methods and nonviolent actions are usually used interchangeably. In my research, I utilise the term ‘nonviolent political action’ as an umbrella term to mean all these activities. Though I go into detail about civil disobedience and sometimes handle it as one political action, civil disobedience is a general concept and can encompass several types of activities. Civil disobedience is commonly understood as disobeying the current active law. There is no universally accepted definition. I am borrowing Menachem Marc Kellner’s (1975) words that fairly describe the situation.

The problem of civil disobedience has received much attention in recent years. No generally accepted definition of 'civil disobedience' has been found. Nonetheless,

it is safe to say that civil disobedience involves the public violation of the law of a government recognised as legitimate by the disobedient. It is further safe to assert that any justified act of civil disobedience (assuming that such there be) is likely to be peaceful and characterized by acceptance of the penalty on the part of the disobedient. (Kellner, 1975, p. 899)

However, nonviolent methods could be protests, boycotts, or strikes as well, which could be conducted while abiding by the law. One need not be (civil) disobedient to execute a political action. Nonviolent methods are not necessarily illegal or illegitimate. Moreover, civil disobedience is executed by the public or the citizens, whereas nonviolent methods could be used by organisations and states as well. Further, even though civil disobedience and civil resistance are used synonymously, civil resistance is understood as a wider term. Civil resistance usually means a campaign or a movement with a larger goal, such as toppling the regime. This is planned, strategised and executed over a longer period. This may include many generally nonviolent activities like civil disobedience. One example of civil resistance is the Otpor movement.

1.6 Research Contribution

The division between violence and nonviolence is not uniform in its definition and application. With the increasing use of technology, the distinction is much more difficult in practical terms. This allows several political actions, both by state and non-state actors, to be seemingly nonviolent, giving them a sort of legitimacy. This leads to many questions regarding the ethical implications of nonviolent political actions. This research attempts to answer these questions.

My research will contribute along the following lines:

(a) Filling the *knowledge gap* regarding the ethics and morals of nonviolent political actions from a holistic angle

- It will answer some thorny questions regarding the ethics and morality of nonviolent politics and show that nonviolent political actions are (*ceteris paribus*) not always ethically superior to violent actions.
- It will indicate a paradigm shift in nonviolent politics due to advanced information technology.

b) Complementing the *theory gap* regarding the ethical framework for justifying political actions

- It will provide an outline of an ethical framework for political actions in the 21st century that integrates how we should understand the ethics of political actions from a holistic view by focusing on the morally problematic points that raise concern.

1.7 Organisation of the Research

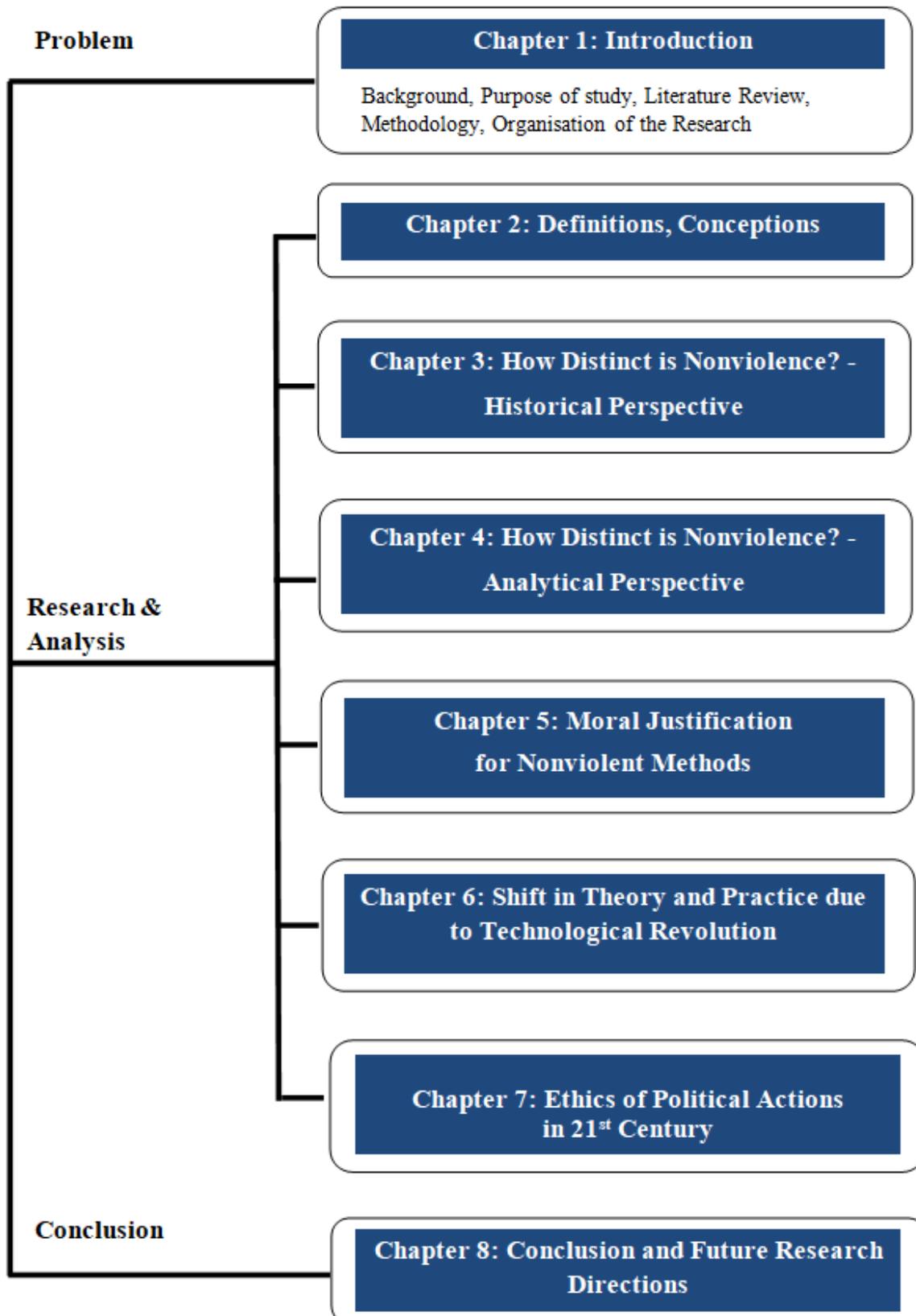


Figure 1: Structure of Thesis

Chapter 2 lays the foundation for the thesis regarding the existing concepts and definitions of nonviolence, especially in comparison with violence. The main argument in this chapter is that there is confusion when it comes to distinguishing between nonviolence and violence. The ambiguity emerges from the present definitions provided by the existing literature, which are not distinct and precise. They have different viewpoints, so one cannot say that a particular action is strictly nonviolent or violent. A precise definition of nonviolence also does not exist. To prove my point about ambiguity, I apply the different definitions to some paradigm examples to see whether they are violent or nonviolent.

Further, a range of factors like context, speech, language, and culture influence how we perceive something as violence or nonviolence. I give a few examples in between to show this. I discuss ordinary language analysis, in short, to understand verbal forms of violence. I then go on to position my view vis-à-vis the existing definitions. I end the chapter with the conclusion that there is no consensus on the definitions, even though each of them might have merits. The consequence of this is that understanding violence and nonviolence asks for a broader and more holistic outlook.

Chapters 3 and 4 delve deeper into the topic of nonviolence. The purpose of these two chapters is to find out how distinct nonviolence is. Chapter 3 answers the question of why we perceive nonviolent political actions as nonviolent from a historical point of view. Chapter 4 sheds light on why nonviolent methods are considered nonviolent from an analytical point of view. I introduce two types of nonviolence: 1) philosophical and 2) pragmatic or strategic. My contention is that we consider nonviolence worthwhile because of its history, which is attached to religion and philosophy. Nowadays, almost all nonviolent activities are of a strategic or pragmatic nature. To demonstrate this, I give a historical development of nonviolence from its origin to its current contemporary form.

In Chapter 4, I continue to argue that the current form of nonviolence is not pure like its philosophical or religious version. For this, I discuss the theory of nonviolence from different positions (as a philosophy, as behaviour, and as mass people's power). Then, I contend that the manifestation of coercion and manipulation makes nonviolence instrumental to achieving certain goals. I give examples of Gandhi's and King's movements and their different strategies to underline my arguments. I conclude the chapter with the insight that, given the different nuances of nonviolence, modern-day nonviolent political actions are coercive, strategic, or at least persuasive. Pure non-coercive or non-persuasive nonviolence exists only in philosophy.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss in detail why we cannot take it for granted that nonviolence is always 'nonviolent'. I contend that not only violent methods but also nonviolent methods require justification for several reasons. In Chapter 5, I argue that neither all nonviolent activities have moral ends, nor do they automatically lead to just ends. Further, I go through a systematic discussion of civil disobedience and show why civil disobedience is not inherently justified. Then, I discuss several types of harm, including the concept of 'power over people', opportunistic, exploitative, manipulative, and unintended harms that are potentially involved in nonviolent methods for which justification is required. I answer the question of whether nonviolence without harm exists, with persuasive nonviolence existing but non-persuasive and non-coercive not.

In Chapter 6, I continue to argue why a new perspective on evaluating ethical questions in nonviolent political actions is needed. First, I show that the differentiation between nonviolence and violence in the virtual world is almost impossible. In the cyber domain, everything is intended, and the new developments make it exceedingly difficult to identify the harms involved since there is no demarcation of kinetic and non-kinetic as in the

conventional world. I then go on to discuss how some cyberattacks could be violent. I discuss the latest technical advancements like Artificial Intelligence and two case studies to indicate the urgent need for an overarching moral framework to justify political actions in the 21st century.

In Chapter 7, I propose the concept of just political action to resolve the dilemma of deciding whether an action is violent or nonviolent. I discuss the traditional approaches to ethics and argue that they are insufficient for the purpose of justifying political actions from a means-end perspective. I introduce an ethical framework with five principles, explain the necessity of each principle in detail, and answer any possible objections that might arise. I defend how these principles help us identify the justification of political actions, whether they are online or offline. I discuss the advantages of this method and some examples in detail. In the case of cyberwar, there are existing works to address the ethical questions. I contend that this is not enough by arguing that there are diverse kinds of activities in the virtual world and that not all cyberattacks are necessarily cyberwars.

In Chapter 8, I synthesise my research and the contribution that this thesis has made to my area of study. I also reflect on the challenges that I faced and the things that could have been accomplished better. Acknowledging the fact that each of our works is just another stone in the vast field of research, I explore the possibilities of future research that could build on my work.

Chapter Conclusion

I outlined my motivation for choosing the thesis topic, which was the subject of nonviolence being undertheorised. Then, I went on to give a general scenario and clarify the research gaps so that the purpose of the study was clear. Further, the literature review established the importance of my research work. The necessity originates from the lack of adequate

discussion of the ethics and morals of nonviolent political actions in the existing literature. Justifying them is important because many issues involved in violence are present in nonviolence as well. After discussing the methodology and scope of the research, I outlined the contribution of my work. The research organisation gives a synopsis of how this dissertation was assembled. I believe the speciality of my thesis is that it is a combination of theory, the incorporation of a technological theme, and a blend of Asian and Western practical examples.

2. Defining and Conceptualizing Violence and Nonviolence

For me context is the key - from that comes the understanding of everything.

~ Kenneth Noland

To comprehend the concept of nonviolent politics, it is essential to have an understanding of what constitutes violence. Historically, violence has been strongly associated with warfare. However, it is important to note that the mere absence of violence does not necessarily equate to nonviolence. This chapter, along with the following two chapters, will examine the intricate relationship between violence and nonviolence. As my research is focused on political actions, I will concentrate on the political context rather than on natural, social, or economic contexts, although it is important to note that these areas are interconnected.

This chapter will lay the foundation for a mutual understanding of the subject matter so that a discussion on ethical issues can follow. I will argue that the assumption that nonviolent methods of political action are ethically superior (*ceteris paribus*) to violent methods is not always true. I shall defend this claim by showing that some cases of nonviolent methods are not genuinely nonviolent due to the ambiguity in definitions. Further, nonviolent methods are not distinct from violent methods if we use the broad definition of violence, as this leaves truly little room for nonviolence. Furthermore, contextual dependency creates conceptual ambiguity.

I begin by examining multiple definitions and fictitious yet real-world situations to highlight the drawbacks and benefits of the competing approaches. I apply the concept of constructive pluralism to analyse the varying definitions and summarise the essence of different authors. Next, I put forward four concrete cases to demonstrate why various definitions are problematic in reality and how a constructive pluralist view can aid in a better

understanding of the concepts of violence and nonviolence. Subsequently, I engage with ordinary language analysis to further examine how ambiguity exists due to the context of language. Finally, in the fourth subchapter, I present my view and the accompanying thought process on the definitions at hand.

I end the chapter with the conclusion that determining whether an action is violent or nonviolent demands much more than just a definition. This calls for a more comprehensive outlook towards constructive pluralism that accommodates the diverse definitions as well as further concepts of power, legitimacy, coercion and norms. The two consecutive chapters will explore the question of whether nonviolence is a distinct phenomenon from a holistic standpoint.

2.1 Analysing the Definitions: Towards Constructive Pluralism

The distinction between violence and nonviolence nowadays is the most confusing. Instinctively, violence is *prima facie* wrong. Unintended and intended harm—foreseeable or unforeseeable—still sounds wrong. Nevertheless, violence is not wrong by definition. Otherwise, one would have to agree on *one* definition of violence being *per se* wrong. Similarly, nonviolence is not inherently good from the perspective of victims or harm done (the consequentialist view). The effect of seemingly nonviolent action could have potentially harmful consequences in a broad sense. For instance, consider the act of putting someone in prison. If one considers freedom of movement as one of the fundamental human rights, imprisoning somebody is an act of violence in the sense of violating human rights. In a strict sense, it is nonviolence as long as the prisoner is not harmed physically.

The confusion is further enhanced by varying interpretations of violence depending on the context and cultural norms of a society. For example, in certain villages and tribes in Pakistan, beating a wife is considered a means of controlling her (Buriro, Khoso and Khaton,

2020). The men viewed beating their wives as a corrective punishment. In this scenario, not the act of beating but the context of the culture overrides. Another example is euthanasia, which is defined as the “direct intentional killing of a person as part of the medical care being offered” (Chao, Chan and Chan, 2002, p. 128). It is illegal in almost all countries except the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the three states of Oregon, Washington, and California in the USA (Campaign for Dignity in Dying, 2023). However, since euthanasia is performed to relieve the terminally ill patient from pain, it is not regarded as violence in countries where it is legal, even though killing someone in a different context would be violence.

Further, language can play an important role in shaping our understanding of the concept of violence. While academic discourse typically takes place in English, other languages may have different words and connotations associated with the word ‘violence’. For example, the German word ‘Gewalt’ is not as heavy-laden with meaning as the English word ‘violence’. This is the same in Nepali and Hindi, where the word ‘hinsha’ (हिंसा) is used, or in French, where the word ‘la violence’ is used. The reason for this is that there are other words in other languages to describe different situations. In contrast, in English, the word ‘violence’ is used in several cases but means different things. A simple example is the translation of the verb ‘to violate’ which in German would be ‘brechen, verletzen, vergewaltigen, missachten, stören, übertreten, vertoßen, schänden, notzüchtigen, misshandeln, missbrauchen’¹⁴. In German, different words are used depending on the situation, whereas in English, the word ‘violate’ would be repeated. It is interesting that some languages, like Tamang, do not have the word violence in their repertoire.

¹⁴ <https://dict.leo.org/englisch-deutsch/violate>

Another complexity arises from different notions of violence. For some, even the given social structure is violence. Garver (Betz, 1977) categorised violence into four compartments: physical and institutionalised, with each one having overt and covert (quiet) forms. As examples of institutionalised violence, Garver included slavery, colonial oppression, and ghetto life (Betz, 1977, p. 341). These socio-structural arrangements are not something to be proud of, but to see them as violence arguably requires a broad interpretation of the term. Amartya Sen's research has shed light on how social structures can lead to violence. He (Sen, 2008) suggests that the nexus between poverty and cultural identities may increase the significance of inequality, which in turn could contribute to violence. Sen further adds that both cultural and socioeconomic factors play a role in violence, but they do not operate in isolation (p. 14).

In light of these complexities, it seems that achieving a single, accurate definition of violence is an arduous task. The competing ideas, notions, and perceptions have their merits as well as shortcomings. To acknowledge and embrace this diversity, the concept of 'constructive pluralism' can be employed. This approach recognises that there may not be a singular, correct definition of violence but instead promotes appreciation of the heterogeneity of perspectives. Even in a seemingly homogeneous society, diverse social classes, individuals, beliefs, and opinions will exist. Adopting a pluralist stance enables us to respect the competition and avoid dominance. This constructive viewpoint acknowledges the existence of grey areas, recognising that concepts are contextual and that knowledge is socially constructed. It is an evolving process that can change over time.

For the constructive pluralism approach regarding violence and nonviolence, the initial analysis will be conducted on selected definitions. Subsequently, advantages and disadvantages will be evaluated, compared and contrasted. The discussion will commence

with an examination of violence, followed by an exploration of nonviolence. Adhering to an analytical approach, there are two types of definitions: narrow and broad. The narrow definition limits itself to physical or psychological harm, while the broad definition tries to accommodate all kinds of negative societal influences. Various authors offer their own definitions, which are situated between these two extremes. In the subsequent paragraphs, several definitions will be scrutinized, and the argument will be made as to why each of them falls short but remains justifiable in its own right.

To begin with a general understanding of violence as offered by a global institution, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines violence as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.

Self-directed violence refers to violence in which the perpetrator and the victim are the same individual and is subdivided into self-abuse and suicide.

(World Health Organization, 2023)

This narrow definition sums up the understanding of violence at its face value: some intentional means called ‘force’ or ‘power’ that result in harmful ends, in its ultimate form, death. This definition presupposes that some action is taken and does not take into account situations where violence occurs without any action being taken (omission). Additionally, it excludes the concepts of ‘intention’ and ‘legitimacy’. It is possible that an action with a good intention may result in harm, or an intention to cause harm may lead to a positive outcome. In some cases, the harm done may not be immediately visible or may be accepted by society or the state as something natural or acceptable occurrence. To illustrate, if a person is injured

during a police protest, the focus is typically on the harm inflicted rather than the legitimacy or the justification of the action. The act would arguably be termed a ‘violent act’, irrespective of the legitimacy question. Thus, the above definition does not delve into topics of justification or legitimacy, intention, action, or agents. However, it remains a suitable definition for capturing the daily understanding of violence.

I will analyse the works of four authors, namely Galtung, Wolff, Coady, and Bufacchi, in order to discuss contrasting definitions of violence. Galtung and Wolff wrote during the same time in 1969 and shared a similar broad approach with distinctive views. Coady and Bufacchi wrote in the same year, 2007 (around 37 years later), but their perspectives were quite different. Coady is critical of the existing definitions, whereas Bufacchi provides his abstract definition. I hope this analysis will capture the temporal and intellectual diversity present in the literature thus far.

I agree with Galtung’s (1969) argument that “an extended concept of violence is indispensable” (p. 168) insofar as the narrow concept seems to include only visible and immediate actions and concomitant results. Galtung differentiates between personal (direct violence) and structural (indirect violence). In personal somatic violence, violence is both anatomical (e.g. crushing, poisoning) and physiological (e.g. denial of air or movement) (p. 174). In structural violence, violence is built into the structure such that unequal power leads to unequal opportunities (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Galtung’s approach is valuable for seeing beyond the obvious and captures different features that are a part of violence. His topology of violence includes both physical and psychological forms. He was the first author to bring structure to the definition of violence, which he termed the six dimensions of violence.

Galtung (1969) says, “Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (p.

168). Coady (2007) rejects Galtung's broad definition, arguing that the practical consequences of adopting it would probably be disappointing (p. 35). Coady wants us to look at some features that he finds rather curious. His counterexamples are as follows:

It seems to follow from it that a young child is engaged in violence if its expression of its needs and desires is such that it makes its mother and/or father very tired, even if it is not in any ordinary sense "a violent child" or engaged in violent actions. Furthermore, I will be engaged in violence if, at your request, I give you a sleeping pill that will reduce your actual somatic and mental realisations well below their potential, at least for some hours. (Coady, 2007, p. 27)

Coady (2007) is somewhat harsh and goes on to mention that "now it seems to me that this justification of the value of his definition is either muddled or mischievous (and just possibly both)" (p. 28). He also states the possibility of propaganda or a political agenda because he finds the whole thing to be a "deliberate promotion of muddle or unclarity" (p. 29).

I neither agree nor disagree entirely with Galtung or Coady. What I want to show is the perspective of constructive pluralism. Coady's critique of "muddle or unclarity" and curious features from a constructive view is that difficulties arise when one attempts to apply Galtung's definition in the real world. Galtung (1969) himself is relatively aware of his definition being problematic, as he agrees that his "statement may lead to more problems than it solves" (p. 168).

Galtung's notions of "actual and potential realizations" are difficult to measure objectively. When he claims that "in a society where life expectancy is twice as high in the upper as in the lower classes, violence is exercised ..." (p. 171), his broad definition allows sufficient room for confusing social injustice with violence. Here, I am claiming that social

injustice (unfair and unjust practices in society leading to inequality) and violence (something leading to physical or mental harm), are two different things. Inequality in society can be at different levels, such as wealth and access to opportunities, but that does not necessarily mean that it will lead to physical and/or mental harm.

Galtung's proposition becomes more complex because he mentions that "in order not to overwork the word violence, we shall sometimes refer to the condition of structural violence as *social injustice*" (p. 171). This argument leads to confusion if violence is equated with social injustice. In such cases, everything in a social relationship becomes violent because all kinds of social activities can be labelled as social injustice of some kind. Here is a hypothetical example to illustrate my point. A grade 8 schoolteacher organises a self-funded trip to an amusement park for her class and only wealthy students can participate. Is this an instance of structural violence leading to social injustice? Although it might seem like a no, a constructive perspective may argue for a yes.

Taking this further, suppose one of the less affluent students feels so personally about the situation that it negatively impacts their mental health, to the extent that they eventually turn to drugs and criminal activities to fund their addiction. Galtung contends that "when it is avoidable then violence is present" (p. 169), and unequal access to educational opportunities is avoidable in the 21st century, particularly in Western countries. One situation leads to another, and as Galtung suggests, this student's "actual somatic and mental realizations" will be below their "potential realizations" as a result of the "structural violence" or "social injustice" they have experienced. It is important to recognise that there is a fine line between structural violence and social injustice, and accepting this distinction and Galtung's definition helps us acknowledge the existence of grey areas. Coady is willing to grant Galtung the benefit of the doubt, as he states:

... let us rather interpret him as seeking to call attention to genuine similarities between personal and structural violence in the hope that once they are seen, people who are concerned to oppose the violence of, for example, war will also work to oppose the structural violence of (as it may be) inequitable tax scales, income inequities, inadequate health services, and so on. (Coady, 2007, p. 29)

Wolff (1969) also has a broad definition, but he brings in the concept of legitimacy as a basis. He states, “Violence is the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desire of others” (p. 606). He argues that by this definition, murder is violence, but capital punishment cannot be considered violence because this act is legitimate insofar as a legitimate state practises it. In addition, he urges us not to restrict the term ‘violence’ to bodily injury only. One of his examples (p. 610) is a sit-in at a lunch counter that could deprive the proprietor of profits and, if persisted with, ruin them completely. He concludes that such an act is morally similar to beating a person.

Wolff makes the case that concepts of violence and nonviolence are “inherently confused” because both depend on “the fundamental notion of legitimate authority”, which in turn is inherently coherent (Wolff, 1969). In contrast to Galtung’s definition, Wolff’s approach helps understand the idea of violence in political discussions as it brings in the topic of ‘legitimate’ and de facto or accepted authority. We would commonly agree with Wolff that “theft or extortion is violent, but the collection of taxes by a legitimate state is not” (p. 606).

However, as Coady (2007) insists, “Like one interpretation of Galtung’s definition, this has the consequence that one could never be violent to another if he sought to be injured” (p. 35), both Galtung and Wolff fail to capture the situation when the harm is desired. Coady shares an example of a bank robber’s accomplice wanting the robber to beat them up to throw the police off the scent. One could think of similar cases of accomplices harming each other to

collect insurance money. Undoubtedly, we have heard of people fabricating car accidents or intentional injuries for the sake of reaping insurance benefits.

Coady has more criticism for Wolff. One of Wolff's examples is the attack on Hitler, which was, in his opinion, nonviolent since his regime was illegitimate. Coady contends that the definition itself needs to determine whether it is an act of violence, irrespective of whether the act is illegitimate or unauthorised. He makes the example vivid by mentioning:

It is tempting to think that anyone who believes that the deliberate blowing up of the conference room in the attempt to kill Hitler, thereby successfully killing and wounding others, is *not* a violent act needs sympathy (Coady, 2007, p. 36).

Again, this is not a place to engage in debate about who is right and who is wrong. Rather, it is about engaging with diversity in a constructive and pluralistic manner, recognising its merits and grey areas.

Coady has his reasons to see the example of a sit-in differently. For him, it is not apparent why ruining could be worse or on par with beating because someone might have a good reason for putting someone out of business but still not justify possible permanent physical or psychological damage or even death as a consequence (p. 37)¹⁵. On the other hand, justification or legitimacy is occasionally required to understand why we perceive some deeds as nonviolent but find similar actions unacceptable. For instance, there is a difference between a doctor cutting open a patient's abdomen and a burglar doing the same to his victim to rob the person. The former is considered 'legitimate' and nonviolent, whereas the latter is seen as violent.

¹⁵ We shall discuss the moral side of it in later chapters.

I continue the exploration of definitions with Coady (2007), who distinguishes three types of definitions. The first type, which he termed “restricted”, is “typically those which concentrate on positive interpersonal acts of force usually involving the infliction of physical injury” (p. 23). The second type, which he termed “wide”, is those that “tend to serve the interests of the political left by including within the extension of the term “violence” a great range of social injustices and inequalities” (p. 22). He refers to Galtung’s “structural violence” as being of this type. Coady’s third type, which he termed “legitimate”, includes “reference to an illegal or illegitimate use of force” (p. 23), like Wolff’s approach.

It was discussed above what Coady has to say regarding wide and legitimist definitions. He endorses a restricted definition such as that of the Oxford English Dictionary, according to which violence is “the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on or damage to persons or property; action or conduct characterised by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom.” He considers this definition to be the “most politically neutral” (p. 23). However, Coady acknowledges that his preferred narrow definition has limitations since it does not account for psychological violence.

As the adage goes, “words can kill”; violent acts do not always require physical force. Significant pressure (e.g. stalking) or defamation (e.g. extreme verbal abuse, harassment) can cause serious harm, leading to long-term consequences, such as suicide due to extreme stress. Nevertheless, a simplified definition can help us concentrate on the core aspect of violence, namely the use of force. Coady defends that “although anyone can recognise the distinctive facts that underpin the concept of violence”, “not everyone will have the same reactions to them” (p. 42). Coady resonates with the constructivist view when he says:

There will be variations in both personal and cultural terms here even amongst persons and communities who are in no obvious way corrupt or wicked. There are individuals who are much more sensitive to and worried about violence than others (Coady, 2007, p. 42).

Moving the discussion to the fourth scholar, according to Bufacchi (2005), there are two distinct types of definitions for violence:

- 1) Narrowly from the point of view of perpetrators (violence as an act of force), which he calls “Minimalist Conception of Violence”, and
- 2) Broadly from the point of view of victims (violence as a violation), which he calls a “Comprehensive Conception of Violence” (Bufacchi, 2005).

Bufacchi’s alternative approach to defining violence involves the view of the spectator and the idea of violence as a violation. His definition is as follows:

An act of violence occurs when the integrity or unity of a subject (person or animal) or object (property) is being intentionally or unintentionally violated, as a result of an action or an omission. The violation may occur at the physical or psychological level, through physical or psychological means. A violation of integrity will usually result in the subject being harmed or injured, or the object being destroyed or damaged. (Bufacchi, 2007, pp. 43-44.)

His definition solves the issues of other definitions by not being too broad but still encompassing the themes of psychology, intentionality, and action or omission. However, the introduction of the concept of “integrity” and the use of the terms “violation” and “violated” make the definition abstract. He refers to MacCallum to suggest how the term integrity should be employed, namely as “a metaphysical conception of the self as something violable, which

is related to but at the same time distinct from a person’s body, ...” (Bufacchi, 2007, p. 42). This proposed definition of ‘integrity’ is vague and unclear.

However, Bufacchi (2022) later revisited his definition and stated, “This definition has many merits, and yet it is problematic and perhaps ought to be revised or replaced by a different definition” (p. 210). He clarified the rationale for using the concept of integrity, explicating that the integrity of an individual is both physical and metaphysical (psychological), addressing our fundamental vulnerability and the fragility of our biological and social existence. He further posited that the idea of integrity as wholeness was compelling. Moreover, he examined two areas in which defining violence as the violation of integrity might be problematic. First, whether a person is ever whole or intact, and second, whether shattered integrity could be broken again. Regarding the former, he elucidates that “integrity is not an endpoint but a process” (p. 215) and at any moment, one can be as whole or intact as possible. Concerning the latter, he argues that “each time something is done to us that takes us further away from our integrity, or intactness, it counts as an act of violence” (p. 216), analogous to a person experiencing violence each time their integrity is shattered.

Based on the previous discussion, the definitions can be summarised broadly, showing which author or definition deals with what sort of aspect.

	mention of agent/actor	intentionality	action and omission	legitimacy/ justification	psychological violence
WHO	no	only intended	only action	no	yes
Galtung	yes (in personal violence)	intended/unintended	both (in structural violence)	no	yes
Wolff	no	no	only action	yes	yes

Bufacchi	no	intended/unintended	both	no	yes
Coady/OED	no	no	only action	no	no

Figure 2: Overview of different approaches to definitions

Following a preliminary discussion of violence, this section will now examine the concept of nonviolence. To begin with, it is important to clarify the syntax used throughout this work. The term ‘nonviolence’ will be employed without differentiating between alternative written variations, such as ‘non violence’ or ‘non-violence’, despite their supposed differences in origins and meanings (López Martínez, 2015, pp. 65-66). The literature reveals that the understanding of nonviolence varies among scholars, just as the comprehension of violence does. Some authors view it as spiritual restraint, while others see it as a means of causing no harm. Still, others consider it a strategic and calculated series of events, which may include civil disobedience, civil resistance and sit-ins, among other things. For some, it is an ideology or way of life; for others, it is a plethora of methods (protest, non-cooperation and intervention) designed to achieve political and social goals. Vinthagen agrees that “Yet even today there is no delineated, unified scientific discipline of the subject [nonviolence]. We lack a mutual way of discussing and using nonviolence.” (Vinthagen, 2015, p. 37)

In general, nonviolence is commonly associated with peaceful demonstrations or other kinds of civil disobedience. Indeed, civil resistance has become virtually synonymous with nonviolent political action. Proponents of nonviolent political actions insist on distinguishing themselves from pacifists. Holmes’ argument is useful in this regard, as he points out that “Pacifism is opposition to war. Pragmatic pacifism is opposition to war on moral grounds” (Holmes, 2017, p. 268). Pacifism generally denotes the ideology of rejecting military violence based on moral principles. While pacifism is considered passive, nonviolent resistance is thought to be of an active nature. Hence, pacifism is not the same as nonviolence. However, defining nonviolence is a challenging task.

Atack proposes a basic definition of nonviolent political action as:

Collective action outside the formal institutions or procedures of the state that avoids the systematic or deliberate use of violence or armed force to achieve its political or social objectives. (Atack, 2012, p. 8)

He provides a definition using the term ‘violence’ as if it were a well-defined term, but the previous discussion indicated that this is not the case. Also, the word “avoids” stands out. Atack’s positive definition states that nonviolent action involves “not merely the absence of violence (negative), but also the strengthening of the capacity for popular power and popular resistance against oppression and injustice (positive)” (Atack, 2012, p. 8). In practical applications, popular resistance usually involves aggression. The target of aggression is often property, but in many cases, it also includes police or security personnel. It is important to concede that well-intended actions can sometimes result in unintended harm.

In comparison to the extensive literature on violence, there is relatively little written about nonviolence as a general topic. The focus is more on civil resistance or civil disobedience. On the other hand, there seems to be a common understanding that nonviolence is more than ‘*not being violent*’. For this reason, the existing literature does not offer many direct definitions of nonviolence, but rather what it entails. The constructive pluralist view in this thesis will explore different approaches to studying nonviolence. The challenge, however, lies in constructing the concept of nonviolence without touching on the concept of violence. Gene Sharp, who has written voraciously on nonviolence, has successfully achieved this by defining nonviolent action as a special technique of struggle in response to social and political conflicts. Sharp (1973) distinguishes nonviolent action from pacifism, viewing it as a form of

‘action’ rather than passive resistance. Moreover, this action may involve (Sharp, 1973a, p. 68):

1. Acts of omission - that is, people may refuse to perform acts that they usually perform, are expected by custom to perform, or are required by law or regulation to perform
2. Acts of commission - that is, people may perform acts that they do not usually perform, are not expected by custom to perform, or are forbidden to perform or
3. A combination of acts of omission and acts of commission.

The general understanding is that there are two approaches¹⁶ to nonviolence: the ‘principled’ approach, which is based on ethical or religious principles and emphasizes the moral rejection of violence and coercion, and the ‘pragmatic’ or ‘strategic’ approach, which is goal-oriented and may use coercion as needed. Sharp (1973) classifies nine types of generic nonviolence, including non-resistance, active reconciliation, moral resistance, selective nonviolence, passive resistance, peaceful resistance, nonviolent direct action, Satyagraha and nonviolent revolution. Nevertheless, the essence of nonviolence lies in rejecting violence (in the sense of harm) while employing alternative methods to achieve political goals. This alternative method, according to Sharp, solely depends on power relations. Sharp (1973) posits that nonviolence can only be effective when the power relationship is shifted, with the ruler relying on political power and the people disobeying and resisting to dissolve that power.

Sharp has extensively explained his theory of power in relation to nonviolence in his book *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Sharp, 1980). He contends that political power is a subtype of social power and that there are various means of exerting influence and pressure to achieve particular objectives, such as authority, rewards, and sanctions. Sharp also posits that

¹⁶ These two approaches will be analysed in detail, including examples, in Chapter 3.

power is not solely concentrated in the hands of the ruler but is distributed across various loci or locations within society, including formal and informal social groups and institutions, such as families, religious groups, cultural and nationality groups, and so on. The strength of these loci of power determines the extent of the ruler's capacity to exercise power and the level of tyranny in society. The society's loci of power control the ruler's capacity in the long run. Ultimately, the ruler's power depends on the obedience and submission of the people (consent)¹⁷, which can be withdrawn to topple the ruler or tyrant, contends Sharp.

The charm of Sharp's approach to nonviolence is that, besides providing hands-on methods for working on the ground, it does not refer to violence. A prior understanding of violence is not required to understand what nonviolence could involve. However, the topic remains complex since power itself is a widely contested concept. One critique comes from the feminist branch (McGuinness, 1993). McGuinness argues that women's experience of power is missing in Sharp's theory. His theory is based on consensual power, but according to McGuinness, this does not apply universally because consent characterises power in gender relations due to patriarchal constructions. She asserts, "If women are not fully constituted individuals in civil society, then the notion of consent does not apply to them" (p. 5). She also points out that, due to sexual violence, it is problematic to take consent as a defining characteristic in power relations. Finally, she questions Sharp's theory of consensual power based on shared political culture. According to her argument, consent or withdrawal from it is not possible without a shared political culture. However, this is not the case, as men and women experience the culture differently due to their varying positions in society as a result of a dominant patriarchal culture.

¹⁷ Sharp explains the role of consent in detail in his work *The Politics of Nonviolent Action: Power and Struggle* (1973).

Another way of constructing and establishing the concept of nonviolence without referring to the concept of violence is by defining the values of nonviolence. For example, the values of nonviolence from a religious or philosophical perspective could be love, compassion, and empathy towards others, animals, plants, and oneself. One more example is by López Martínez (2015), who puts forward four principles and values of nonviolence, namely 1) refusal to kill, 2) the search for truth, 3) active dialogue and listening, and 4) alternative and creative modes of thought.

The question then arises as to whether particular actions or events can be agreed upon as being either *definitely* 'violent' or 'nonviolent'. This is problematic, as a single definition of violence cannot address the complexity of the concept. Similarly, nonviolence cannot be outlined without pointing out what violence is, as each effort to describe nonviolence always involves mentioning violence. To exemplify this point, I will refer to the previous hypothetical example of a prisoner. According to Coady's preferred definition, shooting at a prisoner is a classic example of physical violence. Torturing this prisoner through demeaning and insulting words would be psychological violence, which is captured by Galtung's and Bufacchi's definitions. Not being able to be released on bail by the low-income family would encompass Galtung's structural violence.

Assuming that the prisoner shot at the police guard in an attempt to escape from prison and the guard shot back fatally, the question at hand is whether this act of shooting can be considered a case of violence. There is a general understanding that the police have the right to shoot at someone who poses a real threat. Wolff's legitimist definition would allow the act to be nonviolent. However, if the police used nonviolent means, such as coercion through insults and humiliation instead of physical torture, to extract information from the prisoner about further crimes, the question of whether the act is nonviolent is debatable. According to

Sharp, coercion is considered an acceptable method of nonviolent political action, which makes psychological harm an acceptable nonviolent means.

Further, assuming that the prisoner was kept in prison wrongly (the eyewitness lied for personal reasons) for two years, leading the prisoner to miss out on college and hence depriving this person of good earnings, whether this constitutes structural violence is questionable. After all, the prisoner's future was influenced, and their "actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (Galtung, 1969, p. 168). It follows that in all examples, the whole context is important. Holmes asserts that "It is prima facie wrong to insult, humiliate, denigrate, and degrade persons" (Holmes quoted in Govier, 2008, p. 77). However, the classification of such actions automatically as violent or nonviolent is ambiguous.

There is a natural tendency to think that violence and nonviolence could be seen as a spectrum, with violence and nonviolence at the two ends of the spectrum with grey areas in between. This relies on the assumption that violence includes exclusively physical harm that is immediately visible. As soon as psychological harm is included in the definition of violence, seemingly nonviolent action could cause psychological harm (through coercion), and the spectrum is not maintained anymore. Further, physical harm may not be immediately visible, as in the case of poisoning (discussed below in 2.2.1).

I want to clarify that the pluralistic approach to the definition of violence or nonviolence does not imply that the concept of violence or nonviolence is essentially contested¹⁸. Even though I discuss the concept of context, it is not the same as relativism. My approach is not just pluralistic but it is constructive pluralism. While I employed a pluralistic approach to have a holistic view of the problem at hand, constructivism is predicated on the

¹⁸ Whether the concept of violence or nonviolence is essentially contested concept is beyond the scope of my research work.

notion that belief systems—historical, cultural, and linguistic—explain certain features of human behaviour, such as violent or nonviolent actions. As such, concepts of violence and nonviolence need to encompass Western and Eastern perspectives as well as theoretical, analytical and practical perspectives. Concurrently, it is important to include historical, cultural and contemporary dynamics. This combined approach of constructive pluralism highlights how diverse perspectives can result in a more nuanced understanding of what violence or nonviolence entails at a deeper level. This is vital because objective social or political reality depends on our understanding of it. Later, I discuss how the historical roots of nonviolence influenced the moral values of nonviolent resistance. I argue how contemporary technological advancement shifts our understanding of what nonviolent action constitutes.

In summary, there is no universally accepted definition of violence or nonviolence due to the lack of consensus among scholars and experts. Attempts to define violence have been met with scepticism and criticism, as they often fail to account for the complexity and context of the phenomenon. In everyday life, we may perceive certain actions as violent, while others may not. For example, the use of a gun is typically associated with violence, while the signing of a document with a pen may not be perceived as violent. Nonetheless, both actions can have violent or nonviolent consequences, depending on the context. A gun could be used to save someone from the attacking lion, whereas a signature with a pen could seal someone's future by deciding whether they could remain alive. Therefore, it is essential to understand the nuances of how violence and nonviolence are defined and applied in different situations.

The authors discussed in this subchapter have provided various definitions of violence and nonviolence, but they all have limitations. No definition is perfect, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to understanding violence or nonviolence. As such, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of the issue and approach it with a pluralistic perspective that

recognises and respects diverse perspectives and interpretations. The constructive pluralism approach taken in this chapter allows for the exploration of grey areas and the development of a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of violence and nonviolence.

2.2 Violence and Nonviolence in Context

The concept of violence and nonviolence is complex, with various interpretations and applications depending on the context. To illustrate this point, I will present four real-world examples that highlight the nuances of this topic. Consider two more definitions of violence and nonviolence:

Finlay (2017) defines violence on double-intent accounts as follows:

Violence;: is defined by the presence of Violent Agency consisting of the intentional infliction of (1) destructive harm by human agents on a target using a technique chosen with the further intention (2) of eliminating or evading the target's means of escaping it or defending against it. In paradigm cases of violence by single-minded attackers, (2) will be realized as far as is necessary to secure (1) or, failing that, as far as possible to maximize the chance of doing so (Finlay, 2017, p.73).

The Oxford online dictionary defines nonviolence as “the use of peaceful means, not force, to bring about political or social change.”¹⁹

Here, I revisit the assumption that all other things being equal, nonviolent methods are seen to be morally superior to violent methods. They are:

1. Nonviolence is peaceful and causes no physical or mental harm, whereas violence always involves some kind of damage or harm.

¹⁹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/non-violence>

2. Nonviolence does not use power or coercion, whereas violence is usually coercive and often uses institutional power.
3. Nonviolence has a noble intention (achieving social or political goals through peaceful means), whereas violence is intentionally destructive.

It follows that we can summarise a political action as nonviolent if the following conditions are met:

1. It is politically motivated.
2. It has a certain noble intention or goal.
3. It is perpetrated by either state or non-state actors.
4. It should not cause any intentional physical or mental harm to the opponent or indirectly to anyone, including the self (neither instantly nor at a later stage).
5. It should not cause any intentional structural destruction.
6. It does not use (institutional) power or coercion.

The first three conditions outlined above are also applicable to violent political actions, though the second condition might be more questionable in the case of violence than in nonviolence. So, the key differences between violent and nonviolent political actions lie in conditions 4, 5, and 6. I will apply these conditions and previously mentioned definitions in the subsequent examples and discuss their implications. To show that the statement “*ceteris paribus*, nonviolence is always ethically superior to violence” is not always valid, there must be at least one case where there is an ambiguity, suggesting that violence and nonviolence are not sufficiently distinct to imply ethical superiority.

2.2.1 Poisoning

Poisoning is a controversial issue in the literature, with scholars divided on whether it is considered a violent act. According to condition 4 outlined above, poisoning would only be

considered violent if the act were intentional. While slow poisoning is a case of violence for Harris (1980), Coady (2007) is not convinced. Harry (1980, p. 17) believes that using poison, nerve gas, and exposure to radiation instead of bombs and guns would not make such methods less violent even though the former methods do not involve physical assault or violent actions. On the other hand, Coady claims that it is not a “violent act” as it rather mimics “a slow-acting sickness.” He adds that “the use of poison gas in war, or similar swift-acting poisons”, in contrast, would be “fairly clearly a violent act” (2007, p. 41). Further, he proposes to deal with the case of poisoning either like he suggests or else treat it “as territory lying on an uncomfortable borderline between violence and nonviolence.”

Finlay (2017) posits that poisoning constitutes an act of violence, as demonstrated by his hypothetical example of Susan and Mary. In this scenario, Susan murders Mary by putting poison in her tea and failing to disclose the truth until it is too late. Mary is vulnerable, and Susan intentionally deprives her of any means of escape by employing a deadly technique. As per his definition of double-intent account, both conditions of “intentional infliction of destructive harm by human agents on a target using a technique chosen with the further intention” and “eliminating or evading the target’s means of escaping it or defending against it” are present in cases of poisoning.

The classification of poisoning as an act of violence has practical implications. For instance, the use of gas chambers during the Holocaust in Nazi Germany evokes a strong emotional response. To discuss whether the lethal act is slow or fast, one must consider its relativity to time because swiftness could also be subjective. In 1992, during the execution of Donald Harding in Arizona, 11 minutes passed until death (Weil, 2007) and were considered too long. Since then, lethal injection has been employed in several other states in the USA.

Neither Harding nor the Holocaust victims had a slight chance of escaping or defending themselves.

If *poisoning* were to be defined as slow only when it lasts years, then the lasting health effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam would be an appropriate example. The toxic substance that caused visible cancer leading to death in the first generation or the numerous severe birth defects in the second generation (von Meding, 2017), fits the definition of violence as discussed above. The event was all the more tragic because the Vietnamese victims did not have the government's support, neither the US nor the Vietnamese.

In 2004, Viktor Yushchenko was poisoned, and he barely survived with a dreadful, disfigured face (Herman, 2018). Similarly, the assassination of Kim Jong-Nam, the half-brother of the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, in February 2017 (Ellis-Petersen and Haas, 2019) and the case of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in March 2018 (Herman, 2018) illustrate that the practice of poisoning is still prevalent in achieving political goals. In conclusion, poisoning is utilised in the political arena to eliminate political enemies. However, academic scholars are divided on whether this act is a form of violence.

2.2.2 Self-Immolation

The example of self-immolation by Tibetans (fighting against the Chinese regime for free Tibet) is classically considered a nonviolent political action and passes the conditions one through five stated above. This also fulfils the definition provided by Atack (2012) since the process of self-immolation “avoids the systematic or deliberate use of violence or armed force to achieve its political or social objectives” (p. 8). Hence, the act of self-immolation is, unlike, for example, armed insurrection, not violence.

However, a closer examination reveals the presence of psychological manipulation, which makes this act coercive, raises ethical questions and violates condition six. While the

degree of coercion may not be equivalent to pointing a gun at someone's head, the consequence is still the same: the untimely death of an individual human. Additionally, self-immolation can be classified as violence according to the definitions provided by Bufacchi and Finlay. A subject (here, self) is harmed due to an intentional action (here, putting oneself on fire). Finlay contends that "... with both destructive harming and double intent in place, it is possible to see suicide even in the best case as 'Violence_i' (which presumes nothing about its permissibility)" (2017, p. 90). In this case, intentionally setting oneself on fire inflicts harm on oneself (suicide) and there is no possibility of escape due to ideological or religious convictions.

Self-immolation is often associated with faith and religion (see Chapter 3.1). This could be the reason for people choosing this method as an act of dissent. The practical implications of self-immolation are a double-edged sword. The Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi setting himself on fire in December 2010 was a key catalyst in the Tunisian Revolution and Arab Spring. Though his act was considered heroic, it was also controversial due to Islam's prohibition of suicide. Bouazizi's struggle was genuine, and choosing death through self-immolation was an action out of frustration. However, there is a fine line between struggle and emotional blackmail if self-immolation is intentionally used for political purposes.

2.2.3 Fasting unto Death

Fasting is generally regarded as nonviolent. Sharp (1973b) lists 'the fast' as one of the methods of nonviolent intervention to achieve social and political objectives. He differentiates between the fast of moral pressure, the hunger strikes and the satyagrahic fast (p. 360). He states that the latter two may be for a set time or unto death if the demand is not granted (pp. 363, 364, and 367). The condition "unto death" follows that a hunger strike for an indefinite

period is self-directed violence, similar to slow suicide since the person knows that the ultimate outcome is death and is fully aware of it. The condition of intentional physical and/or mental harm mentioned before is given in this case. Delmas categorises hunger strikes as evasive and coercive as they involve not only the threat of suicide but also impose serious burdens on targeted authorities (Delmas, 2018a, Chapter 1, Principled Disobedience). Hence, the sixth condition is not met.

The definition provided by Bufacchi and Finlay would classify the act of ‘fast unto death’ as a form of violence. Bufacchi’s definition, although not explicitly stating the duration of the act, includes the harm inflicted upon oneself due to the omission (of food) as an element of violence. Similarly, like in the case of self-immolation, Finlay’s “destructive harming” and “double intent” are applicable. In this scenario, the fasting person intentionally omits food, inflicts harm on themselves, and has no means of escape due to ideological or religious commitments.

Although the Satyagrahic fast was meant to be the last resort for Gandhi, hunger strikes are still a popular form of political weapon. Some instances have resulted in success, like the case of Anna Hazare in India (BBC News, 2011), while others have failed, like Irom Sharmila, who fasted for 16 years without achieving her goal (Chandrasekharan, 2017), also in India. It is worth noting that politically motivated hunger strikes have sometimes resulted in death. The Irish hunger strike of 1981 is one such case, during which ten people lost their lives. Similarly, in Nepal, Nanda Prasad Adhikari died after an 11-month-long hunger strike, demanding that the Nepali government punish the murderer of his son (Jayshi, 2014). In conclusion, a hunger strike (fasting unto death) is a widely used strategic tool applied as a form of nonviolent resistance in politics. However, academic definitions classify this as self-directed violence.

The objection that might arise is that self-harm is not ‘real harm’ because one is not harming others. The validity of this notion hinges on one’s definition of harm. Even if self-directed harm may not be included in the aforementioned conditions, the point regarding power and coercion remains relevant. In both self-immolation and fasting unto death, the intention is crucial. If the intention is religious without political motives and takes place privately, it may not be deemed a violent act. However, when there is a political objective, coercion, and the power of certain pictures come into play. Consider a person burning or lying in bed, dying. Imagine seeing this scene broadcasted in the media repeatedly. This image is potentially coercive. Even if the act is voluntary, it is ethically questionable if one’s own body is being used as a medium to achieve political aims.

2.2.4 Property Damage

Vandalism is typically defined as the intentional damage or defacement of someone else’s property or structure. Property damage, on the other hand, can be either intentional or unintentional. While both vandalism and property damage can result in destruction, vandalism implies malicious intent, whereas property damage does not. If the intention is excluded, the result is simply damage. Property can be destroyed, and the consequences of vandalism and property damage are similar. However, property destruction is often accepted as an act of civil disobedience, even if it is intentional. The primary factor behind this is that harm to persons is more readily condemned than harm to property.

It seems some scholars find it easier to accept violence against property than against people. Scheuerman interpreted Rawls’ work on civil disobedience and found that Rawls left some room for limited acts of violence like property damage (Scheuerman, 2022, p. 1286). Scheuerman (2022) further analysed other scholars like Cohen, Delmas, and Celikates. He observed that they were not for violent lawbreaking against persons but were more open to

property destruction or “symbolically important public property” (Cohen quoted in Scheuerman, 2022, p. 1286). However, as discussed earlier, other scholars, such as Coady²⁰, define property damage as violence.

The question of how far property destruction can go in the name of nonviolent protest and whether destroying valuable old sculptures or paintings is acceptable to protest government policies is contestable. These actions cannot be easily undone. A serious justification dilemma arises when an action such as pasting a hand on the street to block the traffic to engender awareness regarding climate change causes someone’s death. For example, a woman in Germany died because the rescue vehicle could not reach her in time due to a traffic jam caused by the activist’s road blockade (Schaaf, 2022). The climate activist was fined, but the question of proportionality and justification remains. The proportionality dilemma attached to property destruction generally exists in all kinds of civil resistance that involve mass action. As Chenoweth (2021, p. 57) notes, property destruction can be viewed as a nonviolent method of sabotage when it is disciplined and discriminating and sends a clear message. She clarifies that even though property damage is not technically violent, it can be a grey area for many when it is undisciplined, indiscriminate, or conveys an unclear message about whether its perpetrators aim to harm people.

The above examples demonstrate the presence of ambiguous cases in the realm of nonviolence and violence. Some theorists accept damage to property as justifiable in unjust societies, whereas others adhere to a strict interpretation of nonviolence. Accepting this from a constructive pluralistic view enables us to gain a deeper understanding of nonviolence and its applications. Violence and nonviolence are interconnected and can be viewed as two sides of the same coin.

²⁰ Coady’s preferred narrow definition, such as that of the Oxford English Dictionary, involves the “exercise of physical force to damage property” as violence.

To summarise, I have examined four instances where the lines between violence and nonviolence become blurred due to definitional ambiguity, rendering it impossible to offer a conclusive response to the assertion that “all else being equal, nonviolence is always ethically better than violence.”

2.3 Influence of Language

Language plays a vital role in understanding where and how the terms violence and nonviolence are used and interpreted. Ordinary Language Analysis, as a method of philosophical investigation, reveals how everyday language takes on different meanings depending on the verbal expressions that are accompanied by particular actions or circumstances. J. L. Austin informs us.

Speaking generally, it is always necessary that the *circumstances* in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, *appropriate*, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should *also* perform certain *other* actions, whether 'physical' or 'mental' actions or even acts of uttering further words. (Austin, 1962, p. 8)

Similar to the example presented by Austin, the words “I do” expressed during a marriage ritual have a certain meaning due to the accompanying circumstances; violence could be present or absent regarding an appropriate situation. For instance, the sentence “Stop terrorising me!” can have different meanings depending on whether it is used by a mother to quiet her child during shopping or by a detainee to a harassing police officer. In another hypothetical example, if person A says “I will shoot you” to person B, violence has not technically occurred unless and until A actually shoots and hurts B. However, if person A shoots but misses and B is not hurt, the situation may simply be a case of children playing

with plastic guns or a robbery attempt that failed. The true meaning of a situation can only be determined by considering the circumstances.

In *Philosophical Investigations* (2009), Wittgenstein uses the concept of language games to demonstrate how language can be used and understood in context. He provides examples such as “Giving orders, and acting on them”, “Describing an object by its appearance, or by its measurements”, “Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)”, “Reporting an event”, “Speculating about the event” (p. 15^e). Wittgenstein asks us to consider the acts (in German Vorgänge), that we refer to as games (in German Spiele), something like board-games, card-games, ball-games and so on. When we use the word “game”, it could mean any of those stated above. He gives the following example:

Someone says to me, “Show the children a game.” I teach them gambling with dice, and the other says, “I didn’t mean that sort of game”. In that case, must he have had the exclusion of the game with dice before his mind when he gave me the order? (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 38^e)

Wittgenstein contends that there is a difference between *knowing* and *saying*. He applies the concept of language games to sentences as well. The sentence “Moses did not exist” (p. 41^e) can mean various things. He argues that without any context, the statement is meaningless.

Wittgenstein’s approach to language games shows various possibilities for using and describing language. This insight is important to grasp the essence of verbal violence. It is challenging to discuss verbal violence as it leaves no discernible trace. However, harassment can still occur without any physical contact. When we use words such as verbal abuse, threat, torture, cursing, and insult, it might be assumed that these words connote verbal harm, but without context, they are devoid of meaning. For instance, a sentence, like “You have to

think. This is torture!” can be said in isolation, but when placed in a context, such as an interrogation filled with insults, torture, and threats, it has all the features of psychological violence previously discussed. Statements like “Don’t!” or “Stop it!” are relatively harmless, but in a situation where sexual harassment is taking place, they carry different meanings.

The use of torture or insult can be both physical and verbal. An individual can harm another person with a stun gun or by kicking them. But one can also torture or insult through verbal means. Often, violence is a combination of both physical and verbal harm. Pratt believes that “violence actually is almost always accompanied by language” (Pratt, 2011). According to her, the reason anthropologists attribute aggression to biology and violence to social factors is that “the accompanying language gives violence its social meaning.” Pratt (2009) also mentions how language can be used as an instrument of violence and a weapon of war. She argues that four linguistic operations, namely exhortation, offence, deception, and mediation, play key roles in warfare (Pratt, 2009, p. 1517). In short, language is instrumentalized professionally as a tool of war.

In most cases, nonviolence is accompanied by language as well. For instance, protest marches with shouted slogans can have a certain effect. The language used either dominates or binds the group together. People tend to take action when a leader shouts at them. Additionally, a group of people singing or chanting creates a sense of camaraderie. Chanting mantras, especially in a group, is believed to have a calming and soothing effect due to the vibrations it creates. When nonviolence is used in peace talks, the participants in essence *do table talk peacefully* (without fighting physically) to resolve issues. The language and bodily language used in these talks have a profound influence. Marshall Rosenberg developed the

model of nonviolent communication (also known as NVC)²¹, which aims to foster empathy in conversation and improve the quality of communication and cooperation.

The potency of language cannot be underestimated. Words and statements possess the capacity to provoke, instigate, and intimidate individuals towards engaging in harmful actions, as well as motivate and inspire others to pursue virtuous courses of action. There is arguably a discernible distinction between the oratory of figures such as Hitler and the vitriolic diatribes of Buddhist monks in Myanmar, as compared to the impassioned addresses by Martin Luther King or Gandhi. The utilisation of language can be both constructive and destructive. The Nazis, undoubtedly, comprehended the influence of language and speech. In her treatise, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt (1964) delves into the concept of “Sprachregelung (language rule).” She discloses that during the Nazi era, words like ‘extermination’, ‘liquidation’, or ‘killing’ were eschewed in official correspondence, except for the reports from the Einsatzgruppen. Instead, the prescribed code names were used. The code names for killing were ‘final solution’, ‘evacuation’ (Aussiedlung), and ‘special treatment’ (Sonderbehandlung). The code names for deportation were ‘resettlement’ (Umsiedlung) and ‘labor in the East’ (Arbeitseinsatz im Osten). Arendt’s statement below demonstrates how the language was cleverly employed as a strategy:

For whatever other reasons the language rules may have been devised, they proved of enormous help in the maintenance of order and sanity in the various widely diversified services whose cooperation was essential in this matter. Moreover, the very term "language rule" (Sprachregelung) was itself a code name; it meant what in ordinary language would be called a lie. For when a "bearer of secrets" was sent to meet someone from the outside world - as when Eichmann was sent to show the Theresienstadt ghetto to International Red Cross

²¹ <https://www.cnvc.org/>

representatives from Switzerland - he received, together with his orders, his "language rule," which in this instance consisted of a lie about a nonexistent typhus epidemic in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, which the gentlemen also wished to visit. The net effect of this language system was not to keep these people ignorant of what they were doing, but to prevent them from equating it with their old, "normal" knowledge of murder and lies. (Arendt, 1964, p. 43)

With the insights thus far, whether the concept of speech is violence depends on the definition of violence. If a narrow definition of violence is used, then speech cannot be considered an act of violence. However, if a broader definition is adopted, one that takes into account harm caused by speech, then it could be considered an act of violence. "An important benefit of a more inclusive definition of 'violence' is also that it allows researchers to penetrate the personal experience and subjective meaning of 'violence' for those involved either as victim (or perpetrator)" (de Haan, 2009, p. 37). Intentional verbal abuse that causes trauma, as well as hate speech that causes harm, would be examples of speech being considered an act of violence. The context of the situation, including the intention and outcome, is crucial in determining whether speech is an act of violence. The necessity of raising ethical questions regarding various types of harm, irrespective of the cause, will be addressed in Chapter 5.

The perception of what violence or nonviolence constitutes can change over time, and the language we use can also evolve to reflect these changes. For example, the word 'Negro' was once commonly used²² but is now considered offensive. Different terms are now preferred, such as 'people of colour' or 'coloured people'. In the USA, the word 'black' or 'Afro-American' is widely used. Similarly, the impact of large language modules like

²² Martin Luther King used the word 'negro' in his writings.

ChatGPT on political actions and our interactions is still being observed and analysed and will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

To summarise, circumstances and context are vital in the discussion. Words can harm as much as arms. However, words can also be healing, and language could stop the violence by communicating verbally. This reminds me of a quote by Jean-Paul Sartre: “I distrust the incommunicable. It is the source of all violence.”

2.4 My View on Definition

In my view, the binary perspective of violence and nonviolence is insufficient for political action. This will be made clearer in Chapter 7. Instead, I propose maintaining the pluralistic approach in choosing the definition. This involves acknowledging both the advantages and disadvantages of various definitions. It is important to recognise that distinct fields may define violence differently, and that is perfectly acceptable. For example, in legal matters, the definition of violence must be neither narrow nor broad. Laws may differ significantly across countries worldwide. For instance, *abortion* may be defined as a kind of violence and be forbidden in some countries (or in some states within the USA), while in other countries, it may be viewed as a woman’s right and her decision to make.

In other fields, like sports, the narrow definition may be more suitable. For instance, in boxing, psychological pressure on athletes during a championship cannot be considered violence. However, if an athlete (or any person) is harassed individually through constant stalking both online and offline, leading to psychological distress, this could be considered a case of violence. Additionally, psychological pressure created due to intentional threats (e.g. threatening to harm loved ones, firing from the job without having done wrong, or making personal vulnerabilities public), such as during interrogations, would belong to the repertoire of violence.

I am inclined to believe that structural damage is not violence in and of itself. This does not mean that structural damage is not harmful. For instance, the loss of personal property can cause psychological harm. But not all harm is automatically caused by violence. The intention (goal), context, and justification are crucial factors to consider. To exemplify my point of view, consider the following example: In general, physical actions that intentionally cause harm to another individual, such as hitting them in the back, are considered acts of violence. But when such actions are performed with the intention of helping a person who is choking, they are considered justified and not perceived as violence. Similarly, while running over a cat or damaging a garden gate accidentally may be considered violent by definition, they are not usually perceived as such under normal circumstances. On the other hand, intentionally running over a neighbour's cat or damaging her gate with the aim to harass and terrorise the neighbour is considered a violent act.

I am also inclined to believe that socio-structural factors like poverty leading to misery are not violence (e.g. the definition put forward by Galtung). Social structures themselves do not engage in violent acts, but rather, they can contribute to the conditions that lead to violence. Racism, sexism, or gender discrimination per se are not act of violence, but rather expressions of underlying attitudes and beliefs that can lead to violence. For example, in the case of racism, there needs to be an intention. For instance, citizens from village X do not want foreigners to live in their village, lest they have to share privileges or the land. So, they might perform some acts of violence to show that. In the case of gender violence, the act of violence is performed to make the other gender (often female) submissive and make the other person do what the perpetrator desires. The perpetrators might also have the intention of showing how powerful they are. This is one of the reasons why gender violence is more

common in patriarchal societies (e.g. see (Sikweyiya *et al.*, 2020), (AWITOR, 2022)). Thus, context and/or intention are crucial.

Violence and nonviolence are subject to ongoing debate and dispute. According to Gallie (1956), there are concepts which are essentially contested because they “inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users” (Gallie, 1955, p. 169). As De Haan (2009) notes in his article “Violence as an Essentially Contested Concept”, “definitions of violence will always be ‘radically or fundamentally contested’.” In his words, the reason for this is that “Every definition of violence bears its own theoretical, methodological and moral implications” (p. 36). Practically, states regularly make decisions about whether or not to use violence, as evidenced by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the international response to it. The recurring Gaza conflict compels us to reflect on the concept of war (an extreme form of violence!). For this thesis, it suffices to accept that some concepts are too complex to be captured by a single definition that satisfies all social scientists. Hence, we need to adopt a constructive, pluralistic approach.

For the purposes of my research, it is adequate to show that ambiguity exists in some paradigm cases of nonviolence and that some methods that are typically considered nonviolent can, in fact, be ethically considered violent. My understanding and application of violence encompasses not only physical harm, but also psychological harm, and takes into account the context and intention or cause behind the action. Physical harm need not be lethal to be classified as an act of violence. Nonviolence is a complex concept that requires meaningful discourse, categorisation and contextualisation, which I have addressed in Chapter 4. In my personal life, I strive to live in a way that minimizes harm to all living beings, including humans, animals and the natural world.

Chapter Conclusion

I have argued that from a conceptual and definitional perspective, there is an ambiguity such that violence and nonviolence are not sufficiently distinct. Due to the missing sharpness, some nonviolent actions appear to not be genuinely nonviolent. Using violence against oneself, even willingly done, becomes ethically questionable under political circumstances. There are several definitions or perceptions of violence as well as nonviolence. There is no consensus regarding these definitions, and interpretation is bound to be contextual. In practice, an act can be classified as violent or nonviolent political action based on the definition being used. A political action that is perceived as nonviolent could, by definition, be violent. Similarly, violent action, in theory, does not necessarily have the characteristics of violence in practice. By the same token, there are empirical cases of ambiguity where no one opinion exists.

Language, especially within a context, is crucial in seeing the nuance of violence and nonviolence. The same sentence can have varying meanings depending on the circumstances and other accompanying activities. A violent act is said to be followed by language. Language is present in nonviolence as well. Speech can have both positive and negative influences. This is further amplified nowadays due to social media. Words can heal but can incite hate as well. The concepts of violence and nonviolence are multifaceted, complex, and ambivalent. There is a conceptual ambiguity insofar as there are several ways of looking at it, and which version is appropriate is a subject of debate—context matters. I have shown how the complexity of definitions, the missing distinction between violence and nonviolence, and several ambiguous cases make the comparison of nonviolence with violence not a straightforward task.

The perception of violence and nonviolence varies based on factors such as context, culture, geography and language. Adopting a constructive pluralist view is crucial to effectively engage with diverse perspectives. Understanding the broader implications of

various concepts is essential when considering whether an act is violent or nonviolent. It is important to recognise that the term 'violence' carries moral and political connotations and adding the prefix 'non' does not automatically negate these associations. Nonviolence is not simply the absence of violence; instead, it has its own distinct characteristics that must be examined. The following two chapters will explore the distinction between violence and nonviolence from both historical and analytical viewpoints.

3. How Distinct is Nonviolence? – Historical Perspective

*Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon, which cuts without wounding
and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals.*

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

It is striking that nonviolence is portrayed as a weapon and a powerful one. The debate revolves around ‘waging peace’ or ‘waging nonviolence’. However, ethically speaking, it is crucial to differentiate between nonviolence as a way of life based on philosophical or religious principles and nonviolence as a strategy for achieving predefined goals. This nuanced distinction is essential because the former suggests that nonviolence is morally superior due to its ‘noble’ or ‘healing’ nature. In practical political contexts, actions are rarely based solely on the former or the latter condition.

I examine the ethical implications in the second half of the thesis. Before going into ethical matters, to understand nonviolence in its essence, one must study its origin and discuss how nonviolence developed into a widely applied political method. I aim to show that nonviolence has evolved from a (religious) ‘belief’ to a ‘principle’ and then a ‘strategy’ in political activity. I acknowledge that there are some holistic approaches involving both strategies and principles. This chapter makes the following two claims:

1. Historical development is the reason that we still have an attachment to nonviolence as something morally desirable.
2. Moral/spiritual vs. strategy/technical: Nowadays, nonviolence is not much about spiritual or moral things but more about strategy or technical things when it comes to political purposes.

To defend the claims, first, by examining the historical roots of nonviolence, I explore how it has evolved over centuries. This will shed light on the perception of its moral superiority. Second, I investigate various historical figures and their contributions to nonviolence. This elucidates how nonviolence became a popular method in the political field. Third, I provide examples that demonstrate how nonviolent political actions nowadays are often purely political strategies without substantial ethical consideration. Lastly, I briefly explore the feminist approach to capture a different perspective on the topic. Due to the nature of the topic on which I intend to show historical evolution, the chapter is somewhat descriptive.

I end the chapter by concluding that, in the political context, contemporary nonviolence fails to engage with the purity it had in its original form. Thus, nonviolence is not distinct in that it cannot be classified as the epitome of goodness or moral flawlessness. Nonviolence as a political method is a medium to bring about political changes based on strategy but includes religious, ideological, or philosophical principles as well. All in all, I defend that the belief that nonviolence is ethically preferable has roots in religion and philosophy. But contemporary nonviolent methods are primarily pragmatic and strategic. Hence, the supposition “*ceteris paribus*, nonviolent methods are always ethically superior to violent methods” cannot be endorsed.

3.1 The Origin of Nonviolence

The history of nonviolence can be traced back to Jainism, an ancient Indian religion that is considered one of the oldest religions in the world. The principles of Jainism are rooted in disciplined nonviolence towards all living creatures in thought, deed, and action. These principles are called the three *Guptis*: mental nonviolence, verbal nonviolence, and physical nonviolence (Sharma, 2012, p. 6). Strictly following Jainism means not harming any living

being, not even animals and plants. The ultimate goal is the attainment of Moksa (enlightenment or liberation) by following absolute nonviolence. Since laypeople cannot achieve this, for Jains, only the ascetic (renouncer: either a monk or a nun) can aspire to attain Moksa.

According to Fohr (2015), Jain soteriology involves inhibiting the accumulation of more karmic matter (a process called *samvara*) and purifying the soul of the karmic matter that has already accumulated (a process called *nirjara*). (p. 6) *Samvara* necessitates adhering to the ethical principles of (1) nonviolence/non-harming (*ahimsa*), (2) truth (*satya*), (3) non-stealing (*asteya*), (4) sexual restraint (*brahmacarya*), and (5) non-possession/non-attachment (*aparigraha*) (p. 37). Eventually, a sixth vow was added to this list, forbidding the eating or drinking of food or drink after the sun had set, as insects are more likely to be killed doing this in the dark (p. 40). In order to follow these ethical principles, the “passions” (anger, pride, deceit, and greed) must also be banished because they result in ethical transgressions of these vows, which in turn lead to the buildup of additional negative karmic matter. “*Nirjara*, on the other hand, requires practising twelve different types of austerities (*tapas*): six external austerities (most of which involve fasting and bodily mortification) and six internal austerities (including penance, humility, service, religious study, renunciation, and meditation)” (p. 37).

These ethical principles were harsh and difficult to follow in daily life. Laypeople, thus, adhere to the less strict versions of The Five Great Vows called *anuvratas* (“lesser vows”). These included “*ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (not stealing), *brahmacarya* (marital chastity), and *aparigraha* (non-attachment to, or limiting of possessions)” (Fohr, 2015, p. 75). Even to this day, Jains follow nonviolence and austerity rigorously and are strictly vegetarians. In Jainism, suicide and abortion are forbidden.

However, fasting to death (*sallekhana*) is an option “if they are no longer able to follow Jain precepts or practices for some reason such as illness or old age” (Fohr, 2015, p. 71).

Gautama Buddha also taught compassion and peace through the practice of nonviolence. Around 2500 years ago, Buddha was born in Lumbini, Kapilvastu (present-day Nepal) as Siddhartha Gautama²³. He was a prince and grew up in a palace. According to the legend, Siddhartha saw and realized human suffering (disease, old age, and death). He decided to find out the cause of all this suffering and how one could end it. So, he left his home and family at the age of 29 and started to live an ascetic life, studying, fasting, and meditating. After attempting it for six years, he attained enlightenment under the pipal tree in Bodhi Gaya (present-day India) and became henceforth known as the Buddha.

Buddha travelled across present-day India and taught about following a path of balance between asceticism and indulgence. This path was called the Middle Way. He preached the Four Noble Truths (suffering, the causes of suffering, how to end suffering, and the eightfold path that frees us from suffering) (see The Pluralism Project, 2020). Buddhism emphasizes compassion, nonviolence (also against animals), generosity, selflessness, and tolerance. This is depicted in many legends. One famous story is about a prince named Mahasatwo (Buddha in his previous life) in Namo Buddha (present-day Nepal). He finds a starving tigress unable to feed her five little cubs. He offers himself as food and saves the whole tiger family.

Tolerance is one of the pillars of Buddhism that translates into nonviolence in practice. Buddhists do not convert non-Buddhists by force. There is no history of crusades or persecutions for converting to Buddhism. Buddhists do not sacrifice animals in the name of religion. “If, as Buddhists believe, our karma will lead us to be reborn again and again, then

²³ The story of Siddhartha Gautama is part of the school curriculum in Nepal, where I attended school.

those who do not understand the truth in this present lifetime will get additional chances to realize it later. If you fail the test, you can take it again. There is thus no necessity to resort to violence to force others to accept the truth” (Goodman, 2009, p. 5).

Due to its core values of tolerance, patience, and acceptance, Buddhism spread worldwide, and various schools emerged in different countries. Today, the four major forms of Buddhism are Mahayana, Vajrayana, Theravada, and Zen Buddhism. They differ in rituals, chanting styles, scriptures, meditation practices, or styles of temples, but all are based on Buddha’s teachings and incorporate core values. However, there is no single religious text like the Bible or Koran. This fact also underlines the diversity of this religion.

Different strands of Buddhism have different outlooks regarding self-immolation depending on the different interpretations of ancient texts. Although Buddha himself is not known to say anything about this, the act of self-immolation is generally regarded as self-sacrifice in the form of a gift for a greater cause. Han-Sang (2020) concluded that self-immolation does not align with Buddha’s original teachings and cannot be seen as heroic or noble (p. 1). On the other hand, Yün-hua (1965, pp. 255-256) studied self-immolation in mediaeval China and found that the Buddhist monks followed the doctrine of the *Lotus Sutra* as an inspiration for the religious practice of burning the whole body or some parts only as homage. The other motivation was the stories of Bodhisattvas who sacrificed their lives for others. Plank (2013) argues that in the practice of Buddhist traditions (both Theravada and Mahayana), self-immolation has a religious dimension and “can be interpreted as an expression of a purely selfless act ...” (p. 359).

Jainism and Buddhism are similar in many ways. Both religions subscribe to the belief in reincarnation, karma, and nirvana (enlightenment), but do not believe in any God as the creator of the universe. Ahimsa (no harm or nonviolence) is the fundamental principle of both

Jainism and Buddhism, which teaches to treat all living beings with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Meditation is also central in both religions, although techniques may differ. However, Buddhism is considered less strict than Jainism. Despite many Buddhists being vegetarians, it is not mandatory. In contrast, Jainism mandates a strict vegetarian diet. Monks and nuns in Jainism are discouraged from staying in one place for an extended period of time. Buddhists follow the tradition of staying in one monastery. In terms of attaining nirvana, Buddhism allows for the possibility of nuns achieving this state, whereas Jainism does not permit it for women. Buddhism is a missionary religion; the Jains did not establish a missionary tradition and remained almost solely in India. Buddhism has historically been non-discriminatory, while Jainism followed the Indian traditional practice of untouchability.

In light of the above, even though both Jainism and Buddhism are based on nonviolence, the former was more rigid than the latter. Modern-day Jainism is still characterised by a strict vegetarian diet and nonviolence. In fact, not much has changed. Jain monks and nuns renounce all material possessions and depend on the Jain community for food and shelter. The strictness regarding nonviolence also remains, as Jains do not eat root vegetables like carrots and cabbages because they are considered injurious foods. The reason for this is the belief that since vegetables are grown underground, pulling them out would mean the destruction of 'micro creatures'.

Buddhism, however, has undergone significant development over the centuries as the religion spread throughout the world. For example, Tibetan Buddhism, as exemplified by the Dalai Lama, is different from Buddhism practised in Japan, and even within Japan, there are various schools of Buddhism. Notwithstanding this, the non-theistic, non-dogmatic, and nonviolent characteristics, including the philosophy of love, kindness, and compassion, have remained. It is important to note that both Buddhism and Jainism did not teach pacifism.

Now, I shall discuss the development of nonviolence through five principal figures: Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (known as “Mahatma” Gandhi), Dorothy Day, and Martin Luther King Jr. All of them were religious, with Thoreau, Tolstoy, Day, and King being Christians, and Gandhi being a Hindu.

3.2 Nonviolence in the Modern World

It is said that Thoreau (1817–1862) was influenced by the Bhagavad Gita, an ancient Hindu religious text. In his popular piece *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854), he writes:

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; ... (Thoreau, 1854, ch. The Pond in Winter)

However, Thoreau was not a Hindu. He was baptized as a Unitarian. In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*, he writes, “Christ was a sublime actor on the stage of the world. He knew what he was thinking of when he said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." I draw near to him at such a time. Yet he taught mankind but imperfectly how to live; his thoughts were all directed toward another world” (Thoreau, 2003, p. 56). Despite this, he criticized established churches in New England. He even resigned his membership from the family’s Unitarian church when he was 23 (Hodder, 2003, p. 88). Thoreau’s idea of nonviolence did not stem from religion.

So, why was Thoreau successful in influencing Tolstoy, Gandhi, or King Jr. in later years? It is because Thoreau planted the seeds of *civil resistance* unknowingly. Motivated by his abhorrence of the Mexican-American War and an economy based on slavery, Thoreau authored an essay titled *Resistance to Civil Government* (later titled *Civil Disobedience*), in

which he espouses the idea of resisting an unjust law. He draws upon his experience of spending a night in jail for refusing to pay the poll tax. This experience gave him a new perspective regarding the relationship between the government and its citizens. Thoreau did not advocate anarchy but a 'better' government, or in other words, a 'lesser judicious' government, which should be beneficial. He claims:

"That government is best which governs least;" and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which I also believe—"That government is best which governs not at all;" and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. (Thoreau, 2008, p. 1)

He argues that the conscience is more important than the law in doing the right thing. "It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right.", he states (Thoreau, 2008, p. 6). Thus, if the law is unjust, like financing slavery or war, it should be disobeyed. In practice, it means not paying taxes and withdrawing support from the government, even if it means facing imprisonment. Thoreau believed that war, as the current state of affairs, meant that the payment of taxes to support it was violent and bloody. He proposed nonpayment of taxes, which he called a "peaceable revolution", as a solution. ***Thus, the core idea of withholding support from the government as a method of resistance was established.*** However, he was not outright against taxes or laws. He did acknowledge the need to pay highway taxes as a way of being a good neighbour and contributing to the education of his compatriots. His reason for refusing to pay taxes was rather his wish to refuse allegiance to the state. He found that the current laws were not just from a higher point of view, but he imagined a just state where all men were treated with respect.

Hence, it is important to know that Thoreau did not embrace the principle of nonviolence. However, his philosophy of disobeying an unjust government for a better society inspired many people. One such person was Gandhi, who was inspired by Thoreau's nonviolent protest, resisting paying the tax and going to jail instead. In 1907, Gandhi wrote excerpts of Thoreau's essay in the newspaper called "Indian Opinion" and had a high opinion of Thoreau which can be observed from the excerpt below.

Thoreau was a great writer, philosopher, poet, and withal a most practical man, that is, he taught nothing he was not prepared to practice in himself. He was one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced. At the time of the abolition of slavery movement, he wrote his famous essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience". He went to gaol for the sake of his principles and suffering humanity. His essay has, therefore, been sanctified by suffering. Moreover, it is written for all time. Its incisive logic is unanswerable. (Gandhi, 1907)

Martin Luther King Jr. was also impressed by Thoreau's essay, which is apparent from his following chronicle:

During my student days I read Henry David Thoreau's essay "On Civil Disobedience" for the first time. Here, in this courageous New Englander's refusal to pay his taxes and his choice of jail rather than support a war that would spread slavery's territory into Mexico, I made my first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I reread the work several times. (*The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1998, Chapter 2: Morehouse College)

Through Thoreau's writings and experience, King Jr. became convinced that not only cooperation with the good but also noncooperation with the bad was morally required. King

Jr. commended Thoreau's eloquence and ardour with which the topic of creative protest was passed on to the new generation as a legacy. Eventually, the civil rights struggle brought Thoreau's principles to life. King Jr. followed the teachings of Thoreau that evil must be fought and that no decent man can quietly adjust to injustice. These became visible in the form of a sit-in at lunch counters, a freedom ride into Mississippi, a nonviolent protest in Albany, Georgia, or a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. (*The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1998, Chapter 2: Morehouse College)

Similarly, Thoreau's essay was an inspiration for Tolstoy. In the novel *Resurrection*, he brings up Thoreau at the beginning of Book Two, Chapter 29, with a positive connotation:

He remembered the thought of the American writer, Thoreau, who at the time when slavery existed in America said that "under a government that imprisons any unjustly the true place for a just man is also a prison." Nekhludoff, especially after his visit to Petersburg and all he discovered there, thought in the same way.

"Yes, the only place befitting an honest man in Russia at the present time is a prison," he thought, and even felt that this applied to him personally, when he drove up to the prison and entered its walls. (Tolstoy, 1999)

Thus, a simple and profound act of disobedience as a form of resistance presented in an essay developed into a widespread idea of *civil disobedience* or *civil resistance* in the early 20th century.

In the modern world, Leo Tolstoy (1828 –1910) is best known for the principle of nonviolent resistance, whose teachings were based on Christian belief and philosophy. His writings, *The Kingdom of God is within You* and *The Law of Love and the Law of Violence* contain his views regarding God, Christianity, and the State in detail. His theory of nonresistance later influenced Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and countless others.

Tolstoy denounced militarism, war, and the use of violence. He initially pursued a career as a cadet, but after observing the atrocities of the Crimean War, his ideas started to shift towards Christian pacifism. He believed that Christianity was irreconcilable with the use of force and war. He argued that Christianity was misunderstood by men; Christ was an advocate of the love of humanity. He outlined a new organisation for society based on Jesus' key teachings, namely freedom, peace, and love, so as to end the organisation of life based on force.

From early on, Thoreau's idea of nonresistance is noticeable in Tolstoy's works. He endorsed this view by writing about Garrison and Adin Ballou, whom he thought were the champions of the nonresistance doctrine against evil (Tolstoy, 1894). For his opinion, he received criticism from religious men as well as freethinkers. He believed that Christianity was misunderstood not only by believers but also by men of science. Tolstoy thought that authority was equal to violence because, according to him, the government's authority, although successful in suppressing some private violence, introduced other forms of violence that increased proportionately with the duration and strength of the government (p. 117). In his view, the suffering of subjects increased with the strength of authority, no matter what type of government was in power. He argued:

The only difference is that under a despotic form of government the authority is concentrated in a small number of oppressors and violence takes a cruder form; under constitutional monarchies and republics as in France and America authority is divided among a great number of oppressors and the forms assumed by violence is less crude, but its effect of making the disadvantages of authority greater than its advantages, and of enfeebling the oppressed to the furthest extreme to which they can be reduced with advantage to the oppressors, remains always the same. (Tolstoy, 1894, pp. 117-118)

He declared that the people obeyed the laws not out of respect but out of fear of being punished. The other reason was to maintain one's own status quo by those who benefited from the situation. This manifested itself in state-sponsored institutions like universal military service. He contended that through methods such as intimidation, corruption, and hypnotising the people, people were coerced into becoming soldiers. These soldiers were then exposed to certain cruelties and brutalities, ultimately becoming enslaved, thus completing the circle of violence. His proposition, therefore, was that the true Christian doctrine of nonresistance to evil by force should be accepted (Tolstoy, 1894, Chapter 5). His notion of the state's different versions of violence and how this can be resolved in the form of nonresistance finds manifestation in his later works.

Tolstoy's main criticism remained the corruption of Christianity, war, and unjust laws that perpetuated societal enslavement. For him, the law of violence governed everywhere in society because of the existing social hierarchies (Tolstoy, 1948), with a few dominating over the majority. This led to things like anger, corruption, lies, servitude, and the brutalizing of the masses either being continued or even being widespread. Tolstoy attributed the current dire state of affairs to the mistakes made by all political doctrines, both conservative and advanced. He explained that the reason for the working class's support for violence stemmed from their habit of either following the false Christian doctrine or denying all religion. Ultimately, Tolstoy believed that the law of love as "supreme law" or "highest law" was the only means of salvation from the appalling conditions the nations were facing. He left a legacy of 'love' as the basis for nonviolence to preserve ourselves from evil. He reminded us that "the common bond is in the union of men, and that this union can never be attained by means of violence" (Tolstoy 1948, p. 40).

My analysis of various texts has shown that both Thoreau and Tolstoy carried and pushed the idea of nonviolence and civil resistance. This was done largely by opposing an unjust government. While Thoreau's main reason for opposing the government was the use of taxes for war, Tolstoy saw even the state's authority as violence²⁴. Although not strictly religious, their inspiration did come from Christianity and other religious texts. Thoreau inspired Tolstoy, and Thoreau was the one whose disobedience by not paying the tax started the nonviolent form of civil disobedience. They were not involved in any political activities. Instead, they focused on producing various literary works that have had a lasting impact on subsequent generations. To preserve the essence of their ideas through their powerful works, I have incorporated several direct quotations in this chapter.

It was in the 20th century that nonviolence gained popularity and followers around the world. Gandhi (1869–1948) preached and practised nonviolence via his concept of 'ahimsa' (no harm). Even though Gandhi was greatly influenced by Hindu scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, his concept of nonviolence involved, on the one hand, a mixture of ideology, strategy, and principles, and on the other hand, creed, religious belief, social concerns, politics, and even philosophy.

As depicted in the Bhagwat Gita, Gandhi condemned inaction. For him, learning how to avoid the evils that accompany action was the "central teaching of the Gita" (quoted in Fischer 2006, p. 39). Gandhi termed his fight against injustice 'Satyagraha' because he thought it more appropriate to differentiate it from passive resistance. He opted for Satyagraha as a pursuit of or search for truth, which began in Transvaal to fight against an anti-Indian ordinance. His struggle in South Africa brought him jail sentences several times, but he was successful in leading a nonviolent, mass civil disobedience campaign. However, it was not

²⁴ In *The Kingdom of God is with You*, Tolstoy uses the word 'violence' 214 times, and in *The Law of Love and the Law of Violence*, the word 'violence' appears 92 times.

without consequences. During some campaigns, some were killed, and several were wounded. His support for the war and the British in 1914 was troubling enough for him that he returned to India in 1915 (Fischer, 2006).

Gandhi was profoundly influenced by Tolstoy, who wrote “A Letter to a Hindu” in 1908, which Gandhi later published in Gujarati with Tolstoy’s permission. The message in this letter was that love was the only method to save people from enslavement. “If the people of India are enslaved by violence, it is only because they themselves live and have lived by violence and do not recognise the eternal law of love inherent in humanity” (Tolstoy, 1908, part 5). Gandhi and Tolstoy communicated several times, discussing the struggle in Transvaal, passive resistance, Christian religion, and many other philosophical topics, until Tolstoy’s death in 1910. Gandhi established Tolstoy Farm in the same year as a tribute and to practice Tolstoy’s philosophy. Gandhi was finally able to use Tolstoy’s idea of love as a weapon to fight evil by organizing nationwide nonviolent strikes in India.

Gandhi’s first resistance in India was against untouchability and discrimination based on caste. He also spearheaded a Satyagraha movement for the remission of taxes for the peasants who had suffered from crop failure. His approach to nonviolence was unwavering; however, it was questionable on some occasions. For example, in 1918, he recruited Indians for the British Army to join the First World War (Fischer, 2006, p. 179). He advocated for the ability to bear and use arms. Prior to that, he had supported two South African Wars. Given these points, it seems that Gandhi’s primary goal was the freedom of India, and he was willing to cooperate with the British, even if it meant using arms. The ‘hartal’ (strike) was Gandhi’s first act against the British government of India. One of his famous nonviolent hartals was the ‘salt march’, during which he walked for 24 days and picked up a pinch of salt at the Dandi beach in defiance of the government’s salt monopoly. Although the British used

violence during the movement, the Indian protestors remained nonviolent, except in Chittagong.

During the same time, the need for pacifism was self-evident due to the aftermath of the First World War and the ongoing Second World War. One of the peace activists of this era was Dorothy Day, who co-founded the newspaper “Catholic Worker” in 1933. Through her writings and activism, she championed the cause of nonviolence and demonstrated how religion and pacifism could be used as a means of opposing war. She wrote notably about the pacifist position and why, as Christians, one should not take up arms or oppose the use of force.²⁵ In one of her articles named ‘pacifism’, she writes, “We oppose class war and class hatred, even while we stand opposed to injustice and greed. Our fight is not ‘with flesh and blood but principalities and powers.’ We oppose also imperialist war” (Day, 1956). She urges us to be courageous enough to set an example and calls upon nations to disarm.

Dorothy Day followed the Catholic faith. Besides being a prolific writer, through which she showed her social activism, she also actively took part in civil disobedience, which prompted four arrests and jail terms, the last one at the age of 75.²⁶ She protested against all kinds of wars. She remained active throughout her whole life and was committed to peace. She was a key figure in the Catholic Worker movement, which, based on Christianity, advocated for pacifism and continues to work on justice, nonviolence, poverty, and hospitality for the homeless to this day. This movement, along with many other peace and social activists, has been involved in anti-war movements, and they have championed to take further the idea of nonviolence. Until the mid-20th century, pacifism, usually based on religious beliefs, was the basis for nonviolent activities. Later, this concept gained more popularity

²⁵ <https://catholicworker.org/563-2/>

²⁶ <https://catholicworker.org/dd-interesting-facts-html/?>

when Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) applied nonviolent resistance to win civil rights for African Americans.

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence greatly influenced Martin Luther King Jr., who believed that nonviolence was not for cowards and that it required courage and discipline. King's civil rights movement can be traced back to Rosa Parks' historic bus ride in 1955. Parks' quiet defiance to give up her seat on the bus triggered the most well-known civil rights campaign in history (ushistory.org, 2023). King, then a relatively unknown minister, was also a part of the community organisation called the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). On December 5, 1955, MIA organised a boycott of Montgomery's buses, which lasted almost a year. On November 23, 1956, segregated busing was declared unconstitutional. This boycott propelled King to national prominence as a leader of the civil rights movement. (ushistory.org, 2023)

Gandhi's profound influence on King is evident in King's adoption of Gandhi's practical nonviolent technique. This approach is visible, among others, in a "Letter from Birmingham Jail", where he mentions that "In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self purification; and direct action" (King, 1963, para. 6). King was determined to fight social and racial injustices such as segregation by using nonviolent resistance. In the book *Stride Toward Freedom*, he writes how studying Gandhi convinced him that true pacifism was not nonresistance to evil but nonviolent resistance to evil. His now famous 'six principles of nonviolence' based on that work are as follows (King, 1958, pp. 90-94):

- 1) Nonviolent resistance is for courageous people.
- 2) Nonviolent resistance seeks to win friendship and understanding. It does not seek to defeat or humiliate people.

- 3) Nonviolent resistance attacks the forces of evil, not individual people.
- 4) Nonviolent resistance accepts suffering without retaliation.
- 5) Nonviolent resistance stands for love instead of hate. It avoids external physical violence and internal violence of the spirit.
- 6) Nonviolent resistance is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice.

Although the civil rights movement led by King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) successfully mobilized a mass of black people through nonviolent demonstrations, some of those actions have raised moral questions. The tactics used were thoroughly planned to provoke violence; hence, they can be termed a strategy. However, my intention is not to evaluate the justifiability of these actions, but rather to demonstrate that, regardless of the moral implications, they were a strategy intended to bring about success. The Birmingham Children's Crusade in 1963 is one such example. Not only is the use of children ethically highly questionable, but the organisers planned the march despite the knowledge that the response would not be peaceful. They planned and trained the children to turn the tide in Birmingham. The image of police commissioner Eugene Bull Connor's men using high-powered fire hoses and police dogs on demonstrators, especially children, brought the nationwide attention the organisers had hoped and intended for.

I argue that this event marked the turning point for the role of nonviolence from purely moral or spiritual inspiration to a more technical strategy in the political arena. King Jr. knew that violence was not a solution. On the other hand, he also understood that the Black people had waited and suffered long enough that they needed to try all means to end their misery. He explained the necessity of fighting back with everything they had, stating, "We know through

painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed” (King, 1963, para. 11).

Hence, the programme in Birmingham was fully prepared, including the timetable that was postponed twice due to changed circumstances. There were volunteers at all levels for demonstrations, running errands, driving, distributing food and attending phone calls. Training was also provided on how to behave and react, and going to jail was part of the whole plan. “Going to jail was no longer a disgrace but a badge of honor” (King, 2011, II: The Sword That Heals), says King. The plan was to fight the oppressor with nonviolent direct action and force them to show their brutality in daylight. King was convinced that the method of nonviolent resistance that had freed the Indian people from colonialism by the British Empire was a hope for the Black people.

King’s nonviolent revolution was not without detractors. In fact, the “Letter from Birmingham” was specifically written to address the criticisms of his actions in Birmingham. He believed that the tragedy in Birmingham was mainly due to the silence of the good people and not only because of the fear and guilt on the part of the oppressed and oppressors. This time, King and his team were willing to go a step further and disobey the unjust law. His defence is as follows:

One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.²⁷ I would agree with St. Augustine that “an unjust law is no law at all.” (King, 1963, para. 12)

King also defended the participation of youngsters in the Birmingham march, calling them foot soldiers, and stated that the diverse range of people with different titles and professions

²⁷ There are different versions of “Letter from the Birmingham Jail”. In some versions, this particular line is missing.

taking part was something very natural and even a token of pride. King believed that nonviolence taught tolerance, but that enough was enough. The nonviolent method, though tactically planned, was the only moral and practical way to end racism, segregation, and discrimination against Black people.

The practice of nonviolence has evolved over time, with the spiritual strictness involved in Jainism and ancient Buddhism fading slowly over the centuries. Although Thoreau and Tolstoy were both Christians, and both earned the credit for establishing the philosophy of nonviolence, they had different views. Thoreau simply began the idea of civil disobedience, and Tolstoy planted the notion of love as a nonviolent method of fighting all evils. During the two world wars, anti-war movements paved the way for pacifism and peace activism. Until then, many activists, like Dorothy Day, had a religious background. The fusion of faith and a desire for peace evolved into nonviolent political activism, mainly in the form of civil disobedience.

By the time King emerged, the ideas had evolved over the decades, and nonviolent resistance had become a key component of the civil rights movement. In the course of the 20th century, Gandhi and King used the concept of nonviolence not merely on an individual level to seek the truth but for political purposes, turning it into a political strategy based on principles.

3.3 Contemporary Nonviolence: Strategy or Belief?

In the fourth quarter of the 20th century, nonviolence slowly turned into a mere strategy regarding political changes. Tired of the Vietnam War and Cold War, the world was searching for more peace, and nonviolent civil resistance appeared as a refuge. I argue this point through the analysis of Gene Sharp's work and contemporary real-world examples of nonviolent

activism. The fact that there has been a gradual change regarding the knowledge and practice of nonviolence is also shown by the two approaches to nonviolence in the current literature:

1) principled and 2) pragmatic. By exploring the figures who practised principled nonviolence, followed by pragmatic nonviolence, I illustrate the evolution of nonviolent methods.

Principled nonviolence emphasizes the moral rejection of violence and coercion. It is of an ideological, religious, or philosophical nature, such that all kinds of physical violence are completely rejected. Gandhi and King employed nonviolent action primarily following moral or religious beliefs, which could be seen as principled nonviolence. However, as discussed earlier, their activities were close to being tactical or strategic on several occasions. Gandhi, especially during his Transvaal days, wanted to popularise the passive resistance movement by organising an essay competition on “The Ethics and Efficacy of Passive Resistance.” He was aware of the moral inconsistency with the true spirit of passive resistance and sought Tolstoy’s opinion on the subject of morality in a letter (Gandhi, October 1st, 1909). In another letter to Tolstoy, Gandhi asked Tolstoy to use his influence to popularise the movement and advertise the struggle of the Indians in Transvaal (Gandhi, October 11th, 1909). In Gandhi’s opinion, resistance to oppression, even through the use of violence, was preferable to no resistance at all. His primary motivation was to combat oppression. Similarly, King Jr. was aware that privileged groups would not relinquish their privileges voluntarily and was prepared to use “well timed” “legal and nonviolent pressure” (King, 1963) (Letter from Birmingham Jail).

For observers, even Gandhi’s method of Satyagraha appeared to be strategic nonviolent action. For instance, Shridharani (Friess, 1941), who followed Gandhi in the Salt March, mentions the following 12 phases of a nonviolent campaign: (1) negotiations and

attempted arbitration; (2) agitation; (3) demonstrations and the ultimatum; (4) self-purification; (5) strike and general strike; (6) picketing; (7) dhurna or sit-down; (8) economic boycott; (9) non-payment of taxes; (9a) hizrat or mass migration; (10) non-cooperation; (10a) ostracism; (11) civil disobedience; (12) assertive Satyagraha tending toward setting up of a “parallel government.” He also notes that the success of any social technique, be it violent or nonviolent, depends on resources like intelligence, experience, and the number and quality of the employed human resources. This notion of nonviolent action aligns with Sharp’s argument that nonviolence is a method of action. Additionally, I believe the role of a benevolent leader such as Gandhi is critical.

From a philosophical point of view, what the Dalai Lama preaches is also principled nonviolence. In the foreword of the book *Nonviolence – The History of a Dangerous Idea* by Mark Kolinsky, he states:

Nonviolence does not mean the mere absence of violence. It is something more positive, more meaningful than that. The true expression of nonviolence is compassion, which is not just a passive emotional response, but a rational stimulus to action. (Kurlansky, 2008)

Other contemporary spiritual and religious leaders also preached nonviolence from a philosophical view. Their teachings continue to influence the current generation. This sheds light on the widely accepted ethical preference for nonviolence. Two figures Thich Nhat Hanh and Osho, have written numerous books and given scores of talks. While I will only briefly touch on their work, my primary goal is to show how Buddhist principles espoused by Hanh and the spirituality advocated by Osho connect with the concept of nonviolence.

Thich Nhat Hanh was a prominent Vietnamese Zen master and Buddhist monk (Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation, 2023). He taught religion and later became a dharma teacher. He was a peace activist during the Vietnam War. He is known for the art of mindfulness. He taught different ways to achieve mindfulness so that strong emotions like fear, anger, despair, or even depression could be handled mindfully. For Hanh, the real enemy of humans was negativity, such as ignorance, discrimination, fear, craving, and violence. Mindfulness is related to peace because to want peace, one *has to be peace*, says Hanh.

By the way we live our daily life we contribute to peace or to war. It is mindfulness that can tell me that I am going in the direction of war and it is the energy of mindfulness that can help me to make a turn and to go in the direction of peace. (Hanh, 2023)

Hanh's teachings were highly practical, and his mindfulness training and meditations were instrumental in helping many people, including businesspeople, manage their personal inner peace. When he says, "Peace is not simply the absence of violence; it is the cultivation of understanding, insight and compassion, combined with action" (Hanh, 2023), it reminds us of Gandhi or King. King nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. Hanh's idea of collective awakening or collective action, which is rooted in Buddhism, is also an inspiration for peace activists and social changemakers. For example, he says we are all part of the wrongdoing when it comes to harming the planet Earth.

Osho, a controversial figure during his lifetime, taught meditation as a means of inner transformation and therapy. He was a spiritual leader, teacher, and critic of Mahatma Gandhi. His teachings remain popular in South Asia, and many continue to follow his guidance and

meditate at one of the Osho retreat centres. Unlike other religious and spiritual leaders, he provoked people to think critically and explore new ideas.

Always remember, whatsoever I say to you, you can take it in two ways. You can simply take it on my authority, 'Because Osho says so, it must be true' - then you will suffer, then you will not grow. (Osho International Foundation, 2023)

Osho's idea of nonviolence is intriguing, which differs from a religious perspective and Gandhi's. He asserts that he is not a philosopher but someone who sees through silence and not through logic or thinking. According to Osho (Osho World, 2021), nonviolence is not a philosophy but a philosia. He further explains that while philosophy means love for knowledge ("philo" = love, "sophy" = wisdom), philosia means love for being, for experiencing ("philo" = love, "sia" = seeing).

Osho's critique of Gandhi was his experiment with truth. Osho opined that one knows the truth and cannot experiment with it. Further, Osho found the word nonviolence to be 'negative' and said, "Violence is positive, non-violence is negative. Nobody has paid any attention to the simple fact that you are making violence positive, solid – and non-violence is simply negating it" (Osho, 1984, p. 17). He preferred the term 'reverence' – 'reverence for life'. Osho believed that if one felt reverence for life, one could not be violent, but one could be nonviolent and still not have any reverence for life. He mentions Gandhi's nonviolence as an example. Osho believed Gandhi to be sincere and not a fraud, but nevertheless, was convinced that Gandhi did not teach his disciples nonviolence and asserts that "He was teaching people to be violent to themselves" (Osho, 1984, p. 19).

According to Osho (1984), people who espouse nonviolence may in fact be psychologically violent, although not in the traditional sense. Instead, they may express their

violence not against others but against themselves, such as through practices like fasting. In Osho's words, "The violence has not disappeared, it has only taken a roundabout turn. Gandhi was very violent to himself – just any excuse and he would go on a fast. Fasting is violence. If you keep somebody else starving it is violence. And if you keep yourself starving, isn't it violence? Do you have double standards?" (Osho, 1984, p. 20) He adds that being violent with one's own body is the easiest way since one can do anything with one's own body. I agree with some aspects of his argument, but I'm afraid I have to disagree with his overall criticism towards Gandhi. As I have argued before, while I agree that self-harm is problematic when used for political purposes, I do not believe that all self-harm is inherently wrong. In my opinion, it is only ethically wrong when used as a method of coercion to achieve a political goal. Otherwise, it is a personal choice; like being a vegetarian, non-vegetarian, or vegan, one can choose to fast as long as one prefers.

In his book *The Power of Nonviolence*, Gregg has put forward an influential theory of principled nonviolence describing the tactics of nonviolence as moral jiu-jitsu. He states:

The art of jiu-jitsu is based on knowledge of balance and how to disturb it. In a struggle of moral jiu-jitsu, the retention of moral balance seems to depend upon the qualities of one's relationship to moral truth. Hence part of the superior power of the nonviolent resister seems to lie in the nature of his character. (Gregg, 2018, p. 56)

Drawing on Gandhi's ideas and practice, Gregg believed that "Courageous violence, to try to prevent or stop a wrong, is better than cowardly acquiescence. Cowardice is more harmful morally than violence" (Gregg, 2018, p. 57). For him, someone who has the courage to fight but still can withhold oneself "is the true nonviolent resister." The objective, hence, was to transform the opponent's perspective, understanding, and sense of morality so that he would

join the resister genuinely in finding a truly agreeable and fulfilling resolution for both parties (Gregg, 2018, p. 58).

The second type of nonviolence is pragmatic nonviolence, which is also termed strategic or tactical nonviolence, is goal-oriented and uses coercion as needed. Almost all nonviolent actions these days are pragmatic ones, as they are not usually based on religious or philosophical grounds. Gene Sharp is the leading example of scholars who follow this type. Although a disciple of Gandhi in the beginning, Sharp later dismissed Gandhi's teachings and developed his own methods of nonviolence.

Sharp (1973) describes nonviolent action as a special technique of struggle as a response to social and political conflicts. He illustrates numerous successful examples of nonviolence in his writings and lists 198 methods of nonviolent action. Sharp asserts that since nonviolent action is a technique, it is not passive but active, and hence, "It is *action* that is nonviolent" (Sharp, 1973a, p. 64). It is worth noting that for Sharp, nonviolent action is not synonymous with 'pacifism'. He also didn't consider nonviolent action to be "identical with religious or philosophical systems emphasising nonviolence as a matter of moral principle" (Sharp, 1973a, p. 68).

Here, a departure in the meaning and understanding of nonviolence is evident. While Gandhi also preferred violence to cowardice, his idea of nonviolence emphasized on converting others through love and forgiveness. Sharp, however, considered successful changes via conversion, accommodation, nonviolent coercion, and disintegration to be nonviolent actions. Sharp also believed that nonviolent techniques functioned by producing power changes. While coercion and power will be discussed later, it is important to highlight that Sharp noticeably no longer adhered to the moral or ethical implications of nonviolence, which could still be observed with Gandhi and King.

Gandhi was committed to self-suffering and self-sacrifice in his civil disobedience campaigns, but he was strictly against physical violence. For example, in 1922, following mob violence in Chauri Chaura, he cancelled the campaign. Nowadays, nonviolent political actions are based on effectiveness and have political significance, such that the risk of violence is accepted or even taken as part of the strategy.

Participating in a nonviolent struggle does not make an individual immune from imprisonment, injury, suffering, or death. As in violent conflicts, the participants often suffer harsh penalties for their defiance and noncooperation. (Sharp and Paulson, 2005, p. 43)

Therefore, it is false to assume that nonviolent political actions are completely devoid of violence. Moreover, in those political actions, sometimes the nonparticipants, like noncombatants in armed conflicts, also suffer directly or indirectly. Attack comes to the conclusion that pragmatic “nonviolence as such has no intrinsic value, apart from this concern with its efficacy. Nonviolence action is seen primarily as a set of methods or techniques which can be used to achieve a wide variety of political objectives or goals” (Attack, 2012, p. 30).

Further, Sharp has made a distinction between ‘nonviolence’ and ‘nonviolent action’. His idea of ‘nonviolence’ is the absence of violence where violence is rejected based on religious, moral, or ethical beliefs. ‘Nonviolent action’, on the other hand, is a technique of waging conflicts using certain types of actions and does not require any specific ethical, moral, or religious beliefs. Sharp informs us that for the future political development of nonviolent struggle, nonviolent alternatives should be used for the following types of conflicts (Sharp, 2003, p. 15):

- Dismantling dictatorships
- Blocking coups d'état and preventing new dictatorships
- Defending against foreign aggression and occupation
- Preserving the existence and ways of life of indigenous peoples
- Lifting social and economic injustices
- Developing, preserving, and extending democratic practices and human rights and
- Incorporating nonviolent means into democratic societies in additional ways.

All of the above are clear political goals, and Sharp emphasizes the importance of strategic planning. Hence, Sharp's nonviolent action disregards moral or spiritual values. Its importance is purely attached to the technical and/or tactical strength of the actions in achieving the set of political goals.

To recapitulate, the legacy of nonviolent tradition includes various forms of civil resistance or civil disobedience, such as peaceful mass demonstrations, petitions, non-cooperation, boycotts, strikes and blockades. Further, fasting continues to be prominent in all kinds of social and political protests. Besides, civil resistance and civil disobedience remain paradigm cases of nonviolent methods. The former could be protests or movements such as the protest organised by the group Fridays for Future against climate change or the Occupy Wall Street movement against capitalism. The latter involves intentionally breaking the existing law, such as whistleblowing against one's own government. Both methods are commonly employed to protest government policies or achieve political, economic and social goals.

Now, two contemporary examples of civil resistance will be analysed to understand how nonviolent action is practised in the 21st century. The first example to be examined is the

nonviolent resistance by Burmese monks, and the second one concerns political protests in Nepal.

In August 2007 (Burma Campaign UK, 2007), the regime in Burma (now called Myanmar) raised fuel prices, which sparked protests and demonstrations. The Buddhist monks joined the movement and participated in protests in several cities around Burma. Although the regime started a crackdown and arrested monks, the peaceful resistance continued. This movement called the 'Saffron Revolution' did not end the military regime but brought the world's attention to the cruelty of military dictatorship.

The participation of the monks in the Saffron Revolution was not for religious reasons but for economic ones. Even then, the monks did not take up arms or resort to violence during the protests. However, the monks' refusal to take alms from members of the military regime and their associates, symbolically with their rice bowls turned upside down, during the protests had religious meaning. Buddhists give alms to achieve a good 'karma' to attain Nirvana someday. This put a certain amount of pressure on the predominantly Buddhist country of Myanmar, where 90% of the population (Rosenthal, 2018) are Buddhists. With a hint of coercion, the Saffron Revolution can be seen as a form of pragmatic nonviolence.

However, some Buddhist monks have been involved in acts of violence against Rohingya Muslims. "In 2012, serious anti-Muslim riots erupted in the Rakhine State when a mob of young Buddhist men armed with sticks and clubs attacked the Rohingya Muslim minority after an alleged rape of a Buddhist girl" (Gravers, 2015, p. 11). Organised hate and resentment against Muslims are entirely against Buddha's love and compassion. Although the core doctrine of Buddhism is ahimsa or nonviolence, some Buddhist monks were openly involved in the ultra-nationalist anti-Muslim '969 movement' in Myanmar (Asia Report N°290, 2017) and 'Bodu Bala Sena' (The Army of Buddhist Power) in Sri Lanka (Lin and

Muez, 2018), using violence in the name of defending the religion. This suggests that when it comes to politics or political power, belief (here Buddhism) seems to no longer hold significance.

The reader might object that Buddhism is not a source of violence and that Buddhism still represents a peaceful religion. I have not refuted this perspective. My argument is that nonviolent actions, such as those undertaken for political objectives or nationalism, like the ones mentioned above, can become solely strategic. As I have asserted earlier, Buddhism's reputation for peacefulness and nonviolence contributes to the widespread perception that nonviolence is morally unassailable. Especially meditation and mindfulness, as essential parts of Buddhism, are widely practised around the world. For instance, Vipassana, a special meditation that can last for several days, has been used in several prisons. Studies suggest that the Vipassana course is said to have a meaningful impact on prisoners in rehabilitation (Ronel, Frid and Timor, 2013).

The second example involves Dr. Govinda KC, a medical activist from Nepal, who has fasted 20 times (Online Khabar, 2022) to pressure the government and the concerned stakeholders to make changes such that the academic functioning of the government medical institutions becomes independent. Each time, he was supported by thousands of Nepali citizens who demonstrated in different cities in solidarity. KC is not religious, and his nonviolent protests were aimed at addressing medical-related issues and were of a political nature. Hence, his fast-unto-death was a nonviolent action, as suggested by Sharp, unlike Gandhi's fasting as a part of his Satyagraha, which involved "either an act of penance for a sinful nation or a moral challenge to British colonial Rule" (Pratt and Vernon, 2005, 97). Also, the public's support was for his agenda, not on philosophical or religious grounds.

Another example of civil resistance in Nepal is the ‘EnoughIsEnough’ campaign launched by Nepali youth, demanding better medical treatment and overall management by the government to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (Aryal, 2020). The campaign involved protests in different places with masks and physically maintaining distance. It was followed by fasting without water and relay fasting by several youths. The messages for protests and the updates regarding the campaign were disseminated through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Both of these instances of civil resistance were driven by political goals rather than philosophical beliefs and therefore, can be classified as pragmatic nonviolence.

To conclude, beliefs or philosophical values are rarely pertinent in contemporary nonviolent political actions. Instead, most of the activities revolve around the 198 methods of nonviolent political action put forward by Sharp. Some instances of nonviolent political action even involve a degree of violence, such as using force, obstruction, or structural damage. The database called the “global nonviolent action database” includes thousands of instances that are catalogued as either methods developed or cases²⁸. As the website informs us, this database includes campaigns and not movements. This differentiation is important because movements generally include a plan executed according to a certain strategy over a long period of time whereas campaigns are more focused and short-lived. Furthermore, a movement will have several campaigns or cases, and some cases within that movement may turn out to be violent and cause physical harm or property damage (e.g. the BlackLivesMatter movement). The ethical implications of harm caused by nonviolent political actions will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

²⁸ <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/>

3.3.1 Feminist Approach

With the strengthening of the women's movement and the reinforcement of the peace movement, feminist perspectives on nonviolence emerged. My analysis is that the feminist approach to nonviolence is based on the acute sensitivity of feminism regarding violence. Further, feminism strives to expose patriarchy by making men, their relationship to violence, and their use of violence, especially against women, visible. There are two ways of looking at the topic. First, there are many women pacifists and peace (nonviolent) activists. Second, some authors have provided principles or theories for nonviolence, especially the ethics of nonviolence. Since we had Dorothy Day as an example of a peace activist, I will discuss two feminist writers to gain other modern perspectives on nonviolence. I shall contend that even the feminist views on nonviolence can be classified as either strategic nonviolence or equivocal.

Let me begin with Barbara Deming, who, besides being a feminist and nonviolent activist, was also a lesbian and poet. Her involvement in the nonviolent movement began in 1960, and she became an advocate of nonviolent struggle after participating in the Peacemaker Training programme and nonviolent campaigns in the civil rights movement (Sheehan, 2021). Deming's approach to nonviolence is a mixture of Gandhi, King, Sharp, and Gregg. Also, the feminist side, which abhors men's connection to violence, is transparent in her words: "Violence makes men 'dizzy,' it disturbs the vision, makes them see only their own immediate losses and fear of losses" (quoted in Livingston, 2021, p. 270).

Deming (1971) often quotes Fanon from the book *The Wretched of the Earth* and pleads for nonviolence. Whenever Fanon calls for some kind of violent action, in her opinion, nonviolent action may easily take its place. Like Gandhi, she makes the case that the only prerequisite is that the action be sufficiently bold. The focus, Deming says, is not on

vengeance but on change. Like King, she thinks that “to resort to power one need not be violent, and to speak conscience one need not be meek. The most effective action both resorts to power and engages conscience” (Deming, 1971, para. 24). In her other arguments, she concurs with Sharp saying, “To refuse one’s cooperation is to exert force.” She believes one can exercise power by refusing to bow down to another’s will. She gives examples of refusing to become a customer if that shop does not hire, refusing to put on a uniform if one does not believe in war, or refusing to pay one’s taxes if one thinks the use of napalm is wrong.

Deming argues that “the person committed to nonviolent action would refuse to injure the antagonist” (Deming, 1971, para. 28). She thinks that “a drastic readjustment of vision” is required to recognise that greater and not less control in the situation is possible through nonviolence. The reason she puts forward in favour of nonviolence is similar to Gregg’s moral Jiu Jitsu. When nonviolent rebellion raises the struggle above the personal, control is gained over the adversary. She says, “They have as it were two hands upon him – the once calming him, making him ask questions, as the other makes him move” (Deming, 1971, para. 32).

“In this sense a liberation movement that is nonviolent sets the oppressor free as well as the oppressed . . .” (Deming, 1971, para. 39). These words sound poetic and philosophical, but Deming’s notion of nonviolence is pragmatic. During the civil rights movement led by King, she was an active participant and wrote about it in many publications (Sheehan, 2021). She was aware that nonviolence can involve violence. For her, a nonviolent battle was still a battle and states, “Battle of any kind provokes a violent response.” Hence, using the example of Meredith, who was shot, she says that people can get hurt in a battle and suggests that if personal safety is more important, one might as well stay at home.

Judith Butler (2020) takes a different approach to tackling the topic. She knows that nonviolence cannot be explained without considering violence. In her view, nonviolence requires a commitment to equality, as violence often takes place to defend certain lives, implying that some lives are deemed more valuable than others. “Most forms of violence are committed to inequality” (p. 47), argues Butler. Furthermore, she says, “The distinction between populations that are worth violently defending and those that are not implies that some lives are simply considered more valuable than others” (Butler, 2020, p. 45). The consequence of this is that some lives become more grievable than others. Therefore, Butler posits that equality includes the idea of equal grievability, which in turn links to interdependency and the questions of why and how best to practice nonviolence. Thus, she contends that one needs to move away from individualism. Her proposed solution is the framework of unequal distribution of grievability.

According to Butler (2020), women belong to those ‘ungrievable’ people in the society. She gives an example of a ‘pro-life’ position, which advocates for the equal value of life, but is incompatible with social equality because this is contradictory to women’s rights to freedom and equality. The situation “intensifies the differential between the grievable and the ungrievable. Once again, women become the ungrievable.” (p. 47) informs Butler. Thus, she questions our deliberate ways of thinking about violence and nonviolence that are distorted by the unequal distribution of grievability.

Butler’s view of nonviolence provides a new perspective on violence and nonviolence discourse. This, however, leaves us with a practical question. Though it is highly noble to think of having a society where everyone is equal, and everybody is, in her words, “equally grievable”, the question is whether and how this can be practically implemented. The political world could be organised in such a way that economic and institutional life can try to mitigate

the still-existing gender-based violence or the issue of minorities being vulnerable to violence. It is unclear how the political world could make all lives equally grievable without putting any boundaries like state, community, and age. For instance, can a state welcome all migrants because the lives of all migrants are equally grievable? On this account, the concept of nonviolence becomes an unattainable utopia. The way broad definition of violence that includes poverty and structural violence leaves no room for nonviolence; Butler's concept leaves little space for nonviolence. Nevertheless, she notes the following:

I am not saying that no one should defend oneself, or that there are no cases where intervention is necessary. For nonviolence is not an absolute principle, but an open-ended struggle with violence and its countervailing forces. (Butler, 2020, p. 46)

The concept proposed by Butler is interesting, as she asserts that vulnerability could serve as the foundation for the conception of the ethics of nonviolence. While I partially concur with her argument, I believe certain modifications are necessary.²⁹ Our society is socially constructed, and humans living within it are interdependent, whether in the context of a family, colleagues, a team, or a financial network, among other relationships. By acknowledging vulnerability and not hiding it, it is possible to build a society where people are caring and attentive to each other. Also, her idea of responding to violence not with revenge but with grief or injury could build a cornerstone for ethics. However, the framework, as it stands alone, is not sufficient for nonviolent political action as this approach has no way to distinguish violence from nonviolence.

²⁹ In the proposed framework for justifying political actions in Chapter 7, I suggest considering Butler's concept of vulnerability as a foundation for just intention.

Despite this, I do not wish to undermine the emotional and philosophical questions that Butler raises. These inquiries help us better understand the relationship between society and violence. She challenges the prevailing prejudice that views nonviolence as passive and ineffective. She argues that this bias comes from the “gendered division of attributes by which masculinity stands for activity and femininity for passivity” (Butler, 2020, p. 137). For her, nonviolence is a force or strength, sometimes observable as an image of the lips-sewing performance by the refugees. She thinks that nonviolence reveals the cover used by state violence to defend itself against marginalised populations, such as LGBTQ individuals, immigrants, homeless persons, dissenting populations, and black and brown people. The ultimate defeat of violent power can occasionally be found in continuing to exist in the annoyance of social connections, she argues. While Butler criticizes violence and extols the virtues of nonviolence, she does not offer a clear definition of nonviolence. At the same time, she also makes a concession.

One of the strongest arguments for the use of violence on the left is that it is tactically necessary in order to defeat structural or systemic violence, or to dismantle a violent regime, such as apartheid, dictatorship, or totalitarianism. That may well be right, and I don’t dispute it. (Butler, 2020, p. 18)

Butler challenges us to see the ethics of nonviolence from the perspectives of vulnerability, grievability, and interdependency. She asks us to move away from individualism and urges us to “rethink the social bonds that constitute us as living creatures” (p. 20). This is a welcoming provocation. However, the question of how to distinguish violence from nonviolence persists. Butler offers no solutions to this dilemma. A feminist critique comes from Ingrid Cyfer (Cyfer, 2019), who finds Butler’s recent ideas both inspiring and disappointing. After

studying Butler’s ethics of vulnerability and interpreting her theoretical reflections, Cyfer concludes that Butler’s articulation of the most crucial ethical and political problems of the current time is inspiring. On the other hand, it is also disappointing because Butler’s recent normative insights seem to produce some empirical confusion.

Chapter Conclusion

Graphically, the timeline and the figures discussed in this chapter can be summarised in the following diagram:

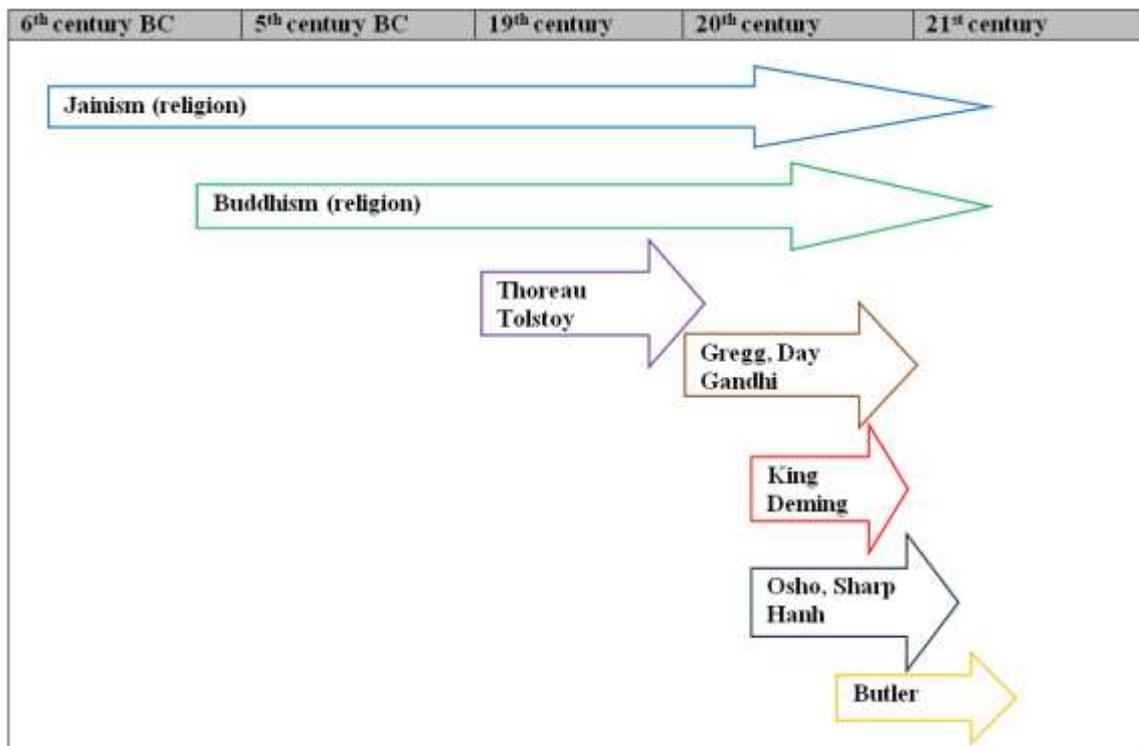


Figure 3: Historical development of nonviolence

I started with the historical background of nonviolence and discussed distinguished figures in the past who had influenced and developed the philosophy of nonviolent resistance. Though nonviolence is rooted in the religions of Jainism and Buddhism, Thoreau’s and Tolstoy’s ideas helped mature nonviolent resistance as a method for fighting injustice in government and society. The anti-war, pacifist movement manifested the necessity and desire for

nonviolence. Gandhi and King eventually put their ideas into practice and were successful in making nonviolent civil resistance a worldwide phenomenon.

Nonviolence can be categorised as principled and pragmatic nonviolence. While the former can be traced back to moral, religious, or philosophical beliefs, the latter is more or less a strategy to attain a certain goal. From a theoretical perspective, Gregg advanced the idea of nonviolent resistance, or Satyagraha, as described by Gandhi. He introduced the iconic figure of Gandhi to the Americans. Both Gandhi and King put the notion of nonviolence into practice. Since the goal they had was of a political nature, and they were successful in achieving it by using nonviolent methods, nonviolent resistance became famous.

Thus, I defended that the idea of nonviolence being ethically superior stems from its prominent historical features, which included causing no harm, promoting truth, love, empathy, compassion, and being non-materialistic. I have supported this by showing the historical development. Nowadays, pragmatic nonviolence, which does not possess the distinctive features of historical or principled nonviolence, is more commonly used in political activism. I have provided examples and discussed the theoretical background proposed by Sharp to support this argument. Nevertheless, spiritual and religious forms of nonviolence continue to exist.

Contemporary discourse on nonviolence would be incomplete without taking the feminist approach into account. I engaged with two crucial figures, Deming and Butler. The feminists' main critique is that women and minorities are still the main targets of violence. Deming's experience and work align with pragmatic nonviolence. Butler proposes the framework of grievability for the ethics of nonviolence, which is a noble concept but the issue of distinguishing nonviolence from violence remains.

It can be deduced that in politics, nonviolent action is a medium to bring about changes, incorporating both strategy and principled nonviolent methods. Throughout history, various activists and figures have preached and practised nonviolent methods. Some theorists spread the idea of nonviolence through literary work. Therefore, from a historical perspective, nonviolence has a distinct history. The teachings on nonviolence from religious and spiritual leaders are still prevalent. This fact, in the eyes of many, makes nonviolence morally desirable vis-à-vis violence. To summarise, one sentence answer to the question, “Why do we assume that nonviolence is ethically superior?” is “Nonviolence is rooted in religion and philosophy, and it continues to be a part of religious, philosophical, and spiritual teachings and practices.”

4. How Distinct is Nonviolence? – Analytical Perspective

Nonviolence is fine as long as it works.

~ Malcolm X

One of the most important features of nonviolence is the assumption that nonviolent political methods are ethically preferable to violent methods. In the last chapter, we examined how this belief stems from a historical perspective where nonviolence had distinct moral and ethical values due to religious or philosophical reasons. However, from an analytical point of view, it is not entirely clear that nonviolent methods are inherently more ethical than violent methods. Both violence and nonviolence share certain features that have troubling moral implications, such as the use of power and coercion. The other similarity is the topic of ‘instrumentality’ in the ‘means-ends’ discourse. In a political context, both violent and nonviolent methods serve as means to achieve an end.

In this chapter, I claim that nonviolence also uses a variety of power and coercion, such that the notion of nonviolent methods being morally unquestionable does not always hold. Indeed, violence is often intentionally destructive. However, nonviolence, even with noble intentions, can also be destructive or morally questionable. I defend this claim by displaying the nature of power and coercion when applied as an instrument. To elucidate whether the type of power and coercion used in violence differs from that used in nonviolence, I theorise nonviolence at a deeper level. Assuming that power or coercion can be used for a just end, I argue that both violent and nonviolent methods in achieving political ends are always instrumental. Further, I contend that nonviolent actions use persuasion, coercion or power in various forms to attain specific social and political objectives.

First, I theorise nonviolence based on the concepts of persuasion and coercion. It is essential to differentiate between coercive nonviolence and non-coercive nonviolence, and various examples will be provided to illustrate the distinction. This chapter is the continuation of the previous one, delving deeper into the relationship between violence and nonviolence. Consequently, key figures such as Gandhi, Gregg, King Jr. and Sharp along with their concomitant outlook towards nonviolence shall be revisited and analysed from an analytical standpoint³⁰. Second, I will (re)explore various examples and events. I construe how nonviolence as an instrument can be employed in the form of collective power, coercion, or institutional power, leading nonviolent political actions to become political strategies similar to some violent methods. I end the chapter with the conclusion that both violence and nonviolence are rather effective instruments for accomplishing objectives in the political context. The ethical considerations are not the primary basis for choosing nonviolence as a method. Hence, nonviolence employed as a method cannot be considered inherently ‘unconditionally’ morally better than violence.

4.1 Theorising Nonviolence

Different approaches to theorising nonviolence exist. One method is to contrast it with violence and pacifism, focusing on various definitions as discussed in Chapter 2. Alternatively, nonviolence can be distinguished between pragmatic and principled, as outlined in Chapter 3. While these methods have their merits, they are too broad to explore the underlying issues. To provide a more nuanced perspective, I theorise nonviolence from a philosophical, behavioural and *mass people’s power* viewpoint. The objective is to adopt this theory in dissecting nonviolence along the lines of coercive, non-coercive, persuasive, non-

³⁰ In Chapter 3, the focus was on discussing the key figures in chronological order as they appeared in history to demonstrate how nonviolence developed over the decades. This Chapter concentrates on their work from the perspective of whether the nonviolence they practised and taught involved elements of coercion, persuasion, or instrumentality.

persuasive, tactical, and instrumental. This will help clarify how nonviolent methods, at their core, are similar to violent methods. Theorising nonviolence from this analytical viewpoint also aids in discussing the justification for nonviolence in the next chapter. I begin by defining the terms that differentiate the nuanced version of nonviolence. This differentiation is then used to categorise and theorise nonviolent political actions from a philosophical, behavioural and *mass people's power* perspective further below.

Coercive nonviolence implies that some threat or external power must be employed in a nonviolent action such that the subject in question feels that there is no other option other than to follow the given direction. In contrast, ***persuasive nonviolence*** implies that a voluntary change of mind or belief is mediated. The chosen medium to induce the change could be a conversation, negotiation, or moral appeal. The receiver generally has the choice of whether to act or not. Another trait of persuasive nonviolence is that it is usually based on principles, such as religion or philosophy. To understand the difference between persuasion and coercion, consider the following definition of persuasion:

A persuades B when A gets B to do or believe (etc.) something which B would not otherwise do or believe (etc.) by exhibiting reasons or consequences of the possibilities B confronts. A does not implicate his intentional agency in producing these consequences by making threats, offers or inducements. (Burnell and Reeve, 1984, p. 402)

Burnell and Reeve see the difference between persuasion and coercion with “respect to intention and success in common usage” (p. 396). They argue that coercion is fully dependent on success, whereas persuasion need not be successful. Persuasion focuses on the process and giving reasons, not the outcome. Coercion, on the other hand, fails to be coercive if the intended outcome is not achieved.

Non-coercive nonviolence means not using coercion but rather persuasion or influence. *Non-persuasive* nonviolence means not using coercion and persuasion, but some influence might be at work. This influence may occur without any intention, whereas persuasion is intended on both sides. For example, a person with a good look and rhetoric might be influencing the audience. “Thus, the boundary between persuasion and influence is marked out by 'having reasons'. I may be unknowingly influenced by advertising, but I cannot be unknowingly persuaded by it” (Burnell and Reeve, 1984, p. 398).

Tactical nonviolence is pragmatic and not based on ethical or moral values. It uses coercion or persuasion depending on the situation, solely based on the probability of a better outcome. Tactical nonviolence is similar to strategic nonviolence³¹. The difference is that strategic implies a broader plan to reach a certain goal, whereas tactical nonviolence refers to the implementation, namely steps and actions taken to achieve that goal. The meaning of ‘*instrumental*’ is to be understood in the sense that something is a ‘means’ to an ‘end’ but only within a context. For example, nonviolence during a sit-in demanding higher pay being instrumental implies that nonviolence is used to achieve an end, namely ‘higher pay’. It does not imply that nonviolence is always instrumental. The means-end relationship, instrumentality and justification can be found in depth in the following chapter.

4.1.1 Nonviolence as a Philosophy

Nonviolence as a philosophy is characterised by *persuasive* and *non-coercive nonviolence*. The practical application of this concept can be understood by studying Mahatma Gandhi, Richard Gregg, and the Dalai Lama. Gandhi³² understood nonviolence as a philosophy which was based on three principles: satya (truth), ahimsa (nonviolence or non-injury), and

³¹ Strategic nonviolence and pragmatic nonviolence are synonyms.

³² Gandhi’s teachings are well-known in India and Nepal. Further detailed information can be found at www.mkgandhi.org.

tyag/tapasya (self-sacrifice or meditation). Based on these tenets, he preached and practised Satyagraha. There are many interpretations of what Satyagraha means. The word Satyagraha is made of two words: “satya” and “agraha.” In Hindi, satya means truth, and agraha means request or insistence. Thus, Satyagraha signifies insisting on or emphasising the truth.

Gandhi used Satyagraha as a method of civil disobedience to confront social and political injustices. Noncooperation and refusal to follow unjust laws were integral parts of his methods. At the centre of it was an attempt to change the opponent’s mind and heart so that the truth could be seen and accepted. The opponent had to accept his wrongdoing without using any kind of physical violence. However, self-suffering, like fasting, was permitted. It is important to note that Gandhi’s acts of noncooperation were not spontaneous. He, in fact, meticulously planned and organised his actions in advance, detailing the strategies and tactics necessary for their success. He was strategic and persuasive in his approach. Aitchison (2018, p. 10) has argued that Gandhi’s actions cannot qualify as non-coercive. He is of the opinion that it was a form of “paternalistic coercion.” Nonetheless, I believe they were guided by a philosophy of means and ends being the same. I shall discuss this later in Chapter 5.1.

Gregg (2018) was inspired by Gandhi’s work and developed a theory of nonviolence based on it. He describes nonviolence using the analogy of practising “moral jiu-jitsu.” Like in the named sport, in which the energy of the opponent is used against himself by using the principle of ‘yielding to win’, nonviolence also wins by making the attacker lose the moral balance. Psychology plays an important role since the defender has to love the opponent and, despite the violence used, respond calmly and bear the suffering voluntarily. Here, the act of persuasion is in the foreground. Although Gregg never put his nonviolent philosophy into action, his work has been influential for many activists. His message is clear regarding the acceptance of nonviolent resistance as something active and equally forceful. He states, “As

long as men have uncontrollable anger or enmity in their feelings, it is better to express it honestly and courageously than to be hypocritical and refuse to fight out of cowardice” (Gregg, 2018, p. 57).

Gregg (2018) argued that training an army of nonviolent resisters makes mass nonviolence possible. Such a nonviolent resister would have to be disciplined to control both anger and fear. They would need the utmost energy, determination, persistence, and willpower. Like the military, they would have to create self-respect and respect from others (p. 87). This philosophy is inspiring for those who want to lead mass activism. According to Gregg, there will be some casualties and losses even in nonviolent resistance. But he is convinced that if “there is discipline and leadership which fully understands the psychological mechanism and the moral and spiritual elements involved” (p. 77), the losses will be much less than in violent war. Following Gandhi, he believed that ‘truth’ was one of the core elements of nonviolent resistance. His understanding of nonviolent methods was, like Gandhi’s, persuasive without being coercive.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, subscribes to the principles of nonviolence as a way of life, and he exemplifies this philosophy in his actions. Despite the struggle for a free Tibet, he has not succumbed to bitterness or resentment towards the Chinese. He advocates compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, warm-heartedness, contentment, and self-discipline. He encourages people to be happy because “a better world is one where people are happier” (The Dalai Lama with Rasmus Hougaard, 2019). In a world where ‘us’ versus ‘them’ generates more crises, he calls on leaders to cultivate mindfulness and compassion. He believes that selfishness is the antithesis of compassion, and negative thoughts and emotions destroy mental peace and tranquillity.

In explaining the distinction between violence and nonviolence, the Dalai Lama says³³ that the motivation behind a particular action is decisive. While actions prompted by anger and greed tend to be violent, those driven by compassion and love are usually peaceful. He further points out that “Peace also means being undisturbed, free from danger” (The Dalai Lama with Rasmus Hougaard, 2019). According to him, one of the things that all humans share is the desire for happiness. Moreover, the Dalai Lama is sure that compassion is the source of happiness. He recognises the prevalence of violence, crime, wars, and disasters happening around the world, but he believes that all these things happen because of an overemphasis on science and technology or material comfort without solving basic human problems. The only logical solution is to “try to strike a balance between material developments on the one hand and the development of spiritual, human values on the other” (The Dalai Lama). He urges disarmament for world peace but, at the same time, also puts forward the idea of compassion as the pillar of a peaceful world.

The concept of nonviolence as a philosophy is rooted in the idea that it becomes an integral part of one’s own life and guides all actions. Even here, there is a slight difference. Gandhi practised nonviolence to achieve certain social and political goals, which was persuasive but non-coercive nonviolence. In contrast, the Dalai Lama is a symbol of ‘pure’ non-coercive and even non-persuasive nonviolence. His teachings influence many Buddhists and non-Buddhists around the world. He does not employ nonviolence for political purposes, such as the “Free Tibet” movement, but rather sees it as a way of life, as the Buddha did.

4.1.2 Nonviolence as a Behaviour

Nonviolence as a behaviour encompasses both *coercive* and *persuasive nonviolence*. Generally, nonviolent behaviour entails acting in a peaceful manner, such as refraining from

³³ The description in this paragraph is based on the teachings of the Dalai Lama which can be found at www.dalailama.com.

aggression, intentional property destruction, shouting, or using abusive language. Instead, individuals may choose to protest using words instead of physical force, and they may engage in acts of civil disobedience peacefully, like sit-ins, boycotts, strikes and rallies. This form of nonviolent behaviour can be employed on both an individual and collective level, and it may not necessarily be based on a principle or moral stance. In a political context, there is always an objective involved, hence, instrumental in nature.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s way of practising nonviolence can be termed as behavioural. His concept of nonviolence was action-oriented and goal-oriented. Although he was a pastor of a Baptist Church, his inspiration for nonviolent action was not based on religion. Rather, his experience of injustice and his conviction of the necessity of fighting evil motivated him. He organised marches and rallies, gave speeches, published articles and books, and went to jail for his activities. Protest campaigns were fully planned with a specific purpose behind them. His ultimate goal was the end of racism and segregation. In his case, nonviolence was instrumental, meaning a 'nonviolent' method to achieve his goals.

King's commitment to nonviolence stemmed from his personal experiences of racial and economic injustice during his childhood and adolescence. He was exposed to the harsh realities of segregation of Black people and was convinced that nonviolent resistance was a powerful tool to effect change. He came across Thoreau during his student days and was convinced that noncooperation with evil was as much a moral obligation as cooperation with good (Carson, 1998). He followed this idea of *noncooperation* throughout the civil rights movement. King was also inspired by Gandhi's campaigns of nonviolent resistance. He tried to apply this philosophy to his activism, for example, during the Montgomery bus boycott movement sparked by Rosa Parks' refusal to relinquish her seat on the segregated bus. King was aware of how Gandhi had practised nonviolence as a philosophy. He admits.

Admittedly, nonviolence in the truest sense is not a strategy that one uses simply because it is expedient at the moment; nonviolence is ultimately a way of life that men live by because of the sheer morality of its claim. But even granting this, the willingness to use nonviolence as a technique is a step forward. For he who goes this far is more likely to adopt nonviolence later as a way of life. (*The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1998, ch. 8)

However, the reality was different. King had to fight and influence all kinds of people. He had to convince those who believed that killing a few white people would make the movement more effective. At times, he grappled with the question of whether the Black community had the resilience to withstand the oppressive forces of repression. The struggle was constant, and he had to strategise and plan if he were to win the battle. King was concerned with the moral dimension of nonviolent resistance, but he gave priority to pragmatism. Notwithstanding his noble aims, his nonviolent method was persuasive and sometimes coercive.

Essentially, peace activists across the world employ nonviolent as behaviour in their activism, often driven by a desire to promote peace and social justice. For example, Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 together for their nonviolent and peaceful method of resolving the ethnic or political conflict in Northern Ireland (Nobel Prize Outreach, 2024). Another example is Jody Williams, also a Nobel Peace Laureate, who worked to ban antipersonnel landmines (Nobel Prize Outreach, 2024). She coordinated the founding of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). This organisation, ICBL, successfully drafted the Mine Ban Treaty, which was signed by 122 countries. All these activists have in common is that the reason for using nonviolent strategies is not 'purely philosophical', but pacifism, advocacy for peace, or a desire to bring about social or political change. Typically, all modern-day social, political, environmental, and

animal rights activists frequently employ noncooperation or nonviolent interventions to amplify their message and bring attention to their cause.

4.1.3 Nonviolence as a Mass People's Power

I use the term *mass people's power* to denote *a mass movement or a large group of people who come together for a movement to achieve a political goal by exerting power that exists only due to the mass or the sheer number of people together at one place*. Nonviolence as a *mass people's power* is characterised by *coercive* or *persuasive nonviolence*. It is often tactical, strategic, and always *instrumental* in nature.

How this kind of nonviolence works in practice has been put forward by Sharp (Power and Struggle, 1973). He identifies the combination of authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources, and sanctions as the sources of power. All of these sources of power depend on obedience, willingness to support, acceptance of the de facto situation, and the number and quality of supporters. For the power to work, there has to be the cooperation of a group of people within society. By getting these key groups to withdraw their consent or disobey, nonviolent action is able to remove the sources of power and weaken or even topple the regime or opponent. Thus, Sharp's theory of nonviolent action is based on an extrinsic power that dislodges when the origin of the source of power stops existing.

Sharp's theory depends on the idea that obedience is essentially voluntary, and consent can be withdrawn. His conclusion is that "all government is based upon consent" (Sharp, 1973a, p. 28). He is correct in saying that the pillars of support are necessary to gain and sustain power. This support can be withdrawn, and hence, the power disintegrates. However, this support can only be effective when a significant number of individuals are willing to withdraw their consent and disobey. If only a few people disobey, a ruler may easily use force

or violence to maintain control. Only when a huge population is at work, using threats or punishments by the ruler become ineffective. All in all, *mass people's power* is a critical component. Besides, disobedience and defections by the opponent's security forces, as argued by Stephan and Chenoweth (2008), are also key factors.

Mobilising a mass of people requires strategic planning. Sharp is fairly clear on this and advocates that for nonviolent action to succeed, it is crucial to establish clear objectives, devise a master plan, and use specific methods according to the objective. Another point is that Sharp does not follow non-coercive nonviolence. His method may include psychological pressure as well as the use of what he calls "powerful coercive effects" that can coerce adversaries to concede or destroy their power. Hence, Sharp's nonviolent action encompasses both strategic and coercive elements.

Although Arendt never defined *nonviolence* as such, her theory on power and violence offers valuable insights into how nonviolence operates through the cooperation of a huge population. Arendt posits that power and violence are not only distinct but antithetical. Her definition of power is as follows:

Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. (Arendt, 1970, p. 44)

This is a similar kind of power that Sharp mentioned, namely the power of a group of people working in concert. Arendt argues that with violence comes success, but in the long run, violence loses power. In the case of nonviolent actions, when the ruler uses violence, the success is often limited to a brief period.

Mass people's power is only effective when people from all walks of life come together. It is a social phenomenon. The most recent author who advocates that we cannot achieve anything alone is Yuval Noah Harari. (Harari, 2015) In his work, he points out that humans as individuals are as good or as strong as a chimpanzee, an elephant, or a pig, and thus not as powerful when acting alone as they are when they work together. Harari contends that humans have an inherent advantage over other species in their ability to cooperate and collaborate. Whereas a million chimpanzees working together would not work, a million human beings can not only work together, but they also bring results that an individual or a small group can never achieve. Harari further argues that humans are the only species with a unique ability to persuade others to join them in their endeavours by promising something in the future. Unlike chimpanzees, who cannot be convinced by promising tons of bananas when they die, humans are able to communicate the benefits of future rewards, such as a successful afterlife, to convince others to take action. According to Harari, this shared belief in stories is the foundation of human cooperation on a large scale.

However, Harari cautions that humans must be mindful of the immense power they possess relative to other species. As the most powerful species on the planet, humans have the capability to destroy all other animals and manipulate the ecosystem. Unfortunately, humans have been very irresponsible regarding this divine power, such that the entire human population is in danger. It is essential that humans recognise their role as part of the ecological system and act responsibly to preserve the delicate balance of nature.

Hence, Harari's argument that humans are powerful in mass relates to the concept of nonviolence as a *mass people's power*. When the people come together as a mass with a common goal, power is created. This goal may be some promise or hope outlined by a leader. Some practical examples will be discussed later. At this point, it is important to note that, the

way Sharp and Harari interpret power, nonviolence is also dependent on the power that stems from a group of people. In this scenario, nonviolence is - depending on the aim - strategic, coercive as well as instrumental. Mass movements cannot work without a strategy and a planner, strategist or leader.

To summarise so far, theorising nonviolence in this way crystallises the nuances of nonviolent methods. Pure and non-coercive nonviolence is only found in the case of nonviolence as a philosophy. This, as explained in the previous chapter, originates from moral and ethical values. Nonviolence as a behaviour, be it individual or in a group, is always instrumental since a particular action is always related to a particular end. Modern-day nonviolent political actions are strategic or pragmatic by nature as the actions require planning, organising, funding, and so on. Bharadwaj (1998) concludes that nonviolence carried out around the world is mainly pragmatic in nature. The reason he gives is that people engage in nonviolent action provided that it promises a measure of practical success. Quoting Ralph Summy, he says that the followers are not committed to principled nonviolence. The majority of followers are rather attracted, mainly to the charisma and effectiveness of leaders.

The main takeaways are:

- 1) The nonviolent method becomes instrumental as soon as it is applied to achieve a goal.
- 2) The difference between persuasion and coercion is of paramount importance. Gandhi remained persuasive, while Martin Luther King Jr. started with persuasive methods but later turned to coercion, as necessary.
- 3) Nonviolence as a philosophy is rare in the contemporary world. At an individual level, nonviolence as a behaviour, and, in a group, nonviolence as a *mass people's power* is more common.

The insights gained from this theorisation will be applied in the next subchapter.

4.2 Violence and Nonviolence as Instruments

Power and coercion are both complex concepts, and they will not be discussed in detail due to the limited space. This subchapter demonstrates how and under which conditions violence and nonviolence share certain forms of power and coercion that make them both instrumental to achieving specific outcomes. It is presupposed that the end is just. Even in the case of violence, the just war theory is predominantly about just cause. It would not make sense to argue about nonviolence for an unjust end. Based on this, all else being equal, power and coercion can be used for a just end. Both power and coercion, although highly debated, controversial, and morally questionable, are not inherently wrong.³⁴ Whether nonviolent methods that use power and coercion are justified is another subject of debate and will be discussed in the subsequent chapter. The question that needs to be addressed now is whether the types of power and coercion used in violence differ from those used in nonviolence.

To answer this question, the focus will be on discussing different examples of nonviolence from an instrumental perspective. It will be argued that both violent and nonviolent political actions are similar insofar as they are intertwined and often not separable when discussing issues in terms of instrumentality. The positive moral connotation attached to nonviolence thus disappears when analysing the instrumental aspect. This applies to both political and social changes that are aspired to by nonviolent methods. When I refer to ‘instrument’, it means that a violent or nonviolent method is being used to accomplish something. I will also explore the similarity regarding coercion. In violence, coercion is often clear as it involves conventional methods, such as the use of external force or visible physical

³⁴ Like in the case of violence, power and coercion are contested concepts and have different definitions. Further, the discourse is context-dependent.

coercion, such as the use of a knife or other weapon. However, coercion can be subtle, like a hint of negative consequences to intimidate.

If both violent and nonviolent methods use power and coercion, which makes them instrumental, is there any difference? I contend that violent methods are overtly coercive and rely on hard power; nonviolent methods use, among other things, soft coercion and mass people's power, making them 'soft instrumental'. My idea of *soft instrumentality* is inspired by Joseph Nye's (1990) concept of 'soft power'.³⁵ He contrasts soft power, "which occurs when one country gets other countries to *want* what it wants — might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of *ordering* others to do what it wants" (Nye, 1990, p. 166). Violent methods can be seen as a form of coercion that "quasi orders" or forces others to do what is desired. In contrast, nonviolent methods rely on making others see the necessity of why a particular goal is important. This "making others see" is intangible, like a leader's attraction and persuasive qualities. In terms of power, violent methods use hard power and coercion that 'pushes', whereas nonviolent methods use mass people's power and soft coercion that 'pulls'. For example, a state sending a police force to enforce its will *pushes* the public to comply, while a mass demonstration *pulls* people's attention and awakens their interest in a particular cause.

I concur with Nye on another point: power, by definition, is a relationship that implies some context. Not only power, but coercion also implies a relationship and context. In this causation, at least two parties are involved: one using power and coercing, and the other being coerced and receiving the effect of power. The idea of "getting others to want what you want" becomes crucial in this context. Therefore, nonviolent activities have to align with the preferences of the target audience for them to be effective. The difference between

³⁵ I use Nye's concept of 'soft power' as an analogy to explain the concept of 'soft instrumentality' vs. 'instrumentality'.

instrumentality and soft instrumentality is best explained using Nye³⁶'s metaphor: instrumentality is brandishing carrots or sticks, while soft instrumentality is more like a magnet. To a greater degree, soft instrumentality depends on the acceptance by the larger public, international support, institutional support, and the resulting degree of leverage. In the first case, the coercing party usually has more resources (carrots and sticks), and the resulting leverage is higher. Conversely, in the latter case, the coercing party needs to be imaginative and creative and use various methods to increase leverage.

4.2.1 Manifestation of Power

When I use the term 'manifestation of power', I am referring to power as an expression that arises as a result of certain given conditions. In Subchapter 4.1.3, we observed that power emerges when a large group of people come together, enabling them to achieve things that would not be possible alone or in a small group. This is usually expressed as a mass movement or *mass people's power*. The other form of power is 'institutional power', which refers to an entity such as a government, organisation, church, corporation, agency, and so on, that has the legitimacy to decide, exercise control over access to resources, and influence outcomes.

Hannah Arendt (1970, p. 51) contends, "Power is indeed the essence of all government, but violence is not. Violence is by nature instrumental." Her argument is that violence is aimed at achieving a specific end. This could be power or dominance. Hence, she argues that, like all means, it constantly requires guidance and justification for the end it seeks. With regards to nonviolence, no scholars so far have posited that nonviolence per se is instrumental. However, as previously mentioned, certain nonviolent actions are rooted in the power of a collective. In fact, nonviolence gained popularity through civil resistance

³⁶ „Hard power is like brandishing carrots or sticks; soft power is more like a magnet.” Nye, J. S. (2021) 'Soft power: the evolution of a concept', *Journal of Political Power*, 14(1), pp. 196-208.

movements, such as Gandhi's Salt March and King's civil rights movement. Their work made nonviolent action a commendable tool for fighting against injustice and oppression. The Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street movements in the 21st century showcased the possibility of using mass civil disobedience as a method to bring about change.

In the subsequent paragraphs, the civil rights movement for the freedom of Black people, and the Arab Spring will be discussed as examples of how nonviolence in practice as a manifestation of power, namely *mass people's power*, is intrinsically instrumental. The events described here are based on the autobiographies of King Jr. (*The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1998) and (Colaiaco, 1988). The description of Arab Spring is taken from the media Al Jazeera English (Al Jazeera, 2021).

A major part of King Jr.'s fight for justice for Black people and desegregation included mass civil resistance. Gathering people in their thousands was necessary which required preparation and strategy. Even though King was eloquent, charming, and persuasive, the nonviolent civil rights movement became successful due to the consistency of not only King but almost the whole Black community and some white supporters. This movement ultimately led to the overthrow of legal segregation in the South of the United States. When the events are examined more closely, the movement involved a series of planned and strategised actions with the mobilization of large numbers of people.

Rosa Parks' arrest for refusing to give her bus seat to a white male passenger in Montgomery was the starting point. Regarding the Montgomery bus boycott campaign, there were phone calls between King, Nixon, and the Rev. Ralph Abernathy. A meeting was held in which over 40 black leaders and ministers participated. A decision to boycott the bus for one day, the coming Monday, December 5, 1955, was made. Several thousand leaflets were distributed explaining the reasons why blacks should refrain from using the buses. The

boycott on Monday was successful, and 16 leaders met on the same day to form the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), electing King as its president. Under the leadership of King and MIA, the boycott movement continued until the Supreme Court's decision on November 13, 1956, declaring that Alabama's state and local laws requiring segregation on buses were unconstitutional.

The victory of the Montgomery bus boycott paved the way for the civil rights movement in the South. An organisation named the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was founded with King as president. Throughout the movement, several nonviolent protest campaigns were launched. While some, such as those in Albany and Georgia, failed, others, like the Birmingham campaign and the March on Washington, where King delivered his famous 'I have a dream' speech, were huge successes. These activities, from the beginning of the Montgomery bus boycott to the point of the Washington March with an estimated 250,000 participants, show that *mass people's power* played a leading role. Hence, from this point of view, this *manifestation of power* was instrumental in the success of ending segregation.

In addition to people's power, *institutional power* also played a crucial role in the civil rights movement. The Black Church, for example, provided a place for political and social activities (Colaiaco, 1988, p. 7) and also gave refuge and solace to the black people who were tortured by a hostile white society. Similarly, the Supreme Court's decision provided legitimacy to the movement and black freedom. The legal order made the result of the boycott movement sustainable and gave the activists hope and strength to carry on their fight against segregation. Furthermore, institutional power in the form of the media played a catalytic role in the movement by providing King with international prominence and the necessary publicity for his nonviolent method. King's ability to captivate and charm his listeners was a great asset

to advance the civil rights cause. The mass outreach of his messages and sermons helped maintain the momentum of the movement and create awareness among the public.

So, while violence is obviously *instrumental*, nonviolence is *softly instrumental*. In violence, the power to exercise war is used as an instrument to gain a political objective, for example, establishing a **Military dictatorship**. In nonviolence, mass movements and certain institutional affiliations are used to achieve a political objective, for example, a **change in the law**. Violence has the tendency to use **hard coercion**, which often constitutes physical harm and is directly visible. Nonviolence, on the other hand, uses **soft coercion** such as mass media, the charm of the leader, and his influential rhetoric. The coercive effect of the mass people is subtle and not immediately apparent, but it can be profound. This does not mean that war and mass movements are extrinsically the same. What I am arguing is that the moral connotation of nonviolence as a strategic nonviolent action in which an end exists is different from that of pure nonviolence, in which one does not anticipate anything in return. Hence, it is intrinsically instrumental in the context of *mass people's power*.

Consider another exemplary case. The massive protest revolution of the 21st century, named the Arab Spring, began in Tunisia. On December 17, 2010, a young street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after the police confiscated his produce. This act of self-immolation triggered nationwide demonstrations as a protest against the authoritarian rule of the then-President Ben Ali. Bouazizi died on January 4, 2011, which only served as fuel for the fire of protests. Ten days later, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. The event inspired other revolts across the Arab world, demanding the end of corruption, autocracy, and dictatorship. For instance, in Egypt, more than a million people demonstrated on the streets and successfully ousted Hosni Mubarak. In Bahrain, while the government suppressed the

months-long protests, the monarchy remained in power. The uprising in Libya turned into an armed revolt and then a civil war. Gaddafi was killed in October 2011.

Although the uprisings in several countries, including Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen, turned into violence, the civil resistance in Tunisia and Egypt remained largely nonviolent, with the exception of clashes between the protestors and law enforcement. The nonviolent nature of these movements in Tunisia and Egypt was only possible due to the collective power of the people, in other words, the *mass people's power*. Tens of thousands of people from all walks of life took to the streets with the one and only task of getting rid of the dictator. As theorised by Harari, this common aim bound them together. They shared a common story of having a country where democracy and the rule of law prevailed.

Institutional power in the form of 'social' media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) helped the movement immensely. Mobile phones, in particular, served as a powerful weapon for the nonviolent revolution. The information in the form of tweets and videos reached out to the world within seconds. In contrast to King in the 20th century, dramatising the situation with a pre-planned strategy was not necessary, as the real-time videos and live updates made the ongoing protest visible to the public worldwide. Social media made the events of marches and occupations of plazas viral.

The focus of this discussion is not on why the *mass people's power* was successful in ending the autocracy in Tunisia and Egypt but not in other Arabic countries, but rather on how violence and nonviolence can be instrumental in certain contexts. This brings us back to Arendt's argument that violence is intrinsically instrumental, as it takes an end as given, such that any means is justified. In the context of *mass people's power*, the end is also given. The end goal of removing the dictator was the driving force behind the collective action of the

people, which rendered any means, including nonviolent resistance, justifiable in their pursuit of this common objective.

My understanding of the concept of *mass people's power* aligns with Sharp's argument. According to Sharp (1973), nonviolent action is "the belief that the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled, who by withdrawing that consent, can control and even destroy the power of their opponent" (Sharp, 1973a, p. 4). The mass movement as a manifestation of power is based on the consent of the participants to cooperate for the given cause. Without unspoken consent, a large number of people cannot come together and perform collectively. In the second part, the mass withdraws consent, meaning they disobey the ruler and become capable of destroying the power of the opponent. The result is similar to what Arendt says: that violence is capable of destroying power. The similarity of violence and nonviolence as instruments capable of destroying power is unmistakable.

In the case of nonviolence as a philosophy, there is a moral commitment to nonviolence. The end is not a consequence or a given. Therefore, it is not instrumental. However, in the case of *mass people's power*, the commitment is not of a moral or ethical nature. The commitment is solely towards the common objective.

Another perspective on the relationship between power and violence is offered by Foucault, who claims that violence and power are compatible insofar as power often involves violence. He states: "Obviously the bringing into play of power relations does not exclude the use of violence any more than it does the obtaining of consent; no doubt the exercise of power can never do without one or the other, often both at the same time." (Foucault, 1982, p. 789) In other words, the exercise of power cannot be done without the use of violence or obtaining consent, and often both are used simultaneously. *Mass people's power*, as a form of power, also requires some kind of instrument and this instrument can be collective nonviolent

resistance and their consent, working simultaneously. The similarities in how power plays a significant role in both violence and nonviolence are evident. These three concepts are intertwined. The difference is subtle, in line with hard power using the military versus soft power using nonviolent protests. As discussed in-depth in Chapter 2, violence is not limited to physical harm or dead bodies. Nonviolence also has an element of instrumentality to it.

Foucault also argues that power is exercised only over free subjects, which means “individuals or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized” (p. 790). He gives an example of slavery, which he believes is not a power relationship because the man is chained, and thus, not free. Foucault further argues that permanent support for freedom is necessary for the exercise of power. “There is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom, which are mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised)” (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). His idea of freedom as a condition for exercising power and simultaneously being a precondition for it is similar to the conceptual collective power of the mass, put forward by Sharp, Arendt, and Harari. For mass people’s power to be effective, people must come together freely and provide permanent support for freedom, which is necessary for the exercise of power.

I conclude the examination of Foucault’s perspective at this point because the chapter does not specifically focus on power. My main goal is to demonstrate the nature of power and its interconnectedness with society in terms of collectiveness, freedom and violence. The discussion of nonviolence and power is inextricably linked, and power cannot be analysed isolated from social relationships. In a similar vein, violence cannot be examined without considering its relationship to power. I reiterate my argument that analytically speaking, the concepts of violence and nonviolence are not sufficiently distinct.

The question arises: Can nonviolence be discussed without the concept of power? The answer can be given using the discussions so far. If *nonviolence* is defined as a philosophy and a way of life without any social or political goals, then the concept of power is missing. But as soon as there is an objective, a method to achieve it is required. This method is what I have termed an ‘instrument’. As such, this instrument is conceptually either coercion or power.

The objection might arise that, the way some scholars argue that violence can also be non-instrumental, nonviolence can also be non-instrumental. Violence could be an end in itself, and nonviolence could also be an end in itself. I have not denied or refuted this. As I noted early on, the meaning of ‘instrument’ is to be understood only within a specific context. Again, philosophically or ideologically speaking, one can adopt nonviolence as a way of living one’s life. The subject of instrumentality arises only when discussing political actions with predetermined goals.

4.2.2 Manifestation of Coercion

When ‘manifestation of coercion’ is referred to, it means a premeditated method, tool, or strategy designed to achieve a certain pre-planned objective. While I touch upon the role of psychological coercion, the main focus will be the deliberate use of diverse methods with a certain audience and effect or outcome in mind. These methods could be a combination of different forms of coercion and power as well as external force as needed.

To begin with, I address the following arguments:

1. Nonviolent methods can be coercive and instrumental.
2. Nonviolent methods can be non-coercive and instrumental.
3. Nonviolent method is instrumental if coercion is used.

It is widely accepted that violence, especially in the form of war, is inherent in politics³⁷. However, I believe that nonviolent activities, such as ongoing negotiation and diplomacy, are also inherent in politics. Further, parallel to these formal methods of communication between states or political actors, power dynamics are also at play. Nations prioritise their own interests first and compete for the world's limited resources.

Persuasion, manipulation, exploitation, and a level of threat (military, economic, or political aggression, which means coercion!) are all means of doing politics. For example, a nation may threaten to cut diplomatic ties. Electoral manipulation can be performed via gerrymandering. Propaganda is used to influence people's convictions and beliefs. Hitler had Joseph Goebbels as his propaganda minister. Political positions are exploited to gain more power or earn wealth. So, nonviolent methods, even without using any external force can be coercive and instrumental. Furthermore, once coercion is involved in politics, instrumentality arises, whether it is violence or nonviolence. Coercion - generally understood - means that the coerced party either has no choice or no acceptable choice. This signifies that the person employing coercion does so to achieve their self-interest and/or goal as an end. Hence, whether using violence or nonviolence, it cannot be coercive without being instrumental. However, it is possible for a violent or nonviolent method to be instrumental without being coercive (other methods e.g. power could be used nonviolently). For instance, a political activist can decline to accept the awarded prize as a token of protest. In the case of violence, the government can opt to detain the protestors for a couple of hours.

I maintain that nonviolence, when pursuing a political or social goal, cannot be non-persuasive, non-coercive and non-instrumental. For nonviolence to be non-coercive and non-instrumental, it first has to be non-coercive. From a philosophical perspective, this is possible.

³⁷ Political realism as a doctrine posits that war or the threat of war is an inevitable feature in international politics. Max Weber (1946) argued that a state "claimed the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within given territory" and hence considered "the sole source of the 'right' to use violence.

We have discussed the case of Gandhi before and how his ‘persuasive’ nonviolence was able to achieve numerous social goals. One of the examples given by Gregg (2018) is about oppressive exactions by the planters in Champaran (northern India). In 1917, the peasants were forced by law to plant 15 per cent of all their land in indigo and were subject to unfair exactions. Gandhi was invited to investigate the conditions. When he started his inquiry, he was asked to leave the district. He refused to obey, for which he was tried at the court. He pleaded guilty, saying that he obeyed his conscience and the purpose for which he had come. The judgement was postponed, and he was permitted to continue his investigation. A government commission of inquiry with Gandhi as a member was appointed. The commission reported that the law was unfair and the exactions were unjust. The law was repealed. The entire event unfolded nonviolently. Gandhi employed persuasion techniques successfully in this instance.

Gregg’s theory of nonviolence, as mentioned before, is based on persuasive power. The aim of the nonviolent resisters, as per Gregg, is not to humiliate or injure the opponents but to convert them and change their way of understanding. The goal, as such, is to re-establish the moral balance of the violent attacker on a higher level than when he started his violent attack. Though Gregg frequently mentions discipline, conviction, self-training of nonviolent resisters, and the necessity to understand the emotional, mental, and moral mechanisms involved, he never uses the word ‘coercion’. Therefore, a nonviolent method can be coercive and instrumental; a nonviolent method can be non-coercive and instrumental; and a nonviolent method is instrumental if coercion is used.

As mentioned earlier, when it comes to non-coercive and non-persuasive nonviolence, the Dalai Lama serves as an excellent example. However, as soon as distinct political or social goals are involved, some level of instrumentality becomes inevitable. There are two ways to

view this: first, using nonviolence as an instrument (e.g. civil resistance, nonviolent protest) to achieve something as discussed in 4.2.1; and second, strategic or pragmatic nonviolence can instrumentalize people by using psychological coercion, including threats or putting them into action (e.g. suing a person, publishing private details/photos in social media, defamation)³⁸. Therefore, a nonviolent method with a specific end is always instrumental in nature.

The question arises, then, whether nonviolent political methods can still be considered so if the action provokes another party to use violence in response. In fact, **provocation** is an inherent aspect of nonviolent resistance, which relies on being arrested or revealing the brutality of those in authority. Media coverage, with its dramatic pictures, functions as a ‘psychological’ weapon that is meant to evoke sympathy and/or anger from the public. As Gregg notes, “We may say that nonviolent resistance is a sort of moral manipulative activity in which the factors used and operated upon are largely psychological” (Gregg, 2018, p. 64).

Going back to the example of the civil rights movement, King Jr. and other activists also used calculated provocation and coercion in their campaigns. One such example is the Freedom Ride campaign in May 1961. It was designed to disrupt public order in the South with the intention to provoke the authorities into arresting the participants. The riders on the bus were attacked, mobbed, clubbed, and beaten. This made headlines in the media, and pictures of wounded riders were circulated widely, which helped to rouse public sympathy and many people took part in the Freedom Ride despite the risks involved. The strategy was to put pressure on the federal government to enforce civil rights. The result was that in September 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued an order banning segregation in both interstate carriers and terminal facilities. James Farmer, one of those who were arrested during the ride, later reflected:

³⁸ I will discuss this in detail further below.

“Our philosophy was simple. We put pressure and create a crisis and then they react. I am absolutely certain that the ICC order wouldn't have been issued were it not for the Freedom Rides.” (James Farmer quoted in Colaiaco, 1988, p. 38)

Colaiaco notes at the end of the chapter describing the Freedom Ride campaign, “In the years ahead, provoking crises to stir publicity and prod the federal government to take decisive action in support of civil rights would become an integral part of the strategy of nonviolent direct action implemented by King and SCLC.” (p. 39)

In the aftermath of the failed Albany campaign at the end of 1961, King and his team came to the realisation that coercion through provocation was one of the key methods. It was believed that if the adversary refused to be provoked, the result would be dismal. Hence, a well-planned strategy was necessary to mobilize the masses. Such a plan could sometimes include confusing demonstrators with onlookers or spectators, such that the press overestimated the number of actual participants. They would use techniques like delaying the march for two hours so that the crowd would gather. King faced criticisms for such tactics which led nonviolent actions or campaigns to often end in violence.

The success of nonviolent resistance depending on provoking violence by the adversary has also been observed by Michael L. Gross. He differentiates between ideological and strategic nonviolence. He argues that “Ideological nonviolent resisters such as Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi eschew violence altogether because they regard it as both morally wrong and ineffective, while strategic nonviolent resisters selectively forego violence only because it is ineffective” (Gross, 2018, p. 323). In the case of strategic nonviolence, protestors successfully use nonviolent tactics that provoke disproportionate violent reactions

to get support from the public, police and military, government officials, and the international community, a phenomenon which he terms “backfire.”

He raises a couple of ethical questions surrounding the use of backfire in nonviolent resistance. For instance, “Under what conditions may organisers expose participants to the risk of injury or death?”, “Must they secure consent or may they conscript activists without full disclosure if such disclosure would jeopardise or interfere with operations?” And “Is provoking violence that may result in the deaths of activists antithetical to nonviolent resistance, even if effective at achieving larger goals?” He points out that “effective nonviolence often embodies a paradox because its success can depend crucially on the ability of activists to provoke sustained violent, brutal, and often murderous reactions from their adversaries” (Gross, 2018, p. 324).

Hence, nonviolent political actions often provoke the other party to use violence and as Chenoweth (2021, p. 6) formulates, “in a very real sense, civil resistance constructively promotes conflict”, thereby creating a situation where coercion becomes inevitable as the other party is left with no option. This sometimes happens during a demonstration, when someone is killed by a police officer, resulting in riots. To quell the unrest, the other party may agree to the protestor’s demands. In the case of such deliberative induced coercion, these actions can be considered either coercive or at least instrumental. Nevertheless, it is clear that nonviolence cannot be non-coercive and non-instrumental if the objective is to achieve a goal. This confirms my argument that a nonviolent method with a specific end is always instrumental in nature.

Coercion as an instrument in a strategic or pragmatic nonviolent method can involve instrumentalizing someone using various strategies, ranging from direct threats, such as blackmail, to subtle and indirect forms of manipulation, such as psychological manipulation.

The use of coercive threats can be as detrimental as actual violence and abuse because it deprives individuals of their freedom to make choices. Craig Carr questions, “If at least some instances of coercion involve making choices, and if being able to make one's own choices is part of what it means to be free, in what sense (if any) is coercion antithetical to freedom?” (Carr, 1988, p. 59). He argues that coercive threats interfere with an individual’s freedom when one person leverages another’s choices in ways that are not allowed in their shared interpersonal relationship conventions³⁹. Moreover, coercion creates a power dynamic where one party exerts control over the other, resulting in dominance and dependency, despite consent. For instance, coercion by poverty forces individuals to engage in actions such as selling organs to survive, even if they give their consent. This raises ethical and moral questions about coercion, as it undermines the autonomy of individuals. Dominance created using physical force is visible, while dominance created using coercion is covert, but both exert pressure. This topic will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

Gene Sharp provides a discussion on nonviolent coercion (Sharp, 1973c, pp. 742–743). He explains that when an opponent is neither converted nor accepts the demands of actionists, the opponent may be nonviolently coerced. Sharp differentiates between ‘violent coercion’ in which there is a deliberate intention of inflicting injury or death, and ‘nonviolent coercion’ in which coercion largely arises from noncooperation or the refusal by the nonviolent group to give up despite repression. One of the examples he presents is the 1920 Kapp Putsch against the new Weimar Republic. Sharp describes how the general strike and the noncooperation made it impossible for the Kappists to govern even though they had

³⁹ Carr uses the example of a basketball coach informing one of his players that if he does not start running the offence properly and stops freelancing, he will be dismissed from the team. This instance would not constitute interfering with the player's freedom since the team's interpersonal interactions would allow the coach to leverage his player's choices. However, conventions for interpersonal relationships are uncommon in nonviolent political actions.

successfully occupied Berlin. He mentions that the Putsch simply collapsed without the support of the people.

I have three objections to this view. First, as argued earlier, coercion does not necessarily have to be physical, and hence, the distinction made by Sharp does not hold. If I were an employer, for instance, I could easily coerce an employee to do something unrelated to the job description by threatening to dismiss them (assuming the employee is in dire need of money and cannot afford to lose their job). No intention of physical injury is necessary. Second, if nonviolent coercion comes from noncooperation by a group of people, what Sharp really means is '*mass people's power*', which as discussed earlier in 4.2.1, is already instrumental in that context.

Third, if violent coercion is morally wrong under the premise that coercion is more about *intention* or *threat* (rather than infliction itself or execution of violence), then nonviolent coercion is also morally wrong if the *intention* or *threat* itself is wrong (regardless of the outcome). For example, consider the situation in which former President Donald Trump sent tweets, encouraged his supporters to overturn the election, or condoned the storming of the U.S. Capitol in early January 2021 (Zengerle, Cowan and Chiacu, 2022). His intention was clearly wrong, as he knew that his actions were undemocratic, unhealthy, and unsportsmanlike. Hence, when nonviolence is employed to achieve a certain goal, it is at least instrumental, and in certain cases, it can be seen as coercive which raises moral concerns.

My arguments are likely to elicit scepticism regarding the distinction between persuasion and coercion, and whether they may be the same in practice. The degree of psychological influence is debatable. For instance, according to Weber's analysis, Gandhi's salt march was successful not because of love or persuasive power by Gandhi and his team, but rather because of the impact on the onlookers of beating the marchers (Martin, 2012, p.

293). The observers (bystanders and media) were visibly touched by the horrific scene of bloody and wounded people. Thus, the psychological process is not as described by Gregg, namely, bringing the moral balance of the violent attacker to a higher level. The psychological effect was more on the viewers, who were visibly affected by the scene. Sharp would likely categorise this type of action as ‘nonviolent coercion’. In this case, there is a divergence of opinion between Gregg and Sharp, with the former emphasizing persuasion and the latter focusing on coercion.

In my view, the primary difference between persuasive and coercive nonviolence lies not in their external appearance but in the surreptitious manner in which they convey their message. In persuasive nonviolence, the use of external activity is limited to worldly arguments and gestures. Agreements or disagreements are a matter of choice. In coercive nonviolence, the choice is not given, and the external activity can involve both covert and overt mechanisms. There is a distinct moral difference between *threatening to kill someone* and *just talking, even if the conversation might be heated*. Moreover, covert mechanisms like psychological abuse (e.g. sexual harassment and the ‘me too’ movement) leave the opponent without choice. As discussed earlier, there is a difference between the manifestation of nonviolence as philosophy (persuasive) and nonviolence as behaviour or mass people’s power (coercive), even if both might be contextually (softly) instrumental.

Further examples will shed more light. Sharp mentions various methods of nonviolent protest and persuasion. These may include speeches, letters of support or opposition, group or mass petitions and symbolic public acts like drama or singing. These acts simply beg for attention, appeal to the opponent to see your point of view and be persuaded voluntarily. However, a case like coercive diplomacy, for example, in the form of an economic embargo, is completely different. Such embargoes can have devastating consequences. The government

of the target country, especially if it has a poor economy, is left with no options other than to either follow the wishes of the foreign country or let its citizens bear the brunt.

One such case is Iraq. Though the details may vary, numerous non-governmental organisations and academics have condemned the catastrophic outcome in Iraq due to the economic embargo imposed for almost 13 years. As stated by Arya (2008, p. 9), the financial damage in Iraq was estimated at \$170 billion. By 1992, the country's GDP had dropped significantly from \$66 billion in 1989 to less than \$245 million. Five million citizens in the city of Baghdad were left virtually without electricity for three months. "Estimates of the number of people who lost their lives because of the sanctions range up to 1.5 million people, including more than 500000 children" (Alnasrawi, 2001, p. 214). Supporters of economic sanctions argue that they are preferable to war, but the issue under discussion is not about the choice of war and sanctions. Instead, the question is whether the target of the embargo has any say in the matter. Depending on the scope of the embargo, the citizens may suffer for extended periods, even though they are not the decision-makers or the cause of the embargo. Hence, diplomacy through discussions or treaties to reduce taxes, etc., falls under persuasion, while coercive diplomacy is ethically highly questionable.

To summarise this subchapter, the social or political cause defines the means used. The consequence is that ethics and morality are not the primary focus. The emphasis is on success. Depending on the proportionality of coercion used, nonviolent methods become morally and ethically questionable. The tactical method of nonviolence provoking violence to gain attention is equally dubious. In practice, it is often the case that when the state military or police use arms to suppress the masses, peaceful marches may escalate into violent riots as a last resort option. Coercion is morally and ethically problematic. It does not become morally better by putting the suffix 'nonviolent' in front of it. While pure 'non-coercive' or 'non-

persuasive' nonviolence remains a special case, it becomes difficult to maintain its purity when political or social objectives are involved. For instance, imagine the Dalai Lama attempting to free Tibet through nonviolent means. It is reasonable to assume that he would have to exercise at least persuasive nonviolent methods, which may not be sufficient to achieve his objective.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examined the relationship between violence and nonviolence from an analytical perspective and demonstrated that similar to violence, nonviolence involves the concept of power and coercion. To explore the type of power and coercion employed in nonviolence, I theorised nonviolence by categorising it from three perspectives: philosophical, behavioural and mass people's power. The underlying differences are in the use of coercion and persuasion. Gandhi and Gregg preached nonviolence as a philosophy. Modern-day nonviolent activities include nonviolence as behaviour, meaning they use different generally peaceful methods such as boycotts, sit-ins and marches. However, sometimes they do not hesitate to be a bit violent in the sense that, for example, the activists use stones to attack the police. Nonviolence as a mass people's power is the basis for mass-based nonviolence, such as civil resistance movements. The power stems from a large group of people working together for a predefined common goal.

I reaffirmed the argument from the last chapter that nowadays, pragmatic nonviolence, which does not possess the distinctive features of historical or principled nonviolence, is more common. I defended this claim by demonstrating that nonviolent political methods are always instrumental and often use coercion and power as instruments. As such they are 'coercive' or 'strategic', or at least 'persuasive' in nature. Pure 'non-coercive' or 'non-persuasive' nonviolence is non-existent except as a philosophy. Further, I briefly discussed how the

concepts of violence, nonviolence and power are intertwined within the context of society and the state. As a consequence, nonviolence is not analytically distinct from violence.

Due to the nature of instrumentality, when it comes to achieving distinct political/social goals, both violence and nonviolence as concepts involve means-end relationships. The next chapter builds on this knowledge and delves into the ethical implications of using power and coercion, and how these practices may be morally problematic demanding justification.

5. Moral Justification for Nonviolent Methods

In some cases non-violence requires more militancy than violence.

~ Cesar Chavez

Previous chapters have revealed definitional ambiguity in the demarcation between violence and nonviolence. Adopting a pluralistic approach helps us comprehend the complexities of these concepts. Historically, nonviolence has been the hallmark of love, compassion, and truth, making it a morally desirable option. However, both violence and nonviolence exhibit similar morally troubling characteristics when employed to attain political goals. This chapter builds upon these insights to advance the discussion on the ethics of nonviolent political action. In the preceding chapter, the discussion was based on the instrumentality of power and coercion. Here, the focus is on the involvement of harm stemming from power and coercion. This chapter serves as a bridge between the three previous chapters and the two upcoming chapters. The justification of nonviolent political methods is inspected through the lens of harm and means-end perspective.

The objective of this chapter is to show—from an ethical standpoint—that certain nonviolent methods are morally equivalent to violent methods because both are effective instruments for achieving political goals and rely on coercion and power. I argue that we must engage in a discussion about the moral justification for nonviolent methods, as moral concerns arise from the harmful consequences of coercion and power. I maintain that nonviolent political activities are not always as pure and devoid of morally problematic features or ramifications as they may seem in theoretical contexts. I shall (re)explore the similarity regarding the means and ends of violent and nonviolent actions from a moral/ethical

perspective. In pursuit of the same just ends, the common belief is that violent means will often be unjust, but nonviolent means will usually (perhaps always) be just. In this context, I discuss the Gandhian view from *Hind Swaraj*, which posits that only nonviolent means can truly give rise to just ends. I assert that while having a just end is crucial, the means must also be just. Further, I also discuss that although having just means is a necessary condition for achieving just ends, one must focus on both (just ends and just means).

First, I will argue that moral justification is required, not only for violence but for nonviolence as well. Morality and ethics demand that nonviolence be justified too. The moral superiority of nonviolence is not entirely flawless, as it is not always guaranteed that adopting the right means will result in just outcomes. Moreover, the commitment to such means does not necessarily preclude their use for unjust or wrongful purposes. Means and ends are, to that extent, separable. Second, I will discuss the morality of nonviolent political methods with civil disobedience as a paradigm example. To review intended and foreseeable harm, the case of sanction is explored and ethically reviewed. The expectation that nonviolence as an option is morally unproblematic is not always met. I will end the chapter with the conclusion that moral justification is not a priori given in nonviolent political activities.

5.1 Link between Nonviolent Means and Just Ends

I have previously argued that violent and pragmatic nonviolent political actions are not adequately distinct. Nonviolent methods have many issues that bother us with violent methods. Here, I take this argument further and contend that nonviolent methods also necessitate justification. The question concerning the justification of nonviolence is not so much in legal but in moral terms. While considering the methods employed, it is indispensable that the level of harm involved is also taken into account. As Wolff (1969) puts it concisely,

Physical harm may be among the most serious injuries that can be done to an opponent, but, if so, it differs only in degree and not in kind from the injuries inflicted by so-called “nonviolent” techniques of political action. (Wolff, 1969, pp. 615–616)

First, I will discuss the issue of harm, partly with a hypothetical example, to provide clarity as to why and under what circumstances harm is morally problematic. Subsequently, taking Gandhi’s Swaraj as a case, I argue that having a just end alone is not sufficient. Just means to that particular end is also cardinal in political actions. Ethical considerations from means-end prospects will be important to accommodate harm that emanates from present-day technological circumstances, which will be dealt with in the following two chapters.

Discussing the concept of harm in detail would go beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, I shall discuss the topic only in relation to the methods applied in ‘nonviolent’ political actions. The Online Britannica Dictionary defines harm as “Physical or mental damage or injury: something that causes someone or something to be hurt, broken, made less valuable or successful, etc.”⁴⁰ In this sense, killing and maiming are harms, but physical and mental tortures or threats are equally harms. Coercion, manipulation, domination and exploitation that hurt someone are also examples of harm. Hence, any action or goal containing these aforementioned characteristics cannot be considered harmless.

Manipulation means steering a certain outcome and is not necessarily always wrong. A person A can manipulate another person B for her gain without necessarily harming B. In a similar vein, being opportunistic per se is also not always wrong. However, these are morally problematic if the features of exploitation, manipulation, and opportunistic behaviour result from domination and the use of others’ vulnerabilities. To argue why these features in

⁴⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/harm>

nonviolent activities are morally wrong, I want to borrow Allen Wood's idea of "freedom as non-domination"⁴¹ (Wood, 2014). Coercion is objectionable not because of some subjective feeling but because it leads to an objective outcome that is not acceptable. The example he uses is the choice of either letting the family starve or accepting the unfavourable conditions given by the employer. This takes away the agent's freedom. Manipulative behaviour is similar, as according to Wood, "it influences people's choices in ways that circumvent or subvert their rational decision-making process" (p. 289). This takes away the agent's freedom of self-government, creating domination as a consequence of unjust or unequal relations. Hence, I believe that dominance requires justification because it is subject to the choices of others.

I agree with Wood's thinking that there need not be a coercer or a manipulator. There can be circumstances in which people can be coerced (e.g. desperately poor women forced into prostitution) or manipulated (e.g. advertising). However, in the discussion of nonviolent political actions, the objectives are predefined and while achieving such goals, agents (coercers or manipulators) exist as the activities do not take place in a vacuum.

Exploitation occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of another's vulnerability for personal gain. This can occur by using coercion, manipulation or other means. According to Wood, exploitation goes beyond mere use in that the exploiter uses what is exploited as a strategy to accomplish a goal, thereby granting the exploiter some degree of dominance or control over the victim. He concludes that the common theme present in coercion, manipulation and exploitation "is the deprivation of freedom as non-domination: the removal, pre-emption, or subtle undermining by one person of another person's rational control over their own choices and actions" (p. 302). Thus, coercion, manipulation and

⁴¹ The concept of 'freedom as non-domination' is associated with republicanism and neo-republicanism. For instance, Philip Pettit (1999) has put this philosophy forward as an alternative to the negative view of freedom as non-interference and the positive view of freedom as self-mastery.

exploitation are morally wrong because they undermine the freedom of self-government, and therefore activities involving these need justification.

Is offending someone harm? Are speeches, insults, or slurs harm? In this case, I principally agree with the harm principle of John Stuart Mill (1998). According to Mill, personal liberty has priority and being offended by someone's words, attire or speech does not count as harm. To be counted as harm, direct, immediate action after the speech must cause harm. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 2, intention and context matter. For example, consider the scenario in which someone throws a banana peel into a dustbin and then continues on their way, unaware that the peel has not landed inside the bin. Later, another person walks by, slips on the peel, and sprains their leg. This is an instance of harm, but it is not a political action and is therefore inconsequential to the political context. Similarly, while excessive use of plastic and riding vehicles is harmful to the environment and ultimately harmful to people on the planet, this does not have a direct relationship to political action without further context.

Let us consider a hypothetical scenario in which I participate in a mass political demonstration, during which participants are provided with bananas as a snack. After consuming the bananas, the participants dispose of the peels on the ground, creating a potential hazard. If someone were to slip and sustain an injury as a result, both I and the other participants would be ethically responsible for the consequences, even if our intention were not for someone to get hurt. As John Stuart Mill stated, "A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case, he is justly accountable to them for the injury" (Mill, 1998, pp. 14–15). So, not only action but also omission can be harmful. In this example, I/we did not take the necessary action to dispose of the peels properly, which led to potential harm. The ethical implications of the situation would be even more severe if

the peels were intentionally left behind to cause harm. But unlike Mill, my concern is not personal liberty or the state's power to punish but political actions.

Coming back to the example of speech, even assuming that insults and slurs didn't cause harm (which is controversial), it is clear that using speech to incite property destruction and physical fights resulting in injuries is harmful. For example, if someone deliberately uses speech as a political tool to incite a mob or stir up a riot, resulting in property destruction and physical altercations, then it is a case of harm. Similarly, continuous insults and humiliation to intentionally harass or bully someone, leading to psychological scars as a form of political action, is harm.

When raising the issue of 'harm', it does not mean that they are generally wrong. For instance, I could harm my neighbour's business by making my own business more effective and efficient. However, some harm is *prima facie* wrong or *pro tanto* wrong. For example, I could pay someone to crash my neighbour's online system so that the products cannot be sold for many weeks harming my neighbour's business seriously. There are harms that are morally questionable and hence, hard to justify. There are different types of harm, and there is a difference in degree as well. Thus, we need to pay careful attention.

Nevertheless, harm is not automatically morally justifiable, even if it may not be inherently wrong. A simple example is invading privacy, which is not automatically justified, even if there may be some circumstances where it could be argued as such. For instance, the public's right to know may conflict with an individual's right to privacy, as seen in the case of journalists invading the privacy of celebrities. However, even in the case of a celebrity, there may still be a limit to the invasion of privacy, such as regarding their children. Invading privacy in this particular case and causing harm to the children is arguably not morally justifiable.

Therefore, the discourse of morality and justification in this research is based on the harms that revolve around political actions. To show that nonviolent methods can sometimes be morally equivalent to violent ones, I draw upon an example provided by Wolff (1969). He states that if someone organises a sit-in to bankrupt the café owner, leading him to misery and poverty, the act is at least morally equal to beating him up (p. 610). Therefore, if the intention to cause destructive harm is present in a nonviolent action, then morally and conceptually, it becomes an act of violence. A sit-in designed to force someone out of business and expose them to harms like poverty, unhappiness, ill-health or even suicide due to destitution, can be considered a violent act under certain definitions, for example, Garver's "covert personal/institutional violence"⁴² (see Betz 1977, p. 340–341). While such actions may be legally permissible, their moral implications are questionable. Wolff (1969) contends that "such indirect coercion as a boycott or a sit-in is morally questionable" as it "merely leaves the dirty work" (p. 610) to the others. There are two perspectives of looking at the question of justifying nonviolence. First, the end is immoral, and the means used is nonviolence. Second, the end is morally sound and nonviolent means are used.

The first case is straightforward. If the objective is wrong, nonviolence cannot justify the action. I agree with King that "It is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends" (King, 1963). King was displeased when some people commended the Birmingham police for being nonviolent and keeping "order." For him, segregation was an immoral end. Even if the police officers used moral means of nonviolence, they were doing so to keep up the immoral end of racial injustice. Quoting T. S. Eliot, "The last temptation is the

⁴² Garver offers four kinds of violence: (1) overt personal violence; (2) overt institutional violence; (3) covert personal violence; and (4) covert institutional violence.

greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason.”(King, 1963), King contended that the evil system of segregation cannot and should not be maintained through nonviolence.

Though it is common to accept a rigid dichotomy between ends and means in most schools of thought, Gandhi was one of those few who regarded the relationship as a connection like a seed to the tree. He claimed that the means is like a seed and the end is like a tree, and there is the same inviolable connection between the means and the end, similar to the way there is between the seed and the tree (Gandhi, 1938, ch. 16). He also believed that if the means are pure, the end will also be pure. So, one just needs to take care of the means, and the end will take care of itself. For him, there was no distinction between means and end because only impure means would result in an impure end. Nonviolence as a means was pure because it is embedded in truth.

I agree with this view that only fair means—what I would call *justified* means—alone can produce a fair end result. In the fight against the British for the Self-Rule, Gandhi explains in *Hind Swaraj* (Gandhi, 1938, Ch. 16–17) why brute force is not a solution. If the Indians were to use gunpowder and think this is justifiable, the opponent would also be entitled to do the same. This would never lead to an agreement and end up “like the blind horse moving in a circle round a mill”, argues Gandhi. Essentially, what he is implying is that violence begets violence. In other words, unjust means breed unjust ends, and we cannot expect just ends by using violence (unjust means). He further states that one could not get a rose by planting a noxious weed and enforces the common saying, “We reap what we sow.”

I take this argument further and contend that in a political scenario, one cannot focus on means only, the anticipated end is equally important. Gandhi’s perspective holds when one believes that the means is an end in itself. He believed so. For him, the end did not matter, or

the end and the means were the same, as evidenced by his statements, a few of which are listed below⁴³:

For me, it is enough to know the means. Means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life.

"To work thou hast the right, never to the fruit thereof" is one of the golden precepts of the *Gita*.

By detachment I mean that you must not worry whether the desired result follows from your action or not, so long as your motive is pure, your means correct. Really, it means that things will come right in the end if you take care of the means and leave the rest to Him.

Success or failure is not in our hands. It is enough we do our part well... Ours is but to strive. In the end, it will be as He wishes.

While this view may be true for Gandhi, who practised nonviolence as a philosophy and never had official political responsibility, the end and the means being the same is not possible in pragmatic nonviolent methods. As shown in the previous chapter, Gandhi practised *non-coercive* and *persuasive* nonviolence. Pragmatic nonviolence, however, is *strategic*, *coercive* and *always instrumental*.⁴⁴ I argue that the end must be as pure or morally sound as the means used, and one has to decide regarding one's own action depending on the result (especially if the result is foreseeable). In practical politics, the idea of taking care of the means and leaving the rest to 'Him' as practised by Gandhi suggests not taking any responsibility for the outcome. This contradicts the principle of accountability in any democracy. Of course, one can only control one's own actions, but precisely that is particularly important because the

⁴³ <https://www.mkgandhi.org/voiceoftruth/meansandends.htm>

⁴⁴ See Chapter 4.2.2, where I argue that if the nonviolent method is coercive, it cannot be non-instrumental. The use of coercion implies a means-end relationship.

decision to go forward might mean life or death. I underline my point by putting forward two cases: first, the Bhagavad Gita, which inspired and influenced Gandhi and second, Gandhi's arguments on the connection between the means and the end.

In Bhagavad Gita (a part of the epic Mahabharata⁴⁵), Lord Krishna advises the warrior Arjun to focus on the action and not on the fruits of that action. In the case of Arjun in the Mahabharata, with his decision to do his duty as a warrior, many, including his family, died, most of them being killed by him. The war between the cousins Kauravas and Pandavas started because Duryodhana (the eldest among Kauravas) was greedy and envious of his cousins. He asked Yudhishtira (the eldest among Pandavas) to play dice and won everything that belonged to Pandavas through cheating with the help of his uncle Shakuni. Gandhi would have viewed the game of dice as immoral because it was planned that Shakuni would help in cheating and winning the game. However, Yudhishtira did have the choice to decline the invitation. But he could not say "no" according to the dharma, and he liked playing dice. Even if accepting the invitation is deemed dharma, one cannot find any reason for the need to place a bet on his wife Draupadi, who is subsequently disrobed in a crowded court. The Pandavas lost their share of the rightful kingdom. Even after staying in exile for 13 years as per the bet during the dice game, Duryodhana refused to give the Pandavas their share. In the end, the war was inevitable, and Krishna had to help the Pandavas win the war, so the story goes.

Bhagavad Gita was Gandhi's constant companion. According to Gandhi, one of the central teachings is निष्काम कर्म nishkama karma (nish = non, kama = desire, karma = action)⁴⁶, which means following one's duty but not attaching to the fruits of that action. One can understand why Gandhi believed in focusing on the means alone. I would agree to this if it were a social service where we helped without anticipating anything in return. However, a

⁴⁵ The story of the Mahabharata is widely known in South Asia through schoolbooks and TV serials. I based my version on the book "The Difficulty of Being Good" by Gaucharan Das.

⁴⁶ <https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/Mahatma-Gandhi-and-the-Bhagavad-Gita.html>

political scenario is more like the Mahabharata, a very complex chain of means and ends. One can control the means but not the end, but because means and ends are interrelated, it does make a difference in which choices were made. As such, the decision to pursue one means over another carries implications for the type of end that will be achieved. The connection is not just the seed and the tree; there are things to consider, like the right soil, watering and taking care of the plant, and also taking responsibility if the tree does not bear any fruits.

Returning to Hind Swaraj, Gandhi postulates three different means to deprive someone of her watch and own it. He states that depending on whether it is fought for, paid for or pleaded for, the watch becomes stolen property, one's own property, or a donation. Even though paying for the watch seems like the most ethical option in this scenario, the morality of *pleading for it* is also worthy of consideration as a just means. If owning a watch is deemed a just end in and of itself (assuming this is absolutely necessary for some higher purpose), then requesting or purchasing it should be considered morally equivalent. It is entirely possible that the watch was absolutely necessary but unaffordable. Means do matter. However, focusing solely on the means without regard for the end is not enough. Gandhi does emphasize, "You will have to adopt means to fit each case." This indicates that one has to focus on the end as well. I postulate that in the case of Hind Swaraj, the end was clear, namely the independence of India, which Gandhi referred to as Home-Rule or Self-Rule. It is probable that for this reason, it was adequate to concentrate on the means, what he called soul-force or truth-force, also termed passive resistance.

Concluding the discussion so far, moral means cannot justify immoral ends. For example, segregation cannot be justified by using nonviolence. For the just end, just means is a necessary condition. As argued by Gandhi, not the brute force of arms but passive resistance can only make real Home-Rule possible. Political actions require that attention be given to

both the end and the means because making the right choice and taking responsibility for one's own decisions are indispensable. In my view, the connection between the ends and the means in political activities is like the connection between the seed and the fruit. One cannot plant a lemon tree seed and expect mangoes. Even though both mango trees and lemon trees are trees, they deliver different fruits. Using this analogy, the means and the ends need to be compatible. Just means might not automatically lead to expected just ends. While the just means (right seed) is compulsory, the just end (fruit) can be expected but not always given. In the Mahabharata, Arjun accomplished his duty as a warrior, and he, along with other Pandavas, killed their relatives for the sake of righteousness. Despite Gandhi's nonviolent actions, he was not able to stop the separation between India and Pakistan, which was followed by massive migration and violence.

This is the premise with which I set out. First, immoral ends cannot be justified with moral means. Ergo, the first perspective of using nonviolence for wrong goals is not the subject of my interest. I assume that the end is just. Second, moral means are not sufficient to guarantee the justness of the targeted outcomes. Hence, the means-end perspective is necessary. I argue step by step that nonviolence as a means is morally objectionable in several cases despite the just end. The central theme is that we prefer nonviolence to violence because we believe that nonviolence is not harmful or less harmful than violence. However, this is not always the case, and we cannot take it for granted that nonviolence is worthy at all times. In other words, if violence requires justification because it is harmful, we also require justification for harmful nonviolence.

5.2 Morality of Nonviolent Actions

This subchapter argues that the issues of nonviolent methods are severe and manifold, which implies that it is not always reasonable to assume that having just ends justifies the means

simply because they are nonviolent. It is crucial to scrutinize and assess their moral acceptability with great care, despite their nonviolent nature. I begin by postulating that the premise of moral justification for nonviolent methods is incorrect. Then, I explore civil disobedience and make the case that the conditions for justifying civil disobedience in particular and nonviolent political action as a whole must be based on a means-end approach. Subsequently, I enumerate the issues involved with nonviolent methods to contend that choosing nonviolent means does not exempt someone from justifying these actions. In the end, I address any possible objections that might arise.

In a political arena, the conceptual difference between nonviolence and violence, in several cases, serves as a rhetorical device to garner support or use different kinds of force to achieve political goals. For instance, assuming that the ends that emerge from civil disobedience will always tend to be just, it is frequently taken for granted that civil disobedience uses morally unproblematic methods. I believe that the means are not always ethically unquestionable. Hence, the morality of nonviolent political actions is vital in discussing the issue of justification. Previously, the question of justification for nonviolence was not raised because it was assumed that nonviolence was morally better or superior, especially in comparison to violence. Following this, the justification is presumed to be given.

The preference for nonviolence by its proponents is based on three main grounds: First, they believe that it works better than violence. The explanation for this belief nevertheless hinges on the moral superiority of nonviolence. Second, they think that nonviolence is about fighting against violence, a struggle for freedom (from oppression) and a fight against injustice. Third, they choose nonviolence out of philosophical and religious reasons. In all three cases, it is a direct or indirect moral choice vis-à-vis violence. Even when nonviolence is sometimes chosen for rational reasons with the assumption that it works better,

it is primarily motivated by morality. Activists know that it is necessary to be in custody to gain public sympathy and moral support. In this case, the morality of the public that ‘choosing nonviolence as the right thing to do’ plays a role.

In the first case, the choice of nonviolence over violence based on its probability of success has been shown by Chenoweth and Stephan (2008). In their study of 323 nonviolent and violent resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006, they found that predominantly nonviolent movements were nearly twice as effective as predominantly violent movements. They give two reasons for the success. First, nonviolent commitment receives domestic and international legitimacy and support. Second, governments cannot easily justify regime violence against nonviolent methods. Similarly, the potentially sympathetic public perceives nonviolent resistance groups as less extreme and more appealing. All in all, people perceive violence as something bad (wrong option) and imply that we must choose nonviolence, which is the right or better option. Hence, indirectly, the main reason for choosing nonviolence is the hidden moral superiority of nonviolence over violence.

In the second case, the preference for nonviolence to fight against violence is essentially based on the concept of civil disobedience and civil resistance. Both are used to fight for rights, freedom and justice without using violence. No matter what specific tactic is used, be it strikes, boycotts or mass demonstrations, the basic idea is to perform the action predominantly nonviolently. The choice is largely symbolic, meaning the ‘nonviolent method’ (justice) going against the ‘violent method’ (injustice). *It is a moral struggle!* Implicitly, nonviolence is less harmful than violence. Hence, the implied reason is also a moral one.

In the third case, as discussed in Chapter 2, being nonviolent means a way of life and includes not harming any living being. The unexpressed meaning of “ahimsa” (no harm) followed by Gandhi is a moral choice as opposed to using violence and harming someone.

Truth, love and compassion are to be preferred to being violent. The preference might stem from religious or philosophical belief, and consequently, nonviolence represents an intrinsic value. The implication, nevertheless, is the assumption that nonviolent methods are ethically better than violent methods.

I maintain my argument that typical contemporary nonviolent political actions rarely include attributes like truth, love, compassion or no harm of any sort of present in principled nonviolence. Even civil disobedience, a paradigm example of (mass) nonviolence, has evolved since Gandhi. Civil disobedience is commonly perceived as unproblematic both in public consciousness and in academic literature. This is generally understood as a necessary component of democratic systems and hence, seen as legitimate. I want to make a case that the question of legitimacy needs to be supplemented by a question of its justification for all kinds of civil disobedience, not only for ‘uncivil’ disobedience. Further, civil disobedience is just one example of nonviolence. I shall discuss different types of harm that can be present in nonviolent methods and contend that moral justification for nonviolence is not a priori given. Violence is objectionable because of different kinds of harm, not only lethal ones. Similarly, some nonviolence is objectionable because of the different kinds of harm involved.

5.2.1 Is Civil Disobedience Inherently Justified?

The answer to the question “Is civil disobedience inherently justified?” is pertinent because civil disobedience is a paradigm case for nonviolence. There is an implicit view that civil disobedients always have a worthy moral intention, and therefore, the means are justified too. Starting from the premise that the goals are justified, we ask for justification in the case of violence as a means, and the just war theory engages with this subject matter. In the case of civil disobedience (nonviolence) as a means, the discussion revolves around whether it is justified in its entirety. We do not engage much with the justification of the *means* involved. I

therefore reformulate my question: *Given the just end, is civil disobedience as a means always justified?*

I begin with a definition⁴⁷ provided by Merriam-Webster.⁴⁸ Civil Disobedience is a “refusal to obey governmental demands or commands, especially as a nonviolent and usually collective means of forcing concessions from the government.”

As a comparison, the definition provided by Oxford References⁴⁹ is as follows:

The political tactic of deliberately disobeying a law in order to bring about some change. The disobedience should ideally be public, non-violent, and committed by activists willing to face the penalties of the law.

As with any definition, there will not be a consensus but rather common ground. The common things in these two definitions are ‘political’, ‘against the government’, ‘nonviolent’ and ‘disobeying the law’ or ‘refusing to obey the law’. The question of morality is not raised here. The issue I have raised is not a legal justification but a moral one. The literature is equivocal and not specific.

Some scholars argue that nonviolence in the form of civil disobedience is morally justified. David Lefkowitz (2007) makes the case that the moral right to civil disobedience is derived from the general right to political participation. He calls this the “moral right to public disobedience.” He argues that if a democratic and liberal state enacts unjust laws that conflict with basic rights, civil disobedience raises no general problems since the state does not have legitimacy in this case. But even if the laws are not in conflict with basic principles, they could be underinclusive, overinclusive, or both, such that the citizens have to engage in public

⁴⁷ I begin with general definitions which are accessible to the public via Google so that the difference between the general perception and the academic world is visible.

⁴⁸ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/civil%20disobedience>

⁴⁹ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095614418>

disobedience because it is their right to participate in lawmaking (citizen's right to political participation). Lefkowitz argues that public disobedience, however, must be non-coercive and acts of public communication.

Candice Delmas (Delmas, 2018a) goes one step further and asserts that some types of uncivil disobedience, like political riots and whistleblowing, can be justified. According to her, this applies even in supposedly liberal democratic states. She examines how the four grounds – the duty to justice, the duty to fairness, the Samaritan duty, and associative duties – justify, constrain and even require the use of principled disobedience to fight against injustice. The uncivil disobedience can also include violent methods, claims Delmas. She gives an example of female suffragists who burned golf course turfs with acid and undertook other forms of sabotage acts and defends that these actions were necessary to gain voting rights for women. She also asserts that uncivil disobedience might be more productive as it can radically disrupt the status quo.

Joseph Raz differentiates between civil disobedience in liberal and illiberal states. According to him, since illiberal states do not respect the members' right to political participation, members of such a state have the right to civil disobedience. It follows that it becomes "their moral right to political participation which is not recognised in law" (Raz, 1979, p. 273). However, the case is different in a liberal state because, in general, liberal states protect the right of their members to participate in politics. He argues that civil disobedience might be justified in a liberal state as well, but only under conditions such as wrong and iniquitous laws. However, it is not a general moral right, and in liberal states, civil disobedience is an exceptional political action, contends Raz.

Rawls defines civil disobedience as "a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies

of the government” (Rawls, 1999, p. 320). According to this definition, acts of civil disobedience must be undertaken out of sincere moral conviction within the limits of fidelity to law, have to be “political” in nature, and need to be conducted in public. Further, this must aim to change the law with the goal of establishing justice, and acts of protest should not be violent. This would mean that other types of non-political acts in which protesters speak up against social injustice (animal rights and veganism) or sexual harassment (#MeToo Movement) would not be counted as civil disobedience. Any disobedience that only aims to voice disagreement or raise awareness but has no intention of changing the laws would usually not fall under civil disobedience.

Rawls argued that we have the duty to obey unjust laws if the basic structure of society is reasonably just. In a near-just state, there is normally an obligation to comply with unjust laws to uphold mutual trust and confidence, provided they do not exceed certain limits of injustice, according to Rawls. Rawls, in fact, mentions several times that civil disobedience is useful *only in a nearly just society*. Then, how is civil disobedience justified? Rawls outlines three conditions which I find problematic in practice.

1. *Civil disobedience should be restricted to clear and serious violations of equal liberty, and fair equality of opportunity and not just a law that is perceived as bad or wrong.*

- From this condition, it follows that civil disobedience with the goal of appealing to moral principles like protests against animal cruelty and vaccinations would not be justified.

2. *Civil disobedience should be the last option.*

- From this condition, it follows that everything should have been tried first. This contradicts the principle that “justice delayed is justice denied”. For example, how long should King have waited, and how long should the black people suffer from

segregation? We also need to consider that many might not have the access or resources to try other methods except civil disobedience.

3. *Civil disobedience should be restricted in a way that two minorities under similar conditions are likewise justified.*

- From this condition, it follows that the dissenter considers the right of one group to disobey under certain conditions suffering certain injustice as equal to the right of another group to disobey under similar conditions suffering similar injustice like the former group. While this concept is acceptable in theory, it is unclear how to distinguish between such situations in practical application.

The framework for justifying civil disobedience provided by Rawls is contradictory in a strict sense. He argues that the injustice of a law is not a sufficient justification to disregard it and we are obligated to follow the unjust laws in a reasonably just society as long as they do not exceed certain limits of injustice. However, it is arguably very difficult to ascertain the limits of injustice. Rawls provides an explanation using constitutional convention and majority rule. Rawls presupposes that when laws and policies do not align with public norms, it may be feasible to appeal to society's sense of fairness. In practice, rules and regulations, public norms as well as society's sense of justice and fairness are generally set by the majority and those who are in power. At the same time, civil disobedience, as Rawls points out, is meant as a means to force the majority to acknowledge the legitimate claims of the minority. I believe Rawls saw this inconsistency⁵⁰ as he acknowledges that "For this reason the problem of civil disobedience is a crucial test case for any theory of the moral basis of democracy. (Rawls, 1999, p. 319)"

⁵⁰ I would make a case that due to this type of inconsistency, social/political injustices such as racial discrimination (e.g. segregation) or gender discrimination (e.g. unequal suffrage) have taken several decades to overcome and exist even to this day (e.g. unequal access to citizenship like in Nepal where men can easily pass their citizenship onto their children without the presence of mother whereas many conditions apply to women).

From the discourse on the justification for civil disobedience, it can be observed that there is a divergent understanding of what civil disobedience constitutes or under what conditions it is justified. There is no generally agreed upon conception of the conditions. Some take liberal or illiberal states as a basis, and others use just and unjust laws as a benchmark for justifying civil disobedience. Some scholars, like Delmas, appeal to not taking ‘civil’ disobedience only in its Rawlsian conception (nonviolent as well as bounded by various other constraints). She proposes that there should be room for acts of violence sometimes (as well as acts that lack decorum, which is clandestine instead of public, and so on). She calls this alternative category “uncivil disobedience” and includes nonviolence and some violent measures, as needed.

I argue that civil disobedience needs justification based on the principles of just means and ends. It is insufficient to defend civil disobedience or nonviolence solely on the basis of the right to justice or legitimacy. An agreed conception of just ends and means is necessary in the case of civil disobedience. I believe Thoreau is an appropriate starting point. He coined the term **Civil Disobedience** with the idea of resisting unjust laws. Thus, just laws or justice should be the just end. However, recognising what unjust laws include may depend on existing norms and culture because norms and culture underline the morality of that situation. But systems and societies change over time. For instance, until around one hundred years ago, disenfranchising women was morally accepted. Nobody questioned the justification at that time, but later, the laws were changed. Currently, due to the concept of a state, laws treat its citizens differently from non-citizens. Such laws are accepted as just but this may change in the future. Hence, speaking of the just law should be relative to the accompanying time and space. For the essence of just and unjust law, I find the following perspective convincing:

“An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust (St. Thomas Aquinas quoted in ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’, (King, 1963))”

For the discussion of just means, I propose to break down the topic as follows:

- a) Civil disobedience is, as practised by Gandhi, the end in itself.
- b) Civil disobedience is used as a means to achieve certain goals.

Gandhi’s civil disobedience was both the end and the means. His means was passive resistance, which meant non-cooperation with the rulers regarding unjust laws. The foundation of passive resistance was using soul-force. It involved self-sacrifice as one needed to accept the penalty and suffer whatever consequence that followed for breaching the law. To become a passive resister was easy and difficult at the same time, said Gandhi. (Gandhi, 1938, ch. 17) He outlined four conditions to become a passive resister: observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness. He states, “The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth.” Later, he is said to have coined the term *civil resistance* as a combination of the words *civil disobedience* and *passive resistance*. (Chenoweth, 2021, p. 10)

Gandhi practised nonviolence as a philosophy, and his methods were non-coercive and generally directed towards the self. In contrast, civil disobedience as a means to achieve political goals often involves power and coercion. To begin with, it is not always clear whether contemporary civil disobedience has just ends. We expect civil disobedience to bring about positive changes like bringing a new just law, changing the ‘unjust’ law, inducing the resignation of someone who has done something wrong or bringing down a ‘dictatorial’ regime. We do not want civil disobedience to result in someone losing a family member,

going bankrupt or committing suicide. In this sense, whistleblowing as an act of civil disobedience, for example, is problematic. Although public interest is said to be the goal, sometimes the intention of a whistleblower is to harm her supervisor or the previous employer as revenge. Some whistleblowing, especially those politically related, could be harmful because national security could be at risk. Thus, even if the end is just, whistleblowing as civil disobedience is ambiguous.

Hactivism as civil disobedience is another ambiguous example, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. Even if we assume that the end is just, hacktivism, due to its nature, involves activities that are morally questionable. Hacktivists hack into systems unauthorised and also involve the computers of the general public without their consent or knowledge. Further, both whistleblowers and hacktivists generally prefer to stay anonymous. This contradicts the principles of civil disobedience as described by Gandhi and Rawls, who argue that civil disobedience has to be public⁵¹ and disobedients have to be willing to accept the consequences of breaking the law.

While there has been some work regarding justification for (un)civil disobedience, we must evaluate the moral justification of all kinds of civil disobedience. Different scholars define civil disobedience in different ways. Some are restrictive, whereas others are more liberal. We need to analyse what we mean by civil disobedience and answer why a particular act of civil disobedience is justified. In other words, the goal must be moral or just (in a given context), and the method should not cause disproportionate harm. In short, assuming a just end, civil disobedience as a means needs justification.

In the next sub-chapter, I shall discuss why ends do not justify the means merely because we use ‘nonviolent’ methods.

⁵¹ Gandhi promoted courage and fearlessness.

5.2.2 Nonviolent Methods Use Power over People

In the means-ends-debate, we cannot isolate one from the other. As Carl von Clausewitz once stated, “The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose” (von Clausewitz, 1976, p. 87). This concept applies to nonviolent political activities as well, which may not be as harmless as they seem on the surface, regardless of how worthy the end goal may be. In this section, I discuss the types of morally objectionable harm that can be created due to the problem of using someone “merely as a means.”

Treating others *merely* as a means is generally understood as morally wrong because it denotes exploitation or manipulation, like in the case of slavery. Immanuel Kant’s moral theory has been very influential in the notion of *using people merely as a means* and the surrounding debate. Kant notes: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.” (Kant, 2015b, p. 38) There are many interpretations of what Kant means by this phrase and what “using merely as a means” constitutes. I draw on the analysis provided by Kleingeld, who examines the text on the account of consent, which is as follows:

An agent uses another person merely as a means if and only if (1) the agent uses another person as a means in the service of realizing her ends (2) without, as a matter of moral principle, making this use conditional on the other’s consent; where (3) by ‘consent’ is meant the other’s genuine actual consent to being used, in a particular manner, as a means to the agent’s end. (Kleingeld, 2020, p. 398)

This interpretation is reasonable as it covers all cases of instrumental use. This is suited for this research as this study also examines the instrumentality in nonviolence. As discussed in Chapter 4.1, in nonviolence, instrumentality occurs within a given context. “Instrumental

actions are those performed in order to realise a further end, as opposed to those that are performed “for their own sake” and, in that sense, intrinsically motivated” (Audi, 2015, p. 14). This implies that to use something as a means, there is an *end* to be achieved using that particular *means, only as a means*, in an instrumental way. Further, there could be a plurality of means to achieve the same end. This possibility has not been ruled out.

In nonviolent political actions, the issue of using others “merely as a means” manifests in “power over people.” This, in turn, could lead to different variations of harm, such as exploitation, manipulation and domination. The harm could be intended and unintended. I am not contending that all harm is severe or unjustified. My objective is to demonstrate that there is harm in varying degrees, and any justification should not discount it.

Before delving into how power is related to nonviolence, let us recapitulate from past chapters. Principled nonviolence is more about philosophy, whereas pragmatic nonviolence is about strategy and does accept coercion. As such, when reviewing potential harm associated with nonviolence, it is generally about the latter kind of nonviolence. Some proponents of pragmatic nonviolence do not hide the possible harms. Sharp (1973) concedes that “nonviolent action is not a safe means of struggle” (p. 454). The reasons are: first, people can suffer physically, economically or imprisonment. Second, death is possible. Third, political violence may break out. Kurt Schock (2003) clarifies that those who engage in pragmatic nonviolent action do so because they find it effective and practical for achieving their objectives in a particular situation. As such, “[They] do not reject the possibility that violent action may be a practical means for alleviating oppression under some conditions” (p. 709). He adds, “Thus, methods of nonviolent action are used without any object to violence in principle” (p. 709).

Now, I move on to what constitutes power. According to Lukes, power⁵² is one of those concepts that is perpetually value-dependent and is an “essentially contested concept” (Lukes, 2005, p. 30). For the purposes of this research, the concept of ‘power over people’ is particularly relevant because nonviolence includes social relations among people. To elucidate this idea, I will draw on Robert Dahl’s (1957) “intuitive idea of power”, which states that “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957, pp. 202–203).

There is a difference between ‘mass people’s power’ from the previous chapter and ‘power over people’. In the Arendtian sense, the concept of ‘mass people power’ means cooperation and communication. The ability of people to ‘act together in concert’ makes mass action possible in the first place. The concept of ‘power over people’ has the traditional meaning of *ruling over* and *domination*. This corresponds with Weber’s popular definition: “Power means every opportunity within a social relationship to enforce one’s will even against reluctance, regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests”⁵³. From both definitions by Dahl and Weber, we can see that the relationship does not require a mass.

In nonviolent activities, activists gain power over their adversaries to the extent that the adversaries do something that the activists want, which the adversaries would not otherwise do. Thus, a “power over” relationship is built upon a combination of force, coercion, manipulation, repression, control, domination and authority. Sometimes, the relationship is indirect. For example, authority or domination creates coercion. The kind of harm that is created in such a situation is the subject of my argument. Sharp puts it clearly, “Sanctions *themselves* do not produce obedience, but the *fear* of sanctions does” (Sharp,

⁵² Lukes categorised power into three views or dimensions, arguing that each view stems from and acts within a certain moral and political perspective.

⁵³ “Macht bedeutet jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel worauf diese Chance beruht” – Max Weber in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*

1973c, p. 456). In violence, torture is used not only to cause physical pain but also to induce fear. When a protester decides to fast on to death demanding something, this protester is particularly using the ‘fear’ part. Normally, nobody wants to be responsible for someone’s death. Thus, fear of someone’s death and being held responsible for that is a kind of ‘power over people’ because this compels the opponents to do something that they would not otherwise do.

Fasting onto death as a method is a combination of coercion and manipulation—a manifestation of using others “merely as a means” since the other party’s consent is not present. One might argue that the fasting person has given consent. However, the means being used here is not the fasting person but the *fear* of the opponent. Only *fear* produces the desired outcome. In Chapter 2.2.3, I mentioned the case of Nanda Prasad Adhikari, who died during the protest via fasting. If the opponent does not *fear* the repercussions, the action is unable to achieve its goal. Besides, it is possible that the *empathy* of the public or onlookers could also be working as a parallel means. Sometimes, *fear* is invoked not by the fasting person but created by the *fear* of repercussion that comes from the public. For example, a political party in the government might *fear* losing the upcoming election if the public is angry and, thus, consents to the demands. In any civil disobedience activity, the role of the public onlooker or the mass is critical.

Regarding the case of self-immolation discussed in Chapter 2.2.2, self-immolation is one of the paradigm cases of nonviolence. We discussed that it is a violent act because the person is violent to oneself. Here, the interesting aspect of such an action is that it has a similar effect to fasting onto death. If a person sets oneself on fire as a protest, and also it is done openly, it is a case of ‘power over people’. No matter how worthy the goal is, an image of a human burning creates shock, dismay and psychological pressure. It is staged to create a

painful drama. Self-immolation as an act of political protest happens openly and sometimes even with advance notice to disseminate the drama. Topgyal (2016) sees self-immolation as a form of securitisation and an act of resistance designed to counteract the perceived threat. The following quoted line is revealing:

In lieu of the destructive power of wars, self-immolation relies upon its shocking effect. To the extent that visual securitization has theoretical purchase, self-immolation is especially effective in the age of advanced and ubiquitous visual and social media. (Topgyal, 2016, p. 25)

Nowadays, fasting onto death as a nonviolent political action is also being organised openly to achieve maximum outreach through the media. This is an example of a planned means of domination. King also staged a similar effect during the Birmingham protests. Images of letting fire hoses and dogs loose on the kids created a state of horror as well as sympathy with the protestors. It was not King's idea to use dogs, but he had the children march, knowing very well that things might not go smoothly. He had had several protest acts before that had gone violent. King followed what Sharp meant when he asserted that for nonviolent action, strategy and tactics are crucial (Sharp, 1973c, p. 493 onwards). Although the cause was worthy, one cannot overlook the nuances of 'power over people' used by King.

When we talk about 'power over people' via force, it is also the force of certain images and speeches, both in a positive and negative sense. In 2015, we saw images of refugees with their lips sewn together. (BBC News, 2015) The migrants were trying to enter stronger economic countries like Germany and Sweden. The image of a three-year-old Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, lying dead on the beach that made global headlines was heart-wrenching. (Smith, 2015) The speech by John F. Kennedy with the sentence "Ich bin ein Berliner" (I am

a Berliner) has become a part of history. Nudity is pretty common in protests to attract the media and the attention of public bystanders.

Power over as domination also occurs when someone has to subordinate for some reason, such as psychological pressure or physical threat. This creates a situation of coercion that raises questions about its moral permissibility. For example, is it morally permissible if (civilian) peacekeepers are paid? James Pattison mentions, “Even civilian peacekeeping relies somewhat on a degree of coercion, namely, the threat of various reputational and financial costs on the aggressors” (Pattison, 2018, Chapter 7, p. 135).

Manipulative exploitation occurs when a certain situation is created through manipulation to exploit the condition after that. The former president Donald Trump has been accused of inciting his supporters, for example, through Twitter posts that urged his supporters to come together and march on the Capitol. (Zengerle, Cowan and Chiacu, 2022) This is believed to be the reason for the mob attack at the Capitol on 6th January 2020. Finlay (2021) has argued that nonviolent coercion can be dangerous, citing the example of largely nonviolent attempts at civil subversion by Trump supporters. In his own words, “Organized civil resistance can be employed subversively as well as progressively. If it is a powerful tool in the hands of democratic egalitarians, then it will be no less powerful tool in the hands of fascists” (Finlay, 2021, 422). Hence, moral justification for civil resistance is essential.

The topic of using coercion in nonviolence has been a subject of great debate, especially regarding civil disobedience. Even if violence against public property is accepted in a limited form, there are scholars like Lefkowitz (2007, p. 216) who believe that civil disobedience should be non-coercive. Others like Sharp openly embrace coercion. Coercive nonviolence becomes a paradox in a moral sense as nonviolence is preferred due to its moral superiority, but coercion, by definition, interferes with the freedom of others and therefore is

morally wrong. Alexander Livingston mentions the limitations of civil disobedience by saying:

When protestors stop trying to merely persuade and start actively interfering with the conduct of others, they move from civil disobedience to “civil blackmail.” (Livingston, 2021, p. 257)

I emphasize the argument from the last chapter that one needs to differentiate coercion from persuasion. Coercion, as a method, requires ethical scrutiny, especially in combination with instrumentality, because coercion leaves the opponent no other option. There are other softer variants of influencing, like imposing one’s ideas, wishes or opinions on other people. We constantly do that directly or indirectly while communicating with each other. In modern days, “social media influencers” have a large audience of followers. They use their influence to boost products and earn money. This situation, however, is persuasion, not coercion.

So, we have a spectrum of protest activities, ranging from Greta Thunberg or Fridays for Future peaceful gatherings where participants sit around with their posters and Insulate Britain⁵⁴ blocking roads to more disruptive ones such as Black Lives Matter movements where participants not only impede the daily lives of people (e.g. by glueing their hands on the roads) but do not hesitate from looting or harassing the citizens. There is a difference in the degree of justifying Greta missing her school so that she can protest and loot or harass the general public. The latter is more difficult to justify than the former. The ethics of political actions should ask not only why-question (just end) but also how-question (just means). Audi (2015) contends that the pursuit of a good end for an individual does not preclude the individual from being treated merely as a means to an end, and therefore failing to act morally

⁵⁴ More information available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-58916326>

in the full sense of the term, which implies morally commendable behaviour. Hence, he asserts, “How we do what we do can make the difference between acting morally and acting immorally, even apart from why we do it” (Audi, 2015, p. 65).

5.2.2 Nonviolent Methods Cause Harm

In this section, I discuss intended and foreseeable harm caused by nonviolent political actions, specifically those that are chosen as an alternative to outright forceful methods, such as a military attack but are considered less harmful. One such paradigm example of this is economic blockades or economic sanctions, which are widely accepted in the field of international relations as a nonviolent method of pursuing political goals.

While the efficacy of economic sanctions is controversial, they are often preferred to armed conflict because they are considered nonviolent. According to Kovach (2015), economic sanctions are frequently viewed as the most popular choice in peace studies while pursuing nonviolent action since they may be implemented without resorting to physical violence. This, however, does not mean that economic sanctions are entirely harmless. For example, Nepal’s economic blockade by India in 2015 came shortly after the devastating earthquake, leaving huge implications for the public health of Nepali citizens (Sharma, Mishra and Kaplan, 2017), particularly the poorest individuals who were not able to afford the increased prices of essential medicines. In this scenario, the harm was intended and foreseeable.

Economic sanctions are often morally impermissible due to their indiscriminateness. While there may be cases where they are justifiable, it is evident that only powerful states can use such measures (a possible case of domination) and may have ulterior motives (a possible case of opportunistic exploitation). One of the main reasons for powerful states using sanctions is not necessarily a desire to help the targeted country or its people, but rather as a

less expensive alternative to military conflict. The idea of sanction in itself is to alter or constrain the behaviour, meaning coercion. Although sanction is used as a political measure, the socio-economic effects extend to vulnerable groups like women, children and minorities. A research by Drury and Peksen (2012) found that economic sanctions are likely to have a negative impact on women's rights as well as their well-being. Their data analysis showed that economic sanctions are most damaging to women in poor countries, while the severity of the effect varies depending on the wealth of the targeted country. Conceptually, from a means-end perspective, vulnerable groups are being used as a means to achieve political ends.

Because of the devastating result of economic sanctions in Iraq (mentioned in the previous chapter), it is said that *targeted* or *smart* sanctions can achieve the targeted goal without harming the general public. Pressurising political elites directly by freezing their assets, travel sanctions, arms embargoes or trade embargoes are such examples. These measures still have negative consequences for the most vulnerable and people experiencing poverty. The wealthy and powerful find ways to circumvent the sanctions, while the vulnerable groups become the victims. As such, the harm caused by targeted sanctions may be less than that of broader sanctions, but it is still present.

A recent example is the pandemic situation in 2020. The United Nations urged the US administration to lift the trade embargo on Cuba because it was hampering the supply of medicine, medical equipment and essentials necessary for surviving the pandemic (UN News, 2020). In such crises, the affluent have financial and networking resources, while the destitute are disproportionately affected. Drezner's (2011, p. 104) assessment of targeted sanctions is that they solve the political problems of the sender countries. They appear to do something but receive less criticism regarding humanitarian and human rights. Smart sanctions do not address the policy issue of pressuring the target state to alter its policies, but they do solve the

sender country's problem with a minimal cost because they do not obstruct trade flows, concludes Drezner.

Another example of foreseeable harm is military assistance. States have armed the rebels of other states directly or indirectly. States also support rebel groups or organisations through other means like training or financial aid. One could argue in a positive sense that the rebels have the right to self-defence and the right to self-determination. However, the moral permissibility of supporting such actions by the states, considering the predictable violence they cause, is a contentious issue. During the Cold War, proxy wars were prevalent because the USA and the Soviet Union sponsored the activities of the rebel groups.

Structural harm is normally accepted in nonviolent movements, especially if it is a fight against repression. For instance, the Otpor movement in Serbia did have moments when the parliament building was on fire; there were broken windows or highways blocked to debilitate the economy and bring the dictator to his knees. Otpor also received funding from Europe and the US (Kurtz, 2010). Political coercion was intended, and the support-giving nations did foresee the risk they were taking. Not all politically motivated interventions from outside have gone well (e.g. proxy wars like the Korean War). My point again here is to show that a nonviolent method of conflict does not mean (morally and even physically or structurally) harmless, even if we can argue concerning the degree of harm.

5.2.3 Nonviolent Methods and Tension with Democracy

The question that warrants attention is the extent to which it is justifiable to violate 'democratic' rules and regulations, even if nonviolent methods are employed. This is a significant inquiry that would merit a dedicated chapter. For a larger discussion, one needs to define precisely what '*democratic*' rules and regulations entail. In my thesis, I concentrate on two primary aspects: first, whether the end is just, and second, whether the nonviolent

methods employed are morally justified. Under the condition that both the means and the end are justified, it would be justifiable to break 'democratic' rules and regulations. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, there is a tension between adherence to the law and nonviolent methods. I briefly discuss these issues in this section.

I align with the perspective of Habermas (1985) that civil disobedience can be understood as a litmus test for the understanding and maturity of democracy. In providing an answer to why civil disobedience is justified precisely in the democratic constitutional state, he says

The modern constitutional state can therefore only expect of its citizens obedience to the laws if and in so far as it rests on principles worthy of recognition, in light of which that which is legal can be justified as legitimate- and, if necessary, can be rejected as illegitimate. (Habermas, 1985, p. 102)

Thus, the demand for justification does not arise from legality. My sole contention is that any form of harm, direct or indirect, asks for justification. Although breaking a law itself might be justified, civil disobedience cannot be classified as 'nonviolent political action' if it includes objectionable harm either as a means or as an end. Strictly speaking, civil resistance that endorses violence is not a justified political action. Chenoweth (2021) asserts that "civil resistance is not necessarily equivalent to nonviolence, although it might use that approach" (p. 6). She further states that civil resistance campaigns frequently involve violence, especially those with revolutionary goals. I believe people often use 'civil disobedience', 'civil resistance' and 'nonviolent action' interchangeably, but in practice, they encompass different activities or outcomes. With nonviolent movement, they often refer to unarmed (without weapons) struggle as opposed to armed (with weapons) violence. This, however,

does not preclude the involvement of certain forms of violence, like stone-throwing, stick-wielding, club-wielding, fistfights, vandalism, etc., which Chenoweth (2021) refers to as “fringe violence.”

As stated earlier, if the cause is immoral, any form of civil disobedience cannot justify the act and even just civil disobedience does not necessarily lead to a just end. For civil disobedience to be considered nonviolent and morally justifiable, the method must not involve disproportionate coercion and manipulation, particularly intentional destructive harm. Civil disobedience might be legitimate because the system is repressive. Still, it is not justified on moral grounds if it involves destructive harm that stems from the use of power and coercion. But as we saw in the last chapter, civil disobedience activities as a *mass people power* movement do involve some sort of persuasion, coercion and institutional power.

Additionally, other nonviolent activities, like blocking the road or causing structural harm have costs which pro tanto need justification because those not involved in the act are also forced to bear the costs. One recent example is the campaigns as a form of civil disobedience by the group called “Aufstand der letzten Generation” (Revolt of the Last Generation) in Germany (Letzte Generation, 2023). The climate activists demand that the food be saved (Unser Essen Retten!) and the life be saved (Unser Leben Retten!). Their actions mainly include nationwide blocking of highways. The activists glue their hands and feet with superglues to the tarmac so that the police cannot carry them away. These actions caused much uproar among the citizens who have been unable to go to work or follow their daily chores. Many critics came after a 12-year-old was also involved or even ambulance or police/rescue vehicles were blocked by the activists. (Letzte Generation, 2023)

The acts of sabotage are intended and foreseeable harm as well as means to an end. The activists aim to gain the attention of politicians but are causing harm to ordinary citizens.

These actions deprive citizens of their right to free movement. The goal of saving food and climate is noble. For the methods to be justified, even if we agree on the form of sabotage as acceptable, the act of civil disobedience should be addressed towards the ‘target’. For example, activists should be blocking politicians or lawmakers, not citizens.

Further, even nonviolent methods that do not break laws, such as protest marches, sit-ins, boycotts, and strikes are designed to raise issues and demand solutions for which the activists employ various strategies. One of them is the image of, in a metaphorical depiction, David against Goliath or the oppressed against the oppressor. However, in a functioning democracy, the state has the duty to maintain peace and treat all minority groups equally. As a reminder, Wolff (1969) defined violence as an “illegitimate or unauthorised use of force.” This creates a certain conflict of interest as to how far the state has a legitimate duty to use force to maintain peace.

To summarise so far, nonviolent methods are not *prima facie* justified. There are different facets that need proper investigation. Moral justification is not only given by the just cause but also *pro tanto* the methods used. The moral threshold set is low to high depending on the kind of nonviolence we are referring to, namely pragmatic or philosophical.

Possible Objections

The objection that might arise is that there are absolutely peaceful, nonviolent political activities, and hence nonviolence without harm is possible. My concern is simply that we should not take it for granted that nonviolence is outright the solution to all moral problems that come with violence or harm. *Ceteris paribus*, the question of justification is valid not only for violence but also for nonviolence.

First, as mentioned above, there are different kinds of harm, and depending on the degree or spectrum, we accept some as (more) justified, whereas others are considered problematic. Second, it is conceptually more accurate if we differentiate between different kinds of nonviolence (persuasive, non-persuasive, coercive, and non-coercive)⁵⁵. In this sense, persuasive nonviolence is more acceptable or proportional to the just cause than coercive nonviolence. Third, the question of who bears the consequences of persuasion and coercion (proportionality) is also an important one. If these actions are directed towards an opponent (just intention), they are generally considered morally acceptable. If not, it is morally questionable. I probe the necessity of proportionality in Chapter 7. Here, I explain persuasive nonviolent methods.

First case: In the case of sanctions, there are different methods and degrees for implementing them. For instance, instead of economic sanctions, diplomatic sanctions such as denying membership of an international or regional body and/or cutting diplomatic ties could be used. Dialogue and mediation are better than embargo. Non-coercive positive incentives like the prospect of certain aid or investment could be employed. Even though this is also not without moral problems, depending on who receives the incentives, this is arguably better on the scale of intended harm.

Second case: I reiterate my argument from the previous chapter that once a social or political goal is the objective of the nonviolent action, it can no longer be ‘non-coercive’ or ‘non-persuasive’. So, the question at hand is whether this particular action is persuasive or coercive. This entails determining whether the methods used are limited to gestures, such as a group of people sitting silently with pamphlets containing persuasive words and images, or involving external manipulation. The story of Liberian Christian and Muslim women who

⁵⁵ The differentiation of nonviolence as pragmatic and principled nonviolence is too broad. This categorization misses the nuance of what it means to be strategic or pragmatic. (see Chapter 4)

came together to end the civil war in 2003 is one illustration of effective persuasion. The documentary film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (Reticker, 2008) chronicles how thousands of women staged a silent protest for several months. They were ordinary mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and sisters who, wearing white T-shirts, demonstrated courage and played a critical role in ending Liberia's civil war. The Mass Action for Peace was led by Leymah Gbowee, who later won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work. Their civil resistance was persuasive nonviolence.

Third case: The method of nonviolent activities should be directed towards the targets. An exemplary case of the Okayama bus strike proves that an act of protest can be carried out in a manner that is morally acceptable within the framework of nonviolence. In May 2018 (SoraNews24, 2018), bus drivers in Okayama staged a protest for better management and improved job security. Instead of going on strike in the usual way by refusing to drive, they went on their regular route but declined to collect fares from passengers. Their message was clear without harming the daily routine of the public.

Moreover, there are some parameters that differentiate nonviolence from violence in terms of morality. First, in both international law and just war theory, there is a common understanding that noncombatants ought to be spared from violence. In nonviolent political action, it is the strategy to appeal to the general public and win their support for subsequent goals. The role of bystanders is crucial to the success of nonviolent actions like civil rights movement marches, where they become an integral part of the action. However, the nonparticipants could also suffer directly or indirectly.

Second, in the case of violence, justification on the basis of self-defence plays an important role. For instance, just war theory posits that self-defence against armed aggression is considered a just cause. Sometimes, preemptive action as a part of self-defence to avert

imminent harm is also considered justified. In nonviolence, if the group of peaceful protesters deviate from the discipline of nonviolence to defend themselves violently, the whole movement loses its legitimacy. Nonviolent actors do not have the privilege of self-defence justification in the form of using arms, as is allowed in violence, even though provocation is often used as a strategy.

Third, violence, as in just war theory, is justified on the grounds of a ‘last resort option’. The *jus ad bellum* principle stipulates that the war cannot be initiated until all other (nonviolent) possibilities have been exhausted. So, nonviolent methods are first-order options and, whatever the circumstances, cannot be violent. The objectives of nonviolent political actions can vary greatly and need not entail larger goals like regime change, as they can serve simply as a moral appeal. While analysing the consequences of civil disobedience, Kurt Schock notes

In democracies, civil disobedience may draw attention to, and educate the public about, an issue through persuasion and moral appeal or aesthetic expression, which may contribute to genuine reflection about issues and shifts in public opinion. Civil disobedience may also trigger judicial review or legislative action which culminates in policy change. (Schock, 2021, p. 418)

Joseph Raz (1979) has contended that there is no obligation to obey the law, but some people may have moral reasons to do so. I am neither defending nor disagreeing with his position relating to obeying the law. My intention is to highlight the difference between obligation and moral reasons. While obligation creates legal legitimacy, moral reasons create moral legitimacy. The justification for the former is given by law and authority, whereas for the latter, it is given by moral values. The root of pure or philosophical nonviolence is not law.

For instance, despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022, numerous Russian citizens have engaged in nonviolent protests against the war.

To reiterate, civil disobedience can be nonviolent and justified according to certain criteria. However, not all nonviolent political activities are, per se, justified, as some, such as harsh economic sanctions, self-immolation and civil resistance with planned fringe violence raise moral concerns. Similarly, not all acts of civil disobedience are inherently justified. There is a difference between coercion, persuasion and conversion, with coercion manifesting in various forms.

Chapter Conclusion

I posited that the ethical superiority of nonviolence is not absolute, as employing the right means does not guarantee just outcomes. Additionally, the commitment to nonviolent means does not preclude their use for unjust purposes. Therefore, to some extent, means and ends are separable. I discussed the conditions under which harm, such as exploitation, coercion and manipulation may require justification, even though they are not always necessarily wrong. Then, building upon the insights from previous chapters, I examined the case of King Jr. and Gandhi, which revealed that immoral ends cannot be justified by moral means. Further, Gandhi's nonviolence was grounded in the principles of love, compassion and the concept of 'ahimsa,' which was followed by his conception of means and end being the same. However, contemporary nonviolent methods are pragmatic and strategic, using power and coercion as instruments to achieve specific political and social goals. Hence, while having a just end is imperative, the means employed must be justifiable as well.

Furthermore, I postulated that the flaws of nonviolent means are serious and numerous, making it impossible to assume that just and good ends automatically justify nonviolent means. Nonviolence does not exempt them from careful scrutiny and moral

evaluation. I examined civil disobedience, a paradigm case of nonviolence, and argued that there is no consensus regarding the justification for civil disobedience, and it is not enough to defend civil disobedience based on legitimacy or the nobility of the objectives, such as combating injustice. The potential harm that may occur due to the employed methods, such as fringe violence or intended destructive structural damage, must be morally evaluated. It is important to note that there are diverse kinds of civil disobedience, and not all nonviolent actions fall under civil disobedience. Hence, the justification for civil disobedience as a means is not inherent.

Further, I briefly discussed the moral issues of using someone ‘merely as a means’ and explored how this manifest in nonviolent methods in the form of ‘power over’ and raising moral concerns. Moreover, I examined the intended and foreseeable harm caused by nonviolent methods that are less harmful in comparison to violent methods but not entirely harmless. Additionally, I showed that nonviolent methods are typically in tension with democracy and care should be taken to address the intended actions towards the perpetrator and not the general public. I engaged with possible objections.

In all nonviolent movements, the moral edge is critical and decisive. The image of victim versus perpetrator, nonviolent protestors being victims, and the power holders as perpetrators is crucial. This normally creates the notion of nonviolence being noble and ethically sound. However, when inspecting several examples from a moral perspective, they are neither better nor worse than violent methods. Further, nowadays, in pragmatic nonviolent action, persuasive and coercive nonviolence exist, but non-persuasive and non-coercive do not. They include opportunistic, exploitative, and manipulative harms in various combinations. In many cases, these harms are intended and foreseeable. In a gist, nonviolent political methods are not *prima facie*—as generally assumed—morally justified, even if they

might not be generally wrong or less harmful than violent methods. Hence, we need to rethink the ethics of nonviolent political actions in the 21st century. This is critical because of the massive influence of technology, which I delve into in the next chapter.

6. Shift in Theory and Practice due to Technological Revolution

We worried for decades about WMDs – Weapons of Mass Destruction. Now it is time to worry about a new kind of WMDs – Weapons of Mass Disruption.

~ John Mariotti

Digital disruption has brought massive changes in many fields, including politics, where the exchange of blows takes place on social media platforms such as Twitter and conflicts are carried out in bits and bytes in the form of computer viruses or Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. The current scholarly discourse comprises inquiries like whether cyber conflicts are comparable to conventional ones and if the conventional laws can be applied to the digital age. This chapter explores the question of when the act of confrontation shifts to cyberspace, what implications it has for nonviolent actions by critically scrutinizing two essential questions: Are cyberwarfare or cyberattacks nonviolent forms of politics? How can we differentiate whether the act was violent or nonviolent when distinct features like the use of force are missing?

In this chapter, I will discuss the concepts of violence and nonviolence under the premises of the current technological revolution. I argue that in the cyber world, the distinction between violence and nonviolence becomes virtually non-existent as there is no direct (physical) contact between adversaries, but cyber conflicts can be just as deadly as normal kinetic armed conflicts. I claim that online and offline activities are deeply intertwined, and online activities have direct and indirect impacts on the real world. This has consequences for how we approach the ethics of nonviolence. This chapter deals with whether virtual nonviolence is possible and whether cyberattacks are acts of violence or not, laying the

groundwork for the next chapter, where we will explore the ethical implications and possible solutions.

First, I look at various forms of conflict in the virtual world and show how the distinction between violent and nonviolent activities blurs with the mounting difficulty of showing whether a certain act is an act of violence or not. Second, I put forward a special case of the current technological advancement, namely cyberattacks. I argue that this new development poses a challenge to the notion of nonviolence because activities in the cyber domain can be harmful and destructive without necessarily being lethal. Third, I raise the ethical questions that are related to this technical advancement, especially in combination with artificial intelligence. I end the chapter with the conclusion that technological progress in the 21st century compels us to rethink the ethical consequences of what nonviolence should pertain.

6.1 Is Virtual Nonviolence Possible?

In the virtual world, the number of people or mass is not as important as in the conventional case. For example, for an effective or noticeable, peaceful demonstration, a crowd of a certain size is necessary. In the online variant, the activists could just post messages on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, which can reach millions of people within seconds. A handful of individuals are able to reach a vast audience. A single expert could sometimes be enough. For the concept of nonviolence, the scenario has changed. In conventional nonviolent political action, the scenario generally involves citizens opposing the regime, fighting against injustice, or the minority opposing the majority. The paradigm example included mass people's power, or, in other words, civil resistance. This demarcation is not given in the virtual world. Cases of civil disobedience through whistleblowing have also been possible, largely due to the technical development that enables access to classified documents on distant servers.

In the realm of the internet, various software programmes called algorithms interact with each other. These algorithms can be programmed so well that they can control and predict future actions by using data from the past. This kind of technological development has opened a host of possibilities in the virtual world, both positive as well as negative. In the subsequent subchapters, I shall introduce different online activities that may seem harmless in a conventional sense but could have harmful consequences.

Defining violence in the virtual world is a challenging task. Many characteristics that are described in various definitions of violence,⁵⁶ such as physical force, an agent, psychological aspects, the meaning of integrity, and even injury, are difficult to pinpoint exactly in the virtual world. The harm is not immediately manifested, as with conventional (armed) attacks. I will explain why the definition of violence or nonviolence is problematic in this scenario, such that *explicit* or *absolute* virtual nonviolence is not possible. With explicit virtual or absolute virtual nonviolence, I mean those actions that are conducted fully online without any physical activities in the real world. Nowadays, almost everyone has a mobile device and can report instantly by going live or uploading pictures. This, however, is still a physical activity, not exclusively a virtual one.

6.1.1 Virtual Nonviolent Mechanisms

As the previous chapters have shown, coercion plays a vital role in nonviolent resistance and protests. As per Gene Sharp (1973a), the dynamics of nonviolence have three main sociological mechanisms of change: conversion, accommodation, and coercion. Later, he added a fourth mechanism, disintegration, in his work, *Civilian-Based Defense*. The question that arises is whether these four mechanisms are nonviolently possible in the virtual world. I

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2, “Defining and Conceptualizing Violence and Nonviolence”.

shall go through the arguments given by Sharp and assess their applicability in the virtual world.

The mechanism of **conversion** is to change the opponent's view, sometimes also influencing the beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and moral system, so that the opponent agrees with the objectives of the nonviolent activist. (Sharp, 1990) gives an example of how Gandhi's supporters held a continuous vigil on the roads in Vykom, South India, despite facing attacks and other discomforts like harsh weather. Their goal was to access the road passing an orthodox Brahman temple (of high-caste people), which was forbidden for "the untouchables" (low-caste people). Finally, after sixteen months, they were able to convert the local Brahmans. They removed the barricades and allowed the untouchables to use the road.

It is evident that such prolonged social interaction as in the above example is not possible virtually. However, some may argue that there are a considerable number of social media influencers who can sway public opinion on certain issues. For instance, social media influencers have a large number of followers and can instantly disseminate a message, such as a product advertisement, to a vast audience. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily result in collective changes in opinion, as in the example of Gandhi's supporters. Another possible argument is that influencers could influence the outcome of political elections, for instance, by influencing the voting behaviour of their followers, potentially changing the outcome of an election. However, it is unclear if this influence is significant enough to alter the political landscape. In order to understand the impact of social media on political elections, it is important to consider both online and offline strategies, which will be discussed later in the brief. At this point, my argument is simply that the conversion mechanism does not work if the action is conducted exclusively virtually and has to fulfil the conditions for nonviolent political actions outlined in Chapter 2.2.

According to Sharp (1990), **accommodation** is the most common mechanism by which “the opponents grant all or some demands without fundamentally changing their minds about the issues” (p. 61). He gives an example of labour strikes, where accommodation occurs by agreeing to a settlement between the employers and the trade union. However, for this to work in the virtual world, labour strikes need to be done virtually. Any kind of nonviolent activity would have to happen virtually before going into talks of settlement. Thus, these kinds of actions could take place through a combination of online and offline methods but happening exclusively online is not a given.

Sharp (1990) posits that nonviolent **coercion** is produced in three ways. First, the defiance could be massive and widespread, such that the repressive measures are unable to control the situation. Second, the resistance could paralyze the existing system. Third, opponents’ ability to use repression might be hampered or even dissolved. In the case of **disintegration**, Sharp mentions that nonviolent mechanisms remove the sources of power, and the system of government collapses. In both cases of coercion and disintegration, the assumption is that numerous activities have already happened. To effectively withhold or block the necessary sources of the opponents’ political power, a major strategy and several activities over a long period of time are necessary. This cannot be achieved exclusively virtually and fully nonviolently without accompanying physical activities.

While activities in the real world, such as fast unto death or self-immolation, cannot be replicated online, other methods can be used. One such method is online persuasion or coercion in different forms and degrees to persuade another person or an organisation to bring about the desired change. This could involve simple methods such as texting or interacting on social media at different intervals. However, it could also extend to more extreme methods such as bullying, stalking, threatening, and sending consistent unwanted messages and calls.

The challenge is that if the former simple method is used, persuasion may not be effective. On the other hand, the latter method is equivalent to harassment and cannot be considered nonviolent since it causes emotional or psychological harm, which is just as harmful as physical abuse.

Identifying a stalker or bully in a virtual world can be a difficult task due to the anonymity that such environments provide. Individuals feel emboldened to engage in harmful behaviour under the guise of fake names and identities. As a result, the agent that exists in violence or nonviolence in a conventional world may be absent in the virtual world due to the anonymity problem. To make nonviolent virtual coercion effective, *intentional* online actions that cause harm or pose a threat are necessary. But by definition, violence is “The **intentional** use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” (World Health Organization, 2023)

It is unlikely that an act of omission (people refusing to perform activities they are expected or required to perform) or an act of commission (people performing activities they are not expected to perform or are forbidden), as Sharp suggested, would work in the virtual world. Both kinds of acts such as symbolic disapproval (e.g. marches) and social, economic or political noncooperation (e.g. economic boycotts) are not possible to achieve fully online in a noticeable way. For instance, the protestors can occupy an organisation and stop using the internet or their computers, but this would not be considered an act of virtual nonviolence. Instead, it would be a sit-in, where participants refuse to work using their computers. Even for what the activists term ‘virtual sit-ins’, the participants need to be actively involved, like refreshing the browser several times in an hour, to disrupt the target’s internet traffic

(Dominguez, 1998). This is a case of a Denial of Service (DoS) attack that will be explored later. In light of these circumstances, it is difficult to see how nonviolent virtual coercion can be achieved entirely virtually and nonviolently. In reality, contemporary political actions usually consist of both online and offline activities.

6.1.2 Civil Resistance in the Modern World

In contrast to traditional civil resistance, virtual civil resistance does not consist of a large number of people taking to the streets or engaging in a collective refusal to comply with expectations. Thus, ‘virtual protest’ by carrying out various online activities would be the better term for that. This is commonly known as ‘hacktivism’. “Hacktivism refers to cyber-activism, or the act of breaking into a computer system to wage an information war for political, social, religious, or anarchistic reasons” (Panda Security, 2022). The protestors use different methods, such as a Denial-of-Service (DoS) attack, doxing, or website defacement. These activities are intended to make remote changes that affect a person or an organisation. As the word ‘hacktivism’ suggests, it is a combination of ‘hacking’ and ‘activism’. However, the term ‘hacking’ has a negative connotation as it means unauthorised access to computer systems and their data. Hacking, per se, is a crime. A DoS attack is a cyberattack that makes servers inaccessible and websites crash (BSI, 2023b). A DDoS (Distributed Denial-of-Service) attack is a sophisticated version in which a coordinated network system is applied for the attack. Doxing involves divulging or leaking confidential or personal data with the goal of defaming or discrediting a person or an organisation. Defacement is an attack on servers that results in a change in the visual appearance of the related websites. Often, some message is left on the page by the attacker.

I raise several conceptual and practical issues in classifying hacktivism as nonviolent civil resistance. I have argued in the last chapter that an unworthy goal cannot be justified by

nonviolence, and hence it is not the subject of this thesis. Thus, here also, it is considered a given that the goal is ethically and morally sound. I argue that not all the activities that constitute hacktivism are nonviolent. I provide the supporting arguments in the subsequent paragraphs.

Conceptually, online activities are not nonviolent political or social action. In conventional civil resistance, the majority of participants believe in nonviolent protests and peaceful marches. The organiser or leader may have chosen a certain topic and strategy for the protest. But the source of inspiration for the participants is religious, philosophical, just cause, sense of duty, or camaraderie. People take part in protest activities like “violence against women” or “against corruption” as a means of expressing solidarity for a worthy cause. There is a human touch, and anyone available at that moment can take part. When it comes to the internet, computers and systems do not have feelings. Those who operate them are not trying to use love, compassion, truth, or empathy to convince their opponents by using principled nonviolence. The agents and actors as well as the actions have neither a philosophical nor religious basis. For pragmatic nonviolence, coercion is an accepted method. However, as discussed earlier, coercion in the virtual world requires intentional harm or destruction. Besides, the participants in virtual activities are limited to people who are computer-savvy.

As discussed in Chapter 2.2, for a political action to be nonviolent, the following conditions must be met:

1. It is politically motivated.
2. It has a certain noble intention or goal.
3. It is perpetrated by either state or non-state actors.

4. It should not cause any intentional physical or mental harm to the opponent or indirectly to anyone, including oneself (neither instantly nor at a later stage).
5. It should not cause any intentional structural destruction.
6. It does not use power or coercion. (principled nonviolence)

There are at least four practical issues when applying the above definition to the virtual world:

1) intentionality 2) missing consent 3) missing agent and 4) unclear intention or goal.

1) Intentionality:

In contrast to conventional civil resistance, in which a certain level of structural destruction is accepted during protest marches, this is not possible in a virtual context. All actions are intentional and deliberate, rather than unintended consequences of symbolic protest activities. For instance, a website cannot deface itself during a virtual protest and confidential data will not leak as a byproduct of other protest activities. Further, even though the goal is activism to promote a cause, it always includes theft and unauthorised intrusion. In the real world, this would be comparable to barging into other people's properties and houses without permission and stealing their valuables. Even in the cases of website defacement, it is akin to intrusion and vandalizing someone's walls with graffiti. In the real world, it is permissible to display a poster and protest in front of a politician's house, similar action cannot be taken online.

2) Missing consent

In a conventional protest or civil resistance, the participants are aware that they are a part of it. They voluntarily participate in the marches or predefined actions. However, in a virtual world, such as during DDoS attacks, computers are used by bots⁵⁷ without the knowledge or consent of the owners. A large network of computers is necessary for the attack to be successful, and innocent individual's computers may also be infiltrated for this purpose.

⁵⁷ A bot is a computer programme on the internet that can execute commands on certain inputs or perform tasks automatically as predefined.

3) Missing agent

Identifying the actor or agent behind the virtual protest is challenging, as hacktivists usually operate anonymously to avoid detection and potential imprisonment. Groups such as *Anonymous*, which is one of the best-known hacktivist groups, communicate via the Internet and collaborate on specific causes. Singer and Friedman suggest using the words “decentralized” but “coordinated” to best describe the group (Singer and Friedman, 2014, p. 82). While conventional strategic nonviolence involves the willingness to accept punishment as part of activism, hacktivists typically aim to remain anonymous to avoid legal repercussions. This is contradictory to the belief that the civil disobedients should willingly pay the penalty although there are different opinions on the type and extent of punishment.

4) Unclear intention or goal

The fourth practical problem is to determine whether the goal is worthy. Hacktivists usually have the goal of fighting the government or big organisations in an attempt to protect freedom of speech, unmask certain personalities, and expose corruption or wrongdoing. As previously stated, the identities of the participants are unknown. There may be criminals with malicious intentions within the group. Further, hacking requires exploiting the vulnerabilities of the system. For example, a DDoS attack can be performed by using a network of bots as mentioned above or manipulating thousands of network devices on the internet. Sometimes, thousands of programmes called computer viruses or worms are spread around the world. They are used to steal data, install backdoors or modify the settings of the target, which allows the operator to access the system. These can remain dormant until they are manually removed. Consequently, the distinction between espionage, theft, and activism can be quite subtle, depending on the intentions behind the actions.

One prominent hacktivist from the past was Aaron Swartz, a highly skilled computer prodigy. The documentary “The Internet’s Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz” (DocumentaryStorm, 2014), illustrates how Swartz coordinated online and offline activities to successfully halt the passing of two bills called the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA). These controversial bills were proposed to expand US law enforcement to fight online copyright infringement and online trafficking of dangerous goods or services. If passed, these bills would have given the companies, internet censorship rights, which would have heavily crippled the right to free speech. Swartz played a vital role in stopping these two acts. His technical acumen helped people join the protest activities both online and offline. He even wrote an extra programme that made participation easy and accessible.

However, Swartz also faced legal trouble for downloading millions of academic articles and documents from JSTOR through MIT’s computer network. He was subsequently indicted and charged. Swartz believed that “Everyone has the license to speak but the question is who gets heard.” For him, information was power. While his supporters argue that he had no malicious intent, US Attorney Carmen Ortiz asserts that “Stealing is stealing, whether you use a computer command or a crowbar, and whether you take documents, data, or dollars.”

People tend to think that using a crowbar and entering the house is different from using the keyboard and sending commands to break the system. Yet, Ortiz is technically correct in stating that there is no difference. The reason is that the consequences of both actions are the same, and they are both intentional. There is damage and infringement of personal rights. The only difference that can be made is in the intention or cause behind the action. For example, using the crowbar to break the car window to save the child left behind in the heat can be considered arguably morally better than using the same method to steal the

laptop left behind in the car seat. As discussed earlier, intention and context matter. However, my objective is not to criticize or defend the activists. Instead, I aim to show how civil disobedience nowadays functions by using coordinated online and offline activities, as well as how the same act can be interpreted as theft or activism.

I have argued so far that absolute or exclusive virtual nonviolent political or social action is not possible. However, the use of virtual activities can serve to enhance traditional civil disobedience. It is possible to send strong messages through the digital realm. A perfect example of this is the incident wherein many women posted videos of themselves cutting their hair or burning hijabs as a protest to show their solidarity with the Iranian Mahsa Zhina Amini, who was murdered for improperly donning her hijab (Khosroshahi, 2022). This kind of act as a digital/virtual protest can receive global attention and allow individuals from all over the world to demonstrate their support, participate virtually, or amplify the message.

Technology has played a pivotal role in facilitating mass mobilization due to the advent of social media and the internet. With smartphones at their disposal, even novice users can take pictures or videos and disseminate them on a global scale. In the 20th century, thousands of pamphlets and extensive periods of time were needed to disseminate information among the masses. In the present era, a message can go viral within a matter of minutes. The news on the internet reaches a far wider audience than conventional newspapers or even television. The danger, however, is to differentiate whether it is propaganda or genuine happenings. The content and the interaction on the internet can be manipulated by ‘bots’, making it difficult to discern between authentic occurrences and fake news. The ease with which citizens can be manipulated has never been greater, and in the same vein, the speed at which people can access information (fake or real) has never been faster. The more serious concern arises when hacktivism is backed and funded by the states. The more sophisticated

versions of the same methods of hacking, such as APTs (Advanced Persistent Threats), are used by states or more prominent non-state actors for a variety of purposes, which are the subject of the next sub-chapter.

6.2 Cyberattack, Cyberwar and the Notion of Nonviolence

Previously, cyberattacks were primarily motivated by financial gain. However, the political implications of these attacks have since come to the forefront, particularly in light of the debate surrounding Russia's potential manipulation of the US presidential election in November 2016. According to Dipert, "What is new is the acknowledgement of attacks that have been coordinated by the central commands of governments (or other political organisations) and that are directed at another country's governmental and military information systems, or at its commercial or infrastructure information systems for political purposes." (Dipert, 2010, p. 385) Hence, the weapons employed in these attacks allow for a form of warfare that is difficult to distinguish from nonviolent activities, blurring the lines between violence and nonviolence. Cyber activities can be performed from anywhere in the world, and the attacker's identities can be masked, contributing to the complexity of the issue.

The current discussion on cyberattacks centres on whether the conflict in the cyber domain is real warfare or falls under the categories of crime, vandalism, vigilantism, and espionage. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus is on determining whether cyberattacks are acts of violence or nonviolence, or something completely different, in order to explore the ethical implications further. This will involve defining relevant terms and examining a few paradigmatic cases of cyberattacks, as well as presenting arguments for and against the classification of cyberattacks as violent. A critical analysis of the activities in cyberspace will be undertaken, with the aim of demonstrating that the demarcation of violence and nonviolence overlaps or dissolves.

6.2.1 Paradigm Cases

Prior to delving into the intricacies of the cyberworld and the ensuing debate, it is essential to clarify some key terms and definitions. Ashraf (2021) points out that there is no universally accepted definition of cyberwar. This may be due in part to the fact that many deny cyberwar being a real “war”, as it does not involve the “act of violence” or “act of force”, as defined by Clausewitz⁵⁸. As Ashraf additionally notes, “Further, the plausible deniability associated with cyberattacks makes determining the political, or instrumental, reasoning behind these acts difficult, reinforcing the Clausewitzian position” (Ashraf, 2021, p. 277). As a computer scientist with over 16 years of experience in the IT industry, I possess a thorough understanding of the potential benefits and risks associated with cyberspace, some of which I shall elaborate in the ensuing paragraphs.

To commence the discussion, let us examine the following definitions of cyberwarfare and cyberattack, as quoted in Roscini (2014):

Cyberwarfare is ‘[a] n armed conflict conducted in whole or part by cyber means. Military operations conducted to deny an opposing force the effective use of cyberspace systems and weapons in a conflict’.

Cyberattack is ‘[a] hostile act using computer or related networks or systems, and intended to disrupt and/or destroy an adversary’s critical cyber systems, assets, or functions’. (Roscini, 2014, pp. 14-15)

According to Roscini, “Cyberwarfare is divided in cyber attack, cyber defence and cyber enabling operations.” (Roscini, 2014, p. 15) Hence, a cyberattack can be a unilateral action by an individual, group, or state, whereas cyberwarfare or cyberwar involves more extensive

⁵⁸ According to Clausewitz (1976), “War is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will”.

actions and activities that are typically conducted by states due to the significant resources required. This includes not only a large number of highly skilled and trained human resources but also costly hardware and software.

In the context of my research, the definition of a cyberattack encompasses a wide range of activities, from the simple act of breaking into a neighbour's computer to more complex and coordinated efforts involving online harassment and hacktivism. Although the word 'hostile' in the above definition might suggest that cyberattacks are acts of aggression only against an enemy, this is not necessarily the case. Rather, a cyberattack is a targeted, or in other words, *intentional* and *unauthorized*⁵⁹, attack on computers in cyberspace, whereby the victim computers could be specific or random. When referring to cyberwar, it typically includes not only cyberattacks but also other forms of 'information operations'⁶⁰. Like in traditional warfare, cyberwar, or cyberattack can include both online and offline activities.

To illustrate the complexities and technological advancements in the field of cyberattacks, I will discuss several notable cases that highlight the importance of taking conflicts in the virtual world seriously.

Stuxnet worm

Stuxnet is a well-known malware that has been extensively discussed in the cybersecurity community. However, what is particularly noteworthy about Stuxnet is its ability to evade detection for a considerable period of time. It was, among others, a case of Advanced Persistent Threat (APT), which involves an attack, typically funded by states, to gain access to a targeted network or system for a longer period of time with the goal of espionage or sabotage (BSI, 2023a). The attacker behind an APT possesses sophisticated levels of expertise

⁵⁹ The word 'hostile' denotes that the act is intentional and unauthorised.

⁶⁰ Information operations' have been defined as the 'integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own'. (Roscini, 2014, p. 11)

and uses the system to steal confidential and critical information without being detected. In the case of Stuxnet, the malware was carefully programmed and leveraged a zero-day vulnerability to target and damage Iran's nuclear and oil infrastructure. In the report by Matrosov, Rodionov, Harley and Malcho (Matrosov *et al.*, 2010), they make it clear that "no information system is absolutely secure and carefully planned or even semi-targeted attacks put a serious weapon into the hands of bad guys" (p. 9). Furthermore, once a self-replicating programme called 'worms' is released; it can be difficult to track its movements or actions. The authors of the report suggest that the Stuxnet attack was carried out by a "more formally-constituted, multi-disciplinary 'tiger-team'" (p. 10).

Equifax Data breach

In May 2017 (Calyptix, 2017), Equifax, one of the largest credit bureaus, suffered a major cyberattack, resulting in the theft of sensitive personal data from around 145 million people, including Social Security numbers. This incident is, by definition, either sabotage (if the criminal act were to harm the company) or espionage (if the data is to be used for further purposes). Regardless, the stolen data is susceptible to misuse for identity theft in the years to come.

Ransomware

Ransomware is malicious software that is designed to block access to a system, usually a database until a specified sum of money is paid. With technological advancement, this kind of software has become increasingly sophisticated. For example (BSI, 2023d), ransomware called WannaCry infected more than 200,000 computers in more than 150 countries within 3 days. WannaCry had the capability to spread to other Windows systems without user intervention.

Malware

Malware is a type of software used to damage or gain unauthorised access to targeted computers. One recent sophisticated example is Emotet (BSI, 2023c). This programme sends very authentic-looking emails using the contacts of the infected computer, allowing it to attack and infect other computers. Further, this malware is able to download other malware, like ‘TrickBot’, that is capable of reading access credentials. Since these malware are capable of modifying themselves, normal virus scanners are often unable to detect them, enabling them to make far-reaching changes within the infected system.

A1 Telekom Austria

A1 Telekom Austria, a telecommunications company in Austria, was likely the victim of the APT attack (Schmidt, 2020). For approximately six months in 2019 and 2020, the attackers were able to access and control the company’s central computers and servers without the host’s knowledge. Although the company stated to the public that no confidential customer data was stolen, this claim is difficult to believe.

The examples provided indicate that in the virtual world, it is difficult to differentiate between violent and nonviolent acts. Harm is usually not physical, lethal or immediate. Further, the nuance of *persuasive* and *coercive* actions found in conventional nonviolence is not identifiable in cyberattacks. The harms discussed in Chapter 5 (opportunistic, exploitative, manipulative, foreseeable and unintended harms) are in fact the basic characteristics of cyberattacks. The vulnerabilities of the system, including human weakness,⁶¹ have to be exploited and manipulated at the right time. Sometimes, unintended harm occurs when the virus chooses its own target computer to spread. The harms that eventually occur, such as data theft, are intended and foreseeable. Based on these observations, it can be concluded that:

⁶¹ Through a method called ‘social engineering’, one gets access to systems.

- The threats posed by cyberattacks are genuine, and the harm inflicted is real, affecting individuals, organisations, and states.
- The programmes become more advanced and sophisticated day by day.
- The development of ingenious and intelligent programmes is not the work of hobby programmers, but rather big organisations, including criminals and states.

Two questions arise:

- 1) How can one distinguish between violence and nonviolence in the context of cyberattacks and other activities in the virtual world?
- 2) How can one address ethical concerns like justification in the context of conflicts in the virtual world?

The first question will be dealt with in the remainder of this chapter. The second will be the topic of the next chapter.

6.2.2 Scepticism about Cyberattack being Violence

The main scepticism stems from the idea that violence is kinetic, and nonviolence is non-kinetic. One school of thought posits that violence is inherently physical, and thus, any activity in the cyber domain must be nonviolent in nature. This argument is further bolstered by the perception that cyberattacks are not associated with traditional notions of warfare. However, it is important to note that the absence of physical force does not necessarily negate the potential for harm without cyber conflict being a total war.

Thomas Rid is one of the sceptics on this issue. He (2012) has argued that cyberwar will not take place because the essential three elements of violent character, instrumental character, and political nature are missing in the cyberattacks of the past and present. While his thesis may hold theoretical merit, it is essential to acknowledge that new forms of

cyberattack can emerge and that past precedents may not always be indicative of future events. Prior to December 7, 1941⁶², the United States had never experienced a large-scale attack on its homeland, yet the devastation wrought by the bombing of Pearl Harbour demonstrated the potential for unprecedented acts of violence caused by an atomic bomb for the first time. Similarly, drawing parallels between cyberwar and conventional war may be akin to comparing football played in Europe and Asia to American football even if they may have the same name, as the rules of engagement and tactics employed differ significantly between the two. While the nature of cyberwar may remain a topic of debate, it is indisputable that certain cyberattacks can be inherently violent in nature. The severity of harm caused by cyberattacks, whether financial, structural, psychological, or even physical, cannot be underestimated.

According to Thomas Rid (2012), Stuxnet is a case of sabotage, and all political cyberattacks at present are essentially sophisticated versions of sabotage, subversion, or espionage. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that conventional conflicts with lethal outcomes have consistently included some form of sabotage, subversion or espionage. The only difference now is that these activities can be conducted remotely. Rid concedes that "... cyberattacks have been steadily on the rise. The frequency of major security breaches against governmental and corporate targets has been going up. The volume of attacks is increasing. ... The range of aggressive behaviour online is widening. At the same time, the sophistication of some attacks has reached new heights." (Rid, 2012, p. 15) Further, Rid does not deny that cyberattacks could be violent. In his article "Hacking can reduce real world violence", Rid (2013) argues that in many cases, the use of computers would be an ethically better choice

⁶² <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/pearl-harbor>

than using conventional weapons because “a cyberattack might be less violent, less traumatizing, and more limited.” (Rid, 2013, p. 85)

For those who relate violence to physical harm only, a cyberattack is not a form of violence. In their recent work, Shandler et al. found out that cyberattacks rarely result in death or major physical destruction. Their conclusion is, “If physical consequences were all that mattered, cyberattacks would never cause sufficient death or devastation to push the attack across the threshold of an armed attack and, thereby, warrant an armed response.” (Shandler, Gross and Canetti, 2023, p. 12) However, if one includes other harms, such as psychological ones, a cyberattack could become a case of violence. Shandler et al. claim that “Our aggregate findings confirm that cyberattacks cause equally high levels of psychological distress as conventional terrorism and political violence.” (Shandler, Gross and Canetti, 2023, p. 3)

Ultimately, the classification of cyberattacks as violent or nonviolent depends on one's definition of violence. Those scholars who restrict violence to the narrow conception of physical (kinetic) or lethal harm, view cyberattacks as nonviolent. For instance, Whyte's (2020) security studies research is based on the premise that cyberattacks are nonviolent and use terms such as “cyber instruments” and “cyber-enabled political warfare.” On the other hand, those who consider violence in terms of harm and damage, see cyberattacks as violent. For instance, Egloff and Shires use the expanded concept of violence, which they call “intentional proximate harm” focusing on harm, intent, and proximity of means. They use the term “offensive cyber capabilities (OCCs).”

The perspective from which violence is viewed is crucial. Scholars like Whyte may argue that actions such as ‘poisoning’ are nonviolent as long as they do not result in death. They view ‘poison itself’ as an instrument and not a violent act. I align with the viewpoint of Egloff and Shires, who argue that context and intention are key factors in determining

whether an action is violent or not. As they note, “both whether such actions are violent and the severity of the violence is extremely context-dependent” (Egloff and Shires, 2023, p. 141). They add, “The large DDoS attacks that targeted the US financial system in 2012 would only be violent if their impact could be traced to harm to specific individuals or communities. (Egloff and Shires, 2023, p. 142)”

Despite the growing number of cyberattacks, there is limited information on the magnitude of cyberattacks because many organisations and states do not disclose such incidents. The reasons are not only related to losing credibility and business but also to protecting the vulnerabilities from being misused by others. As a result, the general public perceives cyberattacks as not significant in terms of security breaches, harm, or damage, both physical and structural.

6.2.3 Arguments for Cyberattack being Violence

To begin with, it is essential to distance ourselves from the notion that cyberattacks being violence suggest direct deaths or wars only. As discussed in the course of this thesis, the concept of violence is multifaceted and includes verbal abuse, structural damage, psychological harassment, and direct or indirect physical harm that might end in death as well. In this section, I will introduce several examples to underline my point.

The first example is **online harassment** in different forms. This mostly takes the form of online abuse, like in the case of Maria Ressa (Maas, 2021), in which the victim is targeted via different social media platforms to damage credibility and spread disinformation. The use of explicit language to humiliate the victim is also common. For instance, during elections, heated competition is expected, but when does it cross the line and become personal abuse? In a study by Weaving et al. (2023), the relationship between online misogyny and female politicians was investigated by analysing Twitter references to Hillary Clinton from 2014 to

2018. They found out that gendered harassment is typically directed at women who have power-seeking ambitions. (Weaving *et al.*, 2023) Slogans such as “Life’s a bitch: don’t vote for one,” and, “Hillary sucks, but not like Monica” indicate that online harassment is a result of misogyny. The matter becomes more complex when election advertisements with hashtags such as “#HillaryClintonForPrison2026” and “#LockHerUp!” are purchased by an organisation that is affiliated with a foreign state.⁶³

The second example is **structural damage**. This is rarely unintended. For instance, a train driver who falls asleep while operating the train may cause accidents, and in a similar vein, computer engineers may also be susceptible to human failure. However, the contention here is about intended actions. Normally, minor harm results from an act of personal revenge or “script kiddies”⁶⁴ trying out new programmes. Applegate (2013) gives several real-world examples of incidents where cyberattacks have resulted in physical damage. One such incident occurred in early 2000 when a former disgruntled employee hacked systems to release 264,000 litres of raw sewage as revenge. The consequence was the damage to the local environment and the unbearable stench for the local residents. (Applegate, 2013, p. 7)

The bigger ones, like Stuxnet, are carefully planned and executed with the aim of destroying the target. According to George Lucas, Stuxnet “constituted, beyond question, a program of preventive war—anticipatory self-defence against the prospects of an Iranian nuclear threat in the foreseeable future” (Lucas, 2017b, p. 4). Even if cyberwar may not be a war as per conventional definition, according to some scholars such as Finlay (2018), some cyberattacks, such as Stuxnet and ransomware like WannaCry are acts of violence. In the

⁶³ IRA (Internet Research Agency) was owned by a Russian oligarch with a close connection to Putin and the Kremlin. (Ohlin 2020b, p. 18-19)

⁶⁴ A term used to denote amateur or novice hackers who carry out cyberattacks using pre-existing programmes and software. Their actions may equally be dangerous.

example of Stuxnet, Finlay makes the case that, on a double intent account⁶⁵; it executes a destructive harm by means of technique and at the same time cuts the target's possibility of evasion or defence by using the shielding component, which helped the programme from being detected. Similarly, Finlay argues that ransomware like WannaCry is a case of violence, like an armed robbery. The way the robber takes something valuable by pointing the gun, the cyber thief threatens to make the victim's data useless unless the demanded sum is paid. (Finlay, 2018, p. 371)

The third example is **real cybercrime**. Financial damage caused in the cyber domain has consequences in real life. This varies from cybercriminals who earn money via ransomware to organisations that use APTs to steal vital information about competitors in the market. "APTs are nightmare scenario for any organisation. Most people do not know they have been targeted until it is too late. And even if they do find out, it is often impossible to prove who's behind it." (Singer and Friedman, 2014, p. 60) This can essentially put individuals or organisations "virtually" (here: intended double meaning) out of business.

The fourth example is **indirect damage or harm**. The leaked or stolen data can be intentionally used a decade later to coerce a particular individual target into making a desired political decision. This, by definition, would be a case of nonviolence. But if this person commits suicide as a result of negative backlash or public pressure, it would be a case of violence by definition similar to that of slow poisoning.

This scenario can also be extended to the state level. If a programme can be written and distributed to damage a nuclear centrifuge, it is reasonable to assume that other programmes can be written to damage other vital systems that can have a severe (potentially deadly) impact on the targeted organisation or state. In this context, State A could collect

⁶⁵ See Chapter 1 for the definition of violence on a double-intent account.

enough data on the population of State B and employ it for subversion, potentially helping a political candidate of its choice in State B win the presidency. If this political candidate turns out to be someone like Hitler who kills the citizens of State B, this would be an exemplary case of covert institutional violence. Wars are fought not just for the sake of killing as many people as possible but to gain economic, territorial, and political power. This is a hypothetical case, but it is arguably not impossible since big organisations and states are involved in cyber activities. I shall underpin my arguments with an example of election interference further below.

6.2.3 Critical Analysis

So far, we have recognised that certain cyberattacks can be categorised as acts of violence. As per the conditions for political action to be nonviolent, a cyberattack is not a nonviolent political action due to intentionality and structural damage. Two things are prominent in a cyberattack:

1. The action performed is virtual, but the ultimate outcome is real.
2. The action performed is always intentional and cannot happen by omission.

My proposal is to view the activities in the cyber domain not as a separate entity, but as an extension of the physical world. Bits and bytes can be considered a new tool, or, in the language of warfare, a ‘new weapon’. Thus, the discussion of whether a particular action is violent or nonviolent needs to consider the entire context into account. As long as the internet is used only to disseminate information about conventional civil disobedience, such actions can still be deemed a part of nonviolent political actions.

However, once cyberattacks are employed, nonviolence cannot be applied in a conventional sense. Hacktivism has become a special case. Some people view hacktivism as a new form of civil disobedience and highly regard it. They consider hacktivism as the

nonviolent use of illegal methods or even nonviolent digital activism. One such definition is given by Alexandra Samuel in her dissertation:

Hactivism is the nonviolent use of illegal or legally ambiguous digital tools in pursuit of political ends. (Samuel, 2004, p. 4)

I cannot agree that hacktivism can be classified as nonviolent. Besides the arguments I presented in Chapter 6.1.2, Samuel's definition tries to situate hacktivism among civil disobedience, online activism, cyberterrorism, and hacking (p. 4). However, hacktivism cannot take place without hacking, and there is only a very fine line between hacktivism and cyberterrorism. The methods used are the same, namely, exploiting the systems. Hacktivists terrorise their targets, with the only difference being that we assume the goals are worthy. Further, Samuel distinguishes hacktivism and civil disobedience based on whether the activity is carried out online or offline. This comparison is not valid in this context because I believe for a reasonable comparison the basis must be the same, either both online or both offline.

I regard hacktivism as a third category. Similar to how love, compassion, and religious belief were the basis for philosophical nonviolence, coercion by the mass of people on the ground was the basis for strategic nonviolence. Technology is the basis for hacktivism. However, I do not intend to equate technology with characteristics like love and compassion. My comparison is an analogy. When Gandhi practised civil resistance, the tools he had and applied were love, compassion and religious teachings. When King Jr. practised civil resistance, the tools he had and employed were the mass people and mass media. These events were strategically planned and executed. Nowadays, hacktivists practice civil resistance by using sophisticated technology and computer programmes as tools. All participants in hacktivism are tech-savvy individuals, and there is no one leader. The goal comes into

existence only if enough participants agree to carry out the mission. There are no geographical boundaries, age restrictions, or specific requirements for participation. This is a new 21st-century form of activism.

Hactivism can be described as a coordinated effort akin to a bird swarm, where a large number of individuals work together in a loosely organised network to achieve a common goal. This goal may range from promoting freedom of expression to engaging in mischief, and even carrying out reprisals. They collaborate to make a certain goal (e.g. against censoring the internet) successful, but they might never meet in real life. While some hacktivist actions may fall under the category of activism, others can be considered criminal, with the distinction lying solely in the objective.

However, what Lucas calls ‘state-sponsored hacktivism’ is a different case. With this, he refers to a form of cyber conflict carried out by states in which they behave like individual hackers and vigilante groups in the cyber world to further their political interests. (Lucas, 2017, Introduction, p.1) The activities could range from technologically low-intensity work like data collection to cyber espionage using drones and other sophisticated methods and tempering with elections in a foreign country.

Delmas has argued that “... hacktivism isn’t, and shouldn’t be shoehorned into the category of, civil disobedience.” (Delmas, 2018b, p. 64) She finds that hacktivists do not satisfy the identifying criteria of civil disobedience, as the online world is not strictly analogous to the offline world. In the online world, several things like streets, public forums, democratic authority, etc. are missing. She further adds that trying to put DDoS actions in the category of civil disobedience stretches the concept of civil disobedience.

As mentioned earlier, I prefer to refer to online activism as “virtual protest” or “digital protest” in cases where the objective is just political or social change. Even if it (hacktivism)

is called “electronic civil disobedience (ECD)”⁶⁶, as proponents of the ECD approach do, the definition of being nonviolent cannot be applied. Cyberattacks can cause significant harm, which is comparable to that of real-world armed conflict and potentially even more so in the future. There is enough room for more technological advancement, which also raises the possibility of real cyberwars. Already, states have established military cyber units or cyber commands, and cyberattacks have become a part of real war. Recent reports mention the use of cyberattacks in the war between Russia and Ukraine (Duguin and Pavlova, 2023). Since Ukraine’s largest mobile network, Kyivstar became the target of a cyberattack in December 2023, the discussion is about “full-scale” cyberwar and the possibility of cyberattacks constituting war crimes (Verbruggen, 2024). While analysing the difference between violence and nonviolence, Nojeim (2004) writes:

Some actions – silent protest, tax resistance, boycotts, or noncooperation – tend toward the nonviolent end of the spectrum while other actions – riots, terrorism, guerrilla war, or nuclear war – tend toward the violent end. The continuum also means, however, that no actions can be totally nonviolent or totally violent. (Nojeim, 2004, p. 9)

Cyberspace presents a unique challenge in categorising the harm caused by cyberattacks due to their indirect and often hidden nature. As demonstrated by Stuxnet, the damage caused by such attacks may not be immediately apparent, and it may take years to fully understand the extent of harm. Further, almost all cyberattacks have one feature in common: the attribution problem because of which there is no clear boundary between the actors involved. Even Rid (2013), who does not believe in cyberwar taking place, cautions regarding the “corrosive

⁶⁶ Hacktivism has also been termed as “electronic civil disobedience (ECD)”. ECD is known to be coined by Critical Art Ensemble (1996).

potential of cyberattacks.” He posits, “That feature of digital conflict represents a fundamental, and in many ways disturbing, change when compared to political confrontations earlier, analogue times, be they violent or non-violent: that change is the attribution problem” (Rid, 2013, p. 139).

One of the problematic areas that requires attention is the influence of social media and technological development in various political decision-making processes, particularly elections. Several questions arise:

(1) whether the activities aimed at winning a political candidate are nonviolent political actions; (2) when such actions become violent; and (3) to what extent social media influences the election outcome.

Although elections are generally peaceful processes, the use of online and offline methods that involve online harassment, structural damage, cybercrimes, and indirect damages or harms makes it difficult to categorise political actions like an election as violent or nonviolent. The situation becomes more complex when election interference occurs. Although state interference in each other's affairs is not new, interfering in another state's election via cyberattacks and social media attacks the core principles of democracy. Ohlin (2020) studied the case of Russian interference in the 2016 US election and found that “there was (1) hacking of email accounts and the public release of information stolen from these accounts; (2) social media campaigns, including paid advertisements on Facebook and postings on Twitter engineered by so-called troll farms; and (3) the infiltration of advocacy organisations such as the National Rifle Association, with the goal of influencing the domestic political landscape.” (Ohlin, 2020b, p. 11) The question of whether election interference constitutes an act of war is a matter of debate. According to Ohlin (2020), election interference is not a cyberwar. For him, election interference is “certainly

destructive” but “not destructive in the way contemplated by the law of war” (Ohlin, 2020a, p. 59). In any case, election interference is not a nonviolent political action, as it is inherently intended to cause harm.

Recent research has shown that social media and influencers can have a significant impact on election outcomes. For example, Fujiwara et al. (2022) studied the 2016 and 2020 US presidential elections, and their research indicates that Twitter’s liberal content helped lower Trump’s vote share in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. (Fujiwara, Müller and Schwarz, 2020) Similarly, Carney’s (2022) study on an election in Tamil Nadu, India, showed that messaging tools like WhatsApp can influence voter behaviour by increasing their knowledge and helping them to distinguish between real and fake news. However, regardless of the tools employed, strategizing and planning are essential. The content disseminated on various platforms must be carefully crafted. My intention here is to emphasize that political actions today involve both online and offline activities, and cyber activities, whether cyberattacks or social media usage during elections affect the real-world outcome.

To sum up, so far, the classification of a cyberattack as violent or nonviolent depends on one’s definition or perception of violence. With the example of an election, I showed that nowadays there is hardly any political action that is performed online or offline only. Attempting to maintain the distinction between violence and nonviolence in such a case becomes extremely difficult. The special case of Artificial Intelligence (AI) further blurs the distinction between violence and nonviolence.

6.3 Artificial Intelligence: A nonviolent weapon?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a widely discussed topic, as the rapid pace of technological development continues to shape the meaning of AI. The Oxford English

Dictionary provides a suitable definition for our purposes, which is to examine whether the usage of AI can be regarded as nonviolent.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines AI as

The theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.⁶⁷

[A part of this subchapter is a section of the paper that I submitted at the UACES Virtual Conference held from September 5-8, 2021, as part of “Nonviolence for a Diverse EU: Gender, Artificial Intelligence and Integrity”. Although I presented slides at the virtual conference, the paper titled *Artificial Intelligence: A Nonviolent Weapon?* was not published anywhere. I have made changes in the wording and sentence structure of the original version.]

AI is a combination of hardware and software that enables a system to perform tasks that are typically achievable by human beings. Therefore, AI is more than just a computer or a piece of software used for presentations or drafting emails. Examples of AI include voice recognition assistance systems like Siri and Alexa, which can understand and respond to voice queries. While some argue that Siri and Alexa are forms of machine learning, it is important to note that machine learning is a part of AI. AI is not a standalone system but is integrated into systems.

It is easy to become accustomed to computers performing intelligent tasks, and they may no longer be perceived as intelligent after some time. Forty years ago, speaking machines would have been unimaginable. Only the intelligent supercar named KITT in the 1982 TV series Knight Rider could perform such tasks. Despite the broad and ever-evolving nature of

⁶⁷ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/artificial_intelligence

the AI concept, it generally involves algorithms performing tasks that are typically only achievable by humans.

The assumption that nonviolence is simply the absence of direct physical force is challenged by the use of AI. First, by using AI such as drones, the use of direct physical force to harm (even lethally) the adversary is not required. Second, AI, which comprises hardware and software systems, can be utilised to bring about peaceful political and social changes, including the use of intelligent bots to interfere in political campaigns. This presents a challenge to proponents of nonviolence, who believe that nonviolence is morally superior due to the use of peaceful means and the absence of direct violence.

Two case studies will be presented to argue why the use of AI is morally questionable and not necessarily better than other violent methods.

Case study 1: use of drones

Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles or aircraft without a human pilot on board. The use of drones by states is not new. Many authors and human rights organisations have criticized the use of drones for targeted killings. The problematic issues raised by US targeted killings using drones have also been repeatedly pointed out. However, the combination of AI and drones, as well as the easy access to drones for commercial and private use, raises new ethical concerns. Drones can now be purchased for as little as \$300 and equipped with cameras to spy on neighbours. Drones have been commonly used for rescue operations and to bring medicines to remote places. Currently, most drones are controlled by humans, and their decisions are made by humans. However, with AI, drones can be developed to make decisions independently based on predefined criteria, without any human intervention, leading to the development of autonomous weapons systems (AWS).

AI-driven autonomy is already a reality. According to Bode and Huelss (2021), such autonomy is found in aerial combat vehicles such as the British *Tranis*, in stationary sentries such as the South Korean *SGR-A1*, and in-ground vehicles such as the Russian *Uran-9*. However, the widespread availability of drones has led to a blurring of the lines between violent and nonviolent actions, as states may perceive targeted killing as an acceptable course of action⁶⁸. The current lack of international law or sovereignty applicability in this regard necessitates a re-examination of the norms governing the use of force.

In regard to technological developments such as AI-powered drones, the use of weapons to delineate violent and nonviolent activities needs reconsideration. In the past, weapons such as guns or nuclear bombs were undoubtedly violent in their purpose. Now, the emergence of drones has introduced a new dimension to the use of force, as these devices can be both harmful and useful. They can be used for outdoor filming or checking the ground for real-estate purposes, but they can also be used to destroy infrastructure. Houthi drone attacks on Saudi oil pipelines in May 2019 “show a new level of sophistication” (Gatopoulos, 2019). The drone was able to fly more than eight hundred kilometres into Saudi Arabia and hit the target without being detected. A priori, there is no clear indication of whether drones are inherently violent or nonviolent weapons. The only criteria to define their permissibility would be by evaluating their ethical and moral implications.

Case study 2: use of bots

Bots, or software robots, are computer programmes designed to perform specific automated tasks and are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Chatbot is one such example, which is a programme to engage with customers online and respond to their repetitive questions.

⁶⁸ Bode and Huelss (2021) have contended that in the state’s use of drone technology, they have adopted novel interpretations of key standards of international law governing the use of force, such as attribution and imminence. They add that these practices are not reflected in the standard conceptual language of customary international law, as they are not openly discussed or do not meet its strict requirements. (p. 4)

Another example is social bots, which were developed to pick up news or feeds automatically, aggregate them, and spread them further. With the progress in AI, social bots have advanced significantly to the point where they imitate human behaviour. Social bots have become, in Coleman's words, "a tool for fabricating social capital" (Coleman, 2018, p. 122). Though many social bots are benign, they "have been used to infiltrate political discourse, manipulate the stock market, steal personal information, and spread misinformation." (Ferrara *et al.*, 2016, pp. 96–97)

Like in the case of drones, the danger of bots lies in their accessibility and affordability. Tools like Tweet Attacks Pro, Twesocial, and Jarvee can be used to automate and manage multiple Twitter accounts simultaneously. While this is not inherently problematic, it can have a negative impact on social behaviour. Since everything revolves around the number of likes, comments or retweets, it creates a vicious circle for extreme content generating higher engagements, which in turn means more money.

According to Unver, "This directly feeds into political campaigns and political advertising, in addition to the tone of regular political messaging people encounter on digital platforms. In a medium that is designed to encourage and reward extreme messaging with engagement, the natural result is unprecedented polarization and offline political engagement with leaders that sustain this extreme narrative." (Unver, 2017, p. 136) Bots can produce and disseminate fake news within a few minutes, harming the targeted individuals or groups. Bots bombard users with large volumes of fake or manipulated content, overwhelming the receiver. The strategies used by bots are continuously changing and evolving, which makes them much more dangerous if used unethically.

Social media and the proliferation of bots can have varying degrees of detrimental effects, ranging from simple psychological pressure to the extreme measure of manipulating

and coercing individuals to take their own lives. For example, the public disclosure and viral spread of unauthorised intimate photographs can exert tremendous psychological strain on the affected individual. While social media serves as a platform for information dissemination, bots play a crucial role in amplifying the reach of such content, thereby exacerbating the harm inflicted. The utilisation of botnets, which comprise a network of interconnected devices with installed bots, can orchestrate substantial harm. These botnets can be used for malicious purposes, such as data theft, spam emails, executing Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks, and allowing the hacker to remotely control the device. DDoS is designed to disrupt normal service by overwhelming the target system with a flood of network traffic, rendering it inoperable. If directed at critical infrastructure, such as airports or nuclear installations, these attacks can pose a severe threat to public safety and security.

In both case studies, the differentiation between violence and nonviolence is difficult to maintain because the distinction between “kinetic” and “non-kinetic” methods, blurs or overlaps. The pertinent question to pose is whether artificial intelligence (AI) will revolutionise how we engage in soft warfare to the same extent that nuclear development transformed conventional warfare.

Soft warfare, in contrast to conventional armed conflict characterised by battles and military engagement, encompasses a range of non-kinetic methods. For some, it represents a form of nonviolent conflict. In the context of this thesis, soft warfare encompasses a variety of cyberwarfare scenarios in which non-state groups, states, and individuals can all participate. In contrast to the definition of conventional war, there are numerous possible scenarios wherein not only states but also non-state actors, such as hacktivist groups comprising individuals from diverse locations globally, can engage in conflict with one another or target states.

To comprehend how AI may disrupt the way we engage in soft warfare, it is essential to grasp the characteristics of cyber conflicts.

A critical feature of cyber conflict generally, as we have seen, is that it has seriously blurred the distinctions between what were once different and distinguishable levels of activity and conflict. (George Lucas, 2017, chapter 7, p. 9)

A second, even more important difference from traditional conflict is that the pursuit of cyber strategy and the employment of cyber weapons and tactics have been largely under the control of intelligence agencies and personnel, whose rules of engagement are vastly different from those of conventional military combatants or of agents of domestic law enforcement. (George Lucas, 2017, chapter 7, p. 9)

In cyber conflict, and in planning for it, many of the weapons and tactics are specifically designed to operate against civilians and civilian noncombatant targets, a feature that, as we noted, is illegal and decidedly immoral in the conventional case. (George Lucas, 2017, chapter 7, p. 10)

Apart from ethical and moral concerns, there are practical implications to consider as well. For instance, advancements in technology enable not only classical computers but also other devices with internet access, such as smartphones, tablets, wearables, or IOTs (Internet of Things) devices like webcams and routers, to function as botnets. This technology is accessible to everyone. The sophisticated versions are used by both big companies and states, making it challenging, as Lucas suggested above to distinguish between actors engaged in certain activities and those already engaged in conflict.

Two examples illustrate this point. Deepfakes use AI to replace an image or video with someone else's. In June 2022, the mayor of Berlin, Franziska Giffey, was tricked into holding a video call with a person who resembled and sounded like Vitali Klitschko

(Oltermann, 2022). It took 15 minutes before the suspicion grew. Hence, as Lucas points out, cyber strategy and cyber weapons are completely different from those of conventional military combatants.

The emergence of advanced AI tools like ChatGPT⁶⁹ further challenges the traditional understanding of nonviolence. Before there was a clear concept that *using weapons* is violent and, without weapons, it is nonviolent. Now, AI tools like ChatGPT have the capability of creating fake news and using bots to spread it worldwide within seconds. They can create targeted messages and create a whole new story in different languages and in an extremely short period of time. This kind of activity may appear nonviolent on the surface, but it is reasonably conceivable how much harm it could cause if exploited as a political tool. Suleyman (Suleyman and Bhaskar, 2023) recounts the impressive results of the recent ChatGPT-4 launched in March 2023. "... you can ask GPT-4 to compose poetry ... and it obliges ... request start-up business plans and the output is akin to having a roomful of executives on call. Moreover, it can ace standardized tests from the bar exam to the GRE." He further adds, "It can also work with images and code, create 3-D computer games ... identify weaknesses in contracts, and suggest compounds for novel drugs, even offering ways of modifying them so they are not patented." (p. 64)

On the one hand, technology has greatly improved the quality of our lives. AI and robotics are transforming healthcare. AI can forecast some diseases, like kidney diseases, through the analysis of large amounts of collected data. On the other hand, cyber criminality is increasing. By using the same technology (ransomware) and exploiting the vulnerabilities of different institutions, cybercriminals are able to extract a large amount of money. At the same time, states interfere in each other's affairs through cyber methods. For example, the US

⁶⁹ GPT = Generative Pre-trained Transformers

National Security Agency has repeatedly accused Russia of meddling in elections. The Biden government blamed the Kremlin for intervening in the presidential elections in 2016 and 2020 in favour of Donald Trump through cyberattacks and the dissemination of fake news (Sattar, 2022).

These developments lead me to conclude that AI will significantly change the way we engage in soft warfare. The extent and manner in which this will occur are yet to be determined as technological developments continue to accelerate. This will further influence how we conduct civil resistance or other activities to engage with the state. To borrow the words of Lucas (2017, Chapter 1, p. 11),

The danger is that such warfare not only blurs the lines between war and “mere” criminal activities, but that such a state of war also becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from peace.

Chapter Conclusion

I have argued that when the act of confrontation shifts to cyberspace, it becomes impossible to apply the traditional definition of violence or nonviolence. Hence, although virtual civil disobedience or online protest is possible, explicit virtual *nonviolent* civil disobedience or explicit *nonviolent* online protest as such is not attainable. The activities are always a blend of online and offline methods. Philosophical nonviolence is also not applicable in the virtual world. Nevertheless, the internet and social media serve to strengthen and expand the effectiveness of conventional nonviolent activities. There is no consensus on whether cyberattacks are conceptually violence. However, some individuals, including myself believe that certain cyberattacks like Stuxnet and WannaCry are violent. Another topic of debate concerns whether hacktivism is a nonviolent or violent act. Some contend that it represents

nonviolent digital civil disobedience. I have provided arguments to support my view that it constitutes a distinct domain in which technology is the driving force behind activism. Nonetheless, similar to conventional riots, some hacktivism may be harmful and violent, especially those performed as an act of revenge.

The difficulty of distinguishing between violent and nonviolent acts is greatly exacerbated in the absence of distinct features, such as the use of force. Furthermore, the traditional definition is not suitable for the cyberworld, and AI poses an additional challenge in differentiating between nonviolent activities and violent ones. Technological advancements have also blurred the lines between warfare and crime. This compels us to re-evaluate the ethics of political actions on a different level. To address this issue, I have proposed viewing the activities in the cyber domain as an extension of real-world activities because there is always a human factor involved. With the widespread use of mobile phones and the internet in daily activities—be they personal, professional, or political—the real world and the cyberworld have blended with each other. Hence, the harms involved also need to be addressed as one issue and not separate from each other.

All things considered, technological development blurs the distinction between violence and nonviolence. Even if cyberattacks need not be directly lethal, digital is never fully self-contained. It is always intertwined with the real world. This reaffirms my claim that we need to rethink the concepts of violence and nonviolence in the context of the virtual world and advanced technology. In this chapter, I primarily focused on the challenges. I will present a potential solution in the next chapter.

7. Ethics of Political Actions in 21st Century

In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others.

In ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so.

~ Immanuel Kant

My central claim of the thesis is that nonviolent political actions are not as nonviolent as they seem in theory. I have supported this claim first by showing how there is definitional ambiguity and how other factors like context, intention, and language have an influence on how we perceive a certain action to be violent or nonviolent. Second, I have shown that the merits of nonviolence stem from religious and philosophical reasons, and in contemporary times, nonviolent methods are strategic and pragmatic, involving the use of power and coercion as instruments to achieve political objectives.

Third, I have argued that justification is required not only for violence but for nonviolence as well because both share morally troubling issues. If violence needs justification due to harm caused, nonviolence that involves harm also requires justification. Means and ends are important considering ethics and morality. Last but not least, I showed that the technological revolution has brought a shift in theory and practice. In the virtual world, the difference between kinetic and non-kinetic actions is blurred. Non-kinetic actions can also have harmful outcomes. Consequently, it is essential to reconsider the ethics of nonviolence in the 21st century.

The question that remains to be addressed is:

How can nonviolent political actions be justified?

I propose that for any action to be justified, the end and the means have to be justified. One effective approach to solve this problem is addressing the ethics from a means-end perspective.

In this chapter, I propose to move away from the dichotomy of violence and nonviolence and instead focus on *just political actions*. I will present an ethical framework and defend the advantages of this holistic view. First, I discuss the prevailing standard frameworks in conventional moral theory and argue that they are insufficient for justifying political actions. Thereafter, I examine how the concepts of violence and nonviolence regarding political actions can be reconceptualised to accommodate my own inquiries from previous chapters. Second, I will identify the essential principles that are necessary for the moral assessment of political actions. Subsequently, I will apply these principles to paradigm cases. I end the chapter with the conclusion that further advancement in technology is foreseeable, and hence, ethical considerations must be concurrently studied in light of contemporary technological development.

7.1 Justifying Political Actions

In this thesis, the primary focus is on political action, and the ethics discussed here revolve around this. I do not delve into ethical behaviour, neither as a philosophy nor as a religious commitment. This does not preclude the possibility that the participants may have philosophical or religious personal motivations. To reiterate from Chapter 1, political action refers to an action carried out to achieve a political goal. Examples of political goals include regime change, policy change, raising public awareness regarding a political issue such as climate change, and informing the public regarding a subject that concerns the citizens, such as corruption and mismanagement. Examples of political action include civil disobedience, protest, and sit-ins. The actors in political action can be individuals, groups, states or non-

states. In this subchapter, I first review contemporary approaches to ethics in political actions. Second, I introduce the concept of just political action. Finally, I describe the concept of an ethical framework for justifying political actions.

7.1.1 Traditional Approaches to Ethics in Political Action

Virtue Ethics:

The focus of virtue ethics is on the moral character of a person, guiding morality on the basis of what makes this individual a better person. Within a personal environment, virtue ethics is suitable. However, in the political arena, I believe the decision-making should be action-based. This does not imply that a political person cannot ask a question such as “Is this action consistent with my moral values?” while making personal decisions. Although Singleton (2002) concludes that “both virtue ethics and Kantian ethics have the development of the agent as their focus whilst providing answers to the question of what makes an action right” (p. 22), both ethics are silent on the consequences.

Consequentialist Ethics:

The focus of consequentialist ethics is on the outcome, guiding morality on the basis of what produces the best outcome for the maximum number of people. The utilitarian principle, as one of the consequentialist approaches, for example, defines morality based on maximizing utility. Jeremy Bentham (1781) is considered the founder of modern utilitarian ethics. In his work *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, he states that pleasure and pain are “the standard of right and wrong” and that the increase of happiness (the sum of pleasures and pains) should be the utility principle. However, in a political scenario, it is not

only about the common good in a majoritarian sense. The well-being of minority groups is equally important. Otherwise, “tyranny of the majority”⁷⁰ would be the result.

Deontological Ethics:

The focus of deontological ethics is on duty-based, guiding morality on the basis of pursuing absolute moral duties rather than the consequences of actions. Immanuel Kant is widely recognised as the founder of deontological ethical theory. Among others, his works *Groundwork in the Metaphysics of Morals* (2015b), *Critique of Practical Reason* (2015a), and *Metaphysics of Morals* (2017) are significant in building his moral philosophy. For Kant, morally good actions are determined by the good will and the good will is derived from moral duty or moral law. The moral laws are a set of guiding principles (maxims) in accordance with categorical imperatives, and Kant identified three of these imperatives. In short, deontology is grounded on duties derived from universal moral obligations.

However, in a political scenario, the end result is just as important as the means employed to achieve it. I believe it would be wrong to fulfil the moral duty blindly if doing so would lead to harmful or violent consequences, especially if those consequences are foreseeable. The concept of civil disobedience would lose its meaning if individuals were to adhere strictly to their moral duties without considering the potential outcomes. For instance, if Thoreau had paid his taxes dutifully, he would not have inspired the idea of civil disobedience. Some may argue that it was Thoreau’s duty to rebel against the unjustified taxation, but deontological ethics is silent on the question of which competing duties dominate. This situation can only be resolved within the context of the specific end goal.

Further, relying solely on deontological ethics in cases of civil disobedience such as hacktivism or whistleblowing can be problematic. In these cases, the activists may engage in

⁷⁰ This statement is commonly attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville.

actions that deontological ethics strictly prohibit, such as theft and lying. As discussed briefly in Chapter 5, Kant mentions that humans are not to be treated as mere means to an end. Even if the conception at hand is from the means-end perspective, this does not hinder what Kant sees as “humanity is an end in itself”, given the just end and the just means.

Dirty Hands Approach:

The dirty hands approach focuses on ethics related to politics and politicians. The basic idea is that politics, being a complicated area where decision-making is a complex process, sometimes demands that politicians make decisions that might be regrettable but not necessarily immoral given certain conditions. In the modern-day, Walzer is widely known for putting forward the problem of dirty hands. In his seminal work (Walzer, 1973), he describes the dilemma of dirty hands in political life and explains why lying and hustling (getting hands dirty) are necessary for the greater good. He gives an example in which giving order to torture becomes inevitable but justified.

While I do not take a stance on Walzer’s standpoint, I contend that the dirty hands approach is insufficient in justifying political actions in this thesis. First, the dirty hands theory assumes that it is only the politicians deciding over political actions. However, in the proposed just political action concept, political actions can be carried out by citizens and non-state actors as well. Second, assuming that the end is just, dirtying hands for a good cause implies that on certain occasions immoral means are necessary. The dirty hands approach resembles the utilitarian view in that the end is the focus and the means is excused. This is supported by how Walzer (2004) contends that “When our deepest values are radically at risk, the constraints lose their grip, and a certain kind of utilitarianism reimposes itself.” He further argues, “There are limits on the conduct of war, and there are moments when we can and perhaps should break through the limits (the limits themselves never disappear).” (Walzer,

2004, p. 40) Even if one might agree on such an extreme condition being a just end, which Walzer terms “supreme emergency”, justifying or excusing actions on this basis implies justifying means depending on the end. It is contrary to my stance that “both the end and the means” require justification.

Just War Theory (JWT):

The focus of just war theory, as the name denotes, focuses on the justification of wars. Thus, this is not applicable in this research as we are seeking a nonviolent solution or at least a solution with less harm short of violence as per the narrow definition (e.g. Coady). However, some of the proposed principles of just political action are similar to the core principles of JWT. It may initially seem counterintuitive as JWT deals with war or violence. This should not surprise us because the morally troubling issues are present in both violence and nonviolence. Besides, JWT is also based on a means-end approach.

The existing traditional approaches, viewed alone, either focus on the means or the end. Therefore, I propose developing a framework that fulfils the ethics of the means used while having a just end. I am not claiming that what I am suggesting is something entirely novel. My proposal is just another way of looking into the issues at hand. The rationale behind defining certain principles similar to existing ethics in broad detail is to acknowledge both the end (the valid conditions) and the means (the method). Although some principles may be familiar from JWT, JWT is for specific circumstances of state-on-state conflict called ‘war’. The just political action approach focuses mainly on domestic politics and does not endorse violence or war. While JWT is for war, Just Political Action is for political actions

that might involve conflicts but fall short of outright war. Furthermore, inspired by Cécile Fabre (2022)⁷¹, I argue that cyberattack is justified as a means, but only as a means.

7.1.2 The Concept of Just Political Action

I begin by summarising the problems identified in the previous chapters as a list. Then, I advance the concept of Just Political Action and explain how this concept addresses the mentioned problems.

The issues that have been raised are as follows:

- 1) Violent and nonviolent political methods are not sufficiently distinct. Both are instrumental in a political context.
- 2) Nonviolent methods are instrumental as they use coercion and power to achieve political goals.
- 3) Due to the nature of power and coercion, nonviolent methods involve harm that raises ethical questions.
- 4) Demarcation of violent and nonviolent methods further blurs or overlaps due to technological development.

Now, I turn to the solution and introduce the concept of Just Political Action. The analogy of learning to swim can be used to illustrate this concept. The objective is to swim and not drown, regardless of the specific swimming technique used. Similarly, when it comes to political actions, what matters most is that the actions are just, regardless of whether they are labelled as violence, nonviolence, or any other term. Each political and social action needs justification if it violates laws and breaks norms. Any action that involves direct or indirect harm requires justification. The idea is not to opt for violence, as war, an extreme form of

⁷¹ Fabre argues that some activities such as espionage and counter-intelligence which she calls intelligence activities are morally justified as a means, but only as a means. I borrowed her idea that certain activity is justified as a means, but only as a means.

violence, is arguably always destructive in many ways. The main motivation is to choose a lesser harm option. In essence, what is needed is an alternative to violence and, yet, a just method of communication. It is important not to be misled by the term ‘nonviolence’ and to recognise that the methods chosen are not automatically ethically sound.

In order to adopt a more comprehensive perspective on political action, it is necessary to move beyond the traditional binary distinction between violence and nonviolence. An action in itself cannot be categorised as violent or nonviolent. For instance, shooting a rifle into the air to honour someone does not constitute violence, despite the fact that it involves the use of a weapon. Similarly, an action that is intended to effect political or social change may be considered a political or social action, regardless of whether it employs violent or nonviolent means. Later, when this action has certain features, a certain context, and a definite outcome, then the action can be considered a justified or unjustified political action.

The advantage of this approach is that it eliminates the need to determine whether a particular method is inherently violent or nonviolent, allowing us to focus on the harm involved. It also avoids the problem of trying to determine whether a nonviolent method is truly nonviolent. Furthermore, this approach does not require us to categorise the country or state in which the action takes place as democratic or non-democratic, or liberal or illiberal. Instead, it concentrates on the morality of both the intention and the outcome of the action, regardless of whether it takes place in the virtual or real world. For example, civil disobedience may be carried out in democratic or illiberal countries, but the latter condition may play a larger role in determining the justifiability of the action. While it is true that kinetic force may be utilised in certain cases, the focus is on the harm caused. Ultimately, the sole focus of this approach is on the means used, the harm caused, and whether they can be justified.

With just political action, I denote political actions that fulfil certain criteria of justification principles. Some scholars have adopted this approach instinctively and indirectly. Pasternak (2019) has made a case for justifying political rioting on the basis of permissibility constraints of success, necessity, and proportionality. She argues that there are circumstances where riots could lead to positive political changes. She claims the necessity of riots in cases of pervasive socioeconomic and racial injustices (p. 401). For proportionality, she states:

A narrow proportionality standard that tracks blame would confirm that some damage to the property of such individual agents is permissible (assuming, also, that it meets the success and necessity requirements). (Pasternak, 2019, p. 412)

The potential objection to this argument is that if political rioting can be justified on three principles of self-defence and war theory, how is this different from just political action? The distinction lies in the principles used, as the principles that I will be employing differ from those used by Pasternak. Further, just political action is usually pre-planned or at least known in advance, whereas political rioting is ad hoc and unorganised. Just political action can be performed not only by a group of people but also by an individual who takes moral and/or legal responsibility.

It is important to reiterate that my proposition is not to advocate for lethal violence, especially organised ones. I will address the permissibility of the just conditions at a later stage. Further, violence is not the primary subject of my thesis, so neither the objection nor the justification of violence is of interest. Just war theory and related works are to be referenced for that. The focus of my thesis is on the concept of just political action and how this can address the problem of differentiating violence and nonviolence conceptually. The moral concerns I raised regarding nonviolence encompass issues like coercion, power

dynamics, instrumentality, and the potential for intentional destructive psychological and structural harm. I also highlighted the significance of context, particularly language and intention, in shaping the outcomes of political actions. By addressing these concerns, we can avoid categorising methods as inherently violent or nonviolent.

The goal of the approach is to have *just* political action. The questions I raised in earlier chapters pertain to the ethical and moral justifications of actions, not their legality. This is crucial to avoid falling into the “ends justify the means” mindset and overlooking the ethical implications of the methods being used. Only when both the ends, as well as the means of an action, are morally justifiable can this action be considered a just political action. If certain wars can be ethically justified, then so can civil disobedience and other forms of resistance, such as cyberattacks or hacktivism, under certain conditions.

The disadvantage of employing the violence-nonviolence dichotomy as a framework for analysis is that it is very difficult to devise definitions that accommodate distinct valid criteria for violent and nonviolent methods. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the ambiguity persists. Furthermore, as observed in Chapters 4 and 5, conceptually, the means used in both violent and nonviolent methods are substantially similar, encompassing aspects such as coercion, manipulation, and power. In addition, they carry other types of burdens, like the need for structural damage repairs, which have to be financed through taxes.

The existing literature on civil disobedience concentrates mainly on justifying the actions undertaken against the regime in illiberal democracies or when civil disobedience is required to fight against social or political injustice (Delmas, 2018a; Lefkowitz, 2007). By incorporating the concept of just political action, we can develop a holistic approach that addresses various forms of civil disobedience under diverse circumstances. The current body of literature on cyberattacks is primarily concerned with determining whether cyberwar can

occur and whether it is justifiable. The just political action approach can help us accommodate various other activities in the cyber domain.

This approach is also valuable in addressing the issue of election interference discussed in the last chapter. The framework that I propose can serve as a benchmark for international legal solutions. If election interference is not cyberwar but still poses significant harm, how should it be regulated? Thus, moving away from the rationale that harm or destructive consequences can only evolve from kinetic attacks is essential.

Possible Objections:

One may raise the following questions:

- 1) Shall we abandon the concept of nonviolence altogether?
- 2) Do all nonviolent political actions require justification?

The answers are 1) no and 2) yes. Nonviolence should not be discarded. There are merits to the concept of nonviolence. It is important to remember that, though pure non-coercive nonviolence may not always be achievable in practical politics, it remains a worthy goal or method in other fields, such as spirituality, theology, and philosophy. Nevertheless, I maintain that all political actions, including those deemed or termed “nonviolent” require justification. These actions, which typically involve significant consequences for a large group of people, should be weighed against their benefits and drawbacks. Political decisions tend to have a long-lasting impact and will affect an entire generation. Thus, methods should be justified to take responsibility for both positive and negative consequences.

It is not necessary to justify actions like going out to buy milk because they do not involve power or coercion. However, politics involves power and coercion, which raise moral concerns, and hence demand justification. This is based on the principle of *public*

*justification*⁷², which is a large field of study. Due to the limited scope, I will not be able to discuss it here. For the purpose of this thesis, it suffices to understand that coercion (via exploitation and manipulation) and “power over people” and their nature of instrumentality in achieving political goals are morally problematic and demand justification.

7.1.3 An Ethical Framework

I declare a few caveats. The proposed framework is designed to operate within a given context (this is not a universal theory) and does not involve decision-making under uncertain conditions. It is intended as a tool for individuals and groups aiming to achieve political goals. In the case of the state, it is limited to the domestic sphere. The framework does not include international relations because this would require the inclusion of concepts like sovereignty, which introduces an element of uncertainty. Ethics refers to the study of moral principles, while morals refer to the values and beliefs that shape our understanding of right and wrong. These principles and values could also involve the questions of rightness, fairness or equity. In this thesis, the terms ethically and morally, as well as the terms ethical and moral, are used interchangeably to signify adherence to established values or principles.

A political action is justified when the following principles are satisfied:

1. **Transparency:** The action must be declared openly by a proper person or a group, and/or the person must take responsibility for that action (e.g. an activist, an organisation or a state)
2. **Just Cause:** The action must have a just cause (e.g. a defence of the common good, a response to grave injustice, or a change in the discriminatory law)

⁷² According to John Rawls’s principle of public justification, political power must be justified. He calls this the “liberal principle of legitimacy”. This principle asserts that political power should only be employed in ways that are universally endorsed by citizens. The use of political power must adhere to the principle of reciprocity, whereby all citizens must accept and endorse the enforcement of fundamental laws. Individuals who are subject to the law must do so freely, without coercion, manipulation, or lack of information. (Rawls, 2005)

3. **Just Intention:** The activists or agents must have just intentions (i.e., they must take the action for justice rather than for self-interest)
4. **Proportionality:** Coercion in the form of intended structural damage and/or physical or mental harm must be proportional and non-lethal and
5. **Cyberattacks:** Cyberattacks are justified only as a means, but only as a means, to achieve a just end as defined in clause two and subject to meeting the requirements of transparency, just cause, just intention and proportionality.

The concept of just political action is rooted in the idea that both the conditions for resorting to action and the manner in which that action is conducted must be just. They are not separate entities. Further, the concept does not pertain to lethal harm, at least not harm that is intentionally inflicted. The conditions will be named the Just Political Action Framework (JPAF).

The approach to borrowing principles from JWT in a limited form is intuitive and also reasonable, as violence and nonviolence share morally troubling features. Some scholars have even compared nonviolent resistance to war or the military. Gregg (2018) argued that nonviolent resistance resembles war in eight ways⁷³, including the fact that “it does not avoid hardships, suffering, wounds or even death” (p. 106). He adds that people could still risk their lives, but the possibilities of casualties and fatalities are greatly reduced in nonviolent resistance compared to war. As such, it can be argued that for nonviolent actions to be justified, at least some of the JWT principles must be fulfilled.

⁷³ “1. It has a psychological and moral aim and effect,
 2. It is a discipline of a parallel emotion and instinct,
 3. It operates against the morale of the opponents,
 4. It is similar in principles of strategy,
 5. It is a method of settling great disputes and conflicts,
 6. It requires courage, dynamic energy, capacity to endure fatigue and suffering, self-sacrifice, self-control, chivalry, action,
 7. It is positive and powerful,
 8. It affords an opportunity of service for a large idea, and for glory.” (Gregg, 2018, pg. 105-106)

The underlying reason for not using just one traditional ethical approach is when applying it to political action; this may lead to conflicting results. For example, a police officer tasked with protecting the borders of the state may not be able to follow his moral duty of helping the immigrants trying to enter the country. Acting in accordance with a rights- or duty-based approach may harm the welfare of the community. Moreover, following a consequentialist approach may lead to actions that are not aligned with personal moral values or may result in unintended consequences. Therefore, it is important to consider a multifaceted approach that encompasses both motivation (justice and moral duty) and the ethical conduct of the action in order to achieve the desired outcome.

Why is transparency required?

Transparency is an essential requirement for any just political action that seeks to be just. Since it concerns the public, the public is entitled to know who is responsible for the action. Transparency ensures that not only those who execute the plan but also those who give orders are held accountable. It is crucial to have openness from either the responsible person or the participants. This feature is necessary to ascertain that the goal is worthy and there is no hidden or ulterior motive, which will further ensure that there is no misuse of power. In the virtual world, it is easy to act anonymously, which poses an attribution problem. Transparency is essential to differentiate between just political action and other activities like terrorism, treason, espionage, state-sponsored cyberattacks, vigilantism, cybercrime, and so on.

This does not rule out clandestine actions or things like ambush that use secrecy. Some actions need to have a surprise effect to be impactful. The activists do not have to act openly and publicly all the time. Giving the game away by declaring their strategy is also not

required. The only requirement is that they take responsibility for the action, for example by giving the name of their organisation and publicising their rationale for acting.

What is just cause, and why is just cause required?

In this thesis, I have presupposed that nonviolent political actions have morally laudable goals. It would be contradictory to use nonviolence for unethical goals. Similarly, *just* political action should be undertaken for just causes, as it would not make sense to do so otherwise. Hence, a just cause is necessary for political action to be considered ethical.

What constitutes a just cause is inextricably linked with the idea of justice. While we may have a general understanding of what constitutes injustice, it is important to acknowledge that what may be just for one group or an individual may not be just for another. Justice is often seen as the opposite of injustice, meaning that it is fair and right. However, achieving true fairness and equity can be difficult due to ‘reasonable disagreement’ which means that it is possible to assess the same evidence in a competent way but reach different conclusions. Political liberal Charles Larmore (2013) argues that the idea of justice must consider two requirements. It must take into account the prevalence of reasonable disagreement regarding what is right and what is good, which implies that when proposing a conception of social justice, it must outline the conditions under which such a concept can be legitimately imposed in society. However, it must also acknowledge that these conditions themselves constitute moral principles that define the appropriate use of coercion. He states, “There is no way to handle politically the problem of reasonable disagreement that is not itself, at least potentially, an object of reasonable disagreement” (p. 296). Therefore, it is crucial to consider the complexity of justice and the limitations of achieving true fairness and equity when determining what constitutes a just cause.

The ultimate consequence is that when discussing justice, fairness, ethics, and morals, they are always relative and not absolute. Unlike physics or mathematics, where we can measure and find absolute data, the discussion of ethics and morals requires context and boundaries. And within context and boundaries, intention is very important. However, the intention may again depend on how we perceive or understand what justice is. To resolve this dilemma, I borrow the self-defence concept of JWT. This is a large field of study, but in this context, the points relevant to the concept of just political action will be discussed. In JWT, the traditional self-defence concept is based on the idea that a nation suffering from aggression, oppression, or some sort of attack is justified in retaliating. The just cause in this thesis is built upon the self-defence concept as well as a duty-based approach.

First, every citizen, organisation, or state has the right to *defend* or fight against injustice, such as authoritarian laws or aggression, including banning certain civil rights or, in the case of states, embargoes. If a state becomes irresponsible or authoritarian, for example, by dissolving a parliament unconstitutionally, the citizens can respond by engaging in political activities such as civil disobedience, to retain their democratic rights. Injustice in the form of aggression is not limited to violence in illiberal states. Sometimes, oppression occurs in most liberal democracies if the head of state or government is of an authoritarian nature. As such, just cause as a right to self-expression and justice can be interpreted as a rights-based approach. In politics, duty and rights are often interconnected. For instance, voting is a citizen's right, but it is also a citizen's duty to elect the right candidate. In this case, voting as a right also becomes a duty. Thus, just cause could derive from both the rights and the duty.

Second, citizens also have to perform their civic duty of 'check and balance' to the existing government. Although they are not legally obligated to this duty, it is expected as a moral obligation as a part of the local or national community. This duty framework is similar

to Delmas' work. Delmas (2018a) argues that our duty to justice requires us to resist injustice or the threat to justice, even in a democratic country, but more so in an illegitimate state. The political obligations arising from this duty would be to follow the methods of education, protest (including civil disobedience), covert disobedience, vigilantism, and government whistleblowing.

Furthermore, Delmas contends that the duty to fairness requires us to stand up and speak up against unfair schemes that benefit only a certain group of people. This may sometimes necessitate flouting the law. Delmas further argues that the Samaritan duty requires us to help people in peril or in dire need, even if it means breaking the law. Finally, she believes that the associativist account of political obligations requires us to fight against the violation of or threat to dignity.

However, I do not subscribe to Delmas' stance on the use of violence. She suggests that violent and undignified resistance can be justified under what she calls "dignitary political membership." She argues that "A violent slave uprising can certainly be construed as a justified and dignified response to slavery, given the immediate and grave threats to slaves' lives, freedom, and bodily integrity. But disproportionate or retaliatory violence could not be justified as an exercise of collective self-defence" (Delmas, 2018a, Chapter 6). The just political action approach does not support violent uprisings that may constitute intentional lethal harm.

The just cause, in the just political action approach, is to resist injustice, fight for one's personal rights, and defend other people's rights. The goal of such action can vary, such as maintaining a common good, like preventing the construction of a park house near a kindergarten for safety reasons or protesting against tax increases for single mothers. Similarly, as an Indigenous woman, I could also fight for affirmative action. So, just political

action is not based on the utilitarian school of thought, in which the outcome is measured on the basis of the greatest good for the greatest number. It is important to note that injustice often disproportionately affects minority groups due to racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and other forms of discrimination. As Habermas has mentioned, “it is the downtrodden and oppressed who first experience injustice on their own persons.” (Habermas, 1985, p. 104) The reasons he provides are that those people are neither privileged nor in a condition to influence politicians, unions, mass media or election campaigns. Therefore, just cause in JPAF goes beyond utilitarian principles.

What is just intention?

The concept of just intention is crucial in determining the morality of an action. Just cause alone may not be sufficient to establish the ethical validity of an action, as intention is also a critical factor to consider. While the just cause principle lays the foundation for the type of purpose of an action and its intended outcome, it does not necessarily reflect the intention of the planners and participants. A just cause may be present, but the initiators may have ulterior motives or have double standards, leading to an overall unjust action. For example, a whistleblower may release documents to expose the misconduct of the organisation as a means of revenge for losing a job or not getting the desired position in the respective company, rather than for the public interest. Though the information would be of public interest, due to the wrong intention, the action is not considered *just* but rather a personal vengeance.

As previously discussed, in the virtual world, the intention may only be the available decisive criteria. Sometimes, some kind of intentional digital damage will be necessary. For example, the intention might be valid for bringing down a server containing child pornographic materials and hindering internet traffic. However, the intention is questionable if

the server is a part of a banking service and many customers are unable to access their accounts. Thus, the intention is also related to the justice-based approach that defines morality as treating everyone equally. Here, Butler's (2020) theory of vulnerability and grievability as ethics discussed in Chapter 3.3.1 can give guidance. Within a society, some groups are more vulnerable than others. Keeping Butler's framework of treating everyone 'equally grievable', the just intention can include prioritising those who are more vulnerable. However, intention does not necessarily entail benevolence, as it signifies a commitment to the just cause.

What does “coercion in the form of structural damage and/or physical or mental harm should be proportional” mean?

The fourth principle unequivocally exempts acts that result in fatal harm. It precludes and forbids intentional lethal harm⁷⁴. Just political action, as posited above, is not about violence similar to war (e.g. armed confrontation with weapons), but rather just political activities. Nevertheless, fringe violence is permitted. However, the proportionality condition ensures that any structural damage and/or physical or mental harm are comparatively less. In general, the benefits should outweigh the costs of the damage, and those who are not directly involved should not bear the brunt. For example, if the Ministry of Health is the target of a just political action, attacking the website of the ministry is more proportional than attacking a hospital and deleting patient data.

Additionally, liability justification is a crucial component. The costs of harm ought to be borne by those who are the obstructers of the just cause in question. Even though intentionally harming the opponent physically or mentally is accepted, general harms like collateral damage in JWT are not. Thus, actions like public data breaches that could affect civilian's data privacy should not be taken.

⁷⁴ The rationale behind forbidding intentional lethal harm or violence such as war is that including lethal harm raises other moral questions regarding who has the right to kill and under which circumstances. Incorporating these go beyond the scope of this thesis as this would necessitate a wider discussion on the morality of violence.

The implication of “coercion in the form of physical or mental harms” denotes that the harms involved are meant to coerce or make the message clear and not to intentionally kill or injure. Consider this hypothetical example: an activist group intends to stop a corrupt politician from getting re-elected. If this candidate gets re-elected, the immigration law will be very strict. The activists decided to stop him from winning again by disrupting his political campaign. For this purpose, the activists hacked into his website and defaced it, stole private data that shows the candidate’s involvement in corruption activities, and made it public. They also threw a cake at his campaign posters. So far, it would be arguably proportional. However, directly attacking the candidate with a gun or harassing his family and children would not be proportional. It seems odd that attacks like throwing cakes and damaging property are accepted. The following line sums up the essence:

Justification is a much stronger form of exculpation than even a fully mitigating excuse, for in contrast to excuses it concerns the rightness of the action itself. A justified action is one that would normally be wrong, but which, given the circumstances, is either fully permissible or a positive good. (Rodin, 2002, p. 28)

In general, structural⁷⁵ damage like defacing the wall of buildings is given preference over physical or psychological harm. However, a distinction between bystanders and participants is necessary. In civil disobedience, for example, during a mass protest, there will be those who participate actively by carrying posters and being a part of the march. But there will also be pedestrians who happen to go to the office at the exact time. The participants are liable for justification, whereas bystanders are not. The participants must be aware of the goal of the event and, in the event of violence from the police, be ready to accept or flee. The participants must also take moral responsibility for any harm that may come to bystanders as a result of

⁷⁵ Not to be confused with injustice as proposed by Galtung.

their actions. To minimize disruption to the public, the participants must plan and execute their activities carefully.

Cyberattack

This principle aims to hinder misusing online activities to cause harm to others. As discussed in the previous chapter, cyberattacks, while the method itself remains non-kinetic, could have severe and destructive outcomes. “A cyber-attack can cause damage (whether collateral or deliberate) to the physical and logical components of a computer network.” (Fabre, 2022, p. 190) As a result of physical and logical damage, user data, such as banking or medical records, could be corrupted or deleted. As Fabre (2022) points out in her example, the consequence of missing banking or medical records means harm, such as suffering financial and health-related hardship. Taking this example further, the missing medical record of a critical care patient can be fatal if the data is vital and cannot be retrieved on time. Thus, a cyberattack can only be deemed justifiable, only and only if the previous principles are fulfilled, and the cyberattack is used only as a means to an end and not the end itself⁷⁶.

The principles of the last resort option and the probability of success are not relevant in the context of JPAF. The last resort option, which is the last choice available, is not applicable in this case because justification action entirely eschews violence (war). In the event that the state or opponent uses violent force, those participating in the action must decide whether to flee, i.e., abandon the mission, or face the consequences, whatever they may be. This applies even if someone dies due to unintentional circumstances during a just political action. The question of who assumes moral and legal responsibility for such occurrences is a separate matter of debate. Similarly, the probability of success is also secondary in the context of JPAF. Although it would be desirable for the objectives of just

⁷⁶ For instance, hackers shouldn't be using cyberattacks to test their hacking skills or take part in anonymous competitions because of pride or a sense of higher purpose. In the same way that Gandhi regarded nonviolence as a way of life, techies and hackers may believe hacking to be their destination.

political action to be achieved, the probability of success should not deter individuals from undertaking just political action. Just political action can also aim to raise public awareness of important issues, such as global warming, whose success may be difficult to measure. Furthermore, some issues may take years or even decades to yield the desired results, as is the case with universal suffrage, which took almost one hundred years to achieve and required the coordination of thousands of individuals over several decades.

The Question of Context and Intention

The reason for choosing nonviolent political action is the belief that it is genuinely nonviolent or at least less violent, as well as the desire to fight against injustice. However, as previously discussed, the same action can be considered either just or unjust, depending on its outcome and intention. For example, a well-organised campaign can be used for either promoting or defaming someone, and a well-spoken speech about Hindu supremacy in India could motivate Hindu supporters, but also incite hatred between Hindus and Muslims. Hence, discussing justice without context, intention, and outcome is often unreasonable or unclear. The choice of why and how is crucial. Justice involves more than simply choosing between right and wrong.

To address this issue, JPAF relies on four interrelated principles: transparency (who?), just cause (what?), just intention (why?), and proportionality (how?). The activities in the virtual world are constrained by the principle of a cyberattack, which can only be used as a means and never as an end. For a political action to be considered justifiable, all of these principles must be fulfilled. The outcome of the action is determined by the conditions of proportionality, transparency, and just cause. Despite just intentions, if the circumstances

result in a harmful outcome, the action is not deemed morally justified. Legal liability is not in the scope of this thesis.

The objections raised against certain nonviolent methods that are morally problematic were not based on the violation of laws. In some cases, breaking unjust laws may be necessary, even in a democracy. In these instances, the duty to combat injustice may take precedence over the duty to obey the law. I do not intend to provide a defence for these statements, as my primary goal is rather to demonstrate that my objection is not related to the violation of current laws. Laws are ideally made according to necessity, and if circumstances change or require it, the law needs to be amended or even broken in certain contexts. This understanding is important in recognising that an intention to break the law may still be considered a *just intention* under the concept of just political action.

7.2 Application of Just Political Action Framework

The example of male students at Nangarhar University in Jalalabad and Kandahar University in Afghanistan walking out of the examination hall as a protest against the Taliban's ban on women's entry into universities (Opindia Staff, 2022) can be considered a form of persuasive nonviolence. While the action did not have any influence on the outcome, it served as a clear message. These kinds of persuasive nonviolent political actions were not debatable before. As such, it should not be unexpected that non-coercive or persuasive nonviolent political methods will be deemed justifiable according to the principles of the Just Political Action Framework (JPAF). However, this framework evaluates only the justifiability of a political action. The success or failure of a particular action is not the focus. In the following two sections, several cases will be examined, including both previous examples and new ones, and explore how JPAF applies in the cyber domain and in light of contemporary technological advancements.

7.2.1 Some Paradigm Cases

The issues I raised about civil disobedience are that, under certain circumstances, they are not morally justified because of intentional damage and various kinds of violence. Under the concept of a just political action framework, this issue is handled from a different perspective. First, intentional lethal violence as found in war is prohibited, and second, structural damage and other harms such as fringe violence or cyberattack ought to be proportional to the just cause.

We shall now proceed to examine the four cases presented in Chapter 2.2. Assuming that both the intention and the cause are just, we must consider the consequences of each action. Poisoning and self-immolation are fatal if no external intervention is made timely, and hence, are not considered justifiable forms of political action. Fasting to death as coercion can be justified because the consequence is not necessarily fatal. Most modern instances of this occur under medical supervision, with activists receiving intravenous fluids. However, just intention plays a significant role because despite the just end, sometimes people participate in activities to gain attention or ‘go viral’.

Property damage discussed in Chapter 2.2.4 would be justified if the conditions of proportionality and transparency were respected. It follows that most of the protest activities with fringe violence or intentional but marginal or reversible property damage such as defacing the website and blocking the data access are deemed justified political actions. Nevertheless, the actions should not be indiscriminate to cause unintentional situations such as the fatality of the participants. Furthermore, the proportionality condition necessitates that irreplaceable properties like priceless artworks (e.g. valuable paintings) and historical structures (e.g. ancient buildings and monuments) are not damaged.

Regarding speech, it is critical due to the strong influence of the media. As discussed in Chapter 2.3, the context of the situation, including the intention and outcome, is important in determining whether speech is an act of violence. For instance, in the BBC documentary “India: The Modi Question” (BBC Documentary, 2023), Narendra Modi is heard saying at 0:09s, “Get ready to kill or be killed. There is no other option.” Given the context of violence between Muslims and Hindus in Gujarat, these remarks might be a political strategy, but they are ethically highly questionable. The documentary was banned in India and removed from Twitter as well. Modi would have known that his speech ran a clearly foreseeable risk of inciting violence. It is likely that it was intended to do this. Hence, this speech cannot be considered justifiable.

Now, let us examine civil disobedience. Although civil disobedience is a prominent example of a nonviolent method, this is a very broad term that encompasses various forms and types of disobedience. In this context, whistleblowing will be discussed as a case study. There is ongoing debate about whether whistleblowing constitutes civil disobedience or not. Scheuerman’s position captures the essential parameters needed to understand the major arguments of the debate:

Admittedly, much of the debate about whistleblowing pertains to individual private employees within private organizations (e.g. the corporation), with civil disobedience instead interpreted as lawbreaking by groups of citizens aiming to alter public practices and policies – in other words, as taking place in very different institutional settings and involving distinctive social roles. (Scheuerman, 2021, p. 389)

Whistleblowing is generally understood as an individual act, while civil disobedience involves a group collectively resisting the law for the purpose of justice. For our purposes, it needs to be determined whether whistleblowing fulfils all the principles.

In terms of the first principle, accountability is crucial. Whistleblowers should take responsibility for their actions. While there may be mechanisms in place to protect the identity of whistleblowers for safety reasons in some organisations and jurisdictions, it is essential that the individual takes responsibility before the concerned authority. Public disclosure of the whistleblower's personal information is not necessary to fulfil the principle of transparency.

For the second condition, the cause must be just. As per Santoro and Kumar, "Whistleblowing is an act of public disclosure, carried out by an agent having privileged access to confidential or classified information of a private or public organisation, concerning present or past wrongdoings or an abuse of state power of immediate or potential harm to the public interest." (Santoro and Kumar, 2018, p. 38) As the word 'disclosure' suggests, this act is standing up against something or someone to unmask the wrongdoings. Santoro and Kumar (2018) have made a case for civic whistleblowing with the justification that "... whistleblowing contributes to the public interest when disclosures reveal crimes that cause an unfair allocation of the burdens of social cooperation ..." (p. 79). With the conception of public interest as the main goal, it can be assumed that the cause is justified.

To fulfil the third principle, there must be a just intention. In other words, the goal of whistleblowing has to be for the common good and not for personal advantage. While it is acknowledged that there may be risks associated with whistleblowing, such as retaliation, and that whistleblowers may require legal protection, transparency is crucial to ensuring the trust and authenticity of the just cause. If this is guaranteed and personal motives such as revenge or personal gain are categorically absent, then the principle of just intention is upheld.

The question of proportionality presents a more complex challenge to address. While it can be contended that the public's interests outweigh the costs, such as the damage to an organisation's reputation, the betrayal of the organisation or the act of theft may be forgiven. In certain cases, laws allow or even require individuals to report wrongdoings like corruption. The permissibility of such actions could be based on legitimacy as established by law or the rules of the organisation. For example, the EU Directive 2019/1937⁷⁷ on the protection of whistleblowers came into force on the 16th of December 2019, obligating EU member states to protect and enable whistleblowers. The method of accessing the documents may also play a role. If the whistleblower has to breach security systems and potentially harm other unrelated people or departments during the process, this may not be proportional to the cause. However, hacking a system per se may be justified if the means are proportional to the cause.

The case is less clear when political whistleblowing, also called government whistleblowing, is involved. The argument that supports the justification is based on the principle of democracy that safeguards the expression of dissent and is grounded in democratic accountability and transparency. The assumption is that political whistleblowing is a form of political dissent. Santoro and Kumar (2018) have argued that political whistleblowing is justified if the 'normative conditions of communication, intent, and public interest' are satisfied.

First, in order to comply with communicative constraints, Santoro and Kumar outline five conditions that must be met, such as the act being informative and relevant to the target audience, not conveying false or inadequate information, and the act of whistleblowing being the only means to convey the message. Second, they propose that the disclosure must be made with a justifiable intent, for which the following harm test has to be passed:

⁷⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/protection-whistleblowers_en

A disclosure is *prima facie* justified when the agent foresees that the probability of harm she may suffer from disclosing the information is higher than the probability she assigns to any personal benefit she may enjoy. (Santoro and Kumar, 2018, p. 139)

Third, the public interest is valid not only for civic whistleblowing but also for political kind.

A political disclosure is therefore in the public interest of citizens when it exposes (i) the violation or limitation of fundamental rights of citizens unbeknown to them; and (ii) the absence of mechanisms of assessment of the reasons for the limitation of those rights. (Santoro and Kumar, 2018, p. 146)

However, there is an argument that speaks against whistleblowing as it constitutes a breach of trust or obligation towards the country that one is supposed to serve. Disclosing classified government information may cause harm to the entire nation due to national security concerns. For instance, the lives of soldiers or people in the higher political hierarchy may be in danger or even harmed if the information gets into the wrong hands unknowingly. In general, national security is undermined because whistleblowing “reveal[s] sources and methods used to obtain secret intelligence” (Rahul Sagar, 2018 quoted in Santoro and Kumar, 2018, p. 29)

The actions of Edward Snowden are often viewed as a justified form of government whistleblowing by several authors (e.g. Santoro and Kumar (2018), Delmas (2015)). While much has already been written about Snowden, I will refrain from delving into detail. In summary, the majority of the public and scholars consider his case to fulfil the principles of just political action (transparency, just cause, just intention, and proportionality). However, the United States government does not share this view. Since 2013, Snowden has been in

exile, where he acquired Russian citizenship in September 2022 (Ilyushina and Nakashima, 2022). If he were to return to the United States, he would likely face charges.

7.2.2 Virtual World

In Chapter 6, the problems in the conception of nonviolence regarding the virtual world and technological development were discussed. Here, I discuss the existing theories or arguments that offer answers regarding the ethics of cyberwar.

There are differing opinions among scholars in relation to cyber activities. One group of scholars accepts that there are changes due to cyber activities, but they believe that these changes are not significant enough to warrant separate attention. A second group of scholars contends that the new developments in the cyber world raise new ethical questions, but that these can be addressed using existing just war theory or a modified version thereof. A third group of scholars believes that the cyberworld represents a completely new domain and argues that a completely new theory is necessary to address its ethics and morality.

The first group of scholars, including Roger Crisp, has argued that the ethical issues arising from cyberwarfare are covered by standard ethical principles (Crisp, 2012). The title of his essay, “Cyberwarfare: No New Ethics Needed” conveys his belief. Similarly, Gartzke (2013) does not view cyberwar fundamentally as transforming either war or world affairs. In his opinion,

Cyberwarfare will most often occur as an adjunct to conventional warfare, or as a stop-gap and largely symbolic effort to express dissatisfaction with a foreign opponent. It is best to discuss cyberwar in these contexts, not as an independent, or even alternative form of conflict, but as an extension of the logic already expressed in combined arms battle. (Gartzke, 2013, p. 73)

In a similar vein, Larry May (2015a) urges that cyberattacks are not to be viewed as war but as something similar to embargoes because, like embargoes, they are more about harm to the property and infrastructure of a state. According to him, “cyberwar is badly named as a form of war.” He argues that “cyberattacks should be understood as a type of international pressure ...” or should “fall into the category of attacks that are short of armed attacks” (May, 2015a, p. 15).

Scholars like George Lucas and Matt Sleat, belong to the second group, which asserts that just war theory (JWT) is capable of handling the ethical issues raised by cyberwarfare. Lucas comes to the conclusion that “... nearly all of the principles of just war moral discourse that guide decisions and actions in conventional and irregular conflict world would find their counterpart or analogue in the cyber domain: just cause, legitimate authority, last resort and proportionality, for example” (Lucas, 2017a, 25). He named these principles *Jus in Silico*. However, he admits that there are problems of interpretation as well as limitations on acceptable or permissible action. He points out that further work is needed to “resolve the problems caused by the blurring of boundaries between kinetic and low-intensity conflict – uses of armed force, for example, rather than espionage and covert action” (Lucas, 2017a, 26). Additionally, he suggests that a brand-new approach to moral education and skilled military training may be necessary and something like a “code of the cyber warrior” would be required to develop and disseminate.

Mariarosaria Taddeo (Taddeo, 2016) belongs to the third group, which believes that the complications and challenges of the cyberworld require a completely new approach to handling ethical questions. She argues that JWT has the necessary but not sufficient tools to resolve the issues. To solve the problem, she proposes the notion of Information Warfare and suggests that JWT should be merged with Information Ethics. She introduces three principles

of Just Information Warfare (JIW) and argues that this approach solves the problem by considering not only the physical damage but also the damage to non-physical entities.

Matt Sleat has objected to the arguments by Taddeo and contended that a new theory is not required and the principles of JWT can be applied to the use of cyber weapons, at least in the case of *casus belli*. He has shown that the justification used for Just Information Warfare that they are non-physical, target non-humans, and are non-violent – was wrong. The reason is the human perspective. In his words, JIW “totally misses the necessarily political dimension of war. War is a relationship between groups of human beings, and specifically between political groups.” (Sleat, 2018, p. 332)

Sleat’s contention is built on the argument that cyberattacks can be very aggressive, even if they take nonviolent forms. The consequences could reach a significant level of disruption that harms vital human interests. This act of aggression can be *casus belli*. He gives an example of how the Tallinn Manual (largely) agreed that the Stuxnet worm represented a *casus belli* and that Iran would have been justified in retaliating. JWT should be amended to accommodate this level as *casus belli*, argues Sleat.

My Objections

The given solutions either ignore the problem of ethical questions completely (the first group) or treat all activities in the cyberworld as one topic (the second and third groups). Not all cyberattacks are a part of cyberwarfare. Some may be carried out by hacktivists as a protest using DDoS attacks. Other cyberattacks may be executed by pranksters. JWT is only applicable when the aggression in the form of cyberattacks is violent and part of a cyberwar or war. For other types of cyberattacks, a different approach is required to determine their justifiability. Further, JWT, war and cyberwar assume that the warring partners are states, in political actions, the involved units can be non-state actors or other communities, but they are

not necessarily political by nature. For example, even a doctor's association could stage a protest against the government using civil disobedience.

How does the Just Political Action Framework address problems associated with the virtual world?

In Chapter 6.1.2, the practical problems that hinder the definition of virtual civil disobedience as nonviolent were discussed. These problems include the intentional nature of actions in the cyber domain, the different types of harm that can be inflicted, and the difficulty in identifying the actor and determining the worthiness of the goal in the virtual world. The principles of a just political action framework address these issues.

The virtual world offers a range of activities, such as making videos viral, sharing or retweeting messages to create awareness, hashtag activism, online petitions, and planned ethical hacking of servers with a specific goal. However, other activities, such as stealing data, harassing people, and bringing servers down, are per se not justifiable. Activities usually include both online and offline endeavours. The intention, cause, perpetrator, and method of action determine whether a political action is justified. For example, hacktivism is not, in and of itself, a just political action for several reasons. In hacktivism, the participants usually come together spontaneously and prefer to stay anonymous. The goal is not always a just cause and many activities by the group Anonymous have been carried out for the sake of fun. As Delmas states, "... many Anons brandish pranksterism as an identity and badge of pride and embrace their status as rebels or villains of the Information Age. They are not committed to the standards of civility" (Delmas, 2018b, p. 70).

Anonymous hackers are often motivated by a desire to seek revenge or demonstrate their power to governments or large corporations. For example, back in 2010 and 2011, the group Lulzsec targeted journalistic websites, causing widespread disruption for no apparent

reason other than to cause chaos (Arthur, 2023). Although their primary objective is to combat internet censorship, their methods frequently result in harm to the general public. The Tallinn Manual (*Tallinn Manual on The International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare*, 2013) defines a hacktivist as “a private citizen who on his or her own initiative engages in hacking for, inter alia, ideological, political, religious or patriotic reasons.” However, as per Rule 35, “Civilians enjoy protection against attack unless and for such time as they directly participate in hostilities.” This implies that civilians engaged in hacking activities could become targets during a war. Thus, it is crucial to distinguish between hacktivism, which is activism carried out through hacking into computer systems, and other forms of cyber activity. Hacktivism can only be considered justified if it is carried out with a justifiable objective, intent, transparency, and proportionate structural damage. Hacktivism can only be justified as a means and not as an end.

On the other hand, a typical example of just political action in a virtual world is ethical hacking. Ethical hackers penetrate the systems with the aim of exposing the vulnerabilities without exploiting them. The action by René Rehme in October 2022 is one such example (Rehme, 2022). He infiltrated the systems of several municipalities in Germany, identified security vulnerabilities or security loopholes, and informed the concerned institutions immediately. Given that municipalities possess a considerable amount of private data that criminals could steal and use as a ransom, it needs to be secured properly.

In early 2023, René Rehme and Eva Wolfangel hacked into the systems of German Universities to test how the systems would react if they were attacked. During the experiment, they managed to access the personal documents of students, including examination results and certificates. Such unauthorised access raises concerns about the potential for harm if such sensitive information falls into the wrong hands, especially if the hackers were to modify the

examination results. In both examples above, the involved individuals were known, their cause and intention were just, and the scale of their actions was proportionate.

Drawing upon the paradigmatic instances outlined in 6.2.1, it may be posited that the case of Stuxnet could be deemed justified as per JPAF if the criterion of transparency were fulfilled. This contention is based on the premise that the objective was to impede a nuclear action, constituting a “just cause”, and the intention was to sabotage solely to achieve this objective, which is a “just intention” and is therefore extremely confined to the infrastructure in question (proportionality). However, cases such as WannaCry, Emotet, and data breaches cannot be considered justifiable, as the criteria of just cause and intention are not met. In these instances, the intention appears to be to inflict harm, with further aims such as financial gain. Moreover, the question of proportionality also remains unaddressed in these circumstances.

To better understand the nature of a conflict in the cyberworld, it is necessary to categorise the activities involved. It is crucial to determine whether the actions constitute state-sponsored hacktivism, hacktivism, espionage, cybercrime or cyberwar. As discussed earlier, for cyberwar, JWT is reasonably sufficient. I agree with George Lucas as well as Matt Sleat that all of the principles of just war theory, including just cause, legitimate authority, last resort, and proportionality, can be applied to cyberwar as well.

However, I argue that *Jus in Silico*, or the application of just war theory to cyber conflict, is applicable only in the context of a true cyberwar. I believe that a distinction should be made between a genuine act of war and state-sponsored hacktivism. For example, a cyber conflict may merely serve as a display of power, similar to muscle flexing in the traditional world. States may engage in acts of espionage, data leaks, or virtual disruptions as a means of testing their capabilities or exerting pressure on opponents. The attack on Lithuania’s institutions by Killnet, the Russia-affiliated hacker group, in June 2022 is one such example

(LRT, 2022). This attack was a retaliatory measure in response to Russia's Kaliningrad transit sanctions imposed by Lithuania. It would be inaccurate to declare this incident a cyberwar. Instead, it resembles a diplomatic action like sending the ambassadors back to their home country. If the concerned authority is transparent about such actions, they may even be justified political actions.

However, state-sponsored hacktivism could be a part of cyberwarfare or escalate into a full-fledged cyberwar. For instance, an act of sabotage like Stuxnet could be considered part of a cyberwar. International law currently classifies acts of sabotage as acts of war. In most cases, cyber conflicts typically remain a part of the regular power game between the states at the moment.

JWT can undoubtedly be applied in the context of cyberwar. However, I view cyberwar as an extension of conventional war, rather than a distinct field. In the past, states engaged in conventional warfare with the aim of maximizing their goals, such as resource acquisition, military power demonstration, or undermining the economy of the opposing state, while minimizing their losses. They used land, sea, and air as platforms for these activities, employing weapons like spears in ancient times; later, firearms; then, automatic guns; eventually, biological and chemical weapons; and finally, the atomic bomb. The cyber domain has now emerged as a new and additional platform for warfare. Similarly, software programmes and technology like AI are the new and additional weapons.

The main reason for this theory is that any war has a human factor. Machines like machine guns and atom bombs do not have the capability to attack on their own: rather, they require human intervention. Conflicts between states or groups often precede any war, and I believe that the human element will always play a role in cyberwarfare as well. For instance, in the case of Stuxnet, the programme had to be delivered to the target without being detected.

Rid (2013) suggests, "... the attackers had to deliver the malicious code via a removable hard drive such as a USB flash drive ..." (p. 84) which requires human activity in the physical world. So, Thomas Rid is correct in his assertion that "cyberwar will not take place" in the sense that there will not be a war that is solely fought in the cyber domain. When Rid states that "hacking will reduce real world violence", what he is suggesting is that it will reduce human casualties because technology allows it to work from a distance and destroy the enemy target. The kamikaze-style attack is not necessary, as the programme can be calibrated such that an aircraft can be made to explode at a predefined hour from afar.

This theory aligns with my view that political actions should be judged based on their justification rather than being categorised as violent or nonviolent. To establish the conditions for justification in the 21st century, the international system requires a rule of law that is appropriate for the current global landscape. These conditions could be developed using the concept of the Just Political Action Framework. Just war theory should only be employed when it meets the criteria for a just war.

To summarise so far, actions taken under the Just Political Action Framework, such as hacktivism and civil disobedience, can be justified if they adhere to the five principles of the framework. However, if the action causes disproportionate harm, it is not considered justified. For example, doxing or trolling can impose serious risks of emotional harm. The use of drones with AI for delivering medicine or engaging in espionage can be justified, but using them for targeted killing or destruction of critical infrastructure, such as power supply, would be considered unjustified.

7.3 Way Forward

A comprehensive understanding of conflicts and violence is essential to the study of nonviolence. The significance of data and information in today's world cannot be overstated.

Despite the ongoing scholarly debates and the development of theories, the practical application of laws and guidelines is equally important in managing real-world life. The rapid advancement of technology presents both opportunities and challenges, as evidenced by the need for a law to mitigate the negative effects of Artificial Intelligence (AI)⁷⁸. Tallinn Manual, an academic, non-binding study on international law as applied in the cyber context, serves as a useful guideline of “black letter rules.” While this manual may provide valuable insight into cyberwar and cyber conflicts, which are beyond the scope of my thesis, which focuses on (non)violence in the cyber domain, its continued development and collaboration are necessary.

Just as soldiers are trained for combat, agents involved in cyberwarfare must receive appropriate training. The companies that work on developing the technology, like software and hardware for AI-related products, also require training on, for example, responsibly using AI. The importance of regulation extends beyond preventing misuse and is crucial for maintaining responsible practices in everyday life and industry. To protect personal data, the distinction between privacy and anonymity is important. Laws like GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) are necessary to protect the privacy of the public and prevent the state from becoming an overreaching authority, exemplified by “Big Brother”, as envisioned in George Orwell’s novel 1984.

It is not difficult to envision a scenario where two equally capable countries refrain from launching a cyberattack, even during a tense conflict, as it would result in the complete destruction of each other’s infrastructure. In a similar vein, the development of cyber capabilities in the near future could potentially serve as a deterrent to cyberwar, much like how nuclear capability has deterred physical warfare. The necessity for moral principles to be

⁷⁸ In December 2023, the EU member countries approved the AI Act. More info at <https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/high-level-summary/>

applied to the intentions and outcomes of actors rather than to their actions or methods cannot be overstated. Ethical knives or ethical weapons do not exist. It is crucial that those who employ these methods and actions act in a morally responsible manner. This requires the provision of guidelines that enable them to make practical decisions, as well as encourage careful reflection and deliberation. Despite the fact that technology allows a person or organisation to accomplish far more than in the past, the observation made by Gene Sharp, “In modern times, the State is always stronger than any other single institution of the society.” (Sharp, 1980, p. 323) remains valid. As such, it is essential that states work towards developing better laws and guidelines.

Chapter Conclusion

Starting from the premise that political and social actions that carry the potential for power and coercion must be justified to ensure ethical soundness, I argued that for any action to be justified, the end and the means have to be justified. I discussed the traditional ethical theories: virtue ethics, consequentialist ethics, deontological ethics, dirty hands approach and Just War Theory, and how these approaches are not sufficient to address ethics from a means-end perspective. I proposed the concept of just political action that avoids the ambiguity between violence and nonviolence and instead focuses on the justification of the actions. I defended the advantages of this holistic view. I presented an ethical framework with five principles: transparency, just cause, just intention, proportionality and the condition for cyberattacks to be used only as a means when all the previous conditions are fulfilled. Further, the necessity of these principles was discussed along with some objections.

The just political action framework (JPAF) was applied to some previous and new examples demonstrating its applicability in both conventional and cyber domains. I reiterated my contention that the cyber world should be understood as an extension of the real world as

political actions are usually a mixture of online and offline activities. However, the complexity and challenge of determining proportionality remain. The trade-off is always having nothing against having at least something to ponder and use as a guideline. The question is not choosing between violence and nonviolence. The question is whether the action is genuinely justified. A blanket statement on the justification of civil disobedience or any other political activity cannot be made. As a way forward, the states need to work further on the morality and ethics of political actions and their participants.

8. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

Research is creating new knowledge.

~ Neil Armstrong

In the final chapter of my thesis, I first synthesise the entire work by examining how the claim was defended in each chapter and how it relates to the overall contribution. Second, I reflect on my limitations and challenges encountered during the research process. Third, I broaden the discussion by considering the topic from a broader perspective. Lastly, I propose potential future research directions that could build upon the work that has been accomplished.

8.1 Synthesizing the Findings

Throughout my thesis, I argued that the assumption that all else being equal, nonviolence is always ethically superior to violence is not valid because several cases of nonviolent activities have moral issues due to the involved harm. I demonstrated this by providing counterarguments from various perspectives. Chapter 2 discussed the definitional and conceptual issues, highlighting the lack of specificity in existing definitions, which makes it difficult to differentiate between violence and nonviolence. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether some of the political actions are genuinely nonviolent. Chapter 3 presented that the perceived ethical superiority mainly comes from a philosophical and religious background. History evidently showed that the root of nonviolence was pure, but contemporary nonviolent activities are often strategic and pragmatic.

Further, Chapter 4 demonstrated that nonviolence is not fundamentally distinct from violence if factors like the use of power and coercion are taken into account. This is particularly relevant in contemporary political actions, where strategic or pragmatic

nonviolence often shares similar characteristics with violence. Building on these shared troubled issues, I argued in Chapter 5 that nonviolence also requires justification, and ethical permissibility cannot be assumed as a priori given. This argument is made on the basis that violence is harmful and requires justification, and therefore, nonviolence, which can also involve harm, should also be subject to ethical scrutiny. Chapter 6 introduced the idea that new technical developments are disrupting the traditional distinction between violence and nonviolence. This further emphasized the need for a broader perspective on the ethics of political actions. Based on the insights of the research, Chapter 7 proposed the concept of just political action and five core principles as a framework for ethically evaluating political actions in the 21st century.

The questions raised in the introduction chapter are answered in the short and precise form below:

i. Are nonviolent methods genuinely nonviolent (e.g. self-immolation)?⁷⁹

Answer: No, not all seemingly nonviolent methods are nonviolent if we consider different kinds of harm. For example, self-immolation cannot be considered genuinely nonviolent if self-directed harm is defined as violence.

ii. Are nonviolent methods clearly distinct from violent methods?⁸⁰

Answer: Not always. There are many ambiguous cases like fasting unto death or cyberattack. The purity of nonviolence and the attached ethical values are rooted in religion and philosophy. In regard to political objectives, coercion and power are used, which are inherent in both violent and nonviolent methods. In the case of the cyber domain, the differentiation

⁷⁹ Discussed in Chapter 2

⁸⁰ Discussed in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 and Chapter 6

between kinetic and non-kinetic is missing, which blurs or overlaps the concept of violence and nonviolence.

iii. In what circumstances are paradigm cases of nonviolent methods justifiable?

a. Is it still nonviolent politics if the action provokes the other party to use violence?⁸¹

Civil disobedience or mass civil resistance builds on getting public support through the media. For this, the strategy of provocation is often used. For example, getting arrested by the police catches the media's attention. Sometimes, this could lead to riots and violence by the sympathisers.

b. How far is it justifiable to violate 'democratic' rules and regulations even if nonviolent methods are used?⁸²

I use the means-end perspective while analysing the issue of justification in nonviolent methods. From this view, the topic of what 'democratic' rules and regulations constitute is not the focus. For civil disobedience to be justified, both the goal and the method used must be justified.

iv. What ethical objections are there in using nonviolent methods? What moral worries do they raise?

a. Aren't violence and nonviolence similar regarding the use of power (through coercion, strategy) in achieving political goals?

Answer: Yes. In a political context, the means used are some forms of power and coercion. Both violent and nonviolent political methods use coercion and power, although the degree and form may vary.

⁸¹ Discussed in Chapter 4

⁸² Discussed in Chapter 5

b. Is it ethical to involve the general public or onlookers in nonviolent political actions (without their explicit consent)?⁸³

Answer: In the conventional form of nonviolent resistance, the public plays a crucial role. The ethical decision must take into consideration that they are not harmed.

c. Is it ethical to use violence to oneself even if it is willingly done?⁸⁴

Answer: It depends on the purpose for which the action is taken. If self-directed violence has a political objective, it is morally questionable even if it is willingly done because there is subtle coercion at play.

v. Is cyberwarfare/cyberattack a nonviolent form of politics?⁸⁵

Answer: Even though there is no consensus on whether cyberattacks are conceptually violence, I have argued that some cyberattacks are violent methods. If violent cyberattacks take the form of full-fledged war, cyberwarfare would also be considered violence.

Contribution to Theory

This research has widened up ethical debates on nonviolent political actions and has filled the theory gap by contributing to the theoretical understanding of nonviolence. It is no longer possible to make a blanket statement on the moral permissibility of nonviolent political actions due to the harm that may result. The theory of nonviolence requires a critical examination of its guiding principles in contemporary society. Given the difficulty of defining violence and nonviolence and delineating them, it is crucial to explore alternative frameworks that help justify nonviolence in the political realm. This research has proposed one such framework. However, this is just a starting point. As technology continues to advance, it will

⁸³ Discussed in Chapters 5 and 6

⁸⁴ Chapter 2

⁸⁵ Discussed in Chapter 6

undoubtedly impact society and the way various actions are taken. Therefore, the discussion and theorising of the ethics of nonviolence must keep pace with these changes.

Contribution to the Real World

The research presented in this thesis, while predominantly theoretical in nature, can also serve as a practical source of motivation for individuals involved in political and social activism.

The thesis has raised and addressed numerous ethical issues related to political actions, which can be of significance to politicians, lawmakers, and political and social activists. Understanding and acknowledging the perspectives of both parties is crucial in political actions aimed at achieving specific goals. It is critical to understand that neither the state nor the activists are always right or wrong; and that the activities must remain justified, regardless of which party initiates them. Ultimately, the goal is to minimize harm and achieve a mutually beneficial outcome. It is crucial that ethical and moral values guide political decisions and activities, as the consequences of these decisions can have a significant and lasting impact on society, both positive and negative. For instance, when a law is passed regarding abortion, the consequences for the entire society can be enormous. It is my hope that ethical and moral values guide such decisions and constrain the harms involved.

Nonviolence is often viewed as desirable and violence as undesirable, but this perception has been influenced by historical developments in religion and philosophy. However, upon examining closely and analytically, the issue of violence and nonviolence is complex and not as clear-cut as it may seem in theory. Nonviolent actions may not always be as nonviolent as they appear, and we must justify these actions in order to address ethical questions. This is made even more difficult by the overlap or blurring of the general characteristics of violence and nonviolence due to technological advancements. It is important to recognise that moral and legal questions are intertwined, and while we need rules and

regulations, we also need ethics to guide these principles and ensure they are followed. For example, a software programmer must be aware of societal issues and build programmes that address or at least do not ignore problems such as racism. This research provides food for thought for those in positions of power, including politicians, activists, and policymakers.

	Chapter 2 Defining and Conceptualising Violence and Nonviolence	Chapter 3 How Distinct is Nonviolence – Historical Perspective	Chapter 4 How Distinct is Nonviolence – Analytical Perspective	Chapter 5 Moral Justification for Nonviolence	Chapter 6 Shift in Theory and Practice due to Technological Revolution	Chapter 7 Ethics of Political Actions in the 21 st Century
Key Arguments/ Findings	Some cases of nonviolent methods are not genuinely nonviolent.	The notion of ethical superiority of nonviolence has historical reasons.	Both violent and nonviolent methods are instrumental when it comes to achieving social or political goals.	We ask for justification of violent methods due to the harms involved. Nonviolent methods that involve harms also require justification.	Activities, such as cyberattacks and hacktivism compel us to reflect on the ethics of nonviolence. Contemporary nonviolent methods are a mixture of online and offline activities.	Framework with principles for Just Political Actions from the means-end perspective is necessary.
Reasons	No consensus and ambiguity in definitions. Conceptual ambiguity due to contextual dependency.	Purity of nonviolence stems from religion and philosophy. Contemporary nonviolent methods are largely strategic and pragmatic.	Both violent and nonviolent methods use power and coercion. Nonviolence as philosophy (e.g. Gandhi) that uses persuasion instead of coercion is rare.	Power and coercion often involve harm such as exploitative, manipulative, opportunistic, intended, unintended and foreseeable harm. Some nonviolent methods are morally equivalent to violent methods. Nonviolent means do not guarantee just ends.	Activities in the cyber domain can be harmful and destructive without always being lethal. The demarcation of violence and nonviolence overlaps or blurs due to missing kinetic and non kinetic differentiation.	Dichotomy between violent and nonviolent methods is not helpful. We need a solution that accommodates both online and offline activities. JWT is only for war.

Figure 4: Key Arguments and Findings

8.2 Reflections

As a technical expert, I initially found it challenging to present my claims confidently. I had an intuition, a concept, and many questions but no solid evidence. I preferred using real-world examples to illustrate my point. In computer science research, some data exists or is collected, and the researcher performs some form of analysis on it. However, it took me some time to realize that my data consists of the vast body of literature spanning history and the contemporary situation. My interpretation and understanding of existing works then serve as the guiding principle for answering the questions at hand.

The limitations of research in theory are that there are no concrete factual data. The data consists of existing theories. Coming from an Asian background, I sometimes found the literature to be one-sided. This is likely because the majority of researchers come from Western countries. In the beginning, I was hesitant to make a strong assertion. This may be attributed to Asian modesty. A PhD thesis can only cover a very narrow area. I could read hundreds of books and still not feel sufficiently prepared. In theory, ideas often contradict one another. There are fewer hard facts to support arguments. The challenge lies in convincing other scholars who review your work. I can still feel the dilemma, as I initially preferred to look for more examples rather than delving into theories. Perhaps I thought that I could better clarify my point through examples as facts. It took me some time to accept that a new theory can be proven by applying existing theories and concepts. Theorising a topic requires extensive research, wider discussion, and considering different perspectives. My efforts, as one research thesis, are still only a small part of the larger body of work.

I selected the subject of my research to be the ethics of nonviolence. However, a thorough understanding of nonviolence requires an examination of related topics such as violence, power, ethics, just war theory, cyberattacks, and so on. These topics are extensive, and the challenge for me was to stay within the scope of my research while still addressing the relevant issues in relation to nonviolence. Despite my best efforts to conduct research and review the relevant literature, I may have missed some information. This could be due to three reasons. First, it is possible that I simply overlooked it. The advantage of part-time study is I was able to continue my research while attending to other obligations. However, it often took me some time to return to the topic after a break. Given that more than six years have passed since I began my research, I may have missed some recent developments that occurred after the literature review was completed. Second, my research approach may have differed from

others, leading to a different prioritization of important literature. This is analytical theoretical research, and I hope that others will be motivated to explore these questions from different perspectives. Finally, my knowledge of the continental approach is limited. While I have read some works by a few continental thinkers, I was not able to give this area the attention it deserves.

8.3 Broader Discussion and Future Research

The current state of research on nonviolence seems to be inadequate when compared to works on violence. It is possible that practical politics may have a preference for violence over nonviolence. However, the transformative potential of nonviolence can only be unleashed if we are critical of its moral and ethical implications. The focus of this work has been on the ethics of nonviolence from a holistic perspective, primarily in the political sphere. However, ethical issues related to the digital gap in the world could also be explored. It is important to consider whether individuals without equal digital access are being excluded from nonviolent activities, as many activities now take place online. Moreover, the role of the large media companies is also not to be underestimated who have the power to regulate speech in social media platforms through algorithms that are not open to the public. Many ideas were not integrated into this work due to time and scope constraints. These ideas could be further explored in smaller or larger projects.

Further Research on Theories

While engaged in research on the subject of *power*, I encountered the works of Michel Foucault and the concept of biopolitics, which I found to be of utmost importance. Additionally, I came across the concept of necropolitics by Achille Mbembe, which I also consider essential. Among the concepts I initially considered for my thesis was social contract theory, although I ultimately decided not to include it. All of these concepts are crucial in

relation to future technological advancements and political activities. With the aid of current technology, state constantly monitoring and controlling its citizens is made even more feasible. The idea of a panopticon without the knowledge or consent of the citizens is a possibility. Social media feeds assist and reinforce our cognitive biases. It is imperative that we exercise caution and not accept things at face value. States may not require soldiers or spies nor need to resort to violence to exert control over their citizens. Seemingly nonviolent methods can be employed to achieve the same harmful or detrimental outcomes on public freedom. Data can be a powerful weapon, and further research could explore the implications of biopolitics and necropolitics in the context of superficially nonviolent activities that exercise social and political power over individuals' lives.

Additionally, it would be interesting to investigate whether violence and nonviolence are essentially contested concepts. The nature of war has been the subject of discussion for centuries, and it is now necessary to extend this discussion to the cyber domain. Questions that need to be addressed include: What kinds of cyberattacks justify a preemptive strike or preemptive war? Is election interference a case in point? What kinds of cyberattacks constitute a last-resort option before declaring war? As technology continues to evolve, the challenge is to consistently adapt to changing circumstances.

Possible Further Quantitative Research

The current research on nonviolent political actions has mainly concentrated on the success or failure of these methods. It would be beneficial to examine the extent to which these methods align with the principles outlined in this thesis. If necessary, the framework could be elaborated. By collecting data on various types of civil disobedience, protests, or other nonviolent methods and applying the concept of just political action, the scope of the

discourse on violence and nonviolence could be expanded. Such deductive research would yield valuable insights.

Necessary Work on Laws and Guidelines

Furthermore, it is crucial to develop appropriate laws and guidelines to protect personal data in the era of big data. While Europe has implemented the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), similar legislation is needed globally. The recent Artificial Intelligence Act passed by the EU parliament is welcoming and similar international legislation would be necessary. The Tallinn Manual serves as a basic guideline, but it must be improved and made binding to address cyberwar ethics and other cyber-related debates better. These discussions will contribute to a deeper understanding and theorising of nonviolence in contemporary society.

As final concluding remarks, this thesis aims to advance the ethical discussion on nonviolent political actions and theorise nonviolence from this perspective. As the debate on the pros and cons of AI and the impact of tools like ChatGPT continues, it is essential to explore the ethical considerations in decision-making, particularly in the political realm.

Violence and nonviolence are not mutually exclusive; it is the predominance of the one or the other that labels a struggle.

~ Nelson Mandela

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