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Gandhi and His Legacies

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Game Theory See Decision Theory and Game Theory

Gandhi and His Legacies

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The Gandhi Story

Major Themes in Gandhi's Life and Thought

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Further Reading

Glossary

Ahimsa Nonharmfulness or noninjury, a concept rooted in the ancient *Vedas* and a key ethical principle in Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

Ashram A disciplined spiritual community; for Gandhi a location for training, support, and mobilization for *satyagraha*, as well as spiritual practice and experiments in building a nonviolent social order with diverse races, creeds, castes, and classes.

Brahmacharya An ancient spiritual practice that cultivates nonattachment, including celibacy; literally, conduct of one approaching God (Brahman).

Civil Disobedience The deliberate violation of an unjust law in order to deliver a moral and political message, popularized by Henry David Thoreau and a basic element of Gandhian nonviolence.

Noncooperation Acts that deliberately restrict, withhold, or discontinue social, economic, or political cooperation with an institution, policy, or government. A general class of methods of nonviolent action.

Nonviolent Direct Action A technique of action in conflicts in which participants conduct the struggle by doing – or refusing to do – certain acts without using

physical violence. It may also be called nonviolent struggle.

Principled Nonviolence Nonharmfulness and nonviolence as a way of life or spiritual practice, rather than strategic nonviolence in which nonviolent strategies are used more narrowly as a means to an ends.

Sarvodaya The welfare of all, or upliftment of all.

Satyagraha Nonviolent resistance or a nonviolent campaign, sometimes called Truth Force or Soul Force, from the Sanskrit *Satya*, truth, and *agraha* from the Sanskrit prefix *a* and the root *grah*, thus meaning grasping or holding the truth. The term was coined by Gandhi to replace the concept of passive resistance.

Satyagrahi One who engages in *satyagraha*.

Shanti Sena Peace brigades, or peace army; Gandhi's vision of a nonviolent force that would keep the peace from the village to the international level, transforming conflicts and engaging in constructive work that would undermine conditions potentially leading to conflict such as injustice and a lack of resources.

Swaraj Self-government or home rule, from the Sanskrit *svarajyam*, 'own rule'.

The Gandhi Story

"There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible. But in the end, they always fail. Think on it . . . always. All through history, the way of

truth and love has always won." That was the belief and the vision of Mahatma Gandhi. He described that, and it remains today a vision that is good and true. (US President, Ronald Reagan at the United Nations, 24 September 1984)

Few individuals have captured the collective imagination as Mohandas K. Gandhi, not only the Father of Independent India, but also of modern nonviolence. Born into a family of public servants in an Indian princely state in 1869, Gandhi grew up in a household where his father was an administrator trapped between British colonial agents and Indians. His mother was a devout Hindu who conducted, according to Gandhi, an “endless chain of fasts and vows.” This tension between his mother’s spiritual orientation and his father’s politics and public service laid the groundwork for his life’s work which, although he was trained as a lawyer in England, consisted primarily in what he called “experiments with Truth,” that is, the application of nonviolence to personal and public affairs.

In addition to his most well-known role as the leader of the Indian Independence Movement, which helped to create the momentum for the end of the colonial period, Gandhi also inspires subsequent generations of nonviolent activists and movements, from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the US Civil Rights Movement to the anti-apartheid movement of South Africa and prodemocracy and human rights movements in every continent.

Scholars, activists, critics, and admirers have written much about Gandhi, and others, making an evaluation of his legacies complicated. Indeed, the US Library of Congress lists 999 titles that include the term ‘Gandhi’ (as of January 2008), the majority of them written in recent decades, almost all of them about the Mahatma. This article will briefly review the history and basic tenets of Gandhian nonviolence and examine his impact in various spheres.

Gandhi as a Counterplayer

Psychoanalyst Erik Erikson points out in *Gandhi’s Truth* that Gandhi is a “counterplayer.” Whereas conventional wisdom assumes that power grows out of the barrel of a gun, or is given to those who steer a course down the mainstream, Gandhi’s success lies in not accepting dominant paradigms but in challenging them. At the core of his challenge, Lester Kurtz observes, is a synthesis of the two prevailing but contradictory teachings in the world’s religious and ethical traditions about force and violence, the warrior and the pacifist.

On the one hand, the warrior motif allows or requires the use of force as a sort of sacred obligation; on the other hand, the pacifist believes that it is a sacred duty not to kill or to harm others. Gandhi’s nonviolent activist – the *satyagrahi* (holder to the Truth) – fights like the warrior, but like the pacifist avoids harming or killing the adversary. It is this key insight, drawn from multiple spiritual traditions and his insights into practical political dynamics that led Gandhi to develop a new paradigm of conflict that some scholars consider transformative.

Noted conflictologist Johan Galtung goes so far as to claim that Gandhi is to conflict what Einstein and Newton are to physics.

South Africa and the Birth of Nonviolence

After studying law in England and being admitted to the bar at the High Court of Chancery, Gandhi returned home to practice law in India. Contrary to our image of him as one of the most prominent men of the twentieth century, Gandhi was by his own account unable to function in court and was speechless. In an attempt to salvage his legal career, he took a job doing legal work for a trading firm in South Africa run by Indian-Muslims. Shortly after his arrival he had a life-changing experience: he was unceremoniously thrown off of a train in Pietermaritzburg because he was “colored” and refused to move from the first-class compartment where he held a ticket. It is a classic story of tragedy transformed – this personal experience of raw racism prompted his development of nonviolent methods of struggle against injustice. Moreover, as his granddaughter Ela Gandhi puts it, the Mahatma “started to look at the world from a poverty-trapped peasant’s perspective rather than a middle-class bourgeois perspective.”

On 11 September 1906, he launched his first nonviolent campaign against a new pass law imposed by the South African regime that required all Indians to carry passes distinguishing their racial identity and granting the police access to their homes without a warrant. He returned home to India a hero in 1915 having developed all of the basic strategies that he later put into practice to fight colonial domination and the discrimination of the caste system and against women.

Influenced by John Ruskin’s spiritual treatise, *Unto this Last*, Gandhi came to advocate *sarvodaya*, the upliftment or welfare of all – society must strive for the well-being of all of its members, not just an elite few or even a majority. He also began to develop the concept of *swadeshi*, local self-sufficiency, that emphasized the value of small local industries over large-scale industrialization.

During his time in South Africa the basic foundation of what became Gandhian nonviolence was firmly laid. Unhappy with the implications of the term ‘passive resistance’ often used to describe it, Gandhi coined the term *satyagraha* from the Sanskrit *Satya*, truth, and *agraha* from the Sanskrit prefix *a* and the root *grab*, thus meaning grasping or holding the truth. It is sometimes translated into English as Truth Force or Soul Force; a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) series and subsequent video game designed to teach the art of nonviolent strategy refers to it as “a force more powerful.”

Gandhi also experimented with his own version of the traditional Hindu spiritual community, the *ashram*, transforming it into a tool for radical social change and setting

the stage for his later nonviolent struggles in which he resisted the existing order with one hand, and began replacing it with a more just, equitable one on the other. In his Phoenix and Tolstoy Ashrams in South Africa, he brought together in community a group of people that cut across then existing social divides: men and women, people of various faith traditions, classes, nationalities, and castes. The *ashram* became a place for training of recruits for the movement and a support network for activists thrown into jail or out of work because of their participation.

He deepened his spiritual commitment and at the same time became active in political struggle, as well as developing a serious critique of Western civilization, calling for an end to colonial rule and *Hind swaraj*, that is Indian home rule.

The Indian Freedom Movement

Gandhi returned to India as a hero and the leadership of the Indian National Congress immediately attempted to enlist his support in the freedom movement. An elder statesman of the movement, Gopal Krishna Gokhale arranged for Gandhi to be supported first to rediscover his homeland, and later to begin the process of mobilizing people to participate in the movement.

Applying the strategies and tactics of nonviolent direct action he developed in South Africa, Gandhi became the uncontested leader of the Freedom Movement and mobilized millions of the poor, as well as appealed to the middle and upper classes to use their resources and talents to struggle for independence. Two of his landmark *satyagraha* campaigns – the boycott of British cloth and the Salt March demonstrate key aspects of his approach.

In 1920 Gandhi went to the heart of the colonial system by calling upon Indians to boycott imported British cloth and spin their own thread and weave their own cloth. The British economic system, built on the technological revolutions in textile production, was dependent upon raw materials and foreign markets. India's indigenous textile industry was undercut by British mechanized production and it was that relationship that constituted a major reason for the existence of colonial domination.

The spinning wheel became a symbol of resistance to British rule while at the same time tapped into the vast storehouse of labor that India had, creating an alternative institution that became a hallmark of nonviolent action elsewhere with its combination of boycotts and alternative production and markets. Congress provided everyone with a spinning wheel who wanted one, in exchange for a certain amount of homespun thread donated back to the movement, in turn facilitating the purchase of more equipment and the recruitment of more freedom fighters. The act of spinning was at the same time

a gesture of defiance and a spiritual meditation, as well as economic production.

Similarly, Gandhi's famous 1930 Salt March has great symbolic, as well as practical value. He organized a 400-km march from Ahmedabad to the seashore at Dandi to make salt himself in defiance of a British tax on this basic element of life in a warm climate. Thousands joined him in the march and in creating a parallel industry of salt making that deliberately rejected British control over Indian economics; thousands were arrested, but the movement continued with its leadership in jail until finally the Viceroy, Lord Edward Irwin, negotiated a settlement in 1931 that brought the civil disobedience to an end, set free the prisoners, and led to the Round Table Conference in London, where Gandhi was invited as the representative of the Indian National Congress.

The Salt March is paradigmatic of Gandhi's nonviolence: it is dramatic and symbolic noncooperation, strategically focused on a specific goal, mobilized mass participation, involved civil disobedience, and had a profound cultural resonance. It both resisted an existing regime and empowered people to create alternatives; it was used not as an end in itself, but as a means for organizing and mobilizing further resistance. Above all, it demonstrated the power of the people to resist a violent regime without violence. Not only did the march rivet the attention of the Indian and international media for an extended period of time, but the protestors arrived at the seashore on the anniversary of the most vivid symbol of the violence of the British Empire, the Jallianwala Bagh (or Amritsar) massacre of 1919 when the British Indian Army had opened fire on unarmed demonstrators resulting in hundreds of casualties and undermining the legitimacy of British rule. In a classic example of repression management, Gandhi turned the tragic effort to suppress the movement into an occasion for mobilization.

The narrative of the heroic Gandhi is not the only one, of course, and he has a chorus of critics from the British who see him as a disturber of the peace and a threat to the empire, to some insurgents who see him as playing into the hands of the British with his gestures of respect and insistence on nonviolence. (Winston Churchill once sent a telegram to the Indian Viceroy demanding to know "Why isn't Gandhi dead yet?") Some blame him for the partition of India and Pakistan while others see him as an anachronistic embarrassment, with his loincloth, spinning wheel, religious rhetoric, and vow of sexual abstinence. Some Muslims disparage him as primarily a champion of Hinduism at the expense of Islam, while others (such as his assassin Nathuram Godse) contend that he betrays Hinduism by catering to the Muslims. Others point to the poverty and violence of contemporary India and ask why Gandhi failed.

Major Themes in Gandhi's Life and Thought

Warrior and Pacifist

Perhaps the most significant impact of Gandhi's legacies lies in his establishing the foundations for nonviolent struggle as a way of addressing the dilemmas of the warrior and the pacifist. The warrior, who traditionally believes in the sacred duty to fight, nonetheless knows that harming and killing others is problematic. This difficulty is exemplified in the high frequency of what is now called 'post-traumatic stress disorder' and acknowledged by militaries in contemporary training methods. The pacifist, however, may share with the warrior the urgency to fight against something or someone, but may be immobilized by sacred prohibitions against harming and killing.

Gandhi's *satyagrahi*, or nonviolent activist, fights like the warrior but avoids harming like the pacifist, thus allowing individuals and groups to engage in struggle for just causes without facing the self-sanctions or moral condemnation by others attached to committing acts of violence. Moreover, Gandhi's perspective is that nonviolence has proven to be not only a moral ideal but has a pragmatic advantage, a proposition for which there is some empirical evidence not only in Gandhi's own "experiments with Truth," as he called them, but also from recent political struggles inspired by the Gandhian model.

Rethinking Conflict and Power

Many scholars in addition to Sharp (e.g., Bondurant, Bell, and Nagler) point out that Gandhi's theory of power provides a new frame for viewing issues of domination and rebellion. His approach analyzes how conventional power works; it also presents an understanding of an alternative form of power, that is, the power of nonviolence or 'people power', in which resisters can bring down the pillars of support for an existing unjust regime by refusing to cooperate with it.

The most important theme in alternative theories of power, as various feminist theorists observe later, is a shift from a focus on domination to looking at power as being associated with ability, capacity, and competence – in short, 'power to' (empowerment) rather than 'power over' (domination). From this perspective, power is clearly distinguished from force, coercion, authority, and violence and can be possessed simultaneously and equally by all parties involved in an interaction. This distinction has been made in the theoretical discussions of Hobbes, Arendt, Parsons, and even Machiavelli. One significant result of this redefinition is that power is no longer viewed in the context of a 'zero-sum' interaction. The traditionally accepted view of a 'one-up, one-down' dynamic in power interactions gives way to the assumption that

power is not increased by denying it to others, but rather expands and is regenerated when it is shared.

Like the Enlightenment theorists of the West, Gandhi wished to replace old power structures with new ones. In contrast to Western thinkers, however, he also wished to transform the very nature of power and our conceptions of it. His definition of power involved three basic principles: (1) respect one's opponents as persons; (2) refuse to cooperate with unjust power; and (3) create alternative systems of power through nonviolent direct action.

Gandhi's innovative approach to conflict grew out of his understanding of power and its multiple bases, as well as his religious convictions and belief in the efficacious and moral superiority of nonviolent rather than violent means for engaging in struggle. His determination to engage in conflict as a way of confronting injustice and untruths in the structures around him is consistent with his firm conviction in the Hindu principle of *ahimsa*, or nonharmfulness. He was committed to avoiding violence as defined in the broadest manner, including not only physical violence but also harmful thoughts toward another person. One must avoid harmful thoughts, words, and deeds. Gandhi was, however, neither a rigid pacifist, as he is sometimes perceived in popular culture, nor a peacemaker in the sense of wanting to prevent or avoid conflict or struggle. On the contrary, his life viewed from one angle appears as a series of conflicts, many of which he deliberately provoked. As J. D. Sethi contends, "Gandhi was a man of conflict and not of consensus and as such his approach was revolutionary."

Gandhi believed that it is not so much the resolution, but the management or means of conduct of conflict that is essential. Moreover, it should be carried out in such a way that the outcome is creative and not viewed as a zero-sum process in which one of the adversaries loses, while the other wins. He consistently provoked conflict rather than shunning it, theoretically even preferring violence to cowardice. The focus of Gandhi's conflict theory is not on winning or resolving a conflict, but on facilitating 'the Truth,' which is shared by both parties to a conflict (including even Gandhi's own opponent). The strategy is to provoke conflict when it seems necessary, but to distinguish between the adversary as a person and the allegedly reprehensible activities in which he or she is engaged.

It is this aspect of Gandhi's theories of conflict management that addresses the self-perpetuating dynamics of conflict. Conflicts, including violent ones, take on a life of their own, and escalate beyond the control of the participants. As conflicts are abstracted, the stakes are raised, so that each party considers itself to be fighting for a righteous cause, rather than for their own personal gain. Gandhian efforts to break the spiral of escalation involve an identification of the needs and aspirations of all involved, even if one risks 'losing' the conflict.

There are always risks in conflict, whether violent or nonviolent. One may, however, have more to lose in being sensitive to the opponents' point of view if one is clearly the stronger adversary. That is why Gandhi insisted on the 'nonviolence of the brave,' rather than operating from a position of weakness. For him, nonviolence was not a strategy of last resort for those without weapons and resources, but a way of life – and of conflict – that was appropriate for all people at all times.

The core of Gandhi's approach to conflict lies in his insistence on the separation between the deed and the doer (or 'the sin and the sinner'), which were for him two distinct things. Attacks in nonviolent conflict thus target behavior, systems, and structures rather than individuals and involve the denunciation of actions and patterns of action rather than their agents: "Whereas a good deed should call forth approbation and a wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked, always deserves respect or pity as the case may be." This perception of conflict was for Gandhi both a religious principle and a pragmatic strategy. It goes to the heart of the processes of reciprocity that fuel upward spirals in conflicts at all levels from the interpersonal to the international and has become the bedrock of contemporary techniques of conflict resolution.

Satyagraha and Ahimsa

With satya combined with ahimsa, you can bring the world to your feet. (Mahatma Gandhi)

For Gandhi *ahimsa* was the path to the doctrine of noninjury. It involved a resolve not to harm anything. It was not just a matter of not killing anyone but was a positive state of love. *Abimsa* was the natural response of a deep spiritual commitment for Gandhi, but it had a practical dimension as well, in a number of ways. First, on a sociological level, the practice of *ahimsa* served to contain the escalation of conflict. In the nuclear age, of course, if carried to its extreme, violent conflict could result in annihilation. If adversaries treat each other with respect and try to avoid harming one another, the likelihood of conflict resolution may be greater, Gandhi claims, because both participants gain. Otherwise, adversaries are caught up in the escalation spiral; the longer it persists, the more each party has to lose, so the less willing they are to capitulate, leading to seemingly intractable conflicts like those in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Second, at the psychological level *ahimsa* is a strategy for throwing the adversary off guard. As Gene Sharp puts it, participants in nonviolent actions

will... be able to apply something like jiu-jitsu to their opponent, throwing him off balance politically, causing

his repression to rebound against his position, and weakening his power. Furthermore, by remaining nonviolent while continuing the struggle, the actionists will help to improve their own power position in several ways. (Gene Sharp, 1973: 110)

This is a subtle psychological insight incorporated into the teachings of many religious leaders (e.g., Jesus and the Buddha), but seldom practiced in international relations. It enhances members of a social movement to engage in what Smithey and Kurtz call "repression management," taking advantage of the paradox of repression, that it sometimes backfires against a regime, initiating sympathy for the protestors and raising questions even within the regime about its legitimacy.

Finally, *ahimsa*, as an element of conflict strategies, reduces both personal and collective motivations for harmful reciprocity. Whereas violence will probably precipitate a violent response and a concomitant escalation of the conflict, nonviolence is a reflexive strategy that anticipates a potential resolution of the conflict or at least a change in its mode. "If I kill a man who obstructs me, I may experience a sense of false security. But the security will be short-lived. For I shall not have dealt with the root cause." Although the use of nonviolence does not guarantee 'success' in a conflict, neither does violence.

Gandhi summarized his understanding of nonviolence in his equation

$$\text{God} = \text{Truth} = \text{Ahimsa}$$

In other words, *ahimsa* was not a mere ethical guide but a fundamental principle of the universe. As he put it, "Ahimsa is my God & Truth is my God. When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says, 'find it through me'. When I look for Truth, Ahimsa says, 'Find it through me'."

Ahimsa is not something that is easily achieved, however, but is the fruit of serious discipline and self-control. Nonetheless, it can be achieved by all who are willing to undertake the necessary self-control and sacrifice. As Gandhi put it, "Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so Ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later."

This perspective presents a radical challenge to mainstream thinking about power and social change: if, as Gandhi proposes, *ahimsa* and truth are equated with God, then nonviolence is more powerful than anything else, including violence. This equation is an integral part of Gandhi's schema for understanding the nature of the universe. He writes two columns in his diary (see **Table 1**).

The most significant aspect of Gandhi's understanding of *ahimsa* – at least from the sociological point of view – is that he extended it to the social/political sphere, thus

Table 1 Truth and untruth according to Gandhi's diary

<i>Truth is</i>	<i>Untruth is</i>
Light	Darkness
Life	Death
Goodness	Evil
Existence	Nonexistence
Love	Hatred

diverging from more traditional interpretations of the concept, which cultivated a detachment from social involvement. As Margaret Chatterjee suggests, Gandhi transforms the concept from a pathway to individual liberation into a means for social change. His goal was to extend what was often emphasized as an individual ethic to the collective life, eventually violence from all spheres of life. Social activism based on religious conviction and the ethic of *abimsa* was also linked intimately in Gandhi's ethos with courage.

One of the keys to Gandhi's success in mobilizing the Indian Freedom Movement and other movements for radical social change during his lifetime – and another major component of the Gandhian paradox – was his ability to envision and present his revolutionary aspirations by means of an appeal to tradition. This mode of presentation was not merely a manipulative strategy; it was the way he himself framed the world and the issues with which he struggled. At the core of Gandhi's life and thought was a deep spirituality that drove him. It had a Hindu foundation from his childhood but was forged out of encounters between that tradition and a variety of others, notably Jainism and Buddhism and also Islam and Christianity.

Gandhi's Hinduism was not entirely 'orthodox', if a rather non-Hindu concept may be used. It did not contradict many of the currents of Vedic tradition's transformation on the subcontinent during the colonial period, but it did stand in sharp contrast to a number of traditional schools of thought and practice. Ashis Nandy contends that Gandhi was neither a progressive nor a conservative, but that he transcends "the dichotomy of orthodoxy and iconoclasm," forging "a mode of self-expression, which by its apparently non-threatening simplicity reconciled the common essence of the old and the new."

Gandhi's relationship to religious traditions was thus consistent with other paradoxical elements of his legacies: he drew upon the tradition in deep and rich ways and incorporated it as his own, but he also transformed key elements of it such as *abimsa* to be woven into his own unique worldview. Consequently, despite the fact that Gandhi was neither a spiritual guru nor a religious scholar, he had a substantial impact on the tradition itself.

Challenging Caste, Communalism, and Sexism

In addition to the end of British colonialism, Gandhi has three other major themes as part of his emphasis on *sarvodaya*, the welfare of all, or upliftment of all: unity among religious communities, the eradication of 'untouchability', and the liberation of women.

Although Gandhi never fully denounced the caste system – he tried to reformulate it in a less-exploitative and more-spiritual manner – he was firmly opposed to discrimination, especially against the so-called 'untouchables', literally the 'outcastes' in Hindu society who were even forbidden to enter temples because, according to Hindu teachings, they would defile the sacred site and its devotees. He declared untouchability to be "the greatest blot on Hinduism." At the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai, he mobilized a famous *satyagraha* and eventually won the group, which he called the *barijans*, the "children of God," the right to worship at the temple.

He spoke and acted boldly on behalf of interfaith respect and dialog, especially – but not exclusively – across Hindu–Muslim lines. On more than one occasion he claimed that he was a Muslim and Christian, as well as a Hindu, and he repeatedly drew inspiration from a wide range of scriptures, many of which were read at his daily prayer meetings, including, of course, his beloved *Gita*, but also the *Bible*, the *Qur'an*, and other sacred texts. His final days were spent addressing the violence that broke out between Hindus and Muslims in India after independence. He walked on foot (a *padayatra*) through troubled sections of Bengal and fasted successfully for an end to the Hindu–Muslim riots in Calcutta, staying at the home of a Muslim while the violence raged outside.

Although Gandhi was in some ways still a product of his time; he made bold challenges to his patriarchal culture and involved women in public life in an unprecedented way. He had women intimately engaged in his own organizing – facilitated, in part, by his vow of chastity (*brahmacharya*) that eliminated the ubiquitous problem of sexual aspects of cross-gender relations with charismatic public figures. (One of his most controversial experiments – even among his devotees – was his sleeping naked with unclothed women to test his ability to get completely beyond the sexual instincts.) He retained some traditional essentialist ideas about women and a gendered division of labor, and believed that women should not just rush to take on men's roles, but he insisted that there be no barriers to their doing so. He stressed the importance of 'feminine' nurturing, nonviolent aspects of male identity and, after fathering four sons and becoming a 'mahatma', took his famous vow of *brahmacharya*. He deliberately cultivated an androgynous identity – one of his grandnieces wrote a book about him entitled *Bapu – My Mother*, which roughly translates as *Father – My Mother*. Indeed, Nandy contends that Gandhi's trans-sexual identity as a mahatma or saint in the Indian sense was part of a

psychological strategy for fighting against a colonialism that equates masculinity with aggressive social dominance and femininity with subjugation.

Gandhi since Gandhi

Why does the figure of Gandhi continue to be such a source of fascination? Attenborough's film ["Gandhi"] supplies one answer, for it presents the picture of a lone moral individual triumphing over the conventional forces of authority in society. This image of moral strength outweighing conventional strength is the stuff of which the classic Western adventure tale is made. It is the cowboy, the space hero, and all those cinematic incarnations of Jesus and Moses. This moral conqueror is also to be found in a certain kind of Indian heroic archetype: the noble renunciant who defies dharmic propriety for the sake of a higher spiritual truth. (Mark Juergensmeyer)

Gandhi and Independent India

At the time of independence, Gandhi urged the leaders of the Indian National Congress not to take over the independent government as a narrow political party, but to transform its nationwide grassroots organization into a movement for social and economic development. Jawaharlal Nehru should not live in the viceroy's mansion but in its servants' quarters and help to empower the flowering of a just, nonviolent India. That dream was not to happen, however, as the freedom fighters were anxious to reap the benefits of their victory and Gandhi himself became a symbol of the establishment in general and the ruling Congress Party in particular.

Indians witnessed something of a Gandhian revival in the late 1960s, however, in part because of the centenary celebration of Gandhi's birth in 1869 and an increase in publications about Gandhi surrounding it. It died down in a couple of years however, and again Gandhi was not widely appreciated until another revival in the 1980s. In the end, Gandhi, like the Buddha, not only took root in India but was also exported and had a broad impact far beyond his native land. His legacies are now not so much an Indian as a global phenomenon.

Because of the prominence of the Indian Freedom Movement and the worldwide interest in Gandhi's nonviolence, the Mahatma became an internationally known figure whose iconic image was called upon not only by civil rights, human rights, and prodemocracy activists, but even the world's governments, as demonstrated by the stamps issued around the world (see [Figure 1](#)). From grassroots human rights activists on every continent to Albert Einstein and the world's most powerful leaders, Gandhi's praise echoes around the globe. The laudatory

language is, of course, seldom met with actual practices of Gandhian nonviolence and his iconic image is coopted by everyone from John Lennon and Harry Potter to Apple.

One of the most notable examples of Gandhi's external impact is the remarkable (though admittedly limited) advocacy of nonviolence by Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet head of state. When Gorbachev visited India in 1989 he left quite an impression. Gorbachev used explicit references to the Mahatma in his speeches and advocated the establishment of a "nonviolent world" in the Delhi Declaration that he signed with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The Anticolonial Movement

The Indian Freedom Movement naturally inspires anticolonial aspirations elsewhere around the world, sometimes very explicitly as, for example, with Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere. Nkrumah was born in a small West African village, studied in the States and Britain, and became involved in forming a nonviolent resistance movement against British rule in the late 1940s. He studied Gandhi and observed his success, as well as Nehru's efforts to combine Gandhi with socialism, leading the independence movement that eventually resulted in the creation of the independent nation of Ghana.

Nyerere contends, "The significance of India's independence movement was that it shook the British Empire. When Gandhi succeeded I think it made the British lose the will to cling to empire." He sees in Gandhi's movement a model for the independence struggle in East Africa and even merges Gandhian thought with an African socialism (*Ujamaa*) after the formation of independent Tanzania. Although some of his economic policies have been widely criticized, Nyerere takes a page from Gandhi's autobiography when he launched a nationwide literacy campaign calling upon all those who could read or write in Swahili to teach those who cannot. He himself spends time every day tutoring the illiterate even while head of state, and after his voluntary retirement he returns to his farm in the countryside (although he is often called into service internationally to consult or mediate conflicts).

Human Rights and Civil Rights

After the success of the Indian Freedom Movement, Gandhi's example became the prime motivator and model for a wide range of social movements, mostly nonviolent, and in every part of the world. The most prominent example is the American Civil Rights Movement launched in the 1950s with explicit Gandhian roots. A number of leaders in the African-American

community become aware early on of Gandhi's work in South Africa and India, as well as the potential relevance to their own community. A. Philip Randolph discovered Gandhi in the 1920s in a period of unprecedented intellectual creativity in the African-American community in the arts, poetry/prose, and music. Randolph began the process of rethinking Gandhi in an American context with a Christian rhetoric, a project later envisioned by Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, and Benjamin Mays, dean of the Howard Divinity School. At the Yale Seminar on the Negro Church in 1931 the conferees passed a resolution contending that "every Negro church must discover and develop a type of leadership that would do for America and the Negro race what Gandhi has done for India and what Jesus has done for the world."

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. takes up the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement as head of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955. People from Christian pacifist organizations who had studied Gandhi, namely, George Houser from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and Bayard Rustin, sent to Montgomery by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, tutored him in Gandhian nonviolence. He also relies upon the expertise of the Reverend James Lawson, a United Methodist clergyman who had spent time in India. The AFSC subsequently organizes and finances a Gandhian tour of India for Coretta Scott King, and Dr. King, who explicitly acknowledged his debt to Gandhi and his trip to India as formative.

Houser provides a direct link between Gandhi's *ashrams* and the civil rights movement. As a young Methodist seminary student in New York City he lived in David Dellinger's Harlem Ashram, an interracial community modeled after Gandhi's experiments in heterogeneous communities in South Africa and India. After a term in jail for refusing to register for the draft (a decision inspired by his reading of Gandhi), he enrolled in the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he organized a Gandhi study group that meets on Saturday mornings. After a period of study they decided they need to act so began experimenting with nonviolence as a means to fight segregation in Chicago eating establishments and eventually formed the Congress of Racial Equality.

Houser arrived at Dr. King's home in Montgomery with a stack of Gandhi books and was welcomed by the bus boycott organizers. When sitting in the King family home the day after it was bombed, he found a gun under the cushion and engaged the young civil rights leader in a long conversation about the need to avoid violence completely to have a more effective movement. King gave up the gun and grew into a dedicated nonviolent activist who later refused to press charges when he was attacked with a knife. When visiting Bombay the young pastor was moved

to spend the night alone in the room where Gandhi used to stay when in the city.

Whereas Gene Sharp secularized Gandhi, extracting his strategic principles and social theory from their religious foundations in the Mahatma, King baptized Gandhi, giving his approach a Christian frame, which he deemed effective in the American context and from a Christian clergyman's perspective.

The American Civil Rights Movement was never fully successful in bringing about its goals – especially in its later formulations by King and others that included more than voting rights but also justice for all Americans. It is widely extolled and emulated the world over, however, and became a vehicle for further disseminating Gandhian nonviolence. At the height of the Cold War the movement was prominently featured in some sectors of the communist press because it showed the failures of the American system, but it inadvertently laid the groundwork for resistance against communist regimes in the 1980s and 1990s.

The African National Congress (ANC) of black South Africans was originally modeled after the Indian National Congress and had a significant Gandhian influence, not only because of the success of the Indian Freedom Movement but also, of course, because Gandhi had first developed his methods of *satyagraha* in South Africa in an effort to protest the injustices wrought upon Indians living there. After years of apparently fruitless struggle against the system they became disillusioned with non-violent tactics and many in the ANC turned to violence. As some scholars observe, however, the apartheid system did not finally fall until they returned to nonviolence.

Elsewhere Gandhi's legacies can be seen in a wave of human rights struggles from the human rights movements of Eastern Europe to the struggles in Argentina such as the Mothers of the Disappeared who marched weekly in the Plaza de Mayo from 1977 wearing the names of their missing children embroidered on white head scarves in a subtle and effective form of resistance of the military junta there, which eventually restored civilian rule and was ousted in new elections in 1983.

Sustainable Development and Environmental Responsibility

Gandhi's notions of grassroots economic development and self-reliant local economies lived in serious tension with the large-scale industrial development of Jawaharlal Nehru's socialism and its successors in India. Although trained in nonviolent resistance by Gandhi, Nehru was attracted by the socialist critique of capitalism and colonialism as a student at Cambridge. As India's first prime minister, he promoted a mixed economy with a state-controlled economy in some spheres such as heavy

industry, mining, and energy, but grassroots development at the village level promoting cottage industries.

Many Gandhians feel that Nehru betrayed the Mahatma with his large-scale industrial development. Much of the Gandhian spirit is alive at the grassroots, in experiments in sustainable development and Gandhian education. According to Janardan Pandey, one of the profound impacts of Gandhi on the national life of India is the flowering of voluntarism in the culture. In addition to the organizations created by Gandhi himself to do 'constructive work', that is, grassroots development and cultivation of civil society, about 11,000 voluntary organizations are officially registered with the Home Ministry. Gandhi's Harijan Sevak Sangh, Gramodyog Sangh, and Hindustan Talim Sangh promote his dedication to service and the construction of a society based on nonviolence, justice, and equality of opportunity.

All across India people are inspired to engage in Gandhian service to the people. In South India, for example, where Gandhi fought untouchability, S. Jeyapragasam is not only a scholar who studies and teaches Gandhi at Madurai Kamaraj University, but he facilitates a network of grassroots sustainable development projects and Gandhian activists. At the 'Servants of the People Society' in New Delhi, ayurvedic doctor, Arya Bhardwaj struggles profoundly with Gandhi's legacies and attempts to live a simple life of service to the poor and to the cause of nonviolent social transformation. Arya and his family have turned their home into a way station for constructive workers and for pilgrims from around the world – activists and scholars alike – to come and stay when they are in Delhi. Arya founded 'Gandhi-in-Action' in 1984 when he came to the conclusion that if Gandhi's ideas were to be put into action then they have to transcend geopolitical boundaries.

In 2006 peasants from all across India organized by Ekta Parishad, a nonviolent social movement, marched on foot from Mathura (the legendary birthplace of Krishna) to Delhi, demanding land reform. They followed the Gandhian twofold strategy of simultaneous protest and construction. It brought people together to demand their rights, on the one hand, and facilitated community-based economic development, on the other, that strived to liberate them from dependency on welfare and government programs.

One hallmark of the Gandhian movement since independence has been the development of a locally controlled economy that is sensitive to the environmental impact of large-scale industrialization. Gandhi's concepts of self-rule and self-reliance have become required reading for many people looking for economic models that promote justice and environmental sensitivity, including the notion of 'deep ecology' that involves a respect for all forms of life, echoing not only Gandhi but ancient Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist teachings as well. They have also been incorporated into critiques of neoliberal economic

policies and the commodification of resources. The economic policies of recent decades (and longer) in most countries have eroded the local control of natural resources such as water, land, and forests, often subverting the ability of indigenous communities to sustain their livelihood, which involves a direct reliance on nature in the immediate environment.

Bringing Down Dictators

Not only were human rights movements inspired by Gandhi, but also a significant number of nonviolent insurgencies against authoritarian regimes as demonstrated in **Table 2**. In 1986, the People Power Movement in the Philippines resisted the Ferdinand Marcos regime with classic Gandhian strategies of nonviolent direct action.

Benigno Aquino, an opposition leader in the Philippines who studied Gandhi and the Indian Freedom Movement and aspired to apply his methods to the Filipino context, initiated the insurgency. When returning home from a period of living in exile, he was assassinated at the airport upon his arrival in Manila. His wife and brother picked up the banner, however, and called in Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (whose representative had trained the Montgomery Improvement Association and Dr. King) to consult about nonviolent strategies and

Table 2 Representative nonviolent prodemocracy movements

Iran (1977–79)
Philippines (1986)
Haiti (1986)
South Korea (1987)
Chile (1983–89)
Bangladesh (1989, 1996)
Mongolia (1989–90)
Nepal (1989–90)
Mali (1992)
Taiwan (1992)
S. Africa (1984–91, 1993)
Madagascar (1991–93)
Indonesia (1998)
Serbia (2000)
Peru (2000)
Georgia (2003)
Ukraine (2004)
Lebanon (2005)

Soviet Bloc

Czechoslovakia (1989)
East Germany (1989)
Poland (1989)
Estonia (1991)
Latvia (1991)
Lithuania (1991)
USSR (1991)
Yugoslavia (1991)

tactics. Benigno's brother and the opposition movement he led, was approached by the guerrillas about forming a coalition, claiming that a few street demonstrations would never overthrow Ferdinand Marcos.

The movement decided to follow a Gandhian path instead and trainers from the Fellowship of Reconciliation conducted workshops around the country. One bishop told the Reverend Richard Deats, one of the trainers, that he believed, of course, in nonviolence, but that it would never work against Marcos since he was the Hitler of Southeast Asia. On Election Day in February 1986, government workers responsible for tabulating the election results walked out on their still unfinished task in protest of obvious attempts by Marcos to steal the election. This ignited the people, and, in the end, following a split in the military and people stopping Marcos' troops with massive nonviolent resistance in the streets, the dictator fled the country and Corazon Aquino was inaugurated as president. The revolution was televised, even in the Soviet Bloc (because the Marcos regime was a staunch ally of the US), and the movement inspired uprisings elsewhere and became something of a benchmark for late-twentieth-century movements.

The subsequent decades see a veritable explosion in nonviolent insurgencies, as shown in **Table 2**. A study by Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman concludes that the major agent of change in the last 33 years of transitions from authoritarian to more democratic states has been broad-based nonviolent civic coalitions that use Gandhian nonviolent strategies such as boycotts, mass protests, blockades, strikes, and civil disobedience to undermine the pillars of support for authoritarian rulers. 'People power' movements, a central feature of Gandhi's legacies, were the key factor driving 50 of the 67 countries transitioning toward more civil liberties and human rights. As Jack DuVall observes, people power undermines the legitimacy of oppressive systems, drives up its costs, and divides the loyalty of those who enforce its orders (see www.nonviolent-conflict.org).

Alternative Dispute Resolution and Peer Mediation

Various forms of alternative dispute resolution, conflict resolution, and mediation have their roots in Gandhian nonviolence and have taken root and flourished in various spheres in recent decades. At the core of much of what is now sometimes called 'conflict transformation' is Gandhi's principle of separating the doer and the deed. Whether the management or transformation of a conflict is carried out solely by the parties themselves or with the aid of a third party (as in mediation), Gandhi's conflict paradigm is foundational, even if – as Thomas Weber points out – scholars have not made the direct causal link between Gandhi and contemporary conflict resolution literature. Nonetheless, Gandhi at least sets the tone for its development. The point is not to have one party win and the other lose, but

to identify the most beneficial outcome for both parties and to struggle creatively and positively toward a just solution, sometimes with the aid of a third party.

Mediation and alternative dispute resolution are popular movements now spanning the globe. Dimostenis Yagcioglu, of the University of Athens, has developed a list of conflict resolution centers around the world.

In the United States, alternative dispute resolution has become popular in many circles, in part because of the clogged court systems and a growing insistence by many scholars and practitioners that the adversarial confrontation of the court system is often detrimental to facilitating the most positive outcome of conflict. In some states people going through a divorce are required by the court to seek mediation if one of the parties desires it, and many attorneys and other professionals trained in conflict resolution are guiding people through conflicts in a more creative manner.

One popular experiment in the schools has been peer mediation, in which students are trained in techniques of mediation and conflicts among members of the student body are taken first through a peer mediation in hopes of resolving them more amicably, getting to the roots of the issue, and not incidentally relieving the school administration of much of the burden of imposing discipline.

A parallel experiment in South Africa known as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission also has Gandhian roots. Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others who developed the Commission believed that they could find an alternative to a tribunal or some other court procedure to deal with the postapartheid situation in which there had to be some sense of justice rendered, but addresses the rift and pain of a society traumatized by years of injustice. The purpose of the Commission was to find the truth, but then also to find ways of moving beyond the atrocities committed and admitted to by people attempting to start over in a new South Africa. Tutu was awarded India's Gandhi Peace Prize in 2007 as a confirmation of his efforts to carry on Gandhi's legacies.

Gandhian Economics and Environmentalism

Nehru's socialism adopts a centralizing approach modeled after the planned central economy but never produces the promised economic benefits for the poor. One response to growing economic disparities in independent India is a self-consciously Gandhian socialism which emerges in the wake of Indira Gandhi's 1977 declaration of a State of Emergency. As Anand Kumar notes, this brand of socialism is egalitarian but opposed to the centralization of economic and political power.

The mainstream of independent India, under Nehru's direction, heads down the path of a democratic socialism in an effort to promote economic development, which is squarely in opposition to Gandhi's conception of village

industries, which became something of an embarrassment to the economic elite of the country. Gandhi is no longer around, nor is he needed for the struggle against the British, so his economic theories fall somewhat quickly by the wayside, with the exception of those involved in the constructive work movement within such organizations as the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Grassroots Gandhianism involves hundreds of thousands in the economics of sustainable development dedicated to *sarvodaya*, although it is considered by some to be a mere finger in the dyke given the overwhelming needs of India's 1 billion people.

Gandhian Scholarship and Peace Studies

It is, of course, easier to study Gandhi than to use his approach to engage in conflict, and one major aspect of Gandhi's legacies is Gandhian scholarship and the birth of the peace studies movement, institutionalized in such associations as the International Peace Research Association and its regional associations, the African Peace Research and Education Association, the Asia-Pacific Peace Research Association, the Latin American Council on Peace Research, the European Peace Research Association, and the Peace and Justice Studies Association.

Three central themes emerge in Gandhian theories of peace in the area of international relations:

1. Relationships among nations are too important to be left to their governments; direct contacts should be made among people within the countries themselves, so that they can make peace agreements where their governments fail.
2. Peace is conceived of holistically so that it has elements that are spiritual and ecological, as well as those concerning conventional power politics and intergovernmental relations. Gandhi deliberately introduced an ecumenical spiritual component into his efforts in all spheres, of which the political was just one, linked intimately with all other aspects of life. Gandhi also links peace with justice and equality, insisting that all peoples must be treated with respect and that the desire for a mere lack of overt conflict and violence at the expense of justice was not peace at all but a different form of violence.
3. Finally, Gandhi himself, and some of his followers, suggested that even international conflicts could be carried out nonviolently and that *Shanti Senas*, or 'Peace Brigades' could eventually replace military solutions and third-party nonviolent interventions even in large-scale conflicts.

Over time the peace studies movement has become increasingly concerned not only about the prevention of war but also the implementation of justice, of a positive

peace that addresses the underlying causes of war and violence, a theme represented in the name of the North American Peace and Justice Studies Association. This concern with the web of violence that connects the interpersonal with the global has a strong resonance with Gandhi's approach.

Shanti Sena and the Peace Brigades

Gandhi advocated, as he put it, "the formation of Peace Brigades whose members would risk their lives in dealings with riots, especially communal. The idea was that this brigade should substitute [for] the police and even the military." The idea of a nonviolent security system, the *Shanti Sena*, was barely sketched out by Gandhi himself and seemed too idealistic for all but his most loyal followers, especially in the face of the Nazi threat of the time. Gandhi was quite serious, however, about the evolution of a nonviolent army that would keep the peace both locally and in the face of a foreign invasion. Despite the increasingly militaristic path of governmental policies in India, especially after the conflict with China in 1962, the vision of a *Shanti Sena* was cultivated along informal lines.

Gandhi's notion was that holistic provisions for security would be built from the bottom up; each village would have its own brigade of individuals trained in nonviolence. Not only would they have a rigorous training and discipline that paralleled that of military troops, but also they would engage in preventive constructive work in the interim periods between overt conflicts by attempting to address the problems in a community that might lead to violence.

Economic inequalities, problems of basic survival such as housing, food, water, and so forth, would be addressed along with intercommunal tensions along whatever cleavages existed within a village. Consequently the *Shanti Sainiks*, that is, members of the Peace Brigades, would build up a level of trust among the people that they were serving so that they could more effectively manage any conflicts that might arise. The structure of *Shanti Senas* organized at the village level would then also serve as a deterrent to potential aggressors from outside the community, who would be met with bold and courageous resistance should they threaten its security.

It is unlikely that such a development could have even been given a hearing outside of India in the wake of World War II; although the political culture of India was far from nonviolent, it had not been militarized as thoroughly as most of the world that had just fought or served the Nazis, Fascists, and expansionist Japanese. Only in India, one might argue, was there a critical mass of people who had personally experienced the efficacy of nonviolent direct action.

Evidence of this strong belief in the potentiality of non-violent struggle was present throughout the culture and stood in sharp contrast to the violence of mainstream policies. From the veterans of the freedom struggle to the top of the contemporary military one could find advocates of nonviolence. The idea of the *Shanti Sena* was thus taken quite seriously by a number of Gandhian scholars and activists and the concept was experimented with systematically at Gandhigram University in Tamil Nadu where the constitution of the university stipulated that students be given training in nonviolence. Dr. M. Aram, Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, and Dr. J. Ramachandran set up a program to develop and train young people for a *Shanti Sena*. Other experiments with the concept include the founding of the *Mabila Shanti Sena* (Women's Peace Corps) in Bijar in 2002, stimulated by empowerment of women in the wake of the 1992 amendment to the Indian Constitution that gave rural villages political autonomy and reserved 30% of the seats on the *panchayats* (village councils) for women.

Not only have these ideas been developed in India, but they have inspired a number of similar movements elsewhere, including the International Peace Brigades and the Nonviolent Peace Force that are experimenting with nonviolent accompaniment of human rights activists and other forms of nonviolent struggle in the Middle East, Latin America, and elsewhere. Others, such as Gene Sharp, have explored the possibility of a nonviolent civilian-based defense, either to parallel or replace a military defense, a notion actually experimented with in post-Soviet Lithuania.

Because of Gandhi's prestige in independent India, Gandhian studies programs were set up at universities throughout the country and prominent scholars took up the study of Gandhi at its premier universities (such as S. C. Gangal at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Mahendra Kumar at Delhi University). Many universities set up departments of Gandhian studies, partly for reasons of national pride, and two Gandhian universities experiment with a wide range of Gandhian studies and their implications – Gandhigram in Tamil Nadu and the Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmedabad.

Under the able direction of Prof. N. Radhakrishnan, a dean at Gandhigram, and his successor Dr. Savita Singh, the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti – a national Gandhi museum in Delhi – has moved beyond a traditional museum and become something of a research and educational center that provides resources for Gandhian scholarship and teaching, including a substantial library with an online catalog. The Gandhi Peace Foundation and the Gandhian Institute of Studies in Banaras are independent institutes that promote the study and application of Gandhian ideas. These institutes are sometimes criticized by the more progressive Gandhians such as the followers of J. P. Narayan's 'total revolution', but the

Gandhi Peace Foundation has taken a more activist stance recently with new leadership despite its establishment roots involving the first president and prime minister of the country.

Although the hundreds of works about Gandhi often tend toward hagiography, his life and work also inspire significant and profound intellectual reflection by such scholars as B. R. Nanda, Gene Sharp, Judith Brown, Margaret Chatterjee, Mark Juergensmeyer, Ashis Nandy, S. Jeyapragasam, William Baskaran, Michael Nagler, Joan Bondurant, Ragavan Iyer, Erik Erikson, S. C. Gangal, Thomas Weber, Suzanne and Lloyd Rudolph, Richard Johnson, and many more.

Although they do not call themselves explicitly Gandhian a significant school of critical science is emerging in India that no doubt has some Gandhian roots. Parts of it indeed sound like they were taken out of the pages of Gandhi's *Hind swaraj*. Although Gandhi considered himself a scientist who was conducting experiments in nonviolence, he asks us to look at the way science has been subservient to political ends. Gandhi believed that we would have to search for an alternative kind of science, one that shows more modesty than convention Western science and is oriented toward the well-being of all. Gandhi believed that such a science could and must be developed and that they must take the first steps.

This conception of science has profound implications for how knowledge is produced and institutionalized, some of which are being explored now, calling into question even some of the basic assumptions and methods of the social and natural sciences.

Gandhi as a Social Theorist

Although neither deliberately a social theorist nor thought of as one, Gandhi's social thought is not only profound, but also relevant to both intellectual and policy issues. The 100 volumes of his collected works reveal not a systematic theorist but an intellectual activist. In his theory – as well as his politics and religion – Gandhi is a counterplayer who confronts the mainstream in his political and social theory.

In an inversion of conventional wisdom, Gandhi would argue that the major source of humanity's core problems of violence, poverty, exploitation, and the like, is not at the margins of the social order but its core. It is not the masses of poor who beg for bread, or the deviant misfits who operate outside of the law who create the bulk of misery in the world. It is, rather, those who sit in the seats of power.

Conversely, he would contend that the solution to these dilemmas will come not from the center, but the margins – not from Wall Street, Washington, London, or Moscow, but – from such places as that poverty-stricken, violent country called India. The great masses of the poor

Table 3 Social theories of Thomas Hobbes and Mahatma Gandhi

<i>Hobbes</i>	<i>Gandhi</i>
Context: growing civil strife, 1630s England	Context: oppressive colonial rule, late-nineteenth- to early-twentieth-century India
Persuade people to obey the law Impose order from above	Persuade people to disobey the law Encourage resistance to corrupt structures and provide order internally
Absolute authority of political sovereigns	Authority of God and individual conscience are adequate; the state imposes violent, unjust, temporary solutions
Tyranny is necessary for the good of the people	Egalitarian ethic: virtues of justice and service
Egalitarian ethic: virtues of justice and charity	Human action compelled by love and nonviolence
Human action compelled by unlimited desires and perpetual motion (vs. Aristotle: state of rest)	
Primary motivations: Restless desires for power after power Avoidance of violent death (self-preservation)	Primary motivations: Ahimsa (nonharmfulness) Preservation and welfare of all (<i>sarvodaya</i>)
Nominalism, atomism action	Realism but with a strong belief in the efficacy of individual
Early scientific philosophy	'Scientific' experiments with 'truth'

who constitute the majority of the world's population are, despite their misery, far from powerless. And, despite the systems of oppression that bear down upon them, they are in the final analysis responsible for their own liberation because they can – if they summon the will to do so – rise up and overthrow the old system, putting a new one in its place. His is a radical social theory that, as Nandy notes, offers an alternative language for public life and values but is presented and actualized as the most natural thing to do.

It is helpful to compare Gandhi's social theory and the assumptions he brings to it with those of Thomas Hobbes, the foundational figure for the modern social sciences (see [Table 3](#)). The domain assumptions and theoretical orientations brought to social theory by Thomas Hobbes and Mahatma Gandhi are diametrically opposed on a number of dimensions and have significant implications for theory construction, as well as public policy.

Hobbes, writing in a chaotic seventeenth-century-English context, believes that humans are basically propelled by unlimited desires and an absolute sovereign is necessary in order to control people and prevent a "war of all against all in which life is nasty, brutish and short." Gandhi, on the other hand, writes in an oppressive colonial context in which he sees the problem as not individual humans – who are basically motivated by nonviolence, love, and the desire for the preservation and welfare of all – but rather the structures that corrupt and oppress them, so must be resisted and replaced.

Whereas Hobbes's theoretical atomism places an emphasis – as do the British utilitarians who follow him – on the individual who is perceived as a rational calculating individual, Gandhi has a more collectivist (realist) theoretical paradigm, believing humans to be social creatures but capable of effective individual action. Moreover, the cultural forces shaping individuals are

quite different from those posited in the utilitarian tradition. In fact, Gandhi explicitly takes on Adam Smith in his essay on 'New life for khadi', claiming that Smith is mistaken to assume that human nature is marked by mere calculations of profit and loss and a selfish attitude. The alternative model, Gandhi's *khadi*, functions to counteract that notion and is "based on the benevolence which is inherent in human nature."

A Hobbesian public policy places a premium on hierarchical social structures that keep individuals in check, whereas Gandhi proposes that every individual should be trained in nonviolent resistance to oppose structures of injustice and facilitate the flowering of the good and positive motivations that lie within every person's heart.

In the end, it is impossible to sum up Gandhi's legacies in a few pages or even a series of books, but they are a significant element of our effort to review the thinking and scholarship that has gone on in the past two centuries about violence, peace, and conflict. Standing in sharp contrast with so-called realist perspectives regarding relationships from the interpersonal to the international, they nonetheless have stood the test of time as a counterpoint to mainstream scholarship and action. If C. Wright Mills is right in suggesting that the utopians are now the realists in light of the development of the atomic bomb, we may find Gandhian scholarship flowing into the mainstream as we move into the next century.

See also: Aged Population, Violence and Nonviolence Toward; Critiques of Violence; Family Structure and Family Violence; Institutionalization of Non-Violence; Nonviolence Theory and Practice; Political Economy of Violence and Nonviolence; Power, Alternative Theories of; Public Health Models of Violence and Violence Prevention; Religious Traditions, Violence and Nonviolence; Technology, Violence, and Peace

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- <http://www.gandhiserve.org> – Gandhiserve: Extensive Resources on Gandhi with Links to Other Relevant Sites.
- <http://www.gandhismriti.gov.in> – Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti: National Gandhi Museum and Government of India Website.
- <http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org> – International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.
- <http://soc.kuleuven.be> – International Peace Research Association.
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- <http://www.peace.ca> – Peace Curricula and Classroom Resources.
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