Untangling the Web of Violence

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The Web of Violence
From Interpersonal to Global

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Conclusion: Untangling the Web of Violence
Lester R. Kurtz and Jennifer Turpin

The argument underlying this volume is that our current perspectives on violence are too narrowly conceived; research approaches, theories of violence, and policy debates must be broadened. We now turn our attention to the implications of these insights for current public policy debates. Recent public attention to problems of violence is heartening, but we are convinced that the debates are narrowly conceived, misguided, and will not solve the problems they are intended to alleviate.

In this conclusion, we argue that the tendency to see violence as the consequence of aberrant behavior committed by deviant individuals at the margins of society obscures the central role violence plays in the very foundations of the social order and the fundamental dilemmas that humans face as they move into the twenty-first century. The problems created by violence will not be solved by acting on the margins but by rethinking the pervasive use of violence in contemporary cultures.

Linking Personal and Global Violence

Current approaches to violence precipitate two conceptual difficulties. First, most people feel forced to choose between a micro- and macrolevel approach to theory, research, and policy. This forced choice leads to two false alternatives, one of which ignores the effect of microlevel processes and individual choices on broad historical trends; the other screens out the impact of broad sociocultural, macrolevel situations on individuals choosing to engage or not engage in violent behavior. Our argument is that violence is caused not simply by individual psychological factors, biological...
impulses, or social-structural factors alone but by a web of causal connections between personal-level and global-level structures, processes, and behaviors.

Second, current perspectives on violence promote efforts to find a "technical fix" to the problems that violence creates, especially in the pragmatic technical cultures that now dominate much social organization. Technical solutions often provide temporary relief, but they also deflect our attention from the underlying nontechnical problems that are not easily remedied.

A sociology of knowledge-oriented analysis of these approaches suggests that they are unduly shaped by cultural biases and attempts by ruling elites to maintain the status quo. The lack of attention to micro/macro linkages, which has been a primary focus of this volume, is a major difficulty facing the general public, scholars, and policy makers around the world. Although broad generalizations are difficult to make on such matters, our impression is that the collapse of socialist experiments at the end of the twentieth century has narrowed our field of vision even further. Individualistic solutions that ignore larger structural causes of violence now dominate the policy scene, as played out in two related models.

The criminal model of violence distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate violence and requires the identification of criminals, whether in neighborhoods or geopolitical regions, who transgress national or international law. According to this paradigm, problems of violence are created by outlaws and thugs who deviate from civil norms and make life miserable for decent, law-abiding citizens and nations. According to this theory, we must punish individual criminals: we put them in prison, drive them from power, execute them by the state (or rebel forces), or somehow expunge them from the civil society in which they are wreaking havoc.

A more liberal alternative to the criminal model of deviance is the medical or psychotherapeutic model: miscreants (from petty thieves to dictators) are maladjusted and require treatment. We should rehabilitate or treat (sometimes medicate) gang members and prison inmates for aggressive personality disorders.

A more recent trend is to teach miscreants conflict resolution techniques that can facilitate their dealing with personal struggles in a less violent manner. The conflict resolution movement, which has had dramatic success in a number of spheres, while promising in many respects, is still only a bandaid applied to a deep wound. It usually represents yet another technical fix, so popular in modern cultures that excel in technology. Conflict resolution is similar to the search for the ultimate weapon that will end all war or the frantic effort to build more prisons or improve the treatment that often accompanies individualistic approaches to solving the problems of violence.

These individualistic and technically oriented solutions are rooted in the broader process of cultural framing in which the policy debates are conducted, and it is to that process that we now turn our attention. From our perspective, the analysis of violence, and any proposed solutions to the problems it creates, must encompass a broad frame that includes many voices heretofore excluded from the debate. At the core of our approach is the conclusion that individual propensities to violence are not ordinarily enacted except in what Elias calls a "culture of violent solutions." That is, any psychobiological vulnerabilities to engaging in violent behavior are discouraged and are rarely acted on unless the broader culture allows or encourages such behavior. On the other hand, even in a culture that promotes violent solutions, not all individuals will be violent. Moreover, even the most violent individuals are not so all of the time. Violence, from our perspective, is thus a result of the dialectical interaction of micro- and macrolevel processes. Solutions to the problem of violence must address all levels—as well as the interactions among them. Most of our current struggles with the issue are framed in such a way as to blind us to significant elements of the problem.

In the discussion that follows, we will explore the ways in which people define policy issues and narrow their alternatives. After exploring two mainstream approaches to violence that frame current policy debates, we will outline a third perspective that we believe addresses significant problems with conventional approaches and provides some promising alternatives.

Public Discourse about Violence

Public policy positions on the problem of violence tend to fit within two major frames, although elements of a third, alternative frame occasionally enter the debate. The first frame is a "peace through strength" or "law and order" frame that emphasizes the use of tough measures, usually involving violence against deviant individuals or nations, to solve problems of violence (the traditional so-called conservative position in U.S. culture). A second frame is the traditionally liberal "legal control" frame that emphasizes rational legal procedures that place boundaries around the use of violence (e.g., such measures as arms and gun control). A final, alternative frame that has seldom been part of the mainstream debate is the "common security and nonviolent conflict" approach that combines elements of the first two positions but emphasizes the interdependence of individuals and nations and promotes the use of nonviolent techniques for solving conflicts.
A narrative expresses each frame, linking macrolevel cultural orientations with microlevel motivations and actions, as Smith observes (in this volume). Individuals thus fit events into "moralizing narrative frames" to assess the ethical status and efficacy of particular acts of violence. This process is a political one, although not exclusively within the realm of the state. Collective and individual rituals thus reaffirm the narratives of the frame and express the boundaries of a culture's repertoire of acceptable behavior.

People are socialized into a culture; its norms are internalized through a variety of cultural processes, from the mundane storytelling of village folktales or corporal punishment of children by conservative Christian parents (Ellison and Bartkowski, in this volume) to the high drama of political spectacles and denunciation of counterrevolutionaries by Chinese communists (Chu, in this volume). Often the cultural boundaries are so pronounced and the institutions that enforce them so powerful that evidence contradicting the culturally accepted frames becomes almost invisible. Thus, the Chinese official Yuan Mu insists that photographs of violence taken in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, are falsifications (Chu, in this volume). Others contend that the Holocaust is a hoax or that its scope has been vastly embellished.

In the discussion that follows, we will explore the narratives, characteristics, and methods of each approach, as well as its fundamental assumptions and policy implications. We will also evaluate the problems with each perspective and what must happen in order to stop the cycles of violence within that framework.

Peace through Strength and Law and Order

Whether violence is occurring within a community or among nations, the peace through strength position advocates the use of whatever means are required—often violent ones—to stop "illegitimate" violence in its tracks. This approach gives birth to the criminal model of violence discussed above and relies on deterrence through intimidation to mitigate violent behavior, thus strengthening military and police forces and pursuing technological developments such as weapons arsenals, surveillance techniques, and so on that will punish offenders. Advocates call for more prisons, tougher sentences, and the death penalty, or military action against aggressors. For the most part, such actions are carried out by the state—the police or military and the criminal justice system, but at the extreme, if the state is perceived as ineffective, vigilante groups may intervene.

A number of assumptions lie behind this perspective. First, the only way to stop violence is with superior force, usually one that relies on violence.

A second assumption is that the world is inhabited by many evil people who must be deterred from violence through intimidation and punished should deterrence fail. Advocates of the law and order position contend that we cannot appease or coddle aggressors and criminals: the only language such people understand is force, and it will do no good to reason with them. In fact, efforts to deal rationally with "deviants" may allow them to perceive authorities as weak and vulnerable, thus resulting in efforts to exploit the weakness, like Hitler did with the British before World War II.

Finally, peace through strength advocates contend that such measures as arms and gun control do nothing to mitigate violence. On the contrary, they simply hamper legitimate efforts of law enforcement officials and the military, leaving them at a disadvantage. Criminals and aggressors will always obtain the weapons they need, whether legal or not, so that militarization will simply disarm legitimate authorities and honest citizens, while criminals and international aggressors will proceed illegally, cheat on treaties, and ignore the law.

Several implications follow from this perspective—most importantly, that military and police systems must have the most advanced weapons available, thus requiring continual force modernization. Second, tough laws must be enacted to enhance deterrence and punish aggressors. The central issue here, as with all frames, is whether the perspective is an accurate depiction of human nature. We contend that the peace through strength approach misreads the dynamics of conflict and inadvertently compels opposing forces to escalate their fights and to proliferate their weapons.

The major problem with the peace through strength frame is that it often perpetuates an upward spiral of violence and thus results in widespread devastation, a police state, war, or—at its extreme—a nuclear holocaust. Moreover, it does not address many of the individual or structural causes of violence, such as fear, greed, and inequality, or foster nonviolent means to engage in conflict or pursue one's desired goals. On the contrary, the peace through strength approaches serve primarily to suppress violent behavior through brute force, regardless of the precipitating factors. Ironically, it is the most effective approach in preventing the weak and powerless from becoming violent, while provoking those with more resources to escalate their aggression. As the military or police become more sophisticated in their ability to destroy, so do their opponents, so that the conflict takes on a life of its own—as it often does—and escalates beyond the control of all involved parties. The most obvious example of this problem is the superpower arms race of the cold war, which escalated to such extremes that the entire planet was placed at risk by a complex system of nuclear...
weapons and redundant weapons delivery systems. Although the danger appears to have subsided somewhat because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the weapons system itself is still very much in place, and the perceived increase in security may be as much a consequence of social amnesia as the result of a substantial change in the situation (Turpin 1993).

Although less threatening in its scope, the arms race between police and illegal forces in various urban areas and regions of ethnic conflict in the United States, Russia, the Middle East, and elsewhere mirrors the larger global process, as does the conflict between various parties making overlapping territorial claims from the so-called warlords of Somalia to the street gangs of Los Angeles.

In such situations, ruling civil authorities feel compelled to “up the ante” by “clamping down,” “getting tough,” escalating the level of armaments, and reducing the civil rights of the populations involved. When the peace is kept by a “balance of terror” within the family, community, or worldwide, everyone feels the pressure to escalate violence and armaments. Terrified citizens who feel vulnerable and unprotected by the state often turn to private systems of security, buying guns for their own homes and—especially among the economic elite—hiring armed bodyguards to protect them.1

A major consequence of this situation is the set of high social and economic costs of living in a militarized zone. As C. Wright Mills noted, we all now live in a “war neighborhood” (1958). Although he was referring to what now seems a rather crude set of long-range weapons delivery systems, the proliferation of weapons at the local level—even among schoolchildren—makes his remarks even more salient.

The high cost of the ongoing escalation of violence globally and in many local contexts around the world involves not only the physical consequences of widespread violence, and the psychological toll of the balance of terror, but also what Victor Sidel calls “destruction without devastation” (1981, 36). That is, the militarized context in which we live has its costs even when the weapons are not fired, in terms of the way economic resources are spent, the effect of the threat of violence on children, and the social construction of evil that poisons interpersonal, interethnic, and international relations. A wide range of political costs of this approach includes the growth of the national security state at the national level, police states at the community level, and a vast system of propaganda, deliberate secrecy, and deception that undermines public trust (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Marullo 1993; Kurtz 1988).

The cycles of escalating violence sustained by these dynamics can only be halted by a technological breakthrough that enables the “good guys” to gain control over the criminals and aggressors who threaten the social order. This search for an ultimate technical fix to the problem runs the gamut from the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, or Star Wars) and first-strike nuclear weapons of the Reagan era to sophisticated arms and management techniques for police forces. Some thought that the invention of the machine gun would put an end to combat, because it was so ghastly that no one would dare to use it. But, the weapon to end all weapons, like the war to end all wars, appears as a mirage on the distant desert of an increasingly armed planet.

The Legal Control Frame

A second major frame in the violence debate is the traditional liberal position that calls for a rule of law that imposes reason on chaotic forces and aims to stop violence with legal progress and procedures designed to impose rational order. This frame emphasizes arms control negotiations and treaties in the international sphere, effective law enforcement and gun control legislation combined with social programs to treat offenders at the domestic level, and a legal framework to protect human rights. Efficient military and criminal justice systems are necessary but should be combined with such efforts as job training, rehabilitation of offenders, and more recently, programs to teach conflict resolution techniques to “at risk” populations.

Several assumptions lie behind this approach, which follows the Western Enlightenment tradition that places a premium on rational thought and efforts to control both natural and social environments. The core assumption, for our purposes, is that the only way to stop violence is to maintain the rule of law. Disputes among civilized people should be fought in the courtroom, not on the battlefield. Human beings, according to this approach, are basically rational and can be taught to act in a rational fashion when shown the costs and benefits of the alternatives.

Unlike the peace through strength frame, this perspective usually maintains that we already have enough weapons and guns, prisons, and tough laws and that an escalation of arms will not alleviate the problem. Moreover, new opportunities exist in the post—cold war era for the establishment of a reasoned global social order governed by rational discourse, international trade and cultural exchanges, and international law. New techniques of arms verification to enforce treaties at the international level and sophisticated techniques of conflict resolution and behavioral therapy at community and individual levels will enable people to make slow, steady progress toward a less violent world.
The legal control framework has a number of implications for public policy, notably (1) an international legal framework is necessary to sustain a stable global social order, (2) violence would be reduced by improving law enforcement and military techniques, while maintaining civil liberties, protecting human rights, and placing strict limits on military and police authorities, and (3) criminal justice and international peacekeeping efforts need significant reforms and increased resources in order to maintain the peace from local to global levels.

The international legal framework involves the elaboration of an arms control regime that expands the efforts of the last few decades, with inter-state negotiations and treaties and mechanisms for monitoring agreements and imposing sanctions on violators. Legal control advocates maintain a wide range of positions regarding the nature of the international order that would best serve the process of legal control. They usually claim that successful international trade agreements and the development of new forms of arms verification provide the foundation on which such an order can be built. Moreover, the structure for negotiating, concluding, and monitoring such agreements has been established through decades of arduous work that could bear fruit in the post—cold war period.

At the community level, the legal control framework would systematically upgrade the criminal justice and law enforcement systems in order to rationalize the entire process of peacekeeping. The effort to make criminal justice a science reflects these kinds of concerns, as does the ongoing professionalization of the police, who in more “enlightened” cities are now armed with conflict resolution techniques and computer databases as well as guns and assault rifles. Hence, journals such as the Police Chief attend to such issues as those addressed in Gary Buchanan’s (1993) article, “Handcuffing All Arrested Persons: Is the Practice Objective Reasonable?” (cf. Hudson 1993).

Finally, such reform of the social control system will require a major effort, with the expenditure of substantial resources to upgrade and rationalize police and military forces, establish rehabilitation programs and treatment centers, train police and military officers, and upgrade technological services available to them. From this perspective, crime control is essentially a management problem, in which individuals who fail to cooperate with the larger system are brought back into line.

Similarly, a legal control system at an international level requires the elaboration of international organizations such as the United Nations. Nationally based militaries would give way to a sophisticated arrangement of collective security arrangements. Effective multinational peacekeeping forces would be deployed by the international community, and violators of international law—individuals or collectivities, public or private—would be brought before the World Court. Convicted offenders would be subjected to rational sanctions to deter them and others from future violations.

The legal control framework is appealing to many who find the peace through strength approach too aggressive, but its major stumbling blocks are formidable: it is individualistic in its proposed solutions, despite its so-called social programs, and it is ultimately hampered by the “bureaucratic shuffle.” That is, the legal control approach must be implemented by large, inefficient bureaucratic systems in which no one takes responsibility. These systems also result in a bureaucratic distancing between officials and the “clients” whom they serve, which ironically results in the hidden bureaucratized violence common in the modern world.

The assumption of this approach—that humans can act rationally—has some serious problems. Although certainly capable of rational calculation, humans often engage in violence precisely because of nonrational motivations, or because of a complex combination of rational and nonrational, individual and social forces, as Lifton suggests occurred among the Nazi doctors. Perhaps the only way to break the cycles of burgeoning bureaucratic administration of violence is the mass mobilization of social movements across national and social boundaries—a mobilization that demands a humanization of large-scale social organizations in much the same way that movements within the civil societies of Eastern Europe challenged their states in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Such movements push us toward the third frame, that of common security and nonviolent conflict.

**Common Security and Nonviolent Conflict**

All problems could be peacefully resolved if adversaries talked to each other on the basis of love and truth. All through history, the way of truth and love has always won. This was the belief and vision of Mahatma Gandhi and this vision remains good and true today.

*Ronald Reagan, speech to the United Nations, September 25, 1984*

The final frame has not been central to the mainstream debates in most societies because of its radical departure from accepted assumptions about security. Four recent developments, however, make it a more imaginable alternative: (1) increased doubts, raised by the specter of a nuclear holo-
caust, about the conventional wisdom regarding security, (2) Mikhail Gorbachev’s advocacy of a common security perspective while serving as president of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, (3) the global diffusion of nonviolent struggle from Gandhi’s anticolonial movement to the pro-democracy movements of the late twentieth century, and (4) increasing public discontent with the threat of violence that saturates daily life.

The common security approach emphasizes the interdependence of all humans. Although differing in substantial ways from the previous frames, it also draws upon elements of both of them: it recognizes both the importance of strength and confidence as an element of security and the need for a rational order based on law. In the place of deterrence through intimidation advocated by both peace through strength and legal control perspectives, however, the common security approach emphasizes cooperation when possible and creative nonviolent conflict when necessary.

The common security perspective advocates the construction of institutions that mitigate the causes of violence rather than emphasize the organization of social control agents like the military and police. Common security relies on the provision of basic economic security and human rights for all, systematic training of the civil population in the techniques of nonviolent struggle and conflict resolution, and the cultivation of cultural prohibitions against the use of violence to solve even problems of violence. In short, the common security approach would replace a “culture of violent solutions,” as Elias calls it, with a culture of nonviolent solutions. New cultural narratives (see Smith) would be woven that delegitimate violence.

The fundamental assumption of the common security approach is that no one is secure until everyone is, because we all live in the same “global village.” A second assumption is that strength is necessary in order to maintain the peace, an assumption similar to the peace through strength position. Weakness will be exploited by others, so some form of deterrence must be adopted. Strength is not measured in terms of military might or weapons technology, however, but by means of a variety of other criteria. Thus, the ability to deter is also redefined in this perspective: people are deterred from undesirable behavior by a variety of factors, one only of which is the threat of violence. In everyday life, for example, people are deterred from harming those whom they love, respect, or with whom they wish to maintain civil relations for fear of the consequences that aggressive actions will have for others and themselves. Deterrence results from a complex combination of rewards and sanctions that lie along a continuum between the most violent and the most nonviolent (Kurtz 1994).

That violent solutions may provide temporary relief of a problem, but do not work in the long run, is a third assumption of the common security approach to violence. Behind this notion is the cycle of violence thesis: “Violence begets violence.” Those whose aggression is stopped by today’s violence may retaliate tomorrow.

This assumption clearly demonstrates the importance of cognitive framing: we readily observe evidence confirming our general frame in order to sustain our preferred argument, while conveniently ignoring any counter-evidence that might negate it. Anecdotal evidence can easily be provided to “verify” the cycle of violence thesis, but counterevidence can be provided just as easily by peace through strength advocates who claim that unchecked aggressors are genuine threats. The common security frame addresses this dilemma by offering an alternative to simply ignoring a genuine threat or “wishing it away.” Nonviolent struggle with opposing forces, which may seem foreign to some peace through strength advocates, requires standing up to opponents but fighting in such a way as to attack their aggressive or unwanted behavior, rather than the people themselves (Gandhi [1951] 1961; Kurtz 1992a).

A fourth assumption of the common security approach is that structural violence can be as destructive as other kinds of violence. This aspect of the approach is significant, because it shifts the focus of definitions of security and deterrence from attention to strictly military or overt violence forms of violence toward other ways in which people are made insecure or are physically harmed. Emanating from efforts in the field of peace studies to distinguish between positive and negative peace (Brock-Utne, in this volume), this argument implies that solutions to the problem of violence must include more than increased use of force to defend against deviants at the local or global level, exploring such matters as economic security, at least as long as malnutrition and poverty remain major killers.

Fifth, conflict does not have to be a “zero sum game,” as it is sometimes perceived (Bell and Kurtz 1991). According to some conventional wisdom, a conflict must end in victory by one party only at the expense of the other; the goal of nonviolent conflict is to conduct a dispute as creatively as possible, so that all parties benefit from its resolution. Whereas violent conflict inherently accentuates differences between partisans, nonviolent struggle seeks to minimize boundaries between people.

Gandhi, for example, argues for separating the “doer from the deed” (Gandhi [1951] 1961, 203); when engaged in struggle, the nonviolent activist seeks to destroy unjust systems but not the people who are involved
Violent responses to complex situations have been a fundamental part of human life for thousands of years; twentieth-century technologies have so transformed the consequences of violent response, however, that conventional approaches are now called into question. Moreover, the long range of contemporary weapons means that no personal contact occurs between perpetrators and victims.

A final assumption of the common security approach is that nonviolence is morally and strategically superior to violence. One central dilemma in the issue of violence is the gap between what is often considered moral and that which is defined as effective. In The Fate of the Earth (1982), Jonathan Schell remarks that the advent of nuclear weapons forces us to be either a strategic or a moral idiot. On the one hand, that which is usually defined as strategically superior (i.e., the effective use of superior force to deter or sanction one’s opponent) becomes morally offensive if it threatens widespread destruction. On the other hand, if one eschews the use of weapons of mass destruction on moral grounds, one opens oneself up to attack and appears strategically naive.

This tension between the moral and the strategic emerged with particular poignancy in the nuclear debates in the United States during the early 1980s. Alarmed by the threat of a nuclear holocaust, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops undertook an extensive study of the ethical implications of nuclear weapons and concluded that nuclear war is morally indefensible because it violates two fundamental principles of the church’s traditional “just war” teachings. The principle of proportionality requires that the good caused by a war must outweigh its harmful consequences; the principle of discrimination prohibits the intentional use of violence that kills noncombatants.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger’s report to Congress grappled surprisingly, for the first time in history, with the ethical virtues of particular strategic and weapons policies (Weinberger 1983). Ironically, in responding to the bishops’ critique of the indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons, the Pentagon developed an argument that justified the escalation of the superpower nuclear arms race. The new, sophisticated weapons under development—so-called counterforce weapons—were declared moral because they were targeted on military installations, weapons systems, and so on. In contrast, earlier and existing systems were less accurate and were used for targeting cities and other “soft” (i.e., civilian) targets. Thus, a whole set of new weapons delivery systems from the MX missile and the Trident D-5 (submarine-launched) missiles to the stealth bomber were justified by the Pentagon on moral as well as strategic grounds.
Reframing the Problem of Violence

The common security approach requires a reframing of public policies at all levels, from local to global. This framebreaking implied by the common security perspective requires nothing less than rethinking basic approaches to human relations from the family to the world system.

It is not possible to address the entire range of implications for that reframing process, but we will suggest three significant areas in which the common security approach to violence differs substantially from most conventional frames: (1) it defines deterrence as a broad social process, rather than as a strategy of military and criminal justice systems, (2) it expands the repertory of nonviolent means of struggle (when deterrence fails), and (3) it transforms cultural values and socialization processes, such as the link between masculinity and violence that encourages the socialization of young men in such a way as to require violent behavior on their part in order to prove their "manhood."

Efforts to deter violence would focus not on more effective means of confronting violence with violence but on a broad range of issues that addresses the assumptions just outlined. Deterrence policies would emphasize the cultivation of friendly relations across boundaries that are the site of violent confrontation, from class and race divisions within the community to international, alliance-driven, and ideological boundaries within the world system. Common security approaches contend that aggression is deterred through a variety of means that address the concern that parties will have about protecting their own interests, relationship, or alliance. It does not necessarily rely on altruism, although it does not deny the possibility that people may engage in altruistic behavior, especially when relating with people for whom they care.

At the interpersonal level, people are frequently deterred from engaging in aggressive behavior because they are afraid that they might harm someone who might then retaliate or sever a relationship. Sometimes the motivating factor may even be genuine concern about the well-being and safety of the other. At more abstract levels of social organization, this more humane element may be obscured by the distancing mechanisms of bureaucratic institutions, vilification of certain groups or nationalities, or the politics of international relations. Even at the most abstract levels, individuals act on behalf of structures, which may help to explain why some puzzling events occur, such as the thawing of the cold war. Although many economic and geopolitical factors converged to bring about the development of friendly relations between the United States and the former Sovi-
et Union, even sociologists must take into account the dramatic impact of the personal relationship forged between the two unlikely partners of Gorbachev and Reagan. A relationship of mutual respect and affection seemed to develop between the two when they began meeting face-to-face at the initiative of the charismatic Gorbachev (Turpin 1995). These personal interactions between two leaders who had both a sense of their role in history and reputations for affability apparently broke through the formal structures that defined them as bitter enemies. The valence of the relationship changed from negative to positive, but its intensity did not diminish.

A related element of the reframing of conflict required by the common security approach is the need to expand the repertory of nonviolent solutions to conflict. It is nothing less than a call to transform the “culture of violent solutions,” as Elias puts it (in this volume), so that the dominant alternatives to social organization and social conflict are not deeply rooted in violence.

We are quite adept at violence because the peace through strength approach has been so important historically, especially in macrolevel human relations. We have the technical know-how, institutional infrastructure, and a wide range of options in our cultural repertory for carrying out violent conflict in a sophisticated manner on a wide variety of fronts. In fact, the world spends about U.S. $2 billion each day (almost half of that by the United States) on its militaries, and another very large sum on paramilitary and police forces and private arsenals. Compared to that remarkable mobilization of resources, very little is spent on nonviolent means of conflict and on research to address the causes of war and violence.

“If you want to get tough on crime, rock a crack baby,” a Catholic bishop remarked recently. Each baby born in poverty and raised in a violent neighborhood without opportunities for meeting his or her basic needs is a candidate for violence. It is not simply a matter of addressing the individual orientation of such a person and providing techniques for dealing with conflict nonviolently—although such a program might help in a number of ways. The fundamental structures that produce a world in which half of the population lives on the verge of starvation, while a small percentage lives in unprecedented wealth, cannot simply be supported indefinitely by force.

Thus, a final implication of the call for reframing in this perspective is the need for a broad transformation of contemporary cultures, so that violence is devalued and nonviolence promoted. Since the vast majority of violence is committed by men (Archer 1994), we must break the link between cultural definitions of masculinity and violence that can be found in most of the world’s cultures. It involves the creation of what Eisler (in this volume) calls a partnership, rather than dominator, social organization, making alternative models of leadership part of the cultural repertory. As long as we require that manliness be proven through the adept use of violence and that boys be taught from a very early age that they must demonstrate their strength through violence and the use of weapons, it is difficult to imagine a significant move toward a nonviolent global order (Brock-Utne, in this volume).

The dialectic between micro- and macrolevels again becomes important. On the one hand, the socialization of young men is shaped profoundly by the culture of violence that is imposed from the top. On the other hand, the ongoing process of teaching boys to use violence for solving problems reproduces the culture of violence across generations. It is difficult to tell one’s young son not to destroy his enemies on the playground when the country’s president uses such methods to solve international problems. By the time our sons become heads of state, they have been taught repeatedly the efficacy of violence in solving problems: by their parents and peers, through popular culture, the media, video games, the political leaders of their respective countries, and sometimes by their religious leaders. These cycles of violence cannot be solved either by transforming individuals on a case-by-case basis or by imposing nonviolent dictums from above but through a complex process of cultural and individual transformation. Although individuals may be taught to “use words” or enlarge their repertoires of conflict techniques, such actions will not be sufficiently widespread without a broader cultural shift. Historic cultural changes, however, do not take place without the courageous action of individuals who contradict existing cultural frames. The kind of cultural transformation required by the common security approach is possible only with massive transnational social movements that mobilize public opinion in opposition to existing frames and that cultivate cooperation between civil society and state agencies, from community to global levels.

The common security and peace through strength approaches have some important common threads that may not be immediately apparent. Both share a suspicion toward the state, which is inconsistent in both approaches; each has some ambivalence about the state that results in internal contradictions. Peace through strength advocates tend to oppose excessive state intervention in other spheres but often place a heavy burden on the state to provide the kind of military and police forces necessary to check violence with violence. Common security advocates tend to be oriented toward forging a democratic civil society as a force opposing the state, which is so of-
of nonviolent “civilian-based defense” have emerged in recent decades, notably in the work of Gene Sharp (1973, 1991). Peace brigade proposals have actually been considered practical policy in a few cases: Costa Rica exists without an army but in relative peace with its violent neighbors; a movement to abolish the army was widely popular in Slovenia before the civil war shattered the peace; the newly independent Lithuania is considering a nonviolent defense system as part of its national security.

Less dramatic, but quite remarkable, measures that emphasize nonviolent conflict and common security include the increasing sophistication and systematic use of conflict resolution techniques in international and ethnic conflicts, such as that between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel (Dajani, forthcoming).

Finally, many creative ideas about the cultivation of a nonviolent civic culture that promotes free expression, equal opportunity, and mutual support have emerged from resistance movements in various parts of the world (Ackermann and Kruegler 1994). From the essays and plays of Vaclav Havel (Havel 1990; see also, Brinton and Rinzler 1990) to the actions of nonviolent prodemocracy movements in Thailand (Satha-Anand, forthcoming) and Latin America (Pagnucco and McCarthy 1992; Maciel, forthcoming), it may be that the groundwork for a less violent culture is being laid toward the end of humanity’s most violent century. At the community level, experiments in nonviolent conflict and its resolution thrive: in Gandhian “constructive workers” in India, Christian-based communities in Latin America, the Quaker “Alternatives to Violence” training in U.S. prisons, and elsewhere around the world.

We are not blind, of course, to the tremendous obstacles to the transition from a violent to a nonviolent culture. We will briefly discuss three major problems with an implementation of the common security approach: (1) cultural resistance and the complexity of such a transformation, (2) our collective ignorance about alternatives to violence and a host of structures for facilitating nonviolent conflict, and (3) the virtually inevitable resistance by powerful interests who profit from the status quo and will fight to maintain it.

In a global culture saturated with violence, the idea of a nonviolent world sounds like the idealistic ramblings of marginal sociologists and pacifists. Two factors make it possible to imagine. First, the power of nonviolent struggle has been demonstrated for the first time on a large scale in the twentieth century, from the Indian Freedom Movement to various social movements especially in the United States, Philippines, Argentina, Palestine, and the former Soviet bloc. The fact that nonviolent approaches have
now been demonstrated changes the nature of the argument in their favor from a primarily moral to a more strategic one.

Second, despite the flaws of a nonviolent approach, conventional approaches look increasingly defective in the nuclear age. As Gwynne Dyer (1985) puts it, violence has been a part of human life for five thousand years; in the twentieth century, it has simply been too costly. Is it really more idealistic to imagine the transformation of human social organization toward nonviolence than to expect humans to survive if we continue down the path of violent solutions? Do increasingly sophisticated weapons of mass destruction, the proliferation of armaments around the world, and the widespread distribution of guns in schools and homes provide more security? Perhaps the shock of the nuclear threat in the 1980s and the violence of daily life for so many (including even the wealthy and powerful) around the world in the 1990s provide the kind of awareness of our addiction to violence that will lead us to seek some therapeutic measures (as Galtung postulates, in this volume).

A second obstacle to the common security approach is our collective ignorance of nonviolent alternatives. For centuries—perhaps millennia—we have cultivated warfare techniques, invented new means of destruction, and rationalized our strategies for violent conflict. In the twentieth century, preparation for the use of violence and its actual practice consume an enormous proportion of human resources. We are very adept at it and getting better all the time.

Nonviolent struggle, on the other hand, while also as old as human life, is less well developed. It is only in the last millisecond of the long day of human history that we have discovered large-scale nonviolent action, systematized plans of action, and laid the groundwork for future development. There is no Strategic Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP) for a nonviolent defense system, and no large-scale system that develops necessary technologies and battle strategies, recruits and trains combatants, and carries out conflicts in a nonviolent manner. We have only the scattered fragments of Gandhi’s writings and stories about his work, the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., Sharp’s Politics of Nonviolent Action, a few documentary films and scholarly works on nonviolence and conflict resolution, a handful of research institutes studying, and religious organizations promoting, nonviolent change, and the recently developed tradition of nonviolent social movements, with their stories, pamphlets, and collective wisdom. Perhaps we do not need or want a Pentagon for nonviolent struggle, which should be democratically forged and wherever possible homegrown, but we should not be surprised that, when the forces of violence meet those of nonvio-

lence, the latter look shabbily prepared and sloppy compared to the twentieth-century culmination of centuries of discipline and training in violence.

Finally, the interests organized against such a transformation are formidable: the largest block of capital resources available for capital formation exists in the U.S. military budget, and those who control it will not relinquish it lightly. Certainly, it appears to be in the vested interests of those who control the missiles and the guns, as well as those who make them, to resist the sort of dramatic social transformation required by the common security perspective, and perhaps to resist it violently.

Developments since the fall of the Soviet bloc demonstrate the nature of the obstacles to taking the nonviolent path. In the former Soviet Union, just days after Boris Yeltsin led crowds of unarmed demonstrators in the streets to challenge the Soviet military troops and tanks with flowers and words, the new Russian president himself was dispersing his new troops around the country and making compromises with his military establishment. Gandhi-reading Lech Walesa requested NATO to admit his new Poland into their military alliance. Self-proclaimed change-oriented presidential candidate Bill Clinton, now in charge of the world’s most powerful military machine, called for dramatic reductions in government but asked for only a 4 percent reduction in the U.S. military budget, swollen to nearly twice its pre-Reagan size.

The only way to break this kind of impasse, it would seem, is what we call the “Eisenhower solution”: that is, a popular mass movement that mobilizes a social and cultural transformation sufficient to press the state into making changes. We call it the Eisenhower solution because Dwight Eisenhower, commander of Allied Forces in Europe during World War II and subsequently president of the United States, claimed that “people of the world want peace so badly that some day governments had better get out of their way and let them have it” (1953, 421).

The Politics of Violence Research

Critics who contend that the problems created by violence are widespread but can only be met with violence are, in the final analysis, correct about the vagueness of the alternatives. We simply do not know enough about how to solve these problems beyond escalating the violence.

Part of our problem is our lack of knowledge, and the current processes for learning about violence and its alternatives are too meager and misguided. We contend that the current myopia in research must be overcome because of four major problems. First, the foundations and government
funding now available for research on violence tend to support status quo systems and are locked into disciplinary frameworks. Second, most current research and policy recommendations tend to frame violence in individualistic terms and propose solutions that involve technical fixes at the margins of society, rather than address the fundamental issues. Third, current research is dominated by a peace through strength frame that screens out many of the insights from the legal control frame and most of the common security approach. Finally, even the style of research that is funded narrows our vision by taking a conservative approach to data collection and analysis, a tactic that further reinforces existing paradigms.

Foundations and other institutions interested in advancing our understanding of violence need “break frame.” The most dramatic example of how the current funding process works is the fact that the largest amount of funding for social science research in all fields (not just violence) is controlled by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, which had an annual research budget of $59.9 million in 1988. Although a small portion of the overall Pentagon budget, that amount exceeds the total combined social science research budget of all other sources of federal funding in the United States, including the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Department of Education (Kurtz 1992b).

The individualistic focus of research is underscored by the fact that the Army Research Institute employs 197 psychologists out of its 213 scientists, and only five sociologists (Bynam 1988). Although their research agenda includes a number of topics, a primary objective is how to make members of the armed forces fight more efficiently, manage more effectively, and stay in the military longer. Thus, the military spends vast amounts of money to study itself and to analyze alternative military strategies (Janowitz and Little 1974).

The end of the cold war offers an opportunity to engage in new thinking about violence; indeed, some new government officials seem to be willing to consider alternative approaches. In Eastern Europe, considerable conceptual and practical progress has been made in this area, growing out of the movements resisting communist domination of that region (Havel 1990).

Some new possibilities are also emerging in the West, especially in the field of nonviolent conflict resolution (Kriesberg 1982, 1986), which is rapidly becoming an established field. Similarly, the number of university peace studies programs has escalated dramatically in recent years, especially in Europe and the United States, but elsewhere as well. A handful of peace institutes were founded after World War I and more following World War II, but only in the 1970s and 1980s did the academic study of peace and conflict become widespread. In 1970, there were two peace studies programs at U.S. universities; in 1990, there were about 250 (Elias and Turpin 1994).

Following years of lobbying for an alternative to the military academies, the U.S. Congress established the U.S. Peace Institute in 1984. Although this official agency faced considerable political turmoil from the outset, with its Reagan-appointed governing board sometimes opposing the procedures favored by those influential in the institute’s creation. Nonetheless, it has managed to fund a number of important projects, primarily in the area of conflict resolution techniques.

More surprisingly, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno recently made the following statement, which represents a sharp departure from previous frames emanating from that office:

One of our greatest challenges in the 1990s is to make the prevention and treatment of violence a top priority.

If we can make peace education and nonviolent conflict resolution a part of everyone’s life; if we take it to the housing projects and make it a part of every resident’s life; if we can make it to domestic violence programs and prevention programs throughout the United States; if we can say that before anyone gets married they should go through a conflict resolution course, we will make great strides in the 1990s.

If we can bring this program to bear at every level of our society, we will be able to look back 10 years from now and be proud of what we did through education, prevention and showing people how to be peaceful. (1992, 1)

It is no accident that this new cognitive frame at the Justice Department comes from the America’s first female attorney general. Similar shifts will occur if we expand our frames of reference in other ways, by including perspectives from various cultures and subcultures around the world other than those that have traditionally dominated research. Papers from “Studying Violence,” a seminar held by the Indian Council of Peace Research in 1973, repeatedly identified social, rather than individualistic, causes of and remedies for violence. According to Sugata Dasgupta, for example, “the seedbed of violence” lies “in the disfunctionalité of the societal process” (1972, 5).

American scholarship tends to dominate social science approaches around the world and, to the extent to which it shapes U.S. policy, has a global impact. Research on violence in the United States tends, however, to reflect the individualistic culture of the country as well as—even though
often unintended—the hegemonic structures of international capital. As long as we remain within the frames provided by conventional scholarship, we will fail to untangle the web of violence we have woven. We hope that this volume will be an initial step toward broadening debate and opening new alternatives.

Notes

1. In residential areas of New Delhi, for example, many homes look like fortresses, complete with high walls and guard towers staffed by well-armed guards.

2. Some have speculated that agents provocateurs planted by the government may have incited the crowds to turn against the soldiers (Sharp and Jenkins 1989, 5).

3. Enlightenment rationality certainly represents a culmination of this sort of thinking, but similar approaches can be found in many other cultures. Confucian thought in Chinese civilization, so influential throughout Asia, for example, emphasizes a hierarchical order and a formal rationality that produces many results similar to the utilitarian rationality of the West, although it did not develop in the same way.

Works Cited


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