

psychological studies on nonviolence only played a marginal role (Gregg, Pelton and Moyton are the rare exceptions).

Stellan Vinthagen's "Theory of Nonviolent Action" is definitively the most important theoretical contribution to the field of nonviolent action and resistance studies since Gene Sharp laid the theoretical groundworks in 1973. In my eyes the conceptualization of nonviolent action as a multi-rational action in conflict is convincing and well-grounded in sociological theory. Furthermore, the framework has indeed the potential to reach the ambitious goal of reconciling the two camps of Gandhians and Sharpians. Last but not least, the dimensions of dialogue facilitation, utopian enactment and normative regulation open up new barely covered fields for research and, at the same time, offer some important theoretical guidance for it.

As the criticism mentioned above shows, the book cannot answer all questions, but it provides an excellent, theoretically rich starting point to deepen the theoretical debate on nonviolence or to expand theorizing to related fields and disciplines. I would recommend the book for every student and scholar who is familiar with the actual debates within nonviolent resistance studies. Due to its demanding theory, it is, however, not very suitable for those who want a short and easy introduction.

Markus Bayer, Universität Duisburg-Essen

Dustin Ells Howes: Freedom Without Violence: Resisting the Western Political Tradition

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The soldiers are off to war—to defend freedom. This is a common theme in popular explanations of war. For example, the usual script is that the Allies had to fight World War II to oppose fascist oppression. After invading Iraq in 2003, the US government claimed it was necessary to liberate Iraqis from Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. On the other side

of the ideological divide, numerous liberation movements have justified armed struggle as necessary to free oppressed people from colonialism.

Advocates of civil resistance argue that nonviolent methods are more suited than armed struggle for creating lasting freedom. This has been argued on grounds of plausibility: armed struggle involves a military command system that, even when it succeeds, creates a tendency for autocratic rule. In civil resistance struggles, a much broader cross-section of the population is directly involved. This is an empowering experience that builds capacity that can be used to resist future oppression. From the perspective of Gandhian nonviolence, a key principle is that ends should be incorporated in the means: a militarised revolution is likely to lead to a militarised society whereas a nonviolent revolution is more likely to lead to a nonviolent society. Then there is the empirical research showing that civil resistance is more effective than armed struggle in overthrowing repressive regimes and leading to a society with civil liberties in the following years. Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan's book *Why Civil Resistance Works* is widely cited.

However, despite good arguments and considerable evidence, advocates of nonviolent alternatives have had a hard time changing the mindset of governments, militaries, the media and the general public. The idea that violence is valuable, even essential, to defend freedom seems deeply entrenched. Why is that so?

For answers, *Freedom Without Violence* by Dustin Ells Howes is an essential source. Howes, a political scientist, examines ideas about freedom and violence from the ancient Greeks onwards. His study is a fascinating and challenging journey through the history of ideas. One of the surprises is that the strong linkage between violence and freedom is relatively new. However, to establish this involves careful analysis. For example, Howes summarises one distinction, which he examines in detail, this way:

... for the ancient Athenians, the ability to dominate others in warfare was an *expression* of their capacity for self-rule. However, the idea that a republican or democratic government could use violence to *defend* or protect freedom is a relatively recent development. (p. 43, emphasis in the original)

Freedom Without Violence is highly effective in drawing attention to issues not often addressed in writings about nonviolence. What is freedom exactly? The usual formulations refer to political freedoms, for example of speech and assembly, economic freedom, religious freedom and so forth. But what happens when freedom comes under threat? How is it to be defended?

The problems with using violence to defend freedom soon become apparent. It might seem sensible to fight to defend our freedom and our way of life, but what about the freedom of those on the other side? If enemies are killed, surely their freedom is destroyed, or is meaningless.

Howes tells how the plebs in Rome defended their freedom: they refused military service. This is a dramatically different approach than the usual one today. Howes sets himself the task of explaining how ideas of freedom changed from the ancient world of Greece and Rome to contemporary societies, in particular how they became ever more entangled with violence—and how nonviolence offers an alternative.

Much of *Freedom without Violence* is a detailed history of ideas. Howes scrutinises the views of ancient thinkers including Socrates, Pericles and Aristotle, of later figures including Edmund Burke and Karl Marx, and a number of modern writers including Isaiah Berlin and Hannah Arendt. This analysis is fascinating in showing how ideas of freedom, free will and rule changed over the centuries. This is a history of western thought—and Gandhi.

Howes shows the shortcomings of the usual formulations that involve defending freedom via violence, and the efforts (and intellectual contortions) of thinkers who sought ways around the problem that using violence, against enemies or as a component of ruling, inevitably involves curtailing someone else's freedom, indeed their lives.

The emergence of the modern state involved the idea of sovereignty, which became linked to military means. Liberal thought, which has claimed a particular affinity to concepts of individual freedom, became entwined with assumptions of the necessity of using violence. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, for example, sovereignty in the United States meant the rule of white settlers over African Americans and Native Americans.

The rise of the modern state was soon challenged or accompanied by nationalism, involving a new set of ideologies. Freedom from alien rule seems a worthy cause, but in most cases the means involved violence. Nationalism became especially toxic with the rise of fascism. There was also the parallel development of ideas of socialism, most of which were also tied up with violence.

Howes addresses these developments primarily through the ideas of key thinkers, showing how ancient ideas about freedom were forgotten or transformed into the modern ideas that assume freedom needs to be defended with violence, both inside societies (via police) and outside (via militaries). Howes also pays attention to a contrary tradition: the use of nonviolent action as a means of defending freedom.

Of special interest is the workers' movement, with the strike— withdrawing labour power—as a key tool. Workers through their struggles demonstrated a different way of pursuing freedom. Howes says strikes are fundamentally nonviolent. He examines the ideas of several theorists who addressed the strike and workers' struggles more generally—Walter Benjamin, Georges Sorel, Rosa Luxemburg and Hannah Arendt—some of whom saw strikes as violent and some who didn't.

Howes' special interest is in what he calls "nonviolent freedom." He sees the use of nonviolent action as an alternative route to freedom, avoiding the contradictions and traps involved in pursuing freedom using violent means. The key figure intellectually, as well as practically, is Gandhi.

Along the way, Howes examines what is called free will, addressing how the will is expressed individually and politically, via the ideas of Arendt, connecting them to those of others, including Albert Camus, Buddhists and Gandhi's idea of *swaraj* (self-rule).

For Howes, *swaraj* offers an alternative to the usual equation of freedom and violence. Gandhi conceived of freedom as having both an individual and collective dimension. At the individual level, freedom for Gandhi meant not licence, namely absence of constraints, but came with the requirement for having self-control. Individual self-control enables living together with others without the necessity of the application of violence for policing. At the collective level, Gandhi envisaged a system

of local village direct democracies linked to others in ever larger networks on the basis of equality rather than hierarchy. Gandhi's vision thus overcomes the usual contradictions in the western political model that derive from exercising violence to defend one's own freedom but at the expense of others'.

Gandhi's model of village democracy is all very well, but are there any signs of how it can operate in practice? Howes points to two options. One is community justice systems based on shame and reintegration. Rather than punishment being imposed by the state, with imprisonment for serious crimes, community justice procedures put the offender face-to-face with victims and community members in a cooperative process to reach an agreed resolution, with the offender making amends. In practice, imprisonment may be involved in some cases.

Howes' second option is civilian-based defence as a replacement for military systems. This involves an empowered population trained and prepared to use methods of nonviolent action to defend against foreign invaders, and to deter aggression in the first place. Howes draws largely on the work of Gene Sharp in his book *Civilian-Based Defense*. Howes' argument would be considerably stronger if he had tapped into the wider body of research on what is also called social defence, nonviolent defence or defence by civil resistance. Sharp's approach is oriented to national defence, namely defence assuming the very system of sovereignty that Howes finds problematical. Other writers in the area see social defence more broadly as a defence of community or society, and just as concerned about defending against one's own government as against foreign enemies. Writers in this area include Anders Boserup and Andrew Mack, Robert Burrowes, Theodor Ebert, and Johan Niezing. Burrowes in particular takes a Gandhian approach in his book *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense*, which ties into Howes' picture of nonviolent alternatives. Howes seems unaware of community-level initiatives to promote nonviolent defence, though admittedly these were never prominent and have faded away since the 1980s.

Nonviolent activists might be frustrated with Howes' book given its focus on the arguments of high-level theorists about freedom and violence and its lack of obvious application. It is very well written, yet challenging to read due to its careful and complex argumentation. Nevertheless,

Freedom Without Violence serves several important functions. It points to a crucial assumption underlying most of the western political tradition, namely that violence is required to defend freedom, and shows the many shortcomings of this assumption. Nonviolent activists and scholars regularly confront disbelief about alternatives to violence. Howes, through his detailed historical examinations, shows that the connection between freedom and violence is largely a modern creation, and that there is a different way to think about things, namely by looking to nonviolence theory and practice. Howes demonstrates, in great detail, that trying to reconcile freedom and violence inevitably leads to contradictions that have exercised the minds of leading thinkers, without a solution within the standard paradigm of state sovereignty. This can be an inspiration for campaigners to develop better ways of identifying and challenging assumptions about freedom, for example that being prepared to kill and torture others to defend our freedom means denying their freedom, and that this tension cannot be resolved by more violence.

Howes shows most of all that today's ideas about freedom were not held in earlier centuries. According to the sociology of knowledge, the prevailing ideas in a society are in part a reflection of systems of power. Howes has shown this in a practical way: ideas about freedom and violence have evolved not according to logic and evidence but in a way that reflects the evolution of social structures. In particular, with the rise of states, militaries and armed police, it is very convenient to justify the use of violence by saying it is necessary to defend freedom. For promoting nonviolent alternatives, Howes points the way to recognising both a different way of defending freedom and the need to think of freedom in a different way.

Brian Martin, University of Wollongong