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Social Defence and Deterrence
Their Interrelationship

Theodore Olson*
Research Programme in Strategic Studies, York University, Toronto

1. *The meaning of social defence and deterrence*

This article seeks to define a positive relation between social defence – unarmed national struggle by the civilian populace against an armed invasion – and the notion of deterrence. I deal briefly with homeland deterrence but focus on the more problematic issue of *extended deterrence* or deterrence at a distance. I contend that social defence has such a capability and go on, in the last part, to address some of the reasons why this capability has been denied or little explored in social defence thinking. Finally I assert that development of the deterrent ability of social defence is important in the dialogue with official defence specialists and with ordinary people.

1.1. *Social defence*

By social defence I mean, in this case, national defence undertaken by the unarmed populace of a nation. This popular defence is conceived here as operating in place of either a professional or a conscripted armed force acting on behalf of that populace. The heart of social defence is congruence between the means of defence and the things to be defended. The chief objects of defence are taken to be the central values, shared experience and common institutions of this people – the very things that conventional and nuclear armed forces claim to defend but which they so often imperil. These are defended directly (and 'direct defence' might be a useful synonym for social defence) by the people to whom they matter, by maintaining them in the face of an armed occupation by invading forces. Though it is common to contrast social defence to territorial defence, expulsion of the invaders is, if not the goal of social defence, the final means of concluding a successful social defence. And social defence, while it might operate on lines different from those of a conventional armed defence, obviously implies extensive, disciplined advance logistical preparation and training, central planning, provision for considerable tactical flexibility and a reliable command structure with both public and covert dimensions. Naturally, social defence would be useless against a pre-emptive and widespread nuclear attack – just as every other actual defence is useless in these circumstances. But social defence does aim to render useless, inapposite or ineffective the weapons and aims that an invader would bring.

1.2. *Deterrence*

It will be well to point out at once that deterrence in conflict far antedates its use as a concept in nuclear deterrence theory. Its presuasiveness there, deserved or not, derives from its commonsense validity in ordinary human affairs and in older forms of warfare. Fences, locks and watchmen deter thieves. Well-located fortresses and armies of proven effectiveness have – perhaps not often enough – deterred adventurous enemies from invasion. It

* Professor Theodore Olson is Coordinator, Alternative Defence Strategies, in the Research Programme in Strategic Studies of the York University, Toronto, Canada.

has become traditional to refer to this effect as deterrence by denial: the invader cannot get what he wants; or his gains will cost more than they will be worth. This may be distinguished from deterrence by threat of punishment. Here it is not prospective gains that dominate the enemy's calculus but fear of loss. The defending nation indicates credibly its ability and willingness to inflict unacceptable losses on the invader, say by overthrowing his regime and annexing his territory. Or criminals threatened by the activities of law enforcement people may issue a credible counter-threat to murder the families of these officials or to kidnap and debauch their womenfolk.

It is reliable delivery systems that provide nuclear deterrence theorists with the credibility of deterrence by punishment. But this deterrence differs decisively from the older military threat of overthrow and annexation. In the usual paradigm, 'nuclear utilization' as punishment comes only after a society-destroying attack has been launched at the defending society; thus there is no victor, only mutual destruction.

A less-noticed use of the threat of nuclear punishment is to defend otherwise indefensible distant 'interests' or assets through threatening nuclear attack on the enemy's homeland if these assets are bombarded. While of inferior credibility, this threat must be taken into account. Its attractiveness to its employers is its infinite elasticity; it can be made to cover nearly any object anywhere.

But this fact conduces to the temptation to assert the defensibility of everything; no choices need be made. Promises can be extended – in response to domestic political pressures, for example – in all directions, compatible or not. What began in technical ability and in political opportunism results in an immobilism unresponsive to the real politics of choice-making. Worse still, at least some threats may someday have to be underwritten by nuclear 'retaliation', lest this bloated periphery be attacked at a number of points and nibbled away. What is to prevent this need to carry out nuclear threats? Only the good behaviour and consistent self-restraint of the enemy – a self-restraint that one has been unable to exercise in respect of one's own area of self-assigned empire.

These undesirable features of nuclear deterrence have provided deterrence itself with a bad reputation, one that is compounded by the false claims made for the near-scientific status of nuclear deterrence. But here the ideological character of nuclear deterrence becomes even clearer. In so important a matter one ought to be able to point to occasions in which nuclear deterrence has 'worked' and to show how it achieved its effects. One ought to be able to specify in advance how it will work in some impending use. But none of this has ever happened.

It is useful, in the face of such bogus extensions of the term *deterrence*, to persist in employing the concept. It has a proper place in the armamentarium of defence and, as I hope to show, in social defence.

Social defence has a complex relation to orthodox contemporary strategies bases on deterrence.

1. At one level, social defence encounters deterrence as a competitor. Like other actual *defence* strategies, social defence can be relegated to subordinate status because, it is argued, if deterrence is effective, no actual defence need be undertaken.
2. Adoption of social defence by one or more minor powers would count for very little in moving the world away from the edge of disaster, so long as the major powers remained wedded to nuclear deterrence-by-threat. And such threats are better adapted to protection of the extended commitments of the major powers than is social defence which, in most versions, is put forward as a purely defensive stance.
3. Paradoxically, the very characteristics in nuclear deterrence theory that social defence thinkers criticize most strongly are quite central to most social defence theory. Thus the critique is ineffective and misplaced: ineffective because of this unacknowledged similarity and misplaced because the strengths of deterrence theory are not located and addressed.

2. *Two different social defence responses to nuclear deterrence*

Dealing with this third relation first may clear the way toward establishing a more positive evaluation of social defence *as* deterrence. In the literature on social defence, beginning with its pioneers (Burritt 1854; Gregg 1935, revised 1944, 1959; Muste 1954; Hinshaw 1956) and continuing through to influential thinkers like Sharp (1973, 1980, 1982, 1983), there is a strong reliance on just those features of nuclear deterrence that have come (perhaps unnecessarily) to dominate that doctrine: non-quantitative, even metaphysical factors like willpower, commitment, resolve and a heavy preoccupation with the impressions to be created in the mind of the opponent. Orthodox contemporary deterrence theorists tell us that the proper employment of nuclear weapons is their utility in creating certain conditions in the mind of the enemy. It is these mental states, then, that constitute the fact of deterrence – not the weapons themselves; they are only tools for the expression of resolve on our part or for the creation of subtle conditions of doubt or certainty in the councils of the opponent.

Social defence thinkers, in common with the new strategic school usually called war-fighters, criticize these features of deterrence as, variously, meta-strategy, ideology covering some other reality, and selective substitution of what 'we' want to happen for what actually takes place in the mind of the opponent as a consequence of what we do.

This is curious, because there is a discernible parallel between standard nuclear deterrence and the work of social defence thinkers who begin from the 'non-violence' tradition. The invader comes and is met by what is, in effect, a huge non-violent demonstration. The sit-down at the military base, the interposition, the manifestation of willpower or of an alternative way of life – all these things are transmogrified into the spectacle of a whole populace imbued with the ethos of the pacifist demonstration.[1] A great refusal – non-cooperation – frustrates the devices of militarism. Even when, as in the most recent work of Sharp (1983), this motif has been modified in response to the criticism of people like Boserup & Mack (1975), the model tends to remain. Abstention and purity, reinforced by resolve, produce their daunting and then victorious effects, nullifying bombs and bayonets by means of the impact of non-violence on the minds of the enemy general and his troops. Where today's military strategists locate power in nuclear weapons, non-violent theorists locate power in the people. But there is a difference: many non-violent theorists, in any other context, show a great mistrust of power; they identify it with authoritarianism and display a clear preference for a social system in which broadly-defined 'rights' take decisive priority over social obligation. Thus their employment of the power-motif in non-violent defence does not arise from their general social theory but may rather begin from an unconscious mirror-imaging of their opponents' strategy.

This resolve, in both nuclear deterrence and in some versions of social defence, is rather abstractly conceived. In the one case it is the declared resolve 'if necessary' to do something profoundly irrational and dysfunctional. In libertarian non-violent defence it is not so much the will to drive out the invaders as it is the will to be our individual selves, whatever they may be, on a given Tuesday. Both versions are formalistic and, I believe, out of touch with real objects of defence – *which alone can usefully inform and justify any defence doctrine and practice.*

3. *Deterrent capability of social defence*

The critique of parallel thinking among advocates of non-violent defence and those who defend nuclear deterrence clears the way for a re-examination of the deterrent capability of social defence. The problem is straightforward. Nations with extended commitments tend to be the nations with nuclear weapons. Such states tend to be those least open to the adoption of social defence – perhaps because its advocates stress the purely defensive capabilities of social defence. It is ill-adapted to the defence of farflung commitments overseas. Schemes for

non-violent expeditionary forces seldom stand inspection, on logistic grounds and on the basis of social defence theory: only the people of a given place can make an effective defence of their own society; anything else smacks of *force majeure*. Some advocates of a non-violent national defence even stress, as a positive feature, that non-violence cannot defend anything gained by force or fraud. All 'ill-gotten gains' must be restored to their presumably disadvantaged earlier possessors or perhaps given up to others; they cannot be defended by non-violence. Thus social defence is inherently and exclusively a defensive doctrine *tout court*.

This is a satisfying position for those whose thinking begins from (and perhaps ends with) a doctrine of non-violence or for those whose libertarian beliefs are paramount. But it makes difficult any perception of a proper relation between social defence and deterrence, a relation distinguished from the uncritical oppositions and unconscious parallels described above.

Even dogmatic advocates of non-violent national defence recognize that there is *some* deterrent capability in social defence. A well-prepared nation can invite observers from among its prospective opponents to view 'non-violent manoeuvres'. This satisfies the Gandhian precept about 'truth and openness' and, at the same time, indicates to the foe some of the prospective costs of an invasion, thus helping to deter that invasion. But few social defence theorists have worked through systematically the requirements for an effective deterrent of this sort. Existing armies are ignored or disbanded with a flourish of the pen. The problem of organization is acknowledged; but primary attention is given to decentralization as the master strategy of social defence. No one should doubt the utility of decentralized defence. Subordinate values and local institutions have an important role in social defence; and, by shifting the ground of confrontation from one to another or from central institutions and superordinate values to parochial ones, the defence can gain the benefits that armies find in the rotation of troops from front lines to rear areas.

But it is finally the unifying values and institutions that must be defended successfully. Fail to plan realistically to defend these and the whole defence is imperilled. And it is realistic planning that constitutes the heart of deterrence against attack itself. Defence of individual 'rights' is no substitute for this. And to treat limited-appeal minority 'life-styles' as if the majority were too benighted to value them is to cut onself off from the strength that gives national defence a deterrent capability.[2]

4. *Extended deterrence*

But it is the issue of *extended* deterrence that truly divides social defence thinkers from defenders of the nuclear status quo. Nuclear strategy, particularly that of the United States, seems predicated on the defence of 'responsibilities' the United States is believed to have on all continents. These investments of men, money and prestige are made defensible by their link to America's ability to loose nuclear weapons in defence of its homeland. The capabilities to do the latter can be diverted to the destruction of targets outside the homelands of either the US or the USSR. Or, one small incident can lead to larger ones, until a crisis is reached that directly involves the 'world position' of one or the other superpower. But these are loose links, uncertain in their connection.

Extended deterrence in Europe is a different matter. Here we have formalized links, spelled out in specific security guarantees underwritten by the presence of superpower troops in central Europe (regularly described as 'the central front'), armed with a wide variety of nuclear weapons. These troops are in turn backed up with large nuclear forces located in rear land or sea areas. It is worth noting, however, that the term 'extended deterrent' is a misnomer. The character of homeland deterrence, at least for the guarantor of Western Europe, cannot be extended to Europe. The doctrine and force capability that defend the United States against direct attack on its homeland cannot be replicated in Europe or for Europe.

At home (that is, in the US) one has, as deterrent, a secure second-strike capability buttressed by sheer distance (therefore by use-

ful lead times for response) and by the ability to locate attractive targets away from population centres. In Europe, however, extended deterrence means nuclear first use 'if necessary' in order to cut down the odds. This equalizer is required because the allies will not or cannot support local armies of sufficient size or put their forces where they will be needed in event of an invasion. Defence in depth is precluded; hence the defence plans must imperil Western population centres or mount a 'forward defence': push at least a missile and aircraft attack far to the rear of Warsaw Pact front line troops, in their homelands. This is called extended deterrence, as if it were a broadened coverage of the nuclear deterrence umbrella over the United States. But these two, if brothers, are more different than Cain and Abel.[3]

But is social defence more sensible on extended deterrence? Some versions have no logical place for it; they grant only a grudging legitimacy even to homeland deterrence. At most they could imagine a league of social defence democracies, equally passive but perhaps acquiring power to threaten an aggressor because of their aggregate economic power. But the belief that only democracies are capable of social defence is scarcely more than an unexamined prejudice. Traditional societies, well-established authoritarian regimes and societies that simply work by norms different from those of the West – all of these are as capable of social defence as Sweden, Canada or the United States. Rid ourselves of this piece of unwarranted ethnocentrism and the scope for extended deterrence in social defence expands considerably.

A league of social defence states would be a good thing. But that is not really what extended deterrence means. Extended deterrence is *projected* deterrence, distant deterrence against an attack on one's own heartland or homeland. States between the homeland and the enemy state are buffers, a strategic forefield before the social defence state; they are a means, from the perspective of strategists in the homeland. In the final analysis, though nations may seek the good of others, they do what they do, not because it is good for their allies but because it is good for themselves. For the European allies, the United States today is a means. In this respect, then, other nations, even social defence allies, are means.

Given the somewhat dogmatic Kantianism prevalent among social defence theorists and their perception of the ideological character of NATO and WTO commitments, it is understandable that little attention has been given in early social defence writing to deterrence and especially to extended deterrence. Only recently (Boserup & Mack 1975; Niezing 1982; Sharp 1983) have thinkers begun to devote serious thought to the extended capabilities of social defence as deterrence-at-a-distance.

In nuclear deterrence the requirements of homeland deterrence and extended deterrence in Europe are in conflict. As an effort to reduce that conflict we see only the dangerous tendency to bring home the most arbitrary and dubious parts of forefield deterrence. But in social defence there is no major conflict between the requirements for homeland and forefield deterrence.

One could employ the official NATO worst-case assessment of Soviet intentions on the 'central front' in order to show the utility of social defence. But for now let us assume something different in order to illustrate the link between homeland and forefield in social defence. Here we assume 1) that Western European nations opt for social defence and 2) that the Soviet Union does not attack. Menaces and flourishes – yes – as the Soviet Union attempts to do what all commentators predict it will if Western Europe 'goes neutralist.' But this gains no advantages; and the failure is not followed by invasion. What effect does this state of affairs have on American defence or deterrence arrangements currently justified as part of homeland defence? The longer Western Europe goes on without being attacked, the more arbitrary, overblown and even silly a good deal of American nuclear deterrence arrangements are going to seem – even to Americans.

Far-fetched though this example may be in some respects, it shown us two things: 1) some

hidden oddities about the current arrangements and 2) the strong demands built into social defence for congruence between homeland defence and extended defence/deterrence. It is important to see that these are *structural* requirements and not some moralistic power of example to change men's hearts.

Whether one is European or North American, then, there are excellent reasons to develop a forward social defence, an activist defence, a policy of exporting social defence, of offering inducements for other nations to adopt it. Other things being roughly equal, it is best, as prudent strategists have always known, to keep rotten social systems and tyrannical, expansionary states as far away as possible, to combat them at a distance. Failing that, one organizes a mutual insurance system, so that front-line states do not feel more exposed than is necessary: NATO without the contradictions.

There are three successive circles that can be drawn as we think of the power of social defence to deter at a distance (or to call in distant nations to redress the local balance of power). The first of course is the social defence bloc. How is this formed? Certainly by one or more nations initiating it. But it will expand as other blocs do, as one power is able to influence another economically and socially and provide advantages to its allies, partners and dependents. And the larger the bloc, the more deterring become the sanctions the social defence bloc can employ; these are discussed below when we reach the circle containing the candidate or actual enemy nation.

The second circle contains non-social defence nations. Nothing in a realistic conception of social defence forbids entering into mutual insurance arrangements of this sort, alliances that cover matters of common concern. Too often social defence is conceived so narrowly that economic and political interests of nations are ignored or are assumed to have some strange autonomy that does not relate to defence. But the power of a state or people is not limited to Sharp's lists of purely-defensive 'non-violent sanctions'. In the real world, nations do not wait to be invaded. They find common interests with other nations who may not share in social defence but who do share apprehensions about the common foe. Social defence may also take steps to induce other nations to provide services useful to a social defence nation expecting attack: radio and television relay facilities, internment arrangements for offenders against necessary social defence disciplines, refuelling for the social defence nation's submarines, stockpiling of supplies, etc. The greater the economic power or strategic position of the social defence nation(s), the easier it is to use this power either as a lever to gain these concessions or to add to the weight the social defence power can employ against the common enemy.

The third circle includes the allies of the enemy and his homeland. Nations live in tension but commonly not in war most of the time. So long as formal peace obtains, political, cultural and economic relations continue between the demonstrated or potential foe and the social defence nation. Why not an aggressive portrayal of that nation's life, ways and achievements, in the lands of the potential enemy and his allies? A forward cultural policy. Targetting the most receptive or the most vulnerable elements of the population within the enemy's orbit. Maintaining an only modest military intelligence network and concentrating instead on political intelligence to be used first to deter and then, if necessary, to destabilize that nation under conditions of war. Forging really solid economic relations that could be manipulated to the enemy's severe disadvantage, but relations that will have helpful domestic payoffs to the potential foe if he restrains himself.

All this is quite expensive, and some portrayals of social defence have been highly unrealistic in their railing at defence expense and in their easy assumption that an alternative defence would be cheap. This extended defence is expensive, realistic and strongly deterrent. The candidate enemy, once he begins to consider aggression, must concern himself at once with consequences close to home. He may have the uneasy feeling that major uncertainties exist that cannot neatly be entered into his calculus of success. Note too that this sort

of deterrent provides a foundation and not a contradiction to any actual defence that the social defence nation may subsequently be forced to undertake. And social defence, like nuclear deterrence, does not depend on physical contiguity to accomplish its deterrent ends.

5. *Obstacles to a realistic social defence*

Presenting the deterrent aspects of social defence sometimes evokes the response that all this is an apalling and inappropriate *Realpolitik*. It is useful therefore to point to obstacles that I believe prevent development of a realistic social defence. I have observed that social defence advocates speak, rightly, of the central importance of defending social values, institutions and common heritage. But the rather unexamined social theory that animates many proponents of 'non-violent defence' is plainly about individuals and their rights; it is about their sovereign status, modified only by those limited powers granted grudgingly to a central authority on a contract basis. One cannot wholeheartedly embrace the defence of institutions and heritage if one starts from this Lockean social theory.

A second issue is rationalism. Social defence must be thought through, explicated and promulgated rationally. But defence is not in fact a rational business. If it were, the Spartans would not have died at Thermopylae; the workers of Germany would have quit under the impact of saturation bombing. A defence theory that is afraid to move away from individualism and rationalism will never understand what people really want to defend and why they are prepared to go on doing it. This understanding is the secret of tapping social power. Fear of authority and fear of power are no basis for creation of effective defence of any kind. Worse still: nuclear deterrence theory is hyper-rationalistic; it must, after all, constantly support the utility of unusable weapons. But when social defence advocates let themselves deduce social defence rationalistically from Lockean social premisses, they mirror-image their opponents; they forget that to adopt the opponent's method is to make refutation of the opponent difficult indeed.

These two issues come together in the problem of organization. To put it summarily, organization on anything like a voluntary basis becomes possible when people care enough about something to be willing to give up something else. Organization works when people are glad to give up things and when they find a reinforcement of their identity in doing it. Organization perpetuates and regenerates itself when there is freedom within a very directive structure (including freedom for local improvements and alterations). But organization cannot become effective when it is equated, straightforwardly or unconsciously, with oppression and denial of rights. Organization is more than a disagreeable and dangerous necessity. If social defence advocates are serious about a people's defence of what that people cherishes, it becomes possible to say that social defence is not derived from some 'principles of non-violence'. Instead, social defence is mainly but not merely a technique of social mobilization.

The deterrent effect of social defence rests on effective organization, believable organization that can produce both payoffs and sanctions at home as well as abroad. And an enduring and finally prevailing organization makes it possible to surmount the mistakes that will be made. Fragile or tenuous coalitions undertaken as reluctant expedients will not deter and will not even be strong enough to make the mistakes that go with effective defence.

It is not my intention to dispute the value or the limited truth of Lockean individualism, of the utopian's faith in the power of example or (in an age in which bureaucracy everywhere inhibits initiative) of a mistrust of organization. To discount these things entirely would violate my sense that a robust social defence – one that can deter as well as defend – depends on its being able to draw on the strengths of many different sorts of people. What disturbs me about those who espouse the views I have described above is precisely their tendency to take what Husserl called 'the natural standpoint', to assume complacently that all

truly radical or progressive persons will of course join in seeking to universalize just these views. I have tried to show that, unchecked, these positions fail to capitalize on the deterrent value of social defence.

Social defence, in my view, is a defence strategy that can and must be judged in the same terms as any other. It is not an implication from any one 'philosophy of life' or ideological stance. It is not a panacea. There are nations and peoples so placed that social defence is not, in today's world, a realistic option for them. There are many more where it is, where it should be considered, where – whether it were adopted or not – consideration of social defence would become a constructive critique of the defence structure now in place.

We have two audiences, then, for social defence advocacy: those now charged with defence and ordinary people. Our dialogue with defence specialists will proceed fruitfully when we show that we care more about defence than about some holistic vision of truth. Common people will begin to hear us when we show that we recognize two things: first, that what they want to defend, in all its sometimes contradictory particularity, is worth defending; and, second, that deterrence, so self-evidently a part of ordinary life as well as of national defence, is part of our defence doctrine too.

NOTES

1. The common theme here is the reduction of cognitive dissonance. Methods appropriate to intra-societal quarrels are extended to conflicts in which there may be fewer commonalities. Alternatively, one's domestic opponents can be treated as if they were aliens: agents of some world-wide conspiracy. The methodological flaw in both cases in the a priori assumption of continuity, whether of means or of one's opponents.
2. It is beyond the scope of this article to deal with the strange phenomenon, visible in the recent work of Galtung and others, of a preoccupation with individual and small-group claims and, at the same time, a certainty that the ones approved by advanced thinkers will become the models adopted everywhere in a coming universal civilization.
3. The recent interest among American policy-makers in 'war-fighting' capability as deterrence may be a back-formation from the possibilities of escalation-dominance in Europe. Extended backward, as it were, the European 'theatre' doctrine can now destabilize homeland defence too. What was unworkable in Europe and what was divorced from a realistic assessment of Soviet intent now begins to make even homeland deterrence look adventuristic.

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