

Conflict Management, Nonviolence and the Rapidity of Change

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Abstract

Today, nonviolent actions have become preferred over violent actions to bring necessary societal changes. However, some actors will rather utilize violent movement due to its perceived rapidity of achieving desired changes compared to nonviolent actions. The study, therefore, examines the rapidity at which social and political changes ensue when nonviolent conflict management techniques – avoidance, competition, compromise, accommodation and collaboration – in the form of strikes, protests, civil disobedience and boycotts are utilized to manage conflicts. While these nonviolent conflict management techniques are regarded as slow and protracted compared to the rapidity of change violent actions bring; violent actions are however destructive and temporary. Nonviolent conflict management actions on the other hand are much more constructive and according to Gandhi ‘the swiftest the world has seen, producing enduring changes the society needs to develop. The narrative, therefore, should not be the rapidity at which social changes occur, but the process and how constructive and enduring the changes are.

Keywords: *Nonviolence, Conflict, Conflict Management, Rapidity of Change*

Introduction

The existence of humans in society has made conflict inevitable. From time immemorial, human interactions have been characterized by differences in opinion, needs and aspirations and the competition for goals and resources that cannot satisfy conflicting parties. Hence, conflict is a major and normal characteristic of human existence and interaction.

The term conflict has been defined by many scholars according to how they perceive the concept. While many According to Harrey, (1998) (cited in Yahaya, 2018), conflict is seen as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns, it also occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motives, perceptions, ideas or desires. Conflict, therefore, ensues when people’s identity, needs, values and perceptions are threatened by others who share different values systems or struggle over analogous needs and incompatible desires. Similarly, Hocker and Wilmot (1995) define conflict as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.

Madalina (2016) also defines conflict as some form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising between individuals or within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group.

Coser (1958), defines conflict as the struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the groups or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired values but to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals. While others see conflicts as mere disagreements, struggles or competition over incompatible goals, this points out the violent resolutions conflicting parties employ to manage conflicts to attain contested goals.

In contrast, conflict can be a mechanism for the realisation of desired societal changes. This is the core of Burton’s (1972) view of conflict which states that conflict is “an essential creative element

in human relationship. It is the means to change, the means by which our social values of welfare, security, justice, and opportunities for personal development can be realised. This points out that instead of seeing conflict as a means of just attaining the item of competition through any means necessary, conflict instead should be enjoyed and managed through non-violence means to attain social goals beneficial to all conflicting parties.

As established, conflict ensues during human interaction. While there are numerous reasons why people disagree, the competition over resources which are most often inadequate, perceived to be inadequate or not evenly distributed; contradicting value systems, identity, perception or ideology; conflict over psychological or survival needs such as food, water, sleep, warmth; and conflict over information that has been distorted or manipulated, are the broad sources of human conflict. Conflict manifests at different levels in society. It manifests within individuals, especially during decision-making processes. This is known as the intra-personal level. It also manifests between two or more individuals (inter-personal), within a group (intra-group), between two or more groups (inter-group), within a Nation (National) and between Nations (international).

Peace is a priced asset and at all levels – from the intra-personal to the international level - to which conflict manifests, peace is sort after. Just as conflict has prevailed from time immemorial, so have been the attempts not just to resolve it, but to prevent it from manifesting or generating violence when they occur. Hence, at all levels, mechanisms are adopted to manage conflicts and prevent and ameliorate violent outcomes to achieve societal peace.

In an attempt to manage conflicts, nonviolent methods are increasingly becoming preferred by conflicting parties in managing their conflicts. Many political and social activists such as Gandhi have favoured and championed using non-violent methods to demonstrate discontentment and frustration rather than employing violent means. However, the debate has been the degree and rapidity at which the desired outcome or change from the conflict situation comes when non-violent conflict management methods are utilized. The study thus examines how and the rapidity of non-violent conflict management mechanisms bring about the desired societal change; compared to utilizing violent approaches.

Conflict Management

Generally, conflict management is a concept that has been used to describe processes used to prevent a conflict from going violent, ameliorate the effect of violent conflicts and pave the way for its resolution. The term has been used interchangeably with concepts such as conflict prevention and conflict resolution, however, the meaning of the concepts is different. Zartman (2000, as cited in Swanström and Weissmann, 2005) argues that the difference between conflict prevention and conflict management merely exists in theory and that both concepts are intertwined in the practical implementation. Preventive measures are designed to resolve, contain and manage conflicts so that they do not erupt into violent conflicts. This makes conflict management an important part of conflict prevention (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005). Meanwhile, conflict resolution refers to the resolution of the underlying incompatibilities in a conflict and mutual acceptance of each party's existence (Wallensteen, 2002, as cited in Swanström and Weissmann, 2005). Hence, the process of conflict management is the foundation for more effective conflict resolution (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005).

Conflict management has been given several meanings by several scholars. For Best (2012) cited in Adewuyi et al (2021), conflict management is a process of reducing the negative and destructive

capacity of conflict through several measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict.

According to Adewuyi et al (2021), conflict management is the deliberate action to deal with conflictive situations, both to prevent or to eliminate them, it covers the entire area of handling conflicts positively at different stages, including those efforts made to prevent conflict by being proactive.

Zartman (1997, as cited in Swanström and Weissmann, 2005) maintained that conflict management refers to eliminating violent and violence-related actions and leaving the conflict to be dealt with on the political level. Zartman's argument has been somewhat criticized as NGOs, academic institutions and half-formal (track-two) structures have emerged as important actors and now influence the conflict management process (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005).

Wallensteen (2002, as cited in Swanström and Weissmann, 2005) also points out that conflict management typically focuses on the armed aspects of a conflict. However, an armed conflict is not necessarily needed for conflict management to be applied. As soon as a structural problem is defined or a direct conflict manifests, without being militarized, it can and should be addressed by the active parties (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005). When the conflicting parties address the conflict without resulting in militarization, it reduces the economic and political cost of resolving or managing the conflict.

Conflict management involves a process of limiting the negative aspects of a conflict while increasing its positive aspects (Osisioma 2016, cited in Adewuyi et al, 2021). To Ramani and Zhimin (2010) cited in Shanka and Thuo (2017), conflict management is an ongoing process that may never have a resolution.

Conflict management is also described as the limitation, mitigation and/or containment of a conflict without necessarily solving it (Tanner, 2000), it also implies a change from destructive to constructive, in the mode of interaction (Swanström and Weissmann (2005).

Therefore, conflict management as adopted by this study is the process where conflict is prevented, contained or transformed from its violent capacities to that which gives room for dialogue, resolution and positive outcomes. It is a process and not an end itself. The mechanisms utilized are not necessarily exploited to resolve the conflicts, but to help the conflicting parties work through the conflict situation to enable them to resolve the conflict.

Conflict Management Mechanisms

Thomas and Kilmann (1974) developed the "Thomas-Kilmann model" to demonstrate how individuals choose conflict management styles in conflict situations. The models for managing conflicts are avoidance, competition, accommodation, collaboration and compromise. Each of these mechanisms can be categorised into two - assertiveness and cooperation (Madalina, 2016) or concern for self and concern for others. Assertiveness or concern for self is the extent to which conflicting parties attempt to satisfy their goals, while cooperation or concern for others is the willingness to satisfy other conflicting parties' goals (Thomas, 2008).

The competitive conflict management model is based on a high degree of assertiveness and concern for self and a very low level of cooperation and concern for others. It is recommended that the competitive conflict management style is to be "applied in situations requiring urgent action when (it is) necessary to adopt unpopular measures" (Madalina, 2016). When conflicting parties adopt this

style, they are goal-oriented and attaining the goal is more important to the conflicting party than maintaining the relationship. In adopting such methods of conflict management, Stoica-Constantin (2008, as cited in Madalina, 2016) states that “it is necessary for the manager to have skills, such as argumentation and debate, exploitation of rank or position, proper evaluation of options or feelings, keeping calm and clear expression of the position.”

The use of the competitive conflict-handling style by parties only produces a win-lose outcome. It leaves one of the parties unsatisfied with the outcome, while they seek out other means to meet their conflict interest. Hence, confrontation does not amicably resolve conflicts, instead, it gives room for frustration, aggression and regeneration of the conflict. In response to conflicts in Nigeria, the government have widely utilized confrontation which was ineffective in managing the conflicts. For instance, as stated by Adewuyi, Salami, & Dogara (2021) Abacha’s use of the police and military to manage the Ife Modakeke crises in 1997 was ineffective, and it required the peaceful intervention of the United States Agency for International Development/Office of International Initiatives (USAID/OTI).

Similarly, in 1999, Obasanjo’s administration directed soldiers to suppress the conflict in the Arogo Ijaw-Ugbo Ilaje. Also, to win legitimacy, and manage and resolve the Niger Delta crises, Obasanjo sent Military Joint Task Force (JTF) to the area (Adewuyi et al., 2021). This confrontational conflict management mechanism however did not effectively manage or resolve the conflicts. It was not until the administration of late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar-Adua, the former President of Nigeria who efficiently managed the conflict by collaborating and utilizing peaceful alternative dispute resolution spectrums to resolve the Niger-Delta crises (Adewuyi et al., 2021), that militancy ended, bringing enduring peace to the region.

The Avoidance conflict management style is characterized by both a low degree of cooperation/concern for others and assertiveness/concern for self. Avoidance is utilized when conflicting parties do not want to engage in an anxious situation or because they lack adequate confidence to handle conflicts (Madalina, 2016). Avoidance keeps one from working through a conflict and reinforces the notion that conflict is terrible and is best avoided. It is characterised by denial and or withdrawal from the conflict and it often leaves one feeling more hurt, frustrated, annoyed, angry, and resentful. This approach is likened to a situation whereby a person keeps sweeping dirt under the carpet, in which case the dirt will surely become a heap which will be difficult to handle or manage one day.

However, according to Madalina, (2016), avoidance “is appropriate when dealing with minor conflict situations to reduce tensions or to gain time, or when the person in the position to manage the conflict is in an inferior position in terms of hierarchy. Avoiding conflicts requires the ability to withdraw, the ability to avoid tensions and the sense of planning in terms of time (Donohue & Kolt, 1992, as cited in Madalina, 2016). Likewise, Adewuyi et al., (2021) liken it to ‘strategic withdrawal’ where actors “do not take any immediate action on the problem or take a mild action but seize the opportunity to buy quality time and space to plan and take a more decisive action.”

Accommodation on the other hand involves low assertiveness/concern for self and a high level of cooperation/concern for self, where maintaining relationships or pleasing others is more important than gaining the goal. Accommodation involves altruism, obedience to orders, and sometimes bliss, in their interests (Haridas, 2003). They have the willingness to do anything to make the other person happy and keep the peace at any price. Hence, they ignore their own goals and resolve conflicts by giving in to others’ decisions, cooperatively. They sacrifice maximally for the other parties with the hope that someday while in need, the other party will also make a sacrifice for them.

Compromise involves a moderate level of assertiveness or concern for self and a moderate level of cooperation or concern for others, where conflicting parties are willing to sacrifice some of their personal goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs. It involves finding a fast mutually acceptable solution to a conflict that partially satisfies the parties. It also involves a give-and-take approach where the parties share the blame and the gain. Here, the parties in the conflict are half satisfied and half unsatisfied with the outcome. Compromise “is suitable if important issues are at stake, moderate when people in the conflict have a similar hierarchical level or where there is a strong desire to resolve the issue. It can also be used as a temporary solution when there are time constraints” (Madalina, 2016). Skills necessary for conflict management are adopted by the negotiated compromise that the art of finding the middle way is the ability to assess situations and to make concessions (Baro, 1992 as cited in Madalina, 2016).

When conflicting parties value their goals and relationships and seek to satisfy their goals as well as others by utilizing a high level of assertiveness or concern for themselves and a high level of cooperation or concern for others, they manage conflicts through collaboration. Collaboration can be defined as the joining of ideas to achieve the best solutions to a conflict. The best solution is defined as a creative resolution of the conflict, a solution that is not generated by a single person (Madalina, 2016). Collaboration involves the willingness to work together, which entails listening to one another, openness, cooperation, exchange of information, welcoming differences, and recognising contrasting views, to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties. Issues are explored by identifying the underlying interest of the parties involved, to arrive at an outcome that meets the concerns of the parties. With this, collaboration could be considered as the best conflict management mechanism (Haridas, 2003), because it is associated with problem-solving, which may lead to a creative situation.

Non-Violence

“Nonviolence is the law of the human race and is infinitely greater than, and superior to, brute force” – Mohandas K. Gandhi

The word nonviolence comes from the Sanskrit word called “ahimsa”. Ahimsa is the positive opposite of the word “himsa” which means, desire to injure. “Ahimsa” is an ancient word, which is found in Bhagavad-Gita and was written between 200 BC and 200 AD (Nonviolence, n.d). Non-violence became an integral force in shaping people’s lives and the political directions of their societies in the past one hundred years, however, the tradition of nonviolence can be traced back to ancient Taoist, Buddhist and Jewish scriptures, as well as the philosophy of the New Testament and some of the resistance movements to the imperial edicts of Rome (Summy, 2009).

There are several interpretations of the meaning of nonviolence. To some scholars, nonviolence is a political method based on peaceful dialogue and distancing itself from violent action. It also suggests practising resistance without causing physical or psychological injury to living individuals. Nonviolence is also the active reaction against violence and oppression in our surroundings; and it meets terrorism by demanding a non-terrorist response (Nonviolence, n.d). To Vinthagen (2015), nonviolence is a goal-oriented action that takes the form of strategic acts dealing with power. Nonviolent action appeals to the humanity of the opposition, seeking not to overpower or humiliate, but to love their enemies with the intent to gain friendship and ultimately respect (Admin, 2016 as cited in Gillespie, 2021). Hence, the advocates of nonviolence intrinsically envision a less violent world (Christoyannopoulos, 2023).

In simple terms, Peace Pledge Union (n.d) defines nonviolence as abstaining from the use of physical force to achieve an aim. Peace Pledge Union states further that nonviolence is a philosophy, a principle, and a practice. As an ethical philosophy, moral behaviour rejects the use of violence; as a political philosophy, violence is self-perpetuating and can never provide a means to a securely peaceful end. As a principle, it supports the pacifist position that war and killing are never justifiable. As a practice, it has been used by pacifists and non-pacifists alike to achieve social change and express resistance to oppression. For pacifists, of course, all demonstrations of their view and protests against violence must by definition be nonviolent (Peace Pledge Union, n.d).

There are several nonviolent actions and methods. Sharp (1973) categorised 198 nonviolent methods supporting them with a rich range of historical illustrations. Historically, nonviolent practices have included civil disobedience, non-cooperation, passive resistance or non-resistance, and nonviolent direct action (Peace Pledge Union, n.d).

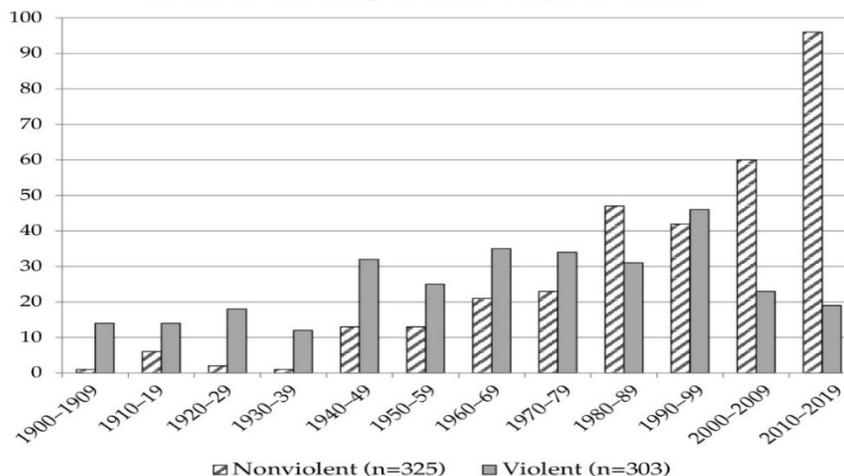
Nonviolent resistance can include the boycotting of goods, services, agencies, institutions and aggressive individuals, strikes of workers, strikes in sympathy, sit-downs and sit-ins; non-payment of relevant taxes and licences; while non-cooperation includes the ability to withdraw cooperation from an existing system, aggressive rules and laws. It also involves working to rule or to the letter and creating obstacles to every task a tyranny imposes. Civil disobedience by individuals, groups and crowds includes silent marches, consciousness-raising parades, subversive theatre performances; leaflets and speeches, fasts and vigils; while nonviolent gestures involve everyone wearing similar headgear or lapel decorations, everyone lighting candles or orchestrating noise at the same fixed times (Peace Pledge Union, n.d).

Nonviolence and Social Change

Nonviolent actions are statistically more likely to be successful than violent actions when seeking to create change or right injustices (Gillespie, 2021). Max Fisher, (2019) (as cited in Gillespie, 2021) notes that “an uprising becomes 50 per cent more likely to fail if it turns to violence and can end up polarizing people in support of the government. Similarly, according to Pinckney (2022), when nonviolent actions turn violent, it undermines the broad, diverse support necessary for the movement to achieve positive change, making it more likely for a new authoritarian regime to emerge; whereas a government crackdown against a nonviolent uprising will often reduce public support for the regime” thereby increasing the success of nonviolent campaigns (Fisher, 2019 cited in Gillespie, 2021).

Similarly, Chenoweth (2020) states that “Over the past fifty years, nonviolent civil resistance has overtaken armed struggle as the most common form of mobilization used by revolutionary movements.” There has been a drastic decline in the use of violent action to enact social and political changes. According to Chenoweth (2020), the period between 2010 and 2019 saw a rapid increase in the utilization of nonviolent resistance. The year 2011 which witnessed the upsurge of the Arab Spring across North Africa and the Middle East was accordingly termed the year of the protester. However, the year 2019 according to Chenoweth et al. (2019) (as cited in Chenoweth, 2020) witnessed the largest wave of mass, nonviolent anti-government movements across dozens of countries in recorded history.

FIGURE 1—ONSETS OF NONVIOLENT AND VIOLENT MASS CAMPAIGNS, BY DECADE (1900–2019)



Source: Chenoweth (2020)

Highlighting some of these nonviolent demonstrations, Chenoweth (2020) avers that “in April 2019, Omar al-Bashir—the Sudanese tyrant fell from power. Weeks later, Algeria’s president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was seeking an unconstitutional fifth term in office, also fell, toppled by a popular uprising known as the Smile Revolution. In July 2019, the governor of Puerto Rico was forced to resign after hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans gathered in mass demonstrations and carried out work stoppages, demanding accountability for his ineptitude and mocking statements regarding victims of Hurricane Maria. And since October 2019, governments have fallen to popular protest movements in places as diverse as Iraq, Lebanon, and Bolivia. In Chile, protests against austerity measures forced the government into prolonged negotiations over its fiscal policies.”

The Success of Nonviolent Actions

Nonviolent actions are not just conducted arbitrarily, their success is dependent on some factors. As an effective way of dealing with conflict nonviolence needs thought (including lateral thinking), resourcefulness, vision, planning, patience and commitment (Peace Pledge Union, n.d). Kurt Schock (2013) cited in Holmberg (2022) states that there are three major components necessary for the success of nonviolent struggles; these are (1) mobilization; (2) resilience; and (3) leverage. Mobilization refers to the process of acquiring people, resources, and support for a campaign, resilience on the other hand is the ability to withstand and recover from repression or according to Holmberg (2022) is “the tactical interactions between the challenger and its opponents” while leverage is the capacity of challengers to utilize different dependence relations to undermine the power of the opponent (Schock, 2013, cited in Holmberg, 2022).

Over time there has been a decline in the success of nonviolent actions. As pointed out by Chenoweth (2020) the decline in success of nonviolent conflicts come not from environmental factors, but from a change in the movements themselves. Some of these factors are (1) decline in participation; (2) overreliance on demonstrations; (3) organizing protests through social media; and (4) increased tolerance of radical flanks. A critical look at these factors that caused a decline in nonviolent actions shows the inadequacies in the components Schock (2013) states as the factors necessary for the success of nonviolent struggles. The fourth factor, radical flanks, for instance, “is heavily related to the resilience of a campaign. How a nonviolent campaign reacts to repression is dependent on its

nonviolent discipline, and its chance of success should increase if it remains nonviolent, which is dependent on whether the movement contains violent-wielding subgroups” (Holmberg, 2022).

Comparing the success and decline in the success of historical and contemporary conflicts based on Schock’s (2013) and Chenoweth’s (2020) theories, Holmberg (2022) reveals that “leverage was the key concept behind the success of historical conflicts, while mobilization is the key for contemporary conflicts. Combined with the descriptive statistics showing a large decline in participation and security force defections between the two periods, the cause behind the decline is found to be these two changes: (1) contemporary conflicts achieve lower mobilization, and (2) contemporary conflicts cause security force defections to a lower degree.”

From time immemorial nonviolent actions have been the preferred method of confronting and achieving social, political and economic changes. For instance, Peace Pledge Union (n.d), notes that “Passive resistance, 'turning the other cheek' and refusing to hit back, has been practised and promoted by followers of both Jesus and the Buddha. Tolstoy preached non-resistance in its pacifist sense, meaning that one should rather die than kill. Also, the first American Quakers, whose religion was pacifist, practised civil disobedience when they refused to pay taxes supporting the British war effort during the American War of Independence. During the Second World War, Danish shipbuilders practised non-cooperation when they feigned misunderstanding and worked so poorly that their ship could not be used in war.”

Nonviolent resistance played a crucial role in most of the major advances of political freedom and social justice in the 20th century (Pinckney, 2021). For instance, nonviolent resistance was central in many of the anti-colonial struggles in places as diverse as India and Ghana. Nonviolent movements touched off the ‘third wave of democracy’ with Portugal’s Carnation Revolution in 1974 and carried it through with a series of movements that brought down dictatorships from Brazil to the Philippines (Pinckney, 2021).

Summy (2009) notes that the downfall of many governments has been spearheaded by acts of nonviolent resistance, most recently in Ukraine, Georgia, Serbia, South Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Philippines. Providing some examples of nonviolent actions, Summy (2009) highlights the apartheid regime in South Africa and how it yielded to a politics of nonviolence as both sides entered into a spirit of reconciliation after decades of racial oppression. Also, in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed when a right-wing coup was successfully countered non-violently.

Nonviolent activists do not 'recognise' tyranny, in that they regard it as an illegitimate rule; they refuse to comply with it, and thus don't become its victims (Peace Pledge Union, n.d). In the Philippines, for instance, two nonviolent actions occurred, one against the dictatorial regime of President Ferdinand Marcos and the other against the corrupt regime of President Estrada; the Palestinians’ nonviolent intifada is widely regarded as the most effective resistance staged; the brutal dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet in Chile succumbed to a coalition of nonviolent forces in 1988; and the Nazis were defeated on several occasions by imaginative and persistent acts of nonviolent defiance (Summy, 2009).

Nonviolent direct action has recently become a high-profile manifestation of nonviolent principles, as when protesters damage fighter planes and other weaponry destined for use in war or by oppressive regimes. Many such protesters, having given their principled reasons in court, have been acquitted (Peace Pledge Union, n.d). Non-recognition has also been a technique used in nonviolent protest. When Serb authorities closed down the Albanian schools in Kosovo, the teachers refused to 'recognise' the ban on their work and quietly continued it elsewhere.

Theoretical framework

The study adopts the Theory of change by Weiss (1972) and Fulbright-Anderson et al. (1998) which describes how practitioners believe individual, intergroup and social/systemic change happens and how, specifically, their actions will produce positive results. Explicitly explained, DFID (2012) (as cited in Babbitt, Chigas and Wilkinson, 2013) points out that the theory of change explains why we think certain actions will produce a desired change in a given context. Hence, the theory “intended to make all of our implicit assumptions more explicit, to (1) clarify which drivers of violent conflict we are addressing; (2) state clearly what the intended outcome of programs will be; and (3) fully articulate how and why the program will address the drivers of conflict and achieve its intended outcomes” (Babbitt et al., 2013).

According to Babbitt et al. (2013), the theory of change can simply be expressed in the following forms: first, “If we do X (action), then we will produce Y (change/shift towards peace, stability, security).” Or “We believe that by doing X (action) successfully, Y will come about (movement towards a desired goal).” It could also be expressed as, “If we do X, Y and Z, it will lead to W,” or, “If we do X, it will lead to Y, which will lead to Z, which might possibly lead to W.”

In simplifying the assumptions by adding the rationale or logic, Babbitt et al., (2013) extend the statement a bit further to—“how and why the change will come about—in a “because” phrase. This then produces the following: “If we do X..., then Y..., because Z....”

For instance, a theory of change designed to promote nonviolent conflict management techniques over violent actions is as follows:

If we utilize nonviolent conflict management mechanisms to manage social conflicts, it is more likely than violent actions to effect a positive social change, because, when violent actions are utilized to manage conflicts, it is more likely to produce more violence, thereby dividing the people and delegitimizing the actors. If nonviolent conflict management mechanisms are utilized, it reduces the violent outcome of the conflict, corrects injustices and produces positive social change.

Non-violence, Conflict Management and the Rapidity of Change

“I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent. We need not be afraid that the method of non-violence is a slow, long drawn-out process. It is the swiftest the world has seen, for it is the surest.” - Gandhi

Conflict management techniques are essentially nonviolent in nature. The techniques (which are nonviolent) can be used at different stages of conflict to prevent a conflict from manifesting or to prevent it from going violent. Meanwhile, nonviolent actions are also geared towards using peaceful methods to manage and prevent conflicts from generating into violence. The aim of both techniques therefore is to achieve desired changes with peaceful mechanisms without resorting to or utilizing violent actions, to bring changes that are beneficial to society.

Nonviolent activists are aware of the many faces of violence (physical, behavioural, institutional, structural), and are continually alert to new ways of resisting it (Peace Pledge Union, n.d). Conflict management techniques such as withdrawal from the conflict to reduce tension and gain time (avoidance), ignoring own goals to resolve conflicts by giving in to other’s decisions, just to keep the peace at cost (accommodation), or applying assertive but peaceful unpopular measures in

situations requiring urgent actions (competitive), or willingly sacrificing some of one's personal goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs (compromising) and the joining of ideas to achieve the best solutions of a conflict (collaboration), is one of the several ways nonviolent activist resist facets of violence non-violently and bring about desired societal changes.

Once subtle nonviolent conflict management styles such as avoidance, compromise and accommodation fail to yield the necessary attention or change required, then more confrontational nonviolent conflict management techniques are utilized. For instance, Pinckney (2021) states that when protest and persuasion don't generate the expected outcome but generate even more opposition, then more direct coercive methods of non-cooperation and nonviolent intervention are utilized. The confrontational non-cooperation and nonviolent intervention Pinckney (2021) mentions are "withdrawing cooperation through engaging in actions that are unexpected, such as 'go-slow,' 'sick-in,' and 'labour strikes,' in which workers refuse to continue at their jobs' and 'general strikes' in which the entire population of a country, region, or city cease all economic activity for a predefined period."

Social changes manifest through violent and nonviolent actions, however, the rapidity at which they effect these changes differs. It is usually thought that violence brings about quick changes whereas nonviolence entails a slow process of transformation (Herbert, 1977), however, violence solves no problem, it only delays and evades a solution (Gahrana, 1977). As Herbert (1977) avers, "Violence leaves behind rancour, suffering and a burning spirit of revenge. It breeds violence and there is no end to it. Anything achieved through violence is only temporary." Hence, the question about the rapidity of social change should not be about the end but the process from which these changes emanate.

Nonviolence actions on the other hand are subtle but their effectiveness is guaranteed. "It is much more active than violent resistance. It is direct, ceaseless, three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible. In its invisibility, it appears ineffective but it is intensely active and most effective in ultimate result" (Gandhiji cited in Mathur Hony, 1977). Importantly, nonviolence possesses remarkable power to achieve change in difficult circumstances (Pickney, 2022), and while it is a "slow, long drawn-out process," as Gandhi said, it is however, "the swiftest the world has seen, for it is the surest."

In its application, non-violent activists utilize all the conflict management mechanisms. However, avoidance and competition are most often than not first used as preventive and quick resolution measures before compromise, accommodation or collaboration is utilized. For instance, nonviolent preventive and confrontational actions such as boycotts, protests, civil disobedience, etc. are first used. In response, the government or organization these measures are used against also responds with avoidance or confrontational mechanisms such as non-response, counter-protests, or the use of security agencies to suppress the conflict. The outcome of utilizing avoidance and or confrontation determines if either or both parties will accommodate and give in to the other party's request, compromise their stance and hope the other party does the same or collaborate to find a mutually beneficial solution to their conflict issue.

Like violent actions which produce quick changes, however, temporary; confrontational/competitive nonviolent conflict management techniques produce faster changes than avoidance and collaboration. Confrontation is direct, ceaseless, and geared towards meeting demands. While it is nonviolent, it is forceful, producing rapid changes. The series of civil resistance, demonstrations and general strikes in the Tunisian Revolution took only 28 days (17 December 2010 – 14 January 2011) to oust the sit-tight (23 years), corrupt and authoritarian government of Zine El Abidine Ali on 14th

January 2011. This resulted in the realisation of the desires of Tunisians for the conduct of free, democratic elections and the democratization of Tunisia.

Avoidance and Accommodation produce partly fast, however, not enduring social changes. The activists are more concerned and settle for the demands or threats of the other party, because of their desire for peace. However, they leave unsatisfied with their decision and outcome, hence the likelihood of returning to make the demands all over again. This leaves the issue protracted and unresolved until more assertive nonviolent actions are utilized. The protracted conflict between the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria evident in the continuous ASUU strike in Nigeria is a manifestation of unresolved conflicts due to the avoidance and accommodation conflict management strategy utilized by the Federal Government of Nigeria and ASUU respectively.

Utilizing compromise as a conflict management strategy produce partly fast and partly slow rapidity of change. Each party give up some of their demands while asking and hoping the other party gives up some of theirs to bring quick management or resolution to the conflict. It involves a process of quid pro quo between parties, which outcome could still leave a party or the parties unsatisfied with the ratio of what the other party gives up to theirs.

Collaboration is the best conflict management style as both parties recognise the need for peaceful dialogue to solve their conflict and meet their needs. Herein, both parties win, however, it takes a long time to manifest as parties have to negotiate through the interest, needs and fears of the parties to reach an agreement satisfactory to all parties. Collaboration, therefore, is a slow spun-out process, but it produces more enduring social changes that meet the desires and needs of the actors.

Conclusion

In a world where the currently prevailing systems are caught in the armlock of violence, nonviolence can't offer instant remedies or results. However, it is catching on (Peace Pledge Union, n.d). Today, many activists consider nonviolent actions as the preferred method of making social and political demands. This is because nonviolence doesn't deny the existence of conflict, but it asserts that no conflict needs to be addressed using violent actions (Peace Pledge Union (n.d).

As established, the conflict management strategies – competition, compromise, accommodation, avoidance and collaboration - are essentially nonviolent in nature, also, nonviolent actions are elements of the conflict management mechanisms. Nonviolent conflict management mechanisms and actions, such as “sit-ins, non-cooperation, strikes, boycotts, and marches have been instrumental in bringing necessary changes within our history and is seen as being more effective than violent actions because it is rooted in the morality that harming another human, especially without provocation, is immoral and unjust” (Gillespie, 2021).

By and large, violent actions bring rapid societal changes, however, these changes are negative, destructive and temporary. The rapidity of change of nonviolent conflict management actions is however slower, nonetheless, the outcome is far-reaching, positive, enduring and meets the needs of the parties. Hence, the spotlight of social change must be on the process of achieving it than the outcome. In fact, the processes of social change must be regarded as a means and not as an end (Sprenger cited in Körppen, 2006).

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