

## **PACIFIST APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLED PACIFISM**

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### **Abstract**

This article explores pacifist approaches to conflict resolution based on principles, justifying the pacifist standard grounded in actors' belief systems (spiritual and ethical principles). This article gives a brief overview of the history of the main traditions that shape the debate on pacifism and non-violence, highlighting the central references of principled pacifism (Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King) and its main techniques and methods of conflict resolution.

### **Keywords**

Non-violence; principled pacifism; conflict resolution; *satyagraha*; creative tension

### **How to cite this article**

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## **PACIFIST APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLED PACIFISM<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

Interests – not always convergent – of different individuals and groups that coexist in various spheres of political and social life make conflicts arise as an almost inevitable result of interpersonal, inter-community and interstate relationships. It does not mean that conflict is necessarily synonymous with aggression and violence. Although attempts to overcome or resolve conflicts often involve the use of force, it is important to remember that there are ways of dealing with conflict using alternative logics and approaches. Pacifism – or the broad spectrum of pacifist approaches, as this article intends to show – adopts a particularly critical and contesting perspective about conflict resolution through violence. As an alternative, pacifist approaches seek to actively defend peace, reject the use of force and identify radical ways to resolve problems caused by political oppression, social injustice and war through the non-violent means.

From this perspective, it can be said that pacifist approaches are defined by an essential standard: *before interpersonal, inter-community or interstate antagonisms, adopt non-violent social behaviour.*<sup>2</sup> From a moral point of view, this position seems more coherent and justifiable than the spiral of death, destruction and other evils caused by violent conflicts. However, the prevailing view in dominant social construction, at least in Western culture, is that the use of violence – and war as its most extreme form of expression – is a fact of nature, a reflex of the struggle for survival that is part of the essence of things and, as such, an event that is not subjected to moral considerations. Even when Western thought relativises this realist warmongering through the just war tradition<sup>3</sup> – introducing the notion that war must be morally justifiable (*jus ad bellum*)

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<sup>2</sup> For a more elaborated discussion of this pacifist standard from a sociological point of view, see Galtung (1959).

<sup>3</sup> The just war tradition basically establishes two sets of constraining principles of war in order to prevent it from reaching extreme and absolute proportions. The first set is concerned with the moral justification of resorting to war (*jus ad bellum*) and involves principles such as the need for a just cause and legitimate authority to decide on war, the commitment to the right intention, the choice of war as a last resort, a reasonable expectation that peace is a plausible result of war, and a general expectation of greater or proportional benefits to the possible damage caused. The second set of principles concerns the conduct of war and seeks to establish limits for it to be justly (*jus in bello*) fought, such as the discrimination between combatants and non-combatants and proportionality when using force (for a detailed discussion, see Cady, 2010, Chapter 2).



and that, once justified, it must endure constraints when using force (*jus in bello*) – war does not cease to be seen as a legitimate instrument of state purpose.

Thus, on the one hand, the realist view of war and moral constraints introduced by the just war tradition occupy dominant intellectual positions and policies. On the other hand, pacifist attitudes are on the opposite side of this spectrum of positions, seen as an idealistic stance and a naive and misleading view of reality. From this angle the preference for non-violence is often confused with passivity. This makes the pacifist standard seem conceptually incoherent and devoid of practical sense, since this supposed passivity can make peace even more distant by stimulating, rather than discouraging, the aggressiveness of antagonists willing to act violently. Therefore, for most critics of pacifism the use of force is a necessary evil and the only realistic shortcut to avoid a greater evil (Alexandra, 2003, p. 589). Approaches committed to non-violence, in turn, seek to challenge this perspective by showing that, even though conflicts are part of social and political life, violence can be avoided and peaceful means can be converted into active instruments of political action (Björkqvist, 2009). By defending protests, blockades, non-cooperation, civil disobedience and a range of other non-violent means to overcome conflicts, such approaches try to make violent interventions lose legitimacy and popular support. They also induce violent political actors to adopt attitudes that are more conciliatory and prone to restoring dialogue and negotiation. It is here where the greatest potential for convergence between pacifism and the field of conflict resolution lies.

Nevertheless, this convergence does not occur on a friction-free surface. On the one side, common sense tends to see pacifism through a caricature based on fundamentalist positions and a radical anti-military fanaticism. Conflict resolution, on the other side, tries to consolidate itself as a "science of peace", seeking to produce a consistent knowledge base that overcomes the supposedly "naive" and "idealistic" answers of pacifist activism. Despite this tension between the scientific agenda of conflict resolution and the usual caricature of pacifism, which hides the complexity and diversity of its broad spectrum of positions, one must note that conflict resolution, as an academic discipline with a strong practical sense, owes much to the pacifism and non-violence traditions (Dukes, 1999, p. 169; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, 2008, p. 38-39). Gandhi and Martin Luther King's ideals and activism against various forms of oppression, domination and social injustice, as well as Gene Sharp's efforts to typify and systematise non-violent action, have inspired some scholars of peace over the past five decades. They provided an alternative source of knowledge that offers significant contributions to the search for methods, procedures and non-violent mechanisms to deal with social and political conflicts.

By bringing the discussion on pacifism into the field of conflict resolution, some initial clarifications are needed regarding how pacifism is conceptualised and what the particularises of pacifist approaches in the field of conflict resolution are. Two crucial aspects must be highlighted for these questions. First, it is important to keep in mind that there is not one pacifism but different perspectives that can be defined within a continuous spectrum of positions, ranging from a side based on principles (where pacifist standards are justified by spiritual and ethical foundations) to a more pragmatic side (where pacifist standards are justified by its strategic effectiveness). An important consequence of this spectral view of pacifism is that it accepts a variety of positions. If it is possible to reject violence based on principles of what is right or wrong (principled



pacifism) it is equally possible to opt for non-violence based on practice (pragmatic pacifism), taking into account not what is absolutely right or wrong, but what is better or worse from a strategic perspective in certain circumstances (Oliveira, 2016, p. 3-7).

Secondly, it is important to understand how the pacifist approaches differ from traditional approaches of conflict resolution. In this sense, two defining elements of pacifism are decisive: its non-institutional character and activist momentum. According to Oliveira (2016, p. 7-8),

*"pacifist approaches are born in civil society and conducted in the form of social movements outside the field of conventional politics and institutionalised state channels, thus distinguishing itself from the official and diplomatic procedures of conflict management".*

Moreover, unlike formal and institutionalised techniques of conflict resolution (such as negotiation and mediation), a large part of pacifist activism seeks to create tensions and confrontations in order to give visibility to the conflict, obtain popular support and pressure the opponent to compromise. Although nothing prevents eventual pressures from also being applied in conventional processes of conflict resolution, it is important to note that formal methods of negotiation and mediation, in general, are directed to the convergence and production of a peace agreement and not to the creation of tensions, confrontations, protests, blockades, non-cooperation and resistance that are part of the conflict resolution mechanisms advocated by the pacifist activism (Oliveira, 2016, p. 8).

One can say that what particularises pacifist approaches within the field of conflict resolution are non-violent activism, its non-institutional character, civil society mobilisation and direct action. This combination of characteristics allows the less powerful to expose the conflict and attract popular support for its cause, working as a mechanism of pressure and resistance. Thus, pacifist approaches to conflict resolution do not refer to a comprehensive debate on peace, institutional models and organisations for the maintenance of peace, or structural mechanisms of peace and conflict prevention. They refer to the particular type of approach derived from activism and traditional currents of thought on pacifism and non-violence.

This article provides an overview of pacifist approaches to conflict resolution based on principles. This means that focus lies in pacifism's spiritual or moral basis, since pragmatic approaches have been addressed by this author in another article (Oliveira 2016). Within this purpose, in the first section, this article makes a brief overview of the history of the main traditions that shape the debate on pacifism and non-violence. The second section focuses on principled pacifism, analysing its central references – Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King – and highlighting its techniques and main methods of conflict resolution. The conclusion emphasises the main challenges and the needs for future development of this research agenda.

### **A brief history of pacifist approaches**

Pacifism and the tradition of non-violence are born deeply immersed in the belligerent context of ancient cultures and evolves by trying to challenge the realist view of war,



based on moral or religious principles. The successive conflicts between the Greek city-states, Alexander the Great's campaigns and Rome's expansion seem to prove the realist propensity for domination through war. This tradition is confronted in practice by those who may be the first pacifist activists in Western history: the early Christians. With rare exceptions, early Christians abhor war, refuse military service and deny any kind of subservience to the Roman emperor, taking their pacifist position to the extreme of non-resistance, even if it costs them the cruellest persecution (Cady, 2010, p. 6). However, this original strand of Christian pacifism is far from reflecting the notion of peace stated with the consolidation of Catholic Church power in the medieval world. The alliance between the empire and the church makes the soldiers, converted to Christianity, start fighting in the so-called just wars and holy wars. In the medieval period, the wars spread not only within the very Christian world, between princes who justified their causes as "just", but also between Christians and Muslims in the Crusades, where the motivations went beyond just causes and were justified in the name of God and his representatives on earth. Thus, between early Christianity and the end of the Middle Ages, the Christian position regarding war, as synthesised by Bainton (1963), involved three main attitudes: pacifism and non-resistance, reluctant involvement in just wars and passionate participation in the holy wars.

If the just wars and holy wars dominate the medieval world, leaving the pacifist attitude in the past and attached to the original context of Christianity, the emergence of some reformist sectors of the church in the sixteenth century leads to the revival of Christian pacifism. By examining the senses of non-violence, Sharp (1959, p. 46-47) observes that the resurgence of pacifism among these reformist sectors – which still inspires groups such as the Mennonites for example<sup>4</sup> – produces an attitude of rejection of the dominant social order and the coercive apparatus of the state, resulting in attitudes such as the condemnation of military service and participation in war, renunciation of serving official government structures and participation in elections, and the rejection of the state's judicial apparatus. These groups condemn, in principle, any form of physical violence and disapprove of any kind of resistance against oppressive situations, even through non-violent techniques. They consider that the best way of influencing and transforming the world results from their acts of goodwill, exhortations and example.

This Christian pacifist tradition significantly reappears in the fight for the abolition of slavery and the American Civil War. Adin Ballou is a classic reference of this pacifist position through the work *Christian Non-Resistance* published in 1846. The author defines Christian pacifism, or more precisely Christian non-resistance, through a set of behaviours, among which the absolute rejection of any act that results in death or injury of human beings stands out, whether as self-defence, family protection or defence of any good or value. From this first rule, Ballou derives a number of other behaviours such as: not being part of any armed force or militia as an officer or soldier; not electing, approving or being part of any government whose constitution or legal apparatus authorises or tolerates war, slavery, the death penalty or any attitude that causes damage or injury to people; and not participating in any official corporation or political body whose

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<sup>4</sup> The Mennonites, originally known as Anabaptists, emerged in the context of the Protestant reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century. Since the beginning, they were committed to peace and non-violence inherited from the non-resistance of the early Christian, rejecting the use of any Type of weapon, even for self-defence or protection of family and neighbours. For a history of the Mennonite Church see Miller (2000, p. 3-8).



regulations allow or oblige its personnel to provide mandatory services to violent governments (Ballou, 1846, p. 26-28).

Ballou's pacifism, which according to some authors is the first to adopt the term "non-resistance" as a label (Koonts & Alexis-Baker, 2009, p. 254), interplays not only with other American pacifists – such as William Garrison, who absolutely rejects war and the use of military force, whether offensively or defensively (1966, p. 125) – but also with the work of the Russian writer Leon Tolstoy, with whom Ballou discusses his ideas in letters exchanged in 1889-1890 (Carpenter, 1931). Similarly to Ballou, by interpreting the Christian message that condemns not only murder and injury of human beings but all forms of violence, Tolstoy considers that the very governments and their social control mechanisms are founded on the use of violence through their armed forces (1966, p. 161). For this reason, he associates the primary source of commitment to non-violence with the level of consciousness of each individual and not with the level of politics and government structures. According to the words of the Russian writer, "the refusal of individuals to take part in military service" is "the easiest and rightest way to universal disarmament" (1968a, p. 113) and represents the "key to the solution of issues", such as war and other forms of violence (1968b, p. 15). Tolstoy says that if nothing defies God's will more than killing someone, one cannot obey a man who gives an order to kill: "a Christian cannot be a killer and, therefore, cannot be a soldier" (1968c, p. 37).

Still in the American context of the mid-nineteenth century, Henry Thoreau also appears in the pacifist movement by defending the idea of "civil disobedience" or, as the title of an essay published in 1849, *Resistance to Civil Government*. Through a discourse that emphasises disobedience and non-cooperation, Thoreau advocates the removal of government, renunciation of official positions and refusal to pay levies and taxes, which he sees as vital sources of resources that finance war and slavery. As observed by his biographer Robert Richardson (1986, p. 127), Thoreau comes close to Ballou's idea that the government is nothing more than "the will of a man to exert absolute authority over another man", but he differs regarding the basis for this assertion: Thoreau's emphasis, both from a logical and rhetorical point of view, is not religious but moral. For the author, people do not force themselves to blindly follow their governments if they believe the government's rules and laws are unfair.

Based on what has been shown so far it is important to note that, for religious sectarian pacifism, non-violent attitudes are a matter of personal vocation and individual consciousness founded on the Holy Scriptures and authority of ecclesiastical sources. This pacifism, under the terms defended by Ballou and Tolstoy, is often associated with a kind of anarchism because it sees the state as a form of institutionalised violence, a political organisation that uses oppression and aggression – and war as its maximum expression – and instruments of domination and social control. For this reason, this pacifism rejects the state and its coercive apparatus as well as participation in institutionalised politics, and advocates a kind of civil disobedience founded on the primacy of divine authority. Muste, another known pacifist American Christian, forges the term "Holy disobedience" as a necessary individual virtue for spiritual self-preservation, in an era in which consent, conformism and alignment are "the instruments used by the totalitarian government to subordinate men and engage them in a permanent war" (1992, p. 208).

The rejection of the hierarchical, centralised state and the abandonment of political life defended by Christian non-resistance have been seen by some analysts, such as Atack (2012, p. 172), as a kind of escapism; this cannot actively challenge the social structures



that constitute the systems that produce oppression, injustice and war. What these analysts want to emphasise is that there is a gap between the "pacifism of individual consciousness" and social and political criticism of the war system that cannot be overcome by Christian non-resistance. Regarding this aspect, the subsequent developments in the tradition based on principles show less-absolute positions of pacifism, as observed in the activism of Mahatma Gandhi and other proponents of non-violence in the mid-twentieth century, like Martin Luther King. These iconic figures of the pacifism of the last century provide important examples of how individual religious consciousness can be creatively combined with a universalising ethical-philosophical inspiration and a radical social and political criticism of the status quo, leading to a more complex, nuanced and integrated approach to pacifism than absolute positions try to provide. Gandhi, perhaps more than any other activist, through a creative synthesis process of several references – ancient Indian asceticism, Hinduism, anarchism, Sermon on the Mount, Bhagavad-Gita and political pragmatism (MacQueen, 2007, p. 329) – can elicit a comprehensive and complex philosophical system that goes beyond Christian non-resistance and has a significant impact on world politics in the mid-twentieth century. Gandhi's approach that he himself called *satyagraha*, provides an important link between the spiritual and moral commitment to non-violence and the pragmatic possibilities of mass non-violent resistance against political and social oppression, without implying an absolute denial of instruments of force (Atack, 2012, p. 173). Unlike Tolstoy's short-sighted pacifism and other Christian pacifists, Gandhi advocates, according to Atack (2012, p. 159) and Roberts' (2009) interpretations, a pacifism of "progressive replacement" that involves accepting that the replacement of violence for non-violence is a long-term transformative process. From Gandhi's perspective, Atack notes that until a pacifist or non-violent society is achieved (an objective that he considers viable through the increased expansion of non-violence practices to all spheres of social and political life, including international relations), the existence of armed forces and the state's right to use violence can be tolerated in certain circumstances (e.g., self-defence against external aggression in societies that are not yet ready for non-violent resistance; or situations of maintenance of social order and the rule of law, when it benefits all citizens and does not violate the social contract).

Martin Luther King resumes Christian pacifism in his campaign for the civil rights of black Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. In a synthesis with Gandhi's *satyagraha* and the philosophy of unconditional love expressed in the Greek word *ágape* (1957; 1961), he advocates non-violent resistance and civil disobedience and forges the central concept of his philosophy of social change by non-violent means: the creation of the "beloved community". In this regard, King considers that non-violent resistance and civil disobedience must not be used as a way to humiliate or defeat the opponent, but as a way to gain its friendship and understanding. The goal, according to King, is to create what he calls "creative tension". It relates to bring tensions and contradictions to the surface in order to publicly expose the deepest resentments, show the situation's injustices, touch the consciousness of opponents and the public in general and – from the discomfort caused by this crisis – create a situation in which people start wanting to resolve conflict and value negotiation (King, 1963). Therefore, the expected consequence is the reconciliation and creation of a "beloved community", united by an unconditional affection even among those who previously opposed and tried to challenge each other. Civil disobedience and non-violent resistance, from this perspective, must be used against oppressive and unjust systems, not against individuals; and the victory, when



achieved, is of a just system over an unjust system and not of a man over another man (King, 1957, p. 12-13).

What this brief historical reconstruction shows is that, even within the pacifist tradition based on principles, its ideas, non-violence and relation to war cannot be reduced to a single denominator. There is a spectrum of different points of view that make these ideas complex and full of nuances. Within the spiritual foundations from which the non-resistance of the early Christians emerges – groups of sectarian reformist, such as the Mennonites and the Amish, and Christian pacifists such as Ballou, Garrison and Tolstoy – a kind of "absolute pacifism" arises that is seen as an inevitable consequence of the word of God and of a particular interpretation of the sacred texts, according to which the murder of human beings and violence are sins that attack the core principles of Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Some interpretations of Asian philosophies or spiritual traditions, such as Buddhism for example, expand this pacifist standard to reject not only any form of physical and psychological harm to humans beings but also violence against all other living creatures and, in some cases, against the global ecosystem as a whole. A clear example of this type of positioning is provided by Dalai Lama, whose Buddhist spiritual foundations not only prohibit the use of any form of physical violence against the ongoing Chinese occupation in Tibet (Howes, 2013, p. 429) but also nourish an absolute reverence for living beings, resulting in a conception of universal non-violent responsibility for humanity and nature as a whole (Jah, 2003, p. 12). If these examples show that absolute pacifism derives from a morality founded on spiritual traditions and sacred texts, nothing prevents the same kind of conviction from deriving a secular morality based on reason. As Cady argues (2010), Kant's<sup>6</sup> "categorical imperative" – according to which all men must treat each other with dignity and never as a means to other ends – can be interpreted as an absolute repudiation of any physical or psychological violence against human beings, justified by an objective and rational standard of conduct and not by a divine principle. Regardless of the claimed basis to justify these positions, the key point is that the adoption of absolute pacifism depends on a kind of individual conversion and personal awareness deeply rooted in a spiritual or philosophical doctrine: the supreme value of life.

Although highly influenced by their respective spiritual heritages and ethical ideals about life in society, both Gandhi and King depart from this absolute pacifist position. In this sense, they are committed to non-violence in their more immediate social and political struggles. At the same time, they nurture a more cosmopolitan and long-term commitment for peaceful world to be achieved through the progressive expansion of non-violent practices to all spheres of social and political life, including as a means of national

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to emphasise that it is a particular interpretation because, in the same way that it is easy for some to find in the Scriptures passages that guide the pacifist consciousness, it is possible for others to find quotes that justify the use of violence on behalf of a deity (the Crusades is a good illustration of this). This does not only occur in the interpretations of Christian texts (the Old and New Testaments), but also in the interpretation of other sacred books, such as the Koran, Lun Yu, Wu Ching, Bhagavad Gita, Tanakh, Talmud, Tao-Te-Ching, Guru Granth Sahib and Vedas (Johansen, 2009, p. 145).

<sup>6</sup> The "categorical imperative" is conceived by Kant as the "supreme principle of morality". This principle is not derived from any divine order but from reason. It was conceived by the philosopher as an objective, complete and unconditional law that guides the actions of all rational beings. This makes each individual a moral, free and independent agent able to derive a universalised standard to guide practical conduct from one's own rationale without the need for any external authority, including the divine. The categorical imperative is formulated through several maxims; in the sense mentioned in this article, according to Cady's argument above, it is expressed by Kant by the following formula: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end but always at the same time as an end" (Kant, 2007, p. 69).





defence (Gandhi, 2005, p. 95, 98) and conflict resolution tool on an international scale (King, 1967, p. 253). While societies have not reached this more advanced stage, both admit that the adoption of non-violent means through civil society organisations and social movements in their local struggles have to live together with the eventual use of force by states in specific situations – such as self-defence or maintenance of the rule of law – in strict accordance with the national constitution and international law (Atack, 2012, p. 160). Thus, the commitment to non-violence on a religious and moral basis not always imply an absolute and immediate rejection of all forms of violence. "Progressive replacement" reflects this position by showing that non-violence philosophy can involve a long-term vision that does not require an immediate and complete rejection of all forms of state violence, while it has not completed the process of social learning able to forge a fuller and more comprehensive consciousness that favours non-violent society.

Trying to overcome and simultaneously contest principled pacifism, the latest stage of this historical narrative has tried to emphasise the pragmatic and strategic character of non-violent action. Unlike the rejection of violence with a spiritual or moral basis, this more pragmatic perspective resorts to political arguments and theories of power sources to understand the logic and effectiveness of non-violence. In this sense, Gene Sharp's pioneering work from the late 1960s clears the way for a current of thought that focuses its efforts on theorising non-violence based on the political effectiveness of its means, and not on actors' belief systems. As Sharp highlights, "non-violent struggle is identified by what people do, not by what they believe" (2005, p. 19). Therefore, through a pragmatic reassessment of Gandhi's writings and qualitative and quantitative analysis of a large number of historical cases of non-violent action – colonial rebellions, international conflicts, struggles for independence, resistance against dictatorships, genocides and foreign occupations, anti-slavery movements, and movements for worker, women and civil rights – the pragmatic tradition has sought to identify elements to construct a theory of non-violence focused on people's potential power and possibilities of converting this potential into effective power. This is done in order to cause social and political changes outside conventional institutional channels without using physical violence (Sharp, 2005, p. 19; Howes, 2013, p. 428). Considering the focus of this article is principled pacifism, this pragmatic tradition will not be examined here.<sup>7</sup>

### **Techniques and methods of principled pacifism**

In order to provide a more organised and didactic explanation of the techniques and methods used in pacifist approaches, this section focuses on the tradition based on principles, although it is important to recognise that principled pacifism and pragmatic pacifism are not irreconcilable or mutually exclusive. As discussed in the previous sections, pacifist approaches form a continuous spectrum of positions that admits not only absolute points of view, but also more nuanced, flexible and merged positions. Although this section is structured around the central references of principled pacifism, it does not mean that the means defended in each approach should be seen in an isolated and independent form. There is a porosity between these approaches, so that their techniques and methods are often coincident, partially coincident or complementary. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that what fundamentally changes between the approach based on principles and that based on pragmatism includes the reasons

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<sup>7</sup> For an overview of this pragmatic perspective see Oliveira (2016).



mentioned to justify the pacifist standard and strategies advocated for its implementation, and not necessarily their techniques and methods.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are generally considered the most representative authors of principled pacifism. Although both Gandhi and King incorporate a pragmatic bias to their approaches to resolve conflicts, their attitudes and writings are strongly influenced by their respective spiritual traditions, views and ideals about life in society and ethical commitment to the emergence of a new social order. Therefore, while the multifaceted positions of these authors should be recognised, this section follows the dominant trend of pacifist approaches in the literature, classifying them within the tradition based on principles. At the end of this section, a comprehensive view of their approaches – the *satyagraha* techniques advocated by Gandhi and the "creative tension" techniques proposed by King – is achieved.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the meanings of the terms "technique" and "method" adopted in this section. Although these words are often interchangeably used, some dictionaries define technique as knowledge, processes and practical principles to obtain a result, while method is defined at a lower operational level as a way of doing or a way of proceeding. In this perspective, technique is seen from a broader angle, encompassing a set of methods (see, e.g., Porto Editora or Michaelis dictionaries). Gene Sharp uses these two terms in a way that reflects these definitions. According to the author, non-violent action is a technique that encompasses a wide range of methods of protest, non-cooperation, and intervention (2005, p. 49). Other authors define Gandhi's *satyagraha* as a social technique of non-violent action that involves various methods, such as non-cooperation, civil disobedience, strikes or blockades (Bondurant, 1988, p. 3-4, 12; Jah, 2003, p. 27), indicating a similar understanding of the relationship between technique and method. This section follows these aggregates, using the term technique in a broader sense to denominate knowledge, means and skills for a particular end; while the term method is understood in a more specific operational sense to designate each type of particular procedure employed when carrying out a technique.

### ***Mahatma Gandhi and the truth force: the Satyagraha***

Gandhi's activism has deep roots in civil disobedience, but it goes far beyond how this notion is developed within the Christian non-resistance tradition and Thoreau's pacifism of moral conscience. As discussed in the historical panorama of the previous section, civil disobedience appears strongly associated with the idea that people do not force themselves to blindly obey their governments if they believe, for religious reasons or moral convictions, that the rules, laws and social control practices of these governments offend the supreme principles of the sacred scriptures (as advocated by Ballou and Tolstoy) or seem unjust (as advocated by Thoreau). Within the work and activism of these authors, civil disobedience is usually treated as a consideration of individual order: the refusal or resistance to certain laws is justifiable as far as they offend the personal conscience or seem questionable in the light of a "superior law" that, in the view of each individual, adopts an absolute priority (such as the law of God or some absolute moral principle). Therefore, the idea of civil disobedience arises, according to Bondurant (1988, p. 3), in a context of competition between conflicting spiritual and moral values, and the solution of this spiritual or metaphysical dilemma is found, as the so-called conscientious pacifists defend, in an intimate and individual choice.



What is absolutely significant in Gandhi's activism throughout his experiments with non-violent action – first in South Africa and later in various social movements and in the struggle for India's independence – is that civil disobedience is no longer a matter of individual conscience to be reformulated within the collective consciousness in the context of large and popular mobilisations. Within this conceptual expansion, a much more complex and comprehensive technique arises, baptised by Gandhi as *satyagraha*. This technique goes beyond passive resistance and places civil disobedience in a broader assemblage of methods that includes protests, boycotts, strikes, non-cooperation, usurpation of government functions and building of parallel institutions. Derived from Sanskrit – "*satya*" (truth) and "*agrah*" (strength, insistence) – *satyagraha* (truth force) is conceived as a technique of conflict resolution through conversion mechanisms. It means that *satyagraha* is not limited to the dimension of resistance, but intends to act in the self-transformation of the parties involved in the conflict by converting their "hearts and minds" through sincerity and truth. It is, therefore, a non-violent technique of conflict resolution that seeks the conversion of the parties through the pursuit of truth (Jah, 2003, p. 27), eliciting what seems "wrong" or remains invisible in the situation (injustice, inequality, oppression, restrictions on freedom, etc.). According to Jah (2003, p. 25), what is particularly unique in Gandhi's contribution is that principles traditionally restricted to an intimate and individual sphere, such as the pursuit of truth and rejection of violence, are transformed into a tool of mass-mobilisation.

There is a clear pragmatic dimension, but there is also a commitment to the truth that, for Gandhi, has a strong spiritual dimension. *Satyagraha* is literally based on the "truth force" and it is through a spiritual notion of truth – bequeathed by the religious mosaic that influences him and which is perceived as an absolute and divine concept – that Gandhi justifies non-violence: "Truth is perhaps the most important name of God" and "where there is truth, there is knowledge" (Gandhi, 2005, p. 39-40); man, however, is unable to know the truth in this pure state, to achieve the truth in such perfection (Gandhi, 1996, p. 37). Thus, "because man is not capable of knowing absolute truth," he is not "competent to punish" (Gandhi, 1996, p. 51), that is he cannot justify violence in the name of what he cannot absolutely know. For Gandhi, therefore, non-violence (*ahimsa*) and truth (*satya*) are so interconnected "that they seem to be the two sides of the same coin": non-violence is the means and truth is the end (1996: 46). According to Bondurant's (1988, p. 16-17) interpretation, what Gandhi means is that, with the inability of knowing the truth in its state of perfection, people must be permanently open to those who think differently; for this reason, instead of trying to resolve differences by using violence against an opponent, men must try to get rid of the error through the practice of patience and compassion. It is how people move nearer to truth (i.e. God). In short, *satyagraha* is a force in the direction of truth, an impulse to follow the truth as a matter of principle in order to reduce the negative impact of errors and try to get as close as possible to perfection (Gandhi, 1996, p. 37). Although unattainable in its absolute sense (i.e. the divine), truth works as an operating principle, as a regulatory standard of the conduct of the parties involved in conflict.

If Gandhi's approach is based on foundations heavily cemented in spiritual and moral principles, it is interesting to note that his experiments with *satyagraha* are developed within a context that is equally pragmatic and strategic. *Satyagraha* does not appear ready in Gandhi's work and activism. By contrast, it is developed over nearly half a century through progress and setbacks in the resistance experiences conducted in South



Africa and India. The birth of *satyagraha* takes place in South Africa around 1908 in the context of the resistance movement led by Gandhi against the discriminatory policies of British colonisers directed to the Indian community in this African country. After this initial experience in South Africa, *satyagraha* is implemented in India, not only in various movements for social reforms but mainly in the struggle for the country's independence and in the civil war between Hindus and Muslims in the late 1940s. One of the central arguments of Gandhi's activism, as he explains in all its simplicity, is the following:

*When my father imposes a law that seems repugnant to my conscience, I think the less drastic way to take it is to respectfully tell him: 'dad, I cannot obey this'... I have submitted this argument to the acceptance of the Indians and all people. Instead of feeling angry with my father, I should respectfully tell him 'I cannot obey this law'. I see nothing wrong with that. If it is not wrong to say this to my father, it does not seem wrong to me to say this to a friend or a government (Gandhi, 1996, p. 62-63).*

What Gandhi proposes with *satyagraha* is a resistance technique based on "respectful disobedience" of the oppressors. It implies to be transparent and true (i.e. to be sincere and honest in purpose), never use physical violence, replace hatred with love and compassion, not to humiliate the opponent and take eventual punishment and suffering that can result from this attitude (Gandhi, 1996, p. 80-83). For Gandhi, *satyagraha* is a "sincerity test" that involves "a solid and silent self-sacrifice". The greatest strength of *satyagraha* is in "humility", "self-restraint" and "attitude correction", because it is through these attitudes that the truth and sincerity of purposes are shown to the opponents (1996, p. 48-49).

From these indications, some conceptual delimitations are important. First, *satyagraha* should not be confused with passive resistance as a non-violent action technique. Although Gandhi adopts the term passive resistance at the beginning of his activism in South Africa, he soon rejects this nomenclature for two main reasons. First, the term passive resistance does not reflect the active power of non-violence; second, passive resistance – that Gandhi observed in the Women's Suffrage Movement<sup>8</sup> and the non-conformist movement<sup>9</sup> in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Great Britain – instrumentalises non-violence as an opportunistic tactic that, from his point of view, serves selfish interests and changes according to convenience (Gandhi, 1996, p. 51-52). When commenting on these aspects, Dalton (1996, p. 10) explains that Gandhi's intention is to show that passive resistance is non-violent only in its form but not in

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<sup>8</sup> Activism in defence of women's suffrage in Great Britain, led by the movement called National Union of Women's Suffrage, also known as the suffragettes, in the first decade of the twentieth century.

<sup>9</sup> Here, Gandhi refers to the passive resistance campaign led by the so-called non-conformist churches of England and Wales, formed by Protestants who, not being members of the Anglican Church (such as Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, etc.), challenged the Education Act of 1902. This law, which merged religious schools into the state education system and started charging taxes for its maintenance and operation, was perceived by non-conformist churches as a source of privilege in the educational system for the official Anglican Church. Organised around the National Passive Resistance Committee, the non-conformist resistance movement, which was primarily characterised by the refusal to pay these education taxes, remained active for about four years, producing reactions from the British authorities that led, depending on the case, to the confiscation of assets, properties and arrest of people involved in resistance acts (Hunt, 2005, p. 167-171).



substance. The passive resistance movements criticised by Gandhi usually incorporate hate speech and disrespect to the opponent, which does not conform to his vision of non-violent action – hence his option to develop his own technique, compatible with his spiritual and moral foundation. However, this criticism seems motivated by a mere matter of principles and its strategic implications are crucial within Gandhi's perspective of conflict resolution. Considering that *satyagraha* operates through the mechanism of conversion, the characteristics advocated by Gandhi – sincerity, humility, civility, discipline, respect for the opponent, personal control and willingness to sacrifice one's self – are fundamental virtues for the effectiveness of this mechanism. It is through the expression of these virtues that resistance groups can "dismantle the anger and hatred" of the opponent willing to use force (Gandhi, 1996, p. 47).

The second important concept to delimit refers to the relation of *satyagraha*, civil disobedience and non-cooperation. Although Gandhi does not literally refer to *satyagraha* as a "technique" and civil disobedience and non-cooperation as "methods", it is in this sense that he ranks these terms. For him, civil disobedience (understood as civil violations of legal decrees that are considered amoral) and non-cooperation (understood as the popular refusal to cooperate with States considered corrupt and oppressive) are "branches" of *satyagraha*, which, in turn, encompasses the entire range of forms "of non-violent resistance that claim the Truth" (Gandhi, 1996, p. 51). In this sense, it is possible to state that *satyagraha* is a social technique of non-violent action that has the truth as a matter of principle and that can be put into practice through a set of methods, including non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

In his comprehensive study on *satyagraha*, Bondurant highlights the fact that Gandhi's writings form a fragmented set of speeches, statements, sermons and responses to critics often motivated by immediate issues related to his experiments with *satyagraha*, failing to provide a systematic explanation of his technique, methods and action strategy. In addition, it is important to note that Gandhi's assassination in 1948, when he was still carrying out his experiments with *satyagraha* in the context of religious conflicts in India, prevented him from reaching a complete view of his non-violent action technique. For these reasons, Bondurant (1988, p. 7) considers that Gandhi's texts must not be interpreted in terms of a political theory, but as integral parts of his political activism in a long process of experiments that failed to produce a systematic explanation of his technique and his non-violent methods of action. Thus, resorting not only to Gandhi's writings, but mainly to the detailed study of the main *satyagraha* campaigns conducted in India, Bondurant tries to complete this effort of theorising, identifying nine steps in the application of this technique, where many non-violent action methods can be identified (see Table 1). Among these methods, negotiation, protest, boycotts and strikes, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, usurpation of governmental functions and the creation of parallel institutions stand out. Even though the steps involved in *satyagraha* and the choice of methods are determined by the specific circumstances of each situation, Bondurant considers, from the cases studied, that the technique of *satyagraha* can be explained through this set of nine steps, serving not only as a general parameter of the technique proposed by Gandhi, but also as an analysis frame for the study of each *satyagraha* campaign in particular.



**Table 1: Key steps in the implementation strategy of *satyagraha***

(1)	Negotiate with the opponent
(2)	Prepare resistance groups for direct action
(3)	Get involved in protest acts (demonstrating the level of opposition)
(4)	Issue an ultimatum
(5)	Implement economic boycotts and strikes
(6)	Implement non-cooperation campaigns
(7)	Implement civil disobedience campaigns
(8)	Usurp government functions
(9)	Build parallel government institutions

Source: Bondurant (1988, p. 40)

Although the difficulties pointed out by Bondurant in Gandhi's writings are recognised, it is possible to identify in his work some clear indications about two methods: non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Gandhi considers these methods particularly relevant in *satyagraha* and that they must be applied in this sequential order due to the higher degree of complexity involved in civil disobedience, in terms of organisation, discipline and training of the population as well as in terms of willingness for self-sacrifice in front of the possibility of the opponent having violent reactions. The resolution on non-cooperation issued by Gandhi in 1920 that originated a resistance systematic campaign of the Indian population against British domination in 1920 and 1921 illustrates how the method of non-cooperation is conceived and unfolded in several other methods (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Synthesis of the resolution on non-cooperation with the British colonial government issued by Gandhi**

(a)	Handover of titles and honorary positions and renunciation of positions appointed in local bodies
(b)	Refusal to attend government meetings and other official and unofficial events
(c)	Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, supported, or controlled by the colonial government and transfer of children to schools and colleges of local provinces
(d)	Gradual boycott of British courts and establishment of private courts for resolving disputes
(e)	Refusal of the military, clerics and Indian workers in British recruitment to serve abroad
(f)	Withdrawal of candidacy for elective offices and refusal of voters to vote for candidates who volunteer for the election
(g)	Boycott of goods from Great Britain

Source: Gandhi (1996, p. 59-60)

Given the success of this non-cooperation campaign in 1921, Gandhi starts to consider the possibility of escalating the non-violent action for a mass civil disobedience campaign, which, from his perspective, is a more challenging and complex method of non-violent action. For a number of reasons, including his arrest between 1921 and 1924, Gandhi is led to postpone this project and conduct, in the years following his release, a programme of social reforms on a smaller scale – such as the abolition of untouchability for example<sup>10</sup> – until the success of a small resistance campaign for the non-payment of taxes in the Bardoli district, in 1928, prepares the ground for a long civil disobedience campaign on a national scale that began in 1930. This historic action, which Dalton considers the

<sup>10</sup> Untouchability involves a set of discriminatory practices against members of the lowest caste of the Indian social structure (the so-called "untouchables").



biggest civil disobedience campaign ever seen (1996, p. 72), is known as "salt *satyagraha*" because it involves resistance to the payment of high taxes for the salt exploited in India under Britain's monopoly. After a long march of twenty-two days that assembled thousands of participants, Gandhi arrives at his destination on the west coast of India, gathers a handful of natural salt, which is legally prohibited due to it countering of the British monopoly, and before the eye of the American, British and other European countries' presses, declares: "With this, I undermine the foundations of the British Empire" and "ask for the world's sympathy in this battle of Right against Power" (cited by Dalton, 1996, p. 72). The extraordinary repercussions of this symbolic act results in a mass civil disobedience campaign that leads to millions of Indians breaking the laws on salt taxation. The campaign triggers a wave of mass arrests that, far from discouraging popular mobilisation, further strengthens the resistance through protests, marches, general strikes, boycotts of British products, symbolic acts of independence declaration, occupation of municipal government premises and the creation of parallel government institutions. This leads to a complete paralysation of the British colonial government and clears the way for negotiations that culminate in the independence of India in 1947 (Nepstad, 2015, Chapter 3).

From the perspective of conflict resolution, it can be said, in short, that *satyagraha* is experienced by Gandhi through a relentless pursuit of a peaceful society at all levels – interpersonal, inter-community and international. For Gandhi, a peaceful society can only be achieved by resolving the conflicts inherent in all these spheres, which requires an ongoing effort; his biography is the greatest testimony of this endless pursuit. It is also important to observe that Gandhi's technique and the methods mobilised by him should not be understood only at operational and strategic levels. The use of *satyagraha* and his methods of action requires a strong foundation in sincerity and the correction of attitudes so that the "hearts" of the parties involved in the conflict are free of hatred and filled with truth and compassion. Therefore, non-violence is a matter of principle and not just a practical way to achieve a certain goal. Finally, it is important to point out that Gandhi's legacy goes beyond the particular context in which he lived. Jah (2003, p. 28) mentions a number of cases of application of *satyagraha* outside the Indian context: the resistance of the Danish people against Nazi occupation in 1940; Norwegian teachers' resistance campaign in 1942; the campaign "Challenge the Unjust Laws" in South Africa in 1952; the strike in Vortuke prison in the Soviet Union of 250,000 political prisoners in 1953; the campaign for the independence of Ghana, completed in 1960, after ten years of non-violent actions clearly inspired by *satyagraha*. It is important to mention that Gandhi greatly influenced Martin Luther King's activism for equal rights for black Americans, whose main aspects are addressed in the next subsection.

### ***Martin Luther King and the "creative tension" technique***

Martin Luther King's activism has strong roots in his Christian faith, but it is also significantly influenced by the legacy of Gandhi. As it was already mentioned, King proposes a synthesis between Christian pacifism, Gandhi's *satyagraha* and the philosophy of unconditional love expressed in the Greek word *ágape* (1957; 1961), providing a technique of conflict resolution that, according to his writings, can be called "creative tension". The goal of the creative tension, according to King, is to bring tensions and contradictions to the surface in order to expose the deepest resentments, show the injustices present in conflict, touch the conscience of opponents and the public in general



and, from the discomfort generated by this crisis, create a situation in which people want to resolve the conflict and value negotiation (King, 1963).

It is possible to note that King's perspective, as well as Gandhi's, has a pragmatic dimension but is founded on spiritual and moral foundations that make the application of his technique and methods of conflict resolution necessarily anchored in principles. The analysis of one of his main writings – *Letter from Birmingham City Jail* (King, 1963) – provides a broad overview of his approach, constituting, along with the interpretation of this text by McCarthy and Sharp (2010), the central references used in this subsection. *The Letter from Birmingham City Jail* was written by King in 1963 in the period that he was in prison due to the protest march led by him on the streets of Birmingham, Alabama, as part of his campaign against racial segregation. In prison, King sees a newspaper report in which a group of white clerics criticise his campaign, saying that although "technically peaceful", this form of protest is hasty and untimely and promotes hatred and violence (McCarthy & Sharp, 2010, Introduction). The letter is a response to these clerics, where King seeks not only to show the structural violence that keeps the blacks in a condition of injustice, segregation and oppression, but also to explain and justify his "creative tension" technique and the methods of non-violent action employed.

When explaining how his technique intends to work, King points out that non-violent action seeks to create a crisis and cause a tension in such a disturbing way that a community that systematically refuses to negotiate is, forcefully, led to deal with the issue. On this technique, King writes in his letter:

*Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatise the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the non-violent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, non-violent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for non-violent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue (King, 1963, p. 291-292).*

Therefore, from King's point of view, the community needs to be led to see the need to resolve its contradictions and social tensions that, although present in the situation, are often hidden or refused. "Creative tension" or "constructive non-violent tension" is the





direct action technique proposed by him to create a crisis so uncomfortable and disturbing that it ends up making the parties involved want to negotiate and resolve the conflict. However, King emphasises that this crisis is not taken out of nowhere:

*Actually, we who engage in non-violent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with* (1963, p. 293).

It is also important to note that non-violent direct action, which is the core of "creative tension", is conceived by King as a last resort and its application must be preceded by three steps – the investigation of facts that allow one to assess if injustices really exist, followed by negotiation and self-purification (Table 3). Using the situation of the blacks in Birmingham as an illustrative case, King seeks to show, first, the facts that demonstrate the existing injustices. In this sense, King draws attention to the fact that Birmingham is probably the most segregated city in the country (it included segregating practices on transport and in commercial establishments) and for the historical record of brutality against the blacks (including unjust treatment in courts and bomb attacks on black people's homes and churches without any police efforts to resolve the cases). In the second step, King seeks to highlight the negotiating initiatives taken by the leaders of the black community, members of the business community, religious authorities and local leaders of the Christian human rights movement in negotiating in good faith. Given the disappointment generated by a succession of broken promises, King argues that direct action becomes an alternative on the horizon, starting the third step, self-purification (i.e. preparation for the difficult times to come and maintenance of the group's discipline). In this step, King says:

*"We began a series of workshops on non-violence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: Are you able to accept blows without retaliating? Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?"*

After this process, King says that the start of direct action is finally scheduled for the Easter period, when the marches on the city's streets and boycott of trade – in the key sales period – would be a good way of pressuring traders into changing segregating practices. This action is postponed twice due to municipal elections, which according to King could shift the focus of his non-violent action campaign, until actions finally begin in April 1963, resulting in King's arrest under the allegation of leading an illegal march (King, 1963, p. 290-291).

Under the accusation of the march being conducted without permission – that is being illegal – King emphasises in the *Letter* the difference between the just and unjust laws. Evoking the notion of civil disobedience, King argues that there is a clear distinction between covertly breaking the law for malicious reasons and, on the other hand, openly challenging unjust laws according to one's consciousness and assuming the arising



penalties with the clear objective of arousing collective consciousness about the injustice of this law (1963, p. 300).

**Table 3: Preparatory steps of the non-violent action campaign according to Martin Luther King**

(1)	Evidence of injustices (investigation of facts that allow one to assess if injustices really exist)
(2)	Negotiation with the opponent
(3)	Self-purification (preparation for the difficult times to come and the maintenance of the group's discipline)
(4)	Non-violent direct action (protests, marches, boycotts, civil disobedience)

Source: King (1963)

In another text written by him, King points out that the expected outcome from this disobedience is not free confrontation and anarchy, but the creation of a more just society and the construction of a "beloved community" united by unconditional affection, including among those who were previously opposed. Civil disobedience, in this perspective, should be used against oppression and injustice systems, not against individuals, and the victory, when it occurs, is of a just system over an unjust system and not of a man over the other (King, 1957, p. 12-13).

According to McCarthy and Sharp's (2010) findings on the technique of "creative tension", King's propositions can be summarised by the following seven main aspects: some crucial steps must be taken to prepare a consistent basis for direct action (evidence of injustice, initiative in negotiation and self-purification); non-violent direct action (through methods such as marches, protests, speeches, boycotts, civil disobedience, etc.) brings out the "creative tension" that leads the opponent to face the issue; one must realise that this tension is already part of the situation and that direct action is only in charge of bringing it to the surface; the crisis created clears the way for negotiation; pressure must be maintained with obstinacy and discipline in order to show the opponent that reactionary attitudes will not be successful; imprisonment and other forms of punishment of activists must be faced without resistance, because this provision for self-sacrifice touches the conscience of citizens in general and the opponent with regard to existing injustices; according to the previous attitudes, non-violent protesters cannot be blamed for the violence, but actually those who really use force in the attempt to prevent or block the efforts of conflict resolution. Although King's propositions express a pragmatic concern that results in political effects, they are anchored in a spiritual and moral foundation that, like Gandhi, aims to sustain a kind of conversion mechanism able to bring the parties involved in the conflict closer and create what King calls the "beloved community".

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to present a conceptual overview of pacifist approaches, seeking to highlight the tradition of the principled pacifis. In this sense, the central references within this tradition were analysed – Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King – as well as their techniques and main methods of conflict resolution. What is crucial to note, based on what was discussed, is that both Gandhi and King stem from a transformative vision that conceives non-violent direct action as a means of conflict resolution through the mechanism of conversion. From this perspective, both authors



believe that conflicts can be resolved by transforming the "hearts and minds" of opponents through the force of truth, love, fraternity and compassion. However, it is important to note that this conversion mechanism is not confused with passivity or non-resistance advocated by a traditional segment of Christian pacifism. Instead, non-violent direct action involves some form of pressure that, while rejecting the use of physical violence and not aiming at annihilation, humiliation or destruction of the antagonist, is sufficiently active and disruptive to the point of leading the opponent to recognise the social injustice and political oppression and adopt a more friendly and conciliatory attitude, prone to dialogue and negotiation.

This new century, mainly driven by the peaceful revolutions of the so-called "Arab Spring", begins to witness a renewed academic interest in Gandhi and King's activism as well as a growing concern with the issues involved in empirical analysis and production of theories of pacifism and non-violence. However, it is necessary to note that much work remains to be done and that a number of important issues, still little explored, continue to challenge the research agenda of principled pacifism. In the introduction of their research guide on non-violent action, McCarthy and Sharp (2010) suggest some of these questions: Can King's technique (and one could also think of Gandhi) work in situations where there is a lack of spiritual and moral leadership of the dimension of these personalities or where the ethical and religious basis of one or another party is less clear? Do the techniques of principled pacifism work in societies where constitutional guarantees are fragile? Do the techniques of principled pacifism operate in the same way in different contexts, in different political systems and conflicts over different issues? Can the application of principled pacifism be comparatively tested in different scenarios? To these questions, it can be added: To what extent can the conversion mechanism, which is central to principled pacifism principles operate in extremely acute and polarised conflicts? The answers to these questions, which obviously go beyond the limits of this article, not only indicate the need for further development, but they also inspire those who have been motivated to extend their knowledge on the pacifist approaches to conflict resolution addressed here.

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