Nonviolent National Defense Would Be Better in Every Way!

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*This article has six parts:*

#1: I’ll encourage us to open our minds and our hearts to consider nonviolence as an alternative to militarism, so we can re-think – and even replace – the concept of military defense.

#2: I’ll propose very practical ways for nonviolent national defense to actually work.

#3: I’ll summarize various benefits of nonviolent national defense.

#4: I’ll mention some very serious obstacles we must overcome in order for our nation to convert to nonviolent national defense.

#5: I’ll urge us to boldly pivot away from militarism and nuclear weapons.

#6: I’ll provide sources for more information.

#1: Let’s open our minds and our hearts to consider nonviolence as an alternative to militarism, so we can re-think – and even replace – the concept of military defense.

**Everybody who wants to abolish nuclear weapons knows that nuclear weapons are the PROBLEM, not the solution. This article makes a compelling case that militarism itself also is a PHONY solution. A NONVIOLENT national defense would actually make us more secure and solve several other problems.**

Thousands of years of wars have not brought peace. The people who promoted World War I promised that it would be “the war to end all wars.” Have we had a century of peace since 1918? **Wars do NOT bring peace!**

The many wars continually raging on our planet are bad enough. A **nuclear** war could kill **billion**s of people and destroy human civilization. That is **NOT** “defense.” It is **SUICIDE**!

When we are chronically stuck in a dysfunctional system, we need to challenge the long-standing assumptions that prop up that dysfunctional system. We need to think creatively – “think outside the box” – and choose bold, positive alternatives to the status quo.

“Politics-as-usual” has gotten us into this mess. “Politics-as-usual” cannot save us. For thousands of years – and in most parts of the world – people have assumed that violence solves problems. Actually, **the problem is violence itself!**

We need to ground ourselves in our best values and think very creatively and very boldly, so we can create a fresh alternative – **NONVIOLENT** national defense – so we can be **truly** secure.

On April 4, 1967, Martin Luther King told the audience at Riverside Church in New York City that “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world” was the U.S. government. Also, he said, “a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

The U.S. needs to break free from that suicidal death spiral, renounce militarism, and replace it with a **NONVIOLENT** national defense. Instead of oppression from the top down, this would empower the grassroots to achieve **REAL “national security.”**

Nonviolent national defense would protect us EVEN IF OTHER NATIONS DO NOT JOIN US! This article’s next section explains how.

#2: Here are some very practical ways for nonviolent national defense to actually work.

**How it could work in the U.S.:**

I have been studying and strongly supporting nonviolent national defense for nearly half a century. Decades ago I figured out an overall plan for **why and how** the U.S. could convert to a nonviolent national defense:

**Let’s focus on the WORST-CASE SCENARIO: The Cold War with the Soviet Union.**

Nowadays *(I’m writing this in early April 2022*) many people are afraid that the Ukraine crisis could escalate into a nuclear war between U.S. and Russia. In October 1962 the world was terrified that the Cuban Missile Crisis could escalate into a nuclear war – and it nearly did!

Nonviolent national defense could protect us far better than nuclear weapons or military violence could!

**During the Cold War, Americans were afraid of TWO dangers:**

**Danger #1:** Either a nuclear war could actually occur – or else the Soviet Union could threaten the U.S. with a nuclear attack and use that threat to force us to surrender to them.

**Danger #2:** The Soviet Union’s military could actually invade and conquer the U.S. and use our industrial and agricultural resources to export them to the Soviet Union.

**Nonviolent national defense would protect us from BOTH of those dangers:**

**Danger #1:** The U.S. has always been willing to start a nuclear war. Indeed, the U.S. unilaterally escalated a conventional war (World War II) into an atomic war. In August 1945 the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on two civilian cities in Japan. The U.S. has never had a “no first use” policy.

The U.S. reacted to the 1917 Russian Revolution with strong opposition to communism (except during World War II when the U.S. and USSR cooperated to fight Nazi Germany). After World War II ended, the Cold War began and the U.S. started to aggressively build nuclear weapons and launched a nuclear arms race that frightened the hell out of the Soviet Union. Russia has a long history of being attacked by other nations. They were afraid of a nuclear attack by the U.S., so in order to protect their own “national security” they reacted to the threat of the U.S.’s nuclear weapons by building their own. The U.S. led each escalation, and the USSR kept trying to catch up and match the U.S.’s weapons and strategies. They kept their nuclear weapons on a “hair-trigger” alert, just like the U.S. was doing.

**If the U.S. had NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS, the fear of Danger #1 would vanish, and the Soviet Union would not have a defensive need to attack the U.S., nor a need for their own nuclear weapons. Also, abolishing our nuclear weapons would eliminate the danger of a war starting by accident, miscalculation, or computer error.**

**Danger #2:** The second kind of fear worried that the Soviet Union’s military could invade and conquer the U.S., and use our industrial and agricultural resources to export them to the Soviet Union. **A nonviolent national defense would eliminate that fear too.**

While some people thought Communism sounded good in theory, the Soviet Union never made it work well for its population. The Soviet Union’s people always suffered shortages of many consumer goods – and shortages of food. They even had to buy wheat from the U.S.

Some Americans worried that the USSR might send many, many thousands of military troops to invade and conquer the U.S. – and use those troops to run our factories and farms – and export those products back to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union would need to send many hundreds of thousands of Soviet military troops to the U.S. The numbers would be far too huge to send in airplanes, so they would need many ocean-going ships. The U.S. monitors what goes on all over the world, so if we saw many, many ships carrying Soviet troops from there to here across the oceans, we would have several days of advance warning before they arrived here.

We would use those days to **activate** the **NONVIOLENT NATIONAL DEFENSE** plan that we will have organized while we were disbanding the military and destroying our weapons. **Here is how we would organize a nonviolent way to protect the U.S. without a military:**

**The U.S. could abolish our military and develop a NONVIOLENT NATIONAL DEFENSE plan that would train millions of ordinary civilian Americans how to NONVIOLENTLY RESIST an invasion and occupation by any foreign nation.**

In a few minutes I will say more about Gene Sharp’s thinking and resources. For now, just know that a population can nonviolently refuse to be governed, and that no dictator can prevail if enough people resist through clever nonviolent methods. I enthusiastically encourage people to read the short article I posted at this link on my blog: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/nonviolence-is-powerful-gene-sharp-explains-how-powerful-it-is**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/nonviolence-is-powerful-gene-sharp-explains-how-powerful-it-is)

**I developed this practical example based on an industrial site where I used to work:**

From 1968 to 1971 I worked every summer at a big industrial plant (a pulp mill owned and operated by the Weyerhaeuser Company), along with 380 other men. Our mill took trees, chipped them up, cooked them with nasty chemicals in eight giant pressure cookers, and rolled them out into giant sheets of pulp. Every worker had his own specific job – and every worker had access to various kinds of industrial equipment, tools, and so forth.

Instead of 380 men paying taxes so the federal government could hire American military troops and pay giant business corporations to manufacture weapons to protect us from Soviet invaders, suppose we saved all of that money and – for a tiny fraction of that cost – suppose we trained ourselves how to **nonviolently** resist a Soviet invasion. We could train ourselves how to nonviolently prevent Soviet troops from operating our pulp mill and any other part of the American economy.

As I mentioned above, an invasion by the USSR would require far too many troops than could be carried on airplanes, so they would need to travel across the oceans on giant troop ships, which the U.S. would be monitoring. If our government reported Soviet troop ships headed our way across the oceans, we would have several days in which to shut down the mill and go home. But before leaving our work site, each of the 380 employees would take certain pre-planned nonviolent actions to make the mill impossible for Russians to operate – and we would make explicit notes of what we were doing, so we could reverse them after nonviolently preventing the invasion:

* We could reverse the wiring of certain pieces of crucial equipment.
* We could reverse the inlet and outlet hoses and the inlet and outlet pipes of crucial equipment.
* We could open the glass cover of many kinds of gauges and replace their faces with phony gauge faces (*e.g*., replace the face of a gauge measuring kilowatt hours with a phony gauge face that said it was measuring water pressure pounds per square inch).
* Each employee would take home a few crucial valves, handles, and so forth.
* Workers themselves could figure out their own plans – and write the plans down – and practice so we’d be ready just in case.

Nobody who was not already intimately familiar with the complexities of this industrial plant would be able to figure out the many hundreds of things that had been nonviolently disrupted, so nobody would be able to operate it.

On the rare occasions when the union went on strike, Weyerhaeuser Company would send people from other Weyerhaeuser mills and from their headquarters office to run it, but they could not run it correctly. And these are people who speak the same English language and work for the same business corporation!

Imagine developing this kind of nonviolent defense for EVERY industrial plant and EVERY utility and EVERY part of American news media and EVERY farm across the nation!

Militaries typically practice vigorous secrecy. But – for this kind of **nonviolent national defense** – we would **PUBLICLY TELL** the Soviet Union that we were temporarily disabling **EVERY** part of the American economy (while keeping all of the details completely secret from them), so they would **KNOW** they would **NOT** be able to operate anything and could **NOT** use our industrial or agricultural resources if they were to invade. Our **nonviolent national defense** would convince them that invading us would be **FUTILE**, so **this creative nonviolent resistance would actually PREVENT an invasion!**

The kind of nonviolent national defense plan I propose here would cause some suffering among the American people – but FAR LESS SUFFERING than a conventional war would cause – and less than several thousandths as much suffering as a nuclear war would cause!

**Nonviolent national defense is very practical – and provides much more effective defense and safer defense – compared to a military defense!**

**Nonviolent national defense is not merely a theoretical possibility. It actually has worked successfully in other countries. Here are just a few examples:**

**India won independence from the British Empire after decades of nonviolent resistance:**

Mohandas (“the Mahatma” – the “Great Soul”) Gandhi devised a radically bold nonviolent campaign soon after 1900 and persistently organized more and more people to build a courageous nonviolent movement for independence from the British Empire. Britain was very cruel and violent, so the courageous participants in Gandhi’s movement suffered violence – including death – on a number of occasions.

He devised the concept of ***satyagraha*** (holding firmly to truth, wherever that might lead), based on combining two words from his own language. ***Satyagraha*** has also been translated as “truth force” or “soul force.” It required profound nonviolence and courage.

His concept of independence likewise was very profound and bold. Far beyond mere political independence from the British Empire, his concept of ***swaraj*** also promoted economic independence from British businesses and also from big businesses including any that might be headquartered in India. ***Swaraj*** promoted grassroots village-level self-sufficiency in economics and in every other way. It affirmed small farmers, equal rights for women, and technology that was simple and appropriate for the village level (*e.g*., the spinning wheel instead of industrial cotton-processing factories).

Nonviolent resistance was an important part of the decades-long campaign for independence, so Gandhi and his followers were arrested and imprisoned many times. He always treated his British adversaries with human respect and won their respect in return.

Detailing the many strategies and activities for India’s nonviolent movement for liberation would go beyond the scope of this article, so I encourage people to watch the historically accurate 1982 film ***Gandhi***, and read the books he wrote and also the best books written about his work, including Eknath Easwaran’s ***Gandhi the Man: The Story of His Transformation***, which does an excellent job of explaining his growth from a child into the mature adult who led the movement. It is very readable. I also highly recommend Louis Fischer’s ***Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World***. It traces the development of his political thinking and his campaigns. It provides an inside view in an easy-to-understand way. If you want more information, contact me at (360) 491-9093 or [**glenanderson@integra.net**](mailto:glenanderson@integra.net)

**Czechoslovakia in 1968:**

During the Cold War, Czechoslovakia was one of the Eastern European nations dominated and oppressed by the Soviet Union. The people wanted their nation to move in more humane and progressive directions, so after some reforms began in 1966, Alexander Dubček was elected in January 1968, he promoted more reforms. In August 1968 the Soviet Union tried to stop the reforms that were underway, so the USSR and its loyal allies in its military alliance (the Warsaw Pact, their counterpart to NATO) invaded Czechoslovakia order to impose tight controls on the nation.

A reliable source ([**https://nonviolence3.com/history/czech**](https://nonviolence3.com/history/czech)) reported that within one week in late August more than half a million Warsaw Pact troops occupied Czechoslovakia and 500 tanks controlled strategic locations in Prague, the Czech capital. This source reported:

“The Soviets had planned to crush any military resistance, install a puppet government, and begin withdrawing within four days. With their overwhelming forces, they were well prepared to counter any resistance the small Czechoslovakian army might offer. But, surprised by an invasion by supposed allies, the Czech soldiers did not fight. Instead, they were ordered to remain in their barracks. This was an unfortunate turn of events for the invaders because they were completely unprepared for the kind of resistance they were about to encounter. The occupiers had been told they would be welcomed with open arms by the Czechoslovakian workers. Instead, they were booed, taunted, spit at and jeered.”

Czech people – all the way from top government officials to ordinary civilians – spontaneously started to nonviolently resist the Soviet occupation. Ordinary people struck up conversations with the occupying army’s troops and explained the truth, which differed from the lies the Soviet military had been telling the troops, so the Soviet troops became reluctant instead of enthusiastic about their mission. The troops were so dispirited that the Soviet military had to rotate them out of Czechoslovakia after just a few days.

Although small instances of violent resistance occurred, Czech radio and TV broadcasts denounced violence and called for nonviolent resistance instead. Clandestine broadcasters promoted and coordinated nonviolent civilian resistance that prevented the Soviet Union from taking control of Czechoslovakia.

One of the best-known nonviolent tactics was removing street signs so the Warsaw Pact troops could not find their way around. They had maps, but with no street signs and building address numbers painted over, the invading military trucks and tanks got lost, both in cities and in rural areas.

At an agreed-upon time on August 26, people all over Czechoslovakia rang church bells, blew horns and sounded sirens to protest the invasion. This unnerved and frightened some of nervous occupation troops, who had already been flummoxed by the nonviolent resistance.

A human blockade across a bridge in a small village blockaded a Russian convoy of tanks and other vehicles until the convoy turned back eight and a half hours after the blockade had started.

Railway workers found a series of nonviolent ways to prevent a Russian freight train from transporting military equipment. The train never reached its destination, so the Soviets eventually had to use a much less efficient method to transport the gear.

The source I noted a few paragraphs above reported this creative method of nonviolent resistance:

“In Bratislava a group of young people gathered up boxes of “girlie” magazines that had recently become available from the West. They went to a park and handed them out to the lonely Soviet tank crews that were keeping watch over the area. After a while the commander realized what was happening and ordered his men back into their tanks. The kids joked that the soldiers, who had been abused by the local Slovaks for the last few days, were now abusing themselves. With the soldiers sealed inside their tanks, the kids pasted paper over their periscopes, making it impossible for the crews to continue their surveillance.”

A Czech employee in a building that the Russians were trying to occupy – and other Czechs in other locations – found ways to shut off the water supplies to various buildings so the occupying troops had no water and for several days the Russian military had to haul water from Hungary by helicopter.

Local persons refused to provide housing or hospitality.

Underground radio and TV broadcasts and printed publications suggested creative ways to nonviolently resist the invaders and emphasized the need for nonviolence.

Smart, clever and bold graffiti messages (paint, chalk, etc.) made the invaders feel unwelcome.

Since practically everyone opposed the Soviet invasion and violation of Czech lands, the Soviet Union was not able to install a puppet government until eight months later in April 1969, but by that time the Czech people’s nonviolent resistance had seriously weakened the USSR’s support from among its normal allies.

Unified civilian resistance and the demoralization of Soviet troops forced Soviet leaders to offer some reforms and other concessions. The Czech resistance was more effective than people realized at the time.

**Just imagine how much more effective the Czech people would have been if they had planned out their nonviolent resistance strategies in advance instead of having to spontaneously improvise ad hoc methods!**

**See more information about nonviolent resistance in Czechoslovakia in 1968 at these sources:**

* [**https://nonviolentliberationstrategy.wordpress.com/case-studies/czechoslovakia/**](https://nonviolentliberationstrategy.wordpress.com/case-studies/czechoslovakia/)
* [**https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/czechoslovak-resistance-soviet-occupation-1968**](https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/czechoslovak-resistance-soviet-occupation-1968)
* Philip Windsor and Adam Roberts, ***Czechoslovakia 1968:******Reform, Repression and Resistance*** (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969).

**Nonviolent resistance helped remove Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic in 2000:**

Amid the turmoil in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Slobodan Milosovic emerged as Serbia’s leader. He was cruel and oppressive. Eventually a nonviolent resistance organization named OTPOR arose in order to protest a particularly bad piece of legislation in Serbia and the censorship of anti-government newspapers. The OTPOR campaign expanded into a more broadly based non-violent campaign against Slobodan Milosevic. It focused a lot on organizing to vote him out. Milosovic was pressured to call for an early election, and people expected him to rig the ballots in his favor, so OTPOR united around one opposition candidate. They reached out to many, many kinds of people (farmers, city people, civil servants, etc., etc., etc.). and used creative publicity (slogans, banners, other visual images, social media, etc.) and promoted nonviolent civil resistance that won many people to their side. After the election they forced Milosevic to resign on October 7, 2000.

I highly recommend the fascinating and informative documentary film about all of this, titled **“Bringing Down a Dictator.”**

I encourage you to search the internet for OTPOR to learn more about their creative organizing and how they “branded” their movement in ways that brought more people – including young people – into their nonviolent movement to remove Milosevic. This resource looks informative, although I have not yet read it: [**https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws\_etd/send\_file/send?accession=ksuhonors1292889981&disposition=inline**](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=ksuhonors1292889981&disposition=inline)

**Iran’s people nonviolently overthrew the U.S.’s heavily armed dictator in 1979:**

**This article summarizes U.S. meddling in Iran since 1941:** [**https://www.truthdig.com/articles/americas-sordid-history-of-meddling-in-iran**](https://www.truthdig.com/articles/americas-sordid-history-of-meddling-in-iran)

In 1953 Iran’s people democratically elected a new prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh. Until then, Britain and other Western powers had been reaping huge profits from the oil that belonged to the Iranian people. Big Oil’s rip-off left Iran’s people poor. Prime Minister Mossadegh took action to nationalize Iranian oil so the Iranian people would benefit from the profits, but the British and American governments did not want that, so the CIA and Britain’s equivalent agency (M16) overthrew the democracy and installed the Shah. The U.S. and Britain overthrew Iran’s democracy and installed an extremely brutal dictator, the Shah, who ruled with a violent, oppressive iron fist.

The U.S. provided enormous amounts of military weapons – including our most sophisticated jet fighter planes, etc., – to help the Shah brutally dominate Iran’s people for 26 years until he was overthrown in 1979 by a **nonviolent** revolution.

In the early 1970s everybody knew the U.S. was losing the Vietnam War and losing many American lives (our government did not care about killing millions of Southeast Asians). The American people now opposed the Vietnam War, so Nixon and Kissinger changed U.S. foreign policy to “outsource” the military violence by vigorously arming and supporting regional geopolitical puppet thugs (such as the Shah) to maintain U.S. control over their respective regions so the U.S. would not need to send our own American troops.

The Shah’s secret police (the SAVAK) and his extreme brutality caused Amnesty International to denounce Iran as having the world’s very worst abuses of human rights.

Also, when the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee studied the extent of U.S. weapons sales to Iran, the Committee declared it “out of control.”

Finally in 1979 the Iranian people rose up and **nonviolently** protested in the streets until the Shah gave up and left. During those protests, the Shah’s gigantic military used military helicopters provided by the U.S. to fly low through the streets of Teheran and machine-gun to death the nonviolent protesters.

The Iranian people disagreed sharply with the U.S. government but never hated the American people as people because they knew the U.S. government did NOT represent American public opinion.

Hardly any Americans know about this part of Iran’s history and the powerful use of nonviolent resistance to topple an extremely brutal and violent dictator who had been vigorously armed and supported by the U.S.

Nonviolence really is this powerful!

**Philippines: “People Power” removed U.S.-backed dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986:**

During the Cold War, the U.S. saw everything through its distorted filter of rabid anti-communism. The U.S. supported brutal dictators – no matter how cruel and oppressive (including imposing martial law) – so long as they served the U.S.’s Cold War politics. This included the Shah of Iran and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, along with many others.

Marcos was the dictator of the Philippines for twenty years, and he allowed his country to be used for several gigantic U.S. military bases from which the U.S. waged its war against Vietnam and other Southeast Asian nations.

A nonviolent “People Power Revolution” arose in the Philippines – especially with support from Catholic priests, nuns, and members, including a prominent cardinal. I know people who had conducted extensive trainings in nonviolent resistance there. The growing nonviolent resistance movement included exposing the electoral fraud Marcos had conducted. It also included an anti-Marcos rally with 1 ½ million nonviolent protesters.

Finally in 1986 Marcos was forced to resign. During the 1980s U.S. President Reagan had very vigorously supported Marcos (no matter how cruel and dictatorial Marcos was, because he was the U.S.’s Cold War puppet in that region), but finally even the Reagan Administration recognized that Marcos could no longer be supported in his role, so they invited Mr. and Mrs. Marcos to come to the U.S.

For more information about all of this, see chapter 10 of the highly informative book by Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall titled, ***A Force More Powerful***. I mention this later in this article.

**The “Singing Revolution” in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia in the late 1980s:**

After World War II, the Baltic nations (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia) became parts of the Soviet Union, although – like the Eastern European nations dominated by the USSR – each had its own historical roots as nations with their own cultures. In the late 1980s the people started reviving them and also made closer relations with Estonia’s neighbor Finland.

The Soviet Union tried to import Russian language make the small Baltic nations more Russian, despite Gorbachev’s liberalization. Local people asserted their own nationalities by increasing the use of their own national languages – especially by using the nonviolent tactic of vastly increasing the singing of their traditional folk songs in their native languages. Gathering in larger and larger numbers to do this allowed many people to gather to organize a nonviolent movement for independence. The totally nonviolent “Singing Revolution” was so successful that Estonia became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991.

You can learn more by searching the internet for “Singing Revolution.”

**The “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004-2005:**

*I’m writing this article in early April 2022, six weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine. While Ukraine’s government is using conventional military defense, some Ukrainians are using nonviolent resistance (although mainstream media in the U.S. are failing to adequately report on this). How much are these nonviolent resisters in 2022 drawing upon the nation’s experience from less than two decades before, when the “Orange Revolution” nonviolently replaced a corrupt government with an honest democracy?*

In November 2004 Ukraine’s corrupt government – and the media it controlled – proclaimed victory in Ukraine’s election. However, credible exit polls showed that the honest opposition candidate actually had won. This opposition candidate had been poisoned (and nearly killed) during the campaign. Now the public was learning about blatant voter intimidation and damaged ballots. In freezing temperatures, more than one million citizens filled the capital city’s streets and protested the election fraud. They nonviolently blockaded government buildings and paralyzed all state functions. Many ordinary people and small businesses supported them in various ways. This went on for 17 days.

Nonviolent resistance actions continued in various ways from November 2004 to January 2005. This was called the “Orange Revolution.” The nonviolent movement won another run-off election that was declared to be “free and fair.” In this election, the challenger Yushchenko was found to have won about 52% of the vote, so he was declared the official winner over the corrupt incumbent. Nonviolent resistance had won. Nationwide, more than 18% of the population said they had participated in the Orange Revolution. A great number of young people participated, along with people of all ages. This empowerment of young people was seen as good for Ukraine’s future as a democracy.

**Nonviolent resistance in Ukraine in 2022:**

Nonviolent resistance is being used again now in Ukraine in February-March-April 2022, although mainstream news media and U.S. politicians keep ignoring it. (I’m writing this article in early April 2022.) I hope Ukraine’s people will expand their use of nonviolent resistance – and I hope American politicians and media will recognize this as a truly effective way for Ukraine to defend itself.

One of the world’s most prominent organizers and writers about nonviolence is George Lakey. See some of his writings at [**www.wagingnonviolence.org**](http://www.wagingnonviolence.org) and more at [**https://blog.pmpress.org/category/blog/george-lakeys-blog/?msclkid=22ed0787acb811ec83e8aca64fd11ce9**](https://blog.pmpress.org/category/blog/george-lakeys-blog/?msclkid=22ed0787acb811ec83e8aca64fd11ce9)

Here is George Lakey’s article about Ukraine’s people using nonviolent national defense now: [**https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/02/26/even-without-russias-military-might-ukraine-can-defend-against-invasion**](https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/02/26/even-without-russias-military-might-ukraine-can-defend-against-invasion) and [**Ukraine doesn’t need to match Russia’s military might to defend against invasion - Waging Nonviolence | Waging Nonviolence**](https://wagingnonviolence.org/2022/02/ukraine-doesnt-need-to-match-russias-military-might-to-defend-against-invasion/?msclkid=6c915058acb811ec8ee6844d6445bd05)

This is one of many smart nonviolent actions that are possible: In March 2022, a Russian oligarch's yacht is stranded because Norwegians refuse to refuel it: [**https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2022/3/16/2086340/--They-can-row-home-Russian-oligarch-s-yacht-is-stranded-because-Norwegians-refuse-to-refuel-it?detail=emaildkre**](https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2022/3/16/2086340/--They-can-row-home-Russian-oligarch-s-yacht-is-stranded-because-Norwegians-refuse-to-refuel-it?detail=emaildkre)

**Gene Sharp was the world’s top expert on nonviolent resistance throughout history. He explained how to use nonviolence effectively to overthrow dictators, repel invaders, etc.:**

Gene Sharp resisted the military draft during the Korean War. When he got out of federal prison, he felt that his own personal witness had not been powerful enough to change the power that militarism kept wielding. He started researching the power of nonviolent organizing against oppression, war, invaders, etc. His research led him to write a number of books (which I have read), including his 1973 three-volume masterpiece series, ***The Politics of Nonviolent Action***. Many of his books and pamphlets have been translated into many languages and used effectively to nonviolently overthrow dictatorships in many nations. His non-profit organization, the Albert Einstein Institution ([**www.aeinstein.org**](http://www.aeinstein.org)) offers many of his books and pamphlets for sale. Some of his writings can be downloaded and printed out for free.

His book ***Civilian Based Defense*** explains how to practice nonviolent national defense, which is the topic of the article you are reading now. Also. two of his other especially useful resources are ***How Nonviolent Struggle Works*** and ***From Dictatorship to Democracy, A Conceptual Framework for Liberation***.

In 1976 Gene Sharp wrote an article in *Fellowship Magazine* (published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation) in which he explained how nonviolent resistance to the British Empire was making very good progress toward freeing the 13 American colonies. However, when the American colonists started killing British troops and started the Revolutionary War, Britain reacted by fighting the war. This interrupted the colonists’ nonviolent revolution and caused the war to stretch on for several years. Sharp’s article (published during the Bicentennial year of the American Revolution) made a solid case that the 13 colonies would have achieved independence sooner if we had not resorted to military violence and the Revolutionary War. Various kinds of nonviolent resistance were making very good progress, so the war actually delayed our independence.

#3: Here are various benefits of nonviolent national defense.

**Nonviolent national defense is better than militarism in many ways:**

* It is MORE EFFECTIVE than the violent military we currently have.  The last significant war the U.S. won was World War II.  We have lost ALL of the others since then, despite the world’s most gigantic military budget and the world’s most sophisticated weapons!
* It is VASTLY CHEAPER than the military budget, so replacing the military with nonviolence would enable our nation to afford to end all poverty, provide high quality health care for everyone, clean up the environment, replace deteriorating infrastructure, and rapidly convert to a sustainable climate.
* It is ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE instead of the military’s huge waste of natural resources, pollution of lands and waters, gigantic climate pollution, and so on.
* It is PROFOUNDLY DEMOCRATIC AND GRASSROOTSY instead of the military establishment’s authoritarianism and abuses that oppress us from the top down.
* It is BETTER FOR THE ECONOMY, because U.S. militarism is designed to support U.S. business exploitation of other nations and is especially designed to enrich corrupt big capitalistic businesses. Since the 1950s, economists have been proving that a billion dollars spent for peaceful purposes (health, education, housing, etc.) creates more jobs than if that billion dollars were spent on the military.

**Nonviolent national defense would actually DEFEND us instead of endanger us:**

* Nuclear weapons are a crucial part of U.S. militarism, but – instead of defending us – they actually threaten to kill all of us in a nuclear war and the “nuclear winter” that would follow. (Search the internet for “nuclear winter.”)
* Radiation hurts people and environments at every step of the process (mining uranium, processing it, making the weapons, testing them on vulnerable dark-skinned people’s lands, suffering endlessly from nuclear waste for which there is no solution, etc.). All of this is hurting people and our environment.

#4: We must overcome these very serious obstacles in order for our nation to convert to nonviolent national defense.

**Two giant obstacles stand in the way of converting to nonviolent national defense:**

**Obstacle #1: The mistaken assumptions that violence solves problems and militarism is the only way to defend ourselves**

**Obstacle #2: The enormous corrupting power of the big corporations that sell to the military and fund politicians’ campaigns**

**Obstacle #1 is a lie that is widely assumed throughout society, mainstream media, and government. We must vigorously rebut obstacle #1:**

The general public, mainstream news media, Congress, and the Executive Branch are very heavily dominated by the “conventional wisdom” that we need a big military. This dominant assumption is very much entrenched and controlled by obstacle #2. (*See below*)

**Converting to nonviolent national defense cannot possibly occur unless we organize a strategically savvy nonviolent grassroots movement to vigorously inform and inspire the public!** We must motivate public opinion to debunk Obstacle #1 and solve Obstacle #2. Only then will we be able to nonviolently force the federal government to adopt nonviolent national defense. This is a huge challenge! We need to strategize and act smartly and boldly from the grassroots up!

**Obstacle #2 prevents our nation from converting from war to peace. Big business’s power and economic pressures prevent us from solving all sorts of other problems (environment, health care, etc.). We must get “Big Money” out of political campaigns and create peaceful jobs and other bold solutions to obstacle #2:**

In January 1961 President Eisenhower warned us about the growing power of the Military-Industrial Complex. It has grown significantly since then and has corrupted our government and our economy. Systemic political and economic problems now protect the entrenched Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex from being challenged. We must devise ways to challenge and weaken their power. This will be difficult, but it is possible if we organize a strategically savvy grassroots movement.

Economic pressures from big businesses and the “jobs” argument have entrenched the problem. Many businesses manufacture military weapons and do other kinds of business with the military. They apply heavy pressures through political campaign donations and lobbying. These pressures interfere with the general public understanding the exciting possibility of nonviolent national defense. These pressures and financial corruption prevent Congress and the Executive Branch from voluntarily converting to nonviolent national defense.

A few decades ago, the giant corporation that was going to build an enormously expensive B-1 bomber cleverly subcontracted – and sub-sub-contracted – and sub-sub-sub-contracted – various parts of the project into EVERY one of the U.S.’s 435 congressional districts. They devised this strategy in order to pressure EVERY member of the House and Senate – and their local governments and local news media – into urging lavish funding for the B-1 bomber. (The airplane was so horrendously expensive that someone figured out that it would be cheaper to make it entirely from solid gold instead of from the various parts in the actual design.)

As soon as we suggest cutting the Pentagon budget, the politicians and businesses and many ordinary people would immediately object on the grounds of “jobs.” **Our strategy for converting to nonviolent national defense must take strategically smart actions to counter the “jobs” argument.**  Many people have jobs in the military and manufacturing military weapons. **Our nonviolent conversion plan must include converting those jobs to peaceful jobs – and converting weapons industries to manufacturing useful products and converting military bases into useful civilian resources** (lands, buildings, air strips, waterfront docks, and so forth). While we are in the process of converting our economy to civilian purposes, we might need to provide income supports for military personnel and weapons manufacturing jobs during the interim while the new civilian jobs are still being developed, just like sensible people have urged income supports and re-training for people who log endangered forests, who operate coal mines and oil refineries, etc.

In 1976 I started researching how military spending distorts how the economy functions. Even apart from the budget trade-offs (better uses for our tax dollars), military spending **distorts how the economy functions as an economy**. It causes various kinds of economic problems. (Explaining them would go beyond the scope of this article, I can provide information to anyone who is interested. In March 1977 I published a 100-page report on this with a special emphasis on the potential for converting Washington State’s economy away from military activities toward civilian productivity and civilian resources that would serve the broad public interest. The report was typed onto paper in 1977, so it is not online. If you want to borrow a copy, contact me at (360) 491-9093 or [**glenanderson@integra.net**](mailto:glenanderson@integra.net). Also, in the late 1970s I helped to create an organization to research and promote converting Washington State’s economy. People elsewhere were doing similar work to research how to convert their regional economies and the businesses where they worked. Sadly, when Reagan became President in January 1981, he massively increased the military budget so horribly that his powerful pressure for more militarism swamped and squashed our efforts to convert to a peace economy.

**It really is possible to convert our economy in such a massive way!** When the U.S. decided to massively fight World War II, the U.S. **rapidly converted** all kinds of civilian production factories (for automobiles, home appliances, etc.) into producing military weapons (trucks, tanks, airplanes, bombs, guns, etc.). We did that in 1941-1942. Now we can reverse the project in our own time. Likewise, climate supporters are urging a Green New Deal to quickly create many good new jobs for energy conservation, alternative energy, etc. We already have this kind of thinking and grassroots organizing underway regarding the climate, so we can adapt that for converting to a peace economy and overcome obstacle #2!

#5: Now we must boldly pivot away from militarism and nuclear weapons.

After the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Japanese civilian cities, Albert Einstein famously said, “The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.”

Yes, we really do need to change how we think about “national security,” as this article’s part #1 urges. Instead of military violence, let’s achieve REAL “national security” by converting to a NONVIOLENT national defense! Militarism – and especially nuclear weapons – can only lead to suicide for our nation and the world. The real and persistent danger of global destruction is NOT “security.”

We need to challenge the long-standing assumptions that have led to the cruel status quo. We’re already doing this in some aspects of our society. **Nowadays we already know:**

#1: Everything in the environment is interconnected, so now we know we can’t “throw something away” because there is no “away.”

#2: Endless economic “growth” is not possible because the earth and our resources are limited, and human beings have seriously disrupted the climate.

#3: Men – and white people – cannot assume they must be in charge of everything.

**Now let’s add #4: Let’s challenge the long-standing assumption that “might makes right.” Let’s challenge the phony assumption that violence solves problems. Let’s create a NONVIOLENT ALTERNATIVE that is more secure and more practical than militarism.**

At a larger scale than what I explained a few minutes ago in this article’s part #2, I would like us to **empower ourselves** to build much more vibrant nonviolent democracy at local community levels and in workplaces. This goes beyond the matter of “defense” to a matter of strengthening democratic values and civil society in more profound ways.

The source I cited above regarding Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1968 included these paragraphs:

“Some believe it may be possible to use nonviolent strategies to defend a country against internal coups and foreign invasions. This practice is sometimes called Social Defense (mainly in Europe) or Civilian-based Defense (CBD).

“Instituting CBD in a country like the US would be problematic for a number of reasons. It would require a radical transformation in the way we think about defense, security and social equality. Because CBD can only defend societies—not territory—it could not project power around the world like a modern military can. And because unyielding solidarity is essential for protracted nonviolent struggles, cultural, racial and economic rifts in the US could become fatal liabilities. Nothing can exacerbate existing societal fault lines more surely than extended pressure from violent repression and divisive propaganda.

“However, a number of smaller countries in Europe have researched the possibility of using carefully planned programs of civilian noncooperation in the event of foreign invasion—either as supplements to military defense or as standalone systems. It will be interesting to see if any military incursions are met with effective nonviolent resistance in the coming years.”

Yes, years ago I was reading that Estonia and some other nations were planning how to either convert to nonviolent national defense or at least devise very strong, practical nonviolent programs to supplement their conventional defenses.

In order to pivot away from the status quo that traps us in militarism and global suicide (if nuclear weapons are launched), society must seriously plan how to free ourselves from fear – and to choose bold, creative alternatives to the status quo. Two of my newest TV programs especially help us do that:

* My **April** 2022 TV program is all about transcending narrow nationalism and declaring ourselves to be citizens of the whole world. You can watch the one-hour video interview and/or read my thorough summary of what we said (with links to more information sources) at this link to my blog: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/world-citizenship-see-fascinating-information-here**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/world-citizenship-see-fascinating-information-here)
* My **May** 2022 TV program will devote an hour to explaining why and how nonviolent national defense would actually be more practical than military violence. It summarizes what I’m saying in this article. My video and the article you are reading now will appear in the “TV Programs” category of my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), in late April 2022 and remain forever.

#6: Here are sources for more information.

We can draw upon the large amount of research and writing that have been produced in recent decades. Unfortunately, most people are not aware of this tremendous resource. We must educate ourselves – and the general public – and the media – and all kinds of government officials.

A few minutes ago, I mentioned Gene Sharp’s writings.  You can read and download some of his writings from the website promoting his work, [**www.aeinstein.org**](http://www.aeinstein.org). I highly recommend these important resources. The first workshop in my series of 6 workshops (“Nonviolent Grassroots Organizing”) discusses this approach along with other powerful information and insights about nonviolence.

In the section above about **nonviolent resistance in Ukraine in 2022**, I mentioned that one of the world’s most prominent organizers and writers about nonviolence is George Lakey. See some of his writings at [**www.wagingnonviolence.org**](http://www.wagingnonviolence.org) and more at [**https://blog.pmpress.org/category/blog/george-lakeys-blog/?msclkid=22ed0787acb811ec83e8aca64fd11ce9**](https://blog.pmpress.org/category/blog/george-lakeys-blog/?msclkid=22ed0787acb811ec83e8aca64fd11ce9). **In this article George Lakey specifically challenges the assumption that military violence is necessary for defense.** His article mentions “[t]he dangerous assumption that violence keeps us safe -- A romanticized belief in violence renders people irrational to the point of hurting ourselves, over and over again.” [**The dangerous assumption that violence keeps us safe - Waging Nonviolence | Waging Nonviolence**](https://wagingnonviolence.org/2022/02/the-dangerous-assumption-that-violence-keeps-us-safe/?msclkid=6c91a967acb811eca6d51e368ca349c3). See Lakey’s article about Ukraine’s people using nonviolent national defense now: [**https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/02/26/even-without-russias-military-might-ukraine-can-defend-against-invasion**](https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/02/26/even-without-russias-military-might-ukraine-can-defend-against-invasion)

I also highly recommend the substantive book by Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall titled, ***A Force More Powerful***.  I own a copy of the book and the videotape (VHS) series based on it.  The book thoroughly explains more than a dozen cases of nonviolent resistance to oppression, dictators, invaders, etc., including some that George Lakey has written about.  The videotape series summarizes 6 of these in 30-minute episodes.  Nearly 20 years ago I organized a series of local gatherings where people watched and discussed each of these 30-minute videos.

Now you can watch all 6 episodes online at this link: [**https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/force-powerful-english/**](https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/force-powerful-english/) This is on the website of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, [**https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/**](https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/) This excellent non-profit organization provides information relevant to the article you are reading now. Their Resource Library has some informative and practical resources: [**https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/resource-library/**](https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/resource-library/)

Many people – but not enough people – have read the 2011 book titled, [***Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict***](https://www.amazon.com/Why-Civil-Resistance-Works-Nonviolent/dp/0231156839/ref=sr_1_1?crid=CRYNLW9K86BT&keywords=Why+Civil+Resistance+Works&qid=1644870822&s=books&sprefix=why+civil+resistance+works%2Cstripbooks%2C136&sr=1-1), by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan. Their very readable book compiles information about civil wars and other major conflicts throughout the recent century. Their book proves that **nonviolent movements are much more likely to succeed** than are movements that include violence.

Their book also proves that – after winning – the new governments emerging after nonviolent movement is much more likely to be democratic, free and inclusive than those movements that included violence. Unlike violent movements led by a few macho men in a top-down hierarchy, nonviolent movements welcome all kinds of people (including women, old people, children, people with disabilities, etc.) in a more egalitarian movement, so their organizing has already laid the foundation for a democratic, free and inclusive society to emerge when they win. Ordinary people can practice nonviolent resistance as part of their daily lives instead of having to go away for military training and fighting on some “front.”

Much information and many insights are distilled from historical examples of nonviolent resistance. These are relevant to any big movement of nonviolent resistance, including Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the one occurring in Ukraine in early 2022. See this practical resource here: [**Social defence: arguments and actions. Historical examples (uow.edu.au)**](https://documents.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/pubs/91nssd/historical.html)

See these sources of information:

* [**Historical Examples - Nonviolence 3.0**](https://nonviolence3.com/history/)
* [**Civilian-based defense - Wikipedia**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian-based_defense)
* [**https://documents.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/pubs/91nssd/historical.html**](https://documents.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/pubs/91nssd/historical.html)
* [**Can Ukrainian Resistance Foil a Russian Victory? - War on the Rocks**](https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/can-ukrainian-resistance-foil-a-russian-victory/)
* [**Erica Chenoweth illuminates the value of nonviolent resistance in societal conflicts | Harvard Kennedy School**](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/advocacy-social-movements/paths-resistance-erica-chenoweths-research)
* [**The success of nonviolent civil resistance: Erica Chenoweth at TEDxBoulder - Bing video**](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Erica+Chenoweth+&&view=detail&mid=8A99C212CCB419200D0C8A99C212CCB419200D0C&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DErica%2BChenoweth%2B%26FORM%3DHDRSC3) **(**12 minutes)
* [**‘The Best Hope We Have.’ The Promise of Protest Movements Going Global (worldpoliticsreview.com)**](https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/28889/the-best-hope-we-have-the-promise-of-protest-movements-going-global)

I have been studying **“nonviolent national defense”** for several decades. I encourage you to search the internet for several interchangeable terms, including **“civil resistance”** and **“civilian based defense**” and **“transarmament.”** The “transarmament” term was devised in order to reassure people that we are not simply “disarming” but are rather converting to a different kind of defense – a nonviolent one.

I enthusiastically encourage people to read the short article I posted at this link on my blog: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/nonviolence-is-powerful-gene-sharp-explains-how-powerful-it-is**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/nonviolence-is-powerful-gene-sharp-explains-how-powerful-it-is)

Our conversion to nonviolent national defense must include several related parts. One important part of the conversion we need is to free ourselves from fear – and to choose bold, creative alternatives to the status quo:

* My **April** 2022 TV program is all about transcending narrow nationalism and declaring ourselves to be citizens of the whole world. You can watch the video interview and/or read my thorough summary of what we said (with links to more information sources) at this link: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/world-citizenship-see-fascinating-information-here**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/world-citizenship-see-fascinating-information-here)
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