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## **THE STRATEGIC UTILITY OF NON-VIOLENCE IN VIOLENT CONFLICT: THE IRA AND HEZBOLLAH**

### **Abstract:**

With undoubtedly the best of intentions in mind, both scholarly analysis and activist advocacy of non-violence emphasizes the potential for non-violent civil disobedience to effect normative political change. This includes the role of non-violence in reducing or even eliminating violent conflict. Non-violence is not without its critics, some more constructive than others. This paper considers the relationship between non-violence and its antithesis, violence itself and seeks to orientate analysis towards a framework that examines how non-violent strategies become vulnerable to manipulation by those actors who have not eliminated physical force from their strategic repertoire. The analysis draws on two empirical examples to draw out the conditions whereby ostensible non-violence tactics has augmented existing violent campaigns. The paper concludes that the discursive framework and moral imperative underpinning non-violence ultimately remains subordinate to coercive power, and the relationship between violent and non-violent resistance is an inextricable rather than a dichotomous one. The study argues that a clearer distinction be made between non-violence as an end in and of itself, and non-violence as a means to an end. The success or failure of non-violent strategies is contingent on variables that influence the political and security calculus of state actors. These include such factors such as established conflict regulation potential, legitimized public values and mechanisms, popular and international exposure and the broader spatio-temporal context. The analysis offers a realistic appraisal of the role of non-violence in violent contexts.

### **Keywords:**

Conflict, Non-violence, Strategy

**JEL Classification:** D74

## 1. The Appeal of Non-Violence

There is an understandable connection between the instrumental utility of non-violence and the pursuit by activists of a positive, fair and equitable political reality. Non-violence, as a form of resistance, is preferable largely because physical force politics has a sad and tragic history in human affairs. Whether it is related to struggles against colonial rule (Ghandi) (Ghandi& Merton, 1965; see also Wolpert, 2002), Racism (King) (Burns, 1997) or economic injustice (Occupy) the use of non-violence meshes with the imperative of pacifism (Atack, 2012, Ch 6). 'Do not become what you behold', might be the conceivable mantra of non-violent activism, inverting St Augustine's own maxim. Non-violence signals for us, as scholars and activists, a turn towards the mobilization of right in the face of might, without a corresponding coercive dimension. Non-violence can even be conceived in Habermasian terms as the crystallization of the 'better argument' (Habermas, 1990) in demonstrably mass popular, grassroots terms, against which the putative reasoning of the state has no counter-argument. In our contemporary period we see the possibilities of non-violence played out in news and social media on an increasingly regular basis. A generation ago, and it is often important to remember it, anti-communist movements sprang up on cities in eastern Germany and other eastern bloc countries (Zubok, 2010), and ultimately in China. It led to a staggering and remarkably rapid success (outside China) of non-violence against previously autocratic communist regimes. More recently we are continuing to witness the tumultuous, and much more chaotic, ferment of the Arab Spring (Gelvin, 2012). Egypt was arguably a paragon of non-violence, where an entrenched and autocratic political system was confronted by popular resistance that neutralized the state's monopoly on legitimate violence. The army, the foremost entity in Egyptian politics, proved unwilling to turn its weapons on its own people. It was the loss of this hold on the legitimate use of violence that ultimately sealed the fate of the Mubarak regime. Ultimately, the final evaluation of the success (or lack thereof) of the Arab Spring remains incomplete.

Simultaneously, however, the Arab Spring shows us the other side of the coin. Syria and Libya both began their periods of instability through non-violent action. Both, however, soon descended into violent confrontation. Syria, the most intractable and devastating of the Arab revolts, is a case worthy of more in depth study, not least because of its regional significance (Stacher, 2012). Resistance to the long entrenched Assad regime was first manifest in popular protest by tens of thousands of protesters in major Syrian urban centres. These protests were contemporaneous with other protests in other Arab states. What went wrong? Any evaluation of non-violence must account for the failure of non-violent movement, still more it's metamorphosis into violent resistance.

Non-violent resistance to injustice and oppression is – at bottom – a good thing (Mattaina, 2001). It goes without saying that this analysis should not be viewed as an advocacy for violent resistance. However, this paper is circumspect about supporting its advocacy in all circumstances. The success of non-violence such as that of Ghandi

or Martin Luther King is ultimately determined by the contextual factors predominant during its deployment (Ling, 2003). Certain factors must be in place in order for the non-violent strategy to be maximally effective, and successfully avoiding the creep towards violence. This study draws back from an in depth discussion of what those circumstances are, but is concerned about the nexus point – and the relationship – between violent and non-violent resistance. It suggests that there is a certain inevitable determinism about the connection between violence and non-violence that cannot be wished away (see Jenkins, 2010). In the two case studies examined below we see examples of the relationship between non-violent protest and violence that, far from permitting a narrative of moral judiciousness, only adds to the complexity. Critics of non-violence point to a range of problematical elements in the dichotomy of violence and non-violence (see Zachariah, 2011; Sen, 2008).

This study proposes that the moral dichotomy between violence and non-violence is not independently sustainable and that their interaction is much closer and more complex (for discussion relative to Judaism, for example, see Weissman, 2003). The present study points to the mutually interdependent relationship between both. It is a relationship that is much more intrinsic than we might suppose or might hope. It is a complexity born in the crucible of mobilized resistance to overt and structural forms of oppression. The dynamics that drive protest and activism towards violence are much more complex than normatively invested imperatives to supplant one (violence) with the other (non-violence) on the basis of a moral argument. At the heart of this study is the recognition, with Foucault, that the choices and strategies for resistance types are invariably determined by localized factors. In one of the cases outlined below, for example, we see that non-violence was the starting point of resistance but the reaction to it by both state and non-state actors tilted the balance in favour of violence. In the other case we see that – conversely – resistance through violent asymmetric warfare succeeded in bringing the conflict between resistance and an occupying state power to the point where it could be ended through a strategically deployed non-violent strategy. In both cases the dividing line between resistance as violence and resistance as non-violence becomes difficult to draw.

The study argues that the relationship between violence and non-violence is not so much one of dichotomy, but more one of strategic choice within the constraints of the particular configurations of context. History, precedent, and the local factors marking the confluence of resistance imperatives, the movements mobilized around these, the regional and international visibility of the conflict and the political status quo render the normative imperative of non-violence subservient to whatever relations of power are embedded. The paper ultimately cautions against the use of non-violence *tout court*. It argues in favour of a thorough, and entirely plausible, analysis of individual cases to offer a more rigorous determination of the relationship between violent and non-violent resistance. The study concludes that the discursive and non-discursive framework and moral imperative underpinning non-violence ultimately remains subordinate to coercive power and the construction of conflicting narratives of both state actors and

non-violent movements. The success or failure of non-violent strategies are contingent on variables such as established conflict regulation potential, legitimized public values and international exposure of resistance mobilization. Where these factors do not align, non-violent resistance will not succeed. The advocacy of non-violent mass protest then becomes instrumentalised by actors who do not confine their resistance strategies purely to non-violence. But the risks inherent in non-violent popular protest are not necessarily borne by these actors.

## **2. Introduction to the Case studies**

The case studies offered below draw on historical examples to demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between violence and non-violence as forms of resistance. In both instances, violence and non-violence have become intertwined in a complex relationship in which one was ultimately utilized to further strategic ends of the other. In both instances, the mass movement that characterised the non-violent protest were either subject to the strategic utility of physical force political activism after the protest or indeed, as in the second case, during it. The dynamic of outrage and international condemnation, either actually manifested as in the case of Northern Ireland, or potential, as in the case of southern Lebanon, catapulted the non-violent dimension of the conflict to the fore. Indeed, it was precisely the question of securing the moral high ground (or losing it in the eyes of the world) that has made non-violence as potent as it has shown itself to be. But it is often a high ground secured at a horrendous cost for the participants in non-violent action. Indeed, it is arguable that the non-violent dimension to this strategy is only adhered to by one side of the argument, with the other side inflicting harsh reprisals upon those it views as a threat to the status quo.

The issue that emerges here centres on non-violence as a non-discursive practice and its proximate relationship to violence. In this sense we are concerned to explore how nonviolence inevitably remains vulnerable to those militant actors who advocate non-violence primarily to provoke a harsh state response that will in turn then justify the mobilization of violent resistance. From a normative point of view, the question most pressing is that of determining the calculus behind those actors who are not committed to non-violence exclusively. It is not sufficient to term this type of action a form of 'human shielding' but the term does capture something of the essence of the problem. In both the cases below the actual (Northern Ireland) or potential (Lebanon) harsh state response – specifically in relation to human casualties and atrocity – is part of the rationale of violent resistance actors. It is, in the view of militant physical force advocates to be welcomed. It is a clear demonstration of the illegitimacy of the state and it boosts the underlying public legitimacy of an armed campaign. Atrocity, outrage and condemnation of disproportionate state responses to non-violent resistance serve to embed violent resistance.

Both cases are very different. Their starting points and end points are very different, as are the imperatives that pushed forward their specific dynamics. What lies at their core, however, is the evident ambiguity of the dividing line between non-violence and violence.

### **3. Northern Ireland**

#### **The Context**

The conflict known with euphemistic understatement as ‘the Troubles’ has its roots in the particular historical reality of the relationship between the island of Ireland and the island of Britain (McEvoy, 2008). What is now the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was, up to 1921, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The division of the island of Ireland into what is now the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (with the latter remaining part of the UK) occurred after protracted efforts by Irish nationalists to end British rule on the island, something that had been attempted and failed at various points throughout history through both violence and non-violent political agitation. The history between the two islands has always been a difficult one (Boyce, 1995; Boyce & O’Day, 2004). It is important to note the emergence of a non-violent strain of Irish nationalist aspiration, despite the inevitable, if somewhat stereotypical, association of Irish nationalism with violent armed struggle.

From the early 1800s, on foot of his personal experience of the horrors of post-Revolutionary France, Daniel O’Connell recognised the imperative of pursuing alleviation of Irish disenfranchisement under British rule through purely parliamentary means. His campaign for ‘Catholic Emancipation’ is arguably a trend setter in the European context for the peaceful and non-violent pursuit of normative political objectives. His mass rallies in Ireland throughout the 1820s, which drew staggering crowds, culminated in a shift in British popular and political opinion and the eventual passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829. This law dismantled much structural inequality for Catholics in Ireland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Latterly the use of non-violent agitation to pursue a more comprehensive political objective was undertaken by what latterly became known as the Irish Home Rule Party of the mid to late nineteenth century, most noticeably under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell. This potent political entity all but achieved the objective of securing Home Rule for Ireland, wherein Ireland would be accorded a measure of independence within the UK but remain part of it. However, a combination of sectarian cleavages (between nationalist Catholics and loyal Protestant Unionists), complicated by the outcome of World War I, fatally delayed the implementation of Home Rule. This delay provided space for militant violent nationalism to emerge from 1916 onward.

This eventual achievement of a moderated form of independence within the British Empire in 1921, after a violent campaign against British rule, resulted in the division of the island into the independent 'Free State' (which accounted for two thirds of the island) and 'Northern Ireland', which accounted for one third (Walsh, 2002). The division was heralded (at least by the British government of the day) as a breakthrough in a long and difficult chapter in mutual relations. At one stroke the aspirations of Irish nationalists appeared to be largely satisfied, although it was only grudgingly accepted in lieu of the real goal of full independence under a republican form of government, while at the same time the sentiments of those Irish who were loyal to Britain (chiefly in the northeast of the island) were afforded a direct and unambiguous link with Britain within the United Kingdom.

The difficulty, and the setting for our discussion, was the fact that at least one third of the population of what became known as Northern Ireland were in fact Irish Nationalists, who now found themselves, in their view, on the wrong side of the border with the new Irish state and within the jurisdiction of a deeply loyalist province of Northern Ireland (for discussion see O'Day, 1997). The inevitable pogroms followed shortly after partition and the circumstances of the nationalist population within Northern Ireland, as a minority, soon came to be characterised as one of explicit second class status. There was wholesale discrimination in terms of job opportunities, housing and access to public services. There was also a highly partisan political, judicial and social system, and this was a situation that prevailed for over five decades after the division of the island into Northern Ireland and Ireland (later the Republic of Ireland upon Ireland's departure from the British Commonwealth in 1949).

The stage was set, therefore, from the period throughout the 1960s, a period of popular ferment throughout the West in particular, for the emergence of resistance movements aimed at challenging this status quo. The narrative of non-violent action, as evinced in particular through the anti-racist activism of Martin Luther King in the United States (Burns, 1997; King, 1992), deeply influenced those among Northern Irish nationalists who saw a parallel and no less legitimate set of grievances. From the late 1960s up to the early 1970s recurring and significant mass protest came to characterise the public politics of Northern Ireland. Very quickly, however, the organs of the state, in particular its partisan police force, sought to quell these activities. At various times, the protests organised by nationalists came under repeated attack by loyalists, with the security forces offering token – if any – protection. Under such pressure, the non-violent movement in Northern Ireland, advocating primarily for greater socio-economic justice, was increasingly viewed as ineffective by more hawkish elements within Irish nationalism. In short, the non-violent protest against clear discrimination, and agitation for equality on the basis of civil rights had – in the eyes of militant republican nationalists – correctly identified a particular facet of the problem. But the narrative of militant nationalists maintained that this was not the whole problem. The whole problem consisted of recognising the fundamental illegitimacy of the Northern Irish state and the irredentist necessity of breaking the link

with Britain and 're-uniting' the island of Ireland. This would, in the republican narrative, and drawing on a long tradition of physical force Irish nationalist activism, only be achieved through violent action. Nationalist and Loyalist sectarianism fractured urban communities, with both sides expelling members of their confessional opponents from housing estates, which resulted in sharp polarization throughout the province.

From within the remnants of precisely the physical force politics that had achieved independence for the rest of the island there re-emerged a militant organisation known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) (see Shanahan, 2009). This development paralleled the development of the civil rights movement and non-violent activism. Unlike other militant and terrorist groups that were emerging across Western Europe at this time (Bader-Meinhoff, ETA, etc) Irish paramilitary groups drew on a very well-established tradition of militant politics, one that had not been wholly unsuccessful, not least in securing independence for the majority of the island in 1921. From 1969 onwards this new paramilitary force began to assert itself with increasing effectiveness upon the administration of government in Northern Ireland. Bombing campaigns, shootings, assassinations resulted in a rapidly deteriorating security environment, which eventuating the imposition of direct rule over the province from London in 1972.

The early stages of this conflict were ambiguous and unformed. It is important to note, and to emphasise, that the original impetus for the non-violence was the general dissent of a minority from a status quo that had marginalized that group, specifically in socio-economic terms. That initial non-violent confrontation throughout the late 1960s was dominated by the strategies of public protest and non-violence. This is arguably the impact of not only the emergence of anti-racist protest in the US, but also the anti-war movement in the US and the student protests of continental Europe in 1968. Just prior the imposition of direct rule from London one particular incident took place that became both seminal and catalytic in terms of how the Troubles would evolve over the next few decades.

### **Non-violence to Violence**

During this early stage of the Troubles non-violent action had become an almost habitual occurrence. An emphasis was placed initially on petitions, letter writing and public advocacy. Eventually, and (apparently) reluctantly, the civil rights movement organised its first march in 1968. One key variable was the fact that some of these demonstrations turned violent, despite the premise of non-violence. Large demonstrations organised by civic leaders designed to challenge the acceptability of the status quo sometimes, perhaps often, became a public order issue. Opposition to these demonstrations emanated also from the majority community, the Unionists. One particular event organized by the civil rights movement was a march from the city of Belfast (Northern Ireland's first city) to the city of Derry/Londonderry (located on the

western edge of the province, near the border with the Irish Republic). This was explicitly modelled on the long march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in the US led by Martin Luther King. In Northern Ireland the marchers came under sustained assault at various points along the route, culminating in a full scale ambush by a combination of Unionists and partisan police as it neared Derry, causing the hospitalization of dozens of people.

These events exposed the latent underbelly of sectarian division in Northern Irish politics, and also the relative vulnerability of non-violence to entrenched power structures. It also convinced significant numbers of nationalists that the harder line republican movement may well have a point. However, the crippling of the normative force of non-violent protests would not manifest itself until one event in 1972. In January of that year civil rights advocates like the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) proposed a mass protest in Derry in order to highlight the grievances of the nationalist community, and in particular it offered an opportunity to mobilise popular protest against the imposition of internment without trial by the Northern Ireland government in August of 1971, only a few months previously. Protests had turned violent on the fringes before, and in some cases significantly so. The security forces had banned any and all marches from taking place. What followed was a profound chapter in the history of Northern Ireland. Peripheral rioting in one part of the city against British Army barricades culminated in the shooting of one civilian. Thereafter, the British Army's parachute regiment was ordered to enter the nationalist enclave within Derry city, the Bog Side area, and make arrests. The execution of this order, along with it the permission to use live rounds, resulted in the deaths of twelve other civilians, all of them now acknowledged to have been unarmed. At the time it was a newsworthy event, not least in western Europe, and the incident drew condemnation from around the world.

What is significant from our perspective is that this non-violent protest, the associated breakdown in discipline among members of the security forces of the state and the corresponding collapse in any vestiges of popular legitimacy among nationalists in the existing political structures became the starting point for a dramatic increase in violent action by militant nationalists. This was justified within the narrative of the IRA not least by the actions of the British Army on the day of the protest, but also by the perception among nationalists that the subsequent inquiry (the Widgery Report)(Widgery, 1972) was deeply flawed and biased in its findings, as it exonerated the army of any wrong. It is no exaggeration to say that the Bloody Sunday incident proved an important and sustaining part of the narrative of militant Irish republicanism for the next several decades, right up to the eventual conclusions of the second Saville report(Saville, 2010) into the incident and the very public apology by then British Prime Minister, David Cameron, in 2010. The newly emergent Provisional IRA in particular capitalised effectively on the state suppression of public protest, the loss of innocent life at the hands of the state's security forces and the subsequent flawed



inquiry. It became, to use a colloquial phrase from the context, a 'recruiting sergeant' for violent militants.

It is important to dwell on the implications of this for the current analysis. The tradition of non-violence in Ireland, already entrenched within nationalist movements from the nineteenth century onwards, was also profoundly entwined with a very strong militant nationalist tradition that closely paralleled it. But quite apart from paralleling each other, the evidence of history clearly shows that physical force resistance was the dominant partner and that it capitalized on the manifest limitations of the non-violent approach and the failure of the state to act within its own laws. The simple fact is that, at the precise period in question in 1972, the non-violent option was losing credibility not alone among militants who wanted to pursue a violent path, but also an increasingly frustrated wider populace who saw it having limited if any effect. In addition, the contextual factors were of key importance as the state actor had, for this specific march, withdrawn its consent to permit public protest under the right to freedom of association. This was both because violent loyalist elements opposed to granting civil rights were attacking the marchers, and also because militant youth culture were on occasion 'hijacking' the protest and undermining its non-violent intent. Added to a partisan security apparatus and an increasingly tense political standoff all this meshed in what we might functionally refer to as a 'violently non-violent' nexus. The repercussions were significant. The Northern Ireland 'Troubles' would drag on for another two and a half decades, and the peace achieved in 1998 following the IRA's cessation of violence would be fragile for almost another decade afterwards. It's arguably still fragile. Above all, mass popular non-violent resistance and strategies would all but disappear from the centre of Northern Irish politics. Future non-violence would be used strategically by the IRA to further its political objectives, not least through the hunger strike campaign in the early 1980s (O'Malley, 1990). In this instance, hunger-striking as a form of non-violence, was used to pursue a wider political objective within the narrative of physical force republicanism, one that largely subsumed the civil rights imperative into a larger nationalist and irredentist narrative.

#### **4. Lebanon**

##### **The Context**

Lebanon's political difficulties have their roots in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I and the handover of that territory to the victorious allies, in this case France (Abraham, 1996). Independence for Lebanon was always a problematic and difficult goal, not least because it had never been an independent entity to begin with. This small sliver of territory along the eastern Mediterranean was (and is) riven with sectarian and confessional conflict (Khalaf, 2002). Officially, the state recognises a modest nineteen distinct confessional groupings. In 1943, before the end of World War II, Lebanon established the National Pact structure. Through the National Pact

power was to be balanced not between the traditional branches of government but between the main confessional blocs (Salamey, 2009). A confessionalised political system was grafted onto the rudiments of a functioning democracy and separated powers. Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims from the south undertook an understanding that established an early version of what Lijphart would later coin 'consociationalism'. For the most part this system appeared to work. Notwithstanding the political crisis of 1958, Lebanon appeared – on the surface at least – to fare well in terms of political stability despite its very diverse socio-political composition.

However, the confessional tensions latent within Lebanese society, along with the centrifugal forces unleashed by the influx of Palestinian refugees following the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, eventually precipitated the Lebanese civil war in 1975. This was followed in 1978, on foot of a deadly Palestinian raid into Israel, by the invasion of Lebanon through Operation Litani (Byman, 2011). From this period onwards, Lebanon became arguably the most lethal flashpoint in the long litany of world conflicts. The morphology of the Lebanese civil war was a consequence of a complex confluence of regional and international factors that gave birth to a series of unintended, but perhaps inevitable, consequences.

One of these was the radicalization of Lebanese Shia Muslims and the formation in the early 1980s of Hezbollah (Norton, 2009). Hezbollah's evolution from radical militant group into Lebanon's key subnational actor was driven primarily by its conflict with Israel and their proxy forces in southern Lebanon. From their formation onward, and notwithstanding high profile spectaculars such as the US Marine and French base suicide bombings of 1983, Hezbollah is ultimately defined by its resistance to Israel's self-declared 'buffer zone' in southern Lebanon. This buffer zone was established by Israeli forces in conjunction with the remnant of Christian Phalangist militia under Major Haddad, a force which called itself the South Lebanese Army (SLA), but which was to be known by the United Nations as the De Facto Forces (DFF). A regularized pattern of violence would come to dominate the period between 1978 and 2000, which bracketed the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) occupation of part of southern Lebanon. This was characterised by increasingly sophisticated and coordinated assaults on the frontline fortifications of the SLA at the edge of the buffer zone by various militant factions such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Amal and Hezbollah. In reprisal, the SLA and more effectively the IDF regularised a campaign of collective punishment, which took the form of sporadic or sustained shelling of villages and approach roads close to the buffer zone. In response to more serious attacks by militants, Israel would also undertake sorties much further north, including Beirut and the Hezbollah strongholds in the Bekaa Valley. From the 1990s onward Hezbollah vied with Amal for hegemony among these factions and its sophisticated assaults eventually put the IDF hold on the region under increasing pressure.

Ehud Barak, who would become prime minister of Israel in 1999, campaigned specifically on the promise of ending Israel's occupation of Lebanon and fully conforming with UN Security Council Resolution 425 (1978), which called for Israel's withdrawal. UN documents from the time indicate that Barak's government informed the UN Secretary General in April of 2000 that the IDF would withdraw from south Lebanon by July of the same year. In what followed, we can see again – albeit in a different form – a complex relationship between both violence and non-violence. Before the July date given by the Israelis, in mid-May of 2000, several positions within the security zone were unilaterally vacated by the IDF and their proxy SLA militias. What followed, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2000, was a remarkable nexus of non-violent strategy coupled explicitly with militant ends.

### **From Violence to Non-Violence...and back again**

Hezbollah had orchestrated the gathering of local villagers from Shaqra and other neighbouring villages in the very south eastern sector of UNIFIL's area of operations at daybreak on the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> May (Byman, 2011).<sup>1</sup> UN positions were located at the edge of the security zone and were an implicit marker to the local population of the outer limits of safe travel. Any attempt to go beyond this marker by unidentified vehicles would usually result in warning fire or even effective fire from IDF/SLA positions. UN vehicles were the only ones permitted by the IDF/SLA to cross into the security zone, and only then after explicit permission was granted. The UN peacekeepers stationed at observation post 6-28 at the edge of the security zone reported a large crowd heading towards the gate that blocked the road into Wadi Saluki and the village of Houle, which was deep inside the IDF buffer zone. The crowd was non-violent and peaceful. This was a risky strategy on the part of Hezbollah, not least for the villagers among whom the militants were concealed.

The local UN commander attempted to negotiate with the Hezbollah commander and reminded him of the risks in attempting to enter the security zone. The gate blocking the road between Lebanon and the 'buffer zone' remained locked. Israeli air force jets were now in the air above the area while more local civilians gathered on the approach road. Hezbollah made it clear that they intended to enter the security zone regardless of the implicit threat of IDF/SLA threats of force and demanded the UN peacekeepers open the gate to allow them to proceed. The UN delayed opening the gate in order to consult with higher UN authorities. Some civilians already bypassed the gate and made their way down into the valley and along the road to the far side. One IDF plane overhead dropped a bomb on the road close to another UN position deeper inside the security zone. Simultaneously Hezbollah commandeered a digger and brought it down to the gate garrisoned by the UN peacekeepers. The UN

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<sup>1</sup> The account given here is primarily derived from the eye witness account of the author, who was serving with UNIFIL at the time and was present in the IRISHBATT area of operations during these events.

commander relented and opened the gate, permitting the free movement of civilians into the security zone.

In a remarkably effective use of non-violent strategy, Hezbollah forced the early capitulation of the IDF/SLA in their control of the security zone. Neither the threat of lethal force, nor the warning strike by IDF jets, deterred the civilians from crossing into the valley of Wadi Saluki. Other UN observation posts reported that SLA positions were now being evacuated in haste as both civilians and Hezbollah fighters moved on foot along the road towards the village of Houle. Similar confrontations sprang up simultaneously across the security zone as events on the ground moved extremely quickly. A mixture of non-violent action by the local population and violent action by militants, including gun battles between the SLA and Hezbollah, was the result. The IDF now accelerated their withdrawal from southern Lebanon and by May 24<sup>th</sup> they had withdrawn completely to positions inside Israel, evacuating much of the SLA apparatus with them. Hezbollah confiscated almost the entire arsenal of SLA weaponry and spirited that north. It would later be handed over to the Lebanese military authorities.

Tension would remain, but thereafter there was no recurrence of the pattern of attacks launched by militants and which invited retaliatory responses by the IDF/SLA over the preceding decades. However, Hezbollah did, later in the summer of 2000 decide to continue its militant resistance against Israel on the pretext of the questions remaining over the Sheeba Farms area.<sup>2</sup> Later in the summer Hezbollah launched a raid against an IDF patrol operating inside Israel's border with Lebanon, snatching several soldiers from their vehicle who would be later murdered. This cross border raid tactic would be repeated again in 2006, an event that would precipitate the Second Lebanon War.

Like the Provisional IRA, Hezbollah made a conscious choice to utilize the non-violent strategy as an augmentation to their political ends, which included – and continued to be dominated by – militant and violent methods. The utility of non-violence at a specific juncture within their broader campaign proved effective for a variety of contextual factors. Not the least of these was the decision by the Israeli government and military to unilaterally withdraw from the 'buffer zone' in the south of Lebanon. Hezbollah had clearly calculated that the compulsion of the IDF withdrawal much earlier than the stated July deadline would benefit their domestic status in Lebanon. They also surmised that the IDF, on the point of withdrawal, would not invite international condemnation by retaliating against civilians breaching their security zone.

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<sup>2</sup> This area was occupied by Syrian soldiers in 1967 when the IDF invaded during the Six Day War. Its precise ownership between Syria and Lebanon was not finalized on UN maps.

## Conclusion

Exactly five hundred years ago this year, the Florentine thinker, Niccolo Machiavelli, gave the world an alternative answer to the question of moral virtue in politics. He argued against idealism and utopianism in favour of a realist understanding of how power really functions (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Half a millennium on and we continue to wrestle with Machiavelli's insights. History is littered with the broken remnants of idealistic and utopian answers to the issue of how human societies should be organised. The non-violent alternative has a valuable role to play in realizing improvements in human societies, whether in favour of moderate reform of existing structures of society or indeed of challenging the established political structures in their totality. However, non-violent advocates would do well to remember Machiavelli's perhaps unpalatable message. As he famously wrote in *The Prince*:

He who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner effects his ruin than his preservation; for a man who wishes to act entirely up to his professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much that is evil (*The Prince*, Chapter XV)

The relationship between non-violence and violence is sometimes, perhaps frequently, not a dichotomous one. As the case studies above illustrate, both violence and non-violence find themselves in each other's close company in various ways. The important issue to emerge here is the extent to which the non-violent strategy is subservient to militant groups and ideologies who continue to include violent actions in their strategic calculations. Of concern for advocates of non-violent strategy is the question of allowing unarmed non-violent mass protest to place members of a given population in the front line in a confrontation between such groups and states.

We need, in short, to make the distinction between non-violence as an end, as a way of life and an ethic, on the one hand, and non-violence as a means to an end, as a strategy, on the other. The ends of the non-violent and violent advocates are polar opposites. Where the non-violent activist is using mass protest and non-violent action in the hope that the state will bend in the face of popular civil disobedience, the violent advocate of non-violence is strategizing in the hope that the state's harsh response will be sufficient to delegitimize it in the face of wider (and international) opinion. How acceptable is it for non-violent protesters to be placed at risk through the cynical calculations of militant groups, who happily return to violence once the non-violent strategy has served its immediate (strategic) purpose? This is not to say that non-violence and mass protest does not have a place, or that it can always be risk free in terms of the state's security response. However, it is incumbent upon genuine advocates for non-violence that they are more critical about who is chiming in support of those actions, and what ideological imperatives might lay behind these supporting voices. Atrocity and condemnation of the state's responses to non-violence are part of the currency of the militant, physical force perspective. They depend upon the potential or actual disproportionate response of the state against non-violence in order

to delegitimize the state monopoly on violence while simultaneously justifying their own violent methods. Participants in non-violent actions thereby become pawns in a much larger conflict of narratives.

The challenge for advocates of non-violence, quite apart from estimating the realistic effectiveness and the likelihood of success for the actions undertaken, is to ensure that the actions are not utilized unduly by other actors with less noble objectives in mind, placing populations at considerable risk. The moral high ground secured through non-violence is precisely what makes it an attractive option for militant violent actors as an expedient device. The recourse to violence against state oppression or in response to marginalization by subaltern groups, quite apart from its moral ambiguity, is an admission of limited normative power. The appropriation of non-violence by such actors is an attempt to rebalance the moral landscape and grant legitimacy to those prosecuting violent campaigns.

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