

Why I Believe War Is Not the Answer

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In my experience, when broached with the topic of war, the average person will say that even though it results in brutal killings and deaths, they are typically effective in getting the job done and beating the “bad guy.” What people seem to forget is that war should be a last ditch effort, a last resort to bring about radical, political change, but they’re rarely used that way. Instead, wars are exploited for power and total control. In an attempt to be justified, many wars are taught as over-simplified, even logical. Take, for example, the Civil War; when asked about it, many Americans give it justification for getting rid of slavery. However, many don’t seem to know the real reasons the war was fought in the first place nor do they remember the havoc and devastation the war created. Many forget just how many men lost their lives battling against their brothers, how many women and children were slaughtered in their own homes, and how many cities needed to be rebuilt after being completely destroyed. Was the end result worth it? Weren’t African American finally free of their restrictive labels? Given the fact that they’re still fighting for equality today seems to say otherwise.

What many people don’t realize is that wars and other violent movements aren’t really effective, especially if the prospective result is democracy; typically they end in the same, albeit slightly altered, restrictive regimes. Freedom and democracy don’t stem from the justification of senseless killing. They stem from peaceful nonviolent movements. In a political science study, scientists Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan reviewed “...323 attempts at regime change between 1900 and 2006,” and found that “...violent campaigns succeeded 26 percent of the time, and that nonviolent campaigns succeeded 53 percent of the time.”¹ The truth is this: War is not effective nor is it the answer to solve our world’s problems.

“Can war ever be justified?” is one of the most controversial questions in today’s modern society. With the threat of terrorist attacks and nuclear bombings, using military force seems like the right thing to do, a way for our message to be heard with just enough force so it will be remembered. But if approached in a peaceful, nonviolent way, these threats *could* be resolved much more effectively than perpetuating the vicious cycle of war. By using “civil resistance,” as Chenoweth calls it, we could have chance to change the way we deal with issues and how we bring change to the world; it could be the first step towards world peace.

Those who argue that civil and peaceful resistance doesn’t work have clearly forgotten their history lessons. Peaceful protests, memorable marches, deliberate boycotts, and compelling speeches are spread throughout history showing us just how powerful nonviolence can be. These tactics granted women our rights, changed our views on segregation and racial discrimination, gained independence from restrictive regimes, and defeated dictatorships. Some of the world’s greatest heroes never raised a sword or a gun for their cause: Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Susan B. Anthony, and Martin Luther King Jr. are some of many that fought peacefully for democracy, changing the world on step at a time.

There is no way to eradicate all the problems in the world, but I believe there is a way to eradicate violence and war. Peace is possible, as Ronald Reagan said, “Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.”

¹ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*. “The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict” (Columbia University Press, 2011).