Institut für
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INSTITUTE FOR PEACE WORK AND NONVIOLENT CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Unarmed Civilian Protection

Lessons for Planning for Social Defence

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IFGK Working Paper No. 29
ISSN 1439-4009

February 2025

Abstract

The paper summarizes various approaches, experiences and studies that show how people have managed to protect themselves and other civilians without resorting to violence, and link this to the question of social defence. Described are international unarmed civilian protection (UCP), local communities protecting themselves and protection tools for human right defenders. It thereby intends to contribute to the knowledge of nonviolent instruments that may be useful when propagating and/or preparing social defence.

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Photo on the front page: Members of Nonviolent Peaceforce observe a dialogue meeting where a local civil war was settled in 2011. Photo. Christine Schweitzer

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Printed by: IFGK
February 2025
Available via: Bund für Soziale Verteidigung, Schwarzer Weg 8, 32423 Minden, info@soziale-verteidigung.de, for 3 Euro plus postage (3,- €). The PDF is free.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The need for unarmed alternatives to military and war

The global security situation has deteriorated significantly in the first 25 years of the new millennium. This is illustrated by the "Doomsday Clock" of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, which has moved ever closer to midnight, from nine minutes to midnight in 2000 to six minutes in 2010, three minutes in 2015, 100 seconds in 2020, 90 seconds since 2023 and the current 89 seconds since 2025.[1] Armed conflict and war - civil or international - is a reality in more than one in seven countries of the world.[2] States, not only in NATO, respond to perceived or real threats with military preparedness, including increased armaments, troop deployments, civil defence preparations and the reactivation of conscription systems. In Germany, the Minister of Defence announced in 2024 that the country would be "militarily capable" by 2029.[3] It is legitimate to ask where these developments might lead. The official justification is deterrence, deterring Russia or other states that might otherwise consider wars of aggression worthwhile. But the belief that deterrence protects is only a theory. [4] We can see what happens when it fails in Ukraine today.

There is an urgent need to develop and promote alternatives to armament and war. Co-operative security regimes, disarmament treaties and the instruments of non-violent, civil conflict resolution are well known and tried. They must be revisited and given priority if the danger of new wars, including a third world war, is to be averted. But in this context, the question also needs to be answered: What can be done if civil conflict resolution fails and an attack occurs, either by a party to the conflict within the country, by a transnational actor (such as some of the Islamist groups in the Middle East), or by another state? One answer is provided by the concept of social defence, resistance by nonviolent means.

1.2 Social defence

In short, for the purpose of the argument in this paper social defence or civilian-based defence is defined as a concept of nonviolent community resistance to military attacks, aimed at protecting lives and defending one's way of life and freedom, even if the territory is occupied by an aggressor.[5] This means that social defence is a special case of civil resistance, which in turn is a special case of nonviolent action in general. With this narrow definition of social defence, I go back to the conservative understanding of social defence as it was formulated before the end of the 1980s. Much of the current literature on social defence dates from before about 1995. [6] Only recently, in the face of the Russian attack on Ukraine in 2022 and the rising tensions in the year before, has there been some revival of interest in social defence.[7]

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[1] https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/timeline/

[2] https://www.medico.de/krieg-und-gewalt-16488

[3] https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2024/kw23-de-regierungsbefragung-1002264

[4] See Lebow 2016, Finckh-Krämer, Ute: Mythos nukleare Abschreckung, in W&F 1/2020.

[5] See Johansen & Martin 2019. There are also other scenarios for Social Defence, like coups d'état or defence against extremist parties rising to power. They are not meant to be excluded, but for the purpose of this paper it made sense to focus on armed conflict. Resistance against coups is conceptually much closer to civil resistance to topple an existing government (dictator).

[6] Some important literature on social defence since World War II: King-Hall 1958, Galtung 1959, Sharp 1965, 1970, 1985, 1990, 1992, Roberts 1967, Vereinigung Deutscher Wissenschaftler 196 and 1974, Hedtjärn et al. 1969, Boserup and Mack 1975, Horsky 1975, Jochheim 1977, Geeraets 1977, Mez 1977, Battke 1979. Publications of the 1980s until mid of the 1990s when the interest in Social Defence diminished, include: Ebert 1981 a und b, antimilitarismus information 1981, Bogdonoff 1982, Galtung 1982, Klumper 1983, Martin 1984, Mellon/Muller/Semelin 1985, Alternative Defense Commission 1985, Niezing 1987, Jochheim 1988, Huisman 1989, Johansen 1990, Militärpolitik Dokumentation 1990, Semelin 1993, Müller 1995, Martin 1993, Burrowes 1996.

7 Publications in recent years include Sharp 2005, Johansen & Martin 2019, Bartkowski 2021, Binnendijk and Kepe 2021, Petrauskaite 2021, Arajärvi 2022, Daza 2023, Bund für Soziale Verteidigung 2023, Marin & Pfeifer 2024. Bund für Soziale Verteidigung (ed.) 2025

There is now a wealth of new research in related fields, particularly on civil resistance to dictatorship. Most of the cases of civil resistance that have been studied have involved a people rising up to overthrow their government, although there are some cases of resistance to military occupation. The term "social defence" is rarely used in these studies, but if one looks at these studies from the point of view of social defence, some of them are highly relevant to the development of a concept of social defence in the paradigms of the 21st century.[8] The knowledge created on the practice of unarmed civilian protection is part of this wealth of new studies and improved knowledge of how nonviolence 'works'.

Revisiting the issue of social defence in the light of the broader research on civil resistance or nonviolent action, it seems to me that there are several different scenarios regarding military occupation, depending on whether it was a) an invasion and occupation by foreign military forces[9], or b) civil wars where armed groups try to occupy and control territory within a country, or c) situations where the occupation took place decades or longer before, like in the case of the European colonies.[10]

For case (a), there might be a further subcategories based on the objectives of the occupation:

- to enforce a change of government and control the country either with or without the continued presence of the foreign military[11], or
- to annex a country permanently in order to settle there[12], or
- to stop attacks by that country or by militant organizations operating from that country[13]
- to extract resources[14]

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[8] Among the most important works are those by Ackerman & Duvall 2001, Schock 2005, Clark (ed.) 2009, Chenoweth & Stephan 2011, Roberts & Ash (ed.) 2011, Nep stad 2011, Carter 2012 and Bartkowski 2013. In their book 'A Force More Powerful', Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall present examples of what they call 'people movements' from the last 100 years. The list ranges from a strike in Russia in 1905 to the democratisation movements in Eastern Europe, China and Mongolia at the end of the last century. Kurt Schock's interest is primarily in the development and course of 'people power' movements. His examples include South Africa, the Philippines, Burma, China, Nepal and Thailand. The work 'Civil Resistance and Power Politics', edited by Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash, collected 'experiences of non-violent action from Gandhi to the present' (according to the subtitle) with 19 case studies of civil resistance. The book also contains a chapter by April Carter on the literature on the subject to date. Marceij J. Bartkowski's book 'Recovering Nonviolent History – Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles' is similarly structured, although, unlike the previously mentioned works, it also contains essays on a number of lesser-known uprisings – Ghana, Zambia, Mozambique, West Papua, USA, Cuba – and thus goes back to the 18th century. Howard Clark's volume, titled 'People Power: Unarmed Resistance and Global Solidarity,' is a compilation of lectures given at a 2006 conference in Coventry on the topic of 'Unarmed Resistance – the Transnational Factor'; most of them are case studies as well. In her book 'Nonviolent Revolutions', Sharon Erickson Nepstad compares six examples (China, the GDR, Panama, Chile, Kenya and the Philippines) and draws conclusions from them about the effectiveness of civil resistance. April Carter's book 'People Power and Political Change' is of a somewhat different character. The author, who has been involved with social defence and nonviolent action for decades, does not deal with examples in her study, but with the central concepts and debates surrounding the topic, also comparing armed and unarmed struggle. Probably the most frequently cited work at present is that of Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 'Why Civil Resistance Works', which is the first to compare cases of civil and violent resistance using quantitative analysis and a database. Chenoweth in 2021 published an update of that study. See Schweitzer 2018a.

[9] Such as the Ruhrkampf (occupation of the Ruhr area in 1923) or the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops in the CSSR 1968.

[10] There are also cases where ethnic or national groups are seeking to split off from a country as part of a process of identity formation, without it being possible to speak of a previous 'occupation' in the strict sense (for example the secession of Slovakia from the Czech Republic). If social defence is defined as it was done above, they would fall rather under nonviolent uprisings than under social defence in the strict sense of the term.

[11] Examples are the NATO attack on Afghanistan 2001 and Iraq 2003, and the attack by Russia on Ukraine in 2022.

[12] Germany in World War II in Poland and Soviet Union, perhaps also Israel in Gaza and Westbank 2024-25

[13] Israel in Lebanon 2024

[14] Ruhr occupation in 1923.

The distinction between these scenarios makes it possible to widen the range of experiences of such unarmed defence.[15] As long as we look only at European examples, the few case studies of unarmed defence against an international aggressor are cases where the struggle ultimately failed or was only partially successful (Ruhrgebiet, CSSR). But there have been decolonisation struggles that have been predominantly non-violent (e.g. India, Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, and in Europe cases such as Finland 1898-1905 and the Baltic states in 1990/91)[16], nd there have been and are civil wars in which communities have successfully defended themselves without weapons (see Chapter 3). On the question of success, it must of course be pointed out that it is rarely, if ever, resistance alone that makes a case successful or not. Other factors, such as the worldwide decolonisation struggles after the Second World War, or the negotiations that follow resistance, as Müller shows in her new book[17] on the Ruhr struggle, always play a role.

1.3 Challenges to and limitations of social defence

When trying to convince people that nonviolent struggle is an alternative to the use of weapons, one usually meets many objections and doubts. Foremost among them are questions like "what about World War II, what about Russia's attack on Ukraine"? The protagonists of social defence often respond by citing examples of civil resistance in these wars.[18] While a case can be made for Ukraine that social defence might have been a viable option in 2022,[19] n my view there are no convincing answers for the Second World War - at least in relation to those countries whose inhabitants were defined as 'racially inferior', such as those in Poland and the Soviet Union (or, much earlier, the peoples of the Americas), and where the aim of the attack was to control territory, not to establish a different political system or regime. In such cases it is hard to argue that civil resistance would have been an option.[20] However, even in Eastern Europe there have been examples of civilians protecting other civilians, in particular Jews (Bulgaria, Denmark, Netherlands for example).[21]

This also means that protection has been an issue in the debate on social defence from the beginning, although often not recognised as such. While it is of course recognised that social defence is likely to have to overcome severe repression and that there will be casualties, I am not aware of any of the 'classic' texts on social defence giving much attention to the issue of self-protection. The topic of violence was more likely to be countered by observing 'backfire', i.e. that the violence in the end harmed the aggressor and strengthened the movement.

Bringing the experience of non-violent protection into the debate on social defence serves a threefold purpose: a) it adds to the body of knowledge on the effectiveness of unarmed action, b) lessons can be learnt if concrete preparations for social defence are to be made, and c) it is something that is important regardless of whether disarmament has taken place or whether the attacked state chooses military defence, as Ukraine did. Unarmed protection is often the last resort, since a military may be equipped to repel attacking armies, but is limited in its ability to protect civilians, especially in international or transnational wars. This limitation also applies to a military deployed for peacekeeping purposes. Although the

[15] Some earlier authors already did that - for example King-Hall when he referred to the liberation struggle of Egypt after World War I and the Indian liberation struggle - but mostly such cases were ignored by the authors interested in social defence, probably because they all were Europeans or North Americans and concerned with an attack by the Soviet Union / Russia rather than taking a more global point of view. India's struggle led by Gandhi is often mentioned but rather in the context of proving the effectiveness of nonviolence in general, rarely as an example for social defence.

[16] See for example Sutherland & Meyer 2000, Binnendij & Kepe 2021, Miniotaite 2002, Arajärvi 2022.

[17] Müller 2025

[18] On World War II, among others Nolte & Nolte 1984, Semelin 1993, or, most recently, Marin & Pfeifer eds. 2024. On Ukraine: Daza 2022.

[19] See Christoyannopoulos 2023.

[20] See for example. Nolte & Nolte 1984, 96pp.

[21] See Bergfeldt 1993, Jochheim 2002, Marin & Pfeifer (eds.) 2024,

protection of civilians (PoC) is now part of the mandate of almost all newer UN peacekeeping missions, experience shows that the need for protection is much greater than these missions can meet.[22]

1.4 Unarmed civilian protection

Alongside the growing interest in civil resistance, the field of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) has also developed over the past twenty-five years. UCP refers to unarmed civilians who use nonviolent methods to protect themselves (e.g. local communities) or others from violence, and to support local efforts to build peace. Unlike other methods of protection (for example, campaigning for political prisoners, as Amnesty International does quite successfully), the key element of UCP is that those practising it are present on the ground where the conflict is taking place and use a variety of tools to prevent violence, protect people and, above all, strengthen the ability of those affected to protect themselves. The target group can be the civilian population in general, people in specific vulnerable situations (e.g. refugees), political activists or leaders (politicians, religious leaders and others). The aim is to prevent violence, stop violence and mitigate the effects of the violence suffered.[23]

The aim of this working paper is to summarize various approaches, experiences and studies that show how people have managed to protect themselves and other civilians without resorting to violence, and to link this to the question of social defence. It looks at two approaches of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) that aim to protect individuals and communities from physical harm:

1. International unarmed civilian protection (chapter 2)
2. Local communities protecting themselves (chapter 3)

UCP could generally be defined as action by civilians for civilians to prevent violence in conflict contexts where violence is threatened or occurring. It takes place primarily on the ground and in proximity to the people who threatened by violence. The means used are nonviolent.

As a third point, the paper will also briefly highlight resources for the protection of human rights defenders (chapter 4). This goes beyond the definition of the UCP, but may also be relevant to social defence and is therefore included.

2. International Unarmed Civilian Protection

2.1 Definition

International unarmed civilian protection refers to those projects and organizations that intervene in potentially or actually violent situations as external parties to prevent violence and to keep people from harm. Much of what is described here also applies to communities protecting themselves.

There are three core elements that distinguish UCP generally from other approaches and activities:

1. the permanent presence of civilian peacekeepers on site,
2. the goal of protecting people from violence and
3. the non-use of arms as means of protection.

There is a wide variety of groups and organizations that practice UCP.[24] They range from small informal citizens' initiatives to peace team organizations and professional NGOs to international state actors such as United Nations observer missions or regional organizations. Perhaps the best-known are Peace Brigades International (pbi), Nonviolent Peaceforce, Community (earlier: “Christian”) Peacemaker Teams,

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[22] Additionally, their standard operating procedures and sometimes slow chain of command are hampering their effectivity. In this paper, I cannot go deeper into this argument. To read up on PoC, see the Policy Briefs by Creating Safer Space (https://creating-safer-space.com/policy-briefs/), or United Nations 2024

[23] Furnari, Julian and Schweitzer 2016; Nonviolent Peaceforce 2021, p.18 and p 87

[24] For his and the following observations see: good practice survey process in the field initiated by the NGO Nonviolent Peaceforce between 2016 and 2022 (Furnari 2016; Schweitzer 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2021).

Operation Dove, Meta Peace Teams, several projects by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, DC Peace Teams and Cure Violence. In total there are more than 50 organizations worldwide, mainly from civil society, which are active in over 30 countries, including the USA, Canada and various European countries[25]. Many of them have joined in a "Community of Practice", a network with its own website and mailing list.[26]

Who the volunteers and the professionals who do this work are varies from organization to organization. Many groups work with volunteers who work on the projects for a period between a few weeks and one to two years. Others, such as Nonviolent Peaceforce, employ paid staff, some of whom have worked in a country for several years.

Methods are varied and depend on the actor and the situation:

- Most organizations are committed to nonviolence as a principle.
- There is a wide range of positions on the conflict actors and issues, from absolute neutrality through varying degrees of impartiality and impartiality to solidarity with a social struggle and its activists.
- The terminology used to describe one's own work also varies. In the scientific literature, there are primarily three terms: Civilian peacekeeping[27], UCP - a term introduced by the NGO Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) and before mainly used by scientists related to NP[28]; and protective accompaniment, the term used primarily by Peace Brigades International[29]. There are also other terms such as proactive presence[30] or the comprehensive term nonviolent intervention[31], which includes all forms of nonviolent intervention. In the French-speaking world, the term "intervention civile de paix" has become synonymous with UCP.[32]

To avoid having to write 'volunteer / professional peace worker' every time, I often use the term 'civilian peacekeeper', although their work goes far beyond what is usually associated with the term 'peacekeeping'.

2.2 History of UCP

A comprehensive history of non-violent conflict intervention, encompassing more than just peacekeeping projects, has yet to be written. An important root and strong line of tradition has formed around a vision of peace armies as preventing wars by interposing between armies. Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber (2000) have rightly called this a "recurrent vision". Between the First World War and the present day, there have been at least a dozen such proposals that have found their way into the literature on nonviolent intervention, and the author is aware of at least two such very recent proposals relating to the war in Ukraine. The better-known proposals, with few exceptions, have two things in common: they emphasise the role of peacekeeping and/or even enforcement by placing unarmed people between the conflicting parties; and they seek to place the new instrument under the auspices of the United Nations or some other international organisation. However, the proposals have never received much, if any, attention from the bodies to which they were addressed.[33]

Not all of these proposals have remained abstract. Gandhi's idea of a "peace army"(Shanti Sena) before the Second World War was never put into practice, but since the 1960s a large number of groups and

[25] https://selkirk.ca/ unarmed-civilian-peacekeeping-database; census from Nonviolent Peaceforce Good Practice Project

[26] https://www.ucpacommunityofpractice.org/

[27] Schirch 1995; Venturi 2014; Julian and Schweitzer 2015, Julian 2020

[28] .eg. Furnari 2016

[29] Eg. Mahony and Eguren 1997

[30] Mahony 2006

[31] Müller and Büttner 1996; Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber 2000; Wallace 2010

[32] Schweitzer 2021

[33] Weber 2000

projects have sprung up in this context, not only in India[34]. A number of overviews of such projects have been compiled.[35] Many of them started with the vision of a larger force, but in the end were content to deploy smaller teams of peacekeepers.[36] At the political level, there has been, and continues to be, advocacy work to replace military interventions with civilian, nonviolent ones in the context of what has been called the responsibility to protect since the turn of the millennium.[37]

There are also projects where it is difficult to decide whether the activists are intervening as outsiders or fighting their own battle. This question arises in particular when peace teams become active in their own country and try, for example, to intervene in racist or ethnic conflicts in their own country or to accompany people who are threatened. This was the case in Germany in the early 1990s, for example, when right-wing mobs attacked the homes of refugees and citizens' initiatives set up alarm chains and were ready to stand in front of the shelters to protect them. In the US, there are several peace teams that monitor demonstrations with the sole aim of intervening if violence threatens (for example, Meta Peace Teams and Peace Teams Washington D.C.).[38]

2.3 When, where and by whom is UCP practiced?

The settings and scenarios in which UCP is practised are very diverse. It takes place in and after wars, especially civil wars (e.g. South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Philippines); in authoritarian regimes where human rights defenders and other activists are at risk from state security forces, paramilitaries or death squads; in indigenous and other rural communities resisting civil war actors or mining companies; in occupied territories; in democracies where demonstrations or other events are threatened by violent disruption by right or left-wing actors; in and around refugee camps threatened by armed attacks or internal violence; and in urban hotspots of criminal violence. Often it is also a matter of being present and patrolling in vulnerable places, be they school routes and schools, hospitals, wells or markets, or monitoring demonstrations when this is done with the aim of preventing violence.

It would be very wrong to assume that it is only a tool for the post-ceasefire period, as many projects in wartime have shown. UCP is used at all stages of a conflict, and its limitations are not so much the timing of the conflict as other limitations discussed below.[39]

International UCP organisations have changed the composition of their volunteers and staff. Previously, local volunteers or staff were mostly excluded on the assumption that locals would have no deterrent value. UCP or Protective Accompaniment (or whatever the different organisations preferred to call their practice) was understood as white, northern foreigners, preferably from powerful countries such as the US or Western Europe, going to the Global South, using the privileges of nationality and skin colour to accompany and protect local activists or communities. This has changed somewhat in the new century, although the older concept can still be found and is sometimes even demanded by local activists.[40] Today, the term 'international' can actually be misleading, as many organisations involve local civilian peacekeepers in their work and/or build community self-protection resources, as Nonviolent Peaceforce has done with the Women Protection Teams in South Sudan.[41] In other cases, INGOs have even begun to work exclusively with local people as peacekeepers in some cases, as Community Peacemaker Teams did during the covid pandemics, or Nonviolent Peaceforce did in Myanmar after the coup.[42]

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[34] For India, see Büttner 1995, Kaisig 2025

[35] Weber 2000; Schweitzer et. al 2001

[36] This is the case for example with Balkan Peace Team (see Müller 2004) and Nonviolent Peaceforce (own knowledge of the author).

[37] See for example https://soziale-verteidigung.de/bereich/ziviles-peacekeeping and the literature that can be downloaded from there.

[38] Schweitzer 2020a, 2021

[39] See also Venturi 2014

[40] Schweitzer 2020a

[41] Nonviolent Peaceforce 2021 and 2023

[42] Schweitzer 2021, Schweitzer 2022

There are at least three sources for that development in the practice of international UCP organizations:

- the debate on decolonisation and overcoming racism that has begun in many organisations, leading to a conscious effort to mix teams more, including local staff/volunteers.[43]
- Shrinking/closing space for INGOs in many countries: State regulations in host countries or conflict situations (and, recently, Covid) that did/ do not permit internationals in the conflict areas.
- A changing understanding of the sources of protection. Whereas in the past 'deterrence' was seen as more or less the only factor in protecting people, many organisations now see the building of relationships between all actors, including potential perpetrators, as much more important.[44]

Nonviolent Peaceforce's good practice workshops have shown that the relationship between local and international is complex. They vary in terms of access to conflict parties, deterrent power, knowledge of backgrounds and contexts, and different approaches to conflict. There was no clear link between the nature of the activity and the identity as national or international. For example, there are also protective escorts provided by locals for other locals, or by locals for internationals. "Protection" doesn't just flow in one direction - often locals, with their local knowledge and standing in their communities, offer protection to internationals, just as internationals, with their status as foreigners, can offer protection to locals.[45]

2.4 Methods

The areas of responsibility vary depending on the organization and project. In their new training manual, Nonviolent Peaceforce (2021) has classified the various methods of "unarmed civil protection" into five categories:

- Proactive engagement: protective presence, protective accompaniment, and interpositioning
- Monitoring: ceasefire monitoring, rumour control and early warning early response
- Relationship building: confidence enhancement and multi-track dialogue
- Capacity enhancement: enhancing self-protection capacities and strengthening local protection infrastructures
- Advocacy: educating and organizing[46]

The vast majority of organizations and projects prepare their volunteers/professionals in so-called training courses, which vary in length:[47] The spectrum ranges from preparation of a few hours to courses lasting several weeks. Occasionally, UCP can also be found as a subject at universities: Leeds Beckett University in England, the Catholic University in Paris and Selkirk College in Canada offer corresponding courses or course modules.

2.5 How does UCP achieve its effects?

Compared to other areas in the field of conflict management or civil resistance, there is little theory behind UCP.[48] However, there is a growing body of case studies[49] – some in the form of articles, others as dissertations by authors who have themselves worked as civilian peacekeepers; the above-mentioned multi-year project to collect "good practices"; and project evaluations, some of which are also publicly available on the websites of the various organizations. The "Creating Safer Space" project[50] has produced

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[43] Bezerra et al n.d.,

[44] See Nonviolent Peaceforce 2021 and the research reports of „Creating Safer Space, cited above.

[45] Rüther 2022

[46] Nonviolent Peaceforce 2021, p. 145

[47] Bund für Soziale Verteidigung 2020

[48] The most recent publication is Furnari, Ellen; Janzen, Randy and Kabaki, Rosemary (eds.) (2023).

[49] Besides articles in Moser-Puangsuwan & Weber 2000, Furnari 2016, Furnari et al 2023 there are for example the dissertations by Coy 1997 and Wallace 2010.

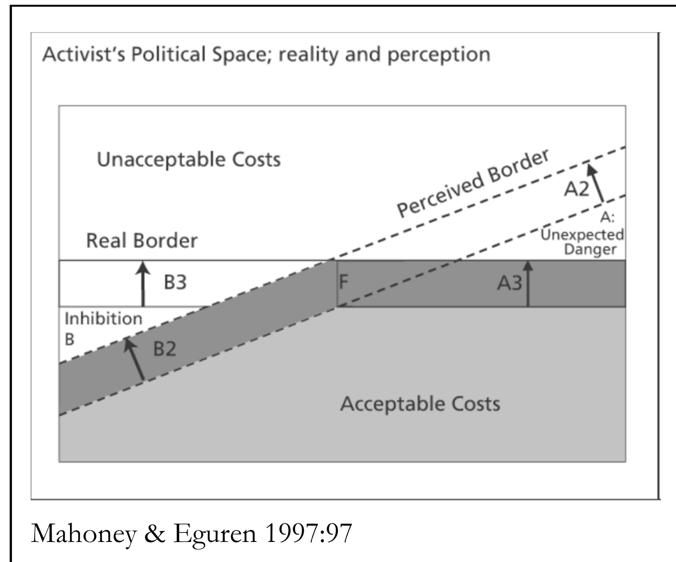
[50] https://creating-safer-space.com/

a particularly rich body of research between 2020 and 2025, albeit focused on community self-protection (see Chapter 3).

There are at least two explanatory models to explain why UCP "works". The first one is a model of nonviolent deterrence, the second emphasises relationship-building.

Nonviolent deterrence

A theoretical model of how UCP (or protective accompaniment) works was formulated by Mahony and Eguren in 1997, based primarily on the practice of Peace Brigades International in Latin America, with which both authors were associated. It is a theory of deterrence that eschews the threat of direct violence, but builds a threatening backdrop through an international network of protection. Arguing that "accompaniment without international support is a facade with no real protective value" (p.85), the authors sketch a picture of the space activists have through protective accompaniment to expand. A distinction must be made between "real" and "perceived" boundaries of this space. The graphic on the right describes the effect:



Mahoney & Eguren 1997:97

Activists (like their opponents, the "aggressors") make a distinction between acceptable and unacceptable costs. However, the danger is perceived differently ("perceived border") than it is in reality ("real border"). The protective escort raises both boundaries because, up to a certain point, it prevents the aggressors from taking action against the activists by threatening international consequences. Nevertheless, there are imponderables. For example, in field B2, the perceived limit is raised even though there has never been any real danger. Here, protective accompaniment only acts as encouragement for the activists. Actions in A3 are now safer, but because the risk has always been considered acceptable by the activists, protective accompaniment here acts as pure protection. B3 is the field of actions that objectively may be safer now, but are still perceived as too dangerous. A2 is the area where activists misjudge the danger, because they subjectively feel safer with an escort, but are not.[51]

However, this deterrent effect does not necessarily have to be based on such a well-planned strategy as that outlined by Mahony and Eguren in relation to the establishment of an international "threat framework". There are other forms of negative consequences. These range from the loss of reputation in the private sphere[52] to damage to the local base, which withdraws its support, to prosecution by national or international courts and sanctions by foreign governments.[53]

An element of deterrence is likely to play some role in all projects, as has been emphasised throughout the Nonviolent Peaceforce Good Practice Workshops. The practice of many organisations shows that the association of "the world is watching" deters potential violent criminals from attacking, even if the activists do not have an international support network at their disposal. The literature is full of such stories. In Rwanda, for example, during the genocide, the nuns of Mother Theresa's order stopped marauding Hutus who were about to enter their church to murder several hundred children with the

[51] Mahony and Eguren 1997, pp.93

[52] Schweitzer 2021

[53] Nonviolent Peaceforce 2021

simple words: "You can't come in here. This is a holy house of God."[54] Similar episodes have been documented many times and in very different world regions and contexts.[55]

Relationship-building and encouragement

However, more recent studies, focusing primarily on the work of non-violent peacekeepers or community self-defence, emphasise that 'deterrence' is not the only impact factor. [56] It may be equally, if not more, important for civilian peacekeepers to build positive relationships with as many actors as possible. Building trust in this way not only protects them, but also means that those willing to use violence will refrain from doing so, and potential conflict situations can be resolved through dialogue. This approach is often referred to in the literature as 'encouragement'. It includes

- in addition to building relationships, modeling alternative ways of interacting with each other and with third parties (e.g. encouraging actors through the mere presence of peacekeepers, which changes the dynamics within a community and can empower activists, especially in politically repressive contexts;
- offering alternatives to established, violent forms of behaviour, either informally or in the context of workshops;
- engaging in behavioural change discussions with security officials, so that they can better fulfil their obligations to respect human rights and protect civilians;
- building trust and relationships with all sides enables communication with the parties to the conflict. This is not only important for controlling rumours, but can also serve to moderate them, if only to allow civilians to leave a conflict zone safely.
- In addition, such activities are the basis for offers of mediation and "good offices" (e.g. shuttle mediation) that can contribute to civil conflict management.

The two models are not mutually exclusive. Different organisations have successfully protected people using one or the other. Which model is chosen seems to depend partly on the 'philosophy' of the organisation and partly on the context. Peace Brigades International, at least in its earlier decades, relied entirely on 'deterrence' and would probably have ruled out, for example, building relationships with militias in the Latin American countries where it worked. Communication was mostly about 'we are here and we have the support of those on whom you ultimately depend' (for example, the goodwill of the US government towards the national government which in turn supported the militias). Nonviolent Peaceforce, on the other hand, was so effective in the Philippines because it was able to build positive relationships and even trust with all sides.

In terms of context, there are places where the activists and the population under threat would see any positive contact with the other side as a betrayal. Palestine is a prime example.[57]

2.6 Impact and Limitations

Research has shown that UCP is often successful:[58]

- Lives are saved.
- Women, children and men are protected from abuse.
- Communities can stay; or if they must flee, they are well prepared.
- UCP creates or expands the space for peace and human rights work by local actors.
- Relationships in divided or between hostile communities are restored.
- Conflicts are prevented or settled.

[54] Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2021, p. 91

[55] See for example the website by Martin Arnold, https://kraftderguete.blogspot.com/

[56] Furnari, 2016, the Good Practice Reports by Schweitzer, Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2021

[57] Schweitzer 2018 b.

[58] See the Good Practice project and the other literature on UCP quoted above. These observations also apply to the work of local communities that protect themselves.

- Mechanisms of early warning and early reaction are created.
- The behaviour of armed actors is influenced, and they may abstain from attacks or allow civilians to leave a battle zone before striking.
- The nonviolent handling of conflicts has a strong symbolic effect in terms of the do-no-harm concept[59]. UCP is the message that violence is not the only way to advance your interests, nor is it the only way to protect yourself (or others).

But there are also limitations. At the beginning of this chapter it was said that there is no clear-cut relationship between UCP and the stage in the development of a conflict.[60] There are, however, contexts in which UCP is difficult or impossible to use successfully. Organisations practicing UCP have a good and well-founded set of assumptions when deciding where to deploy and where to decline an invitation. The basic questions are always Can we make a difference? Would UCP be possible and protective?[61] UCP is based on working with or deterring potentially violent actors on the ground. If such actors cannot be reached (for example if there is a bombing campaign rather than an immediate deployment of troops[62]) or if they are inaccessible[63], UCP practitioners can may do useful things like advising locals on self-protection, helping people to flee or pointing aid agencies to needs of isolated groups of people that they did not reach before, but they cannot influence the violent actors. And they may be able to work only on one side of the conflict line.[64]

A second limitation is that UCP operations require a considerable start-up period during which the presence of civilian peacekeepers and the necessary relationships are established, a period that can last several months. They are not immediately operational upon arrival in the conflict zone. This can be a problem when it comes to intervening in situations that escalate quickly and there is simply no time for such a process.

UCP also has no direct enforcement powers. The civilian peacekeepers cannot use force to protect the civilian population.

Another problem for international NGOs is their legal status in the host country. The UN or OSCE are usually in the country at the invitation of the government and have a special status. NGOs, on the other hand, have to adapt to local laws. There may be cases where their presence and activities are tolerated or even invited by the government, but often they are not. Some INGOs even resort to tourist visas to enter the country where they want to work. But the more precarious the legal status, the easier it is to expel INGOs or individual members, as has happened to many of them.

3. Local Communities Protecting Themselves

3.1 Research

The issue of communities protecting themselves has come to the attention of UCP over the last decade. It has played a role in the above-mentioned process of collecting 'good practices' in UCP carried out by Nonviolent Peaceforce. The Creating Safer Space research network, coordinated by Aberystwyth University (Wales), focuses on local processes in its research and publications. Its goal is to "enhance and strengthen civilians' capacities to protect themselves and others amid violent conflict and displacement, to

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[59] Anderson 1999

[60] Venturi 2014; Julian and Furnari 2014

[61] In an assessment if to start a new project, usually other enabling factors such as access to the country (registration and work permit or at least toleration by the government; visas if working with internationals), financing, sufficient capacity of the organization and finding suitable volunteers/staff play an important role.

[62] An example is the Gulf Peace Team that sought to prevent the U.S. and its allies from attacking Iraq in 2003. They put up a camp in the desert until they eventually were evacuated and deported by Iraq – the bombers just flew over their heads. (See Burrowes 2000)

[63] Like some radical islamist groups in the South of the Philippines, or the so-called Islamic State in Norther Iraq.

[64] Like for example Nonviolent Peaceforce in Ukraine since 2022, see https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/ukraine/

create safer spaces in which communities can build infrastructures for sustainable peace and development."[65] They have so far conducted 26 research projects in eleven countries, working with communities in Colombia, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan and elsewhere in the Global South.[66]

Somewhat older is the Center for Civilians in Harm's Way, founded by Casey E. Barrs, which aims to advise aid agencies that help prepare local communities where they work on how to protect themselves when the (international) agency has to leave.[67] The 30-page paper cannot be fully summarized here. Its main headlines are "physical safety", "life-critical sustenance", and "life-critical services". Under "physical safety" he deals with ways of engagement with armed actors (formal, traditional and non-formal), and the risks involved with different strategies, avoidance (e.g. preparing and safely carrying out flight), skills and tactics by which individuals avoid violence, forming of affinity groups (protective social units and networks, using patronage powers). He also discusses armed resistance as a strategy, but points out obvious risks with this strategy.

3.2 UCP by local actors

In the studies conducted by Creating Safer Space, and the good practice project of Unarmed Civilian Protection, some important factors came to light. Creating Safer Space summarizes this as follows:

- Civilians across the world protect themselves and others from violence using unarmed, community-centred methods that have been developed over generations and are led and carried out by women and men, mostly without having been trained by outside actors.
- In their protection efforts, local communities harness the experiences and knowledge they have by virtue of living amidst violence; they know what works in their context and why.
- Locally-led forms of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) are found in many different violent contexts, where communities develop context-appropriate responses and early warning mechanisms that make people safer.
- The localization of responses to and prevention of harms from violence must start with the recognition of existing community protection mechanisms and knowledge.
- Helping to scale out locally-led UCP by supporting, funding, and helping to connect these community efforts is a cost-effective way of addressing violent conflict and displacement across the world.[68]

Early warning systems often play a very important role, either through mobile phones and text messages, or through more traditional means such as road signs if there is no telephone connection. It is not the warning itself that is important, but the preparation for what to do when the warning arrives. In civil wars, this may often mean preparing to flee - where to go, what to take with you, how to reunite families that may have been separated, for example if children are at school in a nearby town when their village is attacked.[69]

A second very common tool is protective accompaniment and presence. For example, people joining forces to go to far-away places like markets, or neighbours staying in the house of a threatened family.

A third tool often used is negotiation with armed groups or state officials. Fourth, documenting human rights violations and, where possible, seeking legal redress or using the material for international campaigning is a commonly used tool.

Other elements that can be found are the reclaiming of public space (for example, by organising sports events or using the arts to address violence and injustice).[70]

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[65] https://creating-safer-space.com/

[66] Blieseman de Guevara et al 2024a

[67] https://civiliansinharmsway.org/about/

[68] Blieseman de Guevara et al 2024b

[69] Schweitzer 2017 and Schweitzer 2019, Blieseman de Guevara et al 2024 b

[70] Blieseman de Guevara et al 2024 b

A very good example of local communities organising themselves are the so-called peace communities in Colombia. These are communities that have decided to stay out of the civil war(s) and not to allow armed actors into their communities. They have developed various strategies of self-protection, including early warning, confronting armed groups when they try to enter the community (in one case they managed to disarm and arrest such individuals), and installing video surveillance.[71]

The community of San José de Apartadó in Urabá, the best known of these communities, has turned to international UCP organisations to help make visible what is happening in the area. Several accompaniment organisations are working with them. The community is also well networked internationally through publications and speaking tours. Nevertheless, protection has not worked perfectly, and more than 180 members have been killed over the years. [72]

While local civilian peacekeepers may not be as strong as international peacekeepers in terms of "the world is watching" and exerting international pressure when necessary, and may also face more challenges in terms of maintaining an impartial stance in the conflict(s), they also have comparative strengths:

- They know the country, the actors and the language.
- They come from the community and share its history (and its fate), whereas internationals come and go quickly.
- Because of their status as locals, they can work for sustainable change.

A very interesting model that has inspired both the UCP and the social defence communities are the (above mentioned) Indian Shanti Sena, in English “Peace Army”.[73] They were conceived by Gandhi - with the Red Shirts in present-day Pakistan, organised by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, as an early example - but, as the Shanti Sena, realised only after Gandhi's death by Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan. The Sainiks, as the members of the Shanti Sena were called, were to be full-time peace workers, based in and supported by their communities, who would deal primarily with conflicts (such as those between Hindus and Muslims) in their own and neighbouring communities. By 1960, two years after the work began, the Shanti Sena was an active organisation in various regions, although the targeted number of 70,000 Sainiks was never reached. Two years later, the first major conflict erupted when China threatened to invade India. Some like J.P. Narayan wanted to stop the fighting between the Chinese and the Indian army with a 'living wall' of people, (but) Vinoba Bhave rather opposed this idea, saying that since India had decided to have a military force, it should be used.[74] The work of Shanti Sena continued throughout the 1960s, but the movement went down in the 1970s. However, some Shanti Sena initiatives survived much longer, and also today there are people in India seeing themselves in their tradition.

However, similar civil society activities are also taking place in Ukraine, where Nonviolent Peaceforce has a small team supporting such groups[75], and for sure many more elements could be found when studying other international wars.

3.3 Nonwar communities

Anderson & Wallace (2013) published a book of 13 case studies of communities in civil wars that decided to stay out of the fighting and not take sides, from Afghanistan to Rwanda and Colombia. Five examples are documented in more detail.[76] Although they do not use the term 'social defence', these cases can be seen as examples of social defence in civil wars. The authors compared them and found a number of similarities, including that these 13 communities made a conscious decision not to participate in the civil

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[71] Anderson & Wallace 2013, Schweitzer 2020b:47, Jiménez Ospina & Arias López 2023

[72] https://peacepresence.org/what-we-do/peace-community/

[73] For the following, see Büttner 1995, Weber 1996 and 2009, Easwaran 2002, Kaisig 2025.

[74] Weber 1996:80pp

[75] https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/ukraine/

76 Afghanistan: Jaghori resistance against the Taliban, Bosnia: Tuzla, Colombia: indigenous communities, Mozambique: Gaza province and Rwanda: Muslims during the genocide.

wars raging around them and assessed the costs and benefits of that decision. However, with one exception, the Muslims in Rwanda, who based their non-participation on moral grounds, these decisions were pragmatic, not motivated by principled non-violence. The authors emphasise:

> It should … be noted that these thirteen communities were neither pacifists nor antiwar activists. All would fight if they felt a war were justified, and many had fought in other wars. In these cases, they simply calculated that the present war made no sense to them. Therefore, it was not a conflict in which they would participate. Most did not try to end the war or to convince others not to join. They did not try to confront fighters about their ideologies or purposes. They set out their own terms for nonengagement and, largely, managed to maintain these terms. (10-11)

Anderson and Wallace compared the strategies and tactics of these communities and found, that they all took three steps: they predicted the costs of war, they calculated options, and then chose a nonwar identity. They acknowledged that there were risks to nonengagement and that some of their members might be killed and aspects of their lifestyles compromised, but agreed that these risks were more acceptable than those of participating in the war. The nonwar identity was to be an identity that (1.) explicitly rejected the categories of war, for example the Muslims in Rwanda chose religion over the genocidal identities of ethnic groups. In Tuzla (Bosnia-Hercegowina) where ethnicity was the main divider, they chose the civic identity as citizens of Tuzla over ethnic or religious labels. (2.), all these were identities they already had had before, nothing invented arbitrarily: "They did not reinvent themselves to create a new, separating label". (28) But they also imbued (3.) their identity labels with collective values, attitudes, and principles that they wanted to express to explain their nonwar stance.

Communities maintained cohesion largely through the functions and style of governance. They managed to maintain at least some functions of normal governance, but were also able to maintain or invent new structures and systems for consultation and community decision-making. They focused on three functions of governance: the provision of services (agriculture, education, health), the establishment and enforcement of codes of conduct, and community security. Maintaining normality (at least to some extent) was important for cohesion, including celebrations and rituals. Their security strategies included "warnings, enabling members to escape when there was danger, acting in concert when there could be safety in numbers, and attracting external public pressure to circumscribe the behaviour of armed groups." (39) Sometimes the tactics included also trickery – the Jaghori in Afghanistan hid the fact that schooling for girls continued, and Rwandan Muslims hid their Tutsi neighbours, even claiming that they had already killed them when a Hutu militia came along.

Anderson and Wallace also looked at the kind of leadership, consultation and decision-making in the communities. Of particular importance for social defence here is that they found that – contrary to often-held assumptions about the need for strong and hierarchical leadership – "leadership in nonwar communities was often multi-layered and diffuse, with a variety of roles fulfilled by different leaders at varying levels" (48), rather than having one central leader (who could easily be removed by the attackers). Resistance also did not start with an ideological position articulated by a leader, and leaders were already in place before the conflict started.
All communities communicated with the armed groups surrounding them. Often they had to allow them to enter the community. Anderson and Wallace found the following strategies:

1. Nonwar communities used preexisting networks to convince fighters of their sincerity.
2. They negotiated directly with armed groups on all sides.
3. They offered hospitality to everyone.[77]
4. They confronted them, though this sometimes led to those who did the confrontation being killed.
5. They co-opted armed groups or fighters, dealing with them on friendly terms and thereby winning their acceptance, so that a hostile act would entail significant political or military costs for the fighters.
6. They tricked armies (see above).

Summarizing their findings, the authors write (pp 90-05:

[77] In the case of the peace communities in Colombia, as long as they left their weapons outside.

Nonwar communities	Surrounding communities
anticipated conflict	did not
chose an alternative identity	adopted the identities of the conflict
maintained services	suffered a breakdown
maintained internal order	suffered lawlessness
maintained internal security	derived security from fighting forces
collectively celebrated	turned inward
shared leadership and inclusive consultation	followed the leadership of the war
engaged with all armed groups	allied themselves with one armed group

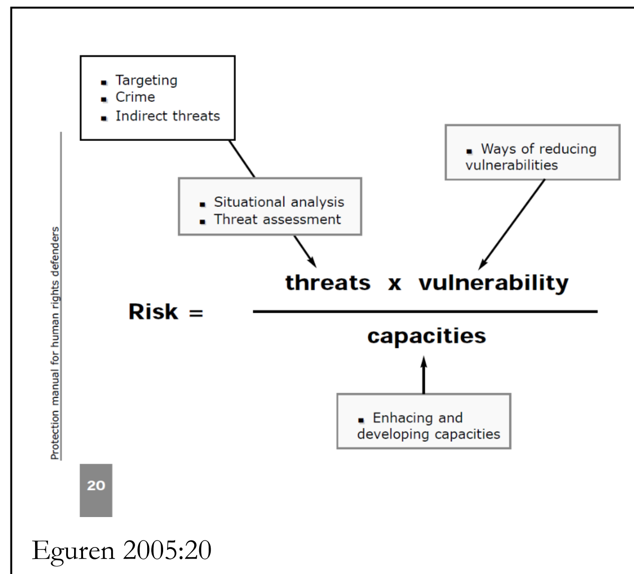
The examples in this study are exciting examples of successful social defence by local communities. Its lessons go beyond much of what has been assumed to work or not to work about social defence on the drawing board of Western academics or activists.

4. Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and other social activists are under threat in many countries. Several organizations have published manuals to advise HRD how to improve their own security. Current versions[78] of these handbooks include handbooks by Frontline Defenders (2011), Protection International (2020) and OSCE/ODIHR (2014).

Of course, the manuals focus on situations other than an international military attack, and may be more relevant to other scenarios of social defence, in particular military coups or other forms of seizure of power by authoritarian rulers.

As in the other cases, the first thing to do, as all the manuals emphasise, is to analyse and assess the risks, threats and options for mitigating them..[79] The resulting formula that can be applied to all risk analysis can be seen in the graphic on the right.



Eguren 2005:20

Threats are what may happen to a HRD, for example arrest, physical attack, loss of work, etc.

Vulnerabilities are things like location (being on the road, for example, may be more dangerous than being in one's office), lack of access to phones, transportation or locks on the door, and also the situation in the team.

Capacities are "the strengths and resources a group or defender can access to achieve a reasonable degree of security". (Eguren 2005:18)

Eguren continues:

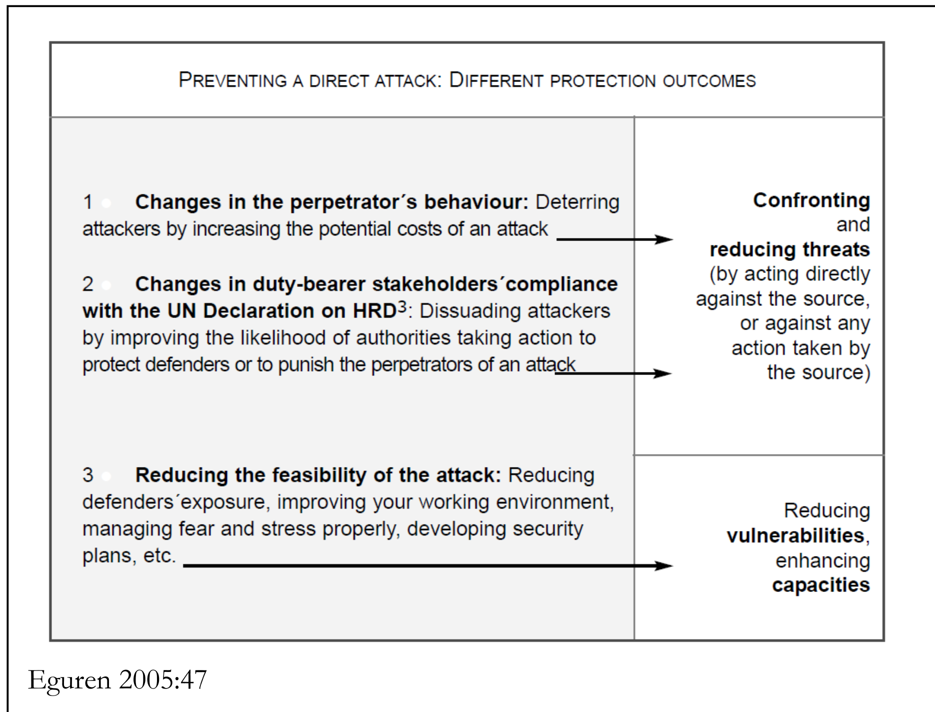
> …There are different ways of dealing with risk:
>
> - You can **accept** the risk as it stands, because you feel able to live with it.

[78] There are many older versions of the same handbooks or other handbooks that have disappeared from the original sites, for example Eguren (2005) or Mahony 2004

[79] The manuals mostly also recommend tools how to do such an analysis.

- You can **reduce** the risk, by working on threats, vulnerabilities and capacities.
- You can **share** the risk, by undertaking joint actions with other defenders to make potential threats to one defender or organisation less effective.
- You can choose to **avoid** the risk, by changing or stopping your activities or changing (your) approach to reduce potential threats.
- You can **ignore** the risk, by looking the other way. Needless to say, this is not the best option. (2005:23)

His handbook also provides a chart for information needed to assess a group's vulnerabilities and capacities (pp 24-27), and discusses ways how to assess threats. There are at least three general ways of preventing attacks, as described in the table below:



Eguren 2005:47

Generally speaking, the aim of the analysis is to produce a security plan. Such a plan needs to be flexible and adaptable to changes in the situation.[80]

Protection International has over the years refined its handbook on the protection of HRDs. Their handbook on HRDs in rural areas[81] describes different approaches, including a psychosocial[82] and a gender approach ("community feminism", looking at the role of female HRDs in their community).

Community protection according to them is based on a "set of social practices adapted to a context of threats and activated through social networks inside and outside the territory, based on ties and bonds that inspire solidarity." (Protection International 2020:38)

Forming such protection networks is an important strategy for the protection of communities and their members. Such networks range from local to regional and also include international stakeholders.

Another strategy for enhancing personal or community security is, of course, protective accompaniment - the approach described above as unarmed civilian protection. The accompaniment of HRDs was

[80] See also Protection International 2020 and Frontline Defenders 2011 for how to do a threat analysis.

[81] Protection International 2020

[82] This aspect of psychosocial well-being is also discussed in Frontline Defenders 2011.

probably the first practice in the broad field of UCP, which PBI has been carrying out since the early 1980s.[83]

Territory is also an aspect of protection of rural communities. In Mesoamerica (but also in many other places of the world), there are processes of "expansion of extractive (mega)projects and agro-export activities, accompanied by the accelerated implementation of infrastructure plans" (Protection International 2020: 68). Defending the territory – keeping control over it – is an important aspect of many struggles, especially of indigenous and other rural communities. Protection International suggests six parameters for the defence of territory:[84]

1. Physical and everyday appropriation, here meaning the regular or routine practices developed by communities in their territory
2. Actions for resistance and defence of the territory, like mass mobilization or nonviolent confrontations (protest in front of mining companies, for example)
3. Organization of the defence
4. Flow, management and use of information for resistance and territorial defence
5. Build ties and networks with other stakeholders (communities, non-governmental organisations, churches, societies, international organisations) as a means of support or solidarity in the process of territorial resistance and defence
6. Knowledge of, use of and response from legal and administrative mechanisms

In any defence, communication issues are important. How do you communicate what to whom, and how do you respond to negative communication from your opponents? It is useful to point out that the HRD manuals also contain much useful advice based on long experience in authoritarian or semi-democratic regimes..[85]

5. Conclusions

Of particular relevance to the challenges of social defence is the question of how people can protect themselves and their fellow citizens. While it is unlikely that a 'peace army' would be deployed between the front lines in the event of military aggression, as envisioned by Maud Roydon and many of her successors[86], smaller international projects aimed at protecting civilians in war situations are being undertaken in many current and past armed conflicts, including the war in Ukraine. The preparation of such international support could therefore be an element in the preparation of social defence.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, UCP is practised in different situations and settings, from rural areas to cities, from indigenous communities to refugee camps and human rights defenders in capitals, from oppressive regimes to situations of civil war and international occupation. For the latter, there is an outstanding example, the work of a large number of international and local initiatives in Palestine.[87] Their work consists mainly of monitoring the situation and reporting on human rights

[83] On protective accompaniment for HRD, see Mahony 2004.

[84] Protection International 2020: pp72-76

[85] See Protection International pp 82-97

[86] The most recent idea was a proposal by two German pacifists suggesting to send 100,000 volunteers tot he Ukrainian-Belarusian border in 2022, a suggestion that nobody was inclined to take seriously. (Source: Personal communication). More serious is a project proposal by an international group suggesting to set up an international presence around the nuclear plant at Zaporizhzhya, the Zaporizhzhya Protection Project. They trained people and got in contact with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but were told that they were not needed. While writing this, they are still hoping for an opening. (Reuwer 2023)

[87] Including Christian (today. Community) Peacemaker Teams, Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, Operation Dove, Meta Peace Teams, International Solidarity Movement, Temporary International Presence in Hebron (a governmental mission, Cure Violence as well as several Israeli or mixed Palestinian-Israeli groups: Machsom Watch; Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, B'Tselem, Combatants for Peace,

violations, accompanying schoolchildren and providing protection during olive harvests, etc. While they have protected people from the military or violent settlers in countless cases, they have not succeeded in ending the occupation, nor have they made this their primary goal. The same goes for the work that Nonviolent Peaceforce and some other organisations are doing in Ukraine, or what the Balkan Peace Team did in the Balkans in the 1990s.[88] The role that UCP can play always depends on the situation and, as UCP practitioners never tire of emphasising, analysis is everything and must come first.

Concrete Lessons:

1. UCP and the protection of human rights defenders is a fascinating and compelling example of nonviolence in practice. Social defence may still be more of a concept than a practice – UCP is a well-developed practice.
2. UCP is important for social defence because it
   a) increases knowledge about the effectiveness of unarmed action in crisis and war situations,
   b) provides lessons for the concrete preparations for social defence, and
   c) is independent of whether disarmament has taken place or whether the attacked state decides on military defence. Unarmed protection is often the last resort, since the military is hardly in a position to protect the civilian population.
3. Concrete lessons for the preparation of social defence are:
   a) The importance of building relationships with armed actors, which is addressed in many studies on civil resistance, is also confirmed here.
   b) The importance of early warning and preparation for different conflict scenarios.
   c) Various instruments of protection and the possibility of training in them:
   analysis, analysis, analysis...
   protective presence, protective accompaniment, monitoring and documentation, anticipation of dangers and preparation for them (e.g. escape), keeping an eye on the weak, networking,...

From the study on 'Non-War Communities' by Anderson and Wallace ("Opting out of War, 2013):

   d) Conscious decision weighing costs and benefits
   e) Not a principled non-violence, but a pragmatic decision
   f) Elements of their own identity are selected and contrasted with the identity of the violent actors
   g) A mix of existing and newly created structures
   h) Three primary governance functions: service provision (agriculture, education, health), the establishment and enforcement of codes of conduct, and community security
   i) No central leader, but decentralised/multilayered leadership
   j) Dealing with the opponent:
      - The non-war communities used existing networks to convince the fighters of their sincerity.
      - They negotiated directly with armed groups on all sides.
      - They offered hospitality to everyone.
      - They confronted them, which sometimes led to the killing of those conducting the confrontation.
      - They co-opted armed groups or fighters by treating them as friends and gaining their acceptance, so that any hostile act would incur significant political or military costs for the fighters.

Ta'ayush, Holy Land Trust and others. See McCarthy & Pinckney 2016; Schweitzer 2019, UCP in Palestine 2024 (which includes a current list of 2024).

[88] Müller 2004

- They tricked armies.

The studies and handbooks on UCP and on local community self-defence mostly deal with civil war situations in the Global South. However, the tools of analysis and many of the lessons learnt there would probably also be of great value for nonviolent defence in an industrialised country in the northern hemisphere. For this reason, the findings of Anderson and Wallace on "nonwar communities" have been summarised in some detail above.

For both international UCP and local communities, there is a common limitation: The violence in question must not exceed a certain level of intensity. Creating Safer Space states:

> Just like international humanitarian aid, communities' nonviolent self-protection depends on a minimum of respect for civilians' lives; indiscriminate violence, especially in situations of great power differentials between warring parties, is difficult to halt or deter.[89]

If these conditions are not met, social defence may cease to function and the population under attack will have to resort to the instruments of civil defence. (The two terms are sometimes confused, but they mean different things. Social defence is about resistance, civil defence is about things like bomb shelters, maintaining necessary infrastructure like water, heating, medical care, etc., fire brigades, etc.).

[89] Blieseman de Guevara et al 2024b

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