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## Beyond Militarisation: Reclaiming Gandhian Ideals for a Harmonious World

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**Abstract:** In a world grappling with conflict and violence, the principles of Mahatma Gandhi pertaining to non-violence and peace offer a beacon of hope to all the global leaders (Anita Bhatt, 2019). The paper provides insights into the relevance and applications of Gandhian principles in today's context, and emphasizes the need to reclaim these ideals in order to make this world more harmonious and a better place to work. As militarisation and global tensions escalate, as evident from the increasing trend of military expenditure, there is a pressing need to embrace Gandhian values of truth, non-violence, and compassion. Gandhi's philosophy, rooted in truth, non-violence, and compassion, resonates in today's context of increasing militarisation and global tensions. The article discusses how Gandhian principles can inform efforts in conflict resolution, sustainable development, and human rights promotion. The Global Peace Index (GPI) and Global Terrorism Index (GTI) reports highlight the urgency of reclaiming Gandhian ideals. The GPI shows a 0.42 percent decline in global peacefulness, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine driving the deterioration. The GTI reveals a 22 percent increase in deaths from terrorism in 2023. The article also presents case studies, such as the Salt March and the Civil Rights Movement, showcasing the power of Gandhian non-violence in inspiring social change around the globe. It also discusses challenges, including the military-industrial complex and historical conflicts, and opportunities, such as non-violent resistance movements and international cooperation, in moving beyond militarisation. Gandhian principles of nonviolence, truth, self-reliance, and respect for all beings can help us strive towards a more peaceful and harmonious world. The article calls for collective efforts and commitment to reclaiming these ideals for a safe and brighter future for all.

### Introduction

In a world where conflict and violence often dominate the headlines in recent decades, the principles of non-violence and peace pioneered by Mahatma Gandhi stand as an epitome of hope and inspiration. Against the backdrop of increasing militarisation and global tensions, there is a rising recognition of the need to reclaim and uphold Gandhian ideals for the pursuit of a harmonious, equitable, and sustainable world (Anita Bhatt, 2019). Mahatma Gandhi, often referred to as the "Father of the Nation" in India, was a pioneer of non-violent resistance and social change. His philosophy, grounded in the principles of truth, non-violence, and compassion, continues to resonate deeply with people around the world.

In today's context, where militarisation and armed conflict continue to pose grave threats to global security and stability, the relevance of Gandhian ideals cannot be overstated. By reclaiming and embodying these principles, individuals and communities can work towards building a world characterized by peace, justice, and mutual respect. In this article, the concept of beyond militarisation and the significance of reclaiming Gandhian ideals for the establishment of a harmonious world have been explored. Efforts have been made to examine how Gandhian principles can inform and guide efforts to address contemporary challenges such as conflict resolution, sustainable development, and the promotion of human rights. Only with a deeper understanding and appreciation of Gandhian philosophy, the world leaders may aspire to create a world where peace and harmony prevail (*Anand Sharma, 2007; D. G. Tendulkar, 1954*).

The concept of non-violence or, in other words, "*ahimsa*" lies in the spirit of Gandhian ideology. Gandhi believed that true peace could only be achieved through non-violent ways and means, rejecting the use of power and intimidation in resolving conflicted issues and actions. His advocacy for non-violence as a moral and political principle has inspired countless movements for social justice and human rights. Apart from non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi espoused the ideals of self-reliance, communal harmony, and sustainable living. He emphasized the importance of simplicity, humility, and service to others as essential components of a meaningful and fulfilling life (*David M. Traboulay, 1997*).

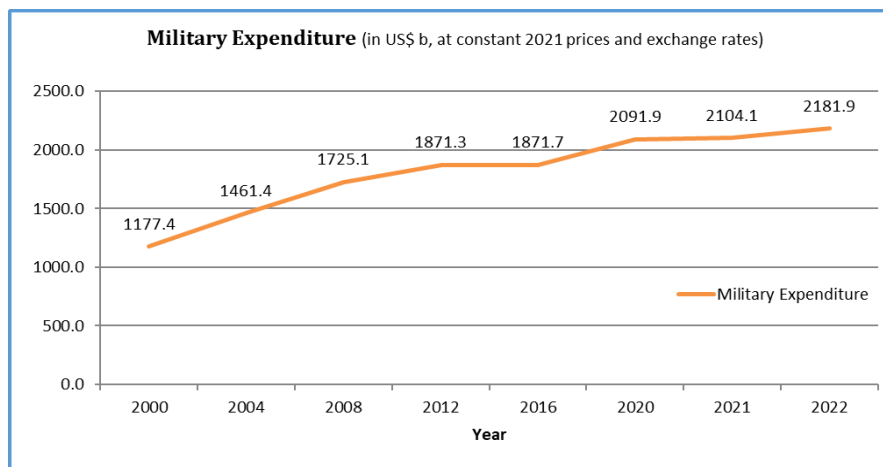
### Trends and Patterns in Militarization

In understanding the dynamic problem of militarisation and conflict issues, it is imperative to analyse the tendencies, intensities, and other aspects like trends and patterns of nations engaged in race to increase their military capacity. According to a report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), there is an increasing trend pertaining to military expenditure measured in monetary terms (*SIPRI Database 2022*). The global values of total military expenditure over the years are mentioned in *Table A and Figure A* below.

**Table A: Trend in Military Expenditure**

Year	Military Expenditure (in US\$b, at constant 2021 prices and exchange rates)
2000	1177.4
2004	1461.4
2008	1725.1
2012	1871.3
2016	1871.7
2020	2091.9
2021	2104.1
2022	2181.9

*Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Database of Military Expenditure, 2022*



**Figure A: Trend in Military Expenditure (Presented considering the above data)**

It can be clearly inferred from above data that there is an increasing trend of military expenditure by nations around the globe. The hidden agendas behind engagement in the race of increasing weapon capacity and military power alert for alternative strategies coined by Mahatma Gandhi, which offer a different approach to non-violence that can help reduce tensions and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts in order to maintain or increase peace for a better and more harmonious world.

According to the Global Militarisation Index (GMI) report for 2023, the significant jump in militarisation in Ukraine after the Russian attack on the former, has led to the introduction of a new category called "very high militarisation trend" as measured by the square of *deltaGMI*. As per the report, one country is classified as having very strong militarisation, one as strong, eight as moderate, and 23 as having little militarisation. Overall, 65 countries exhibit little demilitarisation, 18 show moderate demilitarisation, and one country shows strong demilitarisation (*Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC)*, 2023). The report also listed the top 10 nations with the highest level of militarisation as computed by the GMI score, as mentioned below in Table B.

**Table B: Top 10 Nations with the highest GMI (2023)**

Country	Military Expenditure	Military Personal	Heavy Weapons	GMI Score	GMI Rank
Ukraine	5.3	1.3	1.8	335	1
Israel	2.1	1.8	3.1	257	2
Armenia	2.0	1.8	2.3	223	3
Qatar	3.0	0.8	2.2	220	4
Bahrain	1.9	0.7	2.7	215	5
Saudi Arabia	2.9	0.7	2.1	213	6
Greece	1.9	1.1	2.7	211	7
Singapore	1.7	1.3	2.7	210	8
Azerbaijan	2.4	0.9	2.3	204	9
Russia	2.1	1.1	2.4	204	10

The Global Peace Index (GPI) 2023, published by the *Institute for Economics and Peace (Global Peace Index, 2023)*; shows a 0.42 percent decline in global peacefulness, marking the ninth consecutive year of deterioration. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a key factor, with both countries now among the least peaceful. Conflict intensity was rising even before the Ukraine crisis, with a 96 percent increase in conflict-related deaths. Since 2008, global peacefulness has decreased by five percent, and the gap between the least and most peaceful countries is widening (*GPI, 2023*).

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2024, published by the *Institute for Economics and Peace (Global Terrorism Index, 2023)*, revealed deaths from terrorism rose by 22 percent to 8,352 in 2023, while the number of terrorist attacks decreased by 23 percent to 3,350. The attacks became more deadly, with an average of 2.5 deaths per attack compared to 1.6 in 2022. Despite the increase, deaths are nearly 25 percent lower than their peak in 2015, but are now at their highest level since 2017. The 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals that rapid innovation risks exacerbating trust issues, leading to further societal instability and political polarization (*GTI, 2023*).

The data presented above shows that the world is facing multiple crises of peace, trust, justice, and sustainability. These are not isolated problems but interconnected and interdependent challenges that require holistic and systemic solutions. The philosophy and practice of Mahatma Gandhi can offer such solutions, as they are based on the principles of non-violence, truth, compassion, and simplicity.

#### **Principles of Mahatma Gandhi and their Relevance**

Mahatma Gandhi's teachings and principles hold profound relevance in the context of reclaiming Gandhian ideals for a harmonious world beyond militarisation. His philosophy, rooted in the principles of non-violence, truth, and social justice, offers valuable insights into addressing the challenges of conflict and militarisation that confront our world today. At the core of Gandhian philosophy is the principle of nonviolence, or "ahimsa." Gandhi believed that true peace and harmony could only be achieved through non-violent means. In the context of beyond militarisation, ahimsa emphasizes the importance of resolving conflicts through dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect, rather than resorting to violence and armed conflict (*David M. Traboulay, 1997*). Gandhi emphasized the importance of truth in all aspects of life. In the context of beyond militarisation, the principle of satya underscores the need for

transparency, honesty, and integrity in addressing conflicts and promoting peace. By upholding truth as a guiding principle, individuals and societies can build trust and foster meaningful dialogue towards resolving conflicts peacefully (*Mahatma Gandhi, 1927*).

Gandhi advocated for self-reliance at both the individual and community levels. In the context of beyond militarisation, Swadeshi encourages communities to become self-sufficient in meeting their needs, reducing dependency on external resources and military interventions. Self-reliance fosters resilience and empowers communities to address challenges through peaceful and sustainable means. Gandhi's concept of satyagraha, or nonviolent resistance, emphasizes the power of passive resistance in confronting injustice and oppression. In the context of beyond militarisation, satyagraha offers a nonviolent alternative to armed conflict, enabling individuals and communities to challenge militarisation and promote peace through peaceful means. Gandhi believed in the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. In the context of beyond militarisation, Sarvodaya underscores the importance of respecting the rights and dignity of all beings, including those affected by conflict and militarisation. By promoting a culture of respect and empathy, we can create a more inclusive and harmonious world (*See the autobiography and other writings of Mahatma Gandhi as mentioned in the reference list*). One of the key elements of Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution was his emphasis on the importance of dialogue and negotiation. He believed that conflicts can only be resolved when all parties are willing to engage in a meaningful dialogue, listen to each other's concerns, and work towards finding common ground (*Anita Bhatt, 2019*).

Gandhian principles offer a compelling framework for reclaiming ideals for a harmonious world beyond militarisation. The adoption of non-violence, truth, self-reliance, non-cooperation, and respect for all beings, may lead towards building a world where peace, justice, and harmony prevail.

#### **Case Studies and Examples**

One of the most iconic examples of Gandhian non-violent resistance, the Salt March (1930), was a protest against the British salt monopoly in India. Mahatma Gandhi, along with thousands of followers, walked 240 miles to the Arabian Sea to produce salt from the seawater, defying British law. The Salt March highlighted the power of non-violent protest challenge oppressive regimes and inspired similar movements around the world (*NCERT Books on Indian History*). Inspired by Gandhi's principles of non-violence, leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Through nonviolent protests, sit-ins, and marches, they challenged segregation and discrimination, ultimately leading to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (*G. Ramachandran & T. K. Mahadevan, 1967*). The Velvet Revolution, led by Vaclav Havel and other dissidents, peacefully overthrew the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Through non-violent protests and civil disobedience, the movement achieved a bloodless transition to democracy, demonstrating the power of peaceful resistance in effecting political change (*egyankosh*).

These case studies and examples demonstrate the power of Gandhian ideals to inspiring movements for peace, justice, and freedom around the world. By reclaiming and embodying these ideals, individuals and communities can work towards a more harmonious world beyond militarisation.

#### **Challenges and Opportunities**

One of the primary challenges in achieving demilitarisation is the entrenched environment of the military-industrial complex in many countries around the globe. The arms industry or supplier nations often wield significant political and economic influence, making it difficult to shift towards peaceful alternatives as an increase in demilitarisation reduces their economic and political benefits. The security dilemma, where nations feel compelled to increase their military capabilities in response to perceived threats, creates a cycle of militarisation. There is an urgent requirement for building trust and cooperation among partners and global nations to overcome this challenge. Apart from the globe, many nations or regions have a history of deep-seated conflicts and traumas that continue to fuel militarisation (*Anita Bhatt, 2019*).

Achieving meaningful change towards demilitarisation requires strong political will and leadership. Politicians and policymakers must keep peace-building efforts as a priority in comparison to military solutions or requirements. Militarisation often diverts resources away from essential social services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, creating harmful economic and social externalities in the economy. Transitioning to a peaceful economy may face resistance due to concerns about economic stability and job losses in the defense sector.

Non-violent resistance movements, inspired by Gandhian principles, have shown the power of peaceful activism in achieving social and political change by addressing issues of militarisation and conflict. The movements inspired by the beliefs of Mahatma Gandhi provide a model for promoting peace and justice without resorting to militarisation. Strengthening international cooperation and diplomacy is a necessary tool to address the root causes of conflicts and reduce the reliance on military solutions. Civil society plays a crucial role in advocating for peace and challenging militarisation. Grassroots movements and non-governmental organizations can mobilize public opinion and push for policy changes towards demilitarisation. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the importance of peace, justice, and strong institutions. Achieving these goals requires a shift away from militarisation towards peaceful and inclusive societies. Promoting Gandhian ideals of non-violence, truth, and social justice through education and awareness campaigns can be fruitful in cultivating a culture of peace and non-violence. Educating future generations about the futility of war and the benefits of peaceful coexistence is key to building a harmonious world.

While the challenges of moving beyond militarisation are significant, there are also numerous opportunities for promoting Gandhian ideals and building a more peaceful world. By addressing these challenges and seizing these opportunities, the world may work towards reclaiming Gandhian ideals for a harmonious world free from the scourge of militarisation.

### Conclusion

The principles and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi provide a timeless and invaluable insights and guides for reclaiming ideals and promoting a better, sustainable, equitable, safer, and more harmonious world beyond militarisation. Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence, truth, self-reliance, non-cooperation, and respect for all beings provides a powerful framework for addressing the root causes of conflict issues and building more solutions to conflict management through non-violence and dialogue. In order to achieve the vision, it is essential and imperative to confront the challenges posed by the military-industrial complex, the security dilemma, historical conflicts, and the need for political will and leadership. At the same time, there are opportunities presented by non-violent resistance movements, international cooperation, civil society engagement, the Sustainable Development Goals, and education and awareness. By embracing these challenges and opportunities, all the stakeholders can work towards reclaiming Gandhian ideals and creating a world where peace, justice, and harmony prevail. It is a vision that requires collective effort and commitment, but one that holds the promise of a brighter and more peaceful future for all.

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