

# Strategic Planning and Tactical Choices

Fletcher Summer Institute for the Advanced Study of  
Nonviolent Conflict

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# Presentation Outline

1. What are strategy and tactics and why are they important?
2. Three core strategic principles:  
Unity, Planning, Nonviolent Discipline
3. Tactics:  
Categories and Considerations

Part 1:

# Definitions

# What Are Strategy And Tactics?



# Strategy Definition

## **STRATEGY\*:**

A plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim. Strategy is the idea of how a nonviolent struggle shall develop, and how its separate components shall be fitted together to contribute most advantageously to achieve its objectives. It also coordinates and directs all appropriate and available resources (human, political, economic, moral, etc.) of the group to attain its objectives in a conflict.

\* This definition of the word “Strategy” is a hybrid of definitions of the terms “Grand Strategy” and “Strategy” as defined in Gene Sharp, *There Are Realistic Alternatives*, (Boston, MA: The Albert Einstein Institution), 2003. pp. 33, 38. as well as the term “Strategy” as defined by the Apple Inc. *Dictionary* application version 2.1.2 (80.3).

# Tactic Definition

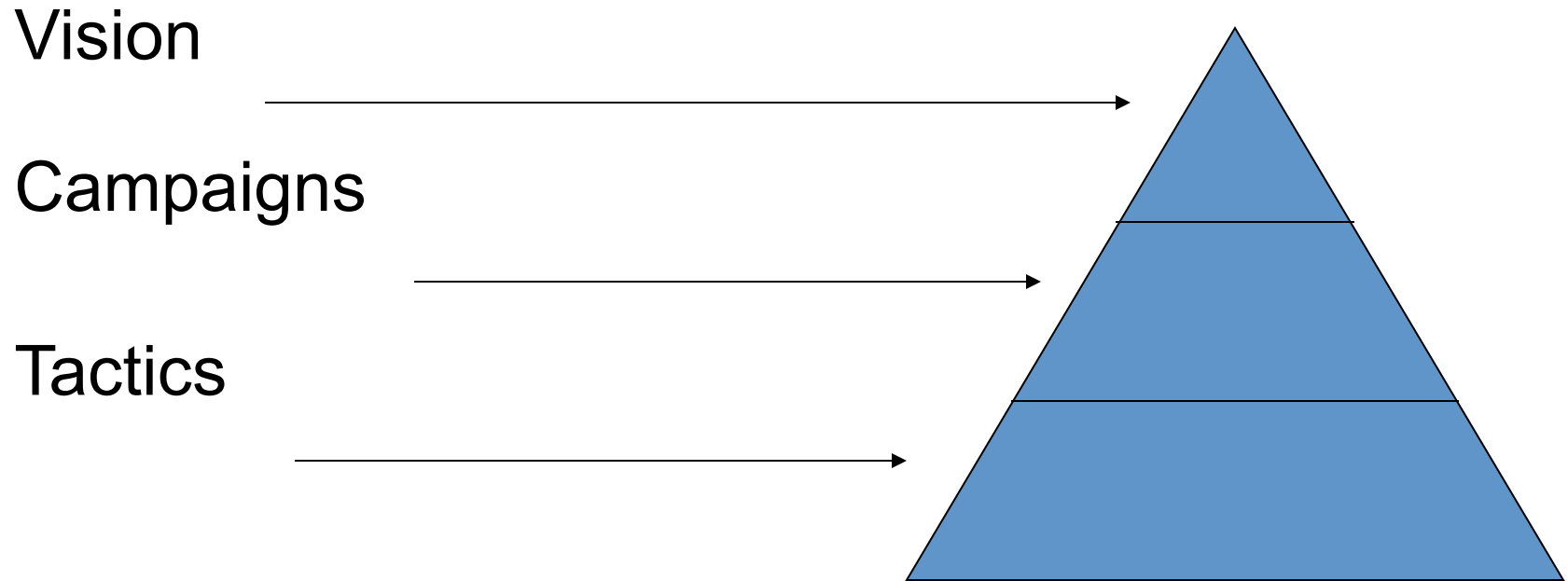
TACTIC\*:

A limited plan of action based on a conception of how, in a restricted phase of a conflict, to use effectively the available means of action to achieve a specific limited objective.

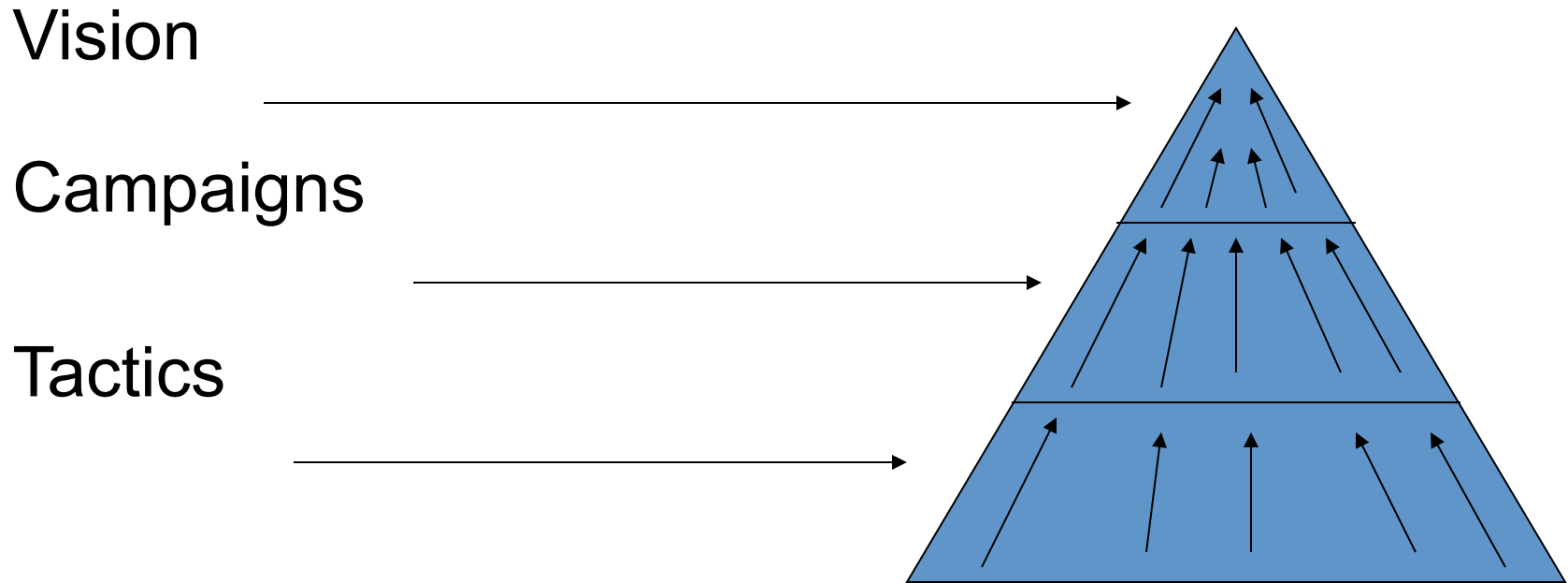
Tactics are intended for use in implementing a wider strategy in a phase of the overall conflict.

\* This definition is taken from Gene Sharp, *There Are Realistic Alternatives*, (Boston, MA: The Albert Einstein Institution), 2003. p. 38.

# Strategy Diagram



# Strategy Diagram





# The Role of Strategy in Nonviolent Movements

Strategy is an art and a science

Strategy can help a movement overcome adverse conditions.

Part 2:

# Strategic Principles

# Three Principles of Effective Nonviolent Action

1. Unity
2. Planning
3. Nonviolent Discipline

# Three Components of Unity

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## 1. Unity of Purpose

- Diverse groups come together

## 2. Unity of Organization

- Leaders
- Organizers
- Activists

## 3. Unity of People

How is unity achieved?

# 1. Unity

- Developing and communicating a unifying vision
- Building diverse participation
- Building domestic coalitions
- Building transnational solidarity

What aspects of a struggle must a movement plan?



## 2. Planning

- Analysis of self, opponent, environment and third parties
- Organizational structure
- Developing campaigns
- Tactical choice and execution

Why is nonviolent discipline  
important?

How do movements build  
nonviolent discipline?

# 3. Nonviolent Discipline

- Training
- Risk assessment
- Building an organizational culture

Part 3:

# Tactics

# Sharp's Classification of Tactics

1. Nonviolent protest and persuasion
2. Noncooperation
  - Social
  - Economic
  - Political
3. Nonviolent Intervention

# 1. Protest and Persuasion

Examples: Petitions, rallies, letters, handing out literature, displaying symbols, singing songs, street theatre, vigils, public statements, SMS messages, websites, etc.

- Tend to be lower-risk activities
- May be insufficient by themselves to win against tough opponents

# 2. Noncooperation

Examples:

- Political: resignations, withdrawal from government institutions, withholding information from the government
- Economic: consumer boycott, retail boycott, secondary boycott, strike, slowdown, walk out, sick-in, stay-at-home, refusal to pay rent, withdrawal of bank deposits, divestment
- Social: ostracism, withdrawal from events, social disobedience, avoidance, suspension of social activities (i.e. sports, festivals, etc.)



# Noncooperation

- Require many people to be effective
- May entail high or low risk and time investment
- Enable broad societal participation by diverse groups in society
- Very powerful. They create a major disruption when effective

# 3. Nonviolent Intervention

Examples: Civil disobedience, creating parallel institutions, sit-in, blockading buildings

- Often directly disruptive and confrontational
- Usually carry a higher level of risk
- Often require strict discipline
- Can be effective even if a few people do them

# Tactics Classification by Outcome

Tactics can also be classified according to their intended outcomes, for example:

Tactics can:

- Build capacity — i.e. meetings, community service, fraternizing, establishing schools
- Communicate — i.e. speeches, leaflets, press conferences, newspapers, slogans
- Attack/mobilize — i.e. protest marches, blockades, strikes, boycotts, picketing, civil disobedience

# What Makes Tactics Effective?



# 1. Clear and Achievable Objectives

Tactics are more effective when they are used for objectives that are:

- Clearly defined
- Achievable

## 2. Tactical Innovation

## 2. Tactical Innovation

Effective tactics are often innovative.

The same tactic may be done at a new location, timing, participants, target, message, or in a new way

Or an entirely new tactic may be used.

# 3. Tactical Sequencing

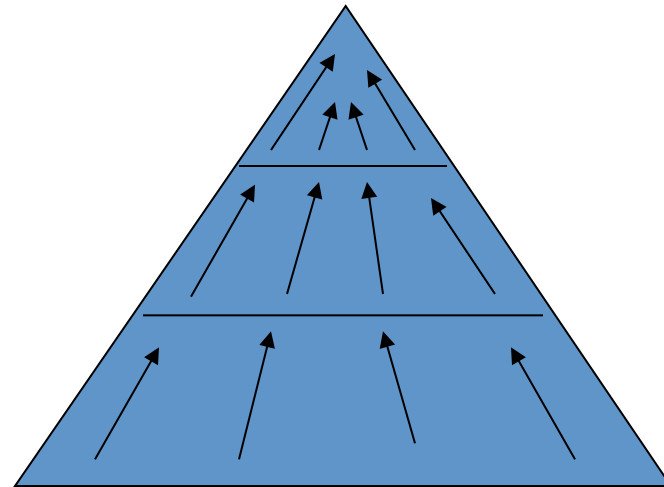
Tactics are more effective when they are sequenced together to reinforce each other and maintain the initiative.



# 3. Tactical Sequencing

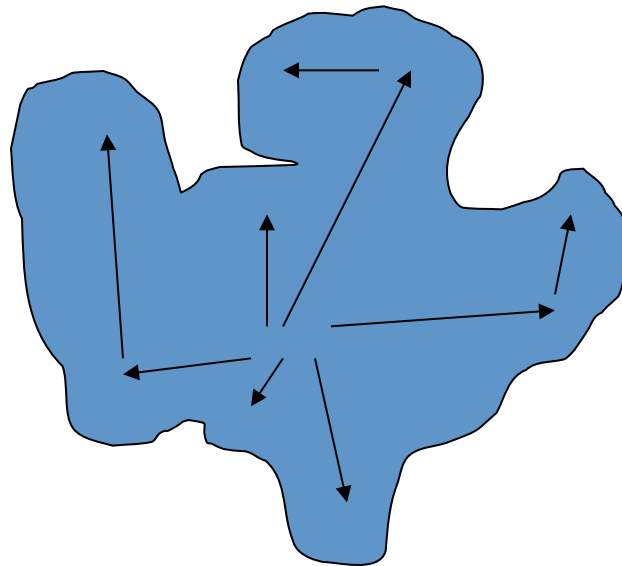
## Three Levels of Strategy

1. Vision----->
2. Campaigns----->
3. Tactics----->



# Poor Tactical Sequencing!

Uncoordinated Vision, Campaigns, and Tactics



# Tactical Sequencing: The Salt March

- Salt March
- Replacement leaders after arrest
- Students withdraw from government schools
- Picketing liquor stores
- Social boycotts
- Replacement leaders after arrest
- Marching to salt depots
- Salt raids
- Boycott of British cloth