

Challenge and Survival: Political Resistance in Authoritarian Burma

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“Challenge and Survival: Political Resistance in Authoritarian Burma”

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to those who devote their lives to political change.

Acknowledgments

I incurred numerous personal debts while completing this dissertation. Many people met with me, often in the oddest of places, to talk about their work or entrust me with their personal history. Personal introductions from people opened doors, while others listened and proffered suggestions.

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Of course, despite an outpouring of help and support, all errors are my own.

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Abstract of Dissertation

Challenge and Survival: Political Resistance in Authoritarian Burma

Burma's dictatorial government maintains its power by coupling political repression and social control methods to cultivate a compliant citizenry. Yet non-violent and violent opposition to military rule continues. Armed resistance groups began fighting for independence and autonomy from the state prior to Burma's independence. Large-scale protests occurred in every decade since military takeover in 1962, the most recent were the monks' protests in September 2007.

How do oppositions maintain their ability to challenge an authoritarian state over long periods? Authoritarian conditions necessitate that opposition movements resist by utilizing two imperatives: challenging the regime and ensuring their own survival. Resistance in Burma encompasses the offensive position of the challenge imperative and the defensive position of the survival imperative.

Challenge activities confront the authority of the governing regime; the authoritarian government and its entities are the primary audience, although it is beneficial if other segments of society witness the action. Oppositional activities do more than just challenge the state. Oppositions conduct activities that also ensure their survival in the face of repression. Political activities serve to signal in-group solidarity, transfer information to other facets of the political movement and encourage long-term participation. For an opposition to survive repression, member retention is critical and activist family networks help individuals overcome regime-constraints to participation.

The challenge and survival imperatives demonstrate that protest does not erupt ‘from out of nowhere.’ Over-relying on protest as a proxy measure of the existence of opposition overlooks the wide range of resistance options available to discontented citizens, especially those living under authoritarian rule. Using a protest events dataset and interviews with activists, soldiers and citizens of Burma, this dissertation examines the range of political resistance used in Burma to challenge the dictatorial regime.

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Acronyms

AAPP(B)	Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (Burma)
ABFSU	All Burma Federation Student Unions
ABMA	All Burma Monks Association
ABSDF	All Burma Students Democratic Front
BSPP	Burma Socialist Program Party
CIF	Chinese Irregular Forces
CMM	Committee for Mass Movement
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KNDO	Karen National Defense Organization
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union
NCGUB	National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma
NCUB	National Council of the Union of Burma
NDF	National Democratic Front
NDF	National Democratic Force
NLD	National League for Democracy
NLD/LA	National League for Democracy/Liberated Areas

NMSP	New Mon State Party
PDC	Political Defiance Committee
PEA	Political Event Analysis
PRC	People's Republic of China
RIT	Rangoon Institute of Technology
RU	Rangoon University
RUSU	Rangoon University Students' Union
SNLD	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SSA-S	Shan State Army - South
SSPP	Shan State Progressive Party

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Statement

Despite the hostile environment created by successive authoritarian governments in Burma, political activists use resistance including, non-violent action, to press for democratic transition. Armed struggle is another means to state transition, and in Burma, several armed resistance groups fight for autonomy within a democratic, federal union. Individuals in Burma who wish to oppose the regime can choose non-violent resistance or armed resistance; unsurprisingly, given the consequences of resistance, most citizens choose to pursue neither.

A revolutionary situation, according to Tilly, involves three elements:

1. Appearance of contenders, or coalitions of contenders, advancing exclusive competing claims to control of the state or some segment of it;
2. Commitment to those claims by a significant segment of the citizenry;
3. Incapacity or unwillingness of rulers to suppress the alternative coalition and/or commitment to its claims (1993: 10).

By this definition, Burma has experienced a revolutionary situation since before it gained independence from Great Britain in 1948. According to Yawngkhwe, “rebellions, insurgencies and civil unrest have figured prominently since 1948 and have more or less become a permanent political feature of Burma” (1995: 174). Despite the presence of armed and non-violent revolutionary groups, in Burma authoritarian rule has expanded. In Burma, the revolutionary situation has not resulted in a revolutionary outcome, a transfer of power (Tilly 1990). The seeming lack of success to the primary goal of these organizations

– overthrow of the regime – prompts the questions: why and how do activists and soldiers continue to defy the regime over the course of decades? Do activities of the opposition help ensure its survival? Does the authoritarian environment change the imperatives of an opposition?

Problem Explanation

Entrenched military rule is not a surprise in Burma. Dictatorial regimes in various forms have ruled Burma since 1962 and cycles of protest and repression have occurred in nearly every generation. The military government in Burma is firmly entrenched and it is difficult to argue the country is on a path towards liberalization and democracy.¹ Nyein writes, “we observe in Burma a trend not comparable to classic post-Cold War countries, since the state is not dissolving but in the process of consolidating and expanding into the ethnic territories, not consistently but apparently relentlessly” (2009: 133).

In Burma, demonstrations against the ruling military government have occurred in every decade. Political activists and organizations press for democratic transition and/or reform using non-violent tactics. Several armed resistance groups also fight the state in pursuit of independence, or autonomy within a democratic, federal union. These armed and non-violent organizations operate concurrently, and both are part of Burma’s ‘opposition movement.’

¹ Despite the military regime’s holding a parliamentary election in November 2010, Burma is not on a linear path towards democratization. Taylor (2008) cautions against considering Burma a case of failing to democratize; this is consistent with other calls to address authoritarian states on their own terms, and not as residual categories of failed democracies or stalled democracies (see for example, Ottaway 2005, Bellin 2004 and Levitsky and Way 2010). Instead, Burma is an example of expanding authoritarianism in the face of continued opposition.

The response from the government against the armed and political opposition has grown increasingly severe in the past four decades. Citizens of Burma understand the risk and danger to a person for challenging the regime. How civil resistance survives under carefully cultivated authoritarian institutions of social control is not well understood. Protest and opposition continue in authoritarian countries in small and large forms. The range of resistance strategies in Burma includes exit (Zaw Oo 2004), acts of avoidance politics (Adas 1992), small-scale resistance activities (Chapter 5), negotiation of regime demands (KHRG 2008), and most visibly to outside watchers, large protests such as those led by monks in September 2007. Analysts do not have a fine-grained approach to the variety of resistance strategies available to people.

In addition to a range of resistance options available, individuals in Burma defy the military regime (*and* political science assumptions) by remaining in the opposition movement for decades. The question in Burma is not ‘why don’t people resist?’, but rather, “how and why those who do protest are able to continue to do so under authoritarian conditions?” How is the opposition able to survive in such a hostile environment? Why do some citizens living under authoritarian regimes challenge the regime while others continue to lead ordinary lives?

There has been a tendency by political science theorists to treat political activism under authoritarian, hybrid/semi-authoritarian and democratic contexts as having similar constraints and opportunities. This dissertation argues the institutional arrangements and public support underpinning political process models are not available for those who contest authoritarian regimes. For example, a recent wave of democratic revolutions with youth-led social movements includes Serbia in 2000, Ukraine in 2004, and Georgia in 2005

(McFaul 2005). Events in these countries highlight how protest-cum-regime change can occur in competitive authoritarian political regimes (Way 2005a and 2005b). There are structural and institutional opportunities available in competitive authoritarian regimes that are not available to oppositions operating in authoritarian systems.² The operating conditions in these countries are significantly different from the conditions found in authoritarian environments. We cannot presume that under authoritarian conditions oppositions will operate in the same manner, have the same goals, imperatives and strategies.

Scholars examine the systemic constraints to activism imposed by authoritarian regimes, but in social movement scholarship there is a tendency to conflate authoritarian durability with a lack of political opportunities. Geddes (1999) argues scholars intent on discovering the dynamics of democratization, ignore the durability of authoritarian institutions. Southeast Asian scholars address some of these issues, with analyses that examine authoritarian durability, including: the personalization of power in Malaysia (Slater 2003), historical foundations of military control in Burma (Callahan 2003), and the use of multiple levels of authority so national leaders can avoid blame for repression in China (Cai 2008). Singapore government uses ‘calibrated coercion,’ a declining use of force paired with an increase of less visible instruments of control George (2007).

² According to McFaul (2005), a number of factors led to the success of these movements. Factors included: these three countries were semi-autocratic, and not fully authoritarian regimes; the incumbents were unpopular; the opposition was united and organized; the opposition was able to drive home the point that voting results were falsified by the ruling regime; the political opposition was capable of mobilizing tens of thousands demonstrators to protest electoral fraud; enough independent media existed in each country to inform citizens about the falsified vote; and finally, there were divisions among the regime's coercive forces.

While some non-violent literature theorizes on sources of power in society (see Sharp 1974 and 2005), “because non-violent studies are often closely tied to the applied aspect of social movements and are thus written with the activist in mind, they often focus on the agency of the insurgents rather than the contingencies of institutions and broad-scale social and cultural structures within which activists operate,” write Zunes and Kurtz (1999: 305). Schock (2005), for example, examines peoples’ power movements and resistance strategies in non-democracies, but does not include a broader analysis of how dictatorial regimes use repression and social control mechanisms to create a compliant citizenry. Boudreau’s (1999) details the immense forms of power and control at the behest of Suharto’s Indonesia; from hindsight, however, this serves to convince that the 1998 movement and ending of the New Order regime should not have occurred.

Oppositional political action occurs despite the threat carefully cultivated by authoritarian governments. Repressive conditions are more than just crackdowns on protestors; authoritarian regimes attempt to prevent political activity through policies that limit democracy organizers access to new recruits, information, financial resources, and support from the population. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, in Burma “these violations have been so numerous and consistent over the past years as to suggest that they are not simply isolated acts of individual behaviour by middle or lower rank officers but are the result of policy at the highest level entailing political and legal responsibility.”

3 Rajsoomer Lallah, 1998, “Interim Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar,” prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, UN General Assembly, A/53/364, paragraph 59. Quoted in Protracted Displacement and Militarisation in Eastern Burma,” Thai Burma Border Consortium, (November 2009: page ii).

While social movement scholarship has long been dominated with Western and democratic cases, there is growing empirical evidence about oppositional social movements outside of these contexts (Slater 2008). For example, Hedman (2006) writes about the 1986 'Peoples' Power' movement that brought down the Marcos' regime in the Philippines. She argues since the 1950s in the name of civil society mass demonstrations occur every 15 – 17 years when the democracy faces full-blown crises (Hedman 2006: 11 - 13). In these examples, the authors argue that to understand opposition to authoritarian rule, scholars must first understand the nature of the authoritarian state (Slater 2008: 69).

Often cases are examined following a transition to a democratic or semi-democratic state. This is problematic from a research perspective because the post-revolution context makes it difficult to remember the long-term nature of resistance, motivation and efforts taken to maintain an opposition. Examined only from hindsight, success appears inevitable, and the difficulties to organizing imposed by the state become viewed as obviously surmountable. This obscures the harsh reality that maintaining an opposition under authoritarian constraints is difficult. Excluding cases of non-transition from analysis means our knowledge of social movements is limited to positive cases. Including negative cases expands our knowledge but also challenges key assumptions in the scholarship.

Reliance on post-transition states for research is in part, due to the difficulties of doing contemporary research in authoritarian conditions. The environment constructed by the authoritarian state makes conducting research difficult. Authoritarian governments use a combination of repression and social control to ensure a compliant public, and this includes efforts to manage scholars. Information going in and out of the country is limited, and the state conducts significant surveillance of citizens and visitors. Citizens risk much to

give candid interviews. Unless mass protests are occurring, it is also difficult for researchers to identify instances of activism; many individuals cannot risk a researcher calling attention to their activities. Interviews are possible from bordering areas of the country, but require relationships with formal and informal gatekeepers. Research on authoritarian regimes, and its opposition, requires creative data-gathering techniques and access to original source materials.

The closed nature of the state and the difficulty of conducting research may contribute to the widespread surprise exhibited by international media when citizens in authoritarian countries ‘spontaneously’ erupt into street protests. Large-scale demonstrations make news headlines, but in Burma and elsewhere, they do not tell the story of opposition resistance and survival. By overemphasizing large street demonstrations, academic research on social movements misses the events of contention that are of particular importance in authoritarian countries. Small-scale contention activities – pamphlets, stickers, graffiti and small one-man protests – occur between the periods of short-lived large-scale protests that capture media attention. These activities differ from the well-documented acts of ‘everyday politics’ (Kerkvliet 2005) and ‘avoidance protest’ (Adas 1992). Small-scale activities are specific forms of resistance that serve different purposes than avoidance protest and everyday forms of resistance. Small-scale activities constitute an area of political action categorically *between* everyday politics and mass demonstrations.

How these small-scale activities matter to opposition movements is unexamined in political science scholarship. These activities may be safer entry-points for individuals willing to move beyond everyday politics. The over-reliance of using demonstrations as a

proxy for size, scope and support of opposition movements is misleading when considering opposition to authoritarian regimes. Examining small-scale contention activities lessens this surprise.

There is not a clear point of division between social movement and revolution scholarship. Most treat these concepts as if they are differing ends of the same continuum. Violent insurgency and revolution are ultimate expressions of working outside or against the system to gain access to institutionalized power. Similarly, pro-democracy movements press for revolution from an authoritarian to a democratic system.⁴ When an opposition is not directly challenging the regime, however, it must survive the onslaught of repression and social control used by the authoritarian regime to eliminate opposition. There is no challenge out of annihilation, and oppositions survive the constraints imposed by the regime.

Through an in-depth examination of political organizing in Burma, this dissertation reviews extant social movement theory, provides novel explanations regarding how and why protest occurs, and generates new hypotheses appropriate for understanding political activism in authoritarian political systems. This research contributes to social movement literature, as well as the growing interest in the study of authoritarian regimes in comparative political science. Increased understanding of democratic activism and the forms that it takes under authoritarian conditions adds richer understanding of political participation in the studies of democratization, social movements and revolution.

⁴ Despite 'democracy' used as a rallying cry by some activists, another form of authoritarianism often replaces the ousted authoritarian government.

Main Arguments

For an opposition to continue to challenge or press claims against the state, an opposition must also survive the conditions of authoritarianism. Survival is an imperative of individuals within an opposition. The activities of an opposition demonstrate survival, based on the elements of signaling solidarity, information transfer and building a sympathetic public. The opposition's need for survival also influences patterns of recruitment and retention.

Despite the best efforts of Burma's successive dictatorial regimes to expand control over the country, it has failed to eradicate non-violent and violent opposition to its rule. State and society factors explain the limited political organizing in Burma, although large-scale protests have erupted in every decade since military takeover in 1962.

To reach its goal for democratization of the country, the political opposition in Burma has two imperatives: to challenge the government and to survive. The challenge and survival imperatives explain the broad range of activities conducted by an opposition in an authoritarian country.

Resistance in Burma encompasses the offensive position of the challenge imperative *and* the defensive position of the survival imperative. Challenge activities confront the authority of the governing regime; the authoritarian government and its entities are the primary audience, although it is beneficial if other segments of society witness the action. Challenge imperative activities are public displays of dissatisfaction; they include street protests, strikes and other visible forms of protest that specifically target the regime and its allies. In electoral authoritarian countries, political parties use these strategies to undermine the governing regime (see Mainwaring 2003).

Survival imperative activities, in contrast, bolster the opposition movement. They serve alternative purposes than direct confrontation and enable the opposition to shore itself up vis-à-vis its more powerful opponent. The survival imperative is demonstrated by restorative acts by individuals and organizations meant to conserve power and enhance the membership. Survival imperative events are less outwardly visible than challenge activities; they address the informational and morale needs of several audiences, including the public, members of the opposition, and even supporters of the regime. The survival imperative is not passive; activities include distributing pamphlets, giving political speeches, issuing statements and holding commemorative ceremonies. While the regime is a secondary audience for these activities, these activities are not without risk. Activists caught implementing survival activities receive severe punishment.

The following propositions construct the arguments made in this dissertation about the nature of state repression and political opposition in Burma.

Proposition 1: Authoritarian governments purposefully construct conditions meant to eliminate opposition to its rule. This context differs significantly from democratic and hybrid regimes; extant explanations in social movement scholarship should not be assumed applicable to this different context. Opposition movements operating under authoritarianism pursue different imperatives, strategies and tactics.

Proposition 2: Authoritarian states use repression to eliminate opposition and use social control mechanisms to cultivate a compliant public. Political repression serves to punish and therefore dissuade individuals from continuing opposition activities. Political activists are targeted with hard, or forced-based, repression that uses violence to quell an opposition, such as lengthy jail sentences and live ammunition to break up protests.

Regimes also use soft repression, including stigma, silencing and ridicule to create psychological and emotional constraints to demobilize politically active individuals.

Regimes use targeted repression coupled with social control initiatives to cultivate social compliance from the population. This is to deter future opposition. Regimes limit access to ideas and information, selectively use force and wield social policies to create institutional and legal barriers that ensure social compliance from the population. These deliberate actions by the state make it nearly impossible for ordinary citizens to have information about political alternatives or contact with opposition-minded individuals. Deterring individuals from becoming politically active is more cost-effective than repressing them later.

Proposition 3: The environment constructed by the authoritarian regime makes it unlikely an opposition will achieve goals—independence , regional autonomy, democratization or other political alternatives—quickly. For individual activists and organizations, survival is as much an imperative as challenging the regime; survival of individuals contributes to the survival of the opposition. By examining an opposition's activities as a whole, it becomes possible to discern patterns of challenge and survival.

Opposition movements, even those operating in authoritarian environments, have an expansive repertoire from which they draw. For example , activists distribute pamphlets, wear symbolic clothes, attend religious events and hold political trainings. Some of these activities directly challenge the state. Other activities serve the purpose of survival. Activities signal in-group solidarity, transfer information to other facets of a political movement, build a sympathetic public and provide rewards to ensure long-term participation. In addition, it is widely assumed by political scientists that opposition

movements and revolutionary groups work to recruit new members; there is widespread acceptance regarding the role of selective incentives for motivating participation (see Weinstein 2007a; Lichbach 1998; Goodwin and Skocpol 1989). Under authoritarian conditions, where regimes often use *agents provocateurs*, opposition movements are wary of letting informants into their ranks (Cunningham 2004). Maintaining an existing and loyal membership base may be a better strategy than widespread recruitment. This broad definition of resistance allows for simultaneous discussion of violent and non-violent groups and strategies, while addressing the wide range of offensive and defensive actions undertaken to resist growing authoritarianism.

Proposition 4: When societal groups show an aptitude for resistance, typically by holding a large anti-state demonstration, authoritarian regimes use repression and social control methods to eliminate institutions that aided the formation of opposition. Dictatorial regimes dismantle institutions that help an opposition overcome regime constraints – such as unions, political parties, universities and monasteries. Successful authoritarian regimes also create institutions to co-opt their citizens, such as administered mass organizations (Kasza 1995), political parties and religious organizations. Contrary to expectations, however, activists do not quit the movement. Instead, activists begin to rely on irregular channels of support to continue their resistance. In authoritarian Burma, activist family institutions help individuals overcome constraints to participation because they are trusted conduits for information, family events (such as funerals) provide necessary cover for political meetings and families can provide financial support to members engaged in political action. Family members already in the resistance also provide the credibility for new recruits – helping an organization determine that a potential recruit is not a regime-

informant. Family units, as an alternative institution of political organizing, help an opposition to survive.

Proposition 5: Many political activists and resistance soldiers remain in the resistance struggle for a decade or longer. Long-term participation is supported by the availability of a variety of opposition organizations, and paradoxically, by the authoritarian regime's use of repression and social control. The presence of many types of organizations within an opposition reduces reasons for an individual to quit the movement. Some people remain interested in political issues and regime change; their presence inside or outside an organization does not necessarily mean they have abandoned the cause of the resistance.

How individuals contribute to the opposition changes when their life circumstances change. Opportunity to shift roles when life circumstances change facilitates long-term participation. When an individual comes to disagree with the strategy of their current organization, often they move to serve in a different organization within the movement. Individuals can also shift between movement organizations for personal reasons; the presence of alternative organizations with different operations, goals and strategies facilitates an individual's long-term participation.

Secondly, the presence of long-term activism in Burma challenges the assumption in revolution scholarship that individuals will not remain involved for long periods of time. The scholarly emphasis on recruitment inaccurately portrays long-term participation as improbable. Contrary to expectations, the regime's use of repression and social control means activists and soldiers who wish to retire are unable to return to being 'ordinary citizens.' Former activists are targets of harassment by the regime, providing an incentive to remain in the opposition movement.

Approach and Methods

This examination of political activism under authoritarian conditions is a case study as it produces detailed description, triangulates multiple methods to explain phenomenon and incorporates a multi-perspective orientation (Snow and Trom 2002). To provide in-depth analysis leading to theory generation, this dissertation is limited to studying activism and resistance in one country. Because this is a case study of one country, there are limits in its generalized applicability and the findings cannot be definitive. It can be the basis for conjecture and further research (Grosz and Sardy 1985: 114).

Case study researchers sometimes deliberately select outlier cases that are infrequent and unrepresentative, or considered 'deviant' cases; these outlier cases are a potential opportunity for theory development (Bennett 1997: 4). This echoes Collier and Mahoney (1996) who suggest that single case study research is valuable for hypothesis testing and therefore theory building.

Burma is an example of a country where political action occurs under extreme authoritarian conditions. Its pro-democracy activist movement traces its contemporary origins to the student-led protests of 1962; it also is the location of several armed anti-state insurgencies, some of which have been fighting the government for over 50 years. Examining the authoritarian nature of the government of Burma deviates from the 'democratic biases' of the social movement subfield, which predominantly examines social movements in democratic conditions. Studying Burma expands understanding of how and why political action occurs in authoritarian conditions.

Research scope and case selection

Distinguishing this work from existing literature is the examination of the interplay of armed and unarmed movement organizations within the same time period and authoritarian context. Some scholars writing about authoritarian and other nondemocratic contexts have largely emphasized unarmed insurrection; civilians, not militaries, are the main actors in social movement struggles (Schock 2004; Zunes, Kurtz and Asher 1999). Schock, for example, defines social movements as “unarmed insurrections, defined as popular challenges to government authority that depend primarily on methods of nonviolent action rather than on armed methods” (Schock 2004: xvi; Zunes 1999). This categorization separating non-violent and violent resistance is prevalent in political science literature;⁵ it neatly delineates between non-violent and armed conflict but risks obfuscating that social movements can operate alongside organizations using armed resistance methods against the state. Those who have examined this interplay have focused on the use of violent strategy by activists working in democratic contexts. In Burma, non-violent and armed groups are present and work to replace the military dictatorship with a democratic and federal union.

Furthermore, these definitions exclude social movements that indirectly criticize state authority and policies—such as environmental, women’s rights, and health awareness

5 Some authors research participation in non-violent social movements (see for example, Schock 2004, Tarrow 1998; Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Della Porta and Diani 1998) while others examine participation in violent resistance (see Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Weinstein 2007a and 2007; Wood 2005; Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). By discussing one form of opposition, authors neglect that both non-violent and violent resistance occurs simultaneously. Two relevant exceptions include Viterna (2006) argues non-violent action is a gateway to violent forms of resistance, and Tejerina (2001) argues there are structural interactions between armed and non-violent opposition groups and that political violence is a form of collective action. Groups working within the same country select non-violent and violent strategies.

movements. Overlooked are the role of ‘reformist’ movements in authoritarian countries; this dissertation argues reform movements should be included in analysis of resistance and opposition under authoritarian countries.

Cases such as Burma provide opportunities to explore patterns of unsatisfied democratic activism and armed struggle, leading to better explanations of motivation without the thrill of success undermining the empirical results. Walton (1984: 169-171) argues failed rebellions should be evaluated as would-be revolutions, suggesting political scientists have been too willing to accept the victors’ account that these events are merely rebellion and therefore of minimal importance. Examining unfinished resistance and rebellion improves understanding of the processes of resistance. The goals of actors participating during the revolutionary situation may be different from the actual revolutionary outcome. As discussed later in this dissertation, democracy is not the only available outcome. Contemporary cases present opportunity for empirical data collection with living participants through interviews and life histories.

This dissertation primarily considers the civilian political struggle, but one cannot discuss opposition in Burma without also referencing the armed resistance. Thus, references to Burma’s ‘movement’ in this dissertation include armed and non-violent organizations and individuals opposing the military regime. These groups often operate in tandem with one another, but within the movement there are disagreements on strategy, tactics and ultimate objectives.⁶ In Burma, citizens wishing to begin anti-state activities

6 Much like the concept of civil society, the democracy movement in Burma is an organizational form without firm boundaries and consists of organizations and people that evolve over time. No organization can claim to represent the entire movement or the entirety of the people of Burma; these limitations are in part, imposed by the environment created by the dictatorial regime. For example, without the ability to safely hold intra-organizational elections, there will always be claims by individuals that they are not

have a choice to join non-violent or armed revolution groups. The presence of both types of resistance in Burma helps address key assumptions in social movement and revolution scholarship. This research compares the reasons civililians join non-violent political struggle to the reasons of individuals who join armed resistance. The reasons citizens do not join either struggle are also considered.

While Geddes (1990) argues against selecting cases based on the dependent variable, it is appropriate to select on the dependent variable when the universe of appropriate cases is small due to the subject matter. "The small-N problem is no problem at all when only a few major instances exist of the phenomenon a one wishes to understand. It is difficult not to sample on the dependent variable if one is interested in such things," according to Goodwin and Horowitz (2002: 37). Access to information and populations in locations with armed and non-violent resistance against authoritarian governments is difficult, thus limiting opportunities for scholars to conduct research on mixed oppositions. Some of the most influential studies in comparative politics produced valuable findings even though they violate norms of case selection proposed by the literature on selection bias (Collier and Mahoney 1996).

Dependent variable. The dependent variable in this dissertation is participation in political activities. This dissertation follows the example set by Opp and Gern (1993), who found "participation in protest" a useful dependent variable in studying motivation for protest in Western Germany. To examine variance within participation in political activities (dependent variable), this research follows an example of large-N research studies of who

accurately represented by organizations claiming to represent their ethnic /gender/political/social cleavage. Several umbrella organizations seeking to lead were established, but no single organization speaks for the

protests in America. McVeigh and Smith research uses three categories of dependent variables that “correspond with three alternative political responses: inaction, institutionalized political participation, and protest” (1999: 687). This dissertation examines the attitudes of, and resistance choices available to, political activists who conduct non-violent action inside Burma, soldiers in the armed resistance, and ordinary citizens who do not undertake anti-regime or political activities.

Independent variables. This dissertation increases understanding about factors that lead individuals to take risky actions in opposition to the authoritarian status quo. The following chapters review variables from three levels of analysis to determine if alternative explanations of how and why political oppositions continue to resist under authoritarian conditions:

- 1) International system variables such as connections to foreigners, understanding of democracy and exposure to relevant international activist networks focusing on democracy. This is measured by connections to the outside world, base knowledge of democratic principles, access to international news media (including the Burmese-language broadcasts on Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, and the Norway-based Democratic Voice of Burma) and the internet, access to foreigners inside Burma, awareness of international advocacy campaigns about Burma (such as U.N. Security Council campaigns, and international sanctions) and sources of funding for political activities.

entire movement. This movement includes organizations with competing claims.

- 2) Mid-level state and societal influences including economic factors, political opportunity structures measured by number of arrests and release of activists and political prisoners, current laws and emergency decrees, history of political activism, repression and social control methods used by the government, and political activities of religious institutions, unions, political parties, and other political organizations above and below ground. The evolving power of Burma's military, the *tatmadaw*, and the changing status of armed struggle is also considered.
- 3) Individual factors, such as by previous exposure to democratic behavior, witnessing prior large political events, generational influence, familial connections within the pro-democracy political opposition and armed resistance movement and demonstrations of pleasure in agency.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, this dissertation is theory generating: empirical evidence derives new ideas about how political action occurs under authoritarianism and what motivates individuals to join resistance and opposition movements. In the process, this work challenges some assumptions in social movement scholarship.

Research Design and Data Collection

This dissertation utilizes unique data gathered from sources that are exceptionally difficult to access. Burma's political opposition, armed and non-violent, by necessity

operates discretely. Previous professional work with the Burmese democracy movement made this research possible; research design and data collection were possible because pre-existing relationships with organizations within the Burmese pro-democracy movement. Familiarity with the existence of available data sources allowed for a research design to utilize unconventional sources of data.

To investigate the growth of authoritarian institutions in Burma, and examine the linkages between large-scale protests, the dissertation's research design included a longitudinal study. This research utilizes protest event analysis and semi-structured interviews to explain what kind of political activities occur in contemporary Burma and why individuals choose to undertake political activities under authoritarianism. Qualitative analysis is superior to quantitative or statistical models when "seeking to grasp the motivations and strategies of two or more sets of political actors, particularly as they interact with each other," according to Bob (2005: 10).

Longitudinal case study

This project begins with a longitudinal analysis of political activism and state response from 1962 to 2008 in Burma. "Longitudinal case study is simply the best research design available for testing hypotheses about the causes of specific events," according to Coppedge (1999: 473). It does the best job of documenting the sequence of events, which is crucial in establishing the direction of causal influence. It is the ultimate "most similar systems" design because conditions do not change from time one to time two (Coppedge 1999). According to della Porta, "in the field of comparative politics, the variable-oriented approach also has a particular interesting the use of time, especially in the form of

periodizations [sic] that allow for the multiplication of (sub) units of analysis; so the same country in different time periods could be treated as a set of distinct cases” (della Porta 2008: 217).

This approach allows the dissertation to include time as a variable, exploring the concept of changes in motivation over time. While recruitment is often considered, little is written about motivation for remaining within a movement over long periods of time. The interconnectivity of generations of protest becomes apparent by examining not only the most recent large demonstrations. This longitudinal study provides a necessary background to the other methods employed, by bringing “to light other variables, processes and relationships that deserve more extensive attention” (Grosof and Sardy 1985: 112).

Large protests occurred in Burma in 1988 and 2007; both received relatively good coverage by international media outlets. Less known are the similar protests that occurred in 1962 and 1974. Many of the activists who protested against the state in these earlier protests are involved in the contemporary political struggle. Each of these four large protests is described in detail, as are the ground conditions before and after the protest. This historical analysis includes discussion of each period’s international context, and mid-level independent variables including the economy, state and society, and status of the armed struggle.

The purpose of the longitudinal analysis is threefold. It provides the reader with a historical background on Burma that is relevant to understanding political activism and state behavior in post-World War II Burma. Second, it shows how demonstrations in Burma relate to each other over time, and the ongoing presence of armed and political resistance. Third, it demonstrates how the military regime has expanded its control over the

population in the past 50 years. The challenge that authoritarianism presents to the opposition is clearly illustrated.

The longitudinal case study draws upon three types of sources. Several contemporary histories of Burma have been written (including Lintner 1990 and 1999; Silverstein 1977; Taylor 2009; Charney 2009), and the dissertation draws upon the myriad of available books and published sources to write the case study. This includes news media sources and publications of political organizations. Secondly, the researcher interviewed more than 140 political activists, exile activists, resistance soldiers and citizens between August 2009 and March 2010; many of the interviewees participated in the events of 1962, 1974, 1988 and 2007. Some of the interviewee accounts of historical events are included in the case study. When information from the protest event analysis is relevant, this is also included in the historical analysis.

Protest Event Analysis

This dissertation argues for scholars doing empirical research on opposition movements to return to Tilly's expansive definition about what constitutes social movement 'protest' and acts of contention. To support this argument, an original dataset cataloged recorded acts of protest in Burma between 1990 and 2008. The dataset provides the basis for a Protest Event Analysis (PEA), which examines the scale and scope of events, the social groups leading political activities, and the general locations of protest activities.

Protest event analysis is a widely used research method in social movement scholarship. Protest event datasets allow researchers to “systematically map, analyze and

interpret the occurrence and properties of large numbers of protests” after mining available sources such as news media and police reports (Koopmans and Rucht 2002: 231). PEA has been used to understand patterns of new social movements and protest in Western countries (Kriesi 1992 and 1995; Koopmans 1995; Kriesi et al 1995), as well as cross-national comparisons of protest events in Hungary, East Germany, Poland and Slovakia in the political transition years of 1989 to 1993 (Ekiert and Kubik 1998). Almeida (2003) used PEA to determine the presence of widening opportunity structures in El Salvador, McAdam (1983) used this method to show how tactics were innovated over time in the Black insurgency in the United States, while Varshney (2010) uses this method to analyze patterns of collective violence in Indonesia. The Burma PEA is the first attempt to use this method to analyze non-violent political activities under extremely authoritarian conditions.

PEA research tends to include only mobilization forms such as demonstrations and civil disobedience. Big protests by demonstrators rarely occur in Burma and only reflect a small part of the activities of the political opposition. Large protests may generate international headlines, but small acts of protest are severely punished in authoritarian countries. Since every act does not directly challenge the regime, recognizing the purpose of activities serves to increase understanding of movement imperatives and strategies. This recognition lends itself to improved definitions of ‘successful’ movements; success should not be based entirely upon the normative criterion of whether (or not) a movement is successful at regime change.

As will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, demonstrations and civil disobedience activities are rare in Burma because of the political repression and social compliance cultivated by the authoritarian regime. Protest in authoritarian countries takes different

forms than it does in countries with democratic institutions, free media, and rule-of-law. This research follows the PEA method, but includes data points that follow a broader, more inclusive definition of political event than mass demonstrations. This dataset includes the contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people made collective claims on others (Tilly 2004).

The PEA only includes activities in the contemporary period of 1990 to 2008. A post-1990 timeframe is the focus of Chapter 4's examination of repression and social control in Burma, so it is appropriate to provide a comparable timeframe of political activities. As Lintner (1990) argues, Burma after 1990 is fundamentally different from Burma prior to 1988. The 1988 protests, the brutal regime response and the organized political opposition that emerged created a significantly different situation than what existed in 1988 (Lintner 1990).

For similar reasons, the year 2008 is an appropriate ending for this research. Cyclone Nargis devastated the country in May 2008 and the country shifted to responding to the humanitarian crisis. Just days following the cyclone, the regime held a constitutional referendum, and widespread 'Vote No' campaigns occurred across the country in the weeks and months prior to the cyclone. This allowed a time lag between an event happening and then being reported in this research. Doing so affords greater personal security for the people who documented events occurring inside Burma.

The PEA is reviewed from two analytical perspectives. Many of Burma's democratic activists adhere to Gene Sharp's (1973, 1980 and 2005) methods of non-violent resistance; it is practical and relevant to use an expanded typology of his resistance

methods to examine the range of political activities used by the opposition in Burma.⁷ Secondly, the opposition's survival imperative and its elements, as proposed in this work, are explained in relation to the protest event analysis. This framework provides an explanation for why opposition organizations conduct particular activities that do not directly challenge the authoritarian regime.

The event dataset is a compilation of a variety of sources, including the reports of several Burmese organizations based in Thailand,⁸ newspaper articles and accounts of political activities in published books.⁹ Each data point records the source; where numerous sources mention the same event, this was noted, but recorded only as one event.¹⁰ The PEA

7 Sharp's treatise on non-violent action, includes a theory of political power, the societal pillars that support government, and list of 198 non-violent political tactics; summarized into pocket-size books, Sharp's methods of non-violent action were translated into Burmese as well Shan, Karen, Mon, Arakan and several other languages of ethnic groups in Burma.

8 Considering a significant amount of source material for the dataset comes from organizations that support activism inside Burma, the results of this likely skew towards over-representation of organizational political action. Despite this likely overrepresentation in the sample, these figures highlight how organizations help provide motivation for long-term political action.

9 Appendix 3 outlines the dataset in detail. The political events dataset incorporates two types of sources – public news media and unpublished private reports of several organizations. International media sources were not considered useful for this project and not included because they only report the rarest of protest events, such as the events surrounding the September 2007 protests. Domestic news media outlets based in Myanmar are tightly controlled by the SPDC; oppositional political events are not reported in Myanmar's official newspapers unless cast in a derogatory manner (see Chapter 4).

Perhaps taking cues from international publications, even the Burmese broadcasters operating outside of Burma infrequently write about small-scale political activities. Newspaper accounts are an inaccurate representation of the range of political activism occurring inside Burma. Ball (2005) compared human rights reports to media coverage in Guatemala, finding problems when political scientists only rely on media reports. He convincingly demonstrates how even in a relatively free media did not accurately cover news of state-sponsored genocide within the country's borders. Ball argues human rights organizations' data should be used by academic researchers. In a similar vein, Davenport argues "what is needed is something equivalent to the human rights-oriented NGO but with an interest in dissent and insurgency," (2007a: 6). This research argues political organizations are effective sources of information regarding political activities.

10 Please refer to Appendix 3's codebook for detailed information about the compilation of the political event dataset. This includes detailed definitions, selection criteria, source publications information and discussion of the limitations of the political events dataset. Lists of sources reviewed and included in the dataset are included in Appendix 3.

dataset includes 1,939 political activities in Burma between 1990 and 2008. No claim is made that the PEA includes all acts of political defiance and resistance.

The PEA presents an illustration of the breadth of political action occurring inside contemporary Burma. While it is exciting to present data that is often inaccessible due to the nature of the authoritarian regime in Burma, the potential for simultaneous problems of underreporting *and* over reporting data stipulate cautious interpretations informed by the other methods used in the dissertation. Due to the difficulty of obtaining records about small-scale political activities, there is likelihood that this research underreports numbers of events. Sources of information detailing events inside Burma are limited, and primarily sourced from organizations. This leads to a non-recording of activities done by individuals and organizations outside the networks of those writing about political events. At the other end of the spectrum, this dataset may also over report the number of events occurring inside Burma. Many events are unverifiable due to the authoritarian conditions that limit information and access inside Burma, and activists might have reasons to over-report activities.

Political conditions in authoritarian Burma preclude more accurate data collection on this subject. Reliable recorded information is extremely limited, scattered in numerous locations, and access to sources curtailed by security concerns. It would be impossible in any authoritarian state to compile such a dataset. Yet authoritarian cases are some of the most interesting in which to examine political resistance. Thus, the PEA informs broadly about what political activities occur and led by which societal groups. It shows how political action occurs in a place where demonstrations are only a small part of resistance.

Analyzed alongside the interviews of activists, soldiers and citizens, the PEA supports conclusions about political challenge and survival in Burma.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the PEA, while Appendix 3 contains the codebook for the PEA, discusses reliability and bias of source materials and provides references of all sources in the dataset.

Interviews with Political Activists, Resistance Soldiers and Ordinary Citizens

The third method used for this research was semi-structured interviews with political activists, resistance soldiers, ordinary citizens and exile activists. Interviews provided first-hand knowledge of events and organizations and specifically addressed the questions regarding motivation and retention.

There is no ideal number of interviews to complete but other scholarly work provided useful guidelines. Bob and Nepstad (2007), for example, interviewed 40 movement leaders to understand how the Ogoni liberation movement changed following the assassination of a movement leader; Wood (2003) interviewed approximately 200 *campesinos* in El Salvador for her work that introduced political action resulting from of 'pleasure in agency.' In her book about living under authoritarian rule in Burma, C. Fink (2001) interviewed more than 150 individuals from a variety of sectors, including migrant workers, students, soldiers, civil servants, businessmen and traders. For this research, 140 anonymous interviews were completed.

Probability sampling to select a representative sample of individuals to interview was not possible in this dissertation.¹¹ A combination of snowball and quota-targeting non-random sampling techniques were used to select interview subjects. Snowball sampling, also called sampling by referral, is “useful when it is difficult or impractical to obtain a list of names for sampling,” according to A. Fink (2002: 23). Sampling by referral is also useful when “members of a scattered minority [ethnic] population comprises a small fraction of the population in a larger area,” according to Welch (1975:237). Activists from Burma regularly visit bordering countries to meet with exile organizations; after the researcher met with leaders from exile organizations to explain the objective of the dissertation, some organizations and individuals arranged interviews with individuals visiting Thailand.¹²

Sampling by referral had the important advantage of providing a foundation of trust between researcher and interviewee, thus helping mitigate problems associated with question threat. Some researchers note difficulties developing trust with social movement activist research subjects (Taylor 1999), and academia is often considered part of the socio-political-economic-patriarchic hierarchy activists are struggling against (Kriesi 1992). Question threat, the recognition that questions can be “psychologically disturbing to this or

11 It is not possible to draw a sampling frame, as there is no list of the population of activists or citizens outside of Burma. While some individuals legally cross into Burma’s neighboring countries (students, businessmen), the vast majority of migrant laborers, activists and soldiers illegally cross into neighboring countries. The presence of armed resistance groups makes the border more porous, and the illegal routes have been used for decades. This presents a dual security risk for interviewees – one from their home country, particularly for those who intend to return after their business is concluded, as well as for example, from the Thai government that can deport them back to Burma for being in their country illegally. Interviewees were well aware of this dual risk to their personal security.

12 Some organizations declined to assist the researcher; others initially agreed, but interviews were not forthcoming. Greater discussion about selection and process of interviewing is included in Appendix 1.

that respondent,” is best minimized by sensitive interviewing techniques and building trust between the researcher and the interviewee (Foddy 1993: 119).

Question threat also relates to the fear of potential danger or sanctions that may result from doing the interview. According to Foddy, “respondents must be able to persuade the researcher not to use the information against them and to define the request [for information/questions answered] to be legitimate” (1993: 12; emphasis in the original). Because most interviewees were illegally in Thailand during the time of the interview, question threat had significant potential to derail use of this method. Sampling by referral had the advantage of helping interviewees trust the researcher and the project.¹³

Sampling by referral has the disadvantage that recommendations may produce a biased sample over-representing activists of certain education, social class and income. It can also lead to under-sampling isolated members of the movement and oversampling those with more extensive contacts and acquaintances (Welch 1975). The researcher worked with 28 organizations and individuals to identify interviewees, reaching populations not normally interviewed.¹⁴ Interviews were conducted with political activists, resistance soldiers, ordinary citizens and exile activists.

Political Activists were interviewed to understand why individuals choose to do the dangerous work of politics in Burma. The label of activist, and therefore who to include in

13 Established trust with Burmese political and armed organizations was fundamental to gain access to interviewees. Trust came primarily from my previous position as the Burma program officer at the International Republican Institute. In this position, I regularly worked with Burmese political organizations based in Thailand, and met with a number of individuals coming out of Burma for trainings between 2004 and 2009. Research was completed in various locations in Thailand and Burma during a field visit between August 2009 and March 2010. During the time of research, I was a PhD candidate at the George Washington University, and no longer a staff member of IRI.

14 Please refer to Appendix 1 for details regarding the selection process and Appendix 2 for sample question guides.

this study under this category, followed the guidelines established by Searle-Chatterjee (1999). It is based on three criteria: 1) self-identification, whereby interviewees label themselves and self-identify as activists; 2) the interviewees have a participatory role in Burma's opposition movement;¹⁵ and 3) substantial amounts of their time and energy is expended in pro-democracy activities. Thirty-two political activists were interviewed for this research.

The political activists interviewed came from a variety of organizations working above and underground in Burma, including members of the National League for Democracy, Generation Wave, All Burma Young Monks Union, All Arakan Students and Youth Committee, Pa'O National Liberation Organization, All Burma Federation of Students Unions, Mon Youth Progressive Organization and 2007 New Generation Students Union.¹⁶ By interviewing activists associated with movement organizations, their testimony helps explain how individual agency contributes to the collective movement.

Political activists are individuals currently or very recently (within the calendar year) pursuing non-violent action inside Burma to defy the government, its policies, or in support of transition to democracy. While interviewees considered themselves to be 'democracy activists,' they are included in this category if they were engaging in political activities inside Burma that posed a risk of imprisonment if the SPDC discovered their

15 Individuals were not necessarily affiliated with an organization, but more than a silent supporter.

16 Members of several other organizations were interviewed, but as above ground groups that explicitly state they are not political, to limit harassment by the authorities, it is not possible to mention the names at this time. Some individuals were active in social/community organizations, environmental groups and women's rights movements.

work.¹⁷ These individuals identify as activists, conduct activities that are risky to do, but some are not as overtly political as others. Some activities conducted by this group address social issues or challenge government policies, but do not challenge the right of Burma's military government to be in power. Chapter 5 discusses the importance of reformist and revolutionary activities, and their role in Burma's opposition movement.

Resistance soldiers. Individuals currently serving in armed, anti-state resistance organizations were interviewed. Resistance organizations challenge the sovereignty of the SPDC; several groups hold their own territory in Burma, but the square mileage under their control is diminishing. Others operate solely as guerrilla movements without territorial holdings. Interviews were with active soldiers and leaders within these anti-SPDC organizations. Some interviews are with individuals from the administrative, medical and political wings of these armed organizations. They may not be on the battlefield, but they have received military training and support the mandate of their organization to pursue armed struggle as a means to challenge the state in Burma.

Resistance soldiers do not include members of the armed forces from Burma's neighboring countries. For example, this excludes Thai and Indian military personnel that have clashed with the *tatmadaw* forces in the years of this study. The interviews with the two soldiers who defected from the *tatmadaw* are not included in this category either, as when they made the decision to join the army they were loyal to the regime; these

17 One individual, for example, called herself a 'social worker,' and led community education projects. Yet after some probing during the interview, she admitted to bringing copies of an alternative democratic constitution into Burma and distributing them. This work was not a habit, but she had chosen to do this several times, and she admitted being willing to do so in the future for important documents. Other individuals, particularly Mon activists, were more focused on promoting culture and Mon language literacy programs – but since this is only nominally legal (and subject to local authorities not allowing it) these individuals are included in the political activist category.

interviews are included in the ordinary citizen category. Thirty-one interviews with members of armed resistance groups were completed.

Interviews included soldiers and leaders from the New Mon State Party (the only ceasefire group included), All Burma Student's Defense Force, Shan State Army – South, Arakan Liberation Army, the Karen National Liberation Army, the Naga National Council, and the Karen National Defense Organization.

Ordinary citizens. Interviews with 'ordinary citizens' provide comparison of the differences between activists, resistance soldiers and citizens not motivated to participate in anti-state or pro-democracy activities. The term 'ordinary citizen'¹⁸ describes people who are not involved in politics or armed struggle. Members of this category were selected because it was assumed they were not politically active. This assumption held as no one interviewed for this category identified as a political or exile activist.¹⁹ Ordinary citizens, even if they mention interested in politics, do not consider themselves political activists or

18 The term 'ordinary citizen' describes people who are not involved in politics or armed struggle. I struggled with finding the best term for this group. Ordinary citizen is appropriate because numerous interviewees (and several different translators), described themselves using Burmese terms that literally mean ordinary citizen. Specifically, they referred to themselves as *yo nai ngan tha* and *thar mahn nai ngan tha*; 'yo yo' and *thar mahn* both mean ordinary, and *nai ngan tha* means citizen. Alternative labels such as 'non-political' or 'non-activist' did not fit, because some interviews revealed that individuals were interested in politics; a handful had even done small political acts such as writing and singing folk songs about independence, but didn't view themselves as activists (Searle-Chatterjee's 1999 requirement of self-ascription). A discussion with a staff member from the Karen Human Rights Group highlighted the problem of defining someone by the term 'non-political': the term implies an absence of agency or interests. In reality, many of these 'ordinary citizens' chose to exit Burma. KHRG (2008) argues that a 'village agency' of small acts of noncooperation and negotiation are present in Burma, a concept that follows the ideas in James C. Scott's (1985) *Weapons of the Weak* (KHRG 2008).

19 The term 'citizen' is loosely used. Citizen in this case it just means citizen of Burma, regardless of whether a person had documents or identity cards. Many do not – it is extremely difficult for citizens of the ethnic areas of Burma to obtain identity cards. These interviewees came from Burma, were born there, and were intending (some hoping) to return to their homes inside the country. Members of this category were selected because it was assumed they were not politically active. Individuals dubbed 'ordinary citizens,' even if interested in politics, do not describe themselves as a 'political' or see themselves as 'doing' politics. This assumption held and no one selected for this category turned out to be a political activist. If they had, I would have moved that interview into the more appropriate category.

see themselves as ‘doing’ politics. Many, by their own admission, were not very interested in politics. All but one interviewee disapproved of the military regime.

Thirty-nine ordinary citizens were interviewed, including refugees, migrant workers, former *tatmadaw* soldiers and students. Interviews were conducted in several locations on the Thailand-Burma border as well as Bangkok and Chiang Mai, Thailand, two large cities with Burmese populations.

Exile activists. Exile activists operating outside of Burma who provide support to the political activists noted above, were also interviewed. ‘Exile activists’ referenced in the text are individuals who spend the majority of their time working within the political movement for democracy from a position of exile, usually in a bordering country. Exile activists are defined as 1) individuals who spend time and personal resources supporting democracy movement activities inside and outside of Burma, and 2) originating from Burma but no longer living in the country. Most exiles cannot return to Burma for fear of immediate arrest by the authorities. Almost all said they intend to return to Burma as soon as conditions permitted a safe homecoming. Thirty-nine exile activists were interviewed.

Inclusion of exile activists’ testimonies deepens understanding of short- and long-term motivation; many of the exile activists interviewed supported the democracy movement for over 20 years. The conditions in which these individuals live are different than their colleagues inside Burma and those in the armed resistance, but are still personally stressful and insecure. Most had begun as activists or soldiers, and transitioned to a position of exile. Some had the chance to emigrate to a third country through refugee resettlement plans, but chose to remain to continue their support of transition in Burma.

Table 1: Summary of interviewee demographics

<u>Interviewee Category (N=140)</u>				
	<u>Citizen</u>	<u>Activist</u>	<u>Soldier</u>	<u>Exile</u>
Number	40	32	31	37
Percent	29%	23%	22%	26%
<u>Urbanity(N=140)</u>				
	<u>Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	
Number	82	57	1	
Percent	59%	41%	1%	
<u>Age Ranges (N=140)</u>				
	<u>Under 20</u>	<u>21 – 35</u>	<u>36 – 50</u>	<u>51+</u>
Number	5	70	41	24
Percent	4%	50%	29%	17%
<u>Gender (N=140)</u>			<u>Gender w/o soldiers (N=109)</u>	
	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
Number	35	105	35	74
Percent	25%	75%	32%	68%
<u>Ethnicity(N=140)</u>			<u>Ethnicity w/o soldiers (N=109)</u>	
	<u>Burman</u>	<u>Ethnic</u>	<u>Burman</u>	<u>Ethnic</u>
Number	37	103	36	73
Percent	26%	74%	33%	67%

Fluidity between dependent variable categories

When during an interview it became clear that an individual's experiences overlapped categories, the classification was determined based on their present status.²⁰

20 For example, Interviewee Activist Z36, now 74 years old, joined a resistance army fighting for independence in 1959. He quit for family reasons after five years and later hired by the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), the official party of the military government. After a few years, when government realized his prior activities, he was fired. Later he helped form a new political party to contest the 1990 elections; the Democratic Party won one seat. Declared illegal by the regime, the party disbanded. Z36

Determining where a person fit into this typology was not always straightforward; a person's history and activities often did not follow a linear path. This dependent variable fluidity is unto itself a finding of this research: political activists and soldiers transitioned between different organizations when it served their interests to do so. The fluidity of actors to engage in different forms of opposition when opportunities expand and constrict, and when personal life circumstances change, is only obvious when considering resistance as a continuum of strategies, activities, and forms of organizations.

The qualitative approach helped identify this finding. The life histories gathered during the interviews, particularly of some of the older activists, highlighted that people remain interested in political issues and regime change even if they can no longer be part of the opposition in their current position. How they *contribute* to the opposition changes due to shifting life circumstances. The ability to shift into different types of resistance when life circumstances changes helps facilitate long-term participation. Chapter 6 and 7 examine this finding more thoroughly.

Burma, not Myanmar

An author's use of Myanmar or Burma, writes Steinberg, "has become a surrogate indicator of political persuasion and even projected legitimacy, causing considerable antipathy and confusion in both official and popular circles" (2006: xx). There is a division

stopped doing politics for about 15 years, going back to farming. After the May 2008 constitutional referendum in Burma, he decided to join a new political organization that was forming; he had been in Thailand for over a year but was planning to return to Burma in two months to begin non-violent political organizing activities in his community. This individual classifies as political activist, but his memoirs about why he joined and quit the armed struggle and joined, quit and resumed politics were valuable to understanding the primary questions of this research.

between those who consider names to be a matter of arbitrary convenience, and those who think names convey meaning and instill legitimacy (Dittmer 2008). This dissertation uses Burma to reference the country, and uses the varying names of the government authority when discussing government policy and actions.

‘Burma’ is used in this dissertation to reference the country and the people living within its territorial boundaries. Steinberg notes that Burma’s political opposition “has accepted neither the legitimacy of that regime nor that [name] change, and continues to call it Burma” (2006: xx). This dissertation is about longstanding political and armed opposition against authoritarianism; as such, the symbolism associated with nomenclature matters. Out of respect to the subject matter and particularly the activists interviewed, the dissertation refers to the country as Burma.

Secondly, for some segments of the population, use of Burma calls attention to the government’s practice of changing *local* names in the ethnic areas under its control. Writes Lintner,

Indigenous place names in Burma’s Shan State such as Kengtung, Hsipaw and Hsenwi (which all have a meaning in the local Shan language) have been Burmanized into Kyaing Tone, Thibaw and Theinli (which is a Burmese corruption of these place names, with no meaning in any language).²¹

This practice and its outcomes receive less attention. The changing of names is analogous to the purposeful erasing of culture and history; as will be discussed in Chapter 4, it is

²¹ Lintner, Bertil. 1994. “A Distortion of History,” reprinted in *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 2 (4): May 15, 1994. Originally printed in the *Sunday Post* May 1, 1994.

another form of social control imposed by the government. States, divisions, and city names also follow pre-1989 names in this dissertation; thus the use of Rangoon instead of Yangon. The dissertation refers to Burmese people, that is, all people living within the recognized territorial boundaries of the country. When discussing specific ethnic-cultural-linguistic groups, the dissertation refers to specific ethnic group names.

When writing about specific events within Burma's history, the text refers to the name of the government for that period. For example, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) ruled the country from the mid-1970s until 1988. The 1988 coup ushered in the military government of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which in 1989 renamed the country Myanmar. In 1996, the SLORC became the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Thus, references are made to the BSPP, SLORC and SPDC as appropriate to the timeframe of discussion. Following the questionable parliamentary elections in 2010 and the ensuing seating of parliament in 2011, the use of 'SPDC' is no longer accurate.²² At the time of writing, there is no accepted acronym with which to refer to the national government, but referring to the government as *new* is misleading since little has changed. According to the BBC, "critics dismiss the new system as a continuation of the old in a new guise."²³ Throughout the dissertation, references are made about the government of Burma.

²² Chapter 3 provides in-depth discussion regarding these name changes and discussion of whether the name change brought changes in governing institutions.

²³ "Burma Transfer of Power Complete," *BBC News*, March 30, 2011, found online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12903507>.

Organization of the Dissertation

The remaining chapters develop the arguments made in this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 presents a literature review that draws upon social movement and revolutions scholarship to answer some of the questions of this research, but in the process challenges several assumptions made by scholars in these fields. Following the literature review, Chapter 3: Political Activism and State Response, discusses the outbreaks of protest in Burma and assesses why individuals became involved in political activities. The chapter provides the core of the longitudinal analysis and demonstrates that state and society variables provide the best understanding of how and why protest occurs in Burma.

The longitudinal analysis continues in Chapter 4: Repression in Burma, although this chapter focuses entirely on the post-1988 period and the military regime's expansion of authoritarian rule. By specifying how the government of Burma uses political repression and social control to eliminate the opposition, the chapter identifies the specific challenges facing opposition movements in authoritarian countries. This leads to Chapter 5: Challenge and Survival: Political Action in Burma, where the protest event analysis alongside the interview data analyzes political activities occurring in Burma. The analytical lenses of challenge and survival scrutinize the offensive and defensive political activities led by individuals, political parties, students, monks, small businesses and community organizations.

Discussion of the opposition's survival imperative continues in Chapter 6: Recruitment and Retention. Finally, Chapter 7 presents a summary of conclusions, policy recommendations and implications for future research. Following the bibliography, Appendix 1 outlines the procedures for selecting interviewees, and Appendix 2 provides

the question guides used in the interviews. Appendix 3 provides the codebook that guided the compilation of the political event dataset, and Appendix 4 cites all source material used for the dataset.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Authoritarian states use tools of repression and social control to eliminate opposition. How and why protest continues under these conditions is under-explained, in part due to a democracy bias in social movement studies. Extant explanations primarily draw upon empirical evidence from movements pressing for expansion of political rights in democratic states (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: xi–ii; McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow 1997: 143; Kurzman 2004: 294). Democratic and hybrid states are comprised of institutions that, to varying degrees, can be leveraged by an opposition. Similar institutions are unavailable to oppositions pressing claims in authoritarian systems. Thus, the accumulated knowledge regarding social movements in democratic conditions is not entirely germane to understanding political activism under authoritarian systems.

Studies of opposition movements pressing claims in hybrid regimes are increasing,²⁴ particularly places where some legal rights are available to opposition groups. Examinations of movements in Ukraine (Arel 2005), Georgia (Way and Levitsky 2006), and Korea (Chang 2008) help redress the overrepresentation of democratic cases in the literature. Fewer examine opposition movements in authoritarian systems; recent work on Belarus (Marples 2006), Burma (Dale 2011) and competitive-authoritarian Eastern Europe (Bunce and Wolchik 2010) are relevant exceptions. Much scholarship assumes opposition movements under authoritarianism pursue a unified, single goal of regime change. These

²⁴ Diamond (2002) classifies as hybrid regimes those that exhibit institutions and norms of both democracies and autocracies.

studies assume movements implement the same type of activities and recruit new members in the same manner as movements challenging democratic and hybrid regimes.

There is also an overemphasis on measuring demonstrations instead of examining the range of resistance strategies and tactics available to social movements. The size and regularity of demonstrations inaccurately portrayed as a proxy for the size and efficacy of a political movement. Regimes tightly control their populations to eliminate opportunities for demonstrations; the lack of demonstrations in Burma and other authoritarian states says more about regime strength than it says about the capabilities or size of the opposition.

This research provides a missing link between research on large-scale demonstrations and scholarship examining peasant resistance. Scholars examining peasant resistance have thoroughly demonstrated the presence of ‘avoidance protest,’ where peasants avoid paying state taxes or being pressed into corvée labor by fleeing to other areas of the country, aligning themselves with different local lords, or migrating to monastic estates that allowed refuge (Adas 1992). This is distinguishable from the ‘everyday politics,’ the indirect resistance by villagers to demands made by people in positions of economic and cultural authority. Resistance by peasants, using foot-dragging and gossip, safely channels grievances about authorities in Malaysia (Scott 1985), and between slaves and figures of authority (Scott 1990).

Everyday politics over time can affect national policy ; Kerkvliet (2005) demonstrates how everyday politics eventually led to changes in national agricultural policy in Vietnam. Survival strategies of villagers constitute resistance against state oppression (Heppner 2004). These traditions of everyday, passive resistance to authority tend to be localized within communities and neighborhoods, and therefore not included in

discussions of social movements and non-violent resistance (Zunes, Kurtz and Asher 1999). These indirect forms are typically more available to individuals under authoritarianism than direct resistance, and this dissertation argues they should be included on a continuum of resistance options.

This chapter begins by outlining the obstacles authoritarian regimes pose to an opposition movement. It then demonstrates how an authoritarian context challenges the assumptions of the political process framework, the dominant research program in social movement scholarship. The chapter draws upon research from revolutions and social movement scholarship to suggest new ways of thinking about opposition under authoritarianism. In short, the authoritarian context challenges widespread scholarly assumptions regarding recruitment, the impossibility of long-term activism, and what kinds of political opposition activities should be used to measure activism in authoritarian systems.

The challenge: authoritarianism quells resistance

Authoritarian regimes provide a degree of certainty – citizens in these societies are extremely aware of the consequences of certain actions, and people subsequently self-censor themselves to ensure that no appearance of wrongdoing could be construed by the authorities. According to Apter, “high coercion systems produce risk-averse behavior. Yet any effort to privatize and democratize, while it will eliminate individual political risk, necessarily increases social and economic risks which, under conditions of uncertainty, people will be reluctant to undertake” (1985: 477). Citizens might rationally falsify their preferences (Kuran 1991), making it impossible for activists to know whether political

change is supported. Communication channels are limited to what people can reasonably produce themselves and must circumvent regime censors. Political activities may therefore take different forms than in democratic societies; demonstrations may play less of a role but speech acts of resistance in authoritarian settings may be more relevant (Johnston 2005).

Authoritarian institutions limit opposition by constructing an environment that induces compliance from the broader society. Regimes conduct targeted political repression against mobilized activists as needed. Authoritarian institutions are the primary shapers of the environment in which opposition [doesn't] occur (Lust-Okar 2005).

Social control policies, those that cultivate compliance of the citizenry, are essential to keep people from joining or creating political opposition to the state. A state's ability to maintain *cohesion*, the level of compliance within the state apparatus, and the ~~state~~*scope*, its effective reach across territory and into society, are key elements of maintaining control of its population (Levitsky and Way 2006). Scope also includes the states' ability to control economic activity. The stronger these elements, a state can more easily resist the demands of its opposition (Levitsky and Way 2006). Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2005) argue the link between economic and political liberalization is getting weaker; this research does not think this is a coincidence or a sign that the relationship no longer matters. Rather, the weakening relationship between economic and political liberalization is a result of increased sophistication by authoritarian regimes.

Regimes have learned how to provide economic growth and benefits to their populations without loosening their political grip. Singapore, China and Vietnam exemplify a social contract where the state provides a foundation for economic prosperity in return for citizens relinquishing claims to political freedom. Successful authoritarian states supply

public goods – such as health care or some education – to build social support for the regime. States that provide aggrieved groups some access to resources and decision-making significantly helps prevent groups from mobilizing for a more radical reorganization of the state (Goodwin 2001: 46). A compliant citizenry helps preclude the rise of future resistance groups that can eventually threaten the government. By doing so, authoritarian regimes eliminate the relative deprivation reasons that might push some citizens to seek to join an opposition while also controlling alternative information sources.

The question, for both democratic and authoritarian contexts is under what conditions severe repression fuels rather than curbs protest activity. According to Henderson, "the worse the conditions of democracy, socioeconomic needs, inequality, the rate of economic growth and economic level, the worse will be the conditions of repression" (1991: 130). Political repression is a policy of coercion or threat by government officials, aimed at potential opponents to limit their ability to dissent against the government or government policies (McCamant 1981: 133; discussed by Mahoney-Norris 2000: 71). Political repression specifically targets activists and opponents of the state. Opp and Roehl (1990) argue repression and protest follow a bell curve, where slight repression by the state initially serves to increase mobilization, but once repression gets high, protest stops. In democratic nations, government sanctions provoke higher levels of protest demonstrations; in autocracies, severe sanctions can impose an unbearable cost, resulting in an inverse relationship between sanctions and protest activity (Gupta, Singh and Sprague 1993). When social control mechanisms fail, and people mobilize against the regime, authoritarian leaders turn to repression. Regime type "is an important determinant in the

relationship of protest under repression,” according to Gupta, Singh and Sprague (1993: 335).

There is significant variation even within regime type. Given recent events in Egypt and Libya, a key variable might be the relationship between the authoritarian regime and its military. If the military refuses to execute above a certain threshold the violent repression ordered by the regime, then the initial use of violent state repression can fuel greater resistance. In the case of Burma, where the military leadership governs the authoritarian regime, there may be greater willingness to use violent repression of political protests than found in civilian-led autocracies.²⁵

In addition to repression of political activists, regimes apply more generalized and indiscriminate forms of repression, violence and coercion against members or groups within a society. This is the broader context in which political organizing occurs. The emphasis on repression conceals that broader authoritarian conditions also deter protest. Writes Davenport, “by ignoring more covert forms of activity such as physical and electronic surveillance and agents provocateur, we end up with a distorted view of what takes place” (2007a: 18). The context of the regime’s social control mechanisms and repression techniques influence how oppositions organize, the strategies deemed available, and tactics considered appropriate. The state context matters not just for a movement’s

25 In the case of Burma, where the military governs the authoritarian regime, questions turn instead to relations between the commanding officers and the rank-and-file soldiers. Rumors circulate about divisions between hardliners and softliners, the presence of centre-periphery tensions, and rivalries between graduates of different training programs (Selth 2002: 262). Despite these rumors, according to Callahan, “Burma’s military leadership has faced no serious challenges from within the ranks” (2000:47).

success or failure; the state is a factor in the formation, success and failure of revolutions (Goodwin 2001).

How social movements *don't* work in authoritarian societies

A synthesis of three research areas into the “political process framework” presently dominates social movement scholarship. The political process framework is considered by some the hegemonic approach within social movement scholarship (Kriesi 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 1999). The political process framework includes scholarship from three research areas: resource mobilization, political opportunity structures and framing processes. Problematically, most empirical research in social movement scholarship focuses on movements under democratic regimes, particularly based on the United States experience (Wickham-Crowley 1991: 10; Davis 1999). Contemporary work in this field has addressed oppositions operating under hybrid regimes, but few consider whether these assumptions hold when considering activism under authoritarianism. The following section will demonstrate the challenge posed to the political process framework by considering activism under authoritarian regimes.

At its beginning, resource mobilization “sought to break from grievance-based conceptions of social movements and to focus instead on the mobilization processes and the formal organizational manifestations of these processes,” according to McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996: 3). It focuses on the bureaucratization of social movement organizations, particularly how they seek survival and face competition from other social movement organizations. In this view, organizations are the primary actors pressing

claims (Gamson 1975), and organizations themselves are a resource for mobilization²⁶. Organizations help sustain a movement during difficult times (Whittier 1997; Taylor 1989) and can be a source of innovation (Staggenborg 1988). An important but minority opinion views formal organizations as unable to extract concessions from elites and thus ultimately opposition organizations end up benefitting the very hierarchy the movement is trying to oppose (Piven and Cloward 1977 and 1992). The efforts required to create and sustain an organization make use of resources that activists can use to press claims against the government.

Several problems arise with resource mobilization when considering activism under authoritarianism. Purposefully sidelined, individual resistance is unimportant (McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow 2001). Collective action equates to organizational action, which may or may not be possible under authoritarian regimes. Movements face the dilemma of decentralization versus hierarchy; the more centrally controlled a group is the more coordinated and effective it may be (Gamson 1975; Jasper 2004: 7), but hierarchy may expose a group to annihilation. To eliminate opposition movements, authoritarian regimes impede the formation of independent organizations, strive to alienate individuals from opposition organizations, and create their own mass conscription organizations (Kasza 1995; see also Chapter 4).

For opposition to continue against an authoritarian regime, decentralization of resistance and the empowerment of individuals to act may play a key role in continuing

26 Resources needed for a social movement or political party, include time, volunteers and money. An organizational structure helps secure and channel these key resources. Social movement organizations, according to resource mobilization, face the task of mobilizing resources – people's money, energy, time, other material contributions, even their lives – for movement goals (Wickham-Crowley 1991).

opposition under duress. Second is the assumption that organizations seek to recruit new members (Weinstein 2007a; Lichbach 1998). However, organizational expansion poses risks to organizations – agents provocateurs can infiltrate and become informants to the regime. Maintaining a membership of individuals with known loyalties may be a better option for opposition movements under authoritarianism. An organization may improve its ability to survive when the opposition remains small.

Resource mobilization excludes political parties from the discussion of social movements (Tarrow 1994). In democracies, and to some extent hybrid regimes, political parties are privy to state power even when they are in the minority and therefore reasonably not considered social or civil society organizations. However, this view is only relevant when elections present real opportunities for parties to gain political power. Elections under authoritarianism “tend to ratify rather than redistribute the power that competing groups wield,” according to Brownlee (2007: 9). Under authoritarian regimes, political parties are often a visible source of ongoing resistance to the regime. Burma’s political parties, even the ones who maintain their legal status, are a key source of opposition to the SPDC government. We cannot discount this source of opposition under authoritarianism.

This view of the role of political parties may already be changing. Press (2004: 17-18) utilizes the term “resistance movement” to describe how social movements, civil society and oppositional political parties collectively push for democratization in an authoritarian setting. As evidenced in the following chapters, a similar combination exists in Burma. In Burma, there is an “opposition movement” which encompasses a myriad of actors and organizations pressing for democracy. Coherence between the multitude of organizations, each pursuing goals and strategies, is limited but in the past 20 years has

grown into a loosely bounded opposition (see Beer 1999 and Beatty 2010). Differences exist, particularly between the non-violent political opposition and those using armed violence to press claims, but several forums exist that attempt to address key divisions. The Burmese opposition includes groups that press for liberalization, those that press claims promoting reform the government and its policies, or by holding it accountable to its own laws. Burma's non-violent opposition operates alongside the groups employing violent strategies of resistance.

The second research area of political process theory is political opportunity structures (POS). POS is a widely used concept meant to draw attention to the context of political organizing. Of the three research areas, POS is simultaneously the most controversial *and* the most frequently called upon concept to provide explanations of when social movements are successful. Political opportunity structures refer to macro-level variables, such as presence or absence of allies, divisions among the elite, or tolerance of dissent (Diani and Eyerman 1992). POS can also refer to the international context, political institutions, cultural models and cleavages within a society (Kriesi 2004:70). POS may allow for analysis of how open or closed a political system is vis-à-vis the international community and whether this influences protest strategies (Kitschelt 1986: 58; cited in Kriesi 2004: 69). Empirically, POS has been used to explain why the civil rights movement was able to gain ground during some historical periods versus others (McAdam 1983), and how opportunities of institutional access and competitive elections motivate regime challengers to form durable civic organizations (Almeida 2003).

Criticized as being a catchall category that ultimately explains nothing (Jasper and Goodwin 1999; Gamson and Meyer 1996: 275), POS often examines factors outside a movement's control, such as history, sympathetic presidents and international climate. Structure, not agency, therefore becomes the key to understanding when movements are successful in reaching their primary goal. POS explains the timing of the fall of the Soviet Union (Tarrow 1994) and Islamic political activism (Wiktorowicz 2004). "To the extent that political process theorists take it as their task to explain movements that occur when theory predicts that they should not, they engage in post hoc scrambling to identify changes in the environment that might plausibly be conceived of as a 'political opportunity,'" write Armstrong and Bernstein (2008: 92). POS might escape these tautological criticisms if used to examine current conditions of an unsuccessful movement; in doing so, POS could articulate areas in which authoritarian regimes are vulnerable. Because of its emphasis on explaining why some movements are successful while others are not, at its core POS assumes that movements only pursue a singular goal. It says little about the other goals, imperatives and strategies pursued by opposition movements.

Finally, framing processes used by social movement actors are the third area of political process theory. Framing processes refer to "the content and framing processes by which meaning is attached to objects and actions," and plays a key role in understanding social movements (Zald 1996: 262). Framing "refers to a n interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment," according to Snow and Benford (1992: 136). Movements draw on cultural cues to provide needed ideology, symbols and iconic events to mobilize members

and persuade their targets to change policies (Zald 1996: 269). Problematically, this ignores the role that governments, particularly authoritarian ones, play in supporting symbols, ideas and subverting the information and ideas that help construct the society's culture.

Social movements attempt to frame issues in ways palatable to their publics (Gamson and Meyer 1996). These publics can be new members, other social movement organizations, and/or the state. While there are different forums that movements can use to disseminate their message and pursue their aims, "the mass media are the major site of contests over meaning because all of the players in the policy process use its pervasive influence," according to Gamson (2004: 243, *emphases in the original*). The emphasis on the role of mass media for understanding political activism is unsatisfying when considering authoritarian countries where independent sources of media do not exist. For example, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Burma's military regime, controls all forms of mass media. While framing might still occur, mass media is not available to oppositions operating in authoritarian conditions. It becomes necessary to examine how the activities of political activists might serve the purpose of countering the regime's narrative.

Mobilizing Ongoing Resistance to Authoritarian Regimes

All three components of the political process framework minimize the role of people in forming organizations, mobilizing resources and conducting political activities. Arguably, this is also problematic for the scholarship on democratic and hybrid regimes, but ignoring people and their actual repertoires leads to false understandings of opposition under authoritarian regimes. The lack of agency in the framework, as well as its emphasis

on explaining how external factors allow movements to be successful when environmental constraints suggest failure, leads to surprise when protests spontaneously erupt in authoritarian countries. The international events of 2011 bring a contemporary saliency to this argument. In Egypt, for example, several years of political activities, led by labor and human rights organizations to promote government reform, preceded the January 2011 protests.²⁷ Bein (2009) documents 2,623 factory occupations, strikes, demonstrations or other collective actions occurring between 1998 and 2008 in Egypt. These received little news coverage. If researched further, there may be evidence of pamphleteering, the wearing of symbolic clothing and other small-scale activities by political groups in Egypt.

Motivation for joining resistance and opposition

In contrast to the social movement literature, revolution scholarship has shown more interest in understanding motivation and recruitment of individuals to resistance movements. A principal assumption of revolution scholarship is that recruitment is difficult; much of this assumption derives from research on the difficulties of peasant mobilization (Paige 1975; for a critique of this assumption see Wickham-Crowley 1991). Early rationalist perspectives found peasants only act for short-term gain and were unlikely to revolt despite interests at hand (Popkin 1979; Paige 1975; see also Wolf 1973).

By assuming that recruitment is difficult, and thus a problem needing a solution, revolution scholarship provides a variety of reasons for why people join revolutionary movements. A number of empirical studies provide a myriad of rational choice solutions to

²⁷ Morrison, Dan "At Last, Egypt's Story has changed," *Slate* January 31, 2011. Accessed online at: <http://www.slate.com/id/2283210/>

overcome Olson's (1965) free rider problem, including solutions found in hierarchy, contracts, market and community (Lichbach 1994 and 1998). Rational choice perspectives on activism assume individuals complete a cost/benefit analysis to decide whether to join an insurgency. Oyefusi (2008) found the factors that reduced the cost and risk of participation, or increased perceived benefits, were more important to youth in Nigeria.

There are multiple paths to mobilization (Viterna 2006). Some individuals feel more secure by joining insurgency groups (Weinstein 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Rosen 2005), and non-participation presents risks to an individual that might be greater than joining the revolution (Kalyvas and Kochev 2007). Structural impediments to political reform make civil war a rational choice for peasants in Nepal (Joshi and Mason 2008), and low threshold barriers to entry facilitate the growth of new rebel movements (Weinstein 2007).²⁸ Individuals also join because they see combat as empowering and liberating (West 2000) or a moral duty (Rosen 2005).

Extant research assumes revolutionary groups seek new members. It ignores that revolutionary groups face costs when increasing their membership, and thus might have reasons to limit their size. Troops require food, training and armaments. Even when done at the barest minimum, financial resources are necessary. The recruiting of regime-informants can wreak havoc on the opposition movement. Armed and non-violent groups may need to be extremely cautious about who they let join the resistance. Resistance takes resources (Wickham-Crowley 1991), and resistance organizations may need to limit their size to

28 Similarly, non-violent struggle strategists emphasize rationalist efficacy arguments in using these method press claims. Non-violent strategy is not pacifism (Sharp 2005). Non-violent strategists include in their calculations the likelihood of the regime harming members taking part in the protest activity – and continuing anyway. Birmingham, Alabama was purposefully selected by civil rights activists, for example, because it was known that the state response would be particularly brutal—and photographed.

remain within their budget. This is true not only of armed groups; non-violent activities are not zero cost and require financial resources.

Participation over time

In contrast to the interest about how groups recruit new members, few studies in the social movements or revolution fields examine long-term participation. Mobilization can be difficult for individuals and organizations to maintain over time due to the high costs of participation. “Collective action, if undertaken on a short-term basis, may indeed occur; collective action that requires long periods of time does not,” writes Lichbach (1998: 17). Despite Lichbach’s admonishment, individuals do conduct armed struggle or partake in non-violent collective action for long periods. Several people interviewed for this research had been part of Burma’s opposition movement for more than 20 years. The field’s emphasis on rational choice explanations for joining political and armed resistance groups does not adequately address why individuals remain politically engaged for long periods of time.

Individuals utilize varying strategies to cope with the effects of their long-term resistance in high-risk movements. Goodwin and Pfaff examine the management of fear in the United States civil rights and the East German anti-communism movements, stating some movements “require a great deal of emotional labor in order to sustain themselves” (2001: 284). They found encouragement mechanisms are necessary to sustain movements, including intimate social networks; dynamics of mass meetings and other communal gatherings of movement participants; strong identification of activists with the movement; shaming and ‘degradation ceremonies’; formal training in the techniques of civil

disobedience; media coverage of movement activities and protest events (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001).

During Germany's anti-nuclear movement, repression resulted in activists labeled by the government as troublemakers, creating incentives for activists to continue protest under repression (Opp and Roehl 1990).²⁹ When governments repress political activists, despite their intentions they inadvertently create incentives for individuals to continue opposing the regime. States may also reinforce an oppositional identity by repression that pushes people outside the protection of the state, thus forcing members to look to the group or organization for protection. In doing so, a person may come to identify strongly with the group. There is evidence that politicized collective identities express themselves through political action (Duncan 1999; Simon and Klandermans 2001; Simon et al. 1998; Stürmer and Simon 2004).

Long-term activism is more likely where dense yet diverse interpersonal networks embed within broader national and transnational institutional and issue networks (Loveman 1998). In Italy, "underground groups were also held together by the members' strong sense of responsibility for one another," writes della Porta, and members didn't want to disappoint their comrades in prison (1995: 177). Examining social networks during the United States civil war, Costa and Kahn (2009) found soldiers in companies with people of a similar background were less likely to desert, even though life expectancy of deserters was higher. Conversely, survival rates of soldiers remanded to prisoner-of-war camps was much higher when prisoners had strong social networks (Costa and Kahn 2009).

²⁹ Opp and Roehl admit political repression in West Germany during the time of the study is significantly less than repression experienced under authoritarian states.

Some also view nonviolent action as a gateway to even tual armed resistance, when armed groups recruit individuals out of organizations sympathetic to the objectives of the armed struggle (Viterna 2006). This is also true in Burma, but the reverse also occurs; for some, armed resistance is also gateway for individuals who eventually join non-violent opposition. Arguably, the ability of individuals to transition between armed and non-violent organizations allows individuals to remain involved in the movement over longer periods. People accommodate their personal needs by moving to other organizations when their life circumstances change.

Goals and imperatives of an opposition

Authoritarian regimes, when they transition at all, do not necessarily transition to democracy – many transition to other forms of authoritarianism (Hadenius and Teorell 2007; see also Przeworski 1986). Way (2005b) demonstrates how Ukraine’s transition ended far short of the expected democratic institutions ; Ukraine’s democratic movement failed to reach fully the goal of consolidated democracy. In other countries, obtaining democratic institutions are not the goal of an opposition movement. Oppositions can press for a range of political systems. Wiktorowicz writes, “the core imperative of Islamic movements is a desire to create a society governed and guided by *shari’a* (Islamic law)” (2004: 16). Opposition movements do not unilaterally pursue the same goals; rather the goals of social movements run the gamut from seeking policy change, inclusion in the current system, seeking material or symbolic change in institutions or culture (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). This research defines social movement goals as the broadest statement of what an organization hopes to achieve.

Within the same social movement, different organizations support different goals. Some movements press for issue-specific policy reform, others for liberalization and democracy. Goals of a social movement may also change over time; some of the armed groups in Burma initially fought for independence but their current position is to settle for state autonomy within a democratic, federal union. Movement goals expand after a success (Calhoun 1994), and goals contract after a failure (Kurzban 2004).

While a state and its policies is often the target of social movements, these are not their only target. Social movements can inform and influence society (Sapiro 1990; Ryan 2006), address the behavior of members of the polity (Snow 2004), transform cultural representations and social norms (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Earl 2004) or influence leaders within social movements (Young 2001). They may also target foreign corporations that they perceive to be buttressing the power of the regime that they oppose (Dale 2011).

The challenge imperative

How opposition groups pursue their goals and imperatives is a matter of strategy. Armed resistance is a set of available strategies; armed strategies include guerrilla warfare, conventional warfare, selective terrorism (assassination) and categorical terrorism (Goodwin 2006). Non-violent resistance presents another set of strategies. Non-violent strategies “conduct the conflict by psychological, social, economic, or political pressure, or a combination of these,” according to Sharp (2005: 49). Those who select non-violent methods are not necessarily morally opposed to the use of violence; non-violent methods constitute a strategic decision selected when the conditions are not present for

implementing successful violent resistance. In interviews with of activists from East Germany, Hadjar found:

There were also rational and tactical reasons to act non-violently since the state forces were superior and the opposition groups wanted to maintain a widely accepted humanist image. Only a small number of activists were pacifists, because 'rational reasons to act non-violently (e.g. superiority of the state or lack of skills) could also be identified in this analysis (Hadjar 2003: 126).

Non-violent and armed strategies and tactics challenge a ruling regime, but can also press claims against other powerful institutions within a society, such as businesses, religious institutions or medical facilities.

Table 2: Challenge imperative, strategies, methods and activities

Goal	Imperative	Strategy	Method	Examples of Tactic / Activity
Democratic Burma	Challenge the regime	Nonviolence	Institutional approaches; Protest and Persuasion; Noncooperation; Nonviolent interventions	Hunger strike, sit-in, boycott, pamphleteering, speeches.
		Violence	Guerrilla or conventional warfare; categorical or selective terrorism	Bus bombing, attacking specific military and business infrastructure; assassinate leaders.

Some authors acknowledge dissidents face a choice between non-violent action and armed violent methods. Findings suggest groups select violence when the relative returns favor it as a strategy (Tarrow 1998; Lichbach 1998). Other authors find violence is selected when groups are powerful (Gamson 1990), when the struggle continues for a long time or in the face of the increased use of violence by the state (Lichbach 1998), to shock people out of complacency (Huntington 1968), to seize resources (Gurr 1970), and when the revolutionary (terrorist) groups lack sufficient followers or financial resources (Rubenstein 1987). A small body of research examines why groups choose to employ violent methods on noncombatants. Kalyvas (2006), for example found that a goal of indiscriminate violence is to “shape civilians’ behavior indirectly through association, and to shift responsibility for hostile actions to a wider group of people” (2006: 171) In contrast, selective violence is used when information is available about specific sources of civilian opposition. Metelits (2009) found that an active rivalry between competing insurgent groups who have the same resource pool led to increased coercion, and thus violence, against civilians. Beer (1999), in his discussion of Burma’s political and armed opposition groups, argues that non-violent and violent methods are not effective if combined, and organizations need to select one strategy. Groups can however, coordinate their approach with organizations pursuing different means within the same movement.³⁰

An opposition does not select non-violent or violent strategy based solely on the type of regime they oppose (Sharp 2005). Social movements using non-violent tactics to press claims are present in democratic environments (for example, the California Grape

³⁰ I thank John Dale for suggesting this point.

Workers strikes 1965 – 1970), in hybrid regimes (such as gay rights’ protests in present-day Russia) and select non-violent strategy to press for democracy in authoritarian environments (Thailand 1990; Philippines 1986). Likewise, revolutionary groups utilizing violent strategy exist in democratic countries (Islamist insurgency in the Philippines), in hybrid regimes (Chechnya’s on-going revolt from Russia), and authoritarian states (El Salvador in the 1980s). Non-violent resistance occurs in wartime (Bravo 2005), and non-violent opposition can occur simultaneously with armed groups against the same regime, as it does in present-day Burma. Non-violent action is present under authoritarian conditions, but the conditions themselves may make the activities appear more dramatic than when done in democratic societies (Sharp 2005: 51).

Demands made by nonviolent action can address incremental changes or an immediate issue (for example, ‘no price increases’) but the techniques inherently challenge the state’s authority and legitimacy by working outside the limited institutional framework. In essence, non-violent action rejects the legitimacy of the institutions of the authoritarian government. Non-violent strategies divide into three primary methods that challenge the state: methods of protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent interventions³¹.

It seems reasonable that organized groups make a rational calculation based on available resources when they select non-violent or violent methods to press their claims. Resistance is inclusive of the offensive strategies that individuals and organizations use to challenge a regime. However, in the presence of armed and non-violent organizations – both opposing the authoritarian state and pursuing the goal of a democratic federal union –

³¹ Chapter 5 discusses in greater detail non-violent methods and political activities occurring in Burma.

how do would-be resisters choose which group to join ? This research finds, in the case of Burma's opposition movement, the presence of family connections plays a key role in determining whether an individual joins an armed or a non-violent group.

The survival imperative

In addition to the variety of challenge imperative strategies an opposition may select, resistance also includes the defensive, restorative activities undertaken by an opposition under authoritarianism. Successful resistance includes the survival imperative. Oppositions have dual imperatives of challenge and survival; under authoritarian conditions, they must actively counter the attempts by the regime to eliminate opposition. Survival is a considerable achievement considering the repression and social control methods employed by the authoritarian regime.

The imperative of opposition survival stems from prior scholarship on survival. In international relations scholarship, structural realists argue that assuming states desire survival helps explain a wide range of outcomes (Howes 2003). This idea is based on the assumptions outlined by Waltz (1979), but is rooted in classic works such as Aristotle's *Politics* and Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Howes 2003).

Not only states pursue survival. Resiliency of individuals, often through the development and use of coping strategies, contributes to community survival. Resilience is a dynamic process that individuals exhibit positive behavioral adaptation when they encounter significant adversity (Luther, Cicchetti and Becker 2000). Organizations too can be resilient, as Dütting and Sogge (2004) discuss how non-governmental organizations attempt to sustain cohesion and solidarity to survive economic downturns. Examining cases

where land rights movements collapse following initial successes of obtaining land for members, Dosh (2009) finds that movements that incorporate a nonmaterial, or altruistic, agenda into the movement helps sustain participation and survive beyond the initial successes.

Evidence of resilience and survival is found within much of the existing work on Burma, as scholars demonstrate how individuals and communities adapt to the increasing presence of the state. Skidmore (2004) documents the strategies used by Burmese citizens to cope and manage omnipresent fear caused by the psychological abuse by a series of authoritarian governments. Karen Human Rights Group too argues villagers in Burma use community strategies to cope and survive the domination of *the* ~~the~~ *adaw*.³²

Table 3: Survival imperative, elements, tactics/activities

Goal	Imperative	Element	Examples of Tactics / Activities
Democratic Burma	Opposition survival	Building public sympathy	Posters, pamphleteering
		Retention of membership	Anniversary ceremonies, financial support to political prisoners
		Signal solidarity	Attendance at other group's ceremonies.
		Transfer information	Speeches, statements

To survive, the opposition must counter the constraints imposed by the authoritarian government. Survival is a factor of the elements of building a sympathetic

³² *Village Agency Report: Rural rights and resistance in a militarized Karen State*, Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), November 2008. Copy in authors possession, also available online.

public, retention of members, recruitment of members, signaling solidarity with other opposition groups, and communicating policies and positions with members of opposition in- and out-groups. Oppositional activities in turn should reflect these elements. The challenge and survival framework improves our understanding of how movements operate in repressive environments imposed by authoritarian regimes. The two sides of the resistance coin play important roles in sustaining opposition movements.

Secondly, a social movement's first-order goal may not be to remove the state but instead change the climate of fear within the populace, as was the case of some organizations in East Germany (Hadjar 2003). When the survival imperative is met, regime removal may become more possible. Opposition activities "influence the opponents, the public, the grievance group, or a combination of the three," writes Sharp (2005: 51). The presence of multiple audiences supports the proposition that activities by opposition groups reflect the imperative of organizational survival. If the opposition's only imperative is to challenge the authoritarian regime, there would be no need to focus activities and resources on multiple audiences. Activities that influence the public and grievance group itself support the imperative of survival.

Importance of small-scale activities

Political action is a continuum of strategies from which an opposition employs tactics appropriate the political context. The theoretical focus on opportunities and processes of social movements leads to an over-emphasis on the organizations of protest and opposition. In adopting this focus, researchers ignore what activities social movements do and the selection of specific tactics. The 'mechanism' approach of this research does the

opposite: by working from micro-level descriptions, broad macro-level results become possible (Jasper 2004; Stinchcombe 1991). “Repertoires of contention,” according to Tilly, are “the ways that people act together in pursuit of shared interests” (1995: 41). Different methods present differing levels of risk to the participant (Sharp 2005). Schock (2005) argues that there are distinct forms of political action, including exit, everyday forms of resistance, non-institutional political action, nonviolent political action and violent political action. In addition, while some authors argue institutional political action is not the domain of social movements (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004), or a form of non-violent political action (Schock 2005), this research demonstrates how institutional political action is an important tool for oppositions working against authoritarian systems. All types of activities are available to social movement and revolutionary movements; to press claims effectively, groups use multiple forms. The political event dataset used in Chapter 5 will discuss how these strategies and activities manifest in authoritarian Burma.

Social movement events can include violent acts and rioting, but social movement scholarship primarily examines groups pressing claims using non-violent action³³ This is in part due to the amount of research about the civil rights movement in the United States and the tactics used by labor movements – often strikes, sit-ins, boycotts, and labor walk-outs (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Feminist movements, however, have long included ‘consciousness-raising’ tactics that also serve to spread information (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).

33 For examples of work that address only non-violent social movements, see: McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; McAdam 1999; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Jasper 1997; della Porta and Diani 2006. A notable exception is Hafez and Wiktorowicz 2004.

In Burma, demonstrations are only one tactic of protest used by social movement actors to challenge the military junta. Other tactics include wearing of meaningful clothing, distributing pamphlets, posters and stickers, graffiti campaigns, religious ceremonies that express political beliefs, letter writing, strikes and boycotts, and court cases contesting regime policies. Taylor and Van Dyke state, “protest—or the collective use of unconventional methods of political participation to try to persuade or coerce authorities to support a challenging group’s aims—is perhaps the fundamental feature that distinguishes social movements from routine political actors” (2004: 263).

Categories of protest are defined in the literature but scholars often ignore the interrelation of resistance strategies. Tilly (2004) and Tarrow’s (1998) definitions include large and small displays of political action, but empirical research has been primarily limited to counting demonstrations. Social movement activities analyzed predominantly include demonstrations, marches, vigils and rallies; scholars often do not research other activities, such as distributing literature and giving speeches despite their prominence (Oliver and Myers 1999). This is problematic in general because it creates inaccurate understandings of the work of social movements. The reliance on using newspapers to count protest activities then creates a standard what resistance should entail; this serves to portray activism under authoritarianism, where mass protest is a significantly more difficult undertaking, as somehow deficient compared to activism in democratic and hybrid regimes. Oliver and Maney (2000) imply the overwhelming focus on demonstrations is in part because newspapers, from which scholars typically create datasets of political events, do not typically publish stories about opposition activities like distributing information. Researchers are too reliant on media sources of data, ignoring that news collection itself is

not value-neutral; in doing so they miss that activities such as distributing literature is a common activity that is usually recorded in applications for permits and police reports (Oliver and Maney 2000).³⁴ Individualized acts of resistance, even when they take familiar forms such as one-man demonstrations or picketing, are also often ignored because of the emphasis on collective claim-making (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Despite the field's enthusiasm to find evidence of protest cycles, less work examines forms of protest and why certain groups select specific tactics (Jasper 1997).

This overemphasis of demonstrations, instead of examining the entire range of tactics available to social movements, leads to misleading conclusions about opposition under authoritarianism. The size and regularity of demonstrations is an inaccurate measurement of the size and efficacy of political opposition, particularly in authoritarian countries. Understanding why groups select specific tactics provides insight to the multiple goals and imperatives pursued by social movements and reflect the persistence of agency despite structural and institutional constraints imposed by an authoritarian regime. Regimes tightly control their populations to eliminate opportunities for demonstrations; a lack of demonstrations in Burma and other authoritarian states says more about regime strength than the capabilities or size of the opposition. Outbursts of demonstrations in authoritarian regimes will always be a surprise if political scientists continue to ignore small activities and their role in opposition challenge and survival.

34 Overemphasis of demonstrations is partially a data-collection problem. Schweingruber and McPhail (1999) argue that newspapers only record ten percent of demonstrations and only the largest protests, leaving many unaccounted. Over-reliance on newspapers as a data source contributes to the inaccurate view of types of protest available to activists.

Role of families

Social movement activities are embedded in dense relational settings (Diani 2004). Opp and Gern (1993) found personal networks of friends were the most important factor, not membership in organizations, for spontaneous protest. This work argues against the idea of mass 'spontaneous protest,' suggesting the roots of large demonstrations are found in the small-scale political activities that occur between protests. Social ties to another volunteer were the best predictor of participation, according to McAdam and Paulsen (1993) in the Freedom Summer campaign, but only when identity was at stake. In their examination of *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, Muller, Dietz and Finkel found the presence of "social network selective incentives... that gratify the private self-interest of the individual and are provided by an external source ... regardless of whether the action is successful" (Muller, Dietz and Finkel 1991: 1279). Recruiters are more successful when they have a close relationship with the target (Brady et al. 1999 : 161); this finding could amplify for activists operating in authoritarian regimes where the issue of trust is important for personal security.

Political socialization normally occurs as young people learn from their parents, but Bloemraad and Trost (2008) argue intergenerational socialization occurs in immigrant families, whereby young and old members of a family pool information from different sources and help mobilize otherwise uninterested family members to participate³⁵. Intergenerational socialization is a method for individuals to gain needed information despite the constraints, such as language barriers, of their new country.

The civic voluntarism model of Verba et al. (1995) theorizes that variables that reduce the cost of participation make political participation more likely. While they focus on skills and demographic characteristics, it may be that family institutions alleviate the cost of participation. As one of the last spheres of life not entirely breached by the regime, activist family networks can facilitate organizing through knowledge sharing and financially supporting the member who does engage in resistance.

Under authoritarian conditions, it is difficult for the opposition movement to know whom to trust. Communication and information sharing is difficult. Regimes infiltrate the very independent institutions such as churches or schools that would under democratic or hybrid regimes be safe places from which to organize resistance. As such, the family institution, particularly in a society where large extended families are the norm, may play a role in organizing and maintaining resistance. While Goldstone (1994) argues group identity is an important factor in the formation of resistance, group identity might serve to ensure responsible, selective recruitment because an organization knows about recruits' backgrounds before they join. Similarly, Oberschall argues against the microeconomic assumption that people are isolated individuals making choices. "People decide to participate... not in isolation but jointly with others, as they indeed jointly decide to go to the movies, attend church, take holidays together," writes Oberschall (1994:85).

Families can help communicate information about prior conflicts, historical successes and regime abuses. Foran (1997) suggests oppositions develop a 'culture of rebellion' from widely remembered prior conflicts. Families help communicate history to

35 Not an example of protest under authoritarian conditions, but as their article discusses, for illegal immigrants the potential for exposure leading to deportation is a significant deterrent and yet still many in

one another and serve as a place of memory for prior conflicts. While Viterna (2006) was surprised so many guerrillas came from unbroken homes, the need for trust and personal security to undertake collective resistance arguably necessitate prior personal connections between activists.

In contrast, Fink (2009) discusses how families can be problematic for protest; in Burma, some parents forbid their children from becoming political activists out of concern for safety of the entire family. Goodwin's (1997) research of the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, posits that group solidarity rests in part upon sublimated or "aim-inhibited" ties of collective identification among group members. Groups coalesce by shared rational interest, as well as due to powerful ties of empathy, friendship and camaraderie that spring from, and reinforced by, face-to-face interactions. Goodwin argues that pre-existing social commitments kept the Huk rebellion members from forming a cohesive identity group. If family ties can complicate or even restrain an activist's commitment to a movement, it could also have a reverse effect: it is possible that family units help mitigate the costs of participation under authoritarian conditions because high levels of trust are required to undertake collective action. The role of activist families in political and armed mobilization is not entirely clear.

Witnessing political events and repression

Witnessing important political events plays a role in mobilizing individuals to join an opposition. Alagappa (1995) describes a politically defining moment as:

this group protested.

one of high political consciousness that can generate deep emotion and galvanize enormous support for a cause. The moment may be a single event or, more likely, the culmination of a string of related events such as national independence, revolution, civil war, holocaust, and international warfare. By its very nature, a politically defining moment has enormous moral authority that can legitimate certain causes while delegitimizing others (1995: 46).

Similarly, Whittier (1997) finds empirical evidence for political generations, whereby people who come of age politically at the same time or due to the same influence tend to hold onto these values across time. “Those who are politically active at midlife are those who are empowered by a sense of personal efficacy to create change, who feel a strong connection to the communities to which they belong, and who are concerned with making a lasting contribution to future generations,” according to Cole and Stewart (1996: 15). Some generations offer more opportunities for political action. Generations that come of age, for example when there is a high level of social turbulence like wars or mass social movements, have been found to be active later in life (Stewart and Healy 1989).

Democracy matters

Limited research in social movement scholarship examines pro-democracy movements operating in authoritarian and hybrid countries³⁶ Social movement scholarship tends to assume that all acts of contention support democratic principles, the expansion of

³⁶ Noteworthy exceptions include Schock 2004 and Dale 2011.

civil rights, or in the case of ‘new’ social movements, when citizens expressing their opinions outside the channels of institutionalized politics. Several Southeast Asia scholars examine opposition movements in authoritarian states. Hebdeman (2006) argues Philippines civil society has become a defender of democracy and democratic principles, while Boudreau (2004) researched the structure and institutions of authoritarianism in the region. In China, “collective incidents” are done by peasants seeking to uphold the rights they think they have, despite great personal risk and hardship (Li 2006). DeVotta (2004) demonstrates how ethnocentric civil society actors promote illiberal democracy in Sri Lanka. These acts do not promote democratic transition. Protest is not always about democratization in authoritarian regimes.

Anti-status quo activists in authoritarian societies do not *de facto* choose democracy as their cause; rather they can call for reinstating the monarchy, support theocracy, or simply a different form or continuance of authoritarian regime structure with new individual leaders. “Until very recently, revolutions have invariably failed to produce democracy. The need to consolidate a new regime in the face of struggles with domestic and foreign foes has instead produced authoritarian regimes,” according to Goldstone (2001: 168).

By conflating pro-democracy activism with civil movements, this unique category has been over-represented but under-explained. The concept of “political cultures of opposition and resistance” help understand how grievances and life experiences are transformed into the creation and mobilization of an opposition as well as what kinds of demands they pursue (Foran 1997). This could mean the choice of mobilizing for democratic principles is rooted in cultural beliefs. It is also possible that movements that

align themselves with democratic principles will have an easier time gaining support of international NGOs and other organizations that support democratization and human rights (Bob 2005). This suggests democracy movements are tactical innovations to gain material and moral support (McAdam 1983). Plenty of support is also available from authoritarian countries – such as Syria’s support of the Hezbollah opposition in Lebanon—meaning choices do exist for an opposition to press for something other than democratic transition. Aside from biographies of dissidents, there is little work undertaken to explain or understand the selection of democracy activism by individuals in authoritarian regimes.

Scholarly work on Burma

Colonized piece-by-piece as an extension of Great Britain’s Indian empire, Burma gained independence from Great Britain in 1948. Post-colonial Burma was a parliamentary democracy until a military coup in 1962. Several authors argue Burma’s present-day authoritarian rule is a result of its historical past. Authors suggest how the military government rules today is informed by its pre-colonial history (Thant Myint-U 2007), the experience of colonial rule (Taylor 2009), the period of fascist rule during Japan’s brief occupation (Skidmore 2004), the methods in which independence was gained and the military’s role as state builder prior to 1962 (Callahan 2003).

For an understudied country that can be difficult to access, there is a large amount of scholarly work on Burma. A significant proportion of texts describe the conditions of the country. This includes histories of the ethnic minority people of Burma and their relationship with the central government (Lintner 1994; Smith 1991; Scott 2009), the role of the internet in the Saffron protests (Chowdury 2008), armed forces and military rule

(Selth 1998), the economy and the control wielded by the state (Steinberg 2001), and political values (Taylor 1998; Pye 1962; Gravers 1999).

Some scholars consider the military junta a primary obstacle to political organizing, while others view the opposition as a source of lack of transition. Skidmore (2004) finds the presence of a social engineering project, an ongoing civil war to conquer and subjugate, and the forms of control historically used by fascist governments are present in contemporary Burma (Skidmore 2004). Similarly, Fink's *Living Silence* (2001; 2009) describes life under military rule in Burma, including how the SPDC utilizes divide-and-rule tactics against organizations, social groups, and at the individual-level among the populace. These scholarly accounts about life in Burma describe the social and political engineering occurring because of the government's institutions of compliance.

In contrast, several publications about Burma's historic and economic record say little about social control. The longitudinal analysis in this dissertation draws upon Taylor's (2009) political history of Burma, but Taylor presents a history where an uninformed reader would think the democratic opposition in Burma is simultaneously non-existent, overly confrontational, and receiving little public support due to its own incapacity. Tonkin (2007) argues the National League for Democracy should have eased its calls for democracy and human rights following their win of the 1990 parliamentary election. Reynolds et al. (2001) suggest contemporary movements in Burma lacked sustainability and fizzled out too soon. Kyaw Yin Hlaing writes "the constraints on the ability of political activists can be attributed not only to government repression but also to the problems between and within various social movement organizations" (2007: 368). None of these pieces systematically evaluates political activities in relation to the authoritarian context,

nor considers that for an opposition to continue to challenge the regime over time, it must also survive.

Conclusion

Revolution and social movement scholarship provide a foundation for answering the questions of this dissertation. However, both lack empirical research specifying how authoritarian regimes influence the processes of political and insurgent oppositions. Burma, with its long history of armed and political resistance, presents a unique opportunity to examine how social movements and armed revolutionary groups operate in authoritarian systems.

By changing the context to an authoritarian system, weaknesses of the political process framework are more apparent. Social movement scholarship imperfectly understands resistance to authoritarian regimes because it over-emphasizes the role of organizations, eliminates agency in light of explanations of structure to understand why some movements are successful, and is too reliant on the presence of an accessible mass media to explain how opposition movements use framing to promote their agenda. It is easy to target the dominant approach in any field, and political process has its share of critics. The political process framework has severe limitations when examining social movements under authoritarianism. New models of understanding are needed as social movement and revolution scholarship turns towards questions about opposition under authoritarianism.

Oppositions under authoritarianism have two imperatives: challenging the regime and survival. There is no opposition out of annihilation, and an opposition must counter the

regime's attempts to eliminate it. Assuming survival, as international relations theorists do about states, provides new explanations for understanding how oppositions operate under authoritarian conditions.

Recruitment into armed and non-violent opposition groups has been a predominant concern of both social movement and revolution scholars. A variety of solutions solve Olson's (1965) dilemma. The question 'why individuals join?' needs to be complemented by the question of 'how and why do they remain involved?' The Burmese activists challenge the assumption that people do not remain involved in resistance for long periods of time. The following chapters examine these questions by examining how oppositions under authoritarianism challenge the government and survive repression. Movements challenge and survive through political activities that signal solidarity, transfer information and build a sympathetic public. Activist family networks also help an opposition survive by being a source of recruitment and retention.

This research also presents an epistemological challenge about the nature of political science knowledge regarding social movements. The dominance of quantitative analysis as a research tool leads to an overemphasis of measuring demonstrations; this in turn limits the kinds of questions asked and thus, the answers available. By utilizing qualitative methods, this research germinates new explanations regarding activism under authoritarianism. The conceptual innovations stemming from micro-level description can lead to improved macro explanations.

Before the micro-descriptions commence, however, the next chapter examines the contemporary history of activism and the authoritarian state response in Burma. The expanding authoritarian state in Burma, through its repression of activists and control of the

population, attempts to eliminate dissent, although protests and other forms of political activities are present throughout the entire period under review.

Chapter 3: Political Opposition and State Response from 1948 – 2008

Introduction

Democratic protest is not a recent phenomenon in Burma. Opposition to the military regime began almost immediately following the 1962 military. Burma began its traditions of non-violent and violent protest during the colonial era. Mass demonstrations have erupted four times since the military replaced the democratic government. Workers, students and monks led protests.

Protest does not always have the desired effect of its organizers, and in Burma protest is followed by increased political repression and policies designed to increase the social compliance of its population. This analysis outlines how Burma's military governments have expanded their control over 50 years of rule. Since 1962, there has been a steady expansion of the state's ability to control its territory and the people within it. This control is purposefully constructed to eliminate opposition against the regime. Control has expanded in part by the military regime's careful dismantling of institutions that facilitated the protests that have challenged its rule.

This chapter presents a historical narrative of the 50 years of post-colonial Burma through the examination of the four largest protests in Burma's history: 1962, 1974, 1988 and 2007. By considering each demonstration as a prologue to the next, the historical similarities of each protest become obvious. One constant has been the presence of activists, conducting similar opposition activities, in each generation of anti-state protest. For each time period, the events leading up to each protest are described, as are the protest

events of each year, and the short and long-term conditions following the regime's response. Each decade is examined by four primary factors: the international environment, state and society, economy, and the status of armed insurgency.

This chapter also serves to show how these internal and external variables do not fully explain the motivation of the political opposition. There is limited contact between Burma's political activists and the international community. The economy has been consistently poor, but has dipped prior to three of the four large demonstrations. In other cases, the economy has dipped precipitously and without resulting in public protest. While state and society variables provide a valuable explanation as to the living conditions in Burma it also explains why people do not rise up against the authoritarian government in Burma.

Analytical categories

Reliable information from Burma's 50 years of independence is inconsistent, in part due to the isolation of the country. This makes finding information for some variables difficult, because almost nothing has been tracked consistently across the entire period. Instead, independent variables associated with international context, economy, state and society, and status of armed struggle are used to determine and eliminate causal factors of protest in Burma.

- **International factors** are examined to determine if it is the international community that drives protest in Burma. Each time period and protest examines the status of Burma in the world community, the country's government-to-

government relationships, foreign policy and relative integration in the world system.

- **State and society factors** are examined to determine if it is state and society variables that drive protest in Burma. This includes the system of government, rough measurements of the size civil society, including prominent actors and state policies that affect civil society. Citizen access to foreigners is included in this category, as it speaks to potential infiltration of ideas not sanctioned by government institutions. This category also discusses the growing size and responsibilities of the military.
- **The economy** for each period is reviewed with emphasis on consequences for citizens and whether protests can be attributed to grievances associated with a declining economy. This includes discussion of inflation rates, imports and exports, cost of consumer goods, changes in the state's fiscal policy and its desired versus actual effect, particularly the impact of nationalization of business and demonetization of currency.
- **The status of armed insurgency** for each period is examined to understand its relationship to the growing authoritarian rule and to the opposition movement. Does armed struggle drive protest in Burma? While this could be considered under the 'state and society' discussion, this variable is too important to Burma's history of resistance to remain under that category. The status of insurgency examines number and size of armed organizations resisting the state,

the rise and fall and alliances, financing, territory held, and the impact of the ceasefire arrangements.

These independent variable categories also serve to bring order to a discussion of Burma's rich contemporary history. Each period is broken into discussions by category, facilitating comparisons of each protest era and causal mechanisms of protest.

Independence to 1962 military coup

The early years of independence and parliamentary democracy were turbulent in Burma. Prior to independence, achieved in 1948, ethnic violence against the state erupted, and territory was seized by the armed Communist Party of Burma. Burma's infrastructure was devastated from World War II; its second largest city, Mandalay, was destroyed in the fighting. Economically, the country slowly recovered, helped by war reparations from Japan and through receipt of international aid.

During the democratic period of 1948 – 1962, media was uncensored, civil society was flourishing, but infighting within the ruling political party coalition grew and increasingly became violent. In part due to the political impasse, the military was handed power as a 'caretaker government' from 1958 – 1960; this was done peacefully, under duress from the military but with the known possibility that democracy could be restored. Burma returned to democratic parliamentary institutions for two more years before the military seized power in 1962. During this period, internationally Burma had an unusually large presence. It led the formation of the non-aligned movement and U Thant served as the Secretary General of the United Nations.

State and society

With independence, the government adopted a democratic , parliamentary political system, as well as health and education institutions i nherited from the outgoing British government. Political leadership was exercised by parti es and individuals of national standing during the parliamentary years. Elections were held with some violence, but people voted, parliament passed laws, and fairly tra nsparent and accountable governance occurred. During the parliamentary democratic period of 194 8 -1961, Burma's national press was vigorous and, as Silverstein reports, it "st rongly influenced people inside and outside of government" (1977: 47). The press prior pl ayed the role of a loyal opposition that was not present in parliament (Silverstein 1964). Civil society during this time also flourished (Steinberg 2004). University students were s ignificantly engaged in the politics and social movements of the democratic period. Silverstein notes, students' "influence extended beyond the campus because they were courted a nd used by the political parties and the insurgents for purposes of organization, propa ganda, and direct political action" (1977: 49).

By the end of the 1950's, the military had grown to over 100,000 soldiers, up from 5,000 soldiers at the time of independence (Callahan 2 003: 173). In 1958, military units surrounded and secured portions of Rangoon. Convinced a military coup would occur, Prime Minister U Nu resigned, allowing General Ne Win and the military to temporarily take over management of the country under a 'caretaker government' and under the known possibility that democracy would be restored after a set p eriod of time (Taylor 2009: 250).

Initially meant to be a six-month handover, the caretake r period lasted 18 months, between 1958 and 1960. During its caretaker government period, the military tried to clean

up Rangoon physically and morally. Urban squatters were removed to satellite towns, crime rates plummeted, 50,000 stray dogs were eliminated in Rangoon, chewing and spitting betel nut became taboo, everyone over 12 years old in Rangoon was photographed for a national registration, streets were widened, potholes filled, and the Army gave lessons in citizenship and tight moral discipline (Charney 2009 : 97-8). Despite these urban successes, segments of the minorities in the Shan and Kayah states (and Kachin state after 1960) began to go underground and campaign for autonomy and outright dissolution of the Union. This in turn encouraged the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO), already fighting against the central government for an autonomous Karen state, to renew its efforts and according to Silverstein, “the Union was faced with a serious new challenge” (1964: 103). After two six-month extensions to its original mandate, the military held elections and handed back power to a newly -elected parliament; the political party backed by the military did not do well in the polls.

Economy

Following World War II, Burma had significant post-war devastation in which recovery and rebuilding was necessary. “Mandalay was effectively gone. Not a single building had been left standing... In many other cities and towns , it was the same. Shwebo, Meiktila, Prome and Bassein were simply wiped out,” according to Thant Myint-U (2006: 243). Communication and transport infrastructure needed rebuilding across the country. Prior to the war, Burma was the leading exporter of rice in the region; following the war this was again reestablished. “In the 1950s, the ratio of Burma’s foreign trade (imports plus exports) to gross domestic product, a common indicator of an economy’s external

involvement, was 40 percent, it fell to 26 percent between 1960 and 1970 and to 13 percent between 1970 and 1977,” according to Taylor (2009: 301, citing Krasner 1985).

Armed struggle

Despite some progress rebuilding the country and establishing democratic institutions, significant challenges to the government persisted and three types of anti-government insurgencies arose. Insurgent³⁷ communists sought to remove the central government, others fought for independence or autonomy for their ethnic group, and others armed as warlords to protect illegal trade routes to the country’s borders. In early 1949, the central government only had control over territory around Rangoon; there were at least 24 ethnic nationality groups fighting against the central government (Zaw Oo 2004, citing Smith 1991). By 1960 most of central Burma was under control due to the efforts of the *tatmadaw*³⁸ but the ethnic areas, particularly those of eastern Burma, were under control of different insurgency groups (Cooke 1983: 222).

Communists challenged the central government, seeking to replace the central government. Prior to independence, the Red Flag communists and several Islamist guerrilla organizations in Arakan state were already fighting. Within three months of independence the White Flag communists joined the Red Flags; the White Flags initially tried to work within the country’s democratic framework (Smith 1991 : 102). Eventually these factions

37 Smith (1991: page 89, footnote) notes most of Burma’s armed opposition groups reject the use of ‘insurgent’ or ‘rebel,’ considering these terms as pejorative and implying resistance struggles are unlawful. Burmese reviewers reading drafts of this dissertation have similarly cautioned against using this term. However, because political science conventionally uses the term ‘insurgent’ to mean seizing power by armed means; this is used to discuss armed groups contesting state power in Burma. No offense is intended.

38 *Tatmadaw* is the Burmese term for the entire Burmese armed forces, including the Burma Army, Burma Navy, and the Burma Air Force (Selth 2002).

combined as the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), and its leaders pursued a Maoist-peasant insurgency approach to take control of the country, intending to displace the democratic central government with a communist system.

Secondly, other insurgency groups at this time fought for greater autonomy within of the structure of a federal union. The Karen revolt began in 1949 partly as a response to the central government's creation of army units of ethnic-Burmese, called *Situndans*; these units were formed in preparation for a Karen uprising (Smith 1991:115 – 117). *Situndans* units massacred hundreds of Karen civilians (Callahan 2003: 132), and were personally offensive to the Karen officer corps, who believed they had proven their loyalty to the central government by fighting the communist insurgencies that initially controlled territory around Rangoon (Callahan 2003; Smith 1991). Following the massacres, the Karen units of the army defected, taking arms and ammunition with them. The Karen National Union (KNU), which became the political body of the Karen resistance, was declared illegal in 1949, four years before the Communist Party of Burma, even though the CPB began fighting several years prior. Other minority ethnic groups, including the Mon, also launched their own revolts, demanding state territory within a federal union for their own people and greater decision-making in matters of politics and culture (Bunge 1983: xxiii; Silverstein 1980: 206). A small, armed Kachin group formed in 1951, leading to the establishment of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and its political wing the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), in 1961. The KIO demands fuller autonomy for Kachin state and less Burmanization of the country by the central government.

Other insurgencies formed with the objective of gaining independence from the union. Shan, Kachin and Chin ethnic groups initially remained loyal to the government of

Burma, but support for remaining in the Union was weakened by the end of the decade (Silverstein 1980: 206). The 1947 constitution contained provisions which allowed secession of Shan and Kayah states after 10 years if state governments were not satisfied with the Union (Silverstein 1964: 147). Some local leaders were not satisfied and began signaling willingness to pursue their right of succession, although some wanted to negotiate, some students were more radical in their position. In 1957 the Shan State Unity Party was established to lead the state out of the Union; in 1958 the Shan States Independence Army (*Noom Sukhan*) formed, its goals included freedom from Burmese domination and to build a united, independent and democratic Shan state (Silverstein 1980: 216). At this time in Western Burma, Naga groups also fought for an independent country carved out of territory from Burma and India.

Despite different objectives, military agreements between those fighting for greater autonomy and those fighting for independence occurred. The KIA, for example, joined the National Liberation Alliance with Shan and Kayah rebel groups (Silverstein 1964: 149). Complicating matters, no ethnic state has a homogenous population. Within the ethnic states, other minority groups also mobilized armies to protect their communities from domination by the larger minority groups.

Finally, warlord insurgents protecting trade routes to the borders also became part of the political landscape. Known as the 'Chinese Irregular Forces' (CIF), these were Kuomintang troops that fled to Burma's Shan state; 12,000 CIF troops controlled Kengtung, Manglun and Kokang areas in northern Shan state by 1953 (Callahan 2003: 155). They built base camps from which to launch attacks against the People's Republic of China (PRC). Receiving supplies and ammunition from the United States, these troops

brought their families, built 100 miles of roads in Burma and Thailand, and controlled poppy agriculture and opium trade routes (Callahan 2003: 155). While the CIF's objectives differed from the communist and independence insurgency groups, there was overlap between the three types of groups, and several CIF groups eventually were absorbed into the CPB alliance. Financing armed struggle for nationalist causes similarly required groups to establish businesses and trade routes. As Weinstein (2007) argues, when the barriers to entry are low, multiple insurgencies will form. In Burma, weapons and ammunition left over from World War II were in ready supply, little authority from the central government governed peripheral ethnic areas of the country and grievances against the central government were growing. The conditions were ideal for a multitude of armed insurgencies to develop in Burma.

International context

On the international front, the government of Burma parlayed the diplomatic skills developed from negotiating independence from the British into international diplomatic efforts. With the onset of what became the Cold War, Burma sought a position of strong neutrality and attempted to be a player in international events. Throughout the Cold War, Burma received aid from the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States provided funds off and on after 1951 for agricultural and land reclamation projects, while the USSR offered specific gifts of a hospital, hotel and technological institute. Burma's relationship with Israel also netted aid and technical advice, and Japan contributed to Burma's war reconstruction and development through reparation funds (Silverstein 1964: 167 - 169).

Burma's Prime Minister U Nu was one of the founders and leaders of the non-aligned movement, organizing the 1955 Bandung, Indonesia conference and developing charters of neutrality for small states. Unlike other former colonies, Burma's leaders declined joining the British Commonwealth of Nations, fearing it would keep it from pursuing neutral policies (Smith 1991:103). Burma's U Thant became the acting-Secretary General of the United Nations in 1961 when Dag Hammarskjöld was assassinated; twice elected to this position, U Thant led the world body for the next ten years. Burma was the first non-communist country to recognize the new government of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Seekins 1983: 54), and sought a delicate balancing role between China and India.

1962 protest: students for the restoration of democracy

At the end of February 1962, Prime Minister U Nu allowed and attended a Federal Seminar of all ethnic minority leaders to discuss their grievances and to propose solutions. Before U Nu could announce whether he agreed to recommendations for constitutional changes, the military seized power (Silverstein 1980: 227-8). General Ne Win staged a military coup on March 2, 1962 that removed the elected government and suspended the constitution. Unlike the way in which the caretaker government was established two years before, in 1962 the *tatmadaw* overtly seized power by use of force (Callahan 2003: 202).

Ruling by decree, the Revolutionary Council consisted of the top coup-leaders under General Ne Win.³⁹ The military government argued its rule was necessary due to the

³⁹ Same government, several names: this text refers to the government of 1962 – 1973 as the Revolutionary Council, and the period of 1974 – 1988 as the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP). General Ne Win was

growing threat posed by dissident minorities (Silverstein 1964). That military rule is necessary to ensure the state does not fragment is a claim still in use today by the government. Despite the regime's claim, Callahan argues that the coup came from two decades of successfully fighting internal enemies of armed insurgents, and by 1962, "the army had become a standing, bureaucratized, and centralized institution, capable of eliminating such challenges to its claims over state power" (2003: 204). Protest against authoritarian conditions in Burma began within months of the 1962 coup.

Four months after the military coup, students at Rangoon University began demonstrating, demanding the military restore the country to democracy. "After three days of breaking through the locked doors [of the university dorms], the Rangoon University Students' Union (RUSU) took leadership as it had in the 1930s. While the RUSU led students on a one-hour protest, government security forces raided the Rangoon University campus and took control of the student union," according to Charney (2009: 116).

Riots in parts of Rangoon followed. Thant Myint-U writes, "at least 15 students were killed and many more wounded" and the next morning troops came with dynamite, reducing to rubble Rangoon University's Student Union building (2007: 292).⁴⁰ Other

the head of state during both periods. After 1974 the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), whereby the military officers took off their uniforms and expanded into a one party system across the country. In Bueno de Mesquita et al's (2003) terms, the military means of co-opting elites. There is no historical dispute that Ne Win remained in charge in both periods. Having resigned from the army in 1974 to be the country's chief executive, Ne Win formally retired from this position in 1981. As he remained the chairman of the BSPP, Ne Win remained in the real seat of power until the 1988 demonstrations (Bunge 1983). It was recognized that Ne Win was behind the 1988 'coup' but this time out of the spotlight (Lintner 1990); as such, the 1988 coup was not so much a coup but a re-establishment of power already held by the military – a contraction of the selectorate.

the ruling authority transformed into a pseudo-civilian selectorate. Military leaders from the Revolutionary Council took over the BSPP increased the size of the selectorate as a result. Ne Win remained in charge in both periods. Having resigned from the army in 1974 to be the country's chief executive, Ne Win formally retired from this position in 1981. As he remained the chairman of the BSPP, Ne Win remained in the real seat of power until the 1988 demonstrations (Bunge 1983). It was recognized that Ne Win was behind the 1988 'coup' but this time out of the spotlight (Lintner 1990); as such, the 1988 coup was not so much a coup but a re-establishment of power already held by the military – a contraction of the selectorate.

⁴⁰ The demolished Rangoon University Student Union building had been the center of student political activism since the colonial days and photos of this building appear in contemporary student political writings, pamphlets and stickers.

sources put the number of deaths closer to 100 students (Lintner 1990: 39; Schock 2004: 93; Charney 2009: 116).

The university was temporarily closed and students who were not arrested were sent home (Silverstein 1977: 49). According to Silverstein, “when the universities reopened at the end of August [1962], students were required to sign pledges of good behavior and to have them endorsed by responsible citizens in their home areas” (1964: 105). By the end of 1962, students were holding small demonstrations again and formed new student organizations to replace those outlawed by the government (Silverstein 1964: 105). In 1963, students protested the government policies regarding armed insurgents and its policy of arrest and terror of leftist politicians (Silverstein 1964: 105); hundreds of students were jailed and the government again closed the universities for a year (Silverstein 1977: 49).

Following the 1962 protests: new rules, clampdown

Following the 1962 protests, the Revolutionary Council pursued policies of economic modernization while ensuring no outside influences would subvert its definition of Burmese culture. Gradually sources of opposition were eliminated. The military regime began to scale back access to alternative sources of information, curtailed civil rights and free movement and eliminated potential sources of opposition. It nationalized industries and devalued⁴¹ the currency, leading to an exodus of foreign investment and traders. International development funding continued, and the state received assistance from

⁴¹ Devalued is a bit of a misnomer as it suggests simply lowering the values associated with currency. Certain denominations of kyat currency bills were de-monetized; with no warning the government declared certain bills to no longer be legal currency. This will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

external donors. But the relationships changed, and portended what was to become an isolationist policy.

State and society

The military regime began to scale back access to alternative sources of information, curtailed civil rights and free movement, and eliminated potential sources of opposition. After the coup, the military government began censoring media reporting it considered regime-critical and inaccurate (Silverstein 1977). Alternative sources of information were also nearly eliminated during this period. Beginning in September 1962, all publishers were required to annually register with the government (Silverstein 1964: 139). Instead of relying on private media to disseminate its policies, the Revolutionary Council eventually set up its own mouthpiece publications, including *Working People's Daily*, established in 1963, and government-run radio broadcasts. The remaining independent news outlets reproduced the news and reports given to them by the government (Silverstein 1977: 48). The government “replaced private and foreign-owned reading rooms with its own, continued the policy of state controlled radio, and expanded into the production and distribution of films and written materials.” Only people with shortwave radios could access information outside of the regime’s pervasive narrative (Silverstein 1977: 99). Entertainment was curtailed; horse racing, beauty contests, and gambling were banned (Taylor 2009: 297).

In contrast to its willingness to accept foreign monetary and technical assistance, the military significantly curtailed citizens’ access to foreigners. “When the government took control of the media and the school system, it sought to eliminate sources of

‘decadent’ Western influence,” writes Seekins (1983: 66). The military limited visits by foreign tourists, and barred journalists from living in Burma and writing on Burmese affairs. By 1965, visitors could only obtain a transit visa for a 24-hour stop over between flights from Europe to locations in Asia. After 1969, tourists could stay for seven days but only allowed to travel to the designated areas of Rangoon, Mandalay and a few towns in the central plains (Smith 191: 1; Silverstein 1977: 99). In 1966, “the last foreign Baptist missionaries and foreign Catholic priests and nuns left Burma, as the government either refused to renew their stay permits or explicitly ordered them out of the country,” according to Charney (2009: 119).

Not only were foreigners now limited in their visits, but in the 1960s travel outside of Burma was made nearly impossible for Burmese citizens. Burmese citizens had to surrender their passports in exchange for letters of identity, were allowed to take only small amounts of money with them for their travels, and had to leave all personal possessions behind when they left the country (Silverstein 1977: 100). Burma-born foreign nationals who immigrated to other countries were not issued visas for return visits to see family; this travel ban was in effect for 30 years until the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) government revised this policy in the early 1990s (Zaw Oo 2004: 248).

The government eliminated sources of opposition. With few exceptions during the March 1962 coup, the country’s elected leaders were imprisoned and held without formal charges or a trial for at least five years (Silverstein 1977: 47). Initially, the Revolutionary Council allowed political parties to continue functioning; parties held meetings, printed newsletters and circulated their views. The acting leaders of the political parties could travel freely in the country. But by September, the Revolutionary Council redacted its

leniency of the existing political parties. “A noticeable change in the coup government’s attitude toward criticism developed during the first part of the 1963,” writes Silverstein (1964: 139). After September, the Revolutionary Council arrested most leaders and second-line leaders of leftist political organizations and the political parties. In contrast to today’s policies towards political prisoners, treatment of political prisoners was not demonstrably harsh. Silverstein reports political prisoners were “permitted occasional visits from their families and were given personal comforts and mobility in the area of confinement” (1964: 142). Exile Activist E2, a student at the time, remembers being well-treated as a political prisoner, although he attributed his relatively pleasant incarceration to family connections within the *tatmadaw*.

Civil society in Burma, while not eliminated, became subdued as organizations such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) became more circumspect in their activities. Informal groups formed to solve local problems, but “advocacy groups were co-opted, neutered, or eliminated,” according to Steinberg (2004: 155). After the students’ protests, the military government sought to enforce new social controls over students by outlawing their political and social organizations and confining them to the university campus. Closing universities for months following the 1962 protests temporarily eliminated the threat posed by students. Over time, the regime broke up the universities into smaller, geographically isolated units, a practice that continues today (Charney 2009: 115).

In March 1965 the regime held an All Sangha Conference,⁴² which, according to Silverstein “drew up a constitution for an All Buddha Sasana Sangha Organization with an identification card and a program for reforming religious education” (1977: 98). After a month of violent protests against these measures, the government arrested 92 monks and closed several monasteries. After these events, the regime established rules prohibiting monks from voting, excluded them from holding office in mass-based organizations, and set up a Ministry of Religious Affairs (Silverstein 1977: 98).

Finally, in 1974, the regime passed a new constitution, one that strengthened and centralized the government’s administrative structure. In doing so the Revolutionary Council completed its transition into the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). This provided for a ‘legal’ transformation of power from the military to the civilian BSPP. General Ne Win stepped down from his command of the military to be the President; in reality, the *tatmadaw* continued to report to him. People were required to vote, but the party handpicked all candidates and outcomes of elections were never in doubt (Silverstein 1977: 133).

Economy

With its takeover of the government, the military also nationalized the economy, with the effect of eliminating foreign business entities and capitalists engaged in business in Burma. “After 1962, all banks, industries, and large commercial enterprises were nationalized... military personnel were brought in to run business enterprises and the civil

⁴² Sangha is the term for monkhood. The attempt to regulate the monkhood increased regime control over the relatively decentralized monkhood that had independent sources of power. Additionally, rebels could

service,” according to Schock (2005: 93). In February 1963, Ne Win announced the state’s takeover of production, distribution, import and export of commodities. No new private industry was to be allowed, and the private sector was limited to retail trade. A week later, the government nationalized all private, foreign and domestic banks.⁴³

In the first ten years of rule, the revolutionary council reorganized over 15,000 private firms into public enterprises, and “most foreign capital was expropriated and nationalized or left the country,” according to Wickham (1983: 137). In 1963, it ended a joint venture with the Burma Oil Company by taking over the outstanding shares, and in 1965 using the same methods, took over the Burma Corporation, a mining company. Unilever and other foreign firms were nationalized (Silverstein 1977: 160). By taking over 10 foreign and 14 private domestic banks, the regime nationalized the banking system in 1963 (Wickham 1983: 150).

Following the nationalization of the banks, the government demonetized 100 and 50 kyat notes and replaced them with notes of similar denominations; doing so “wiped out the savings of ordinary people and contributed to a new wave of ethnic uprisings,” says Rajah (1998: 135). The government only bought cancelled notes up to the amount of 500 kyat; anything over this amount was not allowed and taken as a loss by the individual (Seekins 1983: 62). The government demanded explanations of those who held 100 and 50 kyat notes; this was done to target small businessmen and indigenous capitalists suspected of hoarding goods and supplying the black market (Silverstein 1977: 160).

quickly shave heads and don robes, hiding in plain sight.

43 “February Diary,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 1 (11): 28 February 1994, page 7.

At the same time, “greater restrictions were placed on the activities of Indian businessmen in the name of socialism and nationalism, and their lives and property became increasingly uncertain,” writes Taylor (2009: 275). After the demonetization, nationalizing industries and family businesses, a “mass exodus of some 300,000 Indian and 100,000 Chinese merchants and traders out of the country,” writes Smith (1991: 98). This represented most of the business and trade expertise within the country. These departures meant “many professional, transport, industrial and trading roles became vacant and were either left unfilled or taken up by Burmese,” according to Taylor (2009: 274). In effect, these economic policies reversed the colonial British policy of introducing Indian nationals to manage Burma politically and economically, while Burmese citizens remained at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Burma’s politicians in 1947 had legislated strict anti-immigration law in June 1947, but it was not until “1955 recorded departures surpassed recorded entries,” according to Taylor (2009: 274).

Economic growth during the 1960s was slow and chronic shortages at government-run stores led to the public's reliance on the black market to obtain household goods (Wickham 1983: 138). In 1963, the BSPP government began the monopoly purchase of the rice crop in Burma.⁴⁴ By the 1970s this led to rice shortages as farmers withheld stock from the market because they couldn’t afford to purchase rice for home consumption, and private rice dealers hid stocks in order to drive up the price. According to Silverstein:

The burden of socialist endeavor fell hardest upon the urban population.

Caught between the millstones of low and fixed wages and high prices and

⁴⁴ “November Diary,” the *Irrawaddy* Vol. 1 (6): 30 November 1993.

commodity shortages, they had few options open as a means of escape... necessities had to be purchased from [government-owned] People's Stores where prices for food and ordinary cloth *longyi* [sarong] doubled between 1962 and 1966 (1977: 161).

For the rest of the decade and into the 1970s, economic nationalism continued to negatively affect the Burmese micro-economy. "While the rural population was able to eat sufficiently during the period of military rule, the smaller urban sector faced serious shortages, extreme inflation and black markets for the basic commodities necessary for daily life," writes Silverstein (1977: 158). During the 1970s, 80 percent of the urban population lived at or below subsistence level (Wickham 1983: 179). The official index price of rice, the staple food of Burma, rose by 25 percent per year between 1973 and 1975 (Wickham 1983: 13).

Armed struggle

General Ne Win justified the coup in part due to the need to solve the intractable problem of the anti-state insurgencies. The opposite occurred; according to Smith, "ironically the 1962 coup gave many of the insurgencies a new lease on life" (1991: 98). The suspension of the 1947 constitution by the military led to increased insurgencies in the Shan, Kachin and Kayah states (Cooke 1983: 223), none of which wanted come under the domination of a military regime. The ethnic stronghold areas, such as Shan and Karen state, remained under the control of armed groups, who subsequently taxed the population to raise capital, set up schools, and governed their territories whilst fighting (Smith 1991).

By the mid-1960s, however the ‘new lease on life’ was met by the military’s introduction of the Four Cuts strategy, which cut off many insurgent groups from sources of food, funds, intelligence and recruits. Similar to the ‘strategic hamlets’ used by the United States in Vietnam, Four Cuts forced villagers onto ‘strategic villages’ under military control or close to garrison towns; those forced to live in these villages, according to Selth, were “obliged to join the local militia, observe a curfew and report on any suspicious activity” (2002: 91). Villagers who returned to their original villages would be shot, food was confiscated, wells poisoned and crops destroyed. Despite government and military rhetoric, little was done to win the hearts and minds of villagers’ with social and economic development. All emphasis was on defeating the insurgents and intimidating local inhabitants. Four cuts also drove insurgents into the more rugged frontier areas of the country, where they were harder for the military to eradicate (Selth 2002: 163).

Chinese government support for the CPB continued during this time, in part strengthened by anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon after the Chinese Embassy encouraged cultural revolution activities, including wearing red badges, despite this activity being illegal. Beijing conducted anti-Ne Win radio broadcasts inside Burma, calling Ne Win’s government fascist.

By the end of the 1960’s most of the democratic leaders arrested during the coup were released; many faded into a quiet retirement. Others, such as the deposed prime minister U Nu, attempted to organize an insurgency rebellion from a base on the Thailand-Burma border. This insurgency never gained popular momentum, and in 1972 U Nu gave up the attempt (Taylor 2009: 369). U Nu returned to Burma in 1980 under a government amnesty program for those charged with political offenses (Cooke 1983: 225).

International context

Internationally, the Revolutionary Council's coup did not receive much condemnation, and the regime continued its relationships with foreign governments, particularly to receive "technical and material aid to augment its own economic resources" (Silverstein 1964: 167). Unlike its democratic predecessor, the Revolutionary Council preferred only government-to-government aid of bilateral and multilateral programs; it discontinued acceptance of aid from the Ford and Asia Foundations, and the British Council, as the military considered it belittling to accept aid from private organizations (Silverstein 1964: 167). General Ne Win made a couple of state visits to the United States to examine businesses, secure military support for its anti-communism military campaigns, and to play golf.

The military eschewed joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) when it formed in 1967, or the (now-defunct) Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), as these organizations were considered not neutral, a policy it continued from the democratic period. It did join the Colombo Plan and the Asian Development Bank, regional economic groupings (Shinn 1983 : 209).

1974-5 Workers, Students and Monks Demonstrations

On May 13, 1974, calling for higher wages workers at Chauk oil fields in upper Burma began to strike; strikes spread to workers in the entire oil industry and factory

workers in Rangoon.⁴⁵ A few weeks later on June 6, 1974 workers were joined by students protesting “against inflation and food shortages after the implementation of policy favoring the rural sector,” according to Schock (2005: 93; also see Asia Human Rights Commission). Laborers protested the country’s economic and political conditions in strikes about food shortages, rising prices and bad labor conditions. Beginning at the Insein railway workshop, protests spread to 42 other state-owned enterprises (Silverstein 1977: 141). This culminated in a nationwide workers strike joined by some students. After three weeks of protests, the *tatmadaw* began to violently suppress the labor unrest. “Troops and police fired on textile and dockyard workers... more than 100 were killed,” according to Lintner (1999: 455). Although the students did not initiate these protests, they participated, and the government responded by closing universities for a period of time (Silverstein 1977: 48).

Six months later in December 1974, social unrest again ensued when the government chose not to provide a state burial for U Thant, the former Secretary General of the United Nations. U Thant’s family brought his body to Burma from his home in the United States; the government allowed the body to be placed under a tent at a racetrack on the outskirts of Rangoon for people to pay their respects before his burial. The regime granted permission only for a small private ceremony and burial at a family cemetery.⁴⁶

During the delivery of U Thant’s body to the cemetery, students seized the coffin and took it on a truck to Rangoon University. According to Thant Myint U,

45 *Burma Chronology of Events 1962 - 1989*, booklet by the Asian Human Rights Commission, n.d., page 16.

46 Because U Thant and his family lived outside of Burma, the family requested permission from the regime to bring the body to Burma for burial.

Speeches were made condemning the government and calling for change.

The next day the student organizers sent a letter to the authorities demanding a proper state funeral and said that if the government did not agree, they would hold their own funeral, one befitting a Burmese hero (2007: 313).

Students shouted slogans such as “down with the one-party dictatorship” and “down with the fascist government,” writes Lintner (1999 : 455), also noting this was the first significant protest in 10 years in which monks participated. After the students reached a compromise with the authorities for a burial near Shwedagon Pagoda, a radical student group stole the coffin, intent on burying U Thant’s body on the site of Rangoon University’s demolished Student Union. After three days of standoff, with students and monks sleeping at the site to guard the coffin, government troops stormed the campus and quickly regained control. According to Silverstein:

The students were using the Thant incident as a means of expressing their general antagonism and hostility to an incompetent and repressive government. The students singled out issues of corruption among government officials, basic food shortages, economic decline, loss of freedom and the absence of jobs for university graduates (1977: 143).

After the standoff, riots broke out in Rangoon, with military troops firing on unarmed civilians, students and monks. Political Activist Z1 witnessed the riots while on his way to work. “The authorities used smoke bombs, throwing [them] into the public, so people soaked towels in water [wearing them over their mouths], catching them throwing

them back.” According to Silverstein, “in the riots of December 1974 the monks, with the students, led the popular response to the brutality of the police and soldiers” (1977: 51). It is unknown the number of people who died during these events, but according to Thant Myint-U, “hundreds” of students were arrested, and “some would serve long years in prison” (2007: 314). Officially 1,800 were arrested (Lintner 1999: 455). Following the riots, the military regime again temporarily closed universities (Silverstein 1977: 50).

Less than a year later, in June 1975, five days of student demonstrations occurred, commemorating the anniversary of the 1974 workers strike. Workers joined the students and marched to Insein prison where their colleagues were kept in custody.⁴⁷ Again, the regime closed universities after these events, this time for six months (Silverstein 1977: 50). Student demonstrations began again in March 1976 at Rangoon University, again provoking arrests and the temporary closure of the university (Silverstein 1977: 50), but did not spread. Demonstrations against the government did not occur again until 1987.

Following the 1974 protests: more rules, more clampdown

In the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the military junta expanded its policies of cultural isolation but tried to adjust its economic policies to allow for international development. Burma became a backwater with little international examination or influence on its internal rule. It remained entirely out of the Vietnam War, despite its proximity to Laos and Cambodia, and surprising considering the presence of a homegrown communist insurgency. Its relationships with China improved – bringing some investment but more

⁴⁷ *Burma Chronology of Events 1962 - 1989*, booklet by the Asian Human Rights Commission, n.d. . page 17.

importantly a cessation of China's support for Burma's insurgency groups. During this period, the insurgencies continued, and some groups formed military alliances. Alliances proved brittle, however, and groups were subject to constant shifting and fracturing. Some gains in territory were made by the *tatmadaw*, but armed insurgencies overwhelmingly remained impervious to the *tatmadaw* threat, running their territories as *de facto* governments. By controlling territory, insurgent groups enjoyed great wealth, which allowed them to continue to expand.

During this period, the regime changed its name to the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP); General Ne Win removed his army uniform but remained in charge of a growing single-party state. The BSPP continued the Revolutionary Council's total media control and restricted citizen's access to alternative sources of information. Some private media outfits were allowed to operate, but under strict guidelines. The BSPP government undertook some economic reforms, and the economy improved.

State and Society

The BSPP continued to practice total media control and restricted citizens' access to alternative sources of information in the 1970s and 1980s. The first television programs in the country began broadcasting in 1979 from a state-owned television station, and in the early 1980s, the government "owned and controlled all communications media, and journalists were issued strict guidelines regarding what could permissibly be published or broadcast," writes Cooke (1983: 219). Keeping up with new developments in communications "in 1985, the Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs enacted a special Television and Video Law that requires compulsory licensing of TV sets, video

machines, and satellite television,” according to Chowdhury (2008: 7). Foreign travel remained difficult to do, and international news publications were rarely available (Cooke 1983: 219). “From 1962 to 1988, many writers, cartoonists, poets and singers were imprisoned as their writings, words and stories were seen as harmful and disgraceful to the Government and country,” according to *The Irrawaddy*.⁴⁸

After 1985 some privately-owned publications were allowed to print, but the government maintained strict regulations about what was allowed to be published. Newspapers reported the same stories about BSPP activities and government criticism was not allowed.⁴⁹ Some underground channels existed; best known was *Dawn*, a small newsletter “read mostly by intellectuals including former activists and communist sympathizers,” according to *The Irrawaddy*.⁵⁰

In addition to the underground news channels, there is some evidence that anti-state political mobilization quietly continued after the 1975 protests. Activist Z1, who witnessed the 1974 protests, undertook small acts of resistance in the 1980s. He discussed the resourceful political materials were created for distribution:

[Unlike today], there was no distribution of CDs; there were only gas gestetoner duplication [copy machines]. We improvised by pouring fluorescents on wax, like a photocopier. Homemade... sometimes in my room I made duplicates on wax paper. Booklets of poems and articles were distributed.

48 *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 2: 1994, page 7.

49 *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 2: 1994, page 7.

50 “Burma’s Unfinished Revolution,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 7 (7): August 1999, page 8.

Others report witnessing small-scale political acts meant to challenge the government occurring prior to the 1988 protests. Recalls *The Irrawaddy*,

When Min Ko Naing and his friends started their own [theatre] troupe in 1985, they attempted to revive the original spirit of *than gyat*... Calling themselves ‘Goat Eye and All-Seeing Eye,’ they made jokes at the expense of Ne Win’s regime and highlighted the lack of freedom and democracy in Burma, as well as the corruption among its officials.⁵¹

Any political activities were extremely risky, as an extensive network of neighborhood surveillance developed as an outgrowth of the counterinsurgency campaigns, and anyone criticizing the government or its policies were subject to arrest (Shinn 1983: 183). Travel restrictions on foreigners remained the same; in the 1980s, foreign visitors were still only permitted to stay in Burma for seven days (Cooke 1983: 219).

As of early 1983 the overall strength of Burma’s armed forces was 179,000 people. Cooke argues “in light of the limited employment opportunities in the nation, the armed forces probably provided jobs for many who might otherwise be unemployed” (1983: 248). In addition to the military, Cooke (1983: 249) estimates an additional 35,000 men and women served in units of the People’s Militia, which was tasked with providing village defense in areas close to insurgency. Military size remained about the same throughout the

51 “Min Ko Naing ‘Conqueror of Kings,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 7 (3): March 1999, page 8-9. *Than gyat* is a traditional form of street theatre performed during April’s Buddhist New Year. Historically, *than gyat* pokes fun at rulers and government, and was a form of entertainment in the Burmese royal court. This quotation from the *Irrawaddy* may be translated incorrectly. Aung Saw Oo (discussion with author April 2, 2011), suggests Min Ko Naing’s stage name was “Goat Mouth” (not eye), meaning constantly speaking the truth, as a goat constantly eats. Water festival is a chance to use culture to a little bit criticize the society and government, and *thin gyat* done across the country in every state and major townships.

decade. When the pro-democracy demonstrations began in mid-1988, ~~the~~*madaw's* entire force numbered about 186,000 (Selth 1998: 88).

Economy

Following the workers' strikes and student protests, in 1976 the BSPP government undertook economic reforms and had some success stabilizing the economy. The BSPP increased the amount of international direct assistance it received by seven-fold, and increased the amount of bilateral and multilateral capital imported by the government during this time. U Myint (2004: 264) reports from 1982 to 1988, Burma received an average of US\$342 million per year as official development assistance (ODA) from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members of the United Nations.

Internal growth occurred in several key sectors, including forestry, mining, communications construction, finance and social services (Wickham 1983: 139-140). "Most Burmese households in early 1983 could meet their basic needs of subsistence, however lacking in comfort and convenience," according to Wickham, and consumer items remained scarce (Wickham 1983: 141). Economic pressures on urban dwellers lessened. Despite some growth, challenges remained. Unemployment and underemployment, particularly of able-bodied youths, remained a problem. Despite raised incomes after 1975, to make ends meet many workers held a part-time job in addition to their main occupation (Wickham 1983: 179). Skilled Burmese laborers were leaving the country altogether (Wickham 1983: 142).

As of 1981, 67 percent of all workers were employed in fishing, forestry or agriculture, a sign of how little 'modernizing' of the economy had occurred in 20 years of

BSPP rule. The hypothesis that military regimes breed modernization was disproved by reality in Burma (Silverstein 1980). Between 1981 and 1986, the national debt doubled to US\$ 2.8 billion; it continued to rise and by 1987, the national debt was US\$ 4 billion (Charney 2009: 145-6). To constrain inflation, in 1985 the BSPP demonetized 25, 50 and 100 kyat notes; these notes represented 25 percent of all money in circulation. Partial compensation was given to note-holders (Taylor 2009: 377). Some economic liberalization occurred, and state monopolies of several goods ended. As the BSPP promised more reform, speculation increased – and inflation continued unchecked (Taylor 2009: 381).

By the mid-to late-1980s, consumer prices were spiralling out of control; Charney argues “the basic problem was that as the kyat had become unreliable, rice became the new currency and so was hoarded” (2009: 147). Adding to the problem of inflation, increased trade with China led to an influx of Chinese goods into Burma that undercut local producers (Smith 1991: 361). To address these problems and to confiscate the profits of black marketers and commodity speculators (Taylor 2009: 381), without warning the government in 1987 declared all 75, 35 and 25 kyat notes were no longer legal tender. This decision overnight eliminated 60 to 80 percent of the wealth and savings of Burmese citizens (Lintner 1999: 338; Turnell 2004: 90).

Armed struggle

In the late 1970s, the insurgencies continued their respective fights against the central government. Various military alliances formed and then were cancelled.⁵² Despite

⁵² The various armed insurgencies have found it difficult to work together to oppose a common enemy. Some of these reasons include: their own prejudices and an initial lack of need to cooperate to rebuff the

the inability to form lasting alliances, most groups remained impervious to attempts by the *tatmadaw* to end their campaigns. According to Selth,

After the mid-1970s, the army was strong enough to dominate the southern and central lowlands...Yet it did not possess the manpower, firepower, mobility or logistical support necessary to occupy all disputed territories or to achieve decisive results against any of the major insurgent groups (2002: 163).

The CPB and the KIO agreed to cooperate with each other in the late 1970s; this led to the strengthening of the KIO as it received arms from China (via the CPB). With new weapons the KIA was able to attack *tatmadaw* outposts, extending its territory in northern Kachin state (Smith 1991: 330-333). At the same time, through forged alliances the CPB absorbed various armies representing different factions in Shan state. A north/south split in the Shan State Progressive Party occurred, with elements of the SSPP joining the CPB in 1977. Factions of the Lahu National United Party and the KNPP also joined the CPB. In 1976 the National Democratic Front (NDF) was formed, an alliance of the KNU and nine other ethnic minority armies demanding the formation of a federal Union of Burma (Smith 1991: 10).

The alliance building of insurgents aside, the *tatmadaw* had several successful campaigns against insurgency groups. Despite the CPB's growth due to absorbing elements of the ethnic insurgency groups, from 1975 to 1978 the *tatmadaw* successfully thwarted several attempts by the CPB to expand its territory holdings in Shan state. The *tatmadaw*'s

tatmadaw, overlapping ethnic populations that lead to claims of the same territory, competition for scarce resources and trade routes needed for organizational survival, little sense of common destiny, and perhaps

attacks on remaining CIF strongholds pushed these groups into Thailand (Cooke 1983: 224).

In 1980 secret talks were held between the BSPP government and the CPB, and in 1981 the BSPP held talks with the KIO; neither resulted in an armistice and Shan and Karen rebels vowed to continue fighting (Shinn 1983: 206). In the early 1980s, approximately 28 insurgency groups were believed to operate in North, Northeastern, Southeastern and Western Burma (Cooke 1983). By September 1988 there were 25 insurgent organizations, roughly “divided into two major blocks, one headed by the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and the other by the National Democratic Front (NDF),” according to Smith (1991: 10).

In May 1980, to celebrate the conclusion of a national convention of the Sangha (monkhood), the government declared an amnesty for those engaged in insurrection. “About 21,000 insurgents and political opponents were reported to have returned ‘to the legal fold,’ and some 4,000 political prisoners and felons were released from prison,” writes Shinn (1983: 205). Former Prime Minister U Nu, living in India, was among those who opted for amnesty and returned home to Burma.

International context

The BSPP government accepted international development assistance during these years. In the mid-to-late 1970s, as it looked to take advantage of the mineral wealth of the country, the BSPP allowed increased international assistance in Burma. Writes Charney,

most importantly, differing end goals.

In 1976, the World Bank set up an aid consortium, including Britain, the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Australia and Canada for consultation and the establishment of a common policy regarding Burma. In order to exploit its natural resources, and establish joint enterprises with other countries, without sacrificing the socialist economic system, Burma would need significant capital investment, foreign technical assistance and equipment. Although Japan and West Germany were the largest of the foreign aid donors, the People's Republic of China also emerged as a major source of loans to the country from 1979 (2009: 145).

Relations between China and Burma to steadily improved, with Ne Win making 11 visits between 1960 and 1980 (Shinn 1983: 210). In 1981, China's premier reportedly stated that Chinese relations with communist parties in Southeast Asia, including the CPB, were confined to a 'political and spiritual level' (Shinn 1983: 210). Within a few years, the CPB stopped receiving direct assistance from the PRC⁵³ Relationships with Thailand were strained, in part because Thailand was viewed as too pro-American but also because of long animosity between these countries.⁵⁴ In the early 1980s, relations with India also normalized, with most of the 1,600 kilometer border demarcated, and compensation

53 With less external assistance, the CPB became reliant upon profits derived from an opium trade; by 1979 it boosted poppy cultivation in areas under its control, and drew upon the experience of drug traders within the alliance members to establish trading routes to the border with Thailand (Cooke 1983: 237).

54 The Burmese and Thai kingdoms had a history of conquering the territory between them, but the Burmese made the stronger incursions into Siam (Thailand), and in 1767 'put to the torch' Siam's capital of Ayutthaya, "a city with a population at that time that rivaled London or Paris," according to Thant Myint-U (2006: 99). This is used to stoke nationalism to this day.

allotted for assets left behind by Indians affected by the 1963 nationalization laws (Shinn 1983: 210).

Burma was designated a Least Developed Country by the United Nations in 1987, a move meant to help the country increase its access to aid but which also put it on equal footing with Bangladesh; several authors report this was a national embarrassment widely felt by citizens within the country (Taylor 2009; Kyau Yin Hlaing 2006). Burma also withdrew from the Nonaligned Movement in 1970, due to concerns about an “intensification of disputes, a tendency of the part of some to form ‘active factions,’ the use of force by some members for settlement of disputes and interference in the internal affairs of others,” according to Shinn (1983: 209).

1988 Student-led ‘People Power Movement’

Three rounds of large-scale demonstrations and near collapse of the government occurred in 1988. Precursors to these protests began in 1987, when dissatisfaction with the regime began to rise to the surface and pockets of protest activity stirred around the country. After the 1987 demonetization, students didn’t have money to pay their school fees, and began rioting in Rangoon (Taylor 2009). About 500 students from Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT) protested and burnt a government-owned jeep in front of the university.⁵⁵ In response, the government closed down the universities and colleges. With schools closed for six weeks, students went to their homes outside of the capital, and in doing so spread the news of their activities. Universities had “barely reopened on 26

⁵⁵ *The Irrawaddy* 1993 Vol. 9

October before underground student groups began activities in Rangoon, Mandalay and other towns” according to Lintner (1999: 339).

While the economic situation increased the public’s grievances, it was an interaction between RIT students and the son of a local government official that sparked the largest protests in the nation’s history. A ‘town and gown’ fight between RIT students and local youth occurred on March 12, 1988 (Lintner 1990:2). One RIT student was injured and the youth arrested; as the youth’s father was a local BSPP official, the youth was released quickly. The following day, about 200 RIT students marched to the police station to protest the release of the BSPP official’s son. They were met by *Lon Htein* (riot police), who fatally shot one student.

Leaflets condemning the brutality of the *Lon Htein* and the previous year’s demonetization were distributed the following day on RIT and other Rangoon university campuses. In response, the next day March 15, military troops entered the RIT campus and arrested ‘scores’ of students; the government’s evening news programs blamed the students for the disturbances.⁵⁶ Upset by the regime’s version of the events, the following day students from the main campus of Rangoon University (RU) marched towards the Rangoon University (Hlaing campus) and RIT. Students were protesting unequal treatment, the brutality of the police, and lack of truth in media. On the way, the students were blocked by *Lon Htein* and army units; an unknown number of students were killed as army troops entered RU main campus. The following day, another 1,000 students from RU were arrested and sent to Insein prison. On March 18, thousands of students marched to Sule

⁵⁶ *The Irrawaddy* 1994 Vol. 9.

Pagoda in central Rangoon and were joined and cheered on by others. Army units *Land Htein* were called in and, what is now called the White Bridge massacre, killed more than 100 students, including 41 who suffocated to death in a prison truck deliberately driven around the city (Smith 1991: 2). The BSPP government closed schools and universities, sending students home.⁵⁷ Students became conduits of information about the demonstrations back to their hometowns across the country.

A second wave of protests began when the students returned to universities in June 1988. Demonstrations began again, with students calling for the release of their imprisoned friends, the reinstatement of expelled classmates, and the right to set up a students union. On June 20, 1988, a student march swelled to 20,000 people including monks, workers and high-school students; several demonstrators were shot. Reportedly, six policemen were killed as crowds used home-made weapons and fought back during evening riots (Smith 1991: 3). All universities were closed and students sent home again, and the BSPP imposed a dawn-to-dusk curfew in Rangoon. Reports suggest protests also occurred in Mandalay, Moumein, Taunggyi and Pegu during this week. As July 1988 progressed, riots broke out in several areas of the country; some riots were about food shortages, while other riots resulted from communal antagonism between Muslims and Buddhists (Smith 1991: 3).

To determine how to address the growing unrest, on July 23, 1988 the BSPP government held an emergency congress. Unexpectedly, party chairman Ne Win, 77 years old, declared he was retiring, suggesting several of his senior colleagues also step down because the protests of March and June 1988 indicated significant mistrust of the

⁵⁷ *The Irrawaddy* 1994 Vol. 9.

government (Charney 2009: 151). He proposed the government hold a national referendum on returning to a multi-party system of government.⁵⁸ The Congress voted no on this proposal, according to Charney, “on the grounds that the government should first concern itself with resolving the country’s economic problems (2009: 151). The Congress accepted Ne Win’s resignation, but named Sein Win, a known hardliner who was responsible for suppressing the student demonstrations in March and June 1988 for crushing the RU student demonstrations in 1962, the new BSPP chairman (Charney 2009: 151; Lintner 1999: 341).

In response, a third round of protests commenced. People returned to the streets, at first in Rangoon and Mandalay, but “mass protests erupted in a staggering array of towns across the country, including Moulmein, Tavoy, Mergui, Pegu, Toungoo, Sittwe (Akyab), Minbu, Pakokku and even Myikyina in Burma’s far north,” writes Smith (1991: 4). In addition to the populace joining in the protests, a much more specific demand was articulated: the restoration of democracy.

Student leaders called for a general strike to begin on August 8, 1988.⁵⁹ Their statement for the strike was announced on a BBC radio program, leading to an unusually widespread dissemination of the message. Dockworkers were the first to strike on 8.8.88, followed by factory workers who took to the streets, along with monks, students and

58 “Unexpected” is the word used by Taylor (2009) regarding Ne Win’s resignation and call for a referendum on returning to multi-partyism. Maung Maung (1999: 42) writes the delegates to the congress were “stunned” by Ne Win’s announcement. No author explains why Ne Win chose to suggest a referendum; Maung Maung suggests Ne Win could have just ordered a referendum but Ne Win, “a soldier though he was, had always wanted his men to think and make up their minds” (1999: 43). A more cynical view is Ne Win suggested the idea of political change, but knowing the BSPP would not agree to curtail its power, remains the same, Ne Win appears a moderate and thoughtful. Lintner 1990).

59 August 8, 1988, known as ‘8.8.88’ or the Four 8’s movement

eventually government employees. *Tatmadaw* soldiers fired on demonstrators across the country. Nearly 3,000 people in Rangoon were killed on August 8, 1988; doctors working at Rangoon's General Hospital estimated this number (Lintner 1990). Again, the BSPP government announced it would consider multi-party democracy.

Marches and demonstrations of tens of thousands of people in large and small cities continued throughout the month of August 1988, mobilized by monks and students calling for elections and the restoration of multi-party democracy (Smith 1991: 4-6). "Nationally the students were generally referred to under their historic name, the All Burma Students Union, and this, in theory, maintained informal contacts around the country. This partly explains the speed with which the protests had spread," writes Smith (1991: 7).

The BSPP government announced it would hold another emergency congress on September 12 to decide whether to choose between one-party and multi-party system. It then released the 2,750 people arrested since August 3. After this announcement, student and monk leaders and organizers of the protests cautiously began to make their identities known. "About 1,000 relatively junior members of the armed forces, from all three Services, joined the pro-democracy demonstrations in Rangoon, calling for a return to civilian rule," according to Selth (2002: 260). Most soldiers receded into the countryside, leaving a vacuum of authority in the cities. "Strike centres were established in more than 200 of Burma's 314 townships," according to Lintner (1999: 349). Strike committees took over local administration and distributed food to the needy, and the press began publishing without censure. Taylor (2009) reports these weeks as the most violent and lawless in Burma's post World War II history, with a near total breakdown in authority. By early September, political veterans from the parliamentary era began

resurfacing, making use of the new space for organizing to try to form an interim government. U Nu declared he would reassume state power because he was the last democratically elected prime minister. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of independence hero General Aung San, also began giving widely attended speeches at this time (Smith 1994: 9).

During the protests and state breakdown, the armed insurgencies groups did not take advantage of the situation. As *tatmadaw* troops returned from the border into the cities to quell demonstrations, the insurgencies regained some territory, but did not attack the cities; they took the thaw as an opportunity to rest and do business. The CPB issued statements congratulating the people on their victory, but did not attempt to assume a leadership role – they did not have a presence in the cities after 40 years of rural-based resistance. NDF leaders were surprised when students from ABFSU and other political organizers arrived to the jungles to meet with them; after their initial surprise, they attempted to establish contacts with the emerging political parties in the cities (Smith 1991: 11).

On September 18, 1988, one week after the BSPP congress voted to hold multi-party elections, Ne Win's military guard led by his longtime subordinate Saw Maung, took over Rangoon. Army troops moved in and attacked demonstration centers and attempted to crush the democracy movement. Several days of intense violence occurred, leading to estimates of 10,000 people missing or dead since the protests began in March 1988 (Smith 1991: 16). In 1989, Amnesty International estimated that 6,000 people were arrested for

political reasons since September 1988. Inauspiciously, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) seized state power.⁶⁰

Following the 1988 coup: 1990 elections and expansion of control

Few in the international community immediately denounced the SLORC coup; after the coup, however, the international community increasingly scrutinized the SLORC's consolidation of power. The SLORC announced that its purpose was to provide stability to the country, military rule would be temporary and it would hold a general election to elect a Parliament to draft a new constitution. The SLORC commenced with preparations to hold an election but grew increasingly vague about whether it would hand over power to a civilian government. The regime reinstated and expanded punishment for political organizing and freedom of speech. Despite a repressive environment where political activists were arrested and campaign materials declared illegal, an election occurred, and the National League for Democracy won more than 80 percent of the parliament seats.

No handover of power occurred; after several years of stalling the SLORC held a constitutional convention where some of the elected political parties participated. The NLD and other political parties eventually boycotted these convention proceedings, primarily

60 State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was the name of the regime from 1988 until 1997, when it changed to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Taylor argues that 'SLORC' was an inaccurately translated acronym for the regime seized upon by foreign press and Western diplomats because of its Orwellian tone (2009: 388). Callahan (2003) argues the SLORC was a restoration of military government, similar to the form of the revolutionary council and without the excess baggage of the BSP party apparatus. In 1997, the SLORC underwent a purge, and with a little help from a Madison Avenue public relations firm, rebranded itself as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Despite a few changes in personnel and the removal of a few overly corrupt officials, the regime remained essentially the same, with Senior General Than Shwe firmly in charge.

because open discussion was disallowed and representatives were not allowed to introduce ideas. Several delegates were arrested when they attempted to do so.

While the SLORC-led state gradually became a pariah to the western world, connections to foreigners and outside media in 2007 was greater than at any point since 1962. Relations with its immediate neighbors and regional states are better than at any point in recent history. Compared to its own pre-1962 history, the country remains internationally isolated. Economically, the regime quickly reversed prior policies of nationalization, selling industries and access to mineral and forest resources to gain cash needed to expand the army. After initial gains in the 1990s, sanctions and poor economic management have led to an economy that continues to decline, leaving most citizens living at subsistence level.

State and society⁶¹

After the SLORC coup, 8,000 to 10,000 students and political activists from the cities fled to the liberated zones controlled by the rebel armies (Lintner 1994: 286).

61 Chapter 4 provides an in-depth examination of how the SLORC and SPDC since 1988 uses political repression and social compliance their impact on political activities in theoretical and empirical detail.

62 Students fled to territories held by different ethnic armed resistance groups; some went to the CPB-controlled areas in Shan state, others went north to areas held by the KIO, but the majority fled east to the mountain jungle territory held by the KNU (Smith 1991: 17). The KNU provided food and shelter for thousands of students streaming out of Burma in 1988 and for politicians and activists who in the years since fled to the liberated areas. Some of the students who fled to the jungle to join the armed struggle soon realized they were not cut out for jungle living but wanted to remain engaged in the political struggle against the military dictatorship. The KNU allowed political groups to organize at its headquarters base at Manerplaw, Karen state. A variety of political organizations were formed in the 'liberated areas' of Burma's jungles.

From this position of relative safety, political organizations formed from the remnants of scattered members. The safety of Manerplaw was for many the first opportunity to create more formalized organizations of resistance, including holding internal elections, discuss and deciding objectives, and determine strategies of resistance. Many of these efforts were led by the students who fled in 1988 and since left the jungle to pursue more civil society and political defiance approaches. For example, since 1993 has ABSDF included non-violent, civil defiance approach to complement their armed struggle wing

Students fled to the jungle to escape the expected crackdown and punishment from the SLORC; others, convinced the SLORC would not hand power after its promised election, decided armed struggle was the only way to free the country from dictatorship. Zaw Oo argues, “the departure of the most active segments of the activist groups also helped the regime to control domestic political space more effectively” (2004: 36).

Political organizing against the new military junta continued after 1988: students operated openly, armed resistance continued, and political party organizations formed to contest a parliamentary election (Smith 1991: 406). The SLORC announced a general election would be held to elect Members of Parliament who would draft a new constitution. Following the coup, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi became head of the newly formed political party the National League for Democracy (NLD), and eventually became *de facto* leader of the political movement (Smith 1994: 9).

The SLORC held a reasonably free and fair election, one with less irregularity than in the elections in the late 1940s or 1950s (Thant Myint-U 2006: 335). At that time, 235 political parties registered with the Election Commission. By Election Day, the regime declared all but 93 parties illegal.⁶³ Political activities continued in the lead up to the 1990 elections. According to Lintner:

(“Interview with Dr. Naing Aung,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 3 (25): 30 November 1995, page 3). Several organizations turned nearly exclusively to international affairs – communicating to the international community the real situation in Burma and trying to drum up international support for their colleagues back home. Other groups were more inwardly focused on activism inside Burma, establishing regular contact with their colleagues who remained behind, and trying to use their position between Burma and the modern world to support their friends. A few students returned to Burma when the SLORC government pronounced an amnesty – enough of these returnees were executed as traitors to give pause to others considering returning home. Many eventually left for refugee camps in Thailand, and have since settled in third countries such as the United States, Norway and Canada.

63 *Briefing Memo: Registered Political Parties in Burma*, International Republican Institute February 2008. Copy in author’s possession.

The NLD and other mainstream political parties continued their peaceful activities unabated despite the repression. Leaflets, bulletins, unofficial newspapers, audio cassettes and video tapes were circulated all over Burma and meetings were held in defiance of martial law decrees (Lintner 1994: 302).

Of the 93 parties and 82 individuals that ran as independents in the 1990 election, 27 parties and 6 independent individuals gained enough votes to win seats in the new Parliament (Taylor 2009: 407- 410). The election was a First-Past-the-Post (FPTP), under a plurality-majority electoral system.⁶⁴ Under this system, the NLD won just under 60 percent of the vote and 392 out of 485 seats in the new assembly (Thant Myint-U 2006: 335). The National Unity Party, the successor organization to the BSPP, gained 10 seats despite winning 25 percent of the popular vote; its gains primarily came from constituencies where the NLD ran candidates that competed against allied parties (Taylor 2009: 410). The SLORC did not allow the parliament to convene. In March 1992, the military junta declared illegal 20 political parties that won parliamentary seats. As of 2008, only 10 political parties remained legal in Burma. Of these, seven won seats in the 1990 election, and three did not.⁶⁵ The military government held no elections between 1990 and 2008. While the pro-democracy NLD and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy

64 Htet Aung, 2009. "Electoral System: A Cause for Stability or Instability?" *Irrawaddy*, September 20, 2009. Retrieved online February 4, 2011 at: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/election/constitution/84-electoral-system-a-cause-for-stability-or-instability.html>.

65 *Briefing Memo: Registered Political Parties in Burma*, International Republican Institute, February 2008. Copy in author's possession.

(SNLD) remain legal, some of the other parties were for med by armed groups who signed ceasefires with the SLORC after the 1990 elections.⁶⁶

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, t he leader of the NLD, was periodically put under house arrest. Between 1989 a nd 2011 she served 16 years under house arrest.⁶⁷ During the one-year period she was released in 2002, she and her party visited most of the ethnic areas in the country. These visits e nded in 2003, when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade was attacked by regime-spons ored thugs at Depayin, injuring her and killing up to 100 political activists. She remained under house arrest from 2003 until release in November 2010.

Following the 1988 protests, media again became tigh tly controlled. The SLORC curtailed the uncensored press that erupted during the protests. A draconian new printing law was promulgated, aimed at preventing political p arties for issuing "unauthorized publications." In effect, it ensured a monopoly on inf ormation for the official, state-run *Working People's Daily* – still the only legally permitted newspaper since the Revolutionary Council's 1962 takeover (Lintner 1994: 30 2).

66 Of the parties that remain legal, only the Natio nal League for Democracy (NLD) and Shan Nationaliti es League for Democracy (SNLD) have pro-democracy cred entials. Other parties include the regime-backed National Unity Party (NUP); while the parties of ce asefire organizations are the Union Pa'O National Organization (UPNO); Shan State Kokang Democratic P arty (SSKDP); Mro or Khami National Solidarity Organization (MKNSO); Lahu National Development Par ty (LNDP). The three parties that remain legal, ran in the 1990 elections but won no seats are the Kokang Democracy and Unity Party (KDUP); Union Karen League (UKL); Wa National Development Party (W NDP).

67 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has served several periods of house arrest -- from July 1989 to 1995 and agai n from September 2000 to May 2002. In May 2003, follo wing the Depayin massacre Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was initially detained at Insein prison, but in Sep tember 2003 was moved to her home where she remaine d until release in November 2010. "Timeline: Aung San Suu Kyi," *The Guardian*, November 12, 2010. Retrieved online on February 4, 2011 at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/12/suu-kyi-timeline-burma>.

While official media remains controlled by the SPDC, radio broadcasts of Voice of America (VOA), BBC, Radio Free Asia (RFA) and Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) transmit into the country. According to Zaw Oo, “the underground networks inside Burma would compile the evidence of oppression inside the country, then deliver it outside the country to foreign media and broadcasting stations, from whence the information could be relayed back to the mass population inside the country” (2004: 237).

Some demonstrations against the state authorities occurred between 1988 and 2008. Protest actions of this period are discussed further in Chapter 4, but notably in December 1996, the largest protests of 1988 - 2007 occurred in Rangoon. On December 2, 1996, an estimated 2,000 students from RIT and RU participated in a 20-hour protest. The students made lengthy speeches and did not wear masks to hide their identities. They also hoisted the outlawed student union flag, the fighting peacock.⁶⁸ Student demonstrations that week were held in front of the American Embassy in Rangoon⁶⁹ by the Thakeda River (although the bridge to Thakeda was blocked by the military),⁷⁰ and brief demonstrations were held at Rangoon University's Botataung campus. Students tried to stage a rally at the Sule pagoda in central Rangoon, but their attempts failed when riot police stopped them by closing the doors of the pagoda and deploying trucks of soldiers.⁷¹ Students in Mandalay, Moulmein, Magwe and Taunggyi also staged demonstrations over the weekend of December 7 – 8,

68 "Student Activism Resurfaces," *The Irrawaddy*, Vol. 5 (1): 31 January 1997, page 9.

69 *Burma Alert* Vol. 7, No. 12 (December 1996), Page 4. ISSN: 1182 -0454

70 *DAWN News Bulletin*, Vol. 6 Issue 6, January 1997, page 3-10. Published by the All Burma Students Democratic Front, Bangkok.

71 *DAWN News Bulletin*, Vol. 6 Issue 6, January 1997, page 3-10. Published by the All Burma Students Democratic Front, Bangkok.

1996.⁷² After deploying riot police to disperse the protests,⁷³ the SLORC closed universities from December 1996 to July 2000 (Fink 2009: 199).

Despite social controls imposed by the government, an expansion of communication technologies brought news and information into the hands of some people inside Burma. As of 1999, Burma had one internet cafe in Rangoon although it did not have direct internet access; customers were allowed access to CD-ROMS of pre-screened information and to use word processing software.⁷⁴ By 2007, internet was available in cities, and internet cafes allow highly monitored internet access (and blocked websites) for 300 kyat [approximately \$0.30 USD] per hour.⁷⁵

Steinberg (2004) argues during the SLORC and SPDC governments, the number of indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have blossomed in Burma, particularly to help meet community deprivation needs not addressed by the government. With the end of the one-party system, officially sponsored clubs and other civic organizations were allowed to operate; voluntary organizations become much more visible after 1988 (Taylor 2009: 445). As of 2004, an estimated 241,000 community-based organizations existed throughout the country; religious, parent-teacher, and social groups are permitted but advocacy groups remain illegal (Steinberg 2004:156 – 7).

Western sanctions did not preclude humanitarian organizations from operating inside Burma; Dorning (2004) reports 40 international NGOs were working in Burma as of

72 *Burma Alert* Vol. 7, No. 12 (December 1996), Page 4. ISSN: 1182-0454.

73 See citations in footnotes 25 – 28.

74 “Burma named enemy of the internet,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 7 (7): August 1999, page 3.

2004. This number grew across the decade and by February 2007, approximately 50 international non-governmental organizations and 11 United Nations agencies led programs in Burma. INGOs addressed issues as varied as health, education, HIV/AIDS, and agriculture.⁷⁶ Most programs were based in central Burma, but access to ethnic areas is growing, such as a UNICEF-run HIV/AIDS program in Tachileik and Kawthaung.⁷⁷ The SPDC enacted laws that made it difficult for some organizations to implement their programs.

Government-organized mass organizations were also created, such as the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) formed in 1993. Membership was “essentially compulsory for civil servants and those who sought to do business with or receive services from the state,” according to Taylor (2009: 446). Taylor reports that by 2005, the USDA had 23 million members; every township had a branch, as did nearly every ward and village tract.⁷⁸

In 1997, the government purged some corrupt officials and changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council, but Than Shwe, Maung Aye and Khin Nyunt remained top leaders (Seekins 2006: xxx). Politically, the SLORC/SPDC did little to create a systematic ideology for the citizens to follow. “Beyond slogans and bullet points,

75 Internet access remains too costly for most people: a day’s wage for a civil servant is 400 kyat.

76 *Civil and Military Administrative Echelon of State Peace and Development Council in Burma*. Network for Democracy and Development, May 2007. ISBN 978-7334-64-7; Copy in author’s possession.

77 “Japan, Unicef to Provide HIV/AIDS Care,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 9 (3): March- April 2001, page 3.

78 The social control policies of the Myanmar government and the role of mass organizations is addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 4. These organizations – which include the USDA, the Myanmar Red Cross, Fire Brigades and the Chamber of Commerce – are led by SPDC leaders or their wives, and have been mobilized at various times to demonstrate the people’s support for the military regime. For example, in August 2003, 18 rallies were held across the country to show support of the SPDC’s announced “7-step roadmap to democracy” (Taylor 2009: 447).

couched in calls to resist foreign intervention, no systematic ideology has emerged to make government policies meaningful, even understandable to the general population (or themselves),” writes Charney (2009: 204-5). The SPDC completed its seven-step “Roadmap to Democracy”: it finished a national convention, drafted a constitution, held a constitutional referendum, and in 2010 held parliamentary elections that were widely viewed as neither free nor fair. The new constitution took effect when the parliament convened in March 2011.⁷⁹

Following the SLORC’s takeover, it immediately turned attention to reinforcing the *tatmadaw*’s ranks and modernizing its equipment. Within a year of taking power, the *tatmadaw* increased from 184,000 to 200,000 officers and men (Selth 2002: 165). “By mid-1992 the *tatmadaw* had probably grown to about 270,000 [troops], and by mid-1995 the Thai government was stating that the number had reached 300,000” according to Selth (1998: 88). The *tatmadaw* needed to buy new military weapons and increase its work force to improve its order of battle compared to its neighbors and to quell internal unrest. Selth argues:

The rapid expansion and modernization of the *tatmadaw* since 1988 seems to have been based primarily on the fear that it might lose its monopoly of political power. The *tatmadaw*’s increased recruitment campaign and massive arms procurement program seem aimed above all else at preventing, or if necessary quelling, renewed civil unrest in the main population centers (1998: 95).

⁷⁹ As of June 2011, it remains unclear if the constitution took effect when the parliament convened on January 31, 2011. No announcements were made but the constitution references that it takes effect at the first

Economy

The SLORC takeover of government included a semi-privatization of the economy and business initially boomed after the coup. Doing so provided the SLORC with needed hard currency to pay the army and maintain essential services following the coup. “Burma’s foreign exchange reserves stood at probably less than US\$15 million after the military takeover, foreign aid had been cut off, and exports were down to a minimum,” according to Lintner (1999: 357). Selling off natural resources was an easy means to solving its cash problem. The SLORC reversed earlier policies of nationalization and sold off businesses, in the process creating a crony capitalist class dependent on the regime’s favor. International firms specializing in mineral extraction also approached the regime. In 1989 Petro-Canada, Amoco, Unocal Corp, Croft Exploration and Broken Hill Propriety all signed agreements with the SLORC to explore oil in Burma. O’Rourke reports, “these firms were reported to have paid between \$5 million and \$8 million each in signing bonuses to the Burmese regime.”⁸⁰ The SLORC sold forestry concessions to Thailand businesses, allowing for logging of virgin teak forests in exchange for needed infusions of currency (Lintner 1999: 357-8).

Official development assistance continued after 1988, although at lower levels than prior to the SLORC takeover. From 1989 to 1995, Overseas Direct Assistance flows fell to average US\$150 million per year, about 56 percent less than what was received in 1988 (U

convening of parliament.

80 O’Rourke, Dara 1992. “Oil in Burma: Fueling Oppression,” *Multinational Monitor*, October 1992. Retrieved online at: <http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/mm1092.html.safety#burma> on February 4, 2011.

Myint 2004). Declines in assistance continued into the new millennium, with an average of US\$115 million received by the country in each year from 2000 – 2002 (U Myint 2004: 264).

Inflation, mainly due to the government printing money when it could not meet its internal obligations, was a problem in the early 2000s. Turnell calculates consumer price inflation in Burma was 18 percent in 1999, 2.6 percent in 2000, 21 percent in 2001, 57 percent in 2002 and 36 percent in 2003 (2004: 87). As consumer prices rose, wages were not adjusted, negatively affecting citizens. Writes Charney,

From late 2006, prices of daily necessities, such as cooking oil, began to increase by up to 40 percent, pushing family economies almost to a breaking point... Burmese tolerance of hardship, built up from experience of other long-term hardships that have plagued the country since the early 1960s, proved resilient (2009: 196).

A banking crisis in 2003 dealt a significant blow to the fragile economy. Turnell argues “private sector lending... fell a precipitous 45 percent from its peak immediately before the banking crisis” (2004: 82). This stemmed from the failure of several ‘private finance firms,’ described by Turnell as essentially gambling syndicates and ponzi schemes. These schemes were tempting for people because they offered a higher rate of return than interest on savings accounts – as interest rates at banks was less than inflation, savings accounts lose money for account holders (Turnell 2004: 80 – 81). The failures of the private finance firms led to a crisis of confidence, exemplified by a run on banks, as depositors sought to remove their savings. Withdrawal limits were imposed on depositors, and loans were recalled without considering capacity to repay. This led to classic

symptoms of a banking crisis in Burma, including “bank closures and insolvencies, a flight to ‘cash,’ ‘the creation of a secondary market’ in frozen deposits, the cessation of lending, the stopping of remittances and transfers, and other maladies destructive of monetary institutions,” according to Turnell (2004: 81).

Without warning in August 2007, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), the name of the ruling regime since 1997, increased domestic fuel prices by 100 to 500 percent. “Overnight, the price of diesel was doubled; the cost of petrol was increased by over 60 percent and the price of compressed natural gas was increased a staggering 500 percent,” according to a Human Rights Documentation Unit report.⁸¹ Buses immediately increased their fares and some stopped running; average Burmese citizens could no longer afford transport to go to work. Fuel prices in turn affected the prices of basic commodities, imposed onto a population that was already at the bottom of the economic ladder (Charney 2009: 196). By mid-August protests began about price increases; after a week fuel protests were violently repressed by the government and protest leaders arrested (Charney 2009: 196).

Armed struggle

During the 1988 protests, the armed insurgent groups did not press what might have been their advantage. Following the 1988 protests and students arriving to the jungle areas,

81 *Bullets in the Alms Bowl*, Human Rights Documentation Unit, March 2008, page 10. Accessed online at: <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs5/HRDU-archive/Burma%20Human%20Rights/archive.html>.

some insurgent groups recruited students of their ethnicity to join their ranks.⁸² In addition to students joining existing armed groups, after weeks of discussions, the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), a student army, was formed. The ABSDF's objective is to establish a democratic government in a unified Burma. The ABSDF became one of the few resistance groups where ethnic and Burman individuals worked together. Soldier X31, a founding member of ABSDF, explained, "even though I am Karen, I didn't want to join the KNLA because I participated in the student movement. KNLA is thinking only about nationalities, but the student movement is thinking for the whole country." While armed struggle remains a core activity of the ABSDF, this organization also conducts social and political resistance activities in villages inside Burma.

Despite the influx of students, the CPB military alliance disintegrated in 1989. Smith (1991) cites two reasons for the breakdown of what was the largest collective threat against the central government. Long-standing grievances among the ethnic minority armies within the alliance remained unsolved; with a leadership structure that was aging and primarily Burman, there was a sense that ethnic minorities were dying for someone else's political cause (Smith 1991; see also Kramer 2009). Secondly, the People's Republic of China (PRC) reversed its previous policy of providing military aid only through the CPB, and became willing to work directly with individual minority groups (Smith 1991). This willingness did not mean all armed organizations were treated equally, however. Those with populations and territory closest to China (and farthest from Rangoon) were more likely to receive PRC assistance.

82 Individuals interviewed for this research included Karen students who joined the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Karenni students who joined the Karenni Army (KA), and Shan students who

The disintegration of the CPB alliance into warring factions greatly facilitated renewed offensives by the *tatmadaw*, which had the resources to pacify one group at a time. Instead of simply eliminating smaller armed groups, the SLORC pursued a new tactic: ceasefire agreements. Between 1989 and 1997, the SLORC agreed to 17 ceasefire agreements with armed groups (Taylor 2009: 437). Groups negotiating ceasefires also fractured, whereby members that disagreed with the decision to continue fighting separated and then arranged their own ceasefire agreement. The faction now known as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) left the KNU and allied with the SLORC (Taylor 2009: 436). Six groups broke away from KNU to make agreements with the SLORC; and breakaway groups from the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) also agreed to truces (Kramer 2009: 15). Almost all cease-fires are verbal agreements (Kramer 2009: 14). The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) is the only organization to have a formal, signed agreement with the SLORC. The SLORC's vague but empowering agreements with the Wa, Kokang and other former communist forces led to cessation of fighting in exchange for business concessions, usually in the narcotics trade.⁸³ According to Kramer:

The cease-fires are merely military truces, and do not include any political agreements. The regime insisted it was a temporary military government, and therefore not in a position to talk about politics... The agreements demarcate the territory under control of the groups, the location of

joined the Shan State Army – South (SSA-S).

83 Mathieson, David Scott. 2008. "The Balkanization of Burma?" Book review *Time Irrawaddy*, Vol. 16 (5): May 2008. Retrieved from http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=11644&page=1 on November 16, 2010.

checkpoints, the number and location of soldiers, and the location of military headquarters and liaison posts. Cease-fire groups were allowed to open offices in the major towns in the region, as well as in Rangoon (2009: 13).

Zaw Oo and Win Min (2007) argue the insurgency groups which signed earliest received the most autonomy from the central government; with each subsequent agreement, the SLORC demanded greater control of the ethnic territory. The second and third phases of the ceasefire agreements during the 1990s were more favorable for the SLORC. The Kachin, Pa-O, Palaung and Mon armies agreed to demands with mixed results. Ceasefire agreements allowed for cessation of fighting, while control of territory and leadership of ceasefire organizations remained relatively unchanged. Pursuit of business opportunities, particularly drug trafficking, was no longer hindered by ongoing-armed struggle (Taylor 2009: 438).

Despite the significant alliance defections of KIA and NMSP, the NDF remained relatively intact, although its territory depleted each year. With the ceasefire agreements in place, the *tatmadaw* turned its military forces against NDF members one at a time.

International context

1988's protests were significantly bigger than the protests of 1962 and 1974-1975 but similarly occurred without significant international attention. The 1988 protests spurred greater international interest regarding the political and economic situation in Burma. The protests eventually had a greater effect outside the country than inside. For example,

despite years of authoritarian rule in Burma and the arrests of political prisoners following the earlier protests, it was only in 1989 that Amnesty International published its first report on Burma's political prisoners. However, other international events occurring at the end of the decade greatly overshadowed the protests. Burma's largest protests for democracy occurred prior to the fall of the Berlin wall, the wave of democratization of Eastern Europe, and the student-led protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

The brutality of the SLORC's crackdown was slowly publicized internationally and eventually Western governments imposed sanctions. International financing institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank, have not issued new loans to Burma since 1986 or provided technical advice since 1987.⁸⁴ Withdrawal of the U.S. ambassador occurred immediately following the protests. Western sanctions were not immediate, but were a result of lobbying efforts by democracy-supporting groups, some of which drew on lessons from the end of apartheid in South Africa earlier in the decade. Sanctions by the United States were enacted in 1997, and a trade ban in 2003 (Taylor 2009: 432).⁸⁵ In addition to sanctions, pressure from American-based activists led to businesses such as Liz Claiborne, Osh Kosh B'Gosh, and Pepsi (which was a joint venture with a Burmese businessman, not the SLORC) ending operations in Burma. The Massachusetts state legislature enacted laws prohibiting the purchase of goods from Myanmar by state entities. Several cities in

84 *Asian Development Bank and Myanmar: Fact Sheet*, April 2010. Accessed July 27, 2010 at http://www.adb.org/Documents/Fact_Sheets/MYA.pdf

85 Taylor pointedly ignores that the 2003 trade ban followed the Depayin Massacre, when military-sponsored thugs attacked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's conveyer; in addition to her injuries, an estimated 100 NLD members died. Taylor also ignores the point that sanctions were tightened after 2007, following the brutal crackdown on the monks' protests. Members of the U.S. congress were debating the removal of sanctions just prior to the protests.

California enacted selective purchasing legislation, along with 25 cities across the United States and three in Australia (Dale 2011: chapter 4).

While western countries used sanctions, Asian governments instead followed a policy of ‘constructive engagement;’ in doing so they have filled much of the international and economic vacuum in Burma. Burma joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997; ASEAN governments have since rallied to the Myanmar government’s defense, usually citing their doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. Taylor (2009: 468) argues support within ASEAN for Myanmar has been more muted following the regime’s most visible crackdowns against activists in 2003⁸⁶ and 2007.⁸⁷ The SPDC similarly pursued improved relations with foreign governments and regional actors. It joined the Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Community in 1997 and the Asia-Europe Meeting in 2004 (Taylor 2009: 468).

Over time, democracy in Burma became a cause célèbre for international political activism, lobbying organizations, human rights groups, and political groups. Several foreigners traveled to Burma to protest in the 1990s, including the “Rangoon 18,” who were arrested after handing out leaflets calling on the Burmese to remember the political uprising of 1988 and informing people that the international community had not forgotten

86 In 2003 as Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD members were traveling in Depayin in central Burma, her motorcade was attacked. She sustained some injuries and was placed under house arrest; NLD members were killed (estimates up to 100 people killed) and others arrested. The Depayin massacre was a bit of a surprise, as it occurred in a period of relative détente between the SPDC and the political opposition. The SPDC had allowed Aung San Suu Kyi to travel in the country, was invited by regional commanders to see development projects, and NLD offices were opened again. *Situation Report of the National League for Democracy*, January 2010, page 7; copy in author’s possession.

Burma. The Rangoon 18 were supported by the Alternative Asian Network (Altsean), a pro-democracy NGO based in Thailand and headed by a Malaysian activist. Other foreigners traveled into Burma to protest; James Mawdsley from England was arrested and deported three times between 1997 and 2000 for illegal entry and distribution of anti-government leaflets.⁸⁸ Beginning in 1992, international donors began providing limited financial support to political and civil society activists in Burma.

Unheard of before 1988, Burmese political actors became *in absentia* recipients of international awards promoting democratic transition in Burma. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, while U Win Tin received UNESCO's Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom prize in 2001,⁸⁹ Min Ko Naing was granted the John Humphrey Freedom Award in 1999, and Aung Htun and Pascal Khoo-Thwe were awarded prizes by Human Rights Watch to writers persecuted for their political beliefs in 1999. Ethnic minority groups in Burma were also able to use the newfound interest in Burma to push an ethnic rights agenda. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), now includes representation of Chin, Karenni, Mon, Naga and Shan communities.⁹¹

September 2007 'Monks Movement'

87 Following the September 2007 monks protests, the SPDC implemented a severe campaign of repression against political activists. This will be discussed in the next section and in Chapter 4.

88 These activities are not always well received by Burmese activists and Burmese exile media has been critical of foreigners protesting in Burma.

89 "Win Tin Wins Press Freedom Prize," *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 9 (3): March- April 2001, page 3.

90 "Two Burmese Writers Win Awards," *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 7 (6): July 1999, page 4.

91 "Chin People Join UNPO," *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 9 (6): July 2001, page 3.

In September 2007, the largest protests in 19 years occurred in Burma. Protests slowly built up over the course of several weeks. Demonstrations began in August 2007, when members of the activist group '88 Students Generation led protest marches in Rangoon against the unexplained removal of state subsidies on petrol and compressed natural gas. The ending of subsidies led to immediate price increases on these products (Taylor 2009: 424; Fink 2009: 101). Despite the abrupt arrests of the leaders of the '88 Generation Students group, small pockets of anti-fuel price protests continued around the country, although USDA and Swan Arr Shinn (SAS)⁹² members patrolled streets, ready to intimidate anyone attempting to protest (Fink 2009: 102). In August 2007, 29 demonstrations of varying size occurred, calling for the reduction in commodity prices. The smallest demonstration was an individual in Arakan state who carried signs; at the largest demonstration, up to 2,000 people gathered at Sule Pagoda in Rangoon.

On August 28, demonstrations about rising fuel prices occurred in Sittwe, Arakan state; attended by 200 monks, this was first demonstration in August in which monks participated.⁹⁴ On September 5, in Pakokku, an estimated 500 monks were protesting fuel prices; SPDC troops shot over the heads of protestors to break up the demonstration. USDA and SAS members, who had been watching from the sidelines of the protests, assaulted a few monks. One monk (some reports suggest two monks) was tied to a

92 *Swan Arr Shinn* ('Masters of Force') are a regime-sanctioned paramilitary organization. Members include local thugs and day laborers from the poorer quarters and satellite towns (Fink 2009: 102).

93 *Saffron Revolution > The Protests*, Alternative Asean Network on Burma (Altsean). List of protest events accessed online January 25, 2011 at: http://www.altsean.org/Research/Saffron%20Revolution/SRInside2.php?menu_date1=&menu_date2=&menu_location=&menu_. See also Chapter 5 for description and typology of protest events occurring in Burma 1990 – 2008.

lamppost and beaten by soldiers. “In retaliation to the violence visited upon them, monks from the Mah Visutarama Monastery in Pakokku took almost 20 local authorities hostage the following day, and set fire to their vehicles,” according to a report by Human Rights Documentation Unit.⁹⁵ According to Activist Z29, in Pakokku, “the activists destroyed the supermarket grocery shops and the station of the USDA... USDA people from Mandalay and other cities were really afraid.”

In Mandalay, the monasteries called on all monks to refuse alms from members of the military; an alms boycott, called *pattaneikuzana*, is similar to excommunication. Monks began leading peaceful protests in Rangoon (Charney 2009: 197). Five days after the Pakokku beatings, the All Burma Monks’ Alliance (ABMA) announced its formation, and issued a statement calling on the regime to apologize to the monks, reduce the prices of fuel and basic commodities, release all political prisoners, and begin a dialogue with the democratic movement for national reconciliation (Fink 2009: 102). The ABMA called for *pattaneikuzana* to begin on September 17 if the regime did not comply with its demands.

On September 18, monks in Rangoon, Mandalay, Sittwe and other towns gathered and collectively walked through the streets for hours at a time, chanted *metta sutra*⁹⁶ and waved religious flags. During the first few days, the monks did not allow citizens to join them, keeping this a religious movement. Younger activists eventually formed a human chain around the monks’ marching. On September 21, the ABMA released a

94 *Bullets in the Alms Bowl*, Human Rights Documentation Unit, March 2008, page 11; copy in author’s possession.

95 *Bullets in the Alms Bowl*, Human Rights Documentation Unit, March 2008, page 12; copy in author’s possession.

96 Metta sutra is a Buddhist chant to spread “loving kindness.” Metta means “incantation.”

statement urging the people to join them to ‘banish the evil regime’ (Fink 2009: 103). Monks marching down University Avenue passed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s compound on September 22; she came out in front of her gate despite her being under house arrest (Fink 2009: 103). On September 24, as many as 100,000 people were on the streets of Rangoon. A similar protest was occurring in Sittwe, Arakan state, where tens of thousands of people were congregating near the statue of U Ottama, an Arakanese monk who led anti-colonial demonstrations (Fink 2009: 103). Thousands were out on the street, and Fink reports “smaller numbers came out in more than twenty other towns as well” (2009: 103).

On September 25, the regime issued a night-time curfew and ordered monks off the streets. The next morning, September 26, the regime violently cracked down, beating and shooting protesters. Monasteries were raided by soldiers, and monks were disrobed, beaten and interrogated (Charney 2009: 197). The authorities used live bullets and tear gas to disperse crowds, and the security forces specifically targeted those with cameras and video cameras (Fink 2009: 104); one Japanese journalist was shot at close range.

On September 29, 2007, according to Chowdhury, “the regime completely shut down the country’s Internet connection and disabled the international mobile phone connections in an unprecedented attempt at a total information blockade” (2008: 4). The country was cut off from the international internet gateway for nearly two weeks. This was possible because the SPDC controls the country’s two Internet Service Providers (ISP). “After October 13, the internet gradually came back online, but there were reports that the bandwidth available at public internet access points were deliberately limited to make it difficult for users to upload images and videos” (Chowdhury 2008: 13). At the same time, the state’s news channels reported everything else occurring in the country. “The state-run

press avoided reporting on the nationwide anti-junta demonstrations, filling its state-run newspapers with reports of natural disasters and SPDC officials inspecting infrastructure projects,” according to Altsean (2007: 2).⁹⁷ A protest timeline produced by Altsean records 100 demonstrations and protest activities between August 19 and September 30, 2007, in locations across the country.⁹⁸

Following 2007

After the initial repression following the 2007 protests, for several months the SPDC continued to arrest and interrogate citizens about their participation. Some activists fled to bordering countries to seek safety in exile, but there was not as broad an exodus as in 1988. Some activists joined with the non-violent political opposition in exile, but others also joined the armed struggle (author interviews).

The SPDC however, announced it would resume its “Seven Step Roadmap,” a process that had been quietly on hiatus for several years. The SPDC completed a new constitution in 2008, held a constitutional referendum in 2008 to approve the constitution, and in November 2010 the SPDC held a parliamentary election. Several days before the constitutional referendum, Cyclone Nargis hit the southern delta areas, the largest natural disaster to occur in Burma. While some hoped the crisis would create opportunities for

⁹⁷ Available online at:

<http://www.altsean.org/Docs/PDF%20Format/Thematic%20Briefers/Saffron%20Revolution%20-%20Update.pdf> Retrieved May 20, 2010.

⁹⁸ *Saffron Revolution> the protests*, Altsean, posted March 2008. Retrieved November 18, 2010 from <http://www.altsean.org/Research/Saffron%20Revolution/SRInside1.php?Submit=The%20protests...> Altsean’s timeline is a compendium of cited public media sources.

reform, the social and political impact has been questionable as the governing authorities⁹⁹ continue to expand and consolidate authority.

State and society

The images of the 2007 protests streaming from Burma abruptly ended when the regime shut down the country's servers on September 29. "As many as four thousand people were detained in hastily prepared detention centers, where monks were disrobed and detainees were interrogated to determine the extent of their participation," writes Fink (2009: 105). As of November 2010 there are over 2,203 political prisoners in Burma, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP); nearly 1,000 were incarcerated for their role in the 2007 protests (Fink 2009: 105). Punishment for participation in the 2007 protests was harsher than for those arrested for similar reasons in 1962, 1974 and 1988. AAPP reported as of the end of 2008, "357 activists have been handed down harsh punishments, including sentences of up to 104 years... shortly after sentencing, the regime began to systematically transfer prisoners to prisons all around Burma, far from their families."¹⁰⁰ In contrast, after the 1988 protests the longest sentences issued were for 20-25 years; this was shocking at the time, as these sentences were nearly double the sentences given to individuals participating in the 1974 protests.

⁹⁹ After the seating of the parliament in January 2011, the government no longer refers to itself as SPD. C. With no acronym available, this text refers to the government as the "Myanmar government." It does so in earlier mentions as well, to demonstrate the continuity between leadership within the country. See Chapter 1 for fuller discussion of the use of Myanmar and Burma.

¹⁰⁰ *Burma's Prisons and Labour Camps: Silent Killing Fields*, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), 2009, page 1. Accessed online at: http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs07/Burma%27s_prisons_and_labour_camps-silent_killing_fields.pdf

Immediately following the protests, the SPDC chose to resume its “Seven Step Roadmap,” originally outlined in 2003. On 18 October 2007, the SPDC announced the formation of a 54-member committee tasked with finishing the new constitution. The committee was composed of regime officials, retired doctors and professors. Pro-democracy organizations, ethnic groups and women were not included on the committee.¹⁰¹ Over the next eight months, as per the roadmap, the regime finished a constitutional¹⁰² referendum whereby the SPDC reported 99 percent of eligible citizens voted, and 92 percent approved the adoption of the constitution; the referendum was widely viewed as fraudulent.¹⁰³ The constitution reserves a quarter of the seats in the new parliament for military appointments. To fill the remaining seats, a parliamentary election in November 2010 was held; most seats were won by regime-sanctioned political parties. The NLD chose not to reregister itself as a party, and boycotted the 2010 election.¹⁰⁴ The National Democratic Force (NDF), a newly formed party comprised of former members of

101 The process of writing a constitution had been on-and-off since 1988. *Burma Bulletin*, Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (Altsean), Issue 10: October 2007. Retrieved May 25, 2010 at: <http://www.altsean.org/Docs/PDF%20Format/Burma%20Bulletin/October%202007%20Burma%20Bulletin.pdf>.

102 The NLD boycotted the drafting process in the mid-1990s after they felt free discussion was not allowed at the constitutional convention. *Situation Report of the National League for Democracy*, January 2010, page 6; copy in author’s possession. Individuals who circulated working papers of alternative ideas for the constitution were sent to prison. The constitution does little except entrench the existing political role of the military and does not provide any conditions of personal liberty. For a critical assessment of the 2008 constitution, see *Analysis of the 2008-SPDC Constitution for Burma*, by David C. Williams, Executive Director of the Center for Constitutional Democracy. US Campaign for Burma, accessed June 29, 2011 at: <http://uscampaignforburma.org/david-william-2008-constitution>.

103 Martin, Michael F. 2010. *Burma’s 2010 Elections: Implications of the New Constitution and Election Laws*, Congressional Research Services, accessed April 29, 2010. Retrieved November 22, 2010 at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41218.pdf>

104 Fuller, Thomas, “Main Opposition to Boycott Election,” *The New York Times*, March 29, 2011. Accessed online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/30/world/asia/30myanmar.html?_r=1

the NLD, was the biggest pro-democracy party that took part in the November election. The NDF won 12 of the 664 seats.¹⁰⁵

In May 2008, just days before the constitutional referendum, Cyclone Nargis struck the delta region of the country, leaving an estimated 150,000 people dead and another 2.5 million people homeless and in need of shelter, food and clean water. The regime delayed for three weeks before allowing limited international assistance (Charney 2009: 199). Following the cyclone, information trickled into the country via international news broadcasts and a CD of photographs of the delta circulated; in response, citizens mobilized their own response to the disaster, transporting food and supplies to devastated areas (Fink 2009). Field-based organizations observe a quiet expansion of Burmese civil society at the local level. This expansion is attributed to the capacity-building effect of the negotiation and delivery of humanitarian assistance. In addition, international aid organizations employ and train thousands of Burmese staff in entrepreneurial and results-based projects (Dalpino 2009: 4).

Economy

“After 20 years of military rule, the state in Myanmar appears to be as emaciated financially as it was during the socialist period,” writes Taylor (2009: 455). An economic recession followed the cyclone, especially in the agricultural sector, which faced a series of

¹⁰⁵ Aung Hla Tun, “As Myanmar parliament opens, junta’s shadow looms large,” *Reuters*, January 31, 2011. Accessed online at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/31/us-myanmar-parliament-idUSTRE70U60L20110131>. NDF formed out of a disagreement with NLD leadership regarding boycotting the election; its members left NLD to form the NDF.

successive disasters, according to Khin Zaw Win (2009: 106). Dalpino (2009) reports the economic crisis forced crop prices to unprecedented low levels, leaving most rural households deeply in debt. Farmers sell most of their crops to repay this debt, leaving meager rice stocks for household consumption. The global crisis of 2008-09 caused exports and domestic consumer demand to drop. Remittances from overseas Burmese workers - who had provided significant financial support for their families - slowed or dried up as jobs were lost and migrant workers returned home.¹⁰⁷ Those who remained in Thailand as migrants are unable to continue sending money home to their families (author interviews). In January 2009, Business Monitor International rated Myanmar's business environment a 16.0, placing it 165 out of 167 ranked countries.¹⁰⁸

Armed struggle

Despite the increased presence and control of territory by the *tatmadaw*, various armed insurgent groups continue their fight against the military government in Burma. The largest armed groups, the KNU and the SSA-S, hold very little territory and primarily operate as mobile guerrilla forces. In addition to attacking *tatmadaw* military outposts, insurgency groups escort villagers fleeing the *tatmadaw*, maintain security in the camps of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), and bring backpack medical workers into ethnic areas of Burma to provide medical care.

106 Khin Maw Win 2009. "Burma/Myanmar: Views from the Ground and the International Community," paper prepared for The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), conference May 8, 2009, Washington DC.

107 "Burma" *CIA World Fact Book*. Accessed online November 17, 2010 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html#>

108 *Southeast Asia Monitor* Vol. 1: January 2009, page 7. Published by Business Monitor International.

Most ceasefire groups do not consider themselves allied with the Burmese state, but view the ceasefire agreement as a means to continue to hold weapons while lessening the day-to-day conflict in their territory. The 2008 constitution calls for all ceasefire groups to transform themselves into Border Guard Forces under the command of *tatmadaw*. A number of organizations publicly considered canceling their ceasefire agreements to return to armed struggle. The Shan State Army-North canceled its agreement, and in June 2011, the KIA clashed with *tatmadaw* forces in what is described as the fiercest fighting in more than 20 years.¹⁰⁹

Yet the biggest problem has been the failure of the armed and political movements to work together. According to Kramer, “over the years numerous attempts to form all-inclusive nationwide alliances and united fronts have all failed. The opposition has remained divided over goals (independence versus federation), ethnic conflict, and strategy (armed struggle versus cease-fire versus non-violent political means).”¹¹⁰ The SPDC has not been the only target of the armed insurgents, but fighting among these groups occurs as they compete over resources necessary to survive.

International context

Following the 2007 protests, international pressure exhorted the regime to begin national dialogue with Burma’s opposition. Condemnation came from members of the

¹⁰⁹ “KIA Destroys Strategic Bridges, Total Now Six,” *The Irrawaddy*, Friday June 17, 2011. Found online at: http://www.irrawaddy.org/latest_news.php?publish=1308268800 and “Myanmar Blames Kachin Rebels for Fighting,” *Associated Press*, June 18, 2011, found online at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110618/ap_on_re_as/as_myanmar_ethnic_rebels

¹¹⁰ Kramer, Tom 2009. *Neither War nor Peace: the future of the ceasefire agreements in Burma*, Transnational Institute, Amsterdam: Drukkerij PrimaveraQuint, July 2009.

United Nations Security Council, notably including China and Russia, a resolution from the United Nations Human Rights Council, increased targeted sanctions from Australia, the European Union and the United States, and significant consideration of its policy of noninterference, a statement of ‘revulsion’ from ASEAN.

Despite the West’s response to Burma after 2007, the regime’s leaders remain well-connected to the outside world, being able to secure overseas banking arrangements for their money, foreign education for their children, and health care outside the country that is far superior to that available in Myanmar (Dalpino 2009: 116). The regime is more dependent on the continued tacit support of Beijing, New Delhi and Bangkok, which are more interested in regional stability and continued access to Myanmar’s oil and gas reserves than the regime’s human rights record” according to Business Monitor International.¹¹²

Conclusion

Despite the best efforts of the SPDC, the SLORC, and its predecessor the BSPP, the governments of Burma failed to eradicate non-violent and violent opposition to its rule. Prior to the military coup in 1962, armed resistance groups began their fight for

111 Dalpino, Catherine 2009. “Burma/Myanmar: Views from the Ground and International Community,” *Forum Report* presented by The Atlantic Council of the United States, The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), and the US-ASEAN Business Council in cooperation with Refugees International on May 8, 2009. The conference was held under Chatham House rules, so participants were not quoted. This credit Dalpino with the conference report but it may or may not represent her views.

112 *Southeast Asia Monitor* Vol. 1: January 2009, page 7. Published by Business Monitor International. Myanmar enjoys significant oil and gas reserves. According to a report by EarthRights International (ERI), the Yadana gas field, one of several gas projects in Burma, contains an estimated 5.3 trillion cubic feet of gas. ERI estimates the Yadana Project has generated \$7.58 billion in revenue since commercial production began in 2000, from which the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) earned \$4.83 billion. *Total Impact: The Human Rights, Environmental, and Financial Impacts of Total and Chevron’s Yadana Gas Project in Military-Ruled Burma (Myanmar)*, EarthRights International September 2009.

independence and autonomy from the Burman state. Every non-violent and violent attempt by citizens to challenge the ruling military government met with violent repression from the state. However, resistance is not completely crushed. We cannot separate the demonstrations into singular events; doing so obfuscates that similar actors seeking similar goals led the 1962, 1974, 1988, and 2007 protests in Burma.

State and society factors play the most crucial role to explain the lack of political organizing in Burma. When viewed over time, several patterns emerge. The government violently responded to campaigners at each protest, and government-perpetuated violence increased following every subsequent encounter. Since 1962, there has been a steady expansion of the state's ability to control its territory and the people within it. This purposefully constructed control severely limits the ability of any opposition to organize against the regime. While state and society variables provide valuable explanation as to the living conditions in Burma, they also explain why people do not rise up against the SPDC. After the initial repression of protests, the regime further entrenches and expands, closing off political space previously available. Yet, protest continues. Societal groups, such as students or monks, led large anti-state demonstrations, and following their participation, Burma's government uses repression and social control to eliminate the very institutions that aided the formation of opposition. The regime attempts to dismantle the very institutions used by activists to overcome regime constraints – such as political parties, universities and monasteries. These are all physical locations where people could meet with each other, trade information and plan future events.

Prior to each demonstration, the economic situation significantly worsened due to an event or policy implemented by the ruling regime. When examined in reference to only

one protest event (such as the events of September 2007), it appears the downward spiral of the economy explains motivation for protest in Burma. Yet this chapter highlights, economic crisis and significant recessions have occurred at a number of other points in the country's contemporary history. Significantly, increased economic hardship occurs regularly in Burma, and for the most part does not lead to protests. In addition, the 1962 protests and the 1974 protests included other concerns – students were protesting against the state's dictatorial policies. The 1996 student protests were not preceded by an economic crisis. Monks in 2007 were protesting the economy and the poor treatment of monks by state officials. Economics play a role in protest in Burma, but are not a decisive factor in the continuance of long-term resistance.

International exposure to Burma was greatest in 1962; this is rivaled only by contemporary access to alternative sources of information. The protests of 1974 and 1988, of which 1988 remain the most significant event in the nation's protest history, came during the period of greatest international isolation. The 2007 protests occurred when citizens were still relatively isolated from external influences; the main difference was in 2007 these protests were much more visible to international actors. Transnational networks support democracy in Burma, but they are a result of internal political organizing, created in the years following the 1988 student's protests. Arguably, the 2007 protests demonstrate best how Burma has become a cause célèbre in the international community. Unlike in years prior, the international community noticed when the monks protested. It would be a mistake to suggest that the international system drives protest in Burma.

After 50 years, armed struggle in Burma has been decided. Year after year, cuts in anti-insurgency campaigns led to dismal conditions for ethnic minority peoples, and have

pacified a number of insurgency organizations. Cease fire agreements have not resolved political problems but by proxy allow the SPDC to control territory without having to administer government services to the population. Despite the long odds, armed insurgency groups continue to recruit new soldiers. How armed insurgency organizations continue to recruit new members, despite their shrinking territorial presence, is not well explained by this history.

While armed struggle has declined in the past two decades, non-violent opposition to the Burmese government continues to grow and survive despite the attempts by the state to eliminate it. Citizens continue to join the opposition. The historical narrative tells little about those individuals that do manage to resist the regime. How and why protest continues despite the difficult environment, why some people join in non-violent struggle and other armed insurgency, are explained in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: Repression and Control in Burma

They rule the country in the junta way

Interviewee Y11

Introduction

Authoritarian governments purposefully attempt to eliminate opposition, a context that differs significantly from democratic and hybrid regimes. “Governments select from the full repertoire of coercive activities,” according to Davenport (2007a: 3). To maintain their rule, authoritarian states use repression against an opposition^{and} social control mechanisms to create a compliant public. Doing so is an attempt to eliminate current and future dissent. The previous chapter provided a historical foundation about protest and the expansion of the authoritarian government in Burma. This chapter further analyzes the abuses of the people of Burma by the ruling government and ~~Tat~~^{Tat}~~nedaw~~^{nedaw}, the Burma Army. Understanding protest in Burma is incomplete without an explanation of the ground situation inside the country. Political repression used against the opposition consists of hard and soft repression. The SPDC uses violence but also stigma, silencing and ridicule to eliminate the mobilized opposition.

The regime also cultivates a compliant population through social policies, use of force, and control of information and ideas. It is not only fear of punishment that keeps people from becoming politically active. Structural and institutional methods used to cultivate compliance make it nearly impossible for ordinary citizens to have enough

information or safe contact with opposition-minded individuals to engage in anti-junta behavior. A compliant population is deterred from joining the opposition. Thus, the question in Burma is not ‘why don’t people resist?’ but how and why those who do protest continue to do so under these conditions.

In 2008, Myanmar ranked #163 out of #167 countries on the *Economist Intelligence Unit’s* Democracy Index, ahead of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Chad and North Korea.¹¹³ An August 2010 opinion piece in the *Economist* wryly noted that Senior General Than Shwe must be feeling comfortable as he so successfully consolidated power and has neighboring countries practically begging for access to the country’s immense natural resources. After 50 years of authoritarian rule, dictatorial regimes are not a surprise in Burma; neither is repression against the political opposition. Less understood is the strategic basis for political repression or the institutions that ensure civil compliance and deter future activism.

Reynolds et al. (2001) suggest contemporary movements in Burma lacked sustainability and fizzled out too soon. This opinion neglects the significant and overwhelming response of the military to organized opposition and the tools it uses to maintain widespread civil compliance. The political opposition in Burma is frequently called on to ‘do more’ to promote their cause of democracy and regime change. Skeptics look to the lack of activity - typically in the form of wide scale protest - to argue that support for change is nonexistent in Burma. If Lichbach (1995) is correct in his assertion that only five percent of a population is engaged at any given time in the struggle for

113 “Index of Democracy 2008,” *Economist Intelligence Unit*, page 8. Accessed online: May 24, 2010. Available at: [http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy %20Index%202008.pdf](http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy%20Index%202008.pdf)

political change, then the numerous statements and acts of political defiance occurring in Burma point to potentially widespread support, but a lack of political space for executing regime change.

Anti-state armed actors have fought for independence and pro-federalist positions since 1949; communists revolted prior to Independence in 1948. It is in this context of the military government fighting to conquer the various armed resistance groups that the non-violent, pro-democracy movement developed as did the government response. Following a review of repression and authoritarian literature, this chapter argues the SLORC and the SPDC governments adapted the *tatmadaw's* anti-insurgency program, called *Four Cuts*, to quell the urban-based political opposition after 1988. Secondly, the chapter argues that in addition to the *Four Cuts* against the political opposition, the regime purposefully cultivates a compliant public through social policy, the use of force, and the control of information and ideas.

Literature Review: authoritarian repression and control

There is a recent growing interest in political science to developing understandings of the institutions of authoritarian control and repression. As the third wave of democratization recedes (Huntington 1994), scholars are turning towards understanding the durable nature of some dictatorships. There is also separation between scholarship on the repression of social movements and scholarship on authoritarian regimes; this disconnect occurs *despite* that states utilizing repression are typically those with authoritarian attributes. Social movement research has explored repression of protest, while authoritarian literature more often provides descriptive analysis about institutional design and decision-

making. The two literatures are helpful in understanding the means of repression used by the government of Burma today.

Repression/social movement literature

Political repression is a policy of coercion or threat by government officials, aimed at potential opponents to limit their ability to dissent against the government or its policies (McCamant 1981: 133; discussed by Mahoney-Norris 2000: 71). Repression has thus been conceived as specific acts that can be counted, and political repression is primarily examined by quantitative studies and modeling of repression and protest cycles. This research program produced mixed and competing results about repression's impact on protest behavior, and Davenport argues "little systematic attention has been given to the topic of state repression" (2007: 1).

Of 101 studies of repression and mobilization published between 1965 and 1990, Kowalewski and Hoover found 61 percent were about First World countries (1992). Some settle on an inverted 'U' to explain repression and protest cycles: repression initially leads to protest but at a certain threshold, repression eliminates protest (Gurr 1970; Feierabend and Feierabend 1972). Opp and Roehl (1990) contend where there is less repression by the state, the little repression occurring serves to increase mobilization; once repression is high, protest stops. Rasler (1996) too links government activities to the escalation of rebellious collective action in the Iranian revolution.

More recently, a predator/prey model, rooted in biology, examines protest and repression and highlights an interdependent relationship between the state and its opponents (Tsebelis and Sprague 1989; Francisco 1995, 1996, 1997). Lee, Maline and

Moore (2000) found limited empirical evidence of this model in their own research that examined data from third world countries.

Existing models do not convincingly explain continued protest in places such as Burma, where continued activism occurs at the extreme edge of the bell curve. Other authors contend high levels of coercion can backfire and incite protest behavior (Mason and Krane 1989); Moore 1995). Qualitative research done by Olivier on areas in South Africa (1990) and Khawaja (1995) writing about protest by Palestinians, found coercion incites protest behavior. The difference could be due to methods: quantitative design, in its aim for parsimony, lacks the context necessary for answering why and how protest occurs under authoritarian conditions. The variance in authoritarian institutions, and how oppositions engage despite this context, may be difficult to capture in quantitative models.

A related problem identified by Davenport is that definitions “ignore the fact that governments select from the full repertoire of coercive activities and these more focused efforts miss the underlying similarities that exist across the diverse forms of repression” (2007a: 3). Repression research often equates repression with violence against protestors. Poe and Tate (2004) argue coercive activities targeting political operatives by governments—such as murder, torture, forced disappearance and imprisonment of persons for their political views—intend to induce compliance in others.

Repression is often defined in normative terms of what repression is not—usually in terms associated with democracy or human rights. For example, Wintrobe defines repression as “restrictions on the rights of citizens to criticize the government, restrictions on the freedom of the press, restrictions on the rights of opposition parties to campaign against the government, or as is common under totalitarian dictatorship, the outright

prohibition of groups, associations, or political parties opposed to the government” (1998: 33). In using these definitions, the literature lacks nuance regarding types of repression, including the kinds of control used, and why regimes select various methods of repression over others.

Repression scholarship limits its explanation to the cycles of protest and regime violence; problematically this disregards the extended environment of control that affects political opposition. It is difficult to quantify protests that do not occur due to a sufficiently compliant population. For example, according to Francisco,

The level of coercion in the former Soviet bloc approached totalitarian control, not in the sense of tremendous violence, but through the close monitoring of activities and the control of employment, housing and education. It is a pattern that continues elsewhere in the world, for example, in Myanmar or North Korea" (1995: 279).

It is also difficult to quantify soft repression techniques – such as stigma, silencing and ridicule (Ferree 2004)—that also comprise a dictator’s toolbox. As discussed in detail below, these techniques are widely used in Burma.

Regime type is an important determinant in the relationship of protest under repression. According to Gupta, Singh and Sprague (1993), in democratic nations, government sanctions provoke higher levels of protest demonstrations; in non-democracies, severe sanctions can impose an unbearable cost, resulting in an inverse relationship between sanctions and protest activity. The same applied level of repression is a deterrent in non-democracies. The regime type influences the dynamics of the relationship between

government coercion and dissident activities, as well as the qualitative character of the opposition response (Gupta, Singh and Sprague 1993: 335).

Authoritarian scholarship

Understanding repression of protest begins with an examination of the methods used by regimes to prevent protest and rebellion found in authoritarian studies literature. Trends in authoritarian scholarship have kept pace with world events. Following World War II, Arendt (1951) wrote about the similarities between fascism and totalitarianism. Decolonization following World War II brought academic interest in determining preconditions necessary for a successful democracy, such as modernization (Lipset 1959), presence of a middle class (Moore 1966), or civic culture (Almond and Verba 1963). Linz (1978) spearheaded attempts to classify authoritarian systems, noting differences between totalitarian and authoritarian systems. The military coups in South America in the 1970s brought renewed interest in authoritarianism, particularly addressed by O'Donnell's (1988) comparative analysis of bureaucratic authoritarianism. Others continued in this vein by writing about sultanism (Chehabi and Linz 1998), but the literature shifted from descriptions of various forms of authoritarianism to a focus on transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

Greatly influenced by the collapse of the Soviet Union, democratization scholarship set its sights on the conditions for transition, including factors such as an improving economy (Przeworski 1991; challenged by Boix and Stokes 2002), civil society (Putnam 1993), and necessary institutions (Przeworski et al 2003). As the tide of the third wave (Huntington 1994) appears to recede, interest in understanding regime stability resurges.

Scholars also tend to ignore important differing opinions within an opposition, from which authoritarian regimes specifically manipulate and create formal divisions with the use of careful concessions (Lust-Okar 2005). These divisions are exploited by the ruling regime, according to Lust-Okar, which can “create institutions that shape incentives driving relationships among various opposition groups” (2005: 27). Common wisdom is that the authorities use divide-and-rule strategies against armed and non-violent opponents. Fundamental to Lust-Okar’s work is the idea that authoritarian institutions are the primary shapers of the environment in which opposition occurs (or does not occur).

Gandhi (2008), examining why autocrats bother to create legislatures, found dictators effectively utilize institutions as a forum in which to tender just enough political concessions to stymie opposition. Levitsky and Way (2010), similarly show how in competitive authoritarian regimes, the ruling party creates an unlevel playing field from which it can ensure it remains in power while maintaining the illusion of democratic legitimacy. Brownlee similarly, argues that “the shift to authoritarianism with multiparty elections, then, does not represent an unwitting step toward full democratization... election results in authoritarian contexts tend to ratify rather than redistribute the power that competing groups wield” (2007: 9).

Several other authors discuss control measures used by other regimes. George (2007) outlines how the Singapore government practices ‘calibrated coercion,’ noting the declining uses of force paired with an increase of less visible instruments of control. In China, Cai (2008) argues multiple levels of authority in the forms of national and local governments allow the state to respond with better calculated levels of repression and concessions. Lenzi (2002) describes how Belarusian civil society, a growing sector

following Belarus' independence from the Soviet Union, was systematically dismantled and cowed by the Lukashenka regime.

Bridging the divide and classifying Burma

Political repression is not independent from the wider constructs of social control used by authoritarian regimes to limit opposition. Repression is one tool in a repertoire that creates a compliant public and deters citizens from joining political movements. Other authors have recognized this problem. Earl writes,

State authorities wishing to avoid possible public relation boondoggles while still wishing to neutralize a threatening movement might prefer unobserved repressive strategies. Further, since coercive repression is more likely to gain immediate results when compared to channeling [control via regulations], the larger the threat of the movement, the more likely the state authorities should also prefer coercive repression versus channeling (2003: 60).

Byman and Lind (2008) tie together authoritarian control mechanisms in a cohesive and paradigmatic manner. Their North Korea case highlights how a regime's use of social policy, use of force, and control of information and ideas are the primary ways a government attempts to prevent revolution. This research modifies Byman and Lind's (2008) categorization by arguing that social control is necessarily complemented by a regime's targeted repression of an existing opposition. Their concept of use of force is adapted to address the SPDC's more subtle threat of violence against its civilian population.

In Burma, the regime has not only succeeded at using repression against the political opposition, but it simultaneously wields social policy, uses force, and controls information and ideas to produce a compliant citizenry. A compliant citizenry is valuable as it creates disincentives to the rise of future resistance groups that can threaten the government. Human rights violations, including use of forced labor and relocation camps, should similarly be recognized as purposeful methods to induce social compliance. The removal of political *and* human rights across the country helps the SPDC maintain control over its citizens. Political activities do not occur in a context-less environment whereby activists are subjected only to political repression; cultivated social compliance is an important tool used by authoritarian regimes to deter, and thus eliminate, opposition. The remainder of this chapter articulates how the SPDC uses repression and control in Burma.

Control of the ethnic periphery: Four Cuts against armed insurgents

Unofficially used as a counter-insurgency strategy by the ~~the~~ *U Nu* government since the late 1960s, the *Four Cuts* strategy resembles the US's 'strategic hamlets' program used in Indo-China and the tactics used by the British to combat uprisings in Malaysia (Seekins 2006: 192). *Four Cuts* is a simple strategy of removing ties between insurgents, their families and local villages. The accompanying tactics of this strategy removes underlying conditions necessary for a successful insurgency, specifically food, funds, information and recruits. Begun in the 1960s, this extremely effective program contributed significantly to some insurgent groups losing local support, prompted several to accept cease-fire agreements.

Due to the brutality of the campaign actions, *Four Cuts* led to several hundred thousand people fleeing towards relative safety in surrounding countries.¹¹⁴

This program has been denied by the *tatmadaw*, but its use has been well documented, even mentioned in the public speeches of the *tatmadaw*'s own commanders (Smith 1991). "The much-vaunted 'Four Cuts' strategy introduced in the mid-1960s had initially succeeded in cutting off many insurgent groups from their sources of food, funds, intelligence and recruits," according to Selth (2002: 163). This strategy is apparent in contemporary *tatmadaw*'s campaigns against villages in Shan and Karen state; there were reports that these offensives continued during the monks' protests in September 2007.¹¹⁵

Renaming the enemy is a necessary precondition for dehumanizing enemies; it is easier to perpetrate human rights violations and noxious tactics against an 'enemy.' Renaming also makes it easier for the broader population to accept the use of these tactics. Dehumanizing the enemy also serves to lessen any support for the goals and cause of ethnic rebels from within the heartland. Smith writes:

The first obvious sign of any change in tactics was in the new language the *tatmadaw* used to describe the armed opposition... insurgents were no longer accorded any political status. They simply became saboteurs, bandits, smugglers, racists, and occasionally, leftist or rightist extremists... (1991: 259).

¹¹⁴ *Programme Report: January to June 2008*, Thailand Burma Border Consortium, (TBBC 2008). Copy in author's possession.

¹¹⁵ 2007 Survey: *Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma*, Thailand-Burma Border Consortium, October 2007. Accessed online at: <http://www.tbtc.org/idps/report-2007-idp-english.pdf>

Burma's countryside is divided by the *tatmadaw* into three zones: black (where insurgents exercise control), brown (contested areas disputed by government and insurgent forces), and white (insurgent-free, wholly government controlled) (Seekins 2006: 192). The *tatmadaw's* goal is to have only white zones remaining on the map. Working in a 40 – 50 square mile brown zone area at a time, in some areas ~~tatmadaw~~ *tatmadaw* soldiers order villagers to move to relocation villages. These villages are based on the plains or near military garrisons where their movements are restricted and they can be closely monitored by *tatmadaw* forces.¹¹⁶ Relocation areas are often declared 'free-fire' zones, and "houses, animals and crops are looted and destroyed, and people are raped or shot," according to the Human Rights Watch.¹¹⁷ *Tatmadaw* and cease-fire groups aligned with the Burma Army position land mines around former villages to ensure villagers do not return to scavenge for rice stores or valuables.¹¹⁸

Evidence of these tactics is found in every ethnic conflict area of Burma; these campaigns began in the Karen-areas of the delta in the mid-1960s. The campaigns continue to this day; between 1996 and 2007, according to the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium, more than 3,200 villages in eastern Burma were destroyed, forcibly relocated or abandoned due to threats from the *tatmadaw* (TBBC 2008: 2; see also Fink 2009: 146).

For the citizens who go to the relocation villages, life is essentially one of martial law. The *tatmadaw* does not accept neutrality (Smith 1999). Strategic villages are located

¹¹⁶ *Abuse, Poverty and Migration: Investigating migrant workers' motivations to leave home in Burma*, Karen Human Rights Group #2009-003, June 2009, pages 19 – 20.

¹¹⁷ *They Came and Destroyed our Village Again: the Plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Karen State*, Human Rights Watch, June 2005, Vol. 17, No. 4 (C). Page 42.

along main roads, and typically have a military battalion stationed nearby. Human rights groups report substantial evidence of rape at locations close to military bases, occurring for a multitude of reasons; the stigma of rape tends to isolate women from their communities, advancing objectives of social compliance.¹¹⁹ All residents of the relocation camps are expected to support the *tatmadaw*, or suffer the consequences of being treated as an insurgent. Smith (1991: 260) describes these camps as under constant surveillance: all guests and visitors have to register with the authorities, night time curfews are in effect, and food is confiscated and rationed so as to keep all villagers close to home and must return from their fields every night. Villagers are forced to join village defense units called the “Citizens’ Army,” and are trained by the *tatmadaw*.¹²⁰ They conduct village patrols, report anything unusual to the authorities and held personally responsible for any infiltration by insurgents.

The use of the relocation villages is an effective means of controlling people in the ethnic areas within Burma. According to the Free Burma Rangers (2009),

One of the ways the Burma Army attempts to crush resistance to its rule in many areas of Burma is by forcibly relocating entire villages. There are multiple reasons why this is done. First, by moving villages closer to Burma Army camps, they can exert more control over the day-to-day lives of the

¹¹⁸ McCartan, Bryan. 2009. “Landmines halt refugee return to Karen State.” *Mizzima News*, September 29, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/2833-landmines-halt-refugee-return-in-karen-state.html>. Also, see KHRG 2009 “Abuse, Poverty and Migration.”

¹¹⁹ *Walking Amongst Sharp Knives: the unsung courage of Karen women village chiefs in conflict areas of Eastern Burma*, report by the Karen Women’s Organization, February 2010. Available online at: www.karenwomen.org/Reports/WalkingAmongstSharpKnives.pdf

¹²⁰ *Forgotten Future: Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Burma* (HREIB), September 2008. Copy in author’s possession.

people and further restrict freedoms. Second, those villages become a more convenient pool of forced labor for nearby camps. Third, uprooting communities and forcing them to keep rebuilding over and over again is done in an attempt to weaken the population's will for resistance against the regime, and demonstrate the regime's ability to dictate people's lives.¹²¹

Villagers are not allowed to leave without obtaining a day pass from the military. This practice inevitably leads to military officials establishing a bribe system: people who need to tend fields outside the village must pay officials to receive the appropriate permission slip. Villagers are also dependent on buying goods only from sanctioned traders, who also must bribe their way into the relocation camps to sell their goods. Opportunities for work in the relocation villages are few, which lead to low incomes and a lowered quality of life. "People are subject to official and unofficial taxes, and often subject to extensive bouts of forced labor on state-sponsored projects, such as roads," according to Human Rights Watch.¹²² Villagers are cut off from their families and if they had any previous contact with armed resistance groups, from this new location they are unable to provide food, money or moral support.

As the *tatmadaw* expands its control of the entire physical country, the governing authorities similarly seek to expand control by eliminating the primarily urban-based, non-violent opposition. This strategy could be seen as early as the crackdown on the protesters

¹²¹ *FBR Report: Torture, Capture, Uprooted Villages and Child Soldiers: Live in Northeastern Karen State*
 Free Burma Rangers, May 16 2009. Found online at:
<http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/2009/20090523.html>.

¹²² *They Came and Destroyed our Village Again: the Plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Karen State*
 Human Rights Watch, June 2005, Vol. 17, No. 4 (C). Page 49.

in 1988 when troops quelled the unrest in the cities. According to Smith, of the soldiers that implemented the crackdown,

Most had built their careers in fighting Burma's diverse insurgencies and this, in part, explains the apparent callousness with which the ~~the~~ *adaw's* tactics of the insurgent battlefields were brought back to the streets of Rangoon in suppressing the students' protests. Indeed, widely accused of some of the worst excesses were the 22nd and 33rd LIDs [Light Infantry Divisions], hurriedly redeployed to Rangoon from the Karen front for the capital's defense (Smith 1991: 25).

Repression of Burma's Political Opposition

Authoritarian regimes maintain their power via a combination of targeted repression against the opposition and control methods to create social compliance. The *Four Cuts* strategy utilizes both repression and control, and is extremely effective in deterring resistance to its rule. Repression tactics specifically target opposition groups and individuals who defy the regime. Klandermans and Lindeman (2006) argue that regime repression incorporates a variety of hard and soft repressive tactics and that these forms of repression work simultaneously. This is the case in Burma, where the SPDC uses hard and soft forms of repression, as well as social control methods to create a compliant public.

Hard repression

Hard, force-based repression crushes an opposition by use and threat of violence (Ferree 2004: 88); this is the dominant focus of the literature. Yet as critiqued above, the

assumption by scholars of the immediacy of repression eliminates from analysis the effects of long-term hard and soft repression. In Burma, ongoing repression affects how the opposition operates.

The previous chapter described in detail the regime response to protesters following the protests of 1962, 1974, 1988 and 2007. Hard repression continues long after the protests abate. Following arrests for demonstrating, many activists go to jail, a location of long-term hard repression. The regime uses a penal system with several facilities inherited from the British colonial administration. Today, the country has 44 jails and approximately 50 hard labor camps, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).¹²³ Convicts assigned to the work camps engage in manual labor, including road building and quarry work (Cooke 1983: 263); rarely did political prisoners do hard labor in the past.

Since the 1970s the length of time served by political prisoners has dramatically risen. For example, following the 1962 coup politicians were arrested and most served around five years in jail, including the deposed prime minister, U Nu. Following the 1974 protests activists received around ten year sentences. “Since the mid-1990s, sentences for political activists accused of even the most trivial offences have typically ranged from seven to fifteen years, writes Fink (2009: 172). Hkun Htun Oo, the chairman of the Shan National League for Democracy and in regular contact with Shan ceasefire armies, was sentenced to 93 years in prison for attempting to form a Shan umbrella group (Fink 2009: 173). The SPDC increased sentences to an unheard of 63 years with hard labor for the

123 *Burma's Prisons and Labour Camps: Silent Killing Fields*, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners April 2009, page 2. Accessed online at: http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs07/Burma%27s_prisons_and_labour_camps-silent_killing_fields.pdf

leaders of the September 2007 protests.¹²⁴ Longer sentences facilitate the population and the international community forgetting about political prisoners. These long sentences also remove capable opposition activists from the movement for decades.¹²⁵ At time of writing, the AAPP reports there are 2,171 political prisoners in Burma.¹²⁶ Since 1988, at least 139 political prisoners have died in detention, as a direct result of severe torture, denial of medical treatment, and inadequate medical care.¹²⁷

The SPDC's policy is to move political detainees to locations far from their home towns. Prisoners rely upon family visits to provide food and medicine; lack of outside help leaves detainees vulnerable to illness and malnutrition at the hands of the authorities (Fink 2009: 173). By moving prisoners to far away locations, the regime literally cuts them off from the supplies needed to survive prison. For example, the government courts sentenced U Gambira, one of the leaders of the 2007 protests, to 68 years in prison, 12 of them with hard labor. Initially imprisoned at Khamti prison in Sagaing Division, it is a three-day journey from Mandalay by boat for his mother to visit him. Later, U Gambira transferred to an even more remote facility in Kale, Sagaing division. His brother and brother-in-law are serving their own sentences for helping him hide from the authorities – one in Arakan state and one in Mon state, making regular family visits extremely difficult.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ *Burma's Forgotten Prisoners*, Human Rights Watch September 2009, page 7. ISBN: 1-56432-517-2

¹²⁵ I thank Christina Fink for suggesting this point.

¹²⁶ Data found at the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) website homepage. Accessed August 24, 2010 at: www.aappb.org.

¹²⁷ *Burma's Prisons and Labour Camps: Silent Killing Fields*, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners April 2009, page 2. Accessed online at: http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs07/Burma%27s_prisons_and_labour_camps-silent_killing_fields.pdf

¹²⁸ *Burma's Forgotten Prisoners*, Human Rights Watch September 2009, page 12. ISBN: 1-56432-517-2.

In 2003, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade was attacked by regime-sponsored thugs at Depayin, injuring her and killing up to 100 political activists; this was more severe than the attack on her motorcade in 1996. Since 2007, the authorities increasingly rely upon civilian organizations to assault activists, allowing the military to appear neutral or the ones to restore order in these encounters. By doing so, the regime cultivates the appearance of the military in the barracks, while police and civilian militias are now the visible enforcers of government policy.¹²⁹

In the 1990s, the military regime relocated whole neighborhoods seen to have democratic leanings from the center of Rangoon to satellite cities on the periphery of the city. Many lost the opportunity to continue working in the city as they no longer had a community that could watch their children or the commute into town was too great (Skidmore 2004). Quality of life and incomes plummeted for those forced to relocate.

Doctors and lawyers have been stripped of their licenses for contributing their time and energy to the cause of Burmese democracy, and many businesses have been shut down because of their owners' political sympathies.¹³⁰ In July 1998, the SPDC created new restrictions on MPs elected in the 1990 elections, requiring them to report twice a day to authorities in their respective townships. The NLD reported that 79 MPs were detained for defying this restriction.¹³¹ The MPs complained that the reporting offices were far from their homes and meant walking a long way and were an interruption to their days; secondly, the visits were akin to the parole office visits required for released criminals.

129 Interview with Aung Din, US Campaign for Burma October 2009.

130 Nan Khin Htway Myint, "A Women's Political Work is Never Done" *The Irrawaddy* February 2010.

131 "SPDC detains 79 MPs," *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 7 (1): January 31, 1999, page 13.

The regime videotapes people demonstrating – the hard repression following the September 2007 protests occurred for several months because the regime was slowly going through video footage to determine whom they needed to punish.

Checks and raids on homes of activists are done in the middle of the night to instill fear; soldiers make noise to announce their presence and ensure neighbors understand that this is due to political activities. During certain periods, houses of prominent activists are surrounded by loitering members of Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA; a regime-sponsored mass conscription organization) and Swan Arr Shinn (SAS; a regime-sponsored militia) members who harass visitors regardless of the purpose of their visit. Aung Din, an activist now based in the United States, described how people did not attend his father's funeral because of the severe harassment and people did not want to provoke additional scrutiny by attending.¹³²

People disappear when the police and *tatmadaw* take people for a few hours or days, without informing their families, for questioning or forced portering.¹³³ After the September 2007 protests, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Burma Pinheiro reported at least 74 cases of enforced disappearance where authorities were unable or unwilling to account for the whereabouts of persons allegedly taken into custody.¹³⁴

Soft repression

132 Interview with Aung Din, US Campaign for Burma, October 2009

133 United States of America. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *Human Rights Report 2008*. February 25, 2009, page 2.

134 United States of America. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *Human Rights Report 2007*. Found online at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100515.htm>

While hard, force-based repression crushes an opposition by use and threat of violence, “soft repression involves the mobilization of non-violent means to silence or eradicate oppositional ideas,” writes Ferree (2004: 88). Ferree (2004) describes soft repression as including the tactics stigma, silencing and ridicule. These tools are used by the SPDC against activists to alienate them from their peers as well as the broader society. Using these soft tactics, the SPDC uses civil society to do the psychological and emotional dirty work necessary for political demobilization. In doing so, the regime attempts to change the values, perspectives, culture, norms, expectations and behavior in the public at large to limit political interaction in civil society (Ferree 2004).

Stigma. Stigma is an “impaired collective identity, where connection with the group is a source of discredit and devaluation because of how that group is viewed as a whole,” according to Ferree (2004: 91). Through sanctions on political activists and their families, the SPDC attempts to create a negative stigma regarding the political opposition and inducing citizens to avoid contact. This purposefully serves to isolate socially activist families from the rest of society. According to Citizen Y16,

The people don’t dare talk to their politicians, because the government always make the pressure, and the people who talk with their politicians, the

135 Ferree’s article is about how non-state actors (which typically do not/can not resort to violence) use these tactics against members of new social movements. There is a certain irony in using this framework to describe the efforts of a state since the article is a part of a volume emphasizing how social movements do not always seek to interact with the state but to change society too. Soft repression is also a tool used by governments, but is one that is hard to quantify and does not come up in the social movement repression literature.

intelligence come and ask them questions. Also, the quarter authority¹³⁶ doesn't like the politicians or movement visitors in their home. Also the quarter authority uses some bad guys who stay in the quarter to get the information or beat."

The SPDC also makes it difficult for the children of activists, limiting the schooling available to them, and closing other opportunities. In January 1998 according to *The Irrawaddy*,

The NLD reported that its party members and their families were being forced to seek special permission from the SPDC in order to enter the monkhood... Though the junta has placed various restrictions on the NLD and their associates for their political activities, this was believed to be the first time authorities have intruded upon the social and religious activities of party members and their families.¹³⁷

Poverty is widespread in Burma, and throughout the past 20 years and across the country, many people have experienced a decline in standards of living and particularly access to food (Dapice 2003). It is difficult for political activists to find work in Burma, many of whom must rely on their families for support despite the regime pressure that affects the entire family. Being arrested for political activism can negatively affect the job

136 The quarter authority is the level of SPDC government that oversees the neighborhood. According to Callahan, "throughout most of the country, the SPDC has articulated a rigid bureaucratic apparatus that functions via territorially-delimited state/division-, district-, township-, village tract-, and village level Peace and Development Councils (PDCs)" (Callahan 2007: 6-7).

opportunities available to siblings and parents; writes Fink, “once a member of the household is arrested, the whole family comes under increased surveillance and sometimes harassment” (2009: 179).

Businessmen who provided donations to the NLD in the early days of its existence became subject to intense scrutiny by the SLORC and were not able to successfully bid on some of the state enterprises sold. Crony capitalism passed opposition-friendly business by, and ensures businesses supportive of political change do not donate to opposition organizations.¹³⁸ Fundraising is a dangerous activity, as asking for donations requires one to make personal contact with any number of people who might report you to the authorities. Soliciting from the same safe people repeatedly, limits the amount an organization can collect and creates donation fatigue. For fear of future reprisals, no donation records are kept.

Employers do not want to hire former political prisoners because it puts their own businesses under more direct surveillance by the regime. People who shop at stores or market stalls of known activists are harassed. Exile Activist W26 managed health projects for a small community-based organization for several years; when his employer discovered he was a former student activist in 1988, he was fired. The organization did not want any trouble from the SPDC. Similarly, Exile Activist W30’s brother was fired from his position because of his brother’s political connections. Political Activist Z29 reported his brother,

137 “1998 Year in Review,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 7 (1): January 31, 1999, page 3.

138 Opposition activities are not zero-cost. Political groups must therefore undertake activities affordable to the budget they possess.

currently serving in the *tatmadaw*'s navy, was ineligible for promotion because of his political activities. Activists literally have a difficult time putting food on the table.

Silencing stems from "system processes that specifically block some voices from being heard," according to Ferree (2004: 94). The SPDC uses silencing to eliminate alternative voices and viewpoints from its hegemonic rule. The regime targets activists with silencing repression, often after they've committed an act defying the regime.

The SPDC arrests individuals who have been interviewed by international media (particularly if the interview is broadcast back into the country) or who contact international authorities to report on local conditions. Daw San San, an MP-elect from Rangoon, was arrested and sentenced to six years in prison for giving an interview on the BBC Burmese service about the NLD's boycott of the regime's National Convention to draft a constitution (Lintner 1999). Arrests are made of individuals reporting forced labor conditions to the International Labor Organization (ILO). Laws in Burma prohibit forced labor yet the practice is widely continued in rural areas. Daw Su Su Nwe, a labor activist, successfully sued the local authorities for violating its own laws against forced labor. Charged with "abusing and intimidating local officials," Daw Su Su Nwe was subsequently jailed for her anti-regime activities.¹³⁹

The regime also silences student activists by expelling them from school. This is a strong deterrent as removal from school significantly diminishes a student's chances for a successful life in Burma. Expulsion also silences alternative views by removing the threat and the risk of contamination with oppositional attitudes. Similarly, politically active

139 "United States Condemns Continued Detention of Burma's Su Su Nwe," *Washington File*, February 3, 2006, accessed online August 5, 2010 at: <http://new.s.findlaw.com/wash/s/20060203/20060203172058.html>

monks are removed from their monasteries and local communities and sent to backwater locations where they do not speak the local ethnic language.¹⁴⁰

Ridicule is a tool to enforce conformity, which Ferree describes as “a tool explicitly put to use to diminish and disarm cultural challengers who are mobilizing or are mobilized” (2004: 90). The SPDC regularly uses ridicule to disarm the political opposition, particularly the leaders that have proven influential for challenging the regime. To do so, it uses the official media and government-approved media outlets to ridicule the political opposition. While Skidmore (2004) states that like any incipient fascist regime, the SPDC has no sense of humor, it does use ridicule to reinforce the powerlessness of the opposition and persuade the public that the opposition and democracy are not culturally appropriate in Burma. Later the SPDC used propaganda to promote its concept of ‘disciplined democracy.’

In the 1990s, the SPDC’s print assault against its main rival the NLD, particularly its leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was well documented. “Since coming to power, the junta has published several hundred articles and more than five books detailing why Suu Kyi is unfit to lead the country,” according to Kyaw Yin Hlaing (2007: 360). The regime utilizes its resources to attack NLD and foreign journalists in the state-run and state-sympathetic journals and media. Throughout the 1990s, the regime regularly printed articles on why Aung San Suu Kyi was unfit to rule, cartoons making fun of the opposition, and erected billboards warning about ‘stooges’ of the west. In April 2007, for example, SPDC media featured articles with the titles of “Beware of foreign lackeys disguising under the cloak of democracy and nationalism!,” by Hla Thein Htay, “Listed Criminal” by Nga

140 I met one such monk at a monastery in Inle Lake, Shan state. This young (mid-20s) monk did not speak Shan language and was in a remote monastery in the middle of a lake. His previous location was Pakkoku, Shan state.

Min Swe and, "An open letter to Aunty Su: Please return to where you belong!" by Wathan, attacking the NLD and its leaders.¹⁴¹

In articles against the opposition or targeting the NLD, the regime also refused to use the full name of its rival, instead referring to her as Mrs. Michael Aris [the name of her deceased husband]. It also has misspelled her name in a way that was not only wrong but derogatory,¹⁴² and strongly insinuated she was a prostitute that has sold herself and would sell her country to the West (Skidmore 2004). Photoshop images of a naked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi engaged in vulgar acts with different men circulated in 2009 around the same time as her military trial. A talk radio program was able to make derogatory jokes about her visitors, and a pro-junta internet blog routinely posts demeaning pictures and messages about the detained democracy leader and the political opposition.¹⁴³

Ensuring a Compliant Citizenry

The SPDC uses hard and soft repression tactics to eliminate armed and political alternatives to its rule. The *Four Cuts* is particularly effective as an anti-insurgency strategy that cuts *organizations* off from support. For the SPDC to maintain its power, it also needs to deter individuals from undertaking personal, unorganized action, and deter societal groups from forming new opposition organizations. Interviews for this research point to widespread dislike of the SPDC and desire for its removal, so the SPDC's control over the

Mandalay division, where the September 2007 protest began.

141 *News Commentary April 2007*, disseminated by the Political Defiance Committee, circa. May 2007. Copy in author's possession.

142 Burmese language is tonal, and meanings greatly alter with small changes in punctuation.

143 "Character Assassination of Aung San Suu Kyi," by Salai Pi ~~Mizzima~~ *Mizzima News* online, June 9, 2009.

population is necessary to demobilize the current opposition and eliminate opportunities for future dissent.

The SPDC's *Four Cuts* strategy against armed groups is similar to the hard and soft repression it uses against the political opposition. This is supplemented with institutional methods of compliance meant to expand control over the population. Social movements operate in the context of civil society; authoritarian regime controls in this arena go beyond classic definitions of repression (Ferree 2004: 97). Understanding the greater authoritarian context is necessary to understanding opposition in Burma. Byman and Lind's case study of North Korea highlights three primary ways a government prevents revolution: social policy, use of force, and control of information and ideas (2008: 5 – 13). In a slightly modified form, these three concepts apply to Burma, where the SPDC uses these tools to disable the revolutionary potential of the masses.

Social Policies

According to Byman and Lind, "regimes seek to engineer a society in which organized dissent will be dangerous and difficult (if not impossible)" and to do so regimes target social groups with a history of being highly influential in the onset of revolution (2008:5). Burma's students, monks and workers historically led anti-government protests in the last 50 years but in 1988, the entire population mobilized in anti-state protests (Lintner 1990). The SPDC now casts a wide net to ensure the masses do not rise again. Numerous laws provide severe punishment for the vocalization of dissent, and disallow the formation of organizations not approved by the SPDC. Some of the laws are holdovers from the colonial administration, others are laws from the authoritarian BSPP era and the SLORC

has created its own laws, orders and directives as well as amended earlier legal means to create a legal framework of social control.

Economic policies of control. The regime has used economic policies, often negative ones, to manipulate a compliant citizenry and maintain control. Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003:21) argue purposeful poor economic management is rational behavior from a state eager to maintain control, as long as benefits are provided to those with any real potential to rival the leadership's power. This echoes Sharp's 'pillars of support,' where any regime wishing to remain in power must obtain support from influential segments of society. "Pillars of support are institutions and sections of the society that supply the existing regime with sources of power required for maintenance and expansion of its power capacity," according to Sharp (2005). Regimes cannot rule without the consent of some of the population.

Burma's current military government uses the economy to build support from key social sources while simultaneously controlling the mass public. "Corruption and cronyism," according to the 2006 *Economist Intelligence Unit* report on Burma, is widespread "throughout all levels of the government, the military, the bureaucracy and business communities." In the early 1990's, the regime opened its borders to trade and imports, initially providing citizens access to goods that had long been denied them or only found expensively on the black market. This new access to goods produced an intended effect of leading citizens to look towards an economic future, and more easily ignore the lack of political change in the country (Skidmore 2004). In 2010, 'fire sales' of nationalized industries to government cronies similarly creates a class of businesspeople supportive of

the regime's continued rule.¹⁴⁴ Government authorities issue private monopolies for some concessions, in return demanding kickback payments or gifts. The regime's policies towards business development has not only enriched the upper echelons of the military, but has also been used as a tool promoting compliance. In 1996, *The Irrawaddy* reported:

Burmese banks lend 80 percent of their money to state enterprises who also dominate international trade, accounting for more than half of the nation's exports and over one-third of its imports. Trade in rice, teak and other minerals have already been monopolized by the government causing widespread skepticism among Burma's investors.¹⁴⁵

In 2002, several private finance companies in Burma, described by Turnell (2004) as essentially gambling syndicates and ponzi schemes, failed and spread to the country's nascent private banking sector. A run on banks occurred, and the military government subsequently denied citizens access to their deposits. Furthermore, loans were suddenly recalled, regardless of the ability of people to repay earlier than their signed terms. By 2003, private banks ceased to function and only in 2004 selected banks began to reopen (Turnell 2004: 80-81). Despite the widespread havoc and wiping out of people's savings, Turnell suggests the regime was successful in a banking policy meant to undermine the growing threat from Sino-owned businesses operating in major cities.

Ordinary citizens interviewed for this research perceive greater intent from the military becoming rich due to its exploitation of the country's resources. Citizen Y21

¹⁴⁴ "A New Day Beckons, Sort of," *The Economist* August 19, 2010. Print edition, but also found online at: http://www.economist.com/node/16847708?story_id=16847708

¹⁴⁵ "Doing Business in Burma," *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 4 (14): September 30, 1996, page 19.

remarked in her interview that “the government does not care about what happens to the public; and also the economy is very hard... the government do that on purpose so people don’t do the politics.” Others also suggested the government purposefully keeps people poor so they cannot resist. Burma’s inflation is principally due to the government printing money when it cannot meet its internal obligations (Turnell 2004). Turnell calculates consumer price inflation at 18 percent in 1999, 2.6 percent in 2000, 21 percent in 2001, 57 percent in 2002 and 36 percent in 2003 (2004: 87). Consumer prices have risen, but wages have not adjusted accordingly. In 2002, prices skyrocketed as between January – August the kyat increased from 750kyat/dollar to 1250kyat/dollar over seven months—costs of medicine doubled, food prices went up 2-3 times, and petrol and diesel increased by 100 percent.¹⁴⁶ Prices in Burma seemingly rise unabated. Writes Charney:

From late 2006, prices of daily necessities, such as cooking oil, began to increase by up to 40 percent, pushing family economies almost to a breaking point... Burmese tolerance of hardship, built up from experience of other long-term hardships that have plagued the country since the early 1960s, proved resilient (2009: 196).

The United Nations estimates the Burmese population spends up to 70 percent of their monthly income on food.¹⁴⁷ Economic downturns may breed anti-government sentiment and sometimes protest, but the high level of poverty ensures the population does not have the resources—money and/or time—to mobilize at every economic shock.

¹⁴⁶ “Smoke Screen, 1 July – 30 September 2002,” *ALTSEAN Report Card on Burma*, page 27. Printed in Bangkok December 2002. ISBN 974-90881-1-5. Copy in author’s possession.

One result of poverty is that it makes it difficult for any political organization to solicit donations from fellow countrymen. Organizations need funds to conduct activities. The SPDC restricts the ability of political organizations to receive funds in several ways. It is illegal for unsanctioned organizations to receive funds from abroad, making it extremely convoluted for foreign funding to reach its intended target. The NLD early on and responding to accusations by the SLORC of being “Western stooges,” made it a policy not to accept foreign funding, instead relying on the donations of its members (Beer 1999).

Relocation and land policies. Relocation in the name of modern development is a social policy creating compliance. As discussed under the repression section, suspected activist families and neighborhoods were relocated to peri-urban areas. Other groups too have been forcibly relocated. In the mid-1990s, whole city blocks of people were removed from their homes to provide land to developers of hotels and office buildings. In doing so, community, family and kith networks were broken (Skidmore 2004:88 - 89). Christian cemeteries in Mandalay were expropriated with only a few days notice to move the bodies and no recompense given to families for the expense of doing so (Human Rights Watch 1995: 16-17). Muslim neighborhoods in Rangoon were similarly bulldozed to make way for new buildings. According to Priestley (2006):

When the government forcibly relocated thousands of residents from rundown inner city neighborhoods in the early nineties—ostensibly to demonstrate its commitment to urban development, but in reality to sell off vast swathes of land to private developers... one almost completely Muslim

¹⁴⁷ Kyi May Maung 2007. “Post-crisis economic fallout in Burma,” published in *Mizzima News* December 5, 2007. Found online at: <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2007/12/05/mizzima-news-post-crisis-economic->

neighborhood in Tamwe Township was scooped up en masse and dumped in a new location outside Pegu. Permission for the building of mosques has been turned down.¹⁴⁸

The regime's policy of land confiscation to establish new military bases and provide housing for Burmese families in ethnic areas similarly facilitates social compliance. "The Myanmar Rapporteur has also reasoned that the practice of land confiscation, which appears to be aimed at 'anchoring military control, especially in ethnic areas' has also led to forced displacement," according to the Harvard *Crimes in Burma* report. Fink writes that in northern Arakan state, "authorities have moved Rohingya populations out of many villages, and resettled Arakanese and Burman Buddhists in their place. In many cases, Arakanese Buddhists have supported this policy as they do not want the population of Rohingya to increase" (2009: 148).

Drugs and gambling. The availability of legal and illegal drugs provides an outlet for dissatisfaction and intends to ensure a compliant population, while simultaneously providing local authorities with profit from poppy agriculture, drug trade and money laundering. Fink (2009: 199) reports drug and alcohol use on university campus is tolerated, with her interviewees complaining that heroin is sold out of dormitory rooms. Heroin is easily available and accessible for bored and unhappy youths (Skidmore 2004: 90 - 93). A report card on the regime distributed by Altsean in 2002 reported 2.4 percent of the

[fallout-in-burma-kyi-may-kaung/](#)

148 Priestley, Harry, "The Outsiders," for *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 14 (1): January 2006.

population over 15, or 80,000 people, were smoking opium ¹⁴⁹daily. “Poisoned Hills,” a report by the Palaung Women’s Organization, claims in two villages they did field research, addiction rates rose on average by 20 percent between 2007 and 2009. ¹⁵⁰They also point to government complicity in allowing drug dens, places for addicts to shoot up, and extorting bribes from addicts in return for not sending them to jail for possession of illegal narcotics.

In addition to drugs, gambling and illegal lotteries are tolerated and growing. One interviewee reported that lotteries used to be held every other month, and now held once to twice per month. Gambling distributors on the streets sell tickets, and since 1988, gambling has been allowed at public festivals. Festivals are also growing in length – April’s traditional water festival celebrating Buddhist New Year historically is celebrated for four days, but since 2008, the government mandates a 10-day holiday.

Border policies. The regimes’ relatively porous border also serves its purpose of a compliant citizenry. In 1988, 8,000 to 10,000 students fled to the border after the military coup many of whom either took up arms against the government or started the numerous NGOs working from bordering countries (Linter 1994). The vast majority returned home within a year. When the authorities discover the identities of underground activists, many choose to flee to bordering countries rather than be incarcerated. This is not just to escape the known brutalities of prison but as a member of Generation Wave, an opposition group

149 *Smoke Screen ALTSEAN Report Card: 1 July – 30 September, 2002* Alternative ASEAN. Bangkok: December 2002, page 19. ISBN 974-90881-1-5. Copy in author’s possession.

150 *Poisoned Hills*, Palaung Women’s Union, January 2010. Copy in author’s possession.

formed in the wake of the September 2007 protests explained during an interview “there is no doing politics in prison.”¹⁵¹

There are 10 refugee camps operating in Thailand; as of 2008, these 10 camps were home to more than 138,000 registered refugees.¹⁵² Some activists live here; but most are refugees who fled state-sanctioned violence and the *tatmadaw*’s destruction of their villages. Paradoxically, the self-exile of non-compliant citizens benefits the regime – they are no longer in close enough proximity to personally lead protests or resistance against the regime (Zaw Oo 2004). Border-based exile organizations continue to oppose the government; some focus their attention on lobbying the international community, while others support the networks of activists still in the country. Burmese activists travel to the border areas to meet with some exile organizations and undertake political trainings (Beatty 2010).

Foreigners. Foreigners are limited in the information they can share with Burmese citizens and are also subject to social policies designed to ensure compliance during their visit. During the Revolutionary Council and Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) periods from 1962 – 1988, foreign visitors were permitted to stay in Burma for only seven days (Cooke 1983: 219). Burmese citizens who left Burma and obtained citizenship in another country were not allowed to return for the entirety of the Ne Win era (1962 - 1988). The SPDC removal of the visa ban for foreign citizens of Burmese origin, similarly contributed to the regimes ability to control people. According to Zaw Oo, “this policy had

¹⁵¹ Interview with Activist Z24.

¹⁵² *Programme Report: January to June 2008*, Thailand Burma Border Consortium, (TBBC 2008) pages 5-8.

been a very effective tool to manipulate people who had been separated from their kin for many years so they would acquiesce and keep silent about the regime's policies in order to be able to return for family reunions" (2004: 248).

For those foreigners who visit Burma, travel is tightly controlled, and foreigners are channeled to key tourist zones and not allowed to travel in the large no-travel zones in ethnic territories and around the new capital Naypyida. Hotels wishing to host foreign guests must have a permit to do so, and foreign guests are also required to be registered with the local ward authorities (Skidmore 2004). Transport infrastructure is limited, trains and buses take about the same amount of time, and buses from the mid-century are too small for some Western foreigners to ride (to be fair, on a journey in November 2009, it was clearly uncomfortable for locals too). A bus ride from Mandalay to Rangoon takes 12-15 hours to cover the 250 miles (*Lonely Planet Burma* 2009). Compare this to a Rangoon-Mandalay one-way flight for \$65 (65,500 kyat) (Ko Ko Thett 2010); most choose to fly on a government airline to save time and do not see the conditions in which people live. The tourist infrastructure facilitate foreigners traveling on holiday to visit on package vacation tours, stay in government accommodation, fly on government and crony-owned airlines, accompanied by a government-licensed tour guide.

Concern for putting people at risk also makes it difficult for foreigners to have 'real' conversations with people during their visit. According to Silverstein, "Burmese who met with foreign travelers or diplomats had to report immediately to the government on the content of their conversations" (1977: 99). While much freer today, *Lonely Planet Burma* (2009: 24) similarly cautions travelers not to compromise locals in the eyes of the junta by raising political questions, giving presents, or trying to go to sensitive locations.

To ensure they do not disseminate alternative information or appear to provide more for people than the national government, foreign NGO operations are heavily monitored. In February 2006, the Burmese Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development formalized its restrictions with published guidelines for international organizations. These guidelines require organizations to travel in Burma with a regime representative and must select their Burmese national staff from government-prepared list of approved individuals.¹⁵³

Policies that limit alternative institutions. The SPDC also routinely declares organizations ‘enemies of the state’ and therefore illegal. In the lead-up to the 1990 elections, 235 political parties registered with the Election Commission. By Election Day, the regime had declared all but 93 parties illegal. Of the 93 parties that participated in the 1990 election, 27 parties gained enough votes to win seats in the new Parliament. Of the above parties that won seats in the election, in March 1992, under executive orders No. 7/1992 and No. 8/1992, 20 political parties were declared illegal by the military junta. As of 2008, there were only 10 political parties still considered legal entities in Burma. Of these, seven won seats in the 1990 election, and three did not.¹⁵⁴ The legal parties have very

153 Guidelines for UN Agencies, International Organizations, NGO / INGOs on Cooperation Programs in Myanmar, discussed in U.S. GAO, 2007: 12; reprinted in Hudson-Rodd, Nancy, and Sein Han, *Arbitrary Confiscation of Farmers’ Land by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Military Regime in Burma*. Bangkok: The Burma Fund, February 2008. ISBN: 978-974-8349-36-7. Requirements INGOs must abide by include: 1) Agree that international staff can only travel within Burma with permission from the subject area ministry and with a regime representative; 2) Avoid conducting or distributing any surveys not mentioned or approved in the original project documentation; 3) Agree that their programs will “enhance and safeguard the national interest”, “prevent infringement of the sovereignty of the State,” “and be on the right track to contribute to the socioeconomic development of the Nation;” 4) Coordinate their work with the representatives of the Union Solidarity Development Association and similar groups; and 5) Select their Burmese national staff from government-prepared lists of individuals.

154 *Political Parties in Burma*, International Republican Institute Briefing Memo, February 2008. Copy in author’s possession.

little political space in which to operate; the NLD for example is only allowed to keep open its Headquarters office in Rangoon. It can hold meetings and gatherings within this facility, although it is watched closely.

The activities of the parties still in the legal fold are primarily held underground. Losing legal status means not being able to have an office, operate openly or publicly conduct activities. Remaining legal does not necessarily ensure safety – the NLD was forced to close all but their headquarters offices in 2003 and the entire leadership of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy was summarily arrested in 2006. With the SPDC's parliamentary election planned for 2010, the NLD chose to not re-register as a party as required by the SPDC, instead choosing a legal limbo rather than legitimize an election. Several parties that registered in 2010 reported difficulties conducting information outreach and campaign activities.

The government also curtails the ability of the *Sangha*, the Buddhist monkhood, to communicate independently its religious and moral messages. In 1990, after a religious boycott of regime members, the SLORC regime issued Order 6/90 that banned all 'unlawful' *Sangha* organizations, except the nine sects that had been declared legal in 1980 under General Ne Win's purification of the *Sangha*.¹⁵⁵ Monks have also been charged for 'offenses relating to religion,' and then forcibly disrobed by the military regime. The government arrests monks for forming non-sanctioned organizations, leading protest and making anti-government statements as well as monks' 'overturning the bowl' and boycotting alms in 1990, 2003 and in 2007. Simultaneously, the SPDC presents itself at the

155 *Burma: A Land Where Buddhist Monks are Disrobed and Detained in Prison*, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, November 2004, page 15. Copy in author's possession.

protector of Buddhism, and co-opts its symbols and regularly broadcasts on state media government leaders' donations to pagodas and religious shrines.¹⁵⁶

In addition, the government lowers student opportunities for opposition activities by physically relocating universities from their original locations in the center of cities to peri-urban enclaves.¹⁵⁷ Universities have also been broken up into smaller pieces – while the SPDC claims to have increased the number of universities in Burma to over 150, many of these were existing universities that divided by departments into 'new universities,' and moved to a different location to ensure no school has too many students in one place.

Following the pattern set by the previous BSPP government, at any sign of political unrest the SPDC closes universities for extended periods of time. According to Fink, "between 1962 and 1999, universities were shut down thirteen times, from periods of a month up to more than three years... between 1988 and 2000, universities were open for only thirty-six months" (2009: 199). Universities were closed from June 1988 to May 1991, from December 1991 to May 1992, and from December 1996 to July 2000 (Fink 2009: 199). Distance education, whereby students study from home and only go to campus on certain days for exams, allows the government to ensure potential agitators remain isolated and without the knowledge that comes from in-person pooling of information. Students cannot recruit, build up organizations or organize demonstrations.

156 *Burma: A Land Where Buddhist Monks are Disrobed and Detained in Prisons*, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, November 2004, 2004: page 19. Copy in author's possession.

157 I would like to thank U Win Min and Christina Fink for suggesting this point during a meeting in September 2009.

Use of Force

In addition to its social policies of control, it comes as no surprise that the SPDC is also willing to use force to ensure a compliant citizenry. Violent repression by the state occurred in Burma after every large protest, which follows Byman and Lind's argument that "authoritarian leaders use force (to varying degrees) in order to stay in power... force makes protest more costly" (2008: 11). This dissertation proposes that force against an opposition should be called repression; force is also used more broadly against the population to instill compliance. There is a subtle but important difference between these kinds of force used by a regime. Burma's regime wields force against civil society to remind citizens of the violence that can be unleashed to punish noncompliance. Force is a compelling deterrent to ensure compliance in ordinary citizens. The regime's ability to unleash violence, to know its citizens' secrets, is meant to create a citizenry too terrified to resist.

Force is inclusive of regime displays meant to instill fear and the mechanisms of surveillance and monitoring, which requires significant manpower and financing to deploy. Describing the system of intelligence apparatus, Cooke explains, Burma's

Efficient intelligence and internal security forces operated virtually free from legal restraints. Using block and neighborhood wardens attached to local government 'security committees,' the security forces kept tabs on people in both rural and urban areas and did not hesitate to deal summarily with any persons or activities the leadership believed might pose a threat to the government, public order, or national security. Burmese were legally required to obtain permission to leave the townships where they resided,

although in practice those with valid identity papers could travel without specific permission except in certain restricted areas where insurgency was prevalent (1983: 219).

Skidmore's more recent description of the hierarchy of authority from the state-provincial-township-ward levels suggests a tightening of the lines of authority and increased capacity of the state to respond to challenges made by citizens. Ward-level officials provide day-to-day monitoring and are "the keeper of all records, chronicling all births, death, marriages, movement and residency, and the 'volunteer labor' of Burmese," according to Skidmore (2004: 66). Micro-control within the ward also occurs: "every ten households in the cities have a 'Ten House Leader,' every street has a 'Street Leader,' and every 100 houses have a '100 House Leader'" (Skidmore 2004: 67). Authorities require registration of permanent persons in homes. "Under the household registration system, all households must possess an official form listing the residents of the house.... It reflects the regimes' desire to be able to monitor activities at the household level," according to Fink (2009:137). Guests staying in private homes are required to register with ward authorities on arrival and departure at both their home location and where they are visiting; these rules apply to expatriates and tourists staying at hotels and guest houses (Skidmore 2004: 66). Public gatherings of more than five people are not allowed without the permission of the authorities (SLORC Order 2/88).

In addition to the growing militarization and intelligence apparatus, mass organizations organize the people to support the government. The Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) is "a SPDC-controlled social welfare organization

known for its involvement in political violence,” while Swan Arr Shin [‘masters of physical force’] is a paramilitary force “formed largely from the poor and unemployed.”¹⁵⁸ Swan Arr Shin is government-backed and present in the larger cities; according to the U.S. State department, in 2008 Swan Arr Shin “increasingly assumed the responsibilities of law enforcement authorities, engaging in the arrest, detention, and interrogation of human rights and prodemocracy activists.”

The USDA is significantly bigger with 24.6 million members countrywide as of August 2010 and boasts Senior General Than Shwe as its patron.¹⁵⁹ Teachers and other civil servants are required to join USDA, and often pressure students to join with the threat of lowered grades or expulsion if they do not (Fink 2009: 115). Since USDA’s formation in 1993, the military government has routinely used forced rallies to demonstrate ‘popular support’ for its activities. In 1994, *The Irrawaddy* reported that the government was using its USDA to force citizens to attend rallies about the peace talks with armed soldiers as well as their support for the regimes’ national convention constitution drafting. Owners of trucks and transport are forced to provide transport to the rally site, and public servants including teachers and nurses would go, afraid they would lose their jobs if they did not attend.¹⁶⁰ *The Irrawaddy* reported on May 28, 1996, “The junta staged ‘destructionists rallies’ comprised of government employees in a bid to demonstrate popular support. The SLORC reported some 100,000 people had turned out in rallies across the country in support of the

¹⁵⁸ *Bullets in the Alms Bowl*, Human Rights Documentation Unit, March 2008, page 11.

¹⁵⁹ “Mizzima Election 2010,” *Mizzima News*, accessed online August 25, 2010 at: <http://www.mizzima.com/political-pro/military/usda.html>

¹⁶⁰ “Inside News,” *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 1 (9): 31 January 1994, page 5.

regime.”¹⁶¹ In 2010, the USDA officially dissolved to form the Union Solidarity and Development Party, which contested the 2011 parliamentary election.

There are also government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOS) with government leaders as patrons, including the Myanmar Red Cross Society, the Fire Brigades, the Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation, the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, and other organizations (Fink 2009: 149). GONGOs influence the lives of citizens and work to ensure compliance. Membership in the USDA provides some material benefits to members and helps one maintain a appearance of compliance. The regime threatens those employed in public services to join, often firing those who do not. Membership is coerced but not entirely without benefit to its members. These quasi-government organizations demand ‘donations,’ often several times a year from a population that is already struggling financially (Skidmore 2004). Citizens have little choice but to contribute funds when asked. A range of extortion under the guise of taxation occur in Burma: farmers are forced to grow certain crops and sell them at a low price to the government, goods are confiscated and not returned until a payment is made, arbitrary payments are required at Burmese military checkpoints on the highway, as well as forced “donations” for such events as festivals and school construction.¹⁶² Extortion serves to remind citizens of the power of the regime as few risk declining requests due to the potential for future harassment.

161 “Slorc holds mass rallies as NLD congress ends, 1996, page 4.

Crackdown *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 4 (10-11): June 15,

Control of information and ideas

In addition to social policy and use of force, the SPD C ensures a compliant citizenry by maintaining firm control over information and ideas. The regime effectively atomizes information available to individuals, isolating them from their community while also making them dependent on the regime for information.

The financial cost of communication is very high inside Burma. In Burma the regime owns all internet and telecommunication providers, allowing them to set prices that serve the goals of compliance. In 2005, cell phones cost \$ 3,000 USD in Burma; internet costs \$700 USD for an ADSL line and requires a government-issued permit.¹⁶³ Today cell phones cost \$1,000. Recently, disposable SIM cards costing approximately US\$75 for three months of use have been made available, but relative to average monthly income of \$40 in 2010, the cost of a reduced SIM is too high for most citizens.¹⁶⁴ Obtaining a landline can take 15 years of dealing with government bureaucracy to get a permit and finally installation. Phone booths and payphones were nonexistent during a research visit in November 2009. Instead, enterprising citizens with a phone line set up folding tables on the sidewalk with a telephone for which citizens can pay a fee to use. Phone stations (for lack of a better term) are manned by two to three people, so the conversation is never private, even if it is untapped.

162 *We have to give them so much that our stomachs are empty of food; The hidden impact of Burma's arbitrary and corrupt taxation*, Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (N D-Burma). May 2010. Accessed online at: http://www.nd-burma.org/images/pdf/report_eng.pdf

163 *Internet Filtering in Burma in 2005: A Country Study*, OpenNet Initiative (ONI), October 2005. Copy in author's possession but also found online at: http://opennet.net/sites/opennet.net/files/ONI_Burma_Country_Study.pdf.

164 "The Price of Privatization and Crony Capitalism," Ko Ko Thett *The Irrawaddy* July 23, 2010. Accessed online at: http://www.irrawaddymedia.com/opinion_story.php?art_id=19048 on August 31, 2010.

Internet cafes are expensive relative to average income s, but the websites that would provide information alternative to the regime's narrative are blocked: internet is censored and use is monitored. Internet sites can be reached through proxy servers but this requires knowledge of how to do so by internet users. Burma's military opened a hi-tech warfare and spying centre built and supplied by a Singaporean company in 1997. *Asian Defence Compound*, reported the centre "has been optimized for tapping domestic phone , fax, and email lines on a country-wide basis."¹⁶⁵

Internet cafes, where most people access the internet, are under heavy surveillance and engage in self-censorship (Chowdhury 2008: 13). The Computer Science Development Law, promulgated in 1996, "prohibited ownership of a computer, modem or fax machine without prior approval of the Ministry of Communications . It further prescribed prison sentences of seven to 15 years for violators," according to Chowdhury (2008: 8). Furthermore, "the state maintains strict surveillance over electronic communications, including email, and blocks certain websites. The primary targets for blocking are political opposition or pro-democracy movements, e-mail service providers, free Web space sites, pornography and gambling sites," says Chowdhury (2008: 12) .

The regime, as owner of the two internet service providers, can also turn off internet access at will. Early in September 2007, SPDC authorities blocked access to the website YouTube, which had uploaded recordings of the protests occurring in August. During the September 2007 protests, when numerous images and information were digitally flowing out of the country, SPDC authorities cut off the mobile phones of several journalists

165 "Chronology 1997," *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 5 (8): 15 January 1997, page 11.

working for foreign media, including one journalist and one photographer for *Agence France-Presse*. SPDC authorities blocked numerous websites and blogs in an attempt to block the flow of information about the protests coming into the country. On September 27, 2007, *tatmadaw* soldiers and police searched for foreign journalists in Rangoon hotels where internet and international phone lines were still open.¹⁶⁶ A day later, the SPDC shut down all internet servers in Burma. After the regime reopened communication channels and internet in October 2007, activists commented the system was so much slower and prevented transmission of large files (often photos and video files). Following the 2007 protests, according to Charney, “the government tried once more to gain control by spinning a different account of events, outlawing cell phones, blocking email and internet access, and cutting communication posts” (2009: 197).

As Table 4 summarizes, the laws of the country, many of which are holdovers from the British colonial administration, limit the spread of information:

Table 4: Laws Controlling Information and Ideas

Order/Article¹⁶⁷	Provisions
Official Secrets Act	It is an offence, to possess, control, receive or communicate any document or information, likely to negatively affect the State, regardless of whether the disclosure thereof is in the public interest.
Burma Wireless Telegraphy Act	Originally promulgated in 1933, this act makes it an offence to possess without official permission any "wireless telegraphy apparatus." Amended in 1995 to include use of unlicensed fax machines" and in 1996, computer modems.

166 “Saffron Update,” *Burma Bulletin* Issue 10, Alternative ASEAN, October 2007. Accessed online at: <http://www.altsean.org/Reports/Burma%20Bulletin/BBOctober07.php>

167 Information in this chart adapted from Burma Lawyers’ Council (BLC) unpublished document entitled “Unjust Laws,” provided by the BLC research and documentation unit on December 9, 2009. Copy in author’s possession.

Emergency Provisions Act (EPA)	Promulgated in 1950, its vague terms allow for imprisonment for expression of information deemed false, disrupting behavior, morality or stability in the country.
Printers and Publishers Law	Promulgated 1962; prohibits publications or materials that go against the interests of the government.
Television and Video Act	Requires video businesses obtain licenses from State or Divisional Video Business Supervisory Committees and compulsory licensing of television sets, VCRs, and satellite television by the Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs (MPT). Licensing of videotapes includes mandatory censorship of all videotapes, either locally produced or imported for public exhibition.
SLORC Order 16/89; Amendment of 1962 Printers and Publishers Act	Places restrictions upon periodicals, song lyrics magazines and films and has historically the principal instrument of censorship in Burma. Established a "Press Scrutiny Board" (PSB) mandating all media must gain PSB approval prior to publication.
SPDC Law No 5/96	"The Law Protecting the Peaceful and Systematic Transfer of State Responsibility and the Successful Performance of the Functions of the National Convention Against Disturbances and Opposition," prohibits any dialogue, alternative or criticism pertaining to the new constitution from taking place outside of the SPDC-sanctioned process.
Computer Science Development Law	All network-ready computers and fax machines must register with MPT prior to importation, possession or use. Registration is accompanied by a license agreement and associated fees. Strict controls on the formation and operation of computer-related associations. All such associations are prohibited as illegal save three categories: computer enthusiasts, entrepreneurs, and scientist associations.
Internet law	Regulations governing Internet access and usage issued by the MPT. Includes prohibition of posting any writings detrimental to the interests of the Union, its policies or security affairs. The law prohibits owners of Internet connections from allowing others to use their connections.
Motion Picture Law	The Motion Picture Law, which outlines a censorship regime for films, requires that a license be obtained from the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise in order to produce a film.

Foreigners are not exempt from the SPDC's control of information and ideas.

During the 1996 student demonstrations a Japanese journalist was hospitalized from the

beating he received from the SLORC soldiers (Skidmore 2004: 72).¹⁶⁸ A soldier shot at direct range Kenji Nagai, a Japanese photojournalist, during the September 2007 protests.¹⁶⁸ Journalists wishing to enter the country no longer put their profession on their visa application (Lonely Planet 2009), and the country suspended its 'visa-on-arrival' program in the lead up to the November 2010 parliamentary elections.¹⁶⁹

The SPDC does not only block access to information but also creates and distributes its own narrative of events. All publications are required to print the regime's propaganda slogans on the first page.¹⁷⁰ In general, much more information is now available to people in Burma, although it remains devoid of political or critical content. Writes Fink,

Since the mid-1990s, the number of magazines and journals has grown rapidly, and they cover a wide range of subjects, including economics, domestic and international news and literature, as well as sports, entertainment, and the occult. News publications have to publish as weeklies or monthlies because of the onerous censorship process, leaving only state-controlled daily newspapers (2009: 210).

To ensure a compliant citizenry, the SPDC has also changed the education system. History books no longer present the fascist brutality of the Japanese occupation of Burma

168 Lewis, Leo (2007-09-28). "Video shows Japanese journalist 'being shot deliberately,'" *London Times Online*. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2550369.ece>.

169 "Visa on arrival will be suspended from 1st Sep 2010," *Myanmar Latest News*. Accessed online at: <http://www.myanmarvisa.com/latestnews/?p=119>. This suspension was to conduct a 'review of the program,' according to the Myanmar Ministry of Interior.

during World War II lest citizens draw connections to the current regime or the chance that Japanese humanitarian assistance might be cut (Skidmore 2004: 60); the role of General Aung San, the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, in Burma's independence struggle has been downplayed (Fink 2009). Education based on the leadership's attitudes is not a surprise in any regime. The SPDC changed student's physical access to education. The continual downgrading of Burma's education system through lack of funding, poorly trained teachers (particularly in the ethnic areas), and corruption as students must purchase time with a teacher to learn material relevant to national exams. The emphasis on rote memorization lends itself to a population less able to think critically (Fink 2009: 192-3).

Sharing information is a key aspect of political organizing, particularly in its role of recruitment of new members and coordinating activities. The SPDC severely limits the opportunities for activists to meet with each other and share information. All people in Burma are subject to surveillance but activists face additional measures of social control; activists' phones are tapped, their mail read, and informers infiltrate organizations.

Some interviewees believed that if more people knew about democracy, they would more likely mobilize against the SPDC; many also thought the SPDC purposefully kept people too busy surviving so they cannot mobilize. Said Citizen Y17,

The people need to know about democracy. They also need to know about their rights, and after they know their rights they will be against [the government], and they will join the movement. But if the government

170 The SPDC's slogans are: non-disintegration of the union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and perpetuation of sovereignty.

creates bad economic conditions, the people have to work and work, they can't be learning. They only have time to make their living."

The regime purposefully makes it difficult for the political opposition to discuss and educate citizens on 'real democracy.' In January 1998, the SPDC informed the NLD that if it wanted to have any dialogue with the government, it must stop organizing political activities and issuing statements. By holding negotiations hostage to the manner in which the political opposition conducts itself, the SPDC effectively pushes political organizations towards self-censorship.

Conclusion

In Burma, repression is a multi-layered game meant to eliminate opposition. The SPDC uses its *Four Cuts* strategy to cut the armed resistance groups off from sources of food, funds, information and recruits. This strategy is similarly applied against political activists, although the tactics are adapted to address the different operating environment. Political activists are targeted with hard and soft repression by the SPDC. Hard repression includes crackdowns following protests and jail sentences that last a lifetime. Activists are also the target of soft repression, in the forms of stigma, silencing and ridicule. Both types of repression increase the costs of long-term resistance against the regime.

Fear of repression is not the sole reason deterring people from becoming politically active. The SPDC uses tools of social policy, force, and control information and ideas to ensure a compliant public. Structural and institutional methods used to cultivate compliance make it nearly impossible for ordinary citizens to have enough information or safe contact with opposition-minded individuals to engage in anti-junta behavior.

Unlike modern totalitarian states, the government in Burma does not make its citizens dependent on the state. The regime provides so little, citizens instead spend much of their time fending for themselves and their families. It does so through its social policies, use of force and control over information and ideas. The regime atomizes the individual, and individuals recognize personal action against the state would be ineffective. The regime creates powerful social incentives for activists to quit the movement and for new people to remain outside of politics.

Burma's authoritarian space requires activists to organize collective action using action and organization practical to the realities of their environment. Authoritarian institutions are powerful in Burma, yet even in this climate limited popular opposition to the regime continues to oppose military rule. The opposition survives the regime's attempts to eliminate it. According to Gene Sharp, "dictatorial conditions make an act of nonviolent protest less common and more dangerous. Hence, if it does occur, the act may be more dramatic and may receive greater attention than it would where the act is common or carries no penalty" (2005: 51). The following chapters describe and analyze how activists in Burma join the political opposition, undertake political activities and continue to resist under the constraints of authoritarianism. The next two chapters address how the opposition challenges the regime and survives.

Chapter 5: Challenge and Survival: Political Action in Burma

If you do the political, you have to prepare a little bag for jail.

Citizen Y25

Introduction

To eliminate the opposition and deter future resistance, the authorities use political repression and social control methods. Despite these obstacles, the political opposition in Burma continues to challenge authoritarian rule with methods following non-violent and violent strategies. As Chapter 3 described in detail, non-violent political groups and the armed resistance have a long history of challenging the contemporary and previous governments of Burma.

Oppositions select from a continuum of resistance options including exit, everyday forms of resistance, institutional political action, protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent interventions and violent methods. All forms are present in Burma.

An opposition movement cannot be judged by demonstrations alone. The constraints imposed by the state ensure large demonstrations are rare events. Demonstrations, or the lack thereof, say more about the ability of the authorities to repress the opposition and create conditions of social compliance. Small-scale activities led by opposition movements provide important linkages between large protests. Opposition movements, even those operating in authoritarian environments, have an expansive

repertoire from which they draw. Contention activities occur between periods of large demonstrations that capture international media attention. With small-scale activities, an opposition challenges the state when demonstrations are not feasible.

The constrained environment constructed by the authoritarian regime makes it unlikely an opposition will achieve its goal of regime change immediately. Survival is a critical imperative of an opposition operating in an authoritarian state. This imperative leads to the pursuit of different strategies and tactics/activities by opposition groups operating in authoritarian states. Opposition groups use political activities to circumvent the regime's repression and social control constraints. Activities signal in-group solidarity, transfer information to other facets of a political movement, build a sympathetic public and provide rewards to ensure long-term participation. Political activities provide significant social support and allow activists to maintain their network. Political activities help ensure the political movement survives to continue its resistance despite the regime constraints.

The political event analysis (PEA) provides an empirical examination of the kinds of political action undertaken in Burma.¹⁷¹ The PEA captured information regarding who undertakes resistance activities in Burma, the tactics preferred by different social groups, and discusses how activities support the opposition's challenge and survival imperatives.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Please refer to the codebook in Appendix 3 for discussion of data collection procedures. Appendix 4 provides all sources drawn upon for the PEA.

¹⁷² The following analysis uses data from 1990 to 2008 quality. Very few sources document protest in Burma events are recorded in the years 1990 – 2003 (average number, these were included in the data analysis as protest are prevalent, which social groups protest, build the dataset are most numerous and detailed for events (average 346 events per year over five years events surrounding the 2007 monks' protests. It is campaigns by the opposition against the regime's co – 2003 are included in the analysis, but very limited. Data sources from 1990 to 2008 varied in number and for the early-to-middle years of the dataset. Only 211 events are recorded for the early-to-middle years of the dataset. On average 16 events per year over 13 years); despite this small number, these events are useful in understanding what forms of protest are prevalent, which social groups protest, when and where protest occurs. Source materials used for the years 2004 – 2008, which provided 1,728 records. Some of this is due to meticulous record-keeping of the events surrounding the 2007 monks' protests. It is also attributed to the mobilization of 'Vote No' institutional referendum in 2008. The events from 1990 – 2003 are included in the analysis, but very limited comparisons are made between levels of activism in

While this chapter presents data for political events recorded in the dataset and percentages to discuss the events relative to one another, this is not a definitive account of activism in Burma. Two distinct but related problems introduce uncertainty with respect to the reliability of the data: possible underreporting *and* over reporting. Due to the difficulty of obtaining recorded information about small-scale political activities, there is a risk that this research underreports numbers of events. Sources of information detailing events inside are limited, and primarily sourced from organizations. This leads to exclusion of acts by individuals or organizations outside the networks of those recording events.

At the other end of the spectrum, this dataset may over-estimate the number of events occurring inside Burma. The dataset included information from organizations that receive funding from international donors. Funds meant to ‘support activism’ may create an incentive for activists to over-report activities. The nature of activism in authoritarian regime, and the great need for secrecy to ensure safety, means activities are often unverifiable. There may be an incentive for activists inside and/or outside of Burma to over-report activities.¹⁷³

Despite these concerns, this PEA presents information previously unavailable to researchers of political action in Burma. The PEA illustrates opposition movement activities in authoritarian countries, improving our understanding of how the Burmese movement challenges the government.

the early 1990s to the later years. No claim is made that activism has substantially grown over time. Growth may or may not be occurring – the data available is too limited to make such an assertion.

the early 1990s to the later years. No claim is made that activism has substantially grown over time. Growth may or may not be occurring – the data available is too limited to make such an assertion.

Growth

The Political Challenge to Burma's State since 1990

Challenge activities confront the authority of the governing regime; the authoritarian government and its entities are the primary audience, while other segments of society are secondary targets. In Burma, various groups and individuals in the opposition movement use activities large and small to present a challenge to the government. Challenge activities are public displays of dissatisfaction; street protests, strikes and other visible forms of protest that specifically target the regime and its allies.

Observers of demonstrations try to determine whether protests are political or about other social issues, environmental issues, or rising food prices. Some might also consider the evidence of numerous political ceremonies not political resistance but simply meetings of the opposition. To draw distinctions between 'political' and 'other' protest is inappropriate in an authoritarian context. Challenging the government about the economy carries the same risk to one's person as challenging its rule. Resistance is inclusive of all activities that challenge the authority of the state, regardless if the challenge is not about a political issue.

Revolutionary groups explicitly press for regime and political system changes in Burma. The term 'revolutionary' is often associated with armed insurgency groups, it is appropriate to use this to for non-violent groups specifically focused on democratization and regime change. In Burma, there are a number of revolutionary organizations using non-violent strategy to pursue a goal of regime change.

¹⁷³ Incentives for over reporting constitute a possibility that requires careful use of this data. Donors, however, take great pains to not appear as if grant funds are *quid pro quo* transaction in which they pay for political activities to occur in the country.

Gaining rights for ethnic groups is a well-documented goal of the armed ethnic groups in Burma, as is gaining political and economic control over their regions. Nearly every soldier interviewed mentioned the need for ethnic rights. 'Ethnic rights' is shorthand for the right to use their languages, including in schools and government services, promote ethnic culture and allow for religious freedom for non-Buddhist minorities. These groups seek the non-domination of Burmese language and culture in their territories. Several resistance soldiers and civilians discussed in their interviews the goal of ethnic unity. They believed achieving ethnic unity within their own ethnic group, followed by achieving unity with other ethnic groups were necessary precursors to gaining autonomy from the Burmese state.

Other organizations like those addressing women's rights, children's rights or environmental issues, are more 'reformist' in their agendas. These organizations do not explicitly espouse regime change but instead press the regime to change policies or enforce existing laws. The government does not allow publicly made policy criticisms, particularly those made by individuals with a history of political opposition; it makes little or no distinction between policy reformists and political revolutionaries. Risk of punishment unites reform and revolutionary activities on a continuum of political activism in Burma. Reformist organizations do not operate under different social compliance policies and rules that educate and govern the entire populace. They are community-oriented, and have a constituent base in which they attempt to represent. Some in Burma have relationships with the revolutionary organizations.

Including reformist action is an expansive definition of resistance improves understanding opposition under authoritarianism. The myriad reformist events allow for

improved understanding of how protest and persuasion is done in an authoritarian state, and how political movements attempt to influence more than regime-targets impacts. According to Jasper, “protest movements can provide an *infrastructure* for critical information – contacts with the news media, financial support, some legal protections, perhaps political shelter... this infrastructure... [is] important for sustaining any public debate” (1997: 371; emphasis in the original). Reformist and revolutionary organizations provide an infrastructure for continuing protest in Burma. While events recorded in the PEA are predominantly revolutionary in nature, the PEA includes reformist events.

Political action in Burma

Detailed in the last chapter, armed resistance challenging Burma’s state began before independence in 1948. Dwindling in size and territory held, several resistance groups continue to challenge the regime. Large urban protests occurred in Burma in 1962, 1974, 1988 and 2007. Writes Yawngkhwe,

In addition to the more or less organized rebel groups and 'armies,' urban-based opposition has persisted, especially since the 1962 coup. Until 1988, these urban protests occurred in and around Rangoon and Mandalay. These uprisings were usually initiated by university students who were later joined by the general student population and in time by ordinary people from all walks of life. The largest and, relatively speaking, most successful protest against the ruling military establishment was the 'people power' uprising of 1988 (1995: 179)

Even under current conditions of political repression and social compliance, small protests and various other political activities occur frequently in Burma. This research found the following types of protest occurring in Burma between 1990 and 2008:

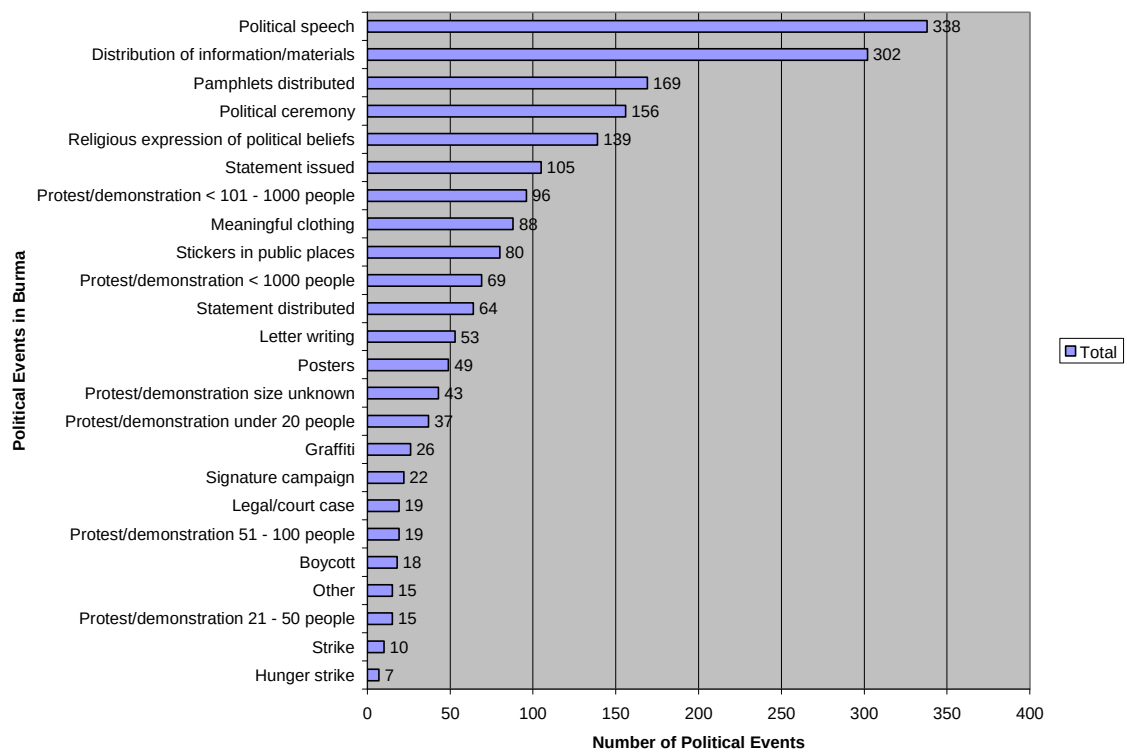
- Boycott
- Distribution of information/materials
- Graffiti
- Hunger strike
- Legal/court case
- Letter writing
- Pamphlets distributed
- Political speech
- Posters
- Protest/demonstration under 20 people
- Protest/demonstration 21 – 50 people
- Protest/demonstration 51 – 100 people
- Protest/demonstration 101 – 1,000 people
- Protest/demonstration over 1,000 people
- Protest/demonstration size unknown
- Religious expression of political beliefs
- Signature campaign
- Statement distributed
- Statement issued
- Stickers in public places
- Strike
- Wearing of meaningful clothing

To highlight the variance even within demonstrations, the list disaggregates five different size categories (and one ‘unknown size’) of demonstrations since 1990. When the

demonstration categories are combined, 279 recorded demonstrations occurred in Burma between 1990 and 2008. Many demonstrations were small, as reported by the available sources; 17 of the recorded demonstrations were single-person protests. Every solo protest led to the arrest of the individual.

As Figure 1 illustrates, demonstrations are only one tactic of protest used by the opposition to challenge the government in Burma. Other tactics include wearing of meaningful clothing, distributing pamphlets, posters and stickers, graffiti campaigns, religious ceremonies that express political beliefs, letter writing, strikes and boycotts, and court cases contesting regime policies. The most predominant activity of political groups since 1990, according to figures reported by the organizations in this study, is materials distribution, which includes 34 percent (N=443) of activities recorded in the dataset. This includes statements distributed by political organizations and pamphleteering to spread information.

Figure 1: Protest events in Burma 1990 – 2008 reported by or organizations contacted in this study



Materials/information distributed included messages on key chains, pens, t-shirts, stickers, poetry books, histories of student movements, and organizational statements. Distributing materials/information also includes activities such as training sessions on human rights to non-activist audiences, distribution of the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights, or any form of information not encapsulated by the other categories of statements distributed, pamphlets and posters. Combined, these five kinds of information materials distribution activities (statements distributed, posters, pamphlets distributed, distribution of information, and stickers) is 34 percent (N= 664) of political action recorded in the dataset in Burma between 1990 and 2008. This is followed by political speech/statements issued, which were 23 percent (N= 443 events) of political acts recorded

in the dataset. Table 5 summarizes recorded protest events occurring in Burma between 1990 and 2008.¹⁷⁴

Table 5: Summary of protest events in Burma 1990 - 2008 reported by organizations contacted for this study

Event categories	Number of Events (N)	Percentage of Activities in the Dataset
Materials distribution	664	34%
Political speech (all)	443	23%
Demonstration (all)	279	14%
Political ceremony	156	8%
Religious display of political beliefs	139	7%
Legal	94	5%
Meaningful clothing	88	5%
Graffiti	26	1%
Boycott	18	1%
Strike	17	1%
Other	15	1%
Total	1,939	100%

Religious expressions of political beliefs are group activities where activists attend a religious place and pray for their political wishes, primarily for the release of Daw Aung San Kyi from house arrest. In Burma, this typically means a group organizes a mass prayer at a Buddhist temple. Often the service begins with a group processional to the location of the temple, and the wearing of meaningful clothing (such as a political party uniform, or t-

¹⁷⁴ The percentages reflect each type of activity's percent of total activities recorded by organizations. These may not reflect percentages of actual ground activities, due to the over reporting and under reporting mentioned above. Instead, these figures represent only what is reported. Even if reality is different, these percentages demonstrate the range of activities occurring, and allow comparisons between reported activities.

shirts with messages printed on them). The dataset records that since 1990, 139 events utilize this method.¹⁷⁵

Social groups and protest

A variety of people from different societal groups engage in acts of protest in Burma. To study patterns of involvement, the dataset includes a classification of the types of organizations and social groups undertaking political action. The political events dataset recorded different types of social groups implementing political acts in Burma. The categories include political party activists, organized political group (non-party),¹⁷⁶ monks/religious, current students, youth, students and youth,¹⁷⁷ human rights, humanitarian organizations,¹⁷⁸ and workers/union. Farmers, artists and small businesses were added as

175 Of all events recorded, the number of religious displays is the most conservative and probably under-represented category of political activity. During archival research, numerous references to these events were found including one stating one prayer campaign was the 200th prayer campaign conducted. Unfortunately, no clear record exists of all the prayer campaigns. Only included in the PEA are the religious displays that were well documented. Please see the codebook for the recording of political events in Appendix 2 for a complete explanation of excluded events.

176 Political group (non-party) are issue-based organizations that are not political parties. Many specifically are pro-democracy organizations. In some respects these organizations within the pro-democracy movement are a politicized 'civil society' and have their own agenda that differs from the political party organizations. This category is not disaggregated by specific organizations, but includes activities done by members of '88 Generation Students, '74 Generation Students, the Veteran Politicians Group, Myanmar Development Committee, Mass Mobilization Committee, and Generation Wave. These organizations often include students interested in continuing political work after they graduate (and thus, no longer 'current students'). This also includes the groups formed by political prisoners after their release, but do not (or no longer) belong to a political party.

177 "Students and Youth" may seem redundant to the other categories, but it was included because 30 descriptions of events in various records used this phrase regarding who conducted an activity. As youth are not necessarily students, it was necessary to create this as an individual category.

178 Humanitarian was included because humanitarian NGOs, particularly international ones, often highlight their work with civil society as supporting democratization in authoritarian regimes. Their work may indeed support democratization (although, no real testing of that hypothesis is made here or by organizations making this claim) but in terms of undertaking actual political events, the archival research revealed no records of humanitarian groups participating in any overtly political events. Humanitarian action is understandably considered political action. There is evidence, however,

categories, after an initial data cleaning exhibited too many events categorized as ‘other.’ The ‘other’ category remained, and there are a large number of events categorized as ‘unknown,’ when it was not possible to ascertain the background of the individual.¹⁷⁹ Not all events are implemented by organizations, but it appears more events are done by organizations than by individuals.¹⁸⁰ As Table 6 shows, events are most highly concentrated among political party members, followed by current students, and political group (non-party) members. Youth activism (that is, the categories of Students (current), Students and Youth, and Youth together) accounted for 23 percent of the recorded political activities. Unknown actors implemented 18 percent of the recorded political events. This high level of ‘unknown’ is primarily due to vague language in reports that detailed the activities of the opposition prior to the 2008 constitutional referendum.¹⁸¹

of some political groups providing humanitarian aid following natural disasters. These events are included in the PEA.

179 This high-level of ‘unknown’ in the dataset reflects two issues within the source documents. Many events, particularly from public news media archives, were witnessed by someone who did not know the individuals undertaking the resistance activity. The source article in many cases reports ‘unknown’ individuals conducting a political act. Secondly, ‘unknown’ also encompasses unspecific reporting in the private sources used for this research. Records that do not state anything about those implementing political acts (only just recording the act itself) may be an attempt to protect the identity of protesters from future harassment by SPDC authorities. This would be especially true if organizations were not sure of the present and future security of official reporting documents. For more on this dilemma see footnote 11.

180 Considering a significant amount of source material for the dataset comes from organizations that support activism inside Burma, the results of this likely skewed towards over-representation of organizational political action. Despite this likely overrepresentation in the sample, these figures highlight how organizations help provide motivation for long-term political action.

181 The majority of events from 2008 recorded in the dataset came from the narrative reports of the Committee for Mass Mobilization (CMM). CMM was an alliance of eight mostly umbrella organizations based on the Thai-Burma border and thus included in some capacity most organizations supporting political networks inside Burma. The CMM reports named what each border area-based organization reported about colleagues’ activities inside Burma, but the names of the groups inside the country were rarely mentioned. The researcher chose not to guess the type of group operating inside solely based on the name of the external organization. The lack of specificity in the reports is likely due to the border groups assuming their

Table 6: Political events by social group since 1990 reported by organizations contacted for this study

Type of Group	Number of Activities	Percentage of Activities in the Dataset
Political party activists	548	28%
Students (current)	356	18%
Unknown	352	18%
Monks/Religious groups	203	10%
Political group (non party)	175	9%
Human rights	111	6%
Youth	52	3%
Worker/Union	50	3%
Students and youth	31	2%
Other	26	1%
Farmers	14	1%
Artists	13	1%
Small business	8	0%
Total	1,939	100%

The ‘political party activists’ category includes events held by the National League for Democracy (NLD), Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), and the activities of small political parties. The dataset does not disaggregate events conducted by specific organizations, but the majority of the political party events recorded were those conducted by the NLD. The high number of events stemming from political party sources is notable considering *Four Cuts* of political repression aimed against known political activists. The parties primarily conduct public activities with the identity of their members known to the authorities.

funding agencies, the audience of this report, would know what specific organizations they link to inside the country.

The recorded data of the PEA indicates that political party activities differ from activities of the other groups. If these figures are taken at face value, Parties conducted more political speech events (N=153) than the other groups, and held more political ceremonies (N=111); parties held three times more ceremonies (N=30) than category political group (non-party). Political ceremonies, often marking anniversaries of founding events, “are particularly important because they forever symbolize the regime, form of action, group, movement, or rhetoric that they helped establish. Events can also be moral models that shame others into acting,” according to Jasper (1997: 91).

Based on type of activities conducted, the government’s efforts to eliminate student political action following the 1988 protests have been effective but not complete. Combined, ‘current students’ and ‘students and youth’ led 18 percent of recorded demonstrations (N=49) in Burma between 1990 and 2008; in comparison, monks led 41 percent (N= 115) of the recorded demonstrations, and 9 percent (N=24) were led by political party activists, and 14 percent (N=39) by ‘unknown.’ These suggestions of what societal groups lead protest is not surprising, considering the historical record of demonstrations and what groups led them (see Chapter 3). While ‘current students’ led demonstrations in 1996 in Rangoon and Mandalay, the dataset implies that the principal activity of students overall is distribution of information and materials. Students distributed 33 percent (N=221) of recorded materials between 1990 and 2008.¹⁸² This is more than any other social group, although ‘unknown’ also distributed 33 percent (N=221) of the materials. Comparatively, the dataset suggests political parties were the second-highest

182 This is ‘current students’ (N=208) and ‘student s and youth’ (N=13) combined.

distributor of protest materials and information; political party members distributed 11 percent (N=76) of all materials and information.

As Chapter 3 showed, monks have historically played a role opposing Burma's military regime, its predecessor the Burma Socialist Program Party government, and during the anti-colonial struggle. Overall, monks and religious groups led 10 percent (N=203) of the political events in Burma between 1990 and 2008 that were reported by the organizations contacted for this study. The dataset indicates monks have selected more visible challenge activities; 56 percent (N=115) of the recorded 203 total activities led by monks were demonstrations. Their 115 demonstrations represent 42 percent of all demonstration in the country between 1990 and 2008. Monks also led 15 of the 18 recorded boycotts against the regime.¹⁸³ Students, in contrast, led 23 percent of (N=65) demonstrations recorded in the dataset between 1990 and 2008. Monks and religious groups have used political speech (N=31) and distributed some materials (N=21). Since 1990, no monks partook in wearing meaningful clothing, an activity that their monastic dress codes proscribe, and as a group did not lead any political ceremonies. They often participate in the ceremonies led by other social groups, however.

Political groups, formed to challenge the regime via political activities also exist; nine percent (N=175) of the political events recorded in the dataset were conducted by these organizations between 1990 and 2008. This category is not disaggregated by specific organization, but includes activities led by the '88 Generation Students, the Veteran

183 Monk boycotts were religious, not economic. Religious boycotts, called *Pataneikuzana*, occur when monks refuse to receive alms from military leaders and their families. *Pataneikuzana* is an act that excommunicates the target from Buddhism, and thus is a tactic only available for use by members of the clergy.

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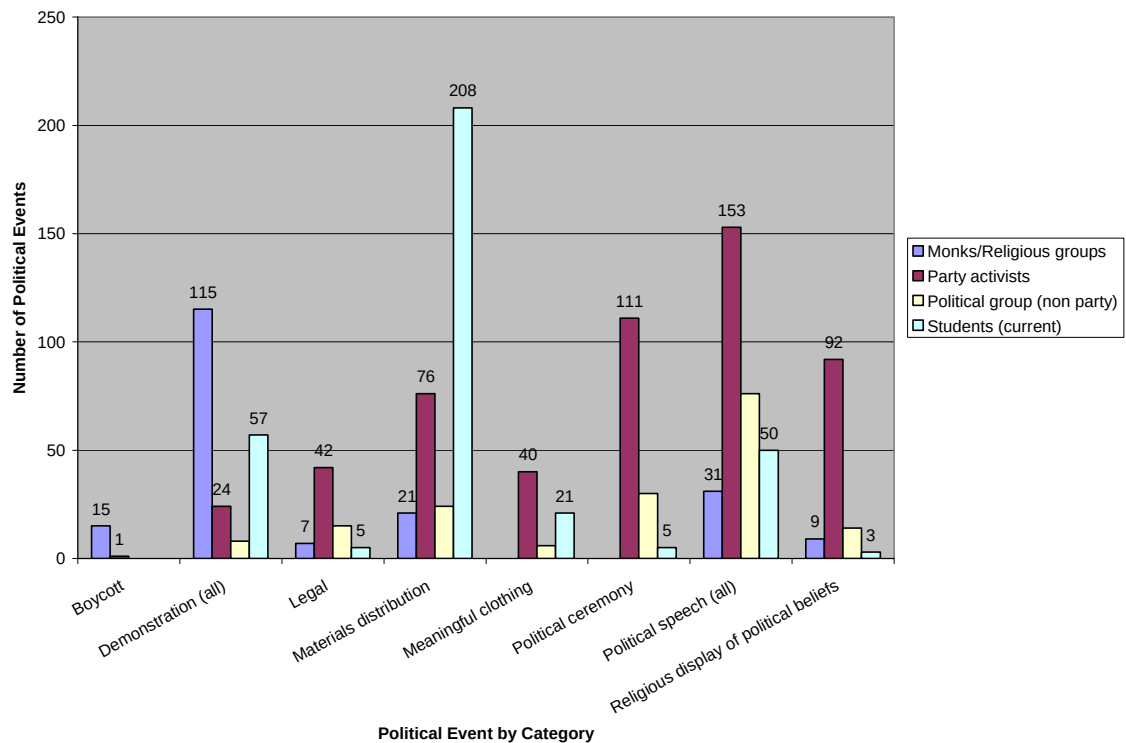
Politicians Group, Myanmar Development Committee, Mass Mobilization Committee and Generation Wave. These organizations within the opposition could be considered a politicized ‘civil society,’ as they do not seek power for themselves and thus have a different agenda from the political party organizations. Many press specifically for democratization in Burma. Others are more policy-oriented and press for gender rights, environmental protection or political liberalization. These organizations often include students interested in continuing political work after they graduate; they also include political prisoners resuming political action following their release.

Although unions are illegal in Burma, several associations exist quietly and try to serve their informal membership. Recorded activities led by workers/union represent 3 percent (N=50) of all political events in the PEA; recorded activities include workers distributing materials (N=20), demonstrating (N=10), and holding strikes (N=9). Anecdotes of worker activism suggest the figures for this group could be ¹⁸⁴ higher.

184 The researcher was unable to obtain any source workers and unions inside Burma, but there is some For example, in March 2010, outside of the scope to division held protests demanding employers give the salaries for working overtime hours. These protests widely reported upon in exile media. “New Decree to 27, 2010. Retrieved on September 28, 2010 from http://www.irrawaddy.org/print_article.php?art_id=19325

materials from the main organization that works with public information about workers’ opposition activities. the dataset, workers in the industrial zones in Rangoon m time-off during public holidays and increase their lasted several days, spread to several locations and were o Prevent Industrial Activities, *The Irrawaddy*, August 27, 2010. Retrieved on September 28, 2010 from http://www.irrawaddy.org/print_article.php?art_id=19325

Figure 2: Political activities by societal groups 1990 – 2008 reported by organizations contacted in this study



Political Action Strategies to Challenge the Authoritarian Regime

Resistance in Burma consists of a wide range of activities, of which demonstrations are relatively few. Rather, a continuum of political action strategies are available to people. Various resistance options present different levels of risk to the participant in the immediate and long term. Schock (2005) argues there are distinct forms of political action available to an opposition, including exit, everyday forms of resistance, non-institutional political action, nonviolent political action and violent political action. These forms tend to appear together but the analytical distinctions are useful to understanding the dynamics of contention (Schock 2005: 6-12). In contrast to Schock's (2005: 15) position that

institutional political action should not be considered a variant of non-violent political action this dissertation argues when examining political action under authoritarianism institutional political action is relevant and necessary to include. The political events analysis dataset, interviews and longitudinal analyses provide empirical evidence that agents employ the entire gamut of opposition strategies in Burma.

Exit

Exit, defined as emigrating from an intolerable situation, is one potential response by members of an aggrieved population. In economics, according to Hirschman (1970: 21), exit is heralded as a positive decision when unsatisfied consumers switch products. Hirschman's (1970) concepts of exit, voice and loyalty have been used to examine opposition in Burma (Zaw Oo 2004).

If exit is viewed as a resistance strategy, then it is by far the strategy of choice for Burmese citizens. Since 1988, there has been a steady stream of people leaving Burma: nearly two million people are migrant workers working in Thailand's factories and farms (Khruemanee 2004). At least 80 percent of the migrant workers in Thailand are from Burma.¹⁸⁵ As of 2008, ten refugee camps in Thailand were home to 138,970 refugees from Burma.¹⁸⁶ There are also unprotected camps of internally displaced persons living on the Burma-side of the border. The Thailand Burma Border Consortium reports "at least 470,000 people are currently estimated to be internally displaced in the rural areas of

185 *Programme Report: July – December 2008*, Thailand Burma Border Consortium 2008, page 8. Accessed online at: <http://www.tbtc.org/resources/resources.htm>

186 *Programme Report: July – December 2008*, Thailand Burma Border Consortium 2008, page 5.

eastern Burma alone... these estimates are conservative.”¹⁸⁷ Some of the citizens interviewed for this research chose to live IDP camps and remain within Burma soil, rather than settle in a refugee camps.¹⁸⁸ The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) argues:

Migrants are not merely seeking better jobs abroad, but are instead pulled to places like Thailand and Malaysia in order to *access protection*... For refugees in particular, protection is often primarily understood to mean legal protection against *refoulement* – defined as the expulsion of a person to a place where they would face persecution.”¹⁸⁹

KHRG argues exit is a “self-initiated protection strategy;” this definition purposefully highlights the personal agency of those who migrate (2009: 8). Migration provides self-protection as well as opportunities for education. Sharp’s (2005: 56) illustrative list of methods of nonviolent action also includes self-imposed exile as a deliberate act of noncooperation with the regime.

It is not only economic migrants and ethnic minorities exiting Burma. Resistance from the location of Burma’s borders has historically been used by political opponents to the military junta (Zaw Oo 2004). Historically, three waves of political exit occurred in Burma. Members of the Burmese independence movement left Burma for Japan during World War II for training that would help them oust the British colonial administration.

187 *Programme Report: July – December 2008*, Thailand Burma Border Consortium 2008, page 3.

188 In economic theory, selecting a substitute or better product has fewer barriers than political exit. Exit is not an easy strategy to select, as the process of exit can be difficult physically and emotionally. In reported difficult and dangerous journeys through the jungles of Burma to reach Thailand, many watch their friends and companions die along the way. Surviving as an undocumented refugee is a hard life made more difficult by extremely limited contact with their home country and family left behind.

Their eventual success in gaining independence made General Aung San and the Thirty Comrades national heroes. This point must have been salient to U Nu, the prime minister ousted by the 1962 military coup; in the late 1960s after his release from prison, he organized an insurgent rebellion from the Thailand-Burma border (Silverstein 1977). U Nu gave up after a few years and eventually returned to Burma in 1980 after the government issued a general amnesty for those charged with political offenses (Cooke 1983). Students fleeing the SLORC coup in 1988 also arrived to the insurgent-controlled areas (called ‘liberated areas’) to continue their opposition. Many remain as leaders of resistance from bordering countries and were joined by subsequent waves of political activists fleeing Burma (Zaw Oo 2004). In 1990 and 1991, elected MPs fled to the border, and another wave occurred following the 2007 protests.

When the SPDC discovers the identities of underground activists’ inside Burma, many choose to flee to bordering countries rather than face incarceration or continue to endure the regime’s *Four Cuts* treatment. Burmese expatriates based in countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand and China play an important role coordinating safe houses and transportation to get their colleagues to safety. Interviews of activists highlight how exit is a strategy that allows for calculated continued resistance.

In contrast to the political activists and resistance soldiers, interviews conducted with ordinary citizens implied their exit was a strategy of economic survival, not one of passive resistance. One’s stance inside the country (activist or not) plays a significant role in whether exit is resistance to, or release from, the political system and authoritarian

189 See *Village Agency Report: Rural rights and resistance in a militarized Karen State*, Karen Human Rights Group, page 7; emphasis in original. Published November 25, 2008. Available online on at:

regime. Self-awareness in this regard is an important distinction. None of the migrant workers and refugees interviewed for this research viewed their exit as resistance to the regime but referred to their leaving as a necessary means to economic survival or escape from abuse imposed by SPDC soldiers. Most migrant laborers interviewed for this research routinely returned to Burma. Many expressed their need about not endangering themselves, or their families, by engaging in any anti-state behavior from Thailand.

Everyday forms of resistance

Scott (1985) discusses how Malaysian peasants use passive techniques to demonstrate dissatisfaction and attempt to maintain a finely balanced status quo. To signal dissatisfaction safely, peasants use low-risk tools at their disposal such as gossip, foot-dragging and petty theft. Social conformity by peasants and other disenfranchised groups is calculated and thoughtful, culturally constrained and beneath the surface of symbolic and ritual compliance (Scott 1990).

There is an undercurrent of ideological resistance in these passive techniques; beneath the superficial appearance of support for the ruling hierarchy, there is continuous material resistance and negotiation of space. KHRG argues villagers in Burma use similar strategies to cope with the domination of the *tatmadaw*. Furthermore, reports describe tactics such as non-conformity to *tatmadaw* demands, stalling to follow through on orders at a time more convenient, and negotiating lower levels of regime extortion.¹⁹⁰ A report by

<http://www.khrg.org/khrg2008/khrg0803.html>.

190 Village Agency Report: Rural rights and resistance in a militarized Karen State, Karen Human Rights Group, November 2008.

the Karen Women's Organization (KWO) discusses how in lowland Karen areas in Eastern Burma women are increasingly stepping into the role of village chief because male village chiefs are more likely to be killed by the Burma Army. In addition to this strategic use of managing gender norms to increase chances of community survival, KWO reports some women chiefs dare to challenge and complain to Burma Army troops about abuses. In some cases chiefs managed to secure compensation and even the rescinding of unjust orders.¹⁹¹

This research found little evidence of everyday resistance, although this is likely because the research design was not appropriate for examining this concept in depth.¹⁹² One event in the political events database classified as an everyday form of resistance: the head teacher of a middle school in Northern Shan state found letters written on the wall of the school building. These read, "Head teacher who repeatedly collects school entrance fees and uses them for his one good, get out." None of the ordinary citizens interviewed for this research discussed small ways people negotiate demands made by authorities, or the use of gossip or humor to make fun of them. Most mentioned how that was not possible because of the repercussions that would ensue for disobedience.

Institutional political action

191 *Walking Among Sharp Knives: The unsung courage of Karen women village chiefs in conflict areas of Eastern Burma*, Karen Women's Organization, February 2010. Copy in author's possession.

192 Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) is the only human rights watchdog organization in Burma known to document everyday acts of defiance. KHRG recently began collecting this information. Thus, this project could be described as a hypothesis in need of more empirical data to see if this trend exists more widely in Burma. Within the Karen community, KHRG is uniquely situated to do this work. Evidence for everyday forms of resistance can be difficult to collect when the researcher is outside of cultures and shared languages.

In contrast to exit and everyday resistance, an opposition can incrementally press a liberalization agenda by using institutionalized political action. This is done through the application of existing government laws and institutions. In using this technique, activists try to hold a government accountable to its set laws, propaganda and international treaties. Measures are meant to challenge the state, while also attempting to improve immediate life conditions for individuals or groups of citizens. Institutional political action is exemplified by the activities of Chinese peasants described by O'Brien and Li (2006), who protest to receive the protections already enshrined in law.

In hybrid and authoritarian regimes, institutional political techniques challenge state power to expand existing rights. The technique attempts to compel the state to comply with its own rules and regulations regarding human rights, many of which are not enforced. In democratic systems, individuals and corporations use similar methods to ensure the state follows its own laws, and includes court cases, and writing letters to influence elected representatives about government policies.

Discussions of protest often exclude institutional strategies because the action occurs within the institutions and rules of the system. Schock argues "nonviolent action is not composed of regular or institutionalized techniques of political action such as litigation, letter writing, lobbying, voting or the passage of laws" (2005: 7). Others consider institutional channels a component of a changing political opportunity structure, and therefore not protest events. McAdam describes how shifts in federal policy "triggered a growing sense of political efficacy among certain segments of the black community"

193 "Head Teacher -- Out!," *Independence* Vol. 15 (4): August - September 1998, page 38.

(1982: 110), leading to expanding political opportunities for protest. Yet, federal law changes in the United States in the 1930s and Supreme Court rulings defending the rights of African Americans did not occur spontaneously. Claimants risked civil and criminal punishment for using the courts to press claims; the courts, as part of the political system, did not automatically view claimants as rightful petitioners. In contrast, Press (2004) found human rights legal activism a necessary precursor to later large-scale organized protests in Kenya.

Institutional political action, such as letter writing, litigation and lobbying, is a valuable tool to activists opposing authoritarian and hybrid regimes. In authoritarian and hybrid regimes, these acts are risky endeavors particularly because these actions are public in nature. Filing a court case requires the legal team to identify the names of who are filing suit. The SPDC arrests those who lead these activities; the regime makes little distinction between those who use institutions to challenge its rule and individuals who choose other strategies.

The political events dataset includes 93 recorded incidences of institutional forms of protest, initiated by activists in Burma since 1990. This includes legal challenges, signature campaigns and writing letters to convince the regime to change its policies. The requests vary: court cases to annul house arrest rulings and illegal detainment of political leaders, and letters asking the highest levels of authority to intervene to return land and buffalo confiscated by local authorities.

A few illustrative examples show how institutional political action presses a liberalizing agenda by an opposition under authoritarian regimes. Burma has existing laws

prohibiting forced labor, yet the practice is widely continued in rural areas.¹⁹⁴ Daw Su Su Nwe, a labor activist, successfully sued the local authorities for violating its own laws against forced labor. She was subsequently jailed for her anti-regime activities, charged with “abusing and intimidating local officials.”¹⁹⁵ The NLD lost the legal challenge it filed against the government for its failure to uphold the results of the 1990 election in which the NLD was a winning party; the lawyers representing these cases were jailed after losing the cases. The ‘88 Generation Students, a political organization, collected signatures in a petition to complain to the regime about the difficulties of ordinary life. According to this group’s statement, circulated on October 23, 2006, over 535,000 people signed the petition, which was sent to General Than Shwe.¹⁹⁶ Whether he received it is more difficult to ascertain, but the petition received constant media coverage by Burmese language media outlets broadcasting into Burma. Copies were also sent to the office of the United Nations Secretary General.

In addition, people who do not self-identify as political activists implement regime-challenging activities under this category. For example, Citizen Y5 explained her work with a women and child rights organization. She led trainings inside Burma on women’s rights, specifically the tenets of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), of which Myanmar is a signatory nation. While Citizen Y5 did not view her work as political activism, due to the inherent

194 Reckinger, Carole. June 2008. “Burma’s Forced Labor” *The New Statesmen* June 9, 2008. Retrieved from: <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2008/06/forced-labour-burma-work> on September 28, 2010.

195 “United States Condemns Continued Detention of Burma’s Su Su Nwe” *Washington File*. February 3, 2006, accessed online August 5, 2010 at: <http://news.findlaw.com/wash/s/20060203/20060203172058.html>

196 ‘88 Generation Students statement reprinted with English translation in Burma Update 51, 26 October 2006. Circulated by the Political Defiance Committee. Copy in author’s possession.

criticism of the regime in any human rights training , the SPDC does not draw the distinction between her work and that of political activists. CitizenY5 understood this and admitted to taking great care to not be caught leading these trainings inside Burma.

Non-violent political action

Non-violent political action uses strategies and techniques of political opposition outside of the institutions of the political system. This category is strongly associated with non-institutional forms of political action. According to Schock, “nonviolent action refers to specific actions that involve risk and invoke nonviolent pressure or nonviolent coercion in contentious interactions between opposing groups” (2005: 7). Claims pressed using nonviolent action addresses incremental changes, an immediate concern (for example, ‘no price increases’), or broader claims such as for democratic transition. The techniques represent an inherent challenge to the state’s authority and legitimacy by working outside the limited institutional framework. In essence, non-violent action rejects the legitimacy of the state’s institutions and bypasses them accordingly . There are three key methods of non-violent political action: protest and persuasion, non cooperation, and non-violent interventions (Sharp 2005). Opposition groups in Burma purposefully follow Sharp’s philosophy on non-violent political action methods.

Protest and persuasion. Protest and persuasion methods motivate popular discontent and publicly signal non-acceptance of the current situation. According to Sharp, “the use of these methods shows that the resisters are against or in favor of something, the degree of opposition or support, and, sometimes, the number of people involved” (2005: 51). Persuasion tactics include street protests, stickers, posters and leaflets, activities

conducted by activists in Burma. The protest and persuasive message intended by these activities is not always directed at the state. Activities “influence the opponents, the public, the grievance group, or a combination of the three,” writes Sharp (2005: 51).

Fully 92 percent (N=1,789) of events recorded in the database fit the protest and persuasion strategy type.¹⁹⁷ Protest and persuasion activities target state actors in their demands, and many of the events recorded call on the government to change specific policies and, more generally, increase political freedoms leading to a democratic government system.

Noncooperation. Noncooperation, according to Sharp is when “the resisters in a conflict deliberately withdraw some form or degree of existing cooperation with the opponents or the resisters refuse to initiate certain forms of new cooperation” (2005: 54). Noncooperation can suspend social, economic and political relationships. In their work documenting political resistance activities inside Burma, Andrieux, Sarosi and Moser-Puangsuwan explain,

these methods include strikes, boycotts, non-payment of taxes and licenses, walkouts from legislative bodies, and the deliberate violation of particular ordinances or prohibitions that are believed to be morally objectionable

197 This finding initially surprised me, as I expected to find greater range between the Sharp categories. This ‘non-finding’ is likely due to the authoritarian environment. Perhaps in less authoritarian societies and hybrid regimes there would be a greater variance in the challenge strategies used by the opposition. Sharp acknowledges that noncooperation and nonviolent interventions generate a severer response from a government than do protest and persuasion tactics. This is outside the scope of this project, but would be interesting to pursue in the future.

while simultaneously undermining the authority and appearance of legitimacy of the power elite (2005: 17-18).¹⁹⁸

Sharp considers noncooperation more dangerous for individuals to do than protest and persuasion events. This is because the impact “hinges heavily on the number of people participating in the use of these methods and the degree to which the opponents are dependent on the persons and groups that are refusing cooperation” (Sharp 2005: 54). In Burma, very few noncooperation events were recorded in the dataset – only 26 out of 1,939 were classified as noncooperation. These included the *pattaneikuzana* religious boycotts by monks and monastic orders, who refused to accept alms and donations from military authorities and their families. The regime responded to the boycotts by raiding monasteries and forcibly disrobing monks. Strikes and work stoppages are included in this category, although depending on the context, some strikes were included nonviolent interventions.

In April 2010, the National League for Democracy chose noncooperation when it decided against participating in the parliamentary election held in November 2010 by the military government. In choosing noncooperation, the NLD signaled to the country their continued resistance to the military regime by not endorsing its new political institutions; non-participation presents a risk that the regime will outlaw and forcibly disband the party.

Nonviolent interventions. Nonviolent interventions, according to Sharp, are “methods that intervene directly to change a given situation” (2005: 62). They are immediate events that directly call attention to a particular situation or issue. Sit-ins, street theatre, forming a parallel government and the occupation of a work site are all examples of

198 Andriex, Aurelié, Sarosi, Diana, and Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan, 2005. *Speaking Truth to Power: The Methods of Nonviolent Struggle in Burma*. Nonviolence International: available online, pages 17-18.

nonviolent intervention. “Negative interventions may disrupt, and even destroy, established behavior patterns, policies, relationships or institutions. Positive interventions may establish new behavior patterns, policies, relationships or institutions,” writes Sharp (2005: 62).

Because nonviolent intervention tactics are the most direct challenge and an obvious demonstration of dissatisfaction with holders of power, they are riskiest to undertake. These events have the most potential to expose the activist to a repressive counterstrike, and as such, can be more difficult to maintain over time. Of the 1,939 recorded events in the database, 23 were nonviolent intervention events. While this is less than one percent of all events in the database, simply counting nonviolent interventions might not capture the degree of influence they have on those targeted by these activities.

Violent political action. Burma has a long history of armed insurgency against the central government as well as violent expressions of anti-state behavior. Non-violent and armed struggle are not mutually exclusive; in Burma, both types of groups have similar goals, and activists and insurgents recognize the utility of the other’s methods.

As discussed in Chapter 3, armed resistance groups began challenging the government of Burma before independence in 1948. Armed insurgents initially operated in every ethnic state, but many signed ceasefire agreements in the early 1990s with the State Law and Order Restoration Council government. Several continue to fight and maintain ever-decreasing territories in border areas; today most claim to maintain a defensive position necessary to alleviate their populations suffering from the well-documented abuses of the state.

In 1988, following the SLORC coup, thousands of student activists fled to the jungles to join armed resistance struggle. A student army, the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), formed; other students chose to join in the numerous armed struggle groups of various ethnic minorities. The Karen National Union (KNU) significantly assisted ABSDF in its establishment – providing training, weapons, and most importantly, feeding the students. It also initially allowed the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) to remain at its (now-overrun) base at Manerplaw. As Member-Elects of Parliament and other activists fled to the jungle, the armed groups provided safe passage to camps in areas outside the military government's control.

Soldier X29, a student activist in 1988 who became a founding member of the All Burma Students Defense Force (ABSDF) explained, “[in 1988] we demanded democracy very peacefully, we don't have any arms, but the response from the junta is bullets. So I think we need to hold arms.” Half of the soldiers (N=15) interviewed thought non-violent political action had no chance of success against the SPDC; many soldiers stated the SPDC military government only had respect for those who held arms.

Armed resistance groups are not the only ones utilizing violence to press their claims against the state. Food riots occurred in Rangoon in 1967; students rioted during Rangoon's hosting of the Southeast Asian Games in 1969.¹⁹⁹ Violence against the state and its representatives was caused by activists and citizens in 1988 and 2007. In 1988, people retaliated against agents of the regime, killing and beating people thought to be military

199 *Burma Chronology of Events 1962 - 1989*, booklet by the Asian Human Rights Commission, n.d.

intelligence (Lintner 1990). Political Activist Z29, a staunch believer in non-violence, did not fight back when he was attacked by regime-sponsored thugs during what became known as the 2003 Depayin massacre. However, he saw a utility in other members of the opposition using violence against property. He explained how during the 2007 monks protests, “after the Pakokku crackdown, [after] monks were beaten, the activists destroyed the supermarket grocery shops, and the local office of the USDA. The USDA senior people were really afraid.”

Burmese activists used political violence to call attention to the government’s human rights abuses. In October 1989, two young activists sneaked into Burma from Thailand and hijacked a Burmese airliner on a scheduled flight from Mergui to Rangoon; the hijackers forced a landing at a Thailand military air base. The incident ended without bloodshed as the hijackers freed all 83 passengers after a nine-hour standoff. A year later, two young Burmese, pretending a bar of soap was a weapon, hijacked a Thai Airways international jet on a scheduled flight from Bangkok to Rangoon, forcing it to land in Calcutta. Passengers and crew were unharmed. The *Irrawaddy* reports “in both incidents, the hijackers received sympathetic media attention and were hailed as heroes, in Burma and abroad.”²⁰⁰

Selection of non-violent methods does not preclude later use of violent methods. A handful of monks from the September 2007 protests joined the ABSDF. Many of the

200 Aung Zaw, “Junta Climbs Aboard the ‘Anti-Terror’ Bandwagon,” *The Irrawaddy*, November 14: 11, 2006.

students who launched ABSDF in 1988 eventually left to form new opposition organizations to promote democracy using non-violent methods.

The Imperative of Opposition Survival

The PEA indicates that the political opposition in Burma relies heavily on protest and persuasion activities, at least if we are to believe that the shares of activities they report are at least somewhat reflective of reality; this evident reliance may in part result from the limited opportunities available to challenge an authoritarian regime. The political repression and social control methods used by Burma's military junta is meant to create a compliant public, after all, and a compliant public would rarely express dissatisfaction with the status quo. The regime purposefully circumscribes the number and kind of events activists can successfully implement.

A perspective that entirely focuses on challenging the regime however, ignores that the Burmese regime is not the only target recipient of political action. This dissertation also argues that resistance includes actions that help an opposition survive state repression and transcend problems associated with social compliance. To survive the opposition must navigate the constraints to organizing imposed by the regime's social control mechanisms. A singular focus on challenge can lead to arrest, imprisonment, torture or exile. Many individuals accept this fate, perhaps willingly so, as the cost of pressing for claims in which they believe. However, others recognize the strategic importance of remaining free to continue to press claims and challenge the state. It is not enough for an opposition only to challenge the regime. Successful resistance requires balancing both imperatives.

International relations scholars have long assumed states desire survival (Waltz 1979). There is no challenge out of obliteration, a concept clearly found in the repression and social control policies implemented by the Burmese military government. An opposition must also pursue the imperative of survival if it is going to be able to be successful in their challenge of the state. Certain organizations may rise and fall, some go underground when declared illegal, and others disappear to be replaced by new organizations of resistance. Nevertheless, an opposition remains to challenge the regime, despite the constraints of authoritarianism.

Survival activities, in contrast to challenge activities, are less public and target a different primary audience. The audience is members of the public, supporters of the regime, or members of the opposition. They serve alternative purposes than confrontation and enable the opposition to shore itself up vis-à-vis its more powerful opponent. Survival activities ensure the opposition can return to fight another day by providing information to onlookers and opposition members. Challenge and survival imperatives are not mutually exclusive, and some activities serve both the challenge and survival imperatives; context of the activity matters. A political speech in front of Rangoon's city hall, for example, has a different audience than a speech at a political party office. Both activities are illegal, are political in nature and serve different imperatives by activists.

The challenge and survival imperatives provide a useful analytical framework to understand how opposition movements survive over time, as well as the relationship between opposition activities and opposition durability under authoritarianism.

The political activities in the PEA suggest survival of the opposition in Burma; survival was also a prevalent theme emanating from the interviews with activists, soldiers

and citizens. Individuals often discussed their efforts to ensure their personal safety and survival despite the risks they took opposing the regime . These accounts show how individual action buttresses the survival of the collective opposition.

Some interviewees considered survival or the chance to fight another day, a success in and of itself. One interviewee, a KNDO battalion commander , said “[our] only success is we haven’t disappeared, like the [Tamil] Tigers in Sri Lanka. We stand [up] and defend the people.”²⁰¹ Armed groups pointed to the necessity of approaching negotiations with the SPDC from a position of military strength. Soldier X15 said, “when you are going to talk with SPDC, the top leader you need to have a gun.” Otherwise, the SPDC will not speak with you.

Nonviolent activists interviewed also suggested their ability to conduct small activities is a success under authoritarian conditions. Their activities allow them to counter claims made by the SPDC that they were ruling the country with support of the population. It communicates dissatisfaction. While not reaching their ultimate goal of transition, activities that irritated the government were in of themselves viewed as a useful enterprise. Doing so was exhilarating for political activist Z18, who enjoyed the adventure of doing political activities. Others disliked the work of being an activist, but felt these oppositional activities were necessary to do.

Survival was evident from the interviews with activists, many of whom discussed the measures they take to ensure their personal survival. Individuals who oppose the state

201 The interviewee refers to the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE), an ethnic armed resistance in Sri Lanka fighting for independence. After controlling a significant amount of territory in northern Sri Lanka for more than 20 years, and approximately a year prior to this interview, the LTTE was defeated by the Sri Lankan government military forces.

believe they can do it without being caught by the authorities, and take precautions to remain safe. Political activist Z31 gave the advice, “do much, don’t talk much.” Others had different advice: if they carry a computer, they make sure anything serious is erased or don’t travel with documents (political activist’s Z13 and Z4); use back streets to avoid the authorities (Z16); don’t talk to strangers about politics (Z5 and Z19); don’t let fellow activists know where they live (Z20); and limit meetings to five minutes (Z17).

The challenge and survival imperatives do not suggest there are no consequences for individuals who implement survival political activities. The framework calls attention to the multiple utilities of political activities, and insists that scholars in the future consider the wide variety and purpose of activities. The SPDC responds to these events a challenge from many of these activities. Similar to the regime’s inability or unwillingness to differentiate between reform and revolution activities, noted earlier in this chapter, survival activities carry similar punishments as challenge activities, including arrest and harassment.

The twin imperatives of challenge and survival are evident in the political activities conducted by Burma’s opposition. Returning to the political event analysis, 78 percent of the 1,939 political events in Burma from 1990 – 2008 reported by the organizations contacted in this study served the opposition’s survival imperative because they served to communicate amongst the opposition and to the public; events do not always serve to directly challenge the military regime. These are activities that while risky for an individual to undertake, served the imperative of oppositional survival. Small-scale activities are critical to the survival of an opposition in authoritarian contexts.

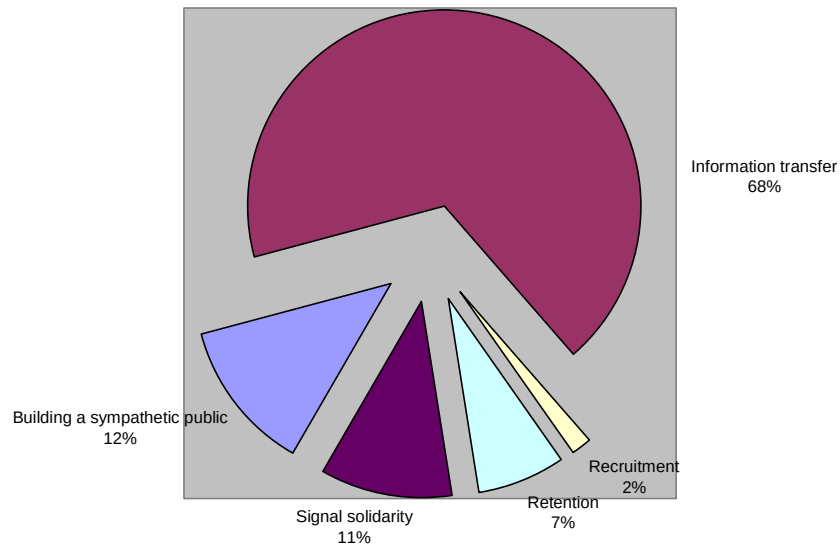
Continuance of opposition over time is possible due to the small-scale activities pursued by an opposition movement between and (sometimes during) large protests. The

large number of protest and persuasion activities in Burma makes more sense when considered from the perspective of the element of survival. Many of the activities presented above serve multiple purposes: not only do they challenge the regime, they support an opposition's imperative to survive the conditions imposed by the regime. Political activities signal in-group solidarity, transfer information to other facets of a political movement and provide rewards that help motivate long-term participation. Political activities help ensure the political movement continues despite the regime constraints.

Activities do not hard and fast fall into these elements of survival; some, such as the signature campaign, serve multiple purposes across the various elements. For example, the collected 500,000 signatures of Burmese citizens petitioning for the release of political prisoners, settlement of hardships in the country, and initiation of dialogue for national reconciliation was a direct challenge to the regime.²⁰² Yet, the process of collecting signatures helps build a sympathetic public because these groups are listening and addressing issues of importance to citizens, and transfers information to individuals about the similarity regime excesses across the country. As the petition was sent to the United Nations General Secretary, it also serves as information transfer to an international audience. Events are also related; surrounding the signature campaign were the numerous statements of solidarity by opposition groups, and statements informed people in the country about this activity, reaching more people than those who saw and signed the petition.

²⁰² The 'signature campaign,' as it was called, completed in October 2006. *Political Defiance Committee October - December 2006 Narrative Report*; not published, January 2007. Copy in author's possession.

Figure 3: Elements of survival



Signaling solidarity

Political activities allow opposition organizations to communicate their mutual agreement on issues and support of one another's efforts. Kramer notes "Burma is a divided society... People and communities are divided over policy, religion, ethnicity, language and education, regionalism, and economic disparity."²⁰³ For an opposition to coalesce despite differences, it must communicate. Eleven percent (N=170) of the events listed in the PEA signal solidarity to others in the opposition.

In lieu of opportunities to meet publicly, dialogue with regime members, or meet with imprisoned political leaders, some political activities provide needed communication

²⁰³ Kramer, Tom. July 2009. *Neither War Nor Peace: The future of the ceasefire agreements in Burma*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Transnational Institute report. Page 7. Retrieved November 13, 2009 at <http://www.tni.org/sites/tniclone.test.koumbit.net/files/download/ceasefire.pdf>.

about values and policy positions. Notably statements issued and political ceremonies, allow political organizations to publically state their positions, respond to the positions of other organizations and communicate values. The use of institutional forms of resistance, such as court cases and petitions, also signal the values groups have. Groups that use the legal system emphasize the value they place on these institutions – signaling their support of similar institutions in the future. Likewise, pro-democracy groups attempt, even under limited conditions of authoritarianism, to engage in activities such as party congresses; this signals to other actors how an organization would rule if it came into power. The arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in 2003 occurred when she and NLD members were traveling to Burman and ethnic regions of Burma and meeting with leaders. Her show of uniting the political struggle with the ethnic struggle, as well as her ability to mobilize large number of people in Burman and ethnic areas, was a challenge to the regime's authority. This activity also improved the visibility of the party in these areas and indirectly communicated a policy of inclusion.

Statements issued jointly by organizations also serve to signal to the public about network connections within the opposition. For example, the Monks United Front and '88 Generation Students issued the joint statement on September 25, 2010, which called for socio-economic well being of citizens, release of all political prisoners and national reconciliation. Monks and students mobilized to set up strike camps near the Sule Pagoda and public speeches were given by monks, students and NLD Members of Parliament.²⁰⁴

204 *Political Defiance Committee July - September 2007*

Narrative Report published, October 2007.

Anti-junta organizations in Burma have different ends and goals and membership bases; organizations imperfectly represent different constituencies. The SPDC makes it extremely difficult for various organizations to resolve differences in positions. In lieu of this, social movement organizations utilize activities, particularly political ceremonies and statements, to communicate symbolically and substantively with each other. These activities build solidarity within the opposition.

Building a sympathetic public

Political activists frequently distribute materials and information inside Burma. In doing so, the opposition provides alternative sources of information to counter the regime's media hegemony. Burma's government uses the media to stigmatize and ridicule the opposition; the opposition has to wage a similar war countering the regime's claims.

Many ordinary citizens interviewed said that if more people knew about human rights and democracy, they would be willing to oppose the SPDC. Many ordinary citizens interviewed felt they did not have enough education to participate in politics in Burma. This perception that 'politics requires education' appears reasonable considering one third of the political activists interviewed became politically active after receiving education and/or training that gave them an alternative political discourse about the current situation inside Burma. The interviewees who knew something about the political struggle were generally supportive of the political struggle against the military regime. Eighteen, nearly half, of the ordinary citizens interviewed stated they hoped for/ maybe democracy would come to Burma in their lifetime. Citizen Y16 explained he "hoped for Burma to get the democracy. I don't know if we'll get it but I hope to get democracy in Burma." The regime

blocks unsanctioned sources information regarding alternative forms of government, and the opposition movement helps introduce new ideas to people.

So while a public may be sympathetic to regime change, they need information that counteracts the regime's narrative about the evils of the opposition. Many of the religious expressions of political beliefs fall under this element. For those who witness the persecution of activists at a temple, it can create greater sympathy for the opposition movement. Some even intervene to try to stop the regime's harassment, as when:

The weekly prayer service held every Tuesday at the southeast corner of Shwe Dagon Pagoda for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and political prisoners. Though it is a regularly held prayer service, pagoda trustees, pagoda police and special police numbering about 200 obstructed it on this day. They made loud noises while the prayers were being performed. Because the people were forbidden to pray on the pagoda, they have to do it at the base of ascent to the pagoda. Nevertheless, they were still pestered so that even ordinary pilgrims were upset seeing authorities of a Buddhist country harassing praying [Buddhists]. Unable to withstand the scene of mistreatment, ordinary pilgrims intervened to speak out against the authorities.²⁰⁵

Twenty of the ordinary citizens, or just over half interviewed, expressed a positive attitude about the efforts of the political groups against the SPDC inside Burma; none interviewed expressed a negative opinion about the groups. "I think the non-violent groups

205 *Political Defiance Committee October - December 2006 Narrative Report* published, January 2007.

also for the freedom, and it's good also," said Citizen Y13, a Karen woman living in an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camp in Burma near the Thailand border.

Stickers serve as a reminder that alternative institutions used to exist in Burma, or tell individuals how to vote, as was the case in the 2008 referendum stickers urging people to "Vote No." To survive under authoritarianism, an opposition uses political events to cultivate a public sympathetic to their cause.

A few interviewees felt that the presence of the political groups provided a barrier of protection between them and the SPDC. Citizens Y10 - 4, laborers who fled to Thailand, said:

After the Saffron Revolution, these political groups were subject to a systematic crackdown by local authorities ... without them, the authorities have a greater chance to commit human rights violations against people.

Information transfer

The SPDC's control over information means in order for the movement to survive, it must engage in activities that fill the information void. Political activists frequently distribute materials and information inside Burma. Activities such as distribution of information and materials such as posters and pamphlets provide the movement and the public information regarding policy positions and suggest courses of action. Information transfer also occurs from inside Burma to the international community – for example, in Karen state, an April 2008 event in the PEA refers to "collection of information on the movements and activities of local referendum commissions." The National League for Democracy/Liberated Areas, an organization based in Thailand, subsequently published an

election monitoring report. Information transfer activities take time away from challenging the regime, but doing so provides alternative information to counter the regime's media hegemony.

Burmese-language media outlets based outside of Burma, such as the BBC and Voice of America, broadcast to audiences inside the country, but their coverage emphasizes current events. Current event reporting, while important, is fundamentally different from rallying people to continue to support the political opposition and oppose the military regime. In addition, materials distributed counter the regime's rewriting of history texts by providing information that is historical in nature – such as more accurate histories of the student movement, Japanese fascism and existing national laws regarding land confiscation and human rights. News media does not always address the historical record. Initially published in the news media before censors noticed that the first letter of each line spelled out 'power-hungry Than Shwe,' students later distributed copies of poet Ko Saw Wai's 'February 14' poem today at East Rangoon University (Tawa, Syriam) and other schools.²⁰⁶ Statements criticize the regime, but also share history or other facts about the nation that is no longer part of the public discourse. These serve the purpose of correcting the historical misinformation spread by the regime.

Underground and aboveground book clubs have been popular with political activists since the colonial era. Book clubs help students remain in contact with their university, and identify potential new activists. During the anti-colonial movement of the 1930s, Taylor writes, "in Rangoon, students had access to various forms of leftist literature,

²⁰⁶ *Political Defiance Committee January - March 2008 Narrative Report* published, April 2008.

especially tracts on imperialism... This literature, more than the students' formal study of European history and law in the University, provided them with a theory to explain their country's and their class's historical dilemma" (Taylor 2009: 204). Today, underground book clubs continue to be a source of alternative information for people and political activists.

Recruitment

Activities to build sympathy in the public can also help mobilize new activists to join the opposition. Political Activist Z24 began her political activities by wearing white clothing – a campaign to express solidarity with the political opposition. She decided to wear white clothing after hearing an announcement of the campaign on the radio. Persuaded by the '88 Generation Students to perform this act of solidarity, this was Z24's entry point to the political movement.

Burma's political organizations have different organizational needs that impact which methods of resistance they select. Universities are highly monitored and the regime has taken steps to isolate students from one another. However, as individual people, students are relatively unknown to the regime because they do not have a known history of personal activism. This allows students to undertake activities – such as distributing materials and information – that other groups cannot do safely.

Student organizations are limited by a membership that is transient and limited to a set number of years each member attends school. Their organizations would need to be constantly consciousness-raising potential recruits to ensure resistance activities carry on after the current members graduate. Jasper (1997) suggested that movements seek to prime

individuals before recruiting them, and student distribution of materials serve to educate junior students about political alternatives. In the process, student activists assess who in their midst could be safely recruited to continue these activities after they graduate. To keep personal identities hidden, individual students cannot implement political activities of a more public nature, such as political ceremonies or religious expressions of political beliefs. As a result, the group solidarity is less, and groups wither following graduation. Universities may have a strong history of political activism, but without the benefit of the other forms of protest to communicate solidarity to its own members and to other organizations, students' do not become long-term political activists. In contrast, students rarely led religious displays of political beliefs or undertook legal action. It is logical that current students do not have the tools or resources to do legal action.

In contrast, distribution of materials plays a smaller role for the more established groups; these groups typically do not recruit new members and instead focus on maintaining a membership based on retaining the individuals who joined at the inception of the organization. This is particularly true of the political party organizations, whose membership was set during the 1990 elections. It is too dangerous to the organizations to use distribution of information and materials as recruiting tools – this could lead to accidental enlisting of *agents saboteurs* into their ranks (Cunningham 2004). According to Fink, “a number of activists have had the painful experience of finding out that people they once trusted or closely associated with were in fact reporting on them behind their backs” (2009: 139). Because they are more organizationally bound than other informal forms of resistance, political party groups face greater consequences than the more transient student

political organizations if regime-allies join their ranks. Recruitment and retention are further discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an illustration of how the opposition in Burma challenges the government in contemporary Burma. Resistance in Burma challenges the state, but also serves the imperative of oppositional survival. Despite the efforts by the SPDC to eliminate Burma's opposition, protest continues in Burma. Political activities in Burma follow a continuum: although most events are concentrated in the category of protest and persuasion, one of Sharp's primary strategies of protest. Political activities serve the challenge and survival imperatives of an opposition.

Protest and persuasion activities target state actors in their demands, and many of the recorded events call on the government to change specific policies and, more generally, to increase political freedoms leading to a democratic government system. Protest and persuasion activities encourage the public to join the political movement in some activities. Statements call on citizens to demonstrate against the regime, to wear white, to 'never forget' the regime's brutality in 1988, and to 'Vote No' in constitutional referendum. There is a similarity of political events across time and space, despite the authorities' use of political repression and methods of social compliance.

Political events challenge the state, but also have a secondary utility in Burma. Protective acts by individuals and groups help an opposition survive by signaling in-group solidarity, building a sympathetic public, transfer information to other facets of a political movement and provide rewards that help motivate long-term participation. These protective

acts, often undertaken by individuals or small groups, provide a collective benefit by preserving the movement. Political activities help ensure the political opposition survives despite the regime constraints. The following chapter continues this discussion by more thoroughly examining how the survival imperative affects recruitment and retention.

Chapter 6: Recruitment and Retention

My life is along the lip of a prison.

Z30, Political Activist

Introduction

Burma's successive ruling military regimes have expanded control over the country, but have failed to eliminate non-violent and violent opposition to its rule. Entrenched military rule is not a surprise in Burma; it is puzzling how an opposition continues *despite* political repression and authoritarian institutions of social control. The previous chapter introduced the opposition's imperative for survival under authoritarianism. This chapter continues the discussion of how the survival imperative affects recruitment and retention of opposition members. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, most research on motivation has sought to demonstrate the myriad rational reasons individuals choose to participate despite the potential to free ride. But Lichbach (1994) remarked that "with over 24 solutions to the free rider problem, it doesn't appear to be much of a problem at all." This research concurs with that sentiment, but suggests the real question is how individuals and organizations overcome political repression and social control constraints. Not well understood is how an opposition is able to survive its challenge of the regime.

Citizens of Burma do not support the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Burma's ruling military regime,²⁰⁷ and overall express support for the opposition.

Instead of free riding being a problem, regime constraints are the biggest hindrance to citizen participation in resistance and opposition. Opposition under authoritarianism requires a survival imperative that affects how the opposition operates.

Overwhelmingly, individuals interviewed for this research said they did not support or approve of the SPDC government. This is an expected finding for the resistance soldiers and the political activists. Ordinary citizens – including students, refugees and migrants living outside of Burma – were more subdued and less specific in their criticism of the SPDC than the other groups. Ordinary citizens, resistance soldiers and political activists have negative attitudes regarding the government and positive attitudes regarding the political and armed opposition. Ordinary citizens explain their non-participation in anti-state activities in Burma to lack of personal connections to armed and/or political resistance organizations, fear of the regime, and citizens need to focus personal resources on survival. Many of the ordinary citizens interviewed lamented their inability to be part of the resistance due to these reasons.

Attitudes about the SPDC and the Opposition

Interviews with ordinary citizens pointed to widespread dislike of the SPDC. Only one of the interviewees, Citizen Y19, said he supported the SPDC government in Burma, and even his endorsement was qualified. Citizens in Burma see the government as a

²⁰⁷ Interviews took place between August 2009 and March 2010, so this chapter refers to the SPDC, as that is what the interviewees were referring to at the time of interview.

nuisance or worse, an impediment to their personal survival. Citizen Y37, a migrant worker from Mon state explained,

the SPDC only gives orders, and what they order is only their interest... not [what] people agree to. They do not allow people to do what we want to do; even if we develop the village, when the SPDC visits they destroy it all.

Not only do citizens dislike the regime, they are hoping for political change in the country. Eighteen, nearly half, of the ordinary citizens interviewed stated they hoped Burma would democratize in their lifetime. Hope for democratic transition is a different attitude than the expectation of democratic transition and only three ordinary citizens interviewed were optimistic transition to democracy would occur in their lifetime. Most ordinary citizens interviewed were positive about the efforts of the armed and non-violent resistance and expressed desires for freedom and/or democracy. Said Citizen Y10, a prisoner and forced porter of the SPDC who escaped to the territory of the Karen National Union (KNU), “whether it is by the armed way or political way, they [the people] will accept it. The only thing people want is freedom.”

Many people interviewed were unfamiliar with the existence of political opposition in Burma. There are several explanations for this lack of awareness. A greater proportion of the interviewees came from rural areas of the country, where protest may not occur nearly as often. The PEA recorded the pattern that a greater number of contemporary political activities occur in urban areas of the country.²⁰⁸ The historical record of protest in Chapter

²⁰⁸ Concerns about the PEA underreporting, discussed in Chapter 1, might also contribute to an appearance of few small-scale protest activities in rural areas.

3 points to mass protest as an urban phenomenon in Burma, despite the greater presence of government authorities.

Despite not being familiar with non-violent opposition, interviewees were more familiar with armed resistance in their native areas. This is logical considering the division of labor within Burma's opposition. According to Beer, in 1991, non-violent activities, led by the NLD, planned to concentrate their efforts in the cities, while "the armed resistance component was to protect the ethnic peoples and activists from Burma military attacks" (Beer 1999: 179). This known division of resistance lends credence to the PEA finding significant more activities in the cities. However, as armed resistance organizations lose territory and the political and economic issues underpinning conflict remain unresolved, non-violent action might increase in the rural ethnic areas.

Of the interviewees who knew something about the political struggle, however, they were generally supportive of the political struggle against the military regime. Twenty of the ordinary citizens, just over one-half of the interviewees, expressed a positive attitude about the efforts of the political groups against the SPDC inside Burma; none interviewed expressed a negative opinion about the groups.

A few interviewees felt that the presence of the political groups provided a barrier of protection between them and the SPDC. A group of laborers, who fled to Thailand, said:

After the Saffron Revolution, these political groups were subject to a systematic crackdown by local authorities ... without them, the authorities now have a greater chance to commit human rights violations against people (Citizen interviews Y0 – 4).

Considering the work of the human rights groups addressing land confiscation issues, it is understandable interviewees felt that the political resistance could provide some protection against over-eager local authorities. It is not a surprise that citizens would support political opposition, especially if they received an immediate benefit for their presence. Only five ordinary citizen interviewees expressed no interest in the political and armed struggles against the regime,²⁰⁹ and three individuals said they did not join because the resistance had no chance of success.²¹⁰

While the interviewees were generally supportive of the political struggle, several people were of the opinion that non-violent methods would not bring change to Burma. “Some people struggle in the non-violent way but all are in jail. If the Karen do not have weapons... the SPDC will crackdown on them [like they do the non-violent groups]. The resistance army, and the weapons, is important,” explained Citizen Y7, a Karen refugee. More ordinary citizens were aware of the armed resistance (62 percent, N=25) than were aware of the political struggle (50 percent, N=20). But unlike the overall support found for political struggle, ordinary citizens had mixed opinions about the armed resistance. Fewer ordinary citizens were supportive of the armed resistance groups; only 35 percent (N=14) of those interviewed were positive about their efforts, and 23 percent (N=9) of ordinary citizens offered negative opinions about the armed groups.

Those who expressed support for the armed resistance cited two reasons. Many supported their local armed group because they supported gaining independence for their ethnic state. Due to the variance in platforms between the different armed organizations, it

209 Interviews Y7, Y8, Y24, Y31, Y39.

makes sense that interviewees spoke of their support for different goals too, such as democracy, independence, freedom and federal autonomy. Secondly, interviewees spoke of the inability of people to protect themselves from the brutalities of Burma's military government and army. The armed resistance provides protection, a public good that is highly valued by ordinary citizens. Said Citizen Y17 of the situation, "I think the people can't respond against the [SPDC] government; the public cannot respond to the government but the armed resistance can respond to the government."

The 'liberated areas' of Burma are growing smaller to be almost non-existent, so very few villages live under their control. The amount of protection provided by the resistance armies has steadily declined in the past 20 years. Despite the reduced physical territory under their control, the armed resistance affiliated organizations, such as youth and women's wings, provide some services. For example, resistance groups provide teachers in underserved areas, bring backpack medical workers to people in need of emergency and routine services (often following an attack by the SPDC on a village), and provide rice and salt to residents of the IDP camps.²¹¹ It is very likely these services play a large part of the support enjoyed by the armed groups. This is how they build the support of a

210 Interviews Y21, Y23, Y7.

211 The armed resistance organizations obtain these resources from several sources. When the liberated areas were larger, they were able to raise capital from black market trade of natural resources (timber and gems) with neighboring countries. As the scenario changed, and the refugee population grew on the Thailand-Burma border, NGOs and church organization have become a supplier of goods to populations in Burma. To get their goods to the populations inside, some wittingly, others unwittingly, resort to assistance from the armed resistance groups.

sympathetic public. It also suggests that if the non-violent groups were able to provide similar services, they might have increasing levels of support.²¹²

Why Not Resist?

The logic of collective action argues citizens do not join opposition movements because they prefer to free ride on the efforts of others (Olson 1965). Yet scholars find that people participate because they see themselves as effective, have a moral obligation to participate, and view unity in opposition as a key element to success (Finkel, Muller, Opp 1989). The repression and social control measures prevent citizens in Burma from joining the political and/or armed opposition. Despite the overwhelming dislike of the military government and general support of armed and/or political resistance groups, three primary reasons explain why ordinary citizens do not join the resistance. Interviews highlight ordinary citizens have little information about the organizations opposing the SPDC; they fear the consequences and punishment from the SPDC; and citizens are too busy working for their livelihood to participate in political activities. Many also felt an education was necessary to participate in non-violent action.

These reasons for non-participation stem from the SPDC government's purposeful implementation of social control institutions designed to keep the population subservient. Ordinary citizen Y16, a migrant worker summarizes this view, stating, "the people have to work because of the poor economy. Also they lack of knowledge about the movement or

²¹² Not all armed groups are beneficial to the local population, however. None of the interviewees expressed a negative opinion, but the positive feelings cannot be universal. Armed groups, like the ~~the~~ *adaw*, demand civilians provided porters, food, recruits and taxes.

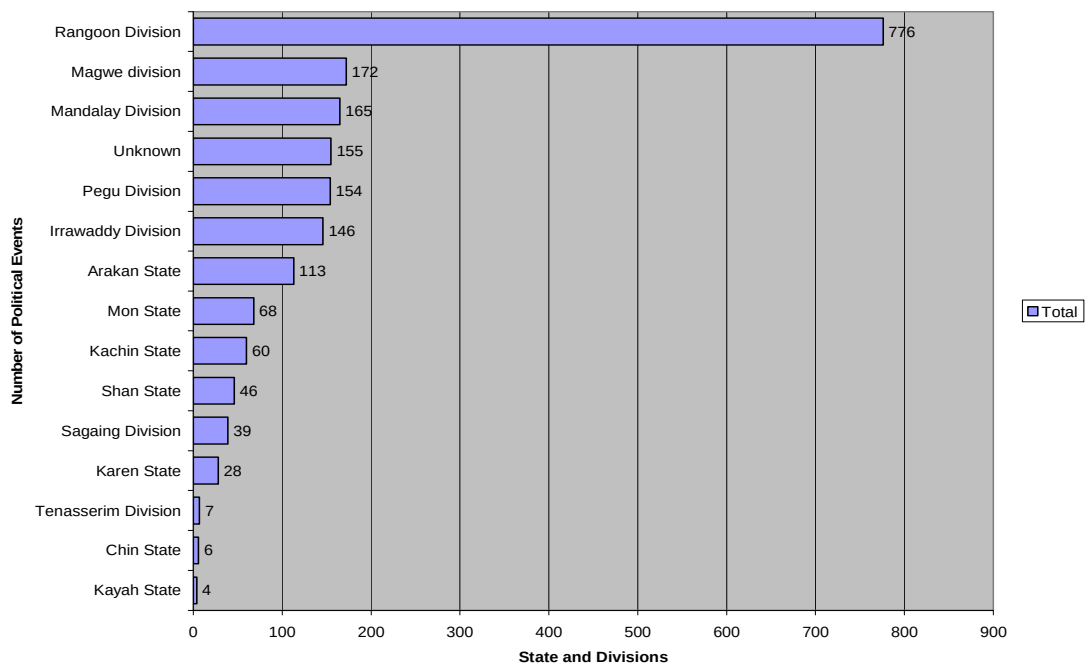
democracy, but they don't like the government, for sure." If more people did not have to work, or knew more about the opposition, they might resist the regime too.

Lack of information about the political resistance

By far, ordinary citizens interviewed did not know about political organizing or resistance groups operating in Burma. When pressed, they did not know that any kind of resistance was occurring, or thought that political opposition only occurred in the big cities of Rangoon and Mandalay. Almost half (N=17) of the 39 ordinary citizens interviewed did not know about the political organizing groups, although as shown in the previous chapter, information distribution is a primary activity of the opposition. Furthermore, political activities of varying magnitude occur across the country. Protest events occurred in every state and division in Burma, but are highly concentrated in cities and urban areas. In Rangoon, 40 percent (N=776) of the recorded events occurred, but this was not immediately followed by Mandalay, the second largest city in Burma. Instead, events in Magwe (N=172) outnumber those in Mandalay (N=165). Figure 4 illustrates the number of political events per state and division. Only a couple of ordinary citizens said they witnessed political events inside Burma.²¹³

213 Is it possible people were feigning ignorance? While a possibility, it did not appear so. Questions were asked in a multitude of ways to come at the issue from different angles and the answers by each individual were consistent about lack of knowledge. The rural nature of the country makes lack of access to information likely. Another possibility, discussed in Chapter 5, is that acts of resistance they do are so small (and survival-oriented) that interviewees do not consider it resistance.

Figure 4: Political events by state and division 1990 – 2008, reported by organizations contacted in this study



Several ordinary citizens felt they did not have the education necessary for political engagement. Citizen Y31 mentioned she would discuss with her university friends about why the government was bad, but only “a little bit, because we do not know about human rights or the women’s rights. We only know the government is not good.”²¹⁴ Citizen Y37, a migrant worker in Bangkok’s fish packing industry, spoke of his interest in joining armed struggle instead of non-violent groups; even though he preferred non-violent methods, he felt he was not educated enough to undertake non-violent action. He explained,

²¹⁴ After coming to the Thailand-Burma border areas, some individuals receive training by INGOs and NGOs on these concepts; while this provides a vocabulary with which interviewees could confidently discuss (and accurately point to issues inside the country), this may unintentionally reinforce the idea that ‘doing politics’ is only for the educated.

To use non-violent methods [you] need knowledge, an education. You need a brain and for me the chance passed already. I cannot get an education, knowledge, so I cannot do. I cannot choose non-violence, so I need to choose violence.

Others believed if people were introduced to the ideas of democracy, they would be more likely to mobilize against the SPDC. This is in part to counter the regime's definitions of democracy, and its argument that democracy is culturally inappropriate for Burma. Citizen Y17 believed that "the people they need to know what is really democracy. They also need to know about their rights, and after they know their rights they will be against [the government], they will join the movement."

To determine if interviewees had exposure to political ideas in their home, they were asked if "their parents were interested in politics." Twelve of the ordinary citizens interviewed stated they thought their parents, typically their father, were interested in politics. Most attributed political interest to seeing their parents listen to the news on the radio. Citizen Y17 said "they used to listen to the radio, they interested in politics. But they don't teach their children to do politics." A few said their parents participated in the 1988 nation-wide movement prior to the SLORC coup. For the 38 percent (N=15) of ordinary citizens who did not think their parents were interested in politics, when asked 'why not' or 'how do you know,' most stated that their families were just simple farmers, indicating they believed their parents did not have the necessary education to follow politics.

Fear Consequences of Organizing

“The people don’t dare talk because they are afraid to be arrested,” said Citizen Y23, who continued to say, “after they are arrested, they will be beaten, they will be tortured. That’s why the people don’t dare to complain.” One-third of the ordinary citizens (N=14) mentioned that trouble would come from the SPDC government for organizing politically or just standing up to the demands of local authorities. As discussed in Chapter 3, the authorities attempt to eliminate the opposition by brutally repressing known political activists. Fear extends to hinting at oppositional behavior, according to Citizen Y29, who gave the example that “if you have some problem with the officer, even though you are right, if you speak up to them you’ll be in trouble, that’s for sure. I know not to say something.” She continued to say that people are also not only afraid of jail, but of the physical violence. Fink (2009 and 2001) documents the widespread fear that keeps the Burmese population from standing up against the government; these interviews confirm her findings.

Half of the ordinary citizens (N=20) interviewed had borne witness to, or personally experienced some kind of repressive action from the military authorities. Citizen Y13 chose to live in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in 2006 after the Burmese army burned down her village and planted landmines. This wasn’t the first or even the second time her village had been destroyed by the *tatmadaw*, but the landmines left this time meant that when “the villagers go back to look for their property, or food, they step on landmines and lose their legs.” She was not willing to risk returning home, and led by Karen National Union guides, walked for 12 days to get to an IDP camp on the Burma-

Thailand border.²¹⁵ Citizen Y11, an orphan from Chin state who deserted the *tatmadaw*, said people were unwilling to resist because “they dare not, most of them dare not resist the SPDC because they have weapons. They rule the country in the junta way.”

Busy Barely Surviving

The third prevalent reason given by ordinary citizens for not joining the opposition is they are too busy surviving. Some of the interviewees considered activism and resistance full-time activities. While discussing the lack of people doing political resistance, Citizen Y31, a university-educated refugee from Kayah state said about her countrymen ... “they work for food, they do not have the time to think about democracy or politics. They worry about food. [They think], today, what can I eat?” Another young woman, Citizen Y21, said her parents are not interested in politics because “they have to work for their daily life.” Others felt regime-mandated activities kept citizens too busy to organize politically. According to one migrant worker,

In my village, some people have to work for the quarter authority, and some people have to work in restaurants or USDA. Some women have to join the women’s association in Myanmar, and the youth and old women have to join the Mothers and Child Welfare association. Also, the villagers have to join the village defense force. Maybe one villager in ten is left; it’s too few people to make a demonstration (Interview with Citizen Y23).

²¹⁵ The guides were likely Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), but the interviewee referred to the guides as from the Karen National Union.

Many interviewees were of the opinion that the declining economy and forced labor policies of the SPDC, outlined in Chapter 4, purposefully kept villagers from being able to afford joining the opposition. Even if people are willing to take the risks associated with activism, setting aside resources to do so is problematic for ordinary citizens in Burma.

Overcoming Constraints to Resistance

Ordinary citizens, even those supportive of political and armed resistance, lacked information about the movement, feared the consequences of joining the opposition and did not have enough personal time to become involved. When asked why ordinary citizens did not join the political movement against the regime, most political activists thoughtfully explained citizens were afraid of the threats made by the regime and citizens needed to work for their survival. Activist Z6 explained,

They are afraid of the ruling government. Maybe they are not worried about themselves but they have to worry about their family... They don't want to be involved in politics because their parents or church will get into trouble from the authorities. Also, they think about their family poverty.

This concurs with the reasons citizens gave for their non-participation. Soldiers and activists faced similar constraints to participation, yet were able to overcome these issues in several ways.

Information about resistance options

Access to information resources, such as training on human rights and comparative political education, also served an important means in which people became interested in

joining the political struggle against the SPDC. A number of ordinary citizens mentioned not having the education to participate in politics in Burma. This perception that ‘politics requires education’ appears reasonable considering one third of the political activists interviewed became politically active *after* receiving education and/or training that taught them about the current situation inside Burma. Six of these twelve were ordinary citizens attending schools and trainings outside of Burma (mostly Thailand) who when they returned to Burma engaged in political work.

Universally, activists who received political education outside of Burma attributed their activism to gaining a new perspective and discourse in which to analyze the situation. Activist Z9’s brother was working in Thailand as an editor of a Mon-language newspaper; he convinced his sister to continue her studies in Thailand. After coming to Thailand, according to Activist Z9, “when I came here, I see human rights and democracy for the first time.” Activist Z13 and Activist Z2 finished high school in Burma, and then a family member invited them to come to Thailand to continue their education in English and computer skills. At the Shan State School for Youth in Chiang Mai, according to Activist Z2, “they do not only teach English language and computer skills, they teach about the Burma situation... I realized what is happening in Burma... That’s why I’m involved in the work that I do.” Education leading to activism is an important factor in Burma; when asked why she handed out copies of political books and an alternative constitution despite the risk, Activist Z13 said “this [is] one of our responsibilities. If we don’t do, who will do? If I know the political, and I avoid, then who will do?”

Educating ordinary citizens is an important way for current activists to build a sympathetic public. Several interviewees discussed that they became involved in politics prior

to the 1988 protests by 1974 activists who quietly approached them and lent them books on political topics. Prior to the 1988 protests, Activist Z 19 learned about the poetry of Min Ko Naing, a leading activist during the 1988 protests, in the work quarters of his college. People do not necessarily comprehend the state of their oppression. Citizens of Burma know life is difficult, but do not necessarily know the precise source of the problems, what alternative solutions might look like, or how they could be personally involved.

Overcoming Fear

The ordinary citizens cited fear of the regime as why people do not do politics. Resistance soldiers interviewed in this research expressed that life in the resistance army provided protection against the forced labor practices of the SPDC. They were not afraid of the regime in their current position, and many attributed this lack of fear to their physical holding of arms.²¹⁶ This is similar to Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) argument that insurgency participation strongly correlates with improving personal security. Explained Soldier X9, a KNLA soldier, “if he did not join the army, it would be no choice, he’d have to work for the Burmese army; he would be forced to be a military porter.” Ordinary citizens fear SPDC repercussions, but soldiers do not – they felt safer as a soldier in the resistance than as farmers in unprotected villages under SPDC control.

As expected, ethnic resistance soldiers interviewed for this research expressed dislike for the SPDC, but many of them had less recent personal experience living in the SPDC territory. Most lived in the ‘liberated area’ of Burma, and thus not directly subject to

²¹⁶ Fear of death did not permeate any interviews with the soldiers, and none of the ordinary citizens discussed fear of dying as a reason for not joining armed resistance.

day-to-day rule by SPDC authorities. The danger for them came from the attacks on their army bases by the SPDC, or when they engaged in guerrilla activity behind enemy lines.

While soldiers expressed little fear, activists admitted being afraid of the regime; they had to overcome their fear to conduct activities. Many activists felt they had a duty, to fallen comrades and colleagues in prison, to use their relative freedom to oppose the regime. A founder of the Generation Wave, Activist Z22 explained, “now it is very risk[y], but I’m not afraid. I work for my organization because my friends are arrested.” Doing right by their colleagues was an important means in which activists overcome their fear.

Being cautious in conducting political activities, helps mitigate fear. Half of the activists interviewed mentioned steps they took to remain safe. For several people it was as simple as not communicating with media outlets inside or outside Burma or talking to strangers about their political work. Activist Z2 said, “I never talk to other people who are strange to me. Some of my friends I don’t discuss my personal life.” Activist Z29, a former National League for Democracy (NLD) member who was still part of the opposition said, “military intelligence are not just walking about.... Those guys depend a lot on informers... I pretend like I’m not interested in politics, or I don’t know the reality of the situation.” Others discussed how they could not take written materials with them from Thailand when they crossed back into Burma. Activist Z4 recalled a narrow escape when the SPDC authorities in Moulmein searched her bag:

At the time, before I got on the bus, I take my papers out of my bag. And I take the bus, and he searching, he looking for my bag. I was really excited, because just a moment before I took the paper [out].

Precautions and awareness of the micro opportunities and dangers allowed the activists to implement their work in a manner that provides a modicum of safety in Burma.

Recruitment: From Citizen to Activist and Soldier

Activists and soldiers were able to overcome regime constraints to join their respective organizations. Two patterns emerged from the interviews with soldiers and activists: many soldiers and activists had family connections within the armed struggle and non-violent opposition organizations. Secondly, prior to their joining the resistance many soldiers witnessed acts of authoritarian repression; in contrast, the political activists witnessed acts of political opposition and defiance.

Family in the resistance

Information about opposition activities was more readily available to activists and soldiers through family linkages. Family and personal linkages provided important conduits for individuals to join the political movement and armed struggle in Burma. Of the 31 Political Activists interviewed, 13 had family members who participated in the political movement (either in the past or currently), and another eight political activists had family members in the armed struggle. In some cases, families were recruitment channels from which insurgency and political organizations could draw when new members were needed. Soldier X21 said his younger brother and friends from the village wanted to join the SSA after he did, and he informed them, “No, you have to go and work for our family. I want to go first; I am a representative from my home and village, so no need to go.” Others learned about the resistance from their fathers, some of whom were retired soldiers.

Two-thirds of the soldiers interviewed had relatives or friends participating in opposition activities. Exactly half (15) the soldiers interviewed had family members, past or present, serving in some capacity within the armed struggle. Two soldiers had family in both the armed resistance and the non-violent struggle. Of the 15 soldiers without family in the struggle, six of them had family members that were involved in the political movement. The soldiers interviewed had greater exposure to opposition and anti-government ideas from familial networks than the interviewed ordinary citizens and the political activists. Several interviewees' fathers participated in armed resistance, but not necessarily the army in which the son joined. For example, Soldier X23 is a member of the Shan State Army South (SSA-S), but his father was a soldier in the Pa Laung State Liberation Organization Army (PSLOA), which agreed to a ceasefire with the government in 1991.

Extended family provides a means for an armed resistance group to safely recruit without decimating core family units, which are necessary for soldier's families to survive. Soldier X5 explained, "most of my relations are soldiers in the Karen National Union, so I was interested in joining. Cousins, uncles, some of them are in KNU army." Similarly, Soldier X9 explained in his family, "my uncle, my nephew, my cousin. My uncle is dead, my cousin is now in Mae La Oo [a refugee camp in Thailand], one of them has only one of his legs, and one is still in the 3rd Brigade [of the Karen National Liberation Army]."

Eighteen of the activists interviewed discussed that they had family and friends doing politics before they began doing activities. Some individuals were recruited into the political movement. Activist Z30, for example, met with a KNU group that was supporting the establishment of social/community groups in local communities. Activist Z30

remarked, “I had no direct connection between the KNU, but ... a person who talked to him, gradually he changed his mind, so he has been involved in political works.”

During the political uprising in 1988, Activist Z32 was in high school and his parents sent him out of Mandalay for fear of him getting in trouble during the time of the protests. When he returned and resumed attending high school in 1989, his two elder brothers, both who attended universities in the Pyinma na region, were “members of the ABFSU [All Burma Federation of Student Unions] so they actively involved and they invited him to participate.”

Contact to the movement as a reason to become politically active is not a recent, post-1988 phenomenon in Burma; Activist Z25 explained his first political activity was in 1969 when he was 22 years old and a medical student. Friends and old politicians “asked me [Z25] to spread the pamphlets.” Members of the 1974 generation of activists asked Activist Z28 to spread pamphlets during the 1988 protests when he was approximately 13 years old, but he admitted at the time he did not understand what the materials meant.

Witness to repression

Opposition and resistance also survive in part due to ongoing regime repression. Repression generates critical, targeted grievances; when an individual with established personal networks to the opposition, such as a family member, witnesses repression they are more likely to join. Soldiers attribute joining armed resistance as due to a personal or localized experience of mistreatment by the military authorities. Soldiers did not attribute their joining the resistance army to their family connection, but the connection is what sets

them apart from ordinary citizens who also experienced repression but did not join the opposition. Soldier X21, who joined the Shan State Army (SSA) in 2009, recalled,

I saw the Burmese soldier come to the village; destroy the village. So at the time I don't want to be a soldier, but I watch the situation, and I thought, 'I need to decide to join the army.'

Witness to repression and family connections are not mutually exclusive reasons to join a resistance army. The SPDC army tries to root out all remaining resistance in the territory they take back from the rebel armies, and reportedly treats those suspected of ties to the resistance terribly. One soldier's wife was arrested and tortured by the SPDC; he would not speak of it during the interview.²¹⁷

Several resistance soldiers discussed the mistreatment of people in their village by SPDC troops, particularly incidences of individuals forced to porter excruciatingly heavy loads of military equipment movement and food supplies for SPDC troops. If they were not personally forced to porter, they witnessed family members selected to porter for the SPDC army. For example, Soldier X4, a soldier from Karen state, joined the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) when he was 20 because the Burmese army forced his father to serve as a porter and could not bear to see this happening. Others reported the SPDC forced people to create "People's Defense Militias" and made them patrol the village, taking valuable time away from the activities needed for personal survival. While this does not sound onerous, patrolling the village takes farmers away from tending crops, leading to

²¹⁷ The translator knew of the incident and talked about it privately with the researcher after the interview concluded.

crop failure and food shortages. Several soldiers viewed their work as a soldier as one of the few avenues for serving their communities.

In comparison to the soldiers, very few of the political activists reported witnessing repressive events perpetrated against communities. Over half of the political activists interviewed witnessed political, anti-state events; activists described this as the reason they became involved in politics. Five activists interviewed began political activities during and after the 1988 protests; one began political work after witnessing the 1974 protests, another in 1987 during the demonetization protests, and another witnessed the student protests in 1996; one interviewee began political activities after attending speeches by politicians. In comparison, only four of ordinary citizens interviewed, and only four soldiers witnessed political events such as the 1988 student protests.²¹⁸

For an opposition operating under authoritarianism, the imperative of survival suggests that political events are an essential method to educate and mobilize future resistance. Activities serve to mobilize people for future activities, but do not channel them into specific organizations. Witnessing events leads to development of new organizations that increase the opposition as a whole, without creating risk for specific organizations.

Seven activists interviewed began political activities immediately following the September 2007 Saffron protests. “Before I don’t like the government, but because of the Saffron revolution I totally do political works... Right now we are 24-by-7 the work of GW,” declared Activist Z24, a member of Generation Wave. The interviewed activists who mobilized after Saffron were all under 25, and had not before experienced large-scale

218 Soldiers X2, X12, X28 and X29.

political action. Witnessing mass action against the regime was a uniquely powerful event for many individuals interviewed.

Widespread action can also help remobilize former political activists who participated in earlier movements, but for various reasons stopped being active. After not doing political work for 12 years due to economic and health reasons, Activist Z23 resumed political activities following the Saffron protests. He said “I know about the information of about Saffron, so I thought ‘oh, my dream will come true,’ like waking up from a dream, so that makes me ... want to do again.”

Even though the authorities crushed the political events witnessed by activists, activists did not see their cause as futile. Many are convinced that non-violent action can bring political change to Burma. According to Activist Z26, “this is the only way the majority of people can participate. They don’t like the current situation but they cannot participate in other things.” She continued:

When the 2007 Saffron Revolution started, at the beginning of the movement the people dare not even to support, to deliver some water or food to the demonstrating monks, but later stage they dare to participate. They obviously see that even the monks can do something, so that is the only way they she and other can organize the people to actively participate.

Witnessing is not enough however. Networks are necessary for individuals to become involved in opposition organizations. Several of the ordinary citizens interviewed provide further evidence of how witnessing political events is a driver to become a political activist. Of the four ordinary citizens who witnessed political action, two of them said they tried to participate but couldn’t get to the protest site or were turned away by the protestors.

Citizen Y16 was in Rangoon during the September 2007 Saifron protests, but could not leave the industrial zone to get to the area of town where the protests were happening. One of his friends went, however, and was able to communicate to other workers what had occurred. Witnessing political events and trying to mobilize is not the same as joining an organization, however. The survival imperative promotes a growing opposition, but not necessarily the growth of organizations. Rather, a mushrooming of political opposition groups, each that can operate within a small but safe location and with a small number of known activists is more relevant under the conditions of authoritarianism.

Another interviewee discussed how he tried to join the 1998 student protests in Rangoon, but was turned away from doing more than handing out leaflets by the students who were concerned he was an informant. Citizen Y25 said, “the student don’t believe us, we are not students we are from outside... in Burma there is many, many secret police, they don’t believe other people.” Turning away people also occurred during the September 2007 protests, when the protesting monks initially only allowed some civilians to join with them. The monks changed their stance on this after a few days. Some view this as evidence that this protest was economic, not political, and people were too afraid to join the monks (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2008). The survival imperative may keep demonstrations small, but it ensures the opposition survives over time. There is tension between the two imperatives: the survival imperative means the opposition cannot allow unknown individuals to join their ranks, but the challenge imperative necessitates opposition to grow.

Selecting Opposition: Violent and Non-violent Resistance

Half of the soldiers interviewed thought non-violent struggle had no chance of success against the SPDC; many soldiers stated the SPDC military government only had respect for those who held arms. Soldier X29, a student activist in 1988 who became a founding member of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) explained, “[in 1988] we demand democracy very peacefully, we don’t have any arms, but the response from the junta is bullets. So I think we need to hold arms.” Only five of the 30 soldiers interviewed knew about the non-violent opposition organizations operating in Burma; thus for most soldiers non-violent action did not represent a choice to oppose the regime.²¹⁹

Overwhelmingly, soldiers thought non-violent struggle could not be successful in the Burmese context. Some were familiar with the success of the method in other countries, but pointed to how the military regime in Burma is different from semi-authoritarian and hybrid regimes. A soldier in the Arakan Liberation Army (ALA) stated:

If the people go to mass demonstrations, they will be killed. If people are involved in mass demonstrations, they surely will be killed and sent to prison. That is why the situation is never to change, and needs the [armed] struggling force. (X12)

Several soldiers from different armed groups cited the example of how the SPDC treats the NLD versus treatment of armed groups. Soldier X11 insisted:

To defend ourselves, armed force is necessary. Take for example the NLD, because they are not armed, the military treat them as they like. But the

²¹⁹ Many spoke of the futility of standing up to the authorities even for the smallest of things. They were unfamiliar with the groups doing collective action in Burma.

Karen people, we have arms [weapons], they don't grab us like they grab the NLD.

One of the students, a founding member of ABSDF who fled to the jungle in 1988, further explained that the SPDC only acknowledges armed power:

The NLD all the time asks the SPDC to sit together around the table and talk about peaceful way and how to share power. But the Wa, Kachin..., the SPDC try to go to their territory, the SPDC *wants* to talk to ethnic minorities, armed groups. But the Wa and Kachin give many reason they do not want to meet at the moment.... The military junta, in their mindset... arms are power (Soldier X28).

Most soldiers believed that the regime was not going to change by dialogue alone. Soldier X12 was a student when he joined the 1988 protests, but by 1998 "the military dictator system hadn't changed by discussion," and he decided to join the Arakan Liberation Army.

Most soldiers maintained they did not want to fight, instead they stressed the armed resistance was necessary to compel the SPDC to dialogue. "In my opinion, the SPDC believes in military force, so we need to balance against them. They have 100 percent, so we need 30 percent to balance. If there is pressure, they will dialogue," said Soldier X2, an officer in the New Mon State Party (NMSP), a ceasefire group. Others saw the armed struggle forces as a necessary support for those who choose non-violent tactics. Soldier X3, also from NMSP, explained "some of them who work inside as protestors have to flee.... Before [the government] arrests them, they need to come to the border area and join with the armed ethnic groups."

Mixed feelings were expressed by activists regarding armed struggle in Burma. Fourteen of the activists interviewed had positive feelings about the armed struggle in Burma; many felt armed struggle was a necessary component of the overall resistance against the SPDC. Activist Z6 was interested in becoming a soldier, but had a health problem and was not physically capable. "I think that if I cannot be a soldier, I can be an activist," explained Activist Z6. He had some friends involved in a youth political group, and was able to join their organization.

One-third of the political activists interviewed expressed negative opinions about armed struggle, citing concerns about killing fellow citizens, or that armed struggle would not work against a military regime. For example, Activist Z20 did not believe in armed struggle because:

In our country, the army is about 400,000 armed soldiers, and there are about 200,000 police. You know their military support is good, and the opposition cannot compare with them. We don't have 700,000 people and we don't have military support, and the people do not support the armed struggle.

Not all activists knew about the armed resistance in Burma before they began doing political activities, and thus it did not really represent an alternative choice of resistance for some activists. Political activists were aware of the armed struggle, but not universally so, due to the SPDC's control of information. Activist Z2, a Kachin woman from Shan state, declared:

I have no reason to join an armed group. I did not even know they were there. On the TV, the SPDC uses propaganda, so I know about the KNU,²²⁰ they are very bad, but I did not know what is the KNU. We think it was not our work when I was inside.

Only one activist spoke of an armed struggle organization trying to recruit him. Activist Z32 “totally rejected the armed struggle” because he wanted to continue his political activities inside Burma, and he did not want to fight his fellow citizens.

Overall, the interviews suggest individuals joined the opposition based on what they had prior exposure to – most did not make a choice between two competing, distinct strategies of non-violent or armed struggle. Choices were made later by several individuals who switched to the other kind of struggle.

Retention: Survival in the Opposition

When asked why some of their colleagues quit the political struggle, one cited that some colleagues do not have a deep ambition and do not believe in the people (Z12), others get married and have to support a new family (Z15 and Z16). Activist Z16 officially divorced his wife and began living in a monastery so that the authorities would stop harassing his wife. Activist Z23 was sick and had family issues, and so quit doing political work for 12 years; he rejoined after seeing the 2007 protests. According to Activist Z25’s experience, financial necessity meant his old colleagues could no longer do politics, saying “... in order to do politics we need money to survive for our living, in order to develop we

220 KNU is the Karen National Union, a resistance group fighting for territorial independence since 1948.

need at least to have a job.” Activists Z29 and Z27 brought up survival and family problems; Activist Z27 also mentioned that the people that quit the NLD already were the ones who joined because they were more interested in state power and the opportunities from being part of a ruling party.

Soldiers discussed why some of their colleagues quit the struggle. Most people responded that life was very difficult for the families of resistance soldiers, and it was the main reason people left the armed struggle. Goodwin argues that kinship and sexual relationship ties outside of the organization weakened the Huk rebellion in the Philippines (1997). Soldier X7 explained people quit for a variety of reasons, “some because of health problem; some because of family. With the families, the husbands are in this camp, and the wives have to farm for themselves.” The SPDC also targets the families of soldiers for punishment and torture, which leads some soldiers decide to quit the resistance. And while the resistance army helps provide food for the soldiers, it is often in small quantities. Jungle living, particularly without access to malaria medicine, is difficult. Some are simply getting older, having struggled for 20 or 30 years, and it is time to retire.

Being too busy working for their livelihood was a reason stated by ordinary citizens as to why they did not join the opposition. For many soldiers this was resolved due to the ability of the resistance armies to provide for the needs of their soldiers. Almost none of the soldiers interviewed received a salary for their labor;²²¹ nearly all expected the army to take care of their essential needs such uniforms, rice and salt, and some shelter. Some of these

221 Interviews included several extremely high ranking officers, including two generals. One interviewee, a medical officer, received a monthly stipend of 1,500 baht per month, at the time approximately the equivalent of \$45 USD. In comparison, Burmese agricultural migrant workers in that area of Thailand typically earned 3,000 baht per month, and Thai minimum wage is 8,000 per month.

provisions were easily observable by the researcher during fieldwork. While these conditions seem bleak, this is some measure of security compared to precarious existence of many of Burma's citizens.

Resistance armies also provide some upward mobility – many interviewees reported if they had not joined the army, they would be farmers like their families, or as Soldier X4 said, “a slave of the SPDC.” During March 2010, Soldier X22 was one of approximately 200 soldiers taking a captain's exam at the Shan State Army - South headquarters; another soldier discussed in his interview how the KNU sent him to India for a university education. He received a master's degree in public administration. If the resistance is successful, the men who joined have much to gain. If the resistance loses, they have not lost much either. The calculation of risk is different for individuals coming from an impoverished village where life is difficult, food is scarce, and ~~the~~ *the* *daw* will torture you regardless of participation.

Retention is also valued in the non-violent opposition. Political activities that strengthen solidarity and commitment of members within organizations are necessary for continuance of the opposition. Some activities help organizations maintain solidarity despite the repression aimed at members. Members-only events, particularly those that celebrate the organizations' past triumphs or mark the martyrdom of fallen members, are a prominent aspect of activism in Burma. Writes Jasper,

Protest activity, which would seem irrational, if judged by narrowly instrumental criteria, appears rational in the light of the incentives constructed collectively by the participants' subculture. There is nothing

irrational about the pursuit of collective goals such as reinforcing the affective bonds of one's community (1997: 208).

Political ceremonies, 71 percent (N=111) of which were conducted by political party activists in Burma, serve the purpose of retention. Members of other political organizations are regularly invited to attend – extending solidarity to others helps the opposition survive. Political ceremonies provide opportunities to remind members of the commitment and shared sacrifice, while celebrating past victories.

Activists too discussed their need for basic income that would allow them to do political work. Some activists worked jobs for their own survival, including several who ran their respective family shops in the market and used their leisure time to do political work. A shop provided useful point for the informal collection of information regarding people's attitudes and the state of the economy, but also allowed for interviewees to have regular quick meetings with people in the network under the cover of shopping. One interviewee earned a living as a graphic designer; he was often called on by political organizations to design posters and stickers with anti-SPDC messages. Political activism does not have to be full time work, as expected by ordinary citizens.

Many of the activists held jobs and did political work when they had the time and extra money to do so. Many of the activists were financially dependent on their families to support them. This came in the form of a financially and morally supportive family that could earn enough to allow one person to donate their time to political work. Other activists, particularly the students, were dependent on their parents income to support their studies. Political work often took place on campus. The four activist monks interviewed were dependent on a monastery to support them, but surprisingly, two activists relied upon

monasteries to support them so they could remain active. Activist Z29 explained his situation, “before the senior monk in Mandalay, always support him, and then after the senior monk passed away he relied on his family economy, so he could survive and continue [his work].”

Families as an Alternative Organizing Institution

Previous research on Burma shows that non-activist families try to prevent their children from joining the opposition movement (Fink 2001 and 2009). This research finds activist family networks are an element of movement survival. Family networks are important resources for soldiers and political activists. As authoritarian conditions expand and the SPDC dismantles institutions of political mobilization, family networks become an important mechanism for ongoing resistance. Activist families may support ongoing resistance because this social unit is hard, although not impossible, for an authoritarian regime to penetrate with its policies of social control. Activist families provide socialization regarding political issues, information transfer about the hidden history of resistance, and safer networking because the trust levels between family members is higher than between outsiders. They are a source of alternative information, can pool resources, and provide other means of overcoming the challenges of oppositional organizing. Activist family networks help oppositions survive under authoritarian conditions.

Information about opposition activities was more readily available to activists and soldiers through family linkages. Family and personal linkages provided important conduits for individuals to join the political movement and armed struggle in Burma. Thirteen of the 31 Political Activists interviewed had family members who participated in the political

movement (either in the past or currently), and another eight political activists had family members in the armed struggle. In some cases, families were channels from which insurgency and political organizations could recruit when new members were needed. Soldier X21 said his younger brother and friends from the village wanted to join the SSA after he did, and he said he informed them, “No, you have to go and work for our family. I want to go first; I am a representative from my home and village, so no need to go.” Others learned about the resistance from their fathers, some of whom were retired soldiers.

Political socialization normally occurs as young people learn from their parents, but Bloemraad and Trost (2008) argue intergenerational socialization occurs in immigrant families. In these families, young and old members of a family pool information received from different sources, which helps mobilize otherwise uninterested family members to participate in political activities. Pooling of information occurs because immigrant families use their family network to overcome access to information limitations, often due to language barriers. Of the younger activists interviewed for this research, several commented that their parents were very aware of their activities; some parents tacitly supported their work, while other parents overtly supported their work.²²²

In an authoritarian environment, political socialization need not be purposeful, but can be a by-product of exposure to activism: private homes and family events are often the location for the planning of political action. An extreme but illustrative example, political activist Z1 witnessed the 1974 protests and joined the National League for Democracy (NLD) at its founding in 1988. His daughter joined NLD Youth, while his eldest son fled to

²²² In other cases, activists’ parents kicked them out of their homes; this was explained as their parents’ feared retaliation by the regime on the entire family.

the jungle to join the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF). To his surprise, Z1's youngest son was a founding member of the 2007 New Students Generation, a group that became prominent during the 2007 Saffron protests. Z1 proudly explained, "they saw their father's activities, particularly successive meetings of NL D youth members at his house. So they always learn what they talked about, what was happening in the country... they themselves gradually became interested in politics."

Secondly, activist families provide a base from which organizations can recruit members. Survival requires secrecy about activities, and it is critical to trust others engaging in collective action. Family relationships supply trust and safe channels of information regarding potential new members. Family members of activists provide a unique recruitment option because they are more reliable than are unknown individuals attempting to join. Families can essentially vouch for the safety of a potential new activist when it is one of their family members, lowering the chance that the organization mistakenly accepts a regime informant into its ranks. Individuals with family members in the movement are also less likely to submit to incentives to turn on their families and become regime informants. To do so risks personal punishment from their family.

The civic voluntarism model of Verba et al. (1995) theorizes that variables that reduce the cost of participation make political participation more likely. Family support networks help overcome obstacles of activism. Viterna (2006) found many guerrilla fighters in El Salvador came from unbroken homes. Under political repression and social control conditions, a division of available family labor makes sense. Some activists interviewed had family that supported their political work; family incomes allowed the activist the freedom from full-time paid work. This would be more possible in homes with

both parents. Rutten argues that “activism requires contributions in money, goods and manpower that have to be accommodated somehow by the activists’ households, and these costs may set the limits to people’s activism” (2002: 168). Families can pool their resources to allow an individual to struggle on their behalf. Family institutions reduce the cost of an individual’s participation.

Families help bridge the coordination issues rampant in authoritarian conditions. Families and friends gather for holidays and events such as funerals, providing legitimate opportunities for activists to discuss and organize future political activities. These gatherings are difficult for the regime to disallow, providing one of the best opportunities for holding political and planning discussions. Visiting relatives is a common enough occurrence, which helps opposition groups pass information to others in their networks.

Families of known activists also experience political repression, leading to comparably higher grievances than experienced by non-political citizens. Imposed isolation from society to the entire family unit makes family members guilty by association. This presents a unique form of comparable grievance, and may promote interest in conducting political opposition activities because they already receive punishment for doing so. These activist families have little left to lose. This seems especially true for the families of the armed soldiers – the mistreatment of the families of suspected soldiers means increased levels of anti-state grievance relative to their neighbors. These families also have comparably more to gain if the revolutionary group is successful in obtaining autonomy. Family networks provide a sense of security – should an individual be sent to jail for political activities, they rely on family members to provide food and medical supplies to survive abysmal prison conditions. Ironically, because the regime continues this practice,

activists know that if they do get into trouble they must be able to count on their family to survive prison. Attempts by the regime to isolate the activists from their community networks serves to increase the importance and personal reliance upon the activist network itself.

Activist family networks assist an opposition to survive authoritarian conditions. There are drawbacks however, that affect how well an opposition can launch challenges to the regime. Families are a small, finite network, even when including extended family. This limits significantly the type of activities family networks can reasonably implement. Small-scale activities are more feasible when relying upon family institutions for the imperatives of political challenge and survival.

Conclusion

In Burma, many activists and soldiers have participated in their respective struggles for a decade or longer. Their presence challenges the assumption in revolution scholarship that individuals will not remain involved for a long time. The emphasis on recruitment has inaccurately portrayed long-term participation as improbable. Contrary to expectations, the regime's use of repression and social control means activists and soldiers who wish to retire are unable to return to being 'ordinary citizens.' The regime continues to harass them for their previous resistance, providing an incentive to remain in the opposition movement.

In authoritarian Burma, activist families help individuals overcome constraints to participation because they are trusted conduits for information. Family events (such as funerals) provide necessary cover for political meetings, and families can provide financial support to members engaged in political action. Family members already in the resistance

also provide the credibility for new recruits – helping an organization determine that a potential recruit is not a regime-informant. Families with members in opposition also provide an immediate network for socialization of young people's views. Activist family units are an alternative institution of political organizing that is difficult for a regime to breach.

Finally, the presence of many types of organizations within a resistance movement reduces reasons for an individual to quit the movement. Some people remain interested in political issues and regime change; their presence inside or outside an organization does not necessarily mean they have abandoned the cause of the resistance. How individuals *contribute* to the opposition changes when life circumstances change. Opportunity to shift roles due to life circumstances facilitates long-term participation. When an individual comes to disagree with the strategy of their current organization, often they move to serve in a different organization within the movement. Individuals can also shift between movement organizations for personal reasons; the presence of alternative organizations with different operations, goals and strategies facilitates an individual's long-term participation.

Authoritarian governments seek to eliminate opposition; they do so with the tools of political repression and social control. For an opposition to continue to challenge the regime, it must also survive the conditions of authoritarianism. The opposition's need for survival affects recruitment and retention.

Chapter 7: Summary of Findings and Conclusions

In the past 50 years, the dictatorial governments of Burma attempted to eliminate the opposition through social policies, use of force, and control of information and ideas. The response from the government against armed and political resistance has grown increasingly severe over the past four decades. Citizens understand the risk and dangers associated with politically challenging the regime. Entrenched military rule is not a surprise in Burma; it is puzzling how an opposition continues *despite* political repression and social control.

In Burma, demonstrations against the ruling military government have occurred in every decade. Protest and opposition continue in Burma; as recently as 2007 monks and citizens protested against the regime. Individuals in Burma defy the military regime by remaining in the opposition movement for decades. Burma's opposition movement is inclusive of the collective efforts of a myriad of opposition groups, including those that pursue revolutionary and reformist agendas, and groups that struggle for autonomy and/or democracy. Individuals and organizations use a variety of methods, including armed and non-violent strategies and tactics to pursue their objectives. The short-term efforts by individuals and groups embody a collective resistance to authoritarianism in Burma from which patterns can be deduced and conclusions drawn.

Authoritarian governments seek to eliminate opposition movements; they use the tools of political repression and social control to target individuals and the entire society. Repressive conditions encompass more than just political repression aimed at protestors;

authoritarian regimes attempt to deter political activity through political repression and social control. Anti-state political action occurs despite the threats imposed by authoritarian governments. For an opposition to continue to challenge the regime, it must also survive the conditions of authoritarianism. Survival and challenge are equally imperative to opposition movements. From a position of annihilation, there is no resistance to regime expansion.

For the opposition to survive and continue to challenge the regime, an opposition must operate in ways that are different from movements operating in democratic and hybrid contexts. The over-reliance of using demonstrations as a proxy for size, scope and support of opposition movements is misleading when considering opposition to authoritarian regimes. The emphasis on demonstrations (or lack thereof), tells us more about the strength of the authoritarian government than it does about the opposition.

Large-scale demonstrations make international news headlines but they only tell part of the story of resistance and contention in Burma. By focusing only on large street demonstrations, research on social movements misses the events of contention that are of particular importance in the most authoritarian countries. In doing so, we risk always being taken by surprise by the 'spontaneous' outbreak of larger demonstrations. Political oppositions do not erupt from out of nowhere; examining small-scale political activities lessens our surprise when demonstrations occur in authoritarian countries.

In Poland for example, in the decade before the Soviet Union collapsed, society groups published underground books and newspapers, conducted illegal radio broadcasts, and other symbolic small-scale activities (Paulson 2005). In authoritarian Kenya, an opposition movement grew out human rights lawyers using institutional methods of protest

(Press 2004). Examples also include contemporary events in Egypt and Tunisia. Small-scale human rights and labor protests occurred in Egypt for years prior to the 2011 fall of the Mubarak regime (Beinin 2010). Three months prior to the protests, activists led signature campaigns to show the extent of public support for electoral reforms and constitutional amendments to allow for fair elections.²²³ In Tunisia, several incidences of self-immolation occurred by individuals protesting poor economic conditions. Growing political unrest followed these individual protest actions, leading to non-violent and violent protests, and eventually the fall of the Ben Ali regime in January 2011. The 2011 protest revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, Weinthal and Lee write,

There are no exact parallels, but much of this reminds us of what happened in Poland in 1979-80. There, as in Egypt and Tunisia, we saw a mixture of a repressive, single-party state with trade unions that functioned as an arm of the ruling party. But there was also a network of NGOs that quietly worked behind the scenes, in workplaces and communities.²²⁴

The activities of an opposition demonstrate survival, based on the elements of signaling solidarity, information transfer and building a sympathetic public. Retention is similarly important to recruitment by an opposition seeking survival under authoritarianism. This concluding chapter summarizes the findings of this dissertation, provides policy suggestions and outlines implications for future research.

²²³ El Deeb, Sarah. "Egypt's Youth Build A New Opposition Movement, Call for Democratic Reform," *Associated Press* September 16, 2010. Accessed online at: <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/75374>.

²²⁴ Weinthal, Benjamin and Eric Lee, "Trade unions: the revolutionary social network at play in Egypt and Tunisia," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*. February 10, 2011. Accessed online at: http://www.defenddemocracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11792083&Itemid=347

Impediments to Political Organization

Authoritarian governments seek to eliminate opposition to their rule, purposefully creating significant impediments to political organizing. In Burma, the SPDC targets the political opposition with political repression while simultaneously cultivating a compliant public.

Repressive conditions create problems for mobilization, but repression makes it more difficult for opposition organizations and the movement to use democratic practices in its leadership. Despite Burma's political opposition promotion of democratic transition and governance, it is extremely difficult to practice democratic rules and decision-making, such as electing party leaders and communicating policy positions. Doing so increases the exposure of the membership to state repression; public exposure of members, in turn, leads to decreased ability to conduct activities without being caught. Decentralization of opposition organizations into small, locally focused activist cells is an answer to this problem, but is one that increases the costs of coordination.

Political repression occurs in the context of wider constructs of social control. Regimes have vast repertoires at their disposal to deter citizens from joining political movements (Davenport 2007a). Along with repression, the SPDC ensures social compliance through a combination of social policy, use of force and control of information and ideas. A compliant citizenry is valuable as it creates social disincentives to limit the rise of future opposition. A compliant citizenry is therefore an obstacle the opposition must address. The poor economy and underdeveloped infrastructure present significant obstacles to germinating future generations of opposition. High costs of communication and routine

monitoring of telephone services, internet access, and transportation creates huge coordination costs for an opposition.

The SPDC uses political repression and social control to eliminate the opposition. In this context, an opposition's imperative is not only to challenge the state, but also to survive the conditions of authoritarianism. Political activities are not only a challenge to the state, but also a means of oppositional survival. In response to authoritarian conditions, resistance becomes offensive and defensive, understood by the twin imperatives of challenge and survival.

Opposition Imperatives: Challenge and Survival

Resistance, in Burma and elsewhere, encompasses the offensive position of the challenge imperative *and* the defensive posture of the survival imperative. For individuals that decide to challenge their government, a continuum of political action strategies is available. Armed resistance is a set of available strategies undertaken by some armed opposition groups to challenge the national governments of Burma. Non-violent resistance presents another set of strategies to challenge the regime. In Burma, as Chapter 4 argued, people challenge the government and *tatmadaw* using the strategies of exit, everyday forms of resistance, non-institutional political action and nonviolent political action. Protest and persuasion activities target state actors in their demands, often calling on the government to change specific policies or to increase political freedoms and transition to a democratic political system. One-man protests, workers' strikes, poster campaigns and monks' religious boycotts challenge the regime, as do the small-scale and large-scale demonstrations that occur in the country.

Regime change is not the only imperative pursued by opposition movements operating in authoritarian countries. Researchers continue to question what motivates individuals to join movements assumed unlikely to succeed. This incomplete view of the imperatives of an opposition leads to the assumption that participation is irrational. This assumption underpins the research tradition of examining motivation for participation. There is need to consider other imperatives of opposition movements. For an opposition to challenge to the regime, it must also survive the conditions of authoritarianism. Challenge and survival are twin imperatives of an opposition.

Survival of the opposition movement, the chance to fight another day, is a success unto itself. Armed groups pointed to the necessity of approaching negotiations with the SPDC from a position of military strength. Soldier X15 said, “when you are powerful you can have discussion with them.” Similarly, activists continuing resistance despite the difficult environment is a success. Small non-violent political activities allow for continuance, for small successes, when large demonstrations are not achievable. Small-scale activities allow them to counter the government’s claims that they were ruling the country with support of the population. Activities communicate broader dissatisfaction. Others delighted in hoodwinking the regime by implementing activities and remaining uncaught.

The imperative of survival was evident from the interviews with activists, many of whom discussed the measures they take to ensure their personal survival. Individuals who oppose the SPDC take precautions to remain safe. Political activist Z31 gave the advice, “do much, don’t talk much.” Others had different advice: if they carry a computer, they make sure anything serious is erased or don’t travel with documents (political activist Z13

and Z4); use back streets to avoid the authorities (Z16); don't talk to strangers about politics (Z5 and Z19); don't let fellow activists know where they live (Z20); and limit meetings to five minutes (Z17). Their advice suggests the micro-context of political organizing, in other words, the political opportunity structure of their neighborhoods, is a relevant factor in which activities are selected. The repression and social control imposed by the regime conditions the micro-context.

The twin imperatives of challenge and survival are not finite categories, and activities conducted by individuals within an opposition movement support both imperatives. There is tension between the imperatives, however. A movement that entirely focuses on challenge is at risk of annihilation by the authoritarian regime; the public, confrontational nature of challenge activities exposes activists. A movement entirely focused on survival however, risks becoming irrelevant because it is not opposing the expanding authoritarian regime. Survival is a useful defensive position from which an opposition can identify opportunities and when possible shift into the challenge imperative.

Small-scale activities matter

Ignoring small-scale activities means misunderstanding political opposition and the ability of movements to endure despite the constraints imposed by an authoritarian regime. Traditionally ignored by social movement research, 'small scale activity' connotes political resistance activities outside of massive demonstrations. These events also differ from 'avoidance protest' techniques which minimize direct confrontation with authority (Adas 1992), as well as unorganized 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet 2005; Scott 1985). Considered within a typology of resistance options available to would-be political

opponents, small-scale activities serve both challenge and survival imperatives of an opposition.

Demonstrations risk lives and are a gamble in regards to outcomes; democratic transition is the rarity, not the norm. The demonstrations that occurred in Burma in 1962, 1974, 1988 and 2007 did not result in transition to democracy or liberalization of the political system. Instead, the opposite occurred – an increase in political repression and tightening of social controls followed every protest. The 1988 uprising led to a change in government from a one-party to military rule; while providing temporary opportunities for political participation, ultimately these protests backfired. Similarly, the 2007 protests helped spur the government to resume its ‘roadmap to democracy,’ and make a show of political transition with a constitutional referendum and new parliament. These trappings of democratic institutions have little promise for delivering democracy. Large-scale protests in Burma have led to more restrictions and government oversight, increasing the difficulties associated with performing any oppositional activity.

Small-scale activities, however, reveal the continuance of opposition under authoritarianism. The political event dataset recorded activities led by monks, students, political parties and other political groups. “Organizational forms are, like arguments and actions, a kind of message. But they are also a cluster of resources and rules that allow certain kinds of tactics and discourage others,” according to Jasper (1997: 331). Similarly, activities convey messages about the opposition and the context in which it operates.

Extreme secrecy is necessary to carry out certain oppositional activities under authoritarian conditions. Coordination within political organizations presents challenges to secrecy, and coordination between different organizations requires a large amount of trust

due to the risk posed to members. Coalition building deeper than the top levels of leadership is nearly impossible. This makes planning events that require large attendance, such as demonstrations, difficult. Pamphleteering and graffiti, in contrast, are useful because small numbers of people can implement them surreptitiously.

Widespread poverty makes fundraising nearly impossible. Security issues are also a problem, as soliciting donations from the same safe people repeatedly creates a donation fatigue and limits how much an organization can collect. In addition, records of donations cannot be maintained for fear of future reprisals. The result is opposition activities must correspond to the opposition's limited budget. Opposition activities are not zero-cost – pamphleteering requires paper and photocopying, graffiti requires paint, and demonstrations require people to absorb the transportation costs of getting to the protest site, as well as the coordination costs of telephone calls and transportation for planning meetings. According to Francisco,

In general, protests may not grow as rapidly as theorists assume. Too seldom considered are inherent mobilization limitations, for example, geographic dispersion or significant dropouts over time – protest is a most disruptive activity both to the government and to dissidents' own lives (1995: 279).

Small-scale activities allow for continuous resistance that people can fit into their daily lives of working, family commitments, religious obligations and sending children to school.

Small activities communicate information regarding resistance²²⁵

compliance policies imposed by the government mean no reliable public discourse exists about the presence of the opposition. The presence of a viable alternative is linked to successful transition (Przeworski 1986), and an opposition needs to remain vigilant in communicating its presence and positions. The SPDC's control of all media outlets also means that for the opposition to reach their audience, they have to rely upon alternative forms of communication. Political speech helps fill that void. Poster campaigns, statements and pamphlets help communicate that underground resistance exists. As discussed in the protest event analysis in Chapter 5, information distribution activities²²⁵ were 34 percent (N= 664) of all political action undertaken in Burma between 1990 and 2008. This is followed by political speech, which comprised 23 percent (N= 443 events) of political acts in Burma.

Resistance in Burma is usually not an obvious undertaking; the consequences imposed by the SPDC require stealth by the opposition if it is to survive. Information about the existence of resistance is important to help create sympathy for those who do mobilize resistance the regime. Because opposition groups can be annihilated if they recruit new members that turn out to be government spies, literature distributed should emphasize the utility of individual-level tactics, the history of opposition to the state, and the existence of a silent majority opposing the regime. These materials do not necessarily serve to recruit new members but help build an informed and sympathetic public an opposition can draw upon during times of large-scale mobilization.

²²⁵ 'Information distribution activities' defined in Chapter 5 included distributing statements, posters, pamphlets, stickers and other types of information.

Because communication channels are difficult, there is a significant opportunity for miscommunication between activists. Oppositional organizations benefit from the coordination opportunities created by small-scale activities. Hosting events such as funerals and holiday ceremonies provide locations for discussion of coordination, while also defying the regime. Meetings provide food to a membership that may be feeling the impoverishing effects of political repression; meetings can provide charity to members, facilitating their continued involvement. Network political activities that increase solidarity and cohesion within an organization, such as meaningful clothing and political ceremonies, serve to motivate for longer term and help create the next generations of activists. Events also provide a forum for educating existing and newly recruited members on history not part of the regime's constructed narrative. To remain in the movement and being a recipient of the support networks within the movement, demonstration of commitment is necessary. Many of the small-scale activities allow an individual to demonstrate commitment to the imperatives of the organization. This means they must continue their opposition to the regime, in the small ways possible.

Recruitment in Authoritarian Settings

Authoritarian conditions present challenges to recruitment and collective action in ways not found in democratic and authoritarian contexts. The regime attempts to eliminate institutions with a history of political organizing. Over time, and typically after a demonstration or an expression of opposition to authoritarian rule, social compliance policies disassemble institutions to limit future opposition. For example, following the 1988 protests, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) government divided

universities into smaller entities and then geographically dispersed them; distance learning too has taken the place of students gathering on campus. Since the 2007 protests, monks and monasteries have subjected to greater scrutiny (Finck 2009). As the regime dismantles institutions traditionally used to facilitate anti-state mobilization, activists turn to alternative institutions to maintain an opposition over time.

Resistance: keep it in the family

In such a risky environment, how do opposition organizations go about finding people they can trust to join them in the movement? Family networks are a critical vehicle for opposition movements to maintain their membership. Two-thirds (N=19) of the soldiers interviewed had relatives or friends participating in opposition activities. Exactly half (N=15) the soldiers interviewed had family members, past or present, serving in some capacity within the armed struggle.²²⁶ Two soldiers had family in both the armed resistance and the non-violent struggle. Of the 15 soldiers without family in the struggle, six of them had family members in the political movement. As a whole, soldiers' exposure to opposition and anti-government ideas from familial networks was much higher than experienced by the ordinary citizens and the political activists interviewed. In comparison, over half (N=18) of the political activists interviewed also knew people doing politics before they began doing political activities. More tellingly however, is that none of the

226 Family does not need to be immediate family; extended family provides an important place for recruitment without decimating the core family unit. The immediate families of known activists and soldiers are harassed by regime members, but not necessarily extended family. The extended family also allows for division of labor – no one immediate family is hard hit by the absence of labor due to more than one activist in the family.

civilians interviewed had family members engaging in political or armed opposition in Burma. Families play an important role in the survival of the opposition.

As authoritarian conditions expand and limit traditional institutional resources for recruitment, organization and opposition activities, activist family networks become an important mechanism for initial and ongoing resistance. Families provide socialization regarding political issues, information transfer about the hidden history of resistance, and safer networking because the trust levels between family members is higher than with outsiders.

Political socialization that occurs in activist families need not be purposeful, but can be a by-product of exposure to activism; private homes and family events are the safest places to plan future political action. Political socialization normally occurs as young people learn from their parents, but Bloemraad and Trost (2008) argue intergenerational socialization occurs in immigrant families. In these families, young and old members of a family pool information received from different sources, which helps mobilize otherwise uninterested family members to participate in political activities. Of the younger activists interviewed, several commented that their parents were very aware of their activities; some tacitly supported their work while others parents overtly supported their work.²²⁷

Family members of known activists are subject to political repression, leading to comparably higher grievances vis-à-vis non-political citizens. Imposed isolation from society to the entire family unit makes younger family guilty by association. This presents a unique form of comparable grievance, and may promote interest in conducting political

²²⁷ In other cases, some activists were kicked out of their homes by parents who feared regime retaliation toward the entire family.

opposition activities because they are already being punished for doing so. This seems especially true for the families of the armed soldiers – the mistreatment of the families of suspected soldiers means increased levels of anti-state grievance relative to their neighbors. These families also have comparably more to gain if the revolutionary group is successful in obtaining autonomy. Family networks provide a sense of security – should an individual be sent to jail for political activities, they rely on family members to provide food and medical supplies to survive abysmal prison conditions. Ironically, because the regime continues this practice, activists know that if they do get into trouble they will be able to count on their family in difficult times. The regime's harassment of spouses of activists and limiting opportunities of activists' children helps solidify a network of activism. Attempts by the regime to isolate the activists from their community networks serves to increase the importance and personal reliance upon the activist network itself.

Secondly, families provide a base from which organizations can recruit members. The need for secrecy to ensure personal security means it is critical to be able to trust others engaging in collective action. Family relationships supply trust and safe channels of information regarding potential new members. Family members of activists provide a unique source of safe recruits because they are more reliable than are unknown individuals. Families can essentially vouch for the safety of a potential new activist when it is one of their family members, lowering the chance the organization mistakenly accepts a regime informant into its ranks. Individuals with family members in the movement are also less likely to submit to incentives to turn on their families and become regime informants. To do so risks personal punishment from their family.

The civic voluntarism model of Verba et al. (1995) theorizes that variables that reduce the cost of participation make political participation more likely. Family support networks help overcome obstacles of activism. Viterna (2006) found many guerrilla fighters in El Salvador came from unbroken homes. Under political repression and social control conditions, unbroken homes provide better chances for a division of family labor to allow for political activism. Some activists interviewed had family that supported their work, and the pooled family income allowed the activists to engage in political activism. Rutten argues “activism requires contributions in money, goods and manpower that have to be accommodated somehow by the activists’ households, and these costs may set the limits to people’s activism” (2002: 168). This also suggests that families can pool their resources to allow an individual to struggle on their behalf.

Family institutions reduce the cost of an individual’s participation. Families help bridge the coordination issues rampant in authoritarian conditions. Family and friends gather for holidays and life events, such as funerals, providing legitimate opportunities for activists to discuss and organize future political activities. These gatherings are difficult for the regime to disallow, providing one of the best opportunities for holding political and planning discussions. Visiting relatives is a common enough occurrence, which helps opposition groups pass information to others in their networks.

Problematically, activist family networks are a small means of organizing opposition. This limits the types of political challenges an opposition can launch. An opposition relying on this institution will be constrained in its activities. For oppositions relying on family institutions to ensure its survival, small-scale activities are a more feasible undertaking.

Generations of protest

Opposition to authoritarian rule in Burma began following the military's coup in 1962. The historical narrative in Chapter 3 highlighted how each of Burma's large protests has roots in the protest before it. Family institutions provide an explanation of how these protests are linked to one another. One clue of continuity between generations is how the forms of protest have not changed significantly over time. The protest event analysis in Chapter 5 showed information distribution was a common event, one that comprised 34 percent (N=664) of activities between 1990 and 2008. But while the PEA is limited in the timeframe it covers, there is evidence that similar activities have occurred in the past. For example, records show that students passed leaflets commemorating the tenth anniversary of the destruction of the Rangoon University Students Union building on July 29, 1972.²²⁸ Political activist Z28 recalled how in the 1988 protests, community elders gave him pamphlets and leaflets to be distributed; he also knew these individuals had experience in the 1974 protests. Because records are not available prior to 1990, it is not possible to determine if pamphleteering occurs more or less than in the past, but it is not a novel form of protest. Similarly, the book clubs discussed in Chapter 5 have been popular with political activists since the colonial era. These activities provide an important organizing and information linkage between past, present, and future activists. The 'tools' of activism are articulated between generations of activists, facilitating continuation of similar kinds of protest over time.

²²⁸ *Burma Chronology of Events 1962 - 1989*, booklet by Asian Human Rights Commission, n.d. page 14.

Chapter 3's history of political action in Burma demonstrated how international influence and contact is limited in the country; there is little opportunity for activists to gain exposure to different forms of protest. Instead, the continuity of the kinds of political action between generations suggests internal networks are able to communicate the utility of types of protest action and then replicated in other locations. It also suggests this is the extent of action possible due to state-imposed constraints.

Retention of an Opposition

Judging by the amount of research on recruitment by resistance organizations, political science scholarship assumes recruitment is a critical activity for armed and nonviolent opposition groups. In authoritarian conditions, however, retention of members also supports the survival imperative of an opposition. A political opposition does not always seek to increase their membership; instead, opposition organizations build a sympathetic public that sympathizes with the movement and ideally, will temporarily mobilize when the time is right.

The emphasis on understanding recruitment and motivation for joining overshadows the question of why individuals stay within an opposition movement for a long time. Why participants remain in the opposition despite repression is an interesting question. It is suggested that long-term commitment is not possible (Lichbach 1998), but this research demonstrates that many people join opposition movements and then remain for long periods of time – from five to 20 to 40 years. How is this possible?

Organizational-support networks help counter the state's repression. In an environment of regime-imposed isolation, organizations play a critical role in creating a

community for which their members participate. Pro-democracy opposition in Burma is primarily organization-based, with great variance between different organization operations, fundraising, management and activities. It is ineffective to oppose the regime as an individual; numerous pro-democracy groups exist, including the above-ground pro-democracy political party the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Underground organizations, some declared illegal by the government, such as the All Burma Federation of Students Union (ABFSU), or those which choose to keep their members anonymous to provide an element of security to more safely conduct political activities, such as Generation Wave and the 2007 New Generation Students Union.

Organizations provide a sense of solidarity and shared fate to its members, while providing practical assistance to help members with needs such as food and shelter. This can be done from the central coffers; for example, in July 2010 NLD announced it sent 2.55 million Kyat [\$2,629 USD] to support the families of 605 political prisoners.²²⁹ Organizations can provide informal support, as activists visit the families of political prisoners to offer moral support. The organization helps direct the energy of activists who have had friends die or go to prison; several activists noted it was their duty to continue their political work on behalf of their imprisoned friends.

Regime persecution maintains resistance

The government's persecution of political activists after they have finished their prison terms in some ways is justified; many individuals continue their activities after their

release. Contrary to expectation, many of activists continue their resistance because regime persecution means they are unable to live normal lives. Regime persecution also helps to create a political activist identity.

Some interviewees discussed the constant monitoring and harassment they experienced following release from prison. They are not allowed to quietly return to a life of an ‘ordinary citizen,’ and thus have little to lose by being active again. If anything, they have the continued respect of their political peers to gain. Activists do not want to return to prison, but the primary reason to be careful is not the horror of prison, but that they were of little value to the movement from that location. Activist Z6, a member of an underground ethnic youth organization explained, “if you get arrested, it will delay your work.” Comparatively, none of the soldiers interviewed had been caught by *tatmadaw* or government, but many reported their families were harassed due to their participation in the armed struggle. This *tatmadaw* persecution of resistance soldiers’ families also serves as a motivator to remain in armed struggle. There is no retirement program for resistance soldiers, and those who choose to return to their villages are subject to punishment for their participation in a resistance army. The *tatmadaw* does not recognize former soldiers as noncombatants.

The government’s persecution of political activists is a principal factor in creating the identity of ‘political activist.’ Gurin, Miller, and Gurin’s (1980) concept of *stratum consciousness*, can explain participation in the face of punishment. *Stratum consciousness* is the politicization of a group identity. This includes a sense of a common belief that

229 Myint Maung, “NLD transfers 2.55 million Kyat for political prisoners,” *Mizzima News* (New Delhi, July 7, 2010). Exchange rate calculation based on 970 Kyat to \$1 USD as reported in *The Irrawaddy* July 14, 2010.

one's group is deprived of power and influence relative to the dominant group, the belief that disparities based on group membership are illegitimate, and the belief members of one's group should pool their resources to eliminate obstacles that affect them as a group. This definition of stratum consciousness is essentially an elaboration of elements comprising Simon and Klandermans' (2001) politicized collective identity. "Collective identity describes imagined as well as concrete communities, involves an act of perception and construction as well as the discovery of preexisting bonds, interests and boundaries," write Polletta and Jasper (2001: 298). It is not individual identity, and it is not automatically present just by sharing the same goal. One may dislike the others in the movement, but a collective identity acknowledges a sense of shared community in an opposition.

Catch-22: Organizational absorption in authoritarian setting

Survival of an opposition requires careful expansion of membership. Citizens interviewed lamented their rejection from joining the opposition due to being unknown to the movement. Because the *tatmadaw* uses informants to infiltrate organizations, it is rational to deny membership to unknown individuals. This leads to the non-recruitment of legitimately interested citizens willing to oppose the regime. Susceptibility to infiltration limits the ability of political groups, particularly longstanding ones, to recruit new, younger members.

With established opposition groups unable or unwilling to take in new members, individuals create new, small political organizations. The creation of new organizations fit

a niche interest and set of people.²³⁰ Instead, student politics – with its inherently transient population of people entering then graduating university – are able to use university institutions to form temporary, membership-shifting groups where a person's political activities end at graduation. The long history of student activism in Burma supports a temporary involvement in the political movement; an individual student's participation and responsibility only lasts the few years they are in school. Some individuals choose to remain active after graduation with their core friends, creating a political group that is no longer part of student mobilizing. The political (non-party) groups discussed in Chapter 5 provide a safe network of known sympathizers (alumni) to those interested in continuing political action after university. In Burma, student networks later remobilize as adult networks. For example, following the September 2007 protests, the opposition group Generation Wave formed, its members consisting of the alumni of a Rangoon university.

Security is not the only reason to deny entry. There is also an organizational responsibility to help members survive regime repression. Political organizations do not seek out new members because they cannot absorb more people. The limited resources of the opposition are a constraint to expanding membership. Including more people in the organization can stress the resources of the organization, which needs to provide help to its members and conduct oppositional activities. Political activities require funds for transportation, communication and safe locations in which to meet. Furthermore, Beer (1997) reports the NLD takes its winning of the 1990 election seriously as a mandate to govern and assist the country. The organization's ethos is it should work for the people, not

230 This process also occurs within the exile political community. With similar security concerns and limited ability to feed and house members, they are unable to absorb every political refugee that might be interested

ask the people to help them to remove the government. It may not be looking to increase its membership.

Policy Implications

There are important policy implications that stem from this understanding of how social control and political repression affect recruitment, organization and activities of opposition groups. The implications discussed here assume a continued policy of support for democracy and democratic transition by international governments.

Stable authoritarian environments pose greater obstacles to political transition than hybrid regimes where the presence of institutional entry points makes it more feasible for an opposition to challenge the government. Considering only political repression, without considering the larger patterns of social control, presents inaccurate calculations of risk and irrelevant programs to promote political transition. Burma's military and government has not been idle in the last 20 years, and has instead consolidated its power and its members enriched themselves from monies earned from extractive industries. The government purposefully creates a climate that does not tolerate political opposition. The challenges facing the Burmese opposition are grossly underestimated compared to oppositions operating in hybrid countries. This inaccuracy leads to overemphasizing support only for challenge activities, when an opposition simultaneously needs support for its survival imperative. Keeping expectations in check might also curb donor fatigue on intractable countries.

in working with them. This is one of the reasons of the expanding number of political exile organizations.

From this perspective, the presence of a multitude of opposition groups is not always a result of oppositional fracturing due to infighting or different visions. The multitude of opposition groups is a necessary diversification by people wishing to oppose the regime but who do not possess personal networks needed to join existing opposition organizations. While different perspectives within the opposition movement exist, the international community should not solely equate the mushrooming of organizations, mandates and leaders with disunity and fracturing. Oppositional plurality is in part due to the authoritarian conditions in which the opposition operates.

Aid programs often emphasize the number of individuals recruited and trained to be active opponents of the state. While cultivating new activists can remain a aim of interested democracy-promoters, it is equally necessary to retain trained, talented activists. Support is needed to assist oppositional survival under authoritarian regimes. Providing assistance that allows activists to continue their work, despite the risks, may be more significant in the long run. Future assistance should consider ways to help political activists overcome personal impediments to remaining active in the opposition. Humanitarian assistance targeted to political activists will help them continue their work despite the regime's repression. In addition, small-scale activities are a safer alternative to larger demonstrations. Except in the rarest occasions, small, decentralized opposition organizations cannot reasonably arrange large demonstrations.

Finally, if activist family networks characterize opposition groups in authoritarian states, it is useful to recognize this is a result of the context and not necessarily a sign of corruption. This also suggests that if/when, the political context liberalizes, and security reasons are no longer paramount, there will be a need to facilitate democratic decision-

making and curb the tendency towards familial political dynasties. While there is an expectation that democracy movements will behave democratically within the movement and in later governance, they have little experience operating in a liberal environment. Their institutions, activities and decision-making faculties are adapted to survival under repression. They too will need to adapt to a liberal environment and become comfortable with the presence of a loyal opposition.

Implications for Future Research

Data collected for this dissertation provides a base layer for future examination of the ideas presented in this dissertation, and addresses other questions of value to the discipline. An immediate project is to apply this model of repression and activism to another authoritarian country to see if the patterns are portable. This would require funding in order to collect additional original data in new locations. A more realistic next step is to incorporate more information gained from the interviews of exile activists. While some of their testimony was included, much was not due to time and space constraints. A future publication should better incorporate the perspective of exile activists, many of whom who have been active for over 20 years. Their interviews would contribute to a piece examining long-term participation.

Agents of social movements address non-state targets, such as businesses or attempts to change societal norms. This research can be a foundation to examine the role of Burma's opposition movements in a society beyond just their impact upon the state. Jasper (1997) argues what movements do is a better basis for evaluation than just end-goal success, and data collected here could address this hypothesis. These ideas regarding the

presence of multiple imperatives of an opposition group should be expanded in a future paper.

This dissertation argues definitions of political events commonly used by political science researchers are too reliant on demonstrations as a measurement for political action. Many events important to an opposition are excluded from contemporary analysis, leaving a less accurate portrayal and understanding of political activities in country. A short paper could address this methodological concern in more depth, comparing the analytical ramifications of inclusion versus exclusion. Research agendas on the interrelation of nonviolent and armed struggle, stable authoritarianism and democracy movements should be pursued.

Interrelation of nonviolent and armed struggle

This paper indirectly questions, but does not explicitly answer, whether social movements and armed opposition groups are comparable entities. On the surface, there are similarities in recruitment, organizing, risks associated with participation, and overlapping activities. A future paper will address this more directly. The reasons soldiers and activists joined and remained in their respective organizations are remarkably similar. Arguably, an army's rules, rigid conduct codes and hierarchy suggest different operations to meet objectives. An in-depth comparison is in order to make the distinction in the literature.

Despite growing understanding of why individuals join opposition movements, armed or non-violent, little empirical work examines why individuals decide to join one organization instead of another. The only piece examining recruitment for both types of oppositions, Viterna (2006) argues nonviolent action is a gateway to eventual armed

resistance; armed groups recruit individuals from political/social organizations sympathetic to the objectives of the armed struggle. A future paper will utilize the interview research completed for the dissertation to argue the relationship goes both directions, as insurgents also join non-violent organizations as a means to continue to oppose the state. Non-violent and armed strategies and the groups pursuing them should not be viewed as 'either/or.' Rather, as events in Burma highlight, non-violent and violent oppositions complement one another and provide alternative options for continued resistance when they grow dissatisfied with their initial opposition location.

Non-violent and armed struggle are not mutually exclusive, and some mixed use might be effective. This research included both concepts under a broader resistance umbrella, but this should be explored further. As shown in the historical narrative of Chapter 3, activists and citizens used violence against the state and its representatives in 1988 and 2007. Political Activist Z29 was a staunch believer in non-violent resistance and did not fight back when he was beaten during the 2003 Dawu payin massacre. However, he explained that during the September 2007 protests, "after the Pakkoku monks crackdown, monks were beaten; the activists destroyed the supermarket grocery shops, and the station of the USDA. So the USDA senior people were really afraid." Mixed use of armed and nonviolent tactics are present in Burma and elsewhere, but often ignored by researchers and journalists.

A paper to be presented at the American Political Science Association's 2011 conference will draw on this dissertation research to demonstrate how individuals come to join political and armed opposition groups, highlighting similar paths to both kinds of participation in Burma. Most new recruits do not choose between armed or non-violent

groups for ideological reasons, but select organizations due to institutional opportunities available. Furthermore, many activists comfortably transitioned between nonviolent and violent organizations. In part because initial recruitment is not due to pre-existing preferences regarding use of violence, an actor's ability to transition from violent to non-violent organizations ultimately lays a foundation for unusually long-term commitment to the anti-state opposition.

Stable authoritarianism

Ottaway (2003) argues for recognizing authoritarian states for what they are, and not adding adjectives to imply a country is transitioning to democracy when it is clearly not. Burma is a stable authoritarian state, and can be used to examine existing hypotheses of authoritarian control. Future research could apply Lust-Okar's (2005) theory about how authoritarian regimes use government institutions to pit opposition groups against one another. It may be possible to document how the SPDC sets the different opposition groups against one another to maintain its advantage. In November 2010, the SPDC held elections for citizens to elect a new national parliament. While no observers believe this process was free or fair, there is some argument about whether this new institution could be leveraged to liberalize the country. Some go so far as to argue the formation of parliament signals the beginning of a slow transition. There is opportunity to do qualitative empirical research based on Gandhi's (2009) argument that legislatures within autocracies serve as a forum for an opposition to gain some policy concessions from the ruling regime. The historical and repression chapters in this work provide a baseline for examining future political trends of authoritarian rule in Burma.

There is a tendency to assume state power and presence is uniform throughout a country; but Chapter 4's analysis hints that the Burma A ~~my~~ *Cuts* strategy is implemented differently between the Burman-majority center and the ethnic periphery. Government control over ethnic states is not total. Callahan (2007) examines three variances of political control in Burma. Future work could further examine how state power differs within a state. If magnitude of state control varies within the country, activities could differ in other parts of the country. More data is needed to appropriately address this question. This could lead to a comparison of the political and social movement opportunities available in the various states and divisions

Furthermore, the SPDC's attempts at control do not end abruptly at its borders, and there are ways it attempts to ensure compliance from those outside the country as well. This question is touched upon by researchers interested in transnational activism, although typically that scholarship examines how external actors attempt to influence the government of Burma. A regime can influence how people outside of the country monitor their behavior to conform to the state's expectations; conformity occurs despite the state's inability to inflict violence on individuals outside the country. For example, interviews with migrants and exile activists pointed to difficulties in recruiting economic migrants to the political opposition in exile. Migrant laborers are afraid of jeopardizing their return or risking reprisals against family still inside Burma. This leads to self-censorship and compliance even when not under the immediate surveillance of the regime.

Prospect theory, including the theory of relative gains (Kahneman and Tversky 1979), could be used to explain how international organizations, as well as local organizations, become compliant to the regime to the point of compromising the integrity

of their missions and international credibility. The government allows international NGOs and businesses to invest in the country, but then begins threatening to remove their access to populations in need of assistance. As organizations want to retain access, they become compliant to the regime. Businesses too become compliant and supportive of regime policies for fear of losing their investments. Fear of losing (relative) gains might explain how the regime gains and maintains compliance over international actors in Burma.

Democracy movements: something different?

Press utilizes the term “resistance movement” to describe how social movements, civil society and oppositional political parties collectively push for democratization in an authoritarian setting (2004: 17-18). This addresses the problem of the exclusion of political parties from some definitions of social movements (for example, Tarrow 1994). Resistance movement as a term may be apt, but it is worth considering whether democracy movements, a more specific demand than simply ‘resistance,’ represent a unique category of activism. Democracy movements appear to be a modern phenomenon evolved from centuries of social movement and revolution. Demands made by Burma’s opposition share similarities with the demands made by citizen movements that attempt to expand civil liberties. At the same time, it appropriates post-modern values of new social movements, and conducts activities in ways reminiscent of late-nineteenth century labor movements.

Most researchers compare current democracy movements to modern civil rights campaigns pressing for the extension of citizenship rights within an existing polity. Despite the frequent comparison, the presence of institutions of government and government allies are important features of civil rights campaigns. Democracy movements operating in stable

authoritarian states, however, typically do not have institutions or allies within the state to successfully press claims. Demands made by democracy movements, including claims for political and civil rights and limitations of state authority, are more similar to the revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The presence of armed groups solidifies the comparison to 'older' political transition and revolutionary movements. Democracy movements have distinct differences from citizenship social movements.

Contemporary democracy movements incorporate some elements of post-citizenship movements, also termed new social movements. Whereas 'old' social movements attempted to gain access to the state through parliamentary politics and focus mainly on economic redistribution, 'new' social movements focus increasingly on issues like social identity, culture, lifestyle and human rights concerns. Such movements tend to be defined by their focus on post-material values, their detachment from an identifiable political ideology, and their use of novel and unconventional methods of political action (Todd and Taylor 2004: 19). Democracy movements in authoritarian states share similarities with both citizenship and post-citizenship movements.

The modern protest tactics used by post-citizenship movements influence democracy movements. As discussed earlier, reformist organizations challenge the regime's policies and often consider their efforts part of the democracy movement. Post-modern issues and values are contested in present-day democracy movements. In addition, because democracy movements are not 'constituent-based' with an identifiable demographic (such as race or gender), they tend to include people from different parts of society and members of ethnic minority groups. This makes cohesion within the democracy movement more difficult; consider how democracy movements must determine which

relevant cultural cues and histories to appropriate to a broad base of support. In this regard, democracy movements represent something more akin to the post-citizenship movements, which have to work harder at creating movement identities than movements based on race, class or gender.

Finally, Burma's democracy movement has similarities to early trade unionism during the industrial revolution. The ground conditions in which these groups organize is strikingly similar: state repression is used to maintain the status quo, there are high rates of poverty among worker (activist) populations, and the family plays a central role in facilitating protest participation. The labor unions purposefully addressed conditions to make resistance feasible for members. According to Wals, unions "considered improving working conditions their foremost task... but in addition created insurance programs to guarantee benefits in case of illness, unemployment or death" (2003: 168). Activities of the union included giving mortgages and lending to other movements, holding social events and running cooperative shops where discounted food was available (Yeo 2002). Similarly, unions struggled with members supporting their goals, but when they needed members to give more time or money for demonstrations, life conditions precluded them from doing so. According to Yeo, "however much the movement tried to help families in distress [due to arrests for labor activism], the lesson taken was that repression should be avoided if at all possible. Thus Chartism, like other early labor movements went to great lengths to try to keep themselves legal as well as to occupy the moral high ground" (2002: 32). Democracy movements in authoritarian conditions address similar challenges, and future work could tease out these ideas more thoroughly.

Conclusion

The authoritarian government in Burma tries to eliminate opposition to its rule by using political repression and social control. An opposition's imperative is to challenge the government using non-violent and/or violent strategies of resistance. Resistance under authoritarianism utilizes all options on the continuum of strategies available to people and from which are selected. Oppositions pursuing a non-violent strategy to challenge a regime have a range of choices including exit, everyday forms of resistance, institutional political action, protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent interventions. Armed resistance remains another option for pressing claims against the state.

Resistance in Burma utilizes offensive and defensive approaches. Challenging the regime is not enough for an opposition under authoritarianism. For an opposition to continue to challenge the regime, it must also survive the conditions of authoritarianism. The activities of the opposition's members demonstrate a survival imperative. Activities allow an opposition to signal solidarity, transfer information and build a public sympathetic to their cause of regime change. Survival also means utilizing alternative institutions of organizing when the regime dismantles traditional ones – such as universities and monasteries. Activist family networks, along with witnessing repression, play a large role in recruitment and long-term participation in a political opposition operating under authoritarian constraints. The opposition's need for survival affects recruitment and retention of members.

Despite a focus on demonstrations in social movement literature, this research shows how small scale activities enable opposition movements to survive and challenge the

regime despite the constraints imposed by the authoritarian context. Small-scale events are as critical to oppositional survival under authoritarian conditions.

These results challenge assumptions in several political science subfields, and insists future research address how movements challenge *and* survive authoritarianism. This research demonstrates that while opposition groups operate in conditions imposed by the state, they are not waiting for political opportunities to appear. Rather, oppositions use activities to create their own opportunities.

Finally, these results imply a need to adapt international policies to provide relevant support for political oppositions operating in these conditions. Survival is a key imperative of opposition movements; supporting nascent and ongoing opposition to authoritarian rule requires understanding the twin imperatives of challenge and survival.

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Appendix 1: Interviewee Selection Process and Question Guides

Semi-structured interviews with political activists, resistance soldiers, ordinary citizens, and exile activists were a primary source of information for this work. Interviews provided first-hand knowledge of events and organizations and specifically addressed the questions regarding motivation and retention.

There is no ideal number of interviews to complete but other works employing this method provided useful guidelines. Bob and Nepstad (2007), for example, interviewed 40 movement leaders to understand changes in the Ogoni liberation movement after a leaders' assassination; Wood (2003) interviewed approximately 200 *campesinos* in El Salvador for her work that introduced political action as a result of 'pleasure in agency.' In her book about living under authoritarian rule in Burma, Fink (2001) interviewed 150 individuals from a variety of sectors, including migrant workers, students, soldiers, civil servants, businessmen, and traders. For this research, 141 anonymous interviews were completed.

The researcher worked with 28 organizations and individuals to identify interviewees, reaching populations not normally interviewed. Four categories of people were interviewed for this research: political activists, resistance soldiers, ordinary citizens and exile activists.

Political Activists. Political activists were interviewed to understand why they choose to do the dangerous work of politics in Burma. The label of activist, and therefore who to include in this study under this category, followed the guidelines established by Searle-Chatterjee (1999). It is based on three criteria: 1) self-ascription, whereby

interviewees label themselves and self-identify as activists; 2) the interviewees have a participatory role in Burma's pro-democracy movement;²³¹ and 3) substantial amounts of their time and energy is expended in pro-democracy activities. Thirty-two political activists were interviewed for this research.²³²

Political activists are individuals currently or very recently (within the calendar year) pursuing non-violent action inside Burma to defy the SPDC government, its policies, or in support of transition to democracy. While interviewees considered themselves to be 'democracy activists,' they are included in this category if they were engaging in political activities inside Burma that posed a risk of imprisonment if the SPDC discovered their work.²³³ These individuals identify as activists, conduct activities that are risky to do, but some are not as overtly political as others. Some activities conducted by this group address social issues or challenge government policies, but do not challenge the right of Burma's military government to be in power. The importance of reformist and

231 Not necessarily affiliated with an organization but more than a silent supporter.

232 Interviews were done with political activists from a variety of organizations working above and underground in Burma, including members of the National League for Democracy, Generation Wave, All Burma Young Monks Union, All Arakan Students and Youth Committee, Pa'O National Liberation Organization, All Burma Federation of Students Unions, Mon Youth Progressive Organization and 2007 New Generation Students Union. Several other organization members were interviewed, but as above ground groups that explicitly state they are not political (to limit harassment by SPDC authorities), it is not possible to mention the names at this time. Some individuals were active in social/community organizations, environmental groups and women's rights movements.

233 One individual, for example, called herself a 'social worker,' a leader in education community projects. Yet after some probing during the interview, she admitted to bringing copies of an alternative democratic constitution into Burma and distributing them. This work wasn't a habit, but she had chosen to do this several times, and she admitted being willing to do in the future for important documents. Other individuals, particularly Mon activists, were more focused on promoting culture and Mon language literacy programs – but since this is only nominally legal (and subject to local authorities not allowing it), these individuals are included in the political activist category.

revolutionary activities, and their place in Burma's movement, are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Resistance soldiers. Interviews were conducted with individuals currently serving in armed, anti-state resistance groups. These organizations challenge the sovereignty of the SPDC; several groups hold their own territory in Burma, but the square mileage under their control is diminishing. Others operate solely as guerrilla movements without territorial holdings. Interviews were with active soldiers and leaders within these anti-SPDC organizations. Some interviews are with individuals from the administrative, medical and political wings of these armed organizations. They may not be on the battle field, but they have received military training and support the mandate of their organization to pursue armed struggle as a means to challenge the state in Burma.

Resistance soldiers do not include members of the armed forces from Burma's neighboring countries. For example this excludes Thai and Indian military personnel that have clashed with the SPDC *tatmadaw* in the years of this study. The interviews with the two soldiers who defected from the *tatmadaw* are not included in this category either, as when they made the decision to join the army they were loyal to the regime; these interviews are included in the ordinary citizen category. Thirty-one interviews with members of armed resistance groups were completed.²³⁴

Ordinary citizens. Interviews with 'ordinary citizens' provide comparison of the differences between activists, resistance soldiers and citizens not motivated to participate in

234 Interviews include soldiers and leaders from the New Mon State Party (the only ceasefire group included), All Burma Student's Defense Force, Shan State Army – South, Arakan Liberation Army, the Karen National Liberation Army, the Naga National Council, and the Karen National Defense Organization.

anti-state or pro-democracy activities. The term ‘ordinary citizen’²³⁵ describes people who are not involved in politics or armed struggle. Members of this category were selected because it was assumed they were not politically active. This assumption held as no one interviewed for this category identified as a political or exile activist.²³⁶ Ordinary citizens, even if they mention interested in politics, do not consider themselves political activists or see themselves as ‘doing’ politics. Many, by their own admission, were not very interested in politics. Most disapproved of the military regime.

Thirty-nine ordinary citizens were interviewed, including refugees, migrant workers, former *tatmadaw* soldiers, and students. Interviews were done from several locations on the Thailand-Burma border as well as Bangkok and Chiang Mai, Thailand, two large cities with Burmese populations.

Exile activists. Interviews were also done with exile activists operating outside of Burma who provide critical support to the political activists noted above. ‘Exile activists’

235 The term ‘ordinary citizen’ describes people who are not involved in politics or armed struggle. I’ve struggled with finding the best term for this group. Ordinary citizen is appropriate because numerous interviewees (and several different translators), described themselves using Burmese terms that literally mean ordinary citizen. Specifically, they referred to themselves as ‘yo-yo nai ngan tha’ and ‘thar mah ngan tha’; ‘yo yo’ and ‘thar mahn’ both mean ordinary citizen. Alternatively, labels such as ‘non-political’ or ‘non-activist’ did not fit, because some interviews revealed that individuals were interested in politics; a handful had even done small political acts such as writing and singing folk songs about independence, but didn’t view themselves as activists (Searle-Chatterjee’s 1999 requirement of self-ascription). A discussion with a staff member from the Karen Human Rights Group highlighted the problem of defining someone by the term ‘non-political’: the term implies an absence of agency or interests. In reality many of these ‘ordinary citizens’ had chosen to exit Burma. KHRG (2008) argues that a ‘village agency’ of small acts of noncooperation and negotiation are present in Burma, a concept that follows the ideas in James C. Scott’s *Weapons of the Weak* (KHRG 2008).

236 I use the term citizen very loosely. Citizen in this case it just means citizen of Burma, regardless of whether a person had documents or identity cards. Many do not – it is extremely difficult for citizens of the ethnic areas of Burma to obtain identity cards. Most of these interviewees came from Burma, were born there, and were intending (some hoping) to return to their homes inside the country. Members of this category were not politically active. Individuals dubbed ‘ordinary citizens,’ even if interested in politics, do not describe themselves as a ‘political’ or see themselves as ‘doing’ politics. This assumption held and no one selected for this category turned out to be a political activist. If they had, I would have moved that interview into the more appropriate category.

referenced in the text are individuals who spend the majority of their time working within the political movement for democracy from a position of exile, usually a bordering country. Exile activists are defined as 1) individuals who spend time and personal resources supporting democracy movement activities inside and outside of Burma, and 2) originating from Burma but no longer living in the country. Most exiles cannot return to Burma for fear of immediate arrest by the SPDC. Almost all said they intend to return to Burma as soon as the conditions would allow them to safely return. Thirty-nine exile activists were interviewed.

Interviewee selection

Probability sampling to select a representative sample of individuals to interview was not possible in this dissertation. No independent list is available of the population of activists or citizens who come out of Burma from which one could draw a sampling frame, so it is not possible to select a random sample of those individuals who come out of the country. A combination of snowball and quota non-random sampling techniques was used to select interview subjects. Snowball sampling, also called sampling by referral, is “useful when it is difficult or impractical to obtain a list of names for sampling,” according to Fink (2003: 23). Sampling by referral is also useful when “members of a scattered minority [ethnic] population comprises a small fraction of the population in a larger area,” according to Welch (1975:237). Activists from Burma regularly visit bordering countries to meet with exile organizations; after the researcher met with leaders from exile organizations to discuss the research, some organizations and individuals organized interviews with their colleagues visiting Thailand.

Sampling by referral had the critical advantage of increasing the likelihood that questions were answered accurately by respondents. Question threat, or recognizing that some sensitive questions are “psychologically disturbing to this or that respondent,” is best minimized by sensitive interviewing techniques and building trust between the researcher and the interviewee (Foddy 1993: 119). Question threat was considered in how questions were written and ordered in the question guide, with sensitive questions worded in a way that lessened potential embarrassment or discomfort for the interviewee.

Question threat also relates to the fear of sanctions from even doing the interview in the first place. According to Foddy, “respondents must be able to trust the researcher not to use the information against them and define the request [for information/questions answered] to be legitimate” (1993: 12; emphasis in the original). Sampling by referral has the advantage of helping interviewees trust the researcher and the project.²³⁷

Sampling by referral has the disadvantage that recommendations may produce a biased sample over-representing activists of certain education, social class and income. It can also lead to under-sampling isolated members of the movement and oversampling those with more extensive contacts and acquaintances (Welch 1975). To limit the

237 Establishing trust with Burmese political and armed organizations was fundamental to being allowed to interview their colleagues visiting from Burma. The difficulty of trust building was mitigated by previous work as the Burma program officer at the International Republican Institute. Personal relationships with leaders of several Burmese organizations developed during 20 visits to the Thailand-Burma border between 2004 and the start of this research in 2009. Trust and a record of discretion were necessary precursors to the access required to conduct this research. Research was conducted from various locations in Thailand and Burma August 2009 - March 2010. During the time of research I was a PhD candidate at the George Washington University, and no longer affiliated with IRI. This change of status was well known during the research.

oversampling of any one organization’s activist network inside Burma, the researcher worked with 28 organizations and individuals to identify ²³⁸ interviewees.

By coupling snowball sampling with quota sampling techniques, where the population is divided into carefully classified subgroups (i.e. activists and non-activists, men and women, young and old), interviews are representative of proportions of subgroups within the population. This method is “practical if reliable data exists to describe proportions within society” (A. Fink 2002: 23). Parts of the BSPP government’s 1983 census are published in Steinberg (2001). To demonstrate this statistically non-representative stratified sampling, a table of cells is created, each representing a category of individual in which data is to be collected (Trott 1986). Starting with a list of independent variables relevant to the study, a large chart tracks demographics of the interviewees, providing an important check on data collection. It helps the researcher self-correct as they conduct interviews, and ensure under-represented populations are included. Figure 5 shows the distribution of interviewees in this research.

Figure 5: Distribution of interviews by category, urbanity, gender and age

Urban/rural		Urban															
Burman/Ethnic Minority		Burman								Ethnic							
Gender		M				F				M				F			
Age		Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+	Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+	Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+	Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+
Urban subtotals		1	8	14	6	0	3	2	2	1	17	9	4	1	12	1	1
Urban/rural		Rural															
Burman/Ethnic Minority		Burman								Ethnic							
Gender		M				F				M				F			
Age		Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+	Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+	Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+	Under 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51+
Rural Subtotals		1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	20	11	10	0	9	1	1
GRAND TOTALS		2	8	15	6	0	4	3	2	2	37	20	14	1	21	2	2

238 Chapter 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the interviewees.

Location of interviews

Members of all four types of groups have access to safe areas on borderlines of Burma, and were accessible to the researcher. For the safety and ensured confidentiality of the interviewees, all interviews were conducted in Thailand or in areas along the Thailand-Burma border not controlled by Burma's SPDC government.

Previous research has been done from inside Burma on a variety of topics: Burma's military history before 1962 (Callahan 2003), political situation (Steinberg 2001) and history (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2006). For this dissertation the researcher traveled to Burma in November 2009; observations from this visit are reported in the chapter on repression and control. However, no interviews were done during the visit because the questions were too sensitive to ask inside the country. It might have been possible to interview a few political activists from inside Burma, but the risk posed to these individuals would have been great. Interviews with ordinary citizens in Burma would have been unethical, as the risk of inadvertently calling suspicion upon non-activists by the authorities who would call into question why a foreigner wanted to ask questions. Even if interviews had been possible, it was not advisable to record the interviews (as was done for all interviews) because the recordings could be seized by the authorities at any time. Carrying written notes posed the same problem, and the richness of detail received in other interviews would not be captured.

It is possible to interview people representing each of the four dependent variable categories from locations outside of Burma. The Thai-Burma Border Consortium estimates that of the two million migrant workers in Thailand, 80 percent hail from Burma (TBBC

2008: 8). Some of these individuals are seeking political asylum, but many are economic refugees that have not participated in pro-democracy political activism. Over 143,000 Burmese people reside in Thailand's refugee camps providing an audience for interviews and over 80 percent of Thailand's migrant laborers are of Burmese origin (Amnesty International 2005). Interviews were done with migrant workers and refugees, as well as Burmese students attending university in Thailand, three convicted criminals that escaped forced portering for the *tatmadaw*, and two *tatmadaw* soldiers who deserted their posts.

Democratic activists frequently come out of Burma for trainings and communication with Thailand border-based exile organizations. It was possible to interview activists from this relatively safe location. The political activist interviews were conducted from the Thailand-Burma border, as individuals came out of the country for key networking meetings and trainings. In this case, inside activists were determined as 1) those whose visit to Thailand was temporary, but no timeframe was established for how long 'temporary' included, as a myriad of variables outside the individuals control determined when they would return to Burma; 2) at the time of discussion they had no intention of settling in Thailand or elsewhere, 3) had not joined any exile organizations, and 4) were planning an immediate return to the country with the intention of continuing political activities. Whether they continued political work after they returned to Burma is impossible to determine, as it was not safe for the researcher to follow up with these individuals once they returned home.

Resistance soldiers are positioned in the Thailand/Burma borderline areas; the borderline hosts several resistance headquarter locations, training camp sites, and offer respite for soldiers who come back from the front-lines of the resistance. Almost all

interviews with exile activists were with those working in Thailand. Exiles in Thailand playing key supportive roles to the political activists inside Burma, but a couple of interviews were done with exile community members living in the Washington D.C. area. Washington has a large activist population, as several leaders of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) currently reside in several towns in Maryland. Others have also settled in the area.

There are implications of primarily doing interviews outside of Burma, both positive and negative. Positively, citizens outside of Burma, and the researcher too, were less worried the conversation was being overheard by regime informants (Fink 2001). Personal security outside Burma is much easier to navigate, although caution was still taken to ensure data and sources remained secure.

There are drawbacks to doing interviews outside of Burma. a. Burmese citizens outside of Burma at some point made a choice to leave, a choice that differentiates them from the 50 million people remaining in the country. This choice implies potential for differences in attitudes from the rest of the population that remained home; the concept of 'exit' introduced in Chapter 5 further addresses this form of passive resistance.

For individuals who have been out of the country for a long time, their motivation may be different than those currently undertaking political activities inside Burma. This dissertation touches on the differences between exile activists and activists remaining in country but primarily focuses on political activists that have not settled outside of Burma but are in Thailand on short visits. The sample technique outlined above helped ensure variation within the dependent variable.

Translation of interviews

Most interviews were conducted with the assistance of a translator. If it appeared an interviewee had enough English-language ability to understand the questions and express opinions thoughtfully, the interview was conducted in English. A significant number of the exile activist interviews were in English; included in the sample are several leaders of exile political organizations. These individuals use English in their work of communicating to donors, the media, and with the ethnic groups that do not speak Burmese. One interview with an inside activist was in English but with a translator present, and only a couple of times did the interviewee ask for assistance in clarification of a word or a sentence. Unfortunately, in another interview I misgauged the interviewee's English skills, and had to stop the interview because it was painfully clear we couldn't understand one another. The 20 minutes of that interview is not included as one of the interviews in this work.

Most researchers would choose one translator and work with them for the entirety of a research project. This was not possible in this work for several reasons. While many people in Burma speak Burmese, not all people do and not all at levels in which they are comfortable or confident in expressing their opinions. It was necessary to conduct some interviews in the languages of Rakhine, Pa-O and different Karen dialects. Very few translators can speak more than one of the languages of Burma.

Secondly, there are few professional-grade translators available for hire on the Thailand-Burma border. The few individuals who do translation work well are usually connected with a political organization that allows them to work on the side to earn extra money. The problem with relying on one translator is none are available for the entire time needed to interview 140 people. Interviewees were also scattered across Thailand, and

required significant travel up and down the borders was required. Secondly, using one translator meant trusting another person to being exposed to the entirety of the collected interview data. Worse, interviewees were unlikely to participate in an interview if they did not know the translator.

These were issues anticipated in the research plan. When contacting organizations about setting up interviews, the request included asking the organization to provide a translator with whom they felt the interviewee would be secure. This resolved several security issues posed by translation with sensitive populations. Interviews were typically done at the location of the interviewee as transporting them to another location was not advisable due to their illegal status in Thailand. If they were caught by police they could potentially be deported back to Burma.

Using different translators affected the work product in positive and negative ways. Positively, new translators had to listen to the questions asked; translators who think they know the question because they've heard it before, often begin translating too soon, and miss subtle changes questions. Regularly switching translators increases confidence that the interview questions followed the order ordered by the researcher. This often made the translations more conversational. By using translators who were familiar to the interviewee, the level of comfort for the interviewee was higher. The translators were of the same community as the interviewee, which meant they could more easily set the interviewee at ease.

Negatively, working with a variety of people required adaptation to new translators' abilities. Questions had to be adapted to meet the level of each translator. One or two translators were not as qualified as expected but an alternative was not possible; this meant

the questions were adapted to meet the skill level of the translator. Translation can significantly affect the quality of the interview and with some of the translators the nuance of some questions was lost. Other questions were changed from their original intent. This was a known hazard using this means of data collection.

Every interview is in transcript form, and can be verified how the questions and answers were stated. Each question was not asked exactly the same with every interviewee. The questionnaire served as a guide, not a definitive list of questions, so even with the best of translators follow up questions were used to better understand an interviewee's train of thought.

Every interviewee was instructed prior to the interview that they could decline to answer specific questions, or cancel the interview. None cancelled, and only one person declined to answer one question. Some of the answers do not answer the question at hand – this is not necessarily an issue of translation. The transcripts show, some questions were rephrased repeatedly, and still no answer was forthcoming. This is most likely due to that in Burmese society evasiveness is more polite than declining to answer a question.

Interview question guides

Interviews of activists, soldiers and citizens followed an IRB-approved question guide, with variances in the guides depending on the audience.²³⁹ The question guide was a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions provided rich information about personal experiences and attitudes, important events and activities in

²³⁹ Interview guides are included in Appendix 2.

respondents' personal history, discussion of democratic principles, opinions regarding the international community, political opinions, attitudes about armed conflict and non-violent struggle, generational influences, and familial connections within the pro-democracy movement and armed struggle.

Questions also addressed what types of political activities activists, soldiers, and citizens participated in recent years, what age they began political activities or joined the revolution, and whether they had been arrested or sent to prison. Closed-ended questions primarily addressed interviewees demographic and socio-economic backgrounds, including age, gender, ethnicity, number of family members, and geographic area of Burma they lived,²⁴⁰ all questions meant to provide understanding of individual placement within society. Demographic questions were standardized and asked of all participants, allowing for comparability of demographic data within the dependent variable categories of political activist, exile activists, resistance soldiers and ordinary citizens. All four question guides were translated into Burmese script, and a copy brought to each interview. If the translator had a question about how to phrase a question, he was able to use the Burmese language guide as a reference point.

240 Exact locations was not asked of the participants; the question is one that makes many interviewees uncomfortable due to the potential risk if data got into the wrong hands. Some interviewees offered their name of the town or village, and this was recorded in hand notes, but kept relatively vague for security reasons. All interviewees were asked if they were from urban or rural areas, and what division or state in which they reside. This was ambiguous enough to not put the interviewee at risk, while allowing for some understanding of the geographical diversity of the interviewees.

Appendix 2: Interview Guides

Activist Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.

My name is Linnea Beatty, and I am a researcher from the George Washington University, in the United States. I am meeting and interviewing up to 200 people as part of a research project on Burma. Our translator was provided by your host organization.

The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. Specifically, I am researching differences in attitudes between people who are politically active inside and outside of Burma, people who are involved with the armed movements or armed struggle. You were selected for this study because you are currently politically active inside Burma.

This interview will be done in two parts. The first part of the interview consists of 35 questions about your political experience inside and outside of Burma. The purpose of recording our conversation is so I can listen again later, to what you have said and compare your answers to those of other people who answered the same questions. I am interested in patterns of responses, not how one person answers any certain question. I will not attribute anything you say during our interview to you specifically. I will not share this recording with any other people or organization, and it will be destroyed after the research is completed.

The second part of the interview consists of 9 questions to help me understand your demographic background. The answers to these questions I will hand write in a separate notebook. By keeping your demographic information separate, I am attempting to lower the possibility of linking your answers to your identity. At no time will I record your name or description in this interview.

The interview will take about 90 minutes. If any questions make you feel uneasy, you are allowed to tell me you prefer not to answer that question and we will go on to the next question. You are also allowed to stop and cancel the interview at any time.

I do hope you will find the experience of being interviewed enjoyable. And thank you for participating in this research project.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

ACTIVIST INTERVIEW PART ONE: (audio recording begins here)

[Interviewer] I am now going to turn on the Audio recorder, and will record our conversation until I tell you I have turned off the recorder.

(Audio recording begins here/no written recording of these answers)

Questions on Burma/situation

- How would you describe the current situation inside Burma?
- What is the root cause of Burma's problems?
- Can you tell me what is your hope for a future Burma?
 - o [if democracy is mentioned...] What will democracy in Burma look like?
 - o How would the normal people benefit?
- What are the objectives of your organization?
- How will you reach these goals?

- What successes do you feel your group has already accomplished?
- Do you think any governments or NGOs are helping people inside Burma?
 - o How do they help?
 - o Can you name any specific organizations or governments?
- Will the SPDC compromise, or join in tripartite dialogue? Under what conditions?
- Do you think Burma will become democratic in your lifetime? Why or why not?

Personal beginnings/entrance into politics

- Are/were your parents involved in the political/democracy movements?
- When did you begin political activities?
- How old were you? How did it start?
- How did you come to be involved in Burma's democracy movement?
- Do you remember your first political act – what was it?

- Why don't more Burmese people actively resist the SPDC?
- How risky is it for you to do political activities?
- Was there a time period when political activities were easier or less risky to do?
- Have you ever been part of the armed resistance in Burma?
 - o If yes, what made you change to non-violent action?
 - o If no, why did you not join these groups?
- What do you enjoy about being an activist? What do you dislike?

Family

- Are there individuals in your family that know you are doing political activities?
 - o Do they approve or disapprove of your choice?
- Are/were your parents interested in politics?

- [what did they do that you know they were interested? for example, did they talk about politics at the dinner table, did they serve as elected members of Parliament or local government, etc.]
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently involved in the pro-democracy movement?
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently involved/member of an armed resistance group?
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently living outside of Burma?
- Any of your family members currently working for (employed by) the SPDC or the *tatmadaw*?
- Have you encouraged your children/siblings/friends to take up politics? Why or why not?

Life

- What is your current profession/occupation (how do you make money to live)?
 - How did you get started in this profession?
- Do you think what happens generally to the armed groups inside Burma will have something to do with what happens in your life?
- There are numerous groups inside Burma working for democratic change. How effective are they in their efforts?
- When did you leave Burma?
 - Is your departure permanent, or do you intend to return?
 - Why did you leave, or what is the purpose of your visit to [Thailand]?
- Have you participated in any political activities inside Burma in the last five years? What kind of activities?
 - [If yes, but not specific, use this list to help probe]: I'm going to name some kinds of political activities, and I'd like you to let me know if you have done any of the following in the past five years:

signing petitions attending meetings writing/designing pamphlets
 visiting a public official contributing money participating in an organization
 participating demonstrations distributing anti-SPDC materials (stickers, posters)
 distributing pro-democracy material teaching people about human rights
 providing financial support to political organizations providing moral support to activists
 blocking public transportation boycotting public transportation besieging government compounds
 holding a sit-in at a government office

- What precautions do you take for your safety?
- Have you been imprisoned by the authorities for your political activities?
 - If yes, how many days/years in jail (in total)?
- Aside from jail, how else has the SPDC punished you or political activists that you know?

- If you could give advice to individuals in Burma who are considering getting started doing political activities, what would you tell them?
- Since you became politically active, what has been your greatest accomplishment?
- Have you considered quitting the movement and living a different life?
- This is the end of the recorded questions, but is there anything you would like to add before I turn off the audio recorder? Any final thoughts?

ACTIVIST INTERVIEW PART TWO: DEMOGRAPHICS (hand-recorded in separate notebook, no audio recording)

[Interviewer]: The audio recording device has been turned off. As a precaution to protect your privacy, that recording will be kept separate from the following questions; your answers to these next few questions I will write down in this notebook.

1. [Interviewer record—do not ask] Gender: Male Female
2. How old are you? Age (years): _____
3. State/division region of Burma (no city/town names recorded unless major city)
4. Education level completed:
5. Do you have a profession/occupation?
6. I'd like to ask your relative income level: Compared to most people in Burma, I am considered:
Very poor Somewhat poor About average Somewhat better off than most Very rich
7. What ethnic group are you from?
8. How many children do you have?
If yes, 8a. Are they still inside Burma?
9. How many siblings do you have?
10. Home/mother organization inside Burma?
11. [interviewer – do not ask] Referring organization?

This concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your time and your willingness to discuss your life and beliefs. Do you have any questions for me?

Exile Activist Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.

My name is Linnea Beatty, and I am a researcher from the George Washington University, in the United States. I am meeting and interviewing up to 200 people as part of a research project on Burma. Our translator was provided by your host organization.

The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. Specifically, I am researching differences in attitudes between people who are politically active inside and outside of Burma, people who are involved with the armed movement, and people who have chosen to not do politics or armed struggle. You were selected for this study because you continue to be involved in the political movement after you left Burma.

This interview will be done in two parts. The first part consists of 32 questions about your political experience inside and outside of Burma. The purpose of recording our conversation is so I can listen again later to what you have said and compare your answers to those of other people who answered the same questions. I am interested in patterns of responses, not how one person answers any certain question. I will not attribute anything you say during our interview to you specifically. I will not share this recording with any other people or organization, and it will be destroyed after the research is completed.

The second part of the interview consists of 9 questions to help me understand your demographic background. The answers to these questions I will hand write in a separate notebook. By keeping your demographic information separate, I am attempting to lower the possibility of linking your answers to your identity. At no time will I record your name or description in this interview.

The interview will take about 90 minutes [less if it's done entirely in English]. If any questions make you feel uneasy, you are allowed to tell me you prefer not to answer that question and we will go on to the next question. You are also allowed to stop and cancel the interview at any time.

I do hope you will find the experience of being interviewed enjoyable. And thank you for participating in this research project.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

EXILE INTERVIEW PART ONE: (audio recording begins here)

[Interviewer] I will now turn on the Audio recorder, and will tell you that I have turned off the recorder.

(Audio recording begins here/no written recording of these answers)

Questions on Burma/situation

- How would you describe the current political situation inside Burma?
- What is the root cause of Burma's problems?
- Can you tell me about the goals of the organization you currently work with?
- Can you tell me what is your hope for a future Burma?
 - o [if democracy is mentioned...] What will democracy in Burma look like?
 - o How would the normal people benefit?
- There are numerous groups inside Burma working for democratic change. How effective are they in their respective efforts?
- Will the SPDC compromise, or join in tripartite dialogue?
- Do you think Burma will become democratic in your lifetime? Why or why not?

Personal beginnings/entrance into politics

- At what age did you begin political activities?
- Do you remember your first political act – what was it?
- How did you come to be involved in Burma's democracy movement?
- What political activity *inside* Burma are you most proud of having been a part of?
- Why don't more Burmese people actively resist the SPDC?
- Have you been imprisoned by the authorities for your political activities?
 - If yes, how many days/years in jail (in total)?
- Besides prison, how else does the SPDC treat people/activists inside Burma? What's their strategy and tactics for promoting fear and keeping people from becoming politically active?
- What do you enjoy about being an activist? What do you dislike?

Family

- Did your parents find out you were politically active?
 - How did they feel about your actions? Do they disapprove or approve of your decisions to do politics?
 - Did any of your siblings join the political or armed movement?
- Are/were your parents interested in politics? [Interviewer: If yes, probe for some detail:] what did they do that you know they were interested? (for example, did they talk about politics at the dinner table, did they serve as elected members of Parliament or local government, etc.)
- Do you have any family members inside Burma (children, parents, siblings) currently involved in the pro-democracy movement? If so, who?
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently involved with an armed resistance group?
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently living outside of Burma?
- Any of your family members currently working for (employed by) the SPDC or the *tatmadaw*?
- Have you encouraged your children/siblings/friends to take up politics? Why or why not?

Life

- When and why did you leave Burma? What happened to make you leave the country?
 - Is your departure permanent, or do you intend to return?
- Is living outside different than you had imagined? How so?
- What's the hardest part about being an 'exile activist'?
- What is the worst part about living outside of Burma? The best part?

- What kind of political activities inside Burma have you helped support since you left?
- In the years you've been an activist, what has been your greatest accomplishment?
- Have you ever taken up arms for your cause, or been part of the armed resistance in Burma?
 - If yes, what made you change to non-violent action?
 - If no, why did you not join these groups?
- Have you considered quitting the movement and living a different life?
- What would your life have been like had you not participated in politics?
 - [: occupation? Have the same friends? Still be in Burma?]
- In the past few years, we've seen some new political groups form inside Burma. If you could give some of these new activists advice, what would it be?
- What is your current profession/occupation (how do you make money to live)?
 - How did you get started in this profession?
- This is the end of my questions, but is there anything you would like to add before I turn off the audio recorder? Any final thoughts?

EXILE INTERVIEW PART TWO: DEMOGRAPHICS (hand-recorded in separate notebook, no audio recording).

[Interviewer]: The audio recording device has been turned off. As a precaution to protect your privacy, that recording will be kept separate from the following questions; your answers to these questions I will write down in this notebook. This notebook is kept in a locked drawer separate from the audio files when not in use.

1. [Interviewer record—do not ask] Gender: Male Female
2. How old are you? Age (years): _____
3. State/division region of Burma (no city/town names recorded unless major city)
4. Education level completed:
6. I'd like to ask your relative income level: Compared to most people in Burma, would you say you are currently:

[Interviewer read]

Very poor Somewhat poor About average Somewhat better off than most Very rich

7. What ethnic group are you from?
8. Are you married?
9. How many children do you have?
If yes, 9a. Are they still inside Burma?
9. How many siblings do you have?
10. Home/mother organization outside Burma? Inside Burma ?

This concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your time and your willingness to discuss your life and activities. Do you have any questions for me?

'Non-activist' Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.

My name is Linnea Beatty, and I am a researcher from the George Washington University, in the United States. I am meeting and interviewing up to 200 people as part of a research project on Burma. Our translator was provided by your referring organization.

The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. Specifically, I am researching differences in attitudes between people who are politically active inside and outside of Burma, people who are involved with the armed movement, and people who have chosen to not do politics or armed struggle. You were selected for this study because you do not practice politics.

This interview will be done in two parts. This interview will be done in two parts. The first part of the interview consists of 35 questions about your political beliefs. The purpose of recording our conversation is so I can listen again later to what you have said and compare your answers to those of other people who answered the same questions. I am interested in patterns of responses, not how one person answers any certain question. I will not attribute anything you say during our interview to you specifically. I will not share this recording with any other people or organization, and it will be destroyed after the research is completed.

The second part of the interview consists of 9 questions to help me understand your demographic background. The answers to these questions I will hand write in a separate notebook. By keeping your demographic information separate, I am attempting to lower the possibility of linking your answers to your identity. At no time will I record your name or description in this interview.

The interview will take about 90 minutes. If any questions make you feel uneasy, you are allowed to tell me you prefer not to answer that question and we will go on to the next question. You are also allowed to stop and cancel the interview at any time.

I do hope you will find the experience of being interviewed enjoyable. And thank you for participating in my research project.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

NON-ACTIVIST/POLITICAL PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PART ONE: (audio recording begins here)

[Interviewer] I am now going to turn on the Audio recorder, and will record our conversation until I tell you I have turned off the recorder.

(Audio recording begins here/no written recording of these answers)

Questions on Burma/situation

- How would you describe the current situation inside Burma?
- What is the root cause of Burma's problems?
- Are you aware of any governments or NGOs helping the people of Burma?
 - o How do they help?
 - o Can you name any specific organizations or governments?
 - o How interested are you in politics inside Burma?
- Will the SPDC compromise, or join in tripartite dialogue? Under what conditions?
- Do you have any hopes or wishes for a future Burma?
 - o [If "Democracy" is mentioned...]What would democracy in Burma look like?

- How would the normal people benefit?
- Do you think Burma will become democratic in your lifetime?
- Do you think what happens generally to *political activists* inside Burma will have something to do with what happens in your life?
- There are numerous groups inside Burma working for democratic change. What do you think about the pro democracy groups?
 - What do you think of the armed groups?
- Why don't more Burmese people actively resist the SPDC?

Family

- Any of your family members currently working for (employed by) the SPDC or the *tatmadaw*?
- Do you have any family members or friends currently involved in the pro-democracy movement?
- Do you have any family members or friends currently involved with an armed resistance group?
- Do you have any family members or friends currently living outside of Burma?
- Were your parents interested in politics?
 - What did they do that you know they were interested? (for example, did they talk about politics at the dinner table, did they serve as elected members of Parliament or local government, etc.)
- What would your feelings be if your children took up politics (inside or outside)? Or joined an armed group?

Life

- What is your current profession/occupation (how do you make money to live)?
 - How did you get started in this profession?
- What is the best part about not living in Burma? The worst part?
- Have you ever done any political acts inside Burma?
 - If yes, what kind and when?
 - What made you stop?
 - Where you part of an organization or acting independently (leave the movement)?
 - If no, did you ever consider joining? Why or why not?
- Have you ever been part of the armed resistance in Burma?
 - If yes, what made you leave the resistance?
 - If no, have you considered joining an armed group? Why or why not?
- When and why did you leave Burma?
 - Is your departure permanent, or do you intend to return?
 - Or what is the purpose of your visit to [Thailand]?
 - Have you considered joining the exile democracy movement here in Thailand? Why or why not?

- This is the end of the recorded questions, but is there anything you would like to add before I turn off the audio recorder? Any final thoughts?

NON-ACTIVIST/POLITICAL PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PART TWO:
DEMOGRAPHICS (recorded in separate notebook, no audio recording)

[Interviewer]: The audio recording device has been turned off. As a precaution to protect your privacy, that recording will be kept separate from the following questions; your answers to these next few questions I will write down in this notebook. When not in immediate use, this notebook is kept in a locked drawer, separate from the audio recordings.

1. [Interviewer record—do not ask] Gender: Male Female
2. How old are you? Age (years): _____
3. State/division region of Burma (no city/town names recorded unless major city)
3a. Urban Rural Satellite
4. Education level completed:
5. Profession:
6. I'd like to ask your relative income level: Compared to most people in Burma, I am considered:
Very poor Somewhat poor About average Somewhat better off than most Very rich
7. What ethnic group are you from?
8. How many children do you have?
If yes, 8a. Are they still inside Burma?
9. How many siblings do you have?
10. [interviewer – do not ask] Referring organization?

This concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your time and your willingness to discuss your life and beliefs with me today. Do you have any questions for me?

Revolutionary Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.

My name is Linnea Beatty, and I am a researcher from the George Washington University, in the United States. I am meeting and interviewing up to 200 people as part of a research project on Burma. Our translator has been provided by your mother organization.

The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. The purpose of my research is to better understand how individuals came to their decision to practice politics in and outside of Burma. Specifically, I am researching differences in attitudes between people who are politically active inside and outside of Burma, people who are involved with the armed movement, and people who have chosen to not do politics or armed struggle. You were selected for this study because you are a member of an armed group still fighting against the SPDC.

This interview will be done in two parts. The first part consists of 28 questions about your political experience inside and outside of Burma. The purpose of recording our conversation is so I can listen again later to what you have said and compare your answers to those of other people who answered the same questions. I am interested in patterns of responses, not how one person answers any certain question. I will not attribute anything you say during our interview to you specifically. I will not share this recording with any other people or organization, and it will be destroyed after the research is completed.

The second part of the interview consists of 9 questions to help me understand your demographic background. The answers to these questions I will hand write in a separate notebook. By keeping your demographic information separate, I am attempting to lower the possibility of linking your answers to your identity. At no time will I record your name or description in this interview.

The interview will take about 90 minutes. If any questions make you feel uneasy, you are allowed to tell me you prefer not to answer that question and we will go on to the next question. You are also allowed to stop and cancel the interview at any time.

I do hope you will find the experience of being interviewed enjoyable. And thank you for participating in this research project.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

REVOLUTIONARY INTERVIEW PART ONE: (audio recording begins here)

[Interviewer] I am now going to turn on the Audio recorder, and will record the remainder of our conversation. I will record until I inform you that the recorder has been turned off.

(Audio recording begins here/no written recording of these answers)

Questions on Burma/situation

- How would you describe the current situation inside Burma?
- What is the root cause of Burma's problems?
- Can you tell me what is your hope for a future Burma?
 - o [If "Democracy" is mentioned...] What would democracy in Burma look like?
 - o How would the normal people benefit?
- Do you think Burma will become democratic in your lifetime?
- What are the objectives of your organization?
- How will you reach these goals?
- What successes do you feel your group has already accomplished?
- Do you think any governments or NGOs are helping people of Burma?
 - o How do they help?
 - o Can you name any specific organizations or governments?

- Will the SPDC compromise, or join in tripartite dialogue? Under what conditions?
- How interested are you in politics inside Burma?
- There are numerous groups inside Burma working for democratic change. How effective are the other armed groups in their efforts?
 - How effective are those that work on non-violent action inside Burma?
 - how about the political groups inside your ethnic territory?
- Do you think what happens generally to the *political activists* inside Burma will have something to do with what happens in your life?

Personal beginnings/entrance into struggle

- Are/were your parents involved in the armed struggle?
- At what age did you join _____ [armed group]?
- Do you remember your first week in [armed group] – what was it like?
- When, or what time period that you can remember, was the situation inside Burma safest for your ethnic community?
 - What time period was least safe?
- Have you ever worked in a non-violent, pro-democracy group in Burma?
 - If yes, what made you change to violent action?
 - If no, why did you not join these groups?
- Why don't more Burmese people actively resist the SPDC?

Family

- Does your family know you are in the _____ [armed group]?
 - Do they approve or disapprove of your joining?
- Were your parents interested in politics?
 - [If yes, probe for some detail:] What did they do that you know they were interested? (for example, did they talk about politics at the dinner table, did they serve as elected members of Parliament or local government, etc.)
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently involved in the non-violent pro-democracy movement?
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently involved with an armed resistance group?
- Do you have any family members (children, parents, siblings) currently living outside of Burma?
- Any of your family members currently working for (employed by) the SPDC or the *tatmadaw*?
- Have you encouraged your children/siblings/friends to join the armed struggle?

Life

- Have you been imprisoned by the authorities for your [armed group's] activities?
 - If yes, how many days/years in jail (in total)?
- What is your current profession/occupation (how do you make money to live)?

- How did you get started in this profession?
- What would your life be like if you had never joined [armed group]?
- In the years you've been in [armed group name], what has been your biggest accomplishment?
- In addition to being a soldier, have you participated in any political activities inside Burma in the last five years? What kind of political activities?
 - [If yes, but not specific, use this list to help probe]: I'm going to name some kinds of political activities, and I'd like you to let me know if you have done any of the following in the past five years:

signing petitions attending meetings writing/designing pamphlets
 visiting a public official contributing money participating in an organization
 participating demonstrations distributing anti-SPDC materials (stickers, posters)
 distributing pro-democracy material teaching people about human rights
 providing financial support to political organizations providing moral support to activists

- Have you considered quitting the struggle and living a different life?
 - What would that life look like?
- This is the end of my questions, but is there anything you would like to add before I turn off the audio recorder? Any final thoughts?

REVOLUTIONARY INTERVIEW PART TWO: DEMOGRAPHICS (record in separate notebook; not audio recorded)

[Interviewer]: The audio recording device has been turned off. As a precaution to protect your privacy, that recording will be kept separate from the following questions; your answers to these next few questions I will write down in this notebook. When not in immediate use, this notebook is kept in a locked drawer, separate from the audio recordings.

1. [Interviewer record—do not ask] Gender: Male Female
2. How old are you? Age (years): _____
3. State/division region of Burma (no city/town names recorded unless major city)
4. Education level completed:
5. Profession:
6. I'd like to ask your relative income level: Compared to most people in Burma, I am considered:
 Very poor Somewhat poor about average Somewhat better off than most Very rich
7. What ethnic group are you from?
8. How many children do you have?
 If yes, 8a. Are they still inside Burma?
9. How many siblings do you have?

10. Home/mother organization (or referring organization)?

This concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your time and your willingness to discuss your life and beliefs. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 3: Codebook for the Political Event Dataset

This research utilizes the method of protest event analysis (PEA) to analyze political activities that happen inside Burma. While traditional uses of PEA focus on large-scale protests and utilizes only public news media sources (Koopmans and Rucht 2002), the Burma dataset records all instances of political opposition activities, as found in a variety of source materials.

Protest event analysis is a widely used research method in social movement scholarship. Sources of news media and police reports are mined to create datasets that “systematically map, analyze and interpret the occurrence and properties of large numbers of protests” (Koopmans and Rucht 2002: 231). PEA has been used to understand patterns of new social movement protest in Western countries (Kriesi 1992 and 1995; Koopmans 1995; Duyvendak 1995), as well as cross-national comparisons of protest events in Hungary, East Germany, Poland and Slovakia in the political transition years of 1989 to 1993 (Ekiert and Kubik 1998; Lemke 1997). Almeida (2003) used PEA to determine the presence of widening opportunity structures in El Salvador, and McAdam (1983) used this method to show how tactics were innovated over time in the Black insurgency in the United States. PEA has not been used thus far to analyze political events in authoritarian countries. The Burma PEA is the first attempt to use this method to examine protest under authoritarian conditions.

This codebook defines different categories of information used in the dataset, the process in which content for the political events database was derived, what was

purposefully included and excluded and the limitations of the dataset. This appendix outlines the standardized reading procedures used by the researcher to compile entries in the dataset. The event dataset is a compilation of a variety of sources, including the reports of several Burmese organizations based in Thailand, newspaper articles, and accounts of political activities in published books. All source materials reviewed for the dataset are included as tables in Appendix 4.

The PEA includes 1,939 political activities occurring in Burma between 1990 and 2008. Lintner (1990) argues that Burma after 1990 is fundamentally different than it was prior to 1988. The 1988 protests, the brutal regime response and the organized political opposition that emerged created a significantly different situation than what existed in 1988 (Lintner 1990).

For similar reasons, the year 2008 was deemed a suitable end point for this dataset. Cyclone Nargis devastated the country in May 2008 and the country shifted to responding to the humanitarian crisis. Just days following the cyclone, the regime held a constitutional referendum, and widespread ‘Vote No’ campaigns occurred across the country in the weeks and months prior to the cyclone. This end point also allowed a time lag between events occurring and being reported in this research. Doing so affords greater personal security for the people who documented events occurring inside Burma.

No claim is made that this represents the entirety of activism occurring in Burma between 1990 and 2008. The difficulty of finding source information about for oppositions working in authoritarian conditions require this be considered is a starting point for understanding activism in these settings. The PEA should be considered a conservative

illustration of the breadth of political action occurring inside Burma. Ideally, this dataset will eventually expand to include more sources and events.

Building the political events dataset

To build the dataset, the researcher conducted archival research in several locations from July 2009 – March 2010. Materials were primarily accessed in public and private libraries in Washington, D.C. and locations in Thailand. Some organizations forwarded documents by email. If time at a location was limited, researcher made photocopies of the relevant pages of a publication and entered the entries into the dataset at a later time. At other times, it was possible for the researcher to directly enter information into the dataset and no photocopies were made.

As acknowledged in Chapter 4, this dataset is limited and serves only to illustrate the kinds of activism occurring in Burma between 1990 and 2008. Acts of protest in Burma cover a wide spectrum of political activities. A conclusive list of political events in Burma is impossible to compile; the 1,939 recorded events are a conservative illustration of the breadth of political action occurring inside Burma.

It is of the modern era of protest in Burma that the dataset measures. Data sources from 1990 to 2008 varied in number and quality. Very few sources document political activities in Burma for the early-to-middle years of the dataset. Only 211 events are recorded in the years 1990 – 2003 (average 16 events per year over 13 years); despite this small number, these were included in the data analysis as these events are useful in understanding what forms of protest are prevalent, which social groups protest, when and where protest occurs. Source materials used to build the dataset are most numerous and

detailed for the years 2004 – 2008, which provided 1,728 recorded events (average 346 events per year over five years). Some of this is due to meticulous record keeping of the events surrounding the 2007 monks' protests. It is also attributed to the mobilization of 'Vote No' campaigns by the opposition against the regime's constitutional referendum in 2008. The events from 1990 – 2003 are included in the analysis, but very limited comparisons are made between levels of activism in the early 1990s to the later years. Some of this is due to the mobilization of a 'Vote No' campaign by the opposition against the regime's constitutional referendum in 2008. The analysis utilizes data from 1990 onwards and should be considered best representative of political events since 2004.

Source materials

The political events dataset was built from two types of source materials – public news media and unpublished private reports of several organizations. International media sources were not considered useful for this project and not included because they only report the rarest of protest events, such as the events surrounding the September 2007 protests. Domestic news media outlets based in Burma are tightly controlled by the government authorities; oppositional political events are not reported in Myanmar's official newspapers unless cast in a derogatory manner. Better opportunity for utilizing media sources came from underground papers and on the Burmese media outlets based outside the country. *The Irrawaddy*, a monthly periodical was a primary source of materials; every edition since its founding in 1993 was reviewed. It was the most useful source because it did not solely rely on internet for transmission. Hard copies were available to peruse; internet media is sub-optimal because websites typically only allow keyword searching, not

the ability to review the publication as a whole entity. A few other publications are included when copies were available, but no other publication included such a wide expanse of time.

The regularity in which political events occur compared to how few are reported in media suggests that even sympathetic Burmese broadcasters rarely consider small events 'news.' It may also be too difficult to get confirmation of events within the short timeframe of a news cycle. To rely solely on newspaper accounts creates an inaccurate picture of political activism inside Burma. This problem of relying only on media reports is recognized by Ball (2005), who compared human rights reports to media coverage in Guatemala. Ball convincingly demonstrates how even a relatively free media did not accurately cover news of state-sponsored genocide within the country's borders. Relying solely on news media archive sources to track human rights abuses can mistakenly reify inaccurate sources of data. Writes Ball,

When human rights organization began to report massive, literally genocidal killings of Mayan people in the early 1980s, the newspaper-reading elites simply refused to believe them. Someone who used press sources to analyze political violence would encode as scholarship this metropolitan naïveté about the periphery (2005: 204).

Ball empirically demonstrates how human rights organizations were sources of more accurate information than news archives, and therefore can be a source of information to academic researchers.

Davenport argues the problem of using human rights data is that the events these groups collect typically does not provide information about those who specifically

challenging the state (Davenport 2007a:5). Furthermore, he argues “What is needed is something equivalent to the human rights-oriented NGO but with an interest in dissent and insurgency,” (Davenport 2007a: 6). Arguably, political organizations can be sources of information regarding political activities.

Of the events listed in the dataset, 29 percent (N= 563) came from published media sources. Table 7 is a summary of all sources used in the dataset. In addition, the following public publications were reviewed with the anticipation of finding events, but none were recorded: *Mon Forum*, *Burma Debate*, *Legal Issues in Burma*, and *New Era Journal*. Additionally, researcher could not locate copies of *Labour Issues*, *Fist*, *Burma Issues* or *Arakan Forum*, all that might have recorded events that could have contributed to the dataset.

Table 7: Source publications of the protest event analysis

Public or Unpublished	Source Publication	Count of Source Publication	Percentage of Total
Public		564	
	Altsean	168	9%
	Asian Human Rights Commission	1	0%
	Burma Alert	26	1%
	Burma Review	11	0.5%
	DAWN	36	2%
	Independence	4	0%
	Irrawaddy	96	5%
	Young Monk Journal	6	0%
	PDC News		11%
	Commentary	216	
Unpublished		1375	
	CMM Report	521	27%

NLD/LA Report	145	7%
PDC Report	709	37%
Total	1,939	

The remaining 71 percent (N=176) of events recorded in the dataset came from a variety of unpublished reports written by several Burmese political organizations based in Thailand and working with political activists inside Burma. These border-based resistance organizations serve as a conduit for information in and out of the country (Fink 2009: 264). These organizations report on activities occurring inside Burma; reports were written for an audience of private and public Western funding agencies.

The following organizations gave the researcher permission to use their reports: Political Defiance Committee, National League for Democracy/Liberated Areas (NLD/LA) and the Committee for Mass Mobilization (CMM). The CMM was an ad-hoc organization created in advance of the 2008 constitutional referendum, and at the time included eight organizations with known contacts inside Burma—including NLD/LA, Student Youth Council of Burma, Ethnic Youth Network Group, National Coalition of the Union of Burma, Ethnic Nationalities Council, Women’s League of Burma, and the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.²⁴¹ The CMM continues to exist, but its membership is constantly evolving.

241 For five years prior to the dissertation research the author managed programs in Burma for an international non-governmental organization (INGO) that received US funding and supported the work of the NLD/LA, PDC and SYCB. During her tenure in this position, which included 25 field visits to Thailand and India to oversee programs, the author formed relationships with individuals in every organization of the CMM. The author left the INGO in July 2009, but the prior relationship provided the groundwork necessary for organizations to trust the reporting materials would not be misused in this dissertation.

There is also a difference in what the sources tend to report. The public sources published events primarily report demonstrations, letter writing, and political ceremonies. In contrast, the unpublished sources recorded more events of information distribution, political speech and the wearing of meaningful clothing. Without the inclusion of the unpublished sources of events, a different pattern of political action in Burma emerges.

Reading and reviewing process

In reviewing the published news sources and the private organization materials, a standardized process of beginning at the top of the document and reading the headlines (subject headings for the organizational reports). If the headline indicated potential for political action within the article, the entire article was read. If the article mentioned political activities by individuals or groups, the researcher flagged the article/page, and continued through the publication, repeating this process page-by-page. After the entire document was reviewed, the flagged items were re-examined, and if fitting the criteria listed in the following section, the event was entered into the dataset.

Some articles were not specifically about a political event, but included discussion of political events within the context of the article. For example, there are numerous articles about the arrest and jailing of individuals for their political actions. Information about events was carefully derived from articles and reports of arrests or incarceration due to a political activity. The mentioned activity is included as an 'event' entry in the dataset when the article does not use the term "alleged," or the article indicated that the political activity/protest actually happened. This walks a fine line, but the researcher attempted to

include relevant event information from these reports while simultaneously excluding inaccurate activities that were likely falsified by the authorities to make an arrest.

In doing archival research for not-current publications, older materials were typically bounded together into a large notebook spanning a couple years. The researcher would read the entire bounded notebook, flagging all articles that included information that might be useful to include in the dataset. If there was an initial question about whether something would count as an event, the item was flagged to be included in the second review.

After a bounded notebook was read, the researcher examined each flagged article to determine if the event met the criteria to be included in the dataset. If it did, it was then entered into the database – the year, month, and event columns were filled in. In most incidences the researcher copied the words verbatim from the original document into the ‘event’ column of the dataset, although a few occasions due to the length of the entry paraphrasing became necessary.

Political events/ dataset criteria

An activity was considered a protest event and included in the dataset if the following conditions were met:

- Public in nature; i.e. it occurred outside of the home, in a public setting, or was of a large size that the public could be aware of it occurring.
- The activity included a minimum of one person. Orthodox collective action scholars may take issue with the inclusion of events such as ‘one man protests,’ but

in Burma these occurred frequently enough (N=17) to warrant inclusion as necessary to understand protest under authoritarian conditions.

- The event voiced ('voiced' includes printed material) dissatisfaction with the ruling regime or challenged its policies.
- The activity occurred within the territorial boundaries of the state of Burma, including areas held by cease-fire organizations or other groups collaborating with the SPDC.
- The event was non-violent on the part of the activists, regardless of police/military response.
- Time frame specific – there was a beginning and an end to the event.
- Statements made by individuals and groups were included in the dataset, but a distinction was made between 'statement issued' and 'statement distributed.' If a statement was issued and distributed, it only appears once under 'statement distributed.' If it is not clear if or how a statement was distributed it was coded as 'statement issued.' This may be a false distinction, but it is one that highlights the 'whisper campaign' nature of political organizing in Burma, a concept that cannot be counted and is thus typically ignored by scholars.

In addition to these guidelines, events that individuals and groups inside Burma directed towards the international community are included, as these actions pose a personal risk to the individual. For example a letter from 92 MEPs to the UN Secretary General against the SPDC's national convention was included in the activities database – this letter

was made public, circulated inside and outside the country, and required coordination and meetings to accomplish.

Excluded from the dataset

Not everything discovered in the archival research was entered into the dataset. Events held by the government or government-affiliated organizations, such as Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) or other pro-military mass gatherings were excluded because these events do not challenge the government. A number of anti-Muslim riots occurred during the time frame of the events dataset. These were excluded as there is evidence the regime helps manufacture these events as a diversion during times of other social or economic uncertainty (Fink 2009: 239). Similarly, violent protest activity is not included – for example the two incidences of plane hijacking by Burmese students in the 1990s and flown to Thailand and India respectively, were excluded. The skirmishes and battles between the *tatmadaw* and armed insurgent groups were excluded although this could be a useful enterprise to pursue in the future. Including these events required enormous resources and was determined to be outside the scope of this current project.

Political acts of resistance conducted by foreigners visiting Burma are not included. There is a reasonable expectation that these acts receive less severe punishment than when a Burmese national undertakes the same action. In short, foreigners make an entirely different risk/benefit calculation than Burmese citizens considering protest action. For example, James Mawdsley distributed pamphlets in Tachileik, Kachin State on August 30, 1999, and was arrested. He spent 300 days in prison with special privileges such as Western food, and was allowed books and visitors; after he was deported back to the

United Kingdom, Mawdsley wrote a book about his experiences and unsuccessfully ran for parliament. Burmese activists getting caught for the same activity have different expectations of treatment.²⁴²

No events by exile activists are included in this dataset. Exiled Burmese political activists implement countless acts of protests in their host countries every year. Some events, such as political ceremonies, are similar to those occurring inside Burma and often commemorate the same occasions. Exiles, particularly those settled in democratic countries, often use their newfound freedoms to protest or applaud the policies of their host government and international organizations. Protests in front of the Myanmar Embassy in Washington D.C. were excluded because this research is about the activities occurring inside Burma. Similarly, Radio Free Burma and other radio and television broadcasts, done from outside the country are not included; although technically listening to these broadcasts is against Burmese law and could contribute to mobilization. Listening to the radio is not included in the dataset.

Events that are reported as in the planning stages, even if the indications were the event would take place in the immediate future, were excluded. The dataset only recorded events found written in the past tense. The problem with including future tense action is the unfortunate likelihood that the organizers could be arrested before carrying out the activity or if conditions were not conducive to a planned event. For example, an August 2006 report said: "It is learnt that about 200 farmers from Rangon Division Hmawbi Township are planning to complain to the ILO on account of their over 2000-acre farmlands confiscated

242 Aung Zaw, 2001. "With Friends Like These..." *The Irrawaddy* Vol. 9 (9): December 2001.

unfairly.” Although compelling, it was excluded as no later-dated report mentioned whether this action indeed occurred. If the event was reported in the past tense in a later report, the event was included. Also excluded were allusions to events taking place in other but unnamed locations. For example, “ceremonies for National Victory Day that fell on November 14 were held at NLD offices in Rangoon and states and divisions including Mandalay Division office.” Entry items were done for both Rangoon and Mandalay locations, but the more general “and states and divisions” was not included as an entry.

Sometimes events were discussed as they related to other events. One entry states “a donation rite commemorating the 130th prayer service was also held on December 27 at Bahan Township Sasana Gonyi Monastery.” This was recorded as one event and others like it as single event. Despite being discussed by one source report as the prayer campaigns reaching its 200 occurrence as of 2007; as there was not documentation about each event found. Only the specific ones cited as occurring were included in the dataset.

While the author recognizes their utility and the risk to a person involved, traveling and organizing meetings were not included as events. These are necessary precursors to the more public political events, but without knowing the content of every meeting, it is too difficult to reliably include without inflating the dataset.

While internal group meetings were not included, meetings or information seminars attended by non-activists were included in the dataset; if it was not clear if materials were distributed, these events were coded as ‘political speech.’ For example, the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) regularly held meetings to explain principles of Human Rights to people in villages and towns. This activity meets the definition of personal risk, for while not technically illegal (except for the size of the meetings if over five people),

HRDP activists were regularly harassed, interrogated and imprisoned for this act. The SPDC responds to this activity as if it were challenge d. There is an underlying criticism of the SPDC when the HRDP activists teach people that fo rced labor is illegal in Burma. If the number of publications distributed at these traini ngs was larger than the number of people attending, then a second entry was made for info rmation distribution.

Events undertaken by political activists outside Burma but directed to people inside the country were excluded. For example, during the ‘Vote No’ to the referendum campaign in 2008, a phone bank of Women’s League of Burma member s in Thailand called over 3,000 people inside Burma to talk about the referendum. While a political activity, it presented no risk to those making the phone calls. I t may have presented some risk to those in Burma who answered, but most calls were made to landl ine phones, presumably to private homes or businesses, and thus were private even ts. Over the years mailings have been sent in via the postal service by exile activis ts; these were not included as events. However, if an exile group created a product (CD, pamphlet, t-shirt design), the creation was not included as an event, but if activists distrib uted these materials inside the country, that was considered an event and included in the dataset.

Coding categories

To capture the richness of the qualitative data, Micros oft Excel was used. Each event entry is one row on the spreadsheet. Each event e ntry recorded the following information in separate columns: month and year; ev ent description; event category: location; type of group, source/reference combined event category and Sharp category.

Month and year

Events are coded by month and year. This designation, instead of exact date, was necessary because many events occur over the course of a month; pamphlet distribution, for example, would not necessarily all happen within one day. Exact dates were usually not recorded in reporting documents as a precautionary measure to ensure security of the activist should the reports become public. Some events listed are sensitive and to name the exact date might be problematic for activists and SPDC personnel who might get in trouble post-hoc for allowing activities that with this research is now public. As the events dataset is saved in a passphrase-protected and encrypted file, the event description in the dataset includes the actual dates if they were noted in the primary source. This is for future reference by researchers and not included in the narrative of the dissertation. For the purposes of this research, a month/year designation is enough to note patterns of activities.

Event description

This category was the primary reason for utilizing Microsoft Excel to record events data. The format allowed for a long description of the event, as found written in the original source material. This will allow other researchers intent on replicating this research to judge whether an event should or should not be included. It also enabled the researcher to refine the dataset categories and to add analytical categories without having to return to the original source materials. Some liberty was taken to shorten some event accounts as needed for space considerations. Also, if additional background information clarified an entry, researcher added information in brackets with initials [lb note:] so it is clear what was added commentary and not in the original source.

Event type

After event descriptions were recorded, a summarization column labeled “event type” provides a brief synopsis of the kind of events undertaken. The ordinal categories summarize the political activities occurring in Burma and provide a basis for analyzing the kinds of activities done by political actors. The research does not privilege one kind of activity over another, but as discussed in chapter four not all events entail the same level of risk or resources. Noting what protest activities are most often selected is important to understanding political action under authoritarian conditions. This category utilized a drop-down list to ensure conformity between all entries. Event types included are:

- Boycott
- Distribution of information/materials
- Graffiti
- Hunger strike
- Legal/court case
- Letter writing
- Meaningful clothing
- Pamphlets distributed
- Political speech
- Posters
- Protest/demonstration over 1,000 people
- Protest/demonstration 101 – 1,000 people
- Protest/demonstration 21 – 50 people
- Protest/demonstration 51 – 100 people
- Protest/demonstration size unknown
- Protest/demonstration under 20 people

- Religious expression of political beliefs
- Signature campaign
- Statement distributed
- Statement issued
- Stickers in public places
- Strike
- Other

To code publications there is one entry in the dataset per location distributed; if the number of publications is not broken up by location in the source, an entry listed the average the number of publications distributed per location. There are no separate entries for the creation of publications, although certainly the creation (writing, design, copying) of materials still presents a risk to the activist. This may be a disservice to the dataset, but it followed the rule of thumb that publication drafting is a private undertaking and not public event.

Location

The research findings are analyzed by state and division. While the researcher was able to record 255 cities and townships in which protest activities occurred, the findings presented purposefully do not mention specific locations. The results are presented by state and division and occasionally large cities (Rangoon, Mandalay) when appropriate. It would be a violation of trust to name the towns in which political activism occurs in Burma. Likely the SPDC is already aware of what areas are most politically active, but this research will not increase the risks assumed by the activists by alerting authorities to

specific locations. For the purposes of this research, state and division designations are enough to note patterns of activities.

If a political event occurred in several locations, each of these locations was recorded as a separate event and line item; this appropriate because an activity was implemented by different individuals and in new locations, each of which represented an equal opportunity for arrest and punishment for the activity. For example, the entry “The birthday was held not only in Rangoon but also in Mandalay **Mogok**, Magwe, Chauk, Moulmein and other cities under various forms,”²⁴³ was recorded as six entries, one per city named. However, the phrase “other cities under various forms,” did not add any additional event lines, as it was not specific to actual event or location. For clarity, as the events were added the city name in the event type category was done in red font, so the reader could easily tell that the entry was not an accidental duplication of the same event entry. The author recognizes however, that events such as the 2006 signature campaign where over 500,000 signatures were collected across the country over the course of six weeks, is underrepresented in the dataset due to the format of counting events based on written accounts of activities. Included are every reference found to this activity, but it doesn’t accurately represent this campaign.

Type of group

To study patterns of involvement, the dataset includes a classification of the types of organizations and social groups undertaking political action. The political events dataset

²⁴³ Entry source: News Commentary November 2006. Compiled and disseminated by the Political Defiance Committee, November 14, 2006

recorded different types of social groups implementing political acts in Burma. The categories include: political party activists, organized political group (non-party), monks/religious, current students, youth, students and youth, human rights, humanitarian organizations, and workers/union. Farmers, artists and small business were added as categories, after an initial data cleaning exhibited too many events categorized as 'other.' The 'other' category remained, and there are a large number of events across the years that are categorized as 'unknown, when it was not possible to ascertain the background of the individual.'

Political party activists included any event organized or performed by members of an established political party. The 'political party activists' category includes events held by the National League for Democracy (NLD), Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), and the activities of small political parties. The dataset does not disaggregate events conducted by specific organizations, although it could in the future based on what was included in the longer event description category. Notably, activities by NLD Youth were included under this category.

Political group (non-party) classification is for issue-based organizations that are not political parties. Many specifically are pro-democracy organizations. In some respects these organizations within the pro-democracy movement are a politicized 'civil society' and have their own agenda that differs from the political party organizations. This category is not disaggregated by specific organizations, but includes activities done by members of '88 Generation Students, '74 Generation Students, the Veteran Politicians Group, Myanmar Development Committee, Mass Mobilization Committee, and Generation Wave.

These organizations often include students interested in continuing political work after they graduate (and thus, no longer ‘current students’). This also includes the groups formed by political prisoners after they are released but who do not (or no longer) belong to a political party.

Monks and religious persons are included as one category of people conducting political events. A person was coded a monk if that was how they were described in the original source.

‘Current students’ is an attempt to capture the role students play in Burma, while setting finite boundaries of what is considered a student. No age boundaries are set for this category, and the labeling is highly reliant on what the original source labeled those doing the political act. ‘Current students’ are primarily university students, but the category includes high school students as well. Thus, ‘current students’ conducting activities in 1996 are not the same people as those students conducting activities in 2008. Political activists in Burma relate to each other (and outsiders) with a reference point of the year they began their activities, particularly those who were active during a big political event (i.e. there are ‘88 Generation Students, ‘74 Generation Students, and recently formed 2007 New Students Generation). As these students graduate, if the organizations they create continue to do politics they then included in the “Political Group (non-party)” category.

The ‘Youth’ category encompasses young people doing political acts but without an obvious student affiliation. No age boundary is included, as this category mirrors how the original source described the implementer of a political act. It should be noted, however that in Southeast Asia, ‘youth’ can include individuals up to 45 years of age.

The ‘Students and Youth’ category may appear redundant. This category was included because 30 descriptions of events in different records used this phrase to describe who conducted an activity. As youth are not necessarily students, it was necessary to create this as an individual category.

‘Humanitarian’ was initially included as a category because humanitarian NGOs, particularly international ones, often highlight their work with civil society as a necessary component of democratization, especially when operating in authoritarian conditions. Their work may indeed support democratization (although, no real testing of that hypothesis is made here or by organizations making this claim) but in terms of undertaking actual political events, the archival research finds no evidence of humanitarian group participating in any overtly political events. There is evidence, however, of some political groups providing humanitarian aid following natural disasters. These few events were included, in light that the SPDC arrests political groups implementing humanitarian aid programs.

Finally the high number of ‘unknown’ as the social group conducting recorded events (N=327) in the dataset reflects two issues within the source documents. Many events, particularly from public news media archival sources, were witnessed by someone who did not personally know the individuals undertaking the resistance activity. The source article in many cases reports ‘unknown’ individuals conducting a political act. Secondly, ‘unknown’ also encompasses unspecific reporting in the private sources used for this research. Records that do not state anything about those implementing political acts (only just recording the act itself) may be an attempt to protect the identity of protesters from

future harassment by SPDC authorities. This would be especially true if organizations were not sure of the present and future security of official reporting documents.

Workers/unions are grouped together as a category although in reality, this might not be the case – there are certainly non-union workers in Burma. Unions are illegal in Burma, but several small worker associations exist and a few of their events were recorded in the dataset. Since the number of worker and union events was small (N=46), it seemed best at this time to combine into a single category. While anecdotal accounts point to more events from this group than what is recorded in the database, there is also great skepticism from other sectors of the democracy movement about political opposition activities stemming from worker communities.

Source/reference

Every entry in the dataset is accompanied by a citation of the source of the information. In all cases of the published information newspaper sources, the researcher recorded in AP style source citations including publication date, volume and page number, into the dataset itself. For private/unpublished sources, the researcher recorded the source/organization name, document title, and the date of the document. This is enough information for future researchers wishing to replicate the dataset to find the documents. The end of this appendix lists all publications that provided material for the political events dataset.

As was expected, some events were reported by different sources. These instances were considered a good check on the private sources, but it was imperative that duplicate events not be recorded as individual entries. Therefore duplicative events were recorded on

the same event entry, but in its own column as “2nd source event description,” and “2nd source citation.” This way the entirety of the event information description was captured while not adding redundant events to the dataset and accidentally inflating the findings.

Combined event category

With so many different event types listed in the event category (as described above), to simplify the discussion most-similar events were grouped together into a ‘combined event’ category. This made comparisons of activities simpler to manage while still highlighting the breadth of activities. Combined events used:

- Demonstrations (all) = all five size categories of demonstrations
- Materials distributed (all) = materials distributed, posters, pamphlets, statements distributed and stickers
- Political speech (all) = statements issued and political speech
- Legal = letter writing, signature campaigns and legal/court case
- Strikes = labor, religious and hunger strikes

Sharp category

After all events were recorded, a protest strategy typology was added to the dataset to allow categorizing the kinds of protests occurring in Burma. In deference to the work of Gene Sharp, this analytical category is labeled “Sharp category,” although this is a bit of misnomer as it includes strategies suggested by several authors from different research traditions, including Hirschman (1970), Scott (1985), Schock (2005), and the institutional

strategy as argued by this work. The typology of protest included the choices of: Everyday Resistance, Institutional Political Action, non-violent political action of Protest and Persuasion, Noncooperation, and Nonviolent Interventions, Other and Unknown. Several Burmese organizations based in Thailand actively promote Gene Sharp's methods and principles of nonviolent protest. Including this as an analytical category was useful for academic and movement analysis purposes, and was included at the request of organizations within the Burmese movement.

Limitations of the political event dataset

Burma is a closed society, where collection of any information is a difficult undertaking. This dataset is limited, but represents a novel attempt to identify levels of political activism in an authoritarian country. Burma's experience with dictatorship has undertaken several institutional forms, and bursts of political activism have occurred in the past 50 years. Unfortunately not enough detailed systematic information is available to create a dataset that would allow comparisons of activism during the different periods of dictatorship in Burma. That was the initial aim of the project, but too limited materials made this too difficult to implement.

While it would be exciting to report political activity has increased annually since 1990, and despite the regime's repression, the dataset itself is not comprehensive enough to make this assertion. Growth may or may not be occurring – the data is not complete enough to responsibly make a comparison. If more sources from the early portion of the dataset were to be found, improved 'over time' comparisons would be possible. Because of this

lack of confidence with the 1990s data as being fully representative of activity level, extremely cautious presentations of data over time are included in this dissertation.

Researcher was also limited to English-language publications and sources. A better grasp of written Burmese (or an army of research assistants) would have provided an opportunity to include sources that appeared to write about the political situation inside the country and the work of political organizations. Burmese language copies of *The Young Monk Journal*, for example, looked promising, but the researcher could only include events from the one issue found that was published in English.

Finally, while the unpublished sources are significant and provide fresh insight to activities, these records are too limited. In their early years of existence, political organizations kept few records; the earliest funding for some organizations was in 1992. Good record-keeping was not necessarily emphasized in part due to an existence in Thailand that was personally insecure. Thai authorities routinely raid the offices of Burmese activists, computers and email use were rarely used until the late 1990s and early 2000s, and donors did not necessarily require sensitive information to be transmitted in written reports due to risk of them being intercepted. These concerns continue, particularly as incidences of cyber-hacking come to light. Interestingly, the passage of the Freedom of Information Act in the United States also serves to limit how specific political organizations are in their reports – organizations sending reports to U.S. funding agencies have no assurance that an unfriendly party will not access their communications. Records are necessarily unspecific.

In addition to the limitations of the unpublished reports used, several other private organizations approached for this research chose not to allow researcher access to reports

and data. Considering the risk to their own operations, this is understandable, but this is something the author would like to correct for future projects. As noted in Chapter 5, there are concern this work is missing information about the role workers and unions play in the political activism inside Burma. More information might have been collected from organizations working with students and monks too. Information gleaned from other methods used in this research help ensure these groups and opinions are represented the overall research.

With greater resources – primarily time and continued access to unpublished and public news sources – this dataset could become more representative of the activism that occurs in Burma, not merely illustrative of the activities. Until then, this dataset is a conservative representation of political activities; this data represents the minimum that is occurring inside Burma, not the maximum.

Individual Journals/Publications

Burma Issues

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
January			11.1		
February			11.2		
March			11.3		
April					
May					
June					
July	9.7	10.2			
August	9.8				
September	9.9				
October	9.10				
November	9.11	10.4			
December	9.12	10.5			

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
 Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/issue was entered into the events datafile

Burma Alert ISSN: 1182-0454

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>
January		Vol. 4 (1)		Vol. 6 (1)	Vol. 7 (1)	Vol. 8 (1)
February	Vol. 3	Vol. 4 (2)		Vol. 6 (2)	Vol. 7 (2)	Vol. 8 (2)
March		Vol. 4 (3)	Vol. 5 (3)	Vol. 6 (3)	Vol. 7 (3)	Vol. 8 (3)
April		Vol. 4 (4)	Vol. 5 (4)	Vol. 6 (4)	Vol. 7 (4)	Vol. 8 (4)
May		Vol. 4 (5)	Vol. 5 (5)	Vol. 6 (5)	Vol. 7 (5)	Vol. 8 (5)
June		Vol. 4 (6)	Vol. 5 (6)	Vol. 6 (6)	Vol. 7 (6)	Vol. 8 (6)
July	Vol. 3 (7)	Vol. 4 (7)	Vol. 5 (7)	Vol. 6 (7)	Vol. 7 (7)	Vol. 8 (7)
August	Vol. 3 (8)	Vol. 4 (8)	Vol. 5 (8)	Vol. 6 (8)	Vol. 7 (8)	Vol. (7-9) July - September
September	Vol. 3 (9)	Vol. 4 (9)	Vol. 5 (9)	Vol. 6 (9)	Vol. 7 (9)	
October	Vol. 3 (10)	Vol. 4 (10)	Vol. 5 (10)	Vol. 6 (10)	Vol. 7 (10)	
November	Vol. 3 (11)	Vol. 4 (11)	Vol. 5 (11)	Vol. 6 (11)	Vol. 7 (11)	
December	Vol. 3 (12)	Vol. 4 (12)	Vol. 5 (12)	Vol. 6 (12)	Vol. 7 (12)	

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
 Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/issue was entered into the events datafile

The Burma REVIEW

1989		1990		1991		1992		1993	
Issue	Month	Issue	Month	Issue	Month	Issue	Month	Issue	Month
X	November	X III	February	XXII	January	XXXI	January	XXXVI	Feb - March
XI	December	X IV	March	XXIII	February	XXXV	August 1992- Jan uary 1993		
		X VI	May	XXIV	March				
		X VII	June	XXV	April				
		X VIII	July	XXVI	May				
		X IX	Aug - Sept	XXVII	June - August				
		X X	Octover	XXVIII	September				
		X XI	Nov - Dec	(no number) October					
				XXX	Nov - Dec				

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
 Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/issue was entered into the events datafile

DAWN A publication of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)

1990		1991		1992		1993	
Month	Volume/Issue	Month	Volume/Issue	Month	Volume/Issue	Month	Volume/Issue
August	Vol. 2 Iss 15	January	2.25	Aug - Sept		July - Aug	4 .4
August	2.16	February	2.26	Oct - Nove	4.1	March	4.2
		April	3.2			april-may	4.3
		Ma	3.3			oct-nov	4.5
		November	3.5				

1994		1995		1996		1997	
Month	Volume/Issue	Month	Volume/Issue	Month	Volume/Issue	Month	Volume/Issue
Jan - Feb	4.6	(likely) August	Not numbered	Jan - Feb	6.1	January	6.6
May - June	4.8	April - May	4.2	March	6.2	Oct - Nov	6.2
July - Aug	4.9	july-aug	5.3	May - June	6.3		
		sept-oct	5.4	July - Aug	6.4		
		nov-dec	5.5	Sept - Oct	6.5		

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
 Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/issue was entered into the events datafile

Young Monk Journal

November 1999 (10 year anniversary special issue)	In English
1999 (cannot tell month)	In Burmese
2001 (cannot tell month)	In Burmese

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
 Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/issue was entered into the events datafile

*New Era Journal**

<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
November	February	April	January	January	February
	March	July	February	May	March
	April	August	March	June	April
	June	September	April	July	
	August	October	May	August	
	September	December	June	September	
	October		July	October	
	December		August	December	
			September		
			October		
			November		
			December		

2007: Burmese language only
2008: Burmese language only
2009: Burmese language only

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/sue was entered into the events datafile
*This publication primarily Burmese but has a 2 page English language insert; most articles were editorials, interviews or analysis of events.

Independence Shan Herald Agency for News

<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
Volume Date	Volume Date	Volume Date	Volume Date
	14.1 (not dated)	15.1 Jan - February	16.1 Jan - Feb
139 7-Feb			
140 24-Mar			16.2 (not dated)
141 30-Apr	14.3 April - May	15.2 April - May	16.3 April - May
142 21-May			
143 25-Jun	14.4 June - July		
144 20-Jul	14.5 August - Sept	15.3 July - August	16.4 June - July
145 26-Aug		15.4 August - Sept	
146 26-Sep			
147 28-Oct	14.6 Oct - Nov	15.5 Oct - Nov	16.5 (not dated)
			16.6
148 31-Dec	14.7 December	15.6 (not dated)	17.7

<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>
Volume Date	Volume Date	Volume Date
Vol. 17 No. January	Vol. 18 N January	
17.2 February	18.182 February	19.194 February
17.3 March	18.183 March	19.195 March
17.4 April	18.184 April	19.197 April
17.5 May		
17.6 June		19.199 June
17.7 July	18.187 July	
17.8 August	18.188 August	
17.9 September	18.189 September	
17.10 October	18.19 October	
17.11 November	18.191 November	
17.12 December	18.192 December	

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/sue was entered into the events datafile

Irrawaddy*** Volume (Issue)															
MONTH	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
January		1.9	3.8		5.1	No issue this month	7.1	8.1	9.1	10.1	11.1 January - February	12.1	13.1	14.1	15.1
February		1.11		4.2		6.1	7.2	8.2	9.2			12.2	13.2	14.2	15.2
March		2.1	3.13			No issue this month	7.3	8.3	No issue this month	10.2	11.2	12.3	13.3	14.3	15.3
April						6.2	No issue this month		9.3	10.3	11.3	12.4	13.4	14.4	15.4
May						6.3	7.4	8. 4-5 April- May 2000	9.4	10.4	11.4	12.5	13.5	14.5	15.5
June				4.12		No issue this month	7.5	8.6	9.5	10.5	11.5	12.6	13.6	14.6	15.6
July		2.8		4.13		No issue this month	7.6	8.7	9.6		11.6	12.7	13.7	14.7	15.7
August		2.10	3.21		5. 4-5	6.4	7.7	8.8	No issue this month	10.6 July - August			13.8	14.8	15.8
September	1.2			4.14		6.5	No issue this month	8.9	9.7 August - September	10.7	11.7 August - 12.8 August September - Sept		13.9	14.9	15.9
October		3.2				Issued a mid-year 1998 chronology	7.8	8.10 [no issue 11 or 12 in files; not sure if they exist	No issue this month	10.8	11.8	12.9	13.10	14.10	15.10
November			3.25			No issue this month		9.8 Oct - November		10.9	11.9	12.10	13.11	14.11	missing
December						No issue 6.6 this month			9.9	10.10	11.10	12.11	13.12	14.12	15.12

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to
 Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/is

find it.
 sue was entered into the events datafile
 ***There are often several entries resulting from t

ent articles. The dataset cites the specific article.

<u>1998</u>		<u>1999</u>		<u>2000</u>		<u>2001</u>	
Issue	Date	Issue	Date	Issue	Date	Issue	Date
1/98	31-Jan	1/99	31-Jan	1/2000	31-Jan	1/2001	31-Jan
2/98	1-Mar	2/99	28-Feb	2/2000	Feb-29	2/2001	28-Feb
3/98	1-Apr	3/99	31-Mar	3/2000	31-Mar	3/2001	31-Mar
4/98	15-Jun	4/99	30-Apr	4/2000	30-Apr	4/2001	30-Apr
5/98	31-Jul	5/99	31-May	5/2000	30-May	5/2001	31-May
6/98	30-Aug	6/99	30-Jun	7/2000	31-Jul	6/2001	30-Jun
7/98	31-Oct	7/99	31-Jul	8/2000	31-Aug	7/2001	31-Jul
8/98	Nov-31	8/99	31-Aug	9/2000	30-Sep	8/2001	31-Aug
		9/99	30-Sep	10/2000	30-Oct	9/2001	30-Sep
		10/99	31-Oct	11/2000	30-Nov	10/2001	31-Oct
		11/99	30-Nov	12/2000	31-Dec	11/2001	30-Nov
		12/99	31-Dec				

If the volume is not listed, then I was not able to find it.
 Highlighted cells means an item from that volume/issue was entered into the events datafile
 **As these volumes yielded no events, I chose to discontinue reviewing this source.

Summary of Private/Unpublished Sources

Political Defiance Committee					
Year	Time Period	Publication circa.	Information type	Year	Month
1999	July - September	Oct-99	Report	2001	April
1999	October - December	Jan-99	Report	2001	March
2000	January - March	Apr-00	Report	2001	May
2000	July - September	Oct-00	Report	2004	November
2001	April - June	Jul-01	Report	2005	December
2002	April - June	Jul-02	Report	2006	August
2002	January - March	Jun-02	Report	2006	December
2002	July - September	Oct-02	Report	2006	February
2003	April - June	Nov-03	Report	2006	January
2003	January	Feb-03	Report	2006	July
2003	July - September	Oct-03	Report	2006	June
2004	April - June	Jul-04	Report	2006	March
2004	July - September	Oct-04	Report	2006	November
2005	October - December	Jan-06	Report	2006	September
2006	April - June	Jul-06	Report	2007	April
2006	April - June	Jul-06	Report	2007	December
2006	January - March	Apr-06	Report	2007	February
2006	July - September	Oct-06	Report	2007	January
2006	October - December	Jan-07	Report	2007	July
2007	April - June	Jul-07	Report	2007	June
2007	January - March	Apr-07	Report		
2007	July - September	Oct-07	Report		
2007	October - December	Jan-08	Report		
2008	January - March	Apr-08	Report		

National League for Democracy/Liberated Area -- Thailand

Time Period	Publication circa.	Information type
2005 December	Jan-06	Report
2005 June - July	Aug-06	Report
2005 November	Dec-05	Report
2005 October - December	Jan-06	Report
2006 August - September	Oct-06	Report
2006 February	Mar-06	Report
2006 January	Feb-06	Report
2006 June - July 2005	Aug-05	Report
2006 March	Apr-06	Report
2006 May	Jun-06	Report
2006 October - December	Jan-07	Report
2007 April - June	Jul-07	Report

National League for Democracy/Liberated Areas -- In

Time Period	Publication circa.	Information type
2001 April - June	Jul-01	Report
2001 January - March	Apr-01	Report

National League for Democracy/Liberated Areas -- Thailand

Time Period	Publication circa.	Information type
2006 May	May-06	Report
2003 February - March	Apr-03	Report
2003 July - September	Oct-03	Report
2003 February - March	Apr-03	Report

Committee for Mass Mobilization

Time Period	Publication circa.	Information Type
2008 February - May 2008	Jul-08	Report