

**Nonviolent Communication Tactics:
Insights from Protest Uprisings in Burma and Iran**

Jay Heisler

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Faculty of Human Sciences

Saint Paul University

Under the supervision of Dr. Megan Bradley

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ABSTRACT

Essential to any activist movement is an effective communication strategy. With that in mind, my research examines cases where nonviolence and nonviolent protest tactics have been used to communicate. By demonstrating and communicating the nonviolence of their movements through their actions in order to gain the sympathy of key target audiences, activists effectively use these actions as a form of propaganda. Such communicative acts can include eye-catching physical actions that attract the attention of professional journalists and citizen journalists, and later the attention of international actors and potential domestic supporters. So far, very little academic literature appears to have examined nonviolent protest actions as a form of political communication. In the case studies that I have examined in my research, those of the 2007 “Saffron Revolution” uprising in Burma and the 2009 “Green Movement” uprising in Iran, there were several notable examples of nonverbal propaganda.

In my research, I use a notable framework in propaganda theory—Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell’s process for propaganda analysis—to examine the physical actions used by protesters in the recent Burmese and Iranian uprisings. I analyze a series of images from Burma and Iran to establish how the protesters’ nonviolent actions demonstrate clear pragmatic use and substantial propaganda value. I then assert that future nonviolent activist movements would be wise to harness the power of nonverbal propaganda, to create compelling images through which their nonviolence is demonstrated and their political goals are advanced.

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

The world has gone through several dramatic waves of democratization since the end of the Cold War, which have seen dictatorships fall in Asia, Africa, South America, Europe and the Middle East. In many cases, this democratization was aided by or resulted from a nonviolent protest uprising. In 2011, international attention was captured by revolutions and mass demonstrations across the Arab world. Just like previous nonviolent insurrections, the Arab Spring increased international attention to theories and strategies of nonviolent protest. Nonviolent protests and actions were commonplace during the successful revolutions of Egypt and Tunisia, and were instrumental in ensuring international support for movements that later turned violent in Libya and Syria. Of course, nonviolent insurrections are hardly a purely post-Cold War phenomenon. From the Indian struggle for independence from colonial Britain to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, nonviolent protest has defined some of the most influential activist movements of modern history. Not all such uprisings are successful, as seen by pro-democracy activists in Burma and Iran who famously used nonviolence in their own insurrections against their despotic regimes.

Before the wave of uprisings that spread across the Arab world in 2011, the 2007 “Saffron Revolution” in Burma and the 2009 “Green Movement” uprising in Iran were perhaps the most prominent recent examples of activists attempting a “bloodless” insurrection, a forced change of government without a shot fired (by the protesters, at least). In both cases, nonviolent activists took to the street in acts of mass protest and civil disobedience, becoming practitioners

of nonviolent protest techniques under the gaze of the international news media, online social media, and dissident media sent back into their countries.

It is in this spotlight that nonviolent protest movements—especially those involved in nonviolent insurrections against dictatorships—gain their strength. In light of the activists’ peaceful actions, the violence perpetrated against them reflects especially poorly on their government in the eyes of domestic and international news consumers, a dynamic that goes to the heart of the strategy behind pragmatic nonviolence. This central communication strategy, in which media coverage is essential and nonviolence itself is a form of communication, was brutally put to the test in Burma and Iran. In both cases, activists communicated nonviolently through protest tactics that captured media attention, such as eye-catching physical actions. When Iranian protesters flashed the “peace” sign, or when Burmese monks turned their alms bowls upside down to show they would no longer be taking money from the government, their nonviolence and their defiance was established for the world to see.¹

The nonviolent tactics used by both movements were at least partially informed by popular literature on pragmatic nonviolence, written and distributed by American academic and nonviolence advocate Gene Sharp (Arrow 2011, Beatty 2010, Revolution 2011, Sharp 2010: iv). Their use of nonviolence, and nonviolent communication, was attributable at least in part to Sharp’s efforts to perfect and disseminate nonviolent strategy, efforts that have been partially credited for the overthrow of governments in Georgia, the Ukraine, and several of the Arab Spring countries (Arrow 2011). However, Burma and Iran cannot yet be added to the list of

¹ Burma is alternately known as Myanmar, after the regime instituted a name change. For the purposes of this project the country will be referred to as Burma, for the sake of consistency and to avoid recognizing the legitimacy of the unelected military regime.

pragmatic nonviolence's success stories. In both cases, the state cracked down on the activists with fatal violence, dealing both movements a blow that neither has recovered from since.

Burma is currently undergoing a rapid democratic thaw. The influence of the 2007 pro-democracy uprising in motivating this political 'opening' cannot be ignored. It is quite possible that Burma's 2007 uprising set the stage for the changes that the country is experiencing as of the writing of this project. While dissident leadership are increasingly tolerated, the protest movement as a whole has yet to reclaim a visible role in Burmese politics.

In Iran, Basij militia thugs, backed by police and security forces, charged into crowds and beat protestors with sticks, chains and iron bars. In Burma, soldiers opened fire on peaceful protestors with live ammunition. In both cases, hundreds were arrested, many of whom are still unaccounted for, and in Iran's case, some of whom have been executed. Also in both cases, the actual body count from the protests is heavily disputed, although the likely minimum in both cases includes dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries. Despite the tragic end to each of these uprisings, they remain important case studies for those interested in the nature of nonviolent insurrections and nonviolent communication.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to examine how the insurrectionary movements in Burma and Iran used physical actions as part of their efforts to capture media attention and communicate through nonviolence to both enemies and potential allies. I will explore the implications of my findings for future research on nonviolence and communication, and for future nonviolent movements.

The central question motivating this work is:

How did activists in Burma and Iran employ nonviolent communication strategies during their protest uprisings?

This project also explores the following secondary research questions:

What particular role did nonviolent physical actions play in protesters' efforts to communicate their dissent to domestic and international audiences? What are the implications of these cases for theoretical understandings of the communicative nature of nonviolence in protests? What are the implications of this use of nonviolence as a communication strategy for future nonviolent movements?

Findings

I will demonstrate through my research that the forms of nonviolent communication examined here, when viewed through the framework of pragmatic nonviolence, can be seen as having a notable strategic value. The physical actions examined here were used by the activists to convey political messages, with the ultimate goal of creating political change. Within established propaganda theory, this would make these actions a form of propaganda. A surprisingly versatile medium, the physical actions used by the activists managed to convey sophisticated political messages and draw significant attention, due to the eye-catching nature of the images that they produced. As propaganda, these actions were powerful and effective, and particularly well suited to the forms of mass media available to the activists in Burma and Iran.

The fact that several of these actions have become iconic of their movements demonstrates their success. These findings add a new perspective to existing literature on pragmatic nonviolence, propaganda theory, and contemporary protest movements in Burma and Iran. The use of physical actions as a communication tactic is a form of persuasive political communication that has so far been little examined by academic literature in any discipline, and further examination is called for. Furthermore, these findings suggest that future nonviolent protest movements would be wise to harness the medium of physical actions for their own political communication strategy.

Key Concepts

Nonviolence is a heavily contested term, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 1 of this project. Considering the focus of this project on pragmatic nonviolence, it will be defined here as written by the Albert Einstein Institute, as “a technique of socio-political action for applying power in a conflict without the use of physical violence” (AII 1). Nonviolent communication will be defined here as an effort to convey a message using nonviolent protest tactics. Nonviolent defiance as referred to in this work will be defined as a message sent through nonviolence that highlights both the existence of dissent and the nonviolence of that dissent. A physical action as referred to in this work will be defined as a gesture, motion, use of a prop, or any other movement meant to convey a specific message nonverbally. Propaganda will be defined, in the words of Jowett and O’Donnell (1986: 16), as “the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.” The term will not be used, as it so often is, as a derogatory or value-laden word. Propaganda of the deed will be defined as a nonverbal action that has

communicative properties (Bolt 2008: 48). A protest movement will be defined as a group of political dissidents who stage mass demonstrations and other acts of political protest. Power will be defined, as by Gene Sharp, as “the totality of means, influences and pressures available to determine and implement policies for the society, especially the institutions of government or the state, or in opposition to them” (Sharp 2012: 229). This definition of power includes—among many other abilities—the ability to control a situation, mobilize people, induce others to behave differently, or engage in opposition (Sharp 2012: 229).

Methodology

In this project, I will examine select images of physical gestures and actions that clearly demonstrate the use of pragmatic nonviolence as a communication tactic. The images chosen are those that most clearly capture these gestures and actions, and include some images of actions that have become iconic due to their coverage by the media. All of the images are from international media outlets or social media. I will be examining the gestures and actions used through two frameworks: pragmatic nonviolence theory, as advanced by Gene Sharp and Robert Helvey, and communication theory, in particular propaganda theory.²

In order to understand the strategic uses of the actions explored in this project, I will be applying communication theory to these actions and gestures, and examining and analysing them as communicative acts. My principle theoretical framework will be Garth S. Jowett and Victoria

² While there is a wealth of literature available on social movement theory, such frameworks of analysis are beyond the scope of this project. This project is more concerned with the strategic value of the actions of protest movements than with the organizational or ideological structure of those movements. However, for an interesting look at social movement theory and its relevance to protest uprisings, see Suzanne Staggenborg’s *Social Movements*, and *Social Movements: Identity, Culture and the State*, edited by David S. Meyer, Nancy Whittier, and Belinda Robnett.

O'Donnell's 10-step process of propaganda analysis, which will be explained further in chapter 1 of this project, and which has been provided in appendix 2. This framework was chosen for its ability to provide insight into these actions as political communication; for its compatibility with pragmatic nonviolence theory; and for its flexibility in application regarding unconventional forms of communication, all of which make it appropriate for this project. Propaganda as a term will be applied here as a neutral concept, not a negative one, and the focus will be on strategy and not moral or ethical concerns. A semiotic analysis will be done of each image as well, using a similar approach to Lisa Wedeen's *Ambiguities of Domination* and Setareh Sabety's *Graphic Content: The Semiotics of a Youtube Uprising* (Sabety 2010, Wedeen 1999).

This analysis of the communicative aspects of the gestures will be complemented by an overview of relevant pragmatic nonviolence theory, which will establish the necessary framework to keep the focus of this project on the strategic value of the activists' actions. The possible inspiration provided by pragmatic nonviolence theory, particularly the writings of Gene Sharp, for these insurrectionary movements will be explained as well.

The case study analysis in this project will be qualitative and comparative, and the case studies have been chosen in line with George and Bennett's (2005: 72) case study research guidelines. Burma and Iran have been chosen for this project both for their differences and for their similarities. The substantial differences between the two states allow us to see how nonviolent communication can be used in different political conditions. In addition to countless cultural, linguistic and religious differences, there are also subtle differences in the form that each country's authoritarianism takes. Iran's use of comparatively democratic institutions—however restricted in practice—and ingrained reformer presence in government make for an interesting contrast with the iron-fisted homogeneity of Burma's military rule (Doyle 2006: 751).

In addition to showcasing different practices of nonviolent communication, Burma and Iran showcase different conditions under which it can operate.

The similarities between the cases are many. This includes the fact that both are authoritarian states whose insurrectionary activists primarily use nonviolence as a tactic. Furthermore, in both cases the activists were at least partially inspired by the work of nonviolence scholar Gene Sharp (Arrow 2011, Beatty 2010, Revolution 2011, Sharp 2010: iv).³ Importantly for my analysis of their communication strategies, the activists in both countries relied heavily on the international media, and new media technologies, to get images of their nonviolent protests out to national and international news consumers (Sohrabi-Haghighat 2010: 24, Helvey 2004: 13). Finally, and perhaps most importantly for this project, activists in both countries used physical actions that captured significant media attention, to a degree that makes them unique among recent examples of nonviolent uprisings against dictatorships.

For the images from Burma, I will first examine photographs of Burmese monks turning over their alms bowls to demonstrate their rejection of the military government, followed by photographs of Burmese activists guarding monks by forming a human chain. For the images from Iran, I will first examine photographs of Iranian women flashing the “peace” sign, followed by a photograph of an Iranian crowd forming a human chain on the front line of its protest march.

The protest uprisings examined here produced multiple eye-catching physical actions to choose from. For example, photographs from the Burmese protests show monks crouching in

³ While Sharp and Helvey’s direct involvement with Burmese and Iranian activists has been established, the extent to which the decisions of these activists are based on Sharp and Helvey’s instruction has not been proven. As such, for the purposes of this project, Sharp and Helvey will not be considered the architects of the strategy of these groups, but will instead be considered to be partial inspiration for this strategy.

front of soldiers, and a famous photograph from the Iranian protests shows a woman forming a heart sign with her green-clad hands. The actions examined in this project were chosen specifically for their relevance to the framework used here—for their powerful communicative value, and for their prominence in visual and written accounts of the protests.

Furthermore, the physical actions examined here were chosen partially to highlight the remarkable similarity between the two case studies. The protests from Burma and Iran both produced a “centerpiece” action—the overturned alms bowls in Burma and the “peace sign” in Iran, both involving extended arms with a partial fist—as well as the additional use of human chains. The specific images of these physical actions were chosen from countless available similar images of the same physical actions, which were captured many times in photographs and videos of the protests. These specific images were chosen based on their compelling imagery and their effective showcasing of the physical actions in question. Where multiple images are provided of the same action, this is to examine different uses of that action.

I am aware in writing this that I am an outsider to the cultures of my case studies. However, I feel that, because the focus of my project is on the strategic value of the actions being examined in an international context of mass media and social networks, the research should remain concerned with aspects of these physical actions that transcend cultural boundaries. A focused examination of the unique significance of each physical action to the cultures of the case studies would be valuable, but is beyond the scope of this project. The scope of this project, and the analysis used within it, are informed partially by my history as an activist and as a journalist. I have been involved in countless political demonstrations in the developed world, and I have worked in the media of the developing world. This has given me an experience with and an

interest in issues of nonviolence and communication, and a passion for finding and sharing effective strategy in both fields.

Structure

I will begin this project with an explanation in Chapter 1 of the relevant academic research on the topic of nonviolence theory. In this chapter I will outline the main theoretical elements of pragmatic nonviolence, including the difference between pragmatic nonviolence and principled nonviolence. I will then explain how pragmatic nonviolence is used in insurrectionary protests, and relate this to relevant literature by pragmatic nonviolence theorists.

Chapter 1 will then give a brief overview of relevant communication theory and how it will be applied in this project. I will introduce key concepts used in the field of communication that will be used in my analysis, and I will explain how they will be used. This will provide an overview of the central framework of my analysis, Jowett and O'Donnell's 10-step process of propaganda analysis.

In Chapter 2 I will examine select images from the nonviolent insurrection of Burma's 2007 "Saffron Revolution," and in Chapter 3 I will examine images from Iran's 2009 "Green Movement" uprising. Each of these chapters will follow the same basic structure of analysis—Jowett and O'Donnell's 10-step process for propaganda analysis. Before analysing each case, I will provide a brief overview of the political context of the uprising, and an overview of the uprisings' goals and participants. I will also explain how the activists in each state were inspired by pragmatic nonviolence, including the work of Gene Sharp, and I will show clear parallels between Sharp's teachings and the forms of protest shown during these uprisings. After

establishing the context of the images of these protests, I will then examine the images using Jowett and O'Donnell's 10-step process. I will show how the gestures and actions demonstrated in these images reflect a clear propaganda value, and I will examine how nonviolent communication was used by the activists in these images to further their political goals.

I will follow my examination of the images from these uprisings with a comparative analysis of both cases in Chapter 4. In the conclusion I will explore the implications of my findings, including the implications for nonviolence theory and the implications for the strategic considerations of future nonviolent insurrectionary movements.

CHAPTER 1: PRAGMATIC NONVIOLENCE AND COMMUNICATION

Moral Jiu Jitsu and Conversion: An Introduction to Principled Nonviolence

It is essential for this project that a clear distinction is made between principled nonviolence and pragmatic nonviolence, and that an explanation is given for why pragmatic nonviolence is the framework within which the actions of Burmese and Iranian activists will be examined in this project. Brian Martin and Wendy Varney (2003: 214) define principled nonviolence as an act in which "refusal to use violence is a moral imperative, based for example on the sanctity of human life," whereas pragmatic nonviolence is an act in which nonviolence is used primarily because it is more effective than violence.

Prominent theorists in the field of principled nonviolence have included scholars such as Richard Gregg, Johan Galtung, Douglas Bond and Michael Nagler (Gregg 1969) (Galtung 1965) (Nojeim 2004) (Nagler 1982). In contrast with pragmatic nonviolence, these thinkers tend to

stretch the definition of nonviolence to include concepts such as pacifism or non-aggression. For example, Bond insists that nonviolence must combine “a sense of community with an underlying premise of the sanctity of life,” or else it is just “violence for other ends” (Nojeim 2004: 6). This refusal to accept non-spiritual nonviolence as true nonviolence, common among principled nonviolence theorists, often leads to criticism of pragmatic nonviolence due to its openly amoral nature (Nojeim 2004: 7, Burrowes 1996: 112).

By far the most famous principled nonviolence theorist is Mahatma Gandhi, who also happens to be its most famous practitioner. Gandhi’s nonviolence is deeply spiritual, involving such concepts as nonviolence being “the law of one’s being—or, the soul’s natural action in oneself” (Borman 1986: 14). In this approach, typical of principled nonviolence, “The law of nonviolence is the self-conscious and intelligent expression of the soul’s omniscience and omnibenevolence” (Borman 1986: 14). Such rhetoric lies in stark contrast with the staunchly realist and sometimes openly cynical nature of prominent pragmatic nonviolence theorists and their influences (Helvey 2004: 87). In addition to seeing nonviolence as inherently spiritual, Gandhi saw nonviolence as an attitude as well as an action. “The spirit of nonviolence necessarily leads to humility,” he wrote, in *Nonviolent Resistance*. “Nonviolence means reliance on God, the Rock of Ages” (Gandhi 1961: 58).

Gandhi was also a keen strategist, and aside from his principles “had an astute eye for what would work in practice” (Martin 2005: 248). Although a secondary consideration to behaving morally, the strategic value of an action can still be considered important by a practitioner of principled nonviolence, and the lines between principled and pragmatic nonviolence can often blur (Martin and Varney 2003: 214). Gandhi argued that nonviolent action was effective because it converted the opponent, and that “satyagrahis (principled nonviolent

activists), demonstrating their commitment by refusing to fight back against attacks, would ‘melt the hearts’ of their opponents” (Martin and Varney 2003: 214). “Since principled nonviolence is founded in a belief that behaviour flows out of the core values of a person,” writes Martin, “it is only sensible to conclude that conversion – namely, changing the opponents’ core values – is the mechanism by which nonviolent action should bring about change” (Martin and Varney 2003: 214). This dynamic, at the core of applied principled nonviolence, is as I will demonstrate quite different from the dynamic of applied pragmatic nonviolence.

Several academics have attempted to build upon Gandhi’s ideas and their implications for applied nonviolent protest. Richard Gregg, whose book *The Power of Nonviolence* was inspired by his time with Gandhi and his respect for Gandhi’s ideals, first made popular the concept of “moral jiu jitsu” (Gregg 1969: 44). A modified, more political version of the jiu jitsu concept would later become a cornerstone of pragmatic nonviolence theory. Gregg’s version of jiu jitsu comes into effect when a practitioner of nonviolence is attacked by an opponent. At this point, the nonviolence and non-aggression of the victim instils “curiosity and wonder” in their attacker, “causing the attacker to lose his moral balance” (Gregg 1969: 44). Despite having practical application, this approach still is grounded in the assumption that nonviolence is a moral, principled act.

Robert Burrowes also used Gandhian theory to form a handbook for applied principled nonviolence, titled *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach*. In his book, Burrowes cites Gandhi’s claims that the moral and spiritual approach is also the most effective approach, and that there need not be a conflict between the two (Burrowes 1996: 113). Burrowes sees the practical value in principled nonviolence as being “likely, from the opponent’s perspective, to generate the minimum degree of psychological resistance and to increase the

rationality of seeking creative outcomes” (Burrowes 1996: 113). In this view of principled nonviolence, its morality and spiritual virtue are in themselves practical assets.

Political Jiu Jitsu and Political Defiance: An Introduction to Pragmatic Nonviolence

Proponents of pragmatic nonviolence are generally quick to point out the differences between their approach and the principled one. Kurt Schock outlines this explicitly and repeatedly in *Nonviolent Action and Its Misconceptions: Insights for Social Scientists*, in which he asserts that the majority of nonviolent activists are followers of pragmatic nonviolence. “Participation in nonviolent action does not require that activists hold any sort of ideological, religious, or metaphysical beliefs,” he writes (Schock 2003: 705). “Contrary to popular and scholarly assumptions, those who engage in nonviolent action are rarely pacifists” (Schock 2003: 705).

Pragmatic nonviolence, far from embracing compromise and unity as inherent to its doctrine, sees nonviolence as a weapon that one uses to defeat or coerce an opponent in a conflict. Robert Helvey’s list of philosophical influences on pragmatic nonviolence theory include, alongside Gandhi, the amoral and decidedly non-pacifist teachings of Clausewitz and Machiavelli (Helvey 2004: 87). A seemingly unlikely advocate of nonviolence, Helvey’s military background caused him to—prior to meeting and befriending Gene Sharp—initially dismiss nonviolence as the domain of “flower children, peaceniks and draft dodgers” (Helvey 2004: xii), all labels that some principled nonviolence proponents would likely take as a compliment. Helvey asserts that Sharp’s ideas are as essential to an understanding of nonviolent conflict as Clausewitz’s ideas are to an understanding of war, and Sharp’s writing certainly

enforces this view of pragmatic nonviolence as an amoral and predominantly strategy-based approach.

Although certainly influenced by Gandhi, Sharp “broke with him in a major way” (Martin 2005: 250). “Nonviolent action does not require its practitioners to ‘love’ their opponent, nor to try to convert him,” writes Sharp (1973: 633) in his enormously influential book *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. “Clearly this technique has been applied by people who hated their opponent and desired to coerce him. Such emotions and attitudes can coexist with the use of nonviolent means” (Sharp 1973: 633). Building on this refutation of principled nonviolence, he goes on to write, “Appeals to ‘love’ the enemy may at times be emotionally or religiously motivated appeals of persons who are politically naïve” (Sharp 1973: 634). However, he then asserts that showing compassion and fraternity with your opponents, when politically appropriate, can be strategically valuable (Sharp 1973: 634).

Gene Sharp’s nonviolence is more palatable to the practically minded in the West, such as Helvey, as it appeals to cold rationality over spiritual or moral beliefs. “Sharp’s pragmatic approach can be considered an adaptation to Western culture,” writes Martin, “where the basis for widespread principled commitment to nonviolence seems to be lacking” (Martin 2005: 250). Indeed, when Sharp occasionally does make normative or morality-based statements, they often reflect a Western liberal world-view and are defiantly non-pacifist. “It is unreasonable to aim for a ‘win-win’ resolution,” he writes, in *There are Realistic Alternatives* (Sharp 2003: 3). “Brutal dictators and perpetrators of genocide do not deserve to win anything” (Sharp 2003: 3). Despite such statements, which clearly reveal the Western liberal influences of Sharp’s thought process, Sharp insists that pragmatic nonviolence has universal appeal, and is practiced in the East and

West, the industrialized and non-industrialized world, in democracies and “against empires, foreign occupations, and dictatorial systems” (Sharp 2003: 4).

Pragmatic nonviolence, Sharp argues, is more effective than violence for oppressed people rising against their governments, not only because it is likely to result in a more democratic and less authoritarian replacement should the regime in power fall, but also because to choose violence is to choose “the very type of struggle with which the oppressors nearly always have superiority” (Sharp 2003: 16, Sharp 2010: 4). The general superiority of state militaries and security forces to the capabilities of those rising against them means that conventional or guerrilla war leaves the oppressed at a strategic disadvantage. To Sharp, nonviolence is the answer, due to its unique political advantages.

As opposed to the concept of conversion, the central dynamic of most principled nonviolence theory, Sharp’s pragmatic nonviolence is founded on undermining the sources of the opponent’s power, and denying power to them. In this view, conversion is only one of several weapons in the pragmatic nonviolence arsenal. In this view of nonviolence, the intended recipient of nonviolent communication is not necessarily the immediate oppressor, but a third party, including international actors, the oppressor’s supporters, and others among the oppressed, all potential allies against the oppressor’s control on power. While theorists like Sharp (1973: 697) and Martin (2003: 221) still give credence to conversion of opponents as a possibility, much of their strategy is still effective if such conversion does not take place. Sharp (1973: 455) in particular offers conversion not as a moral necessity, but as one of two options when dealing with opponents—the other being the less Gandhian option of coercion.

Whereas Gregg’s “moral jiu jitsu” aimed to convert the police officer with the truncheon by contrasting an admirable and sympathetic nonviolence with the brutality of his violence,

Sharp's "political jiu jitsu" aimed to use the same contrast to convert, among others, voters, policy makers, potential fellow protesters, and potential regime defectors, all of whom could be watching the police officer beat the nonviolent activist live on television. If enough people, or enough powerful people, are converted through their admiration of a nonviolent act, the resulting political and economic pressure on the opponent can be a deciding factor in the outcome of a conflict. In this central element of pragmatic nonviolence, which will be explained further in the next section, civil disobedience "is not about melting hearts but about developing power" (Ackerman 2008: 119).

Much as 'love' is just another weapon in Sharp's nonviolent arsenal, morality is useful, not for its own sake, but for its substantial strategic value. After all, the very foundations of the effectiveness of pragmatic nonviolence can be linked to moral views of violence and nonviolence held by the audience of nonviolent communication, as "pragmatic uses of nonviolent action draw strength from a cultural rejection of violence (in certain circumstances)" (Martin and Varney 2003: 214). Part of the political jiu jitsu process is using nonviolence to appeal to the moral beliefs of third party witnesses, and converting them is at least partially accomplished by appealing to their sense of right and wrong—although in the case of regime supporters, nonviolence also appeals to their sense of self-preservation, as they will be more likely to defect to or negotiate with an enemy that isn't shooting at them (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008: 11).

Morality and self-interest stand side by side in the arsenal of the practitioner of pragmatic nonviolence, all part of a strategy of directly challenging and forcing a total defeat of the opponent. Helvey calls this strategy "political defiance," the amoral use of nonviolence to directly challenge the authority of the practitioner's opponent, "allowing no room for

submission” (Sharp 2010: 1). Helvey, who specifically coined the term to separate his brand of nonviolence from that of principled nonviolence theorists, once referred to political defiance and military defiance as “apples and oranges,” not because of any moral distinction but because they are “two different weapons systems” (Helvey 2004: 55).

Is nonviolence, as pragmatic nonviolence theorists claim, more strategically effective than violence? When it comes to non-state actors challenging state actors, the numbers seem to suggest that this is indeed the case. A particularly illuminating study by Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (2008: 8) found that, in an overview of conflicts between non-state and state actors from 1900 to 2006, nonviolent movements were effective in achieving their goals in 53 per cent of cases, and violent movements were only successful in 26 per cent of cases.

Not only can nonviolence increase the odds of success for an insurrection, but it can also decrease the likelihood—a possibility in any insurrection that aims for a change of government—that the current oppressors will be replaced by an even more authoritarian power. A 2005 study by Freedom House found a direct correlation between nonviolence and resulting political freedom during transitions to democracy, in the sense that regimes toppled by nonviolent means are, as Sharp suggested, more likely to be replaced by less authoritarian and more democratic regimes (Ackerman 2008: 119). In other words, “how one chooses to fight determines what one wins” (Ackerman 2008: 119).

Not only is pragmatic nonviolence demonstrably preferable to violence in specific circumstances, it could also be demonstrably preferable to principled nonviolence from a strategic standpoint. Gregg’s concept of “moral jiu jitsu” was later disputed by other scholars, who assert that the minds changed by the nonviolence of Gandhi and his followers were not actually the minds of their immediate attackers but the minds of powerful third parties, most

notably an increasingly uneasy British public (Martin 2005: 249). This view of the benefits of nonviolence—and the proper audience for nonviolent communication—shows that nonviolence is effective not for its ability to convert oppressors, as principled nonviolence advocates claim, but for its ability to undermine the power of oppressors by turning their supporters—in this case, the British public—against them. This clearly echoes Sharp’s “political jiu jitsu” and supports the approach taken by advocates of pragmatic nonviolence.

Criticisms of Pragmatic Nonviolence

Advocates of principled nonviolence are likely aware of the fact that pragmatic nonviolence theorists have a dismal view of their approach, one which can best be summed up by Sharp when he refers to principled nonviolence as “admirable” but “grossly inadequate” (Sharp 2003: 18). In return, principled nonviolence theorists have been openly critical of pragmatic nonviolence and its perceived moral and theoretical limitations. Johan Galtung refers to Sharp’s nonviolence as “negative nonviolence,” which is unable to truly challenge the “structural violence,” the oppression—antithetical to Galtung’s “positive nonviolence”—that Galtung sees as woven into the very nature of society (Nojeim 2004: 7, Galtung 1965).

Robert Burrowes is even harsher in his critique of pragmatic nonviolence and its “major shortcomings” (Burrowes 1996: 112). The first of these alleged shortcomings is “a belief in the divisibility of means and end,” which Burrowes sees as dangerous and leading to non-Gandhian tactics like “deception, secrecy and sabotage,” all of which are an affront to principled nonviolence and its emphasis on the “sacredness and unity of all life” (Burrowes 1996: 113). The second alleged shortcoming is “a conception of conflict in terms of incompatible interests,”

whereas Burrowes feels that the goal of conflict should be “satisfying the needs of all parties” and not to “defeat the opponent” (Burrowes 1996: 113-114). Finally, Burrowes condemns pragmatic nonviolence for its use of “a negative conception of the opponent” (Burrowes 1996: 114). This, Burrowes asserts, could lead to dehumanization, which according to Gandhian theory is in itself a form of violence (Burrowes 1996: 114).

Pragmatic Nonviolence, Communication, and Propaganda of the Deed

In Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler’s 1994 book *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century*, they list what they see as the twelve main principles of strategic nonviolent conflict. These are not “principles” in the principled nonviolence sense, but tenets of applied nonviolent strategy. Surprisingly, the authors do not explore in depth the fact that of the 12 principles listed, several—such as “formulate functional objectives,” “cultivate external assistance” and “alienate opponents from expected bases of support”—require effective communication strategies (Ackerman 1994: 23, Martin and Varney 2003: 137). This common oversight of the role of communication in nonviolence is, as scholars like Martin and Varney (2003: 213) conclude, surprising considering the importance of communication when nonviolence is applied.

Communication is fundamental to the effectiveness of a nonviolent movement (Martin and Varney 2003: 147). Not only is it essential for a movement to communicate effectively within its ranks to maintain discipline and orchestrate nonviolent actions and demonstrations, but communication with opponents and third parties is one of the key means by which nonviolence gains its power. This includes such traditional forms of communication as independent

journalism, press releases, and direct correspondence with the opposition or influential third parties such as foreign leaders. This also includes actions in which nonviolence is a form of communication in itself, of which the intended audience is whoever witnesses the acts of nonviolent protest, whether in person or later through the international media.

Before I illustrate how nonviolence can be used as a form of communication, it is worth pointing out that the alternative to nonviolence is used to communicate quite frequently. Terrorist attacks and government crackdowns that “make an example” of political opponents are just the most obvious cases of violence being used to send a political message (Martin and Varney 2003: 217). In an age where television stations can broadcast live images of a terrorist attack or airstrike, or news of the death of a dissident journalist or anti-gang political figure can reach millions through newspapers and social media, many acts of political violence can be seen as having been performed as much for their communicative function as for any immediate gain in territory or comparative military strength. It logically follows that an act of nonviolence can serve the same function, albeit an inherently less macabre one.

The modern concept of nonviolence as a form of communication originates with Ramana Murti. Murti, a believer in principled nonviolence and the ability for nonviolence to convert opponents, wrote in 1968 that nonviolence sends a message, and that it is important for that message to be clear and well thought out (Murti 1968). “If the activists are seen as behaving stupidly or bizarrely, there is little prospect of understanding or sympathy by the opponents,” Martin and Varney (2003: 214) explain, in an analysis of Murti’s theory. “In communicative terms, a requirement for the effectiveness of nonviolent action is that channels are open and that relevant meanings are produced” (Martin and Varney 2003: 214). This remains true in the field of pragmatic nonviolence as well.

The term “propaganda of the deed,” popular among political anarchists, refers to when “the drama of action communicates without words” (Martin and Varney 2003: 215). “Propaganda of the deed” as a term has been used to describe an “operational act of political violence,” a “performance ritual for individuals or a political group, therefore a spectacle or even merely rite of passage” and an “act of communicating a message directed at a local or wider population” (Bolt 2008: 48). While the term is commonly used to describe acts of violence, Martin and Varney assert that it can be used to describe nonverbal acts of nonviolent protest as well (Martin and Varney 2003:215). One such example of communication through nonviolent action is a labour strike, which “can send a strong message to employers, stronger than claims by trade union leaders in negotiations, about the unity, commitment and power of the workers” (Martin and Varney 2003: 215).

Sending a message to one’s opponent is important, and sending that message nonviolently leaves the door open for meaningful dialogue and rational debate, no matter how heated the conflict becomes (Martin and Varney 2003: 219). As such, nonviolence in itself can be seen as a form of propaganda of the deed. For example, it has been observed that being playful and fraternizing with street-level soldiers and security forces can play a crucial role in undermining their morale. This was clearly shown by the nonviolent response to the 1991 coup attempt in Russia, where activists shared sweets with soldiers and decked their tanks with flowers, leading to individual soldiers professing a desire to be imprisoned before firing on their own people (Martin and Varney 2003: 223).

As mentioned previously, the individual protester’s immediate oppressor is only one of the many potential targets of nonviolent communication in Gene Sharp’s theory of pragmatic nonviolence, and should conversion fail, nonviolence can be used for coercion as well. Political

jiu jitsu builds the relative power of the nonviolent activist and attacks the relative power of the violent oppressor by inspiring witnesses to turn against the oppressor and take action. During a violent quelling of a nonviolent insurrection, the nonviolence of the protesters becomes harshly contrasted with the violence of their oppressors, casting the protesters in a positive light and their oppressors in a negative one in the eyes of these witnesses.

Such witnesses include international actors, supporters of the opponents, and others among the oppressed, all key recipients of an activist's nonviolent communication. Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (2008: 9), in their previously mentioned study, confirm that these three pillars of potential support for a protest movement are all vastly more likely to respond positively to a nonviolent movement than a violent one. Sharp outlines in depth, in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, the importance of political jiu jitsu in reaching these groups.

Of the three groups that can be the target of nonviolent communication, international actors are often the easiest to win over through nonviolence. This includes foreign governments, foreign populations, international human rights NGOs, and international media. Images of peaceful protesters being brutally suppressed can be highly effective in mobilizing global public opinion. Sharp quotes American sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross as saying "The spectacle of men suffering for a principle and not hitting back is a moving one. It obliges to power holders to condescend to explain, to justify themselves. The weak get a change of venue from the will of the stronger to the court of public opinion, perhaps world opinion" (Sharp 1973: 659).

There is, however a weakness in relying too heavily on international actors as the sole audience for a nonviolent communication strategy. As Sharp notes, some regimes are far more sensitive to international opinion than others (Sharp 1973: 662). For example, in the case of regimes that are largely alienated from the democratic West, Western criticism could be easily

ignored. Barring economic sanctions or direct military intervention, the support of governments hostile to the regime they are rising against is not always enough to tip the balance of power in the favour of nonviolent activists.

Of enormous strategic value is the ability to convert supporters of the regime in power. It is in this aspect that nonviolence is truly unique. “Violent repression of nonviolent actionists is far more likely to result in uneasiness and criticism within the opponent’s camp than is violent repression of violent actionists,” writes Sharp (1973: 665). This effect is due both to moral outrage and decreased fear for personal safety (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008: 11). Not only are regime supporters more likely to sympathise with a nonviolent opponent, but they are more likely to defect to an opponent that is not trying to kill them.

Finally, and arguably most importantly, political jiu jitsu can have a profound effect on mobilizing the oppressed against their oppressor. “Repression may increase the resistance from the grievance group itself,” writes Sharp (1973: 678), “instead of intimidating them into acquiescence.” As seen in some of the 2011 “Arab Spring” countries, this can swell the numbers of the existing opposition from a relatively small group of hard core dissidents to a protest movement large enough to grind the country’s political and economic process to a halt and topple the regime.

Political Defiance: Symbolic Protest and Physical Actions

Political jiu jitsu provides a critical example of the importance of communication to nonviolent strategy, as communication is central to its outreach to potential allies. In order for this effect to work, however, the nonviolence of the protesters must capture the public

imagination before the violence of their oppressors can arouse outrage. This is where public demonstrations, acts of nonviolent group political protest, are so important.

Nonviolent political demonstrations “do not constitute direct attacks on the opponent’s sources of power,” writes Helvey, “but rather they are indirect attacks intended to expose the actions of the regime to public scrutiny, express objections to them and attempt to persuade the regime and others that change is needed” (Helvey 2004: 35). These acts, defined by Sharp as purely symbolic, include marches, rallies, vigils and other displays of communicated dissent. Their primary goal is to “produce an awareness of the existence of dissent” (Sharp 1971: 32). As an important aspect of Helvey’s “political defiance,” these acts of symbolic, nonviolent communication challenge existing structures of authority by conveying both that dissent exists and that it is nonviolent. As such, this aspect of the message of these acts will be referred to from now on in this work as “nonviolent defiance.”

These actions, all forms of communication in themselves (Martin and Varney 2003: 213), can be highly effective under repressive regimes (Sharp 1971: 32). Such actions could include any of the symbolic and media-friendly tactics suggested by Sharp in his book *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action*, or actions like those examined in this work.⁴ All of the above-mentioned actors—international actors, regime supporters, and others among the oppressed—are the audiences for this display of nonviolent defiance. Nonviolent protest is a direct attempt to communicate with these audiences and gain their sympathy and support. Once the existence and nonviolence of the protesters is established and widely accepted through their propaganda of the deed, the violence of the regime becomes an asset to the protesters through political jiu jitsu.

⁴ This examination of nonviolent communication is by no means comprehensive. Forms of nonviolent communication that will not be examined in this project include traditional media such as dissident newspapers, or other communicative uses of physical actions such as theatrical or sporting events.

This work will examine how activists in Burma and Iran used nonviolent communication to capture the imaginations of their international and domestic audience, establishing their nonviolent defiance through propaganda of the deed, thus ensuring that political jiu jitsu could come into effect upon the anticipated and brutal government response. For examples of this nonviolent communication, this project will focus on the physical actions of the activists during protests.

Some of the most memorable acts of nonviolent communication, such as the iconic showdown between a man and a tank in China's Tiananmen Square, involve no spoken or written words, but instead a nonverbal symbolic gesture. "Protesting against political issues and politicians has in many circumstances been communicated through gestures," writes Yasmin Ibrahim in her examination of shoe throwing as a form of protest—albeit a benignly violent one (Ibrahim 2009: 213). It is important to note that the most well known, and therefore successful, of such actions are those that have been captured on film and widely distributed through the mass media.

Symbols of potential utility to nonviolent activists include props, such as flags and banners, or physical actions like those examined here, which communicate simultaneously to both a domestic and international audience through a simplicity that may transcend linguistic differences.⁵ "Gesture is probably the default form of communication," writes Marcel Danesi (2008: 88), a leading author on semiotic theory. "When people do not speak the language of the country they are visiting, they resort instinctively to gesture to get a message across or to

⁵ See appendix 1 for examples of famous nonviolent physical actions in protests, including historic actions referenced in this project. These images include Gandhi's salt march in India, Martin Luther King's linked arms in the United States, the clenched fist of the black power movement, the Tiananmen Square "Tank Man" incident, an elaborate demonstration by Serbia's Otpor, political hand gestures during a rally for Lebanon's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), and Coptic Christians guarding praying Muslims during the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

negotiate a meaning” (Danesi 2008: 88). In the same way, gestures helped activists in Burma and Iran to reach international news consumers, many of whom do not likely speak Burmese or Farsi.

Unfortunately, the field of semiotics has yet to produce detailed, relevant work examining the specific use of symbols by nonviolent political activists (Martin and Varney 2003: 161), and the use of semiotic analysis in this project will be limited. The meanings found in the actions of Burmese and Iranian nonviolent activists that are examined in this work are based on popular media and academic interpretation. Explanations for symbolic nonviolent gestures are often given by activists in interviews or provided by analysts familiar with the cultural and political context of the demonstration. However, the analysis conducted in this project connects these actions for the first time to propaganda theory and pragmatic nonviolence theory in order to explore their strategic value.

In the case of political demonstrations during an insurrection, a physical action is a wise substitution for a verbal or written phrase because it can be captured as a silent image and because as an image it can prove to be more powerful and more memorable than a verbal or written phrase—as the iconic Tiananmen Square image so aptly demonstrates. In an age of international mass media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such images can reach millions overnight and as a result can be highly effective forms of political communication. I will assert that the nonviolent physical actions used by the activists examined in this project were not just communication tactics, but propaganda tactics that were particularly effective considering the forms of mass media available to them.

The Media, PSYOPS and Pragmatic Nonviolence

Considering the fact that the media is the means by which acts of nonviolent communication reach their intended audience, a solid media strategy is essential for any nonviolent movement, a fact repeatedly emphasized by Sharp, Helvey, and other nonviolence scholars (Helvey 2004: 13, Sharp 2010: 55, Singh 2010: 104). “Whatever forms of protest and persuasion are selected,” writes Helvey, “the acts should receive widespread media coverage. Demonstrations or protest letters have little or no effect if no one knows about them” (Helvey 2004: 35). William Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld wrote in 1993 that social movements rely on media for three reasons: to mobilize political support, legitimize themselves in mainstream discourse, and broaden the scope of their conflict (Singh 2010: 104). All of these fit well into the goals of pragmatic nonviolence and its use as a communication tactic.

Knowing full well the dangers posed by the communication of their dissidents with the outside world, dictatorships like Burma and Iran are severely repressive toward activist communication techniques. This includes censorship, suppression of alternative media, dissemination of false news, and monitoring and disrupting dissident communication (Sharp 1973: 538). Often publication review boards enforce a strict government control on the public discourse, and fear of punishment leads many to self-censor in the public sphere (Helvey 2004: 13). However, even under the most oppressive conditions, such as Nazi and Stalinist rule, activists have still managed to communicate with each other and the outside world (Sharp 2010: 56). In an age of social networking websites and cell phone cameras, activist communication in the face of government repression has never been stronger. The images examined in this project are a product of communication strategies that overcame the censorship and oppression of an

authoritarian country's political conditions, and were able to reach televisions and home computers worldwide.

True to his military background, Robert Helvey refers to a movement's communication strategy as PSYOPS, or psychological operations. Helvey bluntly points out that "media relations" is merely a polite euphemism for propaganda and proceeds to detail how best to wage an effective propaganda war (Helvey 2004: 77). Helvey's tenets of propaganda, which can easily be applied to nonviolent "propaganda of the deed" as well as traditional leaflets and underground newsletters, state that propaganda needs a target, a message, a messenger, and feedback.

The "targets" of nonviolent communication's propagandists are the three groups mentioned in the previous section, previously referred to as "witnesses" or "audiences": international actors, supporters of the opposition, and others among the oppressed population. The message is specific to each country and each activist movement—and will be examined further in later chapters—but in both Burma and Iran involves a display of nonviolent defiance which sets the stage for political jiu jitsu. Feedback is difficult to measure in the heat of an insurrection, but a rough judgement can be made by the resulting quantifiable support from the targets, such as international condemnation of the regime, defections from the military and government, or increased attendance at protests and demonstrations, and by the success of the propaganda tactic in garnering attention to and sympathy for the propagandists' cause.

The "messenger" is the means by which the message is sent to its targets, and can include everything from traditional propaganda mediums like posters and radio broadcasts, to indirect methods such as spreading rumours or showcasing a symbol. This also includes Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). When communicating directly isn't possible or desirable for activists, the chosen messengers can be "key communicators," including respected

community voices such as political, religious and labour leadership, as well as journalists (Helvey 2004: 80).

Under authoritarian political conditions where domestically produced mass media is under state control, the best choice of messenger for practitioners of nonviolent PSYOPS depends on the message being sent and the intended target. Sometimes the message is related to planning or executing tactics, and the target is other activists. When communicating with each other in a situation where the government has a tight grip on domestic mass media, activists can use messengers that include small-scale acts of communication such as email, graffiti, leaflets, and word of mouth (Martin and Varney 2003: 166). When the message is one already known to most activists in the movement, and the targets are international actors, regime supporters, and others among the oppressed, then the messengers chosen by activists with no access to government-controlled domestic mass media are often citizen journalists who post their news and images on websites or provide them to the international mass media. The term 'citizen journalist' is generally used to refer to an amateur journalist such as a blogger, or an activist or bystander taking on the role of a journalist to report on a protest or other newsworthy event.

The forms of international mass media that are relevant to the case studies of this project include radio, television and print reporting from political news companies based outside the countries of the case studies. This also includes forms of pro-democracy media broadcast into dictatorships, often with the support of democratic governments, such as Voice of America and the Democratic Voice of Burma. Burma and Iran are both cases where radio and TV media outlets outside the country broadcast activist-supplied images to the world about what is happening there, and also send broadcasts inside the country of illegal dissident programming (Helvey 2004: 13).

The forms of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) relevant to these case studies include cell phones, digital cameras and video cameras, and internet resources, including blogs and social networking sites like Flickr, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. At an age when the internet has become a global communication tool, democratic and autocratic governments alike are increasingly finding it to be a frustrating source of civil disobedience (Calabrese 2004: 335).

The Importance of Medium

A reliance on the international media means that the ability to attract international media attention to demonstrations and the ability to ensure that this attention is positive can make or break a movement with no method of domestic mass communication at its disposal (Singh 2010: 105). How then can an activist movement ensure positive media attention? “In principle, any story, told in any way, could lead the evening news or hit the headlines,” Martin and Varney (2003: 183) write; “In practice, what is selected by editors is tightly constrained by experience, competition, expectations of audiences, and responses of powerful interest groups.”

As Martin and Varney point out, activists must choose which messages and tactics are appropriate for different kinds of mediums, as a message or tactic that is effective for television news is often useless for radio (Martin and Varney 2003: 168). For example, when radio is the messenger, Helvey suggests using popular music to gain additional listeners (Helvey 2004: 83). When television is the messenger, and compelling visual images are needed, Helvey suggests that activists use visual symbols, such as flags or uniforms, to accompany their audio message.

When courting visual media, activists need to consider both what conveys meaning through symbolism and what will be camera-friendly on a purely aesthetic level.

With this in mind, Helvey suggests that activists use white bandages to treat each other's wounds, for the sole reason that white bandages show up better in photographs and are more likely to lead to striking images that are chosen by editors to accompany newspaper headlines. Images that are uniquely compelling, either for being beautiful or being horrible, are bound to draw the interest of photographers, who have a keen eye for what will sell in the world of international media (Helvey 2004: 105).

In *Making the News: A Guide for Activists and Nonprofits*, Jason Salzman emphasizes the importance of being entertaining. This does not necessarily mean being entertaining in the sense of being amusing, so much as being engaging or compelling (Salzman 2003: 9). This is as true for images as it is for words. In an age of television, Salzman (2003: 55) writes, it's not about what you say so much as it's about what you show.

The rise of the internet and ICTs has only increased the ability for images to be widely distributed and as such become enormously powerful. Just like any forms of media, the success of a message sent through ICTs depends on its ability to appeal to targets while maximizing the strengths of the medium, for example through photographs illicitly taken at protests with cell phone cameras and uploaded onto social networking websites. The grainy and unpolished images that result from this medium can actually be more compelling to viewers, as they provide a deeper, more personal look into the activists' situation, creating a form of "extreme reality TV" (Sabety 2010: 120). A dependence on international media and ICTs means that the tactics of the activists must be well suited for these mediums, such as the tactic of creating a memorable and accessible visual image that demonstrates clear nonviolent defiance.

Propaganda and Physical Actions

As established above, pragmatic nonviolence requires PSYOPS, and a shrewd media relations strategy, all of which include a heavy reliance on propaganda. Propaganda is essential for the success of a nonviolent insurrection. Edward Bernays, one of the pioneering experts in the field of modern propaganda theory, writes that propaganda helps offset a lack of political power and political experience for marginalized groups, citing the example of women's rights groups in the United States (Bernays 2005: 131). For marginalized pro-democracy groups in particular, propaganda can be especially helpful, as exposing truths uncomfortable to the ruling dictatorship can be enormously powerful. "Truth is democracy's best [propaganda] weapon," writes Fred C. Ikle, "The facts are on our side" (Ikle 1989: 7). The inherent positivity in nonviolence—even in its more aggressive pragmatic incarnations—reflects the propaganda principle that messages an audience dislikes are easier to swallow when presented with a positive framework (MacDonald 2007: 41).

Propaganda as a form of communication, write Jowett and O'Donnell (1986: 14), is "a deliberate attempt to alter or maintain a balance of power that is advantageous to the propagandist." This applies to the communication strategy of an activist movement that aims to remove from power the current regime, and as such separates the propaganda of these activist movements—nonviolent or otherwise—from other forms of persuasion. Persuasion as defined by Jowett and O'Donnell emphasizes mutual understanding and mutual gain, not unlike principled nonviolence. Propaganda, in line with the amorality of pragmatic nonviolence, aims "to promote a partisan or competitive cause in the best interest of the propagandist" (Jowett and O'Donnell

1986: 23). Activists who aim to remove a regime from power, and activists following the form of pragmatic nonviolence advocated by Gene Sharp and Robert Helvey would, as Helvey's PSYOPS manual clearly demonstrates, fall on the side of propaganda instead of persuasion.

However, just as is the case with the relationship between pragmatic nonviolence and principled nonviolence, the cases examined here can arguably be seen as both propaganda and persuasion at the same time, and the line between the two is not always clear. Just as this project uses a pragmatic nonviolence framework to examine the actions of some activists who are likely motivated by principled nonviolence, this project's focus on a propaganda framework doesn't mean that some activists on the ground don't regard themselves as persuaders instead of propagandists.

This is particularly true in light of the fact that "propaganda" has become a dirty word, and is often used as a description to imply dishonesty or ill intent. Especially in light of the cases examined in this project, nothing could be farther from the truth. "Propaganda is not an evil thing," write Jowett and O'Donnell, "It can only be evaluated within its own context according to the players, the played upon, and its purpose" (Jowett and O'Donnell 1986: 217). The amorality of propaganda, despite the negative associations with its name in popular use, is emphasized by many writers of propaganda and PSYOPS theory (Jowett and O'Donnell 1986: 217, Lasswell 1995: 21, Bernays 2005: 48). Propaganda is practiced by every government and every major business, by every political party and religious movement. It "runs the gamut from truth to deception" (Jowett and O'Donnell 1986: 19) and includes so-called "white" propaganda, in which "the source is identified correctly and the information in the message tends to be accurate." The propaganda examined here falls firmly in the category of "white" propaganda, and the use of the term propaganda to describe it should not be seen as a value judgement by the

author, but instead an accurate description of a useful strategy that future pragmatic nonviolent movements could learn from or adopt as their own.

As established, nonviolence can be in itself a form of communication, propaganda of the deed can be nonviolent as well as violent, and nonverbal gestures and other physical actions are an expressive and often effective form of nonviolent communication during protests. Jowett and O'Donnell (1986: 119) write that any communication channel could be used as a propaganda medium, and propaganda's previous mediums have included such diverse examples as dance performances (McLaurin 1982: 220), ceremonies (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 277), spreading health and morale-damaging narcotics (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 278) and tampering with the bodies of fallen enemy soldiers to give the appearance of suicide (MacDonald 2007: 46). With that in mind, I posit that physical actions such as nonverbal gestures can be used as a propaganda medium.

I first realized this effect while in Beirut in the lead-up to the 2009 Lebanese election. Supporters of pro-Hezbollah Christian candidate Michel Aoun and his political party, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) would regularly flash a hand sign unique to their campaign—an extended thumb and pointer finger, like the Western hand sign for “gun,” but held sideways in a check mark.⁶ From the infamous Nazi salute to the raised fist of the black power movement in the United States, physical actions have been used as propaganda by many groups for many purposes, and are made all the more powerful when captured in photographs and spread by international mass media or ICTs.

Repeated by dozens, or sometimes thousands of people, these physical actions gain much of their power from repetition, which increases their visibility and can help to make them iconic

⁶ See appendix 1, Image vi, for an example

of the movement they are a part of. Repetition is actually a cornerstone of many propaganda strategies, for its ability to enhance the believability and acceptance of a message (MacDonald 2007: 42). Like the best propaganda, images of physical actions are “circulated free of expense to the propagandist” (Lasswell 1995: 17) by international mass media and sympathetic parties on social media, as “the skilled manipulator makes events so interesting in themselves that attention is spontaneously turned in their direction” (Lasswell 1995: 17). While it may be jarring to read of the brave and earnest activists of these case studies being compared to “skilled manipulators” like militaries and advertising companies, this is meant not to disparage their work but to examine its nature and value as effective strategy.

Propaganda Analysis: The Ten-Step Plan

To analyse the nature and value of the physical actions of the case studies of this project as forms of communication, Jowett and O’Donnell’s 10-step process of propaganda analysis will be used. The ten-step plan, arguably the most prominent methodology for propaganda analysis, allows us to judge the displays of nonviolence examined here as acts of political communication.

The first step of the 10-step process is “the ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 270). The analysis of ideology includes an examination of the beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours of the propagandist to gain an understanding of the world view that they are attempting to convey to their target (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 271). The analysis of purpose seeks the goal of the propaganda dissemination, including whether the propaganda aims for “integration,” in which official sources attempt to maintain their positions and interests, or “agitation,” which “seeks to arouse people to participate in or support

a cause” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 271). All of the cases examined in this project are clear cases of political agitation, as all involve challenging established systems of power and encouraging others to do the same.

The second step of the 10-step process is “the context in which the propaganda occurs” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 270). This analysis includes an examination of “the events that have occurred and the interpretation of the events that the propagandists have made” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 272), such as the public mood, contentious issues, the parties involved, what is at stake, and relevant history of the conflict.

The third and fourth steps of the 10-step process are “identification of the propagandist” and “the structure of the propaganda organization” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 270). The former includes an examination of the creator and disseminator of the propaganda (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 273), and the latter an examination of the nature of the organization that they are a part of. Analysis of the organization includes a look at its leadership, goals, and means by which to achieve those goals, as well as shared symbols or rituals of membership, and its communication strategy (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 273-275).

The fifth step, “the target audience” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 270) examines the target of the propaganda, while the sixth step, “media utilization techniques,” examines how that target is reached (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 270). Jowett and O’Donnell make clear that, when the sixth step is concerned, all available media, communication techniques and “rituals” can be used as propaganda. This analysis entails an examination of the method by which the propaganda is conveyed, including an examination of the consistency of that message and the “flow of communication from one medium to another and from media to groups and individuals” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 277). Jowett and O’Donnell write that “the analyst should go beyond

interpretation of the message to a closer scrutiny of the ways the message is presented to the media” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 278), and how consistent that message is with the ideology of its propagandist.

The seventh step is “special techniques to maximize effect” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 270). This could mean such devices as those listed by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis⁷ in 1937, including the still-common “name calling,” “glittering generalities,” and “band-wagon” approaches (Institute for Propaganda Analysis 1995: 217), although Jowett and O’Donnell assert that “propaganda is too complex to limit its techniques to a short list” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 279). Jowett and O’Donnell provide some examples of possible techniques, such as creating resonance by speaking to already-existing opinions, beliefs and dispositions (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 279), relying on sources with pre-established credibility (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 280) and using visual symbols of power (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 282).

The eighth step, the “audience reaction to various techniques,” can be difficult to quantify, but can be partially measured through resulting behaviour changes in the target and the realization of propaganda goals (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 285). “Counterpropaganda” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 285), the ninth step, includes any communication in opposition to the communication of the propagandist. While Jowett and O’Donnell (2006: 286) explain counterpropaganda as a population’s response to the propaganda of their government, in the case studies examined here the counterpropaganda is that of a government in response to activists among the population. The tenth and final step is “effects and evaluation,” which includes an examination of “whether the purpose of the propaganda has been fulfilled” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 286). This includes an examination of the achievement or lack of achievement

⁷ The Institute for Propaganda Analysis was an American organization from the early twentieth century dedicated to the study of, and critical thinking toward, propaganda.

of both the overall purpose of the propagandist and limited specific goals, and the reason for the achievement or lack of achievement of these goals.

Propaganda Theory: Back from the Dead?

It is important to note that Jowett and O'Donnell's work appears to be something of an anomaly in contemporary academic literature. Propaganda theory, while a crowded discipline in the first half of the 20th Century, faded from academia in the 1960s and 1970s, as a paradigm shift to mass media and communication theory caused propaganda theory to largely be seen as "obsolete" (Curnalia 2005: 242). The term propaganda is mostly used in contemporary literature as a negative term, whereas neutral or positive analysis of propaganda tends to use the euphemism 'political communication.' There is a wealth of political communication literature available, such as Karen Sanders' *Communicating Politics in the Twenty-First Century* and *Political Communication in Action*, edited by David L. Paletz. However, within this literature there is no analysis of nonviolence or nonviolent protest actions.

Jowett and O'Donnell's work, which bridges the gap between modern mass media and communication theory and the now faded propaganda theory (Curnalia 2005: 247), allows a greater flexibility in its scope of communicative political acts than political communication theory, which tends to focus on traditional mediums of communication. Furthermore, Jowett and O'Donnell's work—including the 10-step process for propaganda analysis that forms the framework of analysis for this project—is more appropriate for an analysis of nonviolent protest strategy than much of the theory in contemporary political communication literature. This is due to its flexibility in application to non-traditional forms of communication, and its compatibility

with pragmatic nonviolence theory. Despite the negative connotations of the word propaganda in its contemporary popular use, I feel that its use fits an analysis of pragmatic nonviolence in both application and in spirit. Perhaps further research into propaganda as an amoral and practical concept could help rehabilitate the term in popular use.

This project uses propaganda as a framework to analyze the provided case studies for the same reasons that it uses pragmatic nonviolence as a framework: to keep the emphasis on strategy. A case can be made for pragmatic nonviolence as an acceptable framework for analysis even when the activists themselves are openly adherents to principled nonviolence, and for propaganda as an acceptable framework even when the specific personal and cultural meaning behind the physical action being examined is vastly deeper and more complex. While cultural considerations are certainly important, they are beyond the capabilities of an analysis of strategy with limited size and scope such as this project. A pragmatic nonviolence framework and a propaganda framework are the most appropriate ways to keep the focus on that strategy.

Jowett and O'Donnell's 10-step process for propaganda analysis comes with some disadvantages—for example, its expansive scope risks making it unwieldy for comparative analysis. Furthermore, an analysis of propaganda techniques is made difficult by the lack of other contemporary literature on the subject, and critically engaging Jowett and O'Donnell's theory is hampered by a lack of competing voices in the field. However, the 10-step process provides an appropriate framework with which to examine an unusual form of propaganda through a propaganda lens, and to reflect on its value as communication. The fact that, unlike many theoretical frameworks in political communication, the 10-step process can be applied to nonviolent protest actions just as smoothly as other mediums of communication makes it ideal for this research.

Conclusion

As we proceed to examine the cases of nonviolent activists in Burma and Iran, we will be exploring how members of these movements communicate through acts of nonviolence. Their message includes nonviolent defiance (usually in addition to calls for democracy and human rights), their messengers are the international media and ICTs, and their targets are international actors, regime supporters, and others among the oppressed. The physical actions used to accomplish this are uniquely suited to the mediums of visual media such as television, print, blogs and social media. When examined through propaganda and persuasion theory, these physical actions can be seen as a skilful form of nonverbal propaganda, or “propaganda of the deed,” that speaks to the moral conscience of targets.

All of this is done with the strategic aim of incurring the necessary sympathy and support to create a backlash when the regime cracks down with violence, thus enacting the process of political jiu jitsu, an essential element of pragmatic nonviolence. The ultimate goal is not necessarily just to convert the oppressors of these activists—as would be the goal of a principled nonviolence advocate—but to defeat them, to topple the authoritarian regimes in charge of their states by using nonviolence to undermine their power and deny power to them. The images that will be examined in the following chapters are powerful, memorable, and as a result highly strategically effective.

PART 2

For the purpose of this analysis of Burmese and Iranian activists, pragmatic nonviolence will be the primary theoretical basis. This is not to imply that the nonviolent activists in Burma and Iran don't believe that nonviolence is the principled choice. On the contrary, Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is a "faith-inspired" leader (Deyoung 2007: 121) who aims for a "revolution of the spirit" (Suu Kyi 1991: 183), and both she and Green Movement leader Mir Hossein Mousavi have called for nonviolence from their followers (Suu Kyi 1991: 184, Sahimi 2010: 120). Many of the activists in both countries likely feel that nonviolence is a moral choice as well as a strategic one. It is not uncommon for practitioners of pragmatic nonviolence to view it as a moral or spiritual calling in addition to its pragmatic value, and the line between principled and pragmatic can blur when nonviolence is applied (Martin and Varney 2003: 117).

However, as established in the previous chapter, the focus of this project is on the strategic implications of the actions of these activists. With that in mind, I will be using pragmatic nonviolence as a framework in all cases examined in this project, in order to keep the focus on their strategic value.

Aside from this consideration, there is also evidence to suggest that all of the cases examined here fall within the realm of pragmatic nonviolence, regardless of the principles of their practitioners. Despite academics citing the principled nonviolence of the activists and their "Gandhian-style satyagraha" tactics, in several ways the nonviolence of activists in both Burma and Iran are clearly pragmatic in nature (Moser-Puangsuwan 2005: 296). First and most important is the fact that both insurrections involved a Sharp-like form of political coercion, a

direct attempt to challenge and usurp the power of each country's government that went well above and beyond Gandhian efforts of conversion through principled behaviour. While the Buddhist monks who led the Burmese protests are unlikely for ideological reasons to take up a violent struggle in any form, other Burmese pro-democracy activists have chosen the path of nonviolence for its strategic advantages at a point when the Burmese military would be nearly impossible to defeat in an armed struggle (Chowdry 2008: 10).

This adherence to pragmatic nonviolence can also be seen in the fact that neither nonviolent movement has shown any qualms about sharing an insurrection with violent actors, even if they themselves are not committing acts of violence. Many of Burma's pro-democracy activists have worked with and been sheltered by armed revolutionaries and ethnic separatist movements who are waging a violent struggle against the government in the country's rural areas (Boudreau 2004: 241, Revolution 2011), and despite a stated need to avoid "contamination" of Burma's nonviolent protests with the violence of its rebel groups (Beer 1999: 174), the strategies of Burma's main violent and nonviolent revolutionary actors have been openly coordinated in the past—with the help of Robert Helvey (Beer 1999: 179). Furthermore, protests during the 2007 "Saffron Revolution" did include occasional violence from the protesters as well as the police (Human Rights Watch 2007, Taylor 2008: 259). Despite the principled nonviolent stance taken by Aung San Suu Kyi and by the Buddhist monks who led the 2007 Saffron Revolution uprising, there has always been a substantial overlap between nonviolent and violent revolutionaries in Burma. This includes cases in recent history of nonviolent activists joining the armed struggle after nonviolence was perceived to be no longer effective—much to the delight of a military regime better suited to battling a rural insurgency than an urban nonviolent uprising (Boudreau 2004: 242).

“Those who practice principled nonviolence view nonviolence as a way of life and assume that violence is inherently wrong,” writes Schock. “Those who practice pragmatic nonviolent action view nonviolent action as efficacious or convenient for attaining their goal in a given context, and do not reject the possibility that violent action may be a practical means for alleviating oppression under some conditions” (Schock 2003: 709). In Burma, nonviolent and violent groups have coexisted and often worked together in their struggle against the government, despite the stated principled nonviolence of protest leadership and in direct contradiction to Gandhian nonviolent principles. I do not mean to imply that Aung San Suu Kyi and others among the Burmese political opposition are being in any way disingenuous in their principled nonviolence stance. However, for the purposes of this project there is a clear case to be made for pragmatic nonviolence as an appropriate framework for analysis of their actions.

The case for pragmatic nonviolence as the primary approach is even more apparent in Iran, where protesters during the 2009 Green Movement uprising chanted the decidedly non-Gandhian (Bode 1994: 7) phrase “Death to the dictator!” and where many protesters threw bricks, set fires, and physically attacked the police and security forces. At no point did the nonviolent majority of these protesters or their leadership ever appear to condemn, apologize for, or attempt to prevent this mayhem, and as a result the protests fit the model of “limited violence” that Sharp (2010: 33) acknowledges as occasionally unavoidable. Importantly, Sharp does not refer to this “limited violence” as regrettable, or suggest that time and resources be spent on stopping it. Instead, Sharp advises that in cases of limited violence, a clear distinction be made between violent and nonviolent forces and actions (Sharp 2010: 33).

In addition to the pragmatic nature of their relationship with violence, the case for pragmatic nonviolence as the approach of choice for activists in Burma and Iran can be made by

the fact that both have been directly inspired by Gene Sharp and Robert Helvey's writing and direct involvement (Beatty 2010: 629, Beer 1999: 179, Revolution 2011, Arrow 2011). Burma even has a dissident organization, not coincidentally with a history of working with Robert Helvey, titled "The Political Defiance Committee" (Helvey 2004: 41). Most tellingly of all for the pragmatic nonviolence of the Burmese opposition is the fact that Helvey personally oversaw the creation of unified strategy between violent and nonviolent Burmese forces against the ruling regime (Beer 1999: 179).

Burma has long been one of the countries on which Sharp has spent the most time and effort. Sharp's seminal book *From Dictatorship to Democracy* was originally published in 1993 by the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma, and was first intended to be used purely by Burmese activists (Sharp 2010: iv). In the 2011 documentary *How to Start a Revolution*, Sharp claims in an interview that the book was written with Burmese activists in mind, and only later, after being exceptionally well received by the Burmese pro-democracy forces, was spread globally in at least 31 different languages (Revolution 2011).

One of these languages was Farsi, and the film shows how Sharp's pragmatic nonviolence was a central inspiration for Iranian activists during the 2009 Green Movement uprising. This connection between Sharp's work and Iranian activists has also been widely referenced by the media, including the BBC (Arrow 2011), and as a result Sharp is so well known in Iran that Iranian state-controlled news broadcasted an animated propaganda piece picturing a meeting between Sharp and various US government officials as they ostensibly plotted the subjugation of the Iranian people (Revolution 2011, Kurzman 2010: 10).

Gene Sharp's vision of pragmatic nonviolence can be seen in action on the streets of Burma and Iran, and while each activist movement used his ideas differently, and in vastly

different political, economic, cultural and religious contexts, activists in both countries clearly used pragmatic nonviolence to attempt the overthrow of their authoritarian governments. Despite well-established principled beliefs in both cases, this project will be focusing on the pragmatic elements of the nonviolence used, in order to examine their strategic value.

Similarly, this project will view acts of nonviolent communication through a propaganda framework, despite the undeniable earnestness and idealism inherent in many of these actions. While some might object to a term with such negative connotations as propaganda being used to describe the actions of principled and morally driven activists, this project will maintain use of the term as an amoral description of any form of political communication designed to further specific and quantifiable political goals—which is clearly applicable in the examples analyzed in this project.

CHAPTER 2: THE SAFFRON REVOLUTION IN BURMA

The Southeast Asian nation of Burma is no stranger to violence. Unfortunate enough to be one of the most war-torn nations in the region, Burma regularly sees clashes between the forces of its military government and the militias of its many diverse ethnic groups. This violence has been perpetuated both by political and economic marginalization of these ethnic groups, and by the pressures of crushing poverty exasperated by years of financial mismanagement—Burma’s GDP per capita is USD 1,400, among the lowest in the world (CIA World Factbook).

The current military leadership has run Burma since deposing dictator Ne Win and brutally crushing a resulting pro-democracy uprising in 1988. After holding an election in 1990 that saw a victory for the National League for Democracy (NLD), the government overruled the election results and placed NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. Since then the country’s vast population, estimated to be almost 54 million people (CIA World Factbook), lived under a brutal authoritarian rule that has seen widespread press censorship, no independent judiciary, mass arrests and torture of political dissidents. In 2007, Burma remained under the grip of dictator Than Shwe, and the political thaw that would later grip the country was only a distant dream for Burmese pro-democracy activists.⁸

In light of both the oppression and poverty suffered by Burma’s population, resistance against the government was unsurprising. However, the main threat to Burma’s government was

⁸ As of the completion of this project, the Burmese regime has released many political prisoners and allowed the political opposition to run for office in elections. Dissidents and journalists are returning from exile and further reforms are anticipated.

not the armed resistance being waged against it by fringe ethnic militias, but the unarmed, nonviolent struggle of members of its majority ethnic group, Burmans, who widely support the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi (Rogers 2008: 116). Despite the brutality of the government toward pro-democracy demonstrators, 2007 saw the largest uprising against the government since thousands were killed in a similar uprising in 1988.⁹

The images that will be examined in this work are available in appendix 3. Image 1 and Image 2 are photographs of Buddhist monks holding their alms bowls upside down as they march through the streets of Burma as part of a political demonstration during the 2007 “Saffron Revolution.” Image 3 and Image 4 are photographs of ordinary Burmese civilians walking next to the monks with their hands linked, forming a cordon around them. All four images will be analyzed using Jowett and O’Donnell’s 10-step process for propaganda analysis.¹⁰ The photographs themselves are not the focus of analysis but instead the physical actions captured by them.

i: Ideology and Purpose

Jowett and O’Donnell stress the importance of isolating the beliefs, values and goals of the propagandists as part of an overall analysis of their propaganda (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 271). Despite the diversity of groups present in the Burmese activist community, there is a

⁹ The 1988 uprising, similar to the 2007 uprising examined here, involved largely nonviolent mass protests that were met with extreme government violence as a response. Nonviolent protest is certainly deeply engrained in the strategy and ideology of Burma’s dissident community, as demonstrated repeatedly by its history of nonviolent protest actions. For an in-depth examination of this uprising and other incidents of Burmese nonviolence, see Vince Boudreau’s *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia* (Boudreau 2004).

¹⁰ The titles of each section are paraphrased from Jowett and O’Donnell’s framework, a summary of which can be found in appendix 2.

substantial overlap between their ideology and purpose. The Burmese pro-democracy forces include a variety of different groups, from veteran activists like the 88 Generation Students to politicized monks such as the All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA). All of these groups are united in their struggle for "basic rights and freedoms" (ITUC 2007: 9) for the people of Burma. The ABMA sees one of its key roles as democracy promotion (ABMA 2012), and have vowed to remove the ruling military dictatorship from power (Rogers 2008: 116). Groups like the 88 Generation students are open about their support for pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi—a support which is widely spread throughout a population that elected Suu Kyi in Burma's last free election in 1990 (Irrawaddy 2011). Suu Kyi is still seen as a leader of Burma's opposition activists, as shown clearly by a defining moment in the 2007 protests when demonstrators stopped outside the house in which she was imprisoned and waved to her through the gate (Rogers 2008: 116). Suu Kyi has called for democracy in Burma as the only path for its government, and remains one of the world's most famous pro-democracy activists (Suu Kyi 1991: 169).

In addition to democracy as a shared goal, many Burmese activists have Buddhism as a shared religion. While there is a substantial non-Buddhist population in Burma, opposition from that population as a whole is more likely to be found in the violent ethnic rebellions against Burma's military junta than in the nonviolent urban protests, which draw largely from Burma's majority ethnic and religious community (Rogers 2008: 116). However, likely in an attempt to avoid alienating ethnic minorities that would be needed for short term support and long term political stability, the Buddhist nature of the opposition has never been made exclusive in nature.

From the monks in Burma's street protests to opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Buddhism is constantly cited as an inspiration and ideology for the Burmese opposition. Suu Kyi

has even cited Buddhist philosophy as a justification for Burmese democracy, outlining that the Buddhist concept of leadership requires democratic principles (Suu Kyi 1991: 173). As previously established, nonviolence is deeply rooted in the Burmese pro-democracy movement, and that nonviolence is both principled and pragmatic in nature. The monks of the ABMA famously chanted the “metta sutta” as they marched through the streets in protest, a religious incantation that wishes kindness toward all beings in the spirit of Buddhist belief (Fink 2009: 355).¹¹

In addition to calling for a Buddhism-inspired democracy, activists in Burma are protesting their immediate living conditions and those of the general population, which in a country as poor and oppressive as Burma are difficult to say the least. The 88 Generation Students, while openly pro-democracy, are more likely to directly protest smaller-scale living standards issues to avoid a stricter response from authorities (Thawngmung 2008: 13,14), and the ABMA marched in order to protest “the worsening plight of the people” (Kingston 2008: 11).

The ideology of the monks and other protesters during Burma’s 2007 “Saffron Revolution” was largely one of Buddhist faith, liberal democracy, and both principled and pragmatic nonviolence. Most of all, it was also an ideology of opposition to the ruling Burmese regime and the suffering of the Burmese people that continues as a result of their undemocratic rule. The main purpose of the propaganda was to convey their opposition to the military regime in power, the depth of their faith and its role in inspiring their activism, and the nonviolence of their movement. This was all done with the goal of inspiring others to act in support of their demonstrations.

¹¹ The Metta Sutta translates into English as follows: “May all be well and secure; May all beings be happy! Whatever living creatures there be; Without exception, weak or strong; Long, huge, or middle-sized; Or short, minute, or bulky; Whether visible or invisible; And those living far or near; The born and those seeking birth; May all beings be happy!” (Larkin 2010: 124)

ii: Context

“Successful propaganda relates to the prevailing mood of the times,” write Jowett and O’Donnell; “Therefore it is essential to understand the climate of the times” (Jowett 272). If the prevailing mood of the times is one of popular anger against the regime and the climate is one of mass unrest, the propaganda message is more likely to be well received. Such was the case in Burma in 2007.

While the politically oppressive climate in Burma was among the worst in the world for human rights, it was economic factors that proved to be the last straw for many Burmese in 2007. On August 15 of that year, the government sharply increased the price of energy, instantly making everyday activities such as commuting to work intolerably expensive for Burma’s poor.

The first to protest were the 88 Generation Students. They appeared in relatively small numbers to form rare public demonstrations, and most of the leadership were arrested almost immediately. That may very well have been the end of demonstrations, if some of the country’s Buddhist monks had not decided to protest as well. A small march by monks was violently crushed by security forces on September 5, an incident in which monks were tied up and publicly beaten and one monk allegedly died. As word of this insult to Buddhism spread, Burma’s deeply religious population responded with outrage and revulsion. Thousands of monks rallied in Burma’s capital in response, and the ABMA was formed in September of 2007. The international press took interest, naming the uprising the “Saffron Revolution.”

Authorities initially held back as the monks continued to gather in greater numbers on Burma’s streets, leading to a large demonstration on September 24 in which students and members of the general population joined the monks in a series of large mass demonstrations. On

September 26 the authorities cracked down hard on the protesters, attacking them in the streets and raiding monasteries at night. While the regime has been far from transparent about the crackdown and exact numbers are impossible to find, it is estimated that dozens were killed and thousands were arrested before the uprising was finally quelled (Steinberg 2010: 138).

iii: The Propagandist

Jowett and O'Donnell acknowledge that finding the identity or affiliation of the propagandist can sometimes be difficult (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 273). It is impossible to identify the group affiliations of the civilians protesting along with the monks in Image 3 and Image 4, and hundreds more who do not appear in these images were engaged in similar acts across the country. For obvious reasons, in such an authoritarian state even an act of public protest is best done in relative anonymity. However, it is reasonable to assume from the political context of these demonstrators that the protesters are supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi and the pro-democracy cause. In a country that voted overwhelmingly for Suu Kyi, it is possible that the protesters are not members of activist groups such as the NLD or the 88 Generation Students, and are in fact laypeople who were inspired by the protests of the monks to voice pre-existing sympathies for the pro-democracy struggle. In a country where political dissidents are regularly sent to forced labour camps and subjected to torture, their mere presence in the street as protesters carried enormous political weight.

It is also reasonable to assume that the monks in Image 1 and Image 2 are members or direct supporters of the ABMA. Monks in Burma make for particularly powerful propagandists, as they are highly respected in Burmese society and a key element of Burmese culture (Selth

2008: 282, Rogers 2008: 116). In addition to being highly respected by a devout population, the monkhood also offers a sort of social safety net to the poorest families—sons who cannot be fed are allowed to become novice monks and live on alms (Kingston 2008: 11). To an even greater degree than the laypeople who protested with them, the very fact that they were protesting was of great political consequence, and sent a powerful message in light of the repressive actions that they were likely to face. 2007 was not the first time that monks had risen up in protest, as monks in the country had a long history of political militancy—including mass participation in the 1988 rebellion (Pinheiro 2007: 14). However, the monk uprising in 2007 proved to be particularly damaging to a regime that attempted to gain legitimacy through cooperation with the country’s religious community (Steinberg 2010: 136). Observers of Burmese politics assert that images of soldiers cracking down violently on the monks will forever stand as a deep insult to Burmese morals and a shocking example of a regime alienating its people and losing popular legitimacy through the brutality of its actions (Kingston 2008: 4).

iv: The Propaganda Organization

Jowett and O’Donnell emphasize the importance of a “strong, centralized decision making authority” to a successful propaganda campaign (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 273). Such a unifying authority would be difficult to manage under the oppressive conditions in which Burmese activists operate. As previously established, groups like the NLD, the 88 Generation Students, and the ABMA form a loose-knit coalition against the ruling military regime, and all struggle to bring democracy to Burma. They are inspired both by the pragmatic nonviolence encouraged by foreign supporters such as Sharp and Helvey, and the principled nonviolence

inherent to their Buddhist faith. While there is no way to prove that the activists in these photographs are members of any of these organizations, they are certainly sympathizers.

Membership in Burmese dissident groups such as the 88 Generation Students and the NLD reflect the fact that activism in a country as closed and repressive as Burma is better done with the strength of a group than as an individual (Beatty 2010: 625). These organizations “provide solidarity, devise strategic frameworks of pro-democracy activities, and assist members in meeting their basic needs such as food and shelter” (Beatty 2010: 625). Even though the specific protests they conduct are often ostensibly about smaller issues such as the cost of living, the “techniques themselves challenge the state’s authority and legitimacy” and follow Gene Sharp’s guidelines for a nonviolent insurrection (Beatty 2010: 626). They coordinate with activists who live abroad and with activists hiding near the border with Thailand to avoid arrest (Beatty 2010: 629).

Burma enforced heavy censorship laws on domestic media, and commonly denied visas to foreign journalists (Fink 2009: 261). As a result, the communication strategies of Burmese activist groups included a reliance on both traditional mass media and on ICTs. Citizen journalists would update websites with news and digital footage of protests or send them directly to news networks like CNN or the BBC, who they would then conduct interviews with from cell phones (Fink 2009: 368). These same images, and the world’s reaction to them, were then broadcast back in to Burma through dissident media like the Democratic Voice of Burma (Fink 2009: 369).

The ABMA doesn’t have the long history in Burmese activism of these other groups, and was formed entirely for the 2007 protests—its leadership largely fled the country or “went underground” afterwards to avoid persecution (Lintner 2009: 7). The ABMA was a

conglomeration of the All Burma Monks' Union, the Federation of All Burma Monks' Union, the Rangoon Monks' Union, and the Sangha Duta Council of Burma (Lintner 2009: 49). Driven to action by state violence against the first monk protests, their demands included an apology from the government for violence against monks, as well as the release of political prisoners—including Suu Kyi—and a dialogue between the government and the democratic opposition (Lintner 2009: 48). Their form of nonviolent communication is firmly rooted in their religious beliefs, and reflects a principled nonviolence stance in addition to its pragmatic applications (Fink 2009: 367).

v: The Targets

Jowett and O'Donnell write that the skilled propagandist chooses a target that is “most likely to be useful to the propagandist if it responds favourably” (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 275). The target audience of Burmese activists during the “Saffron Revolution” uprising were the targets necessary to achieve the effect of political jiu jitsu: international actors, regime supporters, and others among the oppressed. While monks who practice principled nonviolence aimed to convert their opponents (Fink 2009: 367), their fellow activists were busy capturing images of their protests for the benefit of the international press and dissident media.

Regime supporters were easily the most difficult target. Despite being largely Buddhist, the military was fiercely loyal and deeply engrained in the country's social and economic hierarchy (Shen 2010: 39). In a devastatingly impoverished country, joining the military of approximately 400,000 soldiers—roughly the same population as the monks—offers a rare opportunity of social mobility for the country's poor, and there are no incentives for these

recruits to turn against the system that has provided for them and their families (Shen 2010: 39). The monks aimed to appeal to the faith and morals of these recruits through the nonviolence of their protests, and to “awaken” members of the regime to the suffering they were causing (Fink 2009: 367, Fink 2009: 102).

Others among the oppressed were also a difficult propaganda target, but for different reasons. Unlike the regime supporters, the population was economically disadvantaged and discontent with the regime—as shown by their willingness to choose Suu Kyi by a landslide in the country’s last transparent election. Unfortunately, years of severe oppression, including arrest and torture of political dissidents, had cowed many into silence. The brutal crackdown against the 1988 uprising in particular had “burned a place in the collective memory” of the Burmese people (Kingston 2008: 6). However, thanks to ICTs and dissident media, the access of the Burmese people to information about the protests in 2007 was unprecedented (Steinberg 2010: 137).

The international actors were, by a wide margin, the easiest of these targets to sway. As a result, international actors have become a cornerstone of the activists’ strategy, as activists aimed to “sensitize” foreigners to their plight as to increase diplomatic pressure on the regime (Chowdry 2008: 10). International support networks had been cultivated for Burmese pro-democracy activists for years, and governmental aid for these networks has come from Western democracies like Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the United States (Beatty 2010: 621). Burma was for all intents and purposes a pariah state to the West in 2007, and support for the demonstrations from Western governments was immediate and strong, including a travel ban and assets freeze for members of the Burmese regime (Thawngmung 2008: 18). However, the Burmese government could still heavily depend on economic support

from Russia, China and India, all of which had resource interests in the country, and international condemnation was far from unanimous (Thawngmung 2008: 18).

vi: Media Utilization

Jowett and O'Donnell emphasize the importance of examining not only the original form of media used by the propagandist, but also the transfer of the propaganda message between mediums (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 277). In the case studies examined in this project, the message of the propagandists passed through several mediums, but originated with the nonverbal communication medium of physical actions. The message was first conveyed by monks and other activists using their bodies, in a display of nonviolent defiance. In a country where chanting anti-government slogans is cause for arrest, a nonverbal gesture displays dissent in a manner that is less openly confrontational. That message is immediately witnessed by those who are in the presence of the activists, including potential defectors among the security forces and potential protesters in the general population, and as such would still be powerful even if no technology were present.

In the cases examined here, the physical actions of the activists were then captured using digital photography and posted to dissident websites or sent to international news organizations. Photographs sent to dissident websites were then shared on social media websites such as Facebook, Flickr, and blogs, and photographs sent to news organizations such as Reuters were often syndicated and sold to newspapers across the world. Finally, these same images were sent back into Burma through the internet or dissident television stations. Proving the versatility of

physical actions as a communication medium, descriptions of them could also be given by dissident radio announcers, allowing them to transcend visual genres of communication.

The meanings behind the physical actions were arguably less important than the context of them when it came to making the front page of a Western newspaper. However, when it came to the other two targets of political jiu jitsu, supporters of the oppressors and those among the oppressed, those meanings were immensely powerful. The most powerful of these physical actions, and the one that captured the most attention from the international media, was the overturning of the alms bowls. A cursory explanation for this, and the one seized upon by the international media, was that the gesture signified that the monks were no longer accepting donations from the military regime (Hujer 2007: 1). However, the spiritual significance of this action is far deeper, and far more rebellious than a mere principled boycott.

Monks, unable to handle cash for religious reasons, survive on donations of food and clothing from the population (Anonymous 2007: 236). The act of giving alms to a monk is “a fundamental expression of religious piety, and considered among the most meritorious of acts” (Human Rights Watch 2007: 31). The accumulation of this spiritual merit is a core element of Burmese Buddhism, and to deny someone the ability to donate alms is effectively a form of excommunication (Human Rights Watch 2007: 31). This excommunication, known as Patta Nikkujjana Kamma, targeted military figures and their families in an incredibly painful attack on their religious identity and membership in the religious community (Pinheiro 2007: 8). “A monk in Sittwe commented to me that generals do not fear going to hell, but rank-and-file soldiers may not be so insouciant about their karma,” wrote Jeff Kingston, adding, “No one can relish rebirth as a ‘mangy, shit-eating mutt,’ as a few angry monks put it” (Kingston 2008: 16). This makes the

action “a monk’s most hard-hitting spiritual weapon” (Larkin 2010: 120), only to be used in extreme cases of harm against the monastic community.

On an ascetic level, the gesture is a striking one. The raised hands of the monks are aggressive in the way that they thrust the bowl up where all can see. When held with one hand, as in Image 1, this gesture includes a fist thrust into the air, the bowl clenched within it, reminiscent of the clenched fist of the black power movement in the United States.¹² When held with two hands, as in Image 2, the bowl is held like a blunt weapon, and the posture of the monk resembles the posture of a man about to thrust the object in his hands down upon those in front of him. Although strictly nonviolent in nature, these physical actions are confrontational in the body language that they exude.

The overturning of the alms bowls became iconic because of its perfect symbolism of the monks’ defiance. Its cultural meaning was in line with the pro-democracy goals and spiritually-inspired nonviolence of the monks, as it both pressured the regime and its supporters while remaining strictly nonviolent in nature. However, the posture involved in these physical actions is not the only confrontational element of them. Considering the fact that the overturning of the bowls directly threatens the spiritual health and prospects for the afterlife of the regime and its supporters, it can be seen as a form of nonviolent coercion—making it clearly applicable as a form of pragmatic nonviolence despite its spiritual roots.

The other physical action presented here is that of the human chain—a versatile action in itself, as will be shown in the next chapter. In the early days of the “Saffron Revolution,” before the wider population started to join the monks in large street protests, activists largely let the monks remain the centre of the demonstrations. Support included covering their actions as

¹² See appendix 1, Image iii, for an example

citizen journalists, providing them with water, and surrounding them, hand-in-hand (Larkin 2010: 123). This was both a display of solidarity and a way of physically blocking authorities from harming the monks, and apparently was allowed as act of compromise by the monks after being begged by laypeople for the ability to join them in protest (Fink 2009: 356).

In Image 3, the men, women and children who form the human chain are clearly in motion alongside the monks. The image brings to mind later iconic images from the Egyptian revolution—of Coptic Christian protesters forming a human chain around Muslim protesters as they prayed. However, in some photographs the Copts faced outwards, away from their praying comrades, in order to watch for police or government thugs. In Image 4 the activists face the monks with their backs to the rest of the world, in a display of respect for people so central to their own faith. The activists surrounding the monks are raising their hands above their heads as they form their human chain, showing defiance to the government and solidarity with each other as well as with the monks.

While it would be impossible to verify the political affiliation of those participating in these human chains, their actions do reflect the ideology and purpose of the main Burmese dissident groups. They demonstrate both a defiance of the Burmese regime and a respect for Burma's Buddhist culture and the nonviolence inherent in it. Considering the fact that street violence had already been used at this stage by the Burmese authorities, they also demonstrate bravery, and nonviolence in the face of severely violent repression.

vii: Special Techniques

As outlined by Jowett and O'Donnell (2006: 279), one of the main techniques used by propagandists is to create resonance by appealing to the predispositions of the audience. This is particularly visible in the cases examined here.

Firstly, these physical actions are an appeal to the Buddhist faith of the propagandists' supporters and opponents. The overturning of the alms bowls threatens the spirituality of regime supporters and emphasizes the religious nature of the protest for protest supporters. The human chain around the monks emphasizes the faith of the activists and their respect for the monks, appealing to the faith in observers.

Secondly, the nonviolence of these actions speaks to the moral conscience in observers of any religion. International news consumers react so strongly to nonviolent protest because it appeals to their core moral beliefs, beliefs that are nearly universal—that nonviolence, when possible, is more moral an approach than violence. The very foundations of political jiu jitsu, despite its amoral and strategic nature, include an appeal to the personal morals of its targets.

Another popular technique is the reliance on “opinion leaders,” or the use of the status and influence of respected figures in a population (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 281). The involvement of monks in these protests, who are so revered in Burmese society and whose mere presence as protesters sends such a powerful message to their targets, fits with this theme perfectly. Furthermore, even non-Buddhist international audiences are more likely to side with Buddhist monks, famous for their staunch morality and devotion to nonviolence, than a violent military responding to them.

Finally, there is the strength that comes with visual symbols of power, such as through aggrandizing paintings of political leaders or the imposing architecture of corporate lobbies (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 283). While the power shown by the protesting activists isn't the same form of power shown by a corporation or authoritarian government in their propaganda, it is power none the less. By overturning their alms bowls, the monks are showing the power they hold over regime supporters by denying them rituals that are essential to their faith. They are also demonstrating the power they hold in Burmese society as respected religious figures. By joining hand-in-hand around the monks, Burmese activists are showing the power they hold as a group. Their linked hands binding them as a single unit, they become more than an individual, and become members of a powerful group displaying its nonviolent defiance.

viii: Audience Reaction

To this date no study appears to have been conducted on the effectiveness of physical actions as propaganda. However, the effectiveness of these actions is apparent in the very fact that they are so easily available for this research. They were effective enough as a form of communication to garner the interest of photographers, and then the interest of bloggers and international mass media, and then the interest of academics and NGOs. They are effective precisely for having become iconic, or at the very least widely referenced, analyzed, and explained (Anonymous 2007, Human Rights Watch 2007, Pinheiro 2007, ICG 2008, Kingston 2008, Rogers 2008, Selth 2008, Fink 2009, Larkin 2010, Rogers 2010, Shen 2010, Steinberg 2010).

The unifying message behind all of these images is one of nonviolent opposition to the ruling regime, and that message was carried internationally through the strategic effectiveness of these physical actions as a communication medium. Nearly every in-depth account of the 2007 “Saffron Revolution” in Burma includes a reference to at least one of these actions in its discussion of the nonviolent defiance of the protesters, showing that this message was received.

However, Jowett and O’Donnell caution that it is important to examine not just the media response to a propaganda technique, but also the resulting actions of the targets (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 285). As I will explain in the “Evaluation” segment, the results in this respect were mixed.

ix: Regime Counterpropaganda

While Jowett and O’Donnell (2006: 286) frame counterpropaganda in terms of a population’s response to the propaganda of their government, in the case studies examined here the opposite is the case. The government used their grip on Burma’s domestic mass media to convey their counterpropaganda. For example, the state-run *New Light of Myanmar* ran “a convoluted article informing readers that protests are no longer fashionable” (Larkin 2010: 121) and asserted that the protesting monks were heavily armed imposters (Larkin 2010: 143). This questioning of the monks’ nonviolence helps illustrate how powerful that nonviolence was. Only by denying the nonviolence of the monks could the state justify its attack upon them. Furthermore, it illustrates how influential the monks were as “opinion leaders.” Only by denying that the monks were real monks could the state disparage their opinions and justify their persecution.

The government also used the same propaganda medium as the activists. As previously established, propaganda of the deed is often—usually, even—used to describe acts of violence instead of acts of nonviolence. Considering the fact that the goal is to scare activists off the streets, a violent government crackdown against a nonviolent uprising is clearly a form of communication in itself. The shocking scale and brutality of the government response sent a clear message to the activists that their dissent would not be tolerated and that their nonviolence was not enough to prevent further attacks upon them.

x: Evaluation

“The most important effect,” write Jowett and O’Donnell, “is whether the purpose of the propaganda has been fulfilled” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 286). The goals of the Burmese activists in their use of physical actions, to inspire their targets to act in support of their demonstrations, had mixed results. As mentioned before, the governments and NGOs of the Western world reacted with immediate and strong support for the activists. However, governments with trade relationships with Burma, such as India, China and Russia, did not respond in kind—with China and Russia vetoing a UN resolution condemning the Burmese government. Worse yet was the response from regime supporters. Instead of mass defections from soldiers and regime elites, the activists were instead met with a unified response of repressive violence. Finally, while many in the wider population did join the activists in the last days of the protests, once the scale of the government’s crackdown had become clear the demonstrations ceased entirely.

However, it's hardly fair to blame this lack of success solely on the strategic failures of the activists' communication strategies. While a protest movement's communication strategy is essential for gaining support, the success of a protest uprising also relies on a wide variety of factors, including the receptiveness of the activists' targets and their pre-existing likelihood to contribute support. In Burma, the vested economic interests of the regime's supporters abroad guaranteed staunch loyalty (Thawngmung 2008: 18). Furthermore, the degree to which the military regime was entrenched in the social and economic order was formidable (Shen 2010: 39), as was the fear the regime could inspire among the population. As illustrated previously in this project, the immediate short term goals of the physical actions, to spread the message of the activists, was remarkably successful in light of how prominent these actions became in coverage and analysis of the protests. Success in the 2007 "Saffron Revolution" may have been out of reach for the activists no matter what communication strategy they adopted.

It is worth noting that, at the time of this research, the Burmese state is in the midst of a sudden, drastic, and unprecedented democratic thaw. While the 2007 protests may not have immediately toppled the ruling military regime, they may have set in motion the process that will eventually lead to the attainment of their aspirations for freedom and democracy. Thanks largely to the images from the 2007 "Saffron Revolution," the world has been reminded of their struggle, renewing sympathy for a cause that was largely overlooked internationally since the uprising in 1988. The day Burma becomes fully democratic will be celebrated worldwide as a victory for democracy, human rights, and nonviolent struggle.

CHAPTER 3: THE GREEN MOVEMENT IN IRAN

Unlike many authoritarian states, Iran does experience a limited form of democracy, although all political candidates are chosen by its religious leadership.¹³ The country of almost 78 million people, aided by substantial wealth from oil, has created a thriving educated middle class and a GDP that places it among the top economies in the world—just shy of the G20 economies (CIA World Factbook). However, Iran is a deeply divided state with a violently repressive government, and increasing economic stagnation in recent years has only exasperated frustration among the population with the substantial limits to their personal and political freedom (Mather 2010: 508).

The power of Iran's theocratic dictatorship has never been uncontested. Ever since the 1979 revolution that brought down the US-backed regime of the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, there has been an ongoing struggle between the hard-line Islamists—led by Shia Muslim religious figures known as the Ayatollahs—who seized power and moderates pushing for reform. The original 1979 revolutionary movement included not only Islamists, but socialists and secular nationalists as well.¹⁴ As part of their post-revolutionary consolidation of power, the Islamists

¹³ A limited form of democracy exists in Iran, in which elections are held. This includes elections for the position of president, a position that holds significant sway in Iranian politics despite the fact that the Ayatollah's control of the country remains supreme. The candidates for presidential elections are first approved by the Ayatollah, who has further tightened control over Iran's politics since 2009. As of the completion of this project, reformer candidates have been barred from running in elections, and an on-going power struggle between the Ayatollah and Ahmadinejad may lead to the abolition of the position of president altogether.

¹⁴Iran's 1979 revolutionary movement, while turning violent at points, was largely based in nonviolent mass protests. As such, nonviolence can be seen as having a historic presence in Iran, although the connection between the nonviolence of the 1979 revolutionaries and the nonviolence of the 2009 protesters has yet to be fully established in the academic literature on

purged these political rivals from positions of authority and jailed and exiled any who challenged their rule. Iran's brutal border war with neighbouring Iraq from 1980 to 1988 provided ample excuse for the regime to continue repressing political opposition, as has the perceived threats to Iranian sovereignty posed by the United States (Dabashi 2011: 124).

Iran has had a hostile relationship with the US since the revolution, after which US embassy staff were taken hostage for over a year. This relationship has only darkened in recent years over Iranian challenges to American and Israeli power in the region and over Iran's controversial nuclear programme. In light of a US strategy that includes the open threat of war with the Iranian regime, it is not difficult for that regime to use the spectre of US meddling and a US invasion to gain the support of its population and continue to stifle dissent.

Despite ongoing repression, Iran has seen numerous pushes for reform from both those working within the system and those challenging it on the streets. Moderate president Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammad Khatami ushered in a wave of reforms, which were staunchly resisted by hardliners and later reversed by a return of conservatives to power. Protests such as the women's rights movement and the "One Million Signatures" campaign have also highlighted the fact that substantial opposition exists to the present political system, although Iran remains one of the worst countries in the world for women's rights and a deeply authoritarian state where political dissidents face imprisonment, torture and execution. Furthermore, violent ethnic insurgencies exist on both Iran's East and West borders, from its Baloch and Kurdish populations, respectively. However, despite the violence endemic between Iran's military and its ethnic minority communities, and the violence carried out by Iran's security forces against its political dissidents,

the topic. For an in-depth examination of the nonviolence used in the 1979 revolution, I recommend Ervand Abrahamian's chapter in *Civil Resistance and Power Politics* (Abrahamian 2009).

a nonviolent resistance to its authoritarian regime has gained enough political traction to shake the country to its core after a disputed presidential election in 2009.

The three Iranian images examined in this work can be found in appendix 4. Image 5 and Image 6 are of Iranian women flashing “peace signs”—which will be referred to as such for lack of a better term, not as an indication that they are interchangeable with the use of such signs in a North American hippie context. Image 7 is of young Iranian men marching, arm in arm, down the streets of Tehran. All will be analyzed using Jowett and O’Donnell’s 10-step process for propaganda analysis. The photographs themselves are not the main focus of analysis but instead the physical actions captured by them.

i: Ideology and Purpose

The protesters on the streets of Iran during the 2009 uprising were—aside from those attending occasional pro-government rallies—united under the banner of the Green Movement. The exact nature of this movement, however, is heavily disputed, and has “both amazed and baffled observers around the world” (Aslan 2010: 1). This makes an analysis of the group through the first step of Jowett and O’Donnell’s process somewhat challenging. Some call the Green Movement a revolutionary movement, while others call it a reformist movement—one commentator has even referred to it as a “refolutionary movement” (Hashemi 2010: xii). While challenging the legitimacy of the Ahmadinejad government, the protesters and their leadership largely stop short of calling for a complete overhaul of the system or the removal from power of Iran’s ruling religious order, the Ayatollahs (Mather 2010: 510). While not a fundamentalist Islamic movement, the Green Movement are also not entirely seeking “a flight to Western-style

liberalism” (Tahmasebi-Birgani 2010: 80). While beloved by the West and clearly more pro-Western than the government they oppose, there is still evidence to suggest that the Green Movement activists are fiercely nationalist and unlikely to cater to Western interests on issues such as Iran’s nuclear program (Bellaigue 2010: 223).

However, core elements of their ideology become consistently apparent in statements from Green Movement supporters. In an interview, dissident cleric Mohsen Kadivar said that the main three elements of the Green Movement’s ideology were that it was peaceful and against violence, that it was pro-democracy and anti-despotic, and that it was independent from foreign meddling (Roos 2010: 113). These stances are reflected in statements by Green Movement leader Mir Hossein Mousavi (Sahimi: 2010: 190, 191). The Green Movement also has close ties to the women’s rights movement in Iran, and the struggle for democracy is often undertaken alongside a struggle for more liberal social values in the religiously repressive state (Tahmasebi-Birgani 2010: 79).

Although Iranian dissident scholars have written about the potential for nonviolence in the Shia Muslim faith (Jahanbegloo 2010) and the role of the Green Movement in ushering in a new, nonviolent view of the Shia religion (Dabashi 2011: 322), the nonviolence of the protesters appears not to be based in their religious beliefs but in the modern morality of a civil rights movement (Jahanbegloo 2009). References are consistently made by Iranian dissidents to the activism of Gandhi and Martin Luther King as key inspirations (Jahanbegloo 2009, Ahmari 2010: 173). In a distinctly pragmatic twist, however, many activists insist that the nonviolence of the Green Movement does leave room for limited violence in cases of self defence, although this is “the exception rather than the rule” (Farokhnia 2010: 259). This exception has been seen in street clashes with security forces on the streets of Tehran, although protests have largely

remained nonviolent. The pragmatic advantages to nonviolence are repeatedly stressed by dissidents, who urge the movement to constantly emphasize their nonviolent nature in order to enhance its strategic advantages (Farokhnia 2010: 260).

Despite the multicultural and pragmatic roots of the nonviolence being used, the Shia religion of the protesters is hardly irrelevant. The themes of struggle and victimhood ingrained in the faith make it uniquely suited to political jiu jitsu (Kurzman 2010: 12). The activists have often used faith as a nonviolent weapon, through such techniques as shouting “God is Great” from their rooftops at night as an anonymous display of opposition to the government (Zizek 2010: 72).

As such the main ideologies that the propagandists examined here wish to convey are the nonviolence of their movement, the exclusively Iranian nature of their movement, and their pro-democracy opposition to the authoritarian Ahmadinejad regime. They also seem inclined to convey both a pride in their Shia Muslim faith, and a respect for women’s rights and other liberal social values. While a vocal minority of Western observers might assume that these concepts are contradictory, and that the simultaneous adherence to them is paradoxical, Iranian dissidents assert that in their vision of Shia Islam this is not the case (Dabashi 2010: 193). The purpose of their propaganda is to convey these central elements of their ideology, in order to assert the nonviolent defiance necessary for political jiu jitsu to take effect, and to inspire their targets to act in support of their demonstrations.

ii: Context

The spark that ignited Iran's worst internal instability since the 1979 revolution was the June 12, 2009 election, in which conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared victory over reformer favourite Mir-Hossein Mousavi. Many in the country doubted the validity of the election results, and there was plenty of reason to do so, such as dubiously high results for Ahmadinejad in areas where Mousavi was notably popular (Ansari 2010: 57). The government announced Ahmadinejad's victory before all the results were counted, and immediately began arresting activists, journalists, and others that it anticipated would be a source of trouble.

Demonstrations began the day after the election, on June 13. Mousavi and another reformer election candidate, Mehdi Karroubi, accused the government of rigging the vote. This act, and their subsequent support for anti-government protests, made them accidental leaders of the uprising as the thousands of activists in the street adopted them as figureheads in their calls for human rights and democracy.

The regime responded to the protests with violence immediately. The first day of demonstrations saw attacks against activists by the feared Basij¹⁵ militia, which only infuriated the protesters further. The next day protests continued across the country, and the government raided student dormitories, beating, arresting and killing students in response. On June 15, millions took to the streets, carrying green, the colour of Mousavi's election campaign, and the Green Movement was born.

¹⁵ The Basij militia are a paramilitary group that was founded during the Iranian war with Iraq. They are often tasked by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards with crushing dissent and enforcing the country's strict religious laws.

Over the following weeks a grim pattern emerged. Protesters took to the streets nearly every day, only to be met with shocking violence from security forces. June 20 saw the worst of the violence, as government snipers opened fire on protest crowds, seemingly at random. Murdered demonstrators include 27 year-old student Neda Agha-Soltan, whose death was captured on video and became an iconic symbol of the protest movement.

The enormity of the government's violent response was largely successful in stopping the momentum of the uprising, and the days following June 20 were largely quiet. Sporadic demonstrations continued in the following months, usually corresponding with anniversaries, holidays, and other government-sanctioned events which allowed people to initially gather in large numbers without government suspicion. The largest demonstrations in Iran since the initial post-election protests took place in 2011 in the early months of the Arab Spring uprisings, although those too were met with brute force from the government and the Green Movement was once again made dormant.

iii: The Propagandist

Of enormous significance to the Green Movement protests of 2009 was the presence of female protesters. In a country where 65 per cent of all university students are women, there is a growing political radicalization among Iran's young female population (Esfarandiari 2010: 47). Both reformer candidates received the support of many female voters and established women's rights groups for their stance on reforming Iran's archaic gender laws (Esfandiari 2010: 47).

Women's rights groups in Iran combat laws and legalized practices that they see as oppressive, such as polygamy and a strictly enforced dress code for women that includes a

mandatory hijab (Tahmasebi-Birgani 2010: 84). These groups had built up a significant following before the 2009 election, and during the resulting protests women became “vanguard activists” (Vakil 2011: 199). The very presence of so many female protesters in the streets of Iran during the Green Movement protests was notable in itself, and sent a powerful message in such a socially repressive state (Vakil 2011: 202). Women are an essential component of the Green Movement, and make for particularly compelling communicators of its message.

In addition to the growing radicalism of Iran’s women comes the growing radicalism of its youth. Most of the images of Iranian protesters showed idealistic and passionate young people standing up to one of the most conservative and reactionary regimes on earth, as a significant portion of Green Movement activists are youths (Hashemi 2010: xix). In a country where 70 per cent of the population is under the age of 30, the divide between young and old is fast becoming entwined with the wider divide in Iranian society between conservatives and reformists (Jahanbegloo 2009: 15).

Critics of the Green Movement often claim that the protesters were entirely from Iran’s educated middle class, and that Ahmadinejad still holds the support of all of the country’s rural poor. Many dispute this, pointing to strikes, factory occupations and labour sit-ins among Iran’s working class (Mather 2010: 508, Hashemi 2010: xix). However, the male propagandists examined in this project are, according to the blog on which the image was found, protesting at Tehran University, and some would point to the neatly groomed eyebrows and hair-revealing “reformer hijabs”¹⁶ (Sabety 2010: 122) of the female propagandist in Image 5 as evidence that she is too likely from Iran’s educated middle class.

¹⁶ Iranian women are legally obligated to cover their hair to adhere to fundamentalist standards of modesty and piety. Some Iranian women can be recognized immediately as being socially liberal and pro-reform from the way that they wear their mandatory hijabs—for example, if they

iv: The Propaganda Organization

Mir Hossein Mousavi's leadership of the Green Movement appears almost accidental. Many activists despise him for his previous position as a pro-establishment hard-liner, and Hamid Dabashi seems to sum up popular sentiment when he said he only voted for Mousavi while "holding my nose" (Dabashi 2011: 29). Noses held or not, the Green Movement activists have embraced Mousavi as their leader and rallied behind him and the color of his campaign, the now eponymous green. It is worth noting that the color green has religious connotations in much of the Muslim world, as it is a color closely associated with Islam (Gheytanchi 2020: 253). Mousavi's statements have become relatively indicative of the direction that the Green Movement leadership wishes to take, such a list of nine demands that he released after the elections, which include freedom of the press, the release of political prisoners, revised election laws, and punishment for those in the security forces who used violence against peaceful protesters (Sahimi 2010: 190). His wife has also become a figurehead of the movement, and is particularly respected by female activists (Dabashi 2011: 57).

While the exact number of the movement's supporters would be impossible to find, it is clear that the organization holds the support of a wide cross section of Iranian society, although most represented are likely women and youth (Hashemi 2010: xix). As previously established, the ideology of the group's membership is harder to gauge than the moderate ideology of its

choose to wear a loose-fitting scarf that shows some hair. Groomed eye-brows and other cosmetic choices are particularly popular among women of Iran's middle class (Sabety 2010: 122).

leadership, although the shared goals certainly include a freer, more liberal, and more democratic Iran.

The communication strategy of the group has received an enormous amount of media and academic attention, particularly on the importance of ICTs (Sohrabi-Haghighat 2010, Golkar 2011, Fisher 2010). In a country where media is muzzled by state censorship and foreign press act under heavy restrictions, the activists relied so heavily on cell phone cameras and social networking sites like Facebook, Youtube and Twitter that foreign press famously dubbed the uprising “the Twitter revolution” (Parsi 2010: 161, Fisher 2010: 106). Activists uploaded news and images on to social networking sites or sent them directly to foreign press as their most prominent communication tactic, and Mousavi himself used Facebook to communicate with the world outside Iran (Cross 2010). Dissident Nasrin Alavi wrote, “The films, images, tweets and blogs that are cast out like messages-in-bottles across the cyber-waves are a central part of people’s struggle to narrate their own stories and present the case for justice” (Alavi 2010: 257).

v: The Targets

The targets of the propaganda of Iranian protesters were the same targets as many practitioners of political jiu jitsu: international actors, regime supporters, and others among the oppressed. In this case, all three targets appeared at first to be susceptible to the protesters’ message.

Due to the Iranian regime’s aggressive policies, such as its pursuit of a nuclear program and its support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, the Western world was highly likely to support a peaceful and democratic uprising in the country. Gaining international

attention to protests and support from international actors already hostile to their government was a key part of their communication strategy. Iranian dissident Azar Nafisi said, “If a girl is shot in the street in Iran during a protest, and a girl across the world can see it — can put herself in the place of her comrade across the sea — a tragedy becomes a victory for humanity” (Anonymous 2010: 33).

However, considering the substantial history of US meddling in Iranian politics, too much American support would likely undermine the Green Movement and fuel regime accusations that it is a Western plot. Iranian dissidents thus hoped to keep the United States at arm’s length from their movement, and wished only for Americans to “bear witness” (Dabashi 2011: 40) to their struggle. Little attempt appears to have been made by the protesters to court the regime’s less democratic allies, and chants by the activists include the politically notable “death to Russia” (Milani 2010: 42).¹⁷

There was also a pre-existing potential for dissent in the Iranian government, with several avowed reformers in positions of power, including former president Khatami and high-ranking clerics such as Montazeri, Saanei and Kadivar (Postel 2009: 70). On the level of both the government and religious leadership, and the population as a whole, Iran is a society deeply divided between conservatives and reformers, and the divide has never been wider (Jahanbegloo 2009: 15). Exasperating this potential for Green Movement support among the wider population is recent economic stagnation in the country (Mather 2010: 503).

¹⁷ Russia remains one of the Iranian regime’s strongest international supporters.

vi: Media Utilization

In the cases examined in this project, much as in the last case study, the message of the propagandist moved quickly from medium to medium, but originated with physical actions as a communication tactic. The nonviolent defiance shown through these physical actions was then picked up by digital cameras, often in cell phones, and uploaded onto blogs and social networking sites. Many of these pictures were then shown on international mass media, including newspapers and television stations, or described on the radio. Finally, these same images were sent back into the country through such means as Voice of America and BBC Farsi (Xiguang 2010: 145), giving these physical actions an enormous power to reach millions, domestically and abroad.

The most prominent of these physical actions was that of the upwardly extended middle and index fingers, shown in Image 5 and Image 6 being given by female activists. Referred to alternately as the “peace sign” (Aslan 2010: 1), or the “victory sign” (CASMI 2010), this appears to have been taken on by activists as having a similar meaning to its Western usage—to mean either peace or victory, depending on who is asked. Seeing as both peace and victory are stated goals of the Green Movement, either interpretation of it indicates that it is in line with the movement’s ideology. While there is no unanimity or official Green Movement source on the meaning of this physical action to each individual activist,¹⁸ what is more important is that it has

¹⁸ It is worth noting that a similar gesture exists in Persian culture, in which the hand is held at chest height and two fingers are extended and moved away from each other. This is seen as a flirtatious gesture that means, approximately, “naughty, naughty” (Sparhawk 449). No

become widely associated with the Green Movement and adopted as a sign of support for its cause. The action first gained popular use in Iranian politics in the lead-up to the 2009 election, as a symbol of support for Mousavi. Its continued utilization following the election was still used to show allegiance to the reform movement, but in doing so it had changed from a gesture of hope and support for the promise of political change through the democratic process to a gesture of protest against the crushing of those hopes and the obstruction of that change.

The peace sign has spread globally as an activist gesture since being first popularized by counterculture “hippies” in the United States during the 1960s as an anti-war statement. It appears to have been adopted by hippies from its prior use as a “victory sign” by allied forces during the Second World War. In both the hippie context and the Second World War context the sign was used as a form of nonverbal political propaganda, much as it is currently used by Iranian political activists. The fact that activists and observers of the Green Movement can’t agree whether the sign is used to mean peace or victory is interesting in light of the context of the sign’s history of meaning either, for very different purposes. This confusion over the meaning of the peace sign reflects the understandable incoherence of a large and diverse protest movement operating on very short notice, as well as the continued inability for outside observers to agree on basic aspects of that movement.

Countless photographs are available of this physical action, particularly when it is used by female protesters. Some have pointed out that attractive female protesters are disproportionately selected by news photographers covering the Iranian protests (Kurzman 2010: 9). The women in these pictures have their faces covered, meaning their physical attributes were presumably not what drew the photographer to them. It would be hardly fair to consider the

journalistic, NGO or academic literature on the Green Movement appears to have asserted that this is the meaning behind the activists’ use of the “peace sign.”

physical attractiveness of a movement's followers as a judgement on its strategy, and the importance of these images is that the protesters are female, and defiantly protesting. In a country where to be female and politically assertive is in itself an act of protest, the power of these actions is magnified by the gender of their protagonist. The way that the faces of these women are covered is also notable. In a country where modest dress is enforced by law, these women cover their faces not with the traditional Islamic veil but with a loose-hanging scarf that resembles those worn to conceal the identities of political activists worldwide. In Image 5, the hair of the woman is defiantly visible, even as her mouth is covered, highlighting the fact that her covering is for the purpose of defiant anonymity and not enforced modesty.

In Image 5, the arms of the propagandist are thrust in the air, forming a "v" with her body as well as each of her hands. In a 2008 study, Jessica L. Tracy and David Matsumoto found that the human body uses its arms to form a "v" in situations of pride as part of universal and biologically innate response (Tracy and Matsumoto 2008: 11655). This likely originated as a way of "appearing larger, allowing for the assertion of dominance and attracting attention" (Tracy and Matsumoto 2008: 11655). In Image 6, one hand thrusts out defiantly as the activist marches. In both images, this gesture immediately adds to the height of the propagandist and exudes strength and assertiveness over their surrounding space. Their wrists point outward in a sign of openness, whereas the same hand gesture with the wrists pointed in would appear far more aggressive and visually antagonistic. As such, the physical action shows simultaneous defiance and nonviolent intent with a remarkable effectiveness. Lastly, considering how commonly its use had become during the 2009 protests, this action signifies through its repetition a belonging to the Green Movement and an assertion of its strength.

Image 7 shows male youth leading what appears to be a significant crowd, with their arms linked together. This action also exudes an enormous power, as the mass of activists—some raising their hands in the air to highlight their energy and confidence—seems held in place by the front line that leads them, adding a sense of restraint and order to the chaos of so many masked and angry youth. The sense of group cohesion and solidarity fostered by their linked arms is effectively transferred upon the group as a whole, and the closeness with which they hold each other creates a seemingly impenetrable wall that conveys unity and strength. The cordon they create not only protects those behind them and the integrity of the crowd as a unit, but it also visibly protects those in front of it from the potential violence of the mob. The action uses the bodies of the protesters to create an image that effectively conveys nonviolent assertiveness, determination and bravery. In an unintended moment of humanization and vulnerability, some of the activists on the front line passively and defensively fidget with their hands in front of them, highlighting the incredible risk that they are taking and the anxiety that must accompany it.

All three of these images show physical actions that reflect the ideology and goals of the Green Movement, right down to the age and gender of the propagandists. All demonstrate simultaneous assertiveness and nonviolence, while emphasizing unity and solidarity. The banners and green ribbons in some of the images serve to highlight the ideology of the protesters, but the physical actions speak loudly for themselves.

vii: Special Techniques

It is difficult to analyze these images without over-using the word “strength.” Creating visual symbols of power, a key propaganda technique (Jowett and O’Donnell 2006: 282), is a

central element of these physical actions. The activists are attempting to assert political power through their very presence on the street, and this fact is highlighted by their nonverbal communication. Each of these physical actions demonstrates empowerment, and the reclaiming of power from those who feel their political voice has been robbed from them. They also through their posture, as established above, convey a nonviolent form of power assertion.

As with any form of nonviolent protest, these actions speak to predispositions in their audience, creating a resonance that is necessary to garner support (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 279). In a country so deeply divided, with a regime so deeply unpopular internationally, the activists know that there are many potential supporters among their targets. Their use of nonviolence, and their use of physical actions to create nonviolent images, speaks to the moral conscience of their target by highlighting the fact that theirs is a nonviolent struggle against a violent and oppressive opposition.

Unlike the activists of the previous case study, these activists do not rely on “opinion leaders’ (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 280). Theirs is not a movement defined entirely by its leadership. Instead, they gain their visual strength through their youth, passion, and solidarity with each other. In this respect, in the least cynical possible way, they show the propaganda technique of establishing “group norms” (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 281). They create and perpetuate a vision of youth, strength and community that becomes heavily associated with their movement through their assertion of it in their physical actions.

They create, in the words of Tina Rosenberg, a climate where “people who once thought of themselves as victims learned to think of themselves as heroes” (Rosenberg 2011: 3). Writing about CANVAS, an NGO formed by members of Serbia's Otpor that assists the international spread of pragmatic nonviolence, Rosenberg writes that the Serbian activists “realized that young

people *would* participate in politics -- if it made them feel heroic and cool, part of something big” (Rosenberg 2011: 2). According to Rosenberg, CANVAS has consulted with Green Movement activists, several of whom have applied CANVAS-inspired strategy in the field, although the leadership of the Green Movement has not adopted their specific model of nonviolent regime change (Rosenberg 2011: 8).

viii: Audience Reaction

While the “peace sign” didn’t receive the same level of reference or analysis as the overturned alms bowls of Burma’s monks, it received quite a bit of attention from news photographers, and became a common sight as an accompanying photograph to a news story on the uprising. In fact, it became so recognizable as a symbol of the Green Movement that two of the most prominent anthologies by scholars on the movement, *The People Reloaded* (Hashemi and Postel 2010), and *Media, Power and Politics in the Digital Age* (Yahya R. Kamalipour 2010), both feature this hand gesture on their front covers. Furthermore, the astonishing reach of social media meant a single powerful image could reach millions of eyes without ever being picked up by a traditional mass media source. The success of this physical action as a magnet for news photographers and as a favourite choice for newspaper editors and bloggers makes it demonstrably effective at carrying its message.

While the specific human chain of Image 7 received no additional attention from international press, other human chains did, including a 25 kilometre chain that spanned the city of Tehran in support of Mousavi (Sohrabi-Haghighat 2010: 27). That particular physical action will not be examined here, as it took place before the election and was not part of the resulting

insurrectionary protests. Also, it was not particularly photogenic—photographs of the event show people standing next to each other in a disorganized mess without linking arms—and did not make for a compelling image as much as a compelling concept. This diminishes its power as a physical action and as such it isn't an ideal example of nonviolent communication through this medium, although it is still such an example. Successful acts of nonviolent communication through physical actions, such as the “centrepiece” actions examined in this work, are by necessity photogenic.

Why then was the specific human chain in Image 7, despite creating a striking visual impression, largely ignored by the press? It is possible that this was indeed a common protest tactic during the Green Movement protests, but that it was not recorded as such. The “peace sign” could have been favoured for being more visually compelling, or possibly more culturally transmissible, and thus more appealing to journalists. Linking arms is a fairly common protest technique in any country or movement, as demonstrated during the protests of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, and in the image of Martin Luther King provided in appendix 1 (Image ii), and as such may hold less appeal as a symbol of a specific movement. However, the power of this image speaks to its potential as nonviolent communication, a potential that could perhaps have been harnessed with increased use of the physical action in protests. Had this tactic been used more frequently by activists, and featured more frequently in photographs by citizen journalists, then perhaps it too could have become an iconic visual for the Green Movement.

ix: Regime Counterpropaganda

The Iranian government is no stranger to propaganda. Hamid Dabashi wrote, “The custodians of the Islamic Republic went into excruciating detail making sure not a single person waking up in the morning was not exposed to a bombardment of visual propaganda before s/he goes back to bed” (Dabashi 2011: 161). Iranian state-run television is a regular source of pro-government messages, and counterpropaganda during the Green Movement uprising hit some predictable notes, such as accusations that activists were acting in the interests of foreign neo-colonial meddlers—including Gene Sharp (Kurzman 2010: 10).

There were also some quintessentially Iranian counterpropaganda techniques, such as pandering to the regime’s ideological base by questioning the faith and morals of reformers. Before the election, female Mousavi supporters were condemned by state-run media as improperly and immodestly dressed, and Mousavi was accused of attempting to Westernize Iran (Ziabari 2010: 81). This in effect demonstrated an entirely different, more sinister form of jiu jitsu. The state was using the rallying cries of the reformers against them, using a distorted version of their values to alienate and anger the country’s substantial pious conservative population.

In several ways, the regime used propaganda of the deed in response to the opposition’s propaganda of the deed. In response to the overwhelming female support for Mousavi and the power demonstrated by vocal female reformists, the regime showcased its own female supporters prominently—the same three female supporters appeared so frequently on state newscasts waving pro-Ahmadinejad signs that they became famous for it (Kurzman 2010: 16). To counter the sheer numbers of opposition protesters, the regime held a giant “spontaneous” rally several

months after the Green Movement uprising—leading to the creation by dissidents of the wry term “spontaneous-ed” (Dabashi 2011: 161).

The term propaganda of the deed is more commonly used to describe violent deeds than nonviolent ones, and the actions of the Iranian government in response to the Green Movement protests provide a particularly chilling example of violence as counterpropaganda. The violence used by the Basij militia in crushing Green Movement protests was intentionally excessive in its brutality, including the use of knives and swords against peaceful crowds. “The driving imperative was not so much to restore control as to re-instil fear,” wrote Ali M. Ansari (Ansari 2010: 61). “Not an efficient way to conduct crowd control, but a highly theatrical, bloody and memorable tactic” (Ansari 2010: 61).

Thus the Iranian regime responded in kind to each of the propaganda techniques of the activists. They speak to the predispositions of conservative Iranians by highlighting the liberal social values of the Green Movement, and create mass rallies as symbols of power and to establish group norms. They counter the nonviolence and pro-democracy goals of the protesters by calling them foreign stooges, and by maligning Gene Sharp and his ideas (Kurzman 2010: 10). They attack the Iranian nature of the movement by calling it a force of Westernization. Lastly, they counter the nonviolent power assertion of Green Movement protesters and their physical actions with physical actions of their own—a wave of spectacularly grotesque violence meant to re-assert their own power and kill the bravery and enthusiasm of the activists.

x: Evaluation

The Western world reacted with immediate support for the Green Movement, although American support was wisely restrained (Dabashi 2011: 40). Both the US government and the Green Movement were likely aware of the damage that could be done to the Green Movement's image of the US came out too strongly in its favour. It is worth noting, however, the widely held sympathy for the Green Movement across the American political spectrum. An immediate and important unintended effect of the Green Movement uprising, and one completely aside from its political goals, was to permanently and positively change the world's image of the Iranian people from a simplistic view of a fundamentalist, backward population (Dabashi 2010: 12).

Considering the fact that the Western world was already actively pursuing sanctions—and the ongoing possibility of a full-on war—with the Iranian regime, the international actors that would be open to the Green Movement's communication were arguably already as engaged against the regime as possible. It was the assistance of regime supporters and the overall population that the activists needed, and neither materialized. In a country so deeply polarized, the regime still had many supporters, and even those who sympathized with the reformists were not necessarily willing to risk being stabbed in the streets by the Basij militia.

Anti-regime street protests have largely faded in Iran, as the Green Movement has retracted for a period of "soul searching" (Milani 2010: 43). Of the goals outlined by their leadership, none have been met. However, many still call the protests a success, for the pride they gave the Iranian people and the new image of Iranians that they gave the world (Dabashi 2011: 23). Images of the nonviolent protests caused a significant shift in domestic perceptions of the Iranian regime as well as international perceptions of the Iranian people. As a direct result of

the psychological warfare tactics of the Iranian protesters, the regime has been permanently “delegitimised” (Golkar 2011: 56). The propaganda essential to this psychological warfare was enormously effective at reaching millions inside and outside of Iran. This is owed in part to the memorable and powerful nature of the images produced by the protests, and as such the tactics themselves can be seen as a success.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

There are numerous similarities in the two case studies examined in this project. Although Burma and Iran are vastly different when it comes to politics, economics, race, religion, culture and language, activists in each country show similar goals and similar means to achieve them. This includes their pro-democracy and faith-inspired activism, their reliance on ICTs and foreign media, the threat of violence faced during their protests, and their use of physical actions as a communication medium. I will compare the two case studies using the same 10-step process for propaganda analysis. If done thoroughly, such a task would take an entire book to complete, so I will focus only on aspects that are pertinent to the physical actions that have been analysed here.

i: The Ideology and Purpose

The first and most obvious similarity between the activists of Burma’s 2007 “Saffron Revolution” uprising and Iran’s 2009 “Green Movement” uprising is that both were part of protest movements aimed at bringing democracy to an authoritarian state (Rogers 2008: 116,

Roos 2010: 113). Democracy is a complex concept and a difficult one to convey in depth through the medium of physical actions. However, Iranians in particular have done an impressive job of capturing this concept using their physical actions, demonstrating the versatility of the medium.

Many of the nonviolent actions of the Iranian activists, including the use of human chains, the carrying of green banners, and the “peace sign,” were originally used to show support for Mousavi during the campaign for his election (Ollie 2009: 1, Gheytonchi 2010: 253, Sohrabi-Haghighat, 2010: 27). These Iranian physical actions originated in a celebration of the potential of democracy, and only when that potential was crushed were they used as symbols of rebellion. By using the same physical actions that they had used to promote democracy as symbols of defiance against the regime’s authoritarianism, the Iranian activists were able to demonstrate both their opposition to the regime and their choice of replacement for it, all simply and nonverbally.

As previously established, the Burmese activists chose instead to base their symbols around the moral strength of their beliefs. Both the overturning of the alms bowls and the human chain in Burma were used to simultaneously demonstrate opposition to the ruling government, and support for their desired replacement of it—a system more in line with the sanctity and nonviolence of the monks. Furthermore, all of the Burmese actions were taken in the context of pro-democracy demonstrations, and with the pro-democracy goals of the movement clearly visible in the discourse of its leadership and in the protest signs of its activists. In such a context, physical actions that convey opposition to the regime can be seen as also conveying an implicit support for democracy.

Another clear similarity between the Burmese and Iranian activists—a similarity which is the basis of this project—is the use of nonviolence by both. However, as previously established, the inspiration for this nonviolence appears to be different in each case. Activists in both states were clearly inspired at least partially by the work of Gene Sharp and Robert Helvey (Arrow 2011, Beatty 2010, Revolution 2011, Sharp 2010: iv), and there is a case to be made for examining the actions of activists in both countries using a pragmatic nonviolence framework.

However, in the case of Burma's monks, the roots of their nonviolence are very clearly in their Buddhist faith (Kingston 2008, Rogers 2008), making their nonviolence distinctly principled, however pragmatic it may be as well. Aung San Suu Kyi's attribution of her beliefs and goals to her Buddhist beliefs re-enforce this view (Suu Kyi 1991). Meanwhile, the tendency for Iranian activists to cite practitioners of nonviolence from other cultures as inspiration shows that their nonviolence is not deeply rooted in their own cultural beliefs (Jahanbegloo 2009, Ahmari 2010: 173). Despite literature existing on the potential roots of nonviolence in the Islamic faith,¹⁹ no literature appears to have claimed that the nonviolence of Green Movement activists was directly inspired by their religion (Jahanbegloo 2010).

This difference is reflected in the nature of the physical actions that they use. The monks, when overturning their alms bowls, and the Burmese activists, when forming a human chain around the monks, are openly demonstrating their faith and using it as nonviolent weapon against the regime. Religious belief is inherent in each of these physical actions, and the actions would be impossible to properly interpret without mention of their religious symbolism.

¹⁹ Jahanbegloo points out that many observers overlook important Muslim nonviolent thinkers such as Maulana Azad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Jahanbegloo 2010), while Pal (2011) argues that there is a long history of Islamic nonviolence, rooted in a proper understanding of the Muslim faith.

The actions of the Iranian activists, however, are not so clearly spiritual. Both the “peace sign” and the human chain are signs of protest, not signs of religious faith. Even the use of the color green—an important colour to Islam (Gheytonchi 2020: 253)—in banners, flags and ribbons is ambiguous and can be seen as demonstrating association with the political movement without necessarily demonstrating association with the Shia faith of its members. This difference could also be due to the fact that in Burma, a pious rebellion challenged a leadership who clung to religion for legitimacy, while in Iran a comparatively liberal rebellion challenged a fundamentalist theocracy for reform. Faith is clearly important to the populations of both states, but in each of these case studies it holds a different level of influence over the use of nonviolence in political protests.

ii: Context

In both case studies, activists were protesting under extremely oppressive political conditions. They were using a particularly unpopular government action—a price hike and a rigged election—as a pretext to call for long-desired systemic change. Their opposition was a government with a long history of censorship and violent repression of political opponents. In a factor that is certainly important for the use of political jiu jitsu, in both countries the activists had previous historical precedents to inform them that the government would indeed crack down with violence upon them—Burma lost thousands of pro-democracy protesters during a quelled uprising in 1988, and Iran saw the deaths of student activists during a smaller uprising in 1999. In both cases, activists were greeted by government violence very early in the protest uprising,

and took to the streets with every reason to believe that violence would be perpetrated against them.

Also important for political jiu jitsu is the fact that both countries were already alienated internationally for their human rights violations and for their opposition to the interests of Western governments. Support for the demonstrations from international actors was almost guaranteed. These activists used their communication techniques to get their message to an outside world that they knew would be listening.

However, there are many differences in the form of political opposition that the activists faced. Iranians could count on reformist supporters in their government and in the religious order, while Burmese had no reason to believe that they had supporters in the military regime. Furthermore, the Iranian system was at least flexible enough to allow an election in which reformers genuinely believed their candidate could win, whereas the last credible election Burma had held was in 1990—and then ignored after being won by Suu Kyi. This also has had an effect on their use of physical actions as a communication medium. The Iranian physical actions were conceived during a period of hope for democratic change, whereas the Burmese physical actions were forged in an environment of ceaseless, hopeless oppression. This allowed the Iranians the ability to develop physical actions that symbolized the hope and promise of democracy, while the Burmese had no such window of democratic openness in which to do so.

iii: The Propagandist

In both Burma and Iran, political conditions are so repressive that the mere presence of activists on the streets sends a powerful message. However, monks in Burma and women in Iran

make for particularly compelling propagandists. The sacred place held by monks in the hearts of most Burmese Buddhists makes them particularly influential domestically and makes their communication of their message particularly effective. While many malign the faith of the Burmese regime as a façade maintained for legitimacy, it was reasonable for activists to believe that many within the regime took their Buddhist faith seriously and were potentially open to the message of the monks (Kingston 2008: 4). Furthermore, international audiences, including in non-Buddhist states, are likely to respect Buddhist monks as activists due to their positive reputation. This reputation is largely a result of widely held perceptions of Buddhist monks as holding an admirable strength of faith and character, a respect that is notably increased by their famous adherence to nonviolence.

Women in Iran make for compelling propagandists for reasons that could be seen as the exact opposite. Instead of holding a respected position in Iranian society, women there live under some of the most restrictive and unequal conditions on earth. In this regard, they are effective as propagandists because of the substantial shock value of their assertiveness under such oppressive conditions. It is worth noting that women in Iran have a long history of involvement in social protests, particularly for feminist causes. During the 1979 revolution that brought the Ayatollahs to power, women activists were present in “massive numbers” (Moghadam 2011: 36). Despite living in one of the most oppressive countries on earth for their gender, women in Iran paradoxically find themselves in a society in which they are often well educated and of a “relatively high social status” (Sameh 2010: 453), which likely aids their effectiveness as activists.

While women’s activism in the Green Movement is certainly appealing to international actors, most of whom live in countries where women’s rights are more advanced, this is not

necessarily an asset when it comes to gaining popular support within Iran. Women's rights campaigns, like all pushes for social liberalization in the country, are an enormously divisive issue. While liberal activists were inspired by the bravery of their female compatriots in the street protests, conservatives were alienated by the social change that they represented—a fact shown by government propaganda that used the spectre of immodestly dressed women to scare conservative voters before the elections (Ziabari 2010: 81).

iv: The Propaganda Organization

A comparison of the organizational structure of Burmese and Iranian dissident groups would be better suited as the subject for a different, much longer, project. However, it is worth noting that in both Burma and Iran, activists formed the sort of grass-roots social structure that is typical of a protest uprising. While in both cases a semblance of leadership was present, the degree to which this leadership had control over the crowds on the streets has not been fully established, and was possibly minimal. With this in mind, the adoption of communication strategy could either have been passed down from the protest leadership, or adapted by street level activists and spread when adopted by other activists. Further research would be needed to explore the exact relationship between the leadership of these movements and the activist crowds regarding their strategic choices.

Whatever the roots of their communication strategies, activists in Burma and Iran reached remarkably similar strategic choices. Activists in both countries relied on foreign journalists and citizen journalists using ICTs to get news and images from their protests to the outside world, and relied on foreign-based dissident media to bring the same news and images back in. The

physical actions of activists in Burma and Iran were used in a very similar context, and the transmission of their message between mediums and its dissemination to their targets was done in a very similar way.

v: The Targets

The target audience of activists in both cases were the typical targets necessary for the success of political jiu-jitsu—international actors, regime supporters, and others among the oppressed. The effects that this has on their communication strategy and their use of physical actions has been previously established.

vi: Media Utilization

Both the Burmese and Iranian activists had a “centerpiece” physical action that became iconic of their movement—the overturned alms bowls and the “peace sign,” respectively. However, in the Burmese case this physical action was not one that could be done by anyone. It was only a meaningful and powerful gesture when performed by Buddhist monks. The “peace sign,” on the other hand, was used by men and women, young and old, from all walks of life. It gained the most attention when performed by women, not because it was meant as a female action, but because of women’s power as propagandists.

The body language used by activists in both of these “centerpiece” actions is similar. Both involve arms stretched upward, and both can be accomplished with one arm or with two. With one arm stretched up, both actions form a slightly altered variation on a defiantly pumped

fist, either to grip the alms bowl or form the base of the extended fingers.²⁰ With two arms stretched up, the monks' grip on their alms bowl appears even more assertive and commanding, as it is held like a weapon, whereas the double "peace signs" of the Iranian protesters look more celebratory, and more elated. Most importantly, both physical actions demonstrate assertiveness and nonviolence simultaneously. Both show power assertion without appearing threatening to the observer. As such they dramatically embody the spirit of pragmatic nonviolence.

The use of human chains varies substantially between these two cases. In the Burmese case the human chain demonstrates a deep commitment to the activists' spiritual beliefs, whereas the human chain formed by the Iranian protesters seems to be indistinguishable from those of any protest worldwide (note the similar human chain formed by Martin Luther King and his fellow activists in appendix 1, Image ii). This may at least partially explain why the Burmese human chain was widely referenced in literature on the "Saffron Revolution" and why the Iranian human chain appears to have been largely overlooked (Fink 2009: 356, Larkin 2010: 123).

vii: Special Techniques

Both the Burmese and Iranian activists appealed to predispositions in their targets, which as established is an essential element of both principled and pragmatic nonviolence—the need to gain sympathy through an appeal to the target's moral beliefs and negative conceptions of

²⁰ The pumped fist has become a common sight at political protests world wide, although as shown in appendix 1, Image iii, it was first made famous through its use by activists of the black power movement in the United States. Whether it is a universal act of body language or an adopted symbol does not appear to have been explored by academic research. Such research would be both interesting and valuable.

violence. Activists in both countries also relied on symbols of power, albeit unconventional ones. Instead of the grandiose and formidable power symbols of a corporation or authoritarian government, these activists created humble but—in context—rebellious power assertion symbols that were both confrontational and nonviolent.

The main difference between the techniques used in the two cases was the Burmese activists' reliance on the monks as high-status "opinion leaders," an equivalent to which did not exist in 2009 Iran. While there were supporters for the Green Movement in the Iranian establishment, these were largely isolated individuals, not a rebellious mass that could lead street protests (Akhavan 2010: 148). Instead of using the moral authority and spiritual significance of their religious community as a propaganda technique, Iranian activists used the appeal of group norms, creating an image of solidarity and rebellion that is extremely compelling for disenfranchised youth. Whereas the Burmese actions examined here demonstrate an assertion of religious authority or respect for religious authority, the Iranian actions demonstrate belonging to a movement and solidarity within that movement. The Iranian actions demonstrated and enforced group cohesion and togetherness, and the fact that these physical actions were available for anyone to use—not just for select moral authorities as with the alms bowl actions in Burma—made them an effective way for anyone to show their membership to the Green Movement and their support for its cause.

viii: Audience Reaction

As previously mentioned, both "centerpiece" gestures examined here—the overturning of the alms bowls and the "peace sign" became extremely popular among the international mass

media and social media. Both became widely recognized symbols of their movements to the point where they could reasonably be referred to as iconic. However, only the overturning of the alms bowls and the human chain around the monks, as physical actions, were widely dissected, analyzed and explained by the media, NGO analysts, and academic authors. What caused such an interest in physical actions during the Burmese protests, but not during the Iranian ones? This is likely because the meaning behind the Burmese physical action are deeper and more complex than those of the Iranian actions, and the images of the Burmese actions can therefore become more powerful when an explanation accompanies them. The Iranian actions were relatively straight-forward in their presentation, and drew the attention of photographers and news consumers for their eye-catching visual appeal more than for their symbolic meaning.

ix: Regime Counterpropaganda

In both cases, the regime in power proved the strengths of the activists' communication strategy through their counterpropaganda—the Burmese government through attacking the nonviolence and legitimacy of the monks (Larkin 2010: 143) and the Iranian government through imitating the youth-friendly and group norm-establishing appeals of the Green Movement in their own rallies (Kurzman 2010: 16, Dabashi 2011: 161). Disturbingly, both regimes responded with their own, violent, propaganda of the deed, and used murder and injury to send a message to activists to stay off the streets.

x: Evaluation

In both the 2007 “Saffron Revolution” in Burma and in the 2009 “Green Movement” uprising in Iran, political jiu jitsu was initially successful. The nonviolence of activists—partially established and publicized through the use of physical actions in protests—was contrasted with the immediately violent response of both regimes. Sympathy for the cause of the activists led to immediate global condemnation of their regimes and a surge in the population of mass protests domestically. However, in both cases the regime saw no defections and no acquiescence. Instead of buckling under popular pressure, the regimes in both cases intensified their repression and violently crushed the uprisings.

While the violence that the regimes had used at first only angered the protesters and international actors through political jiu jitsu, the heightened violence that they used later proved to be overwhelming and sufficient to scare protesters off the streets. However, as the current thaw in Burmese politics shows, the damage to the legitimacy of each regime was severe enough to have long-term effects, and the full impact of these protests has yet to be seen. Despite the initial failures of both these uprisings, the physical actions used by the activists as a communication tactic proved to be enormously successful, as demonstrated by the substantial attention that they received internationally.

PART 3

CONCLUSION

As established, physical actions have many strengths as a propaganda medium during a nonviolent protest uprising. Despite their nonverbal nature they can communicate a variety of complex and nuanced messages. They can simultaneously demonstrate opposition to a regime and support for an alternative. They can demonstrate membership in a political movement and solidarity with others in that movement. They can highlight the personal faith or political aspirations of the activist who uses them, and can appeal to the faith and political aspirations of their target audience. They can also demonstrate the nonviolence of the activists, setting the stage for political jiu jitsu should their opponents respond violently. Most importantly, they can create eye-catching visual images that can spread quickly across a variety of other mediums and bring substantial attention to the activists and their cause. In this context, they can become effective as a symbol for their cause, regardless of their original symbolic meaning.

It is with their interaction with other mediums that physical actions gain their power to reach their targets and become widely recognized. Their visually compelling nature makes them immediately attractive to journalists, both professional and amateur. They are also helpful at setting an activist's actions apart from those of activists in different movements. By creating a unique physical action associated purely with their cause, activists can ensure that their protest as a whole becomes more visually compelling, and not just yet another crowd of people with signs. This adds to the visual drama of their protest uprising and brings a sense of order to the chaos of mass demonstrations. This is particularly helpful when citizen journalists using ICTs are

concerned, as such resulting footage is usually grainy, shaky, and heavily fragmented. When a recurring visual theme—such as an eye-catching physical action—is produced from these images, it helps to make them more compelling and helps add a sense of order and consistency to the chaos of the crowds.

There are drawbacks, however, to the use of physical actions as a form of propaganda. If the physical actions are not immediately recorded by photographers, they lose their power to reach a wider audience. Also, despite being surprisingly effective at conveying a sophisticated political message and drawing on a variety of propaganda techniques, these physical actions will never be able to have the same complex and nuanced communicative power as verbal and written propaganda when it comes to conveying the goals and ideology of a protest movement. These physical actions gain their communicative power only in a context in which their meaning is otherwise explained or already understood, and cannot speak on their own to those unfamiliar with the struggle of the activists who use them.

Implications for Future Nonviolent Movements and Future Academic Research

This overview of nonviolent physical actions as a propaganda medium during protests has several implications for future nonviolent protest movements. This research suggests that activists under oppressive conditions would be wise to communicate their nonviolence widely and clearly in order to ensure political jiu jitsu will take effect in the event violence is used against them. Whether or not they have principled inclinations toward nonviolence, it is helpful to view nonviolence pragmatically in order to ensure that it is effective. Furthermore, activists should also be creative with their communication strategies, and take advantage of the fact that

propaganda is a versatile form of communication. Under political conditions in which their communication abilities are restricted, unconventional propaganda mediums, such as physical actions, can help the activists effectively get their message to their targets despite censorship and restrictions on journalists.

With this in mind, an activist movement would be wise to plan a unique physical action that could be used by its members. This physical action could demonstrate membership to their movement, support for their cause, defiance against their opponents, and the nonviolence in the face of oppression. If such a physical action is eye-catching and makes for a compelling visual image, they could make substantial gains in receiving attention for their cause, and attention to the nonviolence of their tactics. This action would have to be repeated often enough to become widely recognized, and would have to be picked up by journalists—or citizen journalists—and spread through the mass media or social media websites. Much the same way a corporation needs a logo, a protest movement needs an iconic image to set it apart. By establishing a physical action as representative of their movement, they give the world an image to put on the covers of the books that will someday be written about their struggle.

This research also opens the door for a variety of future academic projects. As established, nonviolent protest tactics, even when conducted by activists with principled beliefs, can be heavily pragmatic in nature. When viewed through a pragmatic framework, these nonviolent protest tactics can be judged for their strategic value. In regards specifically to Gene Sharp's vision of pragmatic nonviolence, this research demonstrates the possibilities inherent in using pragmatic nonviolence as a framework with which to examine any nonviolent protest with political aims, even if the practitioners are adherents to principled nonviolence. While this research builds upon, and draws heavily from, Gene Sharp's vision of pragmatic nonviolence, it

also demonstrates the potential application of pragmatic nonviolence theory beyond case studies involving purely pragmatic adherents. It also demonstrates the usefulness of pragmatic nonviolence theory to retroactively examine the strategy of a movement, instead of just serving as a blueprint or battle plan for future nonviolent movements.

The tendency for academic literature to focus on principled nonviolence and the moral, spiritual and psychological dimensions of nonviolence obscures the potential for research that could improve its pragmatic application and success in practice. This includes academic writing on nonviolence as a concept, as well as academic writing on specific nonviolent protest movements. Academic understandings of nonviolence would be strengthened through an increase in attention to pragmatic nonviolence, and the pragmatic implications of nonviolent action. This could include further research into nonviolent propaganda of the deed and the role of communication in nonviolent political protest.

Secondly, the versatility of propaganda as a communication form makes it a distinctly underutilized concept in academia. Instead of rejecting the very term “propaganda” as a derogative name for biased or manipulative communication, scholars could benefit from rehabilitating the term for its potential use in describing and analyzing political communication on a pragmatic and strategic level. Furthermore, understandings of political communication would benefit from an increased look at unconventional forms of propaganda such as through mediums like physical actions.

In regards to the 10-step process in particular, this research demonstrates its utility as a framework with which to examine political communication. Jowett and O’Donnell’s vision of propaganda as a neutral, amoral concept has significant value when applied to similarly neutral, amoral concepts such as pragmatic nonviolence. The 10-step process itself, while lengthy and

broad in scope to an extent which would cause it to be challenging in a smaller project, is well suited for an expansive comparative examination such as that conducted here. Its focus on the specifics of the propaganda itself, such as the medium and message, as well as the overall context and reception of the propaganda and the nature of the propagandist and their organization, allow for an in-depth comprehensive examination of political communication. This is particularly helpful when applied to an unconventional form of political communication such as that examined here, as it allows for an act of unconventional propaganda to be examined as such on a purely strategic level.

Finally, the surprising depth with which physical actions can be used as a form of political communication is a subject which could be explored further in future research. This subject could benefit from a wide variety of different approaches, including semiotics, persuasion theory, psychology, sociology, and political science.

This project goes against the grain in several ways, bearing little resemblance to the standard literature in both nonviolence and communication theory. However, this research has established the utility and flexibility of both pragmatic nonviolence theory and propaganda theory. Through a combination of these two under-used theoretical approaches, much exciting research can be done to help build an understanding of effective protest strategy and activist communication.

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Appendix 1



Image i: Gandhi Leading the Salt March (India)

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/article388858.ece>



Image ii: Martin Luther King Leading a Civil Rights March (The United States)

Source: <http://www.hopeandchange.net/2011/11/not-non-violence.html>



Image iii: American Black Power
Protest at 1968 Summer Olympics
(Mexico City)

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Carlos-Smith.jpg>



Image iv: A Man Faces Down Chinese Tanks During the Tiananmen Square Protests (China)

Source: <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/behind-the-scenes-tank-man-of-tiananmen/>



Image v: Otpor Activists Protest Milosevic's Rule (Serbia)

Source:

http://www.rferl.org/content/exporting_nonviolent_revolution_eastern_europe_mideast/2316231.html



Image vi: FPM activist during pro-Opposition
Demonstration before 2009 Election
(Lebanon)

Source: <http://www.jadaoun.com/blog/2010/10/2520/bahrain-election-candidates-adopt-fpms-check-mark/>



Image vii: Coptic Christians Protecting Praying Muslims in Tahrir Square Protest (Egypt)

Source: http://www.thisis50.com/forum/topics/muslims-protect-optic?xg_source=activity

JOWETT AND O'DONNELL'S 10-STEP PROCESS FOR PROPAGANDA ANALYSIS

i: "The Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

An examination of the beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours of the propagandist to gain an understanding of the world view that they are attempting to convey to their target (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 271).

ii: "The Context in which the Propaganda Occurs" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

An examination of "the events that have occurred and the interpretation of the events that the propagandists have made," such as the public mood, contentious issues, the parties involved, what is at stake, and relevant history of the conflict (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 272).

iii: "Identification of the Propagandist" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

An examination of the creator and disseminator of the propaganda (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 273).

iv: "The Structure of the Propaganda Organization" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

An examination of the nature of the organization that the propagandist is a part of. Analysis of the organization includes considering its leadership, goals, and the means by which it achieves those goals, as well as shared symbols or rituals of membership, and its communication strategy (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 273-275).

v: "The Target Audience" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

An examination of the target of the propaganda, and the reason that they are being targeted (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 275).

vi: "Media Utilization Techniques" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

An examination of the method by which the propaganda is conveyed, including an examination of the consistency of that message and the "flow of communication from one medium to another and from media to groups and individuals" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 277). Jowett and O'Donnell write that "the analyst should go beyond interpretation of the message to a closer scrutiny of the ways the message is presented to the media" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 278), and how consistent that message is with the ideology of its propagandist.

vii: "Special Techniques to Maximize Effects" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

Jowett and O'Donnell provide some examples of possible techniques that propagandists could use to achieve their goals, such as creating resonance by speaking to already-existing opinions,

beliefs and dispositions, relying on sources with pre-established credibility and using visual symbols of power (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 279-282).

viii: "*Audience Reaction to Various Techniques*" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

In the absence of the availability of opinion polls and elections, audience reaction to propaganda techniques can be partially measured through resulting behaviour changes in the target and the realization of propaganda goals (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 285).

ix: "*Counterpropaganda*" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

Any communication in opposition to the communication of the propagandist (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 285).

x: "*Effects and Evaluation*" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 270)

An examination of the achievement or lack of achievement of both the overall purpose of the propagandist and specific goals, and the reason for these achievements and failures (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 286).



Image 1: Burmese monk overturns alms bowl with one hand

Source: Burma Voices

<http://burmavoices.com/2010/12/u-zawana-50-when-the-burmese-people-and-the-international-community-take-real-action-change-can-come/>



Image 2: Burmese monk overturns alms bowl with two hands

Source: Reuters

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/09/25/us-myanmar-idUSB58859920070925>



Image 3: Burmese activists form human chain around protesting monks

Source: Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/naingankyatha/1443609986/in/photostream/>



Image 4: Burmese activists form human chain around protesting monks (with raised hands)

Source: Burma Human Rights Yearbook
<http://www.ncgub.net/NCGUB/BHRY/2007/saffron.html>



Image 5: Iranian woman flashes the “peace sign” with two hands

Source: Yahoo Human Rights Blog

<http://www.yhumanrightsblog.com/blog/2010/02/11/irans-resistance-keeps-up-cat-and-mouse-web-game/>



Image 6: Iranian woman flashes the
“peace sign” with one hand

Source: Shalom Rav

<http://rabbibrant.com/2010/02/17/what-the-us-should-do-about-iran/>



Image 7: Iranian men form a human chain to lead a protest march near Tehran University

Source: The New York Times

<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/12/07/latest-updates-on-new-protests-in-iran/>