IN FACTIS PAX
IN KNOWLEDGE {THERE IS} PEACE
journal of peace education and social justice
Volume 13 Number 2 (2019): 134-158 ISSN 2578-6857
http://www.infactispax.org/journal

Why Civil Resistance Fails: The Saffron Uprising in Myanmar, 2007

Adhik Badal
Department of Political Science, Kent State University
abadal@kent.edu

Abstract

This article examines why the 2007 Saffron Uprising in Myanmar failed to achieve its strategic objectives. By applying Ackerman and Kruegler's (1994) principles of nonviolent conflict, the author examines how the strategic and tactical choices employed by campaign leaders minimized the campaign's ability to achieve its goals. The findings suggest that the major reason the movement failed is associated with two factors: first, movement leaders were unable to create defection in security forces and in the civilian bureaucracy; second, the organizers were unable to build organizational strength and to produce contingency leadership. The other reasons for the failure include the movement leaders' inability to generate wide external support and that they did not assess the events and options in light of strategic decision making. These findings are essential not only for understanding the campaign's failure, but to building theory. They alert scholars and activists to acknowledge the type of foreign support required for modern campaigns to succeed. The case also underscores the significance of education and preparation

through training so that activists understand the dynamics of nonviolent conflict and are able to respond strategically to trying circumstances.

Keywords: Nonviolence, Saffron Uprising, campaign, loyalty shifts, monks

Most of the social movement literature shows that nonviolent resistance tends to be more effective than violent campaigns to achieve policy goals (Martin, 2015; Stephen & Chenoweth, 2008). Less research, however, explains why civil resistance succeeds or fails. Nonviolence as a concept, originated with Mahatma Gandhi at the beginning of the twentieth century (Martin, 2015). However, the method of nonviolent action was brought into the field of scholarly research by Gene Sharp (1973), who theorized how nonviolent action tends to defuse power (Martin, 1989; Schock, 2013). Since then, several scholars have studied the power of civil resistance. In 2008, Maria Stephen and Erica Chenoweth broke new ground with an empirical analysis of the effectiveness of nonviolent action compared to violent action when opposing a repressive regime (Stephen & Chenoweth, 2008).

'Saffron Uprising' or 'Saffron Revolution' [August-October 2007] in Myanmar was a series of peaceful economic, political and religious protests led by Buddhist monks against the government's removal of fuel subsidies (Kingston, 2008; Shen & Chen, 2010). The removal doubled the price of diesel while the cost of natural gas increased five-fold in less than a week, devastating citizens' purchasing power for basic goods (Pollard, 2015). While the movement received wide popularity in Myanmar and abroad, it ended with killings and massive arrests of campaign participants and monk leaders by the military junta (Shen & Chen, 2010).

This paper applies Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler's (1994) framework to understand the failure of Saffron Uprising. In *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in Twentieth Century*, Ackerman and Kruegler present twelve principles which they assert will make civil resistance more likely to succeed if they are followed. This framework fits the proposed analysis because it critically examines strategies and tactics employed in the movement to examine its effectiveness rather than investigating the process of a

nonviolent movement. The major questions this research analyzes are: Why did the 'Saffron Revolution' fail to achieve its goals? What were its shortcomings? This study analyzes the degrees to which the movement leadership conformed to Ackerman and Kruegler's principles of nonviolent conflict.

This is a qualitative study based on secondary sources. I selected this case because it is one of the prominent nonviolent movements that occurred in South East Asia at the beginning of the twenty-first century which attracted global attention, and in many cases, international condemnation (McCarthy, 2008). Required data are taken from books, scholarly journals, newspaper articles and other sources for analysis. The paper consists of three parts. The first section highlights a brief review of literature which conceptualizes the strategy of nonviolent action. The second section presents a summary of the Saffron Uprising while employing some of the concepts of nonviolence theories. In the third section, I analyze the case in light of Ackerman and Kruegler's principles to look at why the 2007 resistance failed to achieve its goals.

The Strategies of Nonviolent Action

Nonviolent action is an active, civilian based method of waging conflict in the collective pursuit of a social or political objective without using physical force. It comprises 'acts of commission, acts of omission or a combination of both' (Sharp, 2005, p. 41). Researchers have identified hundreds of methods including boycott and sit-in resistors have employed to engage people to delegitimize adversaries and to restrict oppositions' sources of power (Sharp, 1973). Similarly, they have differentiated principled and pragmatic nonviolence approaches. Principled nonviolent resistance is based on religious and ethical elements against violence. Leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King engaged in nonviolent campaigns. However, all involved in nonviolent campaigns do not depend on moral authority (Schock, 2003). This suggests that the effectiveness of civil resistance relies on how activists utilize tactics and strategies to wage nonviolent conflict.

However, as mentioned above, there is less research that explains what determines the success or failure of civil resistance. For some scholars (Nepstad, 2013; Stephen & Chenoweth, 2008) loyalty shifts in security forces explains the efficacy of nonviolent conflict whereas for others (Ackerman, 2007), skills rather than conditions are essential in

civil resistance. Ackerman and Kruegler (1994) present twelve principles of strategic nonviolent conflict, which examine how nonviolent techniques are utilized by activists. They contend that nonviolent struggles which follow most strategic principles are likely to succeed. The six case studies presented in their book illustrate that the principles are applicable in evaluating the effectiveness of the movement.

Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephen (2011) argue that tactical diversity strengthens the ability of civil resistance to strategically outmaneuver the opponents. For them, civilian resistance methods tend to be more successful than violent methods to achieve strategic objectives. The findings of their study indicate that loyalty shifts in security forces and in the civilian bureaucracy are positively correlated with the probability of a campaign's success. The authors also identified that international sanctions do not affect nonviolent campaigns which fail to achieve widespread and decentralized mobilization and are unlikely to create defection among elites.

In recent literature, Erica Chenoweth (2018) examines why some campaigns succeed at making repression backfire while others do not. Her study demonstrates that loyalty shifts among security forces and national elites is the leading factor in the success of nonviolent campaigns, along with movement participation, and withdrawal of support by foreign allies. It indicates that nonviolent conflict does not work as magic. If resistors are weak, if the technique they have employed is poorly chosen, if activists are frightened to submission, or if they lack proper strategies, the likelihood of succeeding diminishes (Sharp 2005).

For Zeynep Tufekci (2017, pp. 195-197), the success of social movements lies in their capacity to set a narrative, disrupt the status quo, and affect the institutional or electoral changes. By comparing modern protests such as 2011 Tahrir Squire protests with those of the past, including the Civil Rights Movement, she asserted that the failure of modern campaigns is associated with resistors' inability to develop organizational strength. They lack organizational structure and leadership to respond to a new political development which she calls tactical freeze. All the literature reviewed above underscores the significance of nonviolent tactics and strategies in examining the success and failure of the nonviolent campaign.

Background and Context of Saffron Uprising

The Saffron Uprising, against the military regime and led by pro-democracy activists from 88 Generation Students Group, began with four days of protest on August 15, 2007, denouncing the removal of fuel subsidies and the price hike in Tamwe Township in Rangoon (Brough & Li, 2013; Chaudhary, 2008; McCarthy, 2008). The rise in the price of diesel and natural gas quickly created pressure on the civilian population. By August 19, a number of pro-democracy activists including students and affiliates of the National League of Democracy (NLD) party started marching through the streets of Rangoon. The ruling State, Peace, and Development Council (SPDC) permitted these demonstrations to proceed, but the resistors were beaten brutally charged by security forces and the pro-government militia [called *Swan Arr Shin* (SAS)] of the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) (Clapp, 2007).

In late August, a small number of Buddhist monks in the western city of Sittwe joined the marches against the government's harsh economic policy. However, on September 5, a small number of monks in the town of Pakokku in central Myanmar were attacked and beaten by SAS who tied some of the monks to poles and beat and disrobed (Clapp, 2007). This event created the 'paradox of repression' -- the use of force by actors to repress their opponents engaged in nonviolent movements often backfires (Chenoweth, 2018, p. 49; Smithey & Kurtz, 2018, p. 2). It revived the wave of resistance around the nation because Monks are highly respected in Burmese society.

The *All Burma Monks Alliance* (ABMA), a central decision-making agency, was formed during the movement to coordinate the campaign. The membership of ABMA included All Burma Young Monks' Union; Federation of All Burma Young Monks' Union, Rangoon Young Monks' Union, and Sangha Dutta Council of Burma (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2009). On September 9, ABMA issued a leaflet while giving an ultimatum of September 17 to SPDC to meet their objectives or face a religious boycott: provide an official apology to the monks for the violence in Pakokku, to reduce commodity prices, to release all political prisoners, and to enter into dialogue for national reconciliation with democratic forces (McCarthy, 2008).

The SPDC denied their demands, which fueled more crises from September 18th. Tens of thousands of monks along with other civilians

peacefully marched against the regime. The authoritarian regime sabotaged the situation through violence. Pro-government security forces raided monasteries and detained monk leaders and activists (Shen & Chen, 2010). The number of civilian dissenters killed during the movement varies. The government claim was thirteen. The UN estimate was at least thirty-one. However, other pro-democracy opposition groups put the figure much higher (Selth, 2008). The extent of the external support the movement received varies. The international community, especially Western states, reacted to the violence by calling on the ruling generals to practice restraint (Pollard, 2015). They imposed new sanctions. However, the movement crackdown by SPDC continued, leaving the SPDC free to use its power to arrest civilians (Thawnghmung & Myoe, 2008). The following analysis examines the Saffron Revolution's degrees and means of adherence to Ackerman and Kruegler's twelve principles in understanding the reasons behind the failure of this campaign.

Principle 1: Formulate a Functional Objective

Developing a functional objective is Ackerman and Kruegler's first strategic principle of nonviolent conflict. The objective must be specific and achievable within a particular time frame (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994; Brown, 2009; Fischer, 2010). It must include a diverse section of nonviolent sanctions and should be vital to the protagonists. The functional objective must attract wide support from those who are affected by the conflict and be in line with the interests of potential external supporters (Ackerman & Kruegler 1994, pp. 25-26). Concurrently, Stephen and Chenoweth (2008) argue that the quantity and quality of campaign participation is the major factor in determining the outcome of the resistance struggle. The objectives of the Saffron Uprising were practical and were manifested in demands made upon the government. The implementation of these demands was the goal of the campaign.

The movement was initiated first by 88 Generations Students. Their primary demand to reduce the price of basic commodities was specific, allowing for various processes for achieving it and serving the basic need of protestors (HRW, 2007). However, with the change in the dynamics of the conflict, the objectives of the campaign expanded. As the movement was revived with the involvement of Buddhist monks, the campaign added further specific objectives such as an official apology to

the monks for the violence in Pakokku, the release of political prisoners, and entering into dialogue with democratic forces to promote reconciliation (McCarthy, 2008).

The monks' withdrawal of religious services from the members of SPDC and security forces (Oxford Burma Alliance), and their demand for an official apology was symbolic and practical for achieving their major objective of enhancing the economy. The goal is practical for its symbolic value of making the government morally accountable to the people (International Federation for Human Rights [FIDH], 2007). Other objectives such as releasing political prisoners and engaging into dialogue with democratic forces are functional because the first one is sufficient to promote and protect justice and human rights of civilians. The second goal is practical because it promotes democracy and peace in the country. This objective is functional because it helped generate wide support for the campaign nationally and internationally while disclosing the lack of political legitimacy of the regime (McCarthy, 2008).

Principle 2: Develop Organizational Strength

The principle of developing organizational strength concerns a movement's ability to form new groups or to turn preexisting groups or institutions towards serving a movement's different functions. Effective organizations lead nonviolent actors 'to make decisions under pressure to translate their decision into mobilizations, and to motivate others to play various supporting parts' (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994, p. 26). Saffron Uprising was organized effectively while forming a national agency called ABMA.

Directed and supported by local and national actors including All Burma Young Monk Union, the ABMA in association with 88 Students Group developed strategies and tactics of the campaign (HRW, 2009). The 15 steering committee members of ABMA consisted of senior monks from different monasteries. Their ability to lead people of diverse socio-economic and political background was maintained through regular contact. The leaders worked with local organizers and travelled to speak with supporters. By doing this, the monks lead the campaign throughout Myanmar (HRW, 2007). The secretary of ABMA also built

up networks with monasteries inside and outside the country. The clear structure and task specialization helped decentralize the movement from Rangoon to Sittwe and other cities, which increased widespread participation among monks, nuns, and other civilians (McCarthy, 2008). The call to mobilize was strengthened by existing monks' networks (HRW, 2007).

Unlike Indian Satyagraha, and Civil Rights Movement, the Saffron Uprising lacked charismatic leadership. Initially, the functional leadership of the movement was provided by 88 Generations Student leaders including Ko Min Ko Naing. When the student leaders were arrested, such monk leaders as U Gambira and Ashin Issariya offered leadership (Kovan, 2012) directly and indirectly. The leadership structure motivated and engaged a large number of populations, thanks to the high regard in which monks are held in Burmese society. Campaign messages were framed in a religious manner. The use of saffron colored clothes, religious flags, and the overturning bowl as a symbol of alms boycott were impressive. It represented the collective identity of Buddhists living in Myanmar (Heisler, 2012). The general strike demonstrated an unusual degree of civilian participation. For example, on September 24, 2007, an estimated 100,000 people joined the peaceful protest with monks in Yangon (Oxford Burma Alliance).

However, the movement lacked middle range leadership such as students (Pollard, 2015) who could gauge an opponent's movement well in advance. It was unable to create affinity groups who could utilize diverse tactics such as turning the fear of tragedy into excitement as suggested by George Lakey (2018) and provide a leadership role to save the movement from military crackdown. The training and educating mechanism for the activists was not developed (Kyaw, 2008). Therefore, such a great peaceful protest ended in a few months due to the lack of leadership and strategic planning. Most of the monk leaders were arrested and detained. The peaceful protest 'lasted leaderless for about two days before the protestors yielded to regime repression' (Pollard, 2015, p. 53). The movement could have succeeded if ABMA had produced leaders like Sarojini Naidu from the Dharasana Salt March in India who employed unique tactics to keep the campaign functional when Gandhi and most of the other leaders were arrested. The regime's violent tactics and the unity did not allow the movement to stabilize.

Principle 3: Secure Access to Critical Material Resources

This principle takes into account material resources necessary to sustain the conduct of nonviolent protagonists that includes basic commodities for activities unique to the campaign, among others. Effective communication and access to transportation are vital in mobilizing resources (Ackerman and Kruegler 1994, p. 31). The Saffron Movement secured access to critical materials through the contribution of local, national and international actors including monastic and local communities.

The movement's organizational structure played significantly into procuring resources. Monks in Myanmar are completely reliant on donations from the people. They are forbidden to handle cash or to engage in politics. During the conflict, the monks received non-monetary (food) support from the local people (Heisler, 2012). The level of support, however, was minimal in some places due to economic hardships (HRW, 2009). By utilizing its existing religious networks, ABMA generated financial support from overseas especially from Burmese Buddhist monasteries from Sri Lanka, Penang, Malaysia and Singapore. The movement also received funding from many other Buddhist institutions from Thailand (HRW, 2009). By broadening its networks with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), the campaign also received financial support from numerous governments and non-government agencies including the United States Congress through the National Endowment of Democracy (Selth, 2008).

Ackerman and Kruegler (1994) write that swift and accurate communication is necessary to bolster the nonviolent activists. Despite the censorship of national media, and the regime's termination of internet and telephone services, the campaign received media support from Radio stations of BBC Burmese, VOA Burmese, Radio Free Asia Burmese and the Democratic Voice of Burma, all operated from abroad and which allowed the resistors to share information with the public in Myanmar (Zin, 2010; Wang, 2007). The IT support came from Burmese dissidents living in neighboring states. Through them the news was circulated to the whole world. These journalists regularly monitored the junta's activities with respect to human rights violations (Chaudhary, 2008). All these supports were crucial to the operation of the movement.

Principle 4: Cultivate External Assistance

Ackerman and Kruegler (1994) note that external assistance can be instrumental in attacking 'the adversaries in outside areas where their vital interest lies' (p. 32). Effective support from external sources can enhance organizational strength necessary to make the campaign successful. These actors launch sanctions of their own against the violent protagonist and in effect become direct parties to the struggle. The extent of the external support the Saffron Uprising generated varied.

The international community, especially Western states, reacted to the violence by calling on the ruling generals to practice restraint (Pollard, 2015). They imposed new sanctions against the regime. The US tightened the 1997 investing ban and froze assets of many regime members. Canada imposed a sweeping ban on all economic deals including all trade and investment. Australia issued visa bans and asset freezes on 430 Myanmar elites. The European Union (EU) added financial bans on the logging and timber industries (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2008: pp. 16-17). Japan dismissed US $4.7 million aid in Burma. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) nations expressed their revulsion against the repression; however, they expressed a softer tone towards the regime (Selth, 2008).

China and India wanted a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Myanmar. However, China vetoed the US/UK resolution of security against Myanmar in January 2008, which received strong negative international reaction. India requested the SPDC to launch a probe into the violent crackdown. However, it wanted to remain invisible on this movement due to its trade deal with the regime (ICG, 2008; Kyaw, 2008). On other side, the UN, especially the Security Council and Human Rights Council, deplored violence against civilians from the beginning. They called for the release of political detainees and for dialogue with democratic forces for national reconciliation (ICG, 2008; Selth, 2008). Secretary General Ban Ki Moon deployed a special representative, Ibrahim Gambiri, to solve the problem diplomatically. However, in the absence of cultivating wider support from the regional powers as well as neighboring countries (i.e. ASEAN), the Western sanctions failed to strengthen the campaign.

Principle 5: Expand the Repertoire of Sanction

The principle expanding the campaign's method of nonviolent action enables nonviolent actors to utilize all their constituents' capabilities

(Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994). This principle was particularly important in Myanmar's case, in which many of the resistors were monks who had moral power in Myanmar. Prayers were utilized. The movement started with the monks reciting *Paritta Sutta*-prayers for protection against evil and *Metta Sutta*-loving kindness (HRW 2007, p. 33). Prayers usually take place in the monastery or in the private home. The monks brought this ritual to the public space throughout the entire campaign to demoralize the military regime. Exposing the regime as the common enemy of Myanmar, the monks publicly denounced the military rulers' activities as evil, sadistic, and pitiless (Kovan, 2012).

The monks captured the world's attention through an alms boycott against the military regime and its supporters. On September 14, 2007, ABMA issued a statement calling for the withdrawal of religious services and refusal to accept alms from all members from the military, government officials and SPDC members (McCarthy, 2008). Andrew Selth (2008) writes that by overturning the alms bowls and refusing to accept donations from SPDC officials and their supporters, the monks attacked the military regime's main claim of political legitimacy and the spiritual wellbeing of Buddhist armed forces. The use of religious signals such as overturning alms bowls and Buddhist flags was excellent.

The nonviolent actors followed the Gandhian method of marching to challenge regime restrictions and to generate solidarity from the people and Buddhist nuns. For example, on September 25, despite the government's restriction, a larger number of monks (30,000-50,000) and other equal number of civilians continuously marched down the street while making a human chain in Yangon (HRW, 2007). In this context, employing these religious methods were innovative and effective for the movement to maintain internal unity of the campaign and increase campaign participation. Many of the scholars (Chenoweth, 2018; Tufekci, 2017) argue that campaign size matters the most for a nonviolent movement to succeed.

Principle 6: Attack the Opponents' Strategy for Consolidating Control

Ackerman and Kruegler (1994) state that 'the violent opponents' optimum control of the conflict situation derives from the presumed link

between commands and responses of those they seek to dominate' (pp. 35-36). Thus, weakening the legitimacy of the oppressors by disobeying their commands is the major pillar of support. Explaining the same phenomenon, Sharp (2005) argues that oppressors are given power through the consent of oppressed. However, that power can be eliminated if the consent is revoked. In the Saffron Uprising, movement leaders tried to delegitimize the regime by exposing their lack of control in Myanmar through religious sanctions. The monk leaders effectively designed and implemented religious boycotts. It questioned the legitimacy of the regime which considered itself as the guardian of Buddhism in Myanmar (Heisler, 2012). In addition to the boycott, they employed the method of non-compliance to attack the regime's legitimacy. For instance, on September 25, the government implemented a ban on meetings of more than five people. But the resistors defied the ban and continued to meet, march, and conduct religious activities (HRW, 2009).

However, the primary source of control that never was attacked was the internal unity of the security forces. Many of the scholars (Nyein, 2009; Pollard, 2015) contend that the main reason for the failure of the movement was the unity of the military regime and the security forces. They argue that despite their great effort, the movement leaders were unable to delegitimize the military regime so that defection could occur. Glenda Pollard (2015) state, the short-lived nonviolent movement was unable to gain leverage over the powerful junta. General Than Shewe's repressive strategy towards his opponents combined with the provision of economic incentives to his supporters had effectively entrenched regime solidarity and military loyalty.

Stephen and Chenoweth (2008, p. 22) assert that security force defection make civil resistance forty-six times more likely to succeed than nonviolent campaign where a loyalty shift does not occur. By raising the political cost of crackdown, the moral cost of regime loyalty, the honor cost of regime loyalty, and the personal cost of regime loyalty, civilian resistors can encourage security force defection (Nepstad, 2013). In this campaign, beside religious boycott and some individual monk's personal request to a single soldier during the crackdown, no other organized strategies were pursued to generate defection among SPDC and security forces (Pollard, 2015). The possibility of loyalty shifts was further discouraged by the lack of communication between the resistance leaders and regime elites. Min Zin (2010) noted that the NLD leaders

joined the street protests rather than playing the role of serving as a bridge between the junta and the demonstrators.

The revolution failed because the highly unified security forces prevented the opposition from gaining leverage. The regime employed smart strategies to maintain their unity. On the one hand, they utilized economic incentives including an increase in troop salaries (Pollard, 2015). On the other, they had already placed regional military leaders into cabinet positions in the ministries (Nyein, 2009). Similarly, the regime was able to maintain its ties with its traditional trade allies such as China and India (Kyaw, 2008). It boosted their strength to content the movement by using violent repression and minimized the possibility of loyalty shifts in security institutions and the SPDC. Chenoweth (2018) states, 'once regime allies withdraw support, the chances of success among the largest campaign double to forty per cent' (p. 46).

Principle 7: Mute the Impact of the Opponents Violent Weapons

Even when nonviolent resistors eliminate violent behavior from their support base and allies, the threat of violence from their opposition remains. Violence utilized against protestors can demoralize supporters, destroy resources, and encourage violence to be reciprocated. Thus, the impacts of violence have to mitigate as soon as possible (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994). To do so movement leaders can prepare people for the worst effects of violence and reduce the strategic importance of what may be lost to violence. In the Saffron Revolution, violence used against resistors was countered by strengthening commitment and preparing actors psychologically in the initial days of the protests. The arrests of the student leaders from the 88 Generation Student Group and SAS's attack on monks in Pakokku turned into the paradox of repression. It revived the campaign by the monks who are highly respected by the people and the military (Heisler, 2012).

After the Pakokku event, the leaders were aware of the possible risk of violence. To prevent the demoralization of their supporters, they established the ABMA. The organization, while issuing a statement on September 9, 2007 gave the SPDC an ultimatum to comply with the four demands or face a nationwide religious boycott (HRW, 2007, p. 30). Ackerman and Kruegler (1994) write that 'the agents of violence can be blunted by confusion. . . or fear of being isolated socially or physically' (p. 39). Similarly, on September 14, the agency issued a second leaflet

and called for an alms boycott (Kovan, 2012). The leaders thought religious boycotts would generate defection among security forces and national elites. They believed that at least rank and file soldiers would revolt because of their strong faith in religion (Heisler, 2012). However, these strategies failed to stop the use of violence by the repressive regime.

To prevent the demoralization of their supporters, on September 24, the members of the ABMA and the 88 Generations Students Group informed the demonstrators that security forces might use violence against them. By taking the reference from the 1988 Burmese campaign, they made protestors aware of the possibility of the regime repression prior to the government crackdown (HRW, 2007). However, no existing literature says that they were actually prepared for handling such challenges. This suggests that ABMA also did not develop any support systems for victims such as medical, psychological, and financial help. Ackerman and Kruegler (1994) note that these dynamics can mitigate human suffering and unite the campaign. As a result, after September 26, the number of the participants decreased, and the movement ended being leaderless.

Principle 8: Alienate Opponents from Expected Bases of Support

Ackerman and Kruegler (1994, pp. 40-41) write that when oppression and violence are inevitable, the best way to prevent violence is to increase the cost of using force. The Saffron movement was partially able to do so by capitalizing on the brutality they endured from SPDC and security forces. Buddhism was the foundation of Myanmar's military regime. Having the supreme command over *Sangha*, the regime believed it had political legitimacy to govern the Buddhist state. However, by disobeying the command of SPDC, the monks marched into the street, and the religious boycott against SPDC and their supporters questioned the regime's pillar of support (McCarthy, 2008). This helped the monks win the hearts and minds of the people and alienate the regime from popular support.

Repression can create the climate of revulsion for an adversary's politics and strategies can be created to alienate the opponent from its usual and expected sources of support (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994, p. 41). In Myanmar, by using satellite phones and the internet, resistors were able to share the images of demonstrations and the regime's violent

repression with foreign media (Selth, 2008). It helped the resistors internationalize the movement repression and generated international condemnation of the violent acts of SPDC. For instance, the Western countries imposed new sanctions against the regime. They banned all economic activities and froze the property of many national elites (ICG, 2008). These actors put pressure on China and India to persuade SPDC to initiate dialogue with democratic forces.

The leadership, however, was unable to alienate China and India from the violent acts of SPDC. As mentioned above, both China and India wanted a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Myanmar. However, China vetoed the US/UK resolution of security against Myanmar in January 2008 (Kyaw, 2008). The reason for China to support SPDS were: first, Myanmar has become its reliable ally in the South East Asia. China is equally aware of increasing US influence in the region. Second, its increasing business relationships with Myanmar (ICG, 2008). The reason India remained invisible from the movement was similar. Selth (2008) notes that at the time monks were protesting, India was enjoying its new energy deal with SPDC. Thus, the monk leaders failed to disconnect the power of support of the regime from its traditional allies. Had this been pursued effectively, the movement would have been more effective in creating loyalty shifts among security forces and the civilian bureaucracy.

Principle 9: Maintain Nonviolent Discipline

Maintaining nonviolent behaviors is Ackerman and Kruegler's main variance from military strategy. However, remaining nonviolent requires the same courage and discipline from individuals as soldiers. Ackerman and Kruegler write that nonviolence delegitimizes the opponents' violence and gives the nonviolent actors 'credibility, stature, and ultimately power' (p. 43). The monk-led campaign was in line with this principle.

Towards the whole campaign the resistors maintained nonviolent discipline. In the initial protest in August 2007, there were no major accounts of protestors acting violently even if the security forces arrested and detained prominent leaders of 88 Generations Students including Ko Mink Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi (HRW, 2007). The movement became more peaceful after the monks joined the protests. Their involvement helped enhance the campaign's momentum. Stephen and Chenoweth

(2008) argue that nonviolent campaigns that are overwhelmingly nonviolent tend to succeed more than twice as often as those of violent campaigns. Despite the monks being assaulted by SAS, they did not engage in violent activities. By forming ABMA, they participated in religious protest. Their tactics of overturning the bowls and rejecting the alms from the elites were excellent (Kovan, 2012). It shamed the violent opponents and impressed third parties nationally and internationally.

Erica Chenoweth and Kurt Shock (2015) argue that implementation of nonviolent methods tends to increase the power of challengers because the use of violence undermines a movement's legitimacy, discourages people's participation, diverts resources and confronts the state. In the 2007 Saffron Revolution, the monks did not give up this discipline as the crackdown began after September 25. For example, on September 27, despite severe repression, a senior monk requested all the members to 'Just pray, do not shout, do not throw rocks; pray for peace and protection and love' (HRW 2007, p. 69). This demonstrates how nonviolent the monks were during the campaign. However, there were few instances of violent sabotages. For instance, on September 26, when the riot police raided the Shewedagon Pagoda in Rangoon, students and other protestors gathered outside attacked the security forces by throwing stones and pushing aside the barricades (HRW, 2007). However, these minor incidents did not taint the overall campaign.

Principle 10: Assess Events and Options in Light of Levels of Strategic Decision Making

This principle is concerned primarily with the assessment of a party's tactical stance, what is needed to advance, and party's tools and weaknesses (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994). The campaign leadership conformed this principle in some but not all events. First, on September 9, campaign leaders analyzed their nonviolent strategies and choices, which was a response to the September 5 attack on the monks by SAS. As mentioned, they formed ABMA to coordinate the campaign and issued a statement asking the SPDC to address their four demands. They also gave an ultimatum for the SPDC to meet their demands by September 17 or risk immediate boycott (Clapp, 2007; McCarthy, 2008).

Another successful assessment occurred on September 14. The SPDC denied meeting their demands and accused the organizers of

making monasteries a safe haven for terrorists. The members of SPDC also offered bribes to senior monks to stop the campaign. At this juncture, the call from ABMA for the religious boycott was crucial (Kovan, 2012). The logistics and tactics were all planned. The action tainted the image of the regime nationally and internationally. The decision to march outside the home of Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon on September 22 was decisive. This march brought momentum and dramatically increased the size of the campaign. (Selth, 2008). The joint statement of the ABMA and the 88 Generations Student Group was well planned. It informed the protestors of the possible risk of repression (HRW, 2007).

However, there were no contingency plans if the security force arrested all the monk leaders (Selth, 2008). As Ackerman & Kruegler (1994) suggest movements should do, the movement leaders did not focus on prevention, mitigation and recovery of the movement from crackdown. Therefore, the campaign ended when the regime arrested most of the monk leaders (Heisler, 2012). ABMA lacked a creative leadership structure who could take the advantage of repression and build a spirit of resistance and collective solidarity as Jenni Williams (2018) noted in her analysis of the women's campaign in Zimbabwe. Such strategies and tactics would have prevented the massive arrests and detention of their leaders. In this context, the decision on the level of policy was poor.

Principle 11. Adjust Offensive and Defensive Operations According to the Relative Vulnerabilities of the Protagonists

The principle concerns the ability of a nonviolent campaign to pivot between attempting to cripple their opponent's pillars of strength and defending its own members. Campaigns should be able to switch tactics based upon which party has more freedom, morale, and resources (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994, p. 48). The Saffron Uprising utilized offensive strategies. It was unable to address vulnerabilities related to morale and in preventing resistors from the regime's repression. The movement used numerous offensive tactics against the regime.

Although demands were made throughout the campaign, they had the greatest impact following other offensive actions, such as giving an ultimatum to risk a religious boycott and marching in the streets by rejecting the ban of the government after September 25 (Selth, 2008).

The alms boycott was symbolic, but it was the most offensive act that tainted the image of the military regime nationally and internationally (Heisler, 2012). The campaign also was successful in immediately turning repression to its strategic advantages in the beginning. For example, the incident of Pakokku became a point of departure to revive the movement (FIDH, 2007).

However, the leaders did not employ defensive adjustments such as 'dispersion of sanctions, persons and material resources, reduction of the numbers of tactical encounters, and the devotion of energy to constructive work rather than overt conflict behavior' (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994, p. 49). For example, on September 26-27, the security forces detained at least 100 monks from Ngwe Kyar Yan monastery in Rangoon (HRW, 2007). Despite the damaged morale of the monks and other bystanders and supporters, the leaders did not pursue defensive maneuvers. None of the existing body of literature shows that the leadership received feedback from the conflict to identify their vulnerabilities and to bring more defensive tactics to counter the regime's repression. The movement leaders could have built communication with SPDC leaders (Zin, 2010). They should have tried to negotiate with SPDC members while keeping the movement intact. Had these tactics and strategies been pursued, leaders would have been better prepared for counterattack.

Principle 12: Sustain Continuity between Sanctions, Mechanisms, and Objectives

This principle concentrates on using the appropriate tactics to achieve the campaign's objective; it includes conversion, accommodation, coercion and disintegration (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994). The objectives of the Saffron uprising are best characterized as coercion in which the nonviolent actors wanted change against their opponent's will but did not want to overthrow the regime (Gravers, 2012). The sanctions, such as giving an ultimatum to the government to meet their demands, religious boycotts, and marching into the street were excellent choices to alienate the regime from its major pillar of support. These coercive tactics helped the resistors win the heart and minds of the people and increase campaign size rapidly (FIDH, 2007).

On a few occasions, they utilized tactics related to accommodation. Accommodation is marked by oppressors giving in to

the nonviolent actors' demands in order to avoid future damage without being forced (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994). On September 9, the ABMA issued a leaflet and gave it to its supporters to send to SPDC leaders asking them to meet the demands of the monks (Selth, 2008; McCarthy, 2008). This tactic can be considered as accommodation because it did not force the government to take an action. Although the regime was not convinced and denied addressing the resistors' goals, this tactic helped SPDC acknowledge the situation. It also succeeded in raising awareness of the conflict.

Conclusion

Ackerman and Kruegler's framework for analyzing a nonviolent campaign explains why Saffron Uprising in Myanmar failed to achieve its strategic objectives. This case underlines the lesson that success in a campaign does not depend solely on the movement having functional objectives. The findings discussed in preceding sections indicate that the campaign failed due to the movement leadership's inability to properly employ other nonviolent strategies and tactics. This includes the campaign leadership's inability to fully conform to many of the Ackerman and Kruegler's principles of nonviolent action such as developing organizational strength, fostering wider external support, attacking opponent's base of support, accessing the events, and adjusting offensive and defensive tactics.

First, the movement leaders did not fully develop the organizational strength of the campaign. The findings (principles 2, 10) indicate that ABMA was unable to train and educate its operational corps so that they could mobilize people while operating within a culture of fear in order to maintain the sustainability of the movement. As Clark and Coy (2015) stated in their analysis of the Nashville student sit-in movement, "proper preparation keeps hope and vision alive no matter what happens at the confrontation stage" (p. 10).

Second, the movement leadership had limitations in building broader international support. However, this principle (principle 4) is questioned by the study of Chenoweth and Stephen (2008) who identified that international sanctions are not necessarily associated with the success or failure of nonviolent campaigns. Therefore, the question that comes from the analysis is: what kind of external support fosters the campaign's success? This movement benefitted from the direct support of some Western states and the UN which put pressure on the regime

diplomatically. The movement, however, did not receive assistance from neighboring states. The finding shows that in the absence of wider support from regional powers and neighboring states, Western sanctions alone are not sufficient external support. The nature of external support seems to matter, moreover, context is an important variable in this as well. This result is also in line with Stephen and Chenoweth's (2011) assertion that domestic mechanisms are more critical components of success in nonviolent movements.

Third, the movement leadership was unable to weaken or separate opponents from their major pillars of support. The findings (principles 6, 7 and 8) demonstrate the campaign's inability to generate a loyalty shift in security forces and the civilian bureaucracy. Although the religious boycott was a powerful tool the resistors utilized, too few other strategies and tactics were pursued. Notably, the prospect of defection was also discouraged by a communication gap between the resistance leaders and regime elites. Sharon E. Nepstad (2011) states that resistors should be equally careful to create loyalty shifts within the security forces without which success in a nonviolent campaign is difficult.

Fourth, the leaders were unable to shift between offensive and defensive positions. The findings (10 and 11 principles) underline that the religious sanctions the leaders utilized were highly offensive. At the same time, the campaign experienced extreme vulnerability such that most of its leaders were arrested and detained by the security forces (Selth, 2008). They clearly needed to develop defensive tactics. But they did not accurately analyze the situation and adjust their approach to include defensive tactics to build strength in supporters who had been brutalized and demoralized. Nor did they develop and nurture other defensive initiatives. Moreover, campaign leaders should have developed communication with SPDC officials and pursued negotiation. Potentially, this could have minimized the violent repression.

In the end the Myanmar case provides details not only about how a nonviolent campaign may fail to achieve its goals, but the analysis provided here also contributes to theory building in nonviolent resistance. As discussed, it alerts activists and scholars to recognize more precisely the types of external supports required for a campaign to succeed. The Saffron Uprising benefited from strong support of the West and the international organizations. However, it lacked assistance from regional powers and neighboring states. Hence, the leadership failed to

create the defections within security forces and national elites necessary for a campaign to succeed as noted by many of the social movement scholars (Chenoweth, 2018; Nepstad, 2011). Therefore, the case underscores that activists should not ignore the benefit of domestic and foreign support when their interest is to weaken the oppressor's source of power. But they should also be cognizant that total reliance on foreign support does not make a campaign successful. Similarly, the Saffron case also establishes the significance of education and preparation through training so that activists understand the dynamics of nonviolent conflict and are able to deal with difficult circumstances. This is essential to reap the many benefits from the paradox of repression. These are some of the lessons this case analysis provides and that can be employed now and in future campaigns in a wide variety of settings.

References

Ackerman, P. (2007). Skills or conditions: What key factors shape the success or failure of civil resistance? Retrieved March 29, 2019 from http://www.gadaa.com/Ackerman_Skills_vs_conditions.pdf.

Ackerman, P. & Kruegler, C. (1994). *Strategic nonviolent conflict: The dynamics of people power in the Twentieth Century*. Intellect Books.

Brough, M. & Li, Z. (2013). "Media systems dependency, symbolic power, and human rights online video: Learning from Burma's Saffron revolution and WITNESS's Hub." *International Journal of Communication*, *7*, pp. 281-304.

Brown, J. M. (2009). Gandhi and civil resistance in India, 1917-1947: Key issues. In A. Roberts & T. G. Ash (Eds.). *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The experience of nonviolent action from Gandhi to present* (pp. 43-57). Oxford University Press

Chowdhury, M. (2008). The role of the internet in Burma's Saffron revolution. Retrieved March 29, 2019 from

http://nclc348f13.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/68497884/Chowdhury_Role_of_the_Internet_in_Burmas_Saffron_Revolution.pdf_0.pdf.

Chenoweth, E. (2018). Backfire in action: Insights from nonviolence campaign. In L. R. Kurtz & L. A. Smithey (Eds.). *The paradox of repression and nonviolent movements* (pp. 26-51). New York: Syracuse University Press.

Chenoweth, E. & Schock, K. (2015) "Do contemporaneous armed challenges affect the outcomes of mass nonviolent campaigns?". *Mobilization: An International Quarterly 20* (4), pp. 427-451.

Chenoweth, E. & Stephan, M. J. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. Columbia University Press.

Clapp, P. (2007). Burma's long road to democracy. United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved March 29, 2019 from https://www.usip.org/publications/2007/11/burmas-long-road- democracy.

Clark, A. D. & Coy, P. G. (2015). "Civil rights, social movements, and domestic policy: The 1960 Nashville student sit-in movement." In M.C. Hallward & N. Julie (Eds.), *Understanding nonviolence: Contours and contexts* (pp. 123-147). Polity Press.

FIDH (2007). Burma's Saffron revolution is not over: Time for the international community to act. Retrieved March 29, 2019 from https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/BURMADEC2007.pdf.

Fischer, L. 2010, *Gandhi: His life and message for the world*. Penguin.

Gravers, M. (2012). "Monks, morality and military. The struggle for moral power in Burma and Buddhism's uneasy relation with lay power." *Contemporary Buddhism 13*(1), pp. 1-33.

Heisler, J. (2012). Nonviolent communication tactics: Insights from protest uprisings in Burma and Iran, Master's thesis, Saint Paul University. Retrieved March 29, 2019 from https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/22856/1/Heisler_Jay_2012_thesis.pdf.

HRW (2007). "Crackdown: Repression of the 2007 popular protests in Burma." Retrieved March 29, 2019 from https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/12/06/crackdown/repression- 2007-popular-protests-burma.

HRW (2009). "The resistance of the monks: Buddhism and Activism in Burma." Retrieved March 29, 2019 from http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burmamonks0909webwcover.pdf.

ICG (2008). "Burma/Myanmar after the crackdown." Retrieved March 29, 2019 from https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/burmamyanmar-after- crackdown.

Kingston, J. (2008). "Burma's Despair." *Critical Asian Studies 40* (1), pp. 3–43.

Kovan, M. (2012). "The Burmese alms-boycott: Theory and practice of the Pattanikujjana in Buddhist Non-violent Resistance." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 19, pp. 95-129.

Smithey, L. A. & Kurtz, L. R. (2018). Introduction: Nonviolent strategy and repression management. In L. R. Kurtz and L. A. Smithey (Eds.), *The Paradox of Repression and Nonviolent Movements* (pp. 1-25). New York: Syracuse University Press.

Kyaw, Y. H. (2008). "The state of pro-democracy movement in authoritarian Myanmar/Burma." In X. Guo (Ed.), *Myanmar/Burma: Challenges and* perspectives (pp. 67-106). Stockholm: Institute for Security and Development Policies. Retrieved from http://isdp.eu/content/uploads/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2008_guo-ed_myanmar- burma-challenges-and-perspectives.pdf.

Lakey, G. (2018). Making meaning of pain and fear: How movements assist their members to overcome repression. L. R. Kurtz and L. A. Smithey (Eds.), *The Paradox of repression and nonviolent movements* (pp. 300-318). New York: Syracuse University Press.

McCarthy, S. (2008). "Overturning the alms bowl: The price of survival and the consequences for political legitimacy in Burma." *Australian Journal of International Affairs 62*(3) pp. 298-314.

Martin, B. (1989). "Gene Sharp's theory of power." *Journal of Peace Research 26*(2), pp. 213-222.

Martin, B. (2015). "The dynamics of nonviolence knowledge." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly 20*(4), pp. 533-545.

Nepstad, S. E. 2011, *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nepstad, S. E. (2013). "Mutiny and nonviolence in the Arab Spring: Exploring military defections and loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria." *Journal of Peace Research*: *50*(3), pp. 337-349.

Nyein, S. P. (2009). "Expanding military, shrinking citizenry and the new constitution in Burma." in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *37* (4), pp. 638-648.

Oxford Burma Alliance, Saffron revolution. Retrieved March 29, 2019 from http://www.oxfordburmaalliance.org/saffron-revolution.html.

Pollard, G. K. (2015). Burma/Myanmar's nonviolent movement failures: Why resilience and leverage matter. Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. Retrieved March 29, 2019 from https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/47844/15Dec_Pollard_Glenda.pdf?sequence=1.

Schock, K. (2003). "Nonviolent action and its misconceptions: Insights for social scientists' in *PS." Political Science & Politics 36* (4), 705-712.

Schock, K. (2013). "The practice and study of civil resistance." *Journal of Peace Research*, *50* (3), pp. 277-290.

Selth, A. (2008). "Burma's 'Saffron Revolution' and the limits of international influence." *Australian Journal of International Affairs 62(*3), pp. 281-297.

Sharp, G. (1973). *The politics of nonviolent action.* Boston: Porter Sargent.

Sharp, G. (2005). *Waging nonviolent struggle: 20th century practice and 21st century potential*. Extending Horizons Books.

Shen, S. & Chan, P. C. Y. (2010). "Failure of the Saffron Revolution and aftermath: Revisiting the transitologist assumption." *Journal of Comparative Asian Development 9*(1), 31-57.

Stephan, M. J. & Chenoweth, E. (2008). "Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict." *International security 33*(1), pp. 7-44.

Thawnghmung, A. M. & Myoe, M. A. (2008). "Myanmar in 2007: A turning point in the roadmap." *Asian Survey 48*(1), pp. 13-19.

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and Tear gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press.

Wang, S. (2007). "Pulling the plug: A technical review of the internet shutdown in Burma." Retrieved March 29, 2019 from http://opennet.net/research/bulletins/013.

Williams, J. 2018, "Overcoming Fear to Overcoming Repression." In L. R. Kurtz and L. A. Smithey (Eds.), *The paradox of repression and nonviolent movements* (pp. 143-163). New York: Syracuse University Press.

Zin, M. (2010). "Opposition movements in Burma: The question of relevancy." In S. L. Levenstein, (Ed.), *Finding dollars, sense, and legitimacy in Burma* (pp. 77-94). Washington: Woodrow Wilson Centre.