

When Repression Backfires

Lester Kurtz
George Mason University

Lee Smithey
Swarthmore College



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- Repressive coercion can paradoxically
 - Empower a movement
 - Identity shifts - movement participants increase intensity of their attachments
 - Third parties may become disaffected with the system
 - Weaken a regime
 - Turn public opinion against it
 - Promote internal dissent among elites

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The Plan

- I. Repression and its Paradoxes
- II. Types & Cases of Repression
- III. Repression Management
 - * Framing of Repression
 - * Frame Alignment Processes
- IV. Identity Construction & Repression Management
- V. Dramatic Realization
- VI. Lessons for Scholars & Activists
- VII. Discussion



i. Repression and its Paradoxes

- Asymmetrical conflict: force used to repress dissidents often backfires against the repressor.
 - Often a turning point in a movement's history
- Performance
- Moral outrage based on norms of fair play, good governance, proportionate response, etc.
 - William Gamson: injustice frame



Backfire

- “Moral *jiu-jitsu*” Richard Gregg
- “Political *jiu-jitsu*” – Gene Sharp
- “Backfire” – Brian Martin
- “Paradox of Repression” – Kurtz & Smithey
- **Backfire:** an attack can be said to backfire when it creates more support for or attention to whatever is attacked. Any injustice or norm violation can backfire on the perpetrator.



Some sources:

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Two possible conditions for backfire

1. An action is perceived as unjust, unfair, excessive or disproportional.
2. Information about the action is communicated to relevant audiences.

For copies of Brian Martin's articles on backfire, see

<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/pubs/backfire.html>

Social Movements & Repression

No consensus among scholars:

- Repression may diminish protest
 - e.g., Oberschall 1973, Barkan 1980, Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tilly 1978
- It may facilitate movement organizing
 - see Barkan 1980, Gerlach and Hine 1970; Zald and McCarthy 1980)
- Or the relationship is U-shaped

Possible Determining Factors

- Political opportunity
 - E.g., moments when a regime is weak
- Labeling
 - Create dissidents by labeling activists and thus radicalizing them. (Opp & Roehl)
- Temporal location in the cycle of protest
- Presence and nature of networks
 - In a dense multi-organizational field repression is more likely to work
 - more opportunities for selective targeting of repression (Klandermans)
- **Our focus: repression as opportunity and the role of activist agency**

ii. Types of Repression that Sometimes Backfire

- Massacres
- Assassinations, Executions, Martyrdoms
- Arrests
- Military Coups
- Memorials
- Violence against Demonstrators
- Torture, Disappearances
- Election Fraud

Massacres



- Amritsar Massacre 1919
 - Quit India Movement
 - Gandhi's Salt March – seize initiative from the British
- Kissa Khain Massacre, Peshawar

Tiananmen Square: A Counter Example?

- June 4th 1989: Chinese troops clear the Square and the movement is crushed . . .



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcvaSnmqZ40&feature=related>

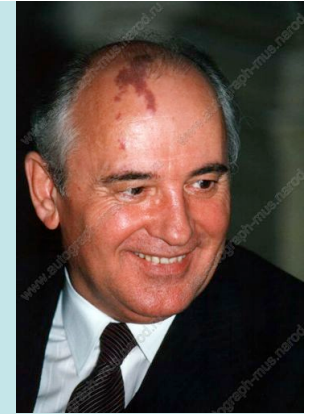
After Tiananmen



- Yan Jia Qi (former head of the Beijing Academy of Political Sciences): massacre sets the stage for the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the following months
- East German President Honecker calls for a “Chinese solution” to massive protests
 - His security chief says “Erick, we can’t beat up hundreds of thousands of people” (New York Times 1991: 219).

November 9th 1989: The Wall Comes Down





- Gorbachev, embarrassed by the massacre, refuses to send troops to repress dissidence in the Empire
 - “Thank God, the new East German leadership had the courage and enough common sense to refrain from trying to quench the popular unrest in blood” (Memoirs, p. 526)
- Gerasimov (Soviet Foreign Ministry) on 25 October announces the “Sinatra Doctrine:”
 - Central and East European countries should do it their own way, without soviet interference

Assassinations, Executions, Martyrdoms

- Benigno Aquino
 - People Power overthrow of Marcos regime
- Civil rights workers, Birmingham bombings
- Bloody Sunday – iconic Northern Ireland symbol
- Jesus as the archetype



Bloody Sunday,
1887 Illustrated
London News

Arrests

- Gandhi in South Africa 1906
- Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Adolpho Perez Esquivel
 - Mobilization of SERPAJ
 - Nobel Peace Prize
- Jewish husbands in Nazi Berlin
- United Farm Workers
 - César Chavez and migrant workers



Military Coups d'États

- Soviet Union, 1991
 - Efforts by hardliners to oust Gorbachev result in collapse of the government
- Thailand
 - Sparks popular protests and restoration of democracy



Memorials



- From Amritsar to the Salt March
- Hungary 1989: The Nagy Funeral
- Czech: Jan Palach Funeral
 - Energizes opposition, helps to spark the Velvet Revolution, 1989

Violent Attacks on Demonstrators

- Bull Connor aids the Civil Rights Movement

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9kT1yO4MGg&feature=Playlist&p=F8C6BD7BAD5479AD&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=48

- Wenceslas Square, Prague, 1989
- Tbilisi, Georgia – Soviet troops fire on demonstrators



Torture, Disappearances

- Mothers of the Disappeared – Argentina
- Chile: SERPAJ organizes public demonstrations against Pinochet’s practices of “disappearing” his opposition

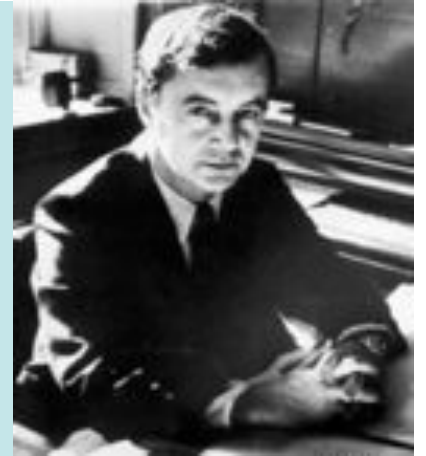


Election Fraud

- Philippines 1986 People Power Movement responds to Ferdinand Marcos' stealing the election
- Serbia – bringing down the dictator Slobodan Milosevic
 - Otpor and the Democratic Opposition of Serbia
 - 30,000 election monitors at polling places
 - Network of emails to central office tallying election results
- Iran 2009



iii. Repression Management



Corollary to Erving Goffman's *impression management*

- How dissident movements frame and respond to repression

 1. Enhance recruitment among sympathetic publics
 2. Evoke support from external third parties
 3. Foster factions and mutinies within elites and security forces

The Arts of Nonviolence

- Management may sound too precise – this may be more of an art
 - Dramaturgical tactics and the art of impression management
 - Jeffrey Alexander – cultural pragmatics
 - Pre-emptive choreography

Relational Theories of Power

- Insufficient attention usually paid to agency
 - Power available to opposition groups often overlooked
 - Power is imbedded in relationships
- Simmel, Gandhi, Sharp
 - Domination as a form of interaction
 - Power of the powerless (Vaclav Havel):
 - Withdrawal of consent
 - Refusing to help enact that relationship
 - Refusing to allow intended consequences of repression

Framing of Repression

Snow et al, Benford & Snow*

Focus on the rhetorical practices

- Movement leaders create “schemata” that resonate with relevant cultures and ideologies
- Mobilize potential recruits and sustain collective action

*Benford, Robert D. and David A. Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:611-639.

Core Framing Tasks (Benford & Snow)



David Snow

1) Diagnostic framing: What's wrong?

- Identify needed system changes
- Discern linkages between repression and system problems
- Injustice Frames: dramatize victimization
- Pre-emptive choreography to strengthen frame resonance
 - Amritsar Massacre --> Salt March
 - Bloody Sunday memorialized
 - Litany of abuses of African-Americans

2) Prognostic: What should be done?

3) Motivational: How can actors be mobilized?





- **Prognostic Framing**
 - What should be done to bring about needed change?
 - What effect will various strategies and tactics have?
- **Motivational Framing**
 - Mobilize people to action
 - Construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive:
 - E.g., severity, urgency, efficacy, propriety

Frame Alignment Processes

(Goffman, Benford & Snow again!)

- Frame bridging
 - Linking ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames
 - Dr. King's Dream
- Frame amplification
 - Idealization, embellishment, clarification, invigoration of existing values or beliefs



- Frame extension:
 - Depicting and SMO's frame as including issues important to potential adherents
 - Everyone benefits from a just society
 - Reverse cooptation?
- Frame transformation
 - Changing old understandings and meanings, generating new ones
 - Dr. King “baptizing” Gandhi for the civil rights struggle



iv. Identity Construction & Repression Management

- Repression may result in identity changes, perhaps
 - Sharpen a sense of belonging to a movement
 - Shift social boundaries
 - Radicalize movement participants
 - Undermine identification with the system



Everything they say we are we are
And we are very
Proud of ourselves
Up against the wall
Jefferson Airplane, “We Can Be Together”

v. Dramatic Realization

- Goffman: infuse activity with signs that dramatically highlight and portray facts otherwise unapparent
- Gandhi: “The duty of a civil resister is to provoke”

vi. Lessons for Scholars & Activists



- More research needed
- Wendell Fogg:
repertoire
 - How can repression management change the Who, what, where, when how, & why of a conflict?



**Call for Papers
The Paradox
of Repression:
Movements
Flourishing
Under the Gun
an edited
volume by
Lester R. Kurtz
and Lee A.
Smithey**