THE DIGITAL DUEL

Resistance and Repression in an Online World

Daryn Cambridge
Director, Knowledge & Digital Strategies
International Center on Nonviolent Conflict
www.nonviolent-conflict.org

OUTLINE

PART ONE

- Defining terms
- Gun or video camera

PART TWO

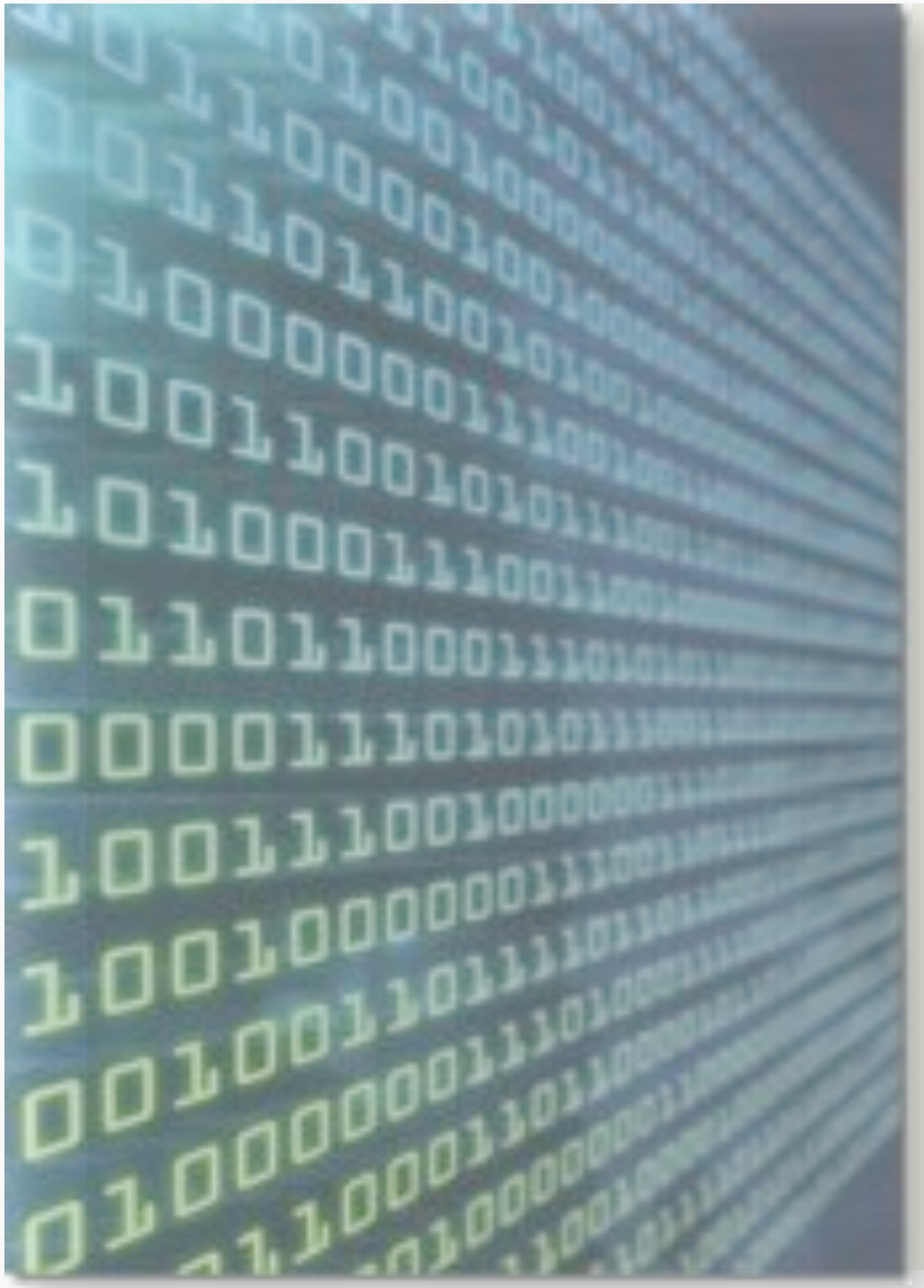
- Changing media landscape
- Core theories of strategic nonviolent action

PART THREE

- Examples of digital activism around the world
- Conclusions

PART FOUR

- Your questions, comments, insights



DIGITAL

The conversion of media, be it video, audio, images, or text, into a binary code, which is a language made up of 1s and 0s that when sequenced in a particular way create a digital copy of the media content. This code is generated or unpacked by digital devices such as a computer, a mobile phone, television, camera, etc.

DUEL

A contest between various parties in a conflict – those who are resisting the status quo in an attempt to create some type of political or social transformation vs. those who are attempting to maintain the status quo in order to further increase their wealth, control, or dominance.

RESISTANCE

Civilian-based movements that use *non*violent tactics to fight against some type of power structure – be it a dictator, government, corporation, or institution – in order to establish and defend human rights, justice, or democratic self-rule.

Saffron Revolution, Burma (2008)
Credit: ShambalaSun.com

REPRESSION

Actions taken by power structures to stifle dissent, quash civic mobilization, or suppress any type of opposition to their established order.

Tiananmen Square (1989)
Credit: ChinaDigitalTimes.com

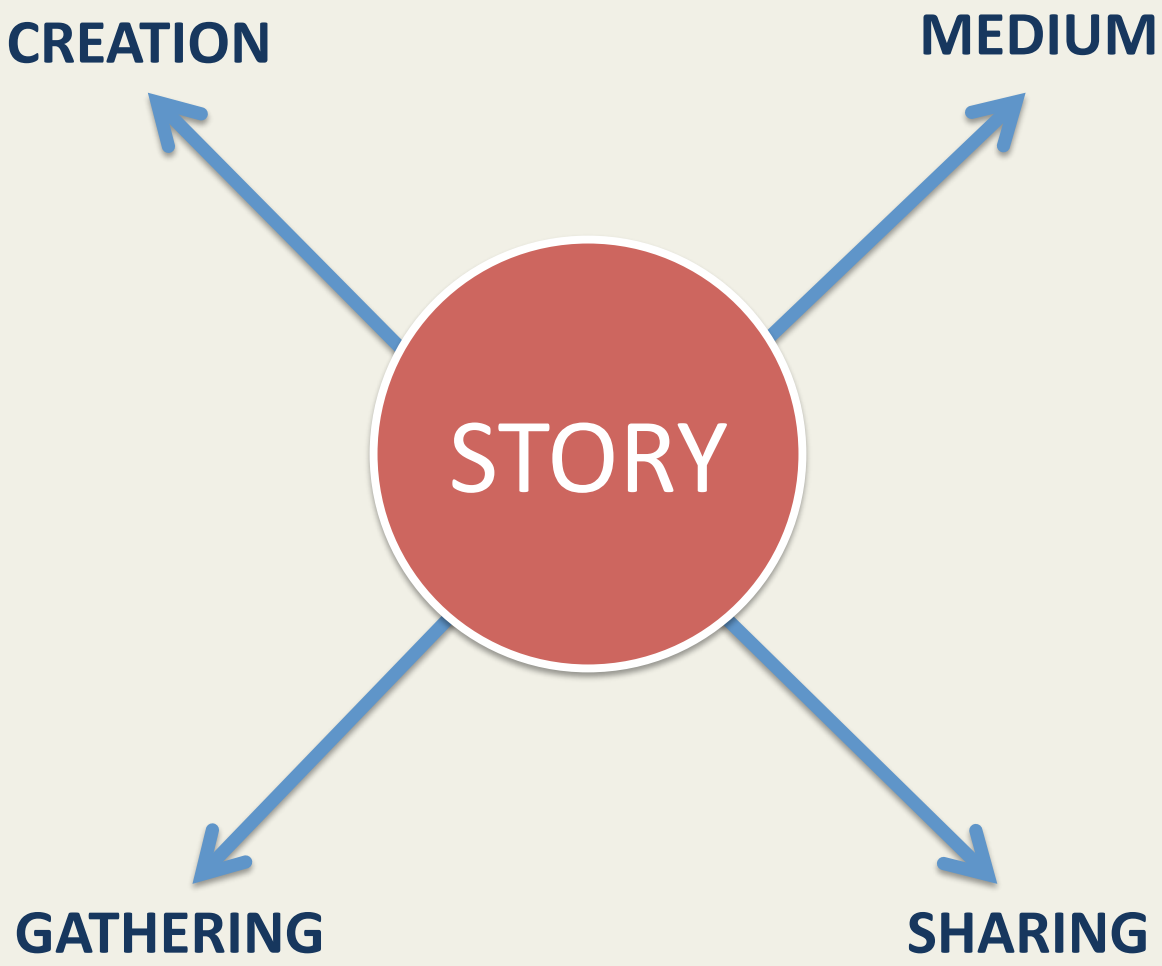
ONLINE WORLD

The increased connection of peoples, institutions, and organizations through the internet and the various forms of web-based, digital media and online social platforms that help facilitate these connections.

IN A CONFLICT, WHAT HAS MORE POWER?

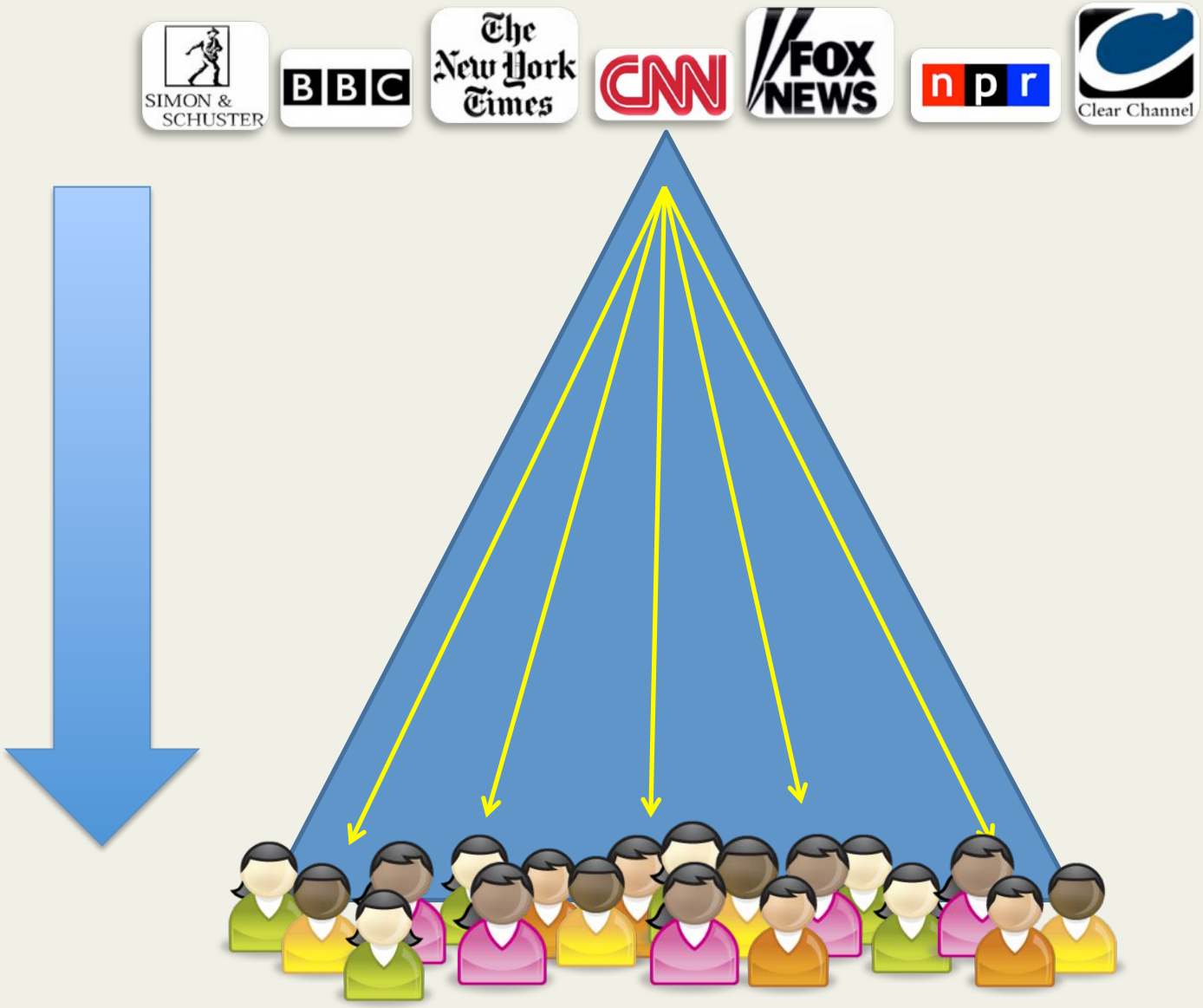
A GUN OR A CAMERA

- How are you defining power?
- What is the context of the conflict?
- What are the goals of the people using the tool?

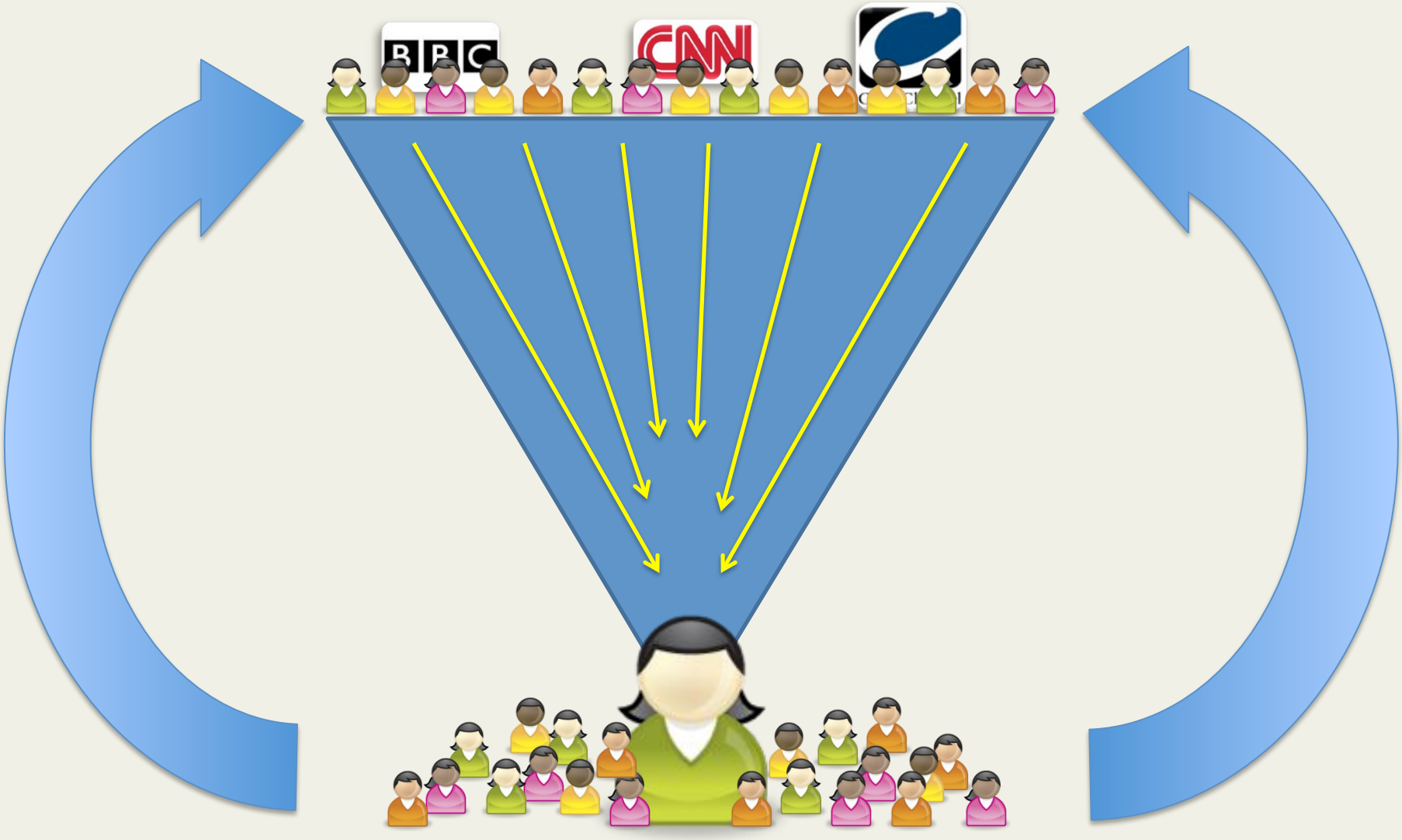

CREATION
MEDIUM
STORY
GATHERING
SHARING

STORY

TRADITIONAL MEDIA



NEW MEDIA



Learn More… READ *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* by Clay Shirky

VIEWS OF POWER

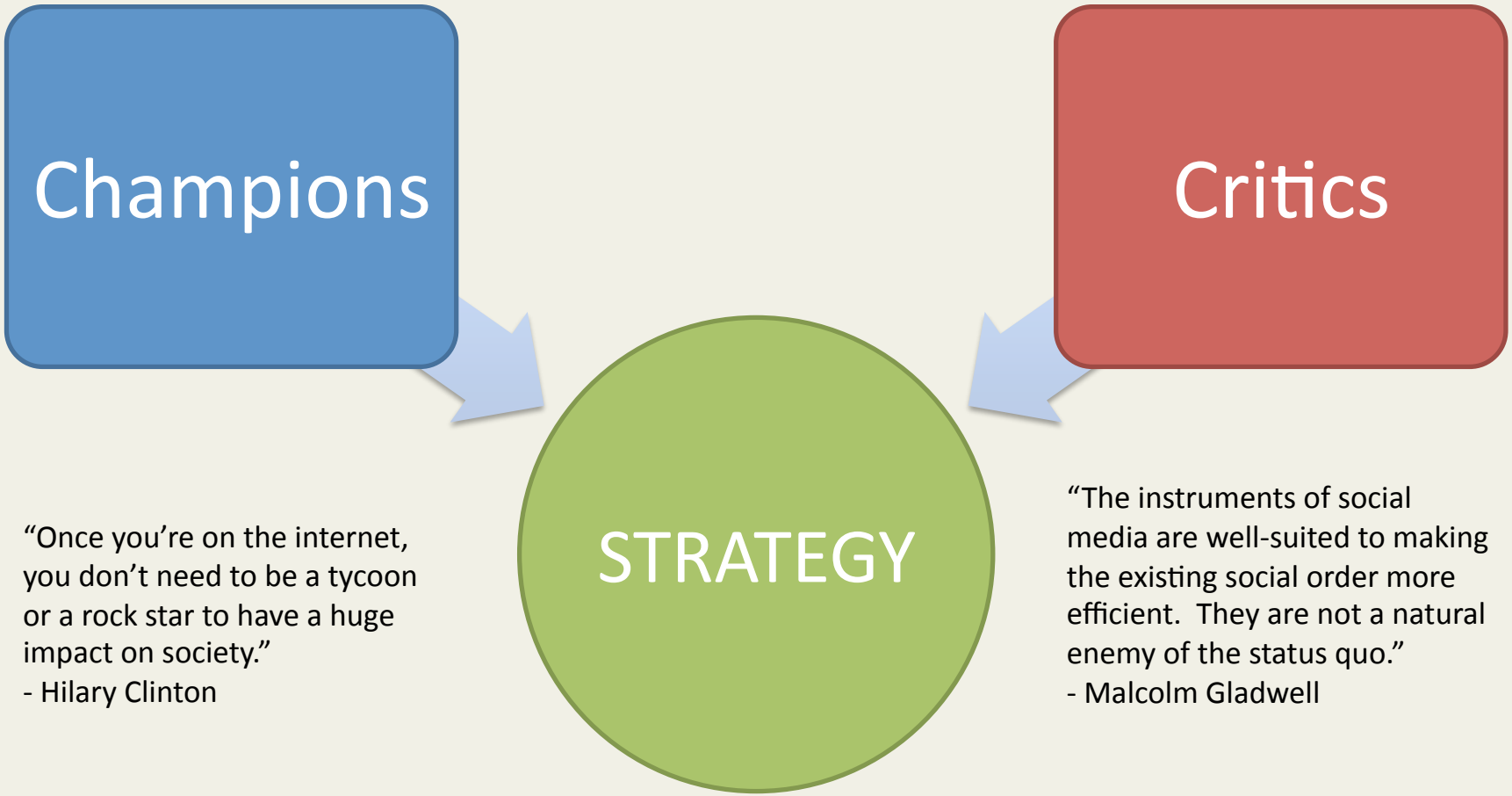
MONOLITHIC

- People are dependent on the goodwill of their government
- Top-down
- Power is self-perpetuating, durable

PLURALISTIC

- A government is dependent on the goodwill of the people.
- Bottom-up
- Power is fragile and requires cooperation

Learn More… READ *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice, 21st Century Potential* by Gene Sharp



"Once you're on the internet, you don't need to be a tycoon or a rock star to have a huge impact on society."
- Hilary Clinton

"The instruments of social media are well-suited to making the existing social order more efficient. They are not a natural enemy of the status quo."
- Malcolm Gladwell

6th of April Youth Movement, 2008 (Egypt)

Learn More… READ *Egypt's "Facebook Revolution," Kefaya, and the Struggle for Democracy and Good Governance*, by Sherif Mansour

6th of April Youth Movement, 2008 (Egypt)

CHAMPIONS…

- Creation of political space for dissent and debate
- Online to on-the-ground

CRITICS…

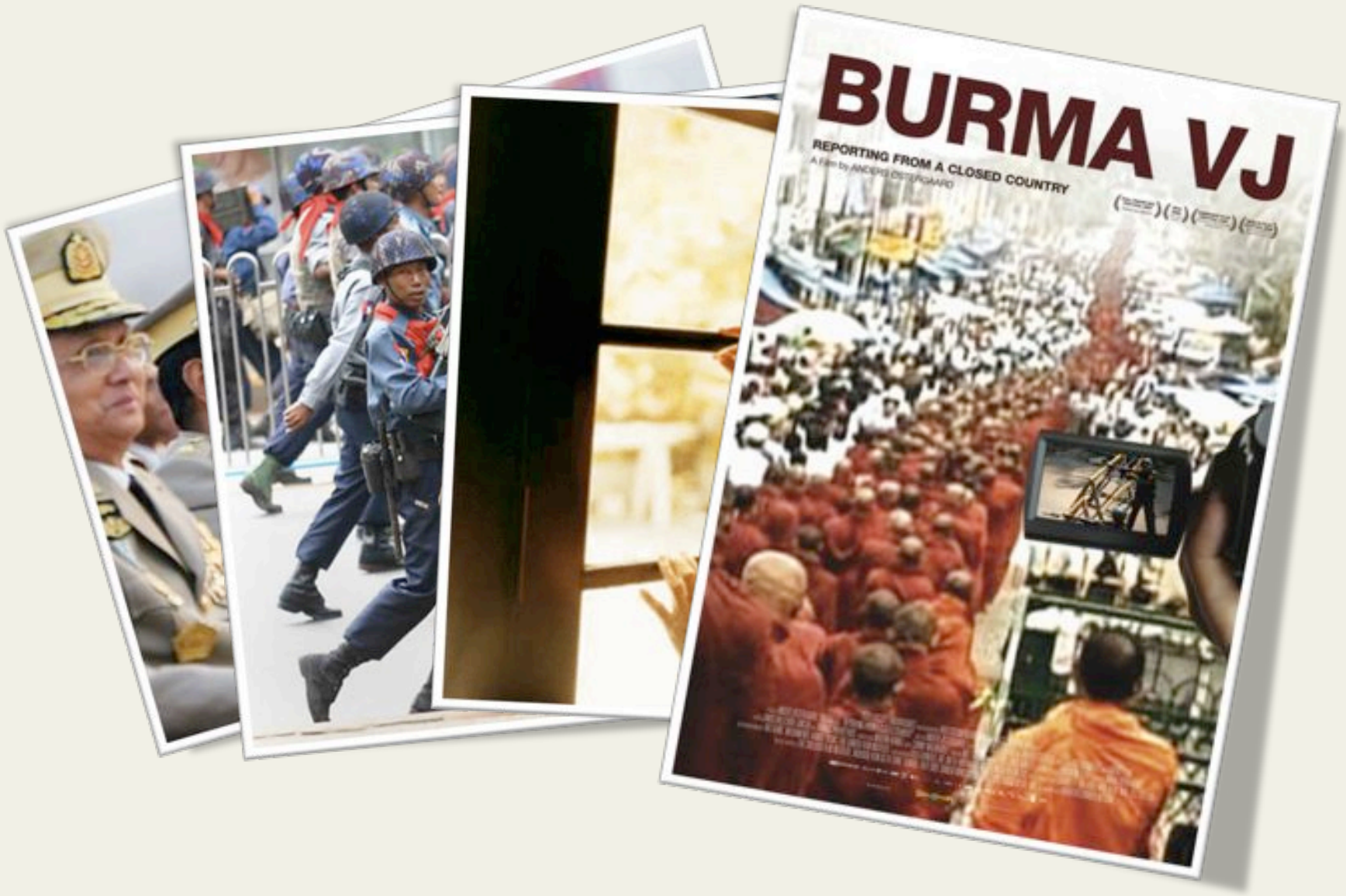
- Gathering information on activists
- Weak social links

STRATEGY…

- Anonymity and secret codes
- Going beyond the Facebook group

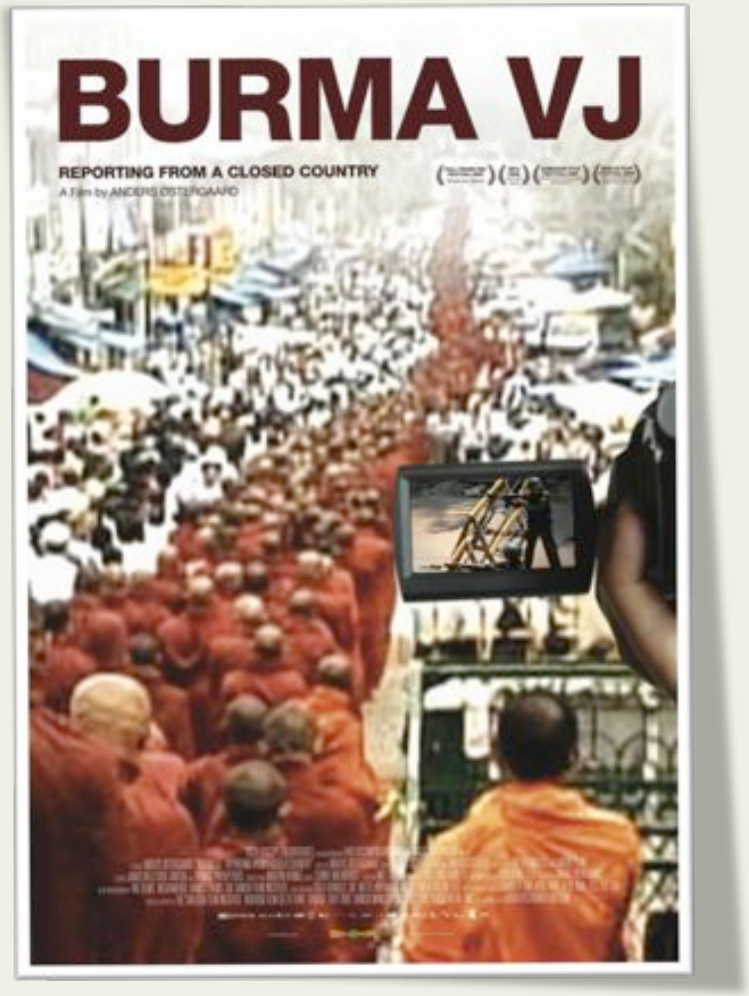
Learn More… READ *Egypt's "Facebook Revolution," Kefaya, and the Struggle for Democracy and Good Governance*, by Sherif Mansour

Saffron Revolution, 2007 (Burma)



Learn More… WATCH *Burma VJ* (available on YouTube)

Saffron Revolution, 2007 (Burma)



CHAMPIONS…

- Documentation of human rights abuses
- Communication with the outside world

CRITICS…

- Shut or slow down internet access
- Unaffordable pricing

STRATEGY…

- Don't rely on a single mode of communication
- Create dilemma actions

Learn More… WATCH *Burma VJ* (available on YouTube)

Orange Revolution, 2004 (Ukraine)

Learn More… READ *The Role of Digital Networked Technologies in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution*, by Joshua Goldstein

Orange Revolution, 2004 (Ukraine)

CHAMPIONS…

- Coordination of tactics and campaigns
- Transportability and access

CRITICS…

- Access to technology
- Jamming cell phone signals

STRATEGY…

- Know your intended audience
- Cultivate and share memes to generate solidarity

Learn More… Chapter 3 in *Digital Activism DeCoded*, edited by Mary Joyce

CONCLUSION

- How we understand and define power will determine how we view the potential impact of digital tools and the internet
- The specific context of each conflict should determine how, when, and if we use digital tools or rely on the internet at all
- The goals of the movement should shape how digital tools are used, not visa versa

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, and INSIGHTS

WEB RESOURCES

Alliance for Youth Movements
http://movements.org

Berkman Center for Internet and Society
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/

Crabgrass
http://crabgrass.riseup.net

Digital Democracy
http://digital-democracy.org

Global Voices Online
http://globalvoicesonline.org

Institute for Technology and Social Change
http://techchange.org

iRevolution Blog
http://irevolution.wordpress.org

Meta-Activism Project
http://meta-activism.org

MobileActive.org
http://mobileactive.org

My Heart's in Accra
http://ethanzuckerman.com

Tactical Technology Collective
http://tacticaltech.org

Tor
http://torproject.org

Ushahidi
http://ushahidi.com

Waging Nonviolence
http://wagingnonviolence.org