

Stacey Lowcock
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Steps to a Successful Nonviolent Campaign

We will talk you through some steps to follow when you are planning your strategy and will also include some suggestions for application of the steps. Obviously this does not cover all your options but gives you some strategic planning tips to help you.

1. Formulate functional objectives:

Should be well chosen, defined and understood. Your three demands that you are currently making are a good start. Any further objectives should follow a similar pattern.



2. **Develop Organizational Strength:** You need to determine who is in your leadership positions for two reasons— leadership and inspiration. You also need to have a system in place which allows you to change your course swiftly and intelligently when conditions change. We would suggest you avoid having too many “official” channels as this inhibits your adaptability.

3. **Secure Access to Critical Resources:** Due to the current situation and the SPDC’s repression of your efforts so far, we suggest you ensure that you have sufficient reserves of essential materials so that you are well prepared should you be prevented from leaving your domain. Self-sufficiency can help with ability to persevere. Taking into account the difficulty, it is also critical that you set up some communication infrastructure especially when you are on the offensive. It needs to be as swift and accurate as possible.

4. **Cultivate External Resistance:** The more external awareness and support you have, the more chance of there is of third parties becoming involved. If you can focus on journalists and media organizations, you can use the publicity to encourage others to become involved.

5. **Expand Repertoire of Sanctions:** Obviously we would recommend continuing with the protests and marches that have been so successful in

raising awareness of your cause and generating support. We also recommend distributing flyers and posters to encourage others to participate. They should be able to see exactly what they are supporting and what is expected of them. We have supplied you with a sample poster.

6. Alienate SPDC from expected bases of support:

We are assuming you are aware of the SPDC’s supporters. If you are able, an attempt to show these expected support bases the violence of the SPDC would go a step closer to having them withdraw their support. If you can focus this step towards the police and the military, you will have a much greater chance of disintegrating the SPDC. While they continue to have the cooperation and obedience of the police and military, they will be a hard enemy. Most police or military will have a relative, friend or even acquaintance involved in the protests or harmed by the SPDC’s policies. Play this as a trump card.



Key feature central to campaign

Maintain Nonviolent Discipline

Maintaining nonviolent discipline is absolutely **vital** to your campaign. You need to make your supporters aware that they aren’t being asked to change their religion or basic world view but they are being asked to keep their behavior within a particular standard for the duration of the campaign. Any person who engages in a rogue act of violence will be distanced from the campaign.

We suggest you develop a code of conduct for participants and perhaps include it on the material you distribute so everyone is clear.

Nonviolent discipline must be maintained despite any provocation and brutalities that the SPDC may engage in. If your participants in this nonviolent action begin using violence, repression will only intensify and you are the ones with the disadvantage in this department, you are ill equipped compared to the SPDC.

Critical Resources

Essential Materials

Some suggestions of items to keep in reserve for yourselves and to assist in relief efforts:

- Food
- Clothing
- Energy Supply
- Medical Supplies



Communications

You should make use of any illegal or smuggled means of communications that are available to you but should this not be possible, other methods may include:

- Trusted runners
- Posters, leaflets, graffiti and banners
- Public Speeches
- Newspapers & Magazines

Alternative Sanctions

Apart from the methods already mentioned some thought should also be given to:

- Refusal to accept appointed officials
- Reluctant and slow compliance
- Civil disobedience of “illegitimate” laws
- Nonviolent harassment
- Nonviolent obstruction
- Overloading of facilities

Gene Sharp

“Nonviolent action is possible and is capable of wielding great power even against ruthless rulers and military regimes, because it attacks the most vulnerable characteristic of all hierarchical institutions and governments; dependence on the governed”

The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle



Do's and Don'ts

DO maintain nonviolent discipline
DON'T engage in any violent act

DO determine & spell out your clear objectives
DON'T get sidetracked on other issues

DO decide on a leader for decision making and inspiration
DON'T have too many official channels that inhibit your ability to adapt

DO make sure you have access to essential materials and communication channels
DON'T forsake efficient & accurate communication when the SPDC make it difficult

DO create awareness & publicity for your cause
DON'T ignore journalists & media organizations

DO utilize varying forms of nonviolent sanctions
DON'T assume participants know all the details of your campaign

DO alienate SPDC's bases of support
DON'T forget to focus on police & military

DO create a code of conduct for participants
DON'T ask them to change religion



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Nonviolent Action Consultancy Group

Our Details

PO Box 376
North Wollongong
NSW
AUSTRALIA 2500

Phone: (02) 42563236
Fax: (02) 42563237
E-mail: nonviolentcampaignhelp@bigpond.com

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Report

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Student Number 2780951

Advice to the
Burmese Buddhist
Monks Alliance

Dialogue

Discussion between the team of consultants to the Burmese Buddhist Monks Alliance

Stacey: Ok team. Since this is our first planning meeting for our new assignment, I'll run through the case to make sure you are all familiar with it before we get down to business. So, we'll start with the players.

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is the official name of the military regime of Burma. These guys seized power by force instead of participating in the election of 1990. It is a military dominated 12-member body that forms the government of Myanmar (Burma). According to the government, the SPDC is a transitional body intended to prepare Myanmar for a return to democracy but critics say it is designed merely to enhance the military's grip on power and its control of the country's resources.

This brings us to the Burmese Buddhist Monks Alliance (BBMA) who fall in the category of, to put it mildly, critics of the SPDC. Obviously the Alliance's members are monks and these guys perceive the military government of Burma as an enemy of the people¹. BBMA is a non-profit, non-government organisation and members hold to Buddhist ideals of peace and non-violent action.

Jono: And it's the BBMA that needs our assistance?

Sheree: Well it certainly sounds like they are in the disadvantaged position here, so I hope it is them that we are helping!

Stacey: Don't worry about it guys, most of the world is supporting the Monks and the people of Myanmar.

Shane: From what I'm aware of in the news, the monks have been leading enormous protests but have been repressed by the SPDC.

Stacey: That's exactly right. The military junta haven't responded very favourably to the protests. They have ordered troops and riot police to pagodas and Buddhist monasteries to stop the mass protests. They have also imposed a night curfew and a ban on public gatherings. Not only that, but they have been arresting thousands and at this stage I think the death toll from the crackdown is around 300².

Jono: Burma has a bit of a history of rebellion doesn't it? There was the Saya San Rebellion in 1930-1932³

¹ BBC News 2007, *Burma monks issue defiant message*, accessed 12/10/07, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7005974.stm>

² Cave, P. ABC News 2007, *Reports Burma death toll in hundreds*, accessed 12/10/07, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/10/04/2051300.htm>

³ For further information into this rebellion, see Aung-Thwin, M 2003, 'Genealogy of a Rebellion Narrative: Law Ethnology and Culture in Colonial Burma', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 34(3), pp 393-419

Sheree: And the more recent uprising in the 1980s where millions of peaceful demonstrators called for the end of the dictatorship and transition to democracy. I think it began at the universities in Rangoon when some students were killed by riot police. The students took an explicitly pro-democracy and anti-government stance and the riot police were again called in to break up the demonstrations with force. Scores were killed and thousands arrested and this was followed by a closing of the universities so that the movement temporarily collapsed⁴.

Jono: Yeah, but it gained momentum again when the universities opened and monks and factory workers joined in. Our case isn't the first time the monks have been involved in protests. There did seem to be some progress being made when the president stepped down asking for a referendum to start a multiparty system. But when the referendum was defeated and the commander of the riot police became president, most protests occurred⁵.

Stacey: Which I can completely understand.

Sheree: Yeah but thousands were left dead when the military opened fired with machine guns.

Jono: There was a series of strikes which saw martial law withdraw but when the country went into near anarchy, some generals established the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC) which is the predecessor to the SPDC.

Sheree: Then these guys called an election to appear legitimate because they expected to win but when the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the SLORC refused to honour the results and remained in power.

Shane: Which brings us where we are today, so that must be where we come in. Are we going to help the BBMA design a strategic plan for a course of nonviolent action to help them achieve their goals?

Stacey: That's the plan.

Sheree: So what are the goals they want to achieve?

Shane: Well, I've been reading that there are three steps that the monks are calling for. The first is a reduction in all commodity prices, fuel prices, rice and cooking oil prices immediately. The second thing they want is all political prisoners and all detainees that have already being arrested during the ongoing demonstrations to be released⁶.

Stacey: Right, and the third thing is the big picture goal- they want the SPDC to enter a dialogue with pro-democracy forces for national reconciliation to resolve the crisis and difficulties facing and suffered by the people.

Jono: So it's a human rights issue too. Has there been any UN involvement?

Stacey: Limited. Some of the members have called for urgent efforts to address the growing unrest and stated that they are appalled at the steps the regime has taken to silence the peaceful protests and clamp

⁴ Schock, K 1990, 'People Power and Political Opportunities: Social Movement Mobilization and Outcomes in the Philippines and Burma', *Social Problems*, 46(3), pp 355-375

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Al Jazeera News, *Myanmar monks' three demands*, accessed 11/10/07, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/6164D6D9-E42A-4A96-8305-F7AC526A56BC.htm>

down on dissent⁷. They've sent a special envoy to the country and there are already some sanctions in place but they haven't been very successful.

Sheree: I say let's get into it then. Since we are focusing on a strategic non-violent action, maybe we should focus on whether we have Ackerman's three conditions necessary for victory in overthrowing an oppressive government⁸. It would be helpful to know whether we have at least a chance here.

Jono: Good idea. Well it sounds like unity⁹ is pretty much on track. Since the BBMA are already an alliance, I'm sure they already have organisational cohesion and we've already talked about their goals.

Shane: Yeah, I guess the bigger picture is making sure it is established with all participants, not just those in the alliance. Maybe we should design some posters to make sure those that want to be involved in the protests know what they stand for and what ideals they need to hold to.

Stacey: Who said we'll be advising involvement in protests?

Shane: Well I just assumed that seeing as the BBMA has already been engaging in them and they have been a very powerful tool in bring awareness to the cause.

Stacey: I was just kidding, I agree. Besides I guess that comes under the third condition for victory-nonviolent discipline by enlisting participation of most people¹⁰.

Jono: Just jog my memory again, we missed the second condition. What was it?

Sheree: Concerted planning¹¹. Which we are about to start right now.

Jono: Now seeing as nonviolent action is the "power of people without weapons in the conventional sense"¹² (see I can remember some things I learnt!) I guess that is what the Buddhists' will be aiming for in their campaign.

Shane: So that's obviously got to be our overriding aim but I think we should maybe look at Ackerman and Kruegler's Principles of Strategic Nonviolent Conflict¹³ to develop an overall strategy for the BBMA and then from there we should be able to create the leaflets and posters for the Alliance.

Stacey: So we need to formulate functional objectives that are well chosen, defined and understood¹⁴.

Sheree: Well, haven't we already done that? The monks pretty well set out what their main objectives were and they seem pretty specific and concrete to me.

Stacey: Yeah, I think you're right.

⁷ BBC News 2007, *Burma monks issue defiant message*, accessed 12/10/07, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7005974.stm>

⁸ Ackerman, P & Duvall, J 2005, 'People Power Primed: Civil Resistance and Democratization', *Harvard International Review*, Summer 2005, 27(2), p 42-47, 45

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ackerman, P & Duvall, J 2005, 'People Power Primed: Civil Resistance and Democratization', *Harvard International Review*, Summer 2005, 27(2), p 42-47

¹² Martin, B & Varney, W 2003, *Nonviolence Speaks: Communicating against Repression*, Hampton Press, New Jersey

¹³ Ackerman, P & Kruegler C 1994, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century*, Praeger Publishers, Westport

¹⁴ Ibid, 24.

Jono: Developing organisational strength is next¹⁵. We should advise the BBMA that they need to determine who will be in the leadership role for the purposes of decision-making and inspiration.

Shane: The other critical element is that the group needs to be able to respond swiftly and intelligently to changing conditions¹⁶. We can include that in their information brochure. Make sure they organise the Alliance and affiliates so that it is able to do this and adapt and change quickly.

Stacey: So what are the critical material resources that they need to secure access to?

Sheree: Before we think about materials for the running of the campaign, the monks should ensure they have sufficient reserves of essential materials to see the struggle through to a successful conclusion¹⁷. Basic goods and services are important for defensive purposes, which the BBMA have had to deal with a lot lately as some have practically been under house arrest.

Jono: Communication infrastructure and transportation equipment have got to be necessary too I would say, especially in offensive operations¹⁸. Swift and accurate communications are essential to authenticate instructions, counter the SPDC's propaganda and generally just to inform and bolster the BBMA's supporters¹⁹.

Shane: And in terms of getting the message out there, the BBMA should be attempting to cultivate as much external assistance as possible²⁰. Obviously the ultimate objective is to have third parties launch sanctions of their own; against the SPDC. The USA have already started making noises in this direction, it would be generate more sympathy for the BBMA and people of Myanmar.

Jono: Yeah, but communications is going to be really difficult. Especially in terms of generating external assistance. Apparently the government has already shut down the internet and blocked both mobile phone and fixed line telephones. Not only that, but just recently, satellite telephones and computers that have been smuggled into Burma have been seized. The SPDC just doesn't want the outside world seeing the images of their crackdown²¹. We're going to have to get creative.

Stacey: Speaking of sanctions too, surely we could find some different sanctions that are on Sharp's list of 198 methods of nonviolent action²² to expand the BBMA's repertoire of sanctions. They have already been engaging in protests, marches, prayer and worship but there's more we can make use of. We'll start with banners and pamphlets but maybe we could encourage the BBMA to engaging in more social disobedience and noncooperation with the government.

Sheree: Well that deals with all the principles of development.

¹⁵ Ibid, 26.

¹⁶ Ibid, 27.

¹⁷ Ibid, 30.

¹⁸ Ibid, 31.

¹⁹ Ackerman, P & Kruegler C 1994, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century*, Praeger Publishers, Westport

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ McKinnon, I. The Guardian, *Burma shuts down last communication links*, accessed 18/10/07, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/burma/story/0,,2186651.00.html>

²² Sharp, G 1973, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Porter Sargent, Boston

Stacey: Yeah it does. I think Ackerman mentions principles of engagement²³ next and three of these deal with the opponent, in our case, the SPDC.

Shane: BBMA need to try to attack the SPDC's methods of control as well as muting the impact of their violent weapons²⁴.

Jono: If they can manage that, they should be able to cause disorientation and frustration. Muting effect of weapons is harder though. How are they supposed to manage that? It may require specially trained people which I'm not sure the BBMA will have access to.

Sheree: But the next best thing to muting the impact of a weapon would be to increase the cost of using it²⁵. If the BBMA could somehow alienate the SPDC from their expected bases of support, like the military and those who provide them with their weapons, this would help their cause.

Shane: I think the BBMA should emphasise the violence of the SPDC to its neutral bases of support and hopefully cause revulsion so that the SPDC's cause is hampered.

Jono: Good idea. I'm not sure who these bases of support are, but hopefully the BBMA will be able to figure this out once we tell them where to focus their attention.

Stacey: I think one of the most important things we have to stress to both the BBMA and particularly anyone else who wants to be involved in the cause, is the need to maintain nonviolent discipline²⁶. We should include something on the posters that lets potential participants know that they aren't being asked to change religion or change their world view. They are simply being asked to keep their behaviour within a particular standard for the duration of the campaign.

Shane: Absolutely. The BBMA should issue some sort of code of conduct perhaps.

Sheree: And make it known that anyone who decides to engage in some rogue violent act will be distanced from the campaign.

Shane: This really is one of their keys to success and it has to be maintained despite any provocation and brutalities that the SPDC may throw at them.

Jono: This shouldn't be too much of a problem though for the BBMA. After all, they are Buddhists.

Stacey: So we know that the SPDC as the main state actor, has three types of control: normative or symbolic, material or political and physical²⁷.

Jono: And obviously the BBMA is in a position of disadvantage. They have far fewer resources and options available.

Shane: So what they need to do is make sure that they utilise tactics that restrict SPDC's social-control resources and increasing the overall cost of any remaining options²⁸. What they should remember is that

²³ Ackerman, P & Kruegler C 1994, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, p35

²⁴ Ibid, 38.

²⁵ Ackerman, P & Kruegler C 1994, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century*, Praeger Publishers, Westport

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ McAdam, D 2000, 'Nonviolence as contentious interaction', *PS, Political Science and Politics*, 33(2), p 149-155

²⁸ Ibid.

all these sources of control really depend on the cooperation, submission and obedience of the population²⁹.

Stacey: You know, I hadn't really thought of it that way.

Shane: Well it makes sense. Withdraw the popular support of the SPDC and you will probably diminish, if not sever, the availability on all the sources of power that they depend on³⁰.

Sheree: And best case scenario, without the availability of these power sources, the SPDC's power will weaken and hopefully dissolve.

Jono: Well you know what area I think they should focus their attention on- the police, bureaucrats and military. If these guys remain fully cooperative and supportive of the SPDC and are obedient in carrying out their commands, it is going to be really difficult to disintegrate the SPDC³¹.

Stacey: Well obviously there is going to be a lot more planning and working out of details, but at least we know where we, and the BBMA, are heading.

Shane: You know, I think its really only appropriate that as we are about to tackle this enormous tasks that we remind ourselves of some of the thing the founder of non-violent action said. Give us a boost in confidence.

Sheree: Is that your way of saying you want to show off your knowledge of Gene Sharp quotes.

Shane: Pretty much. Yep.

Jono: Well...

Shane: "Nonviolent action is possible and capable of wielding great power even against ruthless rulers and military regimes, because it attacks the most vulnerable characteristic of all hierarchical institutions and governments; dependence on the governed"³².

Stacey: Ooh, well I've got a quote. How about we think about what might happen here, like in history, when nonviolent action is successful. "The historical results were massive: tyrants were toppled, governments were overthrown, occupying armies were impeded and political systems that withheld human rights were shattered"³³.

Sheree: Well that pretty much sums up what we are up against. Let just hope we see the same results.

²⁹ Sharp, G 2003, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A conceptual framework for liberation*, The Albert Einstein Institution, USA, accessed 10/10/07, <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/FDTD.pdf>

³⁰ Sharp, G 2003, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A conceptual framework for liberation*, The Albert Einstein Institution, USA, accessed 10/10/07, <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/FDTD.pdf>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sharp, G 2000, *The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle*, The Albert Einstein Institution, USA, accessed 10/10/07, <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/TheRoleofPowerinNonviolentStruggle-English.pdf>

³³ Ackerman, P & Duvall, J 2000, 'Nonviolent power in the twentieth century', *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 33(2) p 146-148

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