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Micropolitical Opportunity Structure in Burma

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors

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Honors Capstone Project in Political Science

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Abstract

This paper looks to answer the question: *Why do citizens in Burma continue challenging the military regime through peaceful social movements despite of the threat of violent oppression?* I set out to examine Burma as an anomaly in political opportunity structure theory. Political opportunity structure influences the type of political action most likely to take place within a regime by affecting which political claims are possible. At first, Burma appears to be a low-democracy, low-capacity regime, which should host civil wars. However, in Burma's cities, peaceful social movements continue to take place. My capstone seeks to explain this problem.

In order to explain why social movements rather than the expected violent conflict take place in Burma's cities, I used data gathered from Freedom House to show that Burma falls squarely in the "low democracy" category of political opportunity structure. After describing the current theories, I constructed a chronology of political events in Burma's cities and compared those to political events in Burma's border regions to show how political participation differs between the two regions. By mapping political behavior on a timeline, I examined the different types of political actions by region in order to determine whether there is a difference in political action in cities compared to border regions.

I argue that Burma is not a true anomaly in political opportunity structure, but rather that the current understanding of political opportunity structure is too basic to provide a valuable prediction of action in countries where state capacity is composed of two distinct factors, infrastructural and despotic capacity. Additionally, a center-periphery split in Burma (as well as many other countries) leads to very different political action between the majority-controlled cities and ethnic minority-controlled border regions. I suggest that solidary incentives offered by the *Sangha*, or Buddhist monks, as well as the political leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, provides pro-democracy movements in Burma with relational consumption goods that are valuable enough for protestors to overcome the threat of violence.

The evidence for this argument comes from a data analysis of political events in Burma as well as a review of relevant scholarly research. In my analysis of different types of political actions by region, I found that political participation in Burma's cities generally takes the form of social movements, while political action in the border regions often occurs as violent conflict. I conclude that the reason why political participation in Burma takes different forms in the cities versus the border regions is because there are two distinct political opportunity structures *within* Burma. The first is a high-capacity, low democracy structure in the cities, where the government presence and infrastructural power is greatest. The second is a low-capacity, low democracy structure in the ethnic minority-controlled border states, where strained economic resources and limited despotic influence mean that the armed opposition groups are strong enough to combat the military in violent conflict. I call these disparate regional structures "micropolitical opportunity structures," and suggest that this theory is applicable to many other sites of political contention.

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Introduction

On September 22, 2007, a group of monks and protestors marched past barricades in downtown Yangon, Burma¹, chanting the words of Buddha's loving kindness. They stopped outside the house where Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was serving her sentence of house arrest and she tearfully greeted them at the gate. Four days later, the Burmese military cracked down violently on the peaceful demonstrations, killing at least nine unarmed protestors.

During the Saffron Revolution, hundreds of thousands of citizens took to the streets to peacefully protest against the repressive military regime. This was the largest social movement in Burma since the 1988 protests, which led to the deaths of 3,000 people in the resulting government crackdown. Why did the people of Burma choose to participate peacefully with the knowledge that the military government would undoubtedly respond with violence? How does a country with no civil rights or political freedoms find peaceful means for conflict resolution?

¹ The country's name is a topic that is hotly contested by the global community. The name "Burma" came from British colonial rule, when the British named the country after the ethnic majority group, the Burman. In 1989, the military government officially changed the English name to "Myanmar," ostensibly in order to avoid the connotations of colonialism. In Burmese, "Myanma" is the formal name of the country, while "Bama" is a colloquial name (Scrivener 2007). Human rights organizations and countries such as the United States insist on calling it Burma, arguing that using the junta's preferred name is tacit support for the illegitimate military regime. However, the United Nations, as well as China and Russia, call the country Myanmar, stating that using the name Burma is a throwback to colonialism. Additionally, the junta renamed most cities, with the old capital Rangoon changing to Yangon, Prome changing to Pyay, and Pagan changing to Bagan. In this paper, I will be referring to the country by the name Burma. However, I will use the new names of cities, since most news sources and reports use them.

This paper seeks to examine the sources of political participation in Burma and the political opportunity structure that influences the type of possible political action. I show that Burma appears to be an anomalous case in current political opportunity structure theory using a data analysis of political events in Burma, as well as a review of relevant scholarly research. Through this research, I aim to contribute to the study of political conflict by showing how the Burmese case can be integrated into theory. My central research question is: *Why do citizens in Burma continue challenging the military regime through peaceful social movements despite of the threat of violent oppression?*

I posit that the current understanding of political opportunity structure is too basic to provide a valuable prediction of action in many countries such as Burma, where state capacity is composed of two distinct factors, infrastructural and despotic capacity. Additionally, a center-periphery split in Burma (as well as many other countries) leads to very different political action between the majority-controlled cities and ethnic minority-controlled border regions. I describe how solidary incentives offered by the *Sangha*, or Buddhist monks, as well as the political leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, provide pro-democracy political action with legitimacy and moral strength. These relational consumption goods are valuable enough for protestors to overcome the threat of military action. I conclude that political scientists must develop a more nuanced understanding of capacity through a concept I call “micropolitical opportunity structure,” which varies regionally within states.

Historical Background

Prior to the nineteenth century, Burma consisted of separate territories controlled by different ethnic groups, many with their own kingdoms, languages and cultures. In 1824, the British launched a military campaign to gain control of Burma and managed to colonize the country for British India in 1885 after sixty years of war, making it a separate crown colony in 1937. During World War II, Japan took control of Burma. They were assisted by the Burmese Independence Army, led by Burma's independence hero, General Aung San. The leaders of the Burmese Independence Army continued to fight for an independent Burma, forming the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), which joined with the British to liberate Burma from Japan in 1945. Burmese nationalists continued to demand independence from Britain. On July 19, 1947, Aung San and other independence leaders were assassinated, six months before Burma's independence was realized. The new constitution took effect on September 2, 1947, and Burma became a parliamentary democracy in 1948 (International Human Rights Clinic 2009; US Campaign for Burma n.d. "Brief History").

In 1962, General Ne Win led a coup that overthrew the elected civilian government and installed the military into political power. In the years following, Burma declined from one of the wealthiest countries in Southeast Asia to one of the poorest. Political turmoil in 1988 led to rampant inflation. By November, the kyat traded at ten times the official rate (Guyot and Badgley 1990). By 1990, inflation reached 70% and higher, with petroleum production halved from the

decade before and an energy crisis limiting industrial productivity (Guyot 1991). In 1990, Senior General Saw Maung named four tasks that the military would undertake: 1) maintain law and order; 2) provide secure and smooth transportation; 3) strive for better conditions for food, clothing, and shelter for the people as well as assisting the private sector; and finally 4) hold multiparty democratic general elections (Guyot 1991).

The military junta became infamous for brutal crackdowns on any form of defiance. In 1988, the army opened fire on peaceful, student-led pro-democracy protests, killing an estimated 3,000. On May 27, 1990, the National League for Democracy (NLD) defeated the junta by a landslide in the first election in three decades. The election itself was relatively unfair, in that opposition leaders were arrested and campaigning was restricted, but the voting was free enough for the NLD to win 80% of the seats contested (Guyot 1991). Instead of giving up power, the military nullified the election and replaced the elected civilian government with the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). It arrested student leaders, closed the schools and enforced martial law across most of the military-controlled regions (Guyot and Badgley 1990). SLORC also arrested thousands for people for “seditious” political attacks, including NLD co-chair General Tin Oo and NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi (Guyot and Badgley 1990). Suu Kyi, the daughter of independence hero Aung San, was in and out of house arrest for over twenty years and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her nonviolent political movement for democracy and human rights (US Campaign for Burma n.d. “Aung San Suu Kyi”).

In 1992, General Than Shwe began leading the junta, and has been the figurehead of the military regime ever since. SLORC changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997, the same year that Burma joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Human rights abuses such as restrictions against political leaders and internal displacement continued throughout the 1990s, and the international community began paying more attention to the issue. The UN General Assembly passed its first resolution on Burma in 1991 and the UN Commission on Human Rights expressed concerns about the “seriousness of the human rights situation” in 1992. In 1993, the first Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma wrote a report detailing arbitrary detentions, torture, unexplained disappearances and executions at the hands of the Burmese government (International Human Rights Clinic 2009).

Armed conflict took place throughout the 1990s, as many students fled to the jungle to join the armed offensive against the Burmese military, or *Tatmadaw*. The Burmese army clashed with ethnic militant groups to gain control of the border regions, and many ethnic groups signed ceasefire agreements with the *Tatmadaw*. The military campaigns against the ethnic armed groups added to the human rights abuses, such as the forced exodus of 250,000 Rohingya Muslims into Bangladesh in 1992. Attacks on hundreds of villages forced thousands of refugees to flee into Thailand, while many more became internally displaced within Burma. *Tatmadaw* soldiers committed severe human rights violations against ethnic nationality civilians, including forced labor, torture and using rape

as a weapon. By the end of the 1990s, there were over 100,000 refugees in Thailand and many internally displaced people within Burma (International Human Rights Clinic 2009).

Political freedoms in Burma have been in continual decline. The regime cracked down on a student uprising in 1996. It arrested and imprisoned students and closed universities. In May 2003, Aung San Suu Kyi emerged from house arrest. While traveling to organize NLD activities, military supporters attacked her motorcade and injured and killed some of her supporters in what became known as the Depayin Massacre (US Campaign for Burma, n.d. “Aung San Suu Kyi”).

The most egregious example of the regime’s attack on political freedoms, however, was the Saffron Revolution. In August 2007, the junta withdrew fuel subsidies suddenly, which caused transportation and food prices to skyrocket overnight. Student activists from the 1988 protests and monks led peaceful demonstrations. The military responded by arresting and beating protestors. Demonstrations led by Buddhist monks spread nationwide throughout September. The regime responded with a harsh crackdown. It beat protestors. It arbitrarily arrested citizens. It banned public gatherings of more than five people. State media reported only nine deaths in the wake of the crackdown but eyewitnesses and pro-democracy activist groups reported many more, including the death of Japanese photographer Kenji Nagai, which was caught on camera and went viral online (US Campaign for Burma, n.d. “Saffron Revolution of 2007”).

On May 2 and 3 of 2008, Cyclone Nargis ripped through the Irrawaddy Delta region and killed as many as 140,000 people (Seekins 2009). Thousands of people died after the cyclone because of starvation, untreated injuries and infectious diseases. Aid agencies estimated that 2.4 million people were affected (US Campaign for Burma n.d. "Cyclone Nargis"). The government refused international aid and erected obstacles to foreign and domestic providers of aid. The U.S., British and French anchored ships off Burma's shore but the government refused to allow them to bring in supplies. The junta viewed such an action as a breach of national sovereignty and worried about local populations organizing against the regime (Seekins 2009). One week after Cyclone Nargis, the SPDC held a referendum on a new constitution to solidify its power, despite the disaster taking place in the delta region. The SPDC reported a suspiciously high 98.12% turnout and an approval rating of 92.48% (Seekins 2009; US Campaign for Burma n.d. "Cyclone Nargis"). The international community has condemned the new constitution for its lack of legitimacy and participation with all state actors (International Human Rights Clinic 2009). The events of 2008 led to entrench military rule deeper (Seekins 2009).

On November 7, 2010, Burma held its first elections since 1990. These elections were neither free nor fair. The junta reserved a quarter of the seats in Parliament for members of the military and made rules specifically to block the candidacy of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. The military government intimidated and coerced citizens into voting for the pro-military party, the Union Solidarity and

Development Party (USDP). Voters who asked for help at the polls were told to tick the box of the USDP (Aung Hla Tun 2010). The military even forced its own soldiers and their families to vote for USDP and the international community denounced the elections as a sham. USDP won 80 percent of the seats in Parliament (Irrawaddy Magazine 2010). In the wake of the elections, Burma's government declared a 90-day state of emergency as bombs exploded in Karen State and fighting broke out between the military and ethnic armed groups, forcing 20,000 refugees to flee into Thailand. (Al Jazeera 2010).

The junta, bowing to global and domestic pressure, held these undemocratic elections as a way of legitimizing their rule. However, a number of indicators suggest an opportunity for democratization in Burma in the near future. The elections were a first step, and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi a few days after the election on November 13 was a triumph for pro-democracy activists (Time Reporter 2010). In addition, a split appears to have emerged between the elder and younger generations within the military. Hundreds of rank-and-file soldiers appeared at Aung San Suu Kyi's house to support her release (BBC 2010). Moreover, the 2007 Saffron Revolution showed that Burma is not immune to the increasing forces of globalization. The participation of Buddhist monks legitimized the pro-democracy demonstrations, and Burmese citizens released information to the world through cell phones and secret videotapes, an indication that the international community is helping to create demand for democracy within Burma (US Campaign for Burma n.d. "Saffron Revolution of 2007"). All

of these suggest that Burma may be on the verge of political change, making this research particularly timely.

Method

I first describe political opportunity structure theory in order to provide a base for my research. I use data gathered from Freedom House to show that Burma falls squarely in the “low democracy” category of political opportunity structure. After describing the current theories, I construct a chronology of political events in Burma’s cities and compare those to a chronology of political events in Burma’s border regions to show how political participation differs between the two regions. By mapping political behavior on a timeline, I examine the prominence of different types of political actions by region in order to determine whether there is a measurable difference in political action in cities compared to border regions. Once I have mapped political action over time in Burma, I explain how the political opportunity structure theory can be extended to cover the Burma case.

Political Opportunity Structure Theory

Political opportunity structure refers to features of a regime that facilitate or inhibit the collective action of political actors. Tilly and Tarrow write that political opportunity structure is a framework “within which people decide whether to mobilize, make decisions about optimal combinations of performances to use, and are likely to succeed or fail in their efforts” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007,

50). Tilly and Tarrow borrowed the idea of political opportunity structure from literature on social movements and applied it to violent political conflicts (Duffy and Makara 2010, 1).

For Tilly and Tarrow, political opportunity structure is composed of two factors: governmental capacity and democracy. Capacity refers to the ability of a government to affect the distribution of population, activity, and resources within the regime's territory. A high-capacity government makes a big difference when it intervenes by raising taxes, controlling the use of natural resources, and controlling populations. Low capacity governments have little effect when they try to accomplish the same things (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 55).

The second factor, democracy, refers to the extent to which people within the regime have "broad, equal political rights, exert significant direct influence (e.g. through competitive elections and referenda) over governmental personnel and policy, as well as receive protection from arbitrary action by governmental agents such as police, judges, and public officials. A regime is undemocratic to the extent that political rights are narrow and/or unequal, consultation of citizens is minimal, and protections are fragile" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 55). Tilly and Tarrow describe six properties that influence the political opportunity structure of a regime. These properties are: 1) The multiplicity of independent centers of powers within the regime; 2) The regime's openness to new political actors; 3) The instability of current political alignments; 4) The availability of influential allies or supporters for political challengers; 5) The extent to which the regime

represses or facilitates collective claim making; and 6) Decisive changes in properties 1 to 5 (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 57).

Political opportunity structure describes opportunities and threats for political action within a given regime. Tilly and Tarrow write that political opportunity structure influences the type of political action most likely to take place within a regime by affecting which political claims are possible. High capacity, high democracy regimes (quadrant I, such as the United States) generally host social movements, because citizens have the freedom to express themselves and the government has enough capacity to allow them to demonstrate without fear of being ousted. High capacity, low democracy regimes (quadrant II, such as China) will most likely have repression and clandestine operations, because the people have few political freedoms to express themselves and the government has enough capacity to crush any opposition. Low capacity, low democracy regimes (quadrant III, such as Sudan) should see civil war, because the people have few political freedoms and the government does not have enough capacity to end fighting over limited resources and power. Finally, low capacity, high democracy regimes (quadrant IV, such as Jamaica) will most likely result in coups d'état or intergroup warfare, because groups have an incentive to grab resources from each other and the government does not have the capacity to prevent them from doing so (see Figure 1).

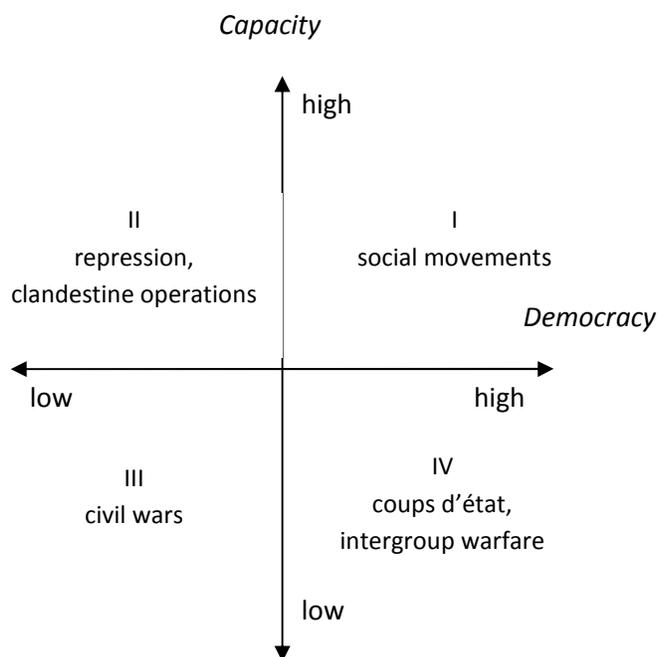


Figure 1: Political Opportunity Structure. *Source*: Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2007).

According to Duffy and Makara (2009), capacity and democracy must be developed simultaneously in order to move from quadrant III to quadrant I. If a state tries to introduce democracy without increasing capacity, the country will move to quadrant IV and aspirations will not be met, creating an incentive for groups to grab resources through *coups d'état*. On the other hand, if state capacity is increased without democracy, the country will move to quadrant II, and those in power will repress any political competitors, who consequently will resort to clandestine operations and terrorist activity. Most conflicts in developing countries take place in quadrant III because of the country's low capacity and low democracy. In principle, once a state moves from low capacity, low democracy to high capacity, high democracy, peaceful political contention can be sustained. The real question is how best to do so.

With this in mind, I will now move to the example of Burma to examine its political opportunity structure and describe the political participation taking place within the country.

What Would Political Opportunity Structure Theory Suggest?

In order to describe Burma's political opportunity structure, I used data from Freedom House's annual report *Freedom in the World*, which measures the state of freedom in 194 countries and 14 territories. In its 2010 *Worst of the Worst* report, Freedom House identified nine countries that it judged to have the worst human rights conditions. These countries were Burma, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, along with the territory Tibet.

These states and territories received the Freedom House survey's lowest ratings: 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties (based on a 1 to 7 scale, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free). Within these entities, state control over daily life is pervasive, independent organizations and political opposition are banned or suppressed, and fear of retribution for independent thought and action is ubiquitous (Freedom House).

Freedom House measures political rights and civil liberties using a number of factors, including electoral process; political pluralism and participation; governmental capacity; freedom of expression and belief; associational and organizational rights; rule of law; and personal autonomy and individual rights. Not only was Burma ranked the worst possible for both political rights and civil liberties, there was also virtually no change in Burma's freedom scores from 1973-2010. It received the lowest score of 7 for both political rights and civil liberties every year from 1988-2010 (see Figure 2A and Figure 2B).

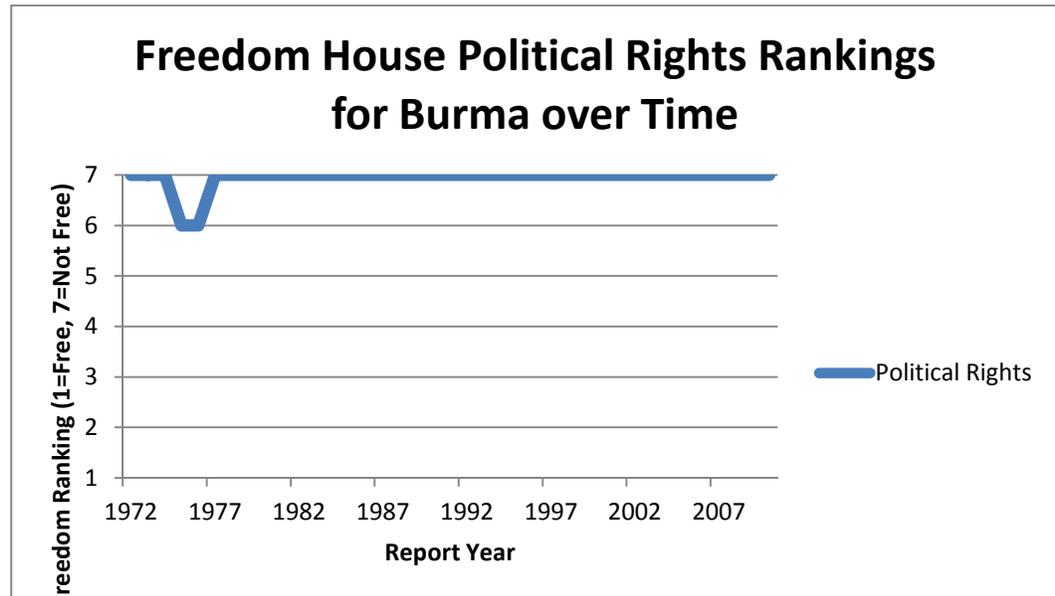


Figure 2A: Political rights rankings for Burma from 1972-2010. *Source:* Data from Freedom House, “Country ratings and status, FIW 1973-2010.”

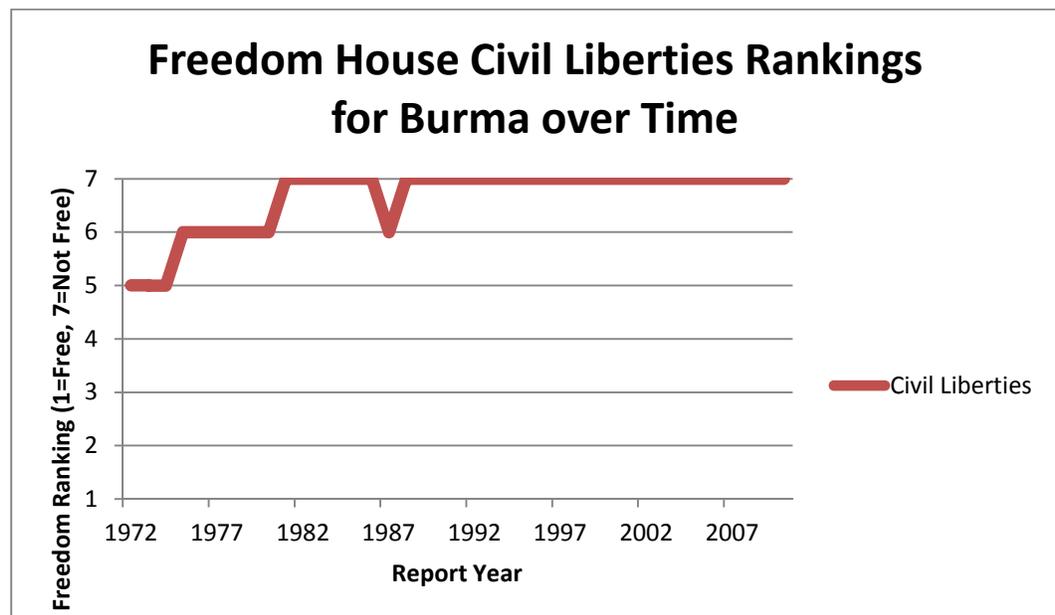


Figure 2B: Civil liberties rankings for Burma from 1972-2010. *Source:* Data from Freedom House, “Country ratings and status, FIW 1973-2010.”

Considering these rankings, it is clear that Burma’s political opportunity structure is undemocratic.

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) rules by decree; it controls all executive, legislative, and judicial powers, suppresses nearly all basic rights, and commits human rights abuses with impunity....The SPDC does not tolerate dissent and has a long history of imprisoning anyone who is critical of the government....The junta drastically restricts press freedom and owns or controls all newspapers and broadcast media....The authorities practice surveillance at internet cafes and regularly jail bloggers....Some of the worst human rights abuses take place in areas populated by ethnic minorities, who comprise roughly 35 percent of Burma's population. In these border regions the military arbitrarily detains, beats, rapes, and kills civilians....The Women's League of Burma has accused the military of systematically using rape and forced marriage as a weapon against ethnic minorities (Freedom House 2010).

Another indication of Burma's low democracy is its recent constitution and election. After Cyclone Nargis, the SPDC blocked foreign aid and relief efforts and insisted in pushing through a constitutional referendum on May 10, 2008. The constitution itself was drafted by the junta and excluded key stakeholders, most notably democratic opposition and ethnic minority groups. This referendum was denounced as a sham by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and U.S. Campaign for Burma. Voting was clearly not free and fair. People were given ballot sheets with "yes" already checked for them. Government officials voted for citizens. Some voters were required to write their personal ID numbers on their ballots (Seekins 2009). According to Aung Naing Oo, a Burmese political analyst, "The new constitution is Than Shwe's exit strategy....He knows he has to provide a façade of civilian rule, but retain most of the power. This constitution gives the Burmese people perhaps 5% to 10% freedom" (Seekins 2009, 170). Likewise, the national elections on November 7, 2010 were undemocratic and exclusive. The junta showed its disdain for a truly democratic electoral process by restricting the access of opposition parties like the

National League for Democracy, by reserving a quarter of seats in Parliament for members of the military, and by coercing or forcing citizens and military members to vote for the USDP.

While Burma clearly has low-democracy, assessing its level of capacity is a more troublesome beast. Two discrepancies in Burma's governmental capacity make it a more difficult country to pin down than most. The first is a difference between "despotic" capacity and "infrastructural" capacity, which Michael Man describes as "a state's capacity to penetrate society with the goal of coordinating and regulating social life" (in Englehart 2005, 631). Caroline Thomas similarly suggested differentiating between despotic and infrastructural power (in Duffy and Makara 2009, 3). In examining the Burma case, there is certainly a major disconnect between SPDC's ability to provide public goods (infrastructural capacity) and suppress political opposition (despotic capacity). The second, and more perplexing, issue with determining Burma's capacity is the huge variance in levels of capacity between the cities and the rural border regions within the country.

The first aspect of Burma's capacity I will address is infrastructural vs. despotic capacity. In their discussion of political opportunity structure, Tilly and Tarrow refer to the ability of the government to control resources as well as the population. However, in the case of Burma, the government's capacity is not consistent across both infrastructural and despotic capacity. Compared to the other forty-seven Least Developed Countries in the world, Burma has the largest military, highest military spending, and is the second-largest importer of arms after Yemen (Alamgir 1997). This suggests an extremely high despotic power. However, Burma's military spending is more than twice its combined spending on

education and health, which is the worst of any country in Asia (Alamgir 1997).

Additionally:

The repressive nature of Burma's government seems to suggest that it is a strong state. While the military government has been able to coerce citizens, spy on opposition groups, and repress dissent, the state apparatus is actually failing in many respects. The civil service has been crippled by repeated purges, politicization, absurdly low wages, and unchecked corruption. These problems are so severe that the bureaucracy has difficulty accomplishing even basic tasks necessary to maintain the regime, such as collecting revenue and supplying the army. The government has virtually ceased to provide services such as education and health care (Englehart 2005, 623).

This indicates a much more nuanced translation of "capacity" than is generally applied within political opportunity structure theory. Without considering despotic and infrastructural capacities separately, one might assume that a country with great control over its people and politics will automatically have the power to build roads, extract resources and tax efficiently. This, however, is not the case in Burma (Englehart 2005, 637).

Why is this discrepancy occurring in Burma? The country's history after decolonization provides some answers. After independence, Aung San's democratically elected Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) inherited a dysfunctional and ethnically diverse country from the British, one that had "incompletely defined states, dissatisfaction over the inequality of the states, a minority preparing to defend its people against a Burman majority and a communist party preparing for revolution" (Silverstein 1990, 116). This democratic government did not last long, as Ne Win launched a military coup in

1962. This new government disarmed local militias, reduced corruption, and improved bureaucratic efficiency. At the same time, the military crippled the civil service, essentially choosing despotic capacity over infrastructural capacity (Englehart 2005, 631). Since then, Burma's military regimes have refused to build infrastructural capacity for fear that they would lose their despotic capacity. The military has justified its rule by "claiming that the army is the only force capable of holding together a country that would otherwise disintegrate under pressure of ethnic separatism and a proclivity to 'disorder'" (McGowan 1993, 51).

The second complicating factor in Burma's capacity is the center-periphery split. Burma has historically been a multiethnic country. Ethnic minorities comprise about 40 percent of the country's population (Transnational Institute 2009). Under the 1974 constitution, Burma contains seven "divisions" mostly inhabited by the majority ethnic Burman people, and seven ethnic minority "states" – Mon, Karen, Kayah, Shan, Kachin, Chin, and Rakhine. These minority states cover 57 percent of the land area in the country and are inhabited by a wide range of ethnic groups (Transnational Institute 2009). Many of these ethnic groups have formed ethnic armed opposition groups, which have been fighting the military government for more autonomy and ethnic rights since the country became independent (Transnational Institute 2009). Within Burma, a vast disconnect of power is occurring between the SPDC-controlled center and the minority-controlled border states (see Figure 3).

Zones of Control in Burma



Figure 3: Zones of control in Burma. Source: Dictator Watch n.d.

This sets the stage for the center-periphery split in Burma's state capacity. After his political takeover, Ne Win justified the military's involvement by arguing that national unity was the most important issue facing a nation with so many ethnic groups (Alamgir 1997, 339). Dealing with ethnic minority groups has been a top priority for Burma's military governments since then. In what is today still the longest running civil war in the world, the Burmese military pushed the ethnic opposition to the mountainous border regions of the country using its "Four Cuts" strategy, which cut off insurgents from food, financing, recruits and intelligence (Transnational Institute 2009). In 1989, after decades of fierce fighting, the junta sent envoys to the select groups to discuss cease-fire agreements. Groups such as the United Wa State Party (UWSP), Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and New Mon State Party (NMSP) agreed to a truce with the military (Transnational Institute 2009). However, other armed groups such as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) refused to sign, continuing to fight against the army in their regions. In 2009, the SPDC tried to strengthen its control over the entire country by incorporating the ceasefire signees into a government-run Border Guard Force (Freedom House 2010). The question of ethnic rights continues to be a major issue in the wake of the 2010 elections.

The struggle between Burma's military government and ethnic armed opposition groups in the border regions is vital to understanding Burma's state capacity. The SPDC, as well as past iterations of the military junta, undoubtedly has high capacity (and low democracy) in the cities, such as Yangon and Mandalay, where most of the peaceful social movements have started (and subsequently been crushed). This is the area of political opportunity structure

theory which seems to be counter-intuitive in Burma, since peaceful social movements typically only take place in regimes with high-democracy and high-capacity. However, political contention in Burma's border regions aligns perfectly with political opportunity structure theory. As established earlier, Burma is a definitively low-democracy state in the cities as well as in the rural areas. On the other hand, the military's despotic capacity is markedly *lower* in the ethnic minority-controlled border regions than it is in the center of the country, where the Burman-majority cities are located. Because of their inability to tax efficiently, the economically strained government has an especially difficult job combating armed ethnic groups in the far reaches of the country. When they do, the conflict is often ignored compared to the repressed demonstrations in the cities:

...[during the 1988 demonstrations] the minorities continued to pursue a civil war which some have been fighting for the past forty years, hopeful that the changing situation in Burma's heartland would affect their struggles because both they, and the Burmans who rose in revolt, have the same enemy and seek the same ends – a peaceful and democratic Burma...However, when revolt erupted in 1988, there was a curious absence of linkage between the Burmans and the minorities, despite the fact that both faced the same enemy – the military rulers. While the people in Rangoon called for democracy, the establishment of a multiparty system based on free elections and changes in the economy, there was no open call for an end to the forty-year civil war against the minorities and their participation in the construction of a new political system (Silverstein 1990, 114-115).

Political participation in Burma takes different forms in the cities (social movements) versus the border regions (violent conflict and civil war) because there are two distinct political opportunity structures *within* Burma. The first is a high-capacity, low democracy structure in the cities, where the government presence and infrastructural power is greatest. The second is a low-capacity, low

democracy structure in the ethnic minority-controlled border states, where strained economic resources and limited despotic influence mean that the armed opposition groups are strong enough to combat the military in violent conflict.

If this is true, the Burma anomaly is occurring not because the entire country is engaging in unpredictable political behavior, but rather because the country is split into two distinct regional opportunity structures, what I will call “micropolitical opportunity structures.” Political contention in the border regions is consistent with political opportunity structure – the low-capacity, low-democracy nature of the regime in the border regions indicates, correctly, that civil war is likely to take place. “Ethnic insurgents would be strongly tempted to take advantage of the central government’s weakness to press their own demands for autonomy or independence” (Englehart 2005, 640). However, an anomaly *is* occurring in political opportunity structure when one looks at the cities, where the micropolitical opportunity structure of high-capacity, low-democracy suggests that clandestine operations should be occurring. Instead, civilians are taking to the streets in peaceful, organized social demonstrations. In the next section, I will describe the type of political participation that has taken place in Burma over time, and start to analyze the reasons behind this anomalous form of political contention.

How Are People Actually Participating in Politics in Burma?

In order to ascertain how and why anomalous political action is taking place in Burma, it is first necessary to examine what kind of political action has occurred over time. Using a number of timelines of Burma’s history, I created a composite of the most significant political events each year from 1945, a few

years before Burma gained independence from Britain, until early 2011. These events were coded by type of political action from 1 to 5: appeal (1), procedural (2), demonstrative (3), confrontational (4), and violent (5). I based these classifications off of a similar portrait tracing done by Dieter Rucht, in which Rucht and his colleagues mapped protest events in Germany from 1950-1997 (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 14). Appeal refers to the most passive type of political action, in which an opposition group requests action through conventional political channels and waits for the government to respond. Procedural is marginally more active, if only that the opposition group pursues political action through the conventional political channels. Demonstrative political action refers to peaceful demonstrations that took place without any tense standoffs or violence between protestors and police. Confrontational political action falls under Tilly and Tarrow's idea of "transgressive" political action, that which "crosses institutional boundaries into forbidden or unknown territory" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 60), such as protests which resulted in tense standoffs or confrontations which stopped short of actual violence. Finally, violent action was considered to be any transgressive action resulting in violence from either the government (crackdowns, killing protestors) or the opposition (bombings, terrorist attacks).

These events were coded by myself using the above descriptions and mapped over time and by place in order to see the difference in type of political action in cities versus border regions (see Figures 4A and 4B). I chose to graph these political events using an area chart in order to parallel Rucht's portrait tracing of events in Germany, which also used an area chart (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 15). I took the average composite score of political action in cities and compared that to the average score in the border regions to determine the average

type of political action in the two micropolitical opportunity structures. Finally, I charted the percentage of each type of political action in both micropolitical opportunity structures to see the difference in how often each type of action was used (See Figures 5A and 5B).

This data mapping yields interesting results. Of 179 political events I coded in the cities, the average score was 3.145, a score closest to demonstrative political action. Looking at Figure 4A, it is easy to see that demonstrative political action was the most common, particularly from 1988 until 2011:

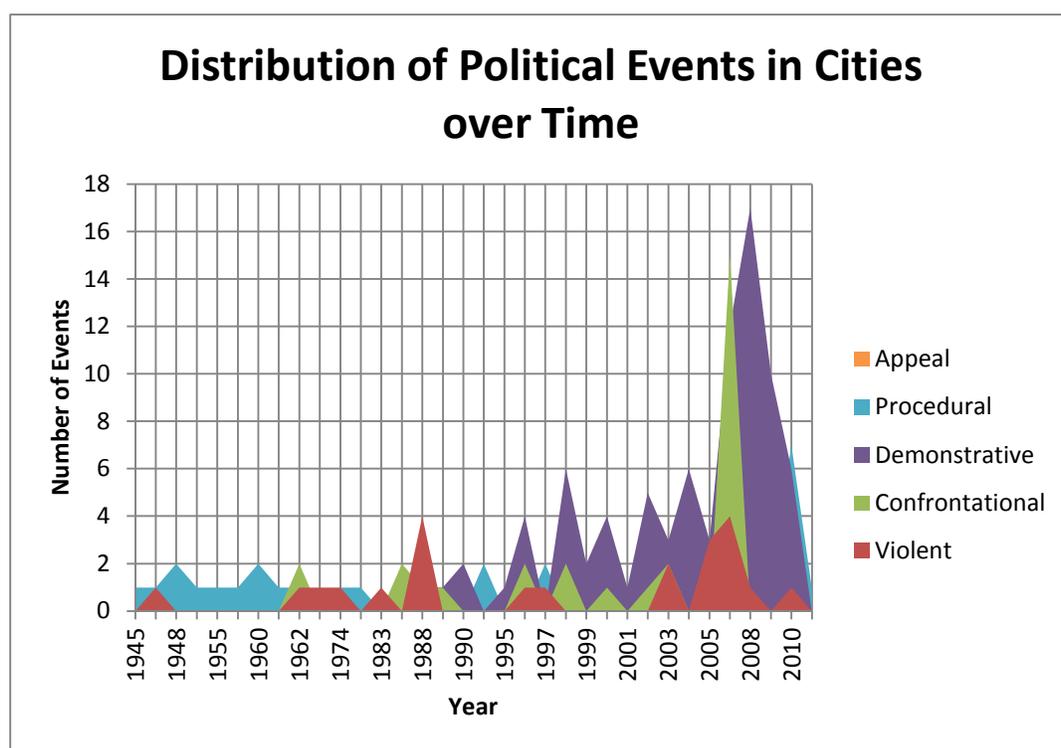


Figure 4A: Distribution of political events in cities over time. *Source:* By the author. 179 political events from multiple timelines were coded 1-5 by type of political action. To see the entire dataset, see Appendix A.

Interestingly, demonstrative events seem to only start occurring in the cities starting in 1988, and grow in popularity since that time. In the next section, I will address this rise in peaceful demonstrations by discussing the solidary incentives offered by the monks leading the demonstrations in 1988 as well as the

political leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi. There is a spike in violent political action in 1988, which aligns with the historical record of thousands of protestors being killed and arrested during the 8/8/88 demonstrations. After 1988, the number of demonstrative political events continues to trend upward, indicating that, despite the crackdowns of 1988, citizens in Burma actually demonstrated *more* each successive year. This steady increase exploded in 2007, when the Saffron Revolution caused the largest spike in political action on the graph. Also notable is the fact that demonstrative events were by far the most common. Although violent political events occurred at regular intervals, these violent events were far outnumbered by demonstrations, and generally consisted of demonstrators clashing with troops trying to oppress them.

The border regions told a different story. Of the 51 political events I coded in the border regions, the average score was a 4.471, meaning political action in the border regions was much more likely to be confrontational and violent and less likely to be peaceful than political action in the cities. Again, it is easy to see that violent action was the most common:

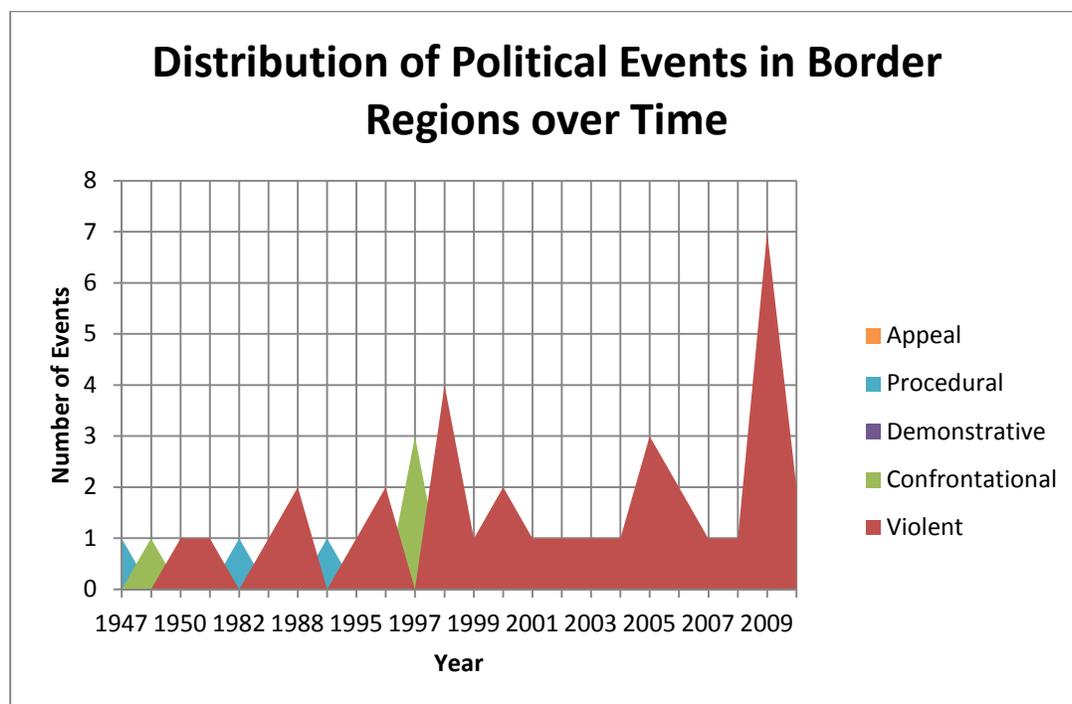


Figure 4B: Distribution of political events in border regions over time. *Source:* By the author. 51 political events from multiple timelines were coded 1-5 by type of political action. To see the entire dataset, see Appendix B.

This difference in type of political action by region is easily demonstrated by pie charts (Figures 5A and 5B). In the cities, demonstrative events made up forty-seven percent of all political action, and procedural made up twenty-three percent, while violent and confrontational together made up only twenty-eight percent. Political action in the border regions, however, was distinctly more violent; violent conflict made up over sixty-eight percent of all political action, with confrontational making up an additional thirty-two percent. Procedural and demonstrative events in border regions made up a mere 11 percent. The absence of appeals and dearth of procedural and demonstrative events in the border regions is probably due to the lack of tolerated forms of claim making in the border regions as opposed to the cities, where there are more opportunities for citizens to air their grievances through accepted channels, such as appeals or procedures.

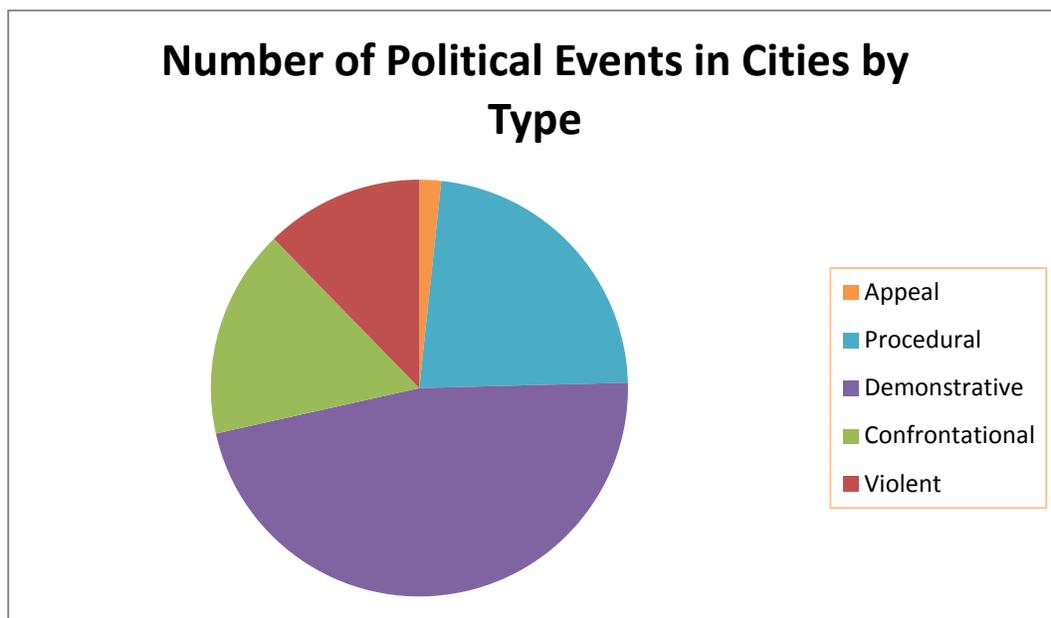


Figure 5A: Number of political events in cities by type. *Source:* By the author. 179 political events from multiple timelines were coded 1-5 by type of political action. To see the entire dataset, see Appendix A.

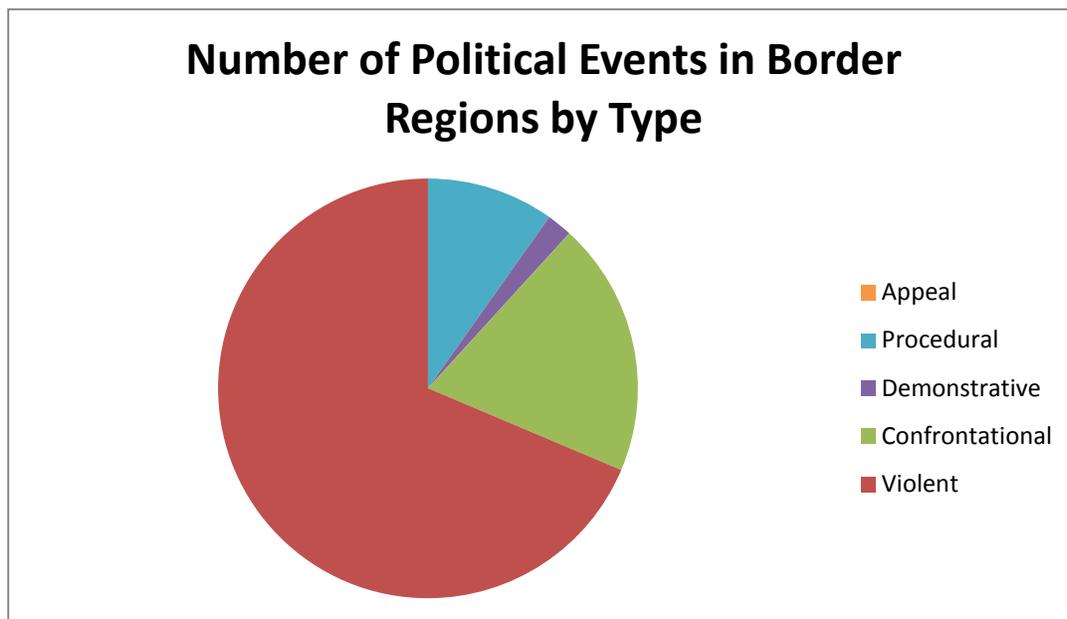


Figure 5B: Number of political events in border regions by type. *Source:* By the author. 51 political events from multiple timelines were coded 1-5 by type of political action. To see the entire dataset, see Appendix B.

This is not to say that peaceful social movements are the only type of political action taking place in Burma's cities. Clandestine operations are certainly occurring in Yangon and elsewhere, as disbanded political groups such

as the National League for Democracy continue meeting in secret. Additionally, there have been violent conflicts in recent months, such as the bombing in Yangon during the Burmese New Year celebration of Thingyan in April of 2010 that injured 170 people and left at least 20 dead (Kyaw Thein Kaw 2010). Still, despite these events, peaceful social movements are undoubtedly part of the Burmese people's political repertoire. The demonstrations of 1988 and 2007 were high-profile, due to the huge number of participants as well as worldwide news coverage and attention, especially in 2007.

This again points to an anomaly in Burma's political participation. These demonstrations which caused such a dramatic spike in 2007 occurred in the high-capacity, low-democracy micropolitical opportunity structure of cities such as Yangon and Mandalay. According to the classic understanding of political opportunity structure, clandestine operations are most likely to occur in such a political environment, due to fear of repression. In order to decipher why citizens took to the streets in 1988 and 2007, we must understand what made them feel safe enough to do so.

Duffy and Lindstrom (2002) have developed a cost-benefit analysis equation to analyze an individual's decision to participate in politics. This equation can be used to evaluate participation in democratic voting as well as the decision to join a revolutionary insurgency, or even to become a defender of the incumbent regime:

$$A = p_p B - C + S + R_c + p_o R_i$$

Where A = individual's decision to participate

p_p = probability of pivotalness

B = benefit of outcome

C = direct costs (being imprisoned, injured or killed)

S = selective incentives (such as being paid for participating)

R_c = relational consumption goods (amplified in social networks, e.g. being a good comrade)

R_i = relational investment goods (for example, earning a job in the new government if they win)

And p_o = probability of being observed

This equation can be manipulated to suggest which factors play a role in the political actors' decision to participate. In the case of the protestors in the 1988 demonstrations and 2007 Saffron Revolution, the costs seem to outweigh the benefits. The probability of one protestor's pivotalness is infinitesimally small, especially due to the size of the demonstrations. This equation can be used for illustrative purposes, to show that R_c must somehow negate the participation-depressing function of p_p . There were no selective incentives available for protestors – the students and monks leading the demonstrations were not offering money or other material incentives as a reward for participating. There *were* relational consumption goods available for participants because of the great respect for the Buddhist monks who were leading the marches, especially in 2007. Those who participated in the demonstrations undoubtedly did so at least in part because of the revered status of Buddhist monks. The probability of being observed was a small factor, because there were government spies watching the crowds and arresting people later because of it. However, relational investment goods were not a consideration for most protestors. The students and monks did

not want political power or positions in the new government – “...during the revolution, the students had expressed no political ambitions. Their goals were democracy, freedom and peace so that they could resume their studies and return to normal lives” (Silverstein 1990, 131). Thus the equation becomes:

$$A = R_c - C$$

This would indicate that the decision to participate in the peaceful demonstrations of 1988 and 2007 relied solely on the value of relational consumption goods (social rewards) from the monks and other pro-democracy leaders in order to overcome the costs of participation. Duffy and Lindstrom describe solidary incentives as “the promise of relational goods that individuals derive from associating with others with whom they identify” (Duffy and Lindstrom 2002, 76). They also address the issue of free riding, in which individuals seek to enjoy the benefits of group action without contributing to the costs of providing them (e.g. the threat of imprisonment or death from participating in protests). A free rider problem occurs when so many individuals free ride that the movement cannot get off the ground. In order to overcome the free rider problem, political leaders must offer incentives for participating. “[W]here leaders lack access to significant material resources, solidary incentives comprise their only means of overcoming the tendency of constituents to free-ride” (Duffy and Lindstrom 2002, 76). Considering the free-rider problem, there is something about R_c that prevents p_p from having an effect on B . This puts the impetus of participation on the influence of the two most important leaders of pro-democracy social movements in Burma; the monks and Aung San Suu Kyi

Reasons for Political Participation in Burma

The first source of political strength behind these seemingly irrational demonstrations is the *Sangha*. The idea of freedom in Burma came from two sources – the implicit beliefs of Buddhism as well as the Western values brought to Burma by the British (Silverstein 1996). It has been estimated that eighty percent of Buddhist monks in Burma either directly support or have sympathy for the prodemocracy movement (Matthews 1993, 419), a figure which indicates why these religious figures might get involved in politics.

Monks joined the student-led protests in 1988 to provide moral and religious legitimacy to the pro-democracy movement. Their influence was even greater in 2007, when monks led hundreds of thousands of protestors in twenty-five cities across Burma (US Campaign for Burma n.d. “Saffron Revolution”). According to U Zawana, a monk who led protests in 1988, “We have a noble tradition that monks have always put their lives at risks for the best interests of the people. Monks get involved in politics not by taking public office, like a prime minister or members of the parliament, but for the sake of the people” (Min Naing Thu 2010).

The monks’ influence came from their ability to appeal to a population consisting of 89% Buddhists (CIA Factbook 2011), including the members of the military. In 1990, “monks protesting the nullification of the elections refused to beg alms from the military and their families – a serious insult in Burmese Buddhist culture because it denied them a chance to earn merit toward rebirth” (McGowan 1993, 53-54). Likewise, in 2007, the monks leading the protests turned their alms bowls upside down, refusing alms from military members again in the practice of *patta ni kauz za kan* that is the equivalent of excommunication

(Matthews 1993). The military retaliated by arresting monks, raiding monasteries and placing spies within the clergy (McGowan 1993). Despite this, the monks remain a strong political force in Burma. During the Saffron Revolution, citizens linked arms and walking on either side of the marching monks, forming a protective barrier between the monks and the police. The *Sangha* are so revered in Burmese society that people are willing to risk their lives to support them.

A public figure who inspires a similar kind of reverence in the Burmese people is Aung San Suu Kyi. The daughter of revolutionary hero Aung San, Aung San Suu Kyi returned from Britain to nurse her ill mother just before the 1988 demonstrations started. She soon became involved in the demonstrations, addressing a large rally at Shwedagon Pagoda, saying “I could not, as my father’s daughter, remain indifferent to all that was going on” (Ghosh 2001, 161). The junta quickly labeled her a threat. After the National League for Democracy won a landslide victory, SLORC nullified the results and put Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest.

House arrest only increased Aung San Suu Kyi’s popularity with the Burmese people. She became a martyr for the pro-democracy movement and is viewed as “embodying the qualities of her father – fearlessness, intelligence and straight talking, and attracted a large and devoted following” (Silverstein 1996, 129). Perhaps the most significant indication of Aung San Suu Kyi’s political influence was her “gateside meetings,” in which huge crowds gathered outside her house each weekend to discuss democracy. There were undercover police in the crowd, but citizens risked being reported to the government to hear Aung San Suu Kyi speak (Ghosh 2001). People in Burma see her as:

...an honest broker of sorts, able to bring the dominant Burmans together with ethnic minorities, a political leader with no real political ambitions herself. Her popularity also springs from the profound compassion she has for her people, the ability to acknowledge the fear that decades of authoritarian rule have driven into them, even as she stirs them to be free of it. It helps, too, for her to be seen as the reincarnation of her famous father, destined to lead Myanmar into the modern world (McGowan 1993, 53).

She also uses the language of Buddhism to bolster support for the pro-democracy movement, applying the Buddhist idea of the four causes of decline and decay to the state apparatus; failure to recover democracy, deteriorating moral and political values, a badly managed economy, and a government run by men without “integrity or wisdom” (Silverstein 1996, 224). Aung San Suu Kyi uses Buddhist ideas as a form of trust-building between Burmese citizens and the pro-democracy movement. She presents her democratic political ideas using Buddhist language and symbolism in order to evoke the idea of a “spiritual revolution” in the people. This “revolution of the spirit requires the development of new norms based on a combination of traditional Buddhist values and modern political principles” (McCarthy 2006, 433).

By distributing solidary incentives, as well as embracing the legacy of her revolutionary hero father and her natural charisma, Aung San Suu Kyi has attained legendary status herself as a trustworthy political player. This, along with the monks’ support of pro-democracy movements, gives courage to the peaceful protestors who face down the military’s guns. It may be noteworthy to point out that the junta owes the peaceful nature of the demonstrations at least in part to the charisma and political power of Aung San Suu Kyi, as one onlooker in 1988

noted that she would “restrain her supports and hot-blooded students from confronting the regime violently” (Alamgir 1997, 350).

By applying these factors to political participation in Burma, we can begin to explain why civilians in the cities continue to join peaceful pro-democracy social movements instead of conducting clandestine operations as the high-capacity, low-democracy micropolitical opportunity structure of the cities would suggest. The cities are inhabited mostly by Burman people, who are overwhelming Theravada Buddhists. The precepts of their religion make them hesitant to engage in violent conflict, and clandestine operations are risky and likely to be quashed by the high-capacity government in the cities. According to the participation equation, the costs are too high.

However, adding relational consumption goods changes the equation. The *Sangha*'s support of pro-democracy movements adds legitimacy and moral strength to political action. Not only are they being good citizens, but they are being good *Buddhists* by joining the monks and protecting them from harm at the hands of the military. If giving alms to a monk is good karma, surely joining them in a pro-democracy protest is exceedingly valuable for any Buddhist who wants to earn merit for reincarnation. This provides relational consumption goods so powerful they outweigh the costs of participating; namely, *if you participate, you will be a good Buddhist as well as a good citizen. You will earn karma for reincarnation, so even if you lose your life, you will benefit in the next life.* This may actually suggest that the probability of pivotalness (p_p) in Duffy and Lindstrom's participation equation is nonzero, because many participants are convinced that their individual participation is pivotal to earning good karma.

This could also be interpreted as a selective incentive for participants. If this is so, the participation equation would read:

$$A = (p_p B + S + R_c) - C$$

This means that there are even more reasons for participants to join pro-democracy protests, despite the considerable costs they face.

Likewise, Aung San Suu Kyi evokes feelings of pride and citizenship. She became a martyr for the pro-democracy cause when she was put under house arrest, and her sacrifices for the cause have endeared her to the people. An inspiring figure, Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership has caused many people to join the peaceful struggle for democracy, despite the threat of retaliation from the regime. These two factors, the movement's appropriation of the religious apparatus through the participation of the Buddhist monks as well as the charismatic leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, have been instrumental in developing anomalous peaceful social movements within Burma's cities.

Alternative Explanations:

Are protestors in Burma emulating successful social movements in other countries?

Protestors in Burma's cities may have participated in peaceful protests because they were emulating successful protests that took place in other countries. Aung San Suu Kyi herself was inspired by both Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and her leadership in peaceful pro-democracy social movements was based on their teachings (BBC 2010, "Profile"). In the wake of the wave of North African protests in early 2011, Burmese political activists hope to model future protests on successful social movements. "We hope we can use the Internet to initiate an

uprising this summer like those that took place in Tunisia and Egypt,” stated Ko Win, a Burmese political activist who teaches laborers from rural areas how to use the Internet in hopes that they will revolt against the Burmese military (Ba Kaung 2011, “Could Burma’s”). In order to use the Internet to coordinate collective action, recruit members and organize political movements, activists face challenges such as the slow Internet speed, the junta’s restriction on access to sites like Twitter, and the small number of Internet users. In a country of 60 million people, one-third of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24, but only 400,000 citizens are Internet users, a small percentage compared to users in China and countries in the Middle East (Ba Kaung 2011, “Could Burma’s”). Aung San Suu Kyi has offered cautious support for the Egyptian protestors, and stated that she would like to use Twitter (which is banned in Burma) and Facebook (the second most popular site in Burma after Gmail) to organize with pro-democracy activists (Wellen 2011).

Emulation also took place during the Saffron Revolution of 2007. Some Burmese dissidents were trained by Gene Sharp, the American intellectual and author of *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, which described 198 methods of non-violent protest that influenced the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt (Ba Kaung 2011, “Could Burma’s”). *From Dictatorship to Democracy* was originally published by Burmese exiled groups in Bangkok in 1993. Burmese activists, such as the All Burma Students’ Democratic Front, an armed group of students who fled to the border after the 1988 protests, received direct training from Sharp on the Thai Burma border (Ba Kaung 2011, “Could Burma’s”). Sharp’s training influenced the methods used by pro-democracy activists during the 2007 protests.

This implies that the emulation may have been an additional factor in citizens' decisions to conduct peaceful demonstrations in Burma.

In addition to emulating the non-violent protest techniques described by Gene Sharp, Burmese activists have started using the Internet as a way of organizing and building their movement, much like social movements in Iran and Egypt. One Facebook page, called "*Just Do It Against Military Dictatorship*," denounces the military dictatorship, calls for Senior General Than Shwe to leave Burma, and urges the army to join with the people (Ba Kaung 2011, "Burmese Attempt"). This campaign started on February 13, just two days after Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak resigned from office. The Facebook page, nicknamed *JD*, has about 1,000 supporters in Burma and has prompted the distribution of anti-government publications in cities around Burma (Ba Kaung 2011, "Burmese Attempt").

Is globalization making it harder for regimes to violently suppress protestors?

Another potential alternative explanation for the social movements in Burma's cities has to do with the likelihood of a governmental crackdown. David Tharckabaw, the vice president of the Karen National Union, stated that

The crackdown on the Saffron Uprising in 2007 only occurred after the junta was able to bring troops from border areas to Rangoon. The local commanders did not want to fire on the protestors. It has also been revealed that some leading generals opposed the crackdown. There is significant dissent and factionalism within the junta....There is good reason to believe that the regime's response to renewed demonstrations would be muted, particularly in light of the precedent set by the Egyptian military (Wellen 2011).

Additionally, Tharckabaw argued that a new governmental crackdown in Burma would end international hesitance to launch war crimes prosecution against the SPDC (Wellen 2011). This suggests that globalization and the influence of international organizations such as the United Nations might be making it harder for regimes like Burma's junta to violently suppress protestors.

Jack Goldstone and Charles Tilly describe threat as a factor in determining an individual's political participation as well as state response to protests. This theory may suggest an alternative reason for regimes to be hesitant to violently suppress protests. If opportunity were the sole factor in determining political participation, this view would be inconsistent with repeated empirical findings that increased repression often leads to *increased* protest mobilization and action (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 181). Instead, the "...way that 'threat' and 'opportunity' combine, rather than shifts in the chances of success or the costs of action alone, will shape decisions regarding action" (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 183). This means that, in deciding whether to participate, an individual considers both the threat of the current regime *and* the opportunity of a new regime, rather than only considering one or the other. Goldstone and Tilly also note that individuals do not make decisions as isolated entities, but rather consider their "relationships to other people within important groups, their assurances that others in their networks will support their actions, and expectations about what other groups will do" in deciding whether a protest will be successful (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 184), which echoes Duffy and Lindstrom's assertions about the value of solidary incentives.

Threat is defined as the costs that a group will incur from participating in the protest, or that it expects to suffer if it does not take action (Goldstone and

Tilly 2001, 183). This helps to explain why citizens in Burma took to the streets in peaceful protests despite facing the threat of a government crackdown. It was not because they believed there was no risk in participating, “but because they believed the chances of success were greater than they had yet seen in their lifetimes” (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 183).

This leads to a new political participation equation that constitutes a reformulation of Duffy and Lindstrom’s model:

The probability of success depends on state weakness (for example, fiscal problems, elite divisions, military defeat), and on popular support for the protest, and on the power of nonstate opponents or allies, at home and abroad. These are “opportunity” dimensions. The value of achieving success depends on whether things might be gained by action, but this includes both new advantages (A) and avoiding harms that are currently experienced or anticipated; such harms under the existing regime are one kind of “threat” which we may label “current threat” (T_c). There are also costs of repression if protest is undertaken this is another kind of “threat,” which we may label “repressive threat” (T_r). What is interesting and important to observe is that the state has substantial control over both kinds of threat (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 184-5).

Thus, the alternative political participation equation for an individual contemplating participation is:

$$G = [O \times (A + T_c)] - T_r$$

Where $O = k_1$ (state weakness) + k_2 (popular support) + k_3 (strength of nonstate allies or opponents) and where protest actions are expected if the gains (G) are greater than 0 (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 185). The multiplication in the equation

accounts for the potential for O to be negative (for instance, if nonstate opponents are strong, or there was little popular support for the movement.)

In order for protestors to decide to participate within Burma, the opportunities of participating, as well as the current threat of the regime as it stands (T_c), must outweigh the “repressive threat” (T_r) of the government’s response to protests. As I have shown, the state is relatively strong in the cities of Burma where protests are taking place, so k_1 is effectively 0. Popular support (k_2) for protests in Burma is significant, considering how many people took part in the 1988 and 2007 demonstrations. The strength of nonstate allies (k_3) for social movements is also a factor. Human rights organizations the world over have expressed support for pro-democracy groups, and Burmese refugees living in other countries have helped with pro-democracy efforts (for instance, the Democratic Voice of Burma, located in Norway, which distributed news about the Saffron Revolution using undercover reporters inside Burma). Finally, new advantages (A) as well as current threats from the regime (T_c) are also significant. It should be noted that A and T_c are the equivalent of B in Duffy and Lindstrom’s equation. Protestors stand to gain advantages such as democracy, personal safety and economic wellbeing if they succeed in overthrowing the military government. Additionally, the current threats from the regime (risk of imprisonment, enslavement and death) are considerable. This equation thus suggests that protests would take place, as long as $[(k_2 + k_3) \times (A + T_c)] > T_r$.

Goldstone and Tilly argue that “for a given level of opportunity and prospective advantages of success, a variety of levels of concessions (T_c) and

repression (T_r) will combine to offset expected gains and eliminate the motivation for protest” (Goldstone and Tilly 1986-7). However, a regime will not base its response simply on maximizing gains. Authoritarian regimes, such as Burma’s junta, are “addicted” to repression, while democratic states are more inclined to using greater concessions (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 188). “[F]or authoritarian regimes, concessions to any groups challenging their monopoly of power is likely to be more costly than repression; thus repression is more likely to dominate protest in these settings....However, repression has its costs as well, particularly if it alienates aid donors and trading partners” (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 192). This, as well as the importance of k_3 in the alternative participation equation, adds to the theory that Burma’s government may avoid repression due to globalization.

How Does This Affect Political Opportunity Structure Theory?

What does all this tell us about Burma, and how does the Burma case affect political opportunity structure theory? To summarize;

1. Political opportunity structure theory suggests that the composition of a regime (democracy and capacity) influence what type of political action is likely to take place there. Tilly and Tarrow’s use of political opportunity structure theory focuses on infrastructural capacity – however, in Burma, despotic capacity appears to be influencing political action. Additionally, a split between the central cities and the peripheral ethnic states seems to be contributing to the difference in regional political action. This center-periphery split occurs because the junta’s despotic capacity is limited to the cities by its low infrastructural capacity (due to their inability to tax efficiently, etc.) Because the regime does not have the

resources to extend its despotism to the border regions, the regime is low-capacity, low-democracy in the border regions. However, it is possible for the regime to extend its despotic capacity to the majority Burman cities in the center of the country, so the political opportunity structure in the cities is high-capacity, low-democracy.

2. This split in capacity in Burma serves to explain why civil war is taking place in the border regions (as expected by political opportunity structure). It does not, however, explain why peaceful social movements are occurring in the cities, where protestors face a government with high despotic capacity.
3. The decision to participate in social movements in Burma's cities must come instead from relational consumption goods, which are valuable enough to override the costs of participating (jail time, injury or death). These relational consumption goods come in two forms; solidary incentives offered by the democracy movements from the highly-revered Buddhist monks, and the appeal of a charismatic leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, whose nationalist hero father and use of Buddhist symbols and language endear her to the people. The incentives offered by the monks could also be considered as selective, in the sense that only those who participate in the social movements earn karma by supporting the monks.

These conditions in Burma have some profound implications for political opportunity structure theory. In a country like Burma, one political opportunity structure for the entire country is too broad to accurately describe and explain political action. Instead, I believe there must be a more nuanced conception of capacity for states such as Burma. I suggest the term "micropolitical opportunity structure" to refer to variable political opportunity structures between different regions within the same state. I believe that these micropolitical opportunity

structures take form when a regime has low democracy (meaning they are likely to use despotic action to keep control) and have limited resources, which requires the government to be selective in exercising their despotic capacity.

The second implication this research has for political opportunity structure theory is the incorporation of political participation theory. Whereas political opportunity structure predicts the type of political action that is likely, it does not account for each country's unique actors who might influence people to use a particular type of political action *despite* the political opportunity structure of the regime. Tilly and Tarrow discuss political participation, but only in describing political action *that was correctly predicted by political opportunity structure*. I posit that, if the influence of a particular group or leader is strong enough, political actors will overcome their fear of the costs of political action (which may not necessarily conform to the prediction of political opportunity structure theory) in order to earn relational consumption goods, such as being recognized as a good Buddhist, patriot, etc. Duffy and Lindstrom would agree with this;

Persons moved by solidary incentives [such as the promise of earning good karma] derive their self-conceptions from their social identifications with the group. As a consequence, they come to see group benefits as personal benefits. There can be, for such persons, no possibility of free-riding, as they have so tightly bound their personal identities to their groups that they find their fate inextricably intertwined with the fates of their groups (Duffy and Lindstrom 2002, 77-78).

So why is this not in Tilly and Tarrow's work? One reason is that they did not include Asia in their research. They write that "Much more remains to be done: We have neglected Asia because we prefer to write about regions on which we have done research and some of whose languages we know" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 196). Perhaps this micropolitical opportunity structure is a feature

mainly of developing countries, and this disconnect did not show up in Tilly and Tarrow's research because the developing countries of Asia were left out of their work. Clark Neher describes an "Asian-style democracy" which takes place in most of the ASEAN nations, where there is a "strong state and strong military presence, alongside a relatively weak legislature popularly and fairly elected" (Neher in Alamgir 1997, 349). This sounds somewhat similar to quadrant two of political opportunity structure, that of high-capacity and low-democracy which occurs in China (and as I have suggested, in Burma's cities), other than the fairly elected legislature. However, I believe that micropolitical opportunity structures are taking place in more countries than just Burma (and more continents than just Asia). I will now describe a number of case studies where a similar center-periphery split appears to be taking place, in order to suggest other cases in which micropolitical opportunity structures may be influencing political action.

Case Studies

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is clearly a country with two very distinct regional micropolitical opportunity structures. The north has benefitted from strong central government control which led to the disarmament of militia warlords and more stability, while the south has suffered from a long history of minimal formal governance, leading to worsening insurgency (Englehart 2010). The central government has mostly left the south alone to be governed by patronage and Pashtun tribal politics, similar to Burma's ethnic-minority controlled border regions. Because of this, Afghanistan has a "legacy of more-extensive state capacity in northern Afghanistan...whereas the administrative vacuum in the

south created opportunities for insurgents to erect parallel structures of governance” (Englehart 2010, 736). Also like Burma, the north enjoyed more infrastructural capacity than the south, with revenue from natural gas fields and taxes on trade allow military leaders in the north to set up a stable system of government (Englehart 2010). Meanwhile, a lack of institution-building in the south as well as a major lack of resources made it much more difficult for the Karzai government to govern the south. This led to a lack of both infrastructural and despotic capacity in the south, leaving the region open to complex tribal politics and exploitation from the Taliban (Englehart 2010). Indeed, this accounts for the appeal of the Taliban in the region. They have infrastructural capacity where the government does not; “[W]henver possible they set up courts, alternative schools, and other services to demonstrate their capacity to deliver services where the government has failed to” (Englehart 2010, 752). The Afghanistan case is significant because it illustrates the importance of a more nuanced political opportunity structure in a state in which “...failures are complex and multidimensional, varying regionally and over time” (Englehart 2010, 756). In Afghanistan, like Burma, micropolitical opportunity structures are the key to understanding political action.

Pakistan

Pakistan is an example of inter-group ethnic conflict, as well as insurgency similar to Afghanistan. Pakistan’s periphery consists of its North West Frontier Province (NWFP) as well as the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Pakistan, like Burma, is a multiethnic and multilingual country. It has experienced inter-group fighting between the separate ethnic groups, most notably leading to

the creation of Bangladesh. Pakistan's eastern border with Afghanistan is mountainous and difficult to reach, leading to Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives taking refuge there (Ghufran 2009). Much like the case of Afghanistan, the Taliban insurgency has been able to exploit the dissatisfaction of ethnic Pushtuns over the lack of public goods, inequitable distribution of resources, and lack of provincial of autonomy (Ghufran 2009).

The situation in FATA was exacerbated by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which changed traditional socioeconomic and power structures between the tribes and the Pakistani government. Since then, Pakistan's government has failed to provide the people of FATA with basic health care, education and communications resources. This limited infrastructural capacity in FATA, as well as the central government's lack of despotic capacity evidenced by its "inability to initiate both political and administrative reforms" (Ghufran 2009, 1106) has contributed to the Pakistani Taliban's ability to influence the region. Between 2004 and 2006, the Pakistani central government set up numerous peace agreements with Taliban factions within the Wazir tribes. Similar to the ceasefire agreements signed between Burma's military regime and the armed ethnic groups in the border regions, these peace deals fell through relatively quickly and contributed to the spread of the Taliban through the tribal areas and NWFP in Pakistan (Ghufran 2009). Political action in the periphery in Pakistan is often violent and directed against the central government, as evidenced by militants attacking military convoys delivering food and basic healthcare products to tribal areas (Ghufran 2009). The split between the center and the periphery in Pakistan is one of ethnic difference as well as a lack of infrastructural and despotic capacities in the border region, much like Burma and Afghanistan. Here again,

micropolitical opportunity structures offer a more accurate and nuanced picture of intra-state conflicts.

China

China seems to fit solidly in quadrant two, high-capacity and low-democracy. The government certainly has plenty of despotic capacity, and its infrastructural capacity is much larger than Burma's. Using political opportunity structure theory, one would expect political action in China to be largely clandestine. However, like Burma, there has been more violent unrest in its border regions, suggesting that China's despotic and infrastructural capacity is also limited due to the huge size of the country and the poverty of its population. For instance, in Xinjiang, the ethnic and religious minority Uighurs have clashed with Han Chinese and police, resulting in 150 deaths in July of 2009 (BBC 2009). The Chinese government has accused the Uighurs of being terrorists, much like Burma's regime has done with ethnic armed opposition groups in the border regions. This border conflict, as well as riots in Tibet and the ongoing tension with Taiwan, show that China too may have micropolitical opportunity structures which portend political action in remote border areas that differs qualitatively from action in the cities.

Sudan

Sudan has been embroiled in civil war between the more developed northern Sudan and the peripheral southern Sudan since gaining independence in 1956. South Sudan was greatly underdeveloped because of the civil war – an interesting side note is that the South contains about 85 percent of Sudan's oil

(Johnson and Hanson 2010), suggesting that a resource curse may be afflicting the infrastructure-starved region. Conflict in Sudan's periphery included land issues in places like Darfur, where internal displacement caused by clashes between rebels and the government-backed *janjaweed* militias, as well as criticisms of the central government's excessive despotic actions (Johnson and Hanson 2010).

In January 2011, a referendum led to 99% of southern Sudanese voting for independence from northern Sudan. South Sudan will be the world's newest country when it gains independence on July 9, 2011 (BBC 2011). This split will hopefully end the decades of violence between the north and south, and holds fascinating implications for micropolitical opportunity structure theory. Perhaps countries with separate micropolitical opportunity structures between their center and periphery can solve intra-state conflict by splitting, like South Sudan or Bangladesh. Chaim Kaufmann suggested this concept of partition as a solution to ethnic civil war (Kaufmann 1996). If this is the case, countries identified as having distinct micropolitical opportunity structures may be more likely to eventually split. This could allow political scientists to more accurately predict not only political participation within countries, but also whether the periphery is likely to split from the center and form an independent nation.

Conclusion – Burma's Future

Despite Burma's long history of violence and repression, the 2010 elections may portend a change. The elections introduced a facet of democracy not heretofore present in Burma. This is the first Burmese government since 1962 that includes civilians, the greatest change in Burma's political structure in over 20 years. Some form of democracy will now be present in national and regional

democratic institutions (Holliday 2008, 1047). This election could be the first step towards democratization, despite the fact that the election itself was not fully democratic. Although the military won 80 percent of the seats in Parliament, the other 20 percent were won by opposition groups. This election will not itself make Burma a democratic state, but there is now a window of opportunity for real change, particularly with the potential for trust-building between the pro-democracy groups and the new generation of the military.

The hope for political change in Burma now lies with the next generation of military leaders. The presence of young military members showing up in support of Aung San Suu Kyi's release revealed there may be a split between the older and younger generations of the military. The top generals right now have no incentive to share power with pro-democracy and ethnic opposition groups – they have too many economic interests, believe they are winning, and also fear the country would devolve into chaos if the military did not exercise control (Holliday 2008). However, the young military members' support of Aung San Suu Kyi shows that "It is necessary to prepare for the moment when this aging leader quits the stage and a window of opportunity cracks" (Holliday 2008, 1053). This generational split may have to do with telecommunications and exposure to other forms of life, such as the recent pro-democracy uprisings in Libya and Egypt.

Obviously, the military cannot be expected to simply turn over power. Senior General Than Shwe recently threatened another military *coup d'état* if the government-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) did not deliver on its promises from the 2010 election (Wai Moe 2011). Duffy and Makara contend that a successful transition to a high-capacity, high-democracy

requires slow, simultaneous progress in increasing both capacity and democracy. This will be even more difficult in a country like Burma, which has different micropolitical political opportunity structures to complicate the process. However, the political actors who have managed to inspire peaceful anomalous political activity in the cities (the monks and Aung San Suu Kyi), as well as the ethnic minority groups and military, must build trust between their respective interests if there is any hope of political progress in Burma. The trick is to encourage the younger generation of military generals to participate in a transitional process towards democracy over the long run, while using programs to improve civil services to increase state capacity and make the military government as well as the other political stakeholders feel more secure:

This requires efforts not simply to pressure the regime but also to transform the political environment so that cooperation with a more representative civilian government will appear attractive to the military (Englehart 2005, 640)....Such programs may build legitimacy and support for the current government, but they will also help foster institutions that can ultimately make more democratic governance feasible (Englehart 2005, 644).

Burma is a fascinating case study, and the international community must focus more effort and resources on encouraging trust-building between political stakeholders within the country. The regime's human rights abuses, economic mismanagement, and general inability to govern efficiently are all indicators of its complex and unique political opportunity structure. By examining Burma through the lens of micropolitical opportunity structures and political participation theory, the seemingly anomalous social movements of 1988 and 2007 make more sense. By applying these changes to political opportunity structure, perhaps the political science community will be able to better understand and predict political action in

countries such as Burma, and develop better ways of studying political conflict around the world.

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Appendix A – City Data

Date	Type	Grade	Description
1945	Procedural	2	Burma was liberated by the British.
1947	Procedural	2	Britain agreed to give Burma independence following negotiations with nationalist leader Aung San.
1947	Violent	5	Aung San, an independence hero, was assassinated on the eve of becoming Burma's first prime minister. 6 other members of his interim government were also killed. His daughter was Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.
1948	Procedural	2	Burma becomes independent with U Nu as prime minister.
1948	Procedural	2	Britain granted independence to Burma (later renamed to Myanmar). Aung San had arranged for national independence on this day but was assassinated before the event by political rivals.
1950	Procedural	2	Burma enacted An Emergency Provision Act that provided up to 20-year jail terms for inciting unrest and disturbing the peace and tranquility of the state.
1955	Procedural	2	U Nu, together with Indian Prime Minister Nehru, Indonesian President Sukarno, Yugoslav President Tito and Egyptian President Nasser co-found the Movement of Non-Aligned States.
1958	Procedural	2	Caretaker government, led by army Chief of Staff General Ne Win, formed following a split in the ruling AFPFL party.
1960	Procedural	2	U Nu's party faction wins decisive victory in elections, but his promotion of Buddhism as the state religion and his tolerance of separatism angers the military.
1960	Procedural	2	Burma elected U Nu as premier.
1961	Procedural	2	U Thant of Burma served as the Secretary-General of the UN.
1962	Confrontational	4	Army commander Ne Win staged a coup against a civilian government and took over control of Burma.
1962	Violent	5	In Burma Sein Lwin headed the army unit that shot dead Rangoon University students protesting Ne Win's rule.
1962	Procedural	2	U Thant of Burma was elected Secretary-General of the United Nations, succeeding the late Dag Hammarskjold.
1962	Confrontational	4	U Nu's faction ousted in military coup led by Gen Ne Win, who abolishes the federal system and inaugurates "the Burmese Way to Socialism"- nationalising the economy, forming a single-party state with the Socialist

			Programme Party as the sole political party, and banning independent newspapers.
1972	Violent	5	In Burma Sein Lwin headed the army unit that exacted a deadly suppression of workers' protests.
1974	Violent	5	In Burma Sein Lwin headed the army unit that suppressed demonstrations by students and Buddhist monks in connection with the funeral of former U.N. Secretary General U Thant.
1974	Procedural	2	New constitution comes into effect, transferring power from the armed forces to a People's Assembly headed by Ne Win and other former military leaders; body of former United Nations secretary-general U Thant returned to Burma for burial.
1981	Procedural	2	Ne Win relinquishes the presidency to San Yu, a retired general, but continues as chairman of the ruling Socialist Programme Party.
1983	Violent	5	The president of South Korea, Chun Doo Hwan, with his cabinet and other top officials were scheduled to lay a wreath on a monument in Rangoon, Burma, when a bomb exploded. Hwan had not yet arrived so escaped injury, but 17 Koreans, including the deputy prime minister and two other cabinet members, and two Burmese were killed. North Korea was blamed. In the "Rangoon Massacre" a terrorist attack plotted by North Korea killed 17 South Korean officials on a visit to Burma.
1987	Confrontational	4	Burma's military junta withdrew most banknotes late this year, which sparked massive protests in 1988.
1987	Confrontational	4	Currency devaluation wipes out many people's savings and triggers anti-government riots.
1988	Violent	5	Thousands of people are killed in anti-government riots. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) is formed.
1988	Violent	5	Burmese riot police shot to death 200 demonstrators as students began an uprising for democracy.
1988	Violent	5	Sein Lwin (d.2004) then became chairman of Burma's ruling party and the country's president, but the pro-democracy protests grew. Instead of negotiating, Sein Lwin tried to end the protests by force, and the capital became a bloody battleground.
1988	Violent	5	Police in Burma (Myanmar) killed nearly 3,000 protesters in the streets of Rangoon.
1988	Procedural	2	Sein Lwin resigned from the presidency of Burma. He was succeeded by a civilian, Maung Maung, who in turn was ousted by the military after just a month in office.
1988	Confrontational	4	In Burma Gen'l. Saw Maung (d.1997 at 69) became chairman of a military junta, called The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). He had been the army chief of staff and defense minister before leading the coup. The junta took power and put under house arrest Aung San Suu Kyi, the elected president. After

			years of economic distress the junta released Aung San in 1995 in hopes of gaining foreign economic aid. The junta announced that Burma would henceforth be called Myanmar, and the capital, Rangoon, Yangon.
1988	Demonstrative	3	In Burma Aung San Suu Kyi formed the National League for Democracy party.
1989	Confrontational	4	Slorc declares martial law, arrests thousands of people, including advocates of democracy and human rights, renames Burma Myanmar, with the capital, Rangoon, becoming Yangon. NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San, is put under house arrest.
1989	Procedural	2	Burma's government renamed the country Myanmar. Rangoon was renamed Yangon.
1989	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar military authorities placed Aung San Suu Kyi and her deputy Tin Oo under house arrest where she was confined for the next 6 years.
1990	Demonstrative	3	Opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) wins landslide victory in general election, but the result is ignored by the military.
1990	Demonstrative	3	The political opposition of Burma (Myanmar) scored a victory in the country's first free, multiparty elections in three decades. The military rulers allowed democratic elections but ignored the results when the National League for Democracy (NLD) of Aung San Suu Kyi won 392 of 485 contested seats.
1992	Procedural	2	Than Shwe replaces Saw Maung as Slorc chairman, prime minister and defence minister. Several political prisoners freed in bid to improve Burma's international image.
1992	Procedural	2	Myanmar Gen'l. Saw Maung stepped down as chairman of SLORC because of illness. He was replaced by Gen'l. Than Shwe.
1995	Demonstrative	3	Aung San Suu Kyi was released after six years of house arrest. She later charged that the Myanmar military regime doesn't want democratic reform.
1996	Demonstrative	3	Aung San Suu Kyi attends first NLD congress since her release; Slorc arrests more than 200 delegates on their way to party congress.
1996	Demonstrative	3	Lu Maw, Par Par Lay and Lu Zaw performed as the Moustache Brothers in a skit outside the home of Aung San Suu Kyi. They satirized Myanmar's ruling SLORC and were charged with "disrupting the stability of the Union." A 2-month public, but juryless trial followed and they were sentenced to prison. They were released in July 2001.
1996	Demonstrative	3	The Myanmar military regime has jailed 71 supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi in a bid to block a pro-democracy meeting. General Maung Aye, commander and deputy chairman of the military regime warned that the

			government will annihilate anyone who disturbs the country's peace and tranquility.
1996	Demonstrative	3	The Myanmar military regime banned the weekly meetings at the house of Aung San Suu Kyi.
1996	Confrontational	4	Myanmar riot police dispersed hundreds of student demonstrators and detained dozens outside Rangoon at the Shwedagon Pagoda.
1996	Violent	5	Two bombs exploded in Rangoon during an exhibit of a tooth believed to have belonged to Buddha. The military regime blamed student and ethnic Karen insurgents based in eastern Myanmar. Five people were killed.
1996	Confrontational	4	The Myanmar universities were closed.
1997	Violent	5	A bomb exploded at the Rangoon home of Lt. Gen'l. Tin Oo and killed his daughter, Cho Lei Oo (34).
1997	Procedural	2	In Myanmar SLORC renamed itself State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).
1997	Procedural	2	In Myanmar the 21-member SLORC was dissolved and a new State Peace and Development Council headed by 4 top generals and commanders of various regions was established.
1998	Demonstrative	3	300 NLD members released from prison; ruling council refuses to comply with NLD deadline for convening of parliament; student demonstrations broken up.
1998	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military regime arrested 40 people it accused of planning to assassinate leaders and bomb buildings.
1998	Demonstrative	3	The Myanmar military regime sentenced San San to 25 years in prison for a BBC interview that criticized the government.
1998	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar democracy activists gathered to mark their 1990 victory, that was annulled by the junta. It was their first legal gathering since then.
1998	Demonstrative	3	The Myanmar military sentenced Aung Thein and Ko Hla Myint to 14 years in prison for handing out copies of a letter from the Shan State Army addressed to Lt. Gen'l. Khin Nyunt, the head of military intelligence, back in March.
1998	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar (Burma) 18 detainees, arrested for passing out literature and charged with violating the 1950 Emergency Provision Act, were forced to leave the country. A 5-year prison term was imposed if they break Burma's laws again.
1998	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar Aung San Suu Kyi had a 13-day roadside standoff against the government
1998	Demonstrative	3	Ten dissidents voted to annul all laws passed by the Myanmar junta in the last 10 years after constituting

			themselves as the elected parliament of 1990.
1999	Demonstrative	3	Aung San Suu Kyi encouraged women to fight for democracy on the unofficial Women of Burma Day, which was created by her followers to coincide with her birthday.
1999	Demonstrative	3	Aung San Suu Kyi rejects ruling council conditions to visit her British husband, Michael Aris, who dies of cancer in UK.
2000	Demonstrative	3	Over 40 youth members of the opposition National league for Democracy were arrested by Myanmar authorities over the mid-month Thingyan (New year) festival. The information was smuggled in on video from Suu Kyi.
2000	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar university students returned to classes nearly 3.5 years after the military shut down schools due to antigovernment protests. Loyalty pledges to the government were required and political activity was barred.
2000	Confrontational	4	Aung San Suu Kyi and 14 supporters tried to leave Rangoon for political activities in the countryside. Police stopped her party and a stand-off began. After 9 days the party was forced back to Rangoon.
2000	Demonstrative	3	The Myanmar military lifted restrictions against Suu Kyi and 8 other leaders of the National League for Democracy.
2000	Demonstrative	3	Ruling council lifts restrictions on movements of Aung San Suu Kyi and senior NLD members.
2000	Procedural	2	Aung San Suu Kyi begins secret talks with ruling council.
2001	Demonstrative	3	Ruling council releases some 200 pro-democracy activists. Government says releases reflect progress in talks with opposition NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi who remains under house arrest.
2002	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar Aye Zaw Win (54) and 3 adult sons, 4 relatives of former dictator Ne Win, were arrested and some military officers were dismissed for planning a coup. Later Ne Win and his daughter were put under house arrest. Aye Zaw Win and his 3 sons were convicted and sentenced to death Sep 26.
2002	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar the military government released Aung San Suu Kyi (56) after 19 months of house arrest in Rangoon.
2002	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar a trial began for a number of soldiers, members of a security unit guarding former dictator Ne Win, in connection with an abortive plot to overthrow the country's ruling junta. In Sep a Myanmar military tribunal sentenced 83 soldiers to 15-year jail terms.
2002	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military government released 32 political prisoners, among them 14 members of the opposition, ahead of the visit next month of top U.N. envoy Razali Ismail.

2002	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's junta freed 14 political prisoners, but the move was far short of the release of all prisoners of conscience that opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has demanded as a precondition for national reconciliation.
2002	Demonstrative	3	Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi released after nearly 20 months of house arrest.
2003	Violent	5	In Yangon, Myanmar, a bomb went off in front of a state telecommunications office, killing at least one person and wounding three as the country marked Armed Forces Day.
2003	Violent	5	In Myanmar a pro-government drunken mob of some 3,000 ambushed a 400-person convoy carrying Aung San Suu Kyi and members of her National League for Democracy. At least 70 people were killed.
2003	Confrontational	4	Myanmar's military junta closed universities and shut down offices of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party, after she and some of her key aides were detained.
2003	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military government released 4 top opposition party members from house arrest, but pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and 4 others continued in detention.
2003	Demonstrative	3	A Myanmar court sentenced 9 people to death for high treason, including the editor of a sports magazine. The government said the suspects were accused of plotting to overthrow Myanmar's military junta through bombings and assassinations.
2003	Confrontational	4	Aung San Suu Kyi taken into "protective custody" after clashes between her supporters and those of government.
2003	Procedural	2	Khin Nyunt becomes prime minister. He proposes to hold convention in 2004 on drafting new constitution as part of "road map" to democracy.
2003	Demonstrative	3	Five senior NLD leaders released from house arrest after visit of UN human rights envoy.
2003	Procedural	2	Myanmar's SPDC unveiled a 17-point "road map" to democracy.
2004	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's junta said it freed 26 members of Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition National League for Democracy party.
2004	Procedural	2	Myanmar's military government said it will take the first step on a self-proclaimed "road to democracy" by reconvening a constitutional convention that was suspended eight years ago.
2004	Procedural	2	Myanmar held a constitutional convention.
2004	Procedural	2	Myanmar's state radio and television announced that PM Gen. Khin Nyunt was replaced by a top member of the country's ruling junta, Lt. Gen. Soe Win.

2004	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military government said it had begun releasing thousands of prisoners who may have been wrongly imprisoned by a recently disbanded military intelligence unit.
2004	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's junta freed Student democracy leader Min Ko Naing, the nation's number two political prisoner, as part of a release of 3,937 inmates. After 15 years in jail he became head of the "88 Generation students' Group."
2004	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar announced it is to free more than 5,000 prisoners on top of the nearly 4,000 announced last week.
2004	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's state media announced the military junta would release a further 5,070 prisoners.
2004	Procedural	2	Constitutional convention begins, despite boycott by National League for Democracy (NLD) whose leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. The convention adjourns in July.
2004	Demonstrative	3	Khin Nyunt is replaced as prime minister amid reports of a power struggle. He is placed under house arrest.
2005	Violent	5	A bomb exploded at a busy market in Myanmar's key tourist city of Mandalay, killing at least two people and wounding 15 others.
2005	Violent	5	In Myanmar 3 explosions rocked the capital, Yangon, killing at least 19 people and wounding 162 others.
2005	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military government released about 240 prisoners, including political detainees and opposition politicians.
2005	Demonstrative	3	Former Myanmar PM Khin Nyunt received a 44-year suspended sentence after being convicted on eight charges including bribery and corruption.
2005	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's government confirmed for the first time that it has extended pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's detention for six months.
2005	Procedural	2	Myanmar's military junta reopened a key national constitutional convention.
2005	Procedural	2	Constitutional convention resumes, but without the participation of the main opposition and ethnic groups. Talks end in January 2006 with no reports of any clear outcomes.
2005	Violent	5	Three near-simultaneous explosions go off in shopping districts in the capital; the government puts the death toll at 23.
2007	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military government freed nearly 3,000 convicts, but key political prisoners were not among those released.
2007	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar at least five protesters who took part in a rare demonstration that urged the ruling military junta to improve health care, education and economic conditions were taken into custody.

2007	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military government extended the house arrest of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi by another year.
2007	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar hundreds of pro-democracy activists marched to protest the government's fuel price hikes. The military junta arrested 13 top dissidents and deployed gangs of spade-wielding supporters on the streets of Yangon.
2007	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar defiant pro-democracy activists took to the streets for the third time this week, forming a human chain to try to prevent officers from dragging them into waiting trucks and buses.
2007	Violent	5	Myanmar's military junta moved swiftly to crush the latest in a series of protests against fuel price hikes, arresting more than 10 activists in front of Yangon City Hall before they could launch any action.
2007	Confrontational	4	Myanmar's state media reported that military junta has detained at least 63 activists who protested massive fuel-price hikes over the last week, as the government pursued its clampdown on the increasingly daring demonstrations.
2007	Confrontational	4	About 50 pro-democracy activists were arrested outside Yangon, as the Myanmar junta clamped down on dissent following a series of protests last week against a sharp hike in fuel prices.
2007	Confrontational	4	Pro-democracy supporters expanded their protests against Myanmar's military, marching through the streets of the port town of Sittwe while attempting to rally in the main city Yangon.
2007	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar pro-government gangs on trucks staked out key streets in Yangon as the country's military rulers sought to crush a rare wave of dissent by pro-democracy activists protesting fuel price increases.
2007	Demonstrative	3	More than 2,000 monks protested across Myanmar for a 2nd straight day against the country's junta.
2007	Demonstrative	3	Almost 1,000 Buddhist monks, protected by onlookers, marched through Myanmar's biggest city for a third straight day and pledged to keep alive the most sustained protests against the military government in at least a decade.
2007	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar about 1,500 Buddhist monks marched through downtown Yangon to protest against Myanmar's military government, beginning their fourth day of demonstrations at a pagoda that has long served as a national symbol for dissent.
2007	Demonstrative	3	In the central Myanmar city of Mandalay, a crowd of 10,000 people, including at least 4,000 Buddhist monks, marched in one of the largest demonstrations since the 1988 democracy uprising. About 1,000 monks, led by one holding his begging bowl upturned as a sign of protest, marched in Yangon for a 5th straight day. The

			anti-government demonstrations touched the doorstep of democracy heroine Aung San Suu Kyi.
2007	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar some 20,000 people, led by Buddhist monks, protested against the junta. Riot police and barbed wire barricades blocked hundreds of monks and anti-government demonstrators from approaching the home of the detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, in a new show of force against a rising protest movement.
2007	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar as many as 100,000 protesters led by a phalanx of barefoot monks marched through Yangon. The movement has grown in a week from faltering demonstrations to one rivaling the failed 1988 pro-democracy uprising.
2007	Confrontational	4	Soldiers, including an army division that took part in the brutal suppression of a 1988 uprising, converged on Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, after thousands of monks and sympathizers defied government orders to stay out of politics and protested once again. The Buddhist monks marched out for an eighth day of peaceful protest despite orders to the Buddhist clergy to halt all political activity and return to their monasteries. Military leaders imposed a nighttime curfew and banned gatherings of more than 5 people.
2007	Violent	5	In Myanmar at least four people including three Buddhist monks were killed as security forces used weapons and tear gas to crush protests that have erupted nationwide against the military junta.
2007	Violent	5	In Myanmar troops cleared protesters from the streets of central Yangon, giving them 10 minutes to leave or be shot as the Myanmar junta intensified a two-day crackdown on the largest uprising in 20 years. At least nine people were killed, including a Japanese national. In December a UN investigator documented 31 people killed by the end of the crackdown in October.
2007	Violent	5	Myanmar soldiers clubbed and dragged away activists while firing tear gas and warning shots to break up demonstrations before they could grow, and the government cut Internet access, raising fears that a deadly crackdown was set to intensify. The US administration slapped visa bans on more than 30 members of the Myanmar junta and their families.
2007	Confrontational	4	Myanmar's government unexpectedly allowed the country's leading opposition figure, Aung San Suu Kyi, to leave house arrest briefly and meet with a UN envoy trying to persuade the junta to ease its crackdown against a pro-democracy uprising. Thousands of troops locked down Myanmar's largest cities, and scores of people were arrested overnight. In Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city, security forces arrested dozens of university students who staged a street protest.

2007	Confrontational	4	Soldiers said they were hunting pro-democracy protesters in Myanmar's largest city and the top US diplomat in the country said military police had pulled people out of their homes during the night. The European Union agreed in principle to punish the junta with sanctions.
2007	Confrontational	4	Myanmar's military leaders stepped up pressure on monks who spearheaded pro-democracy rallies, saying that weapons had been seized from Buddhist monasteries and threatening to punish all violators of the law.
2007	Confrontational	4	Amnesty International said 4 prominent political activists were arrested in Myanmar as the ruling junta kept up its crackdown on pro-democracy protesters.
2007	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar relatives said 5 pro-democracy activists had been sentenced to long jail terms.
2007	Confrontational	4	Myanmar's military junta acknowledged that it detained nearly 3,000 people during a crackdown on recent pro-democracy protests, with hundreds still remaining in custody.
2007	Demonstrative	3	A day of global protests against Myanmar's junta began in Bangkok as democracy leader and Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi marked a cumulative 12 years in detention.
2007	Demonstrative	3	Suu Kyi, detained since May 2003, met with a newly appointed Myanmar government official as part of a UN-brokered attempt to nudge her and the military junta toward reconciliation. At least 70 people detained by the military government following protests in Myanmar, including 50 members of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party, were released.
2007	Demonstrative	3	More than 100 Buddhist monks marched in northern Myanmar for nearly an hour, the first public demonstration since the government's deadly crackdown last month on pro-democracy protesters.
2007	Confrontational	4	Myanmar's military junta arrested three more activists, surging ahead with a crackdown even as it hosted a UN human rights investigator and insisted that all arrests had stopped.
2007	Demonstrative	3	State media said Myanmar's military junta has completed the release of 8,585 prisoners, but it was unclear if any of those released were among those detained during the crackdown.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's Independence Day was marked by opposition calls for the freeing of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners as the military rulers urged national discipline.
2008	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar supporters of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi protested to demand democracy in Myanmar, days after the military regime said it would hold elections in 2010 under a new constitution likely to entrench the junta's powerful position.
2008	Procedural	2	Myanmar's ruling junta said the country's new draft constitution, which will replace one scrapped in 1988,

			has been completed.
2008	Violent	5	In Myanmar 5 people were killed in execution-style shootings in the wealthy Yangon neighborhood where democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi is under house arrest.
2008	Appeal	1	In Myanmar pro-democracy party of detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's said they had failed in a bid to sue the military government for not recognizing their 1990 election victory.
2008	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar a man set himself on fire at Shwedagon pagoda, Yangon's most famous landmark in a political protest against the military junta. He died of his injuries in April.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party urged voters to reject a military-backed draft constitution, saying it was undemocratic and drafted under the junta's direct control.
2008	Procedural	2	Myanmar's junta decided to postpone voting on a new constitution in areas hardest-hit by a devastating cyclone as the death toll soared above 22,500.
2008	Procedural	2	Referendum proceeds amid humanitarian crisis following cyclone. Government says 92% voted in favour of draft constitution and insists it can cope with cyclone aftermath without foreign help.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's junta seized UN aid shipments headed for hungry and homeless survivors of last week's devastating cyclone prompting the world body to suspend further help. According to state media, 23,335 people died and 37,019 are missing from Cyclone Nargis.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Experts said the 1.5 million people left destitute by Myanmar's cyclone are in increasing danger of disease and starvation, but the ruling junta said no to a Thai request to admit more aid workers. The Red Cross said the death toll could reach nearly 128,000. Another powerful storm headed toward Myanmar's cyclone-devastated delta and the UN warned that inadequate relief efforts could lead to a second wave of deaths among the estimated 2 million survivors.
2008	Procedural	2	Myanmar's junta warned that legal action would be taken against people who trade or hoard international aid as the cyclone's death toll soared above 43,000. Myanmar announced that a constitution won massive support in a referendum, a claim slammed by a leading rights group as an insult to the country's people.
2008	Demonstrative	3	UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Myanmar's junta agreed to allow all aid workers into the country after weeks of refusing access to foreign relief experts seeking to help cyclone survivors.
2008	Procedural	2	Myanmar's state-run newspaper said the overwhelming election victory by Aung San Suu Kyi's party in 1990 has been nullified by the approval of a military-backed constitution and her National League for Democracy

			party should prepare for a new vote in 2010.
2008	Demonstrative	3	A Buddhist monk slashed his throat in a suicide attempt at Myanmar's most sacred temple, the scene of several pro-democracy protests that erupted a year ago. A trustee of the Shwedagon temple said the monk became desperate after running out of money to pay for medical care.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's longest-serving political prisoner, journalist Win Tin, was freed after 19 years behind bars and vowed to continue his struggle to achieve democracy in the military-ruled country. Altogether Myanmar freed 9,002 prisoners. Win Htein (64), a former aide to Myanmar pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, was re-arrested less than 24 hours after being freed by the military government in the mass amnesty.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar sentenced 23 activists, including 5 Buddhist monks arrested during anti-junta protests last year to 65 years each in jail, in what rights groups branded a fresh attempt to stifle dissent. Min Ko Naing, considered as one of Myanmar's top activists, was among those sentenced.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar courts handed down sentences of between six and eight years for 4 Buddhist monks and two to 16 years for members of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi's party for involvement in last year's massive protests against the military junta. 14 more activists from the NLD were sentenced the next day at different courts in Yangon for between two to 16 years, all in relation to last year's protests.
2008	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar journalist Ein Khaing Oo, who had been detained for five months, was sentenced to two years in prison for her coverage of a protest over the lack of government relief for victims of a devastating cyclone. She was convicted in a closed-door trial on charges of "disturbing tranquility."
2008	Demonstrative	3	Courts in military-ruled Myanmar sentenced at least seven democracy activists to prison, continuing a crackdown that saw about 70 people jailed last week.
2008	Demonstrative	3	A court in military-ruled Myanmar sentenced a student activist to 6 1/2 years in jail, a week after his father received a 65-year prison term for his own political activities and a decade after his grandfather died in custody. Di Nyein Lin was one of three student activists sentenced by a court in a suburb of Yangon for various offenses, including causing public alarm and insulting religion.
2008	Demonstrative	3	Courts in military-ruled Myanmar handed long prison sentences to a prominent Buddhist monk and Zarganar, a popular comedian active in the country's pro-democracy movement, rounding out two weeks of an intensive judicial crackdown on activists.
2008	Demonstrative	3	A court inside Myanmar's notorious Insein prison sentenced a comedian who has criticized the government's

			cyclone response to 14 more years, bringing his total prison term to 59 years, his lawyer said. Comedian and activist Zarganar was given a 45-year prison sentence last week after he was convicted on charges related to interviews he gave to foreign media outlets.
2008	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar 2 journalists were jailed for seven years each on charges of undermining the military junta after they were caught with a UN human rights report. A court in a northeastern suburb of Yangon sentenced The Zin, editor of the local Myanmar-language journal News Watch, and Sein Win Maung, the paper's manager, under the country's draconian Printing and Publishing Law.
2009	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's military government extended the house arrest of the deputy leader of Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy party for one year, despite recent calls from the United Nations for the release of political prisoners.
2009	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar the government announced an amnesty for 6,300 prisoners. Only a handful of political detainees were among those released.
2009	Demonstrative	3	Authorities in Myanmar were reported to have arrested five members of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's political party from March 6-13. the report came a day after the UN called for the release of more than 2,000 political prisoners in the military-run country.
2009	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was charged with breaking the terms of her house arrest and faces up to five years in jail after John Yettaw, an American intruder, sneaked into her lakeside home.
2009	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi pleaded not guilty at her trial and blamed the regime's lax security for allowing an American intruder to swim uninvited to her lakeside home.
2009	Demonstrative	3	A Myanmar court convicted Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi of violating her house arrest by allowing John Yettaw, an uninvited American, to stay at her home. The head of the military-ruled country ordered the democracy leader to serve an 18-month sentence under house arrest. Yettaw was also convicted, and had just spent a week in a prison hospital for epileptic seizures.
2009	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar-born Kyaw Zaw Lwin, an American citizen also known as Nyi Nyi Aung, was arrested when he arrived at Yangon airport. Lwin started a hunger strike on Dec. 4 to protest conditions of political prisoners in Myanmar. He ended his hunger strike Dec. 15 and was subsequently placed in solitary confinement. On Jan 1, 2010, Lwin was charged for forgery and violation of the foreign currency act. Lwin (40) was released on March 18, 2010.

2009	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's junta announced amnesty to 7,114 convicts at prisons across the country, but it was not immediately known if they included political detainees.
2009	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar released at least 25 political detainees as part of an amnesty program. The country was believed to be holding some 65,000 prisoners including over 2,200 political detainees.
2009	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar Freelance reporter Hla Hla Win (25) was sentenced by a court in Pakokku for an alleged violation of the country's Electronics Act. She was arrested in September after visiting a Buddhist monastery in the northern town of Pakokku. The jailed reporter had worked with the Myanmar exile broadcaster Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), based in Oslo, Norway. A man accompanying her was sentenced to 26 years in jail.
2009	Procedural	2	October - Aung San Suu Kyi begins talks with Burma's military leaders and is allowed to meet Western diplomats.
2009	Appeal	1	April - The National League for Democracy (NLD) main opposition group offers to take part in planned elections if the government frees all political prisoners, changes the constitution and admits international observers.
2010	Procedural	2	Myanmar's ruling junta chief confirmed that the country's first general elections in two decades will be held this year but gave no date for the balloting, which is expected to exclude pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.
2010	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar a court sentenced Nyi Nyi Aung, a Burmese-born American, to 3 years of hard labor for carrying a forged identity card, undeclared US currency and for not renouncing his nationality after becoming a US citizen. He was arrested last September when he returned to visit his mother, an imprisoned democracy activist suffering from cancer.
2010	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar Tin Oo (82), the deputy leader of the pro-democracy party, was released by the military regime after almost seven years in detention and said he hoped the party's leader Aung San Suu Kyi would also soon gain freedom.
2010	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar sentenced four activists to prison terms with hard labor as special UN envoy Tomas Ojea Quintana arrived to assess progress on human rights in the country. The four women were arrested last October after being accused of offering Buddhist monks alms that included religious literature.
2010	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar Gaw Thita, a Buddhist monk, was quietly sentenced to seven years in prison violating immigration laws by taking a trip to Taiwan last year.

2010	Procedural	2	Myanmar announced the enactment of long awaited laws that set the stage for the country's first election in 20 years to be held sometime this year.
2010	Violent	5	In Myanmar 3 bombs exploded at a water festival in the former capital Yangon, killing 8 people and wounding 94. State TV blamed "destructive elements" for the attacks.
2010	Appeal	1	In Myanmar pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi filed a lawsuit with the country's Supreme Court in an attempt to prevent the dissolution of her party under a controversial new election law.
2010	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar a faction of Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition declared it will form its own political party to contest Myanmar's first elections in two decades, a day after the democracy icon's party disbanded to boycott the vote it says will be flawed.
2010	Procedural	2	Myanmar state media reported that a new party formed by renegade members of detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's disbanded party has received a permit to participate in Myanmar's first elections in two decades.
2010	Demonstrative	3	In Myanmar Win Htein, a former aide to Myanmar's detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, was released from prison after 14 years behind bars.
2010	Procedural	2	October - Government changes country's flag, national anthem and official name.
2010	Procedural	2	November - Main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), claims resounding victory in first election for 20 years. Opposition groups allege widespread fraud and the election is widely condemned as a sham. The junta says the election marks the transition from military rule to a civilian democracy.
2010	Procedural	2	A week after the election, Aung San Suu Kyi - who had been prevented from taking part - is released from house arrest.
2011	Procedural	2	January - Government authorises internet connection for Aung San Suu Kyi.

Average 3.145

Sources: Timelines of History. 2010. "Timeline Myanmar [Formerly Burma]." Accessed April 22, 2011.

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BBC 2011. "Burma Timeline." *BBC*, March 30. Accessed April 22, 2011. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1300082.stm>

Appendix B – Border Region Data

Date	Type	Grade	Description
1947	Procedural	2	General Aung San and 21 delegates of the national races of the mountain regions, the Shan, Kachin and Chin, finally signed the historic Pinlon Accord. They unanimously agreed to independence, not for a fragmented country, but for what has now become known as the Union of Myanmar.
1948	Confrontational	4	A conflict for power began that involved the Karen, a group of people from eastern and southern Burma.
1950	Violent	5	Sein Lwin commanded a military unit that tracked down and shot dead the leader of a rebellion against the government of Burma by the country's ethnic Karen minority.
1975	Violent	5	Opposition National Democratic Front formed by regionally-based minority groups, who mounted guerrilla insurgencies.
1982	Procedural	2	Law designating people of non-indigenous background as "associate citizens" in effect bars such people from public office.
1986	Violent	5	Karen refugees established the Huay Ko Lok refugee camp in Thailand. The camp was burned 3 times between 1996-1998 by the Burmese military. Residents were relocated in Aug, 1999, to Um Phien.
1988	Violent	5	In Burma over 10,000 students led by Htun Aung Gyaw took to the jungles to organize an armed resistance against the military regime. Gyaw was arrested by Thai authorities in 1992 and took refugee status in the US. Military rulers killed thousands of pro-democracy activists during the suppression of demonstrations. Hundreds of pro-democracy supporters were killed in Rangoon. A film was made called Beyond Rangoon that depicts the terror and bloodshed of the period.
1988	Violent	5	The Chin army began fighting a low-level rebellion for more autonomy for the mainly Christian Chin in Burma's northwest, where government troops have been trying to force them to convert to Buddhism.
1990	Procedural	2	Gen. Khin Nyunt, Myanmar's prime minister and intelligence chief, brokered a ceasefire and autonomy deal with Sai Leun (Lin Mingxian), warlord of Mongla, who built the area into a gambling destination for Chinese tourists.
1995	Confrontational	4	Myanmar government forces overran the Karen National Union's stronghold at Manerplaw and forced

			refugees to take refuge in Thailand.
1995	Violent	5	In Myanmar more than 500 people died this year in the 48-year long conflict with Karen rebels.
1996	Violent	5	A 1998 Amnesty Int'l. report accused the Burmese army in the torture and killings of hundreds of ethnic Shan villagers in the Shan state during this period.
1996	Violent	5	In 2002 the Thailand-based Shan Human Rights Foundation filed a report that Myanmar government military forces raped at least 625 girls and women in Shan state over this period in an effort to bring the area under control.
1997	Confrontational	4	In Myanmar some 3,000 Karen refugees fled into Thailand to escape fighting. The Karen National Union had been fighting for autonomy since 1948. Thailand said 16,000 Karens were crossing over its border.
1997	Confrontational	4	Thai soldiers pushed Karen refugees back across the border into Myanmar as Burmese troops massed for an offensive.
1997	Confrontational	4	In Rangoon talks between the Karen National Union and Burmese officials broke down when the Karen refused to disarm. After the talks broke the Burmese army swept through Karen territory and forced thousands of refugees into Thailand.
1998	Violent	5	Ethnic Karen rebels launched attacks against Myanmar troops and killed 30 people.
1998	Violent	5	In Myanmar 26 farmers were gunned down near Murng-Kerng.
1998	Violent	5	Myanmar soldiers of the Light Infantry Battalion 246 shot and killed 23 villagers in Kaeng Tawn. The dead included 7 children and 2 women.
1998	Violent	5	Air Myanmar F-27 with 39 people crashed near Tachilek in Shan state. Shan tribesmen looted the wreckage. 5 adult male survivors were tortured and an air hostess was raped for days. A surviving baby was left to die. 30 villagers were arrested.
1999	Confrontational	4	In Thailand the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors took 38 diplomats as hostages at the Burmese Embassy in Bangkok. Two Thai officials were exchanged for the hostages and 12 [5] students were reported to have flown to the Thai-Myanmar border by helicopter, where they were released. The students demanded the release of political prisoners, dialogue between the military and Aung San Suu Kyi and an elected parliament.
1999	Violent	5	In Myanmar the twins Luther and Johnny Htoo (12) led God's Army, a band of some 100 guerrilla fighters that operated from the Ka Mar Pa Law village near the Thailand border.
2000	Violent	5	In Thailand security forces stormed a hospital and ended a 22-hour standoff with Burmese guerrillas. 10

			rebels of the "God's Army" were reported killed. The hostage-takers were executed after surrendering to security forces.
2000	Procedural	2	In Myanmar Bo Mya, legendary 24-year leader of the Karen National Union (KNU), was voted out of the chairmanship. Saw Ba Thin was elected as the new chairman of the Karen National Union (KNU).
2000	Violent	5	Some 125 Karen guerrillas overran the Bianaw Myanmar military camp near the Thai border. 30 escaped and one soldier was killed.
2001	Confrontational	4	Luther and Johnny Htoo, twin adolescent leaders of an ethnic Karen rebel group, surrendered to Thai border police.
2001	Violent	5	Burmese army, Shan rebels clash on Thai border.
2002	Violent	5	The Myanmar army was charged by Amnesty Int'l. of killing and torturing hundreds of ethnic Shan villagers. Some 300,000 Shan villagers have been forced to flee their homes in the past 2 years.
2002	Confrontational	4	In Bangladesh Operation Clean Heart rooted thousands of Rohingyas, dark-skinned members of a poor, Muslim minority from Myanmar, from local villages. Myanmar's ruling junta called them residents of Rakhine state, pressed them into slave labor and severely restricted their rights to travel and marry. This led to the Rohingya border camp named Tal, on the banks of the Naf River in Bangladesh.
2003	Violent	5	In Myanmar bombs exploded on the border with Thailand, killing four people.
2004	Violent	5	In Malaysia 3 men armed with firebombs, machetes and an axe attacked Myanmar's embassy, hacking one senior official and starting a fire that destroyed the building.
2004	Procedural	2	Government and Karen National Union - most significant ethnic group fighting government - agree to end hostilities.
2005	Violent	5	India said police forces have destroyed one of the largest Mynamarese rebel bases in India, deep in the mountainous jungles of the remote northeast. Some 200 guerrillas and supporters living in the Chin National Army camp fled before the attack.
2005	Violent	5	In Myanmar at least four government battalions began shelling and attacking villages and internal refugee hide-outs in southern Karenni State and areas of neighboring Karen State, forcing some 3,000 people to flee their homes.
2005	Demonstrative	3	Myanmar's ruling junta arrested the leader of the Shan State National Army (SSNA) along with other members of the Shan minority.

2005	Violent	5	A rights group said Myanmar's military rulers have launched an offensive against separatist guerrillas, attacking villages and forcing thousands to flee in an attempt to quash a five-decade insurgency by Karen ethnic rebels.
2006	Violent	5	Reports from Myanmar and Thailand said Myanmar troops were waging their biggest military offensive in almost a decade and have uprooted more than 11,000 ethnic minority civilians in a campaign punctuated by torture, killings and the burning of villages.
2006	Violent	5	A Karen group said Myanmar troops, who have driven an estimated 15,000 Karen villagers from their homes, are throwing more battalions into a widening offensive against the ethnic minority.
2006	Confrontational	4	One of two young twin brothers who led a small band of ethnic rebels calling themselves "God's Army" surrendered to Myanmar's military government. Johnny Htoo (18) and 8 fellow members of the group surrendered with weapons in two separate groups on July 17 and 19 at the coastal region military command in southeastern Myanmar.
2007	Violent	5	A report issued by a human rights group accused Myanmar's military of killing, raping and torturing ethnic Karen women as part of its battle against the minority group over the past 25 years.
2008	Violent	5	A series of bomb blasts hits the country. State media blame "insurgent destructionists", including the Karen National Union (KNU), a group fighting for greater autonomy for the ethnic Karen people.
2009	Confrontational	4	January - Thailand expels hundreds of members of Burma's Muslim Rohingya minority who appeared off its coast. Burma denies the minority's existence. Several hundred Rohingyas are subsequently rescued from boats off the coast of Indonesia.
2009	Violent	5	In Myanmar refugees began streaming out of the Ler Per Her camp in eastern Karen state and into Thailand as Myanmar forces shelled near a camp where they were sheltering.
2009	Violent	5	Myanmar forces started launching mortar attacks during fighting with Karen guerrillas.
2009	Violent	5	Myanmar government troops seized a weapons factory near the Chinese border after being informed about it during a ministerial meeting with China on combating transnational crime. This triggered several days of clashes with an ethnic militia that sent more than 30,000 refugees fleeing across the border into China.
2009	Violent	5	In Myanmar fresh fighting erupted between government forces and an armed ethnic group in the remote northeast, forcing tens of thousands to flee across the border into China.
2009	Violent	5	Fighting erupted in northeast Myanmar after days of clashes in which the leader of ethnic forces said more

			than 30 government troops had been killed. Hundreds of ethnic rebels fled clashes in northeastern Myanmar, surrendering their weapons and uniforms to Chinese border police and crossing to safety after several days of skirmishes with Myanmar government troops. The UN and Chinese officials said up to 30,000 civilian refugees have streamed into China to escape the fighting.
2009	Violent	5	The Myanmar junta ended a news blackout about clashes with ethnic rebels near the China border, saying three days of fighting killed 26 government forces and at least eight rebels.
2009	Violent	5	In Myanmar 6 people were killed and 12 injured when a time bomb exploded in Karen state.
2010	Violent	5	In Myanmar ethnic rebels in Nam Zam township, Shan State, killed 20 government troops in an ambush aimed at deterring the military government from launching an offensive against them ahead of elections this year.
2010	Violent	5	In northern Myanmar a series of bombs exploded at a controversial hydropower project site being jointly built by a Chinese company.

Average 4.471

Sources: Timelines of History. 2010. "Timeline Myanmar [Formerly Burma]." Accessed April 22, 2011.

<http://timelines.ws/countries/BURMA.HTML>

BBC 2011. "Burma Timeline." *BBC*, March 30. Accessed April 22, 2011. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1300082.stm>

Capstone Summary

Description of the Project:

My capstone is titled “Micropolitical Opportunity Structure in Burma.” I seek to answer the question: *Why do citizens in Burma continue challenging the military regime through peaceful social movements despite of the threat of violent oppression?* My capstone examines the sources of political participation in Burma and the political opportunity structure which influence the type of possible political action. I show that Burma is an anomalous case in political opportunity structure theory using a data analysis of political events in Burma as well as a review of relevant scholarly research. Through this research, I aim to contribute to the study of political conflict by showing how the Burmese case can be integrated into current political theory.

Political opportunity structure refers to features of a regime that facilitate or inhibit the collective action of political actors. Tilly and Tarrow write that political opportunity structure is a framework “within which people decide whether to mobilize, make decisions about optimal combinations of performances to use, and are likely to succeed or fail in their efforts” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 50). For Tilly and Tarrow, political opportunity structure is composed of two factors: governmental capacity and democracy. Capacity refers to the ability of a government to affect the distribution of population, activity, and resources within the regime’s territory. A high-capacity government makes a big difference when it intervenes by raising taxes, controlling the use of natural resources, and

controlling populations. Low capacity governments have little effect when they try to accomplish the same things (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 55).

The second factor, democracy, refers to the extent to which people within the regime have “broad, equal political rights, exert significant direct influence (e.g. through competitive elections and referenda) over governmental personnel and policy, as well as receive protection from arbitrary action by governmental agents such as police, judges, and public officials. A regime is undemocratic to the extent that political rights are narrow and/or unequal, consultation of citizens is minimal, and protections are fragile” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 55).

Political opportunity structure describes opportunities and threats for political action within a given regime. Tilly and Tarrow write that political opportunity structure influences the type of political action most likely to take place within a regime by affecting which political claims are possible. High capacity, high democracy regimes (such as the United States) generally host social movements, because citizens have the freedom to express themselves and the government has enough capacity to allow them to demonstrate without fear of being ousted. High capacity, low democracy regimes (such as China) will most likely have repression and clandestine operations, because the people have few political freedoms to express themselves and the government has enough capacity to crush any opposition. Low capacity, low democracy regimes (such as Sudan) should see civil war, because the people have few political freedoms and the government does not have enough capacity to end fighting over limited resources and power. Finally, low capacity, high democracy regimes (such as Jamaica) will

most likely result in coups d'état or intergroup warfare, because citizens have enough freedom to express themselves and the government does not have the capacity to prevent an uprising.

Using data from Freedom House's annual democracy ratings, I find that Burma is most definitely a low-democracy regime as defined by political opportunity structure. However, Burma's capacity is more difficult to define. Two discrepancies in Burma's governmental capacity make it a more difficult country to pin down than most. The first is a difference between "despotic" capacity and "infrastructural" capacity, which Michael Man describes as "a state's capacity to penetrate society with the goal of coordinating and regulating social life" (in Englehart 2005, 631). The second, and more perplexing, issue with determining Burma's capacity is the huge variance in levels of capacity between the cities and the rural border regions within the country, what many scholars call a "center-periphery split."

In my analysis of different types of political actions by region, I find that political participation in Burma's cities generally takes the form of social movements, while political action in the border regions often occurs as violent conflict. I argue that the reason why political participation in Burma takes different forms in the cities versus the border regions is because there are two distinct political opportunity structures *within* Burma. The first is a high-capacity, low democracy structure in the cities, where the government presence and infrastructural power is greatest. The second is a low-capacity, low democracy structure in the ethnic minority-controlled border states, where strained economic

resources and limited despotic influence mean that the armed opposition groups are strong enough to combat the military in violent conflict.

I posit that the current understanding of political opportunity structure is too basic to provide a valuable prediction of action in many countries such as Burma, where state capacity is composed of two distinct factors, infrastructural and despotic capacity. Additionally, the center-periphery split in Burma (as well as many other countries) leads to very different political action between the majority-controlled cities and ethnic minority-controlled border regions. I use political participation theory to suggest that solidary incentives offered by the *Sangha*, or Buddhist monks, as well as the political leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, provide pro-democracy political action with legitimacy and moral strength. Duffy and Lindstrom describe solidary incentives as “the promise of relational goods that individuals derive from associating with others with whom they identify” (Duffy and Lindstrom 2002, 76). I argue that these incentives offered by political leaders in Burma are valuable enough for protestors to overcome the threat of military action. I conclude that the political science community must develop a more nuanced understanding of capacity within a state through a concept that I call “micro-political opportunity structures” to describe variable political opportunity structures between different regions within the same state.

Methods Used:

I first describe political opportunity structure theory in order to provide a base for my research. I use data gathered from Freedom House to show that

Burma falls squarely in the “low democracy” category of political opportunity structure. After describing the current theories, I construct a chronology of political events in Burma’s cities and compare those to a chronology of political events in Burma’s border regions to show how political participation differs between the two regions. By mapping political behavior on a timeline and using process tracing, I examine the prominence of different types of political actions by region in order to determine whether there is a measurable difference in political action in cities compared to border regions. Once I have mapped political action over time in Burma, I explain how the political opportunity structure theory can be extended to cover the Burma anomaly.

Project’s Significance:

My project is significant because it makes a valuable contribution to current theories describing political conflict. Current use of political opportunity structure theory treats capacity as an all-encompassing factor for the entire country – however, in Burma, there appears to be a split in capacity both along the lines of despotic versus infrastructural capacity as well as between the central cities and the peripheral ethnic states.

These conditions in Burma have some profound implications for political opportunity structure theory. In a country like Burma, one political opportunity structure for the entire country is too broad to accurately describe and predict political action. Instead, I believe there must be a more nuanced definition of capacity for states such as Burma. I suggested the term “micro-political

opportunity structure” to refer to variable political opportunity structures between different regions within the same state. I believe that these micro-political opportunity structures take form when a regime has low-democracy (meaning they are likely to use despotism to keep control) and have limited resources, which limits their infrastructural capacity and requires the government selectively exercise their despotic capacity.

The second implication this research has for political opportunity structure theory is the incorporation of political participation theory. Whereas political opportunity structure predicts the type of political action that is likely, it does not account for each country’s unique actors who might influence people to use a particular type of political action *despite* the political opportunity structure of the regime. Tilly and Tarrow discuss political participation, but only in describing political action *that was correctly predicted by political opportunity structure*. I posit that, if the influence of a particular group or leader is strong enough, political actors will overcome their fear of the costs of political action (which may not necessarily conform to the prediction of the political opportunity structure) in order to earn relational consumption goods, which are social rewards from one’s group, such as being recognized as a good Buddhist, patriot, etc.

The theory of micro-political opportunity structure that I develop in my capstone is significant because it has implications beyond Burma. I describe four other countries in which a center-periphery split and micro-political opportunity structures may also be taking place; Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and Sudan. By examining Burma through the lens of micro-political opportunity structures and

political participation theory, the seemingly anomalous social movements of 1988 and 2007 make more sense. By applying these changes to political opportunity structure, perhaps the political science community will be able to better understand and predict political action in countries such as Burma, and develop better ways of studying political conflict around the world.