Variations in the Effectiveness of Politically Motivated Suicide: Exploring

Symbolism and Group Access

by

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ABSTRACT

Although politically motivated suicides have spawned some of the largest and most impactful protest movements in recent memory, there remains a lack of research on similarities between events. Previously, each famous suicide has been taken to be a random phenomenon, which cannot be replicated. This paper serves to demystify the concept of politically motivated suicides, and to draw connections between events; this research is undertaken with the acknowledgement that these world shaping events are rarely the first politically motivated suicides in their time. Two main factors combine to spell success for these events. The presence of symbolic and powerful images, and messages from the death of an actor, combined with a social group which is able to harness and direct those images, determines the potential for a politically motivated suicide to escalate issues to a national scale. In this paper I connect litterature on the individual action of politically motivated suicide with the collective action field, and through a series of case studies investigate the importance of the action of suicide, and how social groups utilize the death of the actor. This change in thought reflects the concept that specific factors, not chance, combine to determine the outcome of these potentially nation changing events.

Warning: The images of people in and around their deaths is vital to the understanding of this issue, and as such the images of these people in their final moments will be present in the paper.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

*"What a country we live in! Where the only light for the future is the
burning body of a young boy"*

<div align="right">UNKNOWN - PRAGUE</div>

In September of 1968, the Soviet Union had begun to infiltrate Czechoslovakia
to halt the spread of social reform in the nation. To many citizens who had just
received hard-fought rights from the Czech government, this was an offense which
could not be tolerated. Despite many protests, it seemed clear that the Soviet control
over the Czech Communist Party would not lessen. This was considered the "Winter
of Despair" for the Czech people. [1] In response to this oppression, a person decided
to make the ultimate sacrifice: to burn themselves to death in front of thousands
in protest of Soviet control. At a harvest festival in Poland in 1968, this person set
himself alight in front of a major crowd including several important party members,
and died for his beliefs. However, this is not the individual that the quote above
pertains to. The name of this person is Ryzard Siwiec. This is a name that went
unknown for many months after his death. Instead, the quote describes another
person, who in January of 1969, a mere four months later, burned themselves to
death in the same geographic region, for the exact same political cause. This person,
Jan Palach, inspired the world with his death, and became the symbolic leader of
protests whose numbers reach tens of thousands. Both gave their lives in the hope of
inspiring others to take up their cause. However, we are left to question why there

Quote from Olsarova (2014)

[1]Treptow (1992)

1

were no protests following Siwiec's death, while Palach became the icon of massive amounts of political mobilization.

Acts of politically motivated suicide such as these have shocked and enraged people from all walks of life, leading to immense protests which have grown to restructure entire nations. From the famous self-immolations of Thich Quang Duc, the Vietnamese monk, Mohammad Bouazizi, a Tunisian vendor, to the hunger strike of Bobby Sands, these self sacrificing individuals have captured media attention and galvanized millions into action. In each case, individuals publicly state the cause for their death, and signal their resolve in the most grisly way. The study of politically motivated suicide has focused heavily on these famous cases, which have cemented their places in world history. However, there has been a lack of consideration as to why these select individuals have become the faces of rebellions, while others who committed the same acts at the same times have faded into obscurity. Although politically motivated suicides happen often, national scale protests are few and far between. While acts of politically motivated suicide have become the main focus of these national protests, these are a spectacular few out of many. There are often several instances of politically motivated suicide happening within close spacial and temporal proximity to the famous cases. These failed sacrifices take place in the same unstable climates as the successful ones, but seem to lack a mixture of factors which can combine to increase the likelihood that a political suicide will drive others to take up the cause.

In this paper, I will explore two main factors, the symbolic images and messages from the act itself, and the access that social groups have to utilize the symbolism to bolster their cause, to determine their effect on protest likelihood. While these two broad terms will be unpacked later in the paper, they make intuitive sense as a starting point for assessing the impact of a politically motivated suicide, given its

2

inherently performative nature. [2] Politically motivated suicides can take many forms (self-immolation, hunger strike, gunshot, etc.), and while each form provides different visuals and feelings, each of them presents a morbid story which can be relayed to the masses. In addition, a key point which divides politically motivated suicide from suicide prompted by grievances related to the political climate is the forward thinking nature of the perpetrator. Those who make their deaths a performance do not leave the interpretation of their act solely to others: these acts are accompanied by the distribution of a manifesto, reflective writings, propaganda posters, or the yelling of political slogans. While the person who has died is not able to guarantee that their wishes will be carried out after death, they have clearly tied their death to a particular issue with the hopes that others will take up their mantle in the future. Group access is the ability of a group to convince the public, and the government, that they are the best suited to take up this charge. Although they can be powerful motivators, a politically motivated suicide cannot get people to take up just any cause. The propensity of the viewer to act on the desires of the perpetrator depends on the importance of the issue to the political climate of the time, whether or not the viewer agrees with the stance of the actor., in addition to the existence of a social group which can direct the viewer. [3] If the actor commits this action in the favor of a niche or unknown cause, it is unlikely that they will be able to galvanize millions into action. Rather, these acts serve to provide a starting point to causes which would likely already see massive protests, given enough time.

While politically motivated suicides take many forms, some do not fit under the umbrella of this theory. This theory applies only to non-violent political suicide, in which the intention is only to kill the one participant. While the cases I label as

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[2]Kirkpatrick (2017)

[3]Hyojoung (2002)

non-violent still involve self violence, which can have important cultural impacts that will be discussed later in the paper, for the sake of simplicity, I will continue to refer to them as non-violent. Violent suicides take many forms, with the most famous being suicide bombings. While both acts require an intense commitment to a cause, the difference lies in how the act is accepted by different communities. While the communities where the perpetrator originated from may see them as a martyr and a victim, that image does not translate as well when viewed by the opposing side, and the international community at large. Rather, violent action can strengthen the resolve of the support for the opposing side. [4] Much to the contrary, a non-violent politically motivated suicide can weaken the support for the opposition [5], and can persuade people within the group to switch sides, or strengthen their own resolve. [6] While violent suicide seeks to undermine and weaken the military might and force of the opposition, or to strike fear into the populous, non-violent suicide has the opposite goal; to embolden and strengthen the general populous to stand against the government. As this theory revolves around how the act is perceived by both those within the area of conflict and by the international community, it is important to separate violent from non-violent suicide.

Another important distinction in this paper is the difference between politically motivated suicide and suicide which happens in time of political turmoil. While times of intense repression, with many rights being stripped away and violence being commonplace, may see an increase in the number of people taking their own lives, this does not mean that this action is directed at ending the repressive behavior for all. These acts, while tragic, are not aimed towards society at large. Conversely, politically

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[4]Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)

[5]Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)

[6]Hyojoung (2002)

4

motivated suicide makes an event out of the death of the person, with a clearly stated reason for the death, often with a desired direction for the future. Unfortunately, acts of suicide which protest an issue are exceptionally common, and they can be hard to distinguish from one another. Ahmadi (2007), Laloë and Ganesan (2002), and Campbell and Guiao (2004) note that self-immolation is a common practice for women who are oppressed in their personal lives. The important distinction which makes a suicide in protest of an issue politically motivated is the forward looking social scope of the actor. In this example, while many of these deaths happen in the presence of abusive family members, for the purpose of inspiring guilt and feelings of responsibility [7] , they do not leave behind prescriptions for action, or any specific grievances with the current male dominated system. Although these deaths happen in the presence of others, they are often not reported, and do not have the aim of inspiring others (more than the immediate audience) to take up action. [8] Other people, who are under very similar circumstances, do engage in political actions before their deaths, and make their views well known before, and sometimes during, their deaths. These deaths would enter the realm of politically motivated, as we are able to see, in the person's own words, that they wished to link their action to a greater hope of reformation and action. While this may seem like an arbitrary distinction to draw, the nuance is important when analyzing the difference between successful and unsuccessful politically motivated suicides. The goal in this paper is to divide suicides undertaken with the ideal of creating action among the general population, but fail to do so, from suicides which never had the intention of creating large scale change. This is not to denigrate the importance of any person's demise, but rather is a necessity of the analysis of this political phenomenon, distinguishing it from the

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[7]Campbell and Guiao (2004)

[8]Campbell and Guiao (2004)

study of suicide at large.

Finally, I must define what success means for a politically motivated suicide. In this paper, success does not mean that the goal of the actor is achieved. Many of these people call for very radical changes in their nations, and even in the cases which become famous, most of their demands are not met. Rather, in this paper success means the inspiration of follow-up protests in the name of the actor. If the actor can become the focus of political action in their time, gathering others to act in their stead, then their action can be named as a success. On the other hand, if no protests can be tied to the death of the actor, and they do not enter into the public conversation at the time, then it can be said that their action was unsuccessful.

This paper will proceed at follows; first there will be a comprehensive review of the litterature on protest movements, and politically motivated suicide, in order to draw comparisons between the two, and to investigate how the field has succeeded and failed in their investigation of this phenomenon. The major finding of this review will be that papers have largely sampled on the dependant variable: investigations of the importance of politically motivated suicide have relied on the major cases, without paying mind to the reason why those particular cases saw success. Secondly, I will develop refined concepts on what makes a politically motivated suicide more likely to be successful. Finally, I will present three case studies which will look at particular times where multiple politically motivated suicides have occurred, but only a single case, or no cases, rose to fame. These studies aim to demonstrate that specific factors, rather than random chance, can combine to increase the likelihood that any one death becomes the focal point for mass protests and social change.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> *"Although the ordinary prisoner has lost his liberty his is not prepared to go to extremes to regain it, nor protect his humanity. He settles for a short date of release. Eventually, if incarcerated long enough, he becomes institutionalized, becoming a type of machine, not thinking of for himself, his captors dominating and controlling him. That was the intended fate of the lark in my grandfathers story; but the lark needed not changing, nor did it wish to change, and died making that point. This brings me directly back to my own situation: I feel something in common with that poor bird. My position is in total contrast to that of an ordinary prisoner: I am a political prisoner, a freedom fighter. Like the lark, I too have fought for my freedom, not only in captivity, where I now languish, but also while on the outside, where my country is held captive. I have been captured and imprisoned, but, like the lark, I too have seen the outside of the wire cage"*

<div align="right">

BOBBY SANDS

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This paper will deal with a very sensitive and horrifying issue, that of politically motivated suicide. I define politically motivated suicide as a suicide undertaken in a public, or publicized, area, in which the perpetrator specifically links their act to current societal problems, with the hope of inspiring action in others. Due to the highly publicized and incendiary nature of the subject, the concept and scope of this phenomenon requires careful definition. This review of the connected literature will first tackle the theoretical works on the concept of political suicide. Political suicide falls under the larger umbrella of political exit, and thus we must discuss the roots of the desire to exit the polity. Next, the psychological and sociological reactions to

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Quote from Sands (1983)

politically motivated suicide which make people more or less likely to act must be connected to the onset of protest movements. It is also necessary to note how protest dynamics develop throughout the life of a movement. As such, I will link litterature from all stages of a movement to the initial act of a protest suicide to see whether a movement ignited by a politically motivated suicide should be more robust. Thus, the second half of the litterature review will focus on protest onset, then protest growth and repression, and finally national level protests and protest death.

2.0.1 Theory of Political Exit

The phenomenon of political suicide fits under the umbrella of political exit. Political exit occurs when a person removes themselves from the control of authority, either by secession, seclusion, or physical migration. [1] These exits occur when people become dissatisfied with the community at large; as Kirkpatrick (2017) clarifies, "As an expression of autonomy, reason, and rationality, the individual act of exit reveals that the individual no longer accepts the principles of the comprehensive community out of tradition, faith, or loyalty" (Kirkpatrick 8). [2] Once again, we must make the distinction between political exit, and exit from the polity from any number of personal reasons. Political exit ties itself to a desire to make a change in the polity that one has left. Many will leave and sever ties with their community, while others will maintain their power to affect change in the community they left. As there are many ways to exit a polity, we must focus on just one, Sacrificial Exit. [3] A sacrificial exit ends the ability of the individual to ever reenter the polity by virtue of their

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[1]Hirschman (1978)

[2]According to Durkheim (1897)suicides will also rise when people are in discord with their community. Thus, in times when we see large amounts of political exit, we may also see a rise in non-political exit

[3]Kirkpatrick (2017)

death. While it may seem that suicide is one of the most personal actions, these actors mark their exit from the polity with a performance that is intended to inspire others to create specific change. These exits are inherently focused on others, as the individual cannot reap any benefits from their action. [4] We cannot think of political suicides as selfish or individual acts, as "[...] sacrificial exits show a generous public impulse, a hopeful desire for change in the world that they are no longer a part of."(Kirkpatrick 106) This strengthens the distinction between politically motivated suicide, and suicide due to political and personal grievances.

Politically motivated suicide can take on two major forms: violent and non-violent. The study of politically motivated suicide has not always separated the two forms when looking at their effects. Bargu (2013) developed a conceptualization of political self-destruction which is inclusive of both violent and non-violent acts, while the conceptualization by Kirkpatrick (2017) strictly excludes violent actions. The conceptualizations change based on the effects the author examines. In this case, Bargu was asserting the need to take a more human look at politically motivated suicides, to not distance ones self with data, while Kirkpatrick drew conclusions on the effects of the suicide. There is a major difference in the way that people respond to violent versus non-violent actions, and this difference influences the definition of politically motivated suicide. As this paper has a major focus on media attention and the emotions of citizens in many places, violent acts, such as a suicide bombing, do not fit within the scope of this paper.

Theoretically, the origins and political impacts of the two types of self destruction are far from similar. Violent acts of politically motivated self destruction are most often used for their military effectiveness. Contrary to some popular belief, those who conduct violent acts of suicide are often educated, and are aware of the military

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[4]Kirkpatrick (2017)

importance of their targets. [5] In addition, the original motivations for those who commit violent acts tends not to be altruistic. Many of those who seek to engage in violent acts of suicide are joining for economic reasons, rather than ideological reasons. [6]

There are several main audiences for acts of violent self-destruction; Atran (2003) details two audiences, the primary target, and the population of the area where the strike occurs. While the point of a strike is to harm or kill a particular target, Atran claims "The primary target is not those actually killed or injured in the attack, but those made to witness it. The enemy's own information media amplify the attack's effects to the target target population" (Atran 1534). Here the point is to strike fear into the target population, as is the strategic importance of a terror attack. These strikes must resonate with a community in order for the group to survive, this community is often a network of international donors and funders. [7] While these funders, mixed with the economic incentives mentioned before, can keep the group alive and successful, this does not mean that they will spur protests in support of their claims. Rather, violent actions may serve to strengthen the resolve of opposition, both domestic and international. [8]

To the contrary, this paper will focus on the ability of politically motivated suicides to galvanize the masses into action, and to gain the support of the international community. Thus, for this paper a more conservative conceptualization of protest suicide is prudent. While I focus on non-violent actions, this does not mean that the people who commit these acts fully eschew violence. The commitment to non-violence here can best be summed up through the concept of pragmatic pacifism. Pragmatic

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[5] Benmelech and Berrebi (2007)

[6] Bueno de Mesquita (2005), Iannaccone (1992)

[7] Bloom (2005)

[8] Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)

pacifism is centered on political, not moral, principles in its claim that "[...] the task of developing new political strategies to confront violence is never complete and that violence will always reappear. However, [pragmatic pacifism] retains an ideological element in forwarding two principles: 1) as yet unseen circumstances can be addressed by creative non-violence, and 2) politics and power have certain characteristics that make violence unnecessary" (Howes 437). [9] This definition strengthens non-violence as a discreet political strategy. Thus, although politically motivated suicides vary in the extent of their planning, all should be accepted as a political action, with the ability and intention to create change.

Non-violent acts also have distinct differences on how they affect their audience. Those who commit non-violent politically motivated suicide make their body into a message, in order to point out the wrong-doing of their oppressor. [10] Several important processes apply exclusively to non-violent actions. First, the accused, or blamed party, is often seen as a murderer. Rather than the act being viewed as a suicide, people see the accused as having a direct and active hand in the death of the person. [11] Secondly, there are feelings of guilt and shame which can change the emotions of many of those who witness the action. Hyojoung (2002) details how many who visited the grave of Park Sung Hee, a young student who committed a politically motivated suicide, expressed regret that they had not acted first, and voiced a willingness to act in the future. In addition, many who did not agree with Hee's ideals either changed their stance on the subject, or showed a willingness to listen to the ideas of the other side. Thus the power of non-violent actions is in its ability to gain support from both sides of an issue, bolstering support for its own

[9] Howes (2013)

[10] Andriolo (2006)

[11] Jeffreys (1952), Murray Yang (2011)

cause while weakening the morality of the opposition. [12] Finally, when studying the effects of politically motivated suicide, most works focus on the movements of the masses. There are many barriers preventing everyday people from engaging in mass action [13], such as fear of reprisal or free riding on the work of others, and yet mass protests continue to spawn from politically motivated suicides. As previously stated, however, not all of these events are able to overcome the barriers to collective action. When investigating which deaths will and will not see follow up protests, it makes sense to include only non-violent actions, which is where protests are expected to result.

Politically motivated suicide can be understood as a political act, and a discreet political strategy, which is committed with the expectation that everyday people will respond to the call. With their death, the actor gives others the tools they need to inspire action and create change. However, oftentimes the collective response to this individual action never occurs. Rather, the majority of people who commit these acts do not spur action in others. In fact, they are often reported as suicides by their family or government authorities, with any media, images, or messages discreetly hidden, or destroyed, by family or government forces. [14] Others, while their actions do get some publicity, only see minor political action. The following sections will outline how actions of self-destruction are related to the evolution of collective action.

2.0.2 Protest Onset

It is clear that politically motivated suicides have influence on mass protests. Most previous works focus on the suicides which do spark major protest events. [15]

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[12]Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)

[13]Olson (1965)

[14]Rothschild et al. (2001), Laloë and Ganesan (2002)

[15]Biggs (2005), Andriolo (2006)

Most politically motivated suicides, however, will see no follow-up action. Thus, although politically motivated suicide influences protest dynamics, it does not necessarily cause them. As such, a careful investigation of the influence of these events on protest dynamics is warranted. As previously stated, the scope of this paper will be limited to peaceful, or mostly peaceful, protests. There have been many works on the effectiveness of peaceful protests [16] , establishing peace as a tactical decision which has a higher success rate in implementing policy change. However, in order to grow to a level in which it can alter the nation, a protest movements must first start. In this section I will detail how politically motivated suicide is linked to the onset of protest movements and groups.

Self-interest is at the heart of much research on protest onset. The highly influential work of Mancur Olson [17] established rational self-interest as a significant hurdle when establishing a protest movement for a collective good. Self-interest dictates that when one can benefit from a movement without paying any costs for it, that person will choose not to benefit the group. This concept is summed up with the famous phrase, "Free Riders." Thus, it is hard to motivate large groups to contribute to a movement, as most will rely on others to pay their way. Politically motivated suicide seems to defy the assumptions of this analysis however; a person who commits suicide inherently cannot benefit from a movement, yet they willingly pay the highest cost. If all people focused purely on the potential costs of action, we would not see incidences of politically motivated self-destruction. Thus, we must change the way that we consider the benefit that one receives from a political action. When relating instances of self-destruction to protests, we must consider social incentives and the current political climate, rather than focusing on a rational cost-benefit analysis.

[16]Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), Chenoweth and Cunningham (2013), Gleditsch and Rivera (2017), Howes (2013)

[17]Olson (1965)

Hyojoung and Bearman (1997) change the focus from rational cost-benefit analysis, and bring in social incentives and signaling to help explain why individuals choose to engage in political actions, developing a dynamic network model. According to this model, actors are embedded in networks, and those networks provide social incentives to induce them into action. There are two key parts of the theory which help to explain the power that politically motivated suicide has in creating action among others. First, actors base their decision to act upon the decisions of others. Given that self-destruction is both a costly and visible signal, it serves as a perfect way to indicate to others that there is strong support for their case. Secondly, Hyojoung and Bearman acknowledge that some people can have more influence than others. While they focus on individuals within the group who act as leaders, I propose that those who commit political suicide can have a massive influence on people who are only tangentially related to them. People who hear of these deaths experience emotional reactions, and can come to feel a personal attachment to the actor, regardless of their relation to the actor before the event. [18] Thus, politically motivated suicides have the ability to affect a large number of everyday people, and prime them to be more likely to act, despite their personal situation remaining largely unchanged.

Given some influence, it has been found that mass amounts of people on the periphery of society can create large scale protests. [19] If they are informed of the right time and venue to signal their participation, groups of everyday citizens can spur action based on their connections with others. Information is spread through many weak connections, often by sharing ones support for a cause or protest on social media. When politically motivated suicides occur, they can spread rapidly through media outlets, including modern social media, expanding the number of

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[18]Hyojoung (2002)

[19]Steinert-Threlkeld (2017)

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people exposed to the event, who can go through the mental and emotional reactions which accompany these events. Jasper (1997) describes "Moral Shocks", which are horrifying events that can mobilize many people, even those who do not know each other, to engage in action together. Publicized self-destructions are a perfect example of these moral shocks. As politically motivated suicides tend to be performative in nature [20], there is often careful thought and planning before these events in order to guarantee that there will be witnesses and media recordings. The abundance of recordings and personal accounts leads to visuals and retellings which tend to offend the senses and morality of those who encounter the media following the event.

There have been several explanations as to specific cognitive processes which people undergo when they witness a politically motivated self-destruction. Jeffreys (1952) describes the way that observers view the person decried as the cause of a self-destruction. Self-destructions are often seen as murders, with the accused party believed to be the murderer. People feel that the accused has forced death upon the actor, rather than it being a willing choice. In addition, there are feelings of shame and guilt associated with witnessing these deaths. [21] Many people who witness the death of an actor experience shame that they did not have the conviction to act, and thus potentially save the life of this individual. They also feel anger at the death of the actor, and this anger is directed towards the accused. Thus, politically motivated self-destruction can alter the way that people think about their community, making them more disposed to engage in social movements to benefit their new community. [22]

Combining these individual and social approaches to protest onset sheds light

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[20]Kirkpatrick (2019)

[21]Hyojoung (2002)

[22]Polletta and Jasper (2001)

on the effectiveness of politically motivated suicide as a means to start a movement. Rather than focusing on any benefit to be gained from action, the focus should be on the cognitive effects and changing community relations immediately following a politically motivated suicide. The importance of visual and media representation underscores why many acts may fail to elicit a response. In order for an act to become effective there must be morally shocking videos or stories surrounding the event, which are spread quickly among many people. Otherwise, it is unlikely that enough people will engage with the issue to signal their willingness to act upon it. An incidence of self-destruction which the community can witness again and again poses a moral shock for locals, changing the way that those who witness the act relate to others around them. Friends and community members influence one another by signaling their resolve to act. When news of this death, and of growing support for the cause spreads, more and more people undergo the cognitive processes which make them more likely to mobilize. If many people witness this death, there is power for the mass number of the periphery to create collective action. In addition, if there exists a social group in the community who can claim a connection to this actor or cause, and can effectively use the symbolic media coming from the event, they are gifted with the ability to prime their potential protesters with the desire to protest en masse. This may act as a significant boost to groups, whose biggest hurdle is the ability to get people to commit their time to attending protests. Given the changing community relations, groups can use these emotional images to boost their movement past the beginning stages, and rapidly gain members.

2.0.3 Protests and Repression

The next piece of the puzzle to unpack is how protests which were ignited by an incident of self-destruction grow past the incipient phase and rise to be of national

importance. There are many dangers that a movement must avoid in order to grow and maintain itself. The nature of these movements, and government reactions to them, form the environment in which the movements will evolve, and the potential actions available to them. I will investigate how the legacy of a politically motivated suicide can influence the tactics available to a protest movement, and how that shapes government reactions to the movement.

Restricting the study to non-violent suicides and movements poses important implications for the interplay between the group and the government. Chenoweth and Cunningham (2013) discuss the historic lack of attention that has been paid to non-violent action. Researchers previously underestimated the ability of non-violent movements to create change at the national level, and instead directed their focus on the study of violent and armed conflict. However, a renewed focus on non-violent campaigns reveals that they are in fact more prone to success, even in authoritarian and repressive regimes. [23]

Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) detail two main advantages that non-violent resistance campaigns have over violent ones. First, non-violent campaigns offer lower barriers to participation, thus garnering greater support. Non-violent campaigns do not ask their participants to fight against opposition forces in armed conflict. Rather, they can ask people merely to march with them, or simply be present at a rally. They can even have atmospheres that are almost festival like, with concerts, food, singing, and dancing. This is much more appealing to many people than leaving behind their way of life for a battlefield. This low barrier to participation can explain why politically motivated suicides are prone to combining with non-violent movements. If tens of thousands are primed to act with emotional imagery, and then provided with a low risk option to participate, it makes sense that a non-violent movement could

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[23]Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)

see a sudden drastic increase in participation following a suicide.

Secondly, non-violent campaigns are able to separate the opposition from their pillars of support. Non-violent campaigns are less prone to create a "rally around the flag" effect, and more likely to result in the alienation of the base of support for the opposition. This second point, the alienation of the base of support, relies upon the belief that brutal repression of unarmed and non-violent protesters is not a sustainable counter protest method. Government agents rely on support from the international community, and violent imagery of police brutalizing non-violent protesters make it difficult for international agents to support a government without seeing backlash from their own constituency. This meshes well with the importance of a protest suicide. When a person commits a politically motivated suicide, they are turning their body into a message, symbolizing the pain and destruction of those around them. [24] This message is directed towards those who would find sympathy for the plight of the repressed, to undercut their tolerance of violence from the state. Imagery of the body is a recurring theme in politically motivated suicides [25] , depicting the body as being violated and destroyed long before the death of the actor. These same messages can be seen in the bodies of repressed individuals, and follow-up deaths. [26]

Not all repression, however, takes the form of violent beatings or killings performed by state forces. Repression is not one unchanging strategy followed by state forces, but rather changes and evolves as protest movements do. There has been no shortage in study on the dynamics of repression, and how it affects the opposition. [27] This field has found contrasting evidence on the effect of repression on dissent, but

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[24]Andriolo (2006)

[25]Frazier et al. (2009), Yuill (2007), Sands (1983)

[26]Frazier et al. (2009)

[27]Earl et al. (2003), Moore (1998), Siegel (2011)

has in recent years put forth an effort to ameliorate contrasting works. [28] Despite this disagreement, research on repression provides important information for the interplay between politically motivated suicides and protest repression. As a starting point for analysis of repression, it is important to know whether or not a group will be repressed at all. Earl et al. (2003) discusses which protest events will and will not see repression by government police forces. They find that due to the limited police resources, protests which are large in size and violent in their tactics are the most likely to experience repression. Thus, non-violent protests should be far less likely to be repressed when they are still small in size. However, several other factors hold influence on the level of repression that a group will face, namely the frequency which conflict occurs, and their deviancy from social norms. [29]

The deviancy from social norms requires more attention. Supposedly, deviancy from social norms alerts the government that a legitimate threat arises, and notifies the regime "[...] that it is being directly challenged and that political repression would likely be increased as a means of reestablishing the culturally defined parameters of acceptable behavior."(Davenport 689) [30] The shock of politically motivated suicides comes in part from their distance from social norms, therefore following this logic, movements stemming from these acts should be on the radar of government agents, and should see repression early on. A factor which may skew reports of oppression by government forces is repression by family or community members. Many politically motivated suicides are silenced by family members and local government agents, such

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[28] Moore (1998) provides test of works which provide a contrasting view of repression. Moore tests several approaches (Rasler (1996), Gupta et al. (1993), Lichbach (1987)), and finds that Lichbach (1987) has the most accurate description of repression, in that inconsistent government policies of repression can cause more dissent from rebel groups.

[29] Davenport (1995)

[30] Davenport (1995)

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as doctors and hospital workers, before they ever reach the public eye. [31] If the act is carried out in a place where the information can be contained, family members or doctors may restrict or hide information, so as to avoid shame or responsibility. [32] This leads us to believe that much of the potential repression which politically motivated suicides would see is actually carried out by family members and everyday government employees, through their silencing of reports to protect the desires of the family.

Another point of contention in the political repression literature is whether violent repression ends non-violent protest movements, or galvanizes others into increased action. Opp and Roehl (1990) survey the literature to determine whether repression bolsters or inhibits participation in protest movements. After contrasting the research paradigms of resource mobilization [33], relative deprivation [34], and the theory of collective action [35] several categories surface as key points for determining the effect of repression on participation. Namely, repression affects both the moral and social incentives that an individual faces. An individual's social network has the largest single influence on whether or not repression will deter or bolster them into action. If the social network is approving of protest actions, and will not sanction the individual for undergoing repression, then there is no social or moral barrier to collective action. Given the cognitive effects of shame and anger previously discussed, it is more likely that social networks would view a lack of participation negatively. In addition, due to the moral shock of the event, new networks can be built, based

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[31] Laloë and Ganesan (2002), Ahmadi and Ytterstad (2007), Rothschild et al. (2001), Campbell and Guiao (2004), Rasool and Payton (2014)

[32] Campbell and Guiao (2004)

[33] Focusing on Zald et al. (1988)

[34] Focusing on Gurr (1970)

[35] Focusing on Olson (1965)

solely on the desire for action after a politically motivated suicide. [36] It follows that these new social connections would be very accepting of the risks and consequences of repression.

This structure, many people acting with new social ties, may serve to make these protests more robust. When groups are highly centralized, they tend to be easier to repress. When governments are able to identify and remove key organizers and ideological leaders, centralized protests tend to fail. [37] But protests stemming from a politically motivated suicide cannot have their ideological leader repressed. As long as the moral head of the protest remains the person who sacrificed themselves, the government will find it hard to remove any one person who is representative of the group. In addition, as previously mentioned, these protests rely on weak or new social ties. Thus the repression of any select group of people may not prove effective in preventing the movement from growing. Rather, the ties which disapprove of repression may galvanize people into further action when repressive actions are taken. In other words, the lack of a living ideological head, and the construction of diffuse social ties combine to make protests stemming from a politically motivated suicide particularly robust in the face of repression.

One of the most important factors in determine whether or not protests can grow is the ability to distribute the time and location of an event. With social media, the likelihood that people are aware of the time and place of planned protests, and can signal to others that they will attend, rises. [38] However, events following a politically motivated suicide have a unique advantage in this arena, with or without modern social media: the funeral of the actor provides an obvious and easily spread venue

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[36] Jasper (1997)

[37] Siegel (2011)

[38] Steinert-Threlkeld (2017)

and time for a large march. Funerals for these actors have grown from the hundreds of thousands into the millions. [39] Historically, it seems as though states have had little hesitation attempting to recover and hide the bodies of these people [40] , but these efforts seem to have escalated protest efforts, rather than diminished them. When viewing funeral marches through the lens of scale shifting, or the attempt to bring an issue from a small, less known effort, to making the movement nationally relevant, funeral marches are an effective vehicle to escalate protests, and their goals. Diversions of funerals for important movements, turning them into symbolic events to spread the message of the group has been shown to shift up the scale and importance of a movement. [41] While the use of funeral marchers may or may not shield protesters from repression, it does serve to escalate the importance and size of a movement to a national event.

2.0.4   Protests at the National Level and Movement Death

While the majority of studies pertaining to politically motivated suicide begin their analysis on those which reach nation and world altering levels [42] , this level reaches the extent of the scope of this paper. One of the main points of this paper is to correct this issue: much of this literature samples on the dependent variable, viewing the success of these actions only through the select few which have made a notable impact. However, it would not do to abandon the investigation of the relationship between protest movements and politically motivated suicide before addressing how these events can either affect their desired change, or fail to do so. It should be noted that this level is where the least influence from the initial act is expected. This point

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[39]Olsarova (2014),Biggs (2005), Jacobs (2006)

[40]Golan (1970)

[41]Johnston (2006)

[42]Biggs (2005), Hyojoung (2002), Frazier et al. (2009),Andriolo (2006), Michelsen (2015)

can be reached months or years after the initial act. However, the values and morals that a group is founded on can continue to influence the actions a group takes for many years. [43] By this point many factors will have intervened, and the message of the movement will have invariably changed, but the legacy of the initial action can remain within the movement, thus a look at the death of protest movements could illuminate ways in which movements spawning from politically motivated suicides can be more or less susceptible to petering out before they achieve their goal.

Social movements tend to fail for two main reasons: outside opposition or inside influences. As previously discussed, non-violent groups can prove particularly resistant to outside forces, such as violent repression, but it remains unseen if a politically motivated suicide can prevent the death of a movement from internal factors. These internal factors include member burnout, lost commitment, fractionalization/polarization, and the lost ability to adapt and grow. [44] While a politically motivated suicide may have difficult affecting some of these issues, such as preventing a group from polarizing over issue, it may have a substantial affect over others, such as delaying member burnout and loss of commitment. Politically motivated suicides are able to provide continued inspiration due to their ability to freeze an actor in the moment of their death, removing them from time and change, cementing them as a culturally significant symbol. [45] Photographs and videos in particular have a way of preserving and evoking specific memories. These actors are eternally preserved in the moments before their death, at the height of their symbolism and rebellion. When these images are viewed, they bring up memories attached to the images at the time that they were taken. These images can reinvigorate the feelings attached to them for

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[43]Thies (2001)

[44]Davenport (2015)

[45]Murray Yang (2011), Zelizer (2004)

decades to come. [46] In this way, the visuals following a politically motivated suicide can be harnessed to maintain the motivation of the movement members.

The death of an actor in a politically motivated suicide can be tied to all stages of a protest movement. They have the ability to create new networks among people, and prime them to be more willing to participate in protest movements. The funeral of the actor can serve as a pivotal moment, where movements can grow their message and actions to the national level. Finally, the continued legacy of the visuals and rhetoric of the actor can offer continued inspiration and motivation, to fuel the movement for years to come. In the following section I will develop concepts, drawing heavily upon the political philosophy and collective action fields. In the following chapters, these concepts will be illustrated through three major case studies.

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[46]Zelizer (2004)

Chapter 3

THEORY

I gladly sacrifice myself to the proud sons and daughters of my country.
Dissolve the Skeleton Corps! Step down, military dictatorship!

PARK SUNG HEE

To gain a holistic view of politically motivated suicide, all of the stages of a protest movement must be investigated. The first half of this section will decipher the factors which contribute most to the potential success of any single incident of politically motivated suicide. The latter half of this section will deal with the ability of politically motivated suicides to escalate and maintain protest movements. The aim of this section is to develop concepts which will then be investigated in the ensuing case studies. These ideas should serve to dispel the notion that these are random events, and that their effects cannot be anticipated. This work will by no means attempt to predict when a politically motivated will occur, rather, the aim is to determine which characteristics of a politically motivated suicide make it suited to promote the development, maintenance, and resilience of protest movements. The following section will follow the previous divide of protest onset, protest growth, and finally protests at the national level/protest death.

Quote from Jameson (1991)

3.0.1 Effect on Protest Onset

The importance of Symbolism

The visual effect of politically motivated suicides has been made quite clear. These deaths rely on their performative nature to make their point. The cognitive effects which prime people to act are most effective when they are confronted with the horrific nature of the "about to die moment". [1] As such, politically motivated suicides with compelling symbolism and visuals have caught the attention of media outlets worldwide, becoming the focal point of their coverage. The horrific nature of these acts make for excellent news content, and newspapers rarely fail to publish photos or videos of the events.

For example, Malcolm Browne won both a Pulitzer Prize and the World Press photo of the year award in 1963, for his coverage of the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc. [2] This image was printed thousands of times in newspapers across the world. It received attention from many world leaders, and was considered one of the most impactful images of the time. [3]

Figure 3.1: Self-Immolation of Thich Quang Duc as Captured by Malcolm Browne

While this image sparked a conversation on violence against Buddhists in Vietnam, its powerful message spoke across nations. In this image we

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[1] Zelizer (2004)

[2] Witty (2012)

[3] Jacobs (2006),Tan and Engelmann (2017)

can clearly see a monk in a medative position, who appears to be suffering calmly. It seems clear that this person is here of their own choice, and suffering for others. People from any nation can understand what is going on in this photograph, and thus will undergo an emotional transformation.

However, this photograph was not taken by pure coincidence. For this event, the immolation was planned well in advance, and the press was invited, although not they were told what would occur. [4] In addition, roads were blocked and emergency vehicles were halted to ensure that the event would not be stopped, or deescalated. The actors in this case took stringent steps to ensure that the media would be present to record the entire action, and that they would not be interrupted.

It is common for politically motivated suicides to occur in public places, such as major town squares, religious sites, or government buildings. Even if these events are not pre-arranged, with the media invited, the high population density in these areas makes it more likely that there will be many people with the ability to capture and retell the event. In addition, there are many bystanders to witness the act first-hand, to begin spreading the news to a diverse range of social networks. With the advent of smart-phones and mobile cameras, it is very common for bystanders to take videos and photos of the act to share with the media, if no news outlets are present. As a result, there is rarely a lack of visuals and witnesses for major news outlets to interview, as long as the event occurs in a heavily populated area. The inverse of this is if the politically motivated suicide happens at a time and place where no-one is present; In this case, there are a select few people who are able to regulate the media and the message coming out of the action. If those few people decide to cover up or hide the action, then it is highly unlikely that it will spread into a major story. Extensive media coverage can expose people across the globe to

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[4]Jacobs (2006)

visuals of the action, causing them to undergo the emotional and cognitive processes associated with political suicides. The messages and images which spread affect the symbolism of the event. It is unlikely that actions which are not accompanied by powerful messages and visuals will become symbolic, or culturally important in their time. To put it in a single sentence, I expect only cases which can produce culturally impactful imagery, stories, or ties, to be able to inspire follow up protests.

Importance of Group Access

The importance of widespread symbolic media should not be a radical notion given the work on collective action. It makes intuitive sense that the more people hear about a politically motivated suicide, the more chances they have to experience the emotions that follow from the event. However, the death of the person who chooses to commit suicide is not enough in isolation for people to take to the streets and protest. In order for there to be protests which stem from an event, it must be tied to an important political issue. After all, in order to even be considered a politically motivated suicide, and thus enter into the scope of this paper, a suicide must be prompted by some social injustice which the actor wishes to rectify. The importance of the issue, and the existence of groups to direct action, will come into play when deciding whether or not a person will be moved enough to mobilize. While politically motivated suicides can cause people to develop strong emotions to an already important issue [5] , it is doubtful that they have to ability to single-handedly start the debate on a topic. It should be noted that the observer need not agree with the actor on the issue. Even those who hold the opposing view point to the actor can be deeply affected by the event, and may even change their stance on the

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[5]Hyojoung (2002)

issue. [6] However, the context and culture of the time is highly important in deciding the extent to which the event makes individuals question their beliefs on an issue. If the self-destruction is connected to an issue which truly does not matter to the observer, it is unlikely that they take the time to think deeply about the act, and then subsequently engage in political action. In addition, even if the actor cares deeply for an issue, they will need a place and time to direct their emotions. Without the existence of prior groups to bolster and spread the symbolic messages and images, and direct the resulting emotion, it can be difficult for concrete movements to arise from an action

This connection to a political issue can be called the group access to the action. Social movement organizations who can convince public and government forces that they represent the deceased can gain control over the organizing of death ceremonies and memorial events. When prior groups exist to harness and direct people drawn to an issue, they are able to rapidly grow their organizations, and begin to pressure law makers and government heads to bend to their desires. However, this connection cannot be taken for granted. Rather, the message which develops from an event will often reflect a struggle between the social group and the government. While the social group will leverage their connection to the actor, and try to paint them as a martyr, the government is expected to attack the morality of both the individual and the group. Thus, when investigating these issues, the important social actors of the time need to play a key role. Put simply, these deaths provide an opportunity for related social organizations to lay claim to the actor, and use their impactful death to up-shift the scale of their issue, if they can maintain control over the narrative of the death. It follows that deaths where a social organization can believably lay claim to the actor should see increased mobilization.

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[6]Mecklin (1965)

Both of these factors: the existence of symbolic images and of pre-existing groups is necessary for a national protest to arise. Without the presence of images or first hand accounts, it is unlikely that any group would be able to use a politically motivated suicide to galvanize action in tens to hundreds of thousands of locals. In addition, there would likely be no strong international support for the group. On the other hand, if the there are images of the group, but no-one to provide a time and place for people to gather, then it is less likely that large groups will gather together. [7] The most common combination of these factors, unfortunately, is that there is no preexisting group, and no imagery from these events. These are events in which even small scale movement is not expected, the cases where they are covered up or written off. Although it is exceptionally rare, the cases which combine spectacular symbolism and working social organization are the famous cases which change the course of history in a single, or several, nations. Thus, it is expected that only cases where there are both symbolic media and strong group access are expected to become international issues.

3.0.2   Effect on Protest Growth

The previous concepts could theoretically be linked to any way of popularizing a political message. A message which is highly connected to social interests at any time could appeal to the emotions of viewers. Also, these messages could easily be spread through national news outlets, television, social media, and any other number of mediums. While it is difficult to match the emotional appeal of a politically motivated suicide, there could be comparable messages. However, there is something

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[7]Steinert-Threlkeld (2017) explain cases where it seems that the movement is spontaneous. In this case, although there may not be one central leader, there are still several focus points that people gather around

which is unique to politically motivated suicides that none of these other forms of communication can offer: the death of the messenger. The death of the individual gives a very timely and obvious venue for a protest to develop. There are countless examples of funeral processions and memorial services being used for political purposes [8] , and the funerals of famous protesters can grow to protests of over tens of thousands of people. [9] The funerals make for a perfect protest event for several key reasons. First, they provide a set time and place, while also being a symbolic event. Major events are often catalysts for large scale action [10] , and protest organizers do not need to wait for a significant or symbolic day, where they believe people will be more willing to act. A funeral always marks a symbolic and important day. Funerals also happen quickly after the death of an actor, when their sacrifice is clear in the minds of the people, and they have recently undergone the cognitive effects of witnessing a politically motivated suicide. This provides the first, and best, opportunity for the movement to rapidly gain followers, and shift their issue to a national scale. [11]

Another potential benefit of a protest at a funeral is the social stigma of interrupting ceremonies surrounding death. Protests around death ceremonies and funerals have been known to grow into other forms of civil disobedience, and to become volatile when repressed. [12] What remains to be seen however, is whether or not these gatherings are any safer for protesters. The underlying issue is discovering if the cognitive effects of a politically motivated suicide make individuals more willing to risk repression and physical harm, or if individuals have a reason to believe that these

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[8]Goldstein (1984), Betten (1968)

[9]Olsarova (2014), Joiner (1964)

[10]Francisco (2004)

[11]Johnston (2006)

[12]Tamason (1980)

protests will be safer for them to attend. The pacifying effect of funerals would be an important boost to their protester turnout, on top of the symbolism of the event. As such, funeral marches and memorial services should act as safe and convenient ways for social movement organizations to incorporate the symbolism of the actor with their message. These should be among the first protest events which see a shift in scale to national events.

3.0.3 Ability to Prevent Protest Death

Finally, politically motivated suicides may have the ability to extend the life of a movement. Theoretically, this effect should be less tied to the initial act itself, and more to the cultural feelings surrounding the media of the event. The media leading up to the death of an actor takes them out of time, and cements them in the moment just before their deaths. [13] In this way, the rhetoric and cultural significance of the action can continue to change and grow, taking on new meanings, well after the death of the actor. This media should continue to inspire and motivate members of the group throughout the duration of the campaign. While this may do little to remedy outside forces, such as effective repression, or organizational factors, such as fractionalization, it should reduce the speed of member burnout and lost motivation. [14] Social movement organizations are expected to use the names, images, and ideas of the actors to continuously inspire protesters, and remind them what has been sacrificed. I expect that social movement organizations should continue to use the thoughts, ideas, and images of the act of politically motivated suicide well into their campaigns, as a way to inspire protesters and prevent member dropout

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[13]Zelizer (2004)

[14]Davenport (2015)

3.0.4 Exploring Concepts

A series of case studies will follow, which will illustrate the importance of each of the previous concepts. These concepts can be seen at work in the history of the major events, and their absence can be seen in the cases which failed to get off the ground.

First will be a contrast of the incredibly famous action of Jan Palach, with the less known Rysard Siwiec. Although both self-immolated within a few months of one another, in similar fashions, the lack of information restriction around Palach's act, as well as his connections to student protest groups, allowed protests in the hundreds of thousands to form in his name.

Secondly, the famous case of Thich Quang Duc will be investigated, to shine light on the way that existing groups can utilize their own members, rather than waiting to take hold of the actions of an outsider. Special attention will be payed to the planning and execution of Duc's act by himself and the members of his organization. This will be contrasted with the death of Dr. Homa Darabi. Darabi, who at one time was an avid member of many political groups, failed to make a connection to any one group at the time of her action. The slow erosion of Dr. Darabi's social ties culminated in the failure of her protest to garner massive support for her cause.

Finally, I will explore the hardest cases to examine, those who remain unknown. Through an analysis of Donaldson's collection of over 300 personal accounts of self-immolation, I will highlight several cases which underscore the importance of symbolism and group access. In addition, a look at cases for which there is little to no information will provide insights on how to improve and advance the study of politically motivated suicide. This section will culminate with cases that provide important implications for the advencement of the study of politically motivated suicides.

Chapter 4

JAN PALACH AND RYSZARD SIWIEC

People, who still have a spark of humanity! Pull yourselves together! Hear my cry! A simple old man's cry, a cry of a son of a nation that beloved its own freedom as well as freedom of others above all, above its own life! Pull yourselves together. It's not too late yet!

Ryszard Siwiec

This section juxtaposes the acts of Jan Palach and Ryszard Siwiec. Although both of these acts happened in public locations, gave similar messages for the same issue, and happened a mere four months apart, only Jan Palach was able to inspire collective action. In fact, the death of Jan Palach was so powerful that the people of Czechoslovakia still maintain memorials near the location of this event. Two main factors mediate the success of these events. First, the ability of the government to destroy proof of Siwiec's death, and their ability to control the message of the act, resulted in public institutions believing reports of his death to be a lie. Secondly, Jan Palach's status as a student of Charles University allowed university student groups to secure the rights to organize protests around his funeral. This section will begin with a short history of the developing social actors in Czechoslovakia in the 1960's, followed by accounts of the deaths of Siwiec and Palach. Finally, I will illustrate how the comparison of these actors underscores the importance of symbolism and group access.

Quote from Izdebski et al. (2018)

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4.0.1 Growing Political Unrest in Communist Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia endured a decades long struggle for democratic reforms from the 1920s to 1980s. Although the young government attempted democratic reforms from the late 20s to early 30s, global conflict would serve to cut these reforms at their inception. Nazi forces began to invade Czech lands and brutalize their people. With this invasion, democratic reforms were halted, much to the chagrin of many people. However, local resistance from the Czech people was strong. By 1945, there was a Czech insurrection, extolling national democratic goals. [1] While this insurrection served to help expel the Nazi threat from the nation, it brought swift retaliation from the new eastern bloc. Throughout the 50s, the soviet nations attempted to undercut political power in Czechoslovakia, and maintain communist values.

By the mid 1960's, Czechoslovakia had a developing problem: its youth were growing disillusioned with politics, and apathetic to their national government. Leaders in the Czech communist party traced the blame for this issue to the Czechoslovak Youth Union (CSM), and sought to institute reform in the union. At the time, the CSM had over one million youth members, as membership in the party was considered a requirement to admission in higher education. [2] The party began hearing proposals to reform the organization of the CSM, in order to improve the political attitude of young people in the nation. In 1965, a university student by the name of Jiri Meuller outlined a plan for the young people to be able to build the organization in their own image, by breaking the CSM into a loose federation of related groups that would be able to raise their individual concerns to the party. [3] Although there initially seemed to be support for the reformation, the leader of the communist party

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[1] Luza (1969)

[2] Golan (1970)

[3] Golan (1970)

at the time, Antonin Novotny, struck the proposal down. This enraged students, who already felt disconnected and neglected by the system. By 1967, student marches for non-political aims began to gain an anti-party tint. The most notable case was the Strahov affair. Students of the Prague Technical Institute began a peaceful march in protest of the living conditions in the Strahov hostel. When police used force to break up the protest, entering the hostel and indiscriminately beating the residents, student activism was ignited, and participation swelled. [4] Many different groups sprang up to support the youth unions. Groups for young factory laborers, agriculture workers, Hungarian and Slovak minorities, and even young soldiers began to form. This groundswell of support set the stage for the importance of student activism during and after the Prague Spring. Students began to leave the CSM, as it seemed that their voices would not be heard. They developed the Independent Student Union (SUS) outside of the reach of the national party. Student activism shot up, from less than five percent to over thirty percent, as students began to push for reform, and an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of their views. [5]

In 1968, Alexander Dubcek became the secretary of the communist party in Czechoslovakia, and began a six month period of reforms that would become known as the Prague spring. Although the single party would remain the major political player in the nation, several democratic reforms would be instituted. Chief among these reforms were the freedom of the press, and the freedom of speech, with the elimination of the censorship of media. [6] This change was welcomed by the liberal SUS. During this short time span, the CSM officially dissolved, and the SUS became more welcoming toward the national government. Although formation of the SUS

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[4]Treptow (1992)

[5]Treptow (1992)

[6]Olsarova (2014)

was in violation of national laws, the government took no action against the students, and the group took a wait and see policy towards Dubcek's reforms. Student groups showed strong support for the new reforms, and public support for Dubcek began to rise. Although these new rights were warmly received by the citizens of Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union was far more wary. Czechoslovakia was a part of the Soviet Bloc of states, and in the height of the Cold War, the Soviet Union did not look kindly upon the mention of democratization within its sphere of influence.

In August of 1968, a Warsaw pact force with troops from five eastern bloc nations, headed by the Soviet Union, entered into Czechoslovakia to occupy the nation, with the hopes of strengthening the hold of its communist party and halting democratic reforms. This force was able to occupy the nation, ousting the head of the communist party while installing their own leader. What followed was a period of regression for the people in Czechoslovakia. The newly reformed communist party re-instituted policies, such as aggressive policing, ousting of political rivals, censorship of media, and strengthening of ties with eastern bloc countries.

There was a quick and visceral rejection of these policies by the Czech people, who had just recently convinced the previous leader of the communist party to remove them. Student organizations, who were still wary of the previous party, now began to take leadership positions in mobilizing the public and marching against this occupation. The thirty percent of politically active students grew to over fifty-seven percent. [7] In addition, tensions between workers and students began to dissolve in the face of the common threat of the Warsaw forces. A Worker-Student Union formed to put up a united front in support of their newfound rights.

The self-immolations of Ryszard Siwiec and Jan Palach sprung from this discontent, and both were aimed and inspiring people to rise against the Soviet occu-

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[7]Golan (1970)

pation of their nation. There are many similarities between these two acts. The self-immolations of Ryszard Siwiec and Jan Palach were separated by a mere four months (Siwiec self-immolated on September 8th, 1968, and Jan Palach on January 16th, 1969) and both self-immolated in front of large crowds, protesting Soviet imperialism, and the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Despite the similarities between these events, Jan Palach had a funeral ceremony attended by up to tens of thousands [8], while the news of Siwiec only surfaced once the movements had already gained notoriety. In this section, I will trace both of these events, with an eye on the factors of symbolism and group access. The destruction of recording of Siwiec's acts, and his lack of accessibility led to a lack of notoriety for his sacrifice. On the contrary, Palach was able to perform his act in a public place without government interference, and his prior work with student activism allowed student social movement organizations to leverage his death in the support of their cause.

4.0.2   Ryszard Siwiec

Siwiec planned his actions carefully and well in advance, like many others who commit politically motivated suicides. In the days before his act, Siwiec printed out leaflets, prepared a will, and left notes and belongings to loved ones. He also recorded a cassette tape of his main messages. Siwiec decided to use a well attended harvest festival as the location for his act. [9] The harvest festival attracted crowds in the hundreds of thousands, and many high ranking government officials would be in attendance. In particular, one of the most important politicians in Poland at the time, Władysław Gomułka, would be in attendance. [10] The action happened in the

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[8]Olsarova (2014)

[9]Olsarova (2014)

[10]Izdebski et al. (2018)

midst of the crowds; Ryszard Siwiec covered himself in accelerant and burned while shouting slogans of freedom for eastern bloc nations. Guards came to put out the flames, and quickly removed Siwiec from the scene. Despite many people witnessing the action, any and all media of the event was suppressed by officials. Reporters on scene were forbidden from writing about the events, and their film was confiscated and destroyed. In addition, rumors were spread that a drunken man had caused himself some burns, to discredit any claims of a political activist. [11] The report of the event did make its way to the editors at Radio Free Europe, but was not taken seriously at the time. It was not until seven months later that Radio Free Europe reviewed this report, and finally ran the story of Siwiec, giving some visibility to his sacrifice.

4.0.3   Jan Palach

Jan Palach was a student at Charles University, in Prague. Palach had a history as a political activist, engaging in several protests against the national occupation of Czechoslovakia, and the rebuilding of the communist party. Much like Ryszard Siwiec, Jan Palach's act was pre-planned. Palach chose Wencelas Square, a busy intersection of life in Prague, as the site for his act. In addition to serving as a public place, with high traffic, this location serves a more symbolic purpose: this was the location where Czech Independence was announced in 1918. With this location, Palach was sending a clear message, that Czechoslovakia, once again, needs to declare its Independence as a nation. On January 16th, Palach doused himself in petrol, set himself alight, and ran through the square to the statue of Saint Wencelas, in the center of the square. As Palach collapsed, some people ran over to put out the flames, and at his instructions

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[11]In (2018)

took a briefcase over to the statue, for a prepared letter to be read. [12] In this letter, Palach described himself as "Torch Number 1", a member of a group who would not hesitate to sacrifice themselves in protest for their cause. [13] Much like Siwiec, Palach did not die of his wounds on the scene, but rather was taken to a local hospital. The director of the burn treatment center in the hospital did not allow anyone, such as reporters or police, into Palach's room. [14] Communist authorities did attempt to censor information about the event, but they acted too late. For Siwiec, they were able to prevent the information from leaving the immediate area, but the censorship of Palach's act was not established until the 19th of January, after most people in the nation had already been informed. Even then, they could not remove mentions of the act entirely; articles were restricted to providing updates on sanctioned memorial events.

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[12]Blazek (2009)

[13]Skacel and Lopatka (2019)

[14]Blazek (2009)

The importance of student groups, faculty, and the university, remained throughout the duration of the marches honoring Palach. Palach's identity as a young philosophy student were tied to messages honoring him. While Palach was still in the hospital, a group of young students began a hunger strike where his act took place. In ad-

Figure 4.1: Masses of Protesters Attend the Funeral of Jan Palach (Steinzova (2019))

dition, after Palach's eventual demise, one of the largest protests in his memory was organized by the Union of University students of Bohemia and Moravia. [15] This procession started in Wencelas Square, and ended at Charles University, where his remains were on display. At the university, many students and faculty gave speeches in support of the ideas which Palach espoused. In the following days, and untold number of people would line up to pass by the body of Jan Palach in order to pay their respects. Due to the peaceful and organized nature of their previous protest, the student union was also given permission to plan his funeral. This march once again drew in tens of thousands of followers, and featured speeches from the rector of Charles University, several university deans, and fellow students. Due to the sheer size of the protests, foreign heads of state began to pay their respects as well. The UN Secretary General, the Italian and Indian Prime Ministers,

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[15]Blazek (2009)

as well as Pope Paul VI all put out messages paying tribute to the death of this young student. [16]

Although the protests immediately following Palach's death would not achieve his goal, this was not the end of his inspiration. Not only did his death serve to help end the apathy of young people towards politics, but he also became a national symbol of the virtues of youth and protest. Two other Jans had already become symbols of resistance for the Czech people. Jan Hus, a priest who was burned at the stake for his reformist views, and Jan Opletal, another Charles University student whose execution by

Figure 4.2: Thousands Line up to See Palach's Remains at Charles University (Steinzova (2019))

Nazis in an opposition rally bloomed anti-Nazi protests, combined with the death of Palach. The symbolic deaths of these three formed references to a "Holy Trinity" of Czech resistance. [17] Unfortunately, although Palach was able to inspire people for a short time, it does not appear that his act had the power to sustain mass protests. While invoking his death, and the deaths of follow-up immolaters could keep the public roused for several months, eventually the apathy returned to the public. The Soviet Union recognized the importance of this apathy, and installed a new leader at the head of the party, who dissolved the student unions, effectively ending the groups

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[16]Blazek (2009)

[17]Olsarova (2014)

who could effectively spread Palach's message. It is possible that a lack of imagery could have led to the inability of Palach's act to maintain protest numbers. While it cannot be said that his act lack a cultural impact making him a symbol, there was a distinct lack of the visual medium which can preserve the emotions of the action. [18] This is not to say that Palach was forgotten entirely. His name has remained prominent, with marchers invoking his sacrifice, and the renaming of places of honor to cement the importance of his act to the history of the nation. [19] His cultural influence remains strong in Prague to this day. Jan Palach square was named in his honor, and yearly government officials, college professors and students gather in his memory. These physical spaces and gatherings serve to reinforce the significance of Palach and his action, cementing his place in the historical memory of the Czech people. [20]

4.0.5   Comparing Palach and Siwiec

The juxtaposition of these two acts reveals the importance of symbolism and group access. Although both of these acts happened in broad daylight, with many onlookers, it cannot be said that they have the same symbolic nature. The information and media surrounding Siwiec was able to be contained by government forces. The destruction of the recordings and photographs of his actions, along with the leaflets with his message, effectively prevented powerful images from inspiring the nation. In addition, the ability of the government to paint Siwiec as a drunk who had an accident allowed them to tamper any potential reports of the outstanding nature of Siwiec's character. Palach's act stands in stark contrast to this. Government forces were not

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[18]Zelizer (2004)

[19]Azaryahu (1996)

[20]Azaryahu (1996)

able to stop Palach at the scene of his action, and were prevented from accessing his hospital room in the days before his death. This allowed his message to spread far and wide, and limited the tampering that government agents could perform.

Another factor which separates Palach from Siwiec is his accessibility to social movement organizations. Siwiec was not a member of any existing social movement organization. There was no-one to pry for information about his death, or to spread his message any further. Palach, on the other hand, was a prime candidate for escalating the issues of the social groups at the time. Student organizations were some of the top organizers for social action, and Palach was no stranger to these organizations. He had participated in previous movements, and held clear ties to the university. It is a contested debate whether or not Palach was a member of a concrete organization as he planned his action. In his leaflets at the time of his death, Palach indicates that he is only torch number one, and there there are others ready to follow. Some argue that this was merely a threat to increase the legitimacy of his desires [21] , while others think that a concrete group could have existed, but have lost the resolve to follow up on their politically motivated suicides. [22] However, this is a minor debate, as student organizations latched onto Palach's action. More torches did follow, and organization were able to use the notoriety to gather many people to their cause.

The only part in which Palach does not meet the expectations of this paper is in his ability to maintain the protest size which his death initially inspired. As previously mentioned, protests eventually petered out, and it cannot be said that they directly achieved their goal. It may be that the lack of visual representation prevented groups from keeping the emotions of their protesters in a frenzy. While

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[21]Blazek (2009)

[22]Treptow (1992)

Palach immolated in a public place, there are no pictures of him in his "about to die moment." [23] As apathy was rampant among youth at the time, [24] it may be that these images were necessary to fight off the protesters increasing disillusionment with their lack of voice within society. However, despite the poor odds, Palach and these movements were able to cement themselves in the history of the nation.

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[23]Zelizer (2004)

[24]Treptow (1992)

Chapter 5

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL TIES

This chapter will compare two very unlike cases. First, the spectacular success of the death of Thich Quang Duc will illustrate a perfect case. Duc was a member of an existing group, and was able to enroll his group members in the production of his death, causing it to become a vitally important international issue. On the other hand, Dr. Homa Darabi's isolation from political groups, and society at large, will show the importance of group access, or in this case a lack thereof. In these cases, the organizational ties of the actors hold the key to their success.

5.1   Thich Quang Duc

No news story has generated so much emotion in the world as that one.

JOHN F. KENNEDY, ON THE THICH QUANG DUC SELF-IMMOLATION

Thich Quang Duc is a well recognized name, for good reason. The death of Thich Quang Duc sent shock-waves through the world, and boosted the plight of Buddhists in South Vietnam to a worldwide issue. Duc and the members of his group were able to perfectly utilize symbolism and group access to turn international support against their enemy. Through coordination with his group members, Duc was able to ensure that symbolic imagery of his action would be distributed through international channels. In this section I will recount the beginning of the conflict in Vietnam, with special attention to the importance of foreign aid to the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. Secondly, I will detail how Duc was able to use his strong connections to socially

aware actors to escalate their suffering to an international platform. Finally, I will touch on the remaining cultural impact of Duc's act.

5.1.1 The Vietnam Conflict

The mid fifties throughout the sixties were a time of intense struggle for the Vietnamese people. The conflict in Vietnam sprung out of the end of the second world war. As power dynamics were rapidly changing, the colonial powers of France and Japan were weakened, and opportunities for new powers began to arise. Ho Chi Minh capitalized on the weakened Japanese control in Vietnam after the detonation of the atomic bombs, and marched into Hanoi in order to wrest away the rule of the Japanese controlled government. The foremost goal of this new power was to eliminate the grip of historic colonial rule in Vietnam. Although Ho Chi Minh and his followers (the Viet Minh) had communist motivations in the long run, initially they focused their efforts on eliminating the influence that France and Japan had left from their time as ruling powers. Given their relative strength, and support from the United States in the form of weapons and aircraft, the Viet Minh were able to rapidly increase their power in the area. With this expansion, power was consolidated to the communist portions of the government: Leaders with other ideals were put in positions that had been stripped of power and influence, printing presses were shut down, and many members of the opposition were put to death. In the countryside, landlords who had won their fortune by cooperating the French were stripped of their lands, and often killed by the Viet Minh. This land was then redistributed to peasant farmers in the area.

This is not to say that the spread of the Viet Minh party was completely without contestation. By 1946, Vietnamese nationalists were being supported by Chinese

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Quote from Jacobs (2006)

47

troops in the north of Vietnam. These members of the Vietnamese Nationalist parties were able to gain control over several provinces. However, the Chinese nationalists soon retreated with their support, and the opposition to the Viet Minh quickly fell. However, while all of this attention was being paid to the radical factions in the north of the nation, pockets of resistance quickly grew in the south.

Given the young age of the Viet Minh regime, and their relatively sparse capabilities, the French were easily able to regain control of the southern portion of Vietnam, including the economic power of Saigon. Initially, the French were sympathetic to the call of the Vietnamese people to end the colonial control of their nation. Negotiations began between the French Socialist Party and the Viet Minh in March of 1946. Originally the agreement was to let Ho Chi Minh remain in power in the north, and let the south of the nation vote on whether or not they would reunite. However, Ho Chi Minh stalled negotiations. In December of 1946, the Viet Minh attacked French troops, effectively ending the hope of peaceful negotiations. Ho Chi Minh was quickly driven out of his seat of power in Hanoi, and fled into the jungles where protracted warfare began to take place.

Rather than fight a protracted war, the French sought to install a strong national government which would be able to stand up to the assault of the communist Viet Minh in the north. Originally the French government requested Ngo Dinh Diem, a notable nationalist leader, to be the new head of this government; however, Diem refused due to the stipulations that France would continue to have special privileges. The French found a more willing leader in Bao Dai, who formed a regime with them underneath the French Union. However, this regime immediately ran into serious complications. Also in 1949, Mao Zedong gained control of China. Ho Chi Minh immediately traveled to the Chinese mainland to meet with Zedong and Stalin, who gave their support to his regime. Zedong immediately lent aid to Minh in his struggle

against French troops. Not only did the Chinese provide weapons and military leaders, they also assisted in the spread of communist ideology to the areas that they were able to secure. This aid helped the Viet Minh put pressure on the French, and in 1954 the French sought United States support, claiming that they could not continue the war and fulfill their NATO commitment at the same time. In spirit, the United States supported this action to hinder the spread of communism through Indochina, but their support was contingent on an attempt to form a united front with several other western powers, as to limit the number of ground troops that each nation would have to commit to the battle. Despite their mutual concerns, Britain, a key player in this would-be alliance, declined their assistance, and thus also ended the potential aid from the United States. Thus, in 1954 a peace treaty divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel, with Ho Chi Minh gaining control of the north, and Bao Dai holding tentative control in the south.

Ngo Dinh Diem, having left Vietnam due to a death sentence placed on him by the Minh regime, had fled to the United States. Here Diem spent time advocating for a free Vietnamese state. He gained the support of several politicians, most notably John F. Kennedy, a senator for Massachusetts at the time. When the Dai regime was given control over the south, Dai asked Diem to come back to Vietnam to serve as the premier of the regime. Diem accepted only on the stipulation that he was given full control over civilian and military matters. For the remainder of the year, Diem was forced not only to repair a war torn nation, but also to survive a flurry of coup plots and attempts. After bouts of miscommunication and contestation, the United States put its full support behind Diem, causing the French to give up their support of Dai and the fight against the Viet Minh, and to withdraw their troops from the nation. In 1955 Diem beat out Dai in an election, and became the sole leader of South Vietnam.

It is under the Diem regime that the oppression of Buddhist people began in earnest. At the time of the war, there was a massive internal struggle in South Vietnam. The Buddhists in the nation claimed rampant discrimination of their faith, that the governments was biased against them in favor of Catholics. Much of this persecution is thought to be influenced by President Diem's brother, and close advisor, Ngo Dinh Nhu. Nhu and his wife Tran Le Xuan (also known as Madam Nhu) supposedly advocated against Buddhists, and viciously persecuted them in the summer of 1963. [1] On May 7th, 1963, however, the relationship began to sour even more. In celebration of the Buddha's day of birth, thousands hung Buddhist flags on their homes and buildings. In response to this, a law from the mid 50's was invoked: this law prohibited any flag except for the national one to be flown in public. [2] Many Buddhists saw this law as targeting, as one week prior papal flags were prominently featured throughout many cities, to honor president Diem's bother, Ngo Dinh Thuc, in his twenty fifth year as the archbishop. The next day, thousands gathered in front of a radio station in order to voice their outrage at the religious targeting. In response, troops in armored cars arrived, and began firing into the crowd, and throwing grenades at protesters. Nine people were killed, including two children who had been run over by the government vehicles, and fourteen more were wounded. Relations between the Buddhists and the government began to worsen. Thousands of Buddhists took to the streets in anger over those who had been killed. Their concerns found purchase with the press in South Vietnam, who assailed the President and the government in their stories. It is under this context, a war from outside and massive protests from inside, that Diem and the people of South Vietnam experienced one of, if not the, most famous instances of self-immolation

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[1] Ellsberg (1971)

[2] Jacobs (2006), Thich Nhat Hanh (2008)

5.1.2 The Self-Immolation of Thich Quang Duc

Buddhist citizens were not keen to step down their protest efforts, and sought ways to gain support both in their own country, and from international onlookers. It is in this context which Thich Quang Duc planned his politically motivated suicide. Originally, other Buddhist leaders were resistant to the idea. Duc had to convince others that this was an appropriate action, which could draw many supporters to their cause. Thich Duc Nghiep, the monk in charge of foreign press relations, was an early supporter of the idea of a self-immolation. [3] Once Duc and Nghiep were able to convince their allies that a self-immolation would be acceptable, they carefully laid out their plan. First, they dealt with personal details, arranging monks to join in a procession, printing out fliers and pamphlets to hand out during the act, and even testing different kinds of fuel to see which would yield the best results. [4] Nghiep invited foreign reporters to the event, informing them that an important act was going to take place, but not disclosing the nature of what was to happen. On the day of the event, a procession of over 350 monks and nuns marched into a Saigon intersection, and cleared a space in the middle. This intersection was a just a few blocks away from the presidential palace, ensuring news would travel there fast. As the group stopped traffic, drawing a crowd, Thich Quang Duc took up the lotus position, and was doused in fuel by his fellow monks. As Duc burned, authorities were unable to make it to the scene to prevent or dampen the information from leaving the area. The blocked traffic prevented any police forces from the making their way to the area. In addition, select nuns laid down under the wheels to local fire trucks, so they could not make their way to the square to put out the flames. [5] Thus, Malcolm Browne was

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[3]Biggs (2005)

[4]Browne (1993)

[5]Browne (1964)

able to take the photograph which would live in infamy, going on to inspire millions to turn their support to the Buddhist cause. Most notably, American president John F. Kennedy cited the immolation as one of the main reasons he could no longer support the Diem regime. [6]

It is clear that the monks in this case understood the importance of imagery in creating a symbolic event. The group took painstaking steps to ensure that the event could not be stopped, and that foreign press would be present and ready to inform the world of the plight of the Buddhist people in Vietnam at the time. When viewing this act through the lens of symbolic nature and connections to pre-existing groups, it is clear why the world will never forget the action of Thich Quang Duc.

Thich Quang Duc's group connections are clear. Many Buddhists previously joined together in collective action to protest the government supported repression of their religion. In addition, Duc was a part of a group which had the desire to undertake an important step to boost the importance of their goal, and to leverage power against the national government. Although Duc had to convince them of this goal, once he had swayed their opinion, they were able to rehearse and plan this action to ensure its success.

The ability to rehearse the act makes this a rather unique case. Although most acts of politically motivated suicide are planned in advance, this is a standout case in regards to the complexity of the planning. In addition, although groups are able to lay claim to the ideas and emotions that the actor created, it seems to be rare that the actor is part of a concrete group which sanctions their actions. In this way, Duc's act did not need to make the jump from an individual act to a collective response, as it was a collective effort from the outset. The only other politically motivated

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[6]Lodge (1963)

52

suicides which see this level of coordination tend to be hunger strikes. [7] Duc's group had the foresight to recognize the importance of the visual when it comes to inspiring others. In addition, they recognized the importance of including foreign media, to gain international support.

5.1.3 Symbolism and the Legacy of Thich Quang Duc

The importance of international pressure reveals how the symbolism of Duc's action was able to influence people across many cultures: although I will focus on how this act was able to shift the relations between the United States and the Diem regime. This relation is the most important to the outcome of the protests, as the Diem regime held power mostly due to its support from the United States. After the Quang Duc immolation, the relationship diminished rapidly between these two nations, and a mere five months after Duc's immolation, Diem was removed from power.

Before the actions of Thich Quang Duc, the United States did not concern itself much with the South Vietnam's treatment of the Buddhist people. This relationship can be surmised by President Kennedy's reaction to the May 8th tragedy. Preoccupied by the abuse of his own people during the civil rights movement, Kennedy was not keen to stretch himself out to another human rights issue. When he received a report on the growing crisis in South Vietnam, he merely responded with "Who are these people?" (Jacobs 149). He would quickly reverse this apathy the next month however, after he viewed the image of Quang Duc burning in Saigon. The Kennedy administration quickly lost faith in the Diem regime, and their own handling of the situation. Kennedy removed the current U.S. ambassador, Nolting, and replaced him with Henry Lodge, who would take a far less tolerant approach to the Diem adminis-

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[7]McGray (1983),Rolston and McKeown (2017)

tration. Diem took this change as an affront to his rule, and refused to be compliant to U.S. pressure. At the same time, self-immolations were becoming widespread. While monks and nuns in Vietnam continued to burn, civilians in the United States began to follow their lead. U.S citizens such as Alice Herz and Norman Morrison, who will be featured in chapter 6, began to replicate Duc's act, and self-immolate in protest of the war. Public opinion in the United States had turned against the war, and the U.S. support of an oppressive Diem regime. Quickly, the Kennedy administration gave Diem one last chance: return to true religious freedom and distance himself from the genocidal Madam Nhu, or lose the support of the American people. Diem would refuse this chance however, leading to tentative U.S. support of a military coup. On November 1st, rebel forces began the siege of Diem's palace, and by the next morning he was dead.

The loss of U.S. support was directly related to the ousting and murder of president Diem. The iconic photo of Thich Quang Duc's death can be directly tied to the turn of U.S. support away from South Vietnam. The lack of religious tolerance in the nation, and the act of Thich Quang Duc makes repeated appearances in U.S. decisions to reverse their policy on South Vietnam, and eventually their support for a coup. When Duc self-immolated, he became a powerful symbol for the plight of the Buddhist people. Historian Seth Jacobs succinctly notes the symbolic nature of Duc's act when he states that "When Quang Duc consigned his body to the fire on that fateful June day, he reduced America's Diem experiment to ashes as well."(Jacobs, 149) In this way, not only did Duc's act symbolize the treatment of his people, it also became tied to the fall of the regime itself.

Duc's act remains one of the most symbolic events in history. Duc was honored with the title of Bodhisattva, one of the highest honors in the Buddhist religion. His very body became a religious symbol, with his unburnt heart being preserved as

a religious artefact. Although government forces attempted to raid the place where Duc's ashes and heart were being held, followers were able to escape with the artefacts by jumping fences to get to a U.S. missions outpost. [8]

As is to be expected from the fame of this particular case, Thich Quang Duc's act provides an excellent example of how politically motivated suicides can provide the tools needed for an issue to be escalated international issue. Duc was a member of a group which understood the importance of imagery, and ensured that their act would not be hindered, and that international reporters would be

Figure 5.1: People Celebrating the 54th Anniversary of Thich Quang Duc's Death near a Shrine in His Honor(Ho (2017))

present. The resulting pictures were highly emotionally charged, and it is clear that top U.S. officials, including president John F. Kennedy were moved by them. These images turned public support against the Diem regime, and exploded public support for Buddhist protesters. Duc himself became the symbol of Buddhist repression, and inspired thousands of people to move in support of their cause, in multiple nations. This swell in support for religious tolerance made the U.S. backing of the Diem regime untenable, culminating in a coup of the Diem regime.

While it may be difficult for groups to combine factors this well in the future, this case underscores the importance of symbolism and group access when it comes

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[8]Jones (2003)

to leveraging politically motivated suicides. Duc's group ensured that the act would not be taken in vain, and that they would be able to clearly connect the act to their issue. Not only did they ensure that this act would garner support for their cause locally, but the invitation of foreign press guaranteed the potential of the movement to undercut the international support of their opposition, and to grow their cause to a worldwide issue.

5.2   Dr. Homa Darabi

When I called them, they told me that this story wasn't sensational because I didn't have a picture of my sister burning in fire. I was really shocked and humiliated.

<div align="right">PARVIN DARABI, ON HER SISTER'S DEATH</div>

In this section, I illustrate the action of Dr. Homa Darabi, a noted women's rights advocate, who led student protests, political groups, and met with the president of Iran to discuss women's rights. With her track record of impressive political work, it is odd to address her death as one of the cases which did not spur mass protests, or affect major legislative change. Despite her passion to change the course of her nation, Darabi's social and personal relations, as well as her standing in society as a woman, were eroded over a period of about 30 years. This loss of prior connections, paired with a lack of respect for private life from her friends, family, and society at large, combined to dampen the potential change that she wished for, and called for with her death. In the following section I will first detail Darabi's rise to a politically important and influential figure, followed by the long destruction of her social and cultural ties. After, I will detail how the ability of the government forces and family members to remove Darabi from stations of power diminished the ability of any social group to leverage her death to escalate the importance of her social concerns.

5.2.1   The Life and Career of Dr. Homa Darabi

Darabi was an astute student and noted women's rights activist in Iran throughout her college years in the late 50's. While she was studying medicine at the University of Tehran, she organized many protests, and was an active member of the Pan-Iranist party. This party promoted Mossadegh, who they believed to be a pro-

Quote from Shelly (1994)

<div align="center">57</div>

moter of education and women's rights. Her actions with the party included serving as a speaker at events, publishing an underground newsletter, and helping to organize demonstrations. These efforts got her arrested and interrogated by the Savak, the secret police of Iran. Despite being held for two weeks with no contact from family, Darabi would not be dissuaded from organizing protests and voicing her opinions. [9] Although this time can be considered the height of her political participation, it is also when the seeds of her removal from society began. In her college years is when Homa would meet her future husband, Mohsen. Although it would take many years, Mohsen would grow to become one of the major forces preventing Darabi from leading the live she desired.

From the late 60's to mid 70's, Darabi was absent from politics in Iran, as she completed her clinical work in the United States. This does not mean that she stopped paying attention to politics, however. Darabi's sister, Parvin Darabi, commented on her continued interest in the politics of their home nation. Unfortunately, this is also the time in which Parvin recalls that her sister began to stretch herself thin. [10] Darabi began to struggle between the advancement and success of her personal career and the increasing demands from her husband. In 1976, she and Mohsen moved back to Iran, and Darabi took a prestigious position teaching medicine at the University of Tehran.

When Darabi arrived in Iran, she immediately resumed her political activism. She rejoined with the Pan-Iranist party, and began fervently supporting Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini had been living in exile due to his opposition of the current leader of Iran, the Shah. Darabi believed that Khomeini was an educated man, who

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[9]Darabi and Thomson (1999)

[10]Darabi and Thomson (1999)

would bring democracy to Iran, and end the oppressive rule of the Shah. [11] In the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Khomeini successfully deposed the Shah to establish the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This political victory for Darabi was short lived. Despite promises to allow secular members of the government to hold positions, a key tenant which had won Darabi's support, Khomeini remained as the leader of the republic. He began to strengthen the religious laws of the nation. Chiefly among these new policies was the strict requirement for women to wear the hijab at work. This policy would become the focal point of much of the rest of Darabi's life, and eventually be the point of protest that she would give her life for.

Women quickly began to respond to the new policy with protests and social organizations, and Darabi was no different. In fact, in 1980, Darabi met with the president of Iran, Bandi-Sadr, to represent a women's rights organization in their fight against the Hijab mandate. Unfortunately, her views were dismissed, as these laws were explained as protecting women, not oppressing them.

This meeting with the president would mark the top of Darabi's political trajectory. When the Iraq-Iran conflict began that same year, Darabi quickly became dismayed with politics, and began to reduce her participation. The political conversation turned away from women's rights, and towards winning the conflict. While she reduced her participation in organizations, she did continue to protest the hijab policy in her private practice, and in her capacities as a professor in the university.

Over the next few years, the rights of women in the nation were eroded away. In addition to the hijab policy came restrictions on the ability of women to work, travel, or go to school unless they had their husbands permission. In addition, polygamy was reinstated, and men were granted the right to divorce any of their wives for any

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[11]Darabi and Thomson (1999)

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reason, while women could no longer initiate the process. These laws enraged Darabi, but the people in her life did not share the same sentiment. Her husband, Mohsen, was a supporter of these laws, and enjoyed the rights that they gave him over his wife. In addition, Darabi lost many friends from her political years due to these policies. Most notably, her personal friend, Dariush, the head of the Pan-Iranist party, took a second wife in a stark reversal of his support for gendered equality. [12] In response, Darabi left the party in 1984, ending a connection with a social organization which had remained strong for 30 years. Unfortunately, leaving the party was not enough to shield Homa from the discrimination supported by the state.

Wartime presented unique problems for Darabi. While her patriotism kept her in Iran, tending to soldiers returning from the front lines, it also trapped her in her deteriorating home life. Her husband became disdainful of his wife, ignoring her, turning her children against her, and even concealing the death of her father while she was out of the country. [13] These factors only worsened through the 80's and began to turn Darabi away from social life.

The final straw for Darabi would be her removal from the university, and the government harassment that caused her to close down her private practice. In 1990, Darabi was removed from her position the university for refusing to wear a hijab at work. The hijab policy also directly affected Darabi at her work in Iman Hussein Hospital. She was fired for refusing to wear the hijab while examining patients. These would be striking blows to the social standing of Darabi. Although she had her private practice to fall back on, even this private realm was not exempt from the influence of the government. Government agents would book false appointments with Darabi, and harass her with questions at to why she would not wear the hijab at work. These

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[12]Darabi and Thomson (1999)

[13]Darabi and Thomson (1999)

fake appointments could take hours of her time. Not only were the agents unrelenting in their harassment, but this also took a financial toll on Darabi; the agents would scare off actual patients, and refuse to pay any fee after taking up hours of her time.

As an additional burden of her private practice, Darabi was forced to confront the impact that the regime was having on the lives of many young women. For example, women who were arrested for infractions, such as wearing make-up or going out without the hijab, would come to Darabi for letters certifying that they were mentally handicapped. They would try to get these certifications so they could avoid violent punishment, such as lashings or stoning. [14] All of these problems compounded on the growing troubles in Darabi's personal life. In spite of her worsening depression, she refused to leave Iran. By the time that her sister flew out to see her in 1993, for the last time unbeknownst to Parvin, Darabi had become a recluse in her own home. Parvin attempted to buy tickets to fly Darabi back to the United States, but unfortunately, her husband would not consent to his wife's flight from the country. [15] Under the new regime, husbands had control over many of the aspects of their wife's lives, including their ability to leave the country. With her professional practice essentially ended, and her personal freedoms restricted, Darabi fell into depression. Darabi saw the last few years of her life as a personal failure; she took a personal responsibility for supporting the new leader, claiming that her advanced education should have let her see through their lies. She held strong to her roots to Iran, and her wishes to improve the nation.

These issues weighed heavily on the mind of Darabi. In January of 1994, Darabi turned down a directorship at a children's psychiatric hospital, in refusal to bow to the rules of the government. The job came with one condition: wear traditional head

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[14]Shelly (1994)

[15]Darabi and Thomson (1999)

coverings at work. Although this was her dream job, Darabi still held strong to her contempt for the unjust laws.

Before we get to Darabi's final action, it is important to take stock her connections to social groups. Unfortunately, despite her impressive history of political protest, the outcome seems grim. It is clear that in the latter half of Darabi's life, she was systematically cut off of most political and social relationships. Her husband slowly eroded away her friendships, and relationship with her sister. By the months before her death, Darabi only saw close relatives, and even then it was just a few times a week. Her political relationships had also been severed. First came her split with the Pan-Iranist party. Their reversal on gendered equality cut her out of the group permanently. In addition, the loss of her job at the hospital and position at the University of Tehran were massive blows to her political pressure. Both of these positions had afforded Darabi significant standing in society, and a place from which to spread her beliefs. As she began her retreat from society after these devastating losses, Darabi was not able to maintain any of the relationships that she had built up over the years. Thus, although her storied history of political protest may make Darabi seem like a prime candidate for success, the decades of erosion on her standing in society removed most, if not all, of her ties to social movement organizations.

5.2.2 The Self-Immolation of Dr. Homa Darabi

On February 21st, 1994, just one month after she rejected the directorship, Darabi donned government accepted garments, and made her was to Tajrish Square. This square is one of the busiest places in Tehran, and would guarantee that her actions were viewed by hundreds of people. At 3:00 p.m., Darabi removed her headscarf, doused herself in gasoline, and shouted anti-regime slogans as she self-immolated in the busy square. Although there was panic initially, eventually a person from the

crowd tackled her and doused the flames. She would die from her burns late that night.

Although the square was quite busy, and many could hear and see Darabi's action, there were no photographs of the event. This caused quite an issue when her sister Parvin tried to spread the message. As the initial quote for this chapter states, many international organizations would not run the story, as there was no accompanying media to go with it. It was not considered "spectacular" enough to air. The government was also silent on the issue. It was not until later that the government made the official statement that this was not an act of protest, but that Darabi was mentally ill. [16] Unfortunately, it is likely that this story was accepted, as death by fire was becoming increasingly common to escape unbearable circumstances, such as forced marriages. [17] With the lack of symbolic slogans or images coming from the action, mixed with government slandering of her name and a lack of interest from the international community, there was no groundswell of emotion for a social organization to take hold of.

There is one unexpected result of Darabi's death, and that is her funeral. In the course of my research, several sources have made the claim that her funeral was attended by around ten thousand people. [18] However, this single number is the only available information for her funeral service. The lack of mention of such a massive ceremony in any of the work by her sister, Parvin, casts doubt on this number. However, it is possible that her memorial service would draw such a large crowd. The first hand stories of her death could have inspired many to attend the organized event of her ceremony. However, without any social groups to take hold of the emotions,

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[16]Shelly (1994)

[17]Ahmadi (2007)

[18]Shelly (1994), Afshar (1998)

and without any strong symbolism to continue to inspire such a large mass of people, it makes sense that there were no follow-up protests recorded.

Without the visual images to force the cognitive processes of a politically motivated suicide, the act was not able to grow and maintain a significant social organization. Without a platform to spread, the act cannot transform those within the nation, forcing them to be more willing to act. In addition, there remains no symbolic tie to inspire future protesters, and remind them of the reason for the cause. While it is impossible to say that this act would have sparked a national level protest had their been media images or recording of the event, or had her social ties remained strong, the report of a mass crowd at Darabi's funeral suggests that many people may have been willing to act in her stead.

5.2.3   Comparing Duc and Darabi

These two cases serve as examples of ideal types. While Duc's death will remain in the history of many nations, Darabi was unable to create change in her own nation. The importance of symbolism and group access are clearly divergent in these two cases. Duc was able to enlist his group at the time of his death, to ensure the existence of symbolic imagery. In addition, they invited foreign press to ensure the international scale of the imagery. This case combines these two concepts in an admirable fashion. On the other hand, although at one point in her life, Darabi held strong connection to social movement organizations, by the time of her death political ties had been severed. The groups which could claim a personal connection to her no longer supported her ideals. In addition, the lack of photographs from her demise hindered the ability of local and national groups to create emotional responses from her actions. Finally, the government in this case was successful in their attempt to control the narrative surrounding her death, painting her as mentally ill.

Although these two cases happen in vastly different times and contexts, comparing them highlights the importance of organizational ties in the success of an action.

Chapter 6

THE UNSEEN AND UNKNOWN: FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE STUDY

OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED SUICIDE

> *It was all or nothing at that stage. The fact that so many people had died made us even more determined.*

LAURENCE MCKEOWN, ON THE IRISH HUNGER STRIKES

The previous case studies have illustrated how symbolism and organizational ties mediate the success of politically motivated suicides. However, the cases up until now have had several common characteristics. First, each of these cases had enough information that several tellings of these events allows comparison of information. Even the cases which did not see success in this paper eventually had their stories told. Unfortunately, this is not common among politically motivated suicides. As previously mentioned there are many incentives for the government to control the narrative surrounding these deaths, which can diminish the information available on these cases. As such, the first section of this chapter will examine the cases in which there is little to no information available. These cases present a large gap in this field of study, and provide many avenues for future work.

Secondly, in each of the previous cases, the impact of the suicides were apparent immediately after the action. Although in hindsight we can trace the build-up to them, they seemed unprecedented and unexpected at the time. However, this is not always the case. In the second section of this paper I will examine two cases which slowly build up pressure over time. First, I will touch on the Tibetan self-

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Quote from **?**

immolaters as a key case for further study. This case is interesting, because there are many deaths which build up international attention over time, rather than one standout case. After that, I will detail the hunger strike of Bobby Sands in northern Ireland, to demonstrate that symbolism and group access still hold sway over long time horizons.

6.1   The Self-Immolators

This section will deal with the cases which do not rise to fame, those who do not inspire any follow-up protests, and may be reported in only one place. These cases present one of the largest problems to this field of study. It is immensely difficult to gain any data on these cases, or to find enough information to flesh out case studies on individual cases. As such, this section will feature collection of cases from the work, "The Self Immolators" [1] . This is a detailed collection of people who have self-immolated for political causes, whether or not they rose to fame. It cannot be said that this list is comprehensive, but it does provide important insights into many cases over the course of several decades, and enough information to investigate them further.

This paper arose out of a term paper for a collective action course. Although the paper has seen immense change in its development, it still holds true to the original purpose of directing attention to the differences between cases which do and do not see success. However, the most difficult portion of the original version was collecting information on cases which have little to no information on them. As previously mentioned, there are incentives to cover up politically motivated suicides, or to downplay the political significance of the act. In the course of my investigation I found this self-published online work. Day Donaldson spent several months compiling

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[1]Donaldson (2013)

an impressive list of 307 people who self-immolated for political purposes. Most of these include the name, date, location of the act, relevant social information, and the political slogans or messages left behind at the time of the act. Although this list cannot be comprehensive, it does provide a plethora of cases which cannot be found anywhere else. The vase majority of these cases can only be found on similar online lists, if they can be found at all. Although most of these acts did not inspire mass protest, we can still see some differences among them, when focusing on their connections to existing groups, or the symbolism of their actions.

As mentioned in chapter 5, Alice Herz and Norman Morrison are examples of unknown cases that can be found on this list, where the importance of symbolism and group access remains constant. Alice Herz self-immolated in 1965, in protest of the start of Operation Rolling Thunder. However, there seems to be no images of her death, nor is there information on when and how it happened. [2] Despite being one of the first people in the United States during this period to self-immolate, Herz received little media attention. Rather, the attention was focused on Norman Morrison, who self-immolated a few months later, for the same reason. Morrison's death stands out for a few reasons. First, Morrison's act took place just outside of the Pentagon. His death occurred just outside of the office of then Secretary of State, Robert McNamara. This gave his action immediate national attention. In addition, his status as a Quaker allowed members of the religion to boost his recognition, and to extol his virtue as a person. One of the few groups who has fought for recognition of Alice Herz sums up the differences in their actions: "Owing to his age, gender, and family status, as well as the location and timing of his death, Morrison received greater media coverage and public attention than the first act of immolation. Even among certain WSP circles Alice Herz remained an overlooked figure."(The History of Women Strike for Peace,

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[2]Coburn (2016)

Alice Herz) This quote accurately represents the importance of symbolism and group access, even in cases where neither act inspires massive protests. The smallest amount of group access, and the proper location to be symbolic, allowed Morrison the ability to enter into the conversation at the time, while Herz remained an unknown figure.

Without collections such as these, the case of Herz and Morrison would not have entered the scope of this paper. While individuals self-publishing papers without others to verify their work is not ideal, these lists offer a significant source of additional information. They highlight the need for more attention to be paid to deaths which do not enter into the national conversation. There exists a need for more systematized collection and investigation of politically motivated suicides, if any rigorous study is to be conducted in the future.

6.2 Groups vs. Individuals: Exploring the Tibetan Case

Another issue with these unknown cases is that it can be hard to gauge their individual contribution to social movements. Many of these lesser known cases were follow-up actions, within a few days or weeks of a major case. They tend to live in the shadow of the major case, and any reports of their action are usually bundled with reports of the more notable person. While it is clear that these deaths do not shock the general public as much as the first case did, surely they can contribute to the priming emotions at the time. In addition, there must be some number of followers who join a social movement because they are more closely connected to the less known case. However, due to a lack of reporting, it may be impossible to tell just how much they serve to increase the notoriety of the social cause.

An interesting case which could flesh out these questions would be the Tibetan monks who self-immolated in protest of the repressive Chinese regime. While there are very few stand out names, the monks were able to boost their issue to international

importance by the sheer number of immolations. In an unprecedented fashion, over 141 people self-immolated over the course of just four years. [3]   In addition to illustrating how groups must persist to spread their message, it offers a view on the relations between the level of government repression and the ability of politically motivated suicides to spread their message. In this case, due in part to high levels of government repression, the monks in Tibet have been restricted in their ability to disseminate the media surrounding their acts. For now, the information is spread through a close-knit network of undercover individuals, making it difficult for the media to gain widespread international notoriety. In addition, this is one of the cases in which the government is willing to disrupt death ceremonies surrounding these events. Protesters have been forced to take extreme measures to ensure the success of their action. For example, they have covered their bodies in barbed-wire to prevent people from stopping their actions. [4] This struggle between state forces and the group reveals the importance of government repression. In the previous case studies, when there has been international support for the actor's cause, the government has been unable to maintain their repression. However, in this case the Chinese government has seen success in their ability to hinder the narrative of these people, and has signaled a willingness to tolerate an increased death toll. In fact, government forces have added to the death count,

by torturing and executing monks and nuns, in an attempt to weaken their ties to religious leaders. [5]

In this paper I have used symbolism and group access to illustrate how individual cases succeed or fail, in comparison to the other cases around them. However, the

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[3]Makley (2015), **?**

[4]Kirkpatrick (2017)

[5]Suh et al. (2012)

Tibetan case reveals a much more drawn out struggle, in which every instance of politically motivated suicide can be seen as building upon one another. Makley (2015) provides an insight into explaining the significance of group politically motivated suicides. Mackley addresses the increasing number of Tibetans as creating their own form of mass media. In this way, although each death may not get much attention by itself, together their bodies will send a strong and powerful political message. The downfall of many individual cases of politically motivated suicide is that they do not garner enough media attention. However, the Tibetans were able to overcome this problem through the coordination and dedication of their group members. For future development in politically motivated suicide, blurred lines between individual and collective acts must be cleared. It may be that viewing follow-up deaths as entirely separate from an initial act unfairly downplays their importance to the issue as a whole. In addition this issue must be tied to the level of government repression of the group, and their ability to control information.

6.3 Variation in forms of Politically Motivated Suicide: The Bobby Sands Hunger Strike

As may be evident by this point in time, this paper focuses heavily on one form of politically motivated suicide: self-immolation. This is an unfortunate side effect of the international fame that these cases have consistently drawn. As such, the theory and reporting on self-immolation is far more fleshed out compared to other forms of politically motivated suicide. However, the theory of symbolism and group access can easily be applied to other forms of suicide. As such, I will provide a minor study of the hunger strike of Bobby Sands. The importance of this analysis lies in the time frame of the action. Similar to the previous Tibetan case, hunger-strikes draw out the time in which government and dissident forces struggle against one another.

Unlike in cases of self-immolation, a hunger-striker has the opportunity to voice their views over the months of their death. As a result these cases reflect a war of attrition between the group and the government. Both are able to influence the narrative and symbolism of the action, up to the death of the actor. It follows that the cultural impact of the deaths, and their ability to garner support is a reflection of this months long struggle.

During "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland, prisoners from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) were jailed in droves. Although these prisoners were originally considered political prisoners, and given the accommodations accredited to that title, as the conflict endured their treatment in the prisons became increasingly inhumane. By stripping these prisoners of their political status, the British government was branding them as common criminals. The most symbolic manifestation of this branding was the fight around prison uniforms. Political prisoners were able to wear their own clothing, but as this policy was reversed, jailed IRA members were forced to wear common prison uniforms. Those who refused to don the uniform became known as "Blanketmen," as the thin blankets from their beds became their only clothing. Prison guards were given extreme leniency to torture these prisoners in order to sway them to end the protest. Guards could flood the cells with toxic water, withhold food and water, and violate the bodies of the prisoners. [6]

This extreme treatment led to the development of two distinct yet interconnected communities: The continued resistance of the IRA outside of the prison, and the social community of the jailed IRA members. These two groups, connected by rare visitations, were able to sustain one another. The harrowing stories of the prisoners were able to give legitimacy to the cause of the IRA, and help turn public and

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[6]Sands (1983)

international support against the British government. In addition, as IRA members continued to be arrested, news of the outside and increasing numbers for the opposition made their way into the world of the prison. The prior connection allowed these prisoners to form tight bonds, as a way of supporting one another throughout their protests. [7]

Although the hunger strike of Bobby Sands would prove to be a major driver for international support for IRA, it did not start out as such. In fact, at the start of the strike many people believed that it would end in a rousing failure, as previous prisons strikes had. [8] As opposed to a self-immolation, which tends to gain international fame at most a few days after the initial act, the hunger strike built up notoriety over time. In fact, one of the most important moments would not come until forty days into the strike. A few days into Sands' hunger strike, a member of Parliament in Northern Ireland passed away. This would begin a fateful election, which on the fortieth day of Sands' hunger strike resulted in him being elected as a member of the British Parliament. His campaign did not run on the platform of supporting IRA goals, but rather on supporting the rights of the (semi) political prisoners of the nation. The British government responded to this by passing legislation decreeing that prisoners could not run for political office. This botched reaction to the election, mixed with the reports of the dying Sands, turned public support towards the prisoners. Sands started receiving esteemed guests, such as the envoy of the Pope, and officials from the European Commission for Human Rights. [9]

One consistency with other forms of politically motivated suicide is the importance of funeral ceremonies. Over one hundred thousand people marched behind

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[7]Yuill (2007)

[8]Taylor (1997)

[9]Taylor (1997)

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Sands' coffin when he finally succumbed to his protest. [10] In the aftermath of Sand's death, two more prisoners were able to win seats in the Parliament. However, as the government refused to meet the prisoner's demands, and the strikes continued. Three months after Sands' death, with nine more prisoners dead, the strike was ended. Although they did not get all of their concessions, prisoners were granted the ability to wear their own clothes, to socialize more with other branches of the prison, and most importantly, they had given a platform to their own political party, and had bolstered voter turnout to a immense high.

In this case, although they manifest differently, the themes are the same as our previous case studies. The key difference here is the timeline of the death of the protester. In cases such as self-immolation, their death is instant, and the surprise and rage of the general public can be felt rippling through the world

Figure 6.1: The Funeral Procession for Bobby Sands (Bobby Sands Trust (2019))

like a shock-wave. However, with the hunger-strike, there was a slow build of public outrage, as the prisoners held fast to their choice to die. Although there is this consistent build up, there was not a case a mass mobilization of the public until the funeral of Bobby Sands, which is consistent with the theory.

Additionally, Sands' hunger-strike provides an interesting case for assessing group-access. Sands became a member of two groups: the IRA and the prisoners within the walls. While the prisoners were mostly IRA members, and held firm to their commit-

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[10]Taylor (1997)

ment to the group, they became the vehicles for the IRA to spread their plight to the world. The IRA needed the prisoners to continue their strike, so that they could get the most media attention possible out of the action. In this way, international support to improve the conditions for the prisoners was tentative support for the views of the IRA. In addition, the strike would not be possible without the prisoners within the famous H-block supporting one another. Each of these prisoners expressed the need for the support for their fellow prisoners. [11] Thus, the H-block prisoners formed their own community, one which could not be understood by those who has not faced the same terrors. It was the members of this group who would spread the word of the conditions inside of the prison, and who would support those who faced death in the hunger strike. Both of these distinct, yet interconnected, groups were necessary for the IRA and prisoners to voice their plight to the international community.

Symbolism, group access, and the importance of funerals all play a key role in this style of politically motivated suicide. Although there is more time for the actors in the story to develop their roles, this does not change the root of the theory. These key factors should provide a starting point for the theorising of all forms of politically motivated suicide.

6.4 Conclusion

In this paper I have provided the building blocks for the future analysis of politically motivated suicides. Although these success of these actions are often seen as spontaneous and unpredictable, there are two key factors which regulate the success of an action. The presence of symbolic writings, stories, and images amplify the emotional impact of these events. It is the emotional impact that allows these actions to be so powerful. The guilt, shame, rage, and desperation that these actions inspire

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[11]Sands (1983), Rolston and McKeown (2017)

prime individuals for action in social movements. Additionally, if an organization exists that can lay claim to the ideas of the actor, and can organize and focus the mass swell of support for their cause, they can accelerate their issue to one of national, or even international, importance.

In addition, I explored the specific forms by which organizations can utilize the conditions of a politically motivated suicide to further their, and the actor's, goal. Funeral marches provide an obvious place and time for organizers to direct the masses to their cause. If organizers can prove their connection to the actor, such as the student unions with Jan Palach, they can set up the marches with their speakers and ideas. Finally, groups can use the symbolic speeches and images of the actors to continue to inspire protesters. This inspiration can continue to fuel their protests as the months drag on.

While there have been many works on individual cases of politically motivated suicides, that have been few which seek to draw similarities among them. In addition, those which do tend to sort them by type (I.E. self-immolation, hunger strike, gun shot, etc.). This study constitutes one of the first works to connect the general theory of politically motivated suicide to the outcomes of collective action. As such, this paper can only provide the building blocks for future research. There remains much room for growth in several aspects of this area of study.

As mentioned in the previous section, data collection is lacking in this area. While there are a select few people who have performed the admirable task of combing through reports and newspapers to collect hundreds of names, this surely leaves out a significant number of cases. As this may be the first paper to focus on those who do not get a public response, it can be expected that there is no significant data available. In addition, the cultural incentives to disguise or misrepresent suicide attempts remains a significant barrier to data collection. Future works could be focused on attempts

to standardize data collection for these minor cases, in addition to finding creative way to discover treasure troves of information. For example, hospital reports, reports from burn wards and burn specialty centers, in addition to national death and police records may provide opportunities to search out cases that are missed in the eyes of the press, or mass media.

Additionally, further exploration of differing types of politically motivated suicide is warranted. In earlier sections the temporal importance of different modes of suicide was made evident. In addition, cultural factors can change the importance of these actions. For example, the previous deaths of Jan Hus and Jan Opetal contributed to the symbolic nature of Jan Palach's death. Additionally, discussions of the nature of violence play into the acceptance of Tibetan self-immolation. There are many discussion of whether self-immolation is justifiable in the Buddhist religion. Some claim that it is unacceptable as it constitutes inflicting violence against ones-self, while others argue it as a form of protection of others, similar to putting ones body in between an attacker and a victim. [12] Clearly, these cultural questions will affect the way that local populations accept the action, in addition to changing the narrative which will reach international eyes and ears.

This paper provides important insights into the connections between these individual acts, and the way that they are able to affect society. Although these individuals make the ultimate sacrifice for their beliefs, they are not able to create the change that they desire on their own. Rather, their selflessness provides the opportunity for others to champion their beliefs for them. Unfortunately, it seems that a rather significant force is required to leverage these events. Be it the predominate social organization of the time, such as the student unions for Palach, or an insightful and tight-nit organization such is the case for Thich Quang Duc, some infrastructure and

[12]Suh et al. (2012)

planning is required for these events to provoke mass protests. Works which focus on only the major cases may create an unrealistic view of politically motivated suicide. When most works in this area focus only on cases which see massive success, it may create the idea that these actions intrinsically cause change in nations. Sadly, politically motivated suicides are common, while mass protest remains quite rare. This paper seeks to remedy that mystery, and reveal these individual actions as a key part in a larger social network. Although those who commit a politically motivated suicide often perform this frightening act alone, we cannot view them in isolation.

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