

Indian Country Politics

*Theories of Operation and a Strategy for the
Nonviolent Seizure of Political Power*

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A man is not on the path of righteousness if he settles matters in a violent haste. . . . a wise man calmly considers what is right and wrong and faces different opinions with truth and is the guardian of truth. . . . he is righteous and he is wise.

Dhammapada

The nature of Indian governments recently has been noted to be contentious and revolutionary. In June 2005, one thousand members of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan sought to oust their tribe's current leadership with a petition process.¹ Why do they continue to use petitions when a coup may be more effective, especially with their numbers? Don't they realize there are alternative ways to seize political power and remove current leaders? Therefore, what is the current diagnosis of these governmental systems rife with contention? In his landmark essays Michel de Montaigne reflected on the health and sickness of states. He writes:

Throughout the whole system governing the works of nature there can be found an amazing analogy and correspondence which shows that it is neither fortuitous nor controlled by a variety of masters the maladies and the characteristics of our bodies can also be found in state and polities; like us, kingdoms and republics are bourn, flourish and fade into decrepitude.²

Montaigne further identifies ailing political systems as surfeit and prescribes a massive purge in order to "cure" them. Perhaps revolutionary politics is one way to cure an ailing political system? Do such politics

bear similarities to our own contentious nature? With this in mind, the following article previews the governmental system of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and offers a criticism of current tribal government operations. Then, I discuss a step-by-step plan to nonviolently seize political power. In short, a theory of coup de état or “blow to the state” will be discussed and applied to Indian country politics.

PART I: CASE STUDY:

MENOMINEE INDIAN TRIBE OF WISCONSIN

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

Proverbs 29:2

The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin (MITW) is a federally recognized Indian nation located in Wisconsin. The MITW is an example of a government organized under an Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) constitution. Historically, the leaders of the several bands of Indians that later became the MITW signed numerous treaties with the U.S. government in the nineteenth century. The most notable treaty is the Treaty of Keshena Falls in 1854, which established the present-day reservation that is home to the central governmental body. During a period of termination (i.e., nonfederal recognition), the tribe suffered economic challenges; however, it has rebounded since recognition was reestablished and Indian gaming was introduced on the reservation.

After the end of termination in 1972, a boiler-plate government constitution was adopted by 468 voters on November 12, 1976, and is currently viewed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as the accepted constitution. The MITW operates under the “consent of the governed” theory of political legitimacy. It is noted that the acceptance of this constitution was by a slim margin, and not all of the 1,308 voting-eligible tribal members participated in this acceptance process. There is a nine-member elected legislature that appoints a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary each year. This template constitution creates a disproportionately large legislature while the governing population is relatively small. The chairperson is a full-time paid position appointed annually by the current

legislative body, and each legislature member serves three-year appointments. There is a three-person turnover in the legislature each year and annual potential turnover for the chairperson. The legislators meet at least two times each year and currently have little influence or authority over the day-to-day operation of the tribal government. The administrative manager plus his or her staff, the human resources director, and the financial manager are considered the "management team," and they are given large amounts of discretion over the programs on the reservation. This small group of people actually run the tribal government and make key decisions, and on the surface it appears that they operate as a close-knit group that coincidentally gave direction to the government plan that preserves the authority of their positions. In an interview the BIA deputy superintendent of the Midwest region commented that some tribal governments have drafted laws to preserve their own positions. One example is the procedure requiring any recall process to be approved by the existing governmental leaders. This rule assists the existing government in stamping out any opposition to their work or elected status, and thus it must be removed from any constitution.³ Any theory of self-preservation is not fair to the tribal members.

The MITW is a PL-638 self-determination tribal government where the BIA provides funding, oversight, and technical support; however, the bureau does not operate the programs including Indian Health Service clinic operations, forestry, law enforcement, social services, road maintenance, and education. The state of Wisconsin provides alternative education for the youth on the reservation. The MITW has developed a tribal government plan in which the theory of operations and the duties and responsibilities of the chairperson and the respective departments are established. This plan is the source of "authority" within the tribal governmental structure. Some of the ordinances that have been adopted relate to tribal member employment preference, tribal government plan, police chief elections, tribal enrollment procedures, regular tribal legislature elections, and the annual tribal budget. In itself, the government plan allows far too much decision-making power to be centralized within a select few employees in the management team; it therefore requires immediate changes. One suggestion would be to remove the discretion from certain employees such as the administrative manager and human resource director and transfer it to a smaller, full-time legislature. These employees would be limited to providing technical advice with no au-

thority over money, programs, or the hiring of directors. Then, the will of the elected tribal legislature (and not certain employees) concerning employment, money, and various government programs will be realized. Even more, with any employment position, technically a nontribal member could be employed, leading to a potential conflict of priorities. If the elected legislature is assigned these duties, then there would be no need for concern if a nontribal member was employed in the position mentioned above. Also, pursuant to the MITW constitution, the judges are hired by the legislature and not elected, leading to multiple conflicts of interest within their sphere. Knowing and understanding this governmental paradigm and its associated theories of operations will assist one to develop a plan to seize political power.

PART II: REMOVING AND RECREATING INDIAN
GOVERNMENT: COUP DE ETAT

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.

Abraham Lincoln

When Montaigne observed ailing political systems within France in the sixteenth century, he included a discussion about how to purge an existing system in order to fix it. He wrote this as his country was collapsing around him as the result of a bitter civil war. Are some Indian nations going through civil war? With that in mind, how do systems of government collapse, evolve, and improve? Perhaps revolutionary Indian politics is one form of growing into a better form of government? One useful definition of revolution is found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "A complete overthrow of the established government in any country or state by those who were previously subject to it; a forcible substitution of a new ruler or form of government."⁴ Therefore, how does one evolve or revolutionize an ailing political system? If the people mourn when the wicked rule, what is their recourse? When democracy and its methods of elections, petitions, recalls, and letters fail, change is required outside the usual governmental paradigm. The following section will review some

disintegrating Indian governments and then present a plan to seize political power within Indian country.

Contentious politics and revolutionary activity are a very difficult process to study; however, there have been numerous examples occurring in Latin America as well as in Indian country that deserve attention in order to look for patterns of success and failures. Abroad, coups have been attempted and failed in Spain (1936), Bolivia (1979), and Argentina (1955). Successful coups were executed in Argentina (1955), Bolivia (1980), and Bolivia (1971).⁵ Within Indian country intratribal disputes have occurred within the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe (1982), Saginaw Chippewa (2000 and 2005), Crow Tribe of Montana (2001), and St. Regis Mohawk (2002). The Sac and Fox (2004) experienced a successful coup, resulting in a rapid change of government. Each of these tribes has experienced a level of political turmoil, some resulting in legal disputes while others resulted in a literal occupation of the tribal offices by a "dissenting" group. Amongst the varied tribal governments, recall hearings, occupation of tribal offices, protest actions, circulating petitions to expel "elected" tribal government officials, the invalidation of election results by existing councils, and accusations of the wasteful spending of money appear to dominate the newspaper headlines. Needless to say, such political contention and leadership disputes put a great deal of strain on the community.

Consequently, a hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs of the U.S. Senate in September 2002 sought to elucidate and provide policy suggestions on intratribal leadership disputes and tribal governance. One policy set forward by the BIA is described by Aurene Martin, then deputy assistant secretary of the interior. She says:

In those instances where there is a dispute as to the identity of the rightful tribal government empowered to conduct business on behalf of the tribe, and it's apparent that no tribal resolution is forthcoming, we are authorized to make that determination in furtherance of our mission; although we take that action in the least intrusive manner possible.⁶

Since this testimony Martin has been replaced, and policy may be shifted according to the whims of the new leadership. This is an important topic to keep abreast about. A 2004 discussion with the BIA Midwest regional office has confirmed this policy. Although the BIA acknowledges the power it possesses to recognize the tribal leaders, it will interfere mini-

mally. On one hand, this is beneficial; however, on the other hand, if an existing government is self-serving and creates their own election rules, the BIA is in a position either to turn a blind eye or to recognize an illegitimate government. Philosophical recognition is a central piece in any government-to-government relationship. Sometimes, the BIA recognizes the corrupt or self-serving government. Even more, the agency seems to focus on the “consent of the governed” theory of legitimacy and disregards any other claims to governmental legitimacy such as “divine rule” or “hereditary claim.” Contentious politics was the impetus for the Senate hearing on Intra-Tribal Leadership Disputes and Tribal Governance in September 2002, and it is a valuable inquiry into current BIA position regarding future contentious political situations.

The newspapers described the intratribal dispute of the Sac and Fox of Iowa widely in 2003. Local newspapers drew attention to the differing political factions. Consequently, their casino was forcibly closed by the federal government from May 2003 to December 2003. One political group sought to recall select existing tribal council officials through a constitutional petition process; however, the existing government continually invalidated the results. Therefore, the dissident political party chose to occupy the tribal offices and claim their right to rule. The BIA chose to continue to recognize the existing government amidst the legitimacy arguments brought by the dissident political group. Upon direction of the BIA, the National Indian Gaming Commission ordered the casino to be closed amidst this contention on May 23, 2003. The bank associated with the Sac and Fox froze forty to fifty million dollars in assets. The employment of approximately thirty-five hundred people was affected. The BIA then directed a recall election to be established, addressing the grievances by the dissident and occupying political group. Ironically, the leader of the dissident political group was then elected by the people to operate the tribal government, with the BIA recognizing them as the “legitimate” government in January 2004. Perhaps the publicity and the resolute nature of this leader were good campaign tactics. Even more, the newspapers noted the nonviolent nature of the occupation, which presented the party and its agenda favorably.

The Sac and Fox are a good example of revolutionary political change, with the existing leader challenging the authority and the legitimacy of the current government by nonviolent persuasion methods such as occupation and resistance. From the newspaper accounts, it appeared

the ousted government was making rules and policies in order to keep themselves in political power. Throughout the ordeal, the newspapers reported that there were attempts to negotiate a middle ground; however, the final result was election victory. Perhaps if one only wanted to achieve a goal rather than be elected to the tribal council, an occupation of the tribal offices would be effective to just “bring them to the table” and concede to any grievances. If this is the case, the group must develop a set of demands and then prepare to negotiate. Anecdotally, if the tribe is in a position of asking the BIA for an off-reservation gaming agreement (as with MITW), this may be a critical background event, for if the BIA perceives any intratribal leadership contention, they may disapprove any application from a tribe.⁷ If the residing tribal leadership understands any request may be stalled as a result of intratribal dispute or occupation, they may be more willing to concede on grievances in order to preserve their image with the BIA and to see their request honored. It appears the Sac and Fox occupation was spontaneous and the plan succeeded. During his occupation of the tribal offices, the leader effectively campaigned for the election the BIA wanted. To conclude, the Sac and Fox of Iowa experienced a rapid change of government during a period of contentious politics.

The following will consist of a nonviolent strategic plan to place a party in the “tribal chair” rapidly. In short, the tactics in the seizure of political power will be presented along with potential challenges facing the initiator of revolutionary change. To begin with an end in mind, the revolutionary leader or change-agent must envision him- or herself as the new government re-creator; that leader must occupy the tribal offices recognized by both the federal and state government leaders while those government officials refuse to speak with anyone associated with the ousted tribal government. This may involve perceived “unethical” methods; however, if the ends justify the means, then the removal of a self-serving or wicked government is the end that justifies the means. The internal seizure of political power is a powerful recourse for the people that mourn as a result of wicked rule. When planned sufficiently, it is also a very effective way to create lightning speed governmental change. Judging by my research of Indian country political discord, I haven’t seen one account of a strategic plan to seize power—it all has been spontaneous and unpredictable. If it is thought out, one may be successful.

Gregor Ferguson and Bruce W. Farcau have studied the coup d’état,

writing books specifically dealing with this political phenomenon. Ferguson writes:

A coup d'état is simply a means of seizing power quickly and effectively within an existing framework so that, once established, one can either operate within that framework or start slowly to alter it. . . . the government is what the coup seeks to change. . . . a coup offers much more certainty than a general election. . . . it will be necessary to neutralize any agency that is in a position to oppose one's move, either by incarcerating its leaders, immobilizing its equipment, or by subverting its key personnel and making them part of the plow if you can't be beaten, you may find some surprising people become your allies.⁸

Farcau discusses the nature of the beast, where coups come from, sizing up the field, target analysis, tactical assignments, execution and consolidation, case studies of failed and successful coups, and countering the coup d'état. In short, Farcau identifies the various stages of the coup:

1. *Trabajos* (literally, jobs or tasks): the creation of an initial nucleus of coup plotters, gradually expanded to include officers and noncommissioned officers of key units considered necessary for the successful execution of the coup
2. *Compromisos* (compromises): the formal commitment of the coup plotters to the task at hand and the agreement on the missions to be performed and the rewards to be divided afterward
3. *Accion* (action): the rising of a single garrison as a sort of trial balloon for the rebellion
4. *Pronunciamento* (pronouncement), sometimes referred to as the *grito* (shout): the public declaration of the coup and an explanation of the (ostensible) goals of the rebellion, calling for other non-conspirators, both military and civilian, to support the coup or to remain neutral
5. The march on the center of power and communication: the actual seizure of power
6. The announcement of the creation of a new government
7. The actual naming of the members of the new ruling junta⁹

Although every coup is different, the above pattern describes the relative pattern of coup behavior. Numerous other books have theorized how to

seize political power; however, Farcau's book is a critical look in the successes and failures of a coup.

The development of the coup begins with work. The initial nucleus of coup plotters must organize and develop a mission statement that specifically inquires into the nature of the coup; they must start to formalize how, when, where, and why the coup will take place. What are the political and infrastructural targets that need attention? With utmost care, they must recruit members, research the specific government system and its finances, examine manpower, coordinate schedules, and identify targets of resistance. If the group needs money, perhaps they could extend post-coup promises to businesses or governments and secure a loan for its operation. Within Indian country it is important to recruit the existing police force, especially if the current tribal leaders oversee their department. Coups have failed in the past due to the exclusion of police and military forces that are critical in keeping certain people quiet and organizations closed during a period of change. The police department must be willing to ignore orders from the exiled government while still maintaining public safety. They can also be used to intimidate resistance groups and to move around without drawing attention. One final key planning piece is the new constitution. A new constitution must be drafted and prepared in order to deliver to the BIA as soon as the new government is declared. In any disintegrating government, the constitution can be declared to the BIA when revoking the old constitution and delivering a new one. As Lysander Spooner writes of constitutions,

The constitution has no inherent authority or obligation. It has no authority or obligation at all, unless as a contract between man and man [woman and woman]. And it does not so much as even purport to be a contract between persons now existing. It purports, at most, to be only a contract between persons living eighty years ago Those persons, if any, who did give their consent formally, are all dead now . . . and the Constitution, so far as it was their contract, died with them. They had no natural power or right to make it obligatory upon their children. . . . that is to say, the instrument does not purport to be an agreement between anybody [except] "the people" then existing. . . . [Indeed] the language neither expresses nor implies that they had any intention or desire, nor that they imagined that they had any right or power, to bind their "pos-

terity” to live under it. . . . It only says, in effect, that their hopes and motives in adopting it were that it might prove useful to their posterity, as . . . [it was] to themselves.¹⁰

Then, the BIA will understand the applicable tribe is going through a stage of evolution in order to improve their respective nation. One needs support, understanding, and recognition from the BIA to stage a successful coup. A well thought out new constitution will help in this endeavor.

One more target group to recruit is respected “traditional” Indian leaders for the purpose of establishing legitimacy or hereditary or theocratic claims to rightful governance. It is impossible for the BIA to know or understand the historical and cultural history of each tribe, including who the hereditary leaders were or are. An argument for a new, legitimate government can be advanced using this theory of legitimacy. In other words, the hereditary chiefs are appointing the tribal council instead of public elections. Theoretically, one could advance the divine right to rule theory of legitimacy. The government can have a “state religion,” with the leader a designated spiritual leader. While individual tribal members have the right to practice whatever faith they choose, the same requirement of separation of church and state does not apply under the Indian Civil Rights Act.¹¹ In essence, a spiritual leader could seize political power and rightfully claim rule without any interference from the U.S. Constitution or the Indian Civil Rights Act.

In this initial stage, leadership roles are established as well as the philosophical outlook of the group. The group must also avoid the attachment of any negative labels. In the book *War Against Authority*, Nicholas N. Kittrie explains,

the voids in scholarly knowledge and in public policy-development and application are due in the first place to the many and conflicting roles played by those who contest political power . . . the cadres of political dissidents and rebels—who emerge on the stages of politics and law as either heroes or villains, conspirators or prisoners, asylum seekers or extradition resisters—may in fact consist of reformers and reactionaries, domestic dissenters and international warriors, freedom fighters and terrorists.¹²

These labels are arbitrarily thrown around by people often without forethought, and they can factor into the pre-persuasion effort the group is unknowingly communicating to the public. Evidence is a newspaper

story regarding a disenrolled tribal member who protested her government's past policies. Following the protest, she said she was labeled a terrorist and arsonist.¹³ Interestingly enough, a psychiatric disorder can be attached to a leader of a revolutionary movement. According to the American Psychiatric Association, Oppositional Defiant Disorder is a "recurrent pattern of negativistic, defiant, disobedient, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that persist for at least 6 months."¹⁴ This disorder could fit the psychological profile of a revolutionary leader, although he or she may disagree that they are "disordered."

It is during the initial stage of the coup that the formed nucleus must remain free of labels, close, and committed to nonviolence. Even more, plans of the coup must be carefully guarded and only offered to individuals whom the group may believe will advance the cause and not thwart it. Machiavelli writes that a "conspirator ran a serious risk of compromise if he exposed his plot to more than one or two other individuals."¹⁵ If the plan leaks out, the nucleus group may suffer a negative label by the existing government, although it is noted that no tribal government within the Midwest region holds sedition or treason laws.

However, the Tonawanda Seneca Indian Nation of New York did sentence a group of dissenting individuals to permanent banishment from the reservation in January 1992, giving the following as the reason: "Your actions to overthrow or otherwise bring about the removal of, the traditional government of the Tonawanda Band of Seneca Nation, and further, by becoming a member of the Interim General Council, are considered Treason, therefore, banishment is required."¹⁶ This could very well happen in any area of Indian country, regardless of current laws. The practical implications of banishment is unknown: that is, do they find merely find another job off the reservation or are they permanently shunned from entering the reservation or removed from the tribal rolls? Those who dare to try a coup must be aware of the implications. To conclude, the group must avoid labels and plan to mute, blind, deafen, and paralyze the existing government for the time it takes the conspirators to seize effective control of the government. If they can communicate to the public that they are the new government, and if the old regime is unable to contradict this news, half the battle will be won for the ouster of the incumbents.¹⁷

The second stage of the coup is more or less a solidifying of the plan and the commitment and assignments of the individuals involved. For

example, one person may be assigned to deal with the propaganda element of the coup, which is indispensable in persuading the public and achieving legitimacy. Bertrand Russell describes the important elements of propaganda:

Propaganda is only successful when it is in harmony with something in the patient: his desire for an immortal soul, for health, for the greatness of his nation, or what not. . . . where there is no such fundamental reason for acquiescence, the assertions of authority are viewed with cynical skepticism.¹⁸

Other assignments may involve logistical purposes, such as barricading the tribal offices or cutting off electrical power to create confusion. Preparation for a lengthy occupation of the existing tribal offices should be discussed. How will they eat? What will they drink? Who is arranging for the banners and signs to be displayed during the occupation? The Sac and Fox of Iowa utilized banners, t-shirts, and ceremonial fires during their occupation. These signs are attractive to the media, and most likely will be displayed on the nightly news.

Again, one key person to recruit is the tribal or BIA police chief, for he or she is the individual who exerts the primary force within the area. If he or she supports the coup, it might be safe to conclude that during the middle of the coup attempt the entire police force will not attempt to disrupt and even arrest the coup members, effectively ending the coup attempt. Even more important is the continuity of emergency services that will be available to the public during a period of confusion and rapid change. It is important that the public safety be maintained during this period, and a recruited police chief will ensure that public safety calls are answered during this rapid change. However, if the police chief appears unwilling or is related to tribal members who will lose their positioning in a governmental revolution, the assistant police chief may be recruited. Then, plans must be developed to incapacitate or distract the existing police chief and ensure that no force is used to disrupt the coup. Physical incarceration is to be avoided since this may alienate the new government from state and federal government.

The group must know exactly how to neutralize or eliminate any individual, organization, or facility of society that would prevent the concentration of resistance to the coup. For example, any tribal college would be important to contain as a possible breeding ground of resistance. If

resistance rallies or public speeches are allowed to occur, they may generate enough momentum to re seize political power.

The action phase of the coup is exactly what it describes, and this phase is commonly depicted in the media by images of “tanks rolling” into foreign capitals as the sign of a coup attempt. With the action phase comes movement into the central governmental offices. It is important to neutralize the central area and to avoid any contention or conflict within this area. Within the MITW, it is easy to identify the nerve center, since there is one central government office in Keshena. Bruce Farcau suggests that a successful coup should be scheduled to occur after a significant date (perhaps annual pow-wow) for that specific group of people and during the absence of the government leader, perhaps on official or state business. It is this period of absence during which a government is “headless” and most vulnerable. Even more, the recognized legitimate head of state will not be able to rally forces on his or her side from the proverbial balcony or with a tribal symbol backdrop. If and when the former leader returns, he or she will be very surprised.

One additional suggestion is to utilize the weather conditions, such as a large snowfall or rainstorm. Knowing and understanding current and future weather may very well assist you in the execution of your plan. In order to avoid confrontation and violence, the suggested format for the action phase is the takeover of the tribal offices in the early morning hours when the offices are empty. If this isn't possible, the lunch hour may provide a window. In either case, an individual from the new party needs to be answering any and all incoming phone calls, declaring the new government. While answering phone calls is one aspect, initiating telephone calls to other parties is key since most people will still be unaware of the recent change. Letters clearly stating that the individuals who believe they are still in power are “relieved of duty” can be hand delivered via personal courier on new government letterhead. If these former leaders are resistant, they may be put under police supervision, with a police car stationed outside of their residence as an intimidation tactic. This official letter can have a tremendous psychological impact, reinforcing to the reader the seriousness of their removal. Central office locks may need to be sabotaged to prevent individuals from returning to their offices. The existing Web page must be seized and the new message regarding the change in government must be established with as much persuasion as possible.

The respective BIA superintendent must be notified immediately of the situation and must be sent the new governing document. Ensure you specifically ask the BIA to recognize the newly created coup government. If the BIA is communicating to you via phone, then you can present to the public that the bureau are doing business with your group and recognizing the new government. Mass e-mails can be utilized in order to convince the existing working body that government change is important and necessary. Even more, the platform of the revolutionary government may be presented. The relevant theory of legitimate government should be advanced. The existing financial and health care must be researched previous to the coup and attended to immediately upon arrival of the new government. Contacts with the existing banking institution must be established and confidence must be restored in order to prevent the freezing of assets. If the assets are frozen, it is critically important that the new ruling party achieves bank "recognition" in order to access assets and funds. It is also suggested that, upon takeover, the new government establish an across-the-board raise for its employees, in order to create a favorable image within the eyes of the public. Aldous Huxley writes that it is necessary to inflame public opinion into a state of indignation of the existing institution, and that any case against the existing government must be stated with complete bias and a suitable amount of exaggeration.¹⁹ If there is anything wrong or corrupt with the existing system or people, this must be communicated and exaggerated through a willing media.

Again, the *grito*, or shout of the declaration of the coup and an explanation of the goals of the rebellion, calling for other nonconspirators, both military and civilian to support the coup or remain neutral, can and should be done through a willing TV and radio media.²⁰ Social psychologists Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson spell out the basic theories on effective message building by describing the information-processing model. They write:

According to the information-processing model, a persuasive message must successfully pass through a series of stages. . . . first the message must attract the recipient's attention; ignored messages will have little persuasive impact. . . . second, the arguments in the message must be understood and comprehended. . . . third, the recipient must learn the arguments contained in the message and come to accept them as true; the task of the advertiser and other persuaders is to teach arguments supportive of the cause, so these

arguments will come easily to mind at the appropriate time and place. . . . finally, the recipient of the messages acts on this learned message when there is an incentive to do so; a persuasive message is learned, accepted, and acted upon if it is rewarding to do so. Given that later stages of the persuasion process are dependent on the completion of earlier stages, the chances of any given persuasive communication passing the final stage are quite low and thus the effects are minimal.²¹

Posters can be prepared beforehand and tacked in public areas prior to the coup. The media alone can make or break the coup, and if they present a small incident as a negative piece of information, the coup might suffer the birth of a seed of destruction. Murray Edelman describes public opinion as “a construction of governments [and] the media . . . and is accepted and treated as though it were an objective reality to be discovered by polling or otherwise taking account of expressed beliefs and assumed beliefs about public policy.”²²

The group of conspirators must occupy the existing tribal government structure and remove any existence of the past government. Occupation sends its own perception of legitimacy. Any symbols and outlines of the previous governmental system should be destroyed, including all copies of the constitution. Symbolically, this would illustrate a rejection of and frustration with the current government paradigm and a birth of a new paradigm. Leaflets or declarations can be passed out within the community. The new government must physically reside in the government buildings, perhaps for numerous days asserting their presence and authority. Again, it is noted during the time of occupation, one can take opportunity of this period to “campaign” for your party or “grieve” about current leaders or policies. Judging from past Indian country occupations, the BIA may recognize the legitimacy of your occupation government; however, they will want to see a plan for elections possibly within the next six months. You need to use your time effectively and win over the people with wisdom and a promising future with you as the elected governmental leader. Again, the group needs to keep constantly in mind that they must be aiming to control or eliminate all individuals, institutions, and installations that could be used to organize and make effective opposition against the coup when it occurs. Failure to follow this precept has frequently proven the downfall of many coup plotters.²³

The announcement of the creation of a new government and actual naming of the members of the new ruling junta is perhaps the final step of the successful coup. It is during this period that you might make some new friends who wish to join your organization. Although the public may or may not recognize the new government, one critical element of recognition occurs within Indian country. Since each Indian tribe is recognized by the state and federal governments, it is useless to seize and occupy the tribal offices if that new government isn't "recognized" by these two governmental entities. Gene Sharp writes about "the withholding of diplomatic recognition as a strategy used in order to eliminate or weaken an existing government":

In short, the general practice of governments to recognize other governments which are effectively in control of the countries they rule is sometimes replaced by deliberate refusal of diplomatic recognition. . . . This is often because of objection to the way in which that government came to power or its basic political character.²⁴

If the new government is established by unsavory methods and two parallel governments are vying for attention, the BIA really holds the power to identify and work with a specific group, thereby effectively eliminating the other group by virtue of nonrecognition. Even more, money administered will continue to go to the recognized tribal government, and more than likely the state will follow suit with the federal government. This is unless the state is "worse" off financially with a change in leadership or has arranged "sweetheart" deals with the previous tribal government. Such situations may stem from "behind-the-scenes" deals accomplished in the past. On the other hand, exploiting an existing rift or misunderstanding between the current tribal government and host state or BIA is a good strategy to gain quick recognition. Perhaps the new government (coup) sees things more favorably to the host state than did the ousted government. Within Wisconsin, in February 2005 the Ho-Chunk of Wisconsin was withholding \$60 million in gaming profits due to a compact disagreement.²⁵ Certainly, a coup government could have exploited this rift and sought to work with the state to arrange payment and receive at least state recognition. How could the state refuse to recognize a new government that is willing to negotiate at least partial payment instead of none? The psychological blow to the nonrecognized government will be huge, especially if that party is trying to establish

communication with the federal and state officials but is being ignored. Any parallel government will lose ground quickly if it has no official contacts.

One final strategy is to contact and communicate with the respective federal and state officials who are critical in the recognition process prior to the coup. These people come from the regional BIA office superintendent and the governor's office of the host state. They may sympathize with your situation, but depending upon their existing relationship with current tribal leadership, they may tip-off the existing government and thwart your strategy. The most important recognition to secure is federal, for the state government will normally follow the federal government's lead concerning the recognition of a specific government, which is the current policy in Wisconsin.²⁶ If these officials are clued into the plan, they may sympathize and support your action. A well-planned letter will add to your propaganda campaign. Again, one must be sure to emphasize the nonviolent nature of the coup, for time and time again violent encounters within Indian country have resulted in federal law enforcement intervention and a grievous situation for all people involved.

PART VI: CONCLUSION

Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.

Mahatma Gandhi

The focus of this article is not to incite or encourage individuals to non-violently remove their existing tribal leadership and re-create their government, although the step-by-step strategy may very well accomplish this end. The focus is for individuals to critically look into each of their own tribal government systems and remove paradigms or people that do harm or impede the prosperity of their respective nation. The people who need to be removed are described through the clinical psychology lens of Machiavellianism. These people are described as exhibiting a pattern of behaviors including manipulation of others through guile, deviousness, deception, and opportunism with the increase of power and control as the central motive.²⁷ I have encountered some Machiavellian

personality types on our reservation, and I am certain this isn't the only Indian tribe that has evolved in this fashion, with select people manipulating themselves into the governmental paradigm and creating rules to maintain their presence. It is apparent that the people who wish to remain in power have repeatedly created a government plan to preserve their positions. Although not tragic, this is unnecessary. More oversight is needed by the elected officials. To conclude, three points need to be addressed again that are the essence of my argument.

The MITW governmental system needs immediate changes. Both the past and current elected legislatures have failed to see these problems and continue to believe the current system functions effectively. Certainly some of the problems with violence, drugs, alcohol, and fatalities on the reservation may be reduced if this system is fine tuned. Currently these problems appear to be ignored by the current leadership. I see a reduction in contention alone. I have certainly seen poor employment decisions across the board and specifically in the drug and alcohol treatment center resulting from this paradigm. Both tribal and government dollars have been poorly utilized.

First, the MITW need to revoke their current constitution and government plan. They are operating with an ancient constitution that doesn't take into consideration the population or changing times. The current constitution is designed for contention and instability and creates too much bureaucracy. The current government plan was amended with little thought and centered on maintaining a paradigm that preserves the authority of certain employment positions. I suggest a full-time elected body of three or four people to replace the current paradigm; this elected body would operate the government full-time. Then, they should be allowed to serve at least a three-year term. The chairperson should be elected by popular vote rather than appointed by their co-legislature, and this chair would serve a three-year term. To ensure they are unbiased in their decision making, particularly when they review their tribal government, judges need to be elected, not hired by the legislature. If they are hired by the legislature, they are surely intimidated by their employer when asked to review legal matters.

Then, reduce or eliminate the management team (human resources, administrative manager, and financial manager) and severely limit their influence and authority over policy, programs, and significant decision making, parceling part of their roles to an elected legislature. Currently

these employment positions have way too much authority over tribal operations and need to be modified to actually match what they are supposed to do: technical advising. The proposed full-time legislature should at a minimum hire and supervise the directors of the large programs on the reservation, ensuring their performance and vision is carried forward while receiving continuous feedback on their operation. These are complex programs, and they are not within the scope of one person to measure them, as the current paradigm is designed. The past and current administration department assisted in amending this tribal government plan.²⁸ Certainly this document has created their management team and preserved their positions and authority within the tribal government, without requiring their election to these posts. This plan needs to be revoked. Based on my research, it is unclear whether any technical advice or how much (if any) public input was provided to the officials as they revised this document. Furthermore, these positions are insulated from any oversight that elected officials are subject to. The elected body, not employees, should be empowered to make the decisions regarding key employment positions, funding, and programs. I also asserted earlier that it is possible the management team positions technically could be filled by nontribal members. It wouldn't be good policy to have a nontribal member with that amount of control over the tribal government; therefore, the positions and authority they have need to be reduced and given to a full-time elected legislature. In conclusion, social problems on the reservation may not be ignored if an elected legislature is operating the tribal government. In addition, this suggested paradigm may provide more incentives for qualified people to run for elections, especially with the full-time position, power, and authority enhanced. I am certain election season would be more interesting.

Second, a coup is a very quick way to change government in Indian country, while the petition is slow. The petition process has been written into numerous constitutions, but it should be avoided because of its low success rate. Why petition when one can just displace? I theorize that five well-organized people could stage a successful coup or protest to acquire their demands. However, with the coup, the initiator must be aware of any unintended results. Disenrollment, banishment, delayed or dashed casino plans, and people being hurt are all possible implications. Therefore, one must adhere to the philosophy of nonviolence and choose to return kindness for violence. There is no government system

in Indian country that requires a violent overthrow such as happened in 1989 in Romania. If one continues to practice nonviolence in the midst of violence, the worse possible scenario is your coup is broken up and you are incarcerated, disenrolled, or banished. However, if you choose violence, I am certain both the tribal and federal government will find a way to charge you with assault and battery and lock you up for a long time. Therefore, if you are not willing to remain violence-free, don't choose to initiate a coup. There is no cause in Indian country worth hurting people to achieve. Perhaps the proverb "for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" is applicable.²⁹

Third, the key of your success lies within the respective BIA office. Many discussions with officials and anecdotal evidence suggest that they are the key people who need to support your endeavor. They possess the current constitution (and will need a new one), conduct day-to-day business, and provide the recognition required to establish and maintain a new government. If they refuse to recognize your government and wish for your efforts to be thwarted, they will thwart your effort. They also take the lead with any other federal and state agencies, and if they say the word, it is safe to say that other people—such as the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) or law enforcement—will listen and act. Take these concerns into consideration if and when you decide to re-create your government.

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