

Insurgency in Nepal

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A decade has passed since the end of the Cold War, and insurgency remains a major factor on the world scene. This has been entirely predictable, given the inevitable drive of man to improve his lot. Whether driven by separatism, religious alienation, or ideological desire to restructure the state, insurgents remain as active today as there were in the earlier era of state support. Indeed, forced to rely more upon their own devices, insurgencies have posed increasingly complex problems for the numerous weak states of the world, which find themselves, more than ever, challenged by a growing array of development and population issues.

This reality has driven continuous and extensive US military involvement, and thus brought a renewed focus on the dynamics of internal wars. Upheavals in once-obscure spots such as Nepal now routinely demand American attention. It is through the study of such cases that military practitioners will be prepared for effective engagement – in strategies, operational art and tactics – in future wars.

Insurgency in Nepal has existed for perhaps five decades but burst into the open only with the declaration of a ‘people’s war’

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on February 13, 1996, by the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M), the most radical offshoot of the left-wing spectrum in Nepali politics.¹ Desultory action ended when the ‘Maoists,’ as they are universally termed, unilaterally abrogated ongoing talks with the Government and launched a nationwide general offensive in November 2001. Since that time, a steadily increasing level of violence has left as many as 8,000 Nepalis dead in total, a majority of them in little more than a year.²

Known as a premier tourist destination, the site of the mighty Himalayan Mountains, the majestic Mt. Everest, Nepal would hardly seem a candidate for a raging Communist insurgency. Indeed, if anything, its population was recognized not as rebels but for its loyal service as Gurkhas, perhaps the single most legendary infantry in the world.

The combination, though – dominant peaks and service as infantry in foreign armies – actually goes to the heart of the matter. It is not an accident that, over the past nearly two centuries, a small, land-locked mountain kingdom has sent hundreds of thousands of its young men into combat for others. To the contrary, Nepalese have flocked abroad, not due to their martial bent or any other unique national characteristic, but rather for the oldest reason known to recruiters: need.

Parameters of the Old Regime

Far from being a Shangri-la, Nepal is 24 million people competing for livelihood in a country but the size of North Carolina (which has just 6.5 million). Roughly one-third of the national territory is the Himalayas and consequently has a mere 0.7 per cent of the population. The lower approximately one-third

¹ For a sympathetic treatment of the historical context, see Arjun Karki and David Seddon, “The People’s War in Historical Context,” in Karki and Seddon, eds., *The People’s War in Nepal: Left Perspectives*, Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2003, pp. 3-48.

² The closest approximation to an “official” figure for the conflict is 7,362 dead as of the end of year 2002. See Informal Sector Research and Study Centre, Kathmandu. An updated count through May 12, 2003, increases this slightly to 7,424. Less formal estimates regularly place the total in the 8,000 range. The latest publication with complete statistics for 2002 is *Nepal: Human Rights Yearbook 2003*, Kathmandu: Informal Sector Research and Study Centre, 2003.

of the country, the *tarai* – scrub jungle now largely cleared – holds 32.1 per cent of the populace. It could not even be settled until the 1970s, when several virulent strains of malaria were conquered. This has resulted in a popular concentration, 67.2 per cent, in the central one-third Hill country. Lest the point be lost, some 16 million people are sandwiched into ‘one-third of North Carolina.’

The result, according to a World Bank study of 1973, was a population density (per square kilometre of arable land) rivalling that found in the more fertile, multi-cropped regimes of certain Asiatic deltas. Conditions of livelihood – among the worst in the developing world³ – were exacerbated, because an effective lack of any industrial base meant that 90 per cent of the population was rural, with 80 per cent of the total population working directly on the land. Though 90 per cent of farmers were classified as owner-operators, only severe division achieved this impressive figure: 50 per cent of all households endeavoured to engage in agriculture on plots of less than half a hectare; 7.8 per cent were completely landless.⁴

Thus the economy has a current Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of only US \$5.5 billion, and an annual budget of just US \$1.1 billion. In contrast, the 2003 public schools budget for Fairfax County, Virginia, outside Washington, DC, was passed at US \$1.3 billion. The official leading source of foreign exchange, tourism, in a banner year interjected the purchasing power of just 250,000 visitors annually, a limited trickle-down tap. It should come as no surprise that the United Nations (UN) lists Nepal as among the poorest countries in the world; 80 per cent of the

³ In 1971, when Nepal’s population was just 12 million, average life expectancy was 37 years, and the infant mortality rate (per 100,000 births) was a staggering 172. Adult literacy was put at 13 per cent. By 1998, despite substantial improvement, a Nepali could still expect to live only 58 years; the infant mortality rate was 72; and adult literacy was 38 per cent. Source: *Civics in Nepal*, grade 12 textbook, Contemporary Society Course, Kathmandu: Creative Press, 2001. Such trends became still more pressing as a rapidly growing population produced an age distribution where, as per 2001 census estimates, 50 per cent of the population was 19 years or younger.

⁴ For discussion of structural issues engendered by traditional patterns of landholding, see for instance, Mahesh C. Regmi, *Landownership in Nepal*, Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 1999; Shanker Thapa, *Historical Study of Agrarian Relations in Nepal (1846-1951)*, Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2000.

populace, surveys consistently find, must do outside work to survive.

Limited development, however, ensures that such work is scarce. The result is a skewed distribution of resources, in which some have and others do not. The only solution readily available has been out-migration and participation in the global economy. Historically, for certain hill tribal groups, this meant enlistment as soldiers in the British Indian Army. Such opportunities, though they declined substantially in British service since Indian independence in 1948, have continued in the Armed Forces of India, but still have no possibility of absorbing even a sizable fraction of hill tribe job-seekers, much less others.⁵ Indeed, Nepalese of all communities seeking relatively well-paid expatriate work, have largely opted for service work abroad, with the largest single employer being Japan, if India itself – which has an open border with Nepal – is not considered.⁶ Regardless, most

⁵ The United Kingdom establishment has been run down to just two infantry battalions and limited support units, with another battalion-equivalent (three rifle companies) assigned to round-out under-strength British infantry battalions. Brunei, where one of the two UK battalions is based on a rotational basis, has two Gurkha battalions of its own, though they apparently have declined in strength after agitation concerning pay and allowances. Manpower for these two battalions comes from prior-service British Gurkhas who are recruited upon separation from UK service. Singapore Police have a Gurkha battalion, which is recruited as part of the normal British scheme. India apparently has at least 42 battalions of Gurkha infantry and approximately 10-12 battalions of other formations, such as Assam Rifles, which, though not nominally 'Gurkha,' are in fact manned by them. During a presentation in Kathmandu on May 11, 2003, Major (Retd) Deepak Gurung presented figures, which placed 35,000 Nepalese in the Indian Army, with over 115,000 receiving pensions, and 3,500 men in the British establishment, with 26,000 receiving pensions. If the number of 'other formations' is included, it would appear that the number of Nepali citizens serving in the Indian armed and paramilitary forces is possibly as high as 50,000. Source: Field notes, April-May 2003.

⁶ As of the end of 2001, there were officially 1,870,000 Nepalis working abroad, though the numbers cannot be considered accurate, as there is no way to measure returnees. Perhaps as many as 500,000-700,000 were thought to be in Japan. More purportedly precise figures stated that Saudi Arabia had 71,895 working there, with another 44,226 in Qatar. More than 53,000 Nepalis apparently sought employment in Malaysia the same year. Statistics for Nepalese working in India are unreliable, but one data set puts the figure at 587,243 in 1991, with a further 418,982 Nepalese born in India. See Harka Gurung, *Nepal: Social Demography and Expressions*, Kathmandu: New Era, 2001, pp. 16-18. For a comprehensive look at a particular community, see A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, *The Nepalis in Northeast India*, Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 2003. Independent

job seekers are unable to obtain external employment, irrespective of destination, and so find themselves mired in poverty. Statistics show that at least 20 per cent of the population lives in extreme, abject circumstances.

Considering only economic matters, Nepal would be a candidate for serious dislocation. Exacerbating the situation further, though, are social parameters: issues of caste, ethnicity, and language. On the surface, Nepal is a picture of unity, the world's only official Hindu kingdom. The constitutional monarch, a living god for much of the population even in the 21st Century, sits atop a society 86.5 per cent Hindu and nine per cent Buddhist – a society in which every aspect is dominated by the caste system.

In reality, beneath this picture of unity, is division. There are 60 recognized caste and ethnic groups; only slightly more than half the population, 56.4 per cent, is actually embraced by the caste system. More than one-third, 35.5 per cent is classified as 'ethnics' – tribal groups who are outside the caste system. The four largest of these have just over one million members each: Magar, Tharu, Newar, and Tamang (Magars supplied a plurality of Gurkha manpower in the British system⁷). A further 3.6 per cent of the people are classified as belonging to religious communities (e.g. Sikhs, Muslims); 4.5 per cent are 'others.'

estimates figure at least US \$1 billion is remitted to Nepal from overseas annually. Source: Field notes, November 2002.

⁷ See for instance Gary Shepherd, *Life Among the Magars*, Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press, 1982; for the situation in the Nepali hills, see J. P. Cross, *The Call of Nepal*, Series II/Vol 17 of Bibliotheca Himalayica, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998; on the Gurkhas themselves see Cross, *In Gurkha Company*, London: Arms and Armour, 1986. For details of recruiting, a variety of sources are useful; see particularly two works by Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentlemen: "Gurkhas" in the Western Imagination*, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995, and *Land and Social Change in East Nepal*, 2d ed., Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2000; as well as Tony Gould, *Imperial Warriors: Britain and the Gurkhas*, London: Granta Books, 1999. For insight into the "Victorian Mentality," see a reprint of a 19th Century work, Ministry of Defence, *Nepal and the Gurkhas*, London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1965. For the present Indian forces, the best easily available work is Rajesh Kadian, *India and its Army*, Delhi: Vision Books, 1990. For historical recruiting patterns of Nepalese, see Purushottam Banskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Army*, Delhi: Nirala, 1994, and Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur, *The Gurkhas: A History of the Recruitment in the British Indian Army*, Delhi: Nirala, 1987.

Significantly, half of the caste figure is comprised of the top two castes, Brahmins and Chhetris, the historic priestly and warrior castes, respectively, 16.1 per cent and 12.9 per cent of the total population. Ergo, 29 per cent of the populace is structurally positioned, by religious mandate, to dominate. This they have done and effectively control all positions of power and influence.⁸ Not surprisingly, this leads to charges of unfair advantage, where disproportionate influence and possession are replicated by religious sanction.

Linguistically, there is also severe division. According to the 1991 Census, Nepal's people speak 32 languages, with only 50.3 per cent claiming Nepali, the national language, as their mother tongue. Though the second language, Maithili, 11.9 per cent, is a distant second, the Census notes that some ethnic and caste groups, which have their own tongues, are not even reflected in the total number of languages enumerated. Needless to say, it is the top castes, which are brought up and totally at ease with Nepali, while other groups often struggle, even as linguistic competence is a key factor in access to employment, whether in the Government or private sector.

Given such socio-economic divisions, it would be expected that politics would play a significant role in mediating contending demands. Even though the country is a functioning parliamentary democracy, here again, there is more than meets the eye. A democracy only since 1990, Nepal suffers from the, by now, all-too familiar problems of the genre 'emerging democracy': corruption, inefficiency and lack of focus.⁹ Compounded by a

⁸ British presentation to June 2002 Donors Meeting in United Kingdom: "In 2000, upper castes accounted for 35% of the population, but 95% of the civil service, 98% of army officers, 78% of political leaders, including – ironically – the Maoists." Less dominant figures may be found in the literature, but even the most favorable see the two upper castes represented in all major areas in proportion at least double to their societal fraction. See for instance, the extensive data presented in Harka Gurung, *Nepal: Social Demography and Expressions*, especially the tables in the appendices.

⁹ See e.g. Martin Hoftun, William Raeper and John Whelpton, eds., *People, Politics, and Ideology: Democracy and Social Change in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1999; Dhruva Kumar, ed., *Domestic Conflict and Crisis of Governability in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, 2000. In the latter, Chapter 6 by Pancha N. Maharjan, pp. 163-96, deals specifically with the Maoist challenge and contains a wealth of data.

lack of state integration, the political system has been able to foster little save a lack of legitimacy.

Nepal emerged as a country in 1774-75. As it reached its present boundaries, then sought to expand into territory claimed by British India, it found itself bested in an 1815 war with the East India Company. As a consequence, most of the *tarai* was lost, and Nepal was forced to agree to what effectively was British suzerainty.¹⁰ A prime ministerial coup of sorts led to more than a hundred years of hereditary Rana rule (1846-1951) during which Nepal was closed to the outside world, save limited British representation. This ended in November 1950 when India, which desired a greater role in Nepal's affairs for defence reasons, supported a royal restoration.¹¹ The King assumed direct control in December 1960 and only in 1990-91 did democratic forces emerge triumphant.

This proved a mixed blessing. The era of Rana rule was not improved upon by the subsequent ten years of chaotic transition and the thirty years of monarch-guided democracy – the so-called *panchayat* system. Thus, even as Nepal had all the organization and bureaucracy of a modern nation-state, in reality it remained a backwater. The writ of its administrative apparatus – five regions (plus a capital region), 75 districts (each roughly the size of a North Carolina county), and 3,913 Village Development Committees (VDC) – barely extended beyond district capitals, and most areas of the country could be reached only on foot. Development was at a primitive level and little change was visible.

¹⁰ A lasting result was the treaty, signed with the “King of Goorkha,” that allowed Britain to recruit from certain Nepalese hill tribes for armed service; thus the Gurkhas.

¹¹ The Indian political left played an important role in this process. Useful for what it has to offer concerning later trends discussed in this paper is Santwana Tewari Chaube, *Democratic Movement in Nepal and the Indian Left*, Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 2001. For a more general discussion of the crucial role India played ideologically, see D. P. Adhikari, *The History of Nepalese Nationalism*, Kathmandu: Jeewan Printing Support Press [personal imprint], 1988.

Heightened expectations that democracy would make a difference in the lives of the populace were dashed.¹² Though there were improvements, particularly in the areas of health and education, these were minor bright spots in an overall dark picture of self-absorption by the major political parties. The Nepali Congress (NPC) ruled for all but roughly a single year of the democratic era, with the legal leftist coalition, the United Marxist-Leninists (UML), the major opposition. The monarch, who might have been expected to serve a mediating and leadership role similar to that played so effectively by King Bhumipol in Thailand, was killed in June 2001 in the so-called ‘Royal Massacre’ and was replaced by his brother, who therefore, to many, lacked legitimacy.¹³

Communist Opposition to the Old-Regime

Into this dynamic, the Left had early interjected itself as an active player, even heading the Government for slightly less than a year. Yet, as happened in Peru with the restoration of democracy in 1980 (after a dozen years of attempted military ‘revolution from above’), the expectations and passions unleashed, which surfaced particularly vigorously within the Left, saw the proliferation of ever-more radical options. The result, in the early 1990s, was the Nepalese Communist Party (Maoist), or CPN (M), a body that in its formative stages consciously modelled itself on the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) of Peru.

Committed to the ‘Gang of Four’ Maoism, as had emerged during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – which convulsed China with its attempt to ‘internalise’ the dialectic – it demanded a solution to Nepal’s problems by the establishment of

¹² Useful for a discussion of this issue at the local level is Ganga Bahadur, ed., *Promoting Participatory Democracy in Nepal: An Assessment of Local Self-Governance*, Kathmandu: Political Science Association of Nepal, 1998.

¹³ The entire royal family was shot and killed by the elder son, angered at his inability to secure parental consent to marry the woman of his choice. He subsequently turned his weapon upon himself but did not die immediately, presenting the country with the bizarre situation where a murderer was, prior to his death, the crowned King (which occurred even as he was in the intensive care unit). For further details, see Jonathan Gregson, *Massacre at the Palace: The Doomed Royal Dynasty of Nepal*, New York: Hyperion, 2002.

a Maoist 'people's republic'. Politically, this necessarily meant an end to monarchy, to be achieved through a Constituent Assembly, which would rewrite the Constitution. The Party also demanded an end to 'Indian imperialism'. Economically, there was to be an end to capitalist exploitation; socially, an end to caste, ethnic, religious, and linguistic exploitation. Since the system would not simply accept these demands, 'people's war' was to be used to force the issue.

People's war, declared formally by the CPN (M) on February 13, 1996 – but explicitly discussed and planned in the early 1990s, if not before – was by that time, considered in global perspective, a well-tested and efficient mechanism for seizure of state power. It may be assessed to consist of five elements:

- Mass line: Organizing an alternative society through the construction of clandestine infrastructure. Local socio-economic grievances and aspirations are to be addressed by cadres, who then connect solutions to the political mechanism of the party. As its principal targets, the Party worked in the hill tribe areas, especially in the mid-western region, and amongst *dalits* (untouchables), the lowest caste in the Hindu system.
- United Front: Making common cause with those individuals and groups who shared concerns but not necessarily goals of the Party. Issues of education, for instance, allowed mobilization of students who, though apparently not formally CPN (M) members, nevertheless acted as virtual wings of the party. Tribal fronts, ostensibly seeking more equitable treatment, were also very active.
- Military: The new alternative society, existing as it does illegally and clandestinely, necessarily relies upon armed action to maintain its security within and without. The 'liberation struggle' progresses through three strategic phases, which are quite logical. Initially, the revolutionary movement will be on the defensive, then achieve stalemate and finally go on the offensive. During each phase, a particular form of warfare will drive the dynamic, though not necessarily quantitatively. During the strategic defensive, terror and guerrilla actions will lead. During the strategic stalemate, mobile warfare (also called manoeuvre warfare)

will be dominant. This will see insurgent ‘main force’ units, equivalents of Government formations, take the field but not seek to hold territory. The final phase, the strategic offensive, will see such seizure of ground, the so-called ‘war of position.’ The CPN (M) felt it was entering Phase 2 with its general offensive in November 2001. This was then solidified through the actions, which led to Government reverses.¹⁴

- Political Warfare: Using non-violent methods, such as participation in legal political activity or negotiations, as an adjunct to violence. The CPN (M) has emphasized that it favours a ‘political solution’ to the issues in dispute, by which it appears to mean it is open to negotiating the terms whereby the old-order will disassemble itself. The Maoists used their earlier participation in ‘peace talks’ as a cover for military preparations prior to launching their November 2001 general offensive. There exists a possibility that the current cease-fire is being used in a like-manner, but this is unlikely, since the Maoists see themselves as negotiating from a position of strength.¹⁵
- International Action: Though not a prominent element during the Chinese Civil War itself, this had become ever more prominent as the ‘people’s war’ has developed. In conflicts such as the war of liberation in Algeria by the National Liberation Front or the FLN and the insurgency of the Viet Cong in the Vietnam War, international pressure on the counter-insurgents played a decisive role. The CPN (M) recognized early that, in South Asia and within Western society, it had allies: Maoist bodies that remain committed,

¹⁴ As stated by Baburam Bhattarai, the CPN (M)’s chief ideologue and head of the International Department of the Party: “The revolutionary people’s movement (which is popularly known as People’s War) undergoing for the past seven years has now created a parallel people’s power, army, economy and culture in large parts of the country, except the cities, and a situation of strategic stalemate has developed in the overall sense.” See interview conducted via the Internet by Chitra Tiwari with Bhattarai, “Maoists Seek a Democratic Nepal,” *The Washington Times*, December 14, 2002.

¹⁵ Bhattarai in *Ibid.* “We have always remained amenable to a negotiated settlement of the problem, but it is the feudal autocratic monarchy that has sabotaged all our earlier attempts. The ‘ice’ will be hard to break unless the monarchy is made to realize that its days are now numbered and it has to make a graceful exit from the stage of history.”

whatever the outcome of the Cold War, to radical restructuring along the lines advocated by the so-called 'Gang of Four,' the key adherents to radical Maoism. To that end, regular co-ordination was affected in the West with the constituent members of the Maoist umbrella group, Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM); they provided a variety of services, such as seeking to block assistance to the Nepalese Government. Closer home, a Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) was created in July 2001 after a meeting of nine South Asian Maoist parties in the Indian State of West Bengal.¹⁶

In implementing this approach, the CPN (M) examined the numerous 'people's war' struggles which had been carried out in the post-World War II era. The two insurgencies that exercised the most influence early on were *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru¹⁷ and

¹⁶ From India: Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) (People's War) or CPI-ML (PW), based in Andhra Pradesh and known generally as 'People's War Group' or PWG; Maoist Communist Centre or MCC, based in Bihar, the large Indian State on Nepal's southern border; the Revolutionary Communist Centre of India (Maoist); and the Revolutionary Communist Centre of India (Marxist-Leninist). From Bangladesh: Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal (M-L); Purbo Bangla Sarbahara Party (CC); and Purbo Bangla Sarbahara Party (MPK). From Sri Lanka: the Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist). The ninth attendee was the CPN (M) itself. More recently, a Bhutanese Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) has emerged and called for 'people's war' to overthrow the reigning monarchy. This organization is not yet a CCOMPOSA member but can be expected to seek such status. Source: *Field notes*, May 2003. It remains unclear whether this hitherto unknown party is an ethnic Bhutanese phenomenon or an outgrowth of CPN (M)'s efforts to penetrate the ethnic Nepalese community of the country. The latter has been in a state of turmoil since the late 1980s as a result of official Bhutanese efforts to promote nationalism through a variety of socio-economic-political measures. See for instance, Michael Hutt, *Unbecoming Citizens: Culture, Nationhood, and the Flights of Refugees from Bhutan*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹⁷ Particularly useful in discussing this movement: David Scott Palmer, ed., *The Shining Path of Peru*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, and "The Revolutionary Terrorism of Peru's Shining Path," in Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, pp. 249-308; Steve J. Stern, ed., *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998; Gordon H. McCormick, *From Sierra to the Cities: The Urban Campaign of the Shining Path*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1992; and Gustavo Gorriti, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999. For my own work, see "Making Revolution: *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru as Maoist Conclusion, 1980-,"

the so-called ‘Naxalites’ or Indian Maoists.¹⁸ Shining Path is fairly well known in the West. Its extraordinary level of violence had Lima on the verge of collapse by 1992, when the capture of the leadership, combined with an array of other counter-insurgency moves, all but destroyed the movement. The Naxalite phenomenon, though a virtual icon amongst international leftists, is less known amongst scholars. It began as a minor Maoist-inspired upheaval in 1967 in the small Indian district of Naxalbari, which sits up against Nepal’s southeastern border, and was snuffed out, but then revived in ‘copycat’ left-wing upheavals throughout India, some of which eventually required deployment of the military. Remnants remain active in at least eight Indian States.¹⁹

Significantly, what both of these key influences share are that they are distinguished by their lethality. Mao himself did not shy away from violence against ‘class enemies’, but held that only the most die-hard elements would have to be ‘struggled’ to the extreme; i.e. killed. Most opponents could be neutralized and brought into support of the revolutionary endeavor through the mechanisms of the united front. Neither *Sendero* nor the Naxalites followed this approach, instead taking ‘elimination of class enemies’ as a literal charge for action. The result was an impressive level of terror, with actual numbers being much

Chapter 5 in my *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam*, London: Frank Cass, 1996, pp. 253-84, and “Making Revolution With Shining Path,” Chapter 10 in Palmer, *The Shining Path of Peru*, pp. 191-205. Possibly the single most cited essay comparing the cases of Peru and Nepal is R. Andrew Nickson, “Democratisation and the Growth of Communism in Nepal: A Peruvian Scenario in the Making?” *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. XXX no. 3, November 1992, pp. 358-86. I am indebted to Nickson for an elaboration upon the article’s contents during a discussion in Asuncion, Paraguay, August 15, 1993.

¹⁸ Key works include: S. Banerjee, *India’s Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising*, London: Zed Press, 1984; E. Duyker, *Tribal Guerrillas: The Santals of West Bengal and the Naxalite Movement*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987; and A.K. Samana, *Left Extremist Movement in West Bengal: An Experiment in Armed Agrarian Struggle*, Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1984. Particularly good at placing the Naxalites within a regional development context is Partha Chatterjee, *The Present History of West Bengal: Essays in Political Criticism*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

¹⁹ West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. The most vibrant of these are People’s War Group (PWG) of Andhra Pradesh and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) of Bihar, both CCOMPOSA members.

greater in the Peruvian case. The practical result was that the CPN (M) initially looked for inspiration to two of the more radical insurgent movements to have appeared in recent years.

There is some irony in this, since the CPN (M)'s leadership, like that of both *Sendero* and the Naxalites (not to mention the Khmer Rouge, another Maoist group which adopted extreme violence), is drawn overwhelmingly from the very 'class enemies' attacked by the party's doctrine. The two leading figures in the nine-member Politburo, Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai, for instance, are both Brahmins with educational backgrounds.²⁰ (The party's Military Wing head, Ram Bahadur Thapa aka Badal, is apparently ethnic Magar and hence an exception.)

That leaders of a revolutionary movement should come from the elite is consistent with global patterns, whether insurgent or terrorist, throughout the 20th and now 21st Centuries. So, too, is the prominence of leadership figures with an educational background.²¹ Followers, as might be expected, are drawn from an altogether different strata, the marginalized of society, those who become the so-called 'grievance guerrillas.' That the CPN (M) has had little difficulty tapping such individuals' stems from the abundance of socio-economic-political contradictions discussed earlier and compounded by issues of gender. Women have been prominent in the recruiting profile.²²

²⁰ Both were born in 1954 and entered politics in their university years. Prachanda earned a graduate degree (MA) in agriculture, Bhattarai a PhD in urban planning (his wife, Hishila Yemi, is an architect/engineer and also a member of the Maoist group). Both have been widely quoted as advocating social transformation through violence – Bhattarai is credited with the intellectual authorship of the 'Class Enemy Elimination Campaign' launched in 1996. Asked for personal details by Chitra Tiwari during the interview in *The Washington Times*, he replied, "As per your query about my individual background, you can take me as a typical representative of a Third World educated youth of peasant background, who finds the gross inequality, oppression, poverty, underdevelopment and exploitation of the overwhelming majority of the population in a class-divided and imperialism-dominated world just intolerable, and grasps Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as the best scientific tool to change it positively."

²¹ Fieldwork in the important district of Gorkha (from which the term 'Gurkha' is derived) revealed, as per police statistics for the period November 2001-March 2002, that fully 40 per cent of those arrested were teachers (79 of 196). Source: Field notes, March 2002.

²² Impressionistic analysis of admittedly incomplete data indicates that one-fifth to one-third of the cadre and combatants may be women.

Prior to going underground and becoming illegal, prominent members of what is now the CPN (M), guided by their 'progressive' ideology, focused their political efforts amongst just such strata, even sending a number of representatives to Parliament in the early period of transition to democracy.²³ The areas of this electoral strength, the same mid-western regional hill districts that form the subject of so much development literature, remain the Maoist heartland.

Organizationally, there is nothing unexpected in the CPN (M)'s approach in those areas. Using the mass line in areas where they are present in strength, and the united front in areas of Government presence (especially urban centres), cadres have emphasized winning the allegiance of the people by tapping into local grievances and then connecting solutions with membership in the CPN (M). Logically, however, this has meant that, at times, there are contradictions between the subjective pronouncements of Maoist publications and objective realities on the ground.²⁴ Where the population has hesitated, terror has been used to ensure compliance. This increasingly has been the case as the party has moved out of the areas where it previously had an electoral base. Statistical analysis of casualties shows a near majority to be upper caste victims, an expected result in a society where those castes are dominant.²⁵

²³ Contesting the May 12, 1991, Parliamentary elections as the United Peoples' Front of Nepal, or UPFN, the Maoists won nine seats of the 205: one from the Eastern Region (Siraha); four from the Central Region (Ramechhap, Kavrepalanchok, Lalitpur and Chitwan); and four from the mid-western region (Rukhum, Rolpa x 2, Humla). This is a fascinating mix of some of the most and least educated areas of the country. By comparison, the Nepali Congress captured 110 seats, the Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist), the 'legal Left,' 69 seats.

²⁴ A 'big landlord' in the hills, for instance, may be a man with two hectares of land; but objectively this does not fit the definition of such 'class enemies'. The point is fundamental, for if the essence of Nepal's problems lies, as they do, in the population exceeding the carrying capacity of the land, no ideological restructuring can adequately address issues of livelihood. The result is bound to be, as it was in Cambodia, tragedy.

²⁵ A preliminary analysis of all Maoist civilian victims of terror actions in 2002 produced 323 names, 145 (44.9 percent) of which could be identified as Brahmin, Chhetri. Of the remaining 178 names, 52 were tribals (16.1 per cent; called 'ethnic community members'); and 82 could not be identified (25.4 per cent). These four categories amounted to 86.4 per cent. Victims are virtually all male. Their numbers are exceeded by the number of security force dead, especially the Police.

As a mass base is mobilized, it is incorporated into a clandestine infrastructure, the alternative society of the CPN (M). This structure, to date, has essentially replicated that of the Government, merely setting up a radical alternative. In at least six mid-western districts, Government presence is now limited only to the district capitals, and the Maoists effectively constitute the ruling structure. The Politburo issues directives with the assistance of an approximately 25-member Central Committee. The precise relationship between this infrastructure and the so-called 'Military Wing' is a matter of some conjecture, but the degree of independence ostensibly enjoyed by the latter from the party is undoubtedly overemphasized.²⁶ The main armed component, for instance, six guerrilla battalions, may only launch military action in response to instructions relayed through their individual Chief Commissars (one per battalion), who are Central Committee members.²⁷ Similarly, the united front apparatus, while also existing as a separate entity, appears to be under firm party control.²⁸

Leaders and followers, then, are mobilized, in the final analysis, by the same 'causes,' but approach the issues quite differently. Leaders, drawn overwhelmingly, even at this point in time, from the elite strata, seek structural change to deal with the issues. Followers, while also seeking solution, want direct and local redress.²⁹ Preliminary systemic responses involved sending ill-prepared Police forces, both from local stations and regional response units, into affected areas, where their behaviour, actual

²⁶ The tension that does exist appears to stem from a logical source: the high proportion of hill tribe manpower in combat formations. Many of these foot soldiers see themselves as involved in a self-defence dynamic as opposed to an ideological crusade. Thus, the leadership must deal with them carefully as it engages in the tactical manoeuvring so typical of a Leninist organization.

²⁷ Source: Field notes, April-May 2003. This conclusion is based upon numerous interviews with Maoist combatants in the Rolpa district. It may be further noted that each battalion also has a Vice Commissar with equivalent powers to the Chief Commissar.

²⁸ Most active in the united front campaign are students and ethnic liberation groups. The latter have not proved particularly vibrant, but the former function openly and appear to execute instructions issued by the CPN (M) leadership. Prominent is the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union (Revolutionary), or ANNISU-R.

²⁹ For the benchmark work of theory with respect to this dynamic, see James C. Scott, "Revolution in the Revolution: Peasants and Commissars," *Theory and Society*, 7/1 & 2, January-March 1979, pp. 97-134.

and perceived,³⁰ thrust self-defence into the equation as a major theme for Maoist recruitment.³¹

The heartland of the early Maoist position was the area straddling either side of the border between the districts of Rolpa and Rukum in the mid-western region. There, Kham Magars responded to the CPN (M) guidance and became guerrillas, generally supported by the population.³² Further expansion proved more difficult and the level of popular involvement was commensurately lower. Indeed, even as the Maoists were able to dominate the six districts in the mid-western regional heartland, an area as near to the epicentre of the uprising as western Rolpa, Gharti Magar territory, witnessed infrastructure so thin that mere handfuls of cadres maintained control only through their ability to call upon guerrilla manpower for enforcement of their writ.³³

Though the Maoists themselves did not claim as ‘base areas’ the human terrain they thus were able to dominate, the districts in the mid-western region served that role, as outlined in key ‘people’s war’ documents authored by Mao Tse-tung. Within them, social transformation could serve as a basis for popular mobilization, with the result that the movement could project

³⁰ This is an important issue, because the limited scholarly work produced to date has relied principally upon ‘circular’ journalistic accounts of actual events, the result being that hearsay has taken on a life of its own. One police operation, in particular, ‘Kilo Sierra II’ (June 1998) is now consistently cited as mobilizing hill people in self-defence; but its particulars are normally conflated with other operations, such as the earlier ‘Romeo’ (November 1995), which are then arrayed as if a consistent pattern of systemic repression is established. Examination of contemporaneous data, though, such as the field reports for ‘Romeo’ (Field Notes, November 2001), raises questions as to what occurred objectively – quite a different issue from what occurred subjectively. Subjective issues cannot be ignored and may be crucial in any insurgency; for instance, what could seem to be limited repression objectively might nevertheless subjectively be perceived as substantial. Yet consideration, when dealing with a voluntarist movement, must be given to the possibility that limited, even unexceptional, actions can be exploited through shrewd ideological campaigns by insurgents.

³¹ Available figures on CPN (M) strength do not inspire confidence, but Government estimates provided in early 2003 would seem reasonable: 5,500 combatants; 8,000 militia; 4,500 cadres (referred to in Nepalese English as ‘cah-dres’); 33,000 hard core followers; and 200,000 sympathizers.

³² See for instance Anne de Sales, “The Kham Magar Country: Between Ethnic Claims and Maoism,” in David N. Gellner, *Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences*, Delhi: Social Science Press, 2003, pp. 326-57. There are five separate groupings within the general Magar category.

³³ Source: Field work, Rolpa district, April-May 2003.

itself outward into new areas. Necessarily, a contradiction glossed over in Maoist theoretical literature emerged for the CPN (M) in terms of resources, because the base areas were among the very poorest regions in the country – due, not to the issues of exploitation posited in party literature, but to more mundane reasons of overpopulation, poor techniques of agriculture and animal husbandry, and limited soil and water regimes. The result was the relative absence of the sort of social engineering one would expect to find in a ‘liberated area’ – and very limited resources available to the liberation movement.

In the absence of an external input, as provided, for instance, by drugs in the cases of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) in Colombia and *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, CPN (M) was forced to rely upon the more traditional but limited insurgent methodology of criminal activity, especially bank-robbery, abduction-for-ransom and extortion,³⁴ for generation of funds. These, though they could at times produce windfalls, were not able to meet the demands of rapid expansion.³⁵ Neither could external links make up shortfalls, since the allied movements of CCOMPOSA were actually in an inferior position logistically to

³⁴ Local variations make generalization risky, but extortion, classified by the Maoists as ‘revolutionary taxation,’ appears ‘reasonable’ in an objective sense. Small shopkeepers in Rolpa, for instance, have cited payments of NPR 50 per month (approximately US 66 cents); Government personnel remaining in “liberated” areas (e.g. teachers, postmen) pay amounts equal to one day’s wages per month. NPR 100-200 (US \$1.32-\$2.64) was often cited as the ‘tax’ by teachers who were making approximately NPR 7,500 per month (roughly US \$98). Reports of excess from collecting cadres are comparatively rare. In contrast, abduction-for-ransom is common – despite efforts by the Maoist hierarchy to deny such activity – and far more arbitrary. The amounts frequently are steep by the standards of rural Nepal. A case, not atypical, in Rolpa involved a small innkeeper held until ransomed by his family for NPR 30,000, or nearly US \$400. He subsequently fled to India, leaving his family adrift. Source: Field notes, April-May 2003. Equally lucrative for the movement is extortion from businesses associated with the commercial economy. A typical trekking group of foreigners, for instance, stopped in October 2001, was allowed to proceed once the guide had paid NPR 2,000 (about US \$26), a normal amount and an order of magnitude greater than what can be gained in taxing the impoverished population. In the case just cited, a receipt was issued and the trek reported no further demands. Source: Field notes, December 2001.

³⁵ E.g. Government statistics for the first several days of the November 2001 offensive put losses to CPN (M) bank-robberies at approximately US \$2 million. Source: Field notes, November 2001. No reliable data exists on the total CPN (M) funding.

their Nepalese comrades. These stark realities left the movement with a character, in many areas, as much *jacquerie* as disciplined insurgency.

Dynamics of ‘People’s War’

Progress thus was steady but more a product of Government lack of capacity than insurgent power. Methodology was predictable and mirrored that of other insurgent movements following the people’s war approach. While ‘winning the hearts and minds’ was important in the base areas, terror was indispensable for expansion into contested populations. This was supplemented by guerrilla action and ultimately, with the launching of the November 2001 general offensive, the mobile warfare phase.

The basic pattern of mobile warfare may be conceptualized thus: Terror facilitates or establishes the ‘space’ necessary for the insurgent political campaign. It eliminates societal rallying points, the synapses such as local gentry and minor Government officials. Terror further generates demands for protection. Answering this demand, police forces respond. Once they predictably spread out, they are attacked in guerrilla actions with small patrols and stations overwhelmed. Unable to defend themselves, the police invariably consolidate forces, thus exposing still larger swaths of the population to insurgent domination. Behind the scenes, certain guerrilla units (i.e. a proportion of guerrilla combatant strength) are ‘regularized,’ to use Mao’s term, turned into mobile warfare units – ‘main force’ guerrilla units. They are ‘conventional’, but only in the sense of established tables of organization and equipment (TOE), and specialization. When the Government inevitably deploys its military to reclaim ‘lost’ areas, these units (normally the Army) find themselves, first, harassed by guerrilla action, which demands small unit saturation patrolling, then, defeated in detail by the mobile warfare units (which fight using ‘guerrilla tactics’).³⁶

³⁶ Only in Phase 3 – when mobile warfare gives way to the so-called ‘war of position’ – do the insurgents endeavour to hold ground.

Doctrinally, political cadre should enter an area and gradually mobilize clandestine infrastructure, which produces violent action. Some movements, such as the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and *Sendero Luminoso* itself, prior to its 1980 declaration of people's war, have essentially followed this approach. More common, though, as illustrated by the Naxalites in India and FARC in Colombia, is to lead with violence, 'capturing' a target population and then reorganizing it according to ideological dictate. This is the approach CPN (M) has relied upon since 1996.

In a typical action, in Muchook, a small village which is a four-hour walk from the district capital of Gorkha (the capital is also Gorkha), a Congress Party representative and Maoist opponent, a 'big landlord' (owning two hectares), was awakened at 2230 hrs by a knock on his door. Confronted by seven Maoists, armed principally with agricultural implements, he was dragged from his home and told he was to be made "to suffer the way you made the people suffer." His legs and feet were then systematically broken with hammers. Carried to a hospital in Kathmandu, he survived, but his absence deprived the village of a natural rallying point. For there existed no government presence in Muchook, with no police station, for example. Police, who did venture into the area, found nothing; but they could not stay, and so the Maoists effectively took control of the village and its surrounding area, one of Nepal's 3,913 basic building blocks, or VDCs.

This process was repeated time and again. Complementary moves were carried out to neutralize the state and its agencies completely. District and VDC offices, for example, were systematically razed, their records and equipment destroyed. In Gorkha, the single month-and-a-half period prior to May 2002 saw 34 of the district's 66 VDC offices completely eliminated. The 60-odd police stations, with their approximately 500 men spread out over the size of a US county (3,610 sq-km), with more than a quarter of a million people to cover and no real means to do so save on foot (the only paved road in the district connected Gorkha town to Kathmandu), were helpless.³⁷ Nationwide, then,

³⁷ Source: Field notes, May 2002.

by the beginning of 2003, more than 1,400 VDCs no longer existed and virtually all no longer functioned, their personnel, elected locally, having almost universally fled.³⁸ The influence of terror was illustrated by the reality that fewer than 30 VDC Chairmen had actually been assassinated (again, of a theoretical total of 3,913).³⁹

All other elements of the state likewise found themselves attacked. Roads were cut; bridges, dams and hydropower facilities, aqueducts, telephone towers and electric lines, and airport control towers were systematically destroyed. By the same early-2003 date noted above, more than 440 post offices, most of them with the most rudimentary facilities, had been gutted.⁴⁰

Such action was the essence of the approach of *Sendero Luminoso* (which Nepalese Maoist documents claimed to be copying consciously) and the Khmer Rouge.⁴¹ To all appearances,

³⁸ This was not only an administrative blow but also a key step in establishing Maoist political dominance. For VDC candidates were affiliated with the major political parties. The result was that the legal Left bore the brunt of the Maoist assault, since some 2,600 VDC Chairmen of the 3,913 possible were UML members. Ibid.

³⁹ Source: Field notes, November 2002. The first year of the Maoist offensive (November 2001-November 2002) saw 1,321 VDC buildings completely destroyed, according to Government figures, as per the following breakdown by regions: Far West, 316 of 383 (82.5%); Mid-Western, 165 of 575 (28.7%); Western, 221 of 865 (25.5%); Central, 334 of 1,199 (27.8%); and Eastern, 285 of 893 (31.9%). VDCs continued to be destroyed at such a clip, though, that the statistics were already surpassed at time of release.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ It is significant that leaders steadfastly maintain no inspiration from (or knowledge of) the Khmer Rouge case. It is ironic, then, as per Bhattarai (during interview to Tiwari), to read a claim such as: "There is no independent and authentic account of events in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge available so far. Whatever is emanating from the Western media appears to be highly exaggerated to us." Such, of course, is the untenable position, which ranks with 'Holocaust Denial', but is representative of many ad hoc CPN (M) pronouncements. Essential readings on the Khmer Rouge would include: Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996, and *How Pol Pot Came to Power: A History of Communism in Kampuchea, 1930-1975*, London: Verso, 1985; David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992, and *Voices From S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; Kenneth Quinn, "Political Change in Wartime: The Khmer Krahom Revolution Southern Cambodia, 1970-1974," *Naval War College Review*, vol. 28 Spring, pp. 3-31, and *The Origins and Development of Radical Cambodian Communism*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1982;

the goal was to sever links with the existing system, isolate the population into a self-contained entity, and return society to the proverbial revolutionary ‘Year One,’ when the remaking of the new world would begin. The guide for this transformation was to be the thoughts and dictums of the leader, ‘Prachanda Path,’ a deliberate echoing of *Sendero Luminoso*’s ‘Gonzalo Path’ (‘President Gonzalo’ was party leader Abimael Guzman Reynoso).

Though the essence of the campaign was rural-based, as would be expected from the ‘people’s war’ approach (as it had evolved, particularly through the Vietnam War experience), urban action was not eschewed. Just as *Sendero* eventually extended its campaign into urban space, so did the CPN (M). Such areas, in any case, were limited in Nepal, so the main targets were the three most important cities and their surrounding productive lands: Kathmandu, the capital; Pokhara, to the west, on the doorstep of the mid-western region; and Nepalgunj in the *tarai*. There, united front activity of the CPN (M)’s United Revolutionary People’s Council (URPC) was most important, supplemented by a terror campaign of bombings and assassinations initiated in August 2002.⁴² The most prominent victim was Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohan Shrestha, commanding officer of the police field force (Armed Police Force or APF), killed in January 2003.

Even as terror forced society in upon itself, the principal target of guerrilla action was the 46,500-strong police force, the first line of armed defence – for Nepal possessed no local forces

Karl D. Jackson, ed., *Cambodia 1975-1978: Rendezvous With Death*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989; Michael Vickery, *Cambodia 1975-1982*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999; and Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution*, New York: Public Affairs, 1986.

⁴² By the declaration of the present ceasefire on January 29, 2003, an apparent 21 assassinations had been carried out in the Kathmandu Valley, including two Nepalese security personnel employed by the US Embassy. The goal of united front activity, as per Bhattarai, is transparent: “In the current triangular balance of forces – namely [among] the monarchists, parliamentary democrats and revolutionary democrats – if the latter two democratic forces are able to mount a joint struggle against the feudal aristocratic forces, there are strong chances that democracy will be consummated in the country in the near future.”

of any kind.⁴³ An essentially unarmed ‘watcher’ force, two-thirds of whom carried nothing heavier than a patrol stick, the police were quite unprepared for the demands of counter-insurgency. Emergency response units, who in any case were armed with the 1941 version of the .303 Lee Enfield (a bolt action rifle), were likewise found lacking. Patrols sent to the scenes of incidents were ambushed; numerous small police stations were overrun, attacked in the dead of night in assaults initiated with homemade explosives, then overwhelmed by human wave assaults. Efforts to set up a more appropriately armed and equipped police field force, the Armed Police Force (APF, 15,000 men⁴⁴), made slow progress under the pressure of operational demands. By January 2003, while the Civil Police had suffered 985 fatalities, 108 APF personnel had been killed.⁴⁵

Predictably, the only possible police response was to abandon outlying stations and consolidate the defensible mass. In the hills, where terrain, lack of communication and difficulty of movement favoured the guerrillas, this process was inexorable across the entire breadth of the country. Rolpa, in the insurgent heartland, was typical.⁴⁶ In 1996, there were 33 stations in the district, with the largest but 75 men, most less than 20.⁴⁷ When the post at Ghartigaun in western Rolpa was attacked in 1999, for example, it had a complement of 19. Fifteen were killed, the others wounded; the station was totally destroyed and never re-garrisoned. In 1998, two such stations were abandoned; in 1999, a further 16 (including Ghartigaun); in 2000, six more; in 2001, another four; and in 2002, three – leaving a total of just two for the entire population of nearly 211,000.

⁴³ In a move that increased the vacuum of authority in rural areas, the authorities systematically confiscated weapons – most for hunting – from the populace. Examination of security force statistics citing “weapons captured” reveals a predominance of “musket guns.” Best evidence indicates these are weapons confiscated from civilians and not pieces actually captured from guerrillas.

⁴⁴ Source: Field notes, November 2002. The force was rapidly expanding and likely has already reached its anticipated strength of 25,000.

⁴⁵ In contrast, a total of 850 civilians are listed as having been killed since the declaration of people’s war on February 13, 1996.

⁴⁶ Data that follows are from author’s field notes during April-May 2003.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Local records could not provide total police strength in the years under discussion, but it clearly was just in the hundreds. Even today, there are barely 300 police personnel assigned to the district.

Such was the lack of national integration that, once the police presence was eliminated, the insurgents became the state. All that remained to serve as a reminder of far-off Kathmandu were the minor functionaries, who could not flee lest they lose their meagre salaries: the likes of teachers, postmen and VDC personnel. Heads of VDC's, as mentioned previously, almost universally fled;⁴⁸ but school staff and postmen generally stayed. Had the approach of *Sendero*, the Naxalites or the Khmer Rouge remained the dominant ethos of the Maoists, not only would one expect such personnel to be eliminated but a new order instituted. Allowing for local exceptions, this was not the case. Indeed, in most areas, once the initial spasm of destruction had been completed, it ended – with comparatively lower levels of destruction in those areas where the Maoists held sway and made use of facilities, such as VDC offices. Land was not systematically seized or redistributed, and even schools were not directed to change the normal, centrally determined curriculum (though private schools were generally closed). Maoist combatants carried out civic action projects of sorts (such as improving trails and constructing bridges) even as Government development personnel – charged with doing the same tasks -- were refused entry. Only in those core areas of longstanding insurgent presence did anything 'new' surface, though various people's Governments and projects, in reality, were but efforts to make earlier forms more equitable and responsive.

The critical component at the local level, of course, was the cadres. These, too, were of remarkably uneven quality and presence. It would be expected that the level of ideological knowledge would be low among movement 'followers,' but this generally has proved the case for the cadres, as well. Participation in the movement resulted from a variety of local and personal factors,⁴⁹ and cadres generally did their best to reproduce the

⁴⁸ In Rolpa, the VDC heads numbered 51, affiliated with the major parties as follows: UML, 23; NC, 18; RPP [the successors to the conservative backers of the old *panchayat* regime], 8; and Independent, 2.

⁴⁹ In one village studied, there were only three cadres, well known to villagers. They were normally referred to as the Opportunist, the Criminal and the Young Lenin. The first was a former Nepali Congress (NC) member who, following his own abduction and ransom, had become a Maoist, apparently to safeguard the family property. Other members of his family, having

procedures and ‘symbology’ of the movement; but outside the core areas, they held sway only through terror, through their ability to call upon guerrilla formations to act as enforcers.⁵⁰

This reality revealed a peculiarity noticed by virtually all observers: the dependence of the Maoist campaign upon tribal manpower, especially Magars. The fact that guerrilla formations were dominated numerically by Magars stemmed from the ethnic composition of the core areas in which the Maoists had long worked, such as the Rukum-Rolpa border corridor. That entire tribal communities would become involved in the insurgency was predictable once Government miscues allowed the CPN (M) to tap the self-defence dynamic. A staple of Maoist agitprop in such areas remains skits featuring blue-clad ‘policemen’ burning villages and brutalizing the villagers, only to be routed by them under the leadership of the party. That tribal links were being exploited was further illustrated by Magar dominance of guerrilla formations as far away from the core mid-western areas as Dolakha District, the ‘Rolpa of the East,’⁵¹ where Magars were less than 2 per cent of the population (as per census).⁵²

If this dynamic fingered the CPN (M), in a sense, as a tribal revolt, a different process was at work in more mixed areas. In

moved to the *tarai*, remained prominent NC politicians. The second had spent 10 months in jail for his previous Maoist activities and had been released under the terms of the cease-fire. He was the most dangerous of the lot and was eager for ‘payback.’ The third was a high school student who had affected Leninist dress and seemed a true believer. Yet he attended classes faithfully and, according to his instructors, caused no difficulties. Source: Field notes, April-May 2003.

⁵⁰ The Opportunist discussed above, for instance, had seven months prior to my arrival accused the village postman of being a spy and had summoned a section (i.e. squad) of guerrillas who had taken the man away, bound. He has disappeared, despite the efforts of his family (a wife and four children) to locate him. Likewise, the Criminal worked closely with guerrillas in the area and regularly threatened villagers, at one point telling a teacher that, but for the cease-fire, he was dead. Finally, the Young Lenin, despite all his admirable characteristics – and probably precisely because of his clean-cut, wholesome appearance – had apparently been tapped to work with surveillance teams preparing targets for the urban terror campaign. Ibid.

⁵¹ RNA captain, Field notes, April-May 2003.

⁵² Census figures (projections) put the 2001 population of Dolakha at 204,229, of whom a plurality were Chhetri, 58,183, or 28.5 per cent. Another 18,791 (9.2 per cent) were Hill Brahmins; 27,619 (13.5 per cent) were Tamang; and just 3,392 (1.7 per cent) were Magars. Yet guerrilla units in the area were visibly dominated by the latter and drew support from Magar communities.

these, cadres were the movement, and they, as indicated, were a product of local realities and thus of mixed ethnic and class composition. Though they did participate directly in terror actions, especially in villages targeted for movement expansion, within their own areas of responsibility, they were more likely to call upon outsiders, the guerrillas.⁵³

These guerrillas, who were initially organised in small units, eventually (certainly by early 2003) were overwhelmingly assigned to six main force units, battalion facsimiles of 400-600 men each. Single battalions were found in the Eastern and Central Zones (as per the Maoist framework) and four battalions in the Western Zone.⁵⁴ Their weaponry was similar to that possessed by the Nepalese Government, a mix of the old and the new. The latter were primarily captured pieces and those purchased in the black market using looted funds.⁵⁵ For training, ex-servicemen were both coerced and hired.

Even where terror is not the most salient issue in the minds of villagers, contact between them and the guerrillas would be a recurring factor in life, since the combatants are dependent upon the villagers for the necessities of life. All movement, for instance, must occur through the preparation of caches of

⁵³ All communications observed, whether between cadres and guerrillas, or within and between guerrilla units, was by hard copy message. Widespread presence in hill areas of transistor radios would indicate lack of familiarity with technology was not an issue. Source: Field notes, April-May 2003.

⁵⁴ Source: Field notes, April-May 2003. It is noteworthy that efforts to draw guerrillas into discussions concerning their relationship to terror actions invariably led to responses such as: "Lower level party cadres are involved in such actions, not the battalions. We just fight." This could well have been true, since it was neither possible to establish affiliation of guerrillas observed engaging in enforcement activities during field work in Rolpa, nor to determine the extent of independent guerrilla formations outside the battalion structure. It was noted that half-sections and sections from battalions were constantly moving through the hills, and this accords with villager descriptions of such-sized units carrying out terror actions.

⁵⁵ Captured weapons predominate, with the most common high-powered firearm being the .303 Lee Enfield taken from the police. SLR's taken from the RNA are uncommon enough to be relegated to leadership figures, such as Section Leaders. Efforts to tap the extensive arms black market in South Asia have apparently met with minimal success. There is evidence of attempts to look further afield, though. One intercepted shipment of high-powered firearms was coming from Myanmar. There have been reports of corrupt Chinese officials also providing surplus weapons for a price. Source: Field notes, April-May 2003.

necessities, ranging from food and water to firewood, and such activity occurs through orders issued to villagers by the cadres at the behest of the guerrilla chain-of-command. Similarly, the combatants enforce mandatory attendance by villagers at political rallies with the cadres issuing orders and enforcing them forcefully, if necessary. The end product is a high level of popular fear but an inability to do anything save reach accommodation – unless flight is adopted as a course of action. At the time of the cease-fire, a growing number of villagers appeared to be opting for this latter option.⁵⁶

Systemic Response to the Maoist Challenge

Only with the November 2001 general offensive by the Maoists did Nepal take the necessary step of reinforcing the overwhelmed police force by committing the 54,000 troops of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA)⁵⁷ and passing anti-terrorism legislation. Spread throughout areas of the country which could be reached by road, quartered in battalions, but more often company cantonments, the RNA was a largely ceremonial force better known for its contribution to United Nations peacekeeping missions than for martial prowess. Indeed, even companies did not deploy as such. The result was a number of serious reverses as the RNA went through the painful transformation required for dealing with guerrilla warfare. In several instances, company-equivalents were overrun. By January 2003, the RNA had suffered 244 dead and 345 wounded.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ The dimensions of this phenomenon are difficult to assess. INSEC's *Human Rights Yearbook 2003* (p. vii) lists 17,564 displaced persons for year 2002, a modest figure which would seem too low. As CDO [Chief District Officer] Rolpa, Tejprasad Paudel, noted, when commenting on the high number of passports his office had been issuing daily: "And you do not even need a passport to go to India. Lots of people have been leaving." My own observation in western Rolpa counted roughly 20 per cent of the houses abandoned in villages. Source: Field notes, April-May 2003.

⁵⁷ Field notes, November 2002. Precise figure at the time was given as 54,245. This has apparently increased.

⁵⁸ Taking the figures detailed so far, the Maoists have killed at least 2,187 persons: 1,093 have been police, 244 RNA and the remaining 850 are civilians.

Faced with the Maoist campaign, the Nepalese state reeled. Though the number of dead was not as severe as that of many other insurgencies – the highest total figures for the entire period, February 13, 1996, to the present, are put at some 8,000⁵⁹ – they were concentrated in the year-plus which followed November 2001. A majority of all war dead, therefore, came in the space of just over a year, a powerful shock to Nepal.⁶⁰

Response was hampered by the political shortcomings already detailed. Not only did Governments change with startling rapidity, on average one per year, but also governance was only possible due to the formation of various intra and even inter-party coalitions. Self-interest was the order of the day, illustrated by rampant corruption, and administrative drift meant that even substantial foreign development assistance was not incorporated in a systematic manner. The appearance of an insurgency, therefore, was seen as but one more minor factor among many, and parcelled out to the security forces for action – which in the pre-November 2001 period meant to the police.

Under some enlightened commanders, local police operations could have passed for those that had proved successful for the British in Malaya. Others, though, were more repressive than developmental in thrust. One advantage for the state was that

⁵⁹ This figure, the present highest estimate, must be used with a great deal of caution. Perhaps 3,000 of the deaths are attributed to the Maoists (INSEC counts only 2,021 in its 2002 report), the remainder to the security forces. Ironically, the 5,000 plus does tally reasonably with the Government's own released figures for enemy killed-in-action, but efforts to validate these have run up against a serious level of misstatement and exaggeration. (In one case, a report of 21 dead Maoists was found, upon investigation by Western observers, to involve just two actual bodies. The justification for the higher count was that the guerrillas were seen to have been hit. Source: Field notes, February 2002.) The irony is that cause-oriented groups appear to take the 5,000 plus figure at face value and then use limited, impressionistic evidence to put an actual figure to the number of those killed in error – and thus having their human rights violated. Amnesty International claims more than 50 per cent are innocents. Regardless, it is significant that in the entire 1980-92 period in Peru cited above, deaths of presumed subversives, 10,655, tallied but twice the count Nepal has produced in essentially a year.

⁶⁰ British figures for only the period November 23, 2001, to October 23, 2002, cite the following losses: police, 456 dead, 358 wounded; RNA, 208 dead, 189 wounded; civilians attacked by Maoists, 304 dead, 191 wounded; and presumed subversives, 4,434 dead, 'heavy' wounded. This total of 5,402, if compared to 8,000 (an estimate, to be sure), yields 67.5 per cent. Source: Field notes, November 2002.

numerous individuals, both civilians and security force, had served abroad with the United Nations in peacekeeping situations.⁶¹ Thus, they were well versed in the ‘hearts and minds’ approach to internal pacification, as opposed to pure repression. It was in a sense predictable, then, that approximately a year before the Maoist general offensive, the RNA, though still in its barracks as far as stability and security operations were concerned, was nevertheless deployed in limited fashion in support of a Government Integrated Security and Development Programme (ISDP).

The RNA, it was intended at this stage, would serve as the security shield for bringing Government presence to underdeveloped areas, which would then see an interjection of activity designed to improve conditions and promote livelihood. As matters worked out, the RNA was the only element of the Government which actually fulfilled its role. Though half a dozen districts were designated, with Gorkha as the pilot project, and RNA battalions deployed in area domination patrols, the civilian input was limited to selection of the projects by local Government bodies. The result was that the RNA itself used its limited assets to build roads, dig wells and provide rudimentary medical attention to villagers. Yet none of this was done on a scale that made the slightest difference to the actual situation on the ground.⁶²

With the November 2001 offensive, the ISDP was suspended, and the RNA deployed to engage in area domination. The highest formation for command and control was the brigade, but this gradually gave way to divisions and a planned corps, both of these more area commands than deployable military entities. Solid individual training could not be channelled into results-oriented operations due to shortfalls of arms and equipment, as well as severe shortcomings in leadership and technical skills.

A critical weakness was intelligence, the linchpin of any counter-insurgency effort. Nepal’s various sources for information gathering and processing – the police, Armed Police

⁶¹ See Bishwa Keshar Maskay and Dev Raj Dahal, eds, *Nepal’s Participation in the United Nations Peace Keeping Operations*, Kathmandu: United Nations Association of Nepal, 1995.

⁶² Field notes, November 2001.

Force, RNA, and National Investigation Department (NID) – were quite unprepared for the demands of internal war and generally deficient in both information gathering and intelligence production/dissemination.⁶³ Exacerbating the situation, these bodies functioned as separate entities with little coordination or data sharing. Only at the very highest levels of the bureaucracy was raw input brought together for analysis, but this, too, was provided for in an *ad hoc* and undermanned fashion.⁶⁴

Still, dramatic strides were made in setting up the command and control architecture necessary for counter-insurgency. With the Prime Minister in position as commander-in-chief, the National Security Council (NSC) was charged with executing the campaign. Because the NSC itself consisted of top Government leaders, it was the Council's Executive Secretariat that undertook planning and coordination tasks. At various levels, but especially in the districts, coordinating committees – comprised of the local police, RNA, civil, and intelligence representatives – met to determine policy and implementation. A unified command, with the RNA having authority over all elements of the armed response, eventually came into existence, giving fillip to the *ad hoc* but functioning coordination cells that had been formed at the RNA headquarters. APF platoons were deployed as if they were 'light' RNA units, and the police were given primacy in the defence of most urban areas.⁶⁵

The greatest difficulties occurred in overcoming the substantial baggage of past political inadequacies. The police, for instance, were not trusted by the RNA, being seen as corrupt,

⁶³ See especially Sukumar Basu, "The Role of Intelligence in Conducting a Counterinsurgency Campaign Against the Maoist Rebels in Nepal," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* [London], forthcoming. My own research has found the police consistently to be best informed as to local realities. Indeed, the intelligence centre set up in 2002 as a section of operations in police headquarters, Kathmandu, is as close to that required in counter-insurgency as exists in Nepal. Source: Field notes, November 2002.

⁶⁴ The concept of an All Source Intelligence Centre (ASIC) at the lowest possible tactical levels, a staple of Western (especially US and British) security force procedures, has not yet entered the Nepalese organizational architecture, this despite extensive efforts by, in particular, the British. Source: Field notes, April-May 2003.

⁶⁵ Until early 2003, the Civil Police had primacy in the defence of Kathmandu Valley. This has recently been passed to the RNA. Other urban areas, though, remain principally a police responsibility.

inefficient, and as bullyboys for the ruling party, which normally had been the Nepali Congress. The new APF, in turn, had received a good portion of its initial manpower draft from various Nepali Congress youth groups and so was likewise not trusted by either the Civil Police – who did have a good many within the officer corps who were well trained and had substantial experience – or the RNA. For its part, the RNA was viewed as loyal first and foremost to the Palace and as a possible threat to the fledging democracy. A highly centralized decision-making machinery meant that even the best of motives could often fail to overcome bureaucratic inertia.

Foreign support, hence, became crucial in addressing these flaws. Britain, as might be expected from its long and deep involvement in Nepal, played an important role in training. India, concerned lest it see another security problem develop on a crucial border (Nepal is a buffer between New Delhi and Beijing), responded initially with training and material support, eventually moving vigorously to suppress substantial Maoist subversion within its own borders. Ironically, China, having moved in its foreign policy beyond supporting ‘Maoist insurgents,’ also provided equipment. Finally, the United States, which long had been a major development actor through its US Agency for International Development (USAID), moved vigorously in all areas, from supplying arms and equipment to training. An emergency appropriation brought the combined military aid (Foreign Military Financing) for Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003 (FY02/FY03) to US \$17 million. Assessment teams from all these three countries were supplemented by personnel for actual training, including US Special Forces.

Where no amount of foreign input could compensate, though, was in overcoming the shortcomings of a traditional system, which organizationally manifested themselves in extreme deference to authority and a consequent lack of initiative. Combined with the intelligence shortcomings cited above, this resulted in a failure to come to grips with the struggle operationally and tactically – even as the general strategic grasp of overall parameters could be judged as being reasonably accurate. While it was understood with considerable clarity how socio-economic-political shortcomings had produced the

insurgency, it was not grasped how to respond.⁶⁶ Consequently, a comparatively weak insurgent movement, which drew its combatant strength from a minimally armed tribal revolt and could expand beyond core regions only through terror orchestrated by voluntarist action, was allowed to go unchecked for want of application of any systematic counter.

Further, even as this uncoordinated, haphazard, armed response moved forward, political realities worsened the situation. Virtually the entire post-November 2001 period saw the Government in a state of crisis, with the Nepali Congress splitting into two rival factions, and the UML reportedly refusing to accept the reins of Government. Finally, in October 2002, the King, using extraordinary powers granted to him by the Constitution – but highly controversial nevertheless – disbanded the Parliament and appointed a Government made up predominantly of members from minority political parties.⁶⁷ As the King's own legitimacy was not secure, this made the Government's even less so, and the ousted parties wasted no time in endeavouring to test, through mass action, the staying power of the new regime. So tainted were the political parties by their own corruption and ineptitude, though, that they were unable to rally a viable challenge.

It was at this moment that the Maoists chose to offer, in January 2003, a cease-fire and renewed negotiations. The reason had already been provided by Bhattarai in December 2002: "The situation is now peaking towards a climax after the fratricidal and regicidal 'king,' Gyanendra, and his notorious son, Paras, have staged a retrogressive *coup d'etat* against the supine parliamentary democracy on October 4 and restored autocratic

⁶⁶ This is in sharp contrast to Nepalese performance, both of individuals and units, in Gurkha and United Nations service. What is crucial, of course, is that these experiences occur outside the Nepali cultural matrix as given tangible form in societal structures.

⁶⁷ On October 4, 2002, King Gyanendra while describing Premier Sher Bahadur Deuba as being inept at handling the insurgency, dismisses him from office, assumes executive powers and assures commitment to democratic values and welfare of citizens. He declares that a national government would be appointed. Lokendra Bahadur, a Palace loyalist, assumed charge as caretaker Premier in place of Deuba. The King was forced to repeat the step in June 2003, when Lokendra Bahadur, the first 'caretaker' Premier resigned. Another Royal appointee, Surya Bahadur Thapa, is the current Prime Minister.

monarchy in the country.”⁶⁸ Such vitriol notwithstanding, the country eagerly embraced the proffered respite.⁶⁹

Earlier negotiations, as detailed above, had been unilaterally terminated by the CPN (M) in November 2001, in order to go over to the offensive. However, links had never been broken. The UML, in particular, because its stated ideology continues to incorporate the notion of ‘revolution,’ had kept channels of communication open, as had any number of other actors. Human rights groups, for instance, repeatedly endeavoured to act as mediators. Eventually, the Palace and its appointed Government, in order to renew discussions, used these channels. Just how these would eventually fare remained anyone’s guess, because neither side showed any sign of altering its basic positions. These positions, to be clear, were irreconcilable on such basics as the nature of the state and the position of the Monarchy. Even during negotiations, both sides continued to train, re-equip, and acquire armaments.

In this situation, the Maoist position remains paramount. From the previous cease-fire, captured documents and pictures, including video footage, together with interrogations of prisoners, show cadres telling the mass base that negotiations are no more than a tactical gambit, that the cause of the revolution will never be betrayed or given up until a ‘people’s republic’ is established. The real question is whether the present phase of talks are seen by the party as just a pause for regrouping or a more serious effort to gain, by non-violent means, that which it has thus far been unable to gain through violence – a standard political warfare technique, to be sure, but one that is not producing the level of societal dislocation attending the Maoists’ effort to become, to borrow a phrase, ‘the New *Sendero*.’

Significantly, the latter course seems likely, with the CPN (M) – in its own calculations – moving from a position of strength into fractured Nepali politics. At this point, however, analysis points to two possible interpretations of Maoist design.

- ‘The Leninist Scenario’: The CPN (M), under current circumstances, feels it cannot lose and will be able to defeat

⁶⁸ Tiwari, *Washington Times*, December 14, 2002.

⁶⁹ Background and discussion in SAP-Nepal [South Asia Partnership], *Quest for Peace*, 2nd edition, Kathmandu, 2003.

the enemy in detail, much as Lenin did in the chaos between the ouster of the Czar and the final Bolshevik coup.⁷⁰ Directly and through its front organizations, as in 2001, it is aggressively using political space, within which it can operate freely, to further divide its foes. In closed-door meetings, it makes common cause with the political parties and the monarchy (through the present Government), the end-game being to use one against the other, then to out-manoeuvre the survivor in the organizational contest to follow. Crucial in this strategy is the 'Constituent Assembly, through which the monarchy is to be neutralized, in particular separated from its armed base, the RNA – in the name of establishing a 'republic.' Integration of the CPN (M) combatants, as is being demanded, will further ensure the inability of the RNA to respond to provocation. In such an environment, co-optation will serve in place of armed confrontation. Indeed, the CNP (M)'s '75 Points'⁷¹ are structured as such a multitude, precisely so that no one or minor grouping is objectionable. It is the totality of the platform, to be achieved by persistently emphasizing that the smaller, 'moderate'⁷² compromises provide the only route to a 'lasting peace,' that is intended to produce a totally transformed whole.

⁷⁰ The CPN (M) draws heavily upon Lenin's work in its calculations (and upon Lenin as interpreted by Stalin), an orientation reflected recently in what appears to be a conscious effort by senior party members to imitate Lenin's mode of dress (in contrast to earlier efforts to imitate Chinese or Khmer Rouge models). This mode stands in sharp contrast to more traditional Nepalese forms, especially the use of the worker's cap instead of the ubiquitous *topi*.

⁷¹ See "75 Points of the Maoists," *New Business Age*, Kathmandu, May 2003, pp. 28-33.

⁷² Bhattarai to Tiwari, *op.cit.*, is instructive in this regard: "Our party, our party Chairman Prachanda and our various publications have time and again stressed that our immediate political agenda is to consummate a democratic republic in the country. Please note that we are not pressing for a 'communist republic' but a bourgeois democratic republic. For what we have advanced the immediate slogans of a round-table conference of all the political forces, an interim government and elections to a constituent assembly, which have been increasingly endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the population. As the constituent assembly is the highest manifestation of bourgeois democracy in history, we fail to understand why anybody claiming to be a democrat would shy away from this."

- The PIRA Scenario: The CPN (M) has not changed its basic positions but, like the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in Northern Ireland, sees the moment as ripe for pushing ahead with non-violent means even as violence is held in reserve.⁷³ This formulation is theoretically of particular interest, because it holds that a sub-state actor holds the same rights as the state. In particular, the state is no longer granted a monopoly of legitimate force. To the contrary, having lost this status by illegitimate action, the state, it is claimed, must negotiate with the sub-state actor – which has access to its own purportedly legitimate force. Hence the Maoists claim to have emerged, through the use of violence, as an equal to the Nepalese state. The state controls the urban areas, argues the CPN (M), the sub-state actor controls the rural areas. The clash between the thesis and antithesis, hitherto a violent affair, has given rise to the demand for the realization of a new synthesis through non-violent negotiation. Violence has been necessary to arrive at the point of ‘political solution,’ but violence can now be superseded by political warfare. The destruction wreaked principally in the hinterland, therefore, though having various tactical and operational goals, such as area domination, strategically was intended as political communication, irrefutable evidence for the old-order that the Maoists were a force that could not be ignored.⁷⁴ No doubt of marginal interest to those affected, such a mindset would not be that of *Sendero Luminoso* or the Khmer Rouge but of PIRA: not the destruction of the old-regime in all its manifestations but destruction utilized as a weapon – to inflict pain to achieve the ‘political solution.’

Neither of these two interpretations would preclude inclusion by the Maoists of more immediate concerns, though Bhattarai, as the head of the Maoist negotiations team, has begun to emphasize

⁷³ Particularly useful, amidst the myriad works devoted to the Ulster conflict and the IRA/PIRA, is Richard English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA*, London: Macmillan, 2003. His discussion focuses upon insurgent intentions and calculations in the struggle.

⁷⁴ I base this formulation upon discussions with Maoists during fieldwork, April-May 2003, especially an interview with the second figure in the hierarchy, Baburam Bhattarai, May 13, 2003, Kathmandu.

that the CPN (M)'s '75 Points' is a document of strategic goals rather than tactical demands. He claims for the Party a willingness of the movement to accept intermediate steps (e.g. a 'bourgeois republic' with a constitutional monarchy), a determination to move beyond an early attraction for the approach of *Sendero Luminoso* or the Naxalites in order to arrive at a unique, situationally appropriate 'Nepalese Maoism.'⁷⁵ Specifics of application for the building of a new Nepal are to be found in an expansion of Bhattarai's doctoral dissertation released in May 2003.⁷⁶

Even if this formulation were accepted at face value, there would be grounds for pessimism. Maoist rhetorical excesses, especially attacks on the RNA, and a bargaining emphasis on broad, often utopian, declarations at the expense of specifics, has led to a situation where the two sides are in danger of talking past each other. Undoubtedly, the RNA sees little but a cynical effort to weaken it. In the field, Maoist cadres and combatants have been briefed that the major goal of the current round of talks is the consolidation of the 'national army.'⁷⁷ Simultaneously, the Maoist representatives in Kathmandu have focused on ending international assistance to the Government (which, as indicated above, has been crucial in enhancing the capabilities of the security forces), all the while demanding that the RNA 'return to barracks.' Under no such restrictions themselves, Maoist forces have continued to move and train, funded by undiminished criminal activity.

Further, unsure of their position vis-à-vis Nepal's international supporters in the era of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), the Maoists have stridently attacked them, in particular the United States. This has furthered the impression of Machiavellian manoeuvring, though it would seem more correct to find the inspiration for such CPN (M) verbiage in the party's parochial origins and operational environment. Put simply, the Maoists have a painfully limited understanding of the global

⁷⁵ Interview with Baburam Bhattarai.

⁷⁶ Baburam Bhattarai, *The Nature of Underdevelopment and Regional Structure of Nepal: A Marxist Analysis*, Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2003.

⁷⁷ Field notes, April-May 2003.

forces and processes presently in play.⁷⁸ This leads to a degree of paranoia and mistaken bargaining positions.

It should be further noted here that representatives of the CPN (M) present in Kathmandu are among the most worldly and well-educated in the Party. This leads to questions as to both the scope of their authority and the degree to which their positions accurately reflect those of the entire leadership. Though CPN (M) decision-making is apparently a collective enterprise, Prachanda dominates through majority support in the Politburo. His views – especially concerning the extent to which a compromise may be exercised in the negotiations – are not known – despite the claim by Bhattarai that he and his peers are but a reflection of the Party will.

The difficulty of the situation has been compounded by the movement, in May 2003, of the estranged political parties into a phase of active resistance against the state – which led to the resignation of the first ‘caretaker’ Government in June and its replacement by a follow-on administration. Though the parties had constantly voiced support for a favourable outcome in the Government/CPN (M) negotiations, they have committed their own efforts completely to a confrontation with the palace and its appointed Government. In this action, the Maoists have joined, using their fronts to dramatically increase their influence within what hitherto has been the Government’s rear area.

In such an environment, the only real surprise came when the Maoists on August 27, 2003, abruptly terminated the cease-fire and resorted again to a variety of armed actions, to include targeted assassinations against important Government personnel in Kathmandu. The surprise came from the obvious: Government disorientation and lack of focus seemed to be providing the CPN (M) with ample leeway to make progress through ‘political’ means – progress that would surely be more difficult in a state of armed conflict. Indeed, faced with renewed Maoist assassination

⁷⁸ A telling illustration is provided by the pantheon given pride of place at Maoist functions: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Prachanda. That the public veneration of (at least) several mass murderers might be taken as chilling testimony of a new ‘Kampuchea’ in the making is simply not understood by the Maoist hierarchy. The legal Nepalese Left, it may be noted, suffers from the same myopia.

efforts, the Government promptly restored legal prohibitions and asked international organizations for assistance in apprehending leadership figures. Thus, 'people's war' is again in full swing.