

The Maoists in Nepal Strategies of Subversion and Subterfuge

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The Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M) represents the radical wing of Nepali politics and, for more than a decade, has been planning and implementing a ‘people’s war’ in order to create a ‘people’s democracy’ in line with Mao Tse-tung’s guiding principles. Though a ‘ceasefire’ has been in effect since early 2006, the Maoists, as they are called, have continued to function as a parallel state, threatening all who oppose them and funding their apparatus through abductions, extortion, and robbery.

In Nepal there is a potential mass base for any radical movement preaching a more equitable distribution of scarce resources. The country’s largely youthful population of 29 million¹ people has exceeded the carrying capacity of a land area that of Florida (or slightly more than North Carolina), but in reality much less due to topography and geography. The Himalayas in the north give way to hill country in the center, then to a narrow belt of flatlands, or *tarai*, in the extreme south. Population densities rivalling those of the great Asian river deltas

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¹ 28,901,790 based on a July 2007 estimation, *The World Factbook: Nepal*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/np.html>

have been reported, with none of the bounty and economies of scale that come with river delta civilization.

Extreme divisions caused by a multiplicity of social factors (especially ethnicity, language, and caste) have led to a skewed distribution of resources and claims of exploitation by the have-nots. Increasing incorporation into the global economy, though providing a safety-valve in expatriate employment (overwhelmingly in basic skills), has also heightened tensions by providing, on a continuous basis, evidence, visual and actual, of just how relatively deprived Nepal is. A 'normal job' in Kathmandu, the nation's capital, will pay as little as USD 35 per month, and lack of economic development means that even those positions are increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to come by. In a population where more than half are under 19 years, the result is enormous numbers of rootless young people available to be mobilized by any organization offering life-opportunities (of any sort).

The Maoists have proved most efficient at providing an alternative vision, and thus at mobilizing a growing following and a cadre of 'true believers'. This effort has been enabled by governmental negligence and a lack of state capacity. Though a parliamentary democracy since 1990, the country's political institutions during the democratic era have proved fragile and rife with inefficiency and corruption. Nonetheless, the democratic state could not objectively be judged as predatory. Maoist ideology, however, labeled it as such; and CPN-M forces effectively attacked all human and institutional rallying points, especially the local gentry. The latter, in Nepal's 3,913 counties, or Village Development Committees (VDC), and 75 Districts, were those who owned greater resources than others, especially land, and those who held local offices of the state, either elective or bureaucratic. Teachers were a particular target, an irony since teachers and educational figures have comprised key members of the Maoist cadre, to include the top two leadership figures, Pushba Kamal Dahal *aka* 'Prachanda' and Baburam Bhattarai.²

² Both were born in 1954, are Brahmins, and entered politics in their university years. Prachanda earned a graduate degree (MA) in agriculture, Bhattarai in (PhD) urban planning (his wife, Hishila Yemi, now a Cabinet member, is an architect/engineer and also a Maoists member).

Police were effectively targeted by the insurgents, with the small Police Stations (normally 15-20 individuals) gradually wiped out, and Government presence in 70 per cent of the country reduced by 2003 to the District Headquarters and major urban centres. The police field force (Armed Police Force, or APF) was too new (created only after the conflict began in earnest) and too small to reverse this trend. By the time the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) was deployed in full counter-insurgency mode in 2001, its efforts to secure the population could not progress due to the presence of CPN-M main forces. In one notable encounter, the attack on Jumla District headquarters in November 2002, an RNA independent company (160 men) and three Police installations (a total of 300 policemen), were attacked by four Maoist 'battalions' and associated units, numbering 2,000-3,000 personnel. Though the conduct of the RNA unit concerned resulted in a costly Maoist defeat, even after the three police positions were overrun, the case highlighted the extreme danger to Government units, were they to spread out in the area domination posture required for counterinsurgency progress.

Using their 'liberated areas' as a 'counter-state', the Maoists progressively solidified their position. A multitude of mechanisms and approaches ultimately abandoned 'Chinese' Maoist forms in favour of agitprop built upon traditional forms of song and dance. These proved effective at tapping the local grievances of marginalized groups and directing their energies against 'exploiters' and alleged 'enemies' and 'spies'.

Simultaneously, the Maoists sought to penetrate Government strongholds, especially the urban areas. Urban partisans engaged in terror actions, particularly bombings and assassinations, while seeking to undermine the political will of the authorities to continue. Manpower was the easiest resource for the Maoists to acquire; what little capital was required was obtained through the traditional insurgent means of abduction, extortion, bank robbery, and smuggling. The take was not large, but the funds gained³

³ No reliable data exists on total CPN-M funding during the conflict, but it would seem logical to suggest a high figure of some millions of US dollars. Government statistics for just the first several days of the November 2001 Maoist offensive put losses to CPN-M bank-robberies at about USD 2 million [Field notes, November 2001]. Local variations make generalization

proved adequate to purchase weapons on the Indian black market to augment those captured from the security forces.⁴

Consistent with classic Maoist doctrine, the CPN-M declared ‘people’s war’ on February 13, 1996, and implemented its strategic vision of using the countryside to surround the cities (however loosely defined that latter term may be in the Nepali context) by using five distinct “lines of operation”:

1. **Mass line (political action):** As its principal targets for political mobilization, the party worked in hill tribe areas, especially in the Midwestern Region, and among marginalized elements distinctive to local areas. There was no shortage of grievances (as well as hopes and aspirations). Prior to being banned, cadre of the CPN-M functioned as did the representatives of any other party, but they used their solutions to local dilemmas to form an embryonic counter-state. In this respect, they functioned very much as had other Maoist groups (e.g., Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, and Peru), especially *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path)

risky, but extortion, classified by the Maoists as ‘revolutionary taxation’, was until 2004 apparently ‘reasonable’ in an objective sense. Small shopkeepers in Rolpa in April 2003, for instance, cited payments of NPR 50 per month (about USD 0.66); Government personnel remaining in ‘liberated areas’ (e.g., teachers, postmen, etc.) paid an amounts equal to one day’s wages per month. NPR 100-200 (USD 1.32-2.64) was often cited by teachers who were making approximately NPR 7,500 per month (roughly USD 98). Reports of excesses by collecting cadres were comparatively rare. By contrast, abduction-for-ransom was common, despite efforts by the Maoist hierarchy to deny such activity, and was far more arbitrary. The amounts extracted were frequently 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 USD 400. He subsequently fled to India, leaving his family adrift [Field notes, April-May 2003]. Equally lucrative for the movement, of course, 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 USD 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 [Field notes, December 2001]. It is this activity – extortion – that grew completely out of control by 2004, to the extent that it was forcing the shutdown of even donor-funded projects. Demands as high as 10 percent of contract value were reported [Field notes, June 2004].

⁴ See “An Analysis of Photos of Nepali Maoist Weapons,” September 14, 2006 at: <http://nepaliperspectives.blogspot.com/2006/09/analysis-of-photos-of-nepali-maoist.html>

prior to its own 1980 declaration of people's war in Peru.⁵ During the pre-1996 period, it was the cadre of rival political parties who found themselves engaged in violent confrontations with Maoist cadre as opposed to the security forces.

2. **United fronts (use of allies):** Just as there was no shortage of issues for the mass line, so were there numerous causes around which those who sought activism of a non-Maoist stripe could be mobilized. Issues of education, for instance, allowed mobilization of students who, although apparently not initially CPN-M members, nevertheless acted as virtual wings of the party. Most prominent was the *Akhil Nepal Rashtriya Swatantra Vidyarthi Union (Krantikari)*, the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union (Revolutionary), or ANNISU(R). Similar fronts, ostensibly seeking more equitable treatment, were also very active.
3. **Violence:** The CPN-M used terror and guerrilla war to create a counter-state for itself in the Mid-Western Region, subsequently using this as a platform for projection into other areas of the country. Studying other cases of Maoist insurgency, particularly that of Peru, the Nepali Maoists judged that a mistake had been to accept the protracted war as a given rather than exploiting success as it developed. If, in other words, events unfolded in such a manner as to present opportunities for shortening the insurgency, then openings should be exploited. Thus the CPN-M aggressively sought to reinforce success, to enhance the momentum of its campaign. It felt it was entering Maoist Phase 2 (stalemate) with its general offensive (November 2001). Main force units were fielded in battalion strength, later in brigades and even 'divisions'. Actions led to neutralization of the Government's coercive power in much of Nepal and hence to a transition to the present Phase 3, the final drive for power.
4. **Political warfare (use of non-violence to make violence more effective):** Primary use was made of campaigns to

⁵ See David Scott Palmer and Thomas A. Marks, "Radical Maoist Insurgents and Terrorist Tactics: Comparing Peru and Nepal," *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, 13/2, Autumn 2005, London, 91-116.

undermine Government and popular will to continue the struggle against the ‘people’s war’. In particular, CPN-M emphasized its ostensible desire for a ‘political solution’ to the issues in dispute. CPN-M used its participation in ‘peace talks’ as a cover for military preparations prior to launching its November 2001 general offensive. It did the same with the seven months of talks that ended with unilateral Maoist attacks in August 2003.

5. **International action:** The CPN-M recognized early that it had allies in South Asia and within Western society – Maoist bodies that remained committed, whatever the outcome of the Cold War, to radical restructuring along lines advocated by the so-called ‘Gang of Four’, the key adherents to radical Maoism. To that end, regular coordination was effected in the West with the constituent members of the Maoist umbrella group, the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). RIM, in turn, provided a variety of services, such as seeking to block assistance to the Nepalese Government. Closer to home, a Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) was created in July 2001 after a meeting of nine South Asian Maoist parties in West Bengal.⁶ It further recognized that international cause-oriented groups, as well as the array of countries active

⁶ From India: Communist Party of India/Marxist-Leninist (People’s War), or CPI/M-L (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-ML; Purbo Bangla Sarbahara Party-CC; and Purbo Bangla Sarbahara Party-MPK. From Sri Lanka: the Ceylon Communist Party – Maoist. The ninth attendee, of course, was the CPN-M itself. 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, but now united as the Communist Party of India – Maoist, formed on September 21, 2004. More recently, a Bhutanese Communist Party – Marxist-Leninist-Maoist has emerged and called for ‘people’s war’ to overthrow the reigning monarchy. It remains unclear whether this hitherto unknown party is an ethnic Bhutanese phenomenon or an outgrowth of CPN-M efforts to penetrate the country’s ethnic Nepali community. 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 social, economic and political measures which alienated the ethnic Nepali-origin minority.

in Nepali affairs, could be used as pressure points of tactical, operational, and even strategic significance.

As effective as Maoist people's war strategy was in radically altering the political environment, it essentially delivered up to the Maoists only the marginal areas of Nepal. The RNA expanded to some 80,000 personnel and at least 75 line battalions (enough to place a unit in each District Headquarters); the Armed Police Force (APF) expanded to some 20,000 personnel; and the Police not only expanded but fielded 'Unified' units of growing capacity. Hence, the CPN-M's efforts to secure victory through the 'violence line' of operation, ground to a halt by early 2005.

Nevertheless, royal frustration at the inability of politicians, whether elected or appointed, to make headway in addressing the security issue (or much of anything else), led to the proclamation of direct Royal rule in February 2005.⁷ This move was highly controversial and unpopular, and provided the Maoists with the opening they needed to secure a united front with the marginalized political parties of the all-but-nonfunctioning parliamentary system, the so-called 'Seven Party Alliance' (SPA). Employing political warfare that played upon the desire for peace, the Maoists were able to cast the monarchy as the source of the conflict, and the security forces as the ones who refused to yield to the popular desire for 'peace'.

The result was a 'people power' movement in April 2006 that echoed, in many ways, the 'EDSA Revolution' in February 1986 in Manila, when Marcos was ousted, and the earlier October 1973 student-led upheaval in Bangkok, which brought down the military-led bureaucratic polity. In Nepal, as in the Philippines, the military stood aside and let events take their course. The restoration of parliamentary supremacy – with Girija Prasad Koirala back for his fourth stint as Prime Minister (as of April 28, 2006) – resulted in various interim arrangements, culminating in a Comprehensive Peace Agreement on November 21, 2006, that brought the Maoists into the system and symbolized the effective surrender of the old-order. The monarchy was completely

⁷ Ajai Sahni and P. G. Rajamohan, "The King's Folly," *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Volume 3, No. 30, February 7, 2005, www.satp.org/satporgrp/sair/Archives/3_30.htm#assessment1.

sidelined. After an Interim Constitution was approved on January 15, 2007, the CPN-M formally entered the Government on April 1, 2007.

The Current Situation

A crisis of governance has accompanied the second postponement of the planned election of a Constituent Assembly (CA), which was to be held on November 22, 2007. The 480-member CA was to write a new constitution. The unwieldy number of delegates was derived from a combination of first-past-the-post parliamentary seats augmented by various proportional and sectoral representatives, but the Maoists have now demanded that the selection be at least in part proportional.

The original June 20, 2007, deadline to hold elections proved impossible to meet, both for technical and political reasons. Technically, the necessary steps had simply not been taken, such as passage of enabling legislation for the polls. Politically, the interim authorities proved better at perpetuating a lack of state capacity than in strengthening the new-order. This should have surprised no one, since it was not just the same parties who had been returned to power but, in many cases (e.g., Koirala), the same individuals, who were responsible for the debacles and crises of the past.

The Maoists' action in scuttling the CA election stemmed from their own internal divisions over how to proceed in gaining power. Despite their agreements (signed by all concerned) to participate in peaceful politics, the CPN-M has been very open in asserting that it regarded all political arrangements as but a transition to their goal of a 'people's republic'. As their own actions – which have kept Nepal in a state of turmoil – have increasingly mobilized resistance, the Maoists have responded by alleging 'plots' and ostensible coup preparations, all (they claim) driven by royal action. The reality, of course, is quite different. Hence the Maoists find themselves in a tricky situation: strategically duplicitous, yet tactically astute enough to recognize the ability of key external powers (notably India and China) to isolate a radical Nepal and destroy it economically.

To look backwards at what had transpired leading up to the April 2006 collapse of the old-order: the changing correlation of forces demanded recognition by the Maoists that violence had reached its culmination point. The King's actions provided an opening for a shift in emphasis to the 'other' four lines of operation. In making the switch, the Maoists were assisted by New Delhi, alienated as much by King Gyanendra's nationalism as by his ham-handed authoritarianism. India consequently served as host and mediator for the 'secret' meetings that produced the SPA-Maoist collaboration. From the CPN-M viewpoint, then, what occurred was this:

1. **Mass line** – The Maoists had consolidated a political base in the west through armed political action. Terror by 2006 gave way to *menace*. The base areas had been consolidated relatively quickly and at acceptable human cost. Though the numbers were awful enough, what had been lost in the entire conflict was within 'acceptable' limits. Yet the Maoists had found it increasingly tough going to do anything strategically decisive from those base areas.
2. **United fronts** – The King's assumption of direct rule in February 2005 provided the chance for a strategically decisive shift by creating unprecedented common ground between the SPA and the CPN-M. The most significant element in Prachanda's various statements was his announcing the next step in the united front process: he proposed that the political parties jointly form an army with the Maoists, sharing all positions and authority. He further proposed that democratic elements within the RNA join with the Maoists and the parties. This did not happen, but the effort highlighted the fundamental reality of the Nepali situation: the security forces, especially the Army, remain the linchpin for the old-order.
3. **Political warfare** – Here again, developing circumstances delivered up to the Maoists a 'blue chip' item – 'peace'. The longing for peace was so great that the Maoists could use it as a term over and over to undermine the will of all concerned to continue their struggle against the Maoists. 'We just want peace', as a slogan, could be used as a tool of

mass mobilization to neutralize the ability and/or the political will of the Government to continue.

4. ***International*** – What the Maoists saw was a global situation where the trends were in their favour. Even those international elements opposed to the Maoists' dated, Cold War views, were unwilling to grapple with the situation due to their preoccupation with violent radical Islam (which the Nepalese Maoists claimed to support).

As the CPN-M assessed the situation, everything was flowing its way. At least in part, the Party declared its cease-fire as a tactical gambit to see if it could neutralize Government armed action. This did not work, but strategically the Government took a black eye as the entity that refused to 'give peace a chance'. That the Maoists used the interim to prepare for operations was winked at by many who saw the existing system as irredeemably flawed. India, as the prime offender in this regard, decided that playing its usual version of 'the Great Game' was preferable to supporting the Kathmandu Government. New Delhi was not totally committed negatively, but, in logic virtually identical to that which had prevailed in its Sri Lanka adventure, seemed to think it could contain the Nepali situation by fostering a 'West Bengal solution' (i.e., legal Maoists participating in democratic governance).

Central to the arrangements to end the conflict was the cantonment of some 30,000 insurgent 'combatants' – with the RNA, now renamed National Army (NA) confined to barracks – and a two-step decommissioning of weapons. Best evidence indicates the CPN-M packed the cantonments with recently recruited manpower (thousands of whom were under-age) and failed to turn in many high-powered firearms (the United Nations is responsible for managing this process). They left in the camps a skeleton chain-of-command to train the new recruits (within the limits imposed by their camp circumstances) and placed a reliable chain-of-command comprised of combatants in a new Young Communist League (YCL). These continued to engage in violence and criminal activity (particularly abduction and extortion), with gang activity taking the place of armed combat.

As a consequence, even before most recent events, the security situation was tenuous. The uneven performance of the

chief security officer for the country, Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula, a Nepali Congress (NC) member, was such as to bring calls for his resignation from all sides, but he apparently retained the confidence of Prime Minister Koirala, himself under increasing criticism for his lacklustre leadership. Most seriously, the continued internal deterioration and inability or unwillingness of the state to provide a secure environment (or even regular basic services) unleashed a host of centripetal forces. There are perhaps a dozen separatist movements presently active, with those in the *tarai* the most serious and powerful.⁸ These *tarai* groups, comprised at least in part of CPN-M breakaway factions, have proved more than willing to answer Maoist violence in kind.

The economic picture is also tenuous. Though macro indicators are reasonably stable, the micro situation is such that, if anything, the conditions of unemployment and under-employment, which contributed powerfully to the Maoist ability to recruit manpower, are now worse. The Maoists have contributed to the deterioration of the situation by continuing to run what amounts to a parallel administration, engaging in extortion ('revolutionary taxation'), violent mobilization of workers into unions (displacing as necessary, unions already in place), and ill-considered job-actions.

Socially, the centripetal forces mentioned above have led to a demand from virtually all groups, whether of gender, sector, ethnicity, language, or locality, for inclusion in the new-order distribution of rights, resources, and privileges, with disturbingly little discussion or consideration of obligations.

If there is one apparent bright spot, it is that there appears to be no sign of military desire to intervene in the political situation. This brings to the fore considerations of the monarchy, to whom the military once pledged loyalty (i.e., the *Royal Nepal Army*). Under the old-order, the domination of the formal military chain-of-command by what effectively was a parallel palace structure, a military secretariat, was noted by some analysts. But few were astute enough to recognize the degree to which this arrangement

⁸ Prasanta Kumar Pradhan, "Turmoil in the Terai," *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4, August 6, 2007, www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/6_4.htm#assessment2

increasingly rankled. Though the inadequate palace leadership that prevailed during the counterinsurgency did not produce either a Young Turks movement (as in Thailand after the collapse of the old-order in October 1973) or a Reform Movement (such as the reform of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the post-Marcos era), it did convince numerous line officers that their interests would be better served in a more ‘modern’ arrangement, such as present in other democracies (e.g., India).

Thus, contrary to expectations, there was no resistance in the Army to the transfer of command from the Palace to the Parliament. Unfortunately, the new head of the NA, General Rookmangud Katawal, who replaced General Pyar Jung Thapa, though an experienced officer, finds himself overseeing an Army that is being hollowed out by the inaction inherent to being limited to garrison functions (with some engineer units, involved in mine-clearing and road construction, the exception).

A central Maoist goal remains the “integration” of People’s Liberation Army (PLA) forces and the NA, and the ‘democratization’ of the latter. This was one of the 22 demands put forward by the Maoists which, when unfulfilled, led to their leaving the Government on September 18, 2007. They have continued to press for acceptance of their demands.⁹

What is the CPN-M up to?

Demands of the CPN-M cannot be met within the context of parliamentary democracy. The Maoists themselves are quite explicit in this regard. They remain committed to the sweeping away of the old-order and replacing it with a new-order that is unequivocally ‘Maoist’. The specifics involved are common to Maoist movements throughout South Asia and feature a dreary litany of state intervention in all economic, social, and political facets of existence, accompanied by an ‘anti-imperialist’ foreign

⁹ These comprise a diverse list that, in aggregate, calls for the state to move against previous centres of power, which the Maoists believe are continuing to block their consolidation of power. In particular, they want old-regime members to be punished for alleged crimes committed during the counterinsurgency, even as their own cadre are not called to account for their insurgent actions. In any case, the Maoists deny that their well-documented atrocities, in fact, occurred.

policy that supports the likes of North Korea, Iran, and Venezuela.

South Asian Marxism remains Stalinist in its basic documents and formulations, though the various Indian communist parties have recently endeavoured to move into the second half of the 20th Century (even as the world approached the end of the first decade of the 21st Century). Nepali Marxism is even more odious, coloured as it is by the peculiar Nepali cultural framework discussed earlier. Thus the CPN-M sees no contradiction in claiming to be authentically Nepali even as it meets under pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. Its economic plans are astonishingly similar to those pushed forward by the Khmer Rouge, highlighting that mobilization of the subjective ‘will’ can overcome all objective obstacles. Public works projects are given pride of place (e.g., mobilizing the population to cut roads or to build dams), though there appears to be little thought as to how the pieces are to form part of a coherent whole. The integrating factor advanced is always political: the old-order has failed; thus it is time to move to a new-order.

The central demands of this new-order are for social justice and equity in distribution of scarce resources. That there is little understanding of just why resources are scarce (i.e., as already mentioned, a population that has exceeded the carrying capacity of the land) or why there is inequity (there is, essentially, no economy) has not been given a great deal of thought. If one is to judge by what has occurred thus far in the Maoist-controlled areas, redistribution is the immediate priority: seizing from those who have in order to give to those who have not – though the implementation generally classifies as ‘have-nots’ the same Maoist cadre who are carrying out the redistribution. The truly poor remain just that.¹⁰

¹⁰ Maoist mis-steps have been plenty, none more so than the YCL repeating publicly the longstanding Nepal Communist Party – Maoist (NCP-M) intention to ban recruiting for the Gurkha regiments of Britain and India. The UK establishment may well have run down to but some 3,500 men, but the various Indian formations comprise perhaps one-eighth of the country’s infantry battalions and a sizeable slice of certain paramilitary units – between 35,000 and 50,000 in all. The only substitute offered by the YCL is “employment with dignity” in Nepal.

In order to carry out this vague vision of a utopian future, the Maoists must have power. This, they have stated time and again since coming in from the cold, they will gain ‘peacefully’. But their understanding of the term ‘peacefully’ boils down to: as long as we get what we want, we will not resort to violence; but when non-violence does not work, we will reconsider our position. ‘Non-violence’, in the Maoist lexicon, means only that firearms are not used as the weapons of first resort. Constant menace, backed up by violence – such as abductions and near-fatal beatings – is categorized as ‘nonviolent’.

All actions presently being taken are designed to bring the Maoists to power. When called to account by their CCOMPOSA compatriots for their having abandoned the revolutionary struggle, the Nepali Maoists succeeded in placating their critics by outlining just what is set forth here. Put in so many words: our way will deliver power by emphasizing ‘the other four’ lines of operation and holding military violence in reserve. As the CPN-M put this explicitly, in its report to the June 2007 CCOMPOSA meeting held in India:

The enemy who is attacking our party especially its youth wing the ‘Young Communist League’ with whatever they find in their hands, has generated resentment against the enemies. And our mass line, discipline of our PLA [People’s Liberation Army] and political line has gathered momentum to prepare the ground for the final insurrection. We are utilizing this transitional phase to spread our mass base and consolidate it, to get rid of our own shortcomings and bring disintegration in the enemy’s camp so that we can give a final blow and usher into the country a new democracy.¹¹

This was further explained:

¹¹ “CPN-M Report on Developments in Nepal” to CCOMPOSA, August 19 2007, accessed at: <http://burning.typepad.com/burningman/2007/08/cpnm-report-on.html>. Astute commentary may be found at S. Chandrasekharan, “Nepal: Dilemma Faced by Maoist Leadership,” *IntelliBriefs*, Update No. 131 (August 8, 2007), accessed at: <http://intellibriefs.blogspot.com/2007/08/nepal-dilemma-faced-by-maoist.html>.

The C.P.N (M), for one and a half years has taken this compromise. If we seriously study and analyze the concrete situation and character of this compromise it becomes self evident that our policy is neither all alliance and no struggle nor all struggle and no alliance, but combines both. Grasping the teaching of Lenin we have avoided 'give money and fire arms to share the loot' instead we have given the bandits money and firearms in order to lessen the damage they can do and facilitate their capture and execution. With this sole intention we had a twelve point understanding against the autocratic monarchy on 22nd of November 2005.¹²

This implementation of people's war strategy, however, has not gone unchallenged. The 5th Plenum of the CPN-M, which was held in early August 2007, using an 'expanded meeting' (EM) format that brought together 2,174 delegates, saw fierce opposition to staying the course with campaigns just short of overt confrontation. Though a Central Committee meeting was held at the end of July 2007 to ensure that the required report (to the party) by Prachanda was a consensus document, the 'EM' did not go smoothly. Having continued to exclude the state from the rural areas, yet gaining unfettered access to the urban centers, a faction of the Maoist leadership demanded open confrontation to 'finish the job'. In particular, this faction saw no point in Maoist Ministers continuing in the Government.¹³ In the event, the Maoists did bolt in September 2007.

Very loosely, the leadership of the contending factions was:

Prachanda and Bhattarai Group

- ✍ KB Mahara, (then) Information Minister (resigned on September 18, 2007)
- ✍ Dev Gurung, (then) Local development Minister (resigned on September 18, 2007)

¹² Ibid. The Maoists further reported that were it not for the pressure of "the Nepalese people and the tactical movement of our party against the monarchy," the SPA parties would already have broken their conditional alliance with the CPN-M.

¹³ Despite the tactical advantages of being able to exploit state resources, which have included using government funds to provide transportation and *per diem* to cadre sent to Kathmandu from outlying areas for protest actions.

- ✍ Barsa Man Pun ‘Ananta’, PLA commander (responsible for mobilizing Maoist cadre during the April 2006 confrontation)
- ✍ Top Bahadur Rayamjhi, former negotiator, in charge Western Nepal
- ✍ Pampa Bhusal, (then) Minister
- ✍ Nanda Kishore Pun ‘Pasang’, PLA commander

Vaidya and Gajurel Group

- ✍ Ram Bahadur Thapa *aka* Badal, PLA commander, *de facto* leader of the rebel group
- ✍ Gajurel, head of the Maoist ‘Foreign Desk’
- ✍ Vaidya, senior-most Maoist leader; was replaced by Prachanda in 1991¹⁴
- ✍ Biplav, the powerful youth leader, fiery speaker
- ✍ Janardan Sharma, PLA deputy commander

Though news reports sought to portray the 5th Plenum results as a ‘victory for moderation’, the reality was just the opposite. It was the dissident faction – that of Vaidya and Gajurel – which determined that open confrontation would be the next step. Thus the Maoists left the Government, strenuously demanding acceptance of their 22 demands – many of them precisely the issues that were to be settled by a constitutional convention – and issued instructions to CPN-M front organizations to be prepared to initiate street actions¹⁵ in early November, as necessary, when

¹⁴ Both Vaidya and Gajurel were in Indian custody but were released on November 30, 2006, in an apparent effort by New Delhi to ensure that intra-party factionalism was exacerbated.

¹⁵ As put by the Central Committee: “a mass movement to fulfil the urgent demands of the people and for the pre-requisites required to create essential condition[s] for the forthcoming election of the constituent assembly.” See “An Indispensable Mass Movement,” in Maoist Information Bulletin No. 17 (July 2007), accessed November 1, 2007 at: <http://krishnaseenonline.org/Bulletin/editorial.html> The editorial in question has obviously been added to an earlier release, because the events discussed in detail did not occur until a month after the date. As correctly reported in the Nepali media, Prachanda discussed the necessity of confrontation with the state at an emergency Central Committee meeting held on October 6, 2007, in Kathmandu – should it refuse to declare a republic in response to the 22 Maoist demands. See ‘Prachanda’s Side in Disarray,’ *People’s Review*, 9 October 2007, accessed at: http://peoplesreview.com.np/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3484&Itemid+94. Badal subsequently asserted that the country would meet with a “serious political accident” if Maoist demands were not met. See

the holiday season ended with *Tihar*, or the festival of lights. What happened was fully in accord with their plans: SPA agreed to establish a 'republic', thus disestablishing the centuries old monarchy, and the Maoists, in December, returned to Government. Their only goal left unaccomplished, which will be used to precipitate the next crisis, is integration of their combatants into the Army – thus neutralizing it.

The CPN-M, therefore, is simply pursuing its ends by time and again changing its tactics. Its lines of operation have remained consistent. Only the emphasis placed upon any one has changed with time and circumstances. The present means of choice are front organizations (there are numerous allegedly independent bodies that are in reality Maoist creatures) and the YCL, which dominates the streets and conducts the strong-arm activities against businesses (e.g., forcing through Maoist unionization). Concurrently, the NCP-M seeks to function as an open political party (the mass line), mobilizing those who will respond to any organisation that seems to offer them better life-chances.

Maoist calculations have been hobbled by the *tarai* upheaval, as well as the growing revulsion against Maoist abuses. This reaction has increasingly resulted in vigilante action, because the state is seen as failing in its most basic duty, the provision of security to the populace. The regular claims by Koirala that abuses will no longer be tolerated are belied by standing instructions that no Police intervention can occur without direct authorization from the Home Minister personally – and he rarely gives such orders.

Internationally, ties to India remain important for Nepal, though India's imperial motives have remained almost totally unexamined in analyses, except in Nepali outlets. What India seeks is a soft landing. With its own Maoists gaining in strength and geographic spread,¹⁶ New Delhi's ambition, paradoxically, is

"Maoist Leader Warns of Serious Political Accident," The Himalayan Times, 10 October 2007, accessed at: <http://www.thehimalavantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=6a1Pa2vdo2am8&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20071010> .

¹⁶ At least 16 Indian States, including Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand, in

to prevent Nepal from becoming a huge Maoist base. It intends to do this by taming the Maoists, by bringing them into a democratic system and then encouraging them to behave responsibly within that system. This has proved a bridge too far. Based upon the same inaccurate reporting and even more flawed analysis that characterized India's involvement with the Tamil insurgent groups in the 1980s, it is likely that India's latest version of the 'Indira Doctrine' will misfire every bit as completely as did its disastrous Sri Lanka policy.

What motivates the Maoists?

Adept at running an armed political campaign,¹⁷ the Maoists now struggle to find the proper balance between 'the ballot and the *Armalite*', as the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) strategy put it. In many areas, the organization is no longer fully in charge. Though the CPN-M strategy of seizing power from within has been explained up and down the ranks, it is likely that the Maoists did not anticipate the reversal of protracted war roles, with time favouring the state. Not only are the Maoist ranks growing increasingly restless (for what do they have to show for a

particular, have now experienced Maoist violence, with at least 650 fatalities in 2007. See "Fatalities in Left-wing Extremism",

www.satp.org/satporstp/countries/india/maoist/data_sheets/fatalitiesnaxal.htm

iii

¹⁷ The basic pattern of Maoist violence may be conceptualized as follows: In Phase 1 (strategic defensive), 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, 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 units), copies of government military units. 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"). This realizes Phase 2 and produces strategic stalemate. Only in Phase 3, when mobile warfare gives way to the so-called "war of position," do insurgents assume the strategic offensive and endeavor to hold ground.

decade of internal war?), but their own misbehaviour has mobilized a powerful backlash so pronounced that all attempts at surveys point to a Maoist drubbing in a fair election. Of course, it is implementation of a level playing field that the Maoists intend to thwart.

Their own logic holds that an electoral loss would prove a conspiracy to thwart the will of the people. Consequently, the only way to have a 'fair' election is to determine the results in advance – in accordance with the CPN-M's 22 demands. As stated directly by the Central Committee:

In an open interaction programme held recently in Kathmandu Chairman Com. Prachanda candidly explained the necessity of fulfilling the 22 point demands which were essential for the sake of holding the forth coming election of the Constituent Assembly. ... The king which is actively conspiring (*sic*) and operating to sabotage the whole peace process including the election hand in globe [*sic*] with its foreign masters has been given free hand. So we strongly feel and it has been proved repeatedly by many events that unless and until republic is declared there is no possibility of a proper election. The people of Madhesh, indigenous and tribal people, *dalits*, women etc. are all demanding that there should be proportional mode of election to ensure the election to be really representative. They are already in the struggle and have declared that if the election would not be held in proportional method they would boycott the election. Since the interim government did not show even the least interest in organizing the round table conference, our party has already taken initiative. ... Therefore, the mass movement proposed by our party is categorically not intended to negate the forth coming election of the Constituent Assembly, but really aimed at holding the election in such a way that it will truly be a representative election in which the people of Nepal can participate fully and express their desire in proper way,

which can only pave the way for new, prosperous and peaceful Nepal.¹⁸

In one key area the CPN-M's designs have been denied: the integration of the PLA into the NA. General Katawal has been adamant that integration must be a process whereby individual volunteers are screened through the normal processes of induction. By contrast, the Maoists intend that integration should see their units absorbed into the NA. This induction is joined to demands for the 'democratization' of the military, by which the Maoists mean politicization – better 'red' than 'professional'.¹⁹

On the other hand, the essence of NA transformation has been a movement towards a non-political Army responding to the dictates of a democratic system. Here again the different conceptions of democracy collide. Koirala – and certainly General Katawal – sees the Maoists as having agreed to participate in the democratic system as defined by (and structured as) parliamentary democracy and the market economy. The Maoists, though, see themselves as having agreed to accept the surrender of the old-order. Their intention remains the revolutionary reordering of Nepal to form a people's republic, as perhaps seen in modern variants in Chavez's Venezuela or even Islamist Iran.²⁰

Indeed, the Maoists continue to see the NA as the linchpin, which must be neutralized, preferably by abolishing the monarchy by parliamentary fiat, then confronting the military with no option but to surrender to an irresistible popular tide. As explained by CPN-M to CCOMPOSA:

The question of the monarchy comprises a different meaning in the context of Nepal. It is the only reactionary institution which is deep rooted and well organized with more than a one hundred thousand strong Army. Because of this reality external and internal forces of reaction have joined hands to prop up the crumbling

¹⁸ "An Indispensable Mass Movement."

¹⁹ Field work, Kathmandu, May 2007.

²⁰ In these plans, the 'old military' is to be cut back dramatically, and in its place substituted a mass mobilization model. Again, Venezuela and Iran provide useful models, both having increasingly sidelined old-order military power in favour of newly mobilized (and, in the case of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, institutionalized) and 'ideologically sound' formations.

monarchy and have been trying to convince the vacillating parliamentary forces that once the monarchy is gone there will be no able force remaining to halt the ever growing march of the Maoist force.²¹

Conclusions

Coercion, persuasion, and inducement are just facets of Maoist strategy, campaign elements inherent to the Maoist lines of operation. Faced with the refusal of the old-order to go quietly, the Maoists have responded through greater use of coercion, a form of violence. They have increased their level of menace, particularly through use of the YCL, which regularly battles the Police. This coercion is linked to upping the ante in numerous other ways, from verbal abuse to throwing sand in the machinery of governance. What is significant is that all coercion is linked to inducements and persuasion. Businessmen, for instance, are assured that the market will be allowed to function – but in a more equitable manner. Interest groups are assured that their concerns will finally be addressed once the Maoists are in power.

The trump card, as the Maoists see it, is threatening to bolt, to take to the streets, to launch a new people's war. Though they quickly clarify that they do not mean 'returning to the jungles' – the threat is clear enough: pitched street battles. That plans have been made for such an eventuality is known to the government, but the SPAM coalition [the SPA plus the Maoists] is so tenuous that there is no one to take cognizance of the information.

Outside actors seeking to influence the situation for the better have their options severely constrained by the fact that the 'spoilers' in this case, the Maoists, are, indeed, not interested in compromise of any sort – only in implementing the most efficacious route to power. Thus external programs and resources must seek to build and/or reinforce state capacity. This, of course, has ostensibly been the approach all along of external actors. In reality, though, their efforts have been fragmented, of little consequence, and often implemented in deliberate defiance of state-building objectives.

²¹ "CPN-M Report on Developments in Nepal."

What is occurring is a battle of mobilization capabilities. Throughout the counter-insurgency, the Maoists had the advantage for the simplest of reasons: the Government did not recognize the game being played. To the contrary, all efforts by knowledgeable members of the state, especially within the security forces, to mobilize citizen capacity, whether in local defence forces or even watcher groups, were thwarted by incomprehension, outright opposition, or alliances made with the donor community.²²

By contrast, the entire thrust of the Maoist effort was to engage in mass mobilization, to form a counter-state that could challenge the state. The Maoists explained their situation in these terms – they continue to do so. By 2003, they claimed they were a state (i.e., a counter-state) that existed on equal terms with the existing state and therefore had all the rights and privileges of the state. Just as interesting, theoretically, was their advancing the claim that sub-state actors had all the rights and privileges afforded in international law only to states. There could be no middle ground: one order had to give way to the other.

In this effort, Maoist organization remained hierarchical, with an effort to overcome centripetal forces and indiscipline. ‘The revolution’ was overwhelmingly an internal phenomenon, with the Nepali expatriate community largely onlookers, except as victimized by Maoist efforts at extortion (e.g., in the Middle East) or seeking to participate in the form of fellow-travellers. Eventually, after April 2006, serious divisions did emerge within the expatriate community, with the debate played out principally through blogs but noteworthy for the increasing consideration in the debate of ‘*Mein Kampf* considerations’; that is, what does it mean for the possible future of a country to have potential (and certainly would-be) leadership figures who engage in Cambodian Holocaust denial; who deify (at least several) mass murderers;

²² In meetings to discuss the situation, European donor representatives appeared committed to a view which saw the Maoists as Robin Hood figures, produced by a hopelessly flawed old-order that had no moral right to defend itself. As such, most NGOs and official development activities from European states appeared to have reached accommodations with the Maoists. A number apparently worked actively against the Nepali Government.

and who advance ideas that in the 20th Century produced the greatest crimes in the history of humanity?

The decentralized nature of the electronic debate faithfully reflects what has been occurring within Nepal itself, as hierarchy, both organizational and societal, has broken down. In one sense, it could be argued that the security forces have maintained a degree of hierarchy even as the Maoists have increasingly become networked. Indeed, one of the problems for the transitional state in dealing with the Maoists is the factor of assessing just what the Maoist leadership really controls. How much that is happening is in response to commands, and how much is simply local initiative that the Maoist leadership seeks to exploit?

The most frightening prospect, of course, remains a possible breakdown of law and order beyond anything yet seen. This at times appears to be the way the *tarai* is headed. Determined not to deploy NA, the weak Government would have to be faced with a catastrophic situation before it would act and, by that time, the forces unleashed would probably be uncontrollable. The beneficiaries certainly would be the Maoists.