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# Recruiting Rebels: Indoctrination and Political Education in Nepal\*

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**Key words: greed, grievances, Maoists, Nepal**

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## Introduction

The field of civil war studies has seen a burgeoning interest in the processes of rebel recruitment. Recruitment is vital to the study of civil war since a rebel group's ability to force concessions is contingent on its success in recruiting and motivating soldiers; indeed, its very existence is determined by whether it can continue to muster troops. There are two main threads of research in the recruitment literature. The first focuses on the question of greed versus grievance, that is, whether the incentives that motivate an individual to choose rebellion are primarily loot-seeking in nature or whether they are better explained by group grievances.<sup>1</sup> This literature is complemented by studies that specifically focus on how the resource base of the rebel group can impact its recruitment abilities.<sup>2</sup> The second focus is on the conditions which increase the likelihood for successful recruitment. Factors like geography, ethnicity, and whether the group is ideologically-oriented are argued to play an important role in shaping recruitment.<sup>3</sup>

In empirical evaluations of these theories, the variables which are employed to measure recruitment possibilities are all structural in nature, for example, the presence of natural resources,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2001); James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97:1 (2003), pp. 75-90; Patrick M. Regan and Daniel Norton, "Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization in Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49:3 (2005), pp. 319-336.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49:4 (2005), pp. 598-624.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Gates, "Recruitment and Allegiance: the Microfoundations of Rebellion," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46:1 (2002), pp. 111-130.

percent of mountainous terrain, ethnic composition of the country, gdp per capita and so on. The fact that all of these variables are structural in nature raises the question of whether the rebel group itself has any agency in facilitating recruitment. Given the economic, ethnic, and geographical context in which a rebel group finds itself, can it develop strategies that increase its effectiveness in recruiting supporters and fighters? If so, what are these strategies? The aim of this paper is to develop theory that moves from the structural level to the agent level to focus on the strategies that rebel groups can avail themselves of to increase their recruits.<sup>4</sup>

This topic is approached inductively using the case of Nepal to assist in theory-building. Nepal is an ideal case for several reasons. It has temporal variation, as the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) rebels were increasingly successful in recruiting fighters over time: with only a few dozen supporters in 1996, it grew to an estimated 30,000 by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the literature on the armed conflict in Nepal in many ways mirrors the more general rebel recruitment literature, as it also has primarily stressed the role of structural factors like social and economic inequalities, the geographic context, and weak governance in understanding the Maoists success. By examining specific recruitment strategies by the CPN-M, we can determine whether an analysis of rebel agency is a useful complement to structural understandings of rebel movements. Finally, on a

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<sup>4</sup> See Jeffrey Herbst, “Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa,” *Journal of African Economies*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 270-294. Herbst’s work is related to this paper in that he discusses how rebel leaders motivate followers to fight, noting that beyond economic incentives, rebel leaders also employ strategies of political indoctrination, ethnic mobilization, and coercion.

<sup>5</sup> The number of rebels remains contested. UNMIN has registered 30,852 Maoist rebels, but there are doubts about how many of these individuals were actual rebel fighters as opposed to supporters.

more practical level, the CPA has resulted in Maoist rebel leaders coming out of hiding, greatly facilitating interviews and data acquisition.

This paper first gives a brief overview of the history and development of the armed conflict. It then turns to a discussion of the structural factors commonly cited in explaining the growth of the Maoist organization. Finally, it turns to specific strategies employed by the CPN-M in recruitment efforts, focusing particularly on CPN-M's use of indoctrination and other forms of political education as a key strategy to recruit followers. I argue that while structural variables provided an important context in which the Maoists operated, the primary mechanism for the CPN-M's successful recruitment strategy lay in this focus on indoctrination and political education. The sectors of society to whom the Maoists appealed were largely ignored by traditional political parties, making them especially receptive to Maoist political discourse. By linking villagers' dissatisfaction with their daily lives to larger problems in the political system, the CPN-M was able to exploit these grievances for the purposes of rebel recruitment. The importance of indoctrination was central to the CPN-M strategy and superseded even military training and arms acquisition as the focus for its efforts in expanding the organization. This paper thus seeks to make two contributions. The first is to general theory on the topic of rebel recruitment, by incorporating a more agency-focused approach on rebel strategy than has been found in previous research, and by showing how an agency-focused approach can complement existing structural approaches. The second is to provide a more nuanced understanding of the Nepalese conflict that goes beyond commonly cited structural causes and incorporates Maoist agency more explicitly into the causal story.

## **A Brief History of the Armed Conflict in Nepal**

The seeds of the armed conflict in Nepal are often traced back to the successful People's Movement of 1990, in which the absolutist Panchayat system headed by the king was replaced with a democratic system. The Panchayat system had been in place since a royal coup in 1960 and was widely considered to be an unrepresentative, monarchical-dominated system that provided only a superficial veneer of democracy, leading to widespread demands from a broad spectrum of society to replace the Panchayat system with democratic reforms. Rather than oppose this People's Movement, King Birendra accommodated the demands, and the result was the promulgation of a new constitution in November 1990. It is the provisions of this constitution that are often cited as providing the impetus for the later formation of the insurgent group the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M).

The new system provided for a bicameral parliament, and the palace ostensibly surrendered its powers and acquiesced to a purely constitutional role.<sup>6</sup> The exact powers of the king, however, were not entirely clear from the text of the Constitution and this point of ambiguity would prove to be problematic in later years. The constitution provided for a unitary state with powers centralized almost entirely within the executive. The cabinet effectively controlled all legislation and implementation, and no other governmental entity could challenge or review the decisions of the cabinet, not even those mandated with regulating corruption.<sup>7</sup> This system fostered a political culture characterized by pervasive power abuse and corruption that resulted in widespread

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Hutt, "Monarchy, Democracy and Maoism in Nepal," in *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), pp. 1-20.

<sup>7</sup> Mahendra Lawoti, "Centralizing Politics and the Growth of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal," *Himal* 23:1 (2004), pp. 49-58.

instability throughout the mid-1990s. An additional factor which weakened the possibility of representation for all Nepali citizens was the long-standing domination of the political parties by upper caste Hindus, a pattern of elite domination which did not change after the 1990 democratization process. The marginalization of lower castes and ethnic groups has been largely dismissed by successive governments who have done little to appease this grievance, leaving these groups under-represented at the policy-making level. All of this has occurred within the context of a highly under-developed country with widespread poverty, as the failure to secure steady economic growth exacerbated existing tensions between the haves and have-nots. Economically, there is a sense that there are two Nepals, with Kathmandu's average GDP almost four times that of some rural regions.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the state has little presence in the countryside due to weak local and district governance structures.

These conditions contributed to the stunning growth of the CPN-M since its launching in February 1996, when the group presented the government with a 40-point demand related to nationalism, democracy and livelihood. The 40 demands in and of themselves did not differ radically from those of other parties, but the divergent aspect of the CPN-M's approach was to pose an ultimatum that unless the government initiated positive steps towards fulfilling demands, an armed struggle would be launched.<sup>9</sup> Ignored by the government, CPN-M struck days later in six western districts. The Maoists subsequently laid plans for a protracted war, during which they would recruit and train an army, establish base areas in rural areas and gradually encircle cities.

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<sup>8</sup> Dhruva Kumar, "Consequences of the Militarized Conflict and the Cost of Violence in Nepal," *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 30:2 (2003), pp. 167-216.

<sup>9</sup> Deepak Thapa, "Days of the Maoist," *Himal* 14:5 (2001), pp. 4-21.

The CPN-M took advantage of ethnic and economic grievances held by large parts of the rural population, and the government's weak control outside of Kathmandu allowed the Maoists to quickly capture vast swathes of land relatively unchallenged. The CPN-M explicitly adopted and adapted Mao Zedong's tactics of guerilla warfare which describes three phases: strategic defensive, strategic balance and strategic offensive. CPN-M saw the initial phase of the war as strategic defensive, which was tactically based on a protracted war in which towns would be encircled from the countryside. Maoist behavior was initially characterized by attacks on civilian political opponents and later, mass attacks on district headquarters. Over time, the Maoists gradually progressed to mass attacks which saw great success. It became increasingly evident that the poorly trained, poorly equipped police force stood little chance against the hundreds, and later, thousand-strong hordes of Maoist fighters which would storm district police offices en masse. The Maoist movement also expanded geographically. The original rural roots of the movement were reflected in the remote districts initially targeted by the Maoists, primarily in Western Nepal. As the party grew stronger, however, they came to control large areas in the Far West, Eastern and Terai areas of Nepal. It was not until November 2001 that the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) was deployed to fighting the insurgency alongside the police.

Two rounds of negotiations in 2001 and 2003 resulted in naught and the deployment of the RNA in 2001 after the first round of failed talks resulted in high casualty figures. The level of casualties remained at very high levels after this point, particularly in comparison to the relatively little violence seen in the first five years of the conflict. The period after 2001 also saw an increasingly weakened government which was continually expunged and replaced by the king up until February 2005 when he King sacked the Prime Minister, declared a State of Emergency, arrested opposition leaders, and suspended civil rights. This move was unequivocally labeled a



coup by domestic and international observers. Realizing that negotiating with and pandering to the king would not facilitate a return to power nor help resolve the civil war, the seven major political parties opted instead to form an alliance with the CPN-M in November 2005.

This alliance amongst the political parties and between the SPA and Maoists created a critical mass of political opposition that substantively changed the structure of the conflict and the course of Nepali politics. The populace grew increasingly restless for change, and in April 2006, widespread discontent resulted in mass strikes and demonstrations for democracy, eventually pressuring the king into giving way. With the king's reinstatement of the Parliament in May, the SPA gained control of the government and subsequently restricted the powers of the king, including his control over the army. This interim government established a mutual ceasefire signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the Maoists in November 2007.

### **Structural Factors in Conflict Intensification**

As the preceding overview of the conflict hinted at, there are a number of factors which have contributed to the rise and continuation of the armed conflict in Nepal. Above all, the issues of social and economic inequality, geographic disparities, poor governance, and repressive behavior by the state apparatus are raised by most observers of the conflict. The Maoists themselves also highlight these factors as key justifications for their war on the Nepalese state. These contextual factors are central in previous literature and dominate most analyses of the armed conflict in Nepal.

Nepal is characterized by multiple overlapping identities based on ethnicity, caste, class, and geography. Many groups are characterized by relative inequalities and are effectively excluded from political power. Ethnic communities, which constitute 35% of the population, have long-standing grievances based on their historical exclusion from power.<sup>10</sup> Under-representation in policy-making, exclusionary language laws, and Hindu chauvinism are some of the concerns expressed by various ethnic groups; likewise, there is a widespread perception that ethnic groups experienced higher levels of poverty. Seeking to take advantage of this situation, the Maoist leadership deliberately targeted ethnic groups, hoping to capitalize on their discontent. The CPN-M listed amongst its 40 demands that ethnic communities should be allowed to form autonomous regions and that mother-tongue education should be guaranteed in an effort to stop racial exploitation. Similar disparities exist between the different castes in the Hindu system: lower-caste individuals have traditionally had little access to power and have a higher incidence of poverty and caste-based discrimination has led to frustration over the lack of opportunities for lower castes. Gates and Murshed found that caste disparities indeed are a crucial dimension in explaining the genesis of the conflict.<sup>11</sup> The Maoists also sought to appeal to these individuals by demanding that Nepal be proclaimed a secular nation and the system of untouchability should be eliminated.

The ethnic and caste facets of social inequality are overlaid by class issues, which are favored in Maoist rhetoric. Lower classes (often composed of individuals with certain ethnic or caste backgrounds) are characterized by extreme poverty. Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Scott Gates and Mansoob Murshed, "Spatial-Horizontal Inequality and the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal," *Review of Development Economics* 9:1 (2005), p. 121-134.

world. The small industrial sector, landlocked location, proclivity to natural disasters, disadvantageous trade treaties, and lack of technology have all hindered economic progress. But more important in this context is not the absolute level of poverty, but how economic resources are distributed. With the vast majority of the labor force engaged in agriculture, access to land is a key economic issue. There is an unequal distribution of land that in many areas has resulted in the majority of the land being consolidated under the ownership of few individuals, leaving the majority of the population landless or semi-landless; over 37% of the land is in the hands of 5% of the population.<sup>12</sup> The failure of the state to rectify or substantively address these economic grievances is commonly cited as a grievance which fueled the armed conflict. Poverty makes rebellion more attractive and less costly for individuals, leading Bohara et al. to conclude that poverty-stricken areas see higher levels of violence because rebels are better able to recruit amongst the populace.<sup>13</sup> Maoist demands to rectify economic inequality include that land should belong to tenants, the nationalization of property, guaranteed employment or unemployment allowance, institution of a minimum wage, rehabilitation of the homeless, exemption of loan repayments for poor farmers, inexpensive farming materials, government relief for victims of natural disasters, free health service and education, checks on inflation, provision of basic infrastructure, protection of domestic and cottage industries, and more stringent regulation of all forms of corruption.

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<sup>12</sup> UNDP, *Nepal Human Development Report* (Kathmandu: UNDP Nepal, 2004). The bonded labor system (Kamaiya) in modern times was a system of paying debts with labor. This system was widely abused and led many to label Nepal a 'semi-feudal' state. The practice, which was widespread in the Terai and mid-western regions of Nepal, was only abolished in 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Alok K. Bohara, Neil J. Mitchell, and Mani Nepal, "Opportunity, Democracy, and the Exchange of Political Violence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50:1 (2006), pp. 108-128.

Geographic issues are also woven into the fabric of social and economic inequalities in Nepal. A number of geographic distinctions can be made. One is between the three major geographic regions of the country—the mountains, hills, and Terai (flatland bordering India); another is between urban and rural, that is, between Kathmandu and the rest of the country; finally another is between Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-Western, and Far Western districts. Bohara et al. find that violence tends to increase with rugged terrain since mountains minimize the government's ability to control territory and facilitate rebel insurgency operations.<sup>14</sup> Singh et al. also point out that the western heartland regions of Nepal where the conflict originated have some of the worst scores on economic and health indicators.<sup>15</sup> The Maoist leader Prachanda has stated that the West is the core of the revolution because the people there are more oppressed by the ruling classes than elsewhere, that the government is largely absent, and that the region suffers from historical underdevelopment.<sup>16</sup> It is, however, the general distinction between urban and rural areas that is most often mentioned in the literature on the war in Nepal. The relationship between Kathmandu and the rest of the countries is characterized by an income gap that is indicative of these regional inequality and disparities between urban and rural life prevalent in Nepal. Gates and Murshed show that the larger the gap between a district and Kathmandu, the more likely was the district to experience increased civil conflict.<sup>17</sup> The differences are not only economic, however, but also

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Sonal Singh, Khagendra Dahal, and Edward Mills, "Nepal's War on Human Rights: a Summit Higher Than Everest," *International Journal for Equity in Health* 4:9 (2005), pp. 1-7.

<sup>16</sup> Prachanda. "Inside the Revolution in Nepal," in Arjun Karki and David Seddon, eds. *The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives* (Delhi: Adriot Publishers, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Gates and Murshed, "Spatial-Horizontal Inequality."

relate to governance issues: the government has little control outside of Kathmandu and that which does exist tends to be centralized at district headquarters. The effect is a governance vacuum that further alienates rural areas from the central government, and has led to a tendency amongst the regions to reject Kathmandu's authority, making it clear that the ruling elites are not in control of the districts.<sup>18</sup>

At the heart of the matter are the patterns of weak democratic governance. The high expectations for the new democratic system after the 1990 People's Movement were met with a corrupt and marginally functioning state throughout the 1990s. Political power was centralized in Kathmandu leading to a neglect of the periphery, power abuse and corruption were rife, politicians avoided accountability, and parties focused on infighting rather than coalition-building. The state apparatus became associated with rent-seeking politicians and political exclusion. Moreover, political parties were run undemocratically and characterized by constant bickering both between and within parties. Parties in power systematically used the state machinery against opponents, resulting in government institutions being colored by personal antagonisms. Instead of policies linked to citizen preferences, the Nepalese people were faced with severe factionalism and corruption. As a result, the general populace tired of party politics and lost faith in democratic governance as it was practiced in Kathmandu, creating a conducive environment for the growth of the CPN-M. Because of their party differences, the various organs of the state found it difficult to muster a coordinated response to the Maoist threat and went so far as to try to use the insurgency as a means of consolidating power, prompting one critic to retort, "the political

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<sup>18</sup> Philippe Ramirez, "Maoism in Nepal: Towards a Comparative Perspective, in *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), pp. 225-242; Hutt, "Monarchy, Democracy and Maoism."

mainstream has to realize that insurgency is a dangerous tool for scoring points over each other”.<sup>19</sup> The Maoists were able to capitalize on this situation in a number of ways. First, the rampant corruption, party factionalism, weak state institutions, centralization of power, and lack of representation of citizen preferences in policymaking led to disgruntlement with the existing politicians and political system. The Maoists were able to exploit this disappointment in the state of the Nepalese polity in recruitment efforts by offering an alternative to the current system which promised a more efficient and representative polity. Second, the lack of effective governance in rural areas and the state’s withdrawal from these areas as the conflict picked up pace only accentuated the Maoists ability to recruit unhindered and to mobilize the resources of the rural populace to their cause (whether voluntary or by force). The weak state apparatus was thus not only a source of grievance but also a contributing factor which allowed the Maoists to operate relatively unhindered in large swathes of the country.

Moreover, the government’s law and order response to the insurgency only alienated the populace further. The initial response was to crack down with increasingly repressive security measures undertaken by the poorly-trained police force; a government operation in 1998, named Kilo Sierra II was conducted with such blunt force and disregard for human rights that it only strengthened the rebels’ recruitment base. By 1998, estimates of Maoist strength had mushroomed to 2,300-10,000, and reports suggest that “the real development of the ‘people’s army’ only took place after the start of the government’s Operation Kilo Sierra II”.<sup>20</sup> After its deployment the RNA also quickly made a name for itself with indiscriminate killings and

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<sup>19</sup> C.K. Lal “Nepals Maobadi.” *Himal* 14:11 (2001), p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), “Nepal’s Maoists: Their Aims, Structure and Strategy.” Asia Report No.104 (2005), p. 9.

arbitrary arrests. These repressive measures served only to further alienate individuals and drive them into the arms of the Maoists, motivated by fear of the security forces or a desire for revenge.<sup>21</sup>

These factors—social and economic inequality, geographic disparities, poor governance, and repressive behavior by the state—are those most often mentioned in the literature on the Nepalese conflict to explain the growth of the Maoist organization.<sup>22</sup> Yet these factors are generally speaking beyond the control of the CPN-M; instead, these structural factors can be seen as setting the context for the insurgency which facilitate or constrain rebel behavior. But given this context, what strategies could the Maoists employ to accelerate recruitment and gain supporters? How did they convince individuals to translate their daily grievances into armed insurgency? Even if there are millions of disgruntled and aggrieved individuals in Nepal, by what means could they be convinced to take up arms? In Nepal, one central recruitment strategy used by the CPN-M was indoctrination and other forms of political education given to the masses. It is to this specific recruitment strategy that I now turn.

### **Indoctrination and Political Education as a Recruitment Strategy**

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<sup>21</sup> Sara Schneiderman “Violent Histories and Political Consciousness: Reflections on Nepal’s Maoist Movement from Piskar Village,” *Himalaya* 23:1 (2003), pp. 39-48; Judith Pettigrew, “Living Between the Maoists and the Army in Rural Nepal,” *Himalaya* 23:1 (2003), pp. 9-20; Deepak Thapa, “Days of the Maoist.”

<sup>22</sup> This does not mean that they are the only factors discussed in the literature; there are a plethora of other factors contributing to conflict which cannot be discussed in detail here.

The latent and widespread grievances experienced by large sectors of the population provided ample potential for recruitment. But to be able to convince individuals to join an armed rebellion—an inherently risky and dangerous proposition—the CPN-M needed to inform individuals about its cause and motivate them to join. Realizing this, the CPN-M began propagating its ideology and training cadres even before taking to arms. In 1995, the Maoists began a year-long campaign to build support amongst the peasantry in the western districts of Rolpa, Rukum, and Jajarkot. This campaign involved a number of measures, such as sending political-cultural teams into villages, organizing peasants to challenge local authorities, and mobilizing villagers for infrastructure improvement such as building roads and bridges, etc.<sup>23</sup> The primary focus for this campaign, however, was to educate the masses on the goals and means of the Maoists. According to a Central Committee member of Rukum district, this was done with various forms of propaganda such as mass meetings, cultural campaigns, poster and walling, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and political classes.<sup>24</sup> By spreading information about the CPN-M and its goals, the party hoped to educate the masses not only about the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology, but also about the necessity of using violence to change the political system. The importance of this strategy is emphasized by a party District Committee Secretary of Rukum district, “just before the Initiation, the Party leadership gave many political classes to the masses as the basis for the People’s War; and so if they were not politically conscious, we could not be successful in carrying out our program”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Thapa, “Days of the Maoist”; Li Onesto *Dispatches from the People’s War in Nepal* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Onesto, *Dispatches from the People’s War*, p. 191

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p. 190.



With the onset of the People's War in 1996 and the transition of the CPN-M from excluded political party to active rebels, campaigning amongst the populace increased. The Maoists used a multitude of means for spreading information about their movement and indoctrinating the peasantry, amongst them mass gatherings to villages; individual motivators which recruited door-to-door; kidnapping of school children; various forms of forced recruitment and coercion; and widespread propaganda activities. It was the Schooling Department within the party that was responsible for developing political training programs and for producing propaganda.<sup>26</sup> If we examine the different approaches taken to generate recruits, it is clear that while they all have different dynamics, they are united by the Maoist ideology they propagate and by the fact that this ideology is conveyed by connecting it to individual's daily problems.

### *Means of Recruitment*

Mass gatherings were generally large-scale affairs that involved not only speeches and information regarding the CPN-M's ideology and activities, but also cultural performances such as dancing, music, and skits. Li Onesto describes a program she witnessed in 1999; such programs were generally held in the evening and in great secrecy.<sup>27</sup> After an introduction, there was a minute of silence for Maoist 'martyrs', followed by a female Maoist explaining the goals of the People's War and making special appeals to women to join the revolution. Other speeches about the importance of armed struggle for improving villagers' lives were interspersed with

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<sup>26</sup> Krishna Bahadur Mahara, interview by Kristine Eck, 19 March 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Onesto, *Dispatches from the People's War*. It should be noted that Li Onesto was hosted by the Maoists because she is a writer for the *Revolution*, a communist newspaper, and thus has a clear positive bias towards the CPN-M and its activities.

songs and poems, all the while emphasizing the need for the villagers to join the People's War.

Onesto provides a brief narration:

The cultural team has ten members—four women and six men, all very young. They put on an energetic show full of singing, dancing, and skits, accompanied by traditional Nepali drums, guitars, and portable keyboards. Songs of varying rhythm and moods tell tales of guerilla actions and people killed by the police. Dances combine traditional moves and music with new steps and poses to narrate war stories. The skits move the crowd to laughter as well as tears.<sup>28</sup>

News of battles were given, particularly those which resulted in victories, as were descriptions of Maoist violence against its “revolutionary enemies” such as landowners and petty government officials. Such actions were often viewed approvingly by villagers, particularly in the early part of the conflict, as landowners and government officials were often viewed as the principal perpetrators of economic and social oppression. These depictions demonstrated the ability of the Maoists to take measures against such oppression and inspired hope that the Maoists would indeed be able to affect change. Fujikura elaborates:

In Salyan District, Maoists not only used violence, but after committed a violent act advertised it in newspapers and newsletters as well as during cultural programs, where they skillfully re-enacted the torture and murder of a ‘class enemy’...The purpose of these ‘propaganda activities’...was to convince the villagers of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 133

necessity and efficacy of revolutionary violence. What the Maoists aimed to convey was it was only Maoist violence that could eliminate the local ‘exploiter’ whose power derived in part from his close connection with state power. Through such skillful re-enactments, the Maoists undoubtedly aimed to communicate that they were capable extreme and hence awe-inspiring violence—calculated use of brutality that they hoped made them appear more formidable and effective than their enemy...<sup>29</sup>

Both news of successful battles elsewhere and the elimination of ‘class enemies’ provided palpable illustrations of Maoists strength and ability to challenge the state that proved popular amongst villagers. Such shows of strength probably had inspirational effects, encouraging otherwise hesitant villagers to join themselves, “people are not scared if they hear that many police have been killed” stated one villager.<sup>30</sup> Re-enactments also provided a stern warning to potential ‘class enemies’ and introduced an unspoken element of threat to any villager who would oppose the Maoists, for example by becoming government informants. Information about Maoist ‘martyrs’ was also provided, both with a moment of silence and with a skit acknowledging the danger involved in joining the People’s War. By acknowledging the difficulties in familial separation inherent in joining the CPN-M and the risk of death recruits take, the skit glorified both the sacrifice of the family and the courage of the recruit. The Maoists included amongst their

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<sup>29</sup> Tatsuro Fujikura, “The Role of Collective Imagination in the Maoist Conflict in Nepal,” *Himalaya* 23:1 (2003), p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Sara Schneiderman and Mark Turin, “The Path to Jan Sakar in Dolakha District: Towards an Ethnography of the Maoist Movement,” in *Himalayan ‘People’s War’: Nepal’s Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), p. 94.

demands that all those who die during the time of the People's Movement should be declared martyrs and their families given compensation, ensuring an individual that his death will be glorified in a similar manner as those depicted in the skits. This emphasis on martyrdom may have facilitated recruitment and eased the use of violence, "the Maoist emphasis on martyrdom creates a source of symbolic capital which legitimizes and even encourages violent actions on the part of its participants, just as martyrdom does for suicide-bombers elsewhere in the world".<sup>31</sup>

Themes such as those mentioned above—courage, sacrifice, victory—could be found throughout the program in not only the skits and speeches, but also the songs and dance moves (Onesto 2005). By representing Maoist themes with established cultural practices, the Maoists were able to convey complex ideas about ideology and grievances in an easily accessible manner for poorly educated peasants. Local cultural practices were co-opted by the Maoists as a means to popularize the ideas behind their movement. Onesto argues that this cultural aspect to the mass meetings provided people with a sense of collective strength, as well as facilitating the education, mobilization, and recruitment of the peasantry. Sharma concurs:

Culture is in fact an important aspect of mobilization, where elements of existing cultures are incorporated into mobilization strategies that are themselves varied in different contexts...Instead of the songs one hears in the rest of the country,

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<sup>31</sup> Schneiderman, "Violent Histories," p. 45.

revolutionary songs are much more popular. There has been an unprecedented increase in the local people's capacity for study and analysis.<sup>32</sup>

Although usually clandestine and somewhat risky, the mass meetings were generally well-attended by local villagers. The cultural entertainment provided at the mass meetings had a reputation of being of high quality; even villagers which were not Maoist supports reported attending and enjoying Maoist performances and therefore drew large crowds.<sup>33</sup> Mass meetings therefore served as an efficient means of recruitment; the economies of scale involved in mass meetings meant that many potential rebels and supporters could be easily reached with little cost.

Another means of recruitment involved individual motivators who worked alone or in pairs going door-to-door.<sup>34</sup> These motivators' task was to spread the message of the CPN-M and its armed struggle through individual contacts, sometimes by conducting classes but most often by converse with individuals. One villager in Dang district reported after having met an individual motivator that, "we now know how to talk to people, why the Maoists are against the government and why it is important to support the Maoists".<sup>35</sup> These motivators would often discuss problems the villagers experienced and framed the Maoist movement in terms of these grievances. They

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<sup>32</sup> Sudheer Sharma, "The Maoist Movement: an Evolutionary Perspective," in *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), p. 46

<sup>33</sup> Pettigrew, "Living Between the Maoists," p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Manjushree Thapa, "The War in the West," *Himal* 16:1 (2003), pp.36-42.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Sudheer Sharma and Dinesh Prasain, "Gender Dimensions of the People's War: Some Reflections on the Experiences of Rural Women," in *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), p. 159.

also sought to inform the villagers about their rights and to politicize these individuals by making them aware of how they could affect change by supporting the Maoist cause, “the villagers...say that the Maoists women and men come door to door, provide literacy programs, make them aware of their rights, roles and contribution. The Maoists also talk about how women have been suppressed in the present society, and make them aware that theirs is the only party working for liberation”.<sup>36</sup> Motivators were able to move about more easily than cultural groups and were able to interact with villagers without drawing as much attention from security forces.

Schools also provided fertile grounds for recruitment by the Maoists. As the conflict progressed and the need for recruits intensified, the CPN-M increasingly took to kidnapping entire classes or schools of children.<sup>37</sup> These children were usually then taken to remote areas for several days of indoctrination and then released home again, though in some cases the Maoists held their political education campaigns at the school itself. These kidnappings filled several functions. First, they allowed the Maoists to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the children and determine which to target in future recruitment efforts (which were sometimes forced, a point to which I will return). Second, it allowed them the opportunity to indoctrinate the children into Maoist ideology and present to them the prospect of joining the rebellion. Despite their schooling, many youths had few prospects for gaining future employment and for many, the Maoists offered an opportunity to leave their village. The Maoists’ romanticized images of martyrdom, victory and courage were also easily sold to impressionable youths. Some observers commented that schools

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 160.

<sup>37</sup> To exemplify the extent of these kidnapping, on one day in 2005 over 1,100 primary and secondary schoolchildren and their teachers were abducted in two separate incidents.

were the *primary* forum for disseminating the Maoist ideology and for recruiting new members.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to being perhaps more easily convinced than adults, school children made attractive recruits for other reasons as well. One is that they offered the benefit of having some level of education, which could facilitate training. Another is that the Maoists could again take advantage of economies of scale, by addressing many (young and impressionable) people at once while expending few resources in doing so.<sup>39</sup>

While many kidnapped schoolchildren were subsequently released, this tactic highlights the accusations by some human rights organizations that the Maoists coerced individuals into joining their organization and that some recruitment was in fact forced. In particular, this charge is leveled regarding child soldiers, many of whom are argued to have been coerced into membership. Reports suggest that in many areas, Maoists essentially demanded that every family contribute a family member to the party. Because there is a paucity of information regarding to what extent individuals were forcibly recruited, it is difficult to determine how widespread forced recruitment indeed was. It is also unclear whether those who were forcibly recruited attempted to leave the group or were eventually convinced by Maoist rhetoric. On the topic of coercion, one observer argued that:

“As has often been argued, many may have participated out of fear, but that is not the whole story. The proclamation of a...People’s Government at Rakhe Danda, Dolakha district, on July 23, 2001, is a case in point. According to numerous

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<sup>38</sup> Schneiderman and Turin, “The Path to Jan Sakar,” p. 99.

<sup>39</sup> Karen Macours, “Relative Deprivation and Civil Conflict in Nepal,” paper presented at the first annual Himalayan Policy Research Conference, (2006), pp. 1-43.

independent estimates, including one by a British reporter, 10,000-15,000 locals attended the meeting at which the jan sakar was announced. For an area not stereotypically thought of as a Maoist base up until that time, where the largest religious festivals rarely attract even 5,000 people, this number is significant. I assert that 5,000 people do not attend a meeting purely out of fear”.<sup>40</sup>

Even those who were forcibly recruited to the Maoists were subjected to indoctrination in an attempt to win their loyalty. The re-education of captured police officers is a case in point. There were numerous reports to the effect that police officers who were kidnapped after armed engagements with the Maoists were subject to political indoctrination in an attempt to re-educate them and convince them to join the Maoists. Maoist leader KB Mahara has asserted that such re-education was in fact quite successful amongst the lower echelons of the police as most lower-echelon police officers also suffered from poverty and shared many of the other grievances of the rural populace.<sup>41</sup> The distinction between upper and lower echelons of the police and governmental bureaucracy, argues Mahara, mirrors the societal distinctions that have resulted in discrimination. In addition to captured security forces, individuals who were “convicted” in Maoist courts were also taken for re-education. These individuals, usually local businessmen who were accused of exploiting the peasantry, would spend their days at the re-education camp working the fields, and their evenings learning Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory. This would help them “learn...how to behave in a new society” according to one Maoist.<sup>42</sup> It remains unclear to what extent the indoctrination of such individuals was successful, and the tactic probably more

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<sup>40</sup> Schneiderman, “Violent Histories,” p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Krishna Bahadur Mahara, interview by Kristine Eck, 19 March 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in *Le Monde*, “Nepal: Old-Style Maoist Revolution,” 10 November 2003.



useful in demonstrating to the masses that the Maoists were resolute in their approach to societal change.

For those who joined the party, receiving continued political education in Maoist ideology that was an integral part of the CPN-M's training. The length of this training is unclear, as reports cite a range of one week to months; the confusion may be a result of training practices changing over the course of the conflict. It is clear that all recruits received a minimum of one week of political training on Maoist ideology and key texts before they were allowed into the party.<sup>43</sup> There were numerous roles within the party for an individual, ranging from motivators, cultural performers, spies, members of the armed forces, militia members, and so on. After joining the party, members reportedly worked first as village-level political workers, trying to organize the masses. According to the CPN-M's spokesman, it is only after two to three years that these individuals would then be allowed to apply for military training and join the People's Army.<sup>44</sup> During this time, ideological training continued (and would indeed continue to do so throughout a rebel's career, regardless of what roll s/he held in the party). This was done because "army struggle is not an easy task, it is a very difficult task. And it is not a compulsory job, it is voluntary...so it is necessary to...decide [for oneself] whether it is correct or not". The experience of working in the political wing ensured commitment and through the subsequent political education that was provided during this time, the rebel was able to attain the confidence necessary to engage in armed combat.<sup>45</sup> That political training always preceded military training is backed up by another

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<sup>43</sup> Krishna Bahadur Mahara, interview by Kristine Eck.

<sup>44</sup> Another rebel leader states that it took approximately one year of political work before being allowed to move into the People's Army, see Dev Gurung, interview by Kristine Eck, 22 March 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Krishna Bahadur Mahara, interview by Kristine Eck.

Maoist leader, who also asserts that receiving political training at the outset was of priority.<sup>46</sup> The Maoist leaders realized that continuous political indoctrination facilitated cohesion amongst the different individuals within the movement so that they all shared at least one common background, thus deterring factionalization. A steady stream of ideological training also ensured that cadres would be amenable to the leaders changing strategies (as these were motivated using texts and ideological discourse with which the cadres were familiar). Moreover, it also aided in retention, minimizing attrition rates by continuing to stress and educate the cadres about the importance of the ideology and the armed movement.

### *Why Political Education Worked*

That indoctrination was a successful recruitment strategy for the Maoists can be explained in a number of ways. The different indoctrination campaigns fulfilled perhaps the most basic and essential function of informing the populace about the existence, goals, and methods of the CPN-M. In this sense, mass meetings and individual motivators functioned as a sort of ad agency that ‘sold’ the public on the Maoist movement. The indoctrination campaigns also provided valuable information about the benefits of joining, in particular, the benefits that would be distributed if the Maoists were to succeed in their aims. From a rationalistic cost-benefit perspective, this information about the potential gains from the redistribution of goods in the event of a Maoist victory may have increased the expected payoff in an individual’s calculus.<sup>47</sup> The CPN-M made

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<sup>46</sup> Dev Gurung, interview by Kristine Eck.

<sup>47</sup> Macours, “Relative Deprivation.”

extremely clear that should they come to power, the peasantry would have access to a multitude of political, economic, and social goods currently unavailable to them. Such a promise may have outweighed the risk of joining, particularly when so many had so little to lose.

The promise of future group benefits still does not explain why individuals join as it is more rational for an individual to be a free rider and let others in his group fight for change and then reap the benefits of such change without ever having to take any risk to attain them. Unless an individual is offered gains that are not necessarily distributed to the wider group—such as economic incentives—then it is unclear why a rational individual would choose to rebel when it would be less costly and produce the same benefits to let others do so. For this reason, psychological explanations are useful, particularly when discussing the conflicts characterized by indoctrination.

The Maoist rhetoric at indoctrination sessions often had a powerful effect on the local populace, who were little used to being addressed by politicians of any sort. Interviews with villagers during the conflict suggest that simply addressing and engaging villagers was profound, “many villagers spoke of their sense of incredulity that such brave and powerful individuals should come to speak with them, ask their opinions on weighty issues, and address them with respect”.<sup>48</sup> By addressing the villagers, discussing their problems, and requesting for their assistance, the Maoists encouraged the villagers to be active political agents, a radical change from villagers’ previous experiences of marginalization. Schneiderman and Turin elaborate, “...villagers felt that

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<sup>48</sup> Villager quoted in Schneiderman and Turin, “The Path to Jan Sakar,” p. 91.

they were empowered agents shaping and creating their country's destiny, not passive spectators watching from the political sidelines".<sup>49</sup>

For rural individuals who felt marginalized and aggrieved, the Maoists ideology was compelling. Moreover, the Maoists cleverly tied their ideological ideas to rhetoric on Nepalese nation-building. Schneiderman argues that, "the emphasis...is on an alternative nationalism, one that recognizes the value of indigenous participation and local sacrifice. By proposing a counter-hegemonic national vision where indigenous needs and local sacrifices are honored, the Maoists cleverly deployed the symbol of the Nepali nation to take advantage of existing local sentiments".<sup>50</sup> The new Nepal that the Maoists proposed would be more inclusive and welcome traditionally excluded groups and individuals, "in this regard, becoming a Maoist may provide a powerful alternative national identity within a 'modern' Nepal for those who have otherwise felt excluded from such national imaginings".<sup>51</sup> Fujikura provides an example of this co-optation of nationalistic themes by Maoist rhetoric.<sup>52</sup> He notes that the Maoists adopted national songs traditionally taught and sung in schools and substituted the nationalistic text for Maoist text which exhorts youth to be nation-builders through armed struggle. In this manner, Fujikura argues, the Maoist discourse successfully adapted themes in the nationalist education system and rearranged them to produce an alternate, Maoist vision of nation-building.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> Schneiderman, "Violent Histories," p. 44.

<sup>51</sup> Judith Pettigrew and Sara Schneiderman, "Ideology and Agency in Nepal's Maoist Movement," *Himal* 17:1 (2004), p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> Fujikura, "The Role of Collective Imagination."

This portrayal of the Maoist ideology was especially appealing to rural individuals since it matched well with their own local agendas and grievances. The Maoist ideology in its purest form, such as in the ideological tracts produced by the Central Committee, differed considerably from the ideology with which villagers were met. The CPN-M employed localized strategies for conveying its complex ideological ideas, using local idiom and references which did not require previous political education or literacy, "...it may be useful to differentiate between the theoretical ideology advanced by the Maoist leadership at the national level, and the practical ideology employed at the village level...Grassroots redistribution of wealth lent credence to the Maoists' more abstract promises of political power for those who had previously remained excluded".<sup>53</sup> To locals, the CPN-M's complex ideas about class became palpable because they were expressed in a familiar context; for many, Maoism was about bringing justice to 'exploiters'.<sup>54</sup>

The Maoists were also able to adjust their rhetoric to the grievances of the differing local communities from which they recruited. Different rhetorical strategies were employed depending on what the villagers' backgrounds were. In villages dominated by ethnic minorities Maoist demands for ethnic equality were emphasized. Female motivators gave special attention to recruiting other women and educating them on Maoist ideals of gender equality. Sharma and Prasain elaborate, "...the full liberation of women and gender equality are to be achieved only in a classless or communist society. Hence there is all the more reason for women to take part in the revolution. Such positions are explained to women, and more generally, through political classes,

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<sup>53</sup> Schneiderman and Turin, "The Path to Jan Sakar," p. 93.

<sup>54</sup> Schneiderman, "Violent Histories."

‘cultural’ programs, the party media, and the mass print media”.<sup>55</sup> This focus on local knowledge and an understanding of local grievances was key to Maoist success in attracting recruits. But at the same time as they emphasized particular grievances (ethnic, gender, etc.), the Maoists were also careful to couch their discussion of these grievances in a Maoist perspective, “against the crux of the Maoists ideological work was to construct a narrative that subsumed ethnic counter-narratives as well as other oppositional narratives—including those of women, dalits, the poor, the landless, and small farmers—and to present revolutionary war as the only true remedy for all forms of oppression”.<sup>56</sup>

### *Changing Strategies*

Reports differ as to the Maoist recruitment strategies over the course of the conflict, particularly in terms of the extent of ideological training that recruits received after joining. Prior to the onset of armed conflict, membership was less restrictive, but this was remedied after the CPN-M opted to take up arms,

“The criteria for membership is stricter now [1999] than before the Initiation [1996]. Before, the Party mainly conducted legal struggle, and more people could be involved in this type of struggle, and it was easier...But now it is a time of war. The Party is mainly involved in illegal activities and needs more dedicated cadres who are willing to sacrifice and keep strict secrecy. Today, the criteria for membership is

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<sup>55</sup> Sharma and Prasain, “Gender Dimensions,” p. 155.

<sup>56</sup> Fujikura, “The Role of Collective Imagination,” p. 27.

higher in terms of ideological and political unity and willingness to make whatever physical sacrifices are necessary for the People's War and the Party".<sup>57</sup>

It seems that the early years of the People's War saw careful recruitment of only highly committed individuals, "in the early years their cadres would be carefully selected, screened, and educated in Marxist and Maoist doctrine before being given responsibilities. This created a small but politically focused and disciplined group. But as the movement grew rapidly, especially with the need for increased recruitment once the RNA was mobilized, the process of careful selection was more or less abandoned".<sup>58</sup> By 2001, however, commentators had begun to suggest that the cadres were less ideologically devoted, and that the CPN-M was less committed to educating these recruits on its ideology. A fairly typical analysis of the situation was that "...the Maoist fighting force is getting larger by the day, but its ranks are increasingly filled more by frustrated and romanticized youth rather than by the ideologically committed senior cadre".<sup>59</sup> This may be a reflection of the changed military and political situation that had occurred between 1999 and 2001, as the Maoists shifted from strategic defense to strategic balance. By 2001, the Maoists had changed their tactics from small-scale guerilla attacks to mass attacks of hundreds of rebels on a single point. Moreover, in late 2001, the government finally opted to deploy the army alongside the police, which posed a considerable threat to the Maoist movement; while the police had been long derided as ineffectual, it was expected that the army would quickly dispose of the Maoist rebels.

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<sup>57</sup> Rukum District Committee Secretary, quoted in Onesto, *Dispatches from the People's War*, p. 197.

<sup>58</sup> ICG, "Nepal's Maoists," p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> Thapa, "Days of the Maoist," p. 19.

To survive the difficulties of guerilla life, the Maoists had to be sure that all rebels were committed and united by the same ideological drive. In shifting to mass attacks, the rebels were able to take over previously impenetrable security installations and inflict losses on the security forces. But mass attacks required hundreds which could surge forth simultaneously; quite simply, bodies were needed and it mattered far less whether these bodies were well-educated in Maoist doctrine and whether they could function successfully as independent units. While ideological training was required throughout the course of the conflict, as the need for fighters increased so did the threshold for their ideological training. This was noted by more observant commentators:

Since the emphasis seems to be on increasing the sheer number of people's warriors rather than on their quality, the CPN (Maoist) is experiencing problems in administering the rebel forces...This can be explained in part by the speed of recruitment and lack of adequate briefing; the nature of the Maoists' expansion in Nepal is a contributing factor.<sup>60</sup>

Over the course of the conflict the Maoist leadership was able to assess to what extent resources could and should be spent on indoctrination. Indoctrination was absolutely essential at the outset of the conflict in order to build up a functioning district and local-level organization, ensuring that the local units would be able to operate guerilla strikes relatively independently as they remained in hiding. After the initial years of the conflict, once the Maoists had gained control over large swathes of territory and had shifted their tactics to those of mass attacks, the need for manpower overwhelmed the need for independent and ideologically unified cadres. Moreover,

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<sup>60</sup> Sharma, "The Maoist Movement," pp.47-48.



the success of the Maoists encouraged recruitment and lessened the need for the CPN-M to expend resources on actively agitating amongst the populace.

## **Conclusion**

This paper sought to move from contextual factors in explaining successful rebel recruitment and instead focus on the agency of the rebel group itself by examining particular strategies it can adopt, such as indoctrination and other forms of political education. It is clear that contextual factors are important in the Nepal case: the absence of effective governance and viable channels for influence left the majority of the population alienated from the state and the centralization of the state contrasted markedly from the village-up approach that the Maoists adopted. The weakness of the state also facilitated the Maoists ability to expunge the countryside of village-level representation, allowing them a free hand in further recruitment and consolidation of their inequality and poverty, social discrimination, and so on, provided the Maoists with ripe opportunity to recruit from the aggrieved population. Repression and human rights violations by the government security forces only fanned the flames and drove scores of people into the arms of the Maoists.

Just as the growth of the CPN-M must be understood in this context, so must we also take into account the Maoists' actual recruitment strategies. Grievances over economic and social inequalities and poor governance are long-standing in Nepal: why was it the CPN-M that was able to take advantage of these grievances? Why were so many willing to put themselves at risk to join the movement? In large part, I argue, because the CPN-M was the first to successfully address the villagers about politics and encourage their participation. Moreover, the CPN-M

cleverly linked villagers' grievances about their everyday situation with the larger Maoist ideology, attracting recruits by employing local idiom to their rhetoric. Yet at the same time, the CPN-M was careful to ensure that all members were educated in Maoist ideology, ensuring not only commitment to the cause, but also that the many disparate peoples which composed the CPN-M were united by this common ideology. This minimized factionalism and attrition, and ensured that the leadership would be able to exercise control over the cadres. Indoctrination provided villagers with information about the Maoists—their goals, their means, their successes—that was essential at the outset for promoting the Maoist cause and garnering recruits. Maoist efforts also served to activate a populace which had long been ignored by the powers that be. Finally, indoctrination also prepared future members as to the difficulties they would face as rebels and perhaps lowered their moral threshold for taking to violence.<sup>61</sup>

But the analysis here points to the fact that recruitment strategies are not static; they cannot be divorced from the military and political milieu. As the needs of the CPN-M evolved and required mass mobilization, it adjusted the amount of indoctrination and political education given to recruits. The Nepal case suggests that indoctrination may be a vital strategy in the early years of a rebellion as the rebel group attempts to build up its organization and needs to ensure committed and loyal members. With success, however, the CPN-M needed to work less in informing villagers about its goals and instead was able to conscript from youths inspired by Maoist military victories. Looking beyond the Nepal case, one would expect to see indoctrination at the early stages of a rebel group's formation but less so if that organization manages to shift away from guerilla tactics. Rebel groups which have only mixed or occasional success militarily, or which

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<sup>61</sup> Macours, "Relative Deprivation."

must maintain guerilla tactics, are likely to continue to employ indoctrination; indeed, that may be the very strategy that helps them to exist despite mixed military success. Kashmiri insurgents are perhaps an example of this: because of Indian troop superiority, Kashmiri insurgents must stick to guerilla tactics and can only undertake sporadic and small-scale military operations. To maintain a continued flow of recruits, the Kashmiri insurgents rely heavily on indoctrination of youths.<sup>62</sup> Other such examples abound.

Rebel recruitment is central for understanding the duration, intensity, and termination of a conflict. Without recruits, a rebel organization ceases to exist or to be a substantive threat. Yet there is little research on the processes of rebel recruitment. Contextual factors may provide insight into why individuals are easier to recruit, but it is necessary to go beyond them to examine the strategies and dynamics of recruitment if we are to better understand this crucial process. Careful case study analysis can help in theory-building on this topic. Distinguishing rebel group's recruitment strategies may help in understanding the variation in various aspects of conflict dynamics. Conflicts in which rebel groups motivate recruits primarily by using the promise of economic incentives (often based on resource acquisition) may lead to opportunistic fighters and in turn, this may have consequences for patterns of conflict termination (can the rebels simply be bought off instead of accommodated politically? If military efforts focus exclusively on hindering resource acquisition, does that lead to victory thereafter?) Patterns of indoctrination should also be examined in a cross-national, comparative setting, as should mixed strategies employed by

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<sup>62</sup> International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military," Asia Report No.36 (2002).

rebel groups.<sup>63</sup> Finally, the effect of contextual factors on recruitment strategies needs to be examined more systematically. It is particularly interesting to explore whether there are conditional effects at play. For example, are economic incentives conditional on the presence of natural resources like diamonds? Is the use of indoctrination contingent on a weak state which cannot control its periphery (or alternatively, rebel access to neighboring territories)? Developing more specific theory is necessary in order to generate testable hypotheses, which in turn should be evaluated in a comparative context. Rebel recruitment processes may well prove to be key in unlocking the black box of conflict dynamics.

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<sup>63</sup> cf. Weinstein, “Resources and the Information Problem,” which describes indoctrination processes even in resource-oriented conflicts, though the dynamics of these mixed recruitment patterns are not explored. See also Herbst, “Economic Incentives.”