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The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and US Counterinsurgency Doctrine

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Since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the US Army has wrestled with how to apply socio-cultural factors in counterinsurgency. The case of Nepal provides an example of a state that failed to adequately address socio-cultural problems in an ethnically diverse country and consequently lost power to a Maoist insurgency. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)) gained power by way of free elections after a twelve-year insurgency starting in 1996. While the government of Nepal focused on a military solution, the Maoists grew in strength by out-governing the state and building a solid popular base. After achieving a military stalemate, the CPN(M) transitioned from violence to political maneuvering by exploiting fissures between the parliamentary parties and the monarchy. A key to Maoist success was its ability to mobilize dissatisfied classes and ethnic groups. The government of Nepal was unable to gain or maintain the support of the people because of political upheaval, repressive tactics, and failure to solve social issues among the different groups. US and other foreign training and material support to Nepal were helpful militarily, but insufficient because they did little to address the core political, social, and economic problems unique to Nepal. The Maoist insurgency has implications for US counterinsurgency doctrine that suggest a need for a better understanding of the socio-cultural and political factors that motivate insurgency.

The US military, like the Nepalese Army, faces challenges in understanding the cultures of host nations and adversaries. US counterinsurgency doctrine, as articulated in US Army Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*, stresses gaining legitimacy and gives cultural considerations at the tactical level, but still lacks a comprehensive explanation of how to apply cultural expertise operationally for strategic success. The preface of FM 3-24 warns that the manual “is not intended to be a standalone reference. Users should assess information from other sources to help them decide how to apply the doctrine...to the specific circumstances facing them.”ⁱ The writers acknowledge that given the complexity and changing characteristics of counterinsurgency operations, FM 3-24 is incomplete. Professional journals and blog sites serve as forums for updating counterinsurgency methods. A case such as Nepal, where insurgents adapted Maoist strategy to the conditions of their country, illustrates the difficulty of formulating a counterinsurgency strategy in a challenging political environment with limited means.

History of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal

Nepal, situated between India and China, suffers from extreme poverty, economic stagnation, social oppression, and a legacy of political turmoil. Ethnic and linguistic divisions separate the country into three distinct cultural areas with approximately 32 languages.ⁱⁱ The broken economy of Nepal is a major source of dissatisfaction among the people. To illustrate the dire state of Nepal's economy, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) provides a variety of statistics that compose the human development index (HDI), a measure of how well the people in a given nation live. In 2002, six years into the insurgency, Nepal had the lowest HDI in South Asia. Nepal's HDI currently rates 142d out of 177 countries for which the UNDP maintains data.ⁱⁱⁱ Such a state of poverty made governance difficult. An unstable political environment paved the way for insurgency.

Nepal began its first attempt at democracy in 1951. In 1960, King Mahendra declared democracy a failure and imposed direct rule. In 1962, the king established "Panchayat," a party-less, pseudo-democratic system of government with the King remaining the real center of power. The country suffered economically and socially under the Panchayat system until April 1990, when the Nepali Congress Party (NC) and the United Left Front (ULF) led a people's movement for democracy and human rights. The movement brought change to a bicameral parliamentary system and by November 1990, Nepal had a new constitution and the King became nominally less powerful. The NC became the dominant party, with the Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist-Leninist, CPN(UML), as the largest party.^{iv} Throughout the 90s, the parties clamored for control of the parliament with a multitude of coalitions grappling for power until the NC gained a solid hold on power in 1999. The popular perception that politicians were acting in their own interests rather than in those of the country provided fuel for those who sought a deeper change. Ethnic and disadvantaged groups hoped that the reestablishment of democracy would provide an opportunity to correct the domination by upper castes and elites. Various groups formed parties to seek representation and promote their ethnic and cultural interests with goals to reverse the Panchayat linguistic and religious policies. But the new government saw the demands of these special interest groups as a threat and marginalized them. Just as the Chhetri and Brahmin castes had dominated under Panchayat, the elites took charge of the new democratic government with little concern for the people outside Kathmandu. Missing the opportunity to represent the people in a truly democratic fashion, the parliament rekindled popular resentment of perceived social injustice and lack of economic opportunity.^v

Meanwhile, the left coalition in Nepal had split into multiple factions as the CPN(M) emerged and in September 1995 adopted a plan for People's War. The goals of the CPN(M) were to establish a Maoist people's republic, end Indian imperialism in Nepal, eliminate the caste system, and stop ethnic, religious, and linguistic exploitation. Following Maoist doctrine, the CPN(M) established support in the remote, impoverished areas where poor infrastructure limited government reach.^{vi} In an early effort to counter CPN(M) organization, the police conducted "Operation Romeo" in the district of Rolpa in November 1995, treating Maoist activity there as a law and order problem. Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Chairman of the Central Committee of the United People's Front, addressed the "40 point Demand Presented by Maoist" to Prime Minister Deuba on February 4, 1996. The list of 40 demands included calls to end intrusion and domination of foreign elements in Nepal; for formation of a secular state free of discrimination

and oppression; to strip the monarchy of its privileges; and for a wider range of welfare provisions and social and economic reforms.^{vii} The demands outline what the communists perceived as the economic, political, and social problems in Nepal with desired solutions to address each. The preamble points out that Nepal was the second poorest country in the world and on the verge of bankruptcy because of reliance on foreign loans and a trade deficit. It also blamed “economic and cultural encroachment” by foreign elements, accusing India in particular. The list of demands also points to a wealth gap and blames political parties for seeking power and engaging in aggrandizement at the expense of the people. Dr. Bhattarai included a deadline of February 17, 1996 for the government to show “positive indications towards” progress on answering the demands. But Prime Minister Deuba did not take the Maoists seriously and gave the demands little attention. On February 13, 1996, when the NC-led coalition failed to respond, the CPN(M) officially began “People’s War.”^{viii}

The Maoist insurgency began with attacks on police stations in Rolpa, Rukum, and Sindhuli districts. The Army was initially not involved. From 1997 until 2001, the government responded with repressive police actions while the Maoists continued to conduct guerilla attacks against the police while expanding their base of support. In May 1998, the police conducted operation “Kilo Sierra 2.” Because of indiscriminate police violence against the population, Kilo Sierra 2 backfired and ultimately had the effect of pushing many of the people over to the Maoists. In 1999, the government formed the Committee to Provide Suggestions to Solve the Maoist Problem with little result.^{ix} In February 2001, the Maoists announced a change in strategy, adding urban and political efforts to the guerilla campaign in the countryside.^x The parliament subsequently passed the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control & Punishment) Bill.

In June of 2001, Prince Dipendra massacred the royal family and shot himself, killing King Birendra and leaving the throne to Prince Gyanendra. Conspiracy theory and investigation into what actually happened had further destabilizing influence on the government.^{xi} In July of 2001, the Maoists and the government agreed to a ceasefire and began the first peace talks. Talks broke down, however, and the Maoists resumed violence to include the first raid on an Army barracks.^{xii} The September 11, 2001 attacks in the US influenced Nepal’s decision to label the Maoists as terrorists to turn international opinion against the insurgency and make it easier to obtain security assistance.^{xiii} The parliament declared a state of emergency and curtailed fundamental rights, allowing the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) to mobilize domestically for the first time in the conflict.^{xiv} In October 2002, King Gyanendra fired the prime minister, postponed elections, and assumed executive authority. This caused dissention within the government while providing fuel for the Maoists claims against the government. Between 2003 and 2004, the government and the Maoists alternated between fighting and peace talks. Meanwhile, the Maoists held elections in districts under their control, replacing the state in every aspect of governance.

The insurgency in Nepal reached a turning point in 2005. Although the Maoists had planned to embark on the strategic offensive with the adoption of “Prachanda Path” in 2001, the Maoists realized by 2005 that they were engaged in a military stalemate against the RNA. But in February 2005, King Gyanendra made a fatal error in seizing direct executive authority and disbanding parliament. The king’s move had political repercussions both internationally and

internally. The US, UK, and India ceased providing military assistance over concerns about supporting an anti-democratic regime. The RNA, meanwhile, was uncertain that it could win by force alone. Paul Moorecraft relates that the army chief of the general staff had given up on an outright military victory: “Yet even the devout monarchist, Lieutenant General Rukmangad Katuwal, the chief of the general staff, admitted...that ‘there can be no military solution...we can only hold the ring for an election...and follow the constitution.’”^{xv} The CPN(M) recognized that the time was right for political action and in November of 2005 formed an agreement with the Seven Party Alliance (SPA). Popular opinion swayed against the dictatorial monarch to the benefit of the Maoists. In April 2006, when the king refused to reinstate the political parties, the SPA mobilized three weeks of political protests. The Maoists joined the protests and contributed to their intensity. By the end of April, King Gyanendra relented and ended direct rule, allowing the parties to reinstate parliament. Peace talks between the Maoists and the SPA continued through 2006 resulting in an agreement to hold elections for a constituent assembly and rewrite the constitution, satisfying two of the CPN(M)’s major demands. In March of 2007, the Maoists joined the interim government and formally registered as a political party. The CPN(M) won the largest share of seats in the April 2008 parliamentary elections. In June 2008, King Gyanendra stepped down, Prime Minister Koirala resigned, and in August 2008, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, leader of the CPN(M), became Prime Minister.^{xvi}

Insurgent Strategy

The CPN(M) approach to insurgency was a Maoist People’s War, adapted to the unique conditions of Nepal. The strategy for mobilization also took advantage of ethnic and caste identity. The Nepalese Maoist approach was therefore a composite of protracted popular war and an identity focused approach.^{xvii} Thomas Marks, in his book, *Maoist People’s War in Post-Vietnam Asia*, provides a concise outline of Mao’s five essential lines of operation for taking power from the state. The five lines include mass line, united front, violence, political warfare, and international action.^{xviii} The mass line consists of building a base of support by constructing a counter-state to address the grievances and hopes of the population. The united front includes allying with groups that share common interests in order to strengthen the mass base. Groups included in a united front may include other insurgent elements or legal entities that can participate in political processes openly. Violence is the armed action of insurgency. Mao further divides armed action into three phases: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic offensive. Concurrent with armed action is political warfare. Political action includes negotiations and legal action to undermine the enemy. International action includes engagement with other state or non-state actors to place pressure on the state and provide support to the insurgents.^{xix} These lines of operation serve as a framework for analysis of the Nepalese Maoist strategy.

Mass Line

To support a strategy of protracted war, the Maoists established their initial base areas among the Kham Magars in the remote western provinces of Rolpa and Rukkum where poverty was severe and the reach of the government weak. The CPN(M) needed to recruit, train, and equip an army. The party took advantage of the disaffected *dalits*, or untouchable caste, in the hill tribe areas.^{xx} The Maoist message appealed to people who felt the government had done nothing to help them.

The communist cadre provided promise of relief from structural economic, social, cultural, and political inequalities. Michael Hutt explains that the Maoist operational strategy was to “banish the state” and gradually encircle the towns and cities.^{xxi} Tactics included political indoctrination of villagers and armed attacks on government officials and police posts. The Maoist objective with respect to establishing the base areas was replacement of state institutions with people’s governments, beginning with at the local level and eventually expanding into districts. The repressive government response further drove villagers to the Maoists.^{xxii} By mid 2000, the Maoists gained considerable strength in the countryside, filling a vacuum that the government left. The Maoists staged rallies and used propaganda to bolster their efforts. Two states existed, with government maintaining district positions while the Maoist counter-state controlled much of the countryside.^{xxiii} The strength of the CPN(M) in the countryside eventually allowed them to establish a stable base from which to influence Kathmandu.

United Front

The Maoists allied with other factions of the communist party and leveraged the grievances of different groups, not all of which were communist. Ethnic, regional, and tribal groups as well as those concerned with educational and class issues mobilized under the CPN(M).^{xxiv} Prior to initiating People’s War, the communists disbanded the United People’s Front and replaced it with a “revolutionary united front.” Prachanda, in a 1998 issue of *The Worker*, pronounced that through the People’s War, “oppressed nationalities,” such as the Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Newars, Tharus, Rais, Limbus, and Madhesis were fighting for their own rights. He also championed the rebellion of *dalits* against the “feudal state of high caste Hindus.”^{xxv} In this respect, the Maoist insurgency took on a populist tone through the united front based on diverse socio-cultural interests. The grievances of these groups fit somewhat naturally with the aims of the communists. The common enemy was a self-serving state apparatus that had perpetuated an unjust caste system and had failed to bring development or freedom to the population.

Violence

When the CPN(M) initiated People’s War, it was relatively small and not widely known. At the start, the Maoists were ill-equipped and outnumbered. The Maoists use of armed action grew over the course of the conflict. From 1996 until 2001, the Maoists fought according to the strategic defensive, expanding their base and conducting small guerilla actions against the police and government institutions.^{xxvi} The CPN(M) transitioned from strategic defensive to strategic stalemate, or “strategic balance,” in 2002 after the announcement of “Prachanda Path.”^{xxvii} After the entry of the Royal Nepalese Army in a counterinsurgency role with the 2001 declaration of emergency, the Maoists never truly transitioned to the strategic offensive. Instead, the CPN(M) and the army fought to a military stalemate. The Maoists concluded the insurgency through peace-talks once political conditions shifted in their favor after King Gyanendra’s 2005 seizure of political power.^{xxviii}

At the start of the strategic defensive, the Maoists were weak and had a small following. The guerillas relied on captured weapons from the raids on police stations to arm their new force. Meanwhile, the communist cadre recruited new membership. As Krishna Hachhethu describes, the Maoist plan of action during the strategic defensive was to 1) disarm the local people, 2) kill

certain public individuals (thugs, exploiters, and informants), 3) target banks, NGO's, and IGO's, 4) attack police stations, and 5) establish their own governments at the local and eventually district levels.^{xxxix} The Maoists progressed through six plans in the course of strategic defensive. The first plan for initiation of the insurgency in 1996 called for 80% publicity, 15% destruction, and 5% "other" activities. The second plan, covering the period from March 1996 until June 1997, included eliminating selected enemy, capturing weapons, and developing guerilla-zones. The third plan, covering June 1997 through approximately June 1998, increased guerilla action, developed main force capability to match the RNA, and increased political pressure. The fourth plan, starting in October 1998, called for wide scale coordinated attacks against the police and government institutions. The fifth plan, starting in August 1999, included expanding the base areas, destruction of police, and larger scale coordinated attacks. The sixth plan, covering July 2000 until February 2001, called for an increase in guerilla action and an attack on the district headquarters at Dunai.^{xxx}

At the Second National Conference of the CPN(M) in February 2001, the Maoists announced "Prachanda Path." Prachanda Path, borrowing from *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, deviated from communist fundamentalism and the Maoist construct in order to adapt to the Nepali context. It was a fusion of the Chinese model of protracted People's War in villages and towns and the Russian model of general armed insurrection to expand the base and move towards a people's government in the center.^{xxxi} The Maoists adopted a three-in-one strategic framework for revolution consisting of the party, the revolutionary united front, and the people's army.^{xxxii} The aim of the CPN(M) was to use People's War to expand the base in the villages and instigate revolt at the urban government center in Kathmandu.^{xxxiii} With the government declaration of emergency in 2001, the Maoists increased direct attacks against the RNA. The insurgency escalated in scale and violence as the government began to treat the Maoists as a terrorist threat rather than a law enforcement challenge. The Maoists also realized that in strict adherence to People's War, the CPN(M) had missed opportunities for shortening the insurgency through political engagement.^{xxxiv} The new strategy included engaging in peace talks. Between 2001 and 2005, the Maoists conducted their most violent and large scale attacks while engaging in several rounds of negotiation. The strategic stalemate phase ended in 2005 with a political agreement rather than with a transition to strategic offensive.^{xxxv} While both the NA and the People's Liberation Army (PLA), now officially named as the military arm of the CPN(M), can subsequently claim victory if they arrange the facts to serve their respective arguments, the ultimate result of the 2006 political agreement was a big Maoist win in the 2008 elections to the Constituent Assembly.

Political Warfare

The CPN(M) was successful in manipulating the government and taking advantage of natural rifts. By concentrating action against the police for the first half of the insurgency from 1996 until 2001, the Maoists exacerbated the perceived separation between the police forces who were connected to the political parties in parliament and the Royal Nepali Army which served the King. The tension between the parliamentary parties and the King was another leverage point for the Maoists, particularly after the 2001 massacre of the royal family and Gyranendra's subsequent takeover of executive power. The Maoists also targeted the political parties

unequally, attacking members of the NC while leaving the opposition parties relatively untouched.^{xxxvi}

On a local level, political mobilization was a major component to solidifying Maoist control of local areas in the countryside. The CPN(M) established People's Governments where the insurgents had pushed the state out. They created a system of economic self-sustainability, small farm cooperatives, taxation, and land redistribution. They also pushed for socio-cultural changes, replacing the old order with a new communist culture.^{xxxvii}

The Maoists repeatedly stated their desire to resolve the conflict with a political solution. But, as Marks describes, such statements could be deceptive since the Maoist aim was to “negotiate the terms whereby the old order will disassemble itself.”^{xxxviii} The CPN(M) twice followed negotiations in the name of “peace” with major offensives. And it was through negotiations with the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) in 2005 that the Maoists eventually achieved much of what they had sought.^{xxxix} The old order essentially disassembled itself by allowing the CPN(M) to join the government as a legal entity and eventually win majority rule.

International Action

The Maoists used international action primarily for external political support. The CPN(M) is a member of The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) and the Co-ordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA). The RIM is an organization of revolutionary parties committed to Marxism-Leninism and Maoist thought.^{xl} The CCOMPOSA is a similar grouping of Maoist parties inaugurated in June 2001 specific to South Asia.^{xli} Both serve as forums for political statements and expression of ideology.

A significant international relationship for the CPN(M) was with communist supporters inside India. The Maoists used India as a safe haven for party meetings and conducted training in camps with Indian communists.^{xlii} Prior to 2001, the Indian government quietly tolerated the Nepalese insurgent presence within its borders despite the Maoists view of India as an enemy.^{xliii} India viewed Nepal as a buffer with China and resisted foreign intervention in the conflict while, for a time, working with both sides. After 2001, however, the Indian government ceased its passive tolerance of the newly labeled Maoist “terrorists” and provided aid to the RNA until Nepal's declaration of emergency rule raised concerns over the impairment of democracy.^{xliv}

Although it followed Maoist doctrine, the CPN(M) did not develop strong ties to China during the insurgency. The CPN(M) considered China to have departed from Maoist principles while the PRC officially considered the Nepalese Maoists to be a rogue entity.^{xlv} The new Maoist regime in Nepal, however, has sought financial support from the People's Republic of China after Pushpa Kamal Dahal's ascendance to the Prime Minister position in 2008.

Government of Nepal Counterinsurgency Strategy

While the Maoists demonstrated skill in waging insurgency, internal political, economic, and social challenges to the Nepalese government's counterinsurgency effort were as much a factor in the outcome. The police force and Royal Nepalese Army had insufficient personnel and

equipment, inadequate training, and poor integration of agencies.^{xlvi} While the military capability improved over the course of the conflict, the political situation did not. The government of Nepal failed at counterinsurgency because it failed to address effectively the root social and economic causes of the conflict. Chaotic, adversarial internal politics and an overly military counterinsurgency strategy contributed to the government's inability to gain popular support or retain what little it had.^{xlvii}

Popular support is the key terrain for which the insurgent and the counterinsurgent grapple. After his own deployment to Iraq, John Nagle writes in the preface to an updated edition of his book, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, "...the task of winning and keeping the support of the population is far more complex than I had understood."^{xlviii} Nagle draws from British experience, saying, building relationships and cultural awareness helps produce actionable intelligence. But good intelligence is not the only objective. David Galula's book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, discusses popular support as "the objective" for both the counterinsurgent and the insurgent.^{xliv} FM 3-24 calls legitimacy the government's objective: "The primary objective of any COIN operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government."^{li} The difficulty is in formulating an effective strategy to win the population in a given environment. The counterinsurgent's challenges are to first, determine what, given the specific context, drives popular support and second, to balance military force with political, economic, social, and other efforts.^{li} FM 3-24 focuses on infrastructure and economic development. Development projects are important, but not always sufficient. In Nepal, social identity was key terrain. The Nepalese government and security forces failed to balance their military approach with social issues and were therefore unable to restore effective governance.

The government's initial response to the beginning of the insurgency set a poor tone. According to Deepak Thapa, prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba fixated instead on the pervasive political squabbling at the government center.^{lii} At the start of the insurgency, Nepal was an example of failed development and bad governance. State withdrawal from insurgent areas only made it more difficult for the government to gain support from the population. Police repression and a singular focus on security operations drove the population further from the state. The government made several attempts to reassert control. In December 1999, the Nepali Congress introduced the Integrated Security Programme (ISP), adding political campaigns and development packages to the counterinsurgency strategy. Later versions of the strategy included military components targeted on the Maoist-controlled areas of Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Kalikot, Jajarkot, Gorkha, and Pyuthan. While the ideas of political and development efforts were a step in the right direction, execution was weak. Government attempts at infrastructure development could not proceed while the Maoists controlled the countryside. The Maoists were able to block or co-opt most of the government work.^{liii} Unity of effort was also a problem. FM 3-24 discusses the necessity for unity of effort at every echelon.^{liv} Tension between the King and parliament manifested itself in lack of coordination between the RNA, serving the monarchy, and the police, serving the political parties. Also, constitutional law prevented employment of the Army within Nepal's borders without an emergency declaration. Prior to 2001, the police had to fight the insurgents while the Army remained in its barracks. This was the reason for creation of an Armed Police.^{lv}

While the initial political and law enforcement response to the Maoist insurgency may have been inappropriate, the Nepalese Army eventually developed counterinsurgency doctrine with help from American and British advisors. The NA counterinsurgency manual takes into account the three dominant cultures of Nepal and geographical regions (plains, hills and urban, and mountains).^{lvi} But it was too little too late. Despite the manual's cultural specificity, the Army could not implement it effectively without grounding in a coherent political strategy from the government. The Army's readiness for counterinsurgency was questionable in 2001 when it first joined the police in battling with the insurgents.^{lvii} But despite the weak starting point, the NA fought the Maoists to a military stalemate by 2005. The transition to a political agreement, however, took the initiative away from the Army.^{lviii} The new doctrine came too late to contribute much, if anything, to winning back popular support.

Yubaraj Ghimire blames the combination of economic challenges and political turbulence for weak strategy: "...it took more than nine years for key pro-democracy parties to come together and work out an understanding on how to deal with the Maoist problem...the political parties and successive governments never developed a clear understanding as to the proper use of military force. Instead, the state adopted a reactive policy, rarely a pro-active one."^{lix} John Mackinlay blames failure on the government's overemphasis of the military solution and neglect of the people: "The vital ground was the population – but the government and security forces opted for a military campaign that helped to drive the uncommitted communities into the arms of the insurgents."^{lx} The government offered only a solution by force and lacked the means to solve economic hardship or the impetus to solve perceived social injustice.

Foreign Support to the Government of Nepal

The United States, India, and China have had the most significant influence on Nepal during the Maoist insurgency. Military aid to the Nepalese government was not of sufficient quantity or type to prevent a Maoist political victory, although it at least allowed the Army to hold the insurgents to a military stalemate and mitigate the outcome.^{lxi} Despite substantial military aid from the US after 2001, neither military equipment nor training were able to compensate for the political, social, and economic problems that fueled support for the insurgency. After King Gyanendra seized direct rule in February 2005, much of the lethal military aid to the RNA disappeared as the US and other countries withheld support to prevent legitimizing the king's anti-democratic action.^{lxii} Human rights concerns, as well, discouraged the US and other potential supporters in the international community from doing more to help the government. While the US, India, and even the Chinese had no particular desire to see the CPN(M) take power, neither they, nor the international community were fully committed to prevent a Maoist victory.

After the opening attacks of the insurgency in February 1996, the US, UK, India joined the government of Nepal in denouncing the Maoists as terrorists.^{lxiii} US security assistance to Nepal, however, was minimal prior to 2001, limited mostly to funding for peacekeeping between 1998 and 2001.^{lxiv} The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US altered the context of the insurgency in Nepal. The US added the CPN(M) to its list of "other terrorist organizations" and substantially increased aid to the government.^{lxv}

When King Gyanendra seized direct rule in February of 2005, US and international support diminished. After the coup, the US and UK halted transfers of lethal military equipment to the RNA but maintained some military advisors in Kathmandu.^{lxvi} US policy towards Nepal focused on the need to restore democracy and civil society. It would be difficult to prove whether more support from the US could have prevented a Maoist political victory. US officials did not expect such a large Maoist win in the 2008 elections.^{lxvii} Nepal was not a high priority to the US. Whether or to what degree the US will support the new government is a subject of ongoing negotiation.^{lxviii}

Conclusions

The case of Nepal illustrates that counterinsurgency requires more than a strong military campaign. The Maoists in Nepal were successful because they were more effective than the government in gaining support from the people. The Maoists adapted Mao's theory for guerilla warfare to Nepal and employed a strategy that used not just violence, but gained political power by addressing social grievances. The Nepalese government failed in counterinsurgency for a variety of reasons. One was the unwillingness of political leaders to subordinate their individual quests for power to the survival of the country. Other reasons were repressive military and police operations which pushed people further toward the insurgents, an inability to improve the economy, and an unwillingness to address social disparity. The Nepalese government suffered from lack of a coherent strategy and a crippling shortage of the resources required to answer the threat. Despite the Nepalese Army's military accomplishments, the government of Nepal, to include the parliamentary parties and the king, could not solve the country's core social and economic problems in a constructive way.

The primary lesson of the insurgency in Nepal for US military operational and strategic planners is that the counterinsurgent must be able to apply knowledge of the social, cultural, economic, and political lines of effort. Military planners need to study the factors that drive politics, motivate the insurgents, and determine popular support. Without an understanding of the environment, any military, economic, or even political effort is likely to have unintended effects and unlikely to solve the core problems. While FM 3-24 outlines the requirement to understand the environment, it falls short of providing a comprehensive approach to operational application.

The US Army still needs improvement in institutionalizing the application of social and cultural knowledge.^{lxix} Consideration of social and cultural factors should not be limited to an intelligence gathering activity, but should inform all of the political, economic, and military aspects of planning and executing operations.

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ⁱ Field Manual 3-24: *Counterinsurgency*, vii.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Library of Congress. Federal Research Division. *Nepal and Bhutan Country Studies*, edited by Andrea Matles Savada. 3d ed. (Washington, D.C., 1993) xxxiv; Thomas Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post Vietnam Asia* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2007) 300, 301.

ⁱⁱⁱ United Nations Development Program, "2007/2008 Human Development Report," http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_NPL.html, (accessed December 24, 2008); "Each year since 1990 the Human Development Report has published the human development index (HDI) which looks beyond GDP to a broader definition of well-being. The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income)."

^{iv} Michael Hutt, "Introduction: Monarchy, Democracy, and Maoism in Nepal," in Michael Hutt, ed. *Himalayan People's War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) 3,4.

^v Deepak Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege; Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004* (London: Zed Books, 2004) 76-79.

^{vi} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post Vietnam Asia*, 303, 304; Sudheer Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," in Hutt, 42-49.

^{vii} Bhattarai, "The Forty Demands," in Thapa, 211-216.

^{viii} Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege; Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 48, 53, 71, 72.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 85-87, 90-95.

^x Sudheer Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," in Hutt, 53, 54.

^{xi} John Whelpton, *A History of Nepal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 211-216.

^{xii} Yubaraj Ghimire, "The Many Dimensions of Nepali Insurgency," in *Building a CATR Research Agenda, Proceedings of the Third Annual International Symposium of the Center for Asian Terrorism Research (CATR) March 1-3, 2006, Colombo, Sri Lanka, IDA Paper P-4163*, ed. Caroline Ziemke, (Alexandria: Institute for Defense Analysis, 2006), II-8; Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege; Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 118-121.

^{xiii} Hari Roka, "The Emergency and Nepal's Political Future," in Hutt, 251-253.

^{xiv} Narendra Raj Paudel, "The Price of Maoist Insurgency and Political Violence in Nepal," in John T. Hanley, Jr., ed., *The Anatomy of Terrorism and Political Violence in South Asia, Proceedings of the First Bi-Annual International Symposium of the Center for Asian Terrorism Research (CATR), October 19-21, 2005, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia; IDA Paper P-4096* (Alexandria, Institute for Defense Analyses, 2006): I-33, 34.

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- ^{xv} Paul Moorcraft, "Revolution in Nepal: Can the Nepalese Army Prevent a Maoist Victory?" *RUSI Journal* 151, No.5 (October 2006): 44-46.
- ^{xvi} Krishna Pokharel, "Nepal's Prime Minister Resigns," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, (June 27, 2008). <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121447799266906729.html> (accessed August 14, 2008); Krishna Pokharel, "Nepal's Monarch Steps Down, Ending a Royal Era," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, (June 12, 2008). <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121319127801064207.html> (accessed August 15, 2008); "Nepal Maoist head Sworn in as PM," *BBC News*, (August 18, 2008). http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/7568039.stm.
- ^{xvii} Field Manual 3-24: *Counterinsurgency*, 1-5 – 10; Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism; From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2005).
- ^{xviii} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam Asia*, 2007, 7,8; Marks explains that Mao never articulated his theory specifically in terms these five lines, but Marks uses these "essential components" to form a framework for analysis; Thomas Marks, 24 August 2008, email message to author.
- ^{xix} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam Asia*, 7-14.
- ^{xx} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam Asia*, 303, 310.
- ^{xxi} Hutt, "Introduction: Monarchy, Democracy, and Maoism in Nepal," 5,6.
- ^{xxii} Hutt, "Introduction: Monarchy, Democracy, and Maoism in Nepal," 6.
- ^{xxiii} Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 106-109.
- ^{xxiv} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam Asia*, 304; Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 105,106.
- ^{xxv} Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 105,106.; "Nepal: Report From the Battlefield," in *Revolutionary Worker* #964, (July 5, 1998). <http://revcom.us/a/v20/960-69/964/nepal.htm> (accessed February 18, 2009).
- ^{xxvi} Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 98, 99.
- ^{xxvii} Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," 51-55; Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 99.
- ^{xxviii} Moorcraft, "Revolution in Nepal: Can the Nepalese Army Prevent a Maoist Victory?" 45.
- ^{xxix} Krishna Hachhethu, "The Nepali State and the Maoist Insurgency, 1996-2001," in Hutt, 67,68.
- ^{xxx} Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," 51-53.
- ^{xxxi} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam Asia*, 305-317; Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," 53; Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 113.
- ^{xxxii} Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 103.
- ^{xxxiii} Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," 53, 54.
- ^{xxxiv} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post Vietnam Asia*, 304.
- ^{xxxv} John Mackinlay, "Nepal's Transition to a Post-Insurgency Era," *RUSI Journal* 152, No.3 (June 2007):42-46.
- ^{xxxvi} Paudel, "The Price of Maoist Insurgency and Political Violence in Nepal," I-33, 34; Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 31, 32.
- ^{xxxvii} Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," 45,46.
- ^{xxxviii} Marks, *Maoist People's War in Post Vietnam Asia*, 304.
- ^{xxxix} Jane's Information Group, "Executive Summary, Nepal," August 8, 2008. <http://search/janes.com> (accessed August 15, 2008).
- ^{xl} Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 28, 29; Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, <http://rwor.org/s/corim.htm> (accessed February 18, 2009).
- ^{xli} Ghimire, "The Many Dimensions of Nepali Insurgency," II-9 – 11; South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://satp.org/satporgetp/countries/nepal/index.html> (accessed February 19, 2009).
- ^{xlii} Sharma, "The Maoist Movement; an Evolutionary Perspective," 42.
- ^{xliii} Saubhagya Shah, "A Himalayan Red Herring? Maoist Revolution in the Shadow of the Legacy Raj," in Hutt, 210, 211; Hutt, "Introduction: Monarchy, Democracy, and Maoism in Nepal," 16.
- ^{xliv} Vaughn, *Nepal: Background and U.S. Relations*, 16, 17.
- ^{xlv} Hutt, "Introduction: Monarchy, Democracy, and Maoism in Nepal," 55, 56; Vaughn, *Nepal: Background and U.S. Relations*, 16, 17.
- ^{xlvi} Krishna Hachhethu, "The Nepali State and the Maoist Insurgency, 1996-2001," in Hutt, 58-72.
- ^{xlvii} Mackinlay, "Nepal's Transition to a Post-Insurgency Era," 42.
- ^{xlviii} John Nagle, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 2005 ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), xiii.

^{xlix} David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (1964; repr., New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 2005), 75.

ⁱ Field Manual 3-24: *Counterinsurgency*, 1-21.

ⁱⁱ The importance of context refers to Mao's explanation of the uniqueness of revolution to a particular situation, as in China: Mao Zedong, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," in Combat Studies Institute, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Fort Leavenworth: Command and General Staff College, 2007) 77-79, 92, 93.

ⁱⁱⁱ Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 88.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Hachhethu, "The Nepali State and the Maoist Insurgency, 1996-2001," 58-69.

^{liv} Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, 1-22.

^{lv} Hachhethu, "The Nepali State and the Maoist Insurgency, 1996-2001," 68-71; Hutt, "Introduction, Monarchy, Democracy, and Maoism in Nepal," 9,10.

^{lvi} The Nepalese COIN manual, published approximately 2005, contains comprehensive tactical and operational doctrine as well as a chapter on theory and strategy. One chapter also includes a section on cultural intelligence, civic action, and public relations.

^{lvii} Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*, 136; the army did, however, have extensive peacekeeping experience under the auspices of various UN missions.

^{lviii} Mackinlay, "Nepal's Transition to a Post-Insurgency Era," 42-46.

^{lix} Ghimire, "The Many Dimensions of Nepali Insurgency," II-18.

^{lx} Mackinlay, "Nepal's Transition to a Post-Insurgency Era," 46.

^{lxi} Major Patrick Kelly, U.S. Embassy in Nepal, email (January 8, 2009). A Nepali official at the US Embassy in Kathmandu expressed his opinion that without US training, equipment, and political support, the Maoists may have won a more complete victory and much earlier.

^{lxii} Vaughn, *Nepal: Background and U.S. Relations*, 2.

^{lxiii} Ghimire, "The Many Dimensions of Nepali Insurgency," II-7.

^{lxiv} Enhanced International Peacekeeping Capabilities Initiative, <http://www.ciponline.org/facts/eipc.htm> (accessed 19 February 2009).

^{lxv} Vaughn, *Nepal: Background and U.S. Relations*, 19.

^{lxvi} Rahul Bedi, "Nepal Coup Presents India with Foreign Policy Dilemma," *Jane's Intelligence Review-Posted April 1, 2005*, (March 14, 2005).

^{lxvii} Dr. Felix Moos discussion (January 27, 2009); Dr. Moos discussed the nature of his correspondence with officials at the US embassy in Nepal after the April 2008 elections.

^{lxviii} Veronica Zergovia, "Fragile Peacemaking Underway as Nepal Ushers in Democracy, Seeks Talks with U.S.," *Online Newshour*, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/asia/july-dec08/nepal_09-25.html, (accessed November 18, 2008).

^{lxix} FM 3-24, pp.1-22 – 1-23; the US Army and Marine Corps both have centers established for cultural learning (TRADOC Culture Center at Fort Huachuca and the USMC Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning at Quantico) and have implemented culture into education and training, but their efforts are still relatively new and not universally institutionalized in the operating force.