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**WAR IN SHANGRI-LA: THE INFORMATION DIMENSION OF
NEPAL'S MAOIST INSURGENCY & COUNTERINSURGENCY**

by

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September 2005

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MAOIST INSURGENCY & COUNTERINSURGENCY**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	BACKGROUND	1
B.	PURPOSE & SCOPE.....	3
C.	RESEARCH METHODS & STRUCTURE.....	4
II.	NEPAL'S INSURGENCY & COUNTERINSURGENCY: A SYSTEMS VIEW.....	7
A.	OVERVIEW	7
B.	ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK	7
1.	Conceptual Model of Insurgency	7
2.	Mathematical Model of Insurgency	15
3.	Assessment & Implications of the Models	24
4.	Priority Information Requirements.....	27
C.	CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN NEPAL.....	30
1.	Basic Facts.....	30
2.	The State.....	36
4.	The Target Population.....	50
5.	Mobilization	54
a.	<i>The State</i>	55
b.	<i>The Counterstate</i>	58
6.	Attrition.....	61
a.	<i>The State</i>	61
b.	<i>The Counterstate</i>	62
D.	ASSESSMENT.....	62
III.	NEPAL'S INSURGENCY & COUNTERINSURGENCY: THE INFORMATION DIMENSION.....	71
A.	OVERVIEW	71
B.	THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE DYNAMICS OF INSURGENCY	71
1.	Short Cycle Strategies	72
2.	Long Cycle Strategies	74
3.	Information-Based Approaches	75
C.	TOOLS OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS & OPERATIONS.....	77
1.	Public Information	78
2.	Public Diplomacy.....	80
3.	Psychological Operations.....	81
4.	Deception	83
5.	Operations Security.....	84
6.	Electronic Warfare	85
7.	Computer Network Operations.....	86
8.	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance	88

9.	Command, Control, Communications, and Computer (C ⁴) Systems.....	90
10.	Civil-Military Operations	91
11.	Summary	92
D.	INFORMATION WARFARE IN NEPAL	94
1.	Public Information	94
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	94
b.	<i>Insights</i>	97
2.	Public Diplomacy.....	98
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	98
b.	<i>Insights</i>	99
3.	Psychological Operations.....	99
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	99
b.	<i>Insights</i>	100
4.	Deception	101
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	101
b.	<i>Insights</i>	102
5.	Operations Security.....	103
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	103
b.	<i>Insights</i>	104
6.	Electronic Warfare	104
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	104
b.	<i>Insights</i>	104
7.	Computer Network Operations.....	105
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	105
b.	<i>Insights</i>	106
8.	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance	107
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	107
b.	<i>Insights</i>	108
9.	Command, Control, Communications, and Computer (C ⁴) Systems.....	109
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	109
b.	<i>Insights</i>	110
10.	Civil-Military Operations	110
a.	<i>Current Situation</i>	110
b.	<i>Insights</i>	111
11.	Summary	111
IV.	ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES.....	113
A.	OVERVIEW	113
B.	INFORMATION SYSTEMS & OPERATIONS ALTERNATIVES	113
C.	IMPLEMENTATION	117
D.	U.S. SUPPORT	119
V.	CONCLUSIONS.....	121
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	125

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	129
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	McCormick's Insurgency Model.....	8
Figure 2.	Insurgency as a System	10
Figure 3.	Leites & Wolf Model Overlaid onto McCormick Model.....	12
Figure 4.	Mathematical Models of Insurgency	16
Figure 5.	Notional Insurgent Mobilization Model.....	17
Figure 6.	Notional Attrition Model	19
Figure 7.	Effects of Information on Attrition	21
Figure 8.	Combined Mobilization & Attrition Model.....	22
Figure 9.	Mid-Course Correction Strategies	23
Figure 10.	Nepal's Geostrategic Position	31
Figure 11.	Nepal's Administrative Areas.....	41
Figure 12.	Maoist Affected Areas (2001-2004).....	50
Figure 13.	Revised Interactive Insurgency Model.....	66
Figure 14.	Baseline Nepal Insurgency Scenario.....	68
Figure 15.	Organizational Growth in Baseline Insurgency Scenario.....	68
Figure 16.	Nepal Insurgency Scenario with IO Strategies	116

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Priority Information Requirements for Analysis of Insurgency	29
Table 2.	Nepal's Key Demographics	33
Table 3.	Nepal Opinion Poll Results.....	52
Table 4.	Estimated Parameters of Nepal's Maoist Insurgency	67
Table 5.	Information-Based Counterinsurgency Approaches	76
Table 6.	Tools of Information Systems & Operations	77
Table 7.	Information-Based Tools for Counterinsurgency	93
Table 8.	Counterinsurgent PSYOPS Themes in Nepal	100
Table 9.	Promising Information-Based Tools for Nepal's Counterinsurgency.	114
Table 10.	Revised Parameters of Nepal's Maoist Insurgency	115

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Nepal's Maoist insurgency began in 1996 as a by-product of political and ideological disagreement concerning the proper course and priorities of constitutional governance in the country. In the nine years since then, the conflict has reportedly cost Nepal billions of dollars, killed over 12,000 people, and has transformed the world's only Hindu kingdom into a state of chaos that threatens its very existence as a nation. The consensus opinion of various Nepalese and foreign analysts is that the Maoist insurgency began and bloomed as a consequence of several factors: ignorance of the plight of lower segments of Nepali society; weak or non-existent governance in affected areas; and inappropriate or ineffective resistance to Maoist influence and operations.

On February 1, 2005 Nepal's King Gyanendra staged a "royal coup" by sacking the country's elected—but largely ineffective and corrupt—government, and assumed direct executive powers in order to defeat the Maoist "terrorists" that have plagued the country. The king's bold move was purportedly designed to restore peace and create conditions for democracy in Nepal. In his power grab, however, King Gyanendra curtailed civil liberties and democratic institutions. The king severely limited basic freedoms of expression and assembly, shuttered or censored most independent media outlets, and implemented a national state of emergency. Most significant, at least with respect to the Maoists, King Gyanendra unleashed the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) to conduct strategic offensive operations against the Maoists.

Internal and international reactions to the royal moves have been mixed: high praise from many citizens tired of the bloody conflict and demanding aggressive moves against the Maoists; outrage from Nepalese political parties, other citizens, and the country's external supporters; and ridicule from the Maoists themselves. Whatever one thinks of the king's actions in February, it seems the more important question is what lies ahead—i.e., how do the

government's recent actions and policies address the Maoist insurgency, and are the measures likely to succeed where efforts over the past nine years have not? Events in Nepal may prove otherwise, but at first glance the king's actions seem counterintuitive to what is necessary to ensure political control and support of the population, and to defeat the insurgency there.

The resolution of Nepal's internal conflict begins with a proper appreciation and conceptualization of the problem of insurgency, applied to the circumstances of contemporary Nepal. Insurgency may be viewed as an armed contest between a state and a counter-state for absolute political control of a subject population and its associated resources. Both sides of the conflict have essentially the same basic strategies available to pursue their respective goals of gaining popular support and political control, but each side has strengths and weaknesses that constrain its immediate strategic and tactical choices. Where, when, and how each side applies these choices affects the achievement of its goals and determines the ultimate victor. This fundamental dynamic holds true in Nepal today.

A cursory reading of the history of Nepal's Maoist insurgency and the country's broader political, social, and economic problems leads to two interconnected observations regarding the insurgency's roots and remedies. First, the Maoist insurgency did not just 'happen' suddenly in February 1996—it was the product of a nascent democratic government's inability to resolve or limit political disputes of its divergent parties within the realm of dialogue. Second, the insurgency's persistent growth and survival reflect a perceived legitimacy in the Maoists' declared goals of reducing historical social and economic inequities between Nepal's 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Clearly, the fissures created by political disputes created space for radical counter-state elements to operate; the same fissures all but ensured that delivery of essential goods and services to the people—especially the isolated and rural poor—would take a back seat to the political power struggles in Kathmandu.

The above observations lead one to speculate that conflict resolution in Nepal has three essential tracks: closing the seams in Nepali politics that hinder a unified national response to the crisis; addressing the legitimate needs and aspirations of all classes of Nepali people; and rooting out and destroying Maoist infrastructure and armed forces. In practical terms, there is a full spectrum of tools and tactics that the government might use to unify political stakeholders, to improve the welfare of the average Nepali, and to counter the Maoists ideologically and militarily. Further, many productive government efforts can be taken independent of Maoist actions. Analysts contend, however, that Nepal's government has earnestly tried only the military option to counter the Maoists thus far. Conventional wisdom within Nepal and around the world indicates that military force alone will not resolve the insurgency there. Rather, historical examples suggest that only a unified and holistic counterinsurgency strategy, which blends all elements of the nation's power, can resolve the people's problems and lead to success over the Maoists.

B. PURPOSE & SCOPE

An objective observer might ask the obvious question: "If the solution to insurgency is so straightforward, why doesn't the Nepalese government get it?" The answer to this question is, foremost, that there are fundamentally inadequate and disparate appreciations and conceptualizations of the insurgency among members of Nepal's political and security institutions. To use a medical analogy, it is extremely hard to determine the right prescription for a disease if the diagnosis is grossly wrong or not agreed upon. Fortunately, conceptions can be fixed and agreed upon if the participants are willing. But, Nepal also has severe economic, political, and social constraints that shape the solution and affect its implementation. To use the same medical analogy as above, one would not prescribe a drug for a patient if he or she has a known and dire allergic reaction to it. Nepal's constraints may be overcome or mitigated, however, provided its government and supporters adopt a unified strategy and make informed choices that are calibrated to achieve maximum gains and avoid dire losses.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold: first, to present an analytic framework that properly conceives the challenge of counterinsurgency and calibrates government actions through the use of information systems and operations; and second, to apply this framework to the contemporary crisis in Nepal in order to postulate effective counterinsurgency strategies for the Nepalese government and its supporters, particularly the United States. The analysis attempts to cast a wide net in order to establish a solid grasp of the people, players, and dynamics at stake in Nepal's Maoist insurgency. Although the analysis places available data in the most appropriate context, the real focus of the research is on the role and use of information systems and operations in the dynamics of insurgency. Several important and relevant dimensions of insurgency and counterinsurgency are acknowledged, but are largely ignored, in this analysis insofar as their effects on the outcome of the conflict. For this reason, insights gained from this report must be balanced by further analysis of the larger set of conflict dynamics that is beyond the scope of this effort.

C. RESEARCH METHODS & STRUCTURE

As the purpose of this paper is two-fold, so is the research approach that supports it. One track of research centers on presenting an analytic framework that describes insurgency, demonstrates the value of information systems and operations to insurgency, and identifies specific information tools and strategies that may be effective in fostering or fighting insurgency. The second track of research centers on developing an understanding of the conflict on the ground in Nepal and the relevant situational details that must be factored when applying an information-based counterinsurgency framework there.

The bulk of this work is based on a rich body of second- and third-hand reports and analyses of insurgency and the ongoing conflict in Nepal. Time and travel restrictions imposed by either the Maoists or the Nepalese government prohibited first-hand investigations on the ground in Nepal. However, valuable interviews were conducted via electronic mail and telephone with US and Nepalese government officials and private analysts having first-hand knowledge

of the conflict. Available data was personally assessed and placed into the models where it best fit, unless a source explicitly advised otherwise.

The research is organized along a hierarchy of ideas, going from broad insurgency concepts to specific recommendations for Nepal. It begins by discussing a proper analytic framework for conceptualizing insurgency and places the available data on Nepal in a dynamic systems context. The paper then discusses the role and value of information in the context of the insurgency framework, identifies relevant information tools and strategies, and articulates the current situation in Nepal. Finally, the paper assesses available alternatives to improve the use of information systems and operations in the conduct of Nepal's Maoist insurgency.

This collection of ideas is presented in the remaining four chapters:

- Nepal's Insurgency & Counterinsurgency: A Systems View
- Nepal's Insurgency & Counterinsurgency: The Information Dimension
- Analysis of Alternatives
- Conclusions

While the three tiers of discussion are presented independently, the reader must understand that there is a vital thread connecting each one. Without this thread, it is difficult to capitalize on the promise of information as a tool in Nepal's counterinsurgency.

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II. NEPAL'S INSURGENCY & COUNTERINSURGENCY: A SYSTEMS VIEW

A. OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces a systems framework in which one may analyze Nepal's Maoist insurgency and inform counterinsurgency strategy there. The framework characterizes the structure and dynamics of insurgent conflict. It identifies such conflict as two systems in competition and articulates the situation, players, interests, and resources in play. The analytic framework is essential to properly identify and interpret various geopolitical, demographic, cultural, economic, and topographic factors that shape Nepal's insurgency, which must be considered when forming a holistic counterinsurgency strategy. Finally, the analytic framework highlights the central role that information, in all its forms, plays in insurgency situations. In a sense, this chapter may be seen as "intelligence preparation of the battlespace" for Nepal; moreover, it may be seen as conceptual preparation for planners there. While this chapter cannot possibly capture every detail and nuance about the conflict in Nepal in just a few pages, it introduces an approach and rationale for conducting further analysis in the future.

B. ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

1. Conceptual Model of Insurgency

Dr. Gordon McCormick of the Naval Postgraduate School offers a model of insurgency (Figure 1), which provides a useful starting point to frame this analysis. The model conceives of the insurgency problem as two dynamic systems—the state and counter-state (insurgents)—in a zero-sum competition for political control of a target population, set against the backdrop of geopolitical, social, economic, cultural and topographical conditions that describe the resources, constraints, and opportunities that face either side. McCormick highlights three primary strategies (dashed arrows in Figure 1) that either the state or insurgents may logically pursue to win the fight (in sequential order): gain control and support of the people; identify and dismantle the infrastructure of the opponent; or, defeat the opponent's fielded forces. Similar strategies may be

used to target external support to the degree it exists and is relevant, but the primary object is to control the target population. When and how each side selects and employs these strategies depends on thorough intelligence analysis and a determination of the status of the competition.

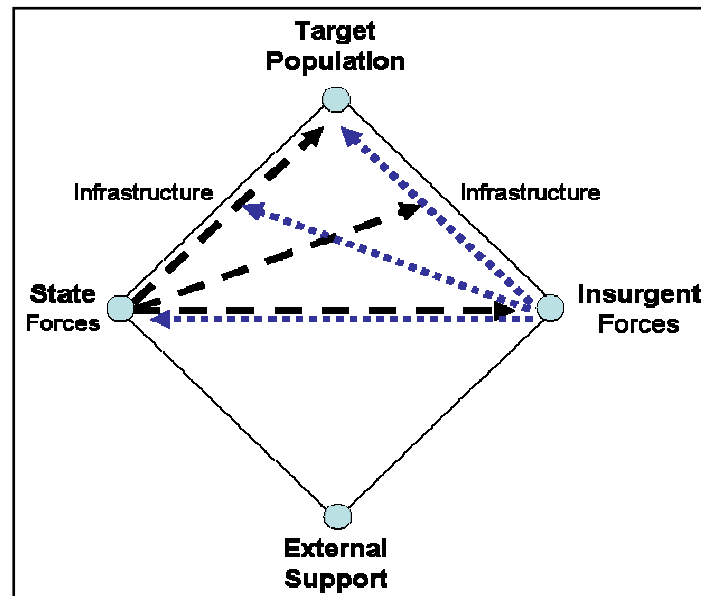


Figure 1. McCormick's Insurgency Model¹

McCormick's insurgency model is simple and powerful, but certain aspects of the problem and the rationale for his suggested tactics and strategies must be examined in more detail if the model is to be applied to the situation in Nepal. To begin with, the centrality of popular support to insurgency warfare is often cited, but is only superficially understood by many analysts of insurgency. Slogans and strategies such as "by, with, and through (the population)" or "hearts and minds," refer to the importance of winning popular support in an insurgency or counterinsurgency. These mantras sound logical, but offer little practical advice to address issues such as why and when it matters what people think, or when one must care more about the population than the enemy. These issues are critical to understanding insurgent and counterinsurgent systems in dynamic conflict and help explain why McCormick argues that the logical sequence of strategies begins with popular support and ends with attacks on the enemy.

¹ Gordon H. McCormick, "Seminar in Guerrilla Warfare Lecture Notes," (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, Summer Quarter 2004).

In their analytic essay on insurgency, Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf present a fundamental interpretation of the role of popular support in this form of conflict. Contrary to prevailing views at the time of the essay's publication in 1970, which emphasized the importance of popular preferences—"hearts and minds"—to strategy, Leites and Wolf focused instead on the *interactions* between popular support and insurgent or counterinsurgent systems.² In essence, Leites and Wolf argue what people *actually* do is more important than what they would naturally *wish* to do in insurgency situations. As their systems model shows (Figure 2), insurgents and counterinsurgents represent systems that convert inputs (e.g., people, money, material, and information) into outputs (e.g., government programs, military operations, rewards, etc.) using their available infrastructure (e.g., government/rebel administration, training, logistics, etc.). Inputs may come from intra- and/or international populations, referred to endogenous or exogenous sources, respectfully. A systems view of the problem, therefore, shows that both insurgents and counterinsurgents rely on the population for inputs, and each system affects the population with its output.

The Leites and Wolf model is another simple but extremely powerful tool that helps explain a number of relationships and strategies in insurgency conflict. The authors describe two sets of popular preferences, "pure" and "assisted"³, which drive people to support either the insurgent or the counterinsurgent causes. Pure preferences reflect the choices that people would naturally make when given a palette of alternatives available to them, with each choice having similar costs but varying rewards. For example, a villager may naturally prefer to follow his religious code's strict sense of duty and provide information on an insurgent's whereabouts to his local police force. Given no other influences, it is only logical that the villager would act on his highest-payoff pure preference, which might be the choice to inform on the insurgent.

² Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr., *Rebellion and Authority; An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1970), 28.

³ Ibid, 150-151.

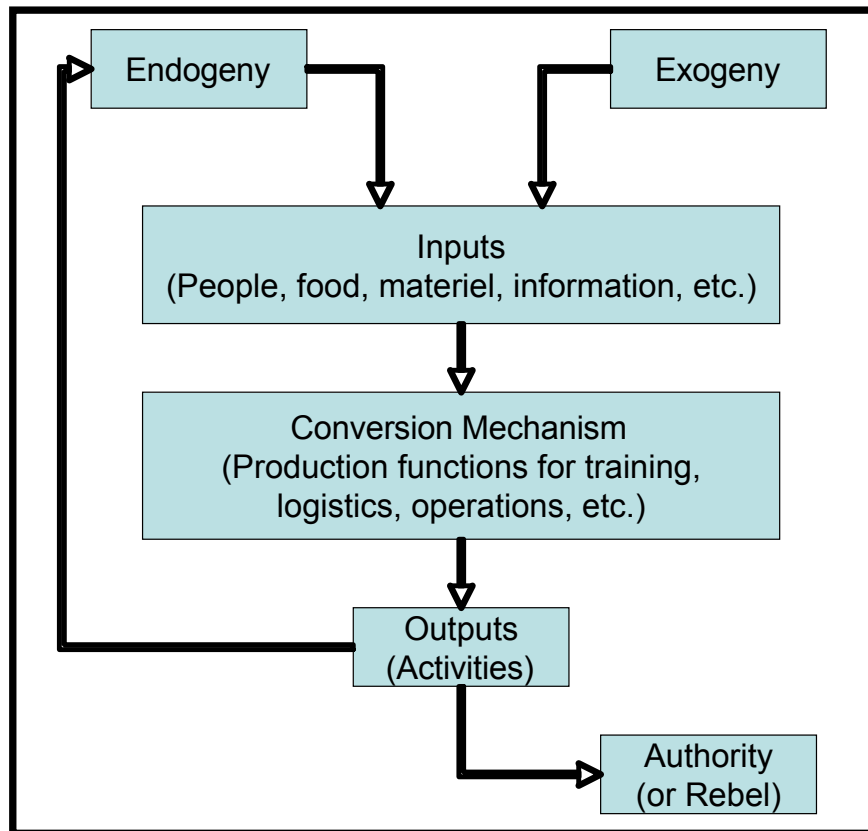


Figure 2. Insurgency as a System⁴

The reality of insurgency, however, is that the population is under extreme duress from both the insurgent and counterinsurgent, each wanting the population to act in a manner more favorable to himself than his adversary. In the same example of the villager described above, insurgents might exact brutal reprisals on village informants and their families if discovered. Faced with an immediate choice of informing and dying versus maintaining silence and living, it is easy to see how the villager is “assisted” in declaring his preference for the latter option. Pressure on the population may come from either the government or the insurgent, in a range of forms: restriction of opportunities; threats or promises based on choices; or actual reprisals or rewards. The consequences tend to be near- or long-term in nature; of these, popular attention tends to focus on the near-term. This pressure is what Leites and Wolf say results in the

⁴ Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority; An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, 35.

population's "assisted preferences," which aim to motivate the public to take a specific course of action.

The notion of popular support is essential to properly target, calibrate, and control insurgent or counterinsurgent operations. The most important concern in insurgency warfare is what people do, not merely what they feel or think. Every individual, consciously or not, conducts a cost-benefit analysis when they act: he or she determines which of the pure or assisted preferences has the greatest benefit at the least cost, and if the person is assumed to be a rational actor, he or she chooses that alternative. To the degree that people act upon these preferences and personal analyses, an insurgent or counterinsurgent strives to influence and manipulate such calculations so as to increase support to his own cause and reduce support to the adversary.

Wherever possible and advantageous, each side in insurgency seeks to affect popular preferences directly as a function of the organization's output. For example, an insurgent or counterinsurgent that provides strong local security, necessary goods, and equitable services directly to the people boosts assisted preferences, as a minimum—even if a villager disagrees with the administrator's politics, he may be content with the services provided. Sometimes, however, the insurgent or counterinsurgent must attempt to influence preferences indirectly by raising the opponent's production costs or projecting doubt on his ability to deliver his set of goods to the population. For example, insurgents may destroy a newly constructed government infrastructure to demonstrate their strength and, more importantly, the government's weakness and wastefulness in the futile effort. Manipulation of assisted popular preferences, therefore, is a central element of insurgent warfare.

If one overlays the Leites & Wolf systems model onto the McCormick insurgency model (Figure 3), it becomes clear why McCormick argues for the set and priority order of counterinsurgency strategies as noted previously. For either side, securing the support of the population or at least denying the same to the adversary is a primary task, since such support is a primary input to the growth

and production of each organization. This is largely accomplished through the manipulation of the population's assisted preferences. Next, each side aims to improve its organizational capabilities to convert inputs into outputs, while disrupting or denying the adversary's infrastructures. If successful in this strategy, an insurgent or counterinsurgent limits the production of outputs, which is hoped to further influence popular preferences in addition to any material effects observed. Finally, each side targets the outputs of the other where able and most important, in order to score direct physical or psychological damage to the adversary or to deny him the link back to the population.

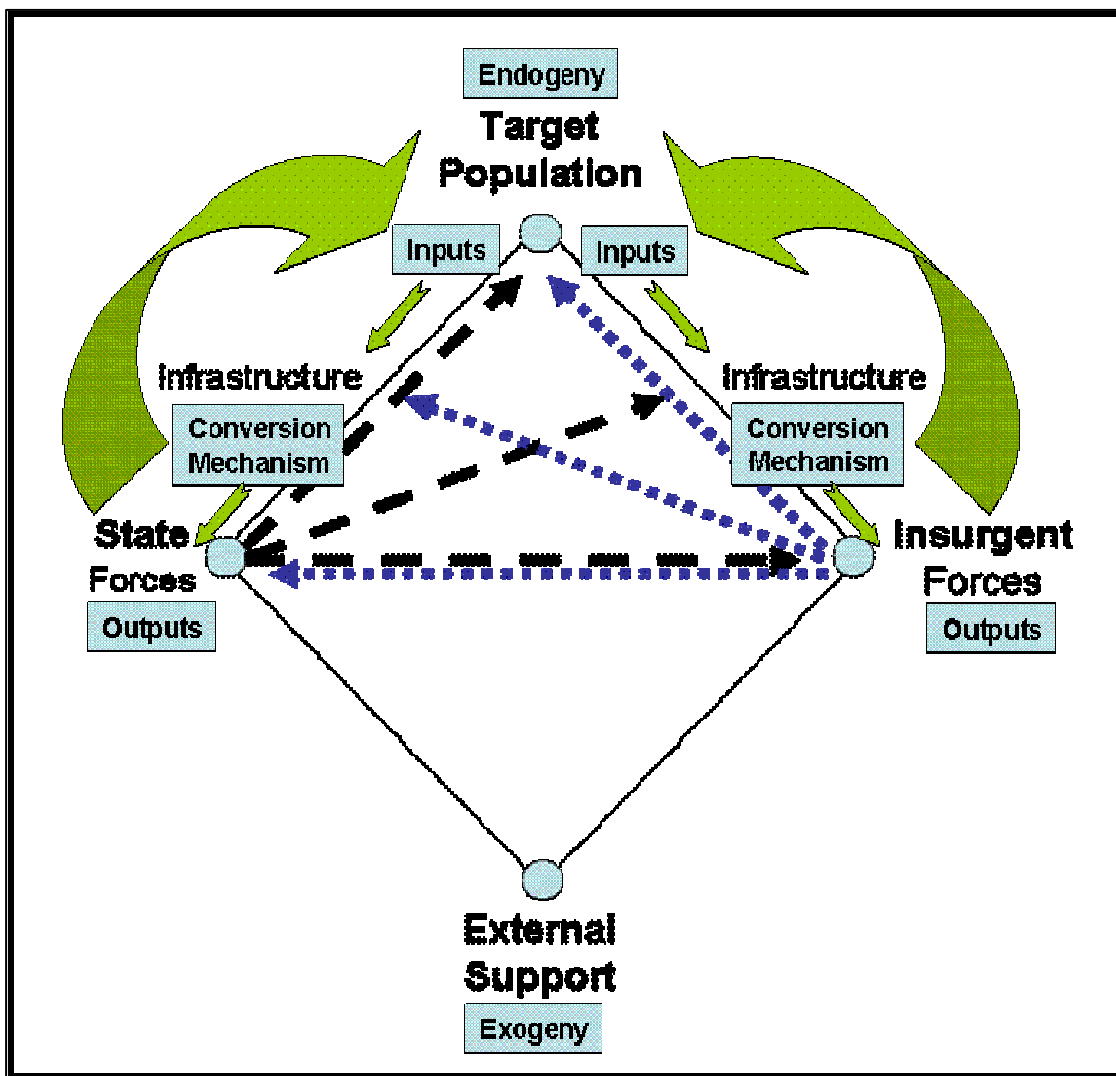


Figure 3. Leites & Wolf Model Overlaid onto McCormick Model

A final set of concepts must be discussed to fully appreciate the problem of insurgency and the complexities involved in matters of strategy and targeting: the nature of the insurgency battlespace and the operational implications it has for each side in the conflict. Dennis Drew and Donald Snow articulate four foundational attributes of insurgency that counterinsurgency planners must consider: time; covertness; subsidiary importance of military actions; and guerrilla tactics.⁵

First, time is an important weapon to insurgents in itself. Because they begin the conflict at a severe material disadvantage, insurgents require time to build support and military strength from which they may openly challenge the state.⁶ Additionally, the protracted nature of the struggle works against the state because every day that the insurgents continue to exist and operate adds a perception of legitimacy to their cause and is seen as a failure of the government.⁷ Second, the insurgents' covert infrastructure is critical. Drew and Snow note, "the primary source of an insurgency's strength is its underground organization... this infrastructure is the single most important ingredient in the insurgent recipe for success."⁸ Leites and Wolf established the rationale for this statement, as infrastructure is the part of the insurgent system that converts inputs into outputs. The covertness of this infrastructure is essential, at least in the early stages of conflict, and compounds the difficulty that the counterinsurgent faces in identifying, disrupting, and destroying it. Third, since the development of covert infrastructure is so vital to an insurgent movement's cause, it relegates insurgent military action to secondary importance. Drew and Snow state, "Without question, rebel military actions play an important role... but success on the battlefield is not crucial to the success of the insurgent

⁵ Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 1988), 111-112.

⁶ Ibid, 112.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

movement.”⁹ This factor is linked to the fourth attribute of insurgency: use of guerrilla tactics. Insurgents do not need or want to engage in large scale operations, where massed insurgents would pose a large signature that is easily tracked, targeted, and destroyed wholesale. Instead, guerrilla tactics ensure that insurgents avoid the asymmetric strength advantage of the state and that insurgents strike only when it is to their advantage to fight. Further, such tactics draw the state’s attention and efforts away from the non-military activities of the insurgent infrastructure.¹⁰

In addition to the attributes described above, Drew and Snow highlight two key differences between conventional and insurgent warfare that confound military responses to insurgency: centers of gravity and objectives. As discussed above, the center of gravity for insurgent forces is clearly the covert infrastructure and its active or passive supporters in the population. The government’s center of gravity also lays in the population, for reasons established in the discussion of the Leites, Wolf, and McCormick models. The commingling of centers of gravity in the general population presents a quandary for the counterinsurgent: attacking the insurgent’s center of gravity may mean attacking one’s own center of gravity.¹¹ This factor largely neuters the superior firepower that a strong conventional military might otherwise bring to bear against the insurgents, at least until intelligence can distinguish insurgents and their sympathizers from average civilians. Insurgents intentionally try to provoke a premature and indiscriminate state response on this center of gravity in order to draw support away from the state and towards the insurgents. This strategy leads into the final point of discussion about the nature of insurgent and counterinsurgent objectives. The insurgent aims primarily to survive and outlast the state—victory is defined as “not losing”; the counterinsurgent, however, aims to decisively defeat the insurgents—victory is defined as “winning”. So long as the insurgents continue to

⁹ Drew and Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems*, 114.

¹⁰ Ibid, 115.

¹¹ Ibid, 117.

fight, however small their numbers may be, they increase the relative legitimacy of their cause and more importantly, discredit the state due its inability to defeat a militarily inferior force.¹²

The conceptual framework presented in this section is essential for understanding the nature of insurgency, the forces in play, the dynamics of conflict, and the essence of strategy and tactics in this form of warfare. These basic concepts, to varying degrees, hold true for all insurgencies and are readily apparent in Nepal today. The next step in forming an effective counterinsurgency strategy for Nepal is to put these concepts to work in a more concrete model where one may place facts from the real world, then postulate and visualize the effects of specific strategies and tactics on the conflict dynamics.

2. Mathematical Model of Insurgency

Gordon McCormick and Frank Giordano extend the basic conceptual model with mathematics to illustrate the underlying calculus of the zero-sum insurgent competition. This calculus identifies the variables and dynamics that intelligence needs to illuminate and measure, and those factors which operators need to affect, in order for one to effectively counter an insurgency. As McCormick and Giordano note, there are two components to insurgent-counterinsurgent competition: mobilization (recruitment & growth) and attrition (the result of head-to-head battles).¹³ In this game, each player's ability to grow, attrit, and survive attacks is a function of its resources and strategies used to manipulate popular preferences and to counter its adversary.

McCormick and Giordano mathematically represent insurgent-counterinsurgent competition using Lanchester's equations of conflict (Figure 4). Lanchester's equations grossly simplify the forces at play in insurgent conflict, but they allow an analyst to experiment with strategies and tactics to see their net effects on the model of conflict. The three models below may be used to examine

¹² Drew and Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems*, 117.

¹³ Gordon H. McCormick and Frank R. Giordano, "The Dynamics of Insurgency," (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 2-3.

the following: mobilization independent of attrition; attrition independent of mobilization; and the combined interaction between mobilization and attrition.

<u>Mobilization Model</u>	<u>Where:</u>
$\frac{dx}{dt} = a(1 - \frac{x}{k_x})x$ $\frac{dy}{dt} = b(1 - \frac{y}{k_y})y$ [A]	$x(t)$: size of insurgent organization at time t k_x: limit of insurgent's potential support base $y(t)$: size of counterinsurgent organization at time t k_y: limit of counterinsurgent's potential support base t: measures time a: insurgent's growth parameter b: counterinsurgent's growth parameter m: counterinsurgent's combat effectiveness parameter n: insurgent's combat effectiveness parameter $m'(t) = q(t)m$, $0 < q < 1$: counterinsurgent's combat effectiveness parameter as function of time & information $n'(t) = r(t)n$, $0 < r < 1$: insurgent's combat effectiveness parameter as function of time & information $q(t)$: counterinsurgent's ability to see insurgents at time t $r(t)$: insurgent's ability to see insurgents at time t
<u>Attrition Model</u>	
$\frac{dx}{dt} = -mxy$ $\frac{dy}{dt} = -nx$ [B]	
<u>Interactive Insurgency Model</u>	
$\frac{dx}{dt} = a(1 - \frac{x}{k_x})x - m'xy$ $\frac{dy}{dt} = b(1 - \frac{y}{k_y})y - n'x$ [C]	

Figure 4. Mathematical Models of Insurgency¹⁴

The math involved here is not complex, but the equations are subtly sophisticated and require some explanation in order to be useful operationally. Looking first at mobilization (model [A] above), each side faces essentially the same challenge of constrained growth. Insurgents and counterinsurgents fight to recruit members or supporters from the same population, up to a maximum capacity (k_x or k_y) that each organization is capable of sustaining and harnessing. The rate of growth is the product of an organizational growth parameter (a or b), the size of the recruitable population ($1-x/k_x$ or $1-y/k_y$), and the size of the existing organization (x or y). Figure 5 shows notional examples of insurgent growth including a typically observed path, a rapidly growing organization, and a movement that exceeds carrying capacity.

¹⁴ McCormick and Giordano, "The Dynamics of Insurgency," 6-21.

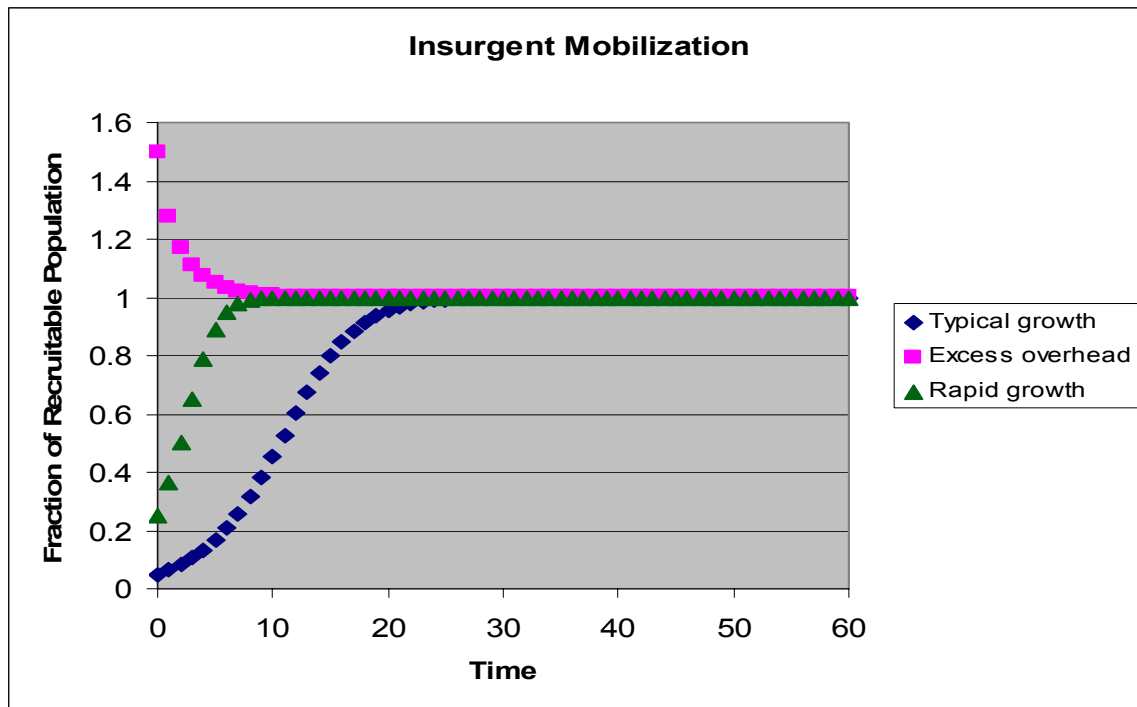


Figure 5. Notional Insurgent Mobilization Model

Independent of each other, either side has two implied goals for growth: first, to reach its maximum organizational capacity as rapidly as its infrastructure can support and employ; and second, to increase the recruitable population it may pursue. Each organization pursues these goals through strategies and tactics designed to improve its growth parameter and engender support to its cause (and thereby deprive such support from the adversary). Some tactics may include negative incentives aimed at the population; other tactics may be actions directed against the enemy.

It is clear why and how insurgents and counterinsurgents pursue independent goals of growth to expand their respective influence and control, but what happens when the two contestants directly confront each other in battle? Attrition as a result of combat will have an impact on growth, but before discussing that connection, one must understand what happens in the battle itself. In the case of attrition, insurgents and counterinsurgents face a dynamic as described by model [B] in Figure 4.

Due to the nature of insurgency warfare and the unique conditions encountered by each side as described in the previous section of this report, insurgents can only be engaged when they are found. Their uses of guerilla tactics, commingling in the population, and maintenance of covert infrastructure are intended to avoid such a fate. As the model shows, insurgent attrition is a function of armed encounters and depends upon the size and effectiveness of the counterinsurgent's armed force as well as the number of insurgents engaged. The counterinsurgent faces a different attrition dynamic; since he operates largely in the open, he may be subject to attack at the discretion of the insurgent and suffers in proportion to the numbers of insurgents and their combat effectiveness.

Figure 6 shows the results of a notional set of encounters between insurgents and counterinsurgents at three levels of government combat effectiveness. The curves represent relative strength of counterinsurgents versus insurgents after each consecutive encounter over time. The winner is the side with forces remaining after the other side is reduced to zero strength. In this example, conflict begins with the counterinsurgents holding a five-to-one advantage in force ratio. As conflict progresses, note that the counterinsurgents face a situation of diminishing returns with respect to attacks on insurgents (assuming no change in force levels or effective firepower between engagements), because there are progressively less people to find, fight, and kill. Also observe the relative effect of changes in combat effectiveness on the attrition equations in Figure 6: as counterinsurgent effectiveness improves, there are more counterinsurgents remaining as the insurgents are defeated; if the counterinsurgents are less effective, there are less counterinsurgents left at the end of the fight. In this example, the insurgents won due to the counterinsurgent's poor combat performance.

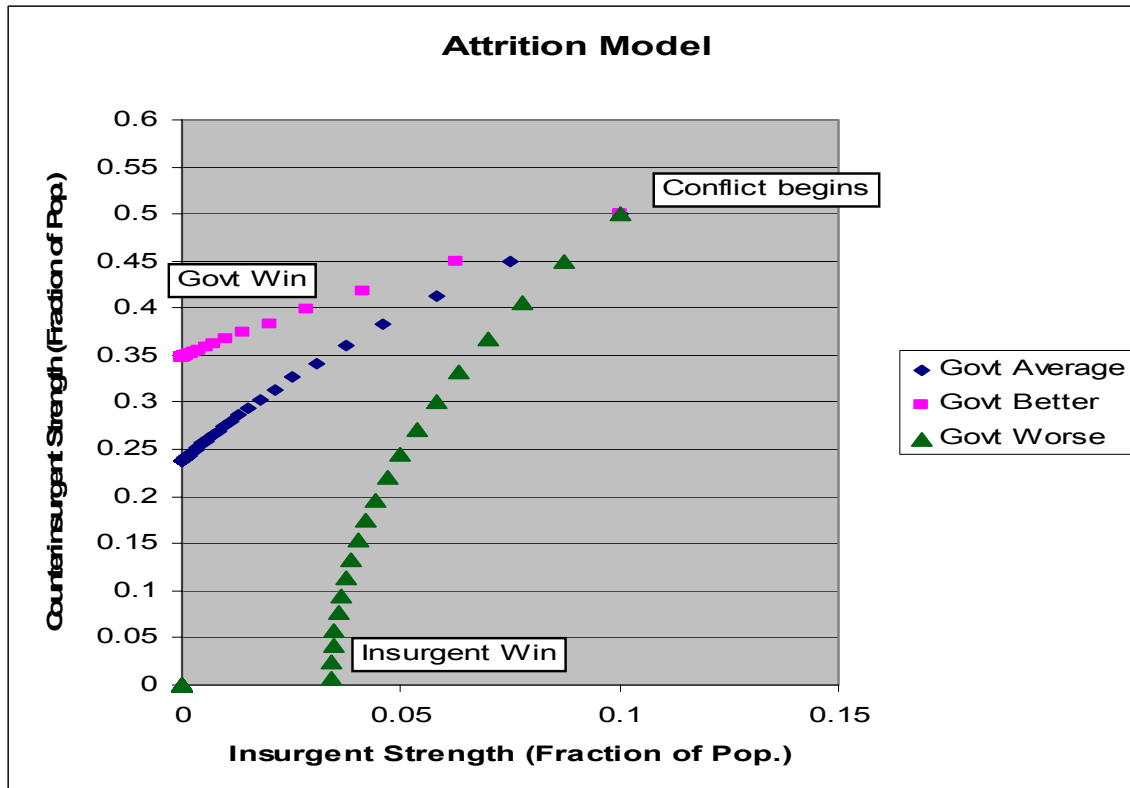


Figure 6. Notional Attrition Model

Assuming the force ratio remains constant, combat effectiveness has a dramatic impact on the outcome of the game and is a critical parameter for each side to improve or degrade. Later discussions in this report will address components of this parameter and strategies to affect it. Force levels do indeed matter, but it is presumably much harder to change that parameter given the resource constraints of either the insurgents or counterinsurgents at the onset of conflict; the integrated insurgency model to be discussed shortly will account for some of this dynamic.

Since it is obvious that combat effectiveness has a profound effect on the ability to attrit the enemy, the topic deserves further examination. The attrition model [B] in Figure 4 denotes combat effectiveness by the parameters m and n for the counterinsurgents and insurgents respectively. Combat effectiveness can be simplified and assumed to be a constant for gross conceptual visualization purposes, but in reality it is a complex variable that represents many factors,

such as: sophistication of weapons employed; level of training and proficiency of soldiers; amount, accuracy and timeliness of intelligence; and the efficiency of command and control. Some of these factors are structurally defined due to the limits of resources, just as overall force levels are. For example, in the case of Nepal, army soldiers equipped with fifty-year old bolt-action Lee-Enfield .303 rifles can only fire so fast and with so much accuracy, regardless of how good their intelligence is. Despite such structural constraints on firepower, a counterinsurgent force still has considerable opportunity to improve combat effectiveness through better intelligence and command & control capabilities; counterinsurgents may also degrade insurgents' effectiveness through various information delay, disruption and denial strategies.

To examine the impact of information on the dynamics of attrition, consider the parameters m' and n' in model [C] of Figure 4. As McCormick and Giordano indicate, these parameters can be expressed as functions of information over time and the ratio of q to r (counterinsurgent's ability to "see" the insurgent compared to the insurgent's ability to "see" the counterinsurgent).¹⁵ If either player is able to influence the ratio of q to r , either by improving his detection capability or decreasing that of the enemy, it can have a dramatic effect on the conflict dynamics (shown notionally in Figure 7). Manipulation of the information ratio, independent of other factors, is therefore a very promising strategy to affect attrition rates.

As discussed earlier, mobilization and attrition are simultaneous processes in insurgent warfare. To examine how one dynamic influences the other, one must consider the equations of model [C] in Figure 4. The framework for the game is structurally set by certain initial conditions of the battlespace: opening force levels and organizational resources; distribution of political support in terms of hard-core followers and the undecided population; and type, condition, and skill of armed elements. For either insurgent or counterinsurgent system to gain strength or at least outlast the enemy, the combatant must

¹⁵ McCormick and Giordano, "The Dynamics of Insurgency," 18.

obviously produce more recruits than it loses in combat or draw down the enemy strength faster than the enemy inflicts losses upon it.

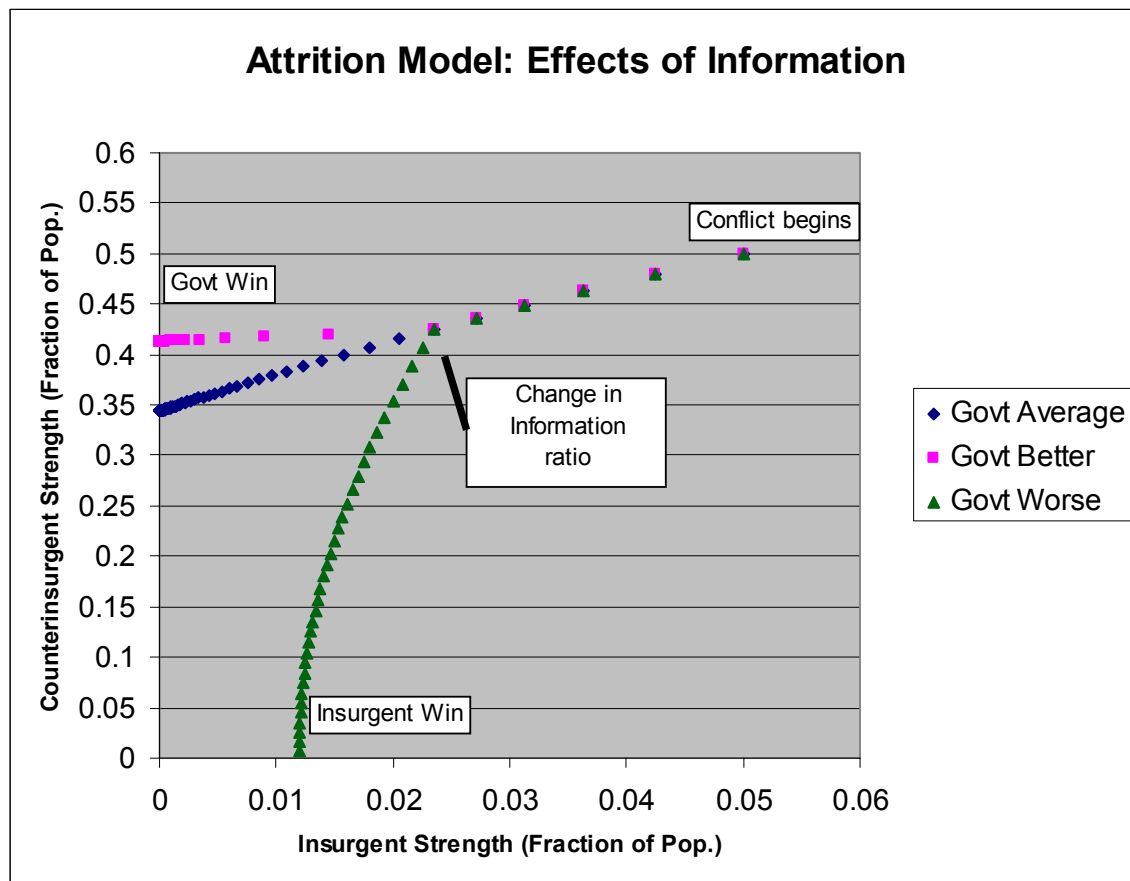


Figure 7. Effects of Information on Attrition

To these ends, there are several potential offensive or defensive strategies to influence the variables of recruitment and combat effectiveness. Figure 8 shows the impact of various levels of recruitment and combat effectiveness on the dynamics of conflict; in this case the two sides begin the fight at a hypothetical force ratio of five-to-one in favor of the counterinsurgents. Clearly, strong mobilization and tactical denial methods stand out as central strategies for insurgents to counter the initial material advantage enjoyed by the government. Counterinsurgents should aim to increase their ability to find and kill the adversary and/or reduce the recruiting ability of the insurgents to capitalize on the state's initial numerical superiority.

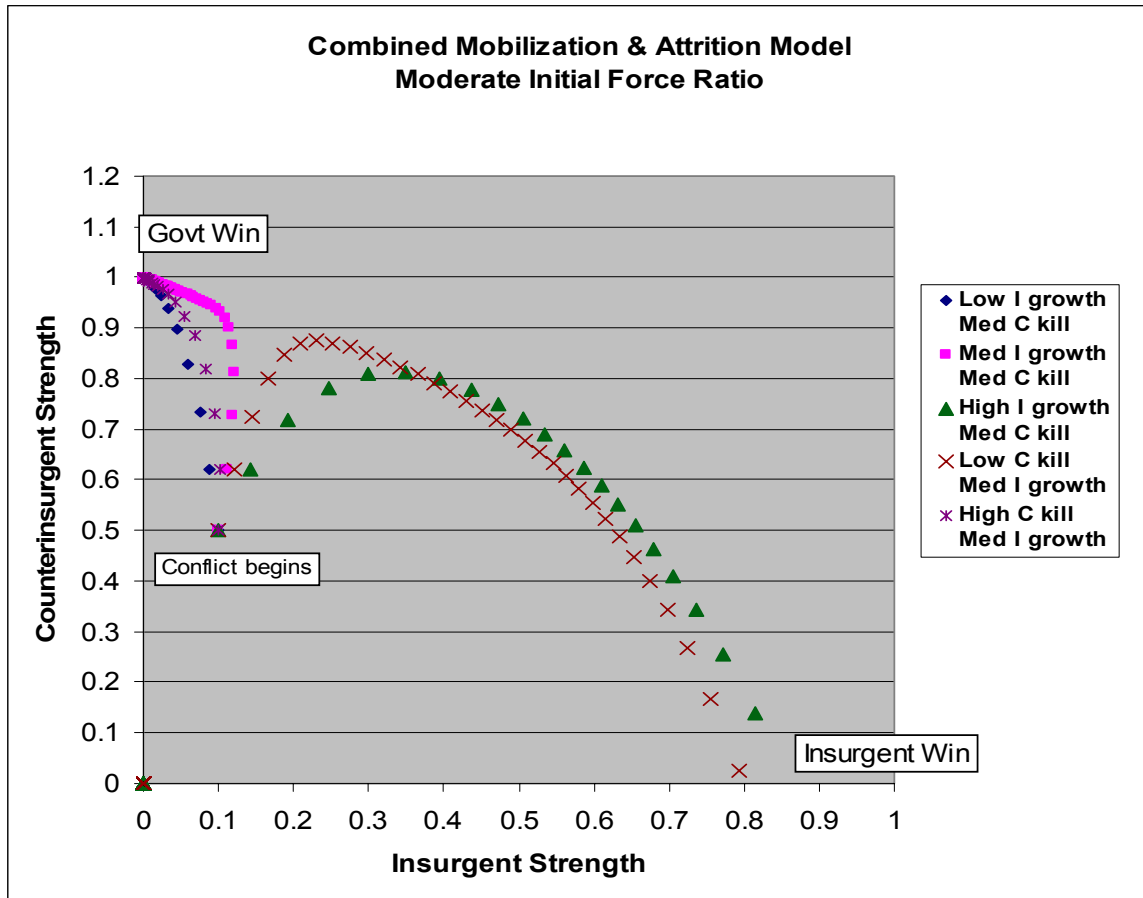


Figure 8. Combined Mobilization & Attrition Model

By no means are the examples presented in Figure 8 totally inclusive of the range of strategies and possible outcomes of insurgent conflict, however they should give one a sense of the nature of the dynamics one faces in insurgency. Further, the graphs thus far only reflect initial conditions, initial moves, and static growth and combat effectiveness parameters. The outcome and the manner of waging actual combat may lead to more complex and compound effects on these dynamics. For instance, a brutal and indiscriminate attack by counterinsurgents on rebel targets intermixed with civilians may very well kill a few combatants, but it may boost insurgent recruitment or at least reduce the appeal of the counterinsurgent; further, if people switch allegiances, precious intelligence on the insurgents may dry up and result in even less effective combat effectiveness in future engagements. Likewise, if one side is enjoying particular success, undecided people may jump on the ‘bandwagon’ and boost recruitment—the

notion of 'success breeding success.' One cannot possibly identify every compound effect embedded in the dynamics and parameters of the insurgency model, but it suffices to mark this point for further evaluation in real world scenarios as a potential consequence or benefit of the strategies and tactics chosen to fight insurgencies.

A wise military planner seeks to measure the status of forces and underlying trends as combat progresses, so as to postulate effective mid-course corrections that may either hasten victory or fend off defeat. With the mathematical framework presented here, one can track such trends and experiment with strategies to see what might be effective in achieving goals. Figure 9 presents a few notional combat scenarios where one player realizes events are not going his way, so he adjusts his strategies.

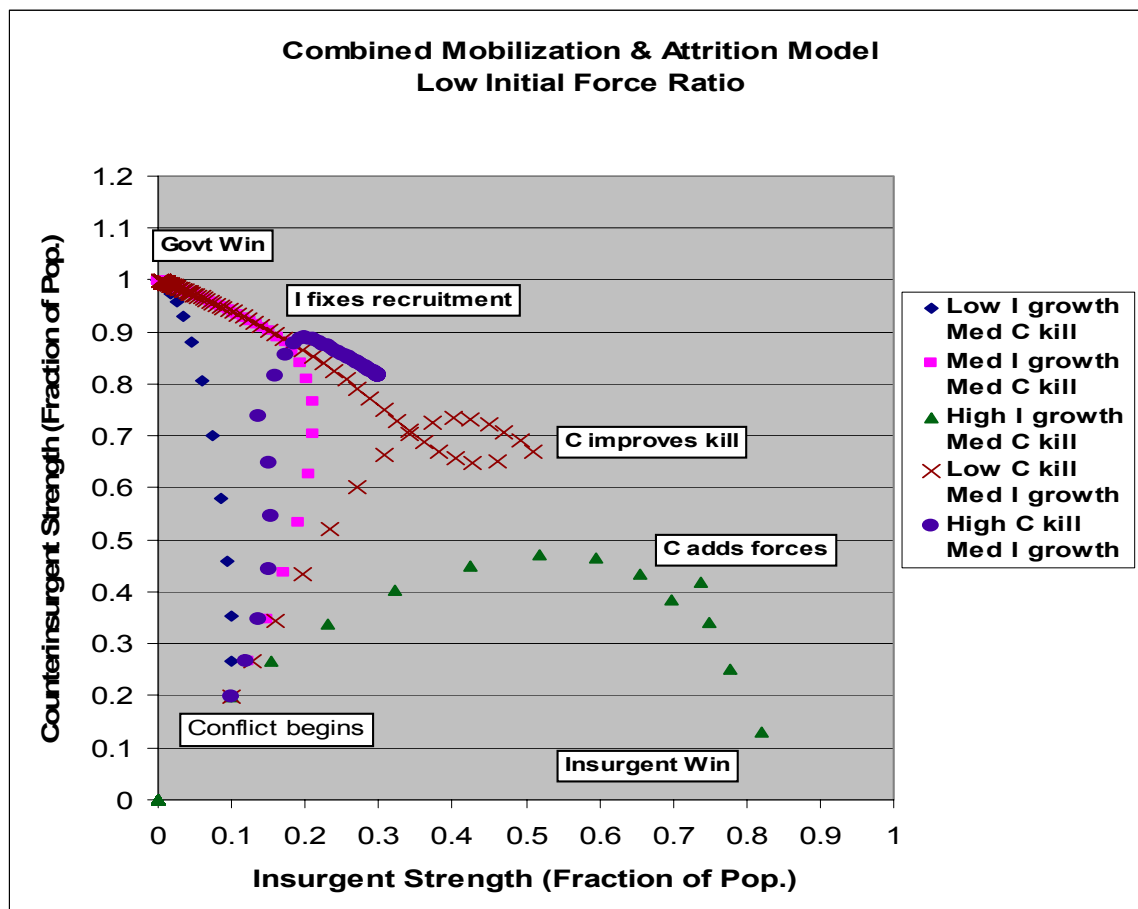


Figure 9. Mid-Course Correction Strategies

Note the power of recruitment for the insurgents, as they fight to a stalemate after adjusting their mobilization strategy in the face of a highly combat-effective counterinsurgent force. Also observe the dramatic effects achieved by improving the counterinsurgents' kill capability. Finally, note that even a significant addition of combat forces cannot overcome a well-oiled insurgent mobilization. These are simply notional examples of how such moves affect the dynamics of insurgent conflict, and of course, either side in the fight may use these strategies.

3. Assessment & Implications of the Models

The conceptual and mathematical models presented in the prior sections should be understood as simplified but useful representations of the systems and underlying dynamics involved in insurgent conflict. To be usable in an analysis of a real-world situation, however, one must pause to reflect on the meaning and implications of the models and then identify the information and intelligence assessments needed to calibrate the systems and variables in play.

Looking first at mobilization, its pace and limits are clearly influenced by three factors: the pool of potential recruits, the number of recruiters, and the rate at which the organization can transform a recruit into an active member. Identification of the number of people supporting each side of the fight, and the degree of support and commitment offered by these supporters, is a primary intelligence need in order to calibrate mobilization. Several related questions must be investigated to calibrate these variables. First, how many people are hard core supporters (for either side) and how many in the middle will lean either way based on circumstances? Further, what factors drive a potential recruit's choice, i.e., what are the expected costs and benefits of supporting one of the sides? This implies the need for a thorough evaluation of the political, social, economic, and cultural conditions facing the population, and assessment of the population's likely response to proposed incentives or threats. It also points to the need for assessment of the respective players' willingness and capabilities to

deliver on promises or threats. Intelligence on changes in recruitment and level of support is essential to gauge each side's overall rate of growth or decline.

Identification of the number, methods, and effectiveness of recruiters is the second intelligence need in order to calibrate mobilization. The only way to grow is to recruit people to one side versus the other; this is an active process that requires people to carry the message and lead the recruit into the organization. The number of recruiters is important because it represents resources dedicated to the task (and not others, such as combat), and may indicate the status and reach of either side in the fight. One also needs to know what methods recruiters are using, and which methods are working or not, as this knowledge is essential to forming countering strategies to either derail the opponent's efforts or to enhance one's own recruitment efforts.

Assessment of the ability of the insurgent or counterinsurgent force to transform recruit into active member is the final intelligence need to calibrate mobilization. To be effective, the organization must be able to accommodate and employ growing numbers of recruits. If the organization cannot provide such support, it will reach a point of diminishing returns in recruitment. In the case of insurgents, this concept highlights the downside of growth: increasing numbers of recruits raises its organizational signature, and strains the insurgency's ability to remain clandestine. In the case of the counterinsurgent, this concept highlights the importance of the state's ability to effectively secure and control people and territory. Intelligence in this area should target indicators such as organizational capacity, training, logistics readiness, and operational security, as a measure of the level of institutional development. It is clear why most experts agree that identification of the insurgent's infrastructure is the critical intelligence need in counterinsurgency, as it reduces the insurgent's primary advantage. The counterinsurgents must be able to grow and sustain its capabilities from a highly exposed position, thus they must focus efforts on minimizing the insurgent's knowledge of, and ability to act on, the state's critical operational information.

As noted previously, the other component of the calculus of insurgency deals with attrition, or the ability to survive in the face of direct armed engagement with the opponent. This is the most “conventional” aspect of insurgency, in that damage or survival of either side appears to be directly calculable: “if ‘a’ shoots ‘b’ with lethality ‘c’ and accuracy ‘d’, then ‘e’ will occur.” Even this simple calculation gets twisted in insurgency, however, due to the relative information superiority held by the insurgents. Since the insurgents remain hidden, at least in the early stages of conflict, the state does not know where and when to apply its combat power—it is weapon rich and target poor. The state can only win when it finds the insurgents. Conversely, since the state generally must operate from known and publicized areas, the insurgent can attack at the time and location of his choosing and inflict as much damage as his weapons allow. The intelligence dilemma of the state on the attrition side of insurgency calculus is stark: knowledge of the identity and location of the insurgent is most important and useful, but it is least available. Basic military intelligence on the nature, skill, and effectiveness of insurgent combat forces and on the battlefield environment remains essential to determining “how” to engage forces when and where an opportunity arises. But, the state must first gain intelligence on the identity and movements of insurgents in order to attack them.

Discrete success in each component of the insurgency equation is required to win the game, but components of the calculus also interact dynamically. This attribute of insurgency leads to sometimes contradictory and counterproductive results—whereby one side’s gains may produce even higher gains for the other side. For example, indiscriminate state reprisal against a minor insurgent act may inflict significant collateral damage on the population that the state is supposedly protecting. In this case, the insurgent may gain recruits from the afflicted population; as a minimum, the lack of discrimination may weaken popular or external support to the state. Thus the mobilization equation can be affected by attrition results, and vice versa, since improved mobilization of the other side would tend to reduce information or other resources

that are necessary to attrit the adversary. This factor of insurgency implies that adequate intelligence on relevant variables and assessment of the likely consequences of specific actions are absolutely critical to properly calibrate the selection, timing, and execution of counterinsurgency strategies.

A final observation on the insurgency models is that the strength and status of an insurgency may vary across various zones of conflict within a country, reflecting a host of structural or dynamic variables linked to diverse local conditions. While intelligence needs are consistent among all areas of conflict, assessments may vary widely between each area. One must take care not to overly generalize local observations across the theater of operations. It is possible, and likely, that intelligence on one area will lead to a counterinsurgency strategy tailored for the conditions of that area, but the same strategy or timing of an operation may not be appropriate for a different area. Intelligence must be broad enough to cover all areas of operations, but precise enough to discern differences from one area to the next.

4. Priority Information Requirements

The framework proposed in this thesis implies a wide array of information and intelligence needs that must be met to effectively model, analyze, and conduct counterinsurgency. The models provide a sensible context in which one may place information regarding the players, the battleground, and the underlying dynamics of the insurgency; moreover, the models provide a means to evaluate alternative strategies and tactics before committing to them in the field. Successful application of these tools in the real world, however, demands accurate intelligence on the variables McCormick and Giordano identify.

This paper proposes the set of priority information requirements listed in Table 1 be researched in order to adequately characterize the structure and dynamics of the conflict ongoing in Nepal. By no means is this list exhaustive, but an effective counterinsurgency strategy for Nepal depends on information and analysis of at least the following subjects.

Basic facts	
Subject	Remarks
Geography / topography / climatology National Districts / zones / villages	Dominant features, constraints and concerns relevant to strategic, operational and tactical ops
Demographics / ethnography / culture National Districts / zones / villages	Characterize local population base Popular strata by meaningful criteria Prevailing attitudes, needs, desires Topical or historical sensitivities Languages, dialects spoken Religions practiced
Economic / social factors National Districts / zones / villages	Levels and sources of income Economic growth / decline rates Health and sanitary conditions, treatment facilities
Political / governmental situation National Districts / zones / villages	Structure and status
Physical infrastructure National Districts / zones / villages	Transportation networks Power generation & distribution networks Water treatment & distribution networks
The State (Counterinsurgent forces)	
Subject	Remarks
Combat forces (military and/or paramilitary)	Effective combat strength: number of deployable personnel Effective combat power: number and type of weapons, level of readiness and proficiency Deployment locations and status Mobility Current operational activity
Infrastructure National Districts / zones / villages	Police & law enforcement Intelligence and information collection, processing, and analysis Communications capabilities Logistics capacity and readiness Governmental / administrative capabilities Mass-media / information dissemination Current operational activity
External support	Source, type, amount, frequency of support Delivery mechanism Current activity
The Counter-State (Insurgent forces)	
Subject	Remarks
Combat forces	Effective combat strength: number of deployable personnel Effective combat power: number and type of weapons, level of readiness and proficiency Deployment locations and status Mobility Current operational activity

Infrastructure National Districts / zones / villages	Number / location of Cadres Intelligence and information collection, processing, and analysis Communications capabilities Logistics capacity and readiness Administrative capabilities Mass-media / information dissemination Current operational activity
External support	Source, type, amount, frequency of support Delivery mechanism Current activity
Target Population (decided and undecided supporters)	
Subject	Remarks
Disposition of population National Districts / zones / villages	Nature of support tendered Political inclinations / natural preferences Perceived level of security & prosperity Specific grievances or disparities
Mobilization	
Subject	Remarks
Counterinsurgent growth National Districts / zones / villages	Number / fraction of hard core supporters Number / fraction of "swing" recruits Number of recruiters Recruitment methods: promises / threats made Capacity to absorb and employ recruits Periodic growth, change in support level
Insurgent growth National Districts / zones / villages	Number / fraction of hard core supporters Number / fraction of "swing" recruits Number of recruiters Recruitment methods: promises / threats made Capacity to absorb and employ recruits Periodic growth, change in support level
Attrition	
Subject	Remarks
Counterinsurgent forces	Engagements initiated vs. induced Weapons & combat effectiveness: exchange ratios, accuracy, kills, losses Survival rates
Insurgents	Engagements initiated vs. induced Weapons & combat effectiveness: exchange ratios, accuracy, kills, losses Survival rates

Table 1. Priority Information Requirements for Analysis of Insurgency

The breadth and depth of information and intelligence needs listed above poses a tremendous challenge for the world's most sophisticated and resource-rich states, let alone a developing and poor nation such as Nepal. If progress is to be made in counterinsurgency, however, leaders need to realize the profound importance of spending resources and conducting operations simply to gain information that will help define the systems in play and shape effective strategy.

C. CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN NEPAL

The next task of this analysis is to populate the insurgency models with available information, using the conceptual and mathematical framework described in the previous sections as a contextual map of the battlespace in Nepal. It should be noted that there are many facts for which there are few published or reliable sources in Nepal, short of in-country village-level research. In these cases, gaps in data often tell a larger tale as they point to weaknesses of access, capabilities, or priorities on the part of the counterinsurgent.

Most people, if they have any impression of Nepal at all, probably imagine it to be a land of rugged natural beauty inhabited by a seemingly harmonious people living in the world's only Hindu kingdom. While some of these notions have a vein of truth to them, author Michael Hutt shatters these images as he describes Nepal not as a land in harmony, rather as a land filled with stark contrasts and contradictions including the following:¹⁶

- A Hindu state vs. the presence of significant religious minorities
- A unitary state with one official language vs. the presence of scores of different ethnic groups speaking dozens of different languages
- A most-aided nation vs. an impoverished population
- A multi-party democracy under a constitutional monarchy vs. an entrenched communist insurgency
- A land of peace vs. a place of brutal violence at many times in Nepal's history

1. Basic Facts

Nepal is certainly a land of physical contrasts, a fact that creates or enhances other contrasts in its society, economy, and politics. Nepal's geography, environment, and climate profoundly influenced its historical development and largely shape its limits and opportunities to this date. Nepal is a

¹⁶ Michael Hutt, ed., *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 1-2.

small landlocked nation that is geostrategically positioned (Figure 10) between the two giants of China and India. It has a land area of about 150,000 square kilometers, roughly the size and shape of Tennessee.¹⁷ Nepal's terrain ranges from low-lying jungles and farmland (known as the Terai) along the southern border with India, to terraced and forested central hills, to majestic Himalayan peaks along the northern border with China. Climate ranges from subtropical in the south to temperate in the middle hills to near arctic cold in the North. Nepal is affected by seasonal monsoons just as most of South Asia; depending on the timing and severity of the storms, floods, landslides, drought or famine are frequent consequences.

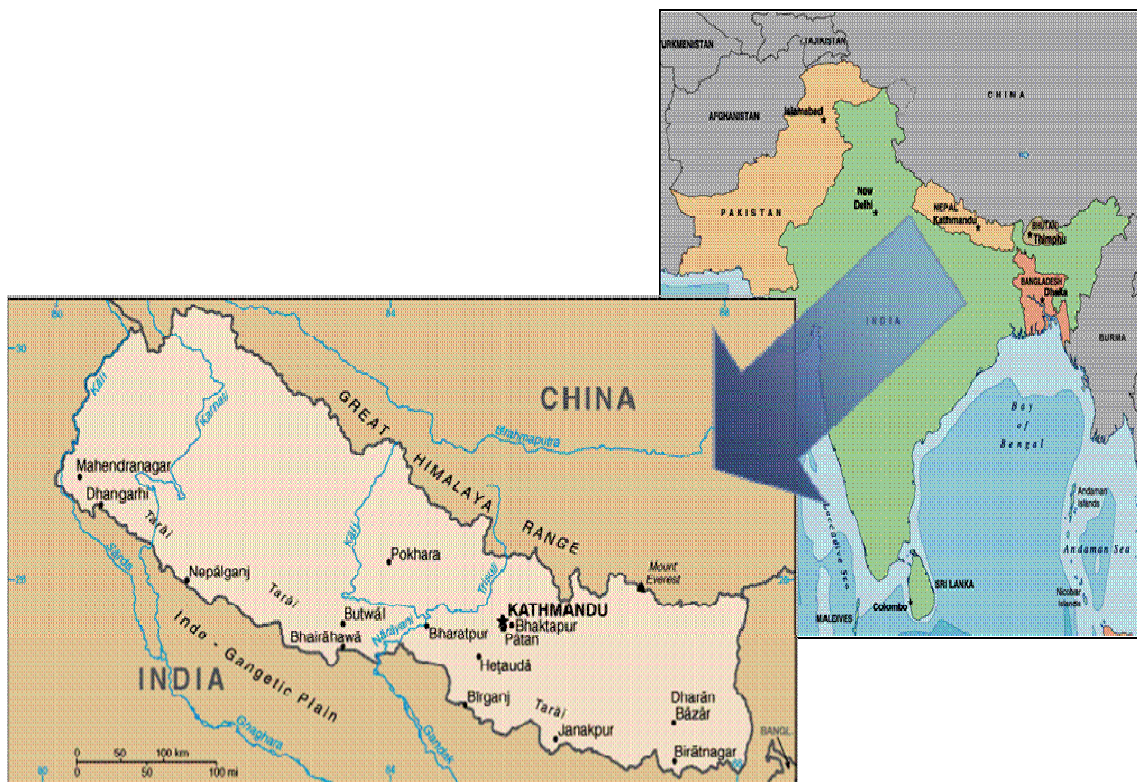


Figure 10. Nepal's Geostrategic Position¹⁸

¹⁷ US Department of State. "Background Note: Nepal." *Bureau of South Asian Affairs*. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5283.htm>.

¹⁸ Images adapted from: Canadian Consular Affairs, *South Asia*, available from http://www.voyage.gc.ca/Images/az/maps/cont/south_asia-fr_big.gif; and US Department of State, *Bureau of South Asian Affairs*, available from <http://www.state.gov/p/sa/ci/np>.

What is most striking about the physical environment of Nepal is how its topography influences life there at national and individual levels. The Himalayas form a natural protective barrier to the north, and the once-impenetrable jungles of the Terai deterred incursion from the South.¹⁹ While the international isolation induced by these features has been reduced somewhat over time, Nepal's topography also isolates the people in various pockets of land within the country—a feature that has not yet been overcome. The pockmarked central hills lend themselves to “micro-cultures” with various ethnic, linguistic, and religious roots; further, rugged terrain reduces lines of communications to just a few north-south and east-west routes.²⁰ This feature makes it very difficult to develop industry, agriculture, or physical infrastructure to reach and service people in remote areas. It is no coincidence that this is the region in which the Maoist insurgency bloomed, which will be discussed shortly.

Nepal's population is often presented as diverse but united under the Hindu monarchy. Table 2 presents Nepal's key demographics; these statistics certainly reinforce the notion of diversity, but also point to the roots of many of Nepal's problems. Nepal is more a mosaic than a melting pot, comprised of tiny societies bound through a variety of castes under the banner of the Kingdom of Nepal. Ostensibly, the Hindu caste system provides structure to Nepali society and a sense of “natural law” among its peoples. Hinduism in theory does not see this as discrimination; rather, it is an ordering of roles and duties in life. As with all religions, however, theory and practice can stray wildly. While caste discrimination is constitutionally illegal, inequities in distribution of public goods and structural limits to one's potential are facts of life that bound the prospects for a large part of Nepali society. Furthermore, such practices fuel perceptions of a feudal and anachronistic society that is out of step with modern needs and practices.

¹⁹ Leo Rose and John Scholz, *Nepal: Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

Demographic	Notes
Population (2004)	24.8 million
Annual population growth	2.25%
Population distribution	Rural (85.8%); Urban (14.2%)
Ethnic groups	
Castes	Brahman, Chetri, Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Tharu, and others
Ethnicity	“Caste” (56.2%); “Ethnics” (35.5%); “Others” (8.3%)
Languages	Nepali and 18 others
Religions	Hinduism (80.6%), Buddhism (10.7%), Islam (4.2%), and others (4.2%)
Education	
Attendance	Primary 80.4%, Secondary 20%
Literacy	53.7% (65.1% male, 42.5% female), lower in rural areas
Health	
Infant mortality rate	64.2/1,000
Life expectancy	58.3 yrs (male), 42.5 yrs (female)
Work force	Agriculture (85%); industry (3%); services (11%); other (1%)

Table 2. Nepal's Key Demographics²¹

Nepal is also an extremely poor nation with bleak economic prospects. Per-capita income is only \$279 (2004), somewhat higher in the urban areas and lowest in the rural areas and among the lower castes and ethnics; nearly 38% of the population lives in poverty.²² Agriculture is Nepal's economic mainstay; it provides 39% of GDP and employs 85% of the population.²³ Nepal's total GDP measures \$5.82 billion with 2.6% growth in 2003, but forecasted to contract 1.6% in 2005.²⁴ The work force is about 10 million, has high unemployment, and severely lacks skills. There are few natural resources, few industries, and few exports; even these are routinely threatened by insurgent attacks. Remittances from Nepalis working in foreign countries, including Gurkha soldiers and common laborers, and foreign aid provide critical influxes of hard currency; U.S.

²¹ US Department of State, "Background Note: Nepal", *Bureau of South Asian Affairs*.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

assistance alone totaled more than \$791 million since 1951, and currently averages about \$40 million per year.²⁵

As noted previously, topography largely determines the extent and nature of Nepal's infrastructure, which further compounds its economic woes. There is extremely limited ground and air transportation, and most rural villages in the hill districts are only accessible by foot. Telecommunications and electronic media include land and wireless phones, FM radio, television, and Internet; services are available mainly in the urban centers and are heavily regulated by the government. Nepal has vast water resources due to the drainage from the Himalayan snows and monsoonal rains, but there are limited processing and distribution capabilities to provide drinking, sanitation, and agricultural supplies to anywhere but the capital and district centers. Only one-third of Nepal's population has access to electrical power, and most of that is concentrated in urban areas; and despite the vast hydroelectric potential of its rivers, only 1% of it is tapped.²⁶ In all cases, therefore, services are mainly limited to the urban areas; most of the rural areas, and especially those in the west and central hills, remain isolated. The limits of Nepal's infrastructures are not due to lack of effort, as hundreds of millions of foreign dollars have paid for projects to extend services to the rural poor; but, corrupt officials and insurgent attacks routinely wreck havoc on development efforts through pilferage or destruction respectively.

To complete the basic understanding of Nepal today, one must also consider its political and governmental situation. 'Fragile' may be too mild a description for it; 'chaos' may be closer to the mark. From Nepal's founding as a nation state in 1768 up to 1990, the country was ruled by either an absolute monarch or a party-less and autocratic oligarchy. Mounting internal pressure for democratic government, which was fueled by similar contemporary movements elsewhere in the world, brought Nepal to its first constitutional crisis in 1990. At that time, the political parties and mass protests by Nepali citizens forced King

²⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Nepal", *Bureau of South Asian Affairs*.

²⁶ Ibid.

Birendra to terminate his party-less form of government and adopt a new constitution. The 1990 constitution reframed Nepal as a constitutional monarchy, in which a multi-party democratic parliament would administer the country and share certain state responsibilities with the monarchy.

Since 1990, the nascent democracy had numerous growing pains and outright failures. Parties formed coalitions, argued over priorities and policies, and then fractured again. Some 12 governments were formed and failed within 10 years, giving the people an impression that politicians were only interested in power plays and obtaining wealth before being ousted by a new power.²⁷ Twelve years of parliamentary rule did little to improve lives of Nepalis, but did result in bloated bureaucracy, corruption, and wider economic and social gaps between the various castes and ethnic populations.²⁸ Simply, average citizens were left behind and fissures grew between all elements of Nepali society. It was in this climate of political chaos that the communists, especially the radical leftists—the Maoists—ascended in February 1996 to take up the cause of the people. As the Maoists expanded their influence and reign of terror, the government's administrative elements were rendered ineffective, and most were withdrawn from rural areas to the more defensible district centers.²⁹

In June 2001, Nepal witnessed an unprecedented royal massacre at the hands of Crown Prince Dipendra, who killed nearly all of the royal family, and then turned his gun on himself. The only survivor was the king's brother Gyanendra, who was away at the time and thus assumed the throne. Since his first days on the throne, King Gyanendra has been embattled with both the politicians and the Maoists. Gyanendra clearly envisions an active role for the monarchy in Nepal's administration, and detests the Maoists' call for abolition of the monarchy. Whether this vision comes from a Hindu sense of dharma (duty)

²⁷ Michael Hutt, *Himalayan People's War*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

as divine ruler of the country, or from a cynical motive to restore the power and prestige of the monarchy, is a point of much debate within Nepal.

Whatever his motive, King Gyanendra quickly established himself as a political force by invoking emergency powers granted to the monarch by the constitution. He blamed the political parties and their successively weaker administrations for failing to suppress the Maoist insurgency and for weakening the social and economic state of the country. He dismissed the Parliament and the Prime Minister in October 2002, initiating a cycle of emergency declarations, direct administrative appointments, and eventual dismissals of the very same administrators. King Gyanendra initiated the most recent political crisis when he dismissed the coalition government in February 2005, and then assumed direct control of the government under the auspices of emergency powers.

In summary, Nepal is a country in dire straits. It faces mounting cultural, social, economic, political, and security challenges; unfortunately, Nepal is ill equipped to deal with such problems—even if the country could form a cohesive and unified political strategy to do so. A combination of poor infrastructure, few resources, weak political mechanisms, and little experience make it especially hard for Nepal to effectively addressing modern problems in a modern way, and to simultaneously counter the raging Maoist insurgency.

2. The State

The previous section outlined basic physical, social, economic, and political factors that shape the conflict environment in Nepal. This section drills deeper into the counterinsurgency model to illuminate the state apparatus of Nepal as one of the two contestants in the conflict there. Conceptually, the ‘state’ refers not only to the regime, but also to security forces, intelligence resources, national and village level officials, and links to foreign support. In the McCormick insurgency model, the state is envisioned as a unitary actor. It should be clear from the discussion in the previous section of this paper that Nepal does not satisfy this presumption in the present day; in-fighting between the monarchy and

political parties, and animosity among security forces hinder the state's response to the Maoists' challenge.

Assuming for the moment—admittedly a big assumption—that political fissures within the government can be resolved, one still faces the challenges of mobilizing popular support, gaining resources, and ultimately defeating the Maoists. Three distinct state security elements are employed in the conflict: the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), the Armed Police Force (APF), and the Nepal Police (NP). Historically, there was little interaction and much distrust among these elements; hence, from the inception of the insurgency until very recently, there was little of what the U.S. military would consider joint operations with respect to the Maoists.

The RNA's traditional and primary mission is to guard the royal family and defend its interests.³⁰ In addition, the RNA has routinely deployed to support United Nations peacekeeping missions in various hot spots around the globe. In all cases, Nepal's constitution specifies that the RNA can be mobilized only after the king's approval (the king is the Supreme Commander of the RNA) on the recommendations presented by the National Security Council (NSC).³¹ The NSC is comprised of the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, and the Chief of Army Staff.³² As the Defense Minister and Chief of Army Staff are appointed by and presumably owe primary allegiance to the king, it is not hard to imagine the reluctance and fear felt by the parliamentary forces in the matter of employing the RNA in counterinsurgency operations. Parliament's reluctance to work with the RNA explains why the civilian Nepal Police was initially deployed instead to counter the Maoists; when the police were clearly overmatched, Parliament established and employed the Armed Police Force.

Following King Gyanendra's first declaration of emergency in November 2001, he authorized the RNA to directly enter the conflict and engage the

³⁰ Deepak Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege* (Kathmandu: The Printhouse, 2004), 136.

³¹ Royal Nepalese Army, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, <http://www.rna.mil.np>.

³² Ibid.

Maoists offensively for the first time. At least initially, the RNA was poorly trained and equipped for counterinsurgency, and it continuously faces allegations of human rights violations. The RNA currently consists of about 85,000 personnel organized into six divisions dispersed in the country (Far Western, Mid Western, Western, Central, Eastern, and the Valley Division) plus separate Aviation, Parachute, and Royal Palace Brigades centered in Kathmandu.³³ Plans are in place for the force to grow to 150,000 troops by 2015.³⁴ By the RNA's own account, however, only about 60% of the force is available to commit to the counterinsurgency as the remaining troops are dedicated to static security duties such as protecting government offices, barracks and infrastructures.³⁵

The RNA's equipment consists of a small number of armored vehicles and personnel carriers, a few artillery pieces, thousands of small arms, and a handful of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft of questionable readiness.³⁶ Due to Nepal's difficult topography and limited infrastructure, the RNA is forced to operate from garrison in the larger regional headquarters, using temporary foot and helicopter-assisted patrols to reach the more isolated rural areas. All of this plays into the hands of the guerrilla adversary, to be discussed shortly.

In addition to the now prominent forces of the RNA, the state employs the Armed Police Force and the Nepal Police to fight the Maoists. The APF numbers about 7,000 troops armed with light infantry weapons, but is considered to be poorly trained and has been accused of perpetrating widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings.³⁷ The 46,000 strong Nepal Police was brought under unified command with the Army in 2003, although there is considerable debate about the level of unity between the security forces. The primary roles of the NP now are to provide security to local people and property,

³³ US State Department, "Background Note: Nepal."

³⁴ *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, "Army-Nepal," <http://www4.janes.com>.

³⁵ John Hill, "Royal Nepalese Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency Role," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, <http://www4.janes.com>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

to provide security for regional administrative centers, and to contain civil unrest in major urban centers.³⁸

Another security element that plays an important, but sometimes unpredictable and even counterproductive, role is the village self-defense force. Such local militias receive at least tacit support from the government, and some claim to have received training and encouragement by the Army.³⁹ In some cases the militias provide an effective deterrent to Maoist extortion, recruitment, or abductions. But, they have also been misused as instruments of revenge or advantage in affairs unrelated to Maoist activities, and there is a tendency to commit counter-atrocities following Maoist attacks. There is no formal count of the number of local militias nor is there anything that resembles state-wide command and control of these units as part of an integrated national counterinsurgency strategy. Thomas Marks, a prominent U.S. counterinsurgency expert, points to the potential of local security forces as the best way to improve the situation in Nepal,⁴⁰ but clearly there must be a mechanism to regulate and harness this capability as a positive tool.

An additional critical component of the state's counterinsurgency system is intelligence. Most analysts agree that Nepal's state intelligence apparatus is woefully inadequate to meet the demands of counterinsurgency. Thomas Marks notes that the RNA, APF, NP and the National Investigation Department are generally weak in gathering, exploiting, and disseminating information; furthermore, the organizations act as separate entities with little coordination or data sharing except at the highest levels of the organizations.⁴¹ These problems, which understandably stem from historic separation of civil and military functions, must be addressed in order to make progress in the counterinsurgency. No where is the problem more acute than in the area of village-level human

³⁸ John Hill, "Royal Nepalese Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency Role."

³⁹ Matthew McAllester, "Fanning the Flames," *Weekly Standard*, <http://www.thestandard.com.hk>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Thomas Marks, *Insurgency in Nepal* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 19.

intelligence on Maoist activities—precisely where the state most needs intelligence collection, fusion, and sharing. Another challenge is centralization of intelligence in Kathmandu, due to limited technical and human means and accesses to penetrate isolated rural villages that are ethnically and linguistically distinct from government forces.⁴²

Nepal's counterinsurgency system also includes its administrative infrastructure. The administration is the government's 'face' to the general public, responsible for delivering public goods and services, maintaining physical infrastructure, collecting revenues, and providing judicial review where needed. As shown in Figure 12, Nepal is divided administratively into 5 development regions, 14 administrative zones, 75 administrative districts, 3,913 Village Development Committees (VDC), and 58 Municipalities in the country (a VDC consists of 9 wards and the Municipalities consist from 9 to 35 wards).⁴³ Although the situation on the ground is fluid, the security forces and the Maoists each claim to have freedom of movement and at least temporary occupation in all 75 districts. Poor security, however, forced most administrative elements to withdraw from rural areas into more defensible positions in district headquarters⁴⁴—thus leaving a vacuum of power and desperately needed services at the village level. In the wake of the government's departure, the Maoists have moved into several areas to establish de facto control and largely render the government administration impotent in providing security and all the other services listed above.

⁴² John Mackinlay, "A Military Assessment of the Nepalese Maoist Movement," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, <http://www4.janes.com>.

⁴³ Nepal Ministry of Home Affairs, *About Nepal*, <http://www.moha.gov.np/nepal.html>, accessed on 31 August 2005.

⁴⁴ Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege*, 99.



Figure 11. Nepal's Administrative Areas⁴⁵

Due to Nepal's intense internal problems and limited resources, it is forced to draw upon external support to fight the insurgency and to resolve the conflict's root causes. Nepal desperately needs military hardware, foreign aid for development projects, and investment for economic growth; assistance, however, often comes with political strings attached and is subject to suspension or termination as conditions within Nepal change. King Gyanendra's assumption of power in February 2005, and his subsequent suppression of civil liberties and democratic instruments, dealt a huge blow to foreign support. With the exception of China and Pakistan, who maintain that Nepal's political crisis is an internal matter, foreign support has substantially decreased in the months since the royal takeover.

⁴⁵ Nepal Ministry of Home Affairs, *About Nepal*.

Exogenous support comes in various means and quantities. China is a significant source of capital investment and development aid in the areas of technology, medicine, and physical infrastructure; Pakistan has offered material support, but as yet Nepal has not accepted.⁴⁶ The bulk of Nepal's external military and monetary aid comes from India, followed by the U.S. and the United Kingdom. The Maoist insurgency in Nepal has direct and serious implications for the internal security of parts of northern India, which explains why India is the largest supplier of security assistance to Nepal. India is the primary source of rifles, ammunition, armored vehicles, and aircraft; it also supplies technical training and assistance in a host of military functions.⁴⁷ Since 2001, the U.S. has provided light weaponry, night vision goggles, body armor, secure communications, spare parts, and training to the RNA.⁴⁸ The U.S. has provided nearly \$200 million in all forms of aid from FY2001 through FY2005.⁴⁹ The U.K. has supplied helicopters, armored vehicles, and counterinsurgency advisors.⁵⁰ As mentioned above, virtually all military and development aid were suspended or placed under review since February 2005; full resumption of aid to Nepal is contingent upon restoration of civil rights and multi-party democracy.

In summary, Nepal's state apparatus for countering the Maoist insurgency is severely challenged in almost every aspect. Nepal's fundamental limitations are security, political unity, and resources. Progressive improvement in critical capabilities appears possible given adequate internal attention and generous foreign support, but fissures between the monarchy and politicians must be resolved. The two entities must then turn their attentions towards the security situation in Nepal.

⁴⁶ Prakash Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha* (Delhi: Nirala Publications, 2004), 123-128.

⁴⁷ Bruce Vaughn, *Nepal: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2005), 16.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 18.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 19.

⁵⁰ Hill, "Royal Nepalese Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency Role."

3. The Counterstate

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) did not suddenly erupt overnight; it grew out of the splinter groups of the political left in the decades prior to 1990, and surfaced following the introduction of multi-party democracy. As the original cadre became more disillusioned by the mainstream parties' ignorance of social issues and perceived profiteering at the expense of average people, its rhetoric became increasingly radical. The Maoists presented the "people's demands" to the government in 1995; the top concerns include the following:⁵¹

- Elimination of the "feudal" monarchy by forming a republican system via constituent assembly
- Demobilization of armies and formation of a single national People's Army
- Conduct of free and fair elections under the supervision of United Nations and international agencies
- Revision of the Constitution in order to redress historic inequities in political, economic, social and foreign affairs
- Implement a host of reforms in domestic and international affairs, such as establishing Nepal as a secular socialist state and disengaging from imperialistic treaties with India and other nations

The demands of the party were largely ignored or otherwise dismissed by the parties in power. Seeing no other alternative to achieve their goals, CPN-M initiated armed revolutionary struggle in Feb 1996 using Mao's "People's War" philosophy. The Maoists are led by Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda), chief ideologue and negotiator Baburam Bhattarai, and chief military strategist Ram Bahadur Thapa (aka Badal).⁵² The makeup of Maoist leadership

⁵¹ S.D. Muni, *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2003), 82-87.

⁵² Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege*, 43-48.

presents yet another bizarre contradiction within Nepal, which remains untapped as a potential source of dissention in Maoist ranks; as Prakash Raj notes:

The paradox of the whole exercise was the fact that two Brahmin Maoist leaders [Prachanda and Baburam] were leading a movement demanding that Nepal be declared a secular state. On the other hand, the movement whose leading military strategist [Badal] was a Magar, an ethnic group that supplied the largest number of Gurkha soldiers to both British and the Indian armies was also demanding that Gurkha recruiting centers in Nepal be closed.⁵³

In line with traditional communist approaches, the Maoists use three instruments to pursue their revolutionary goals: the Party, the People's Army, and the United Front.⁵⁴ Party authority is centralized in the Politburo as the senior decision making body. Operations are organized into five regional units (Eastern, Central, Western, Kathmandu, and Abroad), each with three sub-regional bureaus and multiple smaller layers of administration.⁵⁵ All critical policies concerning the People's War are designed by the central committee of the Politburo and executed through the various bureaus. Strong political centralization likely explains how potentially divergent or harmful ideas are swiftly checked. Structurally, the uniformed People's Army and the non-uniformed village militias provide the means to achieve the goal of destroying the 'old' state's forces; more details on these capabilities will be discussed shortly. Finally, the Maoists envision a united front of broad-based mass support as a primary instrument of state power.⁵⁶ Objective membership of the united front includes workers, peasants, ethnics, and oppressed castes; taken together, this collection represents nearly all marginalized groups in Nepali society.

The cohesion and focus of the Maoists' political instrument is a tremendous strength in its struggle to gain power in Nepal. The rapid growth and

⁵³ Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha*, 19.

⁵⁴ Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege*, 103.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 105.

development of the People's Army is equally impressive and important. The Army's tactical operations—successes or failures—cost the state in material ways and through diminishing perceptions of strength or legitimacy. As Deepak Thapa puts it, “the Maoists grew from a handful of would-be guerrillas, which started out with just two rifles (one of which did not work) to a force of thousands of troops armed with self-loading rifles, machine guns, and rocket launchers.”⁵⁷ Today, the weapons of choice add to the above list such items as land mines, ‘socket bombs’, and ‘pressure-cooker’ bombs; these are all Maoist versions of improved explosive devices (IEDs), and have caused countless injuries and deaths to average citizens as well as security forces. It is nearly impossible to find an accurate and consensus estimate of Maoist troop strength due to poor state intelligence, but most guesses are in the following ranges: 5,000 to 10,000 hardcore Maoist fighters; 10,000 to 15,000 militia members; 15,000 to 25,000 active political cadres; and 100,000 to 150,000 active supporters.

Maoist military strategy is rational and tactically flexible, and is linked to larger political and organizational mobilization plans. The Maoists foresee three strategic phases: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate and strategic offensive.⁵⁸ It is important to note that each of these phases may be pursued simultaneously in various parts of the country, under direction of the Central Committee. Strategic defensive is the initial phase of growth, a period used to build forces in order to fight the government; this phase is also directed at gaining political control in the remote villages in order to remove local vestiges of the “old state”. Activities during the strategic defensive phase include targeted attacks against unarmed civilians, robberies and extortion of food or money, and raids on government stores for weapons and explosives;⁵⁹ all of these activities are designed to improve the Maoists' operational capabilities. Maoists also use terrorism in this phase for its powerful psychological effect on the targeted

⁵⁷ Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege*, 98.

⁵⁸ *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, “Groups - Asia - Active, Nepal: CPN-M,” <http://www4.janes.com>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

population: it demonstrates the Maoists' local power and the government's unwillingness or inability to challenge them.

In the second stage of Maoist strategy, the strategic stalemate, Maoists launch concentrated attacks against relatively weak elements of the security forces. The Maoists use these attacks to attrit the enemy, gain even more weapons and supplies, and inflict psychological stress on the population and the government forces. Also during this phase, the Maoists establish and expand base areas under their political administration. In the absence of the state, Maoists implement taxes, education, courts, and security in an effort to increase their legitimacy in the eyes of the villagers. In the Maoist base areas, all improvement and development must be coordinated through the Maoist administration; this factor has led to the destruction of many internationally-funded infrastructure projects that did not meet with Maoist approval.

During stalemate, the Maoists selectively enter cease-fire agreements or peace negotiations with the government. On the one hand, this tactic allows them to appeal to politicians and people who favor a way out of conflict through dialogue; on the other hand, the Maoists use the lull in activity to infiltrate areas not under their direct control and to rearm their forces. The pattern of cease-fire, negotiations, rearmament, and then resumption of hostilities was observed in 2001, then again in 2003. The cycle may be repeating itself currently in Nepal: in June 2005, the Maoists made direct appeals to the seven mainstream political parties (but not the King) to enter negotiations; this was followed by Chairman Prachanda's announcement on 3 September 2005 of a unilateral Maoist ceasefire for three months, purportedly to facilitate political dialogue with the opposition parties.⁶⁰ Based on previous experiences, one must question whether this is a genuine step towards peace, or a calculated move to consolidate political support and to marshal resources for a final offensive against the King.

⁶⁰ *BBC News*, "Nepal's Maoists Declare a Ceasefire," http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4210722.stm.

The final phase of Maoist strategy is the strategic offense. The objective of this phase is to take control of the remaining countryside by surrounding the cities from the rural areas under Maoist power. This phase is marked by increasingly “conventional” conflict between Maoist regular forces and the state security forces, where swarms of Maoists troops converge and force the state into engagements where they are at a disadvantage. Additionally, the Maoists exert pressure against the people and economy of the urban areas during this phase through tactics such as transportation blockades, large-scale abductions, student or worker strikes, bombings, and targeted assassinations of civil officials. Whether the Maoists believe operations to be in the strategic offensive phase today is not clear; intense activity since the failed peace negotiations in 2003 has certainly raised the possibility.

As many counterinsurgency experts have noted, one of the primary reasons for insurgent growth is their initial intelligence advantage. This dynamic holds for the Maoists in Nepal, especially in the isolated rural villages that are the primary conflict zones. Expulsion of local officials and security forces from the villages to a relatively few regional and district headquarters reduces the intelligence burden of the Maoists in at least two significant ways. First, the Maoists are able to compel the population to provide information on government agents and activities through physical intimidation or actual punishment of the people. Second, Maoists are able to freely maneuver in the affected regions and may monitor the few approaches from the government’s base areas to those of the Maoists, so they know when and with how much strength the government approaches them.

Beyond the tactical level, the Maoists enjoy intelligence advantages at the operational and strategic levels as a result of: good communications access; sympathetic students, workers, or academics in Nepal or India; and infiltration of active Maoist agents into government functions. The Maoists have modern communications, mostly outside the government’s control,⁶¹ and share

⁶¹ *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism*, “Groups - Asia - Active, Nepal: CPN-M.”

information via the Internet. Furthermore, sympathizers provide two-way support between the Central Committee and student or labor unions when the Maoists call for larger disruptions in civil or economic affairs. Finally, on at least several occasions, Maoists in disguise have posed as unemployed youth from the conflict zones who garnered low-paying jobs in governmental offices or RNA barracks—all the while gathering intelligence on officials and activities.⁶² In the cases where Maoist forces were taken by surprise in the field, there is some evidence that it was due to weaknesses in counterintelligence, as villagers with ties to political parties or the RNA managed to inform the government of Maoist plans with sufficient time for the government to outmaneuver the Maoists.⁶³

It should be evident at this point that CPN-M represents a homegrown and nationalistic movement. While the Maoists draw upon ideological support from various Maoist movements in the region and around the world, they remain isolated from undue external influence and they are self-sustaining. Maoists gain military equipment primarily through theft or capture during engagements with state security forces.⁶⁴ Funding comes mainly through a mix of coercive and criminal activities including: 40% extortion from individuals and businesses; 20% looting and bank robbery; 25% illegal trade in narcotics; and 15% external sources (primarily Nepali diasporas in India and the U.S.).⁶⁵ The porous border with India has also allowed the Maoists to use Indian territory as a safe haven for political meetings, training, and assembly of forces. From these sheltered areas, the Maoists have built a robust support network supplying trained manpower, weapons and finances to mid-western Nepal.⁶⁶

The Maoist movement's growth is a product of its political-military cohesiveness, its focused strategy, and the Nepalese government's ineffective response to its challenge. Reportedly, Maoist guerrillas now operate to varying

⁶² Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha*, 53.

⁶³ Ibid, 50.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 98.

⁶⁵ Hill, "Royal Nepalese Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency Role."

⁶⁶ *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, "Groups - Asia - Active, Nepal: CPN-M."

degrees in 68 of Nepal's 75 districts.⁶⁷ Their influence varies between moderate to extreme in these districts. It should be noted, however, that the government also claims to have complete freedom of movement in the same areas. According to K.P.S. Gill of the South Asia Terrorism Portal, the state's presence in the districts of mid-western Nepal is limited to district headquarters, with the rest of each district under Maoist control.⁶⁸ The insurgency began in the three districts of Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot in the mid-western hills, and the area is now considered the "Maoist heartland". The Maoists have developed strong bases since then in Western and mid-Western regions, and to a lesser extent, in the Eastern region.⁶⁹ Figure 13 shows the extent of Maoist influence through 2004, as measured by numbers of internally displaced people in each district. It is no coincidence that the insurgency was able to spawn and grow in these areas. Particularly in the Western and mid-Western zones, the land could be described as a 'guerrilla heaven' due to its craggy and steep terrain, heavily forested hills, single-track trails, and isolated villages. Coincidentally, these are the most socially and economically challenged areas of Nepal.

⁶⁷ K.P.S. Gill, "Nepal Terrorist Groups - Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, <http://www.satp.org>, accessed on 7 April 2005.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

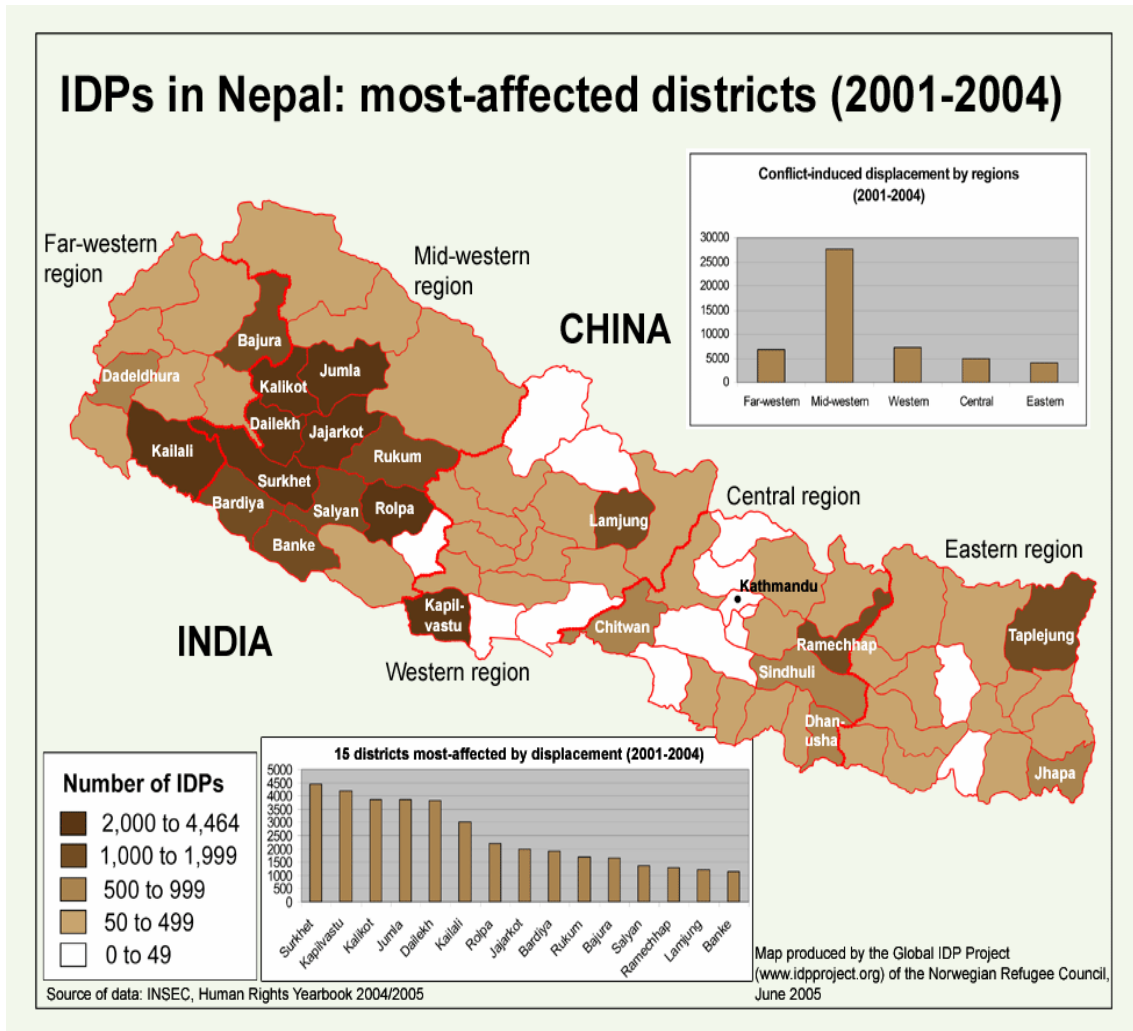


Figure 12. Maoist Affected Areas (2001-2004)⁷⁰

4. The Target Population

It should be clear from the earlier discussion of Nepal's social and economic conditions that there are a number of legitimate concerns underlying the Maoist insurgency: caste and ethnic discrimination, inequity, poverty, and lack of basic life-sustaining services top the list. Each side in the Nepalese conflict proposes to address the concerns and thus gain the support of the population in its own favor, but who holds more appeal: the state or the Maoists?

⁷⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council, "Global Internally Displaced People Database: Nepal," <http://www.db.idpproject.org>.

The political disposition of the affected population and the extent to which the people are acting upon those preferences are often the most overlooked and under-measured factors in insurgent conflict, despite their absolute centrality, in favor of military matters. In a society as diverse and structurally segmented such as Nepal, individual needs, attitudes, and preferences vary greatly from city to city, village to village, and between cities and villages. A functioning democracy intends to reflect these concerns and opinions in political deliberations. In Nepal, the democratic institutions have been in suspended animation since 2002, when Parliament was suspended and local elections ceased. The lack of representative government, combined with a severely restricted media and a fragile security environment, makes it difficult to objectively gauge popular sentiment—especially in areas most affected by the insurgency.

Independent Nepalese researchers have adopted a valuable substitute for tools of political debate and media: the popular opinion poll. The Asia Foundation and Interdisciplinary Analysts conducted an extensive and well-representative poll of Nepalis in late 2004 to examine the national and regional attitudes and priorities of the citizens. The insights of the poll reveal very important perceptions of the state of affairs in Nepal, the needs of the people, and potential conflict resolution strategies. Key findings of the opinion poll are presented in Table 3.

The authors of the report remind readers that the polling was done prior to King Gyanendra's royal coup in February 2005; nonetheless, the poll reveals powerful insights to be considered in the counterinsurgency strategy. Clearly the Nepalis that were surveyed want democracy and the rights that come with it. Furthermore, people favor (at least at the time of the polling) a constitutional monarchy with a popularly elected Parliament and a prime minister responsible to the Parliament as the only legitimate form of government. On the specific question of legitimacy, only 22% saw the King and 2% saw the Maoists as legitimate rulers.⁷¹

⁷¹ Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Kumar, *Nepal Contemporary Political Situation: Opinion Poll Results* (Kathmandu: The Asia Foundation & Interdisciplinary Analysts, 2005), 24.

Topic	Findings
Democracy & Monarchy	77% favor democracy. The most important elements are freedom of expression and rule by elected representatives, religious freedom and rule of law are also important. Greatest concerns are corruption, renegeing on promises, and instability. 53% favor a constitutional monarchy. Extreme options were less popular: only 5.5 per cent favored absolutemonarchy, and 4.9% favored no monarchy. 14% were undecided. A prime minister responsible to Parliament was seen as the only legitimate government. 57% believe situation of country has not improved since King's intervention in politics in 2002, nor do they think his involvement can bring about a political resolution. They do not entirely blame King for situation in country.
Contemporary Situation	Most identify the Maoist insurgency, corruption, and violence/insecurity, and poverty as the greatest problems facing the country. Perception at the national level, but not in every location, is that the Maoist insurgency has grown stronger.
Local Government	59% are experiencing problems due to the absence of local political and administrative units since June 2002. Top problems include obtaining official permission or implementing programs and a lack of decision-making related to local issues.
Constituent Assembly	Less than 15% of the people in Nepal understand what a constituent assembly is all about, despite media attention and political debate.
Maoist Movement & Peace Talks	At the local level, 72% believe that Maoist movement is at a status quo; 19% believe the movement is spreading, with reasons being corruption of local politicians and underprivileged lagging behind; 6% believe movement is decreasing, due to effective security and popular disillusionment with Maoists. On solutions to the Maoist insurgency, people accord priority to peace talks, then ceasefire, and finally fulfillment of Maoist demands. Suppression of rebels by security forces or vice versa is not popular. 73% believe that the insurgency can be settled through talks, but most do not trust that the government nor Maoist leadership is serious about peace talks; 53% favor third-party mediation to break the deadlock.
Solution to Political Stalemate	41% favor round-table talks as first step; 31% do not see a problem with interim government that includes Maoists as second step; constitutional questions are seen as third step. On the subject of the constitution: 35% favor amending present constitution; 17% want new constitution; 10% support development of new constitution by constituent assembly.

Table 3. Nepal Opinion Poll Results⁷²

The polling results further indicated to the researchers that people did not differentiate between effectiveness of administration and legitimacy, which may indicate a popular willingness to accept any political solution that addresses their problems. The people also expect the Maoist insurgency to be settled through

⁷² Compiled from Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Kumar, *Nepal Contemporary Political Situation: Opinion Poll Results*, ii – iv.

peace talks and not military action, but they do not trust either the government or the Maoist leadership to earnestly pursue such talks. Interestingly, the people indicate they would approve a political framework in which a constitutional monarch, multi-party democracy, and the Maoists all fit.

Despite the research analysts' admission of relative under-sampling in the most severely insurgency-affected districts, the poll reveals a more refined picture of needs and priorities in comparable villages. In some places, socio-economic concerns such as unemployment or corruption rose above the Maoist insurgency in priority. The rural areas also described difficulties due to a lack of local governance. Additionally, the poll clearly identifies the reasons for the spread or recession of Maoist activity in local areas: expansion is due to weakness in administration and economics; diminishing activity is related to improved security and disillusionment with the Maoists.

All of the insights above are useful to calibrate the status of the conflict in Nepal with respect to attitudes and priorities of the target population. Questions linger, however, with regards to the nature and extent of support to either the state or Maoists in affected areas. Specifically, are there links between attitudes and actions, or are the preferences expressed in the polls simply natural preferences in the absence of external pressures? There is clearly a distinction in behavior between the cities and the rural areas, and it is most likely due to differences in security levels and available services.

Major urban areas are relatively secure and face little Maoist influence except for occasional incidents of extortion attempts, robberies, and the like, therefore people do not face dire consequences of support for one side over another. Pro-democracy protests in the streets of Kathmandu and other large cities indicate dissatisfaction with the royal government, but protests and anti-royal rhetoric do not translate into active support for the Maoists. If anything, urban populations probably fall in the category of active supporters of the state, as they continue to comply with legal and security requirements—even if they do

so grudgingly. As long as this dynamic holds, it seems very difficult for the Maoists to make inroads to the urban population.

Rural areas, however, face very real consequences of their political choices and behaviors. The situation in the villages is much more fluid and is linked to prevailing activities of the state or the Maoists—a product of assisted preferences, as Leites and Wolf described. As the Nepali opinion poll indicated, the rural parts of the country place social and economic concerns higher on the priority list than the insurgency, which suggests a very pragmatic attitude. The Marxist-socialist agenda of the Maoists has a natural appeal to the depressed peasantry who, as Deepak Thapa notes, “feels at best poorly served by its government and at worst preyed on by officials.”⁷³

Coercive measures by both the state security forces and the Maoists have direct and immediate effects on the temporary level of support, and put the rural population in a very dangerous position. State security forces and the Maoists want different things from the people: the state wants timely and accurate intelligence on Maoist activities; the Maoists want the people to remain silent and to provide the Maoists with materiel and labor in order to continue the People’s War. Redress of social injustice and economic disparity, and improvement of government services and legal access are obvious concerns of the rural population. It is not clear at this time which contestant is making real progress in satisfying these concerns.

5. Mobilization

It is difficult to place exact numbers on the status of either the state’s or the Maoists’ mobilization, especially in the primary target populations of the rural areas. However, independent analysts of Nepal’s on-going conflict have noted several general observations and trends. It is essential to remember that Nepal is a nation of about 25 million people, and even the high estimates of active Maoists or supporters only total 1% of the population. It seems unfathomable that a movement based on a brutal and failed Communist philosophy could spread

⁷³ Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege*, 64.

and threaten the state's very existence from such a small support base, but that is exactly the status of conflict in Nepal today. Perhaps the keys to resolving the insurgency there may best be found in the lessons emerging from the past nine years of conflict.

a. *The State*

The mobilization challenge for the Nepalese government is two-fold: preserve the active support of its citizens in cities and in rural areas under firm government control; and, to improve active (or at least tacit) support from citizens in contested rural areas. These parallel goals reflect the different realities of the people in Nepal today, and imply divergent recruitment strategies and tactics for the cities versus the villages. Unfortunately, the government has had trouble on both fronts due to poor policy choices, misplaced priorities, poor execution, and constrained resources.

In the cities, the people want democracy, economic improvement, and a just and fair legal system which preserves fundamental civil rights. When the political parties were in charge via the Parliament, people in the cities had freedom and were growing prosperous—but at the expense of impoverished citizens in rural areas.⁷⁴ Ignorance by the Parliament of the Maoist problem for the first five years allowed the Maoists to expand their influence on the rural areas and impact the cities where they most felt it—the economy. Since the King's first direct involvement in 2001, and especially since his takeover of government in February 2005, not only has the economy continued to suffer, but also democracy has been largely squelched. The policies of the king are largely unpopular, as daily protests in major cities indicate, and are driving away foreign aid and investment dollars that are needed to keep the economy afloat. As the opinion poll cited in the previous section shows, the current regime's policies appear to be grossly out of line with popular preferences and are ripe for appeals by the Maoists to lend more active support in eliminating the monarchy.

⁷⁴ Thapa, *A Kingdom Under Siege*, 61-62.

The state's other mobilization challenge is the rural villages—areas that are more directly contested by the Maoists. Chitra Tiwari noted the problem of the villages in 2001, “Nepali strategic planners have failed to find a way in which people would stop giving sanctuaries to guerrillas.”⁷⁵ Tiwari suggests that massive economic development in affected areas early in the fight may have achieved state goals, but sustained killings in these areas at the hands of both the government and the Maoists have made such aid irrelevant and ineffective. Furthermore, when aid does arrive, Tiwari writes, “an entrenched coalition of corrupt politicians” is the first to profit at the expense of local villagers.⁷⁶ The mobilization challenge remains daunting for the government in these affected areas. At best, the people could be considered ‘swing’ support based upon prevailing conditions. Until permanent improvements are made in the security situation, accompanied by equitable local government and development programs, support from these people will be tenuous.

The RNA's general concept of operations to counter the insurgency recognizes the value of the civil-military actions. The RNA's campaign plan outlines the following tasks: offensive operations against Maoist bases; securing lines of communication; search and destroy missions; counter-smuggling operations along the border; securing district official facilities; intelligence; psychological operations; and civic action (development projects).⁷⁷

Despite their acknowledgement of the importance of “hearts and minds” to combating the problem, the government's and RNA's policies and actions in the field have not yet inspired widespread support from the affected people. For example, King Gyanendra conducted tours of affected Eastern and Far Western districts in August 2005, to “assess the situation and meet the

⁷⁵ Chitra Tiwari, “Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Internal Dimensions,” *South Asia Analysis Group*, <http://www.saag.org>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Hill, “Royal Nepalese Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency Role.”

people”;⁷⁸ consequently, the King admonished politicians and appointed officials alike to put aside petty issues and focus on the people. In King Gyanendra’s words,

The people or agencies or mechanisms that are supposed to serve the people, should understand their duty and I want to warn them - this is not the time to [ignore people]. They will need to be provided the facilities. They will have to serve the people. This is not the time to seek excuses.⁷⁹

These are promising words, but they mask the restrictions imposed by the King on the people in February 2005 and they gloss over the harsh reality found in the field due to a lack of basic security and development.

Furthermore, Nepal’s security forces are among the worlds’ worst offenders of human rights, despite specialized training from the U.S. military and formal pledges to the U.N. to curb such behavior. According to the U.S. Department of State, Nepal continued to commit numerous serious abuses through 2004. Violations included arbitrary and unlawful lethal force, abuse and torture of detainees, and disappearances; impunity remained a problem, although the military investigated some claims of abuses and found several soldiers guilty under court martial.⁸⁰ Although the RNA is actively attempting to improve its image with respect to the people by taking on projects such as road construction, its dismal human rights record seriously dissuades open support by frightened and threatened villagers. Additionally, temporary RNA encampments in villages do little to help local residents in the long term, as the villagers may face reprisals from the Maoists for not resisting the government’s presence. Judging by available reports, few resources appear to be dedicated to establishing a permanent and cooperative government security presence in

⁷⁸ *Reuters Alert Net*, “Nepal king tours rebel areas after landmine blast,” <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/DEL315378.htm>.

⁷⁹ *Radio Nepal translated by FBIS*, “Radio Nepal Interviews King After Tour of the West,” <https://www.fbis.gov>.

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State, “Nepal: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2004,” <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41742.htm>.

contested villages, which could in turn lead to an effective apparatus necessary to harness support from the people.

b. The Counterstate

As discussed in previous sections, even if taken to extreme estimates, the number of active Maoists represents just 1% of Nepalis. The fact that this small number of active fighters and supporters threatens the future of the remaining 99% of the population validates T.E. Lawrence's famous assessment of insurgency, "Rebellions can be made by 2 percent active in striking force and 98 percent passively sympathetic."⁸¹ While the Maoists may never achieve domination of the hearts and minds of a large percentage of Nepalis, especially in the urban, well-off, and upper castes, they certainly carry enough popular support to dominate several rural areas in the country and influence lives in almost every other area.

There are a number of reasons why people lend support to the Maoists. In some cases, support flows freely to the Maoists in the absence of state government or the failure of its officials to equitably meet the needs of the local population. The main fighting and support forces consist of mixes of ethnics, high caste people, and low caste 'untouchable' people from the most severely depressed districts in the Western and mid-Western zones of Nepal.⁸² In this sense, the above groups are united in their misery and anger against corrupt officials who prey upon them. Involvement with the Maoists offers a chance to redress historic injustice, even to the extent of delivering retribution against their oppressors, and to implement a supposedly just socialist order in the villages.

Additionally, women feature prominently in Maoist recruiting and propaganda. Reports indicate that one-fifth to one-third of the cadre and combatants may be women.⁸³ Women in Nepal are particularly vulnerable to

⁸¹ James J. Schneider, "T.E. Lawrence and the Mind of an Insurgent," *Army Magazine*, <http://www.ausa.org>.

⁸² *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, "Groups - Asia - Active, Nepal: CPN-M," <http://www4.janes.com>.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

abuse and exploitation, for a variety of reasons; involvement in the Maoist movement provides women a chance to fight structural injustices as well as gain a sense of personal control of their circumstances.

The Maoists also enjoy a large following in the student unions. The All Nepal National Independent Students Union (Revolutionary), or ANNISU-R is the student wing of the Maoists. Its membership comprises students from secondary school to the university level. According to the Maoists, the ANNISU-R comprises approximately 600,000 members from age nine and above.⁸⁴ Based on the ages and widely dispersed locations of these supposed sympathizers, they are mainly used to support centrally-directed education strikes and street protests and not armed fighting. The degree and quality of commitment in this group is questionable due to the students' youth and the forced nature of their indoctrinations into the movement. Nonetheless, the student wing dramatically swells the extent of popular support, even if it is low quality and only for temporary activities.

Nepal's Maoists have followed the recruiting path of other Maoist groups in terms of identifying target audiences and recruiting methods. Typically, the Maoists target remote villages and sever physical and psychological links with the existing system by destroying critical infrastructures and killing or driving away key local officials.⁸⁵ Once isolated, Maoist cadres spread the party's ideology to the villages through forced abductions or forced indoctrinations, and compel individuals to pay taxes, to provide food or shelter, or to supply people for military service and forced-labor projects. Through voluntary or involuntary participation in Maoist activities, no matter how small, villagers' fates may be sealed as they are considered Maoist sympathizers by the government. In large part, fear of the Maoists is a primary motivator for people to join or provide tacit support to the movement, just as fear of indiscriminate government punishment keeps people from revealing such support.

⁸⁴ Muni, *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 16.

⁸⁵ Marks, *Insurgency in Nepal*, 13.

While coercive means have been used continuously in remote villages since the outbreak of armed insurgency, Maoists have attempted other recruiting techniques to pursue a larger target audience. During the 2003 ceasefire, the Maoists pursued a political campaign to explain its ideas and concepts for the future of Nepalese politics to the people.⁸⁶ The end of the ceasefire curtailed efforts to court public opinion, so the Maoists instead worked to create a number of district councils, with the objective of taking control of Kathmandu; reports suggested that these efforts were not successful and showed a weakness in the Maoists ability to participate in local politics.⁸⁷

The Maoists are reportedly experiencing difficulties training and equipping new recruits as a consequence of their reliance upon pilfered or captured weapons and equipment. This problem is compounded as Maoists increase their operations tempo, exceed their supplies, and strain popular support that sustains the movement.⁸⁸ Additionally, recent dramatic and brutal Maoist attacks have drawn widespread condemnation within Nepal and in the international community. In one example, the Maoists detonated a land mine as a passenger bus passed over it, killing 38 and injuring over 70 people.⁸⁹ In another example, in the course of a major engagement with the RNA, the Maoists captured, brutally killed, and dismembered over a dozen RNA soldiers.⁹⁰ In both cases, the stature and image of the Maoists greatly suffered in the international community and senior Maoists had to quickly respond to clean up the mess. Overall, the Maoists now appear to be facing similar organizational constraints that led to ceasefire and negotiations in both 2001 and 2003, which may partly explain the recent unilateral ceasefire announcement by Chairman Prachanda.

⁸⁶ *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, "Groups - Asia - Active, Nepal: CPN-M."

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Mackinlay, "A Military Assessment of the Nepalese Maoist Movement."

⁸⁹ *BBC News*, "Nepal Rebels 'Regret' Bus Attack," http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4617541.stm.

⁹⁰ *Samarchapatra translated by FBIS*, "Mutilated, Burnt Bodies of Soldiers Recovered from West Nepal Clash," <https://www.fbis.gov>.

6. Attrition

Neither the state nor Maoist insurgents have what could be called a modern military force. Despite this, or maybe because of it, the conflict in Nepal has been brutal and bloody to the tune of over 12,000 killed since 1996. On one hand, the lack of modern firepower may limit casualties during specific engagements; on the other hand, neither side can deliver a truly crushing blow to the other simultaneously in all parts of the country. As with most insurgent warfare in lesser-developed countries, the conflict naturally has evolved to a stalemate of strikes and counter-strikes—with the rural population caught in the middle—and there is no apparent military solution in sight.

a. *The State*

Observers of Nepal's conflict note that the introduction of RNA forces to the counterinsurgency during 2002 led to a sharp increase in the level of violence. The greater firepower of the RNA, as compared to the Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force, led to some initial advances against the Maoists; the Maoists have since adjusted tactics to insure against engagements where the security forces hold superior numbers or firepower. Government security forces are mainly lightly armed foot soldiers with limited strategic and tactical mobility, due to poor transportation routes and few airborne resources. Poor, if any, intelligence on the location and identity of Maoist forces further hampers security forces. It has also led security forces to misapply or indiscriminately use force, thus affecting the very population the government aims to protect. Not only are the security forces missing the Maoists, but they are also decreasing relative support to the government. Training is also a problem; as the RNA pursues its expansion in troop strength (from 45,000 to 72,000 in just the years 2001-2004)⁹¹), it must train new recruits in basic combat skills and counterinsurgency methods. Obviously, this dynamic will continuously affect combat performance as the RNA grows. While it is true that the RNA has occasional large scale victories and enjoy an aggregate exchange ratio of 10 Maoists killed for every

⁹¹ Hill, "Royal Nepalese Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency Role."

counterinsurgent killed⁹², the Maoists still have nearly complete freedom of movement and have inflicted significant casualties on the RNA in recent mass assaults, thus delivering powerful psychological damage as well as material damage.

b. The Counterstate

The Maoists have adroitly used the tools available to them and have made significant strides in tactical combat performance since the outbreak of the “People’s War”. The insurgents’ tactical flexibility and adaptability to the resources, territory, and weapons available is most impressive. They clearly use their information advantage to punishing effect on government security forces. The Maoists have shown the ability to mount brigade-size assaults on RNA encampments, largely undetected by government intelligence.⁹³ Further, they have expanded the use of IEDs to deny access to territory, to target military patrols, and to generally terrorize urban populations.⁹⁴ The Maoists’ use of guerrilla tactics and pragmatic ability to ‘live off the land’ ensures that they will sustain the fight against the government’s security forces for a long time; however, it does not posture the Maoists to deliver the crushing assault on the state that is called for in their final doctrinal phase of strategic offensive. Simply, the Maoists lack the numbers, equipment, and strategic mobility to deliver such a widespread attack.

D. ASSESSMENT

This chapter presented an analytic framework in which one may analyze insurgent conflict in terms of systems in a competition to mobilize popular support and eliminate the opposing system. The fundamental dynamics of the conceptual and mathematical insurgency models hold true, to varying degrees, in Nepal today. Based on this report’s admittedly cursory analysis of Nepal’s Maoist insurgency, some general conclusions may be drawn regarding the status of the conflict and a basic calibration of the insurgency models may be made.

⁹² Mackinlay, “A Military Assessment of the Nepalese Maoist Movement.”

⁹³ Hill, “Royal Nepalese Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency Role.”

⁹⁴ Ibid.

At the strategic level, the conflict between the state and the Maoists is at a stalemate. Maoists are able to conduct armed operations virtually anywhere in the country, and may even approach the cities in their recruitment and political activism; but, the state also has free roam of the country, scores significant tactical victories when they discover large groups of Maoists, and retains control of a politically agitated—but fundamentally submissive—urban population. How long the conflict remains at this status quo is uncertain.

The King's takeover of government, suspension of civil liberties, and increased security operations since February 2005 have probably hurt, more than helped, Nepal's citizens. More important, the royal actions have brought the political contest even more sharply into a three-way battle between the monarchy, the mainstream political parties, and the Maoists. Internal political and security crises have spilled over into the arena of foreign support and threaten a lifeline of economic and military aid, by alienating foreign donors. Economic troubles are intensifying in the present environment, completing a circular effect on the underlying political and military conflict.

At the grassroots level, the contest for popular support also remains at status quo. The government has proposed a holistic strategy to address popular needs and aspirations, but has not committed the resources to provide permanent security and governance in conflict areas—some of which have been abandoned by the government for years. Problems with security forces' performance during interactions with civilians persist and continue to rob the government of legitimacy. Additionally, the government is risking the loss of mainstream urban support because of its unpopular emergency measures that restrict citizens' civil liberties. The Maoists continue their mix of both coercive and cooperative recruitment measures in rural conflict areas, generally maintaining the ground they presently own. However, the Maoists have not made progress in mobilizing mass support among the larger urban populations.

As a result of the above considerations, domestic and foreign analysts mostly agree that there is no strictly military solution to the conflict given the

present dynamics, and they conclude that the government and the Maoists must negotiate a settlement. If one places the facts and dynamics of the present situation in Nepal into the conceptual and mathematic insurgency models of this paper—despite their admittedly simple nature—this assessment is largely validated. The peril of any model is that it is a simplified view of a sometimes very complex problem. The Lanchester insurgency equations presented in this paper are not immune from this caveat, especially in light of the compartmentalized nature of insurgency with respect to local versus national conditions and the great difficulty involved in obtaining accurate data from conflict-affected areas. Nonetheless, the models provide a meaningful tool to postulate the comparative effects of competing strategies on the dynamics of conflict in Nepal.

The parameters that broadly structure insurgent conflict were listed in Figure 4. As a reminder, the critical parameters affecting mobilization and attrition include the size of each side's hard core support base, organization growth parameter, and combat effectiveness coefficient. A core challenge of any modeling and analysis effort is to obtain accurate data to a level of specificity consistent with the sophistication of the model itself. Data available from this study of Nepal's insurgency is somewhat superficial in detail and generic in the sense that it reflects aggregate performance across conflict zones; however, it is adequate to meet this study's illustrative intentions. Accordingly, insurgent and counterinsurgent growth and combat effectiveness parameters were assessed using a relative ranking of low, medium, or high. Then, these rankings were converted to values on a scale of zero to one with the following calibrations: 0.25 (low); 0.5 (medium); and 0.9 (high).

In addition to calibrating data as described above, several modifications of the insurgency combat models were necessary to reflect the environmental conditions of Nepal. As discussed earlier in this paper, Nepali popular needs and priorities vary greatly between the country's urban and rural populations. To reflect this reality, the mobilization model is adjusted to separately consider each organization's urban and rural support bases. Further, the growth parameter for

each organization is likewise assumed to differ between urban and rural target populations. Thus, the mobilization model now includes two equations for calculating popular support—one each for the urban and rural populations. On the attrition side, it is also assumed that the insurgents and counterinsurgents have different combat effectiveness in rural versus urban areas, owing to each side's present strengths and weaknesses in various environmental factors. Therefore, the attrition equations were modified to include different combat effectiveness parameters for rural and urban engagements. Figure 14 shows the revised insurgency model, which incorporates the modifications just described. Not only does the revised model better reflect the bifurcated nature of the conflict in Nepal, but it also allows the analyst to postulate and examine the relative effects of different counterinsurgency strategies in the villages or cities.

With the above caveats and clarifications set, Table 4 presents an assessment of the conflict parameters in Nepal to use in the analytic framework proposed by this paper. For modeling purposes, the initial size of each organization represents upper limits of current organizational support in rural and urban populations, and is expressed as a fraction of Nepal's estimated total population of 25 million people. Current government support is estimated at 10% of rural and 40% of urban populations, including security forces; current Maoist support is estimated at 5% of rural and 10% of urban populations, again including armed elements. The government is assumed to have hardcore support from no more than 5% of rural and 25% of urban populations; the Maoists are assumed to have hardcore support from not more than 2% of rural and 5% of urban populations, again including armed elements. The remaining population is assumed to be 'up for grabs' in the conflict, and will respond to recruitment and attrition as described by the insurgency model.

Interactive Insurgency Model (Revised)

$$\frac{dx}{dt} = \left[\frac{dx_r}{dt} + \frac{dx_{rc}}{dt} \right] + \left[\frac{dx_u}{dt} + \frac{dx_{uc}}{dt} \right] = \left[a_r \left(P_r - \frac{x_r}{k_{xr}} \right) x_r - m_r' x_r y_r \right] + \left[a_u \left(P_u - \frac{x_u}{k_{xu}} \right) x_u - m_u' x_u y_u \right]$$

$$\frac{dy}{dt} = \left[\frac{dy_r}{dt} + \frac{dy_{rc}}{dt} \right] + \left[\frac{dy_u}{dt} + \frac{dy_{uc}}{dt} \right] = \left[b_r \left(P_r - \frac{y_r}{k_{yr}} \right) y_r - n_r' x_r \right] + \left[b_u \left(P_u - \frac{y_u}{k_{yu}} \right) y_u - n_u' x_u \right]$$

Where:

$\frac{dx_r}{dt}$: change in size of insurgent's rural organization over time

$\frac{dx_u}{dt}$: change in size of insurgent's urban organization over time

$\frac{dx_{rc}}{dt}$: change in size of insurgent's rural organization due to attrition over time

$\frac{dx_{uc}}{dt}$: change in size of insurgent's urban organization due to attrition over time

$\frac{dy_r}{dt}$: change in size of counterinsurgent's rural organization over time

$\frac{dy_u}{dt}$: change in size of counterinsurgent's urban organization over time

$\frac{dy_{rc}}{dt}$: change in size of counterinsurgent's rural organization due to attrition over time

$\frac{dy_{uc}}{dt}$: change in size of counterinsurgent's urban organization due to attrition over time

a_r : insurgent's rural growth parameter

a_u : insurgent's urban growth parameter

b_r : counterinsurgent's rural growth parameter

b_u : counterinsurgent's urban growth parameter

k_{xr} : limit of insurgent's potential rural support base

k_{xu} : limit of insurgent's potential urban support base

k_{yr} : limit of counterinsurgent's potential rural support base

k_{yu} : limit of counterinsurgent's potential urban support base

m_r' : counterinsurgent's rural combat effectiveness parameter

m_u' : counterinsurgent's urban combat effectiveness parameter

n_r' : insurgent's rural combat effectiveness parameter

n_u' : insurgent's urban combat effectiveness parameter

P_r : rural population (as a fraction of total population)

P_u : urban population (as a fraction of total population)

$x(t)$: size of insurgent organization at time t

$y(t)$: size of counterinsurgent organization at time t

Figure 13. Revised Interactive Insurgency Model

While these estimates represent this author's educated guess based on available research material, alternative interpretations by other analysts with more refined data sources are entirely possible. It is most important at this juncture of analysis that estimates are proportionally accurate within categories and that the measurements are placed on a common scale, rather than being absolutely correct; this way, one can compare 'apples to apples'. Furthermore, these estimates may be updated at any time if better data surfaces or dynamics change in Nepal.

Parameter	Description	Maoists	State
x_{r0}	Size of insurgent organization: rural	0.043	
x_{u0}	Size of insurgent organization: urban	0.015	
y_{r0}	Size of counterinsurgent organization: rural		0.085
y_{u0}	Size of counterinsurgent organization: urban		0.060
a_r	Insurgent growth parameter: rural	Med	
a_u	Insurgent growth parameter: urban	Low	
b_r	Counterinsurgent growth parameter: rural		Low
b_u	Counterinsurgent growth parameter: urban		Med
m_r'	Counterinsurgent combat effectiveness parameter: rural		Med
m_u'	Counterinsurgent combat effectiveness parameter: urban		High
n_r'	Insurgent combat effectiveness parameter: rural	Med	
n_u'	Insurgent combat effectiveness parameter: urban	Low	

Table 4. Estimated Parameters of Nepal's Maoist Insurgency

The set of parameters outlined in Table 4 serves as a baseline scenario from which alternative information-based strategies will be explored in later sections of this paper. Assuming nothing changes in the conflict parameters of Table 4, the baseline scenario that represents Nepal's insurgency plays out as shown in Figure 15. In this case, the conflict starts out with the government holding a four-to-one initial size advantage, but the insurgents use their relative advantage in recruiting the rural population to quickly level the playing field and force a stalemate where the insurgents dominate the rural areas and the government controls only the cities. Each side's growth in the respective conflict areas is shown in Figure 16.

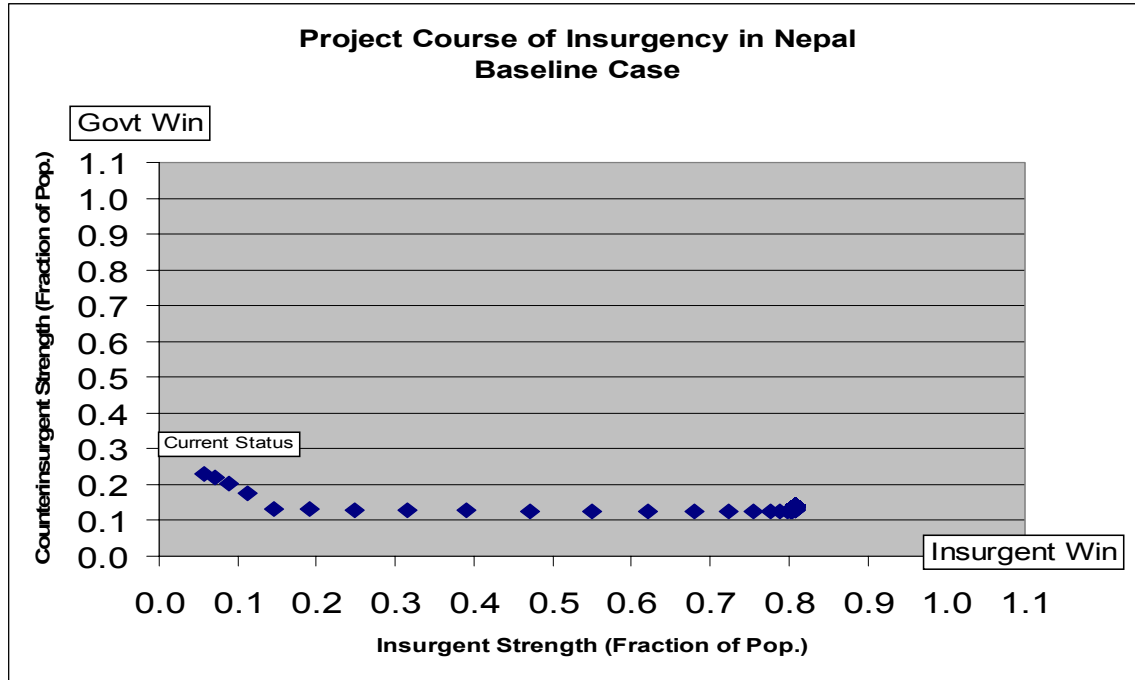


Figure 14. Baseline Nepal Insurgency Scenario

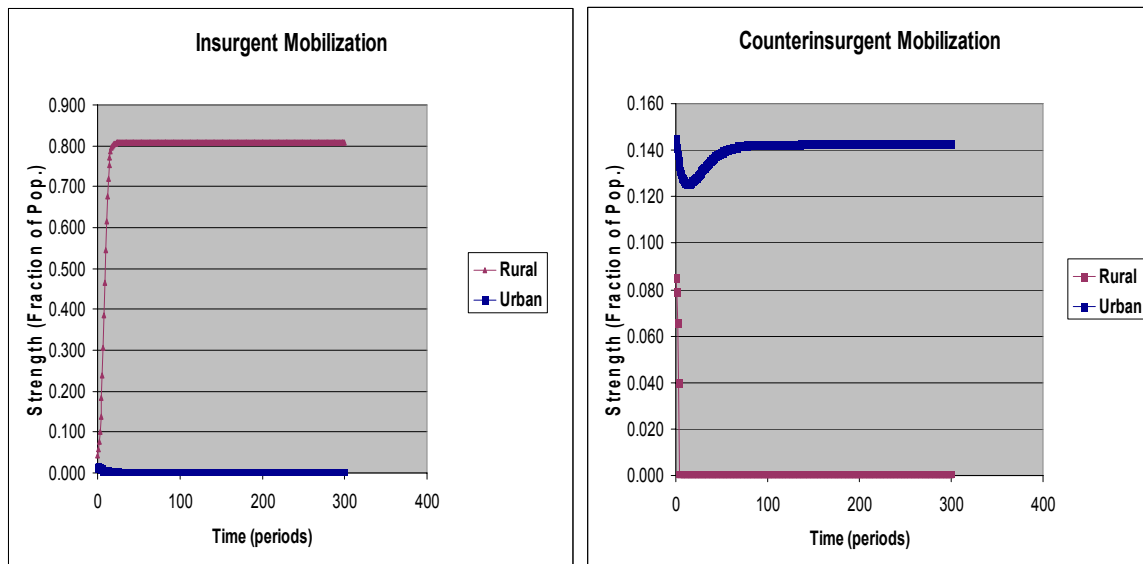


Figure 15. Organizational Growth in Baseline Insurgency Scenario

The baseline scenario provides a crude but powerful illustration of the asymmetric nature of insurgency, particularly when there is such a stark difference in the mobilization and attrition capabilities of each force depending upon the nature of the population surrounding them. In the case of Nepal, the

government's moderate combat capabilities cannot counter the Maoists' moderate recruitment efforts in rural areas, most likely due to poor target location and identification; as the Maoists grow in these areas, they are able to take out the government agents at an increasing pace until they are eliminated. The opposite dynamic is observed in the cities, where the government enjoys a high kill capability and moderate recruitment compared to the Maoists. This should not surprise anyone given the government's strategy of massing its forces in urban areas, where it can flood the streets with security personnel and provide relative protection and prosperity for the people; this, in turn, leads residents to report insurgent activity.

The fundamental problem in this fight, from the government's perspective, is demographics: there are simply too many rural people in too many rural areas to overcome through any advantage in the few urban centers. The only thing keeping the government in the game, in terms of the model, is the fact that the Maoists are too weak in urban recruiting or urban kill capabilities. The challenge for the government now is how to improve their stake in the rural fight while simultaneously preserving its decisive edge in the cities. Fortunately, the basic insurgency model presented in this paper allows one to propose alternative strategies to influence the underlying dynamics and asymmetries of this conflict, and measure their resulting effects in the conflict areas. The next chapter of this report examines the government's situation and explores available strategies to affect the parameters and dynamics of the model to its advantage.

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III. NEPAL'S INSURGENCY & COUNTERINSURGENCY: THE INFORMATION DIMENSION

A. OVERVIEW

This chapter analyzes the information dimension of insurgency and counterinsurgency in Nepal. First, the chapter presents a theoretical framework that identifies the variables and dynamics of insurgency that information directly or indirectly affects and postulates where, when, and why information has the most significant impact. Next, the chapter describes the tools of information systems and operations that are most relevant and useful to fighting insurgency. Finally, the chapter evaluates the conflict in Nepal to appreciate how local circumstances there shape information strategies and to assess the extent and effectiveness of each side's use of information operations in the fight.

B. THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE DYNAMICS OF INSURGENCY

It may be tempting at this point to try to isolate a single conflict variable, parameter, or strategy as the 'best way' to defeat the insurgency in Nepal. McCormick and Giordano caution against this temptation when they note:

The ways in which the variables and parameters in the model interact with each other to influence the course and outcome of the conflict are complex. They must be considered interactively rather than independently. The direction of the game, in every case, will reflect these reciprocal dynamics.⁹⁵

Therein lays the core challenge for a counterinsurgency strategist: what is the right *blend* of strategies and tactics that constructively addresses natural tensions between mobilization versus attrition, rural versus urban environments, and insurgent-focused versus counterinsurgent-focused efforts? McCormick and Giordano point out that the structural conditions and present status of a conflict define the 'operating space' and the dynamics that insurgents or counterinsurgents must conquer if they are to win in this fight.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ McCormick and Giordano, "The Dynamics of Insurgency," 26.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 24.

Each side in insurgent conflict may influence the fight by changing the model's controlling parameters, through what McCormick and Giordano define as either "short cycle" or "long cycle" strategies.⁹⁷ Short cycle strategies are defined as those strategies that each player may use within the present structure of the game; long cycle strategies are defined as those strategies that are designed to change the shape of the underlying structure of the conflict. Design and selection of alternative strategies, whether short or long cycle in nature, depend on a combatant having an adequate analytic framework and solid information from which to work. Furthermore, information operations also provide powerful ways to influence the controlling parameters of insurgent conflict.

1. Short Cycle Strategies

Short cycle strategies are designed to affect the conflict in the short run by manipulating the mobilization and attrition parameters that characterize interactions between combatants and target populations, and engagements between combatants. Short cycle strategies target the revised interactive insurgency model's (Figure 14) controlling parameters of growth (a and b) and combat effectiveness (m' and n'). Each of these parameters differs in rural and urban environments; therefore, strategies to control the game must be calibrated according to the conditions of the particular environment in question. To account for the interactive effects of mobilization and attrition, short cycle strategies must specifically affect the ratios of the each side's growth parameter to the other side's combat effectiveness parameter (a/m' and b/n').

There are two general categories of short cycle strategies to consider: "insurgent-focused" or "state-focused" alternatives.⁹⁸ Insurgent-focused efforts are designed to affect the mobilization capabilities of the guerrillas in the face of state attacks. In this case, the counterinsurgent wants to reduce the ratio a/m' by reducing the insurgent's growth parameter, by increasing the counterinsurgent's combat effectiveness, or through a combination of both. State-focused efforts are

⁹⁷ McCormick and Giordano, "The Dynamics of Insurgency," 27.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 27-28.

designed to affect the mobilization capabilities of the counterinsurgents in the face of insurgent attacks. In this case, the counterinsurgent aims to increase the ratio b/n' by improving the counterinsurgent's growth parameter, by reducing the counterinsurgent's combat effectiveness, or through a combination of both.

Mobilization requires, as this paper discussed earlier, dedication of organizational resources to recruitment, promises or threats to influence the choice of the target population, and a capacity to absorb and employ recruits. Mobilization is inherently a battle to influence the opinions and actions of the population in favor of one side over another. Influence, whether it is based on promises or threats that assist popular preferences, is a psychological process with four component parts: the insurgent that makes a threat or promise; the target audience that receives the threat or promise; the threat or promise itself; and the expectation that the insurgent can and will deliver on its threat or promise to the population. It follows that short cycle efforts to reduce the effectiveness of insurgent mobilization may focus on any one of these components, and that armed force has at best a minor and supporting role in countering mobilization. In order to affect mobilization, strategies should focus on the psychological battle and target its component parts with a range of information- and influence-oriented tools and tactics.

On the attrition side of insurgent-focused short cycle strategy, the counterinsurgent must raise his combat effectiveness to a greater extent than the insurgent can mobilize his resources. Combat effectiveness, as discussed earlier in this paper, is a product of firepower, security force members' skills and will, and most importantly, information regarding the identity and location of the insurgents. Firepower and soldiers' skills are mainly structural issues that are difficult to manipulate in the short term, with minor exceptions for training in areas such as human rights and laws of armed conflict. However, the counterinsurgent's will to fight and his intelligence capabilities may be significantly impacted in the short run through a host of information-oriented tools and tactics. Furthermore, investment in better information has the additional benefit of

improving target discrimination, which in itself helps minimize collateral damage to the affected population and reduces a major theme of insurgent recruitment.

Turning to state-focused short cycle strategies, the state faces the reverse challenge of insurgent-focused activities. In this case, the state must energize and harness its own psychological process of recruiting supporters by improving each of the process' components. In this regard, the state's challenge is similar to the insurgents: it must create, package, and deliver an effective blend of positive and negative incentives to gain the support of the people. To be effective, the state's mobilization effort must: assign adequate resources on the task of recruiting; present relevant, feasible, and fair promises and threats to the target population; and, be perceived as capable of delivering on such measures. Once again, security forces play an important but subservient role in this process; they must be seen as agents of a positive agenda and act accordingly. The other elements in the mobilization process are also essential for the counterinsurgent to be successful, and there are a range of information-based strategies and tactics available to support the process.

Finally, the state's challenge in the short run with respect to the insurgent's combat capabilities is to minimize the guerrilla's combat effectiveness. Logically, this strategy is similar but opposite to the insurgent-focused approach to attrition. In this case, the government wishes to reduce the insurgent's firepower, skill, motivation, or information. Once again, the primary objectives of short-term activities should be to reduce the enemy's will to fight, to diminish its ability to effectively coordinate its fight, and to reduce the insurgent's information advantage with respect to the government forces' locations, actions, and intentions. Each of these short run strategies have information-based alternative solutions.

2. Long Cycle Strategies

Long cycle strategies are designed to affect the conflict in the long run by influencing the political disposition of the population, which structures and limits the contest itself. Long cycle strategies target the revised interactive insurgency

model's (Figure 14) recruitment pools (k_x and k_y) by expanding or contracting the level of each side's hard-core support (k_x^* and k_y^*), or they target the underlying distribution of popular support from a favorable to unfavorable state (or vice-versa). These parameters differ in rural and urban environments, so strategies must be calibrated accordingly. Long cycle strategies more directly reflect the zero-sum nature of insurgency; therefore, in order to change the size of the potential recruitment pool, one side or the other has to add or lose hard-core supporters.

Once again, the insurgency model reveals the manifest political, rather than military, nature of this form of conflict. Armed forces are necessary to eventually find, fix, and kill the opponent, but they may only do so when they enjoy material and information resources supplied by the people. The size, equipment, skill, motivation, and disposition of armed elements may lead to temporary swings in support, and may serve as a source of pride or recruitment to each side's cause, but they do little to change the mind of hard-core followers. What matters most in the long term is how each side addresses the legitimate needs and aspirations of the target populations, be they rural or urban. While it may never be possible for a counterinsurgent to convert an insurgent's hard-core follower to his side, it is very possible to limit the expansion of the opponent's hard-core following by implementing wise policies that meet people's demands. Fortunately, a wide array of information-based tools and tactics are available to pursue this strategy.

3. Information-Based Approaches

As the previous two sections discussed, there are short run and long run approaches to fighting insurgencies; some are focused on the insurgents, and some are aimed at the counterinsurgents. In all cases, however, military solutions are mainly subordinate to political and psychological strategies. The latter approaches may be loosely classified as 'information-based' strategies. These measures aim to influence people and to acquire, manipulate, exploit, or

deny information. Table 5 summarizes the strategies, target parameters, relevant factors, and appropriate responses available to counterinsurgents.

Strategy	Factors	Information Approach	Military Approach
Short Cycle			
Mobilization (a, b)	Recruiters	√	√
	Population	√	
	Threat / Promise	√	
	Expectations	√	√
	Capacity	√	√
Attrition (m', n')	Weapons	√	√
	Skills / Training		√
	Morale	√	
	Intelligence	√	
Long Cycle			
Recruitment Pools (k_x^*, k_y^*)		√	
Political Distribution		√	

Table 5. Information-Based Counterinsurgency Approaches

As Table 5 shows, there are information-based approaches available to some extent for virtually every counterinsurgency strategy proposed in this paper. This table does not imply that information-based alternatives alone will solve the problem of insurgency. Rather, it simply notes the inherent gaps in a military-only approach to insurgency—gaps that information operations can at least partially address. Robert Giesler, Director of Information Operations and Strategic Studies for the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, encapsulates the role of information in counterinsurgency in the following way: “Information operations provide means to ‘cull the herd’, i.e. to separate active insurgents from passive supporters.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, he describes information

⁹⁹ Robert Giesler, interview by author, written notes, (Monterey, CA, 13 April 2005).

operations as instrumental to steering contested populations and combatants in directions favorable to the state and away from insurgent positions.¹⁰⁰ Finally, Giesler notes that information operations may be useful to expose and inhibit foreign support to insurgents, to the extent that such support exists.¹⁰¹ The next section of this report drills down into each of these areas to identify more precisely what information-based approaches are available to the counterinsurgency strategist and where they are best applied.

C. TOOLS OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS & OPERATIONS

This section describes information systems and information operations concepts that are most relevant to the problem of insurgent warfare. Table 6 presents a list of information-based activities that are most relevant to insurgencies. This paper focuses on the most relevant of U.S. military information operations concepts; further, it adds information-based activities that fall outside of established U.S. doctrine in the field but are meaningful to combat insurgency. Some of these information tools may be more useful or feasible than others in the fight against insurgents, but what is most important to note is that the tools are intended to be integrated as part of government-wide holistic strategy involving political leaders and security forces. The key to effective synchronization and employment of these tools lies in the knowledge of where each one fits in a unified counterinsurgency framework and strategy, which is discussed in the next sections of this paper.

Public Information	Electronic Warfare
Public Diplomacy	Computer Network Operations
Psychological Operations	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
Deception	Command, Control, and Communications
Operations Security	Civil-Military Operations

Table 6. Tools of Information Systems & Operations

¹⁰⁰ Robert Giesler, interview by author.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

1. Public Information

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines public affairs as “those public information, command information, and community relations activities directed toward both the external and internal publics.”¹⁰² In the context of insurgency warfare, this paper extends this military-oriented definition of public affairs to the broader scope of government-wide relations with the media and the internal or external public audiences. Additionally, in insurgency warfare, public information is the dominant component of public affairs because it directly addresses the transmission of information to a target population. While internal command information is important to keep security members informed, it does little to change the calculus of insurgency and will not be emphasized here. The community relations component of public affairs is important, but will be discussed separately in a later section.

Recalling that insurgency is as much a battle of ideas as it is a contest of armed forces, a counterinsurgent must develop and employ as many communications channels as possible to reach—and hopefully influence—the target population. This challenge is most relevant to the problem of mobilizing popular support, but also factors into the problem of attrition, albeit in a slightly different manner. In the case of mobilization, the process of influencing people to join one’s side in the fight requires both a credible message that presents a positive or negative incentive to the target audience, and a credible means to transmit the message to the population. In the case of attrition, the manner of combat as well as the results from exchanges between insurgents and counterinsurgents must be accurately presented to the general public, as they both factor into the target audience’s calculations of expectations of the consequences involved in supporting or resisting one side or the other.

The requirements to have credible messages and credible delivery mechanisms hold regardless of whether one is pursuing short cycle or long cycle

¹⁰²Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/index.html>.

counterinsurgency strategies. The key challenge for a counterinsurgent in the area of public information is balancing the need for objective, timely, and accurate reporting of facts on the one hand, with the need for subjective pro-government interpretations of those facts on the other hand. These interpretations are put forth by the state, and aim to garner public support for the counterinsurgent cause—or at least to preserve the public's neutrality.

An independent media provides critical functions in counterinsurgency efforts: it provides the general public with unbiased reporting of facts; and, it provides a credible forum for the state to refute distortions of facts, explain policies and opinions, and engage in dialogue with supporters and foes alike. The counterinsurgent may now focus on carefully constructing an argument in his favor and influencing the target audience to support his position by following a logical path of reasoning, which is supported by credible evidence available in the media. As a corollary process, the counterinsurgent may now refute the insurgent's claims and appeals by presenting logical arguments and using credible evidence against the insurgent that was gathered by the independent media. According to U.S. doctrine, public information activities must be closely coordinated with respect to other ongoing information operations, such as psychological or deception operations. Each element of information operations is important, but must be perceived to be insulated from each other by the target audience in order to foster trust in the counterinsurgent, his message, and the media that delivers his message.

Investment in developing trusted public information systems and transparency is just one part of improving the conflict parameters of mobilization and attrition; nonetheless, public information activities have powerful effects on the dynamics of insurgency. Most significantly, a constructive and believable government policy that is made visible and held accountable to the people by the independent media advances recruitment efforts. Furthermore, improvements in the independent media and in counterinsurgent's public information activities may be made independent of insurgent activity, and they tend to have a 'double-

effect' of de-legitimizing the insurgent's propaganda and recruitment efforts. Finally, one must remember that a professional independent media is expected to report events 'with warts and all' attached; bad policies and poor execution should and will be reported, thus the state must be ready to explain such events when they arise and set terms for addressing such activities in the future.

2. Public Diplomacy

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines public diplomacy as "those overt international public information activities of the United States Government designed to promote United States foreign policy objectives by seeking to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences and opinion makers, and by broadening the dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad."¹⁰³ While this is a U.S.-centric definition, the concept of public diplomacy may be applied universally to every country. In the context of insurgent warfare, public diplomacy is a companion to formal diplomacy in that it aims to influence exogenous supporters of either the insurgent or counterinsurgent. To the degree that either side in a conflict relies on foreign support to mobilize or to fight, public diplomacy offers a means to persuade those supporters to lend additional support for one's cause or cease support to one's opponent. In contemporary conflicts, foreign support often comes not from formal state-to-state aid, but rather from non-governmental organizations or diasporas; in such circumstances, formal diplomacy may not be relevant or effective, so public diplomacy offers an alternative means to reach those parties.

As experts in the field of public diplomacy have noted, it is generally a long-term rather than short-term activity. It is possible, however, to mount intensive short-term public diplomacy 'blitzes' in a crisis or critical decision-making period where one wishes to gain foreign popular support to pressure their leaders into a course of action favorable to either the insurgent or counterinsurgent. During these flashpoints, it is essential for the counterinsurgent to coordinate public diplomacy efforts with concurrent domestic- and foreign-

¹⁰³ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

oriented information operations activities, such as public information, psychological operations, and deception. In order to maximize their collective results and avoid 'fratricide', each of these activities must be calibrated by consistent goals, themes, and messages.

3. Psychological Operations

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines psychological operations (PSYOP) as "planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives."¹⁰⁴ Again, this definition is U.S.-centric in its emphasis on foreign target audiences, but the concept of PSYOP is equally relevant and powerful in the case of domestic insurgencies. In many ways, the process of insurgent or counterinsurgent mobilization is in fact a PSYOP. The U.S. definition of PSYOP, however, is intended more for hostile or neutral audiences rather than friendly ones (public information or public diplomacy are more appropriate for these audiences).

In the context of counterinsurgency, PSYOP may be used to counter insurgent mobilization, to lower the insurgent's combat effectiveness, or to improve the counterinsurgent's combat effectiveness. In the first case, the counterinsurgent develops themes and messages, supported by selected truthful information, to counter the appeal and expectations of the insurgent to the target population. Considering that the insurgent uses threats or promises to assist popular preferences, and he must have both the capability and will to follow through on such appeals, there are a few PSYOP approaches for the counterinsurgent to pursue. He may debunk the insurgent's propaganda by demonstrating failures of the insurgent to deliver on threats or promises made, or he may promote an alternative and positive image of the government's agenda and its ability to follow through on its threats and promises.

¹⁰⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

On the attrition side of insurgency, PSYOP may be used in a number of ways at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. At the strategic level, PSYOP may be used to create or exploit fissures or tensions among insurgent leaders. This is not an easy task, partly due to the difficulty in reaching clandestine figures and partly due to the strong ideological cohesion among senior cadres of insurgent groups. However, opportunities to affect leadership do arise during the course of insurgency, particularly in periods of sustained losses or at transition points such as cease-fires or peace talks. The intent of actions at this level is to create strategic confusion or paralysis, which in turn delays or disrupts campaign plans.

More lucrative PSYOP strategies might be to attack the seams between the strategic and operation level leadership, and in the leadership chain between operational level cadres and military forces. The further one travels from the epicenter of insurgent ideological roots, there is typically a natural decay in the strength of belief and commitment to the 'cause'; this is particularly pronounced in the transition from one level of command to the next. Counterinsurgents should closely monitor such individuals and their actions to detect opportunities for psychological attacks. The intent of actions at this level is to sow the seeds of doubt in the mid-level leaders towards the legitimacy of their cause or their expectations of victory in the fight, thus reducing their cohesiveness and will to fight on the battlefield.

At the tactical level, PSYOP may be employed to achieve temporary and highly localized advantages in combat effectiveness. In advance of counterinsurgent offensives, for example, PSYOP may be used to persuade non-combatants to stay home or stay away from a target area, which aids in the identification of friend or foe. In the same example, different themes are presented to enemy foot soldiers and operatives to persuade them to surrender or face certain destruction, or to motivate them to mass at a desired place and time to increase the counterinsurgent's effective firepower.

For a counterinsurgent to be effective in any of the above PSYOP strategies, he must have highly reliable and specific intelligence tailored to the target audience of the operation. Then, the counterinsurgent must have credible channels available to convey messages to the audience and must be able to back up any claims with hard and verifiable evidence. Finally, the counterinsurgent must provide the target audience with the motive and means to act on the message that he conveys, and he must follow through with any threat or promise made in order to preserve future credibility.

4. Deception

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines military deception as “those measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce the enemy to react in a manner prejudicial to the enemy's interests.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, deception entails the deliberate misrepresentation of facts to the enemy decision maker in order to gain an operational advantage over him. Deception plays on the cognitive biases or weaknesses in enemy intelligence and decision making, and is typically used to lead the enemy to draw faulty conclusions about friendly force disposition, plans, and intentions—either in time, place, intensity, or objectives. As with all information-based activities, there should be some element of truth in deception activities, which may be verified through the enemy's available information sources.

In the context of insurgency, deception is a desirable but often difficult activity to pursue. As discussed early in this report, the primary advantage held by insurgents is their available intelligence on the disposition, status, and intentions of counterinsurgents due to the insurgents commingling with the general population. If the counterinsurgents are able to deceive the insurgents regarding the factors mentioned above, they may reduce the insurgents' information advantage and combat effectiveness. Furthermore, if deception activities lead insurgents to take a desired course of action that forces them to operate in the open or in concentrated masses, it may dramatically increase the

¹⁰⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

counterinsurgents' identification and kill capabilities by attaining surprise, and improving security, mass, or economy of force.

Like the other information operations activities described above, deception requires highly detailed intelligence on the adversary, to include an understanding of his information gathering and decision-making processes. Deception may also require manipulation or denial of specific information channels in order to supply the false indicators to the adversary, which in itself can be a problem in rural insurgent environments. The above constraints lead one to conclude that if counterinsurgents had the level of intelligence and access required to pull off deceptions against the insurgents, they would probably not need to use deception in the first place. Still, deception is a powerful tool and worth pursuing in counterinsurgency strategies, particularly when the state does gain the upper hand in both information and popular support.

5. Operations Security

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines operations security (OPSEC) as:

A process of identifying critical information and subsequently analyzing friendly actions attendant to military operations and other activities to: a. identify those actions that can be observed by adversary intelligence systems; b. determine indicators that hostile intelligence systems might obtain that could be interpreted or pieced together to derive critical information in time to be useful to adversaries; and c. select and execute measures that eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the vulnerabilities of friendly actions to adversary exploitation.¹⁰⁶

In other words, OPSEC is a process that denies information about friendly capabilities and intentions to the adversary. It identifies, controls, and protects generally unclassified evidence or indicators of the planning and execution of sensitive friendly activities. OPSEC indicators are created by detectable friendly actions or they may be found in open source information. The OPSEC process identifies threats, vulnerabilities to those threats, potential countermeasures, and weighs costs and risks of implementing specific countermeasures against

¹⁰⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

specific vulnerabilities. Selected OPSEC measures are used to control an organization's indicators in an effort to deny critical information to an adversary—information that is required to counter friendly operations.

In the context of insurgency, OPSEC is fundamentally a short cycle strategy that aims to increase the survivability of combat forces by reducing the information available to the opposition. To preserve their clandestine nature and to deny information to the state, insurgents practice OPSEC from the inception of the movement. Counterinsurgents face a different problem: on the one hand, they wish to deny operational indicators and intentions from the insurgents to reduce attrition in engagements with the enemy; on the other hand, they must have a visible and strong presence in the affected population in order to make the people feel more secure and more willing to support the state, which makes OPSEC difficult and reduces the insurgents' intelligence burden.

Despite this security dilemma, counterinsurgents can and must strive to practice OPSEC to the maximum extent possible. The process gets easier as popular support for the state grows and counterinsurgents are able to increasingly move out of cantonments, adding an element of maneuver and uncertainty to operations. The reverse happens to insurgents as they grow in size, because their organizational footprint gets too large to easily conceal from the counterinsurgents and it forces them to dedicate more resources and attention toward OPSEC measures. Perhaps the most attractive aspect of OPSEC to the counterinsurgent is that it, in theory, functions independent of insurgent actions; OPSEC as a deliberate process is completely under the state's control and prioritization.

6. Electronic Warfare

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines electronic warfare (EW) as “any military action involving the use of electromagnetic and directed energy to control the electromagnetic spectrum or to attack the enemy.”¹⁰⁷ The three major

¹⁰⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

subdivisions within U.S. EW doctrine are electronic attack, electronic protection, and electronic warfare support. Electronic attack involves the use of electromagnetic energy weapons to attack personnel, facilities, or equipment with the intent of degrading, neutralizing, or destroying enemy combat capability, and includes activities such as jamming and electronic spoofing.¹⁰⁸ Electronic protection involves passive and active measures designed to protect personnel, facilities, and equipment from the effects of friendly or enemy electronic attacks.¹⁰⁹ Electronic warfare support involves actions designed to search for, intercept, identify, and locate or localize sources of intentional and unintentional radiated electromagnetic energy for the purpose of immediate threat recognition, targeting, planning and conduct of future operations.¹¹⁰

In the context of insurgent conflict, EW may directly affect attrition, and indirectly affect mobilization. The extent to which EW applies at all, however, depends on the degree to which either side in the fight has or uses electronic means to support his efforts. If the combatants use systems that depend on the electromagnetic spectrum to sense, measure, transmit, process, and store information, there may be opportunities and vulnerabilities to address with EW. EW may be used to secure and maintain counterinsurgent's control of the spectrum for purposes of command and control, intelligence gathering, combat, government administration, or public broadcasting. Further, EW may be used by counterinsurgents to deny use of the spectrum by insurgents for similar purposes, through a range of lethal and non-lethal options.

7. Computer Network Operations

U.S. Joint Doctrine describes computer network operations (CNO) as being comprised of separate but related components: computer network attack; computer network defense; and computer network exploitation.¹¹¹ Computer

¹⁰⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

network attack (CNA) includes operations intended to disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy information resident in computers and computer networks, or the computers and networks themselves.¹¹² CNA uses data, versus electronic pulses, to execute an attack through techniques such as planting malicious software code or harmful instructions in target computers and networks in order to achieve desired effects. Computer network defense (CND) includes defensive measures, which are intended to protect and defend information, computers, and networks from intentional or unintentional disruption, denial, degradation, or destruction.¹¹³ CND recognizes that environmental factors and internal security often pose challenges to friendly information systems, in addition to any hostile measures taken by the adversary, and must be factored into defensive measures. Computer network exploitation (CNE) is defined as “intelligence collection which gathers data from target or adversary automated information systems or networks.”¹¹⁴ In essence, CNE gathers information that is necessary to characterize and analyze adversary systems, in order to identify opportunities and vulnerabilities inherent in those systems.

In the context of insurgency, CNO may directly affect attrition or mobilization functions. Similar to EW, the extent to which CNO applies in the conflict depends on the degree to which either side has or uses computer systems and networks to support his efforts. If the combatants employ computers and networks to gather, process, store, and share information, there may be opportunities and vulnerabilities to address with the three elements of CNO. CNO may be used to secure and advance counterinsurgent’s use of information systems and networks for the purposes of command and control, intelligence gathering, combat, administration, or public information. Or, CNO may be used by counterinsurgents to deny or exploit insurgents’ use of computers and networks for similar purposes.

¹¹² Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

8. Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) as “an activity that synchronizes and integrates the planning and operation of sensors, assets, and processing, exploitation, and dissemination systems in direct support of current and future operations.”¹¹⁵ As discussed at great length early in this report, intelligence is a fundamental need in fighting insurgencies and supports mobilization and attrition functions. Table 1 encapsulated what information is needed, when it is needed, and why it is needed to properly characterize and assess insurgent conflict. At that point, the report ignored the question of how to gain such information; this section addresses that critical question. ‘How’ to gain information is the function of ISR; ISR encompasses the means to gather data, fuse it, assess it, turn it into actionable intelligence, and finally, disseminate reports to individuals who need the information.

When one thinks of ISR, one may naturally envision traditional intelligence collection methods employed by the U.S. in conventional conflict: imagery (IMINT), signals (SIGINT), electronic (ELINT), communications (COMINT), measurement and signatures (MASINT), or human intelligence (HUMINT) systems. While each of these methods remain valuable to varying degrees in the context of insurgency, and should be exploited if possible, they collectively have great difficulty obtaining the required information on clandestine insurgent organizations. This occurs primarily because the insurgents put a high premium on secrecy and minimizing observable organizational footprints by going ‘underground’ or simply commingling with the general population. The counterinsurgent’s job in this case becomes a lot harder, as he needs to first identify friend from foe, and then collect information on the foe himself. This reality often renders traditional ISR capabilities incapable of delivering the information that is most needed.

¹¹⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

To conquer the challenge of intelligence in counterinsurgency, one needs to rethink both the collection priorities and methods for performing ISR. First, a counterinsurgent needs to shed the conventional mindset when generating collection priorities; collection emphasis has to be placed on revealing the insurgent's organizational infrastructure (key leadership, information channels, finances, etc.) rather than his fielded forces.¹¹⁶ Then, the collection strategy has to transform into a systematic process that is akin to the process of building evidence in a law enforcement case. As Charles Russell and Robert Hildner describe the task:

Information about an insurgent movement . . . usually is acquired in small bits and pieces like those of a jigsaw puzzle. To obtain a clear and accurate picture of the insurgency, the various pieces of information must be fitted together in a number of patterns, which are adjusted or rearranged (collated) on the basis of continuous inputs of new information. Without this accurate and comprehensive picture, counterinsurgency programs and resources cannot be developed or focused to achieve maximum results.¹¹⁷

The small bits and pieces of information described above may come from traditional ISR sources, but more likely, they will emerge from interactions between counterinsurgents and the population. In order to generate such information leads, the counterinsurgents must first provide a relatively secure environment in which average citizens may be willing to reveal what they know without fear of insurgent retribution.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, counterinsurgents must build information networks that tap into many non-traditional or informal sources, such as local civil administration, law enforcement, hospitals, banks, etc. Essentially, any public or private program that requires an individual to identify himself to receive goods or services must be considered a valuable intelligence

¹¹⁶ Andrew Krepinevich, "The War in Iraq: The Nature of Insurgency Warfare," *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments Online*, <http://www.csbaonline.org>.

¹¹⁷ Charles Russell and Robert Hildner, "Intelligence and Information Processing in Counterinsurgency," *Air University Review*, <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil>.

¹¹⁸ Krepinevich, "The War in Iraq: The Nature of Insurgency Warfare."

resource. Furthermore, when local citizens wish to come forward with information, there must be a local security official there to receive it.

In order to exploit information, however, counterinsurgents need to invest in mechanisms to process and share it among various sources in a timely and secure manner. As Leites and Wolf note, “An effective system requires not just collection of information from multiple sources . . . but also processing, classifying, evaluating, storing, and retrieving information.”¹¹⁹ Investment in public information systems, communications networks, and training of intelligence personnel may help in this task; however, even low-technology solutions such as paper records and files are useful. It is no surprise, therefore, that insurgents target public officials, offices, and records banks for intimidation or destruction early in their campaign—not for their objective value as public infrastructure, but for their potential intelligence value to counterinsurgents.

Once insurgent infrastructures are identified, traditional ISR methods are extremely valuable for counterinsurgents to track the insurgents’ movements, activities, and intentions. It is hard to prescribe a generic template that identifies the specific ISR capabilities that are most important to counterinsurgency, as that list is situation-dependent. However, in most cases it is useful to have wide-area long-dwell observation capabilities to monitor specific locations or lines of communications for patterns of insurgent activity or to provide general indications and warning, plus an ability to conduct all-weather day-night detailed reconnaissance to support tactical operations. Along with the above capabilities, one must also have secure communications to relay data among intelligence agents and the ability to quickly correlate, fuse, and assess observations.

9. Command, Control, Communications, and Computer (C⁴) Systems

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines command, control, communications, and computer (C⁴) systems as “integrated systems of doctrine, procedures, organizational structures, personnel, equipment, facilities, and communications

¹¹⁹ Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority; An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, 135.

designed to support a commander's exercise of command and control across the range of military operations.”¹²⁰ Without belaboring the topic, it is sufficient to say that counterinsurgents must have a trusted network of communications between layers of command and functional elements, as well as a well-integrated command and control structure with which they may exercise unified counterinsurgent operations. The design of communications systems such that they provide adequate reach, capacity, and robustness to support often very remote counterinsurgency operations is a particular concern. Efficient and effective C⁴ systems support counterinsurgents by maximizing their mobilization and combat performance. Obviously, counterinsurgents should make every effort to deny insurgents the same capabilities or otherwise reduce their effectiveness through other information operations capabilities described in this report.

10. Civil-Military Operations

U.S. Joint Doctrine defines civil-military operations (CMO) as “the activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, governmental and nongovernmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations, to consolidate and achieve operational US objectives.”¹²¹ CMO is another concept that universally applies to domestic insurgencies, despite the U.S.-centric definition provided here. In CMO, military forces may perform activities that are normally the responsibility of local government, and such activities may occur prior to, during, or subsequent to other military actions—or even in the absence of other military operations. The doctrine and utility of CMO could be discussed at great lengths in a separate thesis; what is most important to consider in this paper is the relationship of CMO to the other tools of information systems and operations.

CMO will always carry a psychological overtone—whether it is acknowledged or not. Simply put, the military does things for a reason; in the

¹²⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.

¹²¹ Ibid.

context of counterinsurgency, CMO is done to support the 'hearts and minds' campaign by providing necessary public services either in support of, or in the absence of, other government agencies. CMO in this light is intended to support counterinsurgents' mobilization efforts by assisting public preferences in favor of the government. CMO thus becomes an element of the influence program, which may also include public information and PSYOP efforts. Each one of these efforts deals in the truth and looks to gain the understanding, trust, and cooperation of foreign target audiences, but each pursues these objectives in different ways.

To be mutually supportive and not destructive, CMO, public information, and PSYOP activities must be coordinated throughout counterinsurgent planning and execution processes. Although their messages may be different, they must not contradict one another or the credibility, and the mobilization benefit, of all three will be lost. Although each operation has specific audiences, information will often overlap between audiences—which makes de-confliction of messages critical. When synchronized effectively, public information efforts pass positive information regarding CMO activities to appropriate audiences through the media. Further, if effectively coordinated, CMO reinforces PSYOP efforts to control the population, gain support for the government, and hopefully, reduce popular support to insurgents.

11. Summary

In summary, there is a wide array of information-based activities available to support counterinsurgency efforts. The intents and effects of these activities are varied: some are geared to improve counterinsurgent mobilization, while others aim to reduce insurgent mobilization; and, some are intended to improve counterinsurgent combat effectiveness, while others try to reduce insurgent combat capabilities. Table 7 summarizes the tools of information systems and operations presented in this paper. For each tool, the table identifies the dynamics and parameters of insurgency that the tool primarily impacts.

Information Tool	Mobilization (a, b)	Attrition (m', n')	Recruitment Pools (k_x^*, k_y^*)	Political Support Distribution
Public Information	√	√	√	√
Public Diplomacy	√	√		√
Psychological Operations	√	√	√	√
Deception		√		
Operations Security		√		
Electronic Warfare	√	√		
Computer Network Operations	√	√		
Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance	√	√	√	√
Command, Control, Communications and Computer Systems	√	√		
Civil-Military Operations	√	√		√

Table 7. Information-Based Tools for Counterinsurgency

The most important point to remember from this discussion is that information systems and operations work best when they are planned and synchronized under a unified and holistic counterinsurgency strategy. This way, the counterinsurgent maximizes synergy between information activities and avoids the pitfalls of not coordinating efforts. Furthermore, despite the fact that so much emphasis is placed in this report on the information dimension of insurgency and counterinsurgency, one must also remember that other dimensions of this type of conflict, such as military forces, governance, economics, and social matters are still important. Information-based activities alone will not defeat insurgents, and the tools must be balanced and blended with the other elements of the state's response to the conflict.

D. INFORMATION WARFARE IN NEPAL

Returning once again to the task of finding an effective counterinsurgency strategy for Nepal, this section surveys the conflict in terms of the tools of information systems and operations as described in previous sections. The intentions of this section are to reveal the extent to which the tools are being employed by the combatants in Nepal, to highlight significant elements of Nepal's information battlespace that shape the tools' employment or feasibility, and to assess effectiveness of the tools on the conflict to date.

1. Public Information

a. Current Situation

Perhaps the most dramatic element of the Emergency declared by King Gyanendra on 1 February 2005 was the curtailing of citizens' constitutional rights to freedom of expression and freedom of press for the purpose of establishing peace and security in the Kingdom. The King's actions, such as the 'shutting off' of Nepal's telecommunications and Internet services to the outside world, strike one at once as ultimately self-defeating measures. In a conflict shaped by natural and assisted popular preferences, it is hard to see how this tactic could possibly move public opinion in favor of the government and away from Maoist insurgents. In fact, the parallels to the Maoist tactic of suppressing alternative viewpoints and public discourse are incredibly ironic.

Since the dawn of constitutional monarchy in 1990, a robust and diverse independent media flourished in Nepal. Newspapers, television, FM radio, and a nascent Internet industry have represented a wide spectrum of political thought in the country. However, through measure after measure since 1 February, the government increased the scope and depth of restrictions on personal and press freedoms: bans on private FM radio news broadcast; bans on private print media publishing news content; elimination of government advertising in private media; armed clashes with and arrests of protesters; selective blocking of Internet sites and services; and severe restrictions on public use of mobile phone service. The once vibrant media has been reduced to strict

reporting of government-furnished news stories and broadcasting mundane entertainment programming.¹²²

In response to these moves, affected elements of Nepal's society have begun popular protests and brought legal filings against the government. Journalists, political parties, dislocated and homeless war victims, student groups, and most recently, civil administration employees have joined the battle to restore basic freedoms that are constitutionally guaranteed. The chain of popular protest unleashed since the 1 February moves is evidence of the psychological cost of the policy and has negatively impacted counterinsurgency efforts. Furthermore, when one considers the physical and opportunity costs of deploying thousands of RNA soldiers and police throughout media outlets and on the streets across Nepal solely to enforce censorship and public obedience, the King's curtailment of civil rights can only be seen as a destructive in the calculus of insurgency. Clearly, securing villages or fighting Maoists would be a more useful way to spend such valuable resources.

Whether the King's actions are strictly legal or not, perceptions of his actions are what matters most, and he has a growing problem with legitimacy that affects all government institutions and actions. Put simply, a large segment of Nepal's society and international support has lost trust in the government's intentions to restore democracy to the country. While some Nepalis continue to support censorship measures as necessary sacrifices in time of war, an objective analysis of the situation highlights greater losses than gains for the government as a result of censorship.

More importantly, since insurgency is by definition a zero-sum gain, the King's losses theoretically translate into Maoist gains. It is difficult to evaluate at this point whether the Maoists have been able to capitalize on the opportunity to enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of the average Nepali, as there is no objective means to investigate and report such matters while the country is under

¹²² Daniel Lak, "A Country Silenced: Nepal After the Coup," *Committee to Protect Journalists Special Reports*, <http://www.cpj.org>.

state censorship. Through Maoist interviews with foreign press and communiqués, however, it is clear that Chairman Prachanda and chief ideologue Bhattari have attempted to exploit the King's actions as evidence of his dictatorial intentions. The Maoists were quick to call on mainstream political parties and the general population to form a unified front with them against the King.

Maoist ideology has always placed high importance on the role of propaganda in the "People's War". This holds true in Nepal today, but the Maoists have limited access to mass media, even before the King's 1 February move, and the Maoists have few positive messages to bring to the average Nepali. The Maoists claim to be fighting against the injustice and disparity of the downtrodden masses in Nepal, but their actions betray the positive social agenda they propose. Official Nepali and international sources report almost daily of Maoist transgressions: destruction of infrastructure, such as roads and power or water projects; abduction of children or government officials; disruption of transit through highway strikes; and indiscriminate bombings of people and property. The most heinous incident to date, which garnered immediate and widespread national and international condemnation, was a landmine attack on a bus in a rural district in July 2005 that killed 38 and injured over 70.¹²³

Additionally, the Maoists themselves routinely restrict free speech and freedom of the press in areas under their control. In just one recent example, the Maoists banned sales, distribution and reporting of a popular daily newspaper in eastern Nepal, claiming that the newspaper has been carrying out a media campaign to malign rebel leadership.¹²⁴ Maoists often accuse reporters of being spies for the Army and respond with a range of tools: censorship; threats of force; abduction and torture; and killings.¹²⁵ These examples highlight the plight of independent public information sources, as they frequently become the targets of repression by both the Maoists and the government. More importantly, the

¹²³ *BBC News* "Nepal Rebels 'Regret' Bus Attack."

¹²⁴ *Asia Media News Daily*, "Nepal: Rebels Ban Newspaper While Another Media House Sacks Correspondent," <http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu>.

¹²⁵ Daniel Lak, "A Country Silenced: Nepal After the Coup."

incidents expose the inherent contradiction between Maoist goals of personal freedom and their actions to restrict such thought and speech.

The lesson for the Maoists in such situations is that people may be disenfranchised and disheartened by the government, but they will not automatically support the Maoists. The Maoists' lofty rhetoric and social ideals are not met with positive action in the field; in fact, the Maoists' own actions are their worst image problem. These factors ultimately limit the gains that the Maoists can make from missteps by the government; no amount of propaganda can change this reality.

b. Insights

The sphere of public information and discourse in Nepal is in disarray and is largely at a stalemate, just as the situation on the military front. Since insurgency is inherently a contest for popular support, there is strong potential for the use (or misuse) of public information to affect the outcome of the conflict. Of the many elements of insurgency, public information may have the most direct connection to the hearts, minds, and, hopefully, the actions of the target population. Additionally, public information is one of the few elements in the conflict that the government has complete control over, in terms of its choices of methods and timing of actions.

There is great potential to rebuild popular trust in Nepal's government, its policies, and its institutions through the proper harnessing of public information. Clearly, improving trust in the state is essential to advance the legitimacy and effectiveness of Nepal's counterinsurgency efforts. The government may take constructive steps to swing popular support in favor of the government—or at least regain the ground lost after 1 February. Obviously, the first step in this process is to restore personal and press freedom. That act alone will not undo all the damage from 1 February, nor will it build an effective tool to support future counterinsurgency efforts. The government may take further steps to engage with credentialed reporters and open access to positive as well as negative information in the countryside and the cities. By doing so, the

government may reclaim the moral high ground and preempt or expose Maoist propaganda in domestic and foreign press reports.

2. Public Diplomacy

a. Current Situation

Nepal has a history of isolation within South Asia and with the world in general. It has always wished to handle domestic matters without undue external influence or interference, and the current crisis certainly reaffirms that wish—at least from the King’s perspective. Despite this wish, Nepal must pay attention to, and attempt to influence, foreign attitudes due to its dependence on foreign financial and military aid. Nepal’s official relations with foreign donors and supporters have been strained for the past few years, dating back to the King’s first declaration of emergency in 2002; this strain mostly is due to foreign perceptions that the present government of Nepal lacks legitimacy. The royal moves in February 2005 only deepened the problem, and led to widespread suspension of foreign assistance. It is no surprise that Nepal’s formal diplomacy and public diplomacy are now focused on explaining the rationale for the emergency takeover and its restrictive measures, and attempt to build support for the King’s plans to improve security and governance in the country.

Unfortunately for the King, the opposition politicians and civil-society organizations have developed a parallel public diplomacy effort. These parties are trying to influence foreign people and their leaders to cease support to the King, and to pressure him into restoring multi-party democracy and full civil rights. Furthermore, the Maoists are using foreign media to highlight bickering between the King and politicians, and promote their own interest. Recent examples, such as a protest letter sent by the opposition parties to the U.N.,¹²⁶

¹²⁶ *Nepalnews.com*, “Opposition parties call upon UN not to entertain current government,” <http://www.nepalnews.com>.

and direct appeals for U.N. mediation by NGOs¹²⁷ and Maoist Chairman Prachanda,¹²⁸ illustrate the competition for influence over foreign audiences.

b. Insights

In-fighting between the monarchy and politicians, and criticism of emergency-related policies, have dominated foreign attention at the expense of the real problems in the country: security, governance, and development. Two important consequences follow from this state of affairs: first, until political legitimacy is restored to the government, foreign donors will be very reluctant to provide desperately needed aid to Nepal; and second, to the extent that foreign audiences perceive continual political bickering as ignorance of Nepal's real problems, it lends legitimacy to certain aspects of the Maoist platform.

In the first case, reduction in aid limits the government's ability to improve conditions and gain support in the rural villages, as well as its capability to combat the Maoists in the field. In the second case, increased legitimacy of their cause improves Maoists' relative standing in the general population and directly fuels their recruiting in the field. The best move in public diplomacy is probably to first resolve the political impasse between the King and the politicians, and then to engage in a unified campaign to regain foreign support in order to meet the security and development needs of the people.

3. Psychological Operations

a. Current Situation

It is clear from the previous two sections that the Nepali public and foreign audiences are under a barrage of influence attempts through either formal or informal means, by both the government and the Maoists. It is less clear, due to the dearth of independent reporting from Nepal, the extent to which these influence methods are affecting the actual behavior of the general population. Furthermore, there is little evidence available to examine specific

¹²⁷ *Nepalnews.com*, "Rights groups, NGOs appeal for UN mediation," <http://www.nepalnews.com>.

¹²⁸ *Nepalnews.com*, "Maoists declare three-month long ceasefire," <http://www.nepalnews.com>.

PSYOP efforts that may be ongoing by the government or the Maoists to affect specific leaders, operators, or supporters in each other's ranks. Despite this, it is possible to identify general PSYOP themes the government is pursuing on the psychological battlefield in Nepal (Table 8).

Counterinsurgent PSYOP Themes
Current Emergency is necessary to restore order, and security is improving
Hindu duty requires good governance by administrators to all citizens
21-Point security and development program to meet social and economic needs
State promises to restore Parliamentary democracy and elections within 3 years
State continues to invest in development projects throughout country
Maoists are exploiting low castes and ethnics simply to gain political power
Maoists claim a 'class struggle,' but it is a fabrication of Maoist leadership
Maoists are ignorant or otherwise revisionist with respect to Mao's principles
Maoists lack of a coherent plan for governance, and would not share power
Maoists claim equality, but lack representation of women and ethnics in leadership
Maoists continually destroy desperately needed infrastructure
Maoists grossly violate human rights

Table 8. Counterinsurgent PSYOPS Themes in Nepal

b. Insights

One of the primary challenges facing the government in its PSYOP efforts is a lack of credible information channels to reach target audiences. Furthermore, the plethora of local languages, dialects, and ethnicities, as well as widespread illiteracy found in conflict areas make it difficult to establish consistent and effective themes and deliver them to the people. For these reasons alone, the government should seriously reevaluate its policies of restricting independent print, broadcast, and electronic media. The government lacks the linguistic and cultural nuances necessary to deliver a credible message to many of the 'micro-cultures' peppered throughout the hills and valleys of Nepal. A vibrant and supportive media may be able to provide inroads to such isolated areas.

The above issue deals with designing and delivering messages to the target audiences; the other components of the influence process require a capability and a willingness to act on threats or promises made to the target audience. To be effective, it is not enough for the King, the politicians, or the security forces to make statements—they must affect the physical reality in the target areas. If security and governance do not accompany psychological appeals to affected peoples, or the security forces cannot inflict punishment on Maoist operatives, PSYOP efforts will likely result in even less support by the intended audiences or the loss of credibility.

4. Deception

a. Current Situation

There is scant published evidence of formal government deception activities ongoing in Nepal. This is not to say that such activity is not happening, but it cannot be confirmed or denied due to the lack of independent reporting. Politics and governance in Nepal have historically been marked with a perception of duplicity, in the form of promises made to people in order to meet immediate needs, and then broken once the need has passed.¹²⁹ One may argue that this statement simply reflects the nature of politics and politicians anywhere; from the perspective of a Nepali villager, however, especially an illiterate person with no conception of the political wrangling inherent in a vibrant democracy, it reinforces the belief that government deception is commonplace. This issue matters very much, as it is a fundamental recruitment theme for the Maoists, and it must be answered through improvements in governance and fair delivery of public services to the affected population.

The question with respect to fighting the Maoists is whether the government or the RNA is deliberately deceiving—or is capable of deceiving—Maoist leaders or forces? Maoist leadership has proven to be very resilient to penetration and manipulation by the King or the politicians, probably due to the fact that senior Maoists are shrewd politicians themselves and will not fall into a

¹²⁹ Pratyoush Onta, “Democracy and Duplicity,” in *Himalayan People’s War: Nepal’s Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 137-140.

deceptive trap. At the field level, particularly in the rural areas, the freedom of movement and relative information advantage of the Maoists undoubtedly make it difficult for the RNA to conduct deception operations. The U.S. Defense Attaché in Kathmandu describes the RNA's operational posture as mainly "movement to contact, due to a poor intelligence capability,"¹³⁰ which implies, among other things, that the RNA either is unable or unwilling to use deception at this time to dictate the terms on which they engage the Maoists.

In contrast, the Maoists have demonstrated a capacity and willingness to engage in deceptive activities against the state. At the strategic level, it is widely believed that previous ceasefires and peace negotiations were, in reality, efforts to buy time in order to recover from tactical losses or reverse adverse political trends. Furthermore, despite putting forth a list of political demands at the onset of the insurgency, the Maoists have yet to articulate and commit to "a coherent economic, political, and social vision for the country."¹³¹ Whether this demonstrates a shrewd political strategy or it is a deliberate strategic deception to deflect attention from their intended re-ordering of society is uncertain, but the Maoists are not challenged on it. At the operational and tactical levels, the Maoists have a natural advantage of information concerning their identities and movements, which leads as a minimum to tactical surprise in terms of timing, location, and strength of attack. The Maoists keenly avoid introducing uniformed and armed militants into areas under government control; rather, they use unarmed cadres—virtually indistinguishable from average citizens—to complete recruitment and intelligence activities and only call upon uniformed members when resistance arises.

b. Insights

The government's opportunities and abilities to employ the tool of deception against specific Maoist targets appear to be limited at this time due to poor intelligence and/or poor control of information channels that reach Maoist

¹³⁰ Scott Taylor, electronic communication to author, 27 July 2005.

¹³¹ Saubhagya Shah, "A Himalayan Red Herring?" in *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, ed. Michael Hutt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 217.

decision makers. This situation may change, especially if/when security and intelligence improve in conflict-affected areas, and the RNA should continuously strive to exploit any opportunities to use deception in advance of tactical offensives. Furthermore, since the Maoists have demonstrated the ability to gather high resolution information on government activities, and the patience and wherewithal to mass forces and attack from hide spots, the government must constantly assess the indicators observed, or lack thereof, in conflict areas.

5. Operations Security

a. Current Situation

Available reports indicate that the government has a genuine and continual operations security problem, as security force patrols and cantonments are routine targets of Maoist ambushes. A primary reason for the government's imposition of strict media censorship is to control irresponsible and untimely reporting of security movements and operations. At best, such measures appear to be too little, too late to stop the flow of information to the enemy; the chances are very low that reporters in Nepal will 'out-scoop' the Maoist intelligence network. More likely, situational factors and the government's deliberate strategies and tactics currently make it very hard to control critical indicators, thus making them observable by Maoists, reporters, and citizens alike. Beyond censorship, however, there is little open reporting of any formal government program to control its operational indicators at the source.

The Maoists, on the other hand, are either more adept at OPSEC, are more motivated to practice it for survival reasons, or are more able to do the function because of their local information advantage. The Maoists take advantage of their operating space by widely dispersing forces, carefully selecting and preparing engagement areas, planning escape routes, and monitoring security force activities. The Maoists are also brutally harsh on informants who reveal critical information to government agents; summary executions, torture, and forced labor are just a few methods of controlling the behavior of the citizens in their base areas, which serves to protect information.

b. *Insights*

The government's OPSEC challenges stem from at least four factors: the Maoists' pervasive intelligence apparatus, particularly within and around rural villages; the government's deliberate concentration of forces in order to provide force protection; the government's limited strategic and tactical mobility due to topography, poor infrastructure and lack of airborne transportation assets; and, the government's lack of active public support in affected areas. Some of these factors are structural constraints, such as topography and mobility resource; these factors can only be conquered in the long run through large scale infrastructure development and investment in mobility resources. Others factors, however, are dynamic and may be affected as a consequence of interrelated counterinsurgent strategies. It would seem that effective government OPSEC in Nepal must begin with training in the concept, followed by incremental implementation of measures to control indicators at the source. As conflict progresses and government forces are able to gain popular support and operational flexibility, the OPSEC situation may improve rapidly.

6. Electronic Warfare

a. *Current Situation*

There is little evidence of significant EW efforts being pursued by either the Nepalese government or the Maoists. It is known, however, that the Maoists use wireless telephones and radios to coordinate activities and communicate with echelons of leadership. Further, Maoists have employed command detonators for landmines or IEDs (materials that were captured in raids on the RNA).¹³² The government uses these same capabilities and would like to obtain more advanced equipment from foreign suppliers.

b. *Insights*

Difficult topography, limited resources, poor infrastructure, and lack of skills and training constrain this area of the conflict. Certainly, if it can obtain equipment and training, the counterinsurgents could make good use of electronic

¹³² Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, "Landmines and UXO," <http://www.watchlist.org>.

surveillance, direction finding, and jamming capabilities to locate, identify, monitor, and if desired, deny Maoist communications to support friendly operations. In lieu of such capabilities, the government's approach has been to monitor and control electromagnetic resources at the source. For example, one of the actions taken as a result of the 1 February 2005 emergency declaration was to suspend pre- and post-paid mobile telephone service, and was not resumed until subscribers re-registered and filed identity documents.¹³³ At the present time, regulation of subscriber-based services is probably the best solution available, but it does not yet solve the problem of unrestricted radio-frequency handsets used in remote areas.

7. Computer Network Operations

a. Current Situation

Although the Internet and modern computer systems and networks are relatively new to Nepal, the government, the Maoists, NGOs, and private entities have established important capabilities in the area and increasingly rely on information systems and the Internet for a host of security, administrative, and business functions. Internet services are mainly available in the Kathmandu Valley and a few other urban centers scattered throughout the country. Environmental factors such as topography, limited infrastructure, illiteracy, and poor technical skills, however, constrain the spread of networks in Nepal. Nonetheless, computers and networks are powerful tools that link critical elements of Nepali society with each other and the outside world.

The importance of telecommunications, network infrastructure, and information systems is not lost on either the government or the Maoists. The government has dedicated significant resources to building wireless and fiber-optic communications networks, radiating outward from Kathmandu to other urban and rural regions. Foreign investment and aid in this area has helped, including innovative projects such as an Australian effort to install wireless networks in high mountainous regions to help otherwise isolated farmers to

¹³³ *Kantipuronline.com*, "Pre-paid cell phones resume partially," <http://www.kantipuronline.com>.

communicate families and conduct trade.¹³⁴ As the government builds such access points in rural areas, however, they must either dedicate badly needed security resources to guard them or otherwise leave them unprotected. In either case, the Maoists routinely target and physically destroy radio transmitter sites, power stations, and media centers.¹³⁵ There is little evidence, however, of Maoist cyber-attacks on these assets.

Another target of both government and Maoist attacks is the information residing on the computer systems and networks. Because of the rising importance of Internet communications via web sites, electronic mail, or voice-over-IP, the government has recently mounted concerted efforts to monitor, restrict, or deny the use of these tools. Reporters Without Borders has reported that the RNA's Directorate of Public Relations actively blocks web sites, closes discussion forums, monitors personal e-mail, and threatens bloggers.¹³⁶ The RNA claimed that a dozen of the 23 news sites blocked are linked to the Maoists.¹³⁷ The Maoists use a counter-information strategy of destroying public records and information systems in areas under their control. While many of these records are paper files, electronic records are targeted when they are present.

b. Insights

From a tactical standpoint, government blockades of web sites are only marginally effective in controlling the Maoists' use of cyberspace. Maoists have the ability to communicate with sympathizers in India, either through telephone or couriers crossing the open border with Nepal, who can easily and quickly spread messages across the world through service providers there or in other nations. Nonetheless, if Nepali service providers or web sites knowingly

¹³⁴ *The Register*, "Wi-Fi yak farmers liberated by Net," <http://www.theregister.co.uk>.

¹³⁵ Prakash Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha*, 59.

¹³⁶ Reporters Without Borders, "Royal Army launches offensive in cyberspace," <http://www.rsf.org>.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

advocate and directly support attacks on government forces or civilians, the government should continue to selectively deny such activity if it can.

From a strategic standpoint, the government may view expansion of internet access and open exchange of information across the medium in the same positive light as freedom of expression in other media. It is to the government's long-term benefit to harness, rather than inhibit, growth and use of cyberspace. Expansion of network infrastructure, whether it is wired or wireless, is a key enabler for a host of security and administrative activities. The most important thing is for the government to build a high degree of control, protection, and robustness in the network so that it can be employed when most needed.

Furthermore, Maoist destruction of public records and information systems is a prime example of deliberate efforts that will be made in order to reduce information available to government. The government must take steps to preserve this critical data since it is essential to support intelligence and administration functions. Wherever computers and networks are used to support these efforts, CND measures such as backups, networking, and redundancy could help administrators retain and control identity records.

8. Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance

a. Current Situation

The government's intelligence network is extremely poor, except in urban areas. The security forces have few resources dedicated to the intelligence task and do not share information well among different elements. The government's situation is encapsulated by a particularly egregious intelligence failure that led to a huge Maoist attack in the zonal headquarter of Karnali during November 2002. In the attack, five to six thousand Maoists are said to have assaulted the security headquarters, resulting in about 40 security force casualties, the theft of money and arms, and the destruction of 36 government offices.¹³⁸ Prakash Raj describes the most disturbing aspects of this particular attack:

¹³⁸ Prakash Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha*, 54.

There were reports one week earlier that an attack was about to take place... however, the local administration did not know that a force of five to ten thousand insurgents was gathering for an attack on the town. Khalanga is not situated in a densely populated area and it should not have been difficult to know about unusual activity in the neighboring villages before the attack.¹³⁹

What is most telling about this attack was the inability or unwillingness to identify even large-scale insurgent activity in a relatively benign environment close to a major cantonment area. If advance reports were available, why were they not shared, corroborated, assessed, and acted upon by security personnel? This example makes it clear that sensing and detecting insurgent indicators is only a part of the Nepal's ISR challenge; the other part of the problem is analyzing and sharing this information.

Without belaboring the point, it is obvious that the Maoist intelligence network is pervasive and effective in rural areas and, in some cases, within government strongholds as well. The key to Maoist intelligence is its coercive grip on local populations, which intimidates the people into revealing government activities and informants. With effective local control, Maoists are free to position observers in key points of approach, where they can easily monitor and relay any security force activity to higher echelons of command. Further, as their cadres move into areas and establish de facto governments, Maoist agents are widely integrated into every aspect of village administration.

b. Insights

Due to Nepal's difficult topography, generally poor infrastructure, and limited resources, the counterinsurgents must carefully prioritize its ISR requirements and allocate its limited ISR assets accordingly. As the example of the Karnali zone attack plainly illustrated, there is a huge need in Nepal for low-cost, wide area, and long-dwell or permanent surveillance capabilities as well as an even greater need to properly assess and share information among all counterinsurgent elements. A few alternative solutions immediately come to mind: small unmanned aerial vehicles; unattended wireless-networked sensors;

¹³⁹ Prakash Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha*, 55.

and village-level human intelligence. Further, a redefinition of intelligence information is necessary: any piece of information that distinguishes insurgents from non-insurgents and reveals indicators of insurgent infrastructure is critical no matter what the source is. Sharing information among all elements of the security forces and the local administration is essential to make this process productive. Despite Nepal's limited real-time intelligence capabilities, there is great potential in the conduct of integrated analysis that tracks the patterns and locations of insurgent activities over time. This process would be useful in creating models to understand insurgent priorities and trends, to prioritize government ISR tasking, and to project effective security force deployments and operations.

9. Command, Control, Communications, and Computer (C⁴) Systems

a. Current Situation

The Maoists are known to have a highly unified and centralized command and control structure; they communicate through Internet, messengers, and wireless radios. There is also some evidence that Maoists use quite innovative command and control tactics, such as communicating in an unintelligible language,¹⁴⁰ which evokes memories of the U.S. military's use of native American 'wind talkers' in World War II against the Japanese. The government currently employs a centralized command and control structure, but it is attempting to decentralize the military somewhat by building up zonal and regional command elements. This report already discussed the unification of security elements under the command of the RNA in 2003, but it is uncertain how effective that arrangement has been in practice. The government employs secure communications and computer systems, and relies on support from the U.S., U.K., China, and India in these areas.

¹⁴⁰ Prakash Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha*, 51.

b. Insights

The RNA's plan to decentralize command elements seems to be an effective strategy to push forces closer and more permanently to the areas where they are most needed. Smaller, more numerous units increase the presence and visibility of counterinsurgents with respect to the population, but they must also be coordinated to ensure their actions are consistent and appropriate with wider strategies. Obviously, no matter what the command arrangements are, the counterinsurgents must have the means to defend their immediate surroundings and they must have C⁴ systems that provide secure and robust capabilities to coordinate activities and needs among all echelons of command. Investment in mobile networking infrastructure and low-cost secure mobile handsets would seem to support this goal.

10. Civil-Military Operations

a. Current Situation

As noted earlier in this report, one of the root causes of Nepal's present crisis is the lack of fair and effective governance in rural areas, which compounds inherent social and economic problems there. Despite hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign development aid, poverty and backwardness persist in a majority of rural Nepal. A history of corrupt, ineffective, and unjust local officials and administrators led to the problems there, and points to the importance of fixing governance issues before injecting large amounts of development money into such areas.

The breakdown of governance fuelled support to the Maoist movement, which in turn drove remaining vestiges of administration out of many areas. Maoist destruction of most state-sponsored or NGO development projects ensures that people in conflict areas remain without even basic public services. In areas where the government stamps out insurgent activity, CMO may fill the immediate vacuum of government services on which the affected population depends. The RNA has taken on numerous CMO efforts in an attempt to not only improve the local population's lives, but also to provide necessary infrastructures

such as roads and bridges in remote areas that support future security and government purposes.¹⁴¹ The critical test of effectiveness, however, has been how long the project stands following the RNA's departure. Infrastructure is a very popular and easy target for Maoist attacks, to the tune of an estimated \$5 billion U.S. as of 2003.¹⁴²

b. Insights

CMO is not in itself an information operation; however, the psychological by-product of successful CMO efforts may generate improvements in several other information-based activities, such as public information, OPSEC, and ISR. Establishment of necessary public services is a safe, efficient, and effective means to reintroduce government control and influence in affected areas; but, these benefits can only be realized if the projects continue in the face of Maoist activity. Therefore a high priority should be placed on protecting as well as publicizing CMO successes.

11. Summary

This section presented a wide-ranging survey of the Maoist insurgency and counterinsurgency, with respect to each side's use of the tools of information systems and operations. In each of the ten areas, both sides engage in information operations, but to varying degrees and with varying effectiveness. The recurring theme that emerges from this survey is that the tools of information are interdependent, and must be addressed in totality to maximize their impact in counterinsurgency. It is clear that the government must improve upon certain foundational elements in order to succeed in the information realm: creation of credible information channels; provision of basic security; consistent and fair follow-through on messages; increased use and sharing of non-traditional ISR; and expansion of secure communications networks. The next chapter demonstrates the impact of these findings on Nepal's counterinsurgency efforts.

¹⁴¹ Royal Nepalese Army, *Support to the Nation*, <http://www.rna.mil.np/stn/index.php?hdng=national%20development&pg=1>.

¹⁴² Prakash Raj, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha*, 61.

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IV. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

A. OVERVIEW

This chapter analyzes the most promising of the information-based strategies and tactics that were introduced in the last chapter, in terms of their relative impacts on the insurgency model presented in this paper. Based on the findings of this analysis, the chapter assesses the implementation challenges unique to the situation in Nepal. Finally, the chapter offers constructive means for the US to support the most promising information operations approaches.

B. INFORMATION SYSTEMS & OPERATIONS ALTERNATIVES

As a reminder of the earlier assessment of Nepal's conflict, this paper proposed that the primary challenge for the government today is how to improve its counterinsurgency performance in the rural fight, while simultaneously preserving its decisive edge in the cities. Then, the paper offered a set of short and long cycle strategies, which are either insurgent- or state-focused, that aim to influence the parameters and dynamics of mobilization and attrition. Finally, the paper identified a set of information systems and operations tools that generically impact insurgency, and specifically assessed the current situation in Nepal. The most promising information-based tools to affect the dynamics in Nepal, based on the subjective assessment discussed in the previous chapter, are listed in Table 9 below. This list represents the author's assessment of 'bang for the buck,' in terms of direct and opportunity costs versus operational gain in terms of the dynamics affected in the insurgency model. Obviously, these are open to other interpretations, but for now these serve to illustrate the overall power of information in counterinsurgency, versus a strictly 'military solution.'

Information Tool	Mobilization (a, b)	Attrition (m', n')	Recruitment Pools (k_x^*, k_y^*)	Political Support Distribution
Public Information	√	√	√	√
Public Diplomacy	√	√		√
Psychological Operations	√	√	√	√
Deception		√		
Operations Security		√		
Electronic Warfare	√	√		
Computer Network Operations	√	√		
Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance	√	√	√	√
Command, Control, Communications and Computer Systems	√	√		
Civil-Military Operations	√	√		√

Table 9. Promising Information-Based Tools for Nepal's Counterinsurgency

Within the resolution of insurgency model presented in this paper, it is only possible to explore the gross effect of these information-based tools on the mobilization and attrition parameters and dynamics. Furthermore, additional assumptions must be made regarding implementation of these tools in the model: first, the model projects the end product of well-integrated and coordinated information activities, thus ignoring the significant 'learning curve' that must usually occur; second, the model projects the intended result of the tools in the absence of active adversary counter-action (i.e., this represents a 'best-case' scenario); and finally, the model assumes that related information operations activities are also implemented as enablers to these primary tools. With these caveats attached, the projected impacts on the parameters of the insurgency model are listed in Table 10.

Parameter	Description	Maoists	Maoists (New)	State	State (New)
x_{r0}	Size of insurgent organization: rural	0.043	0.043		
x_{u0}	Size of insurgent organization: urban	0.015	0.015		
y_{r0}	Size of counterinsurgent organization: rural			0.085	0.085
y_{u0}	Size of counterinsurgent organization: urban			0.060	0.060
a_r	Insurgent growth parameter: rural	Med	Low		
a_u	Insurgent growth parameter: urban	Low	Low		
b_r	Counterinsurgent growth parameter: rural			Low	Med
b_u	Counterinsurgent growth parameter: urban			Med	Med
m_r'	Counterinsurgent combat effectiveness parameter: rural			Med	Med
m_u'	Counterinsurgent combat effectiveness parameter: urban			High	High
n_r'	Insurgent combat effectiveness parameter: rural	Med	Low		
n_u'	Insurgent combat effectiveness parameter: urban	Low	Low		

Table 10. Revised Parameters of Nepal's Maoist Insurgency

When the revised parameters are input into the insurgency model, the combined effects of investments in information operations are dramatic (Figure 17). In the baseline case, the result after three hundred 'engagements' was stalemate; when a comprehensive IO strategy is implemented, the counterinsurgents quickly gain the upper hand in the conflict, and ultimately 'win' the fight. Of all the parameters that are changed in Table 10, the reduction in

insurgent's rural growth parameter and the corresponding increase in the government's growth in rural areas have the greatest combined impact on the model. This combined effect is presumed to be the result of new and credible channels to reach rural audiences, increased intelligence on insurgent activities, psychological efforts to boost support of the population, and lasting civic action programs. Furthermore, government efforts to liberalize media access and freedom of expression in the cities are presumed to have a stabilizing effect in the cities, which preserves the counterinsurgent advantage there.

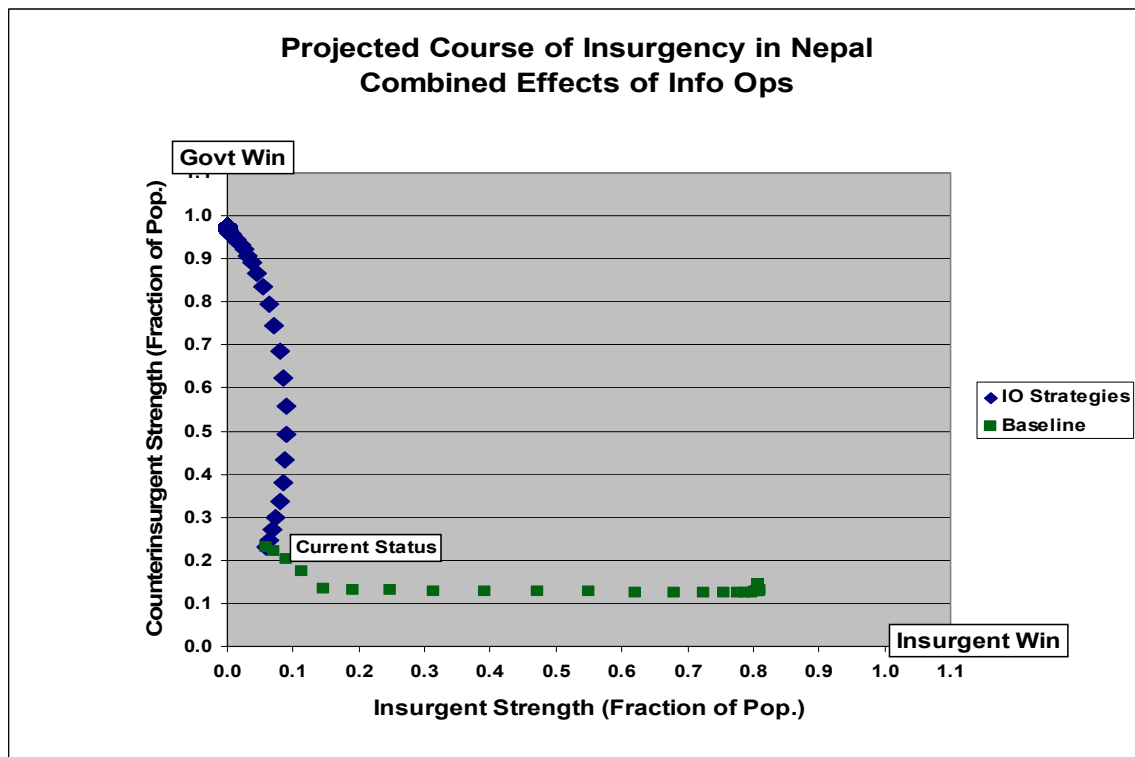


Figure 16. Nepal Insurgency Scenario with IO Strategies

Obviously, the assumptions embedded in the model lead to an extremely positive result for the counterinsurgents. In reality, changes proposed in this discussion would not miraculously happen over night; rather, there would be an incremental implementation of the tools, which would be calibrated by periodic assessments of the campaign. More importantly, the Maoists are shrewd operators, and would likely develop counter-information strategies as the conflict progresses. Further modeling work may be done to assess the discrete effects of

these additional factors, but the tools and analysis provided by this paper affirm the positive effects of information based approaches to the problems of mobilization and attrition. Furthermore, even with the crude model of this paper, it may be asserted that the simple introduction of more counterinsurgent combat forces into this specific conflict—without changing any other parameters of the equation—*a/ways* results in a stalemate. This simple assertion sums up the power of rural mobilization in insurgent conflict. If the tools of information operations can favorably break this dynamic in any manner, they are worth trying.

C. IMPLEMENTATION

This paper has identified many constraints that bound Nepalese counterinsurgency efforts: political fissures between the King and politicians; unity of effort among all security elements; limited resources and infrastructure; challenging topography; a diverse and backwards society; and waning public and international support. It is indeed tempting to look at the situation as bleak and irreversible. However, if one takes a hard look at these factors, the Nepalese government may gain positive control of almost every one (except topography) and turn them around. This is not to say that the task would be easy, quick, or unchallenged by the Maoists.

What is most needed at this point is a sense of purpose and strategic priorities; arguably, that is exactly what the King intended to establish in his 1 February 2005 proclamation as he assumed direct control of the country:

We have no interest other than the restoration of sustainable peace and exercise in meaningful democracy for the welfare of Nepal and Nepalese people. . . . Let no Nepalese feel compelled to take up arms as a means of expressing frustration or disenchantment. At the same time, it must be ensured that every citizen has the opportunity to express discontent effectively without jeopardizing social harmony. It is clear that what the people want are a meaningful exercise in democracy, an effective market economy, good governance, transparency and a corruption-free rule of law. Our only wish is to guarantee our people's happiness through democracy, instill hope among the youth for a brighter future and to ensure dignity for Nepal amongst the comity of nations. Equal

opportunities for the development of all our languages, peoples and their cultures alone can preserve and consolidate the Kingdom's distinct characteristics.¹⁴³

Unfortunately, the government has yet to align all of its policies and actions with the King's promises and intentions, as this paper has discussed at length.

In practical terms, a recommended path to implement the information strategies proposed in this paper includes the following incremental steps:

- Resolve impasse with political parties through a constructive power-sharing arrangement until conditions support full restoration of representative government
- Creation of credible information channels through full restoration and cooperation with independent public media
- Improve basic security in villages, radiating outward from security force cantonment areas; improve practice of OPSEC in these areas
- Increase local population control measures and provide basic public services through CMO activities
- Publicize rural successes through an aggressive PA and PSYOP campaign; follow through fairly on promises and threats made
- Increase use and sharing of non-traditional ISR provided by local administrators, security personnel, and citizen watch groups
- Expand reach and robustness of secure communications networks to facilitate intelligence, security, and administrative functions
- Solicit foreign military and investment aid to improve technical intelligence, communications, and non-lethal equipment
- Expand infrastructure and economic development programs in areas that have permanent security and administrative presence

¹⁴³ Royal Nepalese Embassy, "Proclamation To The Nation From His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev," *Announcements*, <http://www.nepalembassyusa.org>.

The above steps are not a definite blueprint for success, but each one is an important piece of a complex, holistic strategy to address the parameters and dynamics that have the most impact on the insurgency. What is clear is that massive expansion of troop strength is of little value if simply thrown into the fight as ‘cannon fodder;’ however, if such forces are used to support information-based activities such as those presented in this paper, dramatically better results may be achieved.

D. U.S. SUPPORT

In light of the political insularity that defines Nepal’s relations with the world, and to avoid playing into the psychological trap put forth by the Maoist insurgents, foreign supporters must tread very lightly in the ongoing conflict. This caution is especially important for the U.S., as it was singled out by the Maoists as a foreign intruder. Even with this constraint, there are several constructive measures that the U.S. may take to support Nepal’s information-based counterinsurgency campaign.

The U.S. has tremendous expertise in the individual fields of information activities described in this report. It may help by offering military, diplomatic, and especially private advisement and material support in such areas as information operations planning; media relations; intelligence fusion and analysis; telecommunications and Internet infrastructure planning; OPSEC; computer and electronic systems protection; and C⁴ systems. Some of these offerings would be administered by the State Department or the Department of Defense because of the specialized nature of the operations; however, the vast majority could be executed through financial aid to the Nepalese government through Nepalese and international NGOs.

What is most important is that the foreign donor helps, and does not hurt, the situation in Nepal. Requests or offers of support must be calibrated by considering what effects the proposed assistance has on the dynamics of insurgency. The simple model provided in this report is a low-resolution but effective estimator that may be useful to perform this calibration.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented a theoretical framework wherein insurgency is defined as a contest of competing political systems for absolute control of a population and its resources. In the course of discussing the conflict in terms of systems, dynamics, strategy and tactics, it is very easy to overlook the most important element of this power struggle—the affected people. At the end of the day, progress in this form of conflict is measured by the extent of popular support to either side. Mao claimed that “political power comes from the barrel of the gun;”¹⁴⁴ perhaps this logic explains why there have been scant examples of victorious Maoist insurgencies apart from the revolution led by Mao himself in China. While guns may be useful and necessary at times, history suggests instead that successful insurgencies and counterinsurgencies are enabled and implemented by, with, and through the support of people. It follows that the contestant who is perceived to best meet the needs and aspirations of the people will ultimately win the contest.

It is clear why theorists contend that only a holistic strategy, which addresses the wide array of an affected population’s problems, can succeed in beating insurgents. Improving people’s lives through better security, fair and competent governance and services, accessible and equitable judicial systems, and meaningful development of infrastructure, health, education, and economies are all essential to eliminate root causes and rallying cries for insurgency. More importantly, these measures are essential to gain the trust and support of affected people, which manifests itself in more and better information on the insurgents being reported by the population. Of course, there is also a time and place for the state to exert overwhelming military force to capture or destroy insurgent leadership and armed personnel. The overriding challenge for a government that is countering insurgents is to calibrate its actions so as to

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Kipnis, “The Anthropology of Power and Maoism,” *The Australian National University*, <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/papers>.

achieve maximum gains and minimum losses in the fight. The lifeblood that supports this calibration process is information; thus, key counterinsurgency tasks are generating, exploiting, and (where necessary) denying information.

Proper conceptualization of the insurgency problem and its ultimate solution is laudable; understanding and accepting this reality, however, is only the first step of the resolution process. Leaders must follow this step with a commitment to change. The observations of Nepalese analyst Deepak Thapa encapsulate the disillusionment and cynicism prevalent in Nepal today, “People are tired of promises; they want words followed by action—from the King, the politicians, and the Maoists.”¹⁴⁵

Unless and until such a commitment is made to the people of Nepal and truly acted upon, it is hard to foresee an end to conflict there. The King declared support for democracy and civil rights, but stripped these elements from citizens in the latest state of emergency. The politicians claim to serve the people through governance and service, but they failed to stem corruption and resolve inequities plaguing society. Finally, the Maoists’ core promise is to improve the lives of the oppressed Nepalis, but they continue to destroy infrastructure and commit atrocities. Given this track record, it’s no wonder why average Nepalis are distrustful and defeated; actions have simply not matched up with words.

Lest this paper end on a sour note, however, the government and people of Nepal and their supporters should draw hope and strength from the words of ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” If all parties to the conflict truly have the interests of the people at heart, there can be slow and steady resolution of Nepal’s insurgency, one step at a time. The analytical framework, strategies, and tactics proposed by this thesis are all part of a package aimed at calibrating counterinsurgency actions to meet the government’s stated intentions and promises to the affected population. As discussed above, the primary ingredient in this counterinsurgency package is information. This analysis provided a fresh appreciation of how, when,

¹⁴⁵ Deepak Thapa, interview by author, written notes (San Francisco, 1 August 2005).

and why information, information systems, and information operations may be the critical—but thus far, untapped—elements in Nepal’s counterinsurgency strategy.

At the end of the day, Nepal must decide its own fate. If the insurgency stays on its current path, as all signs indicate, there are real doubts as to which side in the conflict will be the victor and what the resulting state will look like. If, however, the Nepalese government can unify the efforts of the King, the political parties, and the people, then commit to a holistic and well-calibrated counterinsurgency strategy, there is genuine hope for a successful outcome.

In this light, there is a limited but vital role for the United States and other foreign supporters to play in resolving Nepal’s Maoist insurgency. Most importantly, the United States and others can refrain from giving bad advice and unproductive or counter-productive support. Technical assistance, lethal or non-lethal military hardware, and financial aid must be evaluated in the context of such aid’s effects on the dynamics of the insurgency. Nepal may always say “no” to external advice; similarly, the United States and others can evaluate and reject Nepalese requests if they don’t “add up” in the calculus of insurgency. Generally, however, the United States would be constructive by offering expertise, materiel, and financial aid in the areas surrounding information operations.

Finally, while the ideas and assertions of this paper are potentially useful tools to inform Nepal’s counterinsurgency strategy and to postulate effective actions, they cannot predict ultimate success in the conflict. Strategy must be paired with the will and commitment to act, and then followed through with skilled and disciplined execution in the field. Success in Nepal’s counterinsurgency will rest partly in the hands of the government’s agents implementing strategy, but it will ultimately be measured in the hearts, minds, and especially the actions of the people.

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