

The Nepalese Youth in the Maoist Insurgency

*How persuasion and coercion led a vulnerable part of the population
to join a violent rebellion in the early years of the Civil War (1996-2001)*

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Introduction

In the year 1996, a People's War was officially proclaimed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The first attacks were carried out on police stations in the Nepalese districts of Rolpa and Rukhum, in the Mid-Western region. Rather than a spontaneous event, this insurgency was carefully prepared, the region chosen with care and the population selected with an acute knowledge of the Nepalese troubles. Here, in the impoverished areas populated with ethnic minorities and caste-less untouchables, the Maoists built their stronghold, a base area that would become the centre of their activities. (Marks 2003: 6-8) Their goal, according to the leaflet they distributed, was to "March Along the Path of People's War to Smash the Reactionary State and Establish a New Democratic State!" (CPN-M 1996:1)

The insurgency ended in 2006 with the abolition of the monarchy, the reinstatement of a multi-party democracy and soon after an electoral victory by the Maoist party. Estimates indicate that by then, over 15,000 people had died, the larger majority of deaths occurring after the deployment of the Nepalese Royal Army in 2001. (Pandey 2010:XI) During and after these ten years of civil war, academic researchers have tried to answer what seems an age-old question; 'why do people revolt?' applied to the situation in Nepal. Many of the reasons that were found referred to inequality, caused by the caste system or the exclusion of ethnic groups. These factors were considered 'grievance' factors; reasons for the population to take up arms and protest the government. (Murshed and Gates 2005) Others focus on the role of opportunity offered by the insurgent organisation, the Maoist party, and how their strategy and actions determined the success of the insurgency. They argue that structural factors of the Nepalese population are the context that constrains or facilitates the rebel organisation. (Eck 2007: 14)

Underneath this grievance or greed discourse, at the heart of the collective action studies; lies the collective action problem. In short, this problem entails the central question of how a population can be brought to participate in a risky violent rebellion to achieve a public good, even though their participation individually has no effect on the outcome, and that the public good, once achieved, would benefit them whether they participated or not. In answer to this question, I will review the conflict in Nepal as a case study. However, not in its entirety. There are two ways in which I will focus my research about overcoming the collective action problem. One; I will focus on the earliest phase of the insurgency, when the Maoists yet had to establish their base area. As I will argue later in this thesis, this phase is the most interesting, as it is here that the organisation has to invest the most in voluntary participation. The period of 1996 to 2001 has been labelled as the initiation period, where the Maoists built their base area and prepared for the offensive launched in 2001. (Adhikari and Samford 2012: 465) It is therefore logical to choose this initiation period as the timeframe for this thesis to study the initial recruitment practices of the Maoists.

The second part of the focus of this thesis is on the youth. This was inspired by a researcher for Winrock international, who pointed my interest towards the practice of the Maoists to kidnap school classes or entire schools, take them into the mountains, and brainwashing them with Maoist ideology. According to him, many young people became involved with the insurgency, either voluntary, coerced or a mixture of both. After the war, these people became a lost generation; often sentenced to seek employment outside of Nepal. (Bhattarai, 2013) The practice of kidnapping schools is corroborated by other researchers, as we will see later in this thesis. (Eck 2007:31) It inspired the following question; did the Maoists target children and young people on a large scale or was it incidental? If it happened on a larger scale, can we see this practice reflected in the literature? Are there causes for the Nepalese youth to be more vulnerable to Maoist recruiting practices? The central question to which this thesis supplies an answer is therefore: 'How does the study of youth help explain how the Maoists overcame the collective action problem in the first years of the insurgency? (1996-2001)'

To reach a conclusion in response to the posed research question, I have divided my research over three chapters. In the first, the concept of a people's war is examined, some examples are

studied for their relevance and the insurgency in Nepal is studied to provide a context for the rest of the research, as well as develop hypothetical knowledge about the practice of a people's war, recruitment practices and other relevant factors. In the second chapter, I focus on the category of youth among the socio-economic situation of Nepal, to find out in what way these young people were making the transition to adulthood, and what opportunities awaited them there. We will see that especially rural youth was especially vulnerable to mobilisation efforts by the Maoists, as their socio-economic situation left them little other options. In the third chapter, I focus on the recruitment and mobilisation strategy of the Maoists, focused on the youth. We will see that the Maoists deliberately made use of the impressionability of the younger generation, and the desperation that was caused by their situation, to mobilise these young people into the insurgency. Especially in the early years, both coercion and persuasion were used in various degrees, though the distinction between the two is blurred. I will also use this chapter to and reflect on how this answers the initial research question.

I argue that the Maoists improved their odds of mobilising the population by focusing on youth in poor, opportunity-deprived circumstances, taking advantage of a young impressionable age as well as their socio-economic vulnerability. In reference to the existing academic discourse, this means adding the factor of youth to the established list of ethnic, caste and poverty-related factors of why the Nepalese people participated in the insurgency. What is left to make clear in this introduction is how I view the category of youth. Statistical information offers the use of the age categories of 15-19 and 20-24. In the second chapter, I deduce what family life in these age categories looked like. I found that between the ages of 15 and 19 most young people are out of school, looking for employment, getting married and often start having children. As a demographic reference, this age category is useful as evidence. In the third chapter, I will focus more on what other researchers perceived and described concerning young people, and therefore the age limit will necessarily become less strict. However, I will focus on the age of around 14 to 24. An assumption underlying these choices is that the Maoists will have focused on the age from 14 or 15 up as valuable, motivated recruits. The use of child soldiers has been researched, but is not the subject of this paper.

1. People's war

As was mentioned in the introduction, the Communist Party Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M) declared a people's war on February 13th of 1996. Rather than a novelty, this concept of a people's war was at the time considered an effective and thoroughly tested mechanism for seizing state power. CPN-M had carefully studied and copied Maoist theory and examples of people's wars, to adapt these to Nepalese circumstances. (Marks 2002:6- 8) In this paragraph, I will do the same by reviewing the concept of the people's war, its theory, practice and academic cadre. This will serve to build a context to this study of youth in the Nepalese insurgency.

1.1 People's war as a concept

As a theoretical concept, the people's war is a military doctrine advocated by Mao Tse-Tung. Its definitions vary, but in this paper I rely on a practical description from the International Crisis Group that studied the insurgency in Nepal; "a protracted war based on encircling the towns from the countryside" (ICG 2005:21). A people's war can be characterised by its central objectives: firstly to mobilise and arm the people to seize political power, the people mainly consisting of peasants. Secondly; to establish revolutionary bases where "the enemy is weak and where there are geographical advantages" (idem, 22). The peasants should thirdly be united with militia and guerrilla forces. Other objectives include relying on the people and the principles of the people's war at all times, as this is a solid basis for revolutionary war. (ICG 2005: 21) A people's war, then, is a strategic concept most of all, predicting a search for rural and remote base areas and built on the 'power of the people'.

There is a second feature of the theory of people's wars that is important to discuss. According to Mao, it is the specific intent of the People's War to politicize the people in the process, establishing the revolution through the armed struggle, rather than as the result of it. (Idem, 25-26) When this quote is combined with the objectives mentioned before, it becomes evident that political and military mobilisation is at the heart of a people's war. This is most interesting, as it corresponds with a dichotomy between 'winning the hearts and minds' and more forceful ways to recruit new troops. I will call this persuasion and coercion, as the former is based upon a voluntary inducement of the people, and the latter on the use of force. As we will see in this thesis, this dichotomy is a recurrent theme in the insurgency. A people's war, then, can be summarised as an attempt to mobilise, politicise and revolutionise the peasant population, culminating in the violent establishment of a revolutionary state.

Examples of people's wars

Practical examples of people's wars abound, and it is well established that the Nepalese Maoists studied and adapted the different examples of the People's War, especially those of Peru and India. (Marks 2003:8) I will review these people's wars or the study thereof, to see how in these wars, the balance between voluntarism and coercion was determined.

The Naxalites, as the Indian Maoist insurgents are called, are still active today. The insurgency originates in Naxalbari, close to the Nepalese border, where an initial uprising in 1967 triggered a series of upheavals in the northeast of India. The insurgency failed after a brutal suppression by the government, but the organisation survived. They remain a force to be reckoned with, especially because of their control over the Red Corridor, a cluster of forested and mineral-rich areas populated by the impoverished low-caste and tribal population. (Mazumdar 2013: 446-7) What is interesting about this people's war is the violent approach the Naxalites took to dealing with 'class enemies'. Though Mao himself knew his way around a death sentence, he held that the elimination of class enemies should be done by turning, or rendering these enemies neutral. The Naxalites interpreted the 'elimination of class enemies' as a literal task, however, which led to a much more violent approach to class struggle. (Marks 2003: 8) This insurgency served as an

example for the Nepalese Maoists, for whom the proximity and open border with India served as a useful means of support. (Marks 2003: 8)

Another example of a particularly violent people's war that affected the Nepalese version is the insurgency led by the Shining Path or *Sendero Luminoso*. The Shining Path insurgency in Peru was crushed in the early 1990's, but is still known for its high death toll and its use of violence and terror. Like the Naxalites, the Peruvian insurgents took the elimination of class enemies as a literal task. The death toll was much higher in Peru, however, and this insurgency came much closer to its goals as it came very close to capturing the capital of Lima. (Marks 2003: 8) The Nepalese Maoists modelled themselves on Shining Path, which was visible in the use of names. The ideological course set out by the Nepalese leader in Nepal was named 'Prachanda Path', after the Peruvian Gonzalo Path. (Marks, Palmer 2006: 104).

The similarities did not end there. Concerning the balance between persuasion and coercion, the scholars Thomas Marks and David Scott Palmer state that Peru and Nepal had a similar approach to the people's war. "While 'winning hearts and minds' was important in the base areas, terror was an indispensable instrument for expansion beyond them." (Idem, 103) The terror was employed to neutralise the state at the local level and eliminate the opposition, similar to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia as well. "The goals were to sever links with the existing system, isolate the population into a self-contained entity, and return society to the proverbial revolutionary 'Year One', when the remaking of the new world would begin." (Idem, 104) So far, we can establish that the interaction/interchangeableness/versatility between persuasion and coercion are an integral part of the people's war. I will come back to this comparison of Peru and Nepal when I discuss factors of motivation and opportunity in these insurgencies.

1.2 Academic responses

The different examples of people's wars beg the question of how these insurgencies were interpreted and understood in the academic literature. We have seen that the people's wars are peasant-based insurgencies, which are deliberately developed in and from remote and rural areas. As this thesis focuses on the initial stage of the Nepalese insurgency, it is this incubation period that is the most interesting. How have scholars analysed this phase, and what is its most salient characteristic?

An answer to this question is found in a case study of the people's war in the Philippines. Gary Hawes presented his study with an extensive review of the relevant social theory, including the moral economy approach and the class-based model of explaining peasant insurgencies. Though neither of these two models fully explain the emergence of an insurgency in the Philippines, he distils a basic value that I consider the stepping stone of understanding a peasant-based insurgency:

"What is important is that tenants, labourers, and small farmers share harsh circumstances, yet have the ideological and political opportunity to forge new attitudes (that are beyond the control of the landlords or the military) about landownership and social organization. In the contemporary era, this is not determined by village structure; rather, it is determined by the national political economy." (Hawes 1990: 271)

Critical about this citation is that Hawes identifies a key characteristic of the Philippine peasants that live under difficult circumstances; that they are able to develop an understanding and/or conviction about their socio-economic situation outside the control of the village, the landlords or the military. As we will see later again in this thesis, this is a particularly strong characteristic of the Nepalese insurgency as well. In Nepal, the political opening in 1990 established a multi-party democracy that exposed impoverished and isolated villages in districts like Rolpa and Rukum to

party politics. As a consequence, the boundaries of the village faded and political workers like the Maoists framed local issues in national or ideological cadres, allowing the peasants to form new opinions and attitudes. (De Sales 2003: 63) Coming back to Hawes, then, we find that a transition of attitudes is at the heart of the start of the insurgency. How this transition comes about, we will see when we move on to factors of grievance and greed; a larger academic discourse that tries to answer the most basic question of an insurgency; why do people revolt?

Grievance and greed

Hawes' identification of the early attitude change is helpful to establish a point of reference, as it is the point where the insurgent group interacts with the peasant population. However, it only begins to explain the question that has occupied the minds of the social scientists studying this phenomenon; 'why do people revolt?' To start answering this question, I will briefly return to the comparison between Nepal and Peru. Marks and Palmer compared the structural factors that shape the background of these insurgencies: poverty, hunger, inequality, unemployment etc. They concluded that the situation in both countries had the potential to be exploited for revolutionary purposes, but did not in themselves lead to revolution. They turned to the other actors; the insurgent organisation and the government, as the most significant causes for the initiation and the expansion of both the people's wars. (2006: 96) This echoes the distinction made between factors of grievance and greed in the academic literature, which calls for a little elaboration. Before moving on to this, I stress that the review of the cases of Peru and Nepal show a distinct pattern of a troubled part of the population that, due to poverty, unemployment and inequality, has the potential of being exploited by an outside group.

'Grievance or greed', then, refers to a debate concerning the onset of what I will call collective protest. Grievance arguments usually focus on what circumstances cause people to take up arms against the government. It is a matter of motivation, as for example high inequality and repression in a country can motivate its people to protest against its government. Greed arguments "typically seek to determine what conditions generate low enough costs or high enough benefits to generate rebellion." (Adhikari and Samford 2012: 459) Whether grievance or greed is more important to explain collective protest is indeed subject of debate. It has been argued that the presence of revolutionary leaders who can mobilise human and material resources is more important than the level and variety of grievances among the population. Other scholars argue that individuals always act within social groups and memberships, and that much more attention should be devoted to the social organisation of the population. (Mason 2004: 40).

Applying the various strands of the debate to an actual example can be a daunting task. However, steps can be taken by eliminating the binary opposition that is part of the grievance or greed discourse. The two terms can also be described as motive and opportunity. Rather than researching whether a conflict can be explained more by grievance or greed factors, effectively leaning towards one or the other, Adhikari and Samford argue that approaching the reality is done more effectively by researching how specific factors of motive and opportunity work *together* to lead to insurgency. The axiom supporting this is that without opportunity, all levels of motive will not lead to insurgency, and without motive no opportunity will be taken. Neither is grievance a stable factor. Especially in Nepal, the inequality that is the result of the caste system and the exclusion of ethnic groups is likely to produce very different levels of grievance. (2012:459-461) I will shortly review the results they found in their study of the combination of opportunity and motive factors in the Nepalese insurgency in the next paragraph.

1.3 Nepalese insurgency

After looking at the concept of the People's war and relevant examples, and taking some early steps into the social theory, it is time to zoom in further on the subject of this thesis; the insurgency in Nepal. As the focus of this thesis lies on the early period of the insurgency and the interaction of the Maoists with the peasants in the base areas, I will use the data that Adhikari and Samford collected in their efforts to unravel the correlation between factors of motive and opportunity in the early phase of the insurgency. As I described in the introduction, I focus on the period of 1996-2001, the period that Adhikari and Samford labelled the initiation period.

Adhikari and Samford researched how various factors in regions in Nepal correlated with high levels of insurgency. Of these factors, seven appear to be highly correlated, which are useful to us here. These factors are:

1. a concentrated tribal population; tribal refers to ethnic and religious groups that fall outside the Nepali-speaking hierarchy of the Hindu caste system,
2. a concentrated *Dalit* population; Dalit refers to the untouchables, the lowest category of people within the Hindu caste-system who are highly marginalised from social, economic and political life,
3. economic disempowerment; a term showing a lack of opportunity to improve one's situation,
4. strong Maoist Party organisation; showing the degree of political activity that the Maoist party developed in the region prior to the war in 1996,
5. a developed road system; low road density shows a limited penetration by the government and is typically associated with higher levels of rebellion,
6. high government funding; as a measure of the central government actively providing aid to impoverished areas
7. state-led violence; as a measure of violence perpetrated by the government against the population. (2012: 469-470)

Two of these, the pre-war Maoist political organisation and the level of infrastructure, are factors of opportunity, the others are factors of motive. The first five of these factors passed the benchmark of 'near necessity', though they were not sufficient in themselves. The study of the opportunity factors confirms that without Maoist party organisation and a developed road system, levels of insurgency were generally low.

The data concerning the combination of motive and opportunity factors is very interesting. It shows that three clusters of factors are associated with high levels of insurgency. These clusters combine either a high Dalit population, a high tribal population or a strong 'economic disempowerment' with factors of low road density and Maoist organisation. In other words; being poor, Dalit or part of the tribal population and being isolated and approached by the Maoists is the recipe for high insurgency. (2012: 471-472)

The other factors are more ambiguously involved. Government funding is low in districts with Dalits or tribal population, but high in the poor regions. According to this data, government violence is not a significant factor in these clusters during the initiation period. This is contested by other scholars, as two repressive and indiscriminately violent measures by the government under the name of 'Romeo' and 'Kilo Sierra Two' in 1995 and 1998 are explicitly connected to factors of grievance under the population. (De Sales 2003: 64) The difference between these interpretations may be attributed to geography; Romeo was conducted in the Maoist base area of Rolpa, Kilo Sierra Two was executed in 18 districts. Out of 75 in total it may be that the geographical limitation of both operations affected the nationwide study of Adhikari and Samford.

Now what can we derive from this? Firstly, that involvement in the Maoist insurgency is correlated with three important socio-economic background denominators; low-caste, tribal and poor. These are three basic but very important sources of problematic circumstances for the people of Nepal, and they will reappear when we look at the demography of Nepal in the next chapter. Secondly, the combination of pre-war Maoist organisation with these three factors shows that the

Maoists were indeed successful in tapping into the local circumstances. According to the Adhikari and Samford, the combination of opportunity and motive factors translates into high levels of insurgency, and “[t]his provides confirmation for the supposition that historical grievances such as negligence by the state, impoverishment, and ethnic- and caste-based exclusion were at the foundation of the Maoists’ capacity to initiate insurgency in these districts.” (2012: 471) It is the purpose of this thesis to zoom in at exactly how this happened, why it happened, and why in this respect we should pay more focused attention to the youth, as they were and are the prime subject in this early phase in the war.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I moved from the original Maoist ideas about the people's war to some of the examples of insurgencies that were ignited under that name. The two insurgencies that had the largest influence on the Communist Party of Nepal were particularly brutal in their approach to eliminating class enemies, a precursor of the violence that would follow in Nepal in the later stages of the war. It was shown that in the early stage of a people's war, tactics of persuasion and coercion are both prominent, though the degree of both has to be further established. From the study of the people's war in the Philippines, it was found that at the start of an insurgency, peasants are able to form a new attitude to their socio-economic station outside of the control of the village, the military of the state through the presence of a new actor: the Maoists. To take an academic viewpoint of these insurgencies, the grievance or greed discourse was explained to relate to factors of opportunity and motive. However, we saw that the study of the *combination* of both can yield useful data. With it, it was possible to zoom in on that moment in time that is truly the focus of this thesis; the initial interaction between the Maoists and the peasant youth in the future Maoist base areas. How persuasion, coercion and the transformation of attitudes panned out here, we will see in chapter three. Before moving there, I will research how a category of peasant youth can be distilled from the statistical data. How was their reality in 1996 different from that of their parents, how was it the same, and how did it translate into participation in a violent insurgency?

2. A study of youth

As I wrote in the introduction, in the study of the Nepalese insurgency, the role of youth has been overlooked. It is the purpose of this chapter to determine what by Nepalese standards could constitute a category of youth, and how this category can be characterised. My assumption is that there is indeed a group of people that is finishing school, or working for their family, that is soon making a switch to married life and possibly will need a more secure source of income. My second assumption is that the reality of these young people is different from that of their parents and grandparents, and I intend to find out how radically different their situation is. Both these assumptions refer to a transformation, either in a social and economic sense as young people get married and look for employment, or in these youth finding themselves in a changed reality from that of their parents. This research is critical in order to understand and assess the role of youth in the insurgency, as it may very well be the starting ground of many of the mobilisation efforts by the Maoists.

To find the category of rural youth, there are two ways in which to determine the position of the youth: through their age and through the rural/urban divide. The national health survey differentiates between age categories of 15-19 and 20-24 which are helpful here. The survey also differentiates between rural and urban figures. Data is unfortunately not divided over rural/urban and age categories, so I will have to combine both types of data to understand the demographic position of the youth in the countryside. I will consequently visit the following themes that are relevant to the situation of the youth; Nepal's national economy and population features, family characteristics in 'life for the young', education levels and employment levels among men and women, and finally I will briefly visit the historical outlet for the youth in need of employment: migration.

As sources of data, I have predominately used the national population census of 1991, which is the closest and most detailed approximation of the population in 1996. The second source is a Family Health Survey of 1996 that was conducted among a nationally representative group of 8500 women. Not only is this survey helpful to research the status of women in 1996, the first year of the Civil War, it is a very helpful survey to determine what family life in Nepal looks like.

2.1 Nepal in general

When looking at the transformations that occurred prior to the insurgency, it is useful to start at the macro level to see what structural factors shaped and changed life in Nepal in the two decades prior to the insurgency. Firstly, as figure 1 illustrates, the population density has increased significantly as it went up from 79 people per km² in 1971, to 126 in 1991, dividing more than 18 million people over the Nepalese territory. (Family Health Division 1997: 3) In addition, habitable territory is severely reduced by the Himalayas. The country is divided into three ecological zones; the mountain, hill and plains or Terai zones, of which the mountainous zone hosts only 10 percent of the population. Put another way;

Indicator	1971	1981	1991
Population (millions)	11.6	15.0	18.5
Age			
0-14	40.5	41.4	42.4
15-64	56.4	55.4	54.1
65+	3.1	3.2	3.5
Population density (per square km)	79	102	126
Percent urban	4.0	6.4	9.2
Crude birth rate	42	44	42
Crude death rate	19.5 ^a	16.1 ^b	13.3
Population growth rate (percent)	2.1	2.6	2.1
Total fertility rate	6.3	6.3	5.6
Infant mortality rate	172	117	97
Life expectancy			
Males	42.0	50.9	55.0
Females	40.0	48.1	53.5
Mean age at marriage			
Males	20.8	20.7	21.4
Females	16.8	17.2	18.2

^a 1974-75
^b 1986-87
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1995

Figure 1: Family Health Division 1996:3

this leads to a population of 16,6 million living on roughly the size of Iceland.

Unlike Iceland, however, Nepal has a very small economy. In 1991, at the time of the census, GDP in current US dollar value was 3,9 billion dollar, which at the time of the insurgency in 1996 had increased to 4,5 billion. Though this shows growth from two decades before, when GDP was less than a billion, it is still very low. (Index Mundi 2011) A simple calculation shows that if all 18 million Nepalese lived on the UN-determined poverty line of 1,25 dollar a day, GDP would have to be around 8 billion. Though widespread sustenance farming may reduce the actual hunger levels, it is clear that poverty in Nepal is widespread, and that the GDP growth, comparable to that of Namibia, Mozambique and Senegal, was nowhere near catching up. When we come to matters of employment, this problematic situation shall present itself in alarming detail.

Concerning the Nepalese demography, two statistics are important as they are illustrative on an national scale. In 1991, 81 percent of the total population was engaged in agriculture, showing a decline from 91 percent in 1981. The other occupations are mostly service-related, with only a few percent of the people active in industrial labour. (CBS 1995: 221) In spite of the decline, this number shows that the economy of Nepal is still largely based on agriculture, and urbanisation is consequently low. According to the same census, 9,2% of the population can be considered urban. (Idem: 41) With hardly any industry, these two statistics indicate a large difference between the city and the country; as the extreme majority of those who live in the countryside are in fact peasants.

Life for the young

Figure 1 also shows that like many developing countries, Nepal has a very young population. In 1991, more than forty percent of the population was below the age of 15. Average life expectancy in 1991 was correspondingly low at a staggering level of 54. More detailed information shows that the ages of 15 to 24 account for around 20 percent of the population. (Family Health Division 1997: 13) As I explained in the introduction, I focus on these ages. Before moving on to matters of education and employment, it is useful to first develop an understanding of the social and familial patterns that shape the lives of people between the ages of 15 and 24. The factors of marriage and fertility rates are therefore reviewed here.

Concerning the age of women when she first marries, it is clear that Nepalese women marry early, and almost collectively. According to the 1996 survey, 95 percent of all women under 25 are married, and at least 75 percent had done so by the age of 20. Although the occurrence of very young marriages is declining, still an average of seventeen percent of the women between 15 and 24 were married at the age of 15. Again, there is data available for the urban/rural divide as well; showing that the median age of rural women first marrying is one and a half year lower in the countryside; 16.3. That means that half the rural women were married by 16,3 years. (Idem: 82-83)

Moving on to fertility rates before attempting an interpretation of these figures, the patterns are repeated. Half of all the women aged 19 are mothers or are pregnant with their first child. Already twelve percent is in the same position at age 16. This is understandable as 71% of all women between 15 and 49 uses no methods of family planning. Change is visible: more women learn about family planning, the age of first marriage is higher and the number of children per woman has decreased to 4,3 births. (Family Health Division 1997b: 6-17) However, these developments fall short of turning the tide, as rural women are still confronted by massive problems. An example of this is shown in children's health statistics. 49 Percent of the rural children under three years is stunted in their growth, a sign of chronic malnutrition, and under-five mortality rates in rural Nepal are at the level of 143 per 1000 births. (Family Health Division 1997b: 11-13)

From these statistics, a bleak summary follows. Rural Nepali women marry early in their adolescent years, half of them has children before turning twenty, and half of all rural children is suffers from malnutrition. These statistics show that in light of the already densely populated Nepal, the continuing practice of early marriage, little use of family planning methods is causing a formidable pressure on the need for employment and nutrition for young people and their families.

The period in which this problematic situation develops is that of the young people; ages 15-24. It will be very interesting to see what happens with these age groups when they are applied to education and employment.

2.2 Education

Concerning education levels of the men in Nepal, the rural/urban divide shows the problem of illiteracy and underdevelopment quite severely. Of all rural men, almost forty percent has received no education, and forty percent has received only primary education. A secondary school diploma was reached by only five percent. This is contrasted by the urban men, of whom only twenty percent has received no education and levels of higher education are much higher.¹ (Family Health Division 1997:16-18) This tells us quite plainly that educational development in the city and the countryside is wide apart, leading to two in five of all rural men to be without any education.

However, the age categories show a dramatic change in education levels. The percentage of basic and further educated among young people between 15 and 24 doubled from the generation of 35-45, and tripled from everyone over 50. In 1996, more than eighty percent of the men aged 15-19 had received primary education and half of them were enrolled in secondary education. For the age of 20-24, this primary school enrolment was 78 percent. This is a major change in the situation of the young people as opposed to the older generations. With such high percentages, it is imperative that education was spreading over a much wider segment of the population, and increasingly reaching those previously marginalised on the basis of poverty, caste or ethnic factors. I will come back to this in the third chapter, but basic education means speaking Nepali and basic literacy and numeracy, which are unifying factors in a nation that has over sixty different ethnic groups and far more ethnic languages. How education translates in to higher expectations and/or employment, we will see later on. (Graham 2007: 233-234)

Concerning women a similar but much more severe picture emerges. The general figures of the rural/urban divide show a marked division once more, as *seventy percent* of all rural women had received no education in 1996, versus over forty percent of the urban women. As high this number is, it is again subject to some interpretation; especially the older women increase the percentage. Starting from the age of 35, roughly 90 percent of all women had received no education. This drops to 64 percent of the women between 20-24, and drops further to 51 for the category of 15-19. Around half of the women who do receive primary education move on to secondary education. (Family Health Survey 1997:17)

For young women in general, then, we know from the census that half of them had not received any education in 1996, and we can safely assume that this percentage is higher in the countryside. As pertaining to differences in generations, the difference between 90, 64 and finally 51 percent is significant, though not yet as dramatic as among the males. Under 20, almost half the young women have attended school, while for their mothers from 35 up; it was only one in ten. The conclusion presents itself that also among the young women, education was becoming available for a much larger part of the population. Primary education in 1996 was transcending ethnic, caste, gender and poverty divisions. This is an important transformation in the lives of the youth that is bound to have psychological and social consequences. I will come back to this in the third chapter. For now, it is interesting to see how these increased levels of education translated into employment and opportunity.

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The only category in which rural men have a higher percentage than urban men is in finishing primary education, 39 over 33 percent, which is interesting. Differentiation versus regions shows that the central and mid-western region have the highest percentages in non-educated, roughly 40%, although here as well, the mid-western region outperforms both the central and eastern region in primary education numbers. These are two instances where the percentage of primary school graduates are higher in regions that are generally considered less developed than the central or urban areas. One possible explanation could be a focused effort by the government, foreign or domestic ngo's to increase education levels in backward regions.

2.3 Employment

After researching demographic figures and education level, the last topic concerns the most important question: is there work? With a population that is increasing in size and density, with a very small economy, and with early marriages and more kids underway at a substantial speed, the pressure to find employment and income must be skyrocketing. I look at female employment separately and firstly using data from the Family Health survey. This survey was conducted among women, who judged themselves whether they were full-time, seasonal or part-time employed. This increases the reliability of these statistics, as female agricultural employment in the service of the family is often misrepresented in official (man-oriented) employment surveys.²

In the category of women between 15 and 49, then, more than three quarters of all women are employed at least a part of the year, 89 percent of them work in agriculture. The remaining eleven percent is divided across commercial or service activities, manual work and a minute group of professional, technical, managerial or clerical occupations. (Family Health Division 1997b:16) It should be noted that the many women who work seasonally or part-time are likely to reflect a shortage in arable land or agricultural opportunity, rather than other causes. (Idem: 16)

If we look at specifically young women age groups, we see that from the earliest age available, women work on the land, the majority of these on their own or family land. When the women are over 20, and as we saw are usually married, the percentages of working on private land rather than family land go up. For the women then, even though we saw that education levels are rising, their employment is usually the same as that of her parents. Combining the statistics I reviewed so far, we see that working on the land and raising children is the norm of women life. We will see in the third chapter that the Maoists had an explicitly female recruiting profile, proposing to liberate her from her socio-economic limitations. This static socio-economic situation is therefore something to be remembered.

Male employment

As we saw before that education among the men has seen tremendous increase, it is interesting to see whether this translated into higher levels of employment, or more diversification across sectors. The results, on the basis of the 1991 census, are far from promising. Unemployment is high, at 32 percent, and has significantly increased in the last two decades. The census offers the explanation that more young men are in school, or that more people registered themselves unemployed out of frustration with the job promises and heightened expectations at the 1990 political opening. (CBS 1995: 207) Concerning diversification, then, of the men that receive no schooling, 75% becomes involved in agriculture. Of the men that receive primary or secondary education, 65% follows the same path, a decrease of ten percent. Only intermediate, graduate and post-graduate level students find themselves by majority in white collar occupations. The level of men that find work in production, service or other jobs is constant across educational levels; around 20%. (CBS 1995: 214). On the basis of these statistics, I conclude that the impact of the increased levels of primary and secondary education in the early 1990's is very limited, as the majority still becomes involved in agriculture, unemployment has risen and only higher levels of education translate into higher positions.

Some considerable doubt can be expressed concerning these male employment figures. From the female employment figures, we saw that the larger majority works on privately owned, family owned or rented land. According to the census, the men work predominately in agriculture as well, and we know that practically all women are married before 25. The majority of couples has land in possession or available to them. So the question arises, who works the land, the man, the

² The population census of 1991 admits to keeping separate standards to judging economic activity: "For instance, a great majority of housewives are not classified as economically active, for, the domestic services and goods which they produce for home consumption are not included in the conventional accounting of national income. For this reason, among others, the activity rates need to be computed for males and females separately."

woman or both? Reflecting on the population density, malnutrition among children and the lacking economy, agricultural activities are generally insufficient. What degree of unemployment or underemployment do high figures of agricultural employment mask? I am not the only one to ask this question. In a study of labour migration from Nepal, it has been stated that:

“An overwhelming concentration on the role of agriculture has blinded researchers and policy-makers alike to the fact that the rural population of Nepal consists not of “farmers” but of individuals and households whose livelihoods are sustained by a wide variety of activities and income sources, many of them not only “off” their own plots but outside agriculture altogether.” (Seddon, Adhikari, Gurung 1998: 20)

The best way to further understand the underemployment in Nepal is to look at labour migration. Looking at this historical outlet for the Nepalese unemployed should go some way to illuminate the need for employment in Nepal, and consequently the troubled situation that the youth, entering the job market with or without education find themselves in.

Migration

The study of labour migration out of Nepal has a central problem, which is the open border with India. This arrangement that provides India with a labour pool since 1951 causes official statistics to misread the size and importance of labour migration as well as seasonal migration. As the border is open, the population of Nepalese working in India is simply not tracked except for the Nepali people who are in Indian public service, which is registered. David Seddon, Jagannath Adhikari and Ganesh Gurung collected data from the period of 1996 to 1998 to offer the estimate of 1 million Nepali working abroad. The estimates of Nepali working in India however go up to 1,3 million people. A large part of the labour migration is seasonal, as an outlet for the limited opportunities in the village or neighbourhood to find employment. The poorest households usually do not have this option, as they are often tied to the village by bondage of debts. (2010: 20)

The impact of such a large part of the population seeking employment elsewhere is substantial, in more ways than one. Financially, the value of remittances was established between 13 and 25 percent of the Nepalese GDP and severely affects inequality patterns. (Idem: 37) The ability to seek employment elsewhere is not dependent on geography but on social capital; factors of kinship, caste, ethnicity, gender and class determine the linkages available to find employment abroad. (Idem, 30) Even though labour migration is available to relieve the unemployment in Nepal, then, this option is usually not open to the poorest segment of the population. Both social capital as well as debt bondage can restrict the possibility to seek employment elsewhere. For young men born under poor, low-caste or tribal circumstances, the opportunities are therefore very scarce.

A final example will illustrate this. When the Indian Army opened a recruitment centre in Pokhara in 1999, “thousands of young men rushed from the hills to try their luck. ... The demand for jobs greatly exceeded the supply and the young men were disappointed.” (Idem, 31) Some of the young men expressed their desperation, as the cost of travelling and staying in town for the recruitment exceeded their limited means. (Idem: 31)

Conclusion

This chapter served to explore the category of youth in Nepal, their socio-economic situation and how this had changed from that of their parents. A review of demographic data showed that between the ages of 15 and 19, most young women are married, start having children and commence their life working on the land, while the young men they marry do the same and look for other opportunities to find employment elsewhere. Though for both the young men and women changes were affecting their lives as education had become available for a much larger part of the

population, these changes did not translate into higher levels of employment and or diversification across sectors. The general factors of high population density, a very small economy and underemployment show that poverty and lack of opportunity cannot but translate in precarious situation for the young men and women in the rural parts of Nepal. In the next chapter, more attention will be given to the psychological and social features that arose from these circumstances.

3. Maoists, youth and the Collective Action Problem

In the last two chapters, I approached the subject of youth in the insurgency by looking at these two concepts separately. In the first chapter I discussed the people's war, its concept and practices. We saw already there that in a people's war, the initial phase is a critical time where the insurgent organisation closely interacts with the population, causing them to be able to change their attitude towards their socio-economic situation. Persuasion and coercion go almost hand in hand as the insurgent organisation seeks support and recruits, and does not shy away from violence. In the second chapter, I answered the question of whether a category of youth can be found in the demographic, economic and social data, and how that category of people made the transition into adult life. As a result, it was shown that the underdeveloped state of Nepal presented a very problematic situation for the youth, as employment was very scarce, education led to very little improvement in job opportunities, and continuing practices of early marriage and high fertility led to significant pressure on available resources. In addition, opportunities like labour migration often do not reach the poorest in the villages as they are trapped in debt bondage or have no means to find their way abroad.

The subject of this last chapter is the interaction between the Nepalese Maoist insurgency organisation and this part of the population that was married, impoverished, with little opportunity for employment, even before their twentieth birthday. Before looking at the youth specifically, I will firstly focus on the more general mobilisation policy of the Maoists. The field work of Kristine Eck supplies us with a detailed account of this policy in the future Maoist base area; the Kham Magar country in the districts of Rolpa and Rukum. This area populated by the impoverished and marginalised ethnic group of the Kham Magar had seen successful political organisation by the Maoists prior to the declaration of the insurgency, and was therefore chosen by the Maoists.

In her study of the Maoists' tactics of recruitment, Kristine Eck emphasises the importance of indoctrination and political education as well as a personal approach in the start-up phase. Through mass meetings in the villages and door-to-door campaigns, addressing the villagers personally, the Maoists were very effective in approaching the people at the most personal level. They listened to the villagers' problems, asked their opinion, and offered solutions by framing both the problem and the solution in Maoist ideology. Once the Maoist revolution would be successful, they promised, land would be more equally divided, caste and tribal inequality would be politically and practically altered, and women would be empowered. This is the propaganda that they offered. During the process of propaganda and political education, they treated the lowest castes and the excluded tribal groups as valuable people, offering a place in their insurgency as a way to further the cause of improving the nation of Nepal, the fate of a marginalised group, and their own families as well. Compensation as well as glorification and honour would follow for the families of martyrs. (2007:19-26)

Once people from the village joined, they were supposed to have first served as political workers before being able to receive military training and join the People's Army, although the duration of the time as political worker is unclear. (Eck 2007: 24). In the earliest part of the insurgency, then, the Maoists carefully built a support network through political education, all the while handpicking their recruits and surrounding these with care.

“In the early years their cadres would be carefully selected, screened, and educated in Marxist and Maoist doctrine before being given responsibilities. This created a small but politically focused and disciplined group. But as the movement grew rapidly, especially with the need for increased recruitment once the RNA was mobilized, the process of careful selection was more or less abandoned”. (Idem 30)

This policy of the Maoists is also shown by the 40 point ultimatum issued by the CPN-M in 1996.

General Maoist demands were issued in the 40 point demands in 1996. This was an ultimatum directed against the government that preceded the actual insurgency. Its social demands included free education, free health care, no discrimination against castes and support for indigenous languages, equal rights for girls and women, intellectual freedom and support for homeless people, widows and orphans, and backward regions. The economically themed demands are even bolder. Those who work the land should own the land, meaning the end of larger landholders, employment should be guaranteed or unemployment should be compensated, minimum wage should be instituted and salaries should rise with inflation levels. Poor farmers should be freed from debt and farmer materials as well as basic daily food should be available at low prices. (South Asia Terrorism Portal 1996)

Even if this list of demands was purely rhetorical, it is remarkable how radically and comprehensively this list addresses the issues that trouble the poor, the marginalized, the tribal, the farmer, and anyone concerned with the fate of Nepal as a whole. Leaving no stone unturned, most issues that villagers, young people or anyone could bring to bear in talking to the Maoists, could indeed be linked to this translation of Maoist ideology to the aims of the CPN-M. The Maoists, then, approached the villagers on a personal level, listened to their problems and connected them to Maoist ideology. The question remains how they approached the youth.

3.1 Youth

Eck describes in her paper how Maoist political workers would enter the village and hold mass meetings, in relative secrecy, with a cultural team and put on a show with singing, dancing, and Maoist ideological propaganda, all executed by young boys and girls. These were very well visited. In addition, during the door-to-door campaigns, they reached both the young and old in their campaign, and from the enthusiasts, they recruited selectively. In this way, many young people who were or could be motivated could join the insurgency. (Eck 2007: 15-17)

The women played a special role in the process of recruiting, as gender equality was one of the primary objectives of the Maoists. By using female Maoist spokeswomen, the Maoists deliberately targeted women to join the insurgency, alter their fate and have equal rights. Though there is little reliable data about the number of women that became involved in the insurgency, their participation has been estimated by the Maoists at 30% of the recruits. (Idem: 31)

As I referred to in the introduction, there were also more direct ways in which the Maoists targeted the young, specifically by kidnapping entire schools at once. Though this happened more frequently later in the insurgency, the Maoists kidnapped classes or entire schools of children, took them to remote areas and held political educational campaigns for some days, after which they were released again. These kidnappings functioned as an opportunity for indoctrination and presenting the kids the option of later joining the rebellion, as well as pre-selecting the children, to see which ones they should seek out during future recruitment efforts. Sometimes the children were 'politically educated' at the schools. "Some observers commented that schools were the *primary* forum for disseminating the Maoist ideology and for recruiting new members." (Schneiderman and Turin, in Eck 2007: 22) These children would have some education, which helped training, and the Maoists had the opportunity to address large groups of young, impressionable children at the same time. (Eck 2007:22).

So far, this shows a relatively voluntarist policy by the Maoists to persuade the young people to join the insurgency. It has also been reported that in many areas, the Maoists forcibly demanded every family to submit one of their youngsters, and that violence was used on a wide scale to recruit boys and girls. As indoctrination and education was intensive after the recruitment, it is possible that initial forcible recruitment transformed into voluntary service once recruited. (Idem, 21-22). This is relevant, as it is unlikely that the entire force of Maoist recruits was only there under coercion. Eck joins other authors in saying that the use of force, though present and apparent, could

not have accounted for the entirety of the support base and recruits that were amassed under the Maoists. (Idem 23)

3.2 Conclusion

The point that is relevant here is that whether forcibly or enticingly or through both, the Maoists undeniably targeted (very) young people as recruits. Eck attributes the recruitment among youth to both economic opportunity and ideological impressionability; “*Despite their schooling, many youths had few prospects for gaining future employment and for many, the Maoists offered an opportunity to leave their village. The Maoists' romanticized images of martyrdom, victory and courage were also easily sold to impressionable youths.*” (Idem, 21) This quote summarises many of the elements of the socio-economic situation that I described in the last chapter.

What remains a little unclear, however, is what the Maoists offered the youth apart from 'romanticized images of martyrdom, victory and courage'. My own interviews with Nepalese men that were young at the start of the insurgency showed that the Maoists explicitly promised job guarantees, effectively offering a selective incentive that in Nepal would command the strongest appeal. Others stated that the Maoists promised 'pretty much anything' to get young people to join the insurgency. Though this hardly qualifies as evidence, Eck also states that when the strategy of the Maoists changed to mass attacks, the need for 'bodies' became more important than whether these recruits were convinced Maoists and recruiting consequently became much less selective and much more forceful. (Idem, 31)

In my opinion, the question of how the Maoists really convinced the youth of the rural villages to join the insurgency requires more research, especially field work. The experiences of the young people and their families should be researched more systematically, to develop a clearer knowledge of how exactly, in the interaction between the Maoist organisation and the village youths, this mobilisation happened.

Conclusion

It is interesting to see whether we can link this image of youth that was created in this thesis, as a socio-economically vulnerable, easily impressed group of people that is faced with a troubled future, to the answers that have been formulated in response to the collective action problem, which I explained in the introduction. The central question is how a population can be brought to participate in a risky violent rebellion to achieve a public good, even though their participation individually has no effect on the outcome, and that the public good, once achieved, would benefit them whether they participated or not. Is this different when one looks at the youth? Is the youth more easily impressed by rhetoric and promises?

Eck showed that this was indeed a factor for young people to join. However, my research in the previous chapter showed that there are also other factors that show that the youth was in a veritable different position from older generations. More education and no employment could have led to disillusion among the younger, and grievance against the status quo. This is corroborated by George Graham, who argues that developmental projects may have created conditions conducive to violent conflict. Apart from the increase in education levels, he describes the recent investments in basic infrastructure; roads that only recently connected Nepal's larger areas to each other. Together, these conditions allowed the tribal population more mobility and access to the cities and Kathmandu especially. Speaking Nepali and being able to migrate unlike their parents gave these young people the chance to become partly modernised, even though no opportunity in follow-up education or jobs awaited them there. A more developed but opportunity-deprived youth segment can be an important factor in an insurgency. (Graham 2007: 233-234)

An answer to the collective action problem then, could be that the Maoists were able to command more credibility towards the young in offering future selective incentives of employment, a future and equal rights for women. The specific transformations of the situation of the youth, both in familial and socio-economic status, may have caused the youth to perceive the cost of joining the insurgency as very low, and the possible benefits high. These benefits only partly refer to the public good, however. On the basis of the literature, I would argue that becoming a part of the organisation, with at least a temporal prospect of a job or a purpose in life, was an important incentive.

Further study and fieldwork could serve to highlight how this interaction between the Maoists and the youth influenced the course of the insurgency. For now, I conclude that among the established factors of poverty, caste and ethnicity, the factor of youth should receive equal attention to explain the population's participation in the insurgency, as well as the eventual success of this People's War.

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