

STRATEGIES OF VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE IN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS

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This paper seeks to explain why some revolutionary movements engage in a strategy of armed insurgency while others embrace nonviolent resistance as an alternative path to political change. Real world event from the end of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe to the Arab Spring show the important and dramatic effect of civil resistance movements. However, they remain understudied in comparison to their violent counterparts. In particular, while the early 2000s saw a wave of research on the onset of civil wars, no similar study has been conducted on the origins of revolutionary civil resistance campaigns. Using datasets of violent and nonviolent conflicts, this paper will seek to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that affect the likelihood of civil insurrections and how they compare to the previously studied correlates of armed insurgency. The quantitative analysis is supplemented by an in-depth case study of movements in Nepal that have alternated between violent and nonviolent strategies over the past 25 years.

SIMILAR GOALS, FORKING PATHS

In 1990, Nepalese citizens took to the streets of Kathmandu to demand a new form of government. The movement was successful in obtaining substantial concessions, securing new restraints on the power of the monarchy and the restoration of a democratically elected parliament. Despite these gains, a new revolution broke out only six years later. And rather than relying on civil resistance, the new revolutionaries employed guerilla warfare in pursuit of their political goals. The civil war lasted a decade and killed over 15,000 Nepalese. It ended only when yet a third movement arose that successfully used nonviolence to coerce the regime into ending martial law and negotiating with the armed insurgents.

The interplay of violent and nonviolent strategies in revolutionary movements in Nepal is indicative of a much broader phenomenon. Major revolutionary waves, from Eastern Europe in 1989 to the Arab Spring in 2011, have shown that civil resistance and

armed insurgency are viable alternative strategies in the pursuit of revolutionary ends. Moreover, these revolutions have posed a vexing challenge to U.S. and global policymakers. At the core of the policy problem has been a tension between the conflicting interests of supporting the democratic aspirations of popular movements and minimizing the risks of violence and instability. Developing a more complete understanding of how revolutionary movements make strategic choices regarding the use of violent versus nonviolent tactics is essential to making more informed policy decisions about whether, when, and how global actors might engage with these increasingly important non-state groups.

This paper focuses on “revolutionary movements,” a term borrowed from the social movement literature that refers specifically to the subset of social movements that espouse these revolutionary goals.¹ While revolutionary movements often employ a combination of violent and nonviolent tactics, I follow Stephan and Chenoweth in distinguishing two ideal types of movement strategy.² “Civil resistance”³ describes a strategy based on the nonviolent use of social, psychological, economic, and/or political pressure in order to exert coercive power on an adversary.⁴ It is different from spontaneous demonstration in that it is employed in the form of a campaign by a

¹ Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10; Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions: 1492-1992* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993), 10.

² Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict,” *International Security* 33, no. 1 (n.d.): 4.

³ The literature on nonviolence additionally uses the terms nonviolent direct action, nonviolent struggle, strategic nonviolence, or nonviolent insurrection. For the purposes of this research, the terms are interchangeable.

⁴ Based on definitions established by Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973) and Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 6.

movement with identifiable leaders and an organizational structure.⁵ It is also different from institutionalized protest in that it occurs outside the channels of normal political activity, and often outside of the law.⁶ In short, it is the most intensive and coercive form of political contention short of violence. “Armed insurgency,” by contrast, is the threat or use of violence to coerce concessions from an adversary.

This paper hopes to elucidate factors that shape whether a revolutionary movement is more likely to adopt a strategy of civil resistance or armed insurgency. The academic literature on revolutionary movements is enormous. Yet the study of movements that confront the target regime with violence has largely been conducted separately from the study of nonviolent civil resistance campaigns with little overlap or direct dialogue between the two literatures.

The paper proceeds as follows. The first section presents existent theories of revolutionary behavior and highlights the need for greater research in this field. The following section develops five hypotheses based on the assumption that movements will attempt to employ the strategy that they believe holds the greatest chance for success. I then test these hypotheses in a quantitative analysis of over 300 revolutionary movements from 1946 to 2006. Recognizing that non-rational factors may influence movement strategy as well, I present potential alternative explanations based on ideology and movement organization. Finally, I compare these explanations to my original hypotheses through a case study of revolutionary movements in Nepal.

THEORIES OF VIOLENT AND NONVIOLENT REVOLUTION

⁵ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 14.

⁶ Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*, 6.

Civil war scholars have focused on variables affecting the onset of civil violence,⁷ conflict duration⁸, and prospects for resolution.⁹ In the two preeminent studies conducted by Collier and Hoeffler and by Fearon and Laitin, both teams of scholars fail to find significant correlations between potential variables for factors related to social frustrations and inequities such as economic disparity, ethnic and religious cleavages, or political exclusion. Instead, they find strong correlations for variables that they believe represent the “opportunity” to rebel against the state such as advantageous terrain, access to arms and commodity resources, a populace willing to fight for pay, and weak state capacity. All of these studies, however, are focused only on the set of revolutionary movements that employ violence; they conflate the entire range of contention short of violence, ignoring the enormous political and social implications of the difference between a polity actively engaged in civil insurrection versus one in which little or no extra-institutional conflict occurs. They are therefore unable to shed any light on the causes of nonviolent revolutions. But more than that, because they fail to distinguish nonviolent revolutionary action from simple inaction, it is impossible to disentangle which correlates represent an increased likelihood of revolution generally and which are specific to the strategy of violent insurgency.

⁷ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (n.d.): 563-595.

⁸ P. Collier, A. Hoeffler, and M. Söderbom, “On the Duration of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 3 (2004): 253-273; H. Hegre, “The Duration and Termination of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 3 (2004): 243-252; J.D. Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last so Much Longer Than Others?,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 3 (2004): 275-301.

⁹ R. Licklider, *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End* (NYU Press, 1995); B.F. Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (1997): 335-364; H. Hegre, “The Duration and Termination of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 3 (2004).

Meanwhile, the literature on nonviolent resistance has focused so singularly on making the case for the efficacy of nonviolent methods¹⁰ that it has missed opportunities to soberly assess factors that may impact the likelihood of a revolutionary movement being able to adopt and maintain a strategy of civil resistance. Gene Sharp has written most prolifically on the topic of nonviolence for nearly five decades. Sometimes referred to as the “Clausewitz” of nonviolent resistance, Sharp’s work focuses on the nature of power and on the tactics and mechanisms through which a nonviolent movement can pressure a regime to meet its demands.¹¹ Ackerman and Kruegler employ a more empirically rigorous approach, using case studies of both successful and unsuccessful nonviolent campaigns to derive 12 “principles” of strategic action that influence whether or not a campaign will be successful.¹² Schock and Nepstad have similarly compared nonviolent movements in an effort to identify determinants of effectiveness. Schock emphasizes tactical factors, such as a movement’s ability to innovate new methods,¹³ while for Nepstad, it is a movement’s ability to generate defections from the regime’s forces that is most important.¹⁴ Chenoweth and Stephan are the first to employ a cross-case quantitative analysis in their study of civil resistance as well as the first to compare directly violent and nonviolent campaigns.¹⁵ They find that nonviolent campaigns are dramatically more successful than their violent counterparts, and that the number of

¹⁰ Ackerman and Duvall, *A force more powerful*; Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash, *Civil resistance and power politics: the experience of non-violent action from Gandhi to the present* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Zunes, *Nonviolent social movements*.

¹¹ Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*.

¹² P. Ackerman and C. Kruegler, *Strategic nonviolent conflict: The dynamics of people power in the twentieth century* (Praeger Publishers, 1994).

¹³ Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*.

¹⁴ Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict,” *International Security* 33, no. 1 (n.d.): 4; Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

participants is the most important factor in explaining the success of nonviolent movements. In short, nonviolent campaigns are more effective *because* they are able to attract more supporters.

These studies have all pushed forward the scholarly analysis of nonviolence with increased rigor and empirical analysis. However, in their focus on relative effectiveness, either amongst nonviolent movements or between violent and nonviolent movements, they all overlook what factors might lead different groups to adopt different strategies, might enable a particular strategy to better gain “traction” in certain environments, or might cause a movement to adapt and change its strategy over time. Moreover, understanding the factors that shape a revolutionary movement’s strategy is a necessary prerequisite to any analysis of the comparative effectiveness of revolutionary strategy. Absent such preliminary knowledge, any comparison of violent versus nonviolent outcomes will be skewed by factors that simultaneously influence both movement strategy and likelihood of success, creating a “selection effects” bias.

THE STRATEGIC CALCULATION OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS

This paper begins with the assumption that revolutionary movements choose strategy based on which set of tactics they believe will be most effective in achieving their goals. In doing so, I do not mean to take the assumption of rationality for granted. Indeed, psychological, ideational, emotional, and organizational factors may all play a role. Rather, the intent is to use the assumption of rational strategic choice to develop a set of testable hypotheses about revolutionary movement behavior that can then be tested and compared to alternative explanations.

Drawing upon the literatures on civil war and civil resistance, I develop a set of hypotheses about conditions under which either a violent or a nonviolent strategy would likely be comparatively more effective than the other. In other words, I argue that we should expect to see violent and nonviolent movements to each have a greater chance of being present under conditions that favor its particular strategic logic and unique arsenal of tactical methods.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INSURGENCY: A major finding from the quantitative studies on civil war onset has been that the onset of violent intrastate conflict is best explained by analyzing factors that effect the “opportunity” for a rebel group to wage an insurgency. In other words, civil wars happen most often in places where carrying out the tactics of guerilla warfare is easier to do. Fearon and Laitin argue that one such case is when the state has extremely low capacity and is therefore unable to effectively squash an incipient rebellion.¹⁶ The similar logic should apply to whether we see a revolutionary movement adopt a violent versus a nonviolent strategy. A movement confronting a regime with limited military capabilities may be more likely to believe that armed confrontation could be successful. By contrast, a movement targeting a militarily powerful regime may avoid playing to the strengths of its adversary and attempt civil resistance instead.

Hypothesis 1: A revolutionary movement will be more likely to employ civil resistance when confronting a militarily capable regime and more likely to adopt armed insurgency when confronting a regime that is militarily weak.

In addition to regime capabilities, civil war scholars have focused on environmental variables that offer tactical advantages to the methods of guerilla warfare. Specifically,

¹⁶ Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.”

geographical features such as mountainous terrain makes insurgency easier by offering rebels places to hide from regime forces.¹⁷ We should expect these same factors to have a similar impact on whether a revolutionary movement against a given regime chooses a violent versus a nonviolent strategy.

Hypothesis 2: If the environmental factors in a given context specifically benefit the tactics of guerilla warfare, a revolutionary movement should be more likely to pursue a strategy of violence.

DEPTH AND BREADTH OF POPULAR SUPPORT: While scholars of civil war have focused on opportunity for rebellion, the literature on strategic nonviolence emphasizes the “primacy” of mass participation to a movement’s success. The logic behind this is straightforward: if strategic nonviolence depends on the withdrawal of the consent of the governed, the more citizens who withdraw their consent, the greater the threat to regime power. In fact, nearly all of the 198 nonviolent tactics identified by Gene Sharp benefit from increased numbers of participants.¹⁸ In addition, a larger movement increases pressures for defection as regime members are more likely to have friends and family members participating in the movement. These close associates may not only make the regime member more sympathetic to the movement, but make the member less willing to engage in repression. Chenoweth and Stephan show that movements with higher rates of participation were over 50 percent more likely to spark defections from the regime.¹⁹

Based on these requisites for nonviolent movement success as presented in the theoretical and empirical literature, a revolutionary movement with a broad base of

¹⁷ Collier and Hoefler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War.”

¹⁸ Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*.

¹⁹ Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 48.

support would do well to consider the employment of nonviolent tactics. Popular support can be beneficial for a violent strategy as well. A sympathetic local population can generate new recruits, provide hiding and shelter for insurgents, offer intelligence, and even be a source of financial revenue. But while popular support can be helpful for a strategy of violence, it is not necessarily required for success as in the strategy of nonviolence. Instead, research on insurgency has shown how small groups of rebels can defeat the most powerful regime adversaries.²⁰ These findings are backed by Chenoweth and Stephan's quantitative analysis, which shows that the number of participants and regime defections are far less important in predicting the outcome of violent campaigns.²¹

Because popular support is helpful to both strategies, a movement that has or expect to generate broad and diverse support may choose either violence or nonviolence. However, for a movement whose popular support is either limited in overall size or constrained to a certain segment of the population that does not overlap with the regime's base of support, a strategy of nonviolence may appear to have little hope of success. Such a movement is more likely instead to opt for a violent strategy.

This broader statement is of little help unless we can identify factors that would allow a movement to anticipate the degree of popular support it is likely to receive before it begins either a violent or nonviolent campaign. I offer three potential correlates of movement support.

First, a movement is only likely to gain broad popular support in a polity in which political grievances are widely held and shared and in which institutional (i.e. non-revolutionary) alternatives either do not exist or have been shown to be ineffective.

²⁰ I. Arreguin-Toft, "How the weak win wars: A theory of asymmetric conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93-128.

²¹ Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

Revolutionary movements should therefore receive more support under autocratic regime structures and thus be more likely to be able to deploy a strategy of civil resistance. In a democracy, by contrast, broader segments of the population may be more likely to either be satisfied with the status quo or to believe that their grievances can be addressed through institutionalized political processes. Movements with revolutionary goals are unlikely to be able to build the popular support necessary to make civil resistance effective and will instead feel compelled to adopt a strategy of armed insurgency.

Hypothesis 3: Higher levels of democratization will reduce the likelihood of a revolutionary movement adopting a strategy of civil resistance compared to insurgency.

While revolutionary goals may draw less support in the context of a democracy, in any regime context the specific goal of secession is likely to garner less support than the goal of regime change. By its very nature, secessionist goals offer potential benefits only to the inhabitants of a territorial segment of a state. Those not residing within the territory seeking secession are very unlikely to support such a movement, thus putting a ceiling on the number of potential movement supporters. Additionally, secessionist movements are often based around a social cleavage: movement members often come from a different ethnic or religious group than both the majority of the state's population and specifically members of the regime and security forces. Winning over defectors, a key element to civil resistance effectiveness, is therefore far less likely in the case of secessionist movements.

Hypothesis 4: Movements seeking secession will be more likely to employ armed insurgency rather than civil resistance.

Finally, even in cases where the revolutionary goal is regime change, we should expect movements to be more likely to struggle to build support when there is little “social overlap” between the movement and both the broader population and the regime. Movements that initially form within a social group that is of a different ethnicity, religion, tribe, or class from the broader population may have extreme difficulty in crossing these social cleavages in order to build popular support. In particular, when such cleavages exist between the movement and the regime, including the security forces, winning over defectors will be extremely difficult.

Hypothesis 5: Movements whose members come from a different ethnic, religious, or class group than the regime and/or broader population will be more likely to employ armed insurgency.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS SINCE 1945

In order to test the previously discussed hypotheses, I assembled a dataset of nonviolent and violent conflicts in the 60 year period from 1946 to 2006. Nonviolent conflicts were drawn from Chenoweth and Stephan’s Nonviolent and Violent Conflict Outcomes (NAVCO) dataset.²² These conflicts were identified based on a broad survey of the literature on civil resistance movements. To be included in the dataset, movements must have an organized structure, and identifiable leadership, and attract at least 1000 participants. Violent conflicts were collected from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset²³ dataset. The unit of analysis of the new dataset is the campaign against an incumbent regime.²⁴ Units were limited to those that fell within the common

²² M J Stephan and E Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works: the Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict,” *International Security* 33, no. 1 (2008): 7–44.

²³ Themnér, Lotta & Peter Wallensteen, 2012. "Armed Conflict, 1946-2011." *Journal of Peace Research* 49(4).

²⁴ Movements that rhetorically espouse revolutionary goals but that do not actually conduct a campaign that deploys violent or nonviolent action against a regime are not counted. The units are also exclusive in terms of strategy employed. For conflicts in which both violent and

timeframe of 1946-2006 and that espoused revolutionary goals: regime change or secession. The resulting dataset consists of 332 campaigns of which 92 adopted violent civil resistance and 240 utilized armed insurgency.

I collected 8 sets of variables relevant to the hypotheses and to serve as controls. Logged per capita GDP figures were collected from multiple sources within the civil war literature. Data was taken from the year prior to the onset of conflict to avoid the effects of conflict itself on the state's economy. The Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) was used from the Correlates of War National Material Capabilities Dataset.²⁵ This measure summarizes a state's total population, urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military personnel, and military expenditures. A measure of the degree of mountainous terrain was collected from multiple sources within the conflict studies literature. Each campaign was coded dichotomously by its revolutionary goal: either regime change (1) or secession (0). These codings came directly from the source datasets: NAVCO and UCDP/PRIO. Polity scores were used as a measure of the degree of democratization within a state.²⁶ For mathematical simplicity, they were transformed to a scale from 0 to 20 (with 20 being the most democratic and 0 the most autocratic).

Finally, I created a new coding of "ethnic overlap" between the revolutionary movement and the regime. Drawing upon the Ethnic Armed Conflict dataset, the Ethnic

nonviolent tactics are present, an effort is made to identify distinguishable organizational structures operating with distinct strategies. When a movement at some point clearly changes strategies (from violence to nonviolence or vice versa), it is similarly recorded as two separate campaigns. However, if a movement consistently employs both nonviolent and violent tactics, the underlying strategic logic is considered to be that of insurgency and is coded as such.

²⁵ Singer, J. David. (1987). "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985" *International Interactions*, 14: 115-32.

²⁶ Gurr, Ted R.; Keith Jagers and Will H. Moore. 1989. *The POLITY II Codebook*. University of Colorado at Boulder, Center for Comparative Politics.

Power Relations dataset²⁷ and original qualitative research, I coded a campaign as having no ethnic overlap between movement and regime (0) if the movement recruited members primarily from within a specific ethnic group that is distinct from the ethnic group(s) that make up the majority of the state’s bureaucracy and security forces.

I used a logistic regression analysis to test the effects of each of these independent variables on the likelihood that the movement targeting the regime in a revolutionary campaign employed a strategy of nonviolent civil resistance (1) versus armed insurgency (0). A summary of results from the model are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: *Logistic regression model of the likelihood that a revolutionary movement adopts a nonviolent versus a violent strategy. The unit of analysis is the revolutionary campaign and the dependent variable is the strategy employed, coded as 1 for civil resistance and 0 for insurgency.*

	B (SE)		95% CI for Odds Ratio		
			Lower	Odds Ratio	Upper
Constant	-1.39 ** (0.53)				
GDP	0.13 ** (0.04)		1.05	1.14	1.25
Regime Capability	-0.69 (5.98)		0	0.5	40836
Mountainous Terrain	-0.12 (0.12)		0.7	0.88	1.11
Regime Change Goal	-0.70 (0.49)		0.18	0.5	1.3
Polity Score	-0.06 * (0.03)		0.94	0.98	0.99

²⁷ A Wimmer, L E Cederman, and B Min, “Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: a Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set,” *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 316–337, doi:10.1177/000312240907400208; Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?: New Data and Analysis,” *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (2010): 87–119.

Ethnic Overlap	1.87 *** (0.42)	2.96	6.46	15.68
No. Observations	298			
AIC	304.53			
Significance Levels:	*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05			

While per capita GDP was included primarily to serve as a control variable, the results show that higher GDP in a state increases the likelihood that when a revolutionary movement in that state would choose civil resistance over insurgency. This finding is consistent with the results of civil war studies that have shown a negative correlation between the onset of civil war and GDP. Some of those studies have interpreted this correlation as a relationship between violent conflict and state capacity.²⁸ Using such an interpretation, the finding above could be seen as supporting Hypothesis 1. However, GDP is a crude measure that correlates to many dynamics within a state. It is difficult to draw too much meaning out of such a correlation.

The state material capability measure was intended to be a more direct proxy of state capacity for the purposes of testing Hypothesis 1 – that the stronger the capabilities of the state, the more likely a revolutionary movement would be to opt for a strategy of civil resistance so as not to confront directly the regime’s military strength. However, the model provides no evidence of any type of correlation between state material capabilities and movement strategy.

Similarly, there is little evidence to support the second hypothesis related to terrain. The model shows a negative relationship between mountainous topography and nonviolence, as predicted, however the result falls short of statistical significance.

²⁸ Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.”

The model shows a negative correlation between democracy and nonviolence. For every additional point toward democracy that a state falls on the Polity spectrum, the model predicts that a revolutionary movement in that state would be 2 percent less likely to employ civil resistance. This finding, though weak in terms of the impact of the effect, is nonetheless statistically significant and consistent with Hypothesis 3.

The effect of a movement's goal on movement strategy provides a surprising result. Hypothesis 4 predicts that movements seeking regime change will be more likely to have broader appeal and thus embrace nonviolence. However, the model predicts that a regime change movement would be half as likely to pursue civil resistance as a secessionist movement, though the result falls short of statistical significance. This is counterintuitive, not only because it runs contrary to the hypothesis, but because in direct numbers, a larger percentage of secession movements are nonviolent. Of all revolutionary movements seeking regime change, 30 percent employed civil resistance while only 22 percent of secession movements embraced nonviolence. (This difference, however, is also not statistically significant: Chi squared = 1.5, $p = .22$).

Finally, Hypothesis 5 receives strong support as the ethnic overlap variable is both highly significant and has a strong effect. In fact, the model predicts that when controlling for other variables, revolutionary movements that enjoy ethnic overlap with the regime are six times more likely to adopt civil resistance than those that recruit primarily from an ethnic group different from that of the regime.

A revolutionary movement's degree of overlap also correlates with movement goals, likely explaining the surprising result of the movement goal variable. In fact, of 90 movements seeking secession, only 10 had ethnic overlap with the regime compared to 164 of the 242 campaigns seeking regime change (Chi squared = 82.9; $p = 0.00$). To

address this issue, I ran independent logistic regressions for the set of regime change campaigns and for the set of secession campaigns. The results (presented in Table 2) show that while the results for movements seeking regime change are largely similar to the those of the original model, in the model for secession movements, GDP remains the only significant variable. This could simply be due to a decrease in analytic power resulting from the reduced sample size, or it could reflect a genuine difference in the strategic logic between regime change and secessionist conflicts.

Finally, I ran a regression model based on a dataset in which I removed violent conflicts from the sample set in which fewer than 1000 battle-related deaths occurred. The intent of the initially broader sample set was both to increase sample size, and also to capture campaigns in which a revolutionary movement attempted insurgency but was perhaps quickly defeated. However, the appropriate threshold for defining “civil war” is contested within the literature.²⁹ Furthermore, it is not clear which standard provides the most appropriate comparison to the set of civil resistance campaigns. My results show only small changes as a result of this different conceptual definition. Ethnic overlap remains a significant and powerful variable. The effect of GDP and Polity point in the same direction, but their statistical significance is weakened, perhaps due to the reduction in sample size. Mountainous terrain has a stronger effect and approaches statistical significance, indicating perhaps that terrain affects the ability of a violent movement to achieve lethal effect more than it affects a movement’s initial strategic calculus.

²⁹ N Sambanis, “What Is Civil War?: Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (December 1, 2004): 814–858, doi:10.1177/0022002704269355.

TABLE 2: Logistic regression models on subsets of the original dataset for cases of regime change only, secession only, and where the threshold for cases of insurgency is increased from 25 to 1,000 battle related deaths. Results from the original model are included as well for purposes of comparison. In all models, the dependent variable is the strategy employed, coded as 1 for civil resistance and 0 for insurgency.

	All Movements	Regime Change Movements	Territorial Movements	Major Conflicts
	B / (SE)	B / (SE)	B / (SE)	B / (SE)
Constant	-1.39 ** (0.53)	-2.97 *** (0.73)	-0.08 (0.99)	0.01 (0.67)
GDP	0.13 ** (0.04)	0.11 * (0.05)	0.29 ** (0.11)	0.11 (0.06)
Regime Capacity	-0.69 (5.98)	13.69 (8.77)	-15.77 (11.97)	-7.92 (6.75)
Mountainous Terrain	-0.12 (0.12)	-0.04 (0.13)	-0.51 (0.31)	-0.29 (0.17)
Movement Goal	-0.70 (0.49)			-0.22 (0.65)
Polity Score	-0.06 * (0.03)	-0.06 * (0.03)	-0.12 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.04)
Ethnic Overlap	1.87 *** (0.42)	2.61682 *** (0.62)	0.31 (1.21)	1.81 ** (0.56)
No. Observations	298.00	224.00	74.00	133.00
AIC	304.53	230.11	68.02	162.71
Significance Levels:	*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05			

IDEOLOGY AND COHESION AS ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

The hypotheses described above are not the only plausible explanations for why some revolutionary movements employ violence while others choose a nonviolent strategy. This section will explore two alternative arguments, ideology and organizational cohesion, that exist as popular conceptions and as more fully developed scholarly theories.

Ideology, Norms, and Culture

A common perception of nonviolent resistance movements is that its adherents are bound to this strategy due to a moral opposition to the use of violent force.³⁰ This impression is reinforced by the fact that many leading figures of nonviolent movements, such as Gandhi and King, have emphasized the moral superiority of violence in their well-known speeches and writings. But even Gandhi does not rule out the use of violence in absolute terms. In fact, Gandhi argues that responding violently to injustice would be preferable to doing nothing at all.³¹ However, nonviolent methods are preferable because they are *effective* while at the same time being morally superior.

In studying nonviolent movements, scholars have generally found that leaders and participants in civil insurrections emphasize the pragmatic advantages of their strategy far more often than they emphasize its moral superiority.³² As Lakey writes,

³⁰ For contrasting contemporary normative perspectives on the decision to employ violence against a regime, see Dustin Ells Howes, *Toward a Credible Pacifism: Violence and the Possibilities of Politics* (SUNY Press, 2009); Peter Gelderloos, *How nonviolence protects the state* (South End Press, 2007).

³¹ Gandhi (Mahatma), *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth* (Courier Dover Publications, 1983).

³² Roger Powers, "Nonviolent Philosophy/Nonviolent Action: an Appeal for Conceptual Precision," *Nonviolent Sanctions* 5, no. 1 (1993): 4.

“Most pacifists do not practice nonviolent resistance and most people who do practice nonviolent resistance are not pacifists.”³³

In a more developed form of a similar argument, social movement scholars have argued that the shared culture, ideology, values, and understandings of a movement’s members serve both to unify the group and to inform the “repertoire” of tactics that it employs.³⁴ Some have even taken this further to argue that certain cultures and religions, especially Islam, place value on violence.³⁵ Yet even within Islam, there is a long tradition of civil resistance³⁶ and the assertion that Islamic cultures are more prone to violence has been shown to be empirically unfounded when other structural factors are accounted for.³⁷ As Pearlman eloquently concludes, “Most cultures are sufficiently rich and complex to legitimate either violent or nonviolent protest.”³⁸

The “Organizational Mediation” Theory of Revolutionary Strategy

Scholars of violent insurgency have recently begun to closely analyze the role of a movements organizational structure on its behavior. Weinstein, for example, argues the different degrees of movement cohesion and discipline explain variation in violence between movements.³⁹ Pearlman takes this a step further to argue that cohesion can

³³ George Lakey, *Strategy for a living revolution* (Grossman Publishers, 1973), 57.

³⁴ Doug McAdam, “Culture and Social Movements,” in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, ed. Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield (Temple University Press, 1994).

³⁵ The most famous academic example of this argument being Samuel Huntington’s assertion that Islam has “bloody borders” : Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 1st ed. (Simon & Schuster, 1998).

³⁶ Maria J. Stephan, ed., *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and Governance in the Middle East* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³⁷ Jonathan Fox, “Is Islam more conflict prone than other religions? A cross-sectional study of ethnoreligious conflict,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 6, no. 2 (2000): 1-24.

³⁸ Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

³⁹ Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside rebellion: the politics of insurgent violence* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

explain whether a movement pursues a violent or nonviolent strategy altogether.⁴⁰ By tracing over 80 years of history of Palestinian movements, she argues that when the movements were united with strong, cohesive institutions, they were able to employ a strategy of civil insurrection, but when they broke apart into factionalism, they turned instead toward violent insurgency and terrorism. Pearlman illustrates compelling mechanisms for how a lack of cohesion can lead toward violence. But at best she describes only a necessary but not sufficient condition for civil insurrection. Plenty of violent insurgent movements have been highly disciplined, organized, and cohesive (as Weinstein points out in his work). Furthermore, it is equally plausible that it is disagreement over the use of violence that leads to fractures within a movement rather than vice-versa. Organizational theories can therefore only explain a small part of the variation we see in revolutionary movement strategy.

Both ideational and organizational theories are difficult to test empirically in the context of a cross-national quantitative analysis. I will however address these explanations and compare them to my theory of networks of popular support in the context of a case study of revolutionary movements in Nepal.

VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE IN THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOM

Within a span of only 16 years, from 1990 to 2006, Nepal experience three revolutionary campaigns that were sequentially nonviolent, violent, and then nonviolent again. This unique history accentuates the puzzle of why some revolutionary movements embrace and maintain a strategy of nonviolent civil resistance while others opt for armed insurgency and makes Nepal a particularly interesting and fruitful case

⁴⁰ Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*.

for further examination. Nepal's weak economy and mountainous terrain should make it particularly likely to experience civil war according to the dominant theories of political violence onset.⁴¹ So the emergence of the "People's Movement" in 1990, and especially the return to civil resistance in 2006, even after a decade of war, defy existing theory and are in need of greater understanding. The "People's War" of 1996-2006 is more empirically predictable, but nevertheless may be surprising coming as it did so quickly on the heels of a generally successful nonviolent movement. Moreover, it provides a stunning contrast to its nonviolent counterparts that is historically interesting and analytically useful.

This section will briefly trace the historical development of each of the three revolutionary movements to challenge the Nepali state. I will then analyze different factors that affected revolutionary strategy during each of the three movements, testing the competing hypotheses presented above. I also address two non-rational potential explanations for revolutionary behavior: movement ideology and organizational cohesion. I show that while these two factors played important roles, they alone are insufficient in explaining the variation between nonviolence and violence. Groups that were ideologically committed to violent insurgency were willing to abandon that commitment in the face of evidence that alternative strategies could allow them to achieve their political goals more effectively and that fragmentation and factional competition within movements was often the consequence of these pragmatic debates rather than a cause of violence in and of itself. Instead, I argue that an analysis of the dynamics of popular support of the revolutionary movements provides a more complete

⁴¹ P Collier, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (June 22, 2004): 563-595, doi:10.1093/oep/gpf064.

picture by explaining changes in the comparative efficacy of violent and nonviolent strategies.

The First *Jana Andolan*: 1990

In 1989, Nepal faced a growing economic crisis as India cut off trade relations in an effort to coerce the regime into renegotiating existing trade and water rights treaties. King Birendra's perceived inability to manage relations with India began to erode his support even among the upper-level classes of Nepalese society. Meanwhile, nonviolent revolutions in Europe incited hope that similar efforts could be successful in Nepal. Particularly influential was the fall of Ceausescu in Romania. Ceausescu was seen as a friend and ally of King Birendra, having visited Nepal as recently as 1987.⁴² If the Romanians could overthrow their dictator, so too could the Nepalese overthrow their monarchy.

Conducting a successful campaign against the King would require significantly more organization and collaboration amongst Nepal's opposition movements than they had proven capable of to that point. Recognizing this need, seven leftist parties joined together to form the United Leftist Front (ULF) in January of 1990. The ULF then began meeting with Congress party leaders in New Delhi in an attempt to form a common set of political demands and strategize for the initiation of a civil resistance campaign. The ideological differences of the two groups proved too great to be overcome entirely. Congress simply sought a revival of a parliamentary system similar to what Nepal briefly experienced in the 1950s, while the ULF sought a more radical set of reforms including a complete end to the monarchy and the *panchayat* system, a redistribution of

⁴² T Louise Brown, *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal*, (Burns & Oates, 1996).

land holdings, and comprehensive measures to reduce inequality and discrimination. However, both parties agreed to pursue simultaneous but distinct nonviolent campaigns in the hope that their aggregate efforts would increase both of their chances of success. Sociologist and scholar of nonviolent movements Kurt Schock describes that "Without their usual fractiousness, the opposition forces were able to temporarily set aside their differences to support the NC's call for a people power movement, as they realized that a more broad based popular movement had to be developed in order to generate a sufficient amount of pressure to promote political change."⁴³

The *Jana Andolan* began with public demonstrations on February 4th, 1990 and a general strike that began on February 19th. Geographically, the movement was focused predominantly in the capital of Kathmandu its suburbs with some additional demonstrations in the industrial cities of the southern plains. These cities represented not only the major population centers, where organizing mass protest was possible, but also the highest concentration of middle class professionals that made up the bulk of movement participants. University students, intellectuals, lawyers, and other professionals played particularly active roles, often forming "solidarity groups" amongst their peers to help maintain the pace of protest activity. Doctors and medical workers assisted in treating those injured by the police and even organized protests of their own against the regime's excessive use of force.⁴⁴

By April, government employees began to defect and support the revolutionary movement. Foreign Minister Upadhyay resigned on April 2nd, citing the King's mishandling of relations with India.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, international pressure against the regime began to build. Nepal's dependency on foreign aid to sustain the most basic

⁴³ Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*.

⁴⁴ Brown, *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal*.

⁴⁵ Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*.

functions of government made the King particularly vulnerable to the demands of donor nations. Indian politicians and observers from the U.S. and West German embassies had in fact been present during many of the initial planning meetings between the ULF and Congress. International organizations such as Amnesty International and Asia Watch reported to the world cases of excessive use of force or human rights abuses by regime forces. Threats from donor nations to cut funding restrained the ability of the King to use all-out force to end the protests (in fact, the Commander of the Army claims that he could have crushed the movement "within one hour" had he been given the order).⁴⁶ By late April, these donor nations, including the United States, Germany, and Switzerland, were not just urging restraint, but actively pressing the King to pursue a negotiated settlement.

With members of his own cabinet defecting and his international allies withdrawing their support, King Birendra's options became limited. As Brown describes: "He could either press on with repression of the movement and risk becoming an international pariah, or he could reach an accommodation with the *Jana Andolan*."⁴⁷

On April 9th, the King agreed to lift the ban on political parties, beginning a process of negotiations with more conservative elements of the *Jana Andolan* that led to parliamentary elections the following year.

The People's War: 1996-2006

While the *Jana Andolan* resulted in free elections and a parliamentary government, it fell far short of meeting the hopes of all who took to the streets to demand change. In an effort to consolidate power and reduce the risk of a counter-revolution, Congress

⁴⁶ Brown, *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal*.

⁴⁷ *ibid*.

worked closely with *panchayat* nobles, even allowing some to run as candidates for parliament on the party ticket. ⁴⁸ The result of this centrist-conservative partnership was that the new democratically elected government did little to change the deeper political, economic, and social structures of Nepali society. In particular, no reforms were made to the country's land tenure system and the nobility retained control of the extensive land holdings they had acquired over decades of the *panchayat* system. The same ethnic and caste groups that had dominated Nepal under the monarchy continued to do so in the new democracy. As late as 1999, the three most powerful groups--the Bahuns, the Chetris, and the Newars--comprised just over a third of Nepal's population but held over 80 percent of high-level positions in government, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary. Only 6 percent of those elected to parliament were women and only one single representative of the lowest Dalit caste was elected during during the "democratic" period from 1990-2002.⁴⁹ While Nepal had in theory undergone a dramatic political transformation, according to some, "all that had changed were the names on the ministers' doors." ⁵⁰

The rising disenchantment with parliamentary politics, especially among the lower classes and castes, played to the benefit of the political faction that had historically courted the support of these groups: the Maoists. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Maoists operated as a minority communist faction in Nepal, often in the shadow of the larger Marxist-Leninist branch. The Maoists did not formally join the Unified Leftist Front in the *Jana Andolan*. In rhetoric, they maintained that true revolution in Nepal could only be achieved through violence, yet in practice many Maoists did participate in the nonviolent direct action. Faced with a new era of party politics after the *Jana*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁹ Routledge, "Nineteen Days in April: Urban Protest and Democracy in Nepal," p. 1283.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 177.

Andolan, the Maoists were split on how to proceed. While Singh opposed participation in parliamentary politics, a new generation of Maoists, led by Pushpa Kumar Dahal (who later goes by the *nom de guerre* "Comrade Prachanda"), Baboram Bhattarai, and Nirmal Lama formed a political party, the United People's Front (UPF), to compete in the elections. The party won 9 seats in the 1991 elections making it the third largest party in the Nepali parliament. Still, UPF's stated goal was not to participate in governance and policymaking, but rather to use the campaign and seats in parliament as a platform to highlight the inadequacy of the political process.

As the government continued to be unresponsive to Maoist demands, the leadership began to fragment again over whether to continue with parliamentary politics or to initiate a People's War. Dahal and Bhattarai split from Lama and began preparations for guerilla war.⁵¹

The Maoists sought to follow the three step strategy developed by Mao himself. They began in the rural areas where they had the strongest base of popular support, attacked police stations and other sites of government presence, seized control of territory, and set up their own "People's" institutions of governance.⁵² They relied primarily on local resources: acquiring arms from attacks on police stations, robbing banks, extorting businesses, and kidnapping wealthy individuals for ransom. The Maoists targeted unpopular and symbolic institutions, focusing especially on the destruction of loan documents and bank records. This not only further built support amongst angry peasants, but they also collected what used to be the land owner's share

⁵¹ Upreti, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Nature, Growth and Impact," 37-38.

⁵² Upreti, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Nature, Growth and Impact," 41.

of revenue in order to fund the insurgence. This often totalled as much as 50 percent of the value of production.⁵³

The Maoists focused on other salient social issues to build support as well, campaigning against the abuse of women, outlawing drinking, and catering to caste, class, ethnic, and gender-based grievances. While the Maoists may not have enjoyed the overwhelming support of the population, they were able to generate a critical mass necessary to meet their tactical needs. According to Whelpton, "Once there was a significant minority of dedicated supporters, the threat of violence was enough to ensure the majority's acquiescence."⁵⁴

Return to a People's Movement

While Nepal's Maoists made impressive territorial gains over nine years of guerilla warfare, by 2005 the conflict had reached a stalemate. Their control of the countryside was strong enough that even the King's efforts to deploy the Royal Nepalese Army were insufficient to roll back the insurgency. But the Maoists faced considerable obstacles if they attempted to press their campaign further. They had essentially succeeded in achieving the first two stages of Mao's "playbook" for insurgency: they had successfully weakened regime forces through guerilla warfare and had achieved a strategic stalemate whereby they controlled the rural areas and had essentially surrounded the major cities. The final phase of "strategic offensive"--entering the Kathmandu valley and overthrowing the regime--would be far more difficult. It would involve confronting the state security forces in their own area of strength and where popular support for the Maoists was weakest.

⁵³ Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

Moreover, there were international obstacles to achieving victory through force. Outside actors, most notably the United States and India, had provided substantial military aid to the regime in the early years of the conflict in order to prevent a communist takeover, but they had rolled back support to punish King Gyanendra for his autocratic coup. However, the Maoists believed that the outside powers would quickly reinvest in the conflict if a total Maoist victory seemed imminent. And even if an urban campaign were successful in toppling the monarchy, governing after the revolution would likely be difficult in the face of international isolation.⁵⁵

The royal coup had also changed the alignment of political interests within Nepal. The political parties that had once been content to keep the Maoists excluded from the political process now found themselves powerless as well. As had been the case in 1990, the center-right Congress and the leftist political parties shared a common cause in their desire to overthrow the monarchy. And now, unlike 1990, the Maoists believed that the success of their insurgency gave them both the negotiation leverage as well as the organizational strength necessary to ensure themselves a dominant role in an electoral system.

Civil society organizations used human rights campaigns as a platform to bring together the formerly competitive political parties to support common agendas.⁵⁶ These smaller initiatives, such as the Agenda 19 declaration of human rights culminated in the formation of a Seven Party Alliance (SPA) that included both Congress and the more moderate leftist political parties. In the fall of 2005, the SPA entered into a series of negotiations in New Delhi with the Maoists and November 22nd both sides issued a 12 Point Understanding that called for an end to the monarchy, the creation of an electoral

⁵⁵ K M Dixit, "The Spring of Dissent: People's Movement in Nepal," *India International Centre Quarterly* (2006).

⁵⁶ Routledge, "Nineteen Days in April: Urban Protest and Democracy in Nepal." 1286.

system with a constituent assembly, and the integration of Maoist fighters into the Royal Nepal Army under the watch of the United Nations.⁵⁷ They further agreed to engage in a second "People's Movement" to coerce the regime into meeting their demands.

In April of 2006, the political parties organized a series of demonstrations on the 30km "ring road" that surrounds downtown Kathmandu.⁵⁸ In addition, the SPA initiated a "tax strike" on April 9th, constructed road blocks, and even blockaded entire towns. Prominent political leaders deliberately attempted to get arrested. The Maoists participated as well, organizing strikes, road blockages, and shutting down local and regional government agencies.⁵⁹ They also helped mobilize and transport their rural supporters to Kathmandu to participate in demonstrations in the capital city. Middle class professionals participated actively in the second *Jana Andolan* just as they had in the first, but the later movement was supplemented by a high level of involvement from the rural peasant class that had not been a part of the 1990 efforts. According to Routledge, "Peasants coming from the rural areas comprised the majority of the demonstrators on the ring road and were the major force of the [second] *Jana Andolan*."⁶⁰

The Maoists declared a cease fire in the Kathmandu valley for the duration of the *Jana Andolan*, but they continued to carry out attacks in peripheral areas not yet under their control. Throughout April, the Maoists conducted violent operations in Nepalgunj, Biratnagar, and Pokhara.⁶¹

On April 21, the King announced that he would be willing to form a new government to be led by a Prime Minister selected by the SPA. According to Nepali journalist Kanak Mani Dixit, the political leaders themselves were unsure whether or not

⁵⁷ Dixit, "The Spring of Dissent: People's Movement in Nepal."

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 1286.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* 1290.

⁶¹ *ibid.* 1287-1288.

to accept the King's offer.⁶² However, the activists in the streets were only more inflamed by what they viewed as inadequate concessions and protests escalated further. This was accompanied by increase diplomatic pressure from foreign embassies in Kathmandu. Two days later, the Royal Nepal Army informed the King that it would no longer follow his orders.⁶³ The King was forced to read a statement of concession drafted by SPA leaders that called for an end to the monarchy and the creation of a new democratic system. To fulfill the Maoists key demand, the parliament would be replaced with a constituent assembly that included more rigorous requirements for the inclusion of Nepal's minority groups. In elections held in 2008, the Maoists routed their political rivals, earning 30 percent of the overall vote and 220 assembly seats--double the number of the Nepali Congress party, their nearest competitor.⁶⁴ On August 18th, the Maoists' revolutionary leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, or "Comrade Prachanda," was sworn in as prime minister of Nepal.

Ideology and Insurgency

One of the simplest and most often noted explanations for revolutionaries' choice of strategy is their ideology. Under this view, groups' actions are a product of their inherent belief systems based on philosophies of the nature of power and justice that can often be traced back to seminal thinkers like Mao or Gandhi.

This argument appears at first glance to be particularly well-suited to the case of Nepal where the insurgents claimed to be disciples of Mao's theory and example. Maoist doctrine identifies a set of structural grievances that resonated with rural, poor,

⁶² Dixit, "The Spring of Dissent: People's Movement in Nepal."

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Thapa and Sharma, "From Insurgency to Democracy: the Challenges of Peace and Democracy-Building in Nepal."

Nepali peasants and provides a specific plan of action to redress those injustices by overthrowing the state with violent force. In the 50 years between Mao's revolution and the Nepalese civil war, Nepal's Maoists repeatedly stated their commitment to the belief that People's War was the only way to achieve meaningful changes to the problems of inequality and discrimination.⁶⁵

Despite the clear importance of Maoist doctrine to Nepal's violent revolutionaries, ideology is nevertheless unsatisfying as an explanation for revolutionary strategy. Ideology may pair a set of grievances with a particular revolutionary solution, but it doesn't explain how certain groups of disenfranchised individuals come to embrace one particular ideology over another. In this sense, to attribute variation in strategy to ideology simply begs the question. Why is it then that some groups come to embrace an ideology that proposes violence as the answer while others adopt a belief structure that proposes nonviolence as the appropriate solution.

It could be that different groups feel a stronger affinity to certain ideologies because due to either the philosophy itself or the historical circumstances in which it has been previously invoked it resonates more strongly with the group's sense of grievance. Perhaps Nepal's rural poor felt they shared a similar plight to the peasants of pre-revolutionary China, while the urban, educated, Indo-Nepali middle-class in Kathmandu felt closer kinship to the nationalists of colonial India.

But it is nevertheless surprising that in over 50 years of subscribing to Maoist doctrine in principle, Nepal's Maoists only engaged in an actual People's War for the last ten. Meanwhile, numerous other supposedly revolutionary leftist groups once considered themselves to be Maoist, but broke ranks with their comrades in disputes

⁶⁵ Upreti, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Nature, Growth and Impact," 38.

over whether or not to pursue violence in practice. For example, in forming the Unified Marxist-Leninist party, the most dominant faction of the Nepali left did not disavow the need for violent revolution, but acknowledged a need to "adapt ideologies to real conditions on the ground."⁶⁶

And in fact even the most hard line Maoist faction led by Prachanda repeatedly showed a willingness to prioritize pragmatism over ideology. Despite not joining the United Leftist Front in 1989, Maoists participated to varying degrees in the nonviolent *Jana Andolan*, and engaged energetically in electoral politics between 1991 and 1994 (while of course continuing to insist that neither civil resistance nor democratic politics could be effective). During the civil war, the insurgents pursued negotiations with the regime in 2001 and 2003, revealing that they thought that perhaps their goals could be met through diplomacy rather than Mao's final state of People's War.⁶⁷ And of course, the civil war eventually ended through a series of negotiations and Maoist participation in a return to civil resistance. Today, the Maoists hold the top positions in Nepal's republican, not communist, government.

Ideology is certainly an important factor in understanding the behavior of revolutionary movements, but it is also a highly malleable one. Movements and their leaders are constantly making decision between purity and pragmatism and it is therefore the factors affecting these decisions that we need to account for if we are to understand why some groups adopt nonviolent civil resistance while others turn to armed insurgency.

Cohesion and Fragmentation

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 36-37.

⁶⁷ Routledge, "Nineteen Days in April: Urban Protest and Democracy in Nepal." 1284.

One of the most fully developed explanations of violent versus nonviolent strategies focuses on the organizational characteristics of the movement.⁶⁸ This theory argues that movement cohesion is a necessary condition for effectively executing and maintaining a civil resistance campaign, especially in the face of regime repression. Competition between factions not only makes nonviolent organizing impossible, but creates incentives to engage in violent attacks in an attempt to "outbid" rivals.

The case of Nepal offers some substantial confirming evidence to this organizational theory. Unity efforts, both amongst leftist groups as well as between the left and the center-right were indispensable in the preparation for both *Jana Andolans*. In 1989, the fractious left came together to form the United Leftist Front (ULF). The ULF then coordinated with the Congress party and agreed to a strategy of nonviolence in pursuit of their shared goal of reinstating an elected government, even though the ULF hoped to achieve more radical political goals. In 2005, political parties from the center-right and center-left came together to form the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the SPA loosely coordinated with the Maoists to pursue a nonviolent campaign. Similar to before, the Maoists sought more radical changes, but negotiations of these details were postponed as the Maoists joined with the SPA to issue a common set of demands of the regime and engaged only in nonviolent resistance activity within the Kathmandu valley.

Meanwhile, as the organizational theory predicts, the outbreak of insurgency was preceded by fragmentation amongst the left. In the early 1990s, the Maoists were in competition with the more moderate Unified Marxist-Leninist communist party. The Maoists were also competing against themselves. Prachanda, Bhattarai, and Lama broke away from party founder Singh over the latter's unwillingness to engage in

⁶⁸ Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

parliamentary campaigns and politics. Prachanda and Bhattarai then split from Lama only a few years later and began preparing for insurgency.

Despite the observed correlations between cohesion and civil resistance and fragmentation and insurgency, the organizational theory of revolutionary strategy is still problematic and incomplete. If factional competition leads to violence through a process of groups trying to outbid each other, we should expect to see multiple factions engage in escalating rounds of violent attacks. But in Nepal, this does not happen. Only the Prachanda/Bhattarai branch of the Maoists engages in violence. Other competing groups, such as the UML and Lama's Maoist faction were content to compete for power through rhetoric, institutional politics, and other nonviolent means. Furthermore, the organizational theory would lead us to expect factional violence to lead to further fragmentation and increasing violence. It does not propose any path out of this vicious cycle. Yet the People's War seemed to build cohesion amongst the Maoists as they were successfully able to build popular support for their revolutionary effort, control territory, and establish institutions of governance in the areas under their control.

Part of the problem is that the organizational theory provides no explanation for how and why some movements are able to be cohesive while others fragment. As such, it is unable to shed insights into some of the most important and surprising events in Nepal's revolutionary history. How was an infamously fragmented Nepali left able to unite almost suddenly in 1989 in support of the *Jana Andolan*? Why were the Maoist insurgents, supposedly born out of factional competition with other political groups, willing to reconcile with the SPA in order to issue a common set of demands in 2005?

Finally, and most critically, the organizational theory may have the causal relationship between fragmentation and violence backwards. While a correlation does appear to exist, in the case of Nepal, many of the cases of fragmentation were not so much the impetus for violence as they were the consequence of disagreement over the relative efficacy of a violent versus a nonviolent strategy. UML's departure from Maoist doctrine in August of 1989 was the result of a pragmatic decision that cooperating with broader elements of Nepali society in the use of nonviolent methods could be more effective than waging war alone.⁶⁹ Again in 1994 it was a debate over whether it would be more productive to focus energies on parliamentary politics versus preparing to launch a People's War that led to the split within the United People's Front and Prachanda's decision to return to Rolpa to begin the insurgency.⁷⁰ Therefore, in order to understand how movements decide between nonviolent and violent strategies we must understand how they come to perceive and evaluate the comparative effectiveness of these strategies.

Dynamics of Social Overlap and Popular Support

Explanations based on ideology or organizational cohesion make valuable contributions to the understanding of revolutionary movement behavior. However, an analysis of the networks of popular support that undergird a revolutionary movement provides a more complete picture of how these movements choose between violent and nonviolent strategies. The theory proposed in this paper asserts that broad public support is necessary for the tactics of civil resistance to be effective. Nepal's history of revolutionary activity since 1989 fits this pattern well. The first *Jana Andolan* was made

⁶⁹ Upreti, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Nature, Growth and Impact," 37.

⁷⁰ Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*.

up primarily of middle-class, urban elites who demographically constituted less than a third of Nepal's population.⁷¹ However, they made up a much larger percentage within the capital city of Kathmandu, the locus of contention, enabling civil resistance tactics from mass demonstration to general strikes to be effective. More importantly, there was substantial overlap between movement participants and members of the regime as this group of upper-caste, Indo-Nepali, Kathmandu residents was disproportionately represented in the upper levels of the bureaucracy and security forces.⁷² This made the police less willing than they might otherwise have been in carrying out violent repression against protesters⁷³ and it made it easier to encourage members of the regime to defect and support the revolutionary effort, as the Foreign Minister did on April 4th.⁷⁴ Finally, the movement was successful in broadening the base of support for the movement to the working classes and more rural areas during the course of the campaign.⁷⁵

By contrast, on the eve of the insurgency, the Maoists had very limited support amongst the population outside of Rolpa province. This was evidenced by their weak performance in the parliamentary elections of 1991 where they finished well behind Congress and the more moderate United Marxist-Leninist communist party.⁷⁶

For the upper-caste elites, their political demands had been largely met by the outcome of the 1990 *Jana Andolan*. Working class Nepalis sought further reforms, but a majority believed that their goals could be met through the political process. Until 1994, even the Maoists engaged in parliamentary politics and nonviolent demonstrations.

⁷¹ Thapa and Sharma, "From Insurgency to Democracy: the Challenges of Peace and Democracy-Building in Nepal." 208.

⁷² Manchanda, "Making of a 'New Nepal'," 5036.

⁷³ Brown, *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal*, 114.

⁷⁴ Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*.

⁷⁵ Brown, *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal*, 112.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 177.

And as the Maoists debated the relative merits of formal politics, civil resistance, and People's War, they fragmented further, making the faction of Prachanda and Bhattarai that eventually launched the insurgency only a subset of Nepal's Maoists who were in turn a subset of the broader Left. Moreover, the insurgents' base of support in Rolpa province had little overlap with the membership of the regime, who were of different ethnicity, tribe, and caste.⁷⁷ Defections were unlikely and the police forces, translocated to Rolpa primarily from the Kathmandu valley, were willing to use repressive force against Nepalis with whom they shared few social ties. Civil resistance did not appear to be a plausible path forward for the Maoist movement to achieve its goals in post-*Jana Andolan* Nepal. And thus it should not be surprising that two Maoist leaders, frustrated with the inefficacy of the nonviolent tactics they attempted between 1991 and 1994, turned to violence out of a belief that it was a means better suited to meet their ends.

The second *Jana Andolan* was characterized by conditions similar to the first, and in fact the social networks of this revolution favored nonviolence even more strongly, despite the fact that a civil war had been raging for a decade. The coalition of popular support necessary for a return to nonviolence was made possible, ironically, by King's re-consolidation of power between 2002 and 2005. Kathmandu elites who had been more or less content with the status quo of constitutional monarchy in the 1990s were satisfied no longer as parliament was disbanded and political leaders imprisoned. Moderate leftists, who over the previous 12 years had sought social and economic change through political processes, were transformed from reformists to revolutionaries. The political interests of these groups had not changed, but the means through which they could plausibly hope to achieve them had. By 2005, there was a broad and substantial

⁷⁷ Upreti, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Nature, Growth and Impact," 44.

coalition willing to seek revolutionary change. As the Maoists, moderate Left, and center-right all shared common cause once again, they created a movement with massive popular support that could effectively carry out a civil resistance campaign. As the tent was even broader than it had been in 1990--extending far more deeply into the working and peasant classes--it should not be surprising that the second People's Movement achieved success even more quickly than the first.

Conclusions

Nepal's series of three revolutions since 1989 makes it a unique case that is particularly well suited for an analysis of revolutionary strategy. Its history lends some support to theories based on ideology and movement organization, but it reveals the shortcomings of these arguments as well. Instead, it is a movement's calculation of comparative strategic effectiveness, informed by the nature of its network of popular support, that provides the most analytic leverage in explaining why some groups pursue civil resistance and others insurgency.

This theory does not obviate explanations based on ideology or organization, but rather supplements them and even provides them with greater explanatory power. For example, strategic calculation and organizational fragmentation can each amplify the effect of the other to create a spiraling effect that makes violence more likely. Debates within a movement over the relative efficacy of formal politics, civil resistance, or armed insurgency can lead to splits within an organization. This fragmentation in turn recasts the strategic calculus as each faction now faces a more limited base of support making nonviolent tactics less effective. Indeed, this is exactly what happened amongst the Maoists between 1991 and 1994.