

12 Third World Maoism

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The idea of the third world developed in the wake of World War II to describe the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. While the first world of capitalism led by the United States and the second world of socialism led by the Soviet Union fought for global domination in the cold war, the third world often was the battleground and theater of operations. This supposedly underdeveloped third world served simultaneously as the cannon fodder, barometer, and spoils of a war over the fate of global modernity – as that two-thirds of the world with “its futures mortgaged to either capitalism or socialism.”¹ Obviously, this cold war model discounts the third world, seeing it as the passive object of a contested but nevertheless teleological history. The people of the third world did not necessarily share this view, instead seeing the postwar period as a global moment of anticolonial, anti-imperialist movements. Revolutionaries seized on their designation as third world subjects to push for solidarity in what they perceived as a shared struggle for national liberation. For many, Maoism provided the ideological underpinnings and a practical blueprint for the struggle.

THIRD WORLD TO THREE WORLDS

Maoism and the Emergence of the Third World

Mao's China took an interest in third world politics from the beginning, dispatching senior statesman Zhou Enlai to attend its seminal organizing moment, the 29-nation Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. The third world movement taking shape at the Bandung conference was essentially a nonaligned movement, seeking a “third way” beyond the development models of the two cold war superpowers. Accordingly, Zhou Enlai there promoted the

¹ Arif Dirlik, “Spectres of the Third World: Global Modernity and the End of the Three Worlds,” *Third World Quarterly* 25:1 (2004), p. 131.

so-called Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence recently negotiated between China and India – a stance of ideological neutrality that still informs Chinese foreign policy today.² Despite this official doctrine of noninterference, the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 had provided third world revolutionaries with a concrete historical example of winning national liberation through a strategy of "people's war."

Mao's revolutionary strategy embraced the peasantry as "the biggest motive force of the ... revolution, the natural and most reliable ally of the proletariat, and the main contingent of [the] revolutionary forces."³ The doctrine of people's war empowered the world's peasants – the third world – to rise up just as Mao once had predicted China's peasants would:

They will rise up like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back. They will smash all the trammels that bind them and rush forward along the road to liberation. They will sweep all the imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local tyrants and evil gentry into their graves.⁴

Just as prerevolutionary China consisted of a vast semifeudal countryside surrounding a few semicolonial cities, so too was the third world an impoverished hinterland to the developed world: "Taking the entire globe, if North America and Western Europe can be called 'the cities of the world,' then Asia, Africa and Latin America constitute 'the rural areas of the world.'"⁵ The metaphorical implication was clear. Peasant insurgencies in their particular national contexts were part and parcel of the world revolution; soon the global countryside would overwhelm the global cities. By the mid-1960s, Maoist insights into peasant insurgency

² The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. See "Premier Chou En-lai's Main Speech at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference," April 19, 1955, in *China Supports the Arab People's Struggle for National Independence: A Selection of Important Documents*, compiled by Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1958), pp. 9–19.

³ Mao Zedong, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" (December 1939), *Marxists Internet Archive (MIA)*; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm.

⁴ Mao Zedong, "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," March 1927, *MIA*; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_2.htm#55.

⁵ Lin Biao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" September 1965, *MIA*; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1965/09/peoples_war/cho7.htm.

had exerted influence among revolutionaries both near and far, from Korea and Vietnam to Cuba and the Congo. Thus could Mao's closest comrade-in-arms Lin Biao brag in "Long Live the People's War" (1965):

Comrade Mao Zedong's theory of people's war has been proved by the long practice of the Chinese revolution to be in accord with the objective laws of such wars and to be invincible. It has not only been valid for China, it is a great contribution to the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed nations and peoples throughout the world.⁶

Maoism initially appealed as a military doctrine, as a way to mobilize peasant society for the goal of national liberation.

It was really only after the emergence of the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s – and especially after the onset of the Cultural Revolution (CR) in 1966 – that Maoism was appreciated in the third world as a complete military, political, cultural, and economic ideology distinct from Soviet communism. The deepening rift between the world's two largest socialist nations had many causes. The Soviets were alarmed by China's increasingly reckless policies, both domestic and foreign. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), in turn, accused the Soviets of capitulationism (proposing peaceful coexistence between irreconcilable capitalism and socialism), revisionism (advocating the peaceful transition to socialism), and social imperialism (heavy-handed interference in foreign communist movements). Within the global communist camp, the Maoist position was a minority view: The mainstream parties siding with China came from smaller nations such as Albania, Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia. Nevertheless, nearly every national communist organization also produced a breakaway Maoist faction. This chapter focuses on some of those parties that advocated Maoism as a dynamic and uncompromising ideology of revolution.

As the other chapters in this book attest, Maoism is a complex and sometimes contradictory set of ideas and practices that have developed over time. These ideas and practices have continued to develop in different ways in the varied historical contexts of the third world. Nevertheless, certain aspects have been emphasized with more or less consistency as Maoism has traveled around the globe. The following section takes up the example of Maoism in India to introduce and explain the common features of what we might generally call "third world Maoism."

⁶ Lin, "Long Live the Victory."

China's Path Is Our Path: The Case of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)

The most important attempt to emulate an explicitly Maoist revolution in Mao's lifetime occurred in India, which had achieved independence from the British Empire and established a parliamentary democracy in 1947. A peasant insurrection, beginning in May 1967 in the village of Naxalbari in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal, soon spread across India and over the borders into neighboring Nepal and Bengal (then called East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). This so-called Naxalite movement, under the guidance of the Maoist Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML), was primarily a rural insurgency but also drew support from urban intellectuals and even inspired students to launch a small-scale "cultural revolution" on the streets of Calcutta in 1970. However, Indian security forces had effectively repressed the Naxalites by the end of 1970 and in 1972 killed their top leader, Charu Mazumdar. The movement in India soon died down into a smoldering, low-level insurgency, although in the long term it influenced the successful Maoist revolution that erupted in Nepal in the 1990s. More important for our purposes here, the Naxalite case illustrates the three most salient features of third world Maoism: (1) analysis of society as semifeudal and semicolonial, (2) adoption of the strategy and tactics of people's war to seize state power, and (3) mirroring the domestic Chinese agenda of the CR, continuation of the revolution to combat revisionism and establish socialism.

The decisive influence of the CR is reflected in the texts most widely cited by the Naxalites, which included two small CR-era distillations of Mao Zedong's works, both compiled by Lin Biao: "the Little Red Book" (*Quotations from Chairman Mao*, in both English and Bengali) and "The Three Old Essays."⁷ Also well known were Mao Zedong's incendiary "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (1927), his military treatises "On Guerrilla Warfare" (1937) and "On Protracted War" (1938), and Lin Biao's paean to Mao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" (1965). The Naxalites also were avid readers of China's English-language periodical *Peking Review*, which ran frequent reports on the Indian insurgency in the late 1960s. This same corpus of texts would inspire later third world Maoist movements. Thus the version of Maoism emulated in the third world was, and continues to

⁷ Sreemati Chakrabarti, *China and the Naxalites* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1990), pp. 60–62. The "Three Old Essays" are "Serve the People" (1944), "Remembering Norman Bethune" (1939), and "The Foolish Old Man Who Moved the Mountains" (1945).

be, the relatively late and retrospective ideology of China's CR period. Here, all the experiences of a half-century of Chinese Revolution are condensed into digest form, and the most recent development, the rejection of Soviet revisionism, is given utmost prominence.

In the third world, under the influence of the CR, party splits and purges preceded even the initiation of people's war. The Naxalites' CPI-ML (formally organized on April 22, 1969, the one-hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth) emerged from two major party splits, first along the international lines of the Sino-Soviet conflict and again in opposition to perceived revisionism at the national party level.⁸ The original Communist Party of India (CPI), founded overseas in 1920 and established in India in 1925, maintained close ties with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and its Communist International (Comintern). By contrast, CPI relations with the CCP were severely strained by the Chinese invasion of buffer state Tibet in the 1950s, the Sino-Indian border clash of 1962, and China's steadfast support of rival Pakistan. Despite the depth of Sino-Indian tensions, in 1964, the larger Sino-Soviet split inspired a broad antirevisionist group to break away from the CPI, rejecting parliamentary democracy in favor of violent revolution. This antirevisionist group divided yet again in 1967, at the height of China's CR, when radical Maoists led by Charu Mazumdar called for an immediate start to the revolution. The split solidified when the less radical CPI factions, which had fared well in recent elections, helped the government to quash the Maoists' peasant insurrection at Naxalbari. Even within the Maoist camp, defending the correct ideology ("the line struggle") took precedence over Leninist party discipline, resulting in multiple purges and organizational chaos similar to the CR.⁹ For better or worse, the CPI-ML adopted as its slogan, "China's chairman is our chairman; China's path is our path."¹⁰

The first step along China's path is Mao's analysis of society as "semi-feudal, semi-colonial." Marxism posits that any effort to change society must begin with an objective assessment of its material and economic conditions. Marx argued that the European revolutions represented a fundamental historical advancement from feudalism (an agricultural economic system, whose typical political form is monarchy) to

⁸ "The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Founded," *Peking Review* 28 (July 11, 1969); reprinted in *Spring Thunder over India: Anthology of Articles on Naxalbari* (Calcutta: Radical Impression, 1985), p. 18.

⁹ "The Naxalite Movement Is Characterized by Its Disorganized Organization," in Chakrabarti, *China and the Naxalites*, p. 80.

¹⁰ Charu Mazumdar, "China's Chairman Is Our Chairman; China's Path Is Our Path," *Liberation (Calcutta)* 3:1 (November 1969), pp. 6–13.

capitalism (an industrial economic system, whose typical political form is the bourgeois democratic nation-state). Moreover, he said, another round of revolutions would transform capitalism into socialism. China in the first half of the twentieth century did not fit Marx's description of the type of society – modern, industrial, capitalist – ripe for socialist revolution. However, Lenin updated Marx's theory with the observation that global imperialism had exported capitalism around the globe and, with it, the possibility of world socialist revolution. Perhaps even more important, Lenin proved that a dedicated Communist Party could seize control of a feudal, agrarian monarchy, namely, czarist Russia. Mao, in turn, argued for the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to describe the prerevolutionary Chinese situation as collaboration between feudal elements in the vast countryside and capitalist elements in the colonized coastal cities. Mao's formulation had great appeal in the third world because it could be easily adapted to nearly any poor country. In the case of India, which had already expelled the British and instituted land reforms, the term indicated a transitional (rather than partial) stage of development from feudal and colonial to capitalist and postcolonial.¹¹ The main concern of Mazumdar's peasant movement was the semifeudal rural economy; only later did the urban student movement draw attention to India's semicolonial culture.¹² For both, the real significance of Mao's analysis lay in its revolutionary imperatives: For Mazumdar, it required a "people's war," and for the students, a continuing cultural revolution.

According to Mao, the revolutionary path for a semifeudal, semicolonial society is to launch a "people's war." A people's war is a life-and-death struggle against reactionaries and imperialists: There is no possibility for parliamentary negotiation with the enemy or a peaceful transition to socialism. It is this all-or-nothing stance that distinguishes revolutionary socialism from social democratic reformism or revisionist appeasement. That violence alone can effect social transformation is summarized by Lin Biao:

In the last analysis, the Marxist-Leninist theory of proletarian revolution is the theory of the seizure of state power by

¹¹ "While completely wrong in their sociological orientation, choice of words and understanding of the Indian economy, the Naxalites intended by their use of the term 'semifeudal, semicolonial' to draw attention to the twin concerns of rural poverty and exploitation and the relative weakness of Indian voices on the international stage." Rabindra Ray, *The Naxalites and Their Ideology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 197.

¹² Ray, *Naxalites*, p. 196.

revolutionary violence, the theory of countering war against the people by people's war. As Marx so aptly put it, "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one." ... It was on the basis of the lessons derived from the people's wars in China that Comrade Mao Zedong, using the simplest and the most vivid language, advanced the famous thesis that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."¹³

However, recognizing the need for violence is not enough: Only the correct strategy and tactics will guarantee victory. Lin Biao summarized the connection between strategy and tactics: "Comrade Mao Zedong points out that we must despise the enemy strategically and take full account of him tactically."¹⁴ To "despise the enemy strategically" means that the practitioners of people's war must develop sufficient hatred of the enemy to commit to protracted struggle; to "take full account of him tactically" means to give play to the full range of guerilla methods. A Naxalite leader in West Bengal explained the relevance of Mao's people's war doctrine: "Ours is a protracted people's war and the enemy is now much stronger than us. Our weapon is Mao Zedong Thought and our method guerrilla struggle."¹⁵

The strategy of protracted war is based on the realization that the people's war begins as an asymmetrical conflict, where the enemy is stronger and better equipped. Defeating such a superior foe takes patience. The enemy has short-term advantages, but if he can be drawn out and stretched thin over time, the tide will turn, and he will be exposed as a "paper tiger." The people, on the other hand, have long-term advantages: strong motivation and superior numbers. The balance of power will shift gradually, from defense to equilibrium to offense. History is on the side of the people, and victory is inevitable: They need only overcome their fears and "dare to win." The power of the people has great appeal in the third world, where people are a ready resource. Thus the outgunned Naxalite leader Mazumdar frequently quoted Mao's pronouncement: "Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people, not things, who are decisive."¹⁶

¹³ Lin, "Long Live the Victory."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "Report on the Armed Struggle by the Debra Thana Organizing Committee of the CPI-ML," *Peking Review* 5 (January 30, 1970); reprinted in *Spring Thunder*, pp. 42–45.

¹⁶ Chakrabarti, *China and the Naxalites*, p. 91, quoting Mao Zedong, "On Protracted War" (May 1938), *MIA*; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm.

Mao espoused familiar guerrilla tactics, inflected with equal parts Marxist dialectics and Sun Zi's *Art of War*:

In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack, withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances, harass him when he stops, strike him when he is weary, pursue him when he withdraws.¹⁷

As the people's war reaches a state of equilibrium, Mao said, the people's army should emphasize a new tactic: "the establishment of rural revolutionary base areas and the encirclement of the cities from the countryside." These bases provide safe havens, economic resources, and opportunities to implement progressive policies. The Naxalites set up bases covering some 300 villages by the end of 1969, following the example set by earlier Indian communists in the 1940s.¹⁸

After waging people's war and establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat, the final part of the Maoist path is continuing the revolution – though it is not clear when, if ever, the path ends: Mao went to his deathbed still advocating cultural revolution in China. Because third world Maoist movements arose during or after the CR, the chronology of the Chinese model often was compacted or muddled. For example, though the Naxalites never seized state power in India, they still had their own cultural revolution. Beginning in mid-April 1970 and persisting for several months, students in Calcutta vandalized images of Indian and Bengali heroes, assaulted heads of educational institutions, and boycotted school exams.¹⁹ Mazumdar, who theretofore had focused on rural mobilization, called on the urban youth to form Red Guard organizations, to "bombard the party headquarters" (as Mao had said to his Red Guards), to go down to the villages (with Mao's *Quotations* in hand), and to experience first hand the hardships of peasant life.²⁰ At the same time that students were encouraged to root out traditional and bourgeois cultural elements, the peasants were encouraged to annihilate

¹⁷ Mao Zedong, "On Guerrilla Warfare" (1937), *MIA*; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1937/guerrilla-warfare/index.htm.

¹⁸ "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire," *Peking Review* 7 (February 13, 1970); reprinted in *Spring Thunder*, p. 46.

¹⁹ Sanjay Seth, "Indian Maoism: The Significance of Naxalbari," in Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy, and Nick Knight, eds., *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1997), pp. 289–312.

²⁰ Charu Mazumdar, "A Few Words to the Revolutionary Students and Youths," *Liberation* 3:5 (March 1970), pp. 13–14, 84–91.

their remaining class enemies. During this period, the "Notes" section of Naxalite newsletter *Liberation* frequently celebrated class hatred, gleefully recounting gratuitous decapitations of landlords, heads stuck on bamboo poles, and slogans painted in blood. However, the excess of violence was not uncontroversial: It led to defections from the party during Mazumdar's lifetime and denunciations of his leadership after his death.²¹ Later, Zhou Enlai lamented the lack of previous coordination between the CCP and the CPI-ML, saying that they could have corrected the Naxalites' rigid mechanical application of the Chinese experience, unqualified adoration of Chairman Mao, and propensity to unnecessary killing.²² Zhou's critique reiterated the point that Maoism demanded a creative and flexible application of Marxism-Leninism to local circumstances. Zhou's critique also reflected the broader, more pragmatic, and arguably less radical attitude that Mao took toward the world in the 1970s.

China's Realignment and Mao's Theory of the Three Worlds

The PRC drastically reoriented its foreign policy in the early 1970s, pursuing detente with the United States and assuming China's seat in the United Nations (previously held by the Republic of China on Taiwan). The mysterious death of Lin Biao in an apparent coup attempt brought an end to China's overtly belligerent tone and struck a blow to the credibility of Chinese radicalism. Mao still decried American imperialism, but the USSR had recently brought Eastern Europe to heel, and now Mao saw Soviet social imperialism as the greatest threat to world peace. Meanwhile, China built relationships throughout the third world with aid and trade, offering favorable loans and technical expertise for massive capital-intensive projects such as a railway connecting Tanzania and Zambia. It was in a meeting with Zambian President Kaunda that Mao first presented his reorientation of the third world concept, an idea that would become known as the "three worlds theory."²³

Deng Xiaoping presented Mao's three worlds theory in an April 1974 speech to the UN General Assembly:

[T]he world today actually consists of three parts, or three worlds, that are both interconnected and in contradiction to one another.

²¹ Chakrabarti, *China and the Naxalites*, pp. 56–57; Seth, "Indian Maoism," p. 298.

²² Chakrabarti, *China and the Naxalites*, pp. 150–175.

²³ "On the Question of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds," February 22, 1974, in *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy*, compiled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Party Literature Research Center under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), p. 454.

The United States and the Soviet Union make up the First World. The developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regions make up the Third World. The developed countries between the two make up the Second World.²⁴

The third world was geographically the same under the three worlds theory, but the first and second worlds were no longer organized according to cold war alignment. The primary contradiction was no longer the struggle between capitalism and socialism but the threat of global imperialism. The first world superpowers were locked in a struggle for global hegemony, threatening to conquer the world with U.S. imperialism or Soviet social imperialism or else to destroy it in a nuclear holocaust.

The three worlds theory opened the possibility of strategic alliance between the third world and the second world, which increasingly suffered from "superpower control, interference, intimidation, exploitation, and the shifting of economic crises."²⁵ The idea was not entirely new: Mao had toyed with the thought of global realignment when the PRC established diplomatic relations with France in 1964,²⁶ and in 1969, Lin Biao had called for it explicitly: "All countries and people subjected to aggression, control, intervention or bullying by U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism, let us unite and form the broadest possible united front and overthrow our common enemies!"²⁷

However, with Lin Biao gone and the height of the CR over, China's foreign policy stressed practical engagement over radical principles. In the 1970s, China established cordial relations with a diverse array of third world monarchs and reactionaries, from the Shah of Iran to Chile's right-wing dictator Augusto Pinochet. Ironically, even as the three worlds theory allowed Maoism to spread its influence ever wider, it became divested of its particular ideological character. Sometimes the influence of Maoism meant little more than a pose, an imitative adoption of Mao's personal authoritarian style. To give just two examples, Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko imposed on his cadres the Mao jacket following his

²⁴ Deng Xiaoping, "Speech by Chairman of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China Deng Xiaoping at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly," April 10, 1974, *MIA*; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1974/04/10.htm.

²⁵ Deng, "Speech by Chairman of the Delegation."

²⁶ "Talk with Edgar Snow on International Issues," January 9, 1965, in *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy*, pp. 416–428. By 1963, Mao was already discussing Europe, Japan, and Canada as "intermediate zones" in the cold war.

²⁷ Lin Biao, "Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China," April 1, 1969, *MIA*; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1969/04/01.htm.

first visit to Beijing in 1973, and Libya's Colonel Qaddafi issued his political treatises in a set of three slim volumes known collectively as the "Green Book," a nod to Mao's ubiquitous "Little Red Book." Mobutu and Qaddafi were political opportunists of the first stripe; there was nothing specifically Maoist about their ruling ideologies. Still, Zhou Enlai pushed for diplomatic relations with countries across the ideological spectrum: "We should ally ourselves with all the forces in the world that can be allied with to combat colonialism, imperialism and above all superpower hegemonism. We are ready to establish or develop relations with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence."²⁸

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 marked the end of an era in China. The CR came to a close, and the most radical faction of the CCP, deprived of Mao's personal patronage, was purged. By the end of 1978, Deng Xiaoping's reformist faction had taken the reins of Chinese domestic policy from Mao's loyal successor Hua Guofeng.²⁹ Despite the domestic transition, however, China sustained a foreign policy based on the three worlds theory. That same year, Albania, erstwhile ally in the Sino-Soviet split, denounced China's slide toward revisionism. Albanian Labor Party leader Enver Hoxha's *Imperialism and the Revolution* (1978) explained that the main reason for the Sino-Albanian split was China's stubborn adherence to the "false, counterrevolutionary, and chauvinist" three worlds theory. Hoxha argued that the three worlds theory was "based on a racist and metaphysical world outlook," a static and stereotyped vision of the world that ignored the diversity among developing nations and the contradictions internal to societies at all levels of development:

The Chinese leadership takes no account of the fact that in the "third world" there are oppressed and oppressors, the proletariat and the enslaved, poverty-stricken and destitute peasantry, on the one hand, and the capitalists and landowners, who exploit and fleece the people, on the other.³⁰

²⁸ Zhou Enlai, "Report on the Work of the Government," January 13, 1975, in *Documents of the First Session of the Fourth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China*, MIA; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/zhou-enlai/1975/01/13.htm.

²⁹ Hua Guofeng, *Continue the Revolution under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to the End: A Study of Volume V of the Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), MIA; available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hua-guofeng/1977/x01/x01.htm.

³⁰ Enver Hoxha, *Imperialism and the Revolution* (Chicago: World View, 1979). Hoxha saw no difference in principle between the two sides of the power struggle, the

Instead, Hoxha repeated Lenin's view that "there are now two worlds: the old world of capitalism, that is in a state of confusion but which will never surrender voluntarily, and the rising new world, which is still very weak but which will grow, for it is invincible." In other words, there are just the two worlds of capitalism and socialism, and within each is being waged a dynamic, historical struggle between the exploiters and the exploited, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Hoxha argued that U.S. imperialism must be fought just as fiercely as Soviet social imperialism, but so too must reactionary and revisionist views in the so-called second and third worlds.

The Sino-Albanian split dealt a major blow to the international Maoist movement because many revolutionary parties – including nearly all the leading anti-Soviet parties in Latin America – sided with Hoxha. The International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO) divided into Maoist and Hoxhaist factions, with the Maoist camp centered on the Communist Party of the Philippines. In 1984, the Maoist faction spawned the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), led by the Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path). Curiously, the founding manifesto of the RIM contested the attribution of the three worlds theory to Mao Zedong, linking it instead to the Chinese revisionists in charge of diplomacy (presumably Zhou Enlai, Hua Guofeng, and Deng Xiaoping), who had "turned their backs on the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat and the oppressed peoples or tried to subordinate these struggles to the state interests of China."³¹ Thus the RIM rejected both Hoxha and the post-Mao Chinese leadership in favor of the radical line espoused by Mao at the height of the CR.

Maoism as a radical ideology had been severely weakened in China by the end of the 1970s. Even so, the collapse of radicalism in China did not attenuate the growth of Maoism overseas. A selective examination of three Maoist worlds will illuminate the common themes and diverse experiences of third world Maoism from the mid-1970s to the present. The following section explores the history of three important Maoist organizations: the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Shining Path in Peru, and the reemergence of South Asia's Naxalite movement in Nepal.

"bankrupt Maoism" of Hua Guofeng and the "Rightist-revisionist fascism" of Deng Xiaoping.

³¹ "Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement," March 1984; available at www.csrp.org/rim/rimdec.htm.

THREE MAOIST WORLDS: CAMBODIA, PERU, NEPAL

Exceeding Mao: The Communist Party of Kampuchea (“Khmer Rouge”)

Cambodia (called Kampuchea in the Khmer language), along with Vietnam and Laos, was part of French colonial Indo-China from the late nineteenth century until the Vietnamese Vietminh, using Maoist military doctrines, expelled French forces from Southeast Asia in 1954.³² In a display of third world postcolonial solidarity, the restored Cambodian monarch Prince Norodom Sihanouk met with Zhou Enlai at the Bandung conference in 1955 and with Mao Zedong in Beijing the following year. By the early 1960s, however, the radical Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK, known to its opponents as the “Khmer Rouge”), was advocating a people’s war against the “feudal” monarchy. The CPK took advantage of a civil war in the 1970s to seize state power, founding Democratic Kampuchea in 1975. In the scant four years that followed, the CPK under its leader Pol Pot distinguished itself as one of the most absurdly brutal regimes of the twentieth century. At the height of their power, the Khmer Rouge pressed Maoism to its most horrible extremes.

The CPK rose to power amid superpower conflict in Indo-China and later benefited from Sino-Soviet rivalry in the region. The Vietnam War spilled into Cambodia in 1970 as the United States first stepped up its secret bombing of communist hideouts across the border and then backed a military coup against Sihanouk, who took refuge in China. A united front of Cambodian royalists, nationalists, and communists immediately responded, launching a civil war against the American-installed government. In 1973, as U.S. bombing reached its peak, Sihanouk and Princess Monique made a much publicized pilgrimage to visit the guerrilla headquarters, lending international credibility and prestige to the ragtag fighters. The guerrillas advanced steadily, filling the voids left by U.S. bombing. Finally, the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975 left its Cambodian puppet government defenseless, and neither food shortages nor lack of popular support could prevent the guerrillas from taking power. The guerrillas dumped Sihanouk (declaring, “the king’s shit smells like everyone else’s”), set up a dictatorship, and drove all city dwellers out to the countryside.³³ With the common enemy of U.S.

³² William J. Duiker, “Seeds of the Dragon: The Influence of the Maoist Model in Vietnam,” in Dirlik et al., ed., *Critical Perspectives*, pp. 313–341.

³³ Henri Locard, *Pol Pot’s Little Red Book: The Sayings of Angkar* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2004), p. 301.

imperialism gone, and Vietnamese communists warming to the Soviet Union, Sino-Soviet rivalry took center stage. Mao had provided logistical, material, and financial support during the civil war, and despite the obvious incompetence and brutality of the CPK rulers, aid continued to flow from Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping, who feared Soviet domination in Southeast Asia. Sino-Vietnamese relations quickly worsened through the late 1970s, eventually erupting into war. Under the three worlds theory, it did not matter whether Khmer Rouge ideology was strictly Maoist; it was enough to be anti-imperialist (meaning both anti-American and anti-Soviet).

Strangely, although CPK policies and rhetoric owed an obvious debt to Mao, the Cambodians themselves made no overt claim to being Maoists. They were known outside the party ranks only as Angkar – “the Organization.” Indeed, it was not until September 27, 1977, nearly two and a half years after the fall of Phnom Penh, that Pol Pot revealed the truth: Angkar was none other than the CPK.³⁴ Even then, Angkar remained a nameless and faceless terror – a cult of *impersonality*. “Big Brother No. 1” continued to sign his correspondence and issue all directives under the name of an anonymous party center. The terrifying, mysterious, and ubiquitous Angkar demanded complete loyalty and compliance: The Organization was both omniscient (“Angkar has the many eyes of the pineapple,” it was said) and omnipotent (“Angkar is the master of the waters, master of the earth”).³⁵ Those suspected of deviance simply disappeared. The CPK also adopted from Mao’s China techniques of control and discipline, including self-criticism, study sessions, and reform through labor. Yet the importance of Maoism relative to other factors is not always clear. For example, while the CPK conducted their guerrilla war by expanding rural base areas to surround the cities, the decisive factor in their victory was probably foreign aid. We also must question their supposed reliance on the peasantry as the main force of revolution because landless farmers comprised just 20 percent of Cambodia’s population by 1970.³⁶ Most confusing of all, the ideological underpinnings of their highly secretive organization remain murky: Until 1977, the CPK systematically concealed its communist

³⁴ “Speech by Comrade Pol Pot, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPK,” Phnom Penh, September 27, 1977, in *Third World Peoples in Struggle 2* (Montreal, Canada: Red Flag Publications, 1978).

³⁵ Locard, *Pol Pot’s*, pp. 53, 112.

³⁶ Kate G. Frieson, “Revolution and Rural Response in Cambodia: 1970–1975,” in Ben Kiernan, ed., *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia: The Khmer Rouge, the United Nations, and the International Community*, Monograph Series 41 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1993), pp. 33–50.

orientation, like the clandestine Vietminh, the CPK espoused the more popular cause of national liberation. When Pol Pot finally did discuss the party's path to power, he did so using the most superficial of Maoist terminology ("applying Marxism-Leninism to the concrete realities of Kampuchea," waging a "new democratic revolution" to be followed by "building socialism," and so on) but without acknowledging Mao. Instead, the CPK stubbornly insisted its "unprecedented" revolution was exceeding, outstripping, and surpassing all others. CPK doctrines of absolute iconoclasm and self-reliance demanded that their cult of impersonality be depersonalized with respect to Mao as well.

Nevertheless, the CPK imitated and exceeded two of Mao's most distinctive and disastrous campaigns: outdoing the Great Leap Forward with a "*Super Great Leap*" and surpassing the CR with "*Year Zero*," a program of total cultural *annihilation*. The CPK marked the capture of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, as a new beginning. Loudspeakers incessantly repeated the surreal injunction, "Brothers! Leave Phnom Penh for three hours ... " (so we can root out hidden enemies) or "for three days ... " (for fear of U.S. bombing).³⁷ A chaotic exodus began, emptying the city completely. From that day forward, society was divided into two basic groups: the "old people" who had remained in the countryside to support the advancing rebels and the "new people" who had lived in the cities or even merely fled there. These "new people" were ideologically suspect for their wealth and education (although many were in fact displaced peasant refugees). The evacuation of the cities inaugurated a cultural revolution *par excellence*, "a clean sweep," premised on the complete erasure of history. A common CPK slogan advised, "When pulling out weeds, remove them roots and all."³⁸ Complete eradication was no mere metaphor: In their brief tenure, the CPK killed perhaps one-fifth of Cambodia's 8 million people.

Many of the dead were "new people" relocated to the countryside to carry out the CPK's "*Super Great Leap*." It is not clear whether the Khmer Rouge did not know or simply did not care that China's Great Leap Forward had been a debacle of famine and waste, a disaster for which Mao himself was forced to make a self-criticism. "The Party's Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977–1980" (adopted in 1976) called for the closure of markets, the elimination of money, the collectivization of meals, and most important, a tripling of agricultural

³⁷ See, for example, Haing Ngor with Roger Warner, *Survival in the Killing Fields* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003), pp. 87–108.

³⁸ Locard, *Pol Pot's*, pp. 38, 77.

yields to be fueled by the ideological zeal of the “old people” and the forced labor of the “new people.”³⁹ The resulting surpluses would be applied toward socialist industry, culture, and defense. In reality, the “new people” (and increasingly, the “old people”) faced 16-hour work days, starvation, endemic disease, and authoritarian rule. The “Super Great Leap” stumbled mightily, even precipitating an attempted coup within the CPK leadership. Nevertheless, Pol Pot reported in 1978 with characteristic mendacity and hubris that “the present situation of our revolution is excellent in all fields.”⁴⁰ As the CPK flared out in a genocidal fury, Chinese advisors withdrew and the Vietnamese army invaded.

Vietnam set up a client state called the People’s Republic of Kampuchea and eagerly exposed the genocidal abuses of the Khmer Rouge, concluding that the Pol Pot regime “in essence, was the combination of a blood-thirsty dictatorship and medieval feudal tyranny disguised as socialism.”⁴¹ Meanwhile, the CPK retreated deep into the forests of Cambodia and Thailand, renewing their awkward civil war coalition with the royalists and nationalists. Incredibly, this coalition government in exile enjoyed continuing UN recognition and massive foreign aid until the withdrawal of Vietnam in 1989 and the conclusion of the Paris Agreement in 1991. The United Nations oversaw a comprehensive peace settlement in the 1990s, prompting several Khmer Rouge leaders to defect from the party in support of peace. Pol Pot died under house arrest in 1998, convicted by his own men of assassinating a top defector. The CPK was done for, and in 2006, the UN began preparations to try surviving Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes against humanity.

The CPK had pushed forward its version of extreme Maoist dictatorship, with Chinese help, even as China was undergoing de-Maoification in the late 1970s. When Vietnam and its client states in Cambodia and Laos then decried “Chinese expansionism and hegemonism” in Indo-China, they were calling out Deng Xiaoping on his own corollary to the three worlds theory:

If one day China should change her color and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world,

³⁹ “The Party’s Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977–1980,” July–August 1976, in David P. Chandler, Ben Kiernan, and Chanthou Boua, trans. and eds., *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976–1977*, Monograph Series 33 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1988), pp. 36–118.

⁴⁰ “Speech by Comrade Pol Pot,” p. 36.

⁴¹ Truong Chinh, *On Kampuchea* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p. 8.

and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it, and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.⁴²

Perhaps the Vietnamese critique of post-Mao China could be dismissed as more Sino-Soviet posturing, but what are we to make of the dead dogs found hanging from lampposts in the streets of Lima, Peru, in 1980, with hand-scrawled signs reading, "Deng Xiaoping, son of a bitch!"⁴³ If Maoism were to survive, it would need to find a home elsewhere in the third world, outside China.

Acclimatization: The Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path)

The people's war in Peru began almost unnoticed in May 1980 with a few burned ballot boxes, small dynamite blasts, and some scattered attacks on policemen. By the time hostilities slowed in the mid-1990s, however, the conflict between Maoist guerrillas and government forces had claimed at least 50,000 lives – most of them rural, uneducated, and poor.⁴⁴ For more than a decade, the Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path) (CPP-SP) carefully prosecuted a violent and uncompromising insurgency along orthodox Maoist lines, demonstrating the resilience of Maoism after Mao and in a context far removed from the cultural and political orbit of China.

The CPP-SP emerged from factional politics within the Peruvian Communist Movement. Peruvian Maoists first split from the main Communist Party in 1964, rejecting Soviet and Cuban influences. Then, in 1970, a former philosophy professor and communist organizer who had trained at a Chinese cadre school during the CR led Maoist militants to form the CPP-SP. Abimael Guzmán Reynoso had attracted supporters among his students and local peasants in the poor and mountainous South-Central Andes – the locals called him the "Red Sun" in their indigenous language, whereas his critics called him "Shampoo" for his brainwashing abilities. Guzmán called himself by the nom de guerre Presidente Gonzalo and described himself as "the greatest living

⁴² Deng, "Speech by Chairman of the Delegation."

⁴³ Gustavo Gorriti, "The War of the Philosopher-King," *New Republic* (June 18, 1990), p. 15.

⁴⁴ UK Parliamentary Delegation to Peru, June 12–25, 2004, *Truth and Reconciliation: An Agenda for the Future* (London: Peru Support Group, 2004), p. 5. The report attributes somewhat more than half of all casualties to the CPP-SP.

Marxist-Leninist." As the intellectual successor to Marx, Lenin, and Mao, his "Gonzalo Thought" became the "Fourth Sword of Marxism." A Mao-like personality cult developed around Guzmán very early in the movement, and the CPP-SP would later make use of such CR agitprop staples as incendiary wall posters and dunce caps for enemies, even to the point of reciting Mao songs in Mandarin.⁴⁵ Unlike the rusticated style of Mao, however, party propaganda always depicted Guzmán in the glasses and dark blazer of an erudite professor.

Guzmán preached a return to a genuinely Peruvian Marxism, heeding Mao's call to adapt universal theory to local conditions. This meant a return to and adaptation of the teachings of CPP founder José Carlos Mariátegui, who in the 1920s had first pointed out the "shining path of revolution" in Peru. As Guzmán explained in a 1988 interview, "[T]he more I understood Mao Zedong, the more I began to appreciate and value Mariátegui. Since Mao urged us to apply Marxism-Leninism creatively, I went back and studied Mariátegui again, and saw that we had in him a first rate Marxist-Leninist who had thoroughly analyzed our society."⁴⁶ Mao's malleable concept of "semifeudal, semicolonial" society proved highly compatible with Mariátegui's description of Peru in the first half of the twentieth century, with multiple coexisting worlds: indigenous peasant communities practicing primitive agrarian communism, colonial-era haciendas maintaining a feudal economy in the highlands, semifeudal coastal estates producing crops for export, and bourgeois urbanites with ties to international capitalism.⁴⁷ Though much had changed in the intervening half-century, Guzmán summarized the Peruvian situation with an appropriately Andean metaphor of three mountains to climb: the imperialism of the international superpowers, the semifeudalism of the Peruvian nation, and the bureaucratic capitalism of the regime in Lima. Mariátegui provided the analysis of Peruvian society; Mao provided the strategy to change it.

For Guzmán, the "shining path to revolution" in Peru had to follow the course of a protracted people's war, demanding a dynamic balance between patience and violence. Maoism taught Guzmán that "the need

⁴⁵ Orin Starn, "Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru—Shining Path and the Refusal of History," in Dirlik et al., eds., *Critical Perspectives*, p. 276.

⁴⁶ "Interview with Chairman Gonzalo," in *El Diario*, trans. by the Peru People's Movement (Red Banner Publishing House, 1988); reproduced by *Red Sun*; available at www.redsun.org/pcp_doc/pcp_0788.htm.

⁴⁷ Lewis Taylor, *Shining Path: Guerrilla War in Peru's Northern Highlands, 1980–1997*, Liverpool Latin American Studies, New Series 6 (Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 10–11.

for violence is a universal law without exception," yet the conditions for armed struggle were less than ideal when the CPP-SP launched its people's war in 1980.⁴⁸ Not only was the CPP-SP small and poorly armed, but various reform movements had drained the urgency of the radicals' agenda. Peru's military government had instituted a number of far-reaching reforms, including land reform, in the early 1970s. Furthermore, a wave of popular movements and general strikes in the late 1970s had addressed the shortcomings of government reforms and brought a return to civilian government. Still, the guerrillas cultivated support among the rural poor and disaffected youth by targeting the common scourges of village life, from cattle thieves and petty extortionists to adulterers and corrupt officials. Much less popular were the rebels' dogmatic study sessions, draconian social programs, and terroristic attacks on well-intentioned grass-roots organizations.⁴⁹ Moreover, the ready recourse to violence of Marxism's "fourth sword" was double-edged: Violent acts could challenge state authority and catalyze revolution, but they also could alienate the people in counterproductive ways. Guzmán's statement that "the masses have to be taught through overwhelming acts so that ideas can be pounded into them" betrays an ambivalent and elitist attitude toward the common people.⁵⁰

Despite lukewarm popular support, the CPP-SP benefited from authoritarian discipline and ideological purity to become, in Degregori's memorable phrase, a "dwarf star" – a concentrated power whose immense mass is disproportionate to its small size.⁵¹ Shining Path built a clandestine party organization that was "strategically centralized and tactically decentralized," a "pearl necklace" of vertically linked but autonomous cells, affording timely initiative to local fighters.⁵² Moreover, the party approached protracted war with patience and planning, adapting to what Michael L. Smith has called the "ecopolitics" of Peru's diverse and fragmented terrain to wage a "War of Little Wars."⁵³ The guerrillas also were resilient, weathering the state's "dirty war" (1983–1985), in which government troops indiscriminately destroyed

⁴⁸ "Interview with Chairman Gonzalo."

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Shining Path*, pp. 22–35.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Carlos Iván Degregori, "Return to the Past," in David Scott Palmer, ed., *The Shining Path of Peru* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 40.

⁵¹ Degregori, "Return," p. 35.

⁵² Michael L. Smith, "Taking High Ground: Shining Path and the Andes," in Palmer, ed., *Shining Path of Peru*, p. 26; Gabriela Tarazona-Sevillano, "The Organization of Shining Path," in Palmer, ed., *Shining Path of Peru*, p. 173.

⁵³ Smith, "Taking High Ground," pp. 19, 29.

villages in rebel-controlled regions. A massive prison riot in 1986, leading to the death of hundreds of CPP-SP partisans, was glorified by the party as a "Golden Seal on the Great Leap of Maoism" in Peru: "Blood does not drown the revolution but irrigates it!"⁵⁴ The people's war continued to expand, and by 1989, the guerrillas were preparing to bring their people's war to the capital, largely funded by the cocaine trade. Working from footholds in shantytowns, Shining Path orchestrated an urban strategy of violence, blackouts, and industrial sabotage throughout the Lima-Callao metropolitan region. That same year, however, the government finally devised a comprehensive and coordinated response to the insurgency that focused on winning back the support of Peru's rural poor. In 1992, forces from Alberto Fujimori's liberal government captured Guzmán, along with half of the CPP-SP Central Committee. Guzmán issued a statement from prison in 1994 advocating peace; since then, Shining Path has been on the decline.

The collapse of the CPP-SP at the height of its people's war illustrates the difficulty of repeating Mao's success in China. The CPP-SP expertly extended its strategy of protracted warfare but could not finish the job. In the end, they discovered for themselves the mortal weakness of the Maoist personality cult: Just as Mao's death brought a sudden end to the CR in China, the capture of the great teacher Guzmán all but doomed the Maoist movement in Peru. The Peruvian adaptation of Maoism was supposed to work, as one scholar has said, "from the top down geographically, but from the bottom up in political, social, and economic terms."⁵⁵ Instead, the CPP-SP built a top-down organization with its Spanish-speaking, educated vanguard of intellectuals out ahead of the indigenous masses.⁵⁶ What was supposed to be a creative acclimatization of Marxism to the Andean highlands instead assimilated many of the same feudal and colonial social divides it had intended to destroy. The doctrines of Maoist people's war had spread far beyond China in the 1980s, but nowhere had a Maoist revolution again succeeded in seizing control of a state. Yet, despite the fall of international Maoism's leading light, Shining Path (to say nothing of the global decline of Soviet-style communism), third world Maoism proved its resilience once again when a people's war erupted in Nepal in the mid-1990s. This time, remarkably, the Maoists would win.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Cynthia McClintock, "Theories of Revolution and the Case of Peru," in Palmer, ed., *Shining Path of Peru*, p. 230.

⁵⁵ Smith, "Taking High Ground," p. 17.

⁵⁶ Starn, "Maoism in the Andes," pp. 277–282.

Globalization: The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

From 1996 to 2006, Maoist guerrillas waged a successful civil war against Nepal's parliamentary monarchy. The Maoists' victory, at a cost of at least 10,000 to 15,000 Nepalese lives (about two-thirds killed by government forces, one-third by rebels), resulted in elimination of the monarchy and founding of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. Their victory had another, most unexpected result: The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) did not set up a "New Democratic" dictatorship of the proletariat on the Maoist model; instead, the party has become a peaceful participant in a representative democracy.

Nepal is a small, poor, landlocked nation bounded by the Chinese-controlled Tibetan Himalayas to the north and by India to the south, east, and west. Because of its geographic isolation and economic dependence on India, Nepal's fate traditionally has been determined by its giant South Asian neighbor. Today, however, the CPN-M has responded creatively to global and regional challenges, demonstrating the capacity of third world Maoism to take on new political forms at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Nepalese Maoism has its roots in the broader South Asian Maoism of the Naxalites.⁵⁷ The original Communist Party of Nepal began as a mirror of the parliamentary CPI, but in the early 1960s, the monarchal ban on political parties in Nepal, the Sino-Indian War, and the revelation of the Sino-Soviet split all splintered the Nepalese Communist Movement into numerous underground factions.⁵⁸ India's Naxalite movement spilled into Nepal in the late 1960s and in the early 1970s inspired rebels to launch a short-lived guerrilla war in the remote Jhapa District bordering West Bengal. These Jhapa rebels and other Maoist groups eventually reunited with other communists, and this united front was well positioned for the first parliamentary elections to be held after reinstatement of political parties in 1990. However, a group of militant Maoists led by Comrade Prachanda (nom de guerre Pushpa Kamal Dahal) refused to accept the persistence of the monarchy or to participate in its pliant parliament; in 1994, the newly formed CPN-M vowed to wage a people's war.

⁵⁷ Rabindra Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," *Asian Survey* 44:5 (September-October 2004), pp. 627-646.

⁵⁸ The CPN has spawned at least 20 notable factions since its founding in 1949, pulled apart by the regional and global ambitions of India, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States – especially by Nepal's desire to break free from Indian interference. Narayan Khadka, "Factionalism in the Communist Movement in Nepal," *Pacific Affairs* 68:1 (Spring 1995), pp. 55-76.

In orthodox Maoist fashion, Prachanda called for a protracted people's war based on the strategy of surrounding the city from the countryside in order to revolutionize a "semifeudal, semicolonial" society dominated by "foreign [especially Indian] imperialism and its running dog, the domestic reactionary ruling class."⁵⁹ The armed struggle started modestly in 1996, but within two years Prachanda announced that the CPN-M was establishing Maoist New Democracy and carrying out cultural revolutions in rural base areas.⁶⁰ Then, in the latter half of 2001, a rapid succession of events escalated the conflict and thrust Nepal onto the international scene. In June, the crown prince massacred the reigning king and most of the royal family in the Royal Palace and later died from his wounds. In August, in the midst of a ceasefire, the CPN-M joined forces with Maoist groups from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan to form the Coordinating Committee of Maoist Parties of South Asia (CCOMPOSA). Just as the rebels were expanding their vision to a regional scale, the attacks of 9/11 reframed the insurgency on a global scale. Over the next year, while the Maoists stepped up their attacks, the convulsed and panicked monarchy declared a state of emergency, dissolved parliament, canceled elections, and mobilized the Royal Nepalese Army against the rebels. Meanwhile, the United States, Great Britain, the European Union, and India all provided military and economic support to fight the CPN-M as part of the "global war on terror." The civil war continued to escalate, and in 2004, the CPN-M boasted that the conflict had reached the stage of strategic offensive.⁶¹ Already in control of most of rural Nepal, the Maoists engineered a blockade of the capital Kathmandu. In 2005 the Maoists formed a united front with the main political parties against the monarchy. In April of the following year, a general strike paralyzed the nation and forced a negotiated settlement: The Maoists accepted peace in exchange for participation in an elected constituent assembly (CA).

From a comparative and historical perspective, formation of the CA appears to be an unlikely resolution to the civil war in Nepal. We have seen that Maoism as a matter of principle generally is antireformist and

⁵⁹ Prachanda, "Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal," March 1995, *A World to Win* 23 (1998); available at www.aworldtowin.org/back_issues/1998-23/nepStrategyTactics_23Eng.htm.

⁶⁰ Prachanda, "Two Momentous Years of Revolutionary Transformation," *A World to Win* 24 (1998); available at www.aworldtowin.org/back_issues/1998-24/nepal-Prachanda24Eng.htm.

⁶¹ FO (pseudonym), "The People's War in Nepal: Taking the Strategic Offensive," *A World to Win* 31 (2005); available at www.aworldtowin.org/back_issues/2005-31/nepal.htm.

antiparliamentary, and the CPN-M from its inception criticized the Nepalese parliament for acting as a mouthpiece of the monarchy and the bourgeoisie. Why, then, did the CPN-M not press its advantage to insist on a Maoist dictatorship? The Maoists explained their advocacy of the CA as a “minimum, forward-looking solution” based on a sober and objective assessment of the situation. Internationally, the CPN-M had no allies to counterbalance the global spread of capitalism and the global war on terror. Regionally, India had shown its willingness to intervene by force. Nationally, escalating violence had generated popular support for a negotiated resolution but not sufficient momentum to topple the entire system through insurrection. Whatever advances the CPN-M had made in Nepal, larger forces militated against an outright Maoist victory. The Maoists concluded that “to continue analyzing strategic offensive even after the revolution in the world and the country itself has faced a serious defeat can only be termed a mockery.”⁶² The CA offered a tactical solution by which the Maoists could force out the monarchy and take control of the military. The CPN-M chose to consolidate its gains and maintain the protracted struggle in a position of strategic equilibrium – in effect, making Nepal a tiny base area to hold the fort until the global prospects for international revolution turned favorable again.

In 2008, the CPN-M won a plurality of seats in free and open elections to the new CA, and although the non-Maoist parties built a majority and selected a moderate president, Prachanda became prime minister.⁶³ The CPN-M dutifully took up the role of loyal minority, and in its first months the CA fulfilled the primary goal of the people’s war through peaceful vote, declaring the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a new republic. Prachanda assured his political opponents that while “our ideologies, political tendencies, norms and values collide against each other,” the CA could unify Nepal and solve problems as a pluralistic “garden of many flowers.”⁶⁴ Before the conclusion of the civil war, the CPN-M had explained that the CA was a transitional form of government, a necessary intermediate step along the way to the

⁶² FO, “People’s War.”

⁶³ Under the complex election formula, the CPN-M won 229 of 601 available seats, about twice as many as either the Social Democratic Nepali Congress Party or the Moderate-Leftist CPN (United Marxist-Leninist). These latter two parties formed a coalition with the Federalist MJF Party, electing Nepali Congress Member Ram Baran Yadav as the first president of the republic.

⁶⁴ Prachanda, “The Real Garden of Many Flowers”; available at www.krishnasenonline.org/theredstar/issues/issue12/prachanda.htm.

eventual withering away of the state under communism.⁶⁵ Prachanda explained that this “development of democracy in the twenty-first century” would guarantee that “the new state will be under the observation, control and hegemony of the general masses. There will be free competition among political parties, [provided they] oppose feudalism and imperialism and work for the service of the masses.”⁶⁶ Perhaps this “observation, control and hegemony of the general masses” is just a euphemistic reworking of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” because Prachanda significantly reserved the right to repress those who fail to “oppose feudalism and imperialism.” It remains to be seen how the CPN-M will react if the new government fails to implement policy initiatives such as land reform, declines to repudiate Indian influence, or otherwise neglects the transition to socialism. Under what conditions would the Maoists revert to an armed strategic offensive?

For now, at least, the institution of true multiparty democracy in Nepal is a real innovation in Maoist practice. The CPN-M has argued that genuine competition between parties can serve the same political function as Mao’s continuous cultural revolutions, combating bureaucratic ossification and unprincipled revisionism while simultaneously staving off the corrupt abuses inherent to single-party rule: The CA directly empowers the people to install an alternative revolutionary party “if the Party fails to continuously revolutionize itself.”⁶⁷ As the civil war ended, Prachanda summarized history’s lessons for the international Maoist movement:

We had a very serious discussion in the party about the Khmer Rouge, and also about the Peruvian Maoists, and we think that we are completely different from them. We are not dogmatists; we are not sectarians; we are not traditionalists. We want to be ever more dynamic, adapting to our environment, understanding modernity.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ “Building Red Power in Nepal,” *A World to Win* 30 (2004); available at www.a-world-to-win.org/back_issues/2004-30/building_Red_Power_in_Nepal.htm.

⁶⁶ Prachanda and Alex Perry, “Our People’s War Is a Totally New 21st Century War,” April 23, 2005, *Time.com*; available at www.countercurrents.org/nepal-perry230405.htm.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Baburam Bhattarai, “The Question of Building a New Type of State,” *The Worker: Organ of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)* 9 (2004); available at http://cpnm.org/new/English/worker/9issue/article_baburam.htm.

⁶⁸ Prachanda, “Our Revolution Won,” interview with Alessandro Gilioli, November 9, 2006, *L’Espresso*; available at <http://espresso.repubblica.it/dettaglio/Prachanda:-Our-Revolution-Won/1431107/1>.

In the third world as in China, Maoism has proved a highly effective military doctrine but a much less effective ruling ideology. The Cambodians showed the disastrous consequences of pushing dogmatic Maoism too far, and the Peruvians showed that even a patient expansion of the people's war could be fraught with danger. The Nepalese hope to alter that reality with a form of Maoism at long last flexible and resilient enough to survive in a globalized world.