Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Nepal:
An Analysis of Child Recruitment in the People's Liberation Army

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
M.A. in Conflict Studies

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Legend

ANNFSU-R All Nepal National Free Student Union-Revolutionary

CCP   Chinese Communist Party

CPA   Comprehensive Peace Agreement

CPN-M   Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist

DDR   Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

NSF   Nepal Security Forces

PLA   People's Liberation Army

YCL   Young Communist League

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Abstract

Based on children's perceptions of recruitment, academic discourse often suggests that children voluntarily enlist in armed groups in Asia in response to political indoctrination. Using Nepal as a case study, secondary sources are analyzed to test the hypothesis that children do not voluntarily enlist in armed groups. Academic literature, official party documents, humanitarian and media reports are triangulated to contextualize agency in child recruitment in the People's Liberation Army, the armed group of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist during the Maoist revolution between 1996-2006. Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance is used to analyze nonphysical elements of force involved in child recruitment.

The research findings confirm the hypothesis and indicate that children assented to forced recruitment. Political indoctrination had little influence in coercing enlistment in comparison to other nonphysical elements of force. In attempt to improve psychosocial and socio-economic factors, particularly basic human needs exacerbated by conflict, enlistment was often coerced with rewards that positively influenced children's perceptions of recruitment as voluntary. However, children's perceptions of recruitment were negatively influenced when rewards were unfulfilled and when recruitment was coerced with threats.

Key Words: Nepal; Child Soldier; Recruitment; Agency; Force; Informed Consent; People's Liberation Army; Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist; Cognitive Dissonance Theory.

Acknowledgements

1.   Introduction

Academic discourse on child soldiers has often focused on conflict-affected countries in Africa, where children are primarily described as forcibly recruited in armed groups through abduction (Betancourt, et al., 2013). In Asia, conflict-affected countries have hosted the second highest number of child soldiers in the world, where children are often described as voluntarily enlisting in armed groups in response to political indoctrination (Becker, 2007). However, forced recruitment and voluntary enlistment of children in armed groups are ambiguous concepts that are generally undefined in academic literature or international standards. Physical elements of force are implicitly used to distinguish between these concepts, while nonphysical elements of force have received little attention.

Based on research with former child soldiers, there is emerging academic discourse criticizing international standards for establishing universal approaches to children's agency. Such discourse is primarily based on the argument that international standards are grounded in western concepts of childhood that are irrelevant in developing countries, particularly in local cultural contexts (Hart and Tyrer, 2006; Khort and Maharjan, 2009; Ozerdem and Podder, 2011; Rivard, 2010). For example, Ozerdem and Podder (2011) argue that the recruitment of children in armed conflict is considered an extension of pre-existing cultural practices of child labour in non-western countries. Universal approaches assume that children's agency is dependent on adults, and critics argue that children are subsequently perceived as being passive, innocent, vulnerable, and lacking agency (Hart and Tyrer, 2006; Ozerdem and Podder, 2011; Rivard, 2010). Increasingly, some scholars suggest that children are capable of exercising individual agency by contributing to their development and influencing others (Hart and Tyrer, 2006; Ozerdem and Podder, 2011; Rivard, 2010). The extent of children's agency is dependent on individual characteristics and competencies, opportunities and environmental constraints, including conflict situations (Hart and Tyrer, 2006).

With the support of the Machel reports (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; United Nations General Assembly, 1996), international standards concerning children and armed conflict are based on the view that children have evolving capacities and exposure to armed conflict is detrimental to their development. Therefore, international standards such as the Paris Principles (2007) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000) universally prohibit all forms of recruitment with children below the age of 18 in armed forces and armed groups, regardless of the methods used. Children are considered incapable of voluntarily enlistment (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2015; United Nations Children's Fund, 2002) and the distinction between voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment is irrelevant as adult commanders are deemed responsible for the decision to recruit children (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2015). Any form of enlistment is regarded as a child's response to a context involving social, cultural, economic, and political pressures that force recruitment, and not a decision resulting from a choice that is made freely (United Nations Children's Fund, 2002).

While concepts of voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment tend to remain undefined in academic literature and international standards, these concepts are defined by humanitarian organizations. For example, the voluntary enlistment of a child has been defined as a decision that is made within the context of conflict that exacerbates pre-existing conditions that place the child at risk of recruitment in armed forces or armed groups, such as poverty (Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2002). The forced recruitment of a child has been defined as a context in which armed forces or armed groups use physical force, coercion, threats, and social or cultural pressures to recruit children (United Nations Children's Fund, 2002). Humanitarian discourse thereby suggests that nonphysical force involves psychosocial and socio-economic factors, threats, and others methods of coercion used to recruit child soldiers. Consequently, the most complex issue is a child's capacity to exercise individual agency amidst various nonphysical elements of force that coerce recruitment in armed groups.

The complexity is highlighted in the juxtaposition between the evolving capacities of a child and the ability to exercise individual agency.

The evolving capacities of children are acknowledged in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), which serves as the foundation of universal child rights. However, it is the evolving capacities of adolescents that pose the greatest challenge to discourse concerning agency. This is demonstrated with increases to universal age criteria in international standards while adolescents consistently remain at highest risk of recruitment in armed groups. For example, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) prohibited the recruitment of children below the age of 15 in armed groups 1989, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000) raised the age criteria to 18 in 2000 which was reiterated in the Paris Principles (2007) in 2007. During this period, a UNICEF report on East Asia and the Pacific Region found that children between ages of 12-14 were at the highest risk of recruitment into armed groups (United Nations Children's Fund, 2002).

Similar child recruitment trends are found with other types of armed groups, such as criminal street gangs. For example, according to a recent UNICEF report on adolescents, the average age for gang recruitment was 13, while most gang members were recruited between the ages of 12-14 (United Nations Children's Fund, 2012). However, despite similarities such as the average age of recruitment as well as particular recruitment methods involving nonphysical force, discourse on recruitment in criminal street gangs generally acknowledges children's agency in the recruitment process.

Cumulatively, more research is needed to adequately explore whether or not children, particularly adolescents, can exercise individual agency and voluntarily enlist in armed groups, particularly amidst various nonphysical elements of force that coerce recruitment in conflict situations. In short, these factors contribute to the development of the research question. Can children voluntarily enlist in armed groups?

1.1.   Approach to Investigation

1.1.1.   Research Objectives and Design

Through qualitative research methods, the objective of the research is to conceptualize nonphysical elements of force that coerce child recruitment in armed groups. The goal of the research is to determine whether or not children can voluntarily enlist in armed groups. Using Nepal as a case study, secondary sources are analyzed to identify factors involved in the recruitment of children in the People's Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist during the Maoist revolution between 1996-2006. Leon Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance is used as the theoretical framework for the analysis.

1.1.2.   Locating the Research in the Nepalese Context

The juxtaposition between the evolving capacities of children and agency is a complex issue in Nepal as demonstrated in domestic legislation. For example, despite being a signatory to international standards that define a child as being a person below the age of 18, the Children Act (1992) defines a child as being a person below the age of 16. However, Nepalese legislation concerning marriage, labour, and criminal responsibility suggests that agency is a variable concept in Nepal. In regards to marriage, the constitution permits individuals who are 20 years of age or older to marry without the consent of their guardian, while individuals who are 18 years of age are permitted to marry with the consent of their guardian (The Muluki Ain (General Code), 1963). Concerning labour, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (2000) prohibits children below the age of 14 years from working. In regards to criminal responsibility, the Children Act (1992) provides various ages in which a child can be held criminally responsible for their actions, beginning at age 10. Depending on the severity of the offence, children between the ages of 10-13 can face similar legal consequences, while children between the ages of 14-16 are subject to more serious punishment under the law. Legal inconsistencies coupled with cultural realities of early marriages, child labour and early criminal responsibility suggest that agency is a variable concept in Nepalese society.

The complexity of the relationship between the evolving capacities of a child and agency is further convoluted in the context of conflict. The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist initiated a successful Maoist revolution in Nepal between 1996-2006, leading to the creation of the Federal Republic of Nepal. An estimated 10,000-15,000 children were recruited in the armed forces and armed groups, the majority of whom were adolescents recruited into the People's Liberation Army (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2007; World Education, 2009). Despite limited academic literature focused on child recruitment in the People's Liberation Army, several authors argue that children voluntarily enlisted in response to political indoctrination imposed by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Binadi, and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Pherali, 2011). However, concepts of voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment are undefined in the literature and a variety of factors were involved in the child recruitment process. Overall, the cultural variability of agency and the high representation of adolescents recruited in the People's Liberation Army suggest that Nepal is a suitable case study to conceptualize nonphysical elements of force that coerced child recruitment and determine whether or not children voluntarily enlisted in the People's Liberation Army.

1.1.3. Relevance of Festinger's (1957) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance is well established and has generated significant research (Cooper, 2007; Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999), particularly in social psychology (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999). The theory provides a general approach to understanding how nonphysical elements of force are used to coerce compliance when an individual is exposed conflicting information. This is relevant for the analysis because children were exposed to conflicting factors that encouraged and discouraged enlistment in the People's Liberation Army. Cognitive dissonance theory is used to conceptualize nonphysical force to specifically address the issue of voluntary enlistment of children in the People's Liberation Army.

1.1.4. Organization of Thesis Research

This paper consists of six chapters. To situate the research in the Nepalese context, chapter two outlines a historical overview of Nepal, including the historical context prior to the Maoist revolution and a summary of the conflict between the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist and the Government of Nepal between 1996-2006. Chapter three presents the research design, methodology, and definition of key terms. Chapter four summarizes the research findings from academic literature, official party documents, humanitarian and media reports, and provides a summary of contested issues and triangulated results. Chapter five discusses the analysis of the research findings using Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. The paper concludes with chapter six, which summarizes the significance of the research, including theoretical and practical implications.

2. Historical Overview of Nepal

To situate the research in Nepal, this chapter provides a summary of the historical context in 1996 prior to the onset of the Maoist revolution, followed by a summary of the conflict between the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and the Government of Nepal from 1996-2006. The historical context outlines a brief summary of Nepal and it's people, including the situation of children; the economic system and national infrastructure; and governance and political organization in 1996. Some of these factors, particularly psychosocial and socio-economic factors, were exacerbated during the conflict and are discussed in the research findings when it pertains to the recruitment of children in the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The summary of the conflict presents a background of the CPN-M to clarify political objectives and organizational structure of the group; and a summary of the conflict between 1996-2006, including the impacts of conflict on children, Nepal's legal commitments to child rights, and CPN-M discourse on the recruitment of children in the PLA.

2.1. Historical Context in 1996

2.1.1. Demographics

Renown as home of Mount Everest, Nepal is a small landlocked country north of India and south of Tibet, replete with hills, Himalayan mountains, and a small portion of plains, known as the 'terai.' In 1996, the country was divided into five development regions (Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-Western, and Far-Western), 14 zones, 75 districts, approximately 58 urban municipalities, and 4000 Village Development Committees predominantly in rural areas (Government of Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). The majority of the population lived in the terai plains (50%); many lived in the hills (43%); and few lived in the mountains (7%) (Government of Nepal, 2012). Most of the population lived in the Central region (36.5%) while the Far-Western region had the lowest population (9.5%) (Government of Nepal, 2012). Overall, the vast majority of the population lived in rural areas (83%) (Government of Nepal,

2011) despite a recent increase in migration from rural to urban centers [1] (Hart, 2001; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006) with the highest population density in the capital city, Kathmandu (Government of Nepal, 2012),

Nepal's diverse population represented over 18 million people (Government of Nepal, 2010a) with an average life expectancy of 60 years in 1996 (World Bank, 2015b). Due to geographic isolation, various cultures, languages, and religions were distinctly preserved (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). There were 126 ethnic and caste groups represented in Nepal (Government of Nepal, 2012), including 98,000 Bhutanese refugees settled in the South East region (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002), and the highest ethnic/caste group was Chhetri (19.8%) (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996). Amongst such diversity, ethnic and caste discrimination was common, particularly towards low-caste Dalits, ethnic and indigenous minorities (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

Nepali was the official language and 92 spoken languages (Government of Nepal, 2012). Nepali was the most commonly spoken mother tongue language representing 75% of the population (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996), and half the population was fluent in Nepali in addition to a mother tongue language (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). There were 10 religious groups recognized in Nepal, including Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Kirat, Jain, Christian, Sikh, and Bahá'í (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 2001). The majority of population was Hindu (87.1%) (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996) and were largely criticized for a long history of religious dominance by high caste Hindus (Bahun and Chhetri) over minority ethnic groups such as Janjatis (mostly Buddhist and animist) and low-caste Dalits (Khort et al., 2010; Lawoti, 2010).

Nepal was one of the poorest countries in South Asia with an average income of $214.10 per household in 1996 (World Bank, 2015a). Poverty was highest in rural areas (44%) than urban areas (20%), with higher rates in the hill and mountain areas,

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[1] In 2001, Nepal had the highest urban growth rate in South Asia, at 6.6% (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

particularly the mid-Western region (Lawoti, 2010) among Dalits and ethnic minorities (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Families living above the poverty line were also poor (Lawoti, 2010). For example, Deraniyagala (2005) argues that 40% of medium to large landowners in hill areas were classified as poor (Lawoti, 2010). In 1996, 71% of the population above the age of 10 was active in the labour force, including women who represented 52% of the labour force, with an unemployment rate of 4.9% (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996). Rural communities, particularly in the hill and mountain areas of the Far-Western and Mid-Western regions had a history of employment migration that contributed to households with remittances from India (9%), Gulf countries (3%) and Malaysia (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

The average years of schooling in Nepal was 3.2, while the expected years of schooling was 12.4 (United Nations Development Program, 2014). A significant proportion of the population had never attended school, including rates as high as 85% for females in 1996 (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996). Similarly, less than half of the population above the age of 5 years was literate (38%) (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996). Literacy rates were substantially higher in urban areas (64%), particularly in the Western region, than literacy rates in rural areas (36%), particularly in the Mid-Western and Far-Western regions; and reflected gender disparities as 53% of males and only 24% of females were literate (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996).

a. Situation of Children in 1996

Nearly half of the population was below 18 years of age (46%) (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006), including a high number of adolescent youth (22%) (CWIN, 2004), many of whom were young parents. The average age for marriage was 16.6 [2], though the law prohibits marriage below 18 years (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Young mothers were at higher risk of complications during delivery, many had

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[2] Many children marry by age 14-15 (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

limited access to medical services[3] and approximately 1 in 25 children died in the first month of life (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Similarly, birth registration of children below 5 years of age (34%) (Government of Nepal, 2001[4]) and immunization rates of children were low. Only 36% of children were fully immunized, though rates were higher in urban areas (58%) compared to rural areas (35%), and higher in the Eastern and Central regions compared to the Western region in 1996 (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996).

Many children had never attended school, ranging between 39-72% (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996). The Far-Western region had the highest non-attendance rates for both males (48%) and females (84%), while the Western region had the lowest non-attendance rates for both genders (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996). An estimated 40.4% of children between 5-14 years were working an average of 22 hours per week (Government of Nepal, 1999), many of whom were children who never attended school or withdrew from school prematurely, including unmarried girls (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). At age 14, the majority of boys (68%) and girls (80%) were employed (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1999). In rural areas, children often worked for their families in their homes or on family farms (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1999; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006), while the majority of children worked in the agricultural sector; followed by the services sector, including food and transportation services (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1999). Over half of children between 15-19 years were working and at higher risk of exploitation, particularly human trafficking of girls, as many left home unaccompanied to find work (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Similarly, child protection issues in Nepal included forced and bonded child labour; sexual exploitation of children; human trafficking; violence against children; and children without primary caregivers, including

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[3] Only 24% of all mothers receive formal antenatal care (Government of Nepal, 1998); 13% of deliveries were attended by a doctor, nurse, or qualified midwife (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

[4] According to a household census in 2000, parents did not have the time to proceed with the birth registration process (39%) and lacked knowledge about birth registration (30%), including knowledge on its necessity (Government of Nepal, 2001).

children in detention and institutional care facilities, homeless children and orphans (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

Children were historically recruited for Nepalese and British armed forces. In Nepal, the Young Boy's Recruitment of Conditions and Service Rules (1971) recruited boys between 15-18 years, despite the Royal Army New Recruitment Rules (1962) that required recruits to be a minimum of 18 years (Child Soldiers International, 2008). Reportedly, the recruitment of boys ended in the 1970s, although the government provided military training to boys between the ages of 15-18 years (Child Soldiers International, 2008). Adolescent youth in the mid-Western region were traditionally recruited for the Gurkha regiment with the British Army (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001; Child Soldiers International, 2004, 2008; Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995, 1997, 1998) from the eighteenth century to the 1970s (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001). Children were also historically recruited by armed communist groups and participated in political violence. For example, youth participated in political violence in the Eastern region during the Jhapa revolution between 1972-1973, and the Jugedi student movement in 1979 (Lawoti, 2010; Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1997, 1998).

2.1.2. Economic System and National Infrastructure

Nepal was ranked 151 in the Human Development Index in 1996 (United Nations Development Program, 2014) with 40% of the population living below the poverty line (Lawoti, 2010). Despite absolute poverty nearly doubling between the 1970s to the 1990s, Nepal experienced economic growth in the 1990s and rose in the Human Development Index, including the mid-Western region (Lawoti, 2010). Infrastructure and the public services expanded rapidly, including roads, health facilities, schools and universities, and commercial banks (Lawoti, 2010). Agriculture was the main source of income in Nepal (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996) and employed 76% of the workforce (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). However, wages in agricultural and industrial sectors were relatively stagnant between 1987-1996, while the government

increased the price of essential daily goods by 40% (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002).

Nepal is a member of the South Asian Alliance for Regional Cooperation and was dependent on trade. More than half of Nepal's imports and exports were traded with India, despite a trade deficit since the mid-1990s (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Imports included industrial raw materials and construction materials, electrical and electronic goods, tobacco, cosmetics, fertilizer, salt, and drugs[5], while exports included various textiles and clothing, carpets, and some commodities (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). The economy was also reliant on trade in services, particularly tourism; and remittances that accounted for 12% of the GDP (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

Largely due to Nepal's challenging environment; transportation, communication, and energy systems were limited; and development correlated with the accessibility of towns and villages (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Roads and aviation were the main modes of transit, while many villages were only accessible on foot (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Urban centers and communities accessible by road had access to higher quality services, including health and education services, while hill and mountain communities with an airstrip had better access to services than communities only accessible on foot (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). In 1996, a total of 29% of the population had to travel half an hour to a paved road, while 19% of the population had to travel 3 or more hours to a dirt road (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996). A total of 45% had access to health posts and 88% of the population had access to primary schools with a travel distance of half an hour (His Majesty's Government Nepal, 1996).

Communication systems included a well established national postal system; an expanding telecommunications systems, including cell phones, internet, and satellite telephone service providers; a wide selection of print media and radio stations, including a short-wave transmission with 100% coverage in the country (Government of Nepal,

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[5] Drug consumption and trafficking involved Afghanistan and Myanmar's Golden Triangle (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002).

2010b; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Nepal was one of the lowest energy consumers in the world, and traditional energy accounted for the vast majority of energy consumption (Government of Nepal, 2010b). Hydropower provided electricity to 40% of the population but only 25% of the rural population (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

2.1.3. Governance and Political Organization

Nepal had a long history of Hindu monarchal rule. The kingdom of Nepal was united under a single monarchy in 1768 (Sattaur, 1996) and ruled by the Shah dynasty for almost 240 years (Government of Nepal, 2010b). After a nine-month introduction to multiparty democracy by King Mahendra in 1962, the monarchy regained control and ruled Nepal for 28 years under a local system of governance referred to as the panchayat system (Hart, 2001; Lawoti, 2010). Political parties were banned; media was censored; the education system was expanded to build national identity through standardized curriculum delivered in Nepali; and foreign investment was encouraged, particularly with India and the United States (Hart, 2001). As a result, school attendance and literacy rates increased dramatically, as well as migration from rural areas to urban centers in Nepal and India, particularly men seeking employment (Hart, 2001). However, economic gains primarily benefitted urban centers, particularly the Kathmandu valley, while rural communities remained relatively unchanged (Hart, 2001; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

Many citizens had little political influence in decision-making (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002) and political tension was fueled by concerns of feudal history; extreme poverty and disparities between the rich and the poor; corruption; discrimination based on religious/caste, ethnic, and gender lines; government sponsored human right abuses; and inadequate infrastructure development (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; CWIN, 2004; Save the Children Norway-Nepal, 2008; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). In 1990, a group of political parties formed an alliance and launched a successful revolution to end

monarchal rule and the local system of governance, known as the 'panchayat' system (Do and Iyer, 2010; Hart, 2001). The first parliamentary elections were held in 1991, and the first general election was held in 1994 (Do and Iyer, 2010).

2.2.   Summary of Conflict

2.2.1. The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist

Inspired by Maoist revolutions in India and China (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995b; Lawoti, 2010), the CPN-M was formed as a revolutionary Communist party in 1986 for the primary goal of establishing a 'New Democratic Republic' under a proletarian government (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991). To achieve this goal, the CPN-M planned an agrarian revolution for the rural poor to confiscate land from "feudal" landlords and redistribute it among the poor and landless, and use armed violence to end "imperialist exploitation" by gaining state power and nationalizing industries and banks (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995b). Under the leadership of Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal[6] (often referred to as 'Prachanda'), the party claimed to adhere to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology, however, the organizational structure and approach to war was strictly Maoist[7].

The party's hierarchy was clearly defined, with a central governing body that reached down to the village level. Military and non-military members organized elections and implemented local political structures including 'people's governments' and 'people's courts' (Lawoti, 2010; Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2001; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). The CPN-M established women and student political wings to engage women and children (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1998, 2000b),

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[6] Bhattarai was Chairman of the party and Dahal was the 'Supreme Commander' of the PLA.

[7] The CPN-M was structured on Mao Tse-tung's principles of protracted war, which includes a revolutionary Communist Party, the CPN-M; a People's Army, the People's Liberation Army; and a United Front, United Revolutionary People's Council (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991, 2001; Com. Prachanda, 1993).

and an international department associated with Maoist groups in India[8] (Sharma, 2004; Thapa, 2004) to recruit expatriates, fundraise, purchase weapons, and organize training (Dhakal, 2009; International Crisis Group, 2005)

Arguably, the CPN-M officially established the PLA and a Revolutionary People's Council to fully implement the Maoist revolution in 2001. The CPN-M established the PLA as the 'people's army' and implemented a policy of "militarizing" society against Nepal Security Forces (NSF) (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2001). The PLA was comprised of a Main Force, a Secondary/Local Force, and a 'People's Militia' (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2001). The purpose was to advance the 'people's war' through armed violence, defend the 'New Democratic Republic' after the revolution, and participate in political activities in leisure and peacetime (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2001). While the level of training and weaponry is debated[9], the military strategy was to build military bases in rural areas and gain control of Kathmandu by encircling around it (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991, 1995b).

The Revolutionary People's Council was established to implement a 'united front' to guide the revolution towards establishing a 'New Democratic Republic' and the state after the revolution (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2001). The initial stages were focused on rural areas at the local level, particularly with the poor, often referred to as 'peasants' (Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991).

2.2.2. The 'People's War,' 1996-2006

On February 4th, 1996, CPN-M Chairman Bhattarai submitted a list of 40 demands to the Prime Minister of Nepal and threatened to launch a Maoist revolution if

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[8] According to Sharma (2004), the CPN-M was affiliated with Maoist political groups in India including the All India Nepali Unity Society, the All India Nepali Students' Association, the All India Nepali Youth Association, and the All India Nepali Ethnic Society.

[9] Some argue that the PLA were inexperienced in combat and had few weapons (Dhakal, 2009; Onesto, 1999), while others argue that the PLA received training from retired Gurkha soldiers, made improvised weapons, and gained an increasing supply of weapons from raiding police and military posts (International Crisis Group, 2005; South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2001).

immediate action was not taken towards fulfilling the demands (Lawoti, 2010). The list of demands was not particularly Maoist (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006) and included demands to reinforce nationalism and end "imperial" relationships with India and other countries; establish a new democratic system that would guarantee the rights of all members of society; abolish special privileges for the king and the royal family; end corruption; declare Nepal as a secular nation; provide universal education in mother tongue language; achieve and economic and social development of the rural poor by redistributing land, provide unemployment insurance and minimum wage for workers; and protect children, orphans, disabled, and the elderly (Bhattarai, 1996). Four days before the deadline was reached, the CPN-M launched the 'People's War' on February 13th, 1996, and carried out armed attacks in Rolpa and Rukum districts in the Mid-Western region and Sindhuli district in the Eastern region (Pherali, 2011).

Over the next decade, the CPN-M targeted government offices and infrastructure, including police stations, military posts, and banks with armed violence (Binadi, 2011; Do and Iyer, 2010; Pherali, 2011; Shakya, 2010; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). The CPN-M gained substantial support by targeting political messages to rural communities disproportionately affected by socioeconomic factors linked to poverty (Binadi, 2011; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Shakya, 2010). The CPN-M prohibited a range of activities and posted notices on public spaces; sent threatening letters to individuals perceived as government sympathizers and potential candidates for extortion; and threatened uncooperative individuals (Lawoti, 2010). The CPN-M established 'people's courts' to sanction individuals for discrimination based on caste (e.g. 'untouchability'), ethnic and gender lines; domestic violence; the sale and consumption of alcohol (Fujikura, 2003; Lawoti, 2010; Shakya, 2010). These courts used public demonstrations of violence against individuals who violated prohibited activities (Fujikura, 2003) and redistributed land among political supporters (Binadi, 2011; Lawoti, 2010).

The CPN-M was accused of human rights violations, including the use of torture and extrajudicial killing to force compliance from civilians; and child rights violations,

particularly the recruitment and use of children in armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2007; IRIN News, 2005; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2005). Initially, the Nepalese Armed Police Force responded to the Maoist insurgency, but the Nepalese Royal Army was deployed to respond to an escalation of violence (Lawoti, 2010; Shakya, 2010) resulting in a State of Emergency declared in 2001.

The government legislated the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (2001) that provided NSF with the authority to arbitrarily detain anyone, regardless of age, who were suspected of affiliations with the CPN-M (Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). NSF were accused of widespread human rights violations including the use of torture, extrajudicial killing, arbitrary arrest and detention; rape and disappearances of civilians, particularly those suspected of being CPN-M members; and child rights violations, including the recruitment of children into the armed forces through illegal arrest and detention (Human Rights Watch, 2007; IRIN News, 2005; Newar, 2003; Onesto, 2003; Siwakoti, 2009; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization-Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1996; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

The CPN-M eventually gained political support in nearly all 75 districts in Nepal (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Pherali, 2011). In April, 2006, a newly formed Seven-Party-Alliance negotiated a 12 point agreement with the CPN-M (Shakya, 2010) ultimately leading to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on November 21st, 2006, which included stipulations to amalgamate a new interim government, thus ending monarchal governance in Nepal (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Shakya, 2010). Overall, the conflict resulted in 13,000 deaths[10] and 1,300 disappearances (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012), and over 100,000 displaced persons (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2006).

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[10] The Nepalese Security Forces (Nepalese Armed Police Force and the Nepalese Royal Army) are often accused of being responsible for the majority of the deaths during the conflict (INSEC, 2008).

a. Situation of Children in 2006

i. Impact of Conflict on Children

The conflict had various impacts on children and exacerbated pre-existing child protection issues. Overall, the conflict resulted in 400 deaths, 600 injured (Human Rights Watch, 2007); one of the highest global rates of injury by landmines and improvised explosives (United Nations Mission in Nepal, 2008), and an estimated 10,000-15,000 children were recruited into armed groups and the armed forces, the vast majority of whom were adolescents recruited in the PLA (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2007; World Education, 2009), representing approximately 30% of PLA recruits (Child Soldiers International, 2004; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

ii. Nepal's Legal Commitment to Child Rights

Nepal was a signatory to several international standards on child rights, although many have yet to be fully implemented into domestic legislation. For example, Nepal was a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that defines a child as a person below 18 years, while the Children's Act (1992) defined a child as a person below 16 years. This was also the case for international standards that prohibit the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. For example, Nepal was a signatory to the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (1999) which prohibited the use of children below 18 years in practices of exploitation, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; while Nepal's Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (2000) only prohibited the use of children below 14 years. However, Nepal was also a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) that prohibits the recruitment, enlistment, and use of children below 15 years of age in armed conflict.

In 2007, the newly formed CPN-M government of Nepal signed the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000) and the Paris Principles (2007). Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, the Paris Principles (2007) will be used to identify child soldiers recruited in the

PLA. Children recruited in the PLA includes any person below 18 years of age who was recruited or used by an armed group in any capacity, including children used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies, or for sexual purposes (Paris Principles, 2007).

iii. CPN-M Discourse on Child Recruitment in the PLA

The CPN-N has denied and acknowledged child recruitment in the PLA. Most often, the party has publicly denied the recruitment and use of children below 18 years of age (Amnesty International, 2005; Child Soldiers International, 2008; Haviland, 2006; Hart, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Nepali Times, 2007b; Perry, 2006; Onesto, 2003; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006), and has specifically denied recruitment of children below 16 years of age (Standing and Parker, 2011). CPN-M leaders, particularly the Supreme Commander of the PLA, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, have often accused the government of exaggerating the issue of child recruitment for political interests (Haviland, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Perry, 2006; Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), 2000); claimed that the party had a policy that prohibited the recruitment of children below 18 years of age for the PLA (Human Rights Watch, 2007), and discouraged children from enlisting in the PLA (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a).

CPN-M leaders have denied that local militias were PLA groups (Haviland, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007); provided military training to children below 16 years of age (Haviland, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007); forced recruitment of children, specifically abduction (Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), 2000); and claimed to adhere to the Geneva Conventions (Magar, 2004b). Instead, CPN-M leaders claimed that the party had a policy to care for orphaned children of CPN-M members[11] (Haviland, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007) and implied that the policy was misinterpreted as one for recruiting children (Haviland, 2006; Onesto, 2003; Perry, 2006).

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[11] According to Halivand (2006), Dahal reportedly claimed that the party provided education, training, and work to orphaned children between 12-15 years.

In addition to various denials, the CPN-M has also acknowledged child recruitment in the PLA. According to CPN-M documents, the party permitted children below 18 years of age to enlist in the PLA at their behest (Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), 2000); including girls (Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), 2004); while claiming that some children were recruited due to occasional lacks of discipline in the PLA ranks (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Onesto, 2000; Rana, 2006). According to news reports, party leaders in other levels of the political organization admitted to recruiting children in the PLA (CNN News, 2002; Rai, 2002b) and permitted children to enlist after participating in the Maoist-focused education[12] (Asia News, 2006; Magar, 2004a) and publicly announced an intention to establish a children's militia[13] (Bohara, 2004; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Onesto, 2003). Further reports suggest that children's armed units were operating in Rolpa (Adhikari, 2013; Magar, 2004b; Rana, 2006) and Rukum districts (Asia News, 2005; Chettri, 2004). Overall, despite various denials of child recruitment by the party, CPN-M leaders acknowledged the recruitment of children in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2006).

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[12] For example, a Rukum district chief reportedly claimed that children had a "human right" to join the PLA voluntarily (Asia News, 2005) and a CPN-M leader in Palpa district reportedly claimed that children would "commit suicide" if they were prevented from participating in the war (Magar, 2004a).

[13] Student leader of ANNFSU-R, Kamal Shahi, is said to have publicly announced that ANNFSU-R's intention to recruit and provide military training to 50,000 children to establish a children's militia (Bohara, 2004; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Onesto, 2003).

3.   Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in this paper. The summary of the research design presents the general approach to the research undertaken, including the rationale for using Nepal as a case study and Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance for the theoretical framework for the analysis. The research methodology is outlined, including the research question, a summary of the literature review and rationale for methods used in data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a description of the research hypothesis, indicators, and defines key terms.

3.1.   Research Design

Using qualitative research methods, this paper analyzes secondary sources to determine whether or not children voluntarily enlisted in the People's Liberation Army in Nepal. A combination of library and internet research was used to produce grounded and rich data to test the research hypothesis that children do not voluntarily enlist in armed groups. Academic literature, official party documents, humanitarian and media reports were compiled to identify factors involved in the recruitment of children in the PLA, the armed group of the CPN-M during the Maoist revolution in Nepal between 1996-2006. Data collected in the research findings were triangulated and analyzed using Leon Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance.

Nepal was selected as a case study for three reasons. First, according to some academic literature, voluntary enlistment of children in armed groups through political indoctrination is prevalent and under-researched in conflict-affected countries in Asia (Achvarina and Reich, 2010; Becker, 2007). Nepal is a South Asian country that recently emerged from conflict in 2006, and several publications argue that children voluntarily enlisted in the PLA in response to political indoctrination (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Pherali, 2011). Second, there is limited academic literature available on child soldiers in Nepal, most of which does not focus on the recruitment of children in the PLA. Third, as previously discussed, legal

inconsistencies and cultural realities suggest that agency is a highly variable concept in Nepalese society. Combined, these factors present Nepal is a suitable case study for the research.

Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance was selected as the theoretical framework for the analysis for two reasons. First, cognitive dissonance theory is used to conceptualize nonphysical force in child recruitment. Festinger's (1957) hypotheses on the effects of forced compliance are used to identify the exertion and consequences of nonphysical elements of force in. Second, cognitive dissonance theory remains relevant today and has generated significant research (Cooper, 2007; Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999). However, the theory is relatively unfamiliar in the field of conflict studies with little indication to suggest that it has been used to analyze the child recruitment in armed groups. In short, these factors suggest that Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance is an appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis.

3.2. Research Methodology

3.2.1. Research Question

This paper seeks to answer one research question. Can children voluntarily enlist in armed groups? To answer this question, this paper will use cognitive dissonance theory to analyze how children were recruited into the PLA.

3.2.2. Literature Review

Academic literature on child recruitment in the PLA is limited. An initial key word search completed on the University of Ottawa Library database produced 4 sources of peer-reviewed literature. A second key word search using variations of a larger selection of key words produced a larger selection of peer-reviewed literature, however, most were unrelated or generally focused on the Maoist revolution in Nepal.

Overall, academic discourse concerning child recruitment in the PLA is often based on research completed with former child soldiers and is therefore focused on children's perspectives of recruitment that generally perceived recruitment as voluntary. Therefore, academic discourse typically argues that the majority of children voluntarily enlisted in response to political indoctrination imposed by the CPN-M (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2007; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009). However, the concept of force is not defined in the literature and nonphysical elements of force that coerced child recruitment have received little attention. Furthermore, there is a general lack of CPN-M perspectives and theoretical analysis in the literature, and data triangulation between various secondary sources is limited.

This paper addresses several gaps identified in the literature. First, information collected from multiple secondary sources, including CPN-M documents, is triangulated to identify factors involved in PLA child recruitment. Second, the research findings are theoretically analyzed using Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance to conceptualize nonphysical elements of force that coerced child recruitment in the PLA.

3.2.3. Data Collection

A combination of library and internet research was used to compile relevant information from academic literature, CPN-M documents, humanitarian and media reports. A key word search was completed using variations of the terms, "Nepal," "Child Soldier," "Recruitment," "People's Liberation Army," and "Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist" on Google's internet search engine to access online sources.

3.2.4. Data Analysis

a. Triangulation

Research findings from secondary sources are triangulated and summarized in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 in chapter four. Through the process of data analysis, three issues emerged. First, because the research is based on secondary sources, much of the data was

previously analyzed in varying degrees. The data collected was therefore susceptible to pre-existing bias, including political influence. For example, academic literature demonstrates a general tendency towards favouring post-modernism and is critical of child development theory. CPN-M documents are based on Maoist political ideology and provide conflicting perspectives towards child recruitment. Humanitarian reports demonstrate a general tendency towards favouring child development theory and support international standards prohibiting the recruitment of children in armed groups. Media reports, both domestic and international, have a general tendency towards supporting humanitarian discourse. Data triangulation was used to mitigate issues of bias from all four sources.

Second, sources do not use a common approach for identifying child soldiers in Nepal. As previously discussed, Nepal's recent commitments concerning child soldiers included the Paris Principles (2007), which was signed by the CPN-M government after the peace agreement. Therefore, the Paris Principles (2007) are used to identify children recruited in the PLA for the purpose of this paper. Third, academic literature, humanitarian and media reports often lack a clear understanding of the CPN-M's organizational structure, particularly that of the PLA. Based on official party documents, the PLA includes 'People's Militias,' Secondary/Local Forces, and the Main Force (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2001). While it is necessary to distinguish between the PLA and CPN-M political groups, it is also important to note that child recruitment in both groups are linked. Overall, data triangulation is used to clarify some of these issues and produce rich and grounded findings.

Triangulation is a method used in qualitative research to assess the validity of research findings (Guion, Deihl, and McDonald, 2013). According to Guion, Deihl, and McDonald (2013), data triangulation can be used to analyze a research question from multiple perspectives and often involves information from different stakeholders. Similarly, the research findings triangulate data from multiple stakeholders and reflect diverse perspectives from Nepalese and international academics, CPN-M members, humanitarian advocates, media reporters and journalists.

The goal of data triangulation is not uniformity of information (Patton, 2002). For example, Patton (2002) argues that inconsistencies may be common and may reflect strengths in particular research methods. Therefore, inconsistencies should not be interpreted as weak evidence, but viewed as an opportunity to understand issues further (Patton, 2002). There are several advantages to using the data triangulation method such as increasing confidence in research findings, developing a clear and comprehensive understanding of complex issues, and identifying unique findings that challenge or integrate theories (Thurmond, 2001).

Data triangulation has some disadvantages, namely, that is time consuming and susceptible to researcher bias (Thurmond, 2001). The researcher made efforts to mitigate challenges with time consumption with planning and organizational skills. The researcher also acknowledges that data collection and analysis were both enhanced and complicated by the researcher's knowledge of child recruitment in Nepal. The researcher has prior knowledge of child recruitment issues through volunteer service with CWIN (Child Workers in Nepal) in the Hamro Sajha Thalo Reintegration Home in 2007 and graduate internship experience with UNICEF Nepal in the Justice for Children Programme in the Child Protection Section in 2012. The researcher made efforts to mitigate challenges with personal predispositions by analyzing data collected from secondary sources representing diverse perspectives and reflecting critically on her influence in the research process.

b. **Theoretical Analysis**

i. **Summary of Festinger's (1957) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance**

Triangulated data is analyzed with Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance to conceptualize nonphysical force that coerced child recruitment in the PLA. The premise of cognitive dissonance theory is that an individual strives towards consistency in their thoughts and actions (Festinger, 1957). Components of knowledge, opinions, beliefs and attitudes are referred to as 'cognitions,' and Festinger (1957) argues that cognitions often correspond with an individual's behaviour. The theory provides a framework for understanding how an individual responds to conflicting sources of

information that produce psychological discomfort, referred to as 'dissonance' (Festinger, 1957).

According to Festinger (1957), an individual is often able to rationalize inconsistencies within his/herself, however, circumstantial factors may prevent an individual from doing so successfully. Under these conditions, Festinger (1957) argues that the individual will experience dissonance. The level of dissonance increases as the importance or value of elements increase, and the overall level of dissonance creates a similar level of pressure to reduce the dissonance (Festinger, 1957). The pressure to reduce the dissonance can result in a number of changes, including changes in an individual's behaviour and cognition (Festinger, 1957).

The thesis of cognitive dissonance theory is threefold. First, individuals regularly manage conflicting sources of information. Second, dissonance motivates an individual to reduce dissonance and achieve psychological equilibrium, which Festinger (1957) refers to as 'consonance.' Third, when an individual attempts to reduce dissonance, the individual will avoid situations and information that is expected to increase the dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Festinger's hypotheses concerning the consequences of decision-making, voluntary and involuntary exposure to information, and the effects of forced compliance are used to conceptualize nonphysical force to specifically address the issue of voluntary enlistment in the PLA.

It is important to note that research in cognitive dissonance theory has primarily focused on adults and outside the context of conflict situations. Therefore, careful attention should be used in the interpretation of children's agency. For the purpose of this paper, agency refers to an individual's ability to interpret and influence their own life and the lives of others (Hart and Tyrer, 2006; James and Prout, 1997) and is generally accepted as a possible consequence of the evolving capacities of children. Furthermore, because the research is based on secondary sources, a psychological approach to analyzing children's agency is beyond the scope of this paper. Cognitive dissonance

theory is used as a framework to facilitate a general understanding of children's agency amidst complex factors involved in PLA child recruitment.

ii. Development of the Research Hypothesis and Indicators

Festinger (1957) identifies four indicators of forced compliance that are used to test the research hypothesis that children do not voluntarily enlist in armed groups. Two indicators are used to identify the exertion of force, including an offer of a special reward and a threat of punishment (Festinger, 1957). Two indicators are used to identify the effects of forced compliance, including a discrepancy between an individual's behaviour and beliefs once the influence of force is removed, and by measuring the opinions expressed by an individual. A positive presence of at least one indicator from each group will be interpreted as children's forced recruitment in the PLA.

c. Definition of Key Terms

A number of key terms are used throughout this paper. In order to facilitate a consistent interpretation of these terms, definitions are used from sources collected during the research process.

i. Adolescent

The term "adolescent" refers to a child between the ages of 10-19 years (United Nations Children's Fund, 2012).

ii. Agency

The term "agency" refers to an individual's ability to interpret and influence their own life and the lives of others (Hart and Tyrer, 2006; James and Prout, 1997).

iii. Armed Group

The term "armed group" refers to groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State that should not recruit or use children below 18 years in hostilities under any circumstances (Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 2000).

iv. Assent

The term "assent" refers to children's affirmation to participate, recognizing that children may be unable to provide ethically valid consent for themselves (Lambert and Glacken, 2011).

v. Basic Human Needs

The term "basic human needs" refers to a hierarchy of five basic human needs including: 1) physiological needs required for human survival; 2) safety needs required for physical security; 3) love needs required for a sense of belonging; 4) esteem needs required for self-respect; and 5) self-actualization needs required for the realization of achieving full potential (Maslow, 1943).

vi. Child

The term "child" refers to any person below 18 years of age (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

vii. Child Soldier

The term "child soldier" refers to a child associated with an armed force or armed group who is a person below 18 years of age who is or who was recruited or used in any capacity, including but not limited to children who were used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies, or for sexual purposes (Paris Principles, 2007).

viii. Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist

The term "Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist" refers to a revolutionary Communist party in Nepal that was formed in 1986 and launched a Maoist revolution in Nepal in 1996 to establish a 'New Democratic Republic' under a proletarian government (Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), 1991), through agrarian revolution (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995).

ix. Consent

The term "consent" refers to an ethical principle concerning a complex concept of decision-making capacity that requires the competence to understand and sufficient information to enable an individual to make a decision without duress/coercion (Lambert and Glacken, 2011).

x.   Forced Recruitment

The term, "forced recruitment" refers to a context in which armed forces or armed groups use physical force, coercion, threats, and social or cultural pressures to recruit children (United Nations Children's Fund, 2002).

xi. People's Liberation Army

The term "People's Liberation Army" refers to the armed group of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, comprised of a 'Main Force,' a 'Secondary/Local Force,' and a 'People's Militia' (Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), 2001).

xii. Recruitment

The term "recruitment" refers to compulsory, forced and voluntary conscription or enlistment of children in any kind of armed force or armed group (Paris Principles, 2007).

xiii. Voluntary Enlistment

The term "voluntary enlistment" refers to a decision that is made within the context of conflict that exacerbates pre-existing conditions that place the child at risk of recruitment in armed forces and armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2002).

4. Research Findings

This chapter summarizes the research findings from academic literature, CPN-M documents, humanitarian and media reports. A summary of factors involved in the recruitment of children in the PLA is presented, including CPN-M recruitment methods, psychosocial and socio-economic factors that facilitated recruitment; and the effects of such factors on children, whether recruitment was avoided or successful. The chapter concludes with a discussion of contested issues and summary of triangulated results.

4.1. Academic Literature

4.1.1. Factors Involved in the Recruitment of Children in the PLA

a. CPN-M Child Recruitment Methods

i. Maoist-Focused Education of Children

Many CPN-M leaders were teachers who had become active in Communist revolutionary politics during their student days (Pherali, 2011). Therefore, party leaders saw children as being both in need of political education and as potential political educators in their own right. The CPN-M viewed the existing education system, particularly private schools, as perpetuating inequalities in Nepalese society (Pherali, 2011; Standing and Parker, 2011). Consequently, the party sought to convey its Maoist ideology, particularly political concepts of equality, to children through informal activities such as demonstrations, and the formal activities such as curriculum delivered in the education system and political campaigns[14]; to persuade them to join the 'people's war' (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Shakya, 2010). The CPN-M initially encouraged children to join student unions/political groups, such as the All Nepal National Free Student Union-Revolutionary (ANNFSU-R); to educate others through informal activities, and to fight in the 'people's war' (Becker, 2007; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011).

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[14] For example, Shakya's (2010) field research found that children participated in political campaigns titled, "Farewell to Firearms" and "Paths to Reconciliation."

Maoist-focused education was referred to as the 'people's education' and included political and cultural components, which constituted political indoctrination (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Pherali, 2011, 2012; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011). The political component focused on Maoist political ideology, such as equal rights for women and lower caste people; CPN-M aims, such as fighting government corruption on behalf of 'the people;' and recruitment messages aimed at children, such as telling children that they had a duty to fight (Binadi, 2011; Becker, 2007; Shakya, 2010). The CPN-M introduced an amended calendar, which included new festivals such as "martyr days" (Hart, 2001; Standing and Parker, 2011); a new national anthem, and a "revolutionary vocabulary" devoid of references to the monarchy and replete with military references (e.g. "g" is for "gun") (Standing and Parker, 2011). The cultural component focused on delivering political messages through cultural songs, dance, and theatre performed in schools and mass demonstrations (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010).

There is some debate on whether or not the Maoist-focused education included military training. For example, Binadi (2011) argues that Maoist-focused education included military training, while Shakya (2010) argues that children received military training sometime after initial recruitment in the PLA.

ii.   Interference in the Education System

The CPN-M demanded free and improved quality of universal education, including access to education in mother tongue language (Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2011, 2012; Standing and Parker, 2011), and closure of all private schools (Pherali, 2011). The CPN-M advertised political messages on school infrastructure (Shakya, 2010) and forced school closures, particularly private schools, through demonstrations and violence often led by student and teachers' unions (Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; O'Malley, 2010; Pherali, 2011; Standing and Parker, 2011). The CPN-M then took over school properties, where they hosted political programs and demonstrations, military training, and hid CPN-M members (Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Shakya, 2010). School closures prevented many

students from completing annual exams and increased school dropout rates (Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2011; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011).

The CPN-M abducted and threatened reprisal on teachers and their students to force their participation in Maoist-focused education (Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2011, 2012; Pyakurel, 2006; Standing and Parkers, 2011). Teachers delivered curriculum to their students, either as party members or extorted by the CPN-M to do so (Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2011, 2012; Standing and Parker, 2011). In some communities, the 'people's education' supplemented the primary or secondary academic curriculum, while in other communities, it replaced it (Becker, 2007; Pherali, 2011; Standing and Parker, 2011).

iii. Abduction

The CPN-M abducted individual children and large groups of children from school to force their participation in Maoist-focused education (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Pherali, 2011; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011). Once trained, children were often released and allowed to return home, while some stayed to enlist, and others were prevented from leaving (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Pherali, 2012; Shakya, 2010). According to Shakya (2010), the rate of child abduction significantly increased after the signing of the peace agreement in order to substantiate exaggerated claims made by the CPN-M concerning the number of PLA combatants.

iv. Threats of Reprisal

Particularly in the Mid-western region of the country, the CPN-M used threats of reprisal to pressure families to provide at least one of its members as a recruit for the PLA (Binadi, 2011; Becker, 2007; Housden, 2009; Lawoti, 2010), though several scholars consider this method as a form of abduction (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010). Binadi (2011) argues that this practice targeted children specifically, while others argue that such practice resulted in child recruitment

due to poverty[15] (Ogura, 2004) and absent fathers (Becker, 2007).

v. Incentives

The CPN-M promised employment with high salaries, free education and training to encourage children to enlist in the PLA (Binadi: 2011; Housden: 2009; Shakya: 2010; Brookeman and Darton: 2010). In some cases, the CPN-M promised to pay salaries that exceeded average annual incomes (Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009).

vi. Deception

Becker (2007) argues that children were often encouraged to participate in short-term Maoist-focused education programs and forced to stay in the PLA indefinitely.

b. Psychosocial Factors that Facilitated Child Recruitment

i. Individual

Children were motivated to enlist in the PLA due to exposure to armed violence inflicted by the NSF on family members, particularly extra-judicial killing of fathers and sexual violence on mothers (Housden, 2009), personal victimization perpetrated by NSF (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002) and subsequent desire for revenge (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2010; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011). According to Khort and Maharjan (2009), some children were also motivated to enlist as means of empowerment.

ii. Family

Academic literature suggests that children were inclined to enlist due to CPN-M membership of family members (Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2010; Podder, 2011), particularly PLA membership of parents and older siblings (Hart,

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[15] Ogura (2004) argues that families provided a family member as a recruit when they did not have material possessions to give.

2001; Pherali, 2012); being orphaned and/or separated from parents/caregivers during the conflict (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2011; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010); and exposure to domestic violence (Becker, 2007; Khort et al., 2008, 2010; Shakya, 2010) and child abuse (Pherali, 2011).

iii. Community

PLA membership of friends (Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2012; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011) and association of teachers with the CPN-M facilitated child enlistment (Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2012; Standing and Parker, 2011). The literature also suggests that children were inclined to enlist due to CPN-M presence in the community, particularly a high presence often accompanied by enforcement of Maoist ideology (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Standing and Parker, 2011) and a withdrawal of government officials and NSF (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Standing and Parker, 2011); thereby allowing the CPN-M to operate in communities with little interference.

In communities where the CPN-M or NSF did not have complete control, contact with either group often resulted in extortion for food and shelter, and placed communities in need of protection from opposing groups (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011). Communities suspected of assisting the CPN-M and/or communities with high Nepal Security Forces (NSF) presence were subject to disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture in custody, and gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence against women and girls (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011), and the CPN-M offered protection from abuse perpetrated by the NSF (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002). Overall, exposure to armed conflict in a community was increased with the presence of either group in a community (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011).

c. Socio-Economic Factors that Facilitated Child Recruitment

i. Age

The majority of children recruited in the PLA were between the ages of 14-17 (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Standing and Parker, 2011).

ii. Gender

While boys and girls were recruited in the PLA, boys were more inclined to enlist when compared with girls (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Standing and Parker, 2011). However, data collection with girls was challenged by social stigma and representation is presumably higher (Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Shakya, 2010). Girls were motivated to enlist as a means for escaping gender discrimination (Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2010), particularly related to arranged and/or abusive marriages (Binadi, 2011; Khort et al., 2010; Shakya, 2010).

iii. Social Status

Children were inclined to enlist due to social marginalization resulting from religious and cultural discriminatory practices towards girls, low-caste Dalits, indigenous and ethnic groups (Binadi, 2011; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2010); lack of citizenship status for Bhutanese refugees (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001); and subsequent interest in the CPN-M's focus on equality (Binadi, 2011; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2010) and expectations for positive social change (Hart, 2001; Khort et al., 2008; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011).

iv. Family Structure

Whether raised in a nuclear, joint (multiple generations and adult siblings in the home) (Khort et al., 2008), or polygamous families (Shakya, 2010), children were

particularly inclined to enlist when orphaned (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2011; Shakya, 2010) and/or separated from one or both parents/caregivers, particularly due to employment migration of fathers[16] (Hart, 2001; Becker, 2007; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002) and/or arbitrary arrest/detention of parents by NSF (Hart, 2001). When parents were killed or disabled during the conflict, children often became the head of the household (Shakya, 2010).

v. Family Income

Poor households[17] are frequently cited as facilitating PLA enlistment (Binadi, 2011; Becker, 2007; Brookeman and Darton, 2010; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2010; Shakya, 2010), particularly landless families due to social marginalization (Binadi, 2011), and Bhutanese refugees (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002). Children were inclined to enlist to improve access to money (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Brookeman and Darton, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011) for basic needs such as food[18] (Brookeman and Darton, 2010; Shakya, 2010), which historically contributed to child exploitation, including child labour and human trafficking (Hart, 2001). Children with disabled parents and/or parents who were killed during the conflict assumed financial responsibility for their siblings (Shakya, 2010).

vi. Area of Residence

Children were inclined to enlist when living in rural areas (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2008; Pherali, 2011) particularly in the mid-Western region due to high CPN-M presence, such as in Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot districts

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[16] Men from rural communities often migrated to urban areas in Nepal and India in search of employment; and were therefore absent for most of the year (Becker, 2007; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001). Their absence increased the likelihood of child recruitment in response to family quota recruitment drives (Becker, 2007).

[17] According to Hart (2001), poverty was exacerbated during the conflict because the government only provided compensation to families of those killed or injured by the CPN-M, despite the NSF being responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths and injuries.

[18] Brookeman and Darton (2010) argue that children will do almost anything for food and money when faced with extreme poverty.

(Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010; Standing and Parker, 2011); historical recruitment of boys for military purposes by the British Army[19] and Nepalese rulers[20] (Hart, 2001); and living in Bhutanese refugee camps in South East Nepal (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001).

vii. Education

Although Pherali (2011) suggests that many adolescents were educated, historically low levels of school attendance facilitated PLA recruitment (Boyden, Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001), particularly for girls (Becker, 2007; Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2011, 2012; Standing and Parker, 2012), children from low-caste and ethnic groups (Hart, 2001; Pherali, 2011, 2012), and Bhutanese refugee children (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002). According to Shakya (2010), children were unable to continue their studies when their parents were disabled or killed during the conflict, as they could not afford to pay school fees.

4.1.2. Responses of Children

a. Avoidance

Children avoided recruitment by withdrawing from school (Becker, 2007; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Hart, 2001; Khort et al., 2010; Pherali, 2011; Standing and Parker, 2011) and leaving their home community/displacement, often unaccompanied by an adult (Becker, 2007; Hart, 2001; Khort, 2007; Pherali, 2011; Standing and Parker, 2011). Boys were inclined to migrate to urban areas in search of employment, often sent by their parents (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Shakya, 2010), but were at risk of homelessness and working in exploitative conditions (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002).

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[19] Communities in the mid-Western region traditionally provided boy recruits for the Gurkha regiment with the British Army, from the eighteenth century to the 1970s. Boys below 18 years were regularly sent abroad for military training and service from the same region that became the center of the Maoist revolution (Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; and Hart, 2001).

[20] Hart (2001) argues that ethnic groups from the mid-Western region, such as the Gurungs and Magars, traditionally provided boy recruits for military campaigns of Nepalese rulers.

b. Recruitment

The majority of children were recruited in student unions serving as performers (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Brookeman and Darton, 2010; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010). Some children were subsequently recruited in militias in noncombatant roles on a part-time basis and later served in other PLA groups as combatants on a full-time basis (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Brookeman and Darton, 2010; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010), sometimes by force (Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011) and after receiving military training (Becker, 2007; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010).

Children served a variety of roles, the majority of whom served in non-combatant roles, as porters of food and weapons, messengers, cooks, guards/sentries, and informants/spies (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart, 2002; Brookeman and Darton, 2010; Hart, 2001; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010) under the age of 16 (Housden, 2009). Children were also used to detonate landmines and improvised explosive devices (Shakya, 2010), and girls were more likely to serve in non-combatant roles (Binadi, 2011; Khort et al., 2008) and at risk of sexual exploitation by other PLA members[21] (Housden, 2009).

The majority of children believed that they voluntarily enlisted in the PLA (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011, Dewan and Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Pherali, 2011, 2012). Therefore, academic discourse primarily argues that children voluntarily enlisted in the PLA after being politically indoctrinated by the CPN-M (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2001; Binadi and Dewan, 2011; Housden, 2009). Peer pressure/peer recruitment (Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010), artistic delivery of CPN-M political messages, and opportunities for political expression and participation were effective methods used to attract children to enlist in the PLA (Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Shakya, 2010). To a lesser degree, threats of family reprisal (Binadi, 2011; Becker, 2007; Housden, 2009) and interference in the education system (Shakya,

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[21] The extent of sexual exploitation of girls recruited in the PLA is under-researched due to social stigma. For example, research completed with children formerly associated with the PLA by Khort et al. (2008) did not investigate sexual exploitation of girls to avoid potential risk of harm in their family and/or community.

2010) were also effective CPN-M strategies used to recruit children in the PLA (Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Binadi and Dewan Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Pherali, 2011, 2012; Standing and Parker, 2011).

4.2. Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Literature

4.2.1. Factors Involved in the Recruitment of Children in the PLA

a. CPN-M Child Recruitment Methods

i. Maoist-Focused Education of Children

Being strongly influenced by Maoist ideology and the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995b, 1997; Com. Prachanda, 1993) the CPN-M intended to deliver Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology in a systematic manner in Nepalese society (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991). The CPN-M considered the political indoctrination of children as an important component of the 'people's war,' and established 'Akhil Bal Sangathan' as a "children's organization," tasked with delivering the 'people's education' to children (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a).

The curriculum aimed to develop children's sense of responsibility towards their country and their people (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1998) and encourage children to support CPN-M political ideology and the people's war[22] (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a). CPN-M documents suggest that Akhil Bal Sangathan operated in their "base areas" in the mid-Western region (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a), such as Rolpa and Rukum districts, where the CPN-M established child care centers and boarding facilities for orphaned children (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2004). Adolescent youth were encouraged to join the PLA (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b) and engage in political violence (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995, 1997, 2000b). However, one article states that "minors" were "strictly forbidden" from joining CPN-M armed groups (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a).

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[22] According to an article in the 'The Worker,' Akhil Bal Sangathan "takes care of the overall development of children, including their right to express their solidarity to what they consider is good, including the People's War," (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a).

ii. Interference in the Education System

The CPN-M 'people's committees' monitored government schools and had influence over the curriculum, such as removing Sanskrit language from instruction (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a).

b. Psychosocial Factors that Facilitated Child Recruitment

i. Individual

Party documents suggest that children were inclined to enlist in the PLA following exposure to armed violence inflicted by the NSF on family members (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1996, 2000a), particularly sexual violence of mothers (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a).

ii. Family

Children were inclined to enlist due to PLA membership of family members, particularly mothers (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist), 1998; 2000b, 2004). CPN-M documents suggest that children were susceptible to recruitment due to exposure to domestic violence and/or child abuse, parental substance abuse, particularly alcoholism and gambling of fathers (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b); and being orphaned during the conflict (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2004).

iii. Community

CPN-M documents suggest that child recruitment was facilitated by CPN-M presence in a community, particularly a high presence that was often accompanied by CPN-M political structures to enforce compliance with Maoist objectives[23] (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a, 2000b); and exposure to armed violence in the community (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1996b), including exposure to NSF violence in

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[23] In communities with a high CPN-M presence, the party established 'people's committees,' 'people's courts,' and 'people's jails' to enforce CPN-M political ideology, resolve disputes and redistribute land (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000a, 2000b, 2001).

communities suspected of assisting the CPN-M, particularly extra-judicial killing and abuse while in custody and detention[24] (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1996b).

c. Socio-Economic Context

i. Age

The party acknowledged "youth" participation in the PLA (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b) and claimed to have been unsuccessful in deterring children away from PLA enlistment[25] (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b).

ii. Gender

The party claimed that girls were particularly inclined to enlist in the PLA (Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2004).

iii. Social Status

CPN-M documents suggest that child recruitment was facilitated by social marginalization resulting from religious and cultural discriminatory practices towards girls, low-caste Dalits, indigenous and ethnic groups (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991).

iv. Family Structure

Children were inclined to enlist in the PLA when orphaned (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2004) and/or separated from one or both parents/caregivers[26], particularly

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[24] The CPN-M accused the NSF of being responsible for extra-judicial killing, state repression, arbitrary arrests, torture in police custody, including sexual violence of women (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1996b).

[25] During the party's wide scale militia recruitment in 2000, the party "had a tough time convincing minors below 18 to wait for joining the people's army" (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b).

[26] Children were often displaced when parents were arrested and/or detained by the NSF (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1996b).

girls separated from their fathers,[27] due to employment migration and polygamy (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b, 2004).

v. Family Income

According to CPN-M documents, youth enlisted in the PLA due to unemployment (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995, 2000b). Party documents also suggest that children from poor, landless households were inclined to enlist in the PLA (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991).

vi. Area of Residence

Party documents suggest that children were often recruited in rural areas (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1991, 1995, 2001) where poor and indigenous boys were historically recruited by British and Indian armies, particularly in the mid-Western region (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995, 1997, 1998); youth historically participated in armed political violence in the Eastern region[28] (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995, 1997, 1998); and children historically participated in weapons making for Gurkha fighters (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995, 1997).

vii. Education

Aside from encouraging children's participation in Akhil Bal Sangathan, there is little mention of education in party documents.

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[27] Fathers often migrated in Nepal and India in search of employment, often as labourers and mercenaries (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2004).

[28] According to the CPN-M, revolutionary youth and student movements were responsible for armed political violence in the Eastern region during the Jhapa revolution between 1972-1973 and the "historic" Jugedi student movement of 1979 as contribution towards the 'people's war' (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1995, 1997, 1998).

4.2.3. Responses of Children

a. Recruitment

While the CPN-M denied recruiting children in the PLA, the party claimed that youth (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b), particularly girls (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2004) voluntarily enlisted as full-time members in the PLA. The CPN-M argues that adolescent youth "found the true meaning of life" after enlisting in the PLA (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2000b).

4.3. Humanitarian Reports

4.3.1. Factors Involved in the Recruitment of Children in the PLA

a. CPN-M Child Recruitment Methods

i. Maoist-Focused Education of Children

The CPN-M delivered the 'people's education' in informal activities such as demonstrations, and formal activities such as curriculum in the education system; to persuade children that they had a duty to fight and join the people's war, and identify potential recruits (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). Children were encouraged to join student and women unions to educate others, participate in demonstrations, and to fight in the 'people's war,'[29] (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Student unions were associated with militias (Child Soldiers International, 2008), and organized competitions between districts to see which schools would recruit the highest number of children (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

The 'people's education' aimed to politically indoctrinate children with political, cultural, and military components (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights

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[29] Children were said to tell their peers, "If we can do it, so should you," (Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, 2012: 89).

Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009). The political component focused on Maoist ideology, particularly equality[30], and recruitment messages aimed at children (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009). The cultural component focused on delivering political messages through cultural songs, dance, and theatre, in schools and mass demonstrations (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009).

In addition to the political and cultural components, several reports claim that the Maoist-focused education included a military component that focused on training and arming children with homemade, lightweight firearms and improvised explosive devices, such as pressure cooker bombs (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Some reports claim that the CPN-M provided military training to children 16 years and older and those who were full-time PLA members (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005), although many children were much younger (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007).

ii.   Interference in the Education System

According to Human Rights Watch (2007), the CPN-M initially focused recruitment efforts in schools until the CPN-M extended recruitment efforts to mass political demonstrations and rallies in 2003. The CPN-M abducted children and their teachers from school to force participation in the 'people's education' (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Teachers instructed the curriculum to their students, often coerced by the

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[30] According to World Education (2009), the CPN-M used the motto, "Rise from discrimination."

CPN-M with threats of reprisal, such as extortion (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Members of student and women unions delivered the cultural component of Maoist-focused education in cultural performances to students attending school and community members attending demonstrations held on school grounds (Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). According to some reports, the 'people's education' encouraged children to withdraw from school and enlist in the PLA[31] (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

The CPN-M forced school closures[32], particularly private schools[33], through demonstrations and strikes; prohibiting payment of school fees[34]; violent attacks on schools for non-compliance with political demands[35] (Amnesty International, 2005; Child Soldiers International, 2008' United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005); and school take overs to deliver Maoist-focused education, including demonstrations and military training (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

iii. Abduction

The CPN-M abducted children to force participation in Maoist-focused education and directly recruit children for the PLA (Amnesty International, 2005; Child Soldiers

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[31] The CPN-M was said to have used slogans such as, "Put the paper and pencil in the bag and target the palace with the gun," (Amnesty International, 2005) and "One school, one militia," (Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

[32] In June, 2004, schools across the country were closed for over two weeks following strikes initiated by the CPN-M and student unions (Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

[33] The CPN-M reportedly demanded the closure of all private schools in April, 2005 (Amnesty International, 2005).

[34] In some districts, the CPN-M prohibited payment of school fees needed to pay teachers and keep schools open (Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

[35] For example, the CPN-M bombed three schools in Banke, Chitwan, and Rukum districts in April, 2005 (Amnesty International, 2005).

International, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Armed CPN-M members abducted groups of children at school, and individual children at home, or in the community while travelling between home and school (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Children were threatened with reprisal (Human Rights Watch, 2007) and once abducted, children were reportedly forced to walk long distances to remote areas, often without food, to participate in the 'people's education' (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Some reports argue that children were trained in CPN-M "training bases" (Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005) or "model districts" such as Jumla and Jajarkot (Human Rights Watch, 2007), while others argue that the CPN-M brought children to areas where they could safely deliver Maoist-focused education without NSF interference (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006).

After completing a training session, the CPN-M released the majority of children, while some stayed to enlist and others were prevented from leaving (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist, 2005). According to Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict (2005), students between 12-15 years of age were initially abducted while later trends involved abductions of children between 14-18 years of age.

iv. Threats of Reprisal

The CPN-M threatened children with reprisal to force their participation in Maoist-focused education (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Once recruited, the CPN-M deterred children from leaving armed groups with threats of physical assault and extrajudicial killing of children and/or their families (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Children who managed to successfully escape were at risk of re-abduction (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

The CPN-M also threatened families with reprisal, including physical assault and extrajudicial killing, to coerce families to provide one member as a recruit for the PLA (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; Save the Children, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Most reports argue that this recruitment method specifically targeted children[36] (Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005), while the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal (2012) argues that this method resulted in child recruitment when families could not provide money, food, and clothing due to poverty.

v. Incentives

The CPN-M promised children various incentives for enlisting in the PLA, including employment[37]; money/salaries (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Security Council, 2008); food; clothing (Amnesty International, 2005; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005); entertainment, adventure and travel (Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012).

vi. Deception

The CPN-M deceived children by encouraging them to participate in short-term "campaigns" for one-two months, and refusing to release them afterwards (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

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[36] For example, advocates often argue that the CPN-M used the slogan, "One family, one child" to recruit one child from households (Amnesty International, 2005; Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007).

[37] In particular, children were promised money and employment in a new national army that would amalgamate the PLA with the NSF (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007).

b. Psychosocial Factors the Facilitated Child Recruitment

i. Individual

Discrimination and exposure to violence facilitated enlistment. Children were inclined to enlist in response to discrimination experienced along gender, caste, and ethnic lines (Amnesty International, 2005; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2005) and subsequent interest in the CPN-M's focus on equality (Save the Children Norway-Nepal, 2008; Transcultural Organization, 2012; World Education, 2009); experienced child abuse and neglect (Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, 2012; World Education, 2009), particularly sexual violence of girls (Amnesty International, 2005; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, 2012; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005); and having witnessed NSF violence on family members, particularly the death of a parent, and subsequent desire for revenge (Save the Children Norway-Nepal, 2008; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, 2012; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

ii. Family

Children were inclined to enlist when parents were PLA members (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005); children were orphaned[38] and/or separated from one or both parents/caregivers during the conflict (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Less often, reports argue that children's exposure to violence in the home facilitated child recruitment, including exposure to domestic violence, and other family dynamics including alcohol abuse by fathers and polygamy (Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; World Education, 2009).

iii. Community

Children were inclined to enlist due to CPN-M membership of peers, particularly

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[38] A child with one parent is considered an orphan in Asia (United Nations Children's Fund, 2002).

friends associated with the PLA (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005) and teachers (Amnesty International, 2005; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009); and school closures due to military attacks and school take overs by NSF (Amnesty International, 2005; UNICEF, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005)m and teachers abandoning their posts (Amnesty International, 2005; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Community factors that facilitated recruitment included CPN-M presence, particularly a high presence with enforcement of Maoist objectives in the community[39] (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007). A higher CPN-M presence increased risk of NSF presence and exposure to NSF violence armed conflict in the community (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005), including child recruitment in the NSF[40] (Child Soldiers International, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007).

c. Socio-Economic Context

i. Age

Children recruited in the PLA were primarily between the ages of 14-17 (Child Soldiers International, 2004).

ii. Gender

Boys were more susceptible to recruitment (Child Soldiers International, 2004), while girls were particularly motivated to enlist as a means of escaping gender

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[39] For example, the CPN-M was known to use violence and threats of reprisal to force community participation in demonstrations, donations/extortion, and take over property (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007).

[40] The NSF recruited children by detaining them under the government's anti-terrorism laws and used them as informants/spies, porters, and messengers; often subjecting them to torture and abuse (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007; UNICEF, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

discrimination, such as arranged marriages (Amnesty International, 2005; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2005). According to Human Rights Watch (2007b), girls were recruited when boys had left the community.

iii. Social Status

Recruitment was facilitated by social marginalization due to historical religious and cultural discriminatory practices towards girls, low-caste Dalits, indigenous and ethnic groups (Amnesty International, 2005; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2005) and lack of government enforcement of child protection policies (Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Security Council, 2008)

iv. Family Structure

Orphaned children and/or children separated from one or both parents were susceptible to recruitment (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005) particularly due to employment migration of fathers (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; World Education, 2009).

v. Family Income

Being raised in a poor household facilitated enlistment (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009), while conflict exacerbated pre-existing poverty (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal 2012; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009). Poverty and youth unemployment (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural

Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; World Education, 2009) also facilitated enlistment, including historical exploitation of children, such as child labour and human trafficking, particularly girls (Amnesty International, 2005; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

vi. Area of Residence

Child recruitment primarily occurred in rural areas (Child Soldiers International, 2008; World Education, 2009), particularly in the mid-Western (Human Rights Watch, 2007) and Eastern regions (Human Rights Watch, 2007; World Education, 2009). According to humanitarian reports, historical military recruitment of boys for the Gurkha Regiment of the British Army (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004) also facilitated PLA enlistment.

vii. Education

Historically low levels of school attendance facilitated child recruitment (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

4.3.1. Responses of Children

a. Avoidance

Children avoided recruitment by withdrawing from school and migrating away from their home communities/displacement into urban areas in Nepal and India, particularly unaccompanied boys who often migrated for employment (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). In some cases, parents sent children away to prevent their recruitment (Human Rights Watch, 2007b).

b. Recruitment

Children were often initially recruited into militias on a part-time basis, often serving in non-combatant roles; and reports suggest that some children were later recruited into the Secondary/Local Force of the PLA on a full-time basis, often in combatant roles (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Children recruited into the Main Force of the PLA were deployed away from their communities and family, without access to their families, education, and healthcare (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005). Younger children served in militias and adolescent children often served in the Secondary/Local and/or the Main force of the PLA (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007). Once recruited, the CPN-M threatened children with reprisal, such as physical assault of children and family members; manual labour; and risk of arrest and detention by NSF, to prevent desertion (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Children served a variety of roles, mostly serving in non-combatant roles, as performers/recruiters in student unions[41] (Amnesty International, 2005; Child Soldiers International, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005), though many were armed with homemade guns and grenades (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007). Children served as porters of military equipment, weapons, and injured persons; messengers; informants/spies; cooks; funds collectors; bomb makers (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005); and human shields (Amnesty International, 2005). Girls were more likely to serve in non-combatant roles, and often subject to sexually abuse and exploitation by male PLA members (Child Soldiers International, 2004; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005).

Humanitarian discourse often asserts that children were recruited in the PLA by

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[41] According to one child's testimony, student leaders who were particularly successful in recruiting children were promoted (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

force. Forced recruitment, particularly abduction and threats of reprisal on children and their families, were effective in forcing children's participation in the 'people's education' (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009), resulting in political indoctrination (Child Soldiers International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund, 2006; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009). Therefore, the majority of child soldiers believed they had voluntarily enlisted in the PLA due to interest in political ideology and peer pressure (Amnesty International, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Save the Children Norway-Nepal, 2008; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; World Education, 2009). However, the conflict exacerbated pre-existing socio-economic conditions, particularly poverty, which left many children with no alternative but to enlist in CPN-M armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict, 2005; World Education, 2009).

4.4. Media Reports

4.4.1. Factors Involved in the Recruitment of Children in the PLA

a. CPN-M Child Recruitment Methods

i. Maoist-Focused Education of Children

The CPN-M viewed the education system, particularly private schools, as perpetuating social inequalities and delivered the 'people's education' to children in formally organized political campaigns (Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Nepali Times, 2001; Rai, 2001, 2002a; Samacharparta, 2001, 2002, 2004; Sapkota, 2001). Campaigns included events to commemorate the deaths of CPN-M members (Samacharparta, 2002), and those specifically targeting school children[42] (Bohara, 2004; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Siwakoti, 2009; Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Newar,

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[42] ANNFSU-R reportedly organized the "Special Peoples' Military Campaign" (Gaire, 2004) and the "One School, One Strong Militia Campaign" to recruit school children for the PLA (Bohara, 2004; Magar, 2004a).

2005; Pokharel, 2004) to convince them that they had a duty to fight in the PLA (Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Siwakoti, 2009).

The political component focused on CPN-M political ideology and recruitment messages aimed at children (Bohara, 2004; Kathmandu Post, 2009; Magar, 2004a, 2004b). The cultural component focused on delivering political messages through cultural songs, dance, and theatre in political campaigns (Bastola, 2009; Newar, 2006b). While Chettri (2004) claimed there was no evidence that CPN-M provided weapons training to children, several news reports indicate that the people's education included a military component focused on weapons training[43] (AsiaNews, 2005; Bohara, 2004; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Magar, 2004b; Nepali Times, 2007b; Relief Web, 2006; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009), particularly instruction on the use of rifles and grenades (Gaire, 2004; Magar, 2004a), sometimes said to be for the purpose of self-defense (Bohara, 2004; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004). Moreover, several news reports published photographs of noticeably young individuals wearing camouflaged clothing and equipped with guns (AsiaNews, 2005; BBC News, 2006; Bhandari, 2007; Bohara, 2004; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Ghale, 2002; Haviland, 2006; IRIN News, 2007; Magar, 2004b; Nepali Times, 2007b; Newar, 2006a, 2006b; Piper, 2012; Rai, 2002b; Samacharparta, 2002; Silwal, 2010). The 'people's education' was reportedly delivered in schools and "Maoist base areas" (Bandhari, 2007; Bohara, 2004; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Magar, 2004a; Samacharparta, 2004; Newar, 2005, 2006a; Shresta, 2013).

ii. **Interference in Education System**

The CPN-M denounced the curriculum used in the education system and created a 13 point demand including the nationalization of private schools; universal education; admission for underprivileged children; and eliminating English, Sanskrit, the national anthem, and 'western' influences from the curriculum (Magar, 2004a; Samacharparta, 2004; Onesto, 2003b; Rai, 2001, 2002a; Sapkota, 2001). The CPN-M delivered Maoist-focused education in schools (Chettri, 2004; IRIN News, 2006; Nepal, 2004; Pokharel,

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[43] For example, according to Gaire (2004), 15,000 students received basic military training in the 'model districts' as part of the "Special People's Military Campaign."

2004), and CPN-M bases (Onesto, 2003b) built in "model districts" (Gaire, 2004). Party members delivered curriculum to students, often delivered by teachers associated with the CPN-M (Onesto, 2003b) or threatened by the CPN-M (Newar, 2005), and sometimes delivered by ANNFSU-R (Gaire, 2004; Magar, 2004a). The CPN-M forced students' and teachers' participation with abduction and threats of reprisal (Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Nepal, 2004; Newar, 2005; Pokharel, 2004); and encouraged children to withdraw from school and participate in the war (Bohara, 2004; Magar, 2004a, 2004b).

The CPN-M recruited teachers with threats of reprisal and followed through with physical assaults and extrajudicial killing in some cases (Chettri, 2004; Newar, 2003, 2005). The CPN-M was responsible for several school closures, particularly private schools (Bandhari, 2007; Bhattarai, 2000; Chettri, 2004; Magar, 2004a; Nepal, 2004; Newar, 2003; Rai, 2002a; Onesto, 2003b); due to strikes often initiated by ANNFSU-R (Magar, 2004a; Nepali Times, 2001b; Onesto, 2003; Rai, 2002a; Sapkota, 2001); CPN-M military attacks on schools (Newar, 2003; Onesto, 2002); and CPN-M school takeovers for military purposes (Chettri, 2004; Pokharel, 2004).

iii. Abduction

The CPN-M often abducted students and their teachers from school to force their participation in Maoist-focused education and recruit children directly into armed groups (AsiaNews, 2005; Asia Tribune, 2005; Chettri, 2004; Deccan Herald, 2005; Gaire, 2004; Ghale, 2004; Ghimire, 2005; Himalaya Times 2000; IRIN News, 2005, 2006a; Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Nepali Times, 2001a, 2007; Samacharparta, 2004; Newar, 2005; Onesto, 2004; Pokharel, 2004; Shresta, 2013; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009). Once abducted, children were often forced to walk long distances in remote areas to participate in the 'people's education' (AsiaNews, 2005; IRIN News, 2005; Samacharparta, 2004, 2013; Onesto, 2004), including CPN-M "model districts," such as Jumla and Jagarkot (Gaire, 2004; Samacharparta, 2004). In some cases, children were abducted by peers associated with ANNFSU-R (Gaire, 2004; Magar, 2004a). The majority of students were released

afterwards (Magar, 2004b; Onesto, 2004; Pokharel, 2004; Siwakoti, 2009), though some were selected for "additional training" and held back (Magar, 2004a).

iv. Threats of Reprisal

The CPN-M forced children's participation in Maoist-focused education with threats of reprisal including physical assault and extrajudicial killing of children and/or their families (IRIN News, 2005; Nepal Samacharparta, 2002, 2004; Magar, 2004b; Newar, 2003; Shresta, 2013; Silwal, 2010). The CPN-M also threatened families with reprisal, such as physical assault and extrajudicial killing, to coerce families to provide one member as a recruit for the PLA (Magar, 2004a; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009), sometimes children specifically (Magar, 2004b; Nepali Times, 2007b; Rai, 2002b).

v. Deception

According to Magar (2004a), some children expected to receive a 'people's education' but were made to participate in military drills instead.

b. Psychosocial Factors that Facilitated Child Recruitment

i. Individual

Children were motivated to enlist due to discrimination along caste, ethnic, gender lines, particularly girls (Adhikari, 2013; Bastola, 2009; De Vries, 2011), including Dalits and Janjatis, and subsequent interest in CPN-M concepts of equality (Onesto, 2003b; Rai, 2002b); and exposure to violence, such as witnessing NSF inflict violence on family members (Kathmandu Post, 2009; Nepali Times, 2003; Newar, 2003; Onesto, 2003a, 2003b; Siwakoti, 2009) and friends (Adhikari, 2013; Newar, 2003; Shresta, 2013), and subsequent desire for revenge (Newar, 2003; Onesto, 2003b; Siwakoti, 2009).

ii. Family

Children were receptive to recruitment when parents were PLA members (Adhikari, 2009; Onesto, 2003b), particularly mothers (Rai, 2002b); when children were orphaned and/or separated from one or both parents during the conflict (InfoChange India, 2005; IRIN News, 2005; Onesto, 2003a; Perry, 2006; Singh, 2003; Siwakoti, 2009), including arrest and detention of parents (IRIN News, 2005; Newar, 2005; Onesto, 2003a, 2003b); exposure to family conflict and abuse (Siwakoti, 2009); and the inability of parents to prevent recruitment (Chettri, 2004) or negotiate the release of their children (Silwal, 2010).

iii. Community

Enlistment was facilitated by several community factors, including peers associated with the CPN-M, particularly friends in the PLA (Adhikari, 2013; Gaire, 2004; Kobylinska, 2010; Magar, 2004a; Onesto, 2000; Singh, 2003); interruption in school attendance due to strikes[44] (Chettri, 2004; Nepali Times, 2001b; Newar, 2003; Rai, 2002a; Siwakoti, 2009) and withdrawal of teachers (Chettri, 2004; Nepal, 2004); and NSF's armed attacks on schools, school take overs (Chettri, 2004; IRIN News, 2006), and increased school security checks[45]; home take overs by NSF (De Vries, 2011); unemployment (Adhikari, 2013; De Vries, 2011; Global Press Institute, 2011; Onesto, 2003b); and imposed isolation of communities by the CPN-M[46] (Magar, 2004a; Rijal, 2002).

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[44] In some cases, teachers initiated strikes to protest against the CPN-M (Nepali Times, 2005).

[45] For example, in Khalanga, Rukum's district headquarters, children were unable to attend school if they did not present an identity card to NSF and could not afford to buy one (Chettri, 2004).

[46] For example, the CPN-M destroyed bridges and road connecting Dang district to the Mahendra highway and prevented villagers from leaving districts (Rijal, 2002).

c. Socio-economic Factors that Facilitated Child Recruitment

i. Age

Despite challenges with age verification[47], boys and girls between the ages of 14-17 years were recruited in the PLA (Nepali Times, 2001a, Rai, 2002b).

ii. Gender

Boys and girls were susceptible to recruitment; however, girls were reportedly motivated to enlist as a means for escaping gender discrimination, particularly arranged marriages (Bastola, 2009; Onesto, 2003b) and sexual violence (Bastola, 2009).

iii. Social Status

Social marginalization facilitated enlistment due to historical religious and cultural discrimination based on caste, gender, and ethnic lines (Adhikari, 2013; Bastola, 2009; BBC News, 2006; De Vries, 2011; Kathmandu Post, 2012; Onesto, 2000; Rai, 2002b).

iv. Family Structure

Being orphaned and/or separated from parents/caregivers facilitated enlistment (IRIN News, 2005; Siwakoti, 2009).

v. Family Income

Being raised in a poor household facilitated enlistment (De Vries, 2011; Kathmandu Post, 2012; Kobylinska, 2010; Onesto, 2003, 2004; Siwakoti, 2009). Children were inclined to enlist due to unemployment (Adhikari, 2013; De Vries, 2011; Global Press Institute, 2011; Onesto, 2003b, 2005) and attempts to increase access to basic necessities (Global Press Institute, 2011), which historically contributed towards the exploitation of children (Onesto, 2003b, 2004, 2005).

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[47] Many recruits did not have citizenship or birth certificates to verify their age (Nepali Times, 2007a).

vi. Area of Residence

Children were inclined to enlist when living in rural areas (Adhikari, 2013; Kathmandu Post, 2012; Rai, 2002b) with a high CPN-M presence and enforcement of Maoist ideology (Bhattarai, 2000; Chettri, 2004; Gaire, 2004; Nepali Times, 2007b; Onesto, 2004), particularly in the mid-Western region (Bhattarai, 2000), such as Rolpa and Rukum districts (Adhikari, 2013; AsiaNews, 2005; IRIN News, 2005; Kathmandu Post, 2012; Magar, 2004b; Onesto, 2000; Rai, 2002b); and historical armed violence in the Western region, particularly among ethnic Mongolian groups (Onesto, 2000).

vii. Education

Barriers to school attendance facilitated enlistment, such as school fees (Global Press Institute, 2011; Rai, 2001), particularly for marginalized groups (Onesto, 2003b).

4.4.2. Responses of Children

a. Avoidance

Children avoided recruitment by withdrawing from school (Magar, 2004a, 2004b) and migrating away from home communities/displacement to urban areas (Gaire, 2004; IRIN News, 2005; Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Onesto, 2005; Rijal, 2002; Samacharparta, 2004), particularly unaccompanied boys going to India (Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Rijal, 2002; Shresta, 2013). To avoid recruitment, some parents sent their children away unaccompanied (Magar, 2004b; Samachapatra, 2002); however, these children were at risk of exploitation and abuse (IRIN News, 2005).

b. Recruitment

According to Onesto (2003b), children were initially recruited into student unions before enlisting in the PLA; however, several media reports suggest that children were initially recruited into militias (BBC News, 2006; Gaire, 2004; Magar, 2004b; Rai, 2002b; Rijal, 2002) and later recruited as whole-timers in other PLA units (Magar,

2004b). Once recruited into the Secondary/Local and/or main force of the PLA, the CPN-M threatened children with physical assault and extra-judicial killing to deter desertion (IRIN News, 2005; Newar, 2003; Silwal, 2010). In some cases, children were threatened by peers (Newar, 2003). Children who attempted to escape were at risk of physical assault and manual labour (Magar, 2004b; Silwal, 2010). Children were deployed away from their home communities, often separated from their parents (Global Press Institute, 2011; Shresta, 2013; Silwal, 2010), and without access to formal education (AsiaNews, 2005; Global Press Institute, 2011; IRIN News, 2012; Shresta, 2013; Silwal, 2010) and health care (Global Press Institute, 2011; Shresta, 2013; Silwal, 2010).

Children served in non-combatant roles (Bastola, 2009), mostly as cultural performers (Bastola, 2009; Bhandari, 2007) and peer recruiters (Kobylinska, 2010; Magar, 2004a) in student unions. Children also served in a number of other non-combatant roles as sentries/guards, messengers; cooks; and porters of weapons and medical supplies; medical assistants (Bastola, 209; Bell, 2004; Ghale, 2002; IRIN News, 2005; Magar, 2004b; Newar, 2006; Rai, 2002b; Samacharparta, 2002; Siwakoti, 2009); and human shields[48] (Asia News, 2005; Magar, 2004b; Silwal, 2010); while girls were particularly at risk of sexual exploitation by PLA members (Bastola, 2009; InfoChange India, 2005), sometimes in the form of marriage (Bastola, 2009). When children served as sentries/guards, they were often armed with guns and/or grenades (Bohara, 2004; Ghale, 2002; Magar, 2004b; Samacharparta, 2002). More often, children served as combatants[49] (Bastola, 2009; Bell, 2004; Bhandari, 2007; Chettri, 2004; Global Press Institute, 2011; IRIN News, 2005; eKantipur, 2010; Kathmandu Post, 2010; Nayapatrika, 2007; Newar, 2006; Rai, 2002b; Siwakoti, 2009), including those who served as commanders in the PLA (Adhikari, 2013; Global Press Institute, 2011; Samacharparta, 2002; Silwal, 2010).

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[48] During combat, children were reportedly instructed to march in the frontlines (Silwal, 2010) and forced to carry supplies and casualties during armed combat with NSF (Asia News, 2005; Magar, 2004b).

[49] For example, one former child soldier reported fighting in 14 battles with the PLA in the far Western region (Shresta, 2013).

Media reports primarily discuss the CPN-M's use of abduction to force children's participation in Maoist-focused education and to recruit children directly into the CPN-M armed groups (Gaire, 2004; Ghale, 2002; IRIN News, 2005, 2006; Magar, 2004a, 2004b; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009). However, some media reports indicate that Maoist-focused education was effective in recruiting children as combatants by convincing children that they were contributing to a better future for their country (AsiaNews, 2005; Global Press Institute, 2011; Onesto, 2003b), and were liberating people from poverty and marginalization (Global Press Institute, 2011; Onesto, 2003b). These impacts are often noted in several media reports quoting PLA child members[50].

4.5. Summary of Research Findings

4.5.1. Summary of Contested Issues

a. CPN-M's Intention to Recruit Children in the PLA

The research findings present conflicting information regarding the CPN-M's intention to recruit children in the PLA. However, further research suggests that the CPN-M intended to recruit children in the PLA for ideological and practical reasons. Ideologically, the CPN-M was highly influenced by Maoism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution led by Mao Tse-tung of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CPN-M structured the party and the revolution according to Maoist ideology with the intention to engage Nepalese society in PLA activities to advance the revolution, including children. There are strong similarities between child recruitment methods used by CCP and the CPN-M.

Like the CCP, the CPN-M used Maoist political education to initially recruit children into student political groups and subsequently recruit them into armed groups as combatants. Both parties organized political activities for specific age groups. The CCP established groups to indoctrinate young children towards Maoist ideology in China. The CCP established the 'Children's Corps' for this purpose and required children to join at

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[50] A 15 year old PLA member was quoted as stating, "We will fight exploitation, suppression and atrocities prevalent in society, we may be martyred but we will not give up the struggle to liberate our brothers and sisters," in a Nepali Times article (Bohara, 2004).

age 6 (Chang and Halliday, 2006). Research findings suggest that the CPN-M established Akhil Bal Sangathan for a similar purpose.

Both the CCP and the CPN-M initially encouraged children to join student political groups. In China, the CCP established the Young Pioneers branch for children between the ages of 9-15 (Israel, 1967) and the Young Communist League for adolescent youth between the ages of 15-25 (Tynes, 2011). Once recruited, children were encouraged to deliver political activities to recruit their peers into the party. Younger children were organized into smaller groups, often referred to as "humiliation teams," and used peer pressure to recruit children for the party (Chang and Halliday, 2006). Members of the Young Communist League were responsible for delivering a range of political activities including Maoist classes, physical training, revolutionary theatre, and manual labour (Leader, 1974). The CPN-M established similar political groups for children in Nepal.

Similar to the Young Pioneers branch, the ANNFSU-R was established as the student wing of the CPN-M, and there is some indication that it was intended for children between 12-15 years of age[51]. Similar to the CCP's "humiliation teams," the CPN-M organized younger children into 'cultural troops' to perform revolutionary theatre, songs, and dances during the 'people's education' programs and recruit their peers through peer pressure, particularly girls. However, the CPN-M established the Young Communist League (YCL) after the peace agreement (Snellinger, 2010).

The CCP and the CPN-M recruited children from student political groups into armed groups. In China, the CCP automatically enlisted children into the Youth Brigade at the age of 15 (Chang and Halliday, 2006). Young Pioneers were trained as combatants and armed with wooden guns and grenades in the Korean war (Funnell, 1970). Similarly, media reports indicate that ANNFSU-R provided military training and recruited children

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[51] Based on an interview with Pushpa Kamal Dahal, ANNFSU-R may have been organized for children between the ages of 12-15 (Haviland, 2006), however, Pherali (2011) claims that ANNFSU-R was predominately composed of educated university students.

to establish a children's militia in the PLA. The research findings suggest that children were recruited into the militia beginning at age 14, often armed with rifles and grenades.

The striking similarities between child recruitment methods suggest that the CPN-M modeled their child recruitment methods after those used by the CCP. Furthermore, since the first Maoist revolution in China, several Maoist revolutionary groups in Asia have been accused of recruiting children in armed group, particularly through political indoctrination, including the Communist Party of Kampuchea/the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia (Etcheson, 2005; Tynes, 2011), the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (Mukherjee, 2014), and the Communist Party of the Philippines (Fabe, 2013). This trend strongly suggests that Maoist revolutionary groups intend to recruit children into armed groups as combatants.

In addition to ideological reasons, research findings strongly suggest that the CPN-M recruited children in the PLA to compensate for recruitment shortages of adult males due to employment migration and conflict related death. Women represented approximately one-third of recruits in the PLA (Becker, 2007; Parvati, 2004), and children represented approximately the same amount (Asia Tribune, 2003; Child Soldiers International, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Newar, 2006; Rai, 2002b; Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal, 2012; Watchlist, 2009). Given these estimates, women and children represented the majority of PLA members. Arguably, child recruitment was inevitable once men and women were recruited in the PLA.

Therefore, in additional to ideological reasons, this paper suggests that the CPN-M intended to recruit children in the PLA for practical reasons. In short, the CPN-M carried out their intention to recruit children in the PLA, which is a violation of child rights based on several international standards, including the Paris Principles (2007) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000).

b. Voluntary Enlistment vs. Forced Recruitment of Children

Academic literature and CPN-M documents generally describe child recruitment in the PLA as voluntary enlistment resulting from political indoctrination, while humanitarian and media reports generally describe child recruitment as forced with abduction, deception and threats of reprisal. Nonetheless, the research findings indicate that a variety of factors were involved in the recruitment of children in the PLA. These issues are analyzed in the next chapter.

4.5.2. Summary of Factors Involved in the Recruitment of Children in the PLA

a. Triangulated Results

Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 summarize triangulated research findings. These results will be considered as areas of general agreement for the analysis in Chapter 5. Table 1 summarizes the CPN-M child recruitment methods. The findings suggest that the CPN-M systematically delivered Maoist-focused education to children throughout most of the conflict, while the implementation of other recruitment methods varied in response to conflict dynamics.

In the early stages of the conflict, between 1996-2000, the CPN-M piloted Maoist-focused education with children in the Rolpa and Rukum districts in the mid-Western region. Party members delivered the curriculum to indoctrinate children towards Maoist-ideology. Children were encouraged to join student political groups and deliver Maoist-focused education to their peers through artistic cultural activities in schools and community centers.

In the mid stage of the conflict between 2001-2004, CPN-M political support spread beyond the mid-Western region and conflict intensity increased. A higher CPN-M presence in a community was often associated with the delivery of Maoist-focused education. Curriculum was delivered in schools and community centers to force children's exposure to curriculum, which was often reinforced by the CPN-M with threats of reprisal. The delivery of Maoist-focused education varied between instructors and

eventually included military training. Teachers were more likely to deliver curriculum in schools, whether as party members or threatened with reprisal by the CPN-M. In addition to being encouraged to join student political groups, children were instructed to enlist in the PLA, and recruitment was often encouraged with incentives such as food, protection, money, and employment, whether implicit or explicitly offered by the CPN-M.

As conflict intensity increased in later stages of the conflict, particularly between 2005-2006, a higher CPN-M presence in a community was associated with a higher risk of armed violence with NSF. As a result, Maoist-focused education was increasingly delivered in base areas in specific locations with little or no government presence. The CPN-M used abduction, threats of reprisal and deception to force children's attendance at Maoist-focused education sessions often located outside of children's communities. Upon arrival, the CPN-M often forced children's participation with threats of reprisal, such as physical assault, and encouraged enlistment with incentives. The majority of children were released after sessions were delivered, however, some children remained to enlist in the PLA, and the CPN-M prevented some children from leaving with threats of punishment.

In the most intense stages of the conflict in 2006, the CPN-M increasingly used abduction, threats of reprisal, and deception to recruit children directly in the PLA, to compensate for adult male recruitment shortages and increase political influence in peace negotiations. Delivery of Maoist-focused education varied and some children received little, if any training, prior to recruitment. Overall, once children were recruited, the PLA often used threats of reprisal, including manual labour and physical assault to deter children from desertion.

Table 2 summarizes the psychosocial factors that facilitated enlistment in the PLA, including individual, family, and community factors. Pre-existing psychosocial factors attracted children's interest in Maoist ideology and initially placed children at risk of recruitment. These factors were exacerbated by conflict dynamics and CPN-M

recruitment methods, particularly parental relationships and exposure to violence, and subsequently increased the risk for recruitment in the PLA.

Table 3 summarizes the socio-economic factors that facilitated child enlistment in the PLA, including age, gender, social status, family structure, family income, area of residence, and education. Like psychosocial factors, pre-existing socio-economic factors attracted children's interest in Maoist ideology and initially placed children at risk of recruitment. These factors were exacerbated by conflict dynamics and CPN-M recruitment methods, particularly poor households in socially marginalized communities, and subsequently increased the risk for recruitment in the PLA.

Table 4 summarizes children's responses to CPN-M child recruitment methods, psychosocial factors, and socio-economic factors. Although many children were recruited into student political groups, fewer children were subsequently recruited in the PLA, primarily adolescents between 14-17 years of age. Children were initially recruited part-time in the militia as non-combatants, particularly girls, however many were armed with guns and grenades. Eventually, some of these children were recruited full-time in the Secondary/Local force and the Main force as combatants, particularly boys, and were often deployed away from their communities, separated from their parents and without access to education and health services.

Table 1. Summary of CPN-M Child Recruitment Methods

	Maoist-focused Education	Interference in School System	Abduction	Threats of Reprisal	Incentives	Deception
Child Recruitment Methods	• Systematic delivery of political, cultural, and military content to indoctrinate children and encourage enlistment • Initial delivery in Mid-Western region, delivered later in schools and community centers, and eventually in base areas	• Delivery of Maoist-focused education in schools • Forced school closures	• Abduction of children and teachers in schools • Abduction of children from home and community	• Threats made to children, including manual labour, physical assault and extrajudicial killing of children and family members • Threats made to families • Threats made to teachers	• Promises made to children and parents, including employment, money, food, protection, education, adventure, entertainment	• Claims of short-term participation

Table 2. Summary of Psychosocial Factors that Facilitated Child Recruitment

	Individual	Family	Community
Immediate Factors	• Exposure to armed violence, particularly NSF violence on parents	• CPN-M membership of family members, particularly PLA membership of parents and older siblings • Orphaned and/or separated from parents/caregivers	• High CPN-M presence and enforcement in the community, particularly PLA presence • Exposure to NSF violence, recruitment, and school interference • Exposure to armed violence between the CPN-M and NSF • CPN-M membership of peers, particularly PLA membership of friends • CPN-M membership of teachers
Pre-existing Factors	• Experienced discrimination	• Exposure to domestic violence, child abuse, parental addiction and substance abuse • Separation from a parent/caregiver, particularly fathers	---

Table 3. Summary of Socio-Economic Factors that Facilitated Child Recruitment

	Age	Gender	Social Status	Family Structure	Family Income	Area of Residence	Education
Immediate Factors	• Adolescent youth between 14-17 years of age	• Primarily boys	---	• Orphaned and/or separated from parents/caregivers	• Exacerbated poverty	• Rural, mid-Western, Eastern, South East regions	• School closures due to NSF military attacks and takeovers, and teacher strikes
Pre-existing Factors	---	• Discrimination towards girls, including arranged marriages and limited access to education	• Marginalization, based on gender, low-caste, ethnic lines, and refugees lacking citizenship status • Lack of government enforcement of child protection policies	• Separation from a parent/caregiver, particularly fathers • Raised in polygamous family, joint, or nuclear family	• Raised in a poor household • Historical child exploitation • Adolescent youth unemployment	• Historical military recruitment of boys, particularly British recruitment of Gurkhas • Historical engagement of children in weapons making • Historical engagement od youth in political violence • Residing in refugee camps	• Low school attendance

Table 4. Summary of Children's Responses to CPN-M Child Recruitment Methods, Psychosocial and Socio-Economic Factors

	Avoidance	Recruitment
Responses of Children	• Withdrawal from school • Migration/displacement	• Initial recruitment into student political groups, particularly girls • Subsequent part-time recruitment of some children in militias as noncombatants, but often armed with weapons, particularly girls • Eventual full-time recruitment in the secondary/local force and the main force as combatants, particularly boys

5. Discussion

This chapter uses Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance to analyze the research findings. The theory is used to contextualize children's response to nonphysical elements of force that coerced PLA recruitment. Festinger's (1957) hypotheses on the consequence of decisions; voluntary and involuntary exposure to information; and the effects or forced compliance are used to determine whether or not children voluntarily enlisted in the PLA. The chapter concludes with a summary of the analysis and implications of the results.

5.1. Analysis Using Festinger's (1957) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

5.1.1. The Consequence of Decisions

a. Decisions Resulting in Dissonance

Hypothesis: Before a decision is made, an individual considers the features of each alternative and compares them. Consequently dissonance is the result of having made a decision, and pressures are produced to reduce post-decision dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

The research findings suggest that children compared features of PLA membership with various psychosocial and socio-economic factors present in their lives. Children had five options available to them. Children could remain in their community and enlist in the PLA; leave their community and enlist in the PLA; remain in their community and avoid recruitment; flee their community with their family to avoid recruitment; and flee their home community unaccompanied to avoid recruitment. The availability of these options varied in response to conflict dynamics, particularly proximity and intensity of conflict, and more than one option may have been used. The success of avoiding or enlisting in the PLA was particularly linked with parental relationships and exposure to violence. Regardless of which option was chosen, the hypothesis suggests that a child would have experienced post-decision dissonance and pressures to reduce such dissonance.

b. The Magnitude of Dissonance Following Decisions

Hypothesis: The strength of dissonance produced after a decision depends on the importance of the decision, the relative attractiveness of the alternative not chosen, and 'cognitive overlap' (Festinger, 1957).

Other things being equal, Festinger (1957) argues that the degree of post-decision dissonance is stronger when the importance of a decision increases. Based on the research findings, the importance of a child's decision to enlist in the PLA was initially influenced by a variety of pre-existing psychosocial and socio-economic factors and subsequently influenced by those exacerbated by conflict dynamics and CPN-M recruitment methods. While the degree and relevance of psychosocial and socio-economic factors varied between children, the hypothesis suggests that a child would experience stronger post-decision dissonance when deciding to enlist in the PLA under all such circumstances, particularly in attempts to increase access to basic human needs.

Festinger (1957) argues that the degree of post-decision dissonance is stronger when there is a relatively greater attractiveness of the alternative/s not chosen. According to the research findings, the attractiveness of enlisting or not enlisting in the PLA was linked with psychosocial and socio-economic factors. For example, PLA enlistment would be an attractive option for a child who was orphaned and/or separated from their parents/caregivers; exposed to NSF violence on parents and/or violence and abuse in the home; raised in a poor and socially marginalized family; not attending school; unemployed and without access to basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, and protection. Based on the hypothesis, the child would experience stronger post-decision dissonance if he/she did not enlist in the PLA. Contrarily, PLA enlistment was likely an unattractive option for a child who was raised by both parents in a high caste family in a financially stable home; had little or no exposure to violence and abuse in the home and/or NSF violence; whose family members had no association with the CPN-M; had little or no CPN-M presence in the child's community; and had little or no friends associated with the CPN-M. The hypothesis suggests that the child would experience stronger post-decision dissonance if he/she enlisted in the PLA.

Festinger (1957) argues that the degree of dissonance is weaker when there is a greater degree of 'cognitive overlap' between two alternatives. The degree of 'cognitive overlap' is greater if many elements in a cluster corresponding to one alternative are similar or even identical with elements of a cluster corresponding to the other alternative (Festinger, 1957). Based on the research findings, 'cognitive overlap' could reduce post-decisions dissonance in two ways.

A child could enlist in the PLA and experience less post-decision dissonance through 'cognitive overlap' if the PLA recruitment process involved similar circumstances as those experienced by the child prior to recruitment. For example, a child may have less post-decision dissonance if the child experienced similar circumstances at home as those experienced during Maoist-focused education sessions, such as separation from parents/caregivers; association of peers with the CPN-M, particularly friends enlisted in the PLA; and living in a community with high CPN-M presence and a history of military recruitment of boys, particularly in the mid-Western region.

A child could also enlist in the PLA and experience less post-decision dissonance through 'cognitive overlap' if the child believed in Maoist ideology. A child would have less post-decision dissonance when politically indoctrinated towards Maoist ideology. As a result, 'cognitive overlap' would exist between the child's belief in Maoist ideology and PLA recruitment.

c.   Manifestations of Pressure to Reduce Post-decision Dissonance

Hypothesis: Post-decision dissonance can be reduced in three ways: 1) changing or revoking the decision, 2) changing cognition about the alternatives, and 3) establishing cognitive overlap (Festinger, 1957).

Festinger (1957) argues that a person can reduce post-decision dissonance by changing or revoking the decision immediately after the decision is made and before further experience is acquired to influence future actions. He further argues that this

method can only be used when the dissonance is not overwhelming. However, according to the research findings, the PLA prevented children from revoking their decision to enlist. The PLA often threatened children with reprisal, including manual labour, physical assault, and extra-judicial killing to prevent desertion. Therefore, children could not reduce post-decision dissonance with this method.

According to Festinger (1957) one of the most direct and common methods of reducing post-decision dissonance is to change an individual's cognition about alternatives to increase the proportion of relevant cognitive elements that are consonant with the action taken. Therefore, post-decision dissonance can be reduced by either eliminating some unwanted elements of cognition or by adding new elements of cognition that are consonant with the knowledge of the action taken (Festinger, 1957). According to Festinger (1957), this method requires a level of 'mental agility' in an individual's ability to prioritize elements associated with a chosen alternative and develop new advantages. When applied to the research findings, a child's ability to reduce post-decision dissonance in this way would be influenced by the child's developmental capacity, which may be limited due to evolving capacities.

Festinger (1957) argues that an individual can reduce post-decision dissonance by establishing 'cognitive overlap.' This occurs when elements corresponding to each of the alternatives are put into a context in which they lead to the same end result (Festinger, 1957). When this hypothesis is applied to a child who enlisted in the PLA, research findings suggest that 'cognitive overlap' could occur if he/she perceived PLA membership as resulting in the same end result as resisting recruitment, particularly during later and most intense stages of the conflict. For example, a child may experience 'cognitive overlap' if the child believed he/she would be exposed to violence, orphaned or separated from their parents/caregivers, regardless of whether or not he/she was recruited in the PLA.

5.1.2. Voluntary and Involuntary Exposure to Information

a. The Possibility of Relevant Future Action

Hypothesis: Individuals will seek out information that is relevant to action they must take (Festinger, 1957).

According to Festinger (1957), an individual is motivated to actively seek out information relevant to anticipated behaviour. He further argues that due to impending circumstances, an individual will not resist relevant information he/she is exposed to. Therefore, many cognitive elements will be established and may later be dissonant with the cognition corresponding to the impending action (Festinger, 1957). According to the research findings, various factors, including psychosocial, socio-economic, conflict dynamics and CPN-M recruitment methods would have contributed towards a child developing a perception that PLA recruitment was forthcoming, particularly in the mid-Western region. For example, PLA membership of parents, older siblings, and friends; a high CPN-M presence in the child's community; the CPN-M's use of abduction, deception, and threats of reprisal for direct child recruitment in the PLA; and exposure to armed conflict would create a reasonable perception that PLA recruitment was inevitable. Under such circumstances, cognitive dissonance theory suggests that a child would be motivated to seek out information on PLA recruitment activities.

b. The Presence of Dissonance

Hypothesis: The magnitude of dissonance in some particular areas will have important effects on the extent of information seeking and on the selectivity of such information (Festinger, 1957). Three levels of dissonance are identified: 1) relative absence of dissonance, 2) moderate amounts of dissonance, and 3) extremely large amounts of dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

According to Festinger (1957), an individual will not be motivated to seek out new and additional information when there is a relative absence of dissonance. Instead, he argues that the presence of moderate amounts of dissonance will motivate an

individual to seek out new and additional information to introduce consonances and avoid information that increases existing dissonance. However, when extremely large amounts of dissonance are present, Festinger (1957) argues that an individual will be motivated to actively seek out dissonance-increasing information. If the individual can increase the dissonance to the point where it is greater than the resistance to change one or another cluster of cognitions, the individual will change the cognitive elements involved, and significantly reduce or even eliminate a high level to dissonance completely (Festinger, 1957).

According to the research findings, the hypothesis suggests that a child would experience little or no dissonance towards PLA enlistment when there was a relative absence of CPN-M presence in the child's community. As a result, the child will not be motivated to seek out information on PLA recruitment activities. Such conditions more likely occurred during in the initial stages of the conflict and progressively decreased throughout the duration of the conflict as CPN-M political support eventually spread throughout the country.

Based on the research findings, the hypothesis suggests that a child would experience a moderate amount of dissonance towards PLA recruitment when there was a moderate CPN-M presence in the child's community. As a result, the child would be motivated to seek out new and additional information to introduce consonances and avoid information that increased existing dissonance. For example, a child with parents, siblings, and friends, associated with the PLA would be motivated to seek out information on recruitment activities while other children may be motivated to avoid such information.

According to the research findings, the hypothesis suggests that a child would experience a significant amount of dissonance towards PLA recruitment when there was a significant CPN-M presence in the child's community. As a result, the child may be motivated to seek out information on PLA recruitment. If the level of dissonance was

greater than the child's resistance to PLA recruitment, dissonance towards PLA recruitment could be removed completely.

c. Involuntary and Forced Contact with Information

Hypothesis 1: There are four circumstances in which involuntary contact with information will increase dissonance: 1) accidental exposure, 2) exposure on an irrelevant basis, 3) forced exposure, and 4) interaction with other people (Festinger, 1957).

One way in which an individual may be involuntarily exposed to information is by accidental exposure (Festinger, 1957). While it is possible that some children were accidentally exposed to PLA recruitment activities in the early stages of the conflict, research findings indicate that the CPN-M systematically exposed children to PLA recruitment activities through Maoist-focused education, particularly in the mid to late stages of the conflict. Festinger (1957) also argues that an individual can be involuntarily exposed to information on an irrelevant basis. This can occur when an individual exposes his/herself to a potential source of information and is subsequently exposed to additional information, which may be irrelevant to their motivation for seeking information in the first place (Festinger, 1957). Based on research findings, children were often exposed to PLA recruitment activities on an irrelevant basis when attending school, particularly in the mid to late stages of the conflict.

Festinger (1957) argues that an individual can be involuntarily exposed to information by forced exposure. According to Festinger (1957), forced exposure to information includes an event or knowledge that is so widespread that it is nearly impossible for an individual to avoid knowing it, and/or unforeseen consequences of an individual's actions bring about experiences that force the development of a new cognition. Similarly, research findings indicate that knowledge of PLA child recruitment activities eventually became widespread as a result of several factors including public advertisements distributed by the CPN-M and coverage in the media. As the conflict intensified and CPN-M political support progressively spread throughout the country, it

would have been increasingly difficult for a child, particularly an adolescent, to be unaware of the CPN-M's child recruitment activities.

According to Festinger (1957), an individual can be involuntarily exposed to information through interaction with other people. By interacting with others, whether accidentally or intentionally, an individual will often seek agreement and support from others, despite the fact that individuals often do not share the same opinions and are therefore a source of dissonance (Festinger, 1957). According to the research findings, children were often involuntarily exposed to Maoist-focused education through interactions in close relationships with family and peers associated with the CPN-M. A child's agreement and support for PLA enlistment was particularly linked to interactions with parents, older siblings, and friends associated with the PLA. According to the hypothesis, involuntary exposure to Maoist-focused education through such interactions would increase a child's dissonance towards PLA enlistment.

Hypothesis 2: When an individual is involuntarily exposed to information that increases dissonance, the individual will set up quick defensive processes to prevent the new cognition from ever becoming firmly established (Festinger, 1957).

Festinger (1957) elaborates on this hypothesis using Cooper and Jahoda's (1947) research findings on involuntary exposure to propaganda. According to Cooper and Jahoda (1947), an individual can resist propaganda in one of three ways: 1) initially misunderstanding the propaganda message and using a convoluted line of reasoning which results in misunderstanding; 2) deciding the total propaganda message is invalid; and 3) having an initial misperception in line with an existing cognition (Festinger, 1957).

Based on the research findings, an initial misunderstanding of PLA recruitment messages could prevent cognitions that supported PLA recruitment from becoming firmly established in children. The research findings suggest that some children misunderstood

PLA recruitment messages. For example, children's testimonials in humanitarian and media reports indicate that at the time of recruitment, some children did not understand their intended role/s in the PLA (Shresta, 2013); believed they were receiving education/training (Magar, 2004a); did not understand they would be subject to manual labour (Samacharparta, 2004); and some believed they could leave the PLA at their behest (Human Rights Watch, 2007; IRIN News, 2005). It is important to note that the research findings also suggest that some children may have genuinely misunderstood recruitment messages due to varied delivery of CPN-M recruitment methods and differences between children's evolving capacities.

According to Cooper and Jahoda (1947) an individual can initially understand a propaganda message correctly, but create a convoluted misunderstanding of the message to compensate for components they do not agree with, and consequently lose the original understanding of the message in the process (Festinger, 1957). Based on the research findings, children often resisted PLA recruitment following exposure to Maoist-focused education, while many were recruited into student political groups, and relatively few were recruited in the PLA. This may suggest that the majority of children were generally uninterested or opposed to enlisting in the PLA and/or children who enlisted in the PLA had few alternatives available to them as a result of various psychosocial and socio-economic factors, particularly concerning basic human needs. Therefore, according to the hypothesis, a child could develop a misunderstanding of recruitment messages to compensate for a general disinterest in PLA recruitment. According to Festinger (1957), this process could remove the initial dissonance caused by the correct understanding of PLA recruitment messages.

According to Cooper and Jahoda (1947), an individual can resist propaganda by deciding that the total propaganda message is invalid. For example, according to Cooper and Jahoda (1947), an individual can accept the message superficially but decide that the message is invalid by accepting the message in general principle but allowing exceptions based on personal beliefs and perceptions and/or by accepting an individual item as convincing but not an accurate representation of realistic situations (Festinger, 1957).

Based on the research findings, children were attracted to components of Maoist ideology due to psychosocial and socio-economic factors and subsequently joined student political groups. These children may have considered PLA recruitment messages as invalid. This provides some explanation as to why the majority of children were recruited in student political groups and not the PLA.

Cooper and Jahoda (1947) argue that an individual can resist propaganda by having an initial misperception in line with an existing cognition (Festinger, 1957). According to Cooper and Jahoda (1947), an individual's perception may be so biased by their own prejudices that when confronted with conflicting information, the information is unintentionally distorted to be compatible with his/her own views (Festinger, 1957). The research findings indicate that children often expressed a motivation to enlist in the PLA to seek revenge for NSF violence inflicted on family members, particularly after witnessing extrajudicial killing and physical assaults on parents. According to the hypothesis, a child's preoccupation with a desire to seek revenge on NSF may have distracted the child's ability to understand that PLA enlistment was a long-term commitment towards CPN-M political objectives and not a short-term opportunity to achieve an immediate personal objective.

5.1.3. The Effects of Forced Compliance

Hypothesis 1: Forced compliance is brought about mainly through the exertion of an offer of a special reward for compliance and/or a threat of punishment for noncompliance that sufficiently impedes an individual from leaving a situation (Festinger, 1957).

According to the research findings, the CPN-M used both methods to force children's compliance with PLA recruitment, though reliance on particular methods varied in response to conflict dynamics. In the mid stage of the conflict, the CPN-M often used special rewards to coerce enlistment, but increasingly relied on threats of punishment for non-compliance with PLA recruitment. CPN-M offers of special rewards, such as employment, money, and food, were often successful in coercing enlistment due

to psychosocial and socio-economic factors. However, when special rewards were not offered by the CPN-M, rewards were implicit, particularly for children with limited access to basic human needs. As conflict intensity increased, particularly in the late and most intense stages of the conflict in 2006, the CPN-M increasingly used threats of punishment, such as physical assault and extra-judicial killing, for noncompliance with direct recruitment in the PLA.

Hypothesis 2: A situation in which a reward or punishment is offered to force compliance may be frequently accompanied by other types of coercion (Festinger, 1957).

In addition to offers of special rewards and threats of punishment, the CPN-M used several child recruitment methods that were responsive to conflict dynamics. In the early to mid stages of the conflict, the CPN-M forced children's exposure to Maoist-focused education through delivery in schools and community centers. As violence escalated in the late stage of the conflict, the CPN-M increasingly used abduction and deception to force children's exposure to Maoist-focused education and recruit children directly into the PLA.

Hypothesis 3: Forced compliance can result in a discrepancy between an individual's behaviour and beliefs. This discrepancy can be identified when the source of influence is removed and when personal opinion is measured directly (Festinger, 1957).

Festinger (1957) argues that the effects of forced compliance can be observed when an individual expresses compliance in their behaviour, including verbal statements, without a corresponding change in personal beliefs. When the source of influence is removed and there is no change in the individual's belief, the individual's behaviour will revert back to what is was previously (Festinger, 1957). If the individual's belief has changed, their behaviour will continue after the influence or pressure has been removed (Festinger, 1957). Therefore, when forced compliance has produced a change in an individual's personal belief to correspond with their behaviour, dissonance disappears

completely (Festinger, 1957). The research findings indicate that both effects of forced compliance were present with children recruited in the PLA. However, it is difficult to identify a specific period when children were no longer under the influence of the CPN-M.

After the peace agreement, the CPN-M continued recruitment activities (Saferworld, 2012; Shakya, 2010; United Nations Security Council, 2008) and delays in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process were largely due to the CPN-M's lack of cooperation[52]. In order to fulfill the PLA's political role after the peace agreement, recruitment activities increasingly shifted from the PLA to the YCL, to engage children in political violence (United Nations Security Council, 2008, 2010), including demonstrations, strikes, and blockades, particularly in the Kathmandu valley (IRIN News, 2010, 2012; Kathmandu Post, 2010; Saferworld, 2012; United Nations Security Council, 2008). Many children recruited in the PLA were subsequently recruited in the YCL (United Nations Security Council, 2008, 2010) while some returned home awaiting orders to return to duty (Khort et al., 2008). The research findings suggest that a child's continued association with the PLA after the peace agreement is an indication of forced compliance through a belief change in favour of PLA recruitment.

Sources also suggest that many children ended their association with the PLA at some point after the peace agreement. Children left the PLA either by escape/desertion, successful negotiation with the CPN-M for their release, or through the DDR process (Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; Khort et al., 2008; Shakya, 2010; United Nations Security Council, 2008), however, the majority of these children did not access reintegration support (Binadi, 2011; Housden, 2009; United Nations Security Council, 2008) and some were subsequently recruited in criminal armed groups in the plains/terai (United Nations Security Council, 2008, 2010) including criminal street gangs (Saferworld, 2012). These children often reported their recruitment as forced (Adhikari, 2013; Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Himalaya Times, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2007a; IRIN News, 2005;

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[52] The DDR process was completed in February, 2010 (IRIN News, 2011; United Nations Security Council, 2010).

Khort et al., 2008; Magar, 2004a; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009; Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2005) and were inclined towards desertion (Adhikari, 2013; Becker, 2007; Himalaya Times, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2007a; IRIN News, 2005; Magar, 2004a; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009; Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2005). According to the hypothesis, a child's withdrawal from the PLA and expressed opinions of their recruitment are indicators of forced compliance with no change in belief.

a. Dissonance Resulting from Forced Compliance

Hypothesis: To some degree, dissonance is an inevitable consequence of forced compliance. When a reward is promised for compliance or a threat is made when noncompliance occurs, at least some individuals will exhibit forced compliance and experience dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

Based on the research findings, the hypothesis suggests that some children would have experienced dissonance as a result of forced compliance with PLA recruitment, regardless of whether recruitment was coerced with offers of rewards and/or threats of punishment. However, the research findings indicate that children recruited with threats of punishment were inclined towards exhibiting forced compliance by withdrawing their association with the PLA following the peace agreement and perceiving their recruitment as forced.

b. The Magnitude of Dissonance Resulting from Forced Compliance

Hypothesis: The magnitude of dissonance is greater when there is a higher importance of the opinions involved and a greater magnitude of reward or punishment necessary to elicit forced compliance (Festinger, 1957).

According to the research findings, the importance of a child's opinion towards PLA recruitment and the magnitude of reward and punishment required to elicit recruitment was initially influenced by pre-existing psychosocial and socio-economic

factors. The hypothesis suggests that the magnitude of dissonance was greater when such factors were exacerbated by conflict dynamics, particularly basic human needs.

c. Manifestations of Pressure to Reduce Forced Compliance Dissonance

Hypothesis: Dissonance can be removed in two ways: 1) changing an opinion/belief to produce consonance with an individual's behaviour, and 2) magnification of the reward or punishment to increase the consonance of an individual's compliant behaviour (Festinger, 1957).

Festinger (1957) argues that dissonance can disappear entirely when an individual changes their personal opinion to correspond with their behaviour (Festinger, 1957). Based on research findings, this hypothesis suggests that a child could remove dissonance by believing in Maoist ideology and enlisting in the PLA. A child's belief in Maoist ideology would produce consonance with PLA recruitment and consequently reduce or even remove dissonance.

Festinger (1957) argues that an individual's belief can change in the opposite direction and consequently strengthen their original belief when an offer of special rewards or threat of punishment is not strong enough to elicit compliant behaviour. The research findings suggest that rewards were generally less effective in recruiting children in comparison to threats of punishment. Offers of special rewards were generally effective in coercing enlistment from children with a predisposed vulnerability to recruitment due to psychosocial and socio-economic factors, particularly basic human needs, but generally less effective with most. Threats of punishment were generally effective for recruiting most children exposed to such method. Therefore, the hypothesis suggests that a child's resistance to PLA recruitment would increase when an offer of reward was not strong enough to coerce enlistment. This may provide some explanation as to why many children did not enlist in the PLA despite repeated exposure during Maoist-focused education sessions.

Festinger (1957) argues that the best way to achieve a change in a belief is to offer just enough reward or punishment to elicit an individual's overt compliance (Festinger, 1957). A reward or threat that is too strong will only produce little dissonance which is likely unaccompanied by a change of opinion. The research findings suggest that a child's overt compliance with PLA recruitment was often accompanied by a change of opinion when enlistment was coerced with rewards, particularly in response to psychosocial and socio-economic factors. Likewise, children were positively influenced by rewards and often reported their recruitment as voluntary. However, children were negatively influenced when promised rewards were unfulfilled by the CPN-M. Children were inclined to express complaints of having been deceived and/or taken advantage of by the CPN-M, especially when children were verified as being a minor during the DDR process and consequently eliminated from future employment in the armed forces (De Vries, 2011; Global Press Institute, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2007; IRIN News, 2011, 2012; Kathmandu Post, 2012; Shresta, 2013).

The research findings suggest that a child's overt compliance with PLA recruitment was often unaccompanied by a change of opinion when recruitment was coerced with threats. Likewise, children were negatively influenced by threats of punishment and often reported their recruitment as forced (Adhikari, 2013; Becker, 2007; Binadi, 2011; Himalaya Times, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2007a; IRIN News, 2005; Khort et al., 2008; Magar, 2004a; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009; Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2005) and were inclined towards desertion (Adhikari, 2013; Becker, 2007; Himalaya Times, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2007a; IRIN News, 2005; Magar, 2004a; Silwal, 2010; Siwakoti, 2009; Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2005).

5.2. Summary of Analysis and Implications

5.2.1. Festinger's (1957) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

a. Summary of Theoretical Analysis

Festinger (1957) argues that dissonance is a natural consequence of making a decision. In response to CPN-M recruitment methods, psychosocial and socio-economic factors, the research findings suggest that children had five options available to them. The success of a child's ability to resist or comply with PLA recruitment was particularly linked with parental relationships, while the availability of these options varied in response to the proximity and intensity of conflict, particularly exposure to violence. According to cognitive dissonance theory, a child would experience dissonance regardless of whether he/she resisted or complied with PLA recruitment.

The magnitude of post-decision dissonance depends on three factors: 1) the importance of the decision, 2) the relative attractiveness of the unchosen alternative, and 3) the degree of 'cognitive overlap' between the alternatives (Festinger, 1957). The research findings suggest that the magnitude of a child's post-decision dissonance after enlisting in the PLA was initially increased by pre-existing psychosocial and socio-economic factors and subsequently increased by conflict dynamics that exacerbated these factors, particularly basic human needs. A child would also experience strong post-decision dissonance when there was a relatively greater attractiveness of the alternative/s not chosen, primarily linked with psychosocial and socio-economic factors. However, a child would experience weaker post-decision dissonance when exposed to a CPN-M recruitment process that was similar to previous experiences due to psychosocial and socio-economic factors, particularly concerning parental relationships, exposure to violence, and belief in Maoist ideology.

Post-decision dissonance can be reduced in three ways: 1) changing or revoking the decision, 2) changing a cognition about the alternatives, and 3) establishing 'cognitive overlap' (Festinger, 1957). The research findings indicate that the PLA prevented children from revoking their decision to enlist in the PLA, often with threats of reprisal,

including manual labour, physical assault and extra-judicial killing. A child's ability to remove post-dissonance dissonance by changing a cognition would be influenced by a child's developmental capacity, which may be limited due to evolving capacities. The research findings also indicate that post-decision dissonance could be reduced through 'cognitive overlap,' if a child perceived that PLA membership would produce the same end results as resisting recruitment, such as being orphaned and/or separated from parents/caregivers and exposed to violence, particularly in the mid-Western region.

According to Festinger (1957), voluntary exposure to information occurs when an individual seeks out information that is relevant to action they must take. The individual will not resist relevant information due to impending circumstances (Festinger, 1957). The research findings suggest that various factors would have contributed towards the development of a child's perception that their recruitment in the PLA was inevitable, particularly as conflict intensity and proximity increased in the mid-Western region. Festinger (1957) also argues that the magnitude of dissonance affects the extent of information seeking and the selectivity of such information. A relative absence of dissonance results in an individual having little to no motivation to seek out information. A moderate amount of dissonance motivates an individual to seek out information to introduce consonance and decrease dissonance. A significant amount of dissonance motivates an individual to seek out information and may remove dissonance completely. Similarly, the research findings suggest that the level of dissonance was associated with children's access to PLA recruitment activities through CPN-M's presence in the children's community.

When an individual is involuntarily exposed to information that increases dissonance, then in addition to the usual methods of reducing dissonance, the individual will also set up quick defense processes to prevent the new cognition from becoming firmly established (Festinger, 1957). According to cognitive dissonance theory, an individual can be involuntarily exposed to information through accidental exposure, irrelevant exposure, forced exposure, and through interactions with other people (Festinger, 1957). The research findings suggest that children were exposed to PLA

recruitment activities through involuntary exposure to Maoist-focused education in varying degrees though exposure was generally not accidental as the CPN-M systematically delivered curriculum to children throughout most of the conflict. Research findings also suggest that children were exposed to Maoist-focused education on an irrelevant basis when attending school; through forced exposure due to widespread information concerning PLA child recruitment activities; and through interactions with family and peers, particularly parents, older siblings and friends associated with the PLA.

Based on Cooper and Jahoda's (1947) research concerning involuntary exposure to propaganda, Festinger (1957) argues that an individual can set up quick defense processes to prevent a new cognition from ever becoming firmly established. An individual can achieve this by initially misunderstanding the propaganda message and using a convoluted line of reasoning that results in misunderstanding; deciding that the total propaganda message is invalid; and having an initial misperception in line with an existing cognition (Festinger, 1957). The research findings suggest that a child may have initially misunderstood PLA recruitment messages to avoid recruitment or due to evolving capacities; while a child may have decided that PLA recruitment messages were invalid, particularly a child who lacked psychosocial and socio-economic factors that placed him/her at risk of recruitment; and a child may have had an initial misperception of PLA recruitment messages in line with existing personal biases, particularly a child who wanted to seek revenge on NSF for violence inflicted on family members.

According to Festinger (1957), forced compliance results in a discrepancy between an individual's behaviour and expressed opinion when an individual is offered a special reward for compliance and/or threatened with punishment for non-compliance. Many children continued their association with the PLA following the peace agreement and engaged in political violence with the YCL. However many children also withdrew their association from the PLA after the peace agreement, and these children often reported their recruitment as forced and were inclined towards desertion.

Dissonance resulting from forced compliance can be reduced in one of two ways: 1) a subsequent change of belief/opinion to be consonant with compliant behaviour, or 2) the magnification of the reward or punishment to increase the consonance of compliant behaviour (Festinger, 1957). The research findings suggest that a child could remove dissonance resulting from forced compliance with PLA recruitment by subsequently believing in Maoist ideology. The research findings also suggest that the magnification of special rewards were generally strong enough to elicit compliance with PLA enlistment from some children who were predisposed to recruitment due to psychosocial and socio-economic factors. The magnification of threats of punishment were generally strong enough to elicit compliance with PLA recruitment for the majority of children recruited with this method. Likewise, children were positively influenced by rewards and often perceived their recruitment as voluntary. However, children were negatively influenced by threats of punishment and unfulfilled rewards and often perceived their recruitment as forced.

b. Limitations of Theoretical Analysis

There are two limitations in the theoretical analysis. First, cognitive dissonance theory assumes that an individual has the capacity for logical reasoning. Consequently, Festinger does not consider potential limitations in logical reasoning, such as the evolving capacities of a child. Second, Festinger's conceptualization of force is generally restricted to nonphysical force as offers of special rewards and threats of punishment. The research findings indicate that child enlistment in the PLA was coerced by several elements of nonphysical force, including a wide variety of psychosocial and socio-economic factors. As a result, children were predisposed to recruitment through implicit rewards, particularly when basic human needs were exacerbated by conflict dynamics.

5.2.2. Implications of Analysis on Child Recruitment in the PLA

a.   Little Influence of Maoist-focused Education in PLA Child Recruitment

Contrary to academic discourse, the research findings suggest that political education had little influence in PLA child recruitment. Children's interest in Maoist ideology was influenced by a variety of psychosocial and socio-economic factors. Consequently, the majority of children were recruited in student political groups. Child recruitment in the PLA was predominantly forced by basic human needs, particularly those exacerbated by conflict dynamics. These factors increased children's susceptibility to recruitment in attempts to benefit from implicit and explicitly offered rewards of PLA recruitment.

b.   Debunking Voluntary Enlistment of Children in the PLA

Using Festinger's (1957) hypotheses on voluntary and involuntary exposure to information, the analysis superficially suggests that children may have voluntarily enlisted in the PLA. Children may have been motivated to expose themselves to PLA recruitment activities, such as Maoist-focused education, if they perceived that PLA recruitment was inevitable, particularly in the mid-Western region. This line of reasoning may be used to suggest that children were also motivated to enlist in the PLA. However, the research findings indicate that children were initially exposed to Maoist-focused education involuntarily, often through curriculum delivered in school and/or through interactions with family members and peers associated with the CPN-M, particularly parents, older siblings and friends associated with the PLA.

The research findings also suggest that the majority of children resisted PLA recruitment following exposure to Maoist-focused education, including repeated exposure. Enlistment was primarily motivated by attempts to increase access to basic human needs exacerbated by conflict dynamics. Although Festinger (1957) does not address basic human needs in cognitive dissonance theory, they are conceptualized in Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation.

According to Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, the research findings suggest that children were motivated to enlist in the PLA to address needs for love and belonging; physiological needs for human survival, such as food and water; and safety needs for physical security, such as shelter. The research findings indicate that children's need for love and belonging superseded other needs, as similarly argued by Maslow (1943). Due to needs for love and belonging, children separated and/or orphaned from their parents were coerced to enlist in the PLA to maintain interpersonal relationships with family members and peers associated with the CPN-M, particularly parents, siblings, and friends associated with the PLA. For these children, enlistment was coerced by implicit rewards to maintain interpersonal relationships. Children were also coerced to enlist in the PLA to fulfill physiological and safety needs, particularly children separated and/or orphaned from their parents and raised in poor and socially marginalized families. For these children, PLA enlistment was coerced by implicit and explicitly offered rewards for survival and physical security.

Maslow's (1943) human motivation theory provides some clarification in the relationship between CPN-M recruitment methods, psychosocial and socio-economic factors in PLA recruitment. Subsequently, these factors can be prioritized according to the level of risk for child recruitment in the PLA as summarized below in Table 5. It is important to note that despite particular trends between psychosocial and socio-economic factors that facilitated child recruitment, the relevance of these factors varied between individual children. Therefore, further analysis is required to address a child's capacity to exercise individual agency to enlist in the PLA amidst various elements of force that coerced child recruitment.

The juxtaposition between the evolving capacities of a child and individual agency can be addressed using the ethical principle of informed consent. In medicine, social work, law, and participatory research, an individual's capacity to provide consent is conceptualized as an ethical principle of informed consent (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). Although it is often used as a measure enforceable in law, it can be used as a general approach to determine children's capacity to consent to PLA enlistment.

According to the principle of informed consent, an individual can assent to affirm participation or provide informed consent when the individual has the capacity to understand and has received sufficient information to make a decision without coercion (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). The distinction between these concepts is important because the capacity to consent is concurrent with responsibility. According to Lambert and Glacken (2011), there are seven elements of informed consent. These elements assist in conceptualizing a child's capacity to consent to PLA recruitment.

Table 5. Factors Influencing The Level of Risk for Child Recruitment in the PLA

	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Immediate Factors	• Little or no CPN-M presence in community • Association of teachers with the CPN-M • CPN-M interference in the school system • Exposure to CPN-M's Maoist-focused education • Association with student political groups • Uninterrupted school attendance	• Moderate CPN-M presence in community • Association of extended family members and peers with the CPN-M • Exposure to political violence/armed conflict • Household poverty exacerbated by conflict • Adolescents between 14-17 years of age, particularly boys • Limited school attendance • CPN-M rewards offered for PLA enlistment	• High CPN-M presence in community • Orphaned and/or separated from parents/caregivers • Homeless • Exposure to NSF violence inflicted on family members, particularly parents • Association of parents, siblings, and friends with the PLA • Withdrawal from school • CPN-M threats of punishment for resisting PLA recruitment • Abduction • Deception
Pre-existing Factors	• Raised in a financially stable household • Raised by both parents • Moderate to high social status of the family	• Raised in poor household • Raised by a single parent/caregiver, particularly mothers • Lack of government enforcement of child protection policies • Residing in a refugee camp • Regional history of military child recruitment, particularly British recruitment of Gurkhas in the mid-Western region • Regional history of political violence, particularly in the Eastern region	• Unemployed • Exposure to domestic violence, child abuse, parental substance abuse and gambling addiction • Socially marginalized • History of child exploitation • History of low school attendance

The first element of informed consent requires an individual's capacity to make a decision (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). While it is possible that adolescents between the ages of 14-17 were inclined towards having the capacity to enlist in the PLA, an accurate assessment of a child's evolving capacities should be determined on an individual case-by-case basis. The second element of informed consent requires an individual to have access to sufficient and appropriate information to make a decision (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). The research findings provide mixed results. In varying degrees, children often received political, cultural and military training, while others received little to no training prior to direct recruitment near the end of the conflict.

The third element requires the individual's decision to be made voluntary without coercion/force (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). As previously discussed, the research findings indicate that children enlisted in the PLA in response to various levels of coercion, including non-physical elements of force in CPN-M recruitment methods, psychosocial and socio-economic factors. The fourth element of informed consent requires the absence of subtle signs of refusal (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). The research findings indicate that the CPN-M increasingly forced children's participation in Maoist-focused education with threats of punishment, however, children often refused PLA recruitment, even after repeated exposure to Maoist-focused education. Furthermore, children recruited by threats, abduction and deception were inclined towards desertion. The fifth element requires evidence of understanding sought and demonstrated in questions and feedback (Lambert and Glacken, 2011); however, such information is not available in the research findings.

The sixth element of informed consent requires consent to be negotiated continuously (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). The research findings indicate that a child's ability to negotiate consent to enlistment became increasingly irrelevant as recruitment was progressively coerced with physical force, particularly abduction. Furthermore, after children were recruited in the PLA, consent was nonnegotiable throughout the conflict and the PLA threatened reprisal on children and their families to deter desertion. Finally, the seventh element requires provision of sufficient time to the individual to think about

the decision (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). According to the research findings, children had more time to consider PLA recruitment during the early and mid stages of the conflict. However, opportunities increasingly diminished and children were eventually recruited directly in the PLA with threats, abduction, and deception.

Based on the research findings, several elements of informed consent were not satisfied. Although some information is unavailable in the research findings, children's ability to negotiate consent to PLA recruitment was increasingly restricted and eventually irrelevant; children did not always receive sufficient information before deciding to enlist in the PLA; children's decision to enlist in the PLA was coerced by various levels of force; subtle and overt signs of refusal were demonstrated in children's behaviour; consent was nonnegotiable after recruitment; and children were eventually denied time to consider PLA enlistment. According to the principle of informed consent, children did not have the capacity to consent to recruitment and enlist in the PLA. Therefore, children assented to recruitment in the PLA.

c. Conceptualizing Force in PLA Child Recruitment

All four of Festinger's (1957) indicators of forced compliance were present in CPN-M recruitment methods. Both indicators used to identify the exertion of force were present in CPN-M recruitment methods, including offers of special rewards and threats of punishment. While both methods were effective in recruiting children in the PLA, special rewards were effective in recruiting children with predisposed vulnerabilities due to psychosocial and socio-economic factors exacerbated by conflict dynamics, particularly access to basic human needs. Threats of punishment were particularly effective in recruiting most children subjected to this method, regardless of motivating factors. Both indicators used to identify the effects of forced compliance were also present. A general discrepancy between children's behaviour and expressed beliefs was present, particularly children coerced to enlist in the PLA with offers of special rewards who withdrew after the peace agreement when rewards were unfulfilled. The effects of forced compliance were also present in children's opinions, however the analysis indicates children's

perceptions of recruitment varied in response to the method used to coerce recruitment. Children's perceptions of recruitment were positively influenced when rewards coerced enlistment. However, children's perceptions were negatively influenced when rewards were unfulfilled and when recruitment was coerced with threats. These results are strengthened with supplementary research that suggests children's compliance is generally more susceptible to offers of reward.

According to Mischel and Grusec (1967), rewarding experiences generally strengthen a child's tolerance during immediate aversive conditions. Children who have a positive experience making a decision based on rewards are more inclined to accept smaller punishments immediately (Mischel and Grusec, 1967). Children are also inclined to make decisions based on delayed rewards and immediate punishments (Mischel and Grusec, 1967), as similarly indicated in the research findings. Correspondingly, rewards are increasingly used in cognitive-behavioural therapy to coerce significant behavioural change in children. For example, rewards are effectively used in addiction treatment programs with adolescents (Murphy; Rhodes; and Taxman; 2012). Therefore, because children are predisposed to coercion with rewards, Festinger's (1957) indicators of forced compliance are particularly relevant for conceptualizing nonphysical force used to elicit children's compliance with PLA recruitment.

In addition to rewards and punishment, the research findings indicate that child enlistment coerced by various elements of nonphysical force. In order of relevance, the research finding suggest that nonphysical elements of force that coerced child enlistment involved psychosocial and socio-economic factors, particularly basic human needs; and CPN-M recruitment methods, particularly threats, deception, rewards, Maoist-focused education, and interference in the education system. However, physical force was particularly effective in coercing direct child recruitment in the PLA with abduction. The research findings indicate that force should be conceptualized as involving nonphysical and physical elements in PLA child recruitment. Therefore, children assented to forced recruitment in the PLA.

d. Reconceptualizing Voluntary Enlistment as Children's Assent to Forced Recruitment in the PLA

As previously discussed, the research findings strongly suggest that children were recruited in the PLA in response to various levels of force, particularly non-physical elements. The CPN-M initially used offers of special rewards to elicit children's compliance with PLA recruitment, which was particularly effective with some children due to psychosocial and socio-economic factors, especially basic human needs exacerbated by conflict dynamics. The CPN-M increasingly used threats of punishment to deter noncompliance with PLA recruitment and finally resorted to physical force to recruit children directly in the PLA in the late and most intense stage of the conflict. The analysis suggests that children did not have the capacity to consent to enlistment. Children's capacity to negotiate consent was limited and eventually denied, consent was non-negotiable after recruitment, children did not always receive sufficient information before enlistment, and children often demonstrated subtle signs of resisting recruitment. In conclusion, academic discourse concerning child enlistment in the PLA should be reconceptualized as children's assent to forced recruitment.

6. Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the conclusions of the analysis and significance of the research. The chapter discusses the limitations in the scope of the research and contributions to the field of conflict studies, including challenges to contemporary discourse, practical implications, and topics for further research. The paper concludes with a summary of final comments.

6.1. Significance of the Research

6.1.1. Limitations in the Scope of the Research

There are some limitations with the scope of the research. First, the analysis and conclusions provide a generalized approach to understanding children's agency within the context of PLA recruitment in Nepal. Individual differences would exist between children, including the relevance of psychosocial and socio-economic factors. Second, because the research is based on a case study, generalizability of the research findings may be limited. Comparative research is required to test the generalizability of practical implications.

6.1.2. Contribution to Conflict Studies

a. Challenging Specific Discourse on Child Recruitment in the PLA

i. Misinterpretation of Children's Assent to Forced Recruitment as Voluntary Enlistment

The research findings suggest that academic discourse has misinterpreted children's assent to forced recruitment as voluntary enlistment in the PLA. First, children, notably adolescents, were predisposed to recruitment due to psychosocial and socio-economic factors. These children were at risk of recruitment in attempt to improve psychosocial and socio-economic factors; particularly access to basic human needs exacerbated by conflict dynamics. Consequently, children often perceived their recruitment as voluntary when they benefitted from rewards that coerced recruitment,

both implicit and explicitly offered by the CPN-M. Second, children did not have the capacity to consent to enlistment. Recruitment was coerced in various ways, particularly through non-physical elements of force; while consent was based on irregular information and training, and children's ability to negotiate consent to recruitment was eventually denied and consistently nonnegotiable after recruitment.

ii. Little Influence of Maoist-focused Education in Child Recruitment

Contrary to academic discourse, the research findings suggest that Maoist-focused education had little influence in coercing enlistment in comparison to other nonphysical elements of force. Children's interest in Maoist ideology was influenced by a variety of psychosocial and socio-economic factors that primarily resulted in the recruitment of children in student political groups. Recruitment in the PLA was predominantly forced by basic human needs. Subsequently, child recruitment was often coerced with rewards.

b. Challenging General Discourse on Child Recruitment in Armed Groups

i. Conceptualizing Force in Child Recruitment

The research findings indicate that force should be conceptualized as involving physical and nonphysical elements that coerce child recruitment in armed groups. Nonphysical elements of force can be particularly effective in recruiting children, especially when recruitment methods are responsive to psychosocial and socio-economic factors. Of note, the research findings indicate that children's perceptions of recruitment are influenced by nonphysical elements of force that are used to coerce recruitment in armed groups. When recruitment is forced with rewards, a child is inclined to perceive their recruitment as voluntary. When rewards are unfulfilled or recruitment is forced with threats of punishment, a child is inclined to perceive their recruitment as forced and more inclined towards desertion. Therefore, an armed group may opt to recruit children with rewards to increase children's participation in armed conflict and decrease the risk of desertion. In sum, force should be conceptualized as involving physical and nonphysical elements of force that coerce child recruitment in armed groups.

ii. Conceptualizing Children's Agency as Informed Consent to Recruitment in Armed Groups

Because psychosocial and socio-economic factors vary between children and agency is concurrent with responsibility, academic discourse should address the issue of a child's capacity to enlist in an armed group. The research findings suggest that children's agency can be conceptualized as a child's capacity to provide informed consent to recruitment. The research findings demonstrate that Lambert and Glacken's (2011) elements of informed consent can be used as a general approach to addressing children's capacity to consent to recruitment in an armed group. However, the most accurate assessment of a child's capacity would require an individual evaluation.

c. Practical Implications

i. Assessing Risk of Child Recruitment in Armed Groups

The research findings summarized in Table 5 can be adapted and used as a risk assessment tool for strategists and practitioners in conflict prevention and peace building programs. It may be used for early risk identification to increase opportunities for intervention to prevent and/or reduce the rate of child recruitment in armed groups. For example, the research findings indicate that parents and caregivers should be engaged in prevention and reintegration programs for child soldiers as recruitment is significantly influenced by parent-child relationships. Table 6 summarizes the level of risk for child recruitment in armed groups.

Table 6. Risk Assessment for Child Recruitment in Armed Groups

	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Immediate Factors	• Little or no presence of armed groups in community • Association of teachers with the armed group • Interference of armed groups in schools • Exposure to political ideology • Association with student political groups • Uninterrupted school attendance	• Moderate presence of armed group in community • Association of extended family members and peers with armed group • Exposure to political violence/armed conflict • Poverty exacerbated by conflict • Adolescent children between 12-17 years of age, particularly boys • Limited school attendance • Rewards offered by armed group for enlistment	• High presence of armed groups in community • Orphaned and/or separated from parents/caregivers, particularly fathers • Homeless • Association of parents, siblings, friends with armed group • Exposure to violence on family members, particularly violence inflicted by government forces on parents • Withdrawal from school • Punishment threatened by armed group for resisting recruitment • Abduction • Deception
Pre-existing Factors	• Raised in a financially stable household • Living with both parents • Moderate to high social caste and/or class status of the family	• Poor household • Raised by a single parent/caregiver • Residing in refugee camps • Regional history of political violence • Regional history of military child recruitment	• Unemployed • Exposure to domestic violence, child abuse, parental alcohol and gambling addiction • Socially marginalized • Lack of government enforcement of child protection policies • History of child exploitation • History of low school attendance

d. Topics for Further Research

i. Comparative Research

Based on the research findings, comparative research can be explored in three general areas. First, comparative research should explore child recruitment in armed groups in other conflict-affected countries in Asia to test the generalizability of the research findings. Comparative research with other Maoist revolutionary groups would be particularly relevant and should include the Communist Party of India (Maoist), given

the historical link with the CPN-M. Second, comparative research should be explored with children recruited in armed groups involving religious indoctrination. Due to increasing international concern particularly in conflict-affected countries in the Middle East, such research would be timely. Third, comparative research should be explored with children recruited by armed groups over the internet. Such research would also be timely and may identify specific psychosocial and/or socio-economic factors that influence children towards voluntarily exposure to recruitment information.

6.2.   Final Comments

Careful attention should be used when interpreting agency in the recruitment of children in armed groups. Academic discourse has increasingly focused on cultural relativist arguments and overlooks two key issues that contextualize agency in child recruitment. Nonphysical elements of force can be particularly effective in coercing child recruitment in armed groups, and enlistment is likely to result from children's attempts to increase access to basic human needs exacerbated by conflict dynamics. Furthermore, because the relevance of psychosocial and socio-economic factors varies between children and agency is connected to responsibility, a child's capacity to exercise individual agency and enlist in an armed group should be addressed, particularly for adolescents. Using Nepal as a case study, this paper suggests that children's assent to forced recruitment is generally misinterpreted as voluntary enlistment in armed groups in academic literature.

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