POLITICAL CONFLICT AND MIGRATION: IMPACT OF THE MAOIST INSURRECTION ON MIGRATION BEHAVIOR IN NEPAL

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Does political conflict affect migration patterns?
2. Do people migrate more or less during political conflict?
3. Is it the general context of political conflict, or specific events that affect migration?
4. Are there thresholds of violence over which migration responses change?

SETTING

Nepal, situated between India to the south and Tibet to the north, is one of the poorest countries in Asia. Of the 29 million people in Nepal, 31% live below the poverty line. Life expectancy at birth is 60 years for both men and women.

The setting of this study, the Chitwan Valley, is in the terai zone of south-central Nepal. It is flat, fertile, primarily rural, and dominated by agriculture.

THE MAOIST INSURRECTION

What it's about

Following a relatively unsuccessful political campaign, in early 1996, the Nepalese Maoist party made a formal declaration of "People's War" with the aim to unseat the current constitutional monarchy and install a republican government.

The earlier stages of violence were contained primarily in several western districts and aimed at government installations and security forces. From 2000, the Maoists progressively expanded their campaign nationwide. In Jan. 2001, the Nepalese government responded by creating a special armed police force to fight the Maoist insurgents.

Human rights abuses by the Maoists AND government forces-

Since then, reported violent acts by the Maoists and the government security forces against civilians include torture, extra-judicial killings, gun fights, bombings, abductions, conscription, billeting and taxing. Between 2000 and Nov. 2006, the Maoists are responsible for 4312 deaths, and the government forces are responsible for 7544 deaths[1].

The government has generally maintained control of many of the cities and the capital Kathmandu. The Maoists have controlled large areas of the countryside.

Peace

Since Nov. 2006, there have been serious peace talks. An interim constitution has been put in place, the Maoists are officially participating in the government, and they have agreed to put down their weapons. The demilitarization is being monitored by a UN arms monitoring mission.

DATA

The Chitwan Valley Family Study

- Prospective monthly data collection.
- 108 months, from Feb. 1997 to Jan. 2006.
- 3882 respondents, ages 15-80.
- *Migration* is defined as the first move of one month or more from the 1996 neighborhood.

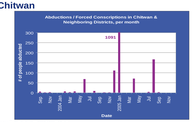
1996- Maoists declare "People's War."

2000-2001 Violence escalates and spreads. Government creates armed police force to fight Maoists.

Abductions / Forced Conscriptions

in Nepal

in Chitwan



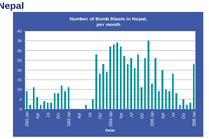
[2] Data from South Asia Terrorism Portal

[4] Photo from www.phalano.com

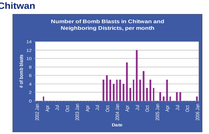
[3] Photo by Tomas van Houtryve for TIME Asia

Bomb Blasts

in Nepal



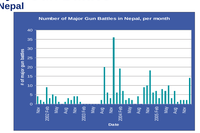
in Chitwan



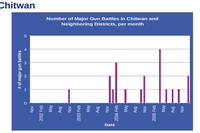
[2] Data from South Asia Terrorism Portal

Major Gun Battles

in Nepal



in Chitwan



[2] Data from South Asia Terrorism Portal

RESULTS

Q1: Does political conflict affect migration patterns?
Q2: Do people migrate more or less during political conflict?

Discrete-time hazard model of person-months, predicting first migration out of neighborhood in Chitwan since 1996.

VARIABLE	MODEL 1- Controls	MODEL 2- Conflict
During conflict (0,1) (1 = Sep. 2000 – Jan. 2006)		**0.572***** (10.89)
INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS		
13 – 20 years old	**1.164***** (5.76)	**1.220***** (6.12)
21 – 25 years old	**0.887**** (2.98)	**0.899**** (3.02)
26 – 30 years old	**0.905**** (2.69)	**0.910**** (2.70)
31 – 40 years old	**0.929**** (2.92)	**0.930**** (2.77)
41 – 50 years old	**1.007** (0.01)	**1.007** (0.05)
50+ years old	**0.977**** (2.94)	**0.982*** (2.21)
Gender (female = 1)	**0.624***** (6.19)	**0.639***** (5.97)
MONTHS OF THE YEAR		
January	**0.721***** (3.41)	**0.769**** (2.95)
February	**0.683***** (3.73)	**0.719***** (3.21)
March	**0.913** (0.96)	**0.962** (0.41)
April	**0.775**** (2.99)	**0.817*** (2.16)
May	**1.005** (0.04)	**1.000** (0.00)
June	reference	reference
July	**0.918** (0.90)	**0.918** (0.90)
August	**1.061** (0.58)	**1.052** (0.50)
September	**0.975** (0.16)	**1.036** (0.34)
October	**0.561***** (5.48)	**0.587***** (4.99)
November	**0.847*** (1.77)	**0.902** (1.1)
December	**0.825*** (2.05)	**0.879*** (1.36)
Merge	-11116 **	-9.563
No. of obs (person-yrs)	211,051	211,051
Log likelihood	-26,488	-26,455

Note: Estimates are presented as odds ratios.
Asymptotic z-statistics are given in parentheses.
* p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

During the conflict, people have 0.43 lower odds of migrating out of their neighborhood in Chitwan.

Q3: Does the general context of political conflict, or do specific events, affect migration?

Discrete-time hazard model of person-months, predicting first migration out of neighborhood in Chitwan since 1996.

VARIABLE	MODEL 3- in Nepal	MODEL 4- in Chitwan & neighboring districts
VIOLENT EVENTS		
# of abductions/ forced conscriptions (1 month lag) (Abductions = 1 Lag)	0.990** (3.03)	0.992** (2.87)
# of bomb blasts (1 bomb blast = 1 Lag)	0.982*** (5.24)	0.982*** (8.80)
# of major gun battles (1 gun battle = 1 Lag)	1.024*** (3.87)	1.062* (2.22)
POLITICAL EVENTS		
Strikes and protests (0,1)	1.307* (2.32)	0.976 (0.23)
Ceasefire (0,1)	0.672*** (6.32)	0.748*** (4.66)
Government instability (0,1)	0.949 (0.12)	0.955 (0.10)
Intercept	-4.543***	-4.548***
No. of obs (person-yrs)	167,663	167,663
-2 log likelihood	22,274	22,350

Note:
Control variables not shown- age, gender, months of the year
Estimates are presented as odds ratios.
Asymptotic z-statistics are given in parentheses.
* p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.005
All events are lagged by one month, except strikes and protests.

Results from events in Nepal and events in Chitwan are similar in magnitude and direction.

However, events in Chitwan have a stronger impact on out-migration than events in Nepal.

The following results are described for Chitwan & neighboring districts only (Model 4)

ABDUCTIONS

- For every 10 people abducted in Chitwan and neighboring districts in one month, the odds of out-migration **decrease** by 0.008.
- 100 abductions would decrease the odds by 0.077.

BOMB BLASTS

- Each bomb blast in Chitwan and neighboring districts **decreases** the odds of out-migration by 0.11.
- 5 bomb blasts in one month would decrease the odds by 0.45.

MAJOR GUN BATTLES

- Each major gun battle in Chitwan and neighboring districts **increases** the odds of out-migration by 1.09.
- 5 major gun battles fatalities in one month would increase the odds by 1.40.

CEASEFIRES

- During the months when there was a ceasefire, the odds of out-migration **decreased** by 0.25.

OVERALL, VIOLENT EVENTS MAKE PEOPLE STAY HOME.

The "lock-the-door-and-hide-behind-he-couch" response

Question:
How can we understand the positive coefficient for major gun battles?

Proposed explanation: Thresholds
- At some levels of violence and danger, people are more likely to stay at home to avoid the violence.

- At higher levels of violence and danger, above a threshold where people may feel threatened in their own homes, people are more likely to leave.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Political conflict can affect migration patterns.
2. In this study area, the general context of political conflict reduced migration.
3. Specific events- abduction, bomb blasts, major gun battles, and ceasefires- affected migration.
   --> Violent events generally reduce migration.
4. Events that occured close to one's home have a greater effect than events that occured farther away.
5. It is possible that event thresholds exist. Further examination of this hypothesis would be useful.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. More careful specification of models, using precise individual measures as controls-
   a. Ethnicity
   b. Marital status
   c. Children
   d. Wealth
   e. Occupation
   f. Land/home/business ownership
2. Investigate the threshold hypothesis.
3. Investigate hypotheses of accumulation and acclimation to violent and political events.
4. Investigate different destinations of migration as outcome variables- local, domestic, and international migrations.
5. Investigate how individual characteristics affect migration responses to political conflict.

DATA SOURCES

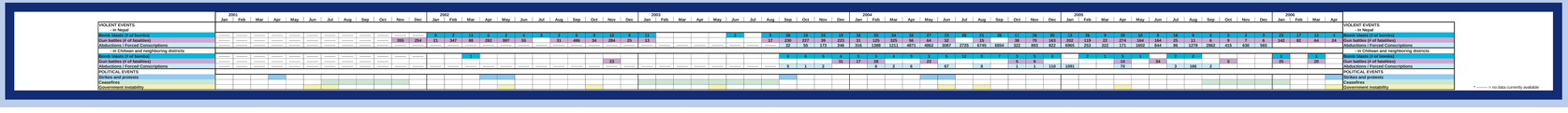
Dates and records of events and news reports from:

1- **Human Rights Documentation and Dissemination Center, Informal Service Sector,** www.insec.org.np

2- **South Asia Terrorism Portal-** www.satp.org
data "Compiled from official sources and the English language media in Nepal"

* Also useful- **Nepal News,** www.nepalnews.com
Daily news reports from Nepal news correspondents and compilation of a variety of new publications in

Photos from:

3- Photo by Tomas van Houtryve for TIME Asia photo essay "Rebel Territory" accessed at: http://www.time.com/time/asia/photoessays/nepal_civil_war/

4- Photo accessed at: www.phalano.com