

The People's War: Mapping Conflict Vulnerability in Nepal

Background

The year 1996 marked the beginning of the ten year civil conflict in Nepal, also known as "people's war" in rural Nepal, or the "Maoist Insurgency". Years of political instability had increased the divide between Nepal's ruling elite and the working class. By mid-90s, the "People's War" began, a guerrilla uprising against the state. What began as a low intensity insurgency soon escalated into a full scale civil war between the state and the Maoists, who were mostly comprised of the rural local population. Many factors contributed to the uprising and influencing investment of the rural population. The Maoist army was comprised of local recruitment of young community members. Factors like illiteracy, poverty and economic underdevelopment are seen as contributors to the uprising.

A spatial analysis can further help understand the influence of these factors in shaping concentrations of the conflict in the district level. During the time of the conflict, Nepal was administratively divided into 75 districts. In some districts, the conflict intensity was higher in comparison to others. A spatial assessment can map which districts were more prone to conflict incidents and determine its vulnerability to conflict based on different economic, demographic and geographic factors that may have contributed to the conflict.

Spatial Questions to answer:

What districts had high conflict density?
Did districts experiencing higher rate of conflict have higher illiteracy, poverty, and access to roads?
What are districts were the most vulnerable to conflict?

Methodology

In order to calculate a conflict vulnerability rank for each district, four different indicators are used: Poverty Incidence, Illiteracy rate, road density and conflict density. Data for each indicator is derived from 2001 Nepal census data. Each indicator is reclassified to create a ranking system which is then aggregated to create the final conflict vulnerability rank. Each indicator has also been weighed according to its relevance to finding a conflict vulnerability. Conflict density is the most important indicator, followed by poverty incidence. Illiteracy and road density are indicators with the least weight.

Indicators

Conflict Intensity : Derived from number of conflict incidents per district, normalized by total population. All the incidents took place during the timeline of the conflict (1996-2006).

Poverty Incidence: the proportion of the population with per capita income less than the per capita poverty threshold. Poverty is believed to be a significant contributor for starting the insurgency.

Illiteracy Rate: The lower the literate population, the more likely the population can be easily influenced to join the insurgency.

Road Density: The civil war was concentrated in rural parts of Nepal. Higher road density can impact the number of conflict incidents. Road density is also an indicator of economic development.

Limitations

2001 Nepal census data does not include many relevant economic indicators that would have also been important in deriving the final conflict vulnerability. There is also a dearth of conflict data besides the dataset (UCPD) used for this project.

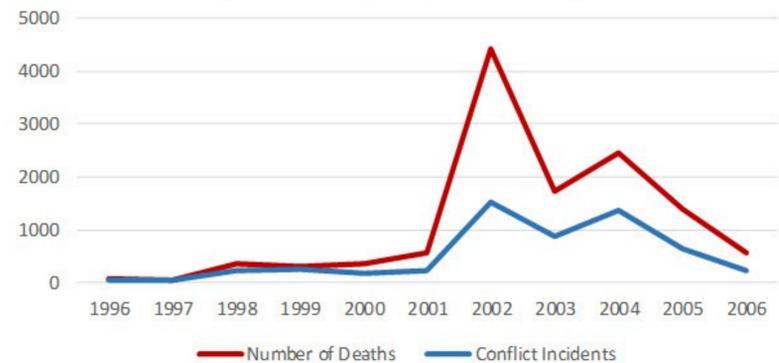
Cartographer: Cecelia Rana

Fall 2018 DPH 207 GIS for International Application

Data Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Nepal), National Spatial Data Infrastructure Clearing House (Nepal), Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Humanitarian Data Exchange

Data Projection: WGS_1984_UTM_Zone_45N

Maoist Insurgency in Nepal
Timeline



Conflict Vulnerability

