

# PROXIMATE CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN NEPAL

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## Introduction

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has made the entry of Nepal as a country razed by violent domestic conflict for the first time in its annual report SIPRI 2003. This is a loud expression of internal conflicts expanding to hitherto untouched territories, and interests generated by such conflicts for scholarship to focus on understanding domestic political violence that previously was simply dismissed as an affliction of the weak states. Despite a considerable decline in such episodes in 2003 from its peak period between 1989 and 1996 (Gurr, Marshall and Khosla 2001; Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 1996; SIPRI 2003), this global trend, however, is reversed in the case of Nepal where violence exploded in 1996 as “People’s War” for the seizure of state power and continued as a protracted or persistent conflict. This deadly conflict is neither near to seize state power, nor militarily defeated, nor has achieved mass support. But the Maoists have vigorously pursued their agenda for establishing a Republican state by dethroning monarchy even when negotiating with different governments in the past. The government, on the other hand, has mobilized its security forces under a unified military command to crush the Maoists uprising (Rising Nepal November 5, 2003). Nepal, therefore, indicates a case of the spread of internal conflict along with the process of globalization (Keane 1996).

Some commissioned reports and other publications on the “People’s War” in Nepal have proliferated in the recent past (e.g. ICG 2003a; ICG 2003b; ICG 2003c; Karki and Seddon 2003; Thapa 2003; Sharma 2002; DfID 2002) identifying various causes of conflict. Among them poverty, destitution and discrimination are poignantly presented as cases for breeding conflict. Social inequality and social exclusion are attributes for rationalizing conflict in a country like Nepal where rural-urban gap is widening and the neglect of the periphery by the centre is pervasive. This oppressive situation, according to Bhattarai, is not only related to the question of nationality but has become a national question to be addressed and resolved (Bhattarai 1998). The national question remains the state’s neglect to deal with the burgeoning crises concerning centre-periphery relationships.<sup>1</sup> Shrinking resource base and denial of social opportunity are largely identified as causes of conflict and violence. Of the 40-point demand, the Maoists have enlisted 14 points directly related to the question of livelihood of the people and the situation of underdevelopment. Understandably, Nepal is, therefore, a minefield of latent

conflict given the context of social disequilibria created by misgovernance. These being the cases of propensity to violence have thus largely displaced the "development diplomats" in Nepal by a tribe of "conflict resolution experts."<sup>2</sup> And, the conflict study has become a growth industry in a country facing catastrophic impact of the Maoists insurgency and economic decline.

Conflict studies, particularly in the context of the Third World, have contextualized the causes of conflict basically to the situation of social exclusion and the centralized control of the state resources by a minority elite group. The economic determinism as a core of conflict has been taken as an explanatory tool for investigating social discrimination and increasing inequalities fuelling socio-political and economic antagonism internally (Muller 1985). The discourse in Nepal has also continued to revolve around development and conflict. Economic inequality, regional disparities and social exclusion prominently feature the conflict narratives, as most of the conflicts are concentrated in the low-income underdeveloped regions. But the question: "Does economic inequality breed conflict?" (Lichbach 1989) has yet to be answered properly. Quantitative methods used in studying the problem have not resolve the conflict puzzles. Nor had case studies based on grievance theories been helpful in unravelling the problem.

Perhaps economic inequality is an important cause but may not be the one that led to rebellion. Deprivation (Gurr 1970; Tilly 1978) has also led to grievance making it a potential cause of conflict: grievances in relations to social, economic and political segregation have persisted. Severe economic disparities causing abject poverty have pointed to grievances as a catalyst for conflict (Bray, Lund and Murshed 2003:107-32). Keen (1998), on the other hand, has observed that internal conflict also comprises of economic function for protagonists making short-term economic benefits. But, in the case of Nepal, economic inequality, deprivation, grievances or even economic benefits cannot be rationalized as the root causes of conflict. Violent insurgencies have erupted in Nepal not from the areas of abject poverty and deprivation, but from the relatively well-off areas. For instance, the relatively rich Jhapa district in the eastern Nepal was the first site of the Naxalite violence in the early 1970s, where the government had launched the land reform pilot project with American aid. Similarly, the Maoist movement has sprung up from the area where the USAID had invested over US \$ 50 million in the 1980s through 1995 on the Rapti Doon Integrated Development Project. The unintended effect of investing into development, however, is negative. Coupling development with conflict thus would be less explicable unless the structural impact of development is thoroughly explored and understood. The question therefore is that does development deliver?

Besides this, the ideational quest of the people related to their politico-religious beliefs and cultural practices have challenged the static view premised on the traditional concept of sovereignty and territorial integrity of

the state crafted by the Westphalian system. The assertion of the people's sovereignty over the state's sovereignty has become one of the most contending issues as the discourses on democratisation are increasingly being focused on the individual rather than collective entity like the state. Thus, conflict studies in the post-Cold War period have empirically testified that most of the conflicts are internal, and civil wars occurring in the poorest countries of the world and erupting into crises in places where there are human rights abuses in extremity. A significant drift in the conceptualisation of conflict from state-centricism to people-centricism has occurred in the process of the assertion of people for their legitimate rights as citizenry of a given state. This has led to a "problem situation" in the state-society relations and the tensions created by the change-resistant states have led to overt violent conflicts.

Political conflicts are features of the state management process and challenges to governance, particularly under democracy. Societal tensions, conflicts and grievances leading to political competition under democracy, if managed properly by the state machinery would be the constructive contribution to the advancement of the people and the state in question. The failure of managing grievances would certainly have negative impact on the state opening vulnerabilities with different consequences. The case of Nepal reflects this "problem situation" to which the government has yet to formulate a sustained response. Assertion of rights in relations to the question of livelihood requires mediation by the institutions to prevent the estrangement of the people from the state. Conflict theorists in Nepal have largely ignored the case of state failure, which is crucially linked with the leadership problematique in exploring causes of conflict. Most of the conflict literature on Nepal has confined analysis to the structural/motivational preconditions for conflict that had long existed but not on the elite behaviour as a crucial factor in generating conflict.

To my mind, there is still a theoretical deficiency in explaining how and why violence erupted in Nepal. Besides an assortment of conflict inducing factors related to structural conditions, which are adequately combustible and inflammable materials for explosion, what actually spur violence is not easily understandable. Because the Nepali case is unique: conflict in Nepal is neither generated for secessionism nor for separatism nor for self-determination, it is rather understood as an upheaval for grabbing state power through armed revolution. Power politics verging to the point of zero-sum game, thus, could be an explanatory cause of conflict under democracy where the competitive elite objective could rebound to the purse of the state through the control of state power. The precipitant cause of conflict in this paper, therefore, relates to the process of democratisation opening the floodgate of demands and political activities of all kinds not necessarily confined to the legitimate channels. My argument is based on the situation of democratic

transition where intense pressure for democratisation is constrained by the structural incongruity as well as institutional infirmities undermining the process of democratic consolidation. Thus, the process of democratisation remains unarticulated because the need of the continuous dialogue was largely discounted by the urge for reprisal. My concern, therefore, is to locate the proximate cause of conflict under turbulent democracy wherein the role of the leadership becomes more ascertained in determining the scale of cooperation and conflict in the competitive foray for political power. This paper therefore addresses the case with exploring the plausible and possible causes of conflict with an objective of transforming the "problem situation" to "problem solving."

To further understand the case, it should, at the outset, be noted that the facts before us are obvious: (1) Nepal remains constitutionally a Hindu State in a multireligious society (2) politically patrimonial, (3) economically exploitative, and (4) functionally incompetent and corrupt in the case of governance. These are the defining categories to which the leadership of the country is intertwined. These are also some of the major reasons constantly interrogating the Nepali society and continuously undermining the political process against the creation of an inclusive society by broadening the sphere of political participation, provisions of safety and welfare to the people and develop national resilience in achieving human security. Perhaps these are the indices fertile enough to produce conflict in Nepal.

### **Conflict Puzzles: Identifying the proximate causes of Conflict**

Does the above indices explain the question: What lies behind conflict and violence? What are the reasons and propensity for violence? How and why has violence erupted? In relative terms, violence is associated with the people, defined pejoratively as a social category, which is principally illegitimate. Violence is generally described as a sickness, a social pathology. Men committed to violence are described as psychologically abnormal and their sense of status inconsistency and social marginality cause violence. However, the underlying causes of violence and conflict are universally defined as the persistent and pervasive socio-economic inequalities. Despite this, the fundamental structures of the Nepali culture have been that it has continued to produce greater social inequality by locking itself into a self-replicating culture of poverty. The social order established with the emphasis on the material wealth as a source of status and power as vividly expressed through the "thatched huts and stucco palaces" (Regmi 1978:152) and denial of rights and resources to the majority by minority have continuously reproduced poverty ever since the abstract notion of state as a modern entity took shape in Nepal through violence, war and conquest that began with civilization.<sup>3</sup> (Regmi 1995; Stiller 1978). Despite violence being modern and a product of Enlightenment closely associated with the progress in science

and society, the term “violence” has ironically become a social evil as “violence from above” is now being questioned by the “violence from below.” Violence from below is a label tagged to the activities of the non-state actors who disturbingly challenge the essence of the supremacy of the state as a category defined to monopolize violence as the state property with the rights to inflict it on the people in the name of preserving and maintaining law and order and securing compliance.

In contextualizing violence and conflict in the case of Nepal, the question again is why have the seemingly peaceful and law-abiding people of Nepal suddenly turned to violence critically impairing the functioning of the state in response to their development needs? Why has violence erupted under democracy not under autocracy? There are some theories answering the question why has not conflict occurred before but now. According to one theory, the absence of deadly conflict before was the presence of the authoritarian regime, intolerant and repressive, leaving no room for compromise. The element of fear was the most considered aspect for the absence of violence. Closely associated with this theory is the notion that the collapse of authoritarianism/totalitarianism in the 1990s has brought the clashes and competitions between integrationist and fragmentationist forces to the open that have long embedded intra-state tensions. Accordingly, the process of tribalization has occurred in which primordial and ancient hatred subsisting amongst the people exploded<sup>4</sup> (e.g. Gaddis 1991; Brown 1993; Kumar 1997; Shurke and Garner 1997). Thus, multiethnicity – the ethnic dimension – has prominently surfaced as the most important case for numerous states in turmoil in the recent past (Gurr 1993, 1994, 1997; Brown 1996).

Inevitability of conflict in a multiethnic society of Nepal is, therefore, projected as a given phenomenon (Gurung 2003a; 2003b; Sharma 2002; Lawoti 2002; Bhattachan 2000; 1995; Neupane 2000). In essence, the ethnic revivalism in Nepal has its origins in democratic constitution of the 1990 recognizing the country as the “multiethnic [and] multilingual” state (Constitution 1990: 3). Howsoever inadequate the stipulation may have been, it has ultimately outstripped the “harmonic model” pursued by the authoritarian regimes as an agenda for nation-building (Sharma 1986). The Constitution 1990, following the *Jana Andolan*, has rejected the process of nation building hitherto practiced by inadvertently recognizing the failure of governance in Nepal. The constitution itself has, ironically, become a controversial document with the assertion of being a Hindu state, however. The conceptual anomaly of being Hindu state catering to the interests of religious majority but recognizing multireligiosity while attempting to project a secular posture has itself generated societal tension questioning the formation of the identity of the state. Politics therefore has been ethnicised by the constitution by refurbishing the social structure predominated by the

religious Hindu majority encouraging ethnic revivalism. Ethnopolitics in Nepal has therefore one common plea to make against the manufactured truth of Nepal being one nation, one religion, one language and one cultural determinism seen by the indigenous people as the continuation of the legacy of the authoritarian past.

Authoritarian regimes, though unpopular to their core, are singularly driven by the urge of preventing dissent by cajoling, co-opting, threat of suppressing and actually repressing challenges to its authority illegitimately derived from the expression of raw power of the state. Democracy, however, is born with a twin called dissent where power and authority are in desideratum. A critical question in relation to Nepal under democracy has been the state of authority building by the elected representatives of the people in the government in which the state capacity to control remains seriously circumscribed as the maintenance of democratic regime become the priority rather than a process of governance. The circumstances under which the democratic regime in Nepal functioned was characterised by the process where "political institutions were too feeble to contain the centrifugal pluralisms emitted by political development, impotence rather than omnipotence to rule... [and] where authority was not deeply veined with custom and tradition, where it rested solely on the shifting sands of performance." (Keehn 1974: 333-337). On the question of performance, Nepal under democracy has not reformed, but sadly deformed (Kumar 2000: 18).

The power vacuum, thus, was a context in which political authority was challenged both legitimately and illegitimately as the performance of the governments narrowed down to seeking compliance through resource manipulation but driving dissatisfaction to the point of explosion. Conflict is, therefore, caused by the obvious power vacuum at the central level accompanied by the erosion of authority. Unlike in the authoritarian regimes, democracies are dispensed with the task of mediating demands channelled from several fronts constitutionally balancing the societal demands against institutional performances. The objective of the ruler's in preserving their position of power in authority clashes with the demands for performance. Failing which, when the rulers/ governments rely upon force, according to Nordlinger, "they tend to overreact to demands with the application of excessive force; the value of organizations with force at their disposal (the army and the police) is heightened; there is consequently a further loss of legitimacy; and finally the population itself turns to violence." (Nordlinger 1968:508). Simply stated, Nepal exemplifies the case. Attempts at suppressing the Maoists rebellion, particularly with "Operation Romeo" in September 1995, had brutalized the conflict. Hence, the leadership becomes a crucial factor in instigating conflict despite the consequence.

Perhaps the growing literature on the Failed State Syndrome intertwined with leadership behaviour can be useful in understanding conflict. The Nepali case can be understood under this rubric primarily because it resembles a situation of a failed state. Nepal reflects all the attributes of a failed state as defined by the State Failure Task Force (King and Zeng 2001: 625). According to the Task Force, the indicators of a state failure are: (i) sustained military conflicts between insurgents and governments, aimed at displacing the regime; (ii) sustained policies of protagonists resulting in the death of a substantial number of people or political group, and; (iii) an adverse and disruptive regime transfer with a major abrupt shifts in the pattern of governance leading towards authoritarian rule (King and Zeng 2001: 625). This situation perforce the people as the victims, their rights, their welfare and survival as both the contending forces have made them the prime target for their struggle for power. As a consequence of the participation and empowerment foregone, the state capacity to resist the violent upsurge has dwindled with the spread of insurgency in the country. In addition to this, the Nepali state is mired by social anomalies ranging from the discriminatory practices of the caste system, bonded labour to human trafficking despite laws prohibit such practices.

There is another theory based on the correlations between demography and violence developed on the basis of the empirical evidence provided by the pattern of violence factoring the age of the population as the crucial determinant of conflict. This theory consigns violence to the youthfulness of the population size of the country. Accordingly, the pacifist countries are those where the median age of the population is older than those found to have been involved in conflict.<sup>5</sup> Taking demographic structure as a clue for defining criterion of conflict, the case of Nepal can be explored as a category of states where conflict proneness is naturally higher because of the youthfulness of its population size. Nepal is a country of teenagers. There are 49.86 per cent of the people below 20 years of age out of 22,736,934 persons recorded (NPC 2002:24). The people of the 20-29 years age group constitute 3.75 million. The median age of the population in Nepal in 1991 was 18.8 when the total population was 18.49 million. By 2001, the population of the country was 23.15 million and the median age 20.1 (MoPE 2002).

A comparable data on median age of population for 1961, when the country was in turmoil after the Royal coup in December 1960, was 20.9 years. The median age of the Nepali population was 20.3 in 1971, when the Naxalite movement in India and the liberation war for Bangladesh had energised the armed rebellion in Nepal. Similarly, the country was in tumultuous situation immediately after the national referendum in 1981 as the median age of population then was 19.9. Although the median age of the population was not exactly known in 1951, when the Nepali Congress led armed rebellion had succeeded to overthrow the century old Rana oligarchy

from Nepal, it was inferred to be relatively younger because, according to the population census held in two phases in 1952/54 covering the Eastern districts first in 1952 and Kathmandu Valley, Mahottari and rest of the Western districts in 1954 (DoS 1954:), the median age derived from this census report was 21.1 (NPC 1987:66).

Conjecturally, it can, therefore, be inferred that the median age of the Nepali youths during the Jana Andolan in 1990 was the crucial factor for the mass upheaval. Likewise, when the Maoists' movement surfaced in 1996, 52 per cent of the population in Nepal then was below 18 years old.<sup>6</sup> Of every 100 children 93 lived in villages and dropouts from the schools were over 45 per cent. Their youthfulness, illiteracy and unemployment and the challenges for survival can generate conflict the probability of which cannot be ignored.<sup>7</sup> Although inferences cannot be drawn from some cases to generalize youthfulness as being a tempting recipe for conflict in every country, can this phenomenon of being a country with nearly 50 per cent of young population, be taken as a clue to an understanding of the conflict puzzle in the case of Nepal? Perhaps juvenile literature can be a guide to a reflection on this state of affairs. The generational shifts in the attitudes of the young people, their values and aspirations and perhaps their sense of denial and desperation have led them to violence as a recourse to achievement and attention. This leads to some complex questions: Are discipline, order and sanity the properties of the adults and vandalism and antisocial behaviour are cases of vulnerabilities of the children significantly causing social disorder? Is rigid social order hindering a creative use of their potentiality the causes of conflict. Or there is a difference between the motivational factor of the people determined to preserve the given social order against those bent on to destroy it? The sanitized defensive measures undertaken by the "matured" moving towards a gated community have further repercussions as the government has dispossessed those in the lower hierarchy of social order. The situation, therefore, is complicated by the notional confusion that how much these theories explain the causes of conflict in the case of Nepal where the propensity to conflict points to every direction.

Knowledge construction by engaging the prior experiences in understanding a problem situation can be a basis for deriving insights on the subject of inquiry. One can build knowledge from the experience of other countries facing similar situation without being trapped by the rigidity of others' experiences and the lessons emanating from them. It helps construct indigenous knowledge emanating from the national experience making it the best guide for understanding a situation. For example, both the Dhimi Commission (1997) and the Deuba Commission (2000) reports had identified abject poverty and destitution being the genuine causes for rebellion. Looking at the clue to the Maoists insurgency in Nepal, the indigenous perspectives that these reports have provided are similar, if not identical.



On the other hand, the Maoists have also pointed out the same, in addition to exploitation, discrimination and external dependency as compulsive reasons for taking up arms against the government(s). Socio-economic inequalities have been projected as the perennial problem causing national woes to which both the reports and the Maoists had pinpointed. Accordingly, the Maoists assert that they are, in fact, not the problem, but solution to the problems facing the country (e.g. Bhattarai 2003). "The principal objective of the People's War" that the Maoists have defined, "is thus to develop the social productive forces and create a higher form of society through a continuous revolution... by putting 'politics in command' "(Bhattarai 1998). Rationalizing the insurgency in the political-economic perspective the Maoists have clearly targeted their struggle against the "semi-feudal and semi-colonial" situation the state is experiencing under monarchy (Bhattarai 1998). So whence the threat and what is the dilemma for resolving the problem as the problem has been identified by both the contending parties to be the same? A comparable identification of the problems can also be found in the consecutive Five Year Plan documents produced by the governments since 1956 and the 40-point demands posed by the Maoists in 1996. Between these two dates comprising a period of four decade, the problem facing the country has been the same, the issues raised are the same, and the commitments made by different governments are the same. The problem is poverty and underdevelopment, social inequalities and marginalisation, discrimination and destitution, social craving and denial. The recent "position paper" presented by the Thapa government during the third round of talks with the Maoists has also reiterated commitments for reform (Kantipur July 26, 2003). If there is no divergence but convergence of views between the two protagonist groups why are they essentializing violence through rationalizing armed conflict? Is repackaging of their interests to resolve the conflict an inadequate measure in understanding the causes of conflict?

What factors should then be essentialized for the causes of conflict and violence in Nepal? Theories rebound to point out the challenges /neglects of development as progenitor of conflict (e.g. Lichbach 1989; Auvinea 1995; Thapa 2003:53-81). There is inescapable truth in identifying the socio-economic situation related to development as the cause of conflict, which the Maoists have also explained as being "oppressive situation" in Nepal (Bhattarai 1998). The characterisation of Nepal as overwhelmingly agricultural, primary material exporting country with low level of development and urbanization and even with low energy consumption are all features of high propensity to conflict. Besides, there are some other common factors explaining casual pathways to most civil conflicts such as

- The key to the politics of violence in specific countries is the exercise of state power and government policy to handle violence within society and by the state;

- Political regime change including recent transition to democracy, commonly inflames violence among groups;
- Persistent pattern of violence along with state rights abuses exist in every country;
- Large scale economic change, including programme for economic reform, are associated with rising level of violence, particularly among distinct groups and classes;
- Violent scapegoating of racial, religious, ethnic and sexual mischief persists in many countries; and,
- Violence remains a component of many groups' responses to the state, from spontaneous protests to armed rebellion (Ungar, et al 2002:2).

In the case of Nepal, there are other indicators of which some may be endemic; some others could be temporary but all are pervasive. The existence of any one of the following indicators would be sufficient to mark the state as being weak, instable and conflict prone:

- low level of socio-political cohesion;
- high level of political violence occasioned with state repression;
- political conflict over organizing ideology of the state;
- major recent change in the structure of political system;
- existence of a proportionally small urban middle class;
- rampant corruption and government unaccountability;
- low absorbing capacity of foreign aid and its utilization; and
- high level of external penetration (Kumar 1997: 13).

These classificatory notes explain both the existence of the subaltern and elite level factors for inducing conflict. Perhaps these factors in combination have influenced the Maoists' decision to enter into a violent confrontation against the state once the government foiled their efforts for amelioration through seemingly negotiable agendas (40-point demands). Capturing the state power through violent struggle becomes the norm in which the monarchy with its feudal attributes remained the target for restructuring the Nepali state (The Worker 1996). The Maoists have projected monarchy as the embodiment of all the evils in their revolutionary rhetoric. They have therefore gambled for the elections to the constituent assembly if negotiated settlement to the problem is to be found in order to clear the pathways for the future. They have made the issue of constituent assembly as the ultimate test case both for the monarchy and their republican position by determining sovereignty to actually reside on the people (Rajdhani April 28, 2003). The crucial reason for the deadlock to ensue during the third round of talks and the Maoists' resumption of arms conflict<sup>8</sup> after declaring the 'ceasefire' to be void on August 27, 2003 was the government's inability to engage the Maoists on the issue and the modality for drafting a new constitution. The

situation is further complicated by the marginalised political parties' defiance to the government nominated by the king and their nonconformist posture towards the actions taken by the government against the Maoists.<sup>9</sup>

The complexity of situation can be further explicated with enumerating some noticeable trends in the context of Nepal. First, as the Nepali state has become utterly incapable of sustaining itself with civilian measures, it has slipped into a militarisation trap as a coping strategy against the internal violence. Second, the process of militarisation has further heightened the level of social tensions making the context intensely violent leading to the appalling domestic situation essentially undermining the judicial system. Third, the state has completely stopped delivery to the citizens the public goods they rightfully require. And, finally, the leadership void, particularly after the assertion of executive power by the king on 4 October 2002 (as monarchy is above the law of the land, his acts cannot legally be questioned as constitutional authority), has led the state verging towards anarchy. Again, the situation has been further problematised in the name of stability with centralisation of the state power. Democratic reversal has led to the emergence of a dominant power system with privatisation of power without any prospect of reform in the near future.<sup>10</sup>

### **Conflict Triggers: Conventional Praxis**

In the case of Nepal, conflict has, thus, multiple causes. What keeps a conflict violent and continuing is different from what led it to start. There need not be any compulsive reason for the onset of conflict despite there exists sufficient condition for conflict to occur<sup>11</sup> (Kumar 2000: 31). Notably, numerous conflict-inducing factors exist. Societal cleavages have persisted and these can be all encompassing factors generating conflict. Nepal is also not a stranger to the clandestine political activities and violence in its history.<sup>12</sup> Retrospectively; both indigenous and extraneous factors were behind the birth of political parties in Nepal. Political Parties in Nepal were formed initially as groups opposed to the existing regime. Of these the Communist Party of Nepal formed in 1949 had singularly addressed the cause of conflict to be the structural problem emanating from the monarchical system with different degree of emphasis. The problem situation identified by the Maoists remains the institution of monarchy as the cause of conflict (Bhattarai 1998; 2001).

An understanding of the cause triggering conflict can therefore be made within the framework of the nature of the state evolved under the monarchical system of governance since the formation of the Nepali state in 1769 under the rubric of which multiparty democracy had functioned for slightly over a decade in the 1990s and collapsed. Democracy in Nepal has a long history of struggle against autocracy that culminated into violent conflict in 1990 leading to a political change with the establishment of multiparty parliamentary system along with constitutional monarchy. Unfortunately,

democracy proved structurally incongruent with the expectations of the masses and congruent with the nature of the state. Democracy was problematised by the constitutive principles of the Nepali state that has built the power matrix in the country since its inception. Four key ideas were laid behind the constitutive principles. The first was the indispensable power and authority of monarchy that the Hindu king of Gorkha has established. Second was the supremacy of the Hindu ethos in national life. Third, the Hindu social system based on caste division was promoted for social integration. And lastly, the Khas language—later to be known as Nepali language—spoken by the king and his courtier was recognized as the lingua franca (Sharma 1992). State building thus becomes a process in which the ruler(s) through combination of power of coercion, manipulation and co-option, imposed the cultural and moral values it uphold on population found within its boundaries (Bendix 1964; Connor 1972). The process of Hinduisation of the state therefore has become an intrusive category conforming to the pattern of social segregation based on the caste system with 'monoethnic and religious' supremacy.

This structural incongruity inadequately defining the Nepali state is reflected in the Constitution adopted in 1990 by declaring the country being a "Hindu and constitutional monarchical kingdom" that diluted the essence of Nepal being recognized as a "multiethnic and multilingual" state [Article 4). Although the state as a provider of fundamental rights to its people asserts that the rule of law would prevail and it shall not discriminate citizens on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or ideological conviction" and none of the citizens shall be "deprived of the use of public utility" (Article 11.3 and 11.4), the Muluki Ain (Law of the Land) amended in 1992, however, has upheld the preservation of "traditional practices," continuing social exclusion (Gurung 2003b: 3-4). The constitution has refused either to mediate or to negotiate with the popular aspiration of secularising the Nepali society. Assertion of the exclusive position of being a 'Hindu State' has essentially delegitimised the process of democratisation of the Nepali society in which the projection of the national identity becomes contestable. Undeniably, the democratic constitution, thus, in itself becomes the precipitant to conflict. The constitution has failed to impart a sense of change in the caste-laden society that has continued to reinforce social segregation since the adoption of the Muluki Ain in 1854.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the constitution becomes a document of contradiction in its assertion of Nepal being a "multiethnic, multilingual," state on the one hand, and the "Hindu" kingdom, on the other (Article 4). The problem situation from the standpoint of non-Hindus therefore revolves around the issue of Nepal being a theocratic state. Religiosity has become a largely contested domain in national discourse because this state ideology has reproduced social exclusion and cultural hegemony of the dominant group even under

democratic dispensation. Although the constitution has apparently recognized the minority rights, there is however, little discernible impact in practice. The limits to minority rights under democracy despite pressure for democratisation of the social sphere have exacerbated social tensions as the majoritarian multiparty democratic process clashes with the non-majoritarian demands for broader representation.

Complexities, thus, abound in Nepal's democratic transition in the 1990s, particularly, because of the compromise between the political leaders and non-elected traditional elites who remained decisive actors in the dominant power system. The constitution was framed to appease the traditional power structure rather than appealing the popular aspirations. The constitutional provisions defining the executive authority remained vague in crucial decision making arenas wherein monarchy retained the rights to command ultimate authority. Thus, despite the preamble of the 1990 Constitution has theoretically transferred sovereignty to the people, the constitutive dimension of sovereignty in practice was vested on monarchy.<sup>14</sup> The constitution vests monarchy with a right to a decision on national emergency and his discretion on the use of Article 127 in exceptional situation along with power to the use of force as the supreme commander of the armed forces. In these three crucial aspects of the national decision making processes—namely, emergency power, exceptional situation and the use of force—the position of monarchy remains unaltered as well as undisputed. Again, the sovereign power of the state is related to “the exceptional case [that] has an especially decisive meaning which exposes the core of the matter...[that is also characterised by] principally unlimited authority, which means the suspension of the entire existing order.” (Schmitt cited in Gross 2000: 1839-40).

Testimonies to these can be found in the Nepali case where exception has become the rule and return to political normalcy an exception. Political development in Nepal throughout the 1990s had attempted to make certain discontinuity in normal practices. But the question of devolution of power against the centralised authority, however, was never seriously pursued. The leaders who had failed to create any enduring social base for democratic continuity acceded to no constitutional limits on the power of the centralised government. Democratic practices did not diffuse authority, but made the central government a locus of authority of the unitary state. The unintended consequence was the encouragement to the traditional power centre to manoeuvre the centralised authority in its favour. Politics simply subsisted with the fusion of the elected and non-elected authorities reducing democracy to the rites to passage for power. Circumstances against which the national emergency was declared, the parliament was dissolved and the assertion of the executive power by the king occurred are clear manifestations of democratic delusion caused by the political elites who had refused to reform themselves as well as democratise their political parties' function. Obsessed

with the position of power and purse of the state the political elites had sacrificed the norms of being representatives of the people making intra-party factionalism and personal antagonism crucial to decision making.<sup>15</sup> The dissolution of the parliament in May 2002<sup>16</sup> had no other compelling reason than intra-party rivalries that led to the split of the ruling Nepali Congress party and discontinuing of the local governments had put the final nail on the coffin of democratic polity.

Hence, besides the subaltern level analyses, the leadership can be considered as one of the most prominent and integral factors for the causes of conflict in Nepal. As the state in its functional terms is intertwined with the leadership that is embedded with the responsibility to provide welfare, representation and security to its citizenry, the leadership can, therefore, be considered and explained as a crucial catalyst for conflict because it relates to the situation of governance. As described above, democratic transition was not made by thoroughly discrediting the authoritarian regime but by striking a compromise between the continuity of the constitutive principles of the state and change in the mode of governance from non-party to party politics. In the scheme of multiparty democracy, the leadership has, although, broadly become the representative of the people, it has, nevertheless, remained loyal and tied to the constitutive principles of the state, which was not constitutionally deligitimised. Rather the constitution has deligitimised "any act which may jeopardize the harmonious relations subsisting among the peoples of various castes, tribes or communities" in Nepal (Constitution Article 12 e1, 3, 4). Similarly, through enactments of laws, both ethno-religious and regional based political parties were discouraged in the country in order to prevent the ethnic, caste and community polarization. It appears a sensible decision taken by the political leadership in preserving the status quo ante but proved insensitive to the popular aspirations demonstrated during the constitution-making period (e.g. Hachhethu 1994).

The act of desecularizing the state through constitutional design has, therefore, jinxed the process of democratisation that the political leadership reduced to procedural phenomenon through periodic elections. Subsisting representation through elections as the sine qua non of democracy the political parties have transformed democracy to the "tyranny of majority" by using the electoral legitimacy as licence to abuse power and authority. The ballot box democracy led to criminalization of politics making political participation myopic<sup>17</sup> (Kumar 2001). Politics therefore entered a "grey zone" in which "winner takes all" led to institutional dysfunctionality of democracy compounded by political instability. In addition to this, the leaderships' inertia, their greed and grandeur, horse-trading and criminal enterprises caused political instability rather than the phenomenon arising out of spontaneous popular protests and violent opposition.

The unfair political competition revived the embedded psychological insecurity of leaderships belonging to different political parties with the uncertainty caused by severe intra-party factionalism, leadership centralization, organizational deficiencies of the party and government and over all by the impending elections. Since 1994 each and every succeeding governments had to function with a single agenda of commencing elections under its tenure in office. The priority for commencing elections had not only led them to amass elections funds through manipulation of the state purse for the party, personal or private regarding but also encouraged strategies to win elections through all means. The state, as being the lucrative institution for the flow of money, power and privilege, became the hub of political activities. The priorities of the political leaderships were therefore confined to the spoils of tenure in government and their terms in the parliament. Hence, both the parliament and government become embroiled in corruption (Thapa 2002; Shrestha 2001) leaving opposition to the state of “feckless pluralism”(Carothers 2002).

Parliamentary practices in Nepal had a compendium of records in adopting 275 bills of which the women’s property rights bill and the bill regarding destitute and dalits are significant. But a majority of decisions were made outside the parliament on the basis of internal and external compulsions and the House of Representatives was used simply as a rubber stamp by the political parties (Kumar 2004: 146-171). Political parties become the umbrella organizations operating as patronage network by virtually transforming democracy to kleptocracy in which the political leadership functioned as “protection racketeers” with the sanctity of governments formed under the party flags as organized criminals. This contention has been substantiated by the self-confession of leadership suggesting that the governments functioning in Nepal were under the grips of mafia.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, there was no sign of improvement. Governments functioned as musical chair game. Nepal had 12 prime ministers within the twelve years of parliamentary democracy. Most of the legislatures from the mainstream political parties had opportunities to become ministers. Even independent legislatures were incorporated as ministers in different coalition governments. The politics of patronization had led to ministerial portfolio distribution to 48 persons even to the extent of comprising four cabinet ministers without portfolio. Inter-party and intra-party wrangling had become so prominent that the government of the day had to survive on account of the numerical equation in the parliament. The crux of the problem of political stability depends on the tantrums of the parliamentarians not with the simmering discontent of the people excluded from the political mainstream. Demands related to governance were raised since early 1992, initially with 8-point demand put by the United Peoples’ Front Nepal (UNFP) to be extended to 14-point. During the period of the CPN (UML) government, the demands

swelled to 36-point in January 1995, but were ignored in totality. Four more points were added to these demands to the successor coalition government led by the Nepali Congress Parliamentary party leader Sher Bahadur Deuba on February 4, 1996, but to no avail (Maharjan 2000: 168; Thapa 2003). The latter demand made after the repressive measures taken by the Deuba government in September 1995 had also urged the government to refrain from such heinous acts in the future (See Demand No.15 of 40 point Demand in Maharjan 2000).

Although one cannot refute the importance of the subaltern level factors in understanding the causes of conflict, as the 40-point demand has catalogued, the elite-level factor as being crucial cannot be ignored either. Since the leadership deliberately makes decisions, the elite-level becomes the catalyst for the causes of conflict. Vulnerabilities to conflict existed in Nepal at the subaltern level as preconditions, which demanded the leadership attention and response. But the leadership void under democracy left the challenges unarticulated, as the government did not seek out to defuse the challenge through mediation. Instead, the mode of managing challenge through repression made the leadership instrumental in triggering conflict.

Why? An explanation can be found both in perceptual level and traits of the leadership. First, at perceptual level, democracy has opened up all hitherto suppressed demands of the masses leading to the state's inability to cope with the challenges. Second, at the trait level of the leadership, the articulation of demands at the mass level was perceived to have escalated threats to the incipient democratic order duly established after the success of the Jana Andolan in 1990. The legitimate opposition spearheaded by the major opposition party – the CPN (UML) – in the parliament as well as on the street with a slogan of “sadan dekhi sadak samma” (from the parliament to the street) and determination to unseat the government within a week of its formation had already posed a handful of problems to the government headed by the Nepali Congress party formed in 1991 with majority in the parliament. The opposition was led by the major communist party in the parliament with the support of the United Peoples' Front Nepal—then the Maoists' front organization – with nine seats in the House of Representatives that had immobilized the government early in April 1992, thus, inviting repression by reported killings of 16 people in Kathmandu. This event shook the people and their hope in democracy being less repressive. On the other hand, the leadership had justified repression as it being anti-communist in a world that had just graduated from the Leninist extinction. The threat that democratic leadership had inculcated ever since the inception of the multiparty polity in the country was therefore related to the threats manifested with the communists' unruly behaviour. Thus the level of threat inculcated by the leadership was related to the demands of the opposition determining the response.



Though the parliamentary opposition in Nepal was a quite different case from the Maoists insurgency that was later fuelled by the leadership idiosyncrasy, it is however pertinent to understand the perceptual, interpersonal and intra-party relations contributing to violent conflict. First, the CPN (UML's) ascendancy as a formidable opposition party in democratic Nepal was historic in the sense that the party has surfaced from underground movement and its leaders were unknown, and faceless figures. By reluctantly endorsing the Constitution 1990 it has participated in the democratic process merely as a survival strategy which was rewarded by a massive electoral votes in 1991 elections leading it to move confidently towards locking horns with the government through coercive bargaining. The CPN (UML), until very late, had treated the Maoists as "friendly forces," even with monetary assistance because the ultimate goal of both groups was described as establishing a republican state in Nepal.<sup>19</sup>

The experience of the elections to the local bodies in 1997 had clearly established this fact, when the CPN (UML) in government as a major coalition partner manoeuvred to win elections by an overwhelming majority with the alleged assistance of the Maoists insurgents by displacing the rival parties' strongholds. This caused further consternation in inter-party relations leading the President of the Nepali Congress Party, Girija P. Koirala, to publicly accuse the CPN (UML) as the real Maoists responsible for the political violence in the country over the years, while posing as a member of the ruling coalition only in the broad day light.<sup>20</sup> Despite the electoral violence, there are empirical evidences to suggest that when the CPN (UML) ruled the country the magnitude of the Maoists' violence was at the lowest ebb (Maharjan 2000: 172).

The Nepali Congress leaders, on the other hand, were dead sure in their perception that they were confronting a two front attack on democracy—one from the legitimate political opposition party led by the CPN (UML) and another from the underground extremist group comprising the Maoists to destabilize and destroy the democratic process through complicity. They were led to define violence in the country as a power struggle requiring reprisal rather than accommodation and compromise. The target of the opposition – both legitimate and illegitimate – was to thoroughly discredit the Nepali Congress party and destroy the democratic process. Ideologically, these two political parties had antagonistic history since their inception in the late 1940s. Particularly, the lurking feelings of the communists in Nepal being used by monarchy since the December 1960 Royal coup against parliamentary democracy have not disappeared from the leadership mindset of the Nepali Congress party. The sheer opportunistic political behaviour of the CPN (UML) under democracy has further entrenched this feeling when that party invoked nationalism as a criterion for alliance formation with

monarchy against the alleged pro-Indian and, therefore, unpatriotic Nepali Congress party.

The CPN (UML) as the mainstream communist party both in opposition and government was also undergoing a complex transformation as a consequence of the challenges posed by the Maoists questioning their Marxist credentials. Although the CPN (UML) remains ideologically opposed to the parliamentary system of governance, the party has however realistically appraised that there is no route to power other than competitive electoral process. Even their tactical support to multiparty democracy therefore becomes an imperative because they have refrained from the risk of taking uncertain course through violence in which there is a certainty of them becoming a second fiddle to the Maoists. Thus, on the question related to the Maoists and the ensuing insurgency, the CPN (UML) had, nevertheless, taken both carrot and stick measures to emerge as a central and powerful communist force in the country. On the one hand, the party had used the Maoists to serve its short-term interests through ideological complicity, as was evident in the case of the 1997 local elections. Similarly, the party as an influential member of the coalition government had also declared the Maoists as “terrorists”<sup>21</sup> expressing hardening posture against them through reaching a cabinet decision to adopt anti-terrorist law, on the other. Though the anti-terrorist act never got through the parliament due to the mounting public pressure against the proposal, every successor governments, after the fall of the CPN (UML)-RPP-NSP government, were encouraged to probe on the bill. Likewise, every government since 1997 had probed the idea of military mobilization against the Maoists, only to be rebuffed until the national emergency was declared on November 26, 2001 and the anti-terrorist act was subsequently adopted.

Every government formed after the eruption of the Maoists insurgency were, therefore, inclined to use force to deal with the problem. None had seriously thought about the alternative to resolve the problem through negotiation. Though there are instances of the efforts towards negotiating conflict, these were half-baked and therefore unpersuasive. The three round of negotiations that the Deuba government held with the Maoists between August and November 2001 embroiled their differences rather than developing mutual compliance with sustained engagement. Another three round of negotiations held under the king's government in the recent past were not substantially different from the previous ones, as the problem remained unaddressed forcing the Maoists to break the talks and raise arms after August 27, 2003 (Kumar 2003; ICG 2003c). Negotiations had therefore stymied the situation from being encouraging for both parties to build trust as a precondition for peaceful settlement of the problem.

The pursuit for repression of the Maoists, thus, becomes an agenda for government of any kind. The Nepali Congress party government had earlier

pursued this agenda against the Maoists with massive combing operation code named Kilo Shera Two for a year between May 1998 and May 1999 till the national elections were held. This repressive measure was keenly supported both by the CPN (ML) – a splintered faction led by Bam Dev Gautam – and CPN (UML) led by Madhav K. Nepal, after securing their berth in the coalition governments formed by the Nepali Congress, one after another. Nearly 600 persons were killed during the yearlong operation in which the Maoists suffered heavily (Maharján 2000: 172). This led to the renewal of efforts on the part of the Maoists to strengthen their guerrilla strongholds with the development of the People's Army along the military formation despite their earlier claim of the existence of the Central Military Commission in February 1998 (Sharma 2001). Excessive reliance on force has become a single agenda for the governments in their counter-insurgency drive, particularly after November 26, 2001 (against the backdrop of the 9/11), with the official declaration of the national emergency for nine months and continuation of the anti-terrorist law with the provision of impunity to the security forces.<sup>22</sup>

The critical question that relates to this narrative is what has triggered the conflict and why has conflict remains thriving? My submission is that despite the causes of conflict being numerous and latent, the leadership could have minimized the impact of societal challenges through mediation and sequential response, which was conspicuously absent in the policies and programmes of the governments. Instead, power politics at the macro-level led to the progressive breakdown in the authority of the executive and the governments ensuring the legitimacy crisis in general. Governance therefore becomes an alien concept for the leadership who were made and unmade by the numerical support in the parliament, not by their function of managing the affairs of the state. The leaderships spent most of their times on bean counting the intra-party and inter-party equations than equating their roles with the responsibilities they were bestowed with. Political authority was abused rather than used on the questions of national imports. As a mid-term evaluation of the democratic governance revealed, people at large were rather dispossessed than possessed by the governments formed under different party flags that had not even minimally met the basic needs (CSD 1996). This situation has been reflected in other studies because the leadership has confined to the social strata overwhelmingly composed of the high caste Hindu group constituting traditional elites who are temperamentally inclined to preserve the status quo (Dahal 2000; Baral et al 2001; 2004). As the democratic leadership becomes the inheritor of authoritarianism, the historical burden of expectations posed by different categories of people remained unarticulated while confronting the post-authoritarian polity.

The conflict trigger can thus be located in the form of unhealthy elite competition and conflict within the parliamentary system racing for the

winning support of the traditional institution of monarchy rather than sustaining public support through governance. At the heart of conflict in Nepal is the failure to implement any substantial and sustainable programmes directly affecting the welfare of the masses as indicated by the governments formed under the dominant political parties as a majority, minority and coalition. Electoral politics reinforced elitism and popular aspirations remained unacknowledged. Subalternity persisted and the political leaders to construct their power used the people at the margin as raw materials. Understandably, the pressure for democratisation, therefore, caused conflict that was coupled with the post-authoritarian dream of discontinuity from the past, making the political elites more vulnerable to their electoral positions in the absence of performance. The self-perpetuating behaviour of the leadership has further exacerbated the desperate situation to a point of reconfiguring the precipitants triggering conflict.

It requires further explanation in positing why and how has the leadership become more important than other factors for triggering conflict? ? Is there any irrefutable evidence to support this contention? Can this single factor explanation make a satisfactory understanding of conflict in Nepal? A definite answer to these posers would be difficult to arrive at this juncture. Certain indicators, however, lead to following postulations. First, the post-authoritarian politics in Nepal was the consequence of the long and arduous struggle made by the democratic leadership with popular support. Leadership, therefore, has become the strategic factor with a pivotal role to mediate social tensions through maintaining a working relationship among members of different social groups. Instead, the democratic leadership has spent energies and power in blocking challenges posed by real or imagined threats. Political parties functioned merely as an instrument for capturing power and thrived on the personal popularity of the leadership than on its programme and commitment. Hence, for those in the leadership, the personalistic power holders tend to look at the others within from their own parties and the rules and the institutions they represent as constraining and impinging on their will to rule. The leadership did not disavow continuity with the authoritarian state. The recurring tendency was to build the hierarchy of the loyalists from top down than democratising the function of the party and the state. The leadership objective remained excessive centralization of power leading to the dissolution of the popular convictions about power diffusion. Thus the leadership under democracy has provoked the conflict against the process and pressure for deeper democratisation.

The popular assertions of differences were in search of a platform for dialogue by addressing an audience, which, unfortunately have failed to achieve any substantial response from the part of the leadership. The incendiary effects of the demands, particularly posed by the Maoists in their previous form of the United People's Front Nepal, were ignored but not

contemplated by the leadership. The democratic leadership neither engaged nor influenced nor responded to the threshold of conflict inherent in ever expanding demands from the forces of alienation. Rather the measures that the leadership took to restore the situation from being explosive through the use of force had unintended effect of exploding the conflict. The reason for this was obvious. There was no adequate preparation for counterinsurgency mobilization either. Thus the sheer neglect of the leadership in every dimension of statecraft remains a proof for triggering the conflict.

Second, the democratic leadership in Nepal in the 1990s was operating in the most congenial domestic as well as international situation with donors' liberal assistance towards the consolidation of democracy. But the trust and expectations of both domestic and international popular support were belied by the leadership as the Nepali leaders failed to relate themselves to the institutional dynamics of democracy and the process of governance. The leadership was, therefore, characteristically democratic deficit type. The leadership is temperamentally found inegalitarian to democratic ideals identified with constitutional liberalism. It was just unethical and immoral on the part of the leadership to conceptualise a heterogeneous society as a Hindu Kingdom and continue to profess democratisation. The leadership has not sought to resolve the problems within democracy through social consensus but relied heavily on rules designed by the authoritarian regime to contend political activities during panchayat period.

Third, the leadership has unlearned the lessons from their past oblivious political experiences of being marginalised by the traditional monarchical forces after 1960 coup in the post-authoritarian atmosphere. Ironically, the democratic leadership forged alliances with the same forces in order to marginalise the emerging social forces from the political mainstream creating rupture in the state-society relations. Hardly any efforts had the leadership made to make the state responsive to the societal demands, tried for consensus building with the disgruntled groups to bring them back to the political mainstream and initiate any programme for changing the character of the state through social inclusion. Reform agendas with the contents of subaltern aspirations remained untouched, the restructuring of which could have become amenable for institutionalisation of the democratic process. As a consequence, there was a decisive breakdown of popular consensus forged for the democratic future of the state. The conflict today is therefore shaped by the same reform agenda on how to devolve and share state power through a comprehensively restructured polity bordering on the demand for republicanism.

Finally, the political/power elites have failed both at the macro-and-micro level of being a change agent. At the macro level they could not capitalise on the popular support garnered by the democratic movement and translate it into expanding their power base with policy measures. The political space

opened by democratic upsurge in the 1990s was mostly filled by the traditional elites as the parties functioned as oligarchic heritage encouraging familial link and redrawing support from the pre-democratic politicians/bureaucrats by filling different party hierarchies and government positions rather than neutralising their political as well as policy influence in decision making process. The elite structure remained unchanged (Dahal 2000: 131). Evidently, the traditional high caste groups dominated the political representation in the House of Representatives, the combined strength of which between 1991 and 1999 ranged from 62.91 to 67.70 per cent (EC 1991,1994,1999). Thus authoritarianism is formatted in the state-society relations through constraining participation by forcing the unorganised communities to support the populist electoral agenda. However, the legitimacy derived from the electoral process was salutary. The failure of performance of the leadership to anticipatory transformation of society has a corrosive effect on legitimacy. The consequent effect was the neutralisation of the citizenry in their identification either with the leadership or the government and decay in the support base to the leadership. This is evident at the moment with the absence of the popular support either for the reinstatement of the dissolved parliament or for the forming of the All-Party government by the leaderships of the marginalised political parties after 4 October 2002. To sum up, it should also be noted that none of the agitating political parties or the leaderships in their march to the streets have addressed the popular agenda for restructuring the state except for demanding power sharing by the king with the political parties.

### **Some Observations**

In the case of Nepal, if one were to look at the maze of underlying causes of conflict, there is the certainty of creating a Tower of Babel. I have, thus, identified and chosen the leadership as the discrete problem and the underlying power struggles primarily responsible for triggering conflict in Nepal. The first factor contributing to conflict is political, which can be prominently observed in the behavioural pattern of the leadership whenever the question of redistribution of power and imparting social justice arises. The leaderships' inclination towards repression rather than conciliation on social demands; the absence of democratic practices and institutions providing a means for the people to mediate conflict without resort to force; alienation of the majority of the people from political process of the country have compounded the crises.

Secondly, the monarchy as an intervening factor in national polity has continued to be the problem situation structurally imbued with unending, antagonistic elite history of political development in Nepal. The institution of monarchy has temperamentally displayed its uncongeniality with the democratic process by exploiting the tensions persisting between the political

leaderships conducive to its emergence as a critical central authority even at the cost of suspending the existing political order. The current impasse created by monarchy with authoritarian streak in regime transformation from democracy to autocracy is reminiscence to what happened in December 1960 against similar situation, though, of lesser magnitude. Had monarchy and political leadership worked with a sense of obligation to history and ingenuity, they could have, perhaps, averted the misfortune of being the victims of popular contempt. Rather than becoming instrumental for regulating and maintaining systemic process they have become culpable for destroying the political order creating further space for the anarchists and the Maoists to thrive. Although defeating insurgency remains the primacy of current politics, the case of the paralysis of the democratic system has caused another crucial problem making the conflict triangular in nature wherein the monarchy has become the major target of contending forces. The issue of democratic deficit has conspicuously disoriented the political thrust of addressing the violent conflict caused by the Maoists.

Thirdly, the economic and social factors are prominently seen as conflict multipliers. The gross domestic economic inequalities leading to resources dispute among the masses against the background of depleting sources of sustainability provide a fertile ground for conflict in any social setting. Finally, there is a psychological factor concerning ethnopolitics that has continued to marginalize the ethnic masses by the high caste Hindus. Nativist thinking is becoming entrenched in projecting the conflict between the indigenous people and the settlers, as the high caste Hindus are defined in this category. This psychological factor has fuelled the urge for broadening representation in the national polity as well as equitable sharing of the national resources any delay in denial of which could embroil Nepal into ethnic violence. Fortunately, ethnic separatism is not the demands, although the Maoists have tried to cultivate the support of the Janajatis (indigenous people) by advocating rights to "self-determination even to the point of conceding to secession." These mass-level factors have persisted requiring proper response from the state. The Maoists have, to certain extent, been succeeded in raising the voices of subalterneity even though their violent forays have failed to proceed with subaltern mobilization.

Looking to the future, it should however be critically articulated that to think of democracy as answer to Nepal's problem is naive because democracy is a process which is inherently conflictual. The marked failure of leaderships to manage diversity has proved the inadequacy of the parliamentary process to absorb the thrust of societal demands in the absence of public accountability and institutional responsibility. Thus interrogating leaderships to make a dimensional change in their party organisation with democratisation of the social base and abide by the law of the land is a prerequisite for mitigating conflict. Besides, the classical situation that Nepal

faces in the power matrix is the presence of monarchy both in its 'active' and 'constructive' forms. Unless this problem situation is settled or neutralised the chances for this traditional and conservative institution to manoeuvre against democratic desideratum would persist. Thus, the right question for Nepal to ask should be how would the political leaderships consciously arrive at a binding consensus to patch up their differences caused by their lust for power the resolution of which may perhaps solve one-half of the challenges facing the country.

Comprehending the problem situation it can be stated that an enduring bequest of over a decade of parliamentary democracy was the crises of state pronounced with the violent Maoists uprising, economic decay and political uncertainty with the return of monarchy to the central stage of national politics. The institution of monarchy after 4 October 2002 has become the most prominent power contender arrayed against the legitimate democratic forces it has unseated on that fateful day and the Maoists as the extra-constitutional opposition. This situation has led to a triangular contestation for power where there are likely and unlikely pairs for power grabbing. On the one hand, monarchy and democratic forces can be the most likely pair against the Maoists, which is yet to be presumed. On the other hand, monarchy and the Maoists can be another likely pair against the democratic forces as the preference of the king to directly negotiate with the Maoists by marginalizing democratic forces had demonstrated. The third pair can be a combination of democratic forces with the Maoists to build pressure against the monarchy (as is evidenced by the 19-20 November 2003 Lucknow [India] meetings between the CPN (UML) General Secretary and the Maoists top brass). But unless the Maoists forsake violence the democratic forces would not consider them as a likely option. Finally, the possibility of these three forces coming together with a mutual agenda for dialogue can also not be negated outrightly provided that they agree to a minimum condition for normalcy.

Provided that the pairing of the democratic forces and monarchy is likely, this initiative should be made by the monarchy by either reviving the dissolved parliament or conceding to form the all-party government demanded by the parliamentary parties as a precondition for restoration of democracy. By this act the monarchy would be facilitated with the power to use an "exception" sensitising the circumstance. Though this decision will constitutionally be a "normless exception," because the Nepali constitution has no provision for restoring the dissolved parliament, such decision can nevertheless be made with a condition to hold elections to the local bodies or the House of Representatives within the six months of the revival of the parliament. Though the practicality of this decision against the ensuing Maoists terror can be questioned, such decision can, however, be influenced by three crucial factors. First, there should be intensive negotiations between



the two-likeminded parties clarifying their respective positions for future political dispensations.<sup>23</sup> The king's commitment to democracy should remain supreme, and the third, the parties must reform. But to realise this objective of the pair the king and the democratic parties have now also to take the armed forces of the country into confidence. Although the Royal Nepal Army is practically under the king's domain, it can also act independently in case its ambitions are undermined. It can be a threat both to monarchy and political parties in the event of unsettling of its priorities. Experiences have shown that the army is distrustful of political parties. Their disdain towards politicians has increased along with increase in their profile as a decisive factor in national decision-making process in counterinsurgency operations and their direct contact through the forging of military-to-military relations with foreign powers. Therefore the fundamental question of civilian supremacy that remains in the sphere of civil-military relations require to be decisively resolved if the pairing of monarchy and political parties agrees to return to normalcy.

The monarchy, however, has taken a different track than giving up the executive power of the state to the legitimate political parties. In his address to the nation on constitutional day on 9 November 2003, the king has asked all the democratic forces for their support to the "national government" formed by him in the interest of preserving the constitutional sanctity as well as peace, security and governance (Kathmandu Post November 9, 2003). The "national government" on the other hand, has become reckless in appointing partisan people to the vacant seats of local bodies and rhetorically preparing for the national elections to the House of Representatives without any groundwork to create a favourable national situation. This has further widened the gulf between the king and the political parties.

Second, the pairing of the monarchy and the Maoists would be possible only in case the Maoists agree to completely disarm and pave the way for normalcy by joining the electoral politics with general amnesty by the king. This would facilitate a radical change in the political alignment and structural reform in the country provided that the army and political parties endorse the move. This is not likely at the moment because neither the monarchy nor the Maoists have shown any sign of relapse or fatigue caused by the war weariness. Forces belonging to both the contending parties are better organized now than ever before. Their fighting skills have improved and their determination to cow each other increased.<sup>24</sup> It can therefore be assumed that unless a final showdown occurs between the armed forces and the Maoist guerrillas, the persistent confrontation cannot easily be transformed to cooperation.

Third, alienation from monarchy has significantly increased the possibility of the formation of a united front by pairing of the political parties and the Maoist guerrillas. This pair can make a common cause on the demand

for the election to constituent assembly for restructuring national polity provided both agree to peaceful mobilization of the masses. Alternatively, if and when the pairing occurs by resorting to arms, there is certainty of increase in bloodshed but uncertainty in the form of the government to be established after the war ends. The full-blown civil war in Nepal could also be a recipe for humanitarian intervention from abroad. This could become a catalyst for the political future of Nepal, as external forces are particularly averse to violence and coming to power of extreme radical forces in the country. Given the situation confined to a diametrically opposite motive pursued by the political parties for the restoration of parliamentary system, not a republic as posed by the Maoists, the pairing of the democratic political forces with the Maoists is most unlikely unless the monarchy becomes more repressive against the agitations launched by the political parties. Though the Maoists had earlier considered the political space for the disgruntled political parties by apparently recognizing their strength congenial to their cause, they have however assessed that political parties' infirmities are turning to self-extinction (Bulletin 2003). Analysing the conflict in Nepal from the standpoint of class relationship, the Maoists have firmly concluded that there is no third force between the forces of reaction and the forces of revolution.

Thus the nature of resistance and challenges posed by the Maoists are substantially different from what the political parties have normally aspired for. The undercurrent of tensions and antagonism between the political parties and the Maoists has been freshly addressed after the Lucknow talks between the CPN (UML) and the Maoist leaderships in the former's outright rejection for the joint struggle for a republican state (Mulyankan 2003; Koirala 2003). Despite political consternation developing to the demand for constituent assembly elections has been strongly articulated, political parties are yet to endorse it as an option for resolving the conflictual relations between monarchy and themselves. In the absence of any sign of reconciliation between monarchy and political parties, the situation therefore is in a flux.

My experience suggests that politics has become the real site of dispute articulated both in the shape of violence from the margin as well as structural violence pushing the country to a dead end. The Maoists' movement has a unique feature in Nepali history in the sense that this is the first ever rebellion that originated from western Nepal that has consecutively spread all over the country in comparison to the sporadic and short-lived rebellions originated in eastern Nepal against the state. The insurgency has polarized the national scene and exposed all the protagonist forces to desperation. The Maoist violence, however, has become a catalyst for the rise of conservatism with dangerous imprints of the assertion of political right by pushing democratic ethics to the edge. Besides this, the Maoists' ruminations of the guerrilla war, the pattern of violence they have unleashed has nurtured terrorism that can be

understood in the shape of the “warfare deliberately waged against civilians with the purpose of destroying their will to support either leaders or policies that the agents of such violence find objectionable” (Carr 2002: 6). Their heinous crimes against the citizenry, particularly since 1999, committed through indiscriminate killings, extortions, rustification of people from their domiciles and infringement in their personal faiths along with alleged destruction of religious and cultural sites had earned them a bad name fuelling popular alienation.

This brings in the interests of the fourth actor (s) in the shape of the external powers/friendly states in becoming an intervening variable in the violent conflict in Nepal. Their initial interests concern with the type of insurgency launched by the radical left forces against the democratic state that has been strengthened by their anti-terrorist resolve after 9/11 led by the United States. The sequence of domestic conflict in Nepal changed in the aftermath of the visit of the American Secretary of State Colin Powell in January 2002 and tied Nepal to a partnership on “war on terrorism.” The avowed purpose with which the American military assistance begins is to facilitate the restoration of stability in Nepal. Besides this, three prominent criteria have guided the American decision to aid the country militarily. First, Nepal has been a struggling democratic country in proximity to a powerful communist neighbour. Second, the country has plunged into a violent domestic conflict generated by the ultra-leftist elements leading to a near collapse of the democratic state. Third, the counter-insurgency support against the communist forces remains the political-strategic domain of the American foreign policy. Fourth, the most important and undisputable factor influencing the American rush to aid Nepal militarily is the “war on terrorism” that has become its doctrinal pursuit against the forces of terror after 9/11.

The United States has entered Nepal with a mixture of twin interests. Though its unilateral agenda has an element of consultation, it is however determined to aid one side in a conflict either deterring through presence or threat to act. Perhaps this is the reason why the United States has enlisted Maoists in the terrorist category. The pattern of the Maoists violence has been comprehended as terrorist rather than violence caused by insurgency, as the victims of violence are mostly innocent people or security personnel remaining outside the zone of conflict. Thus the American policy in Nepal can be cloaked behind the façade of “humanitarian intervention” against terrorism for which the US has set “no clear temporal or spatial limit,” in order to undertake actions to prop up a failed state (Farer 2003:59-90; Frost 2001:33-54).

The second, perhaps, the long term American interests involves establishing and consolidating institutional links between the armed forces of the United States and Nepal. Entrenching military to military link between

the armed forces of the two countries would be a novelty reflecting on the deepening of American interests in the post-Cold War period when, despite the rhetoric to the contrary, coercion and the use of force have normally become a primary option. The Americans can possibly exploit this institutionalised military relation for its benefits in the future to avoid domestic intolerance of casualties of the Native American Soldiers by employing the "Ghurka model." By recruiting and deploying Gorkhas as soldiers of fortune, if not from Nepal or the Royal Nepal Army itself, the United States can use these "mercenaries" as infantry units and circumvent opposition to combat casualty of the indigenous American soldiers in far flung conflict zones with American involvement. None other than the distinguished American strategist Edward N. Luttwak has cautiously suggested this model nearly a decade ago reminding the US government of its previous practices (Luttwak 1994:28). The military to military institutional ties that the United States is establishing with the Royal Nepal Army could exemplify a case of comprehending the quality of soldiers of Nepal and the prospective use of the Gorkha model in the future eventuality.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps this has been the reason behind the indirect American push for the qualitative upgrading of the Nepali armed forces with military training, arming and logistic support with numerical increase in the security forces. The Americans are firmly behind the government, which is evident by their declaration of the Maoists as the full-fledged terrorists group and a potential threat to US security interests.<sup>26</sup>

Contrarily, the European Union's policy towards the conflict in Nepal has been concerned with the situation of human rights from the beginning. Perhaps this was the crucial reason behind Germany's refusal to supply arms to a conflict laden country like Nepal. It has also been reliably learnt that the two European Commission's (EU) Ambassadors had in their secret meetings with certain Central Committee members of the Maoists' party in Kathmandu recently have clearly warned them against the destruction of infrastructure, private property and indiscriminate killing of the civilians. They have also assured the Maoists that they would put pressure on the government to concede to legitimate social demands of the Maoists. The envoys have told the Maoists that the EU's policy towards them and Nepal, as a whole would be contingent upon the human rights situation in the country. They have also revealed the fact that the Maoists' destructive activities had given enough reason for the Americans to enlist them as a full-fledged terrorist group.

This is the background against which the Maoists had convened their politburo meeting and promptly responded to public concern with corrective measures on 20 October 2003 (Bulletin 2003). Neither Britain nor the EU in combination has considered the Maoists in Nepal as terrorists. As a matter of fact, these states are mostly disillusioned by the Nepali state's refusal to renovate and with the "childish" reactions of the high government officials to

the crucial national agendas than the Maoists' mission for reforming and restructuring of the state machinery. For instance, a senior UN official had to personally express a serious concern to the COAS over the misuse of the UN vehicles by the army in patrolling the streets in Kathmandu in extreme violation of their use in designated peacekeeping missions. Meanwhile, the EU's Deputy Charge d' Affairs to Nepal, Wenk Rudiger has publicly expressed his reservation against the use of force to resolve the Maoist problem. He chided the American belligerency against the Maoists asserting, "we don't see any basis for military force. Only way is sticking to talks if you can't win militarily." He has also hinted at certain foreign country helping the Maoists (Kathmandu Post 17 November 2003).

That certain country under suspicion remains none other than India. With its formidable presence in the neighbourhood, India figures prominently in the calculus of conflict in Nepal. Looming suspicion both in the elites and the masses that India is behind the Maoists' uprising dies hard. Despite India's declaration of the Maoists as the terrorists and the massive supply of arms and ammunition to the government, the India factor remains crucial in resolving the conflict. India has earned a bad name in Nepal because of the structural incongruity in bilateral relationships. Although both Nepal and India recognize that the need of cooperation between the two neighbours with open border is a must in order to thwart the threat of cross border terrorist activities<sup>27</sup> India, particularly the adjoining state of Bihar, has, however remained the unbridled conduit for Maoists activities against Nepal. A testimony to this has recently been provided by the state government of Bihar in a report submitted to the Union Home Secretary of India stating that the Nepali Maoists are jointly training with the Indian Maoists Communist Centre (MCC) and the People's War Group (PWG) to mount cross-border attack on Nepal (Cited in Spotlight 7 November 2003:5). Deployment of the paramilitary forces by India along the stretches of Nepal-India border since 2001 has yet to prevent infiltration causing ruminations from both sides.

One of the obvious implications of the burgeoning interests of foreign powers in the internal conflict in Nepal is reflected in the ever-growing military cooperation inadvertently encouraging the process of dependent militarization. This issue has not only become critical but crucial in determining the course of politics in Nepal impacting on its future development. Under the façade of the Maoists insurgency the relationship between the state and military is rapidly undergoing change where the forces as the 'instrument of state policy is becoming the major determinant for the state policymaking. This situation is ascertained with the bilateral military cooperation between Nepal and the United States supplemented by the arms supplies both from India and the United Kingdom. With the Maoists violence and increasing American interests in assisting Nepal to cope with the challenge, Nepal has been able to diversify its traditional dependent relations

with India. As the hallmark of military cooperation is national interest, it has become a strategic issue to be concerned with as there is only a hair split distinction between the military cooperation and the military pact, particularly between the client and protector state. Though the military cooperation between Nepal and the United States appears to be goal specific in developing the counterinsurgency capacity of the Royal Nepal Army through training, arming and logistics supplies and preventing the regime collapse, it is the easiest means for the protector state to penetrate the most sensitive apparatus of the state and therefore influence policymaking.

This is the reason why India has shown a considerable reservation against the growing military ties between Nepal and the United States despite its closer collaboration with Britain and the United States against terrorism in Nepal (Sibal 2002). For example, an editorial in the Times of India has questioned the US arms transfer to Nepal, "If Pakistan based cross-border terrorism violates Indian sovereignty, the same sovereignty is no less transgressed when, despite the 1950 treaty with Nepal, Indian sensibility is ignored by Mr. Powell's explicit offer of military aid to the Himalayan Kingdom... . [D]espite Nepal falling within New Delhi's area of 'security interest,' [it] is now being brazenly mocked by Washington's overflying of Indian prerogatives... . [I]t is a situation that does little credit to India as it undermines its primacy... ." (TI 2002, emphasis added). India has obviously not compromised its normative thrust in policymaking towards Nepal that remains constant in preserving its national interests of monopolistic stakeholder in the power equation and keeping the rest guessing. This is natural for a country like India, which not only absorbs the displaced people from Nepal but also provides a safe haven for the "terrorists" from Nepal against whom the Indian government is officially committed.

Thus, the situation in Nepal is becoming more complicated than normally understood. Internally, the governmental paralysis caused by the Maoist insurgency and the popular disapproval of the suspension of democratic process by the monarchy have led to a situation in which the domestic complexities are portioned with the zero-sum game. Neither the Maoists, nor the political parties nor the monarchy has climbed down from their rigid positions and have come forward to seek mutually acceptable solution to the problem confronting the state. Irreconcilable domestic dissensions in Nepal have adequately provided external forces to show their legitimate concerns. The question therefore remains: how can this situation be dismantled and open up the political space for reconciliation?

### **What is to be done?**

The measure that should be taken to change the situation from hopelessness and despair to a situation of hope and optimism is first to recognize the real problem situation. Are monarchy and its insatiable ambition to rule the

country unassailable by any forces the real problem? Or are the political leaderships with proven inefficacy to govern the state a fundamental reason for conflict and consternation? Do the Maoists pose a problem or are the Maoists a consequence of the problem? For a general observer of the national scene these posers are themselves a problem to understand correctly because none of the protagonists concede that either of them is the problem. But solutions to the problem have become like chasing mirage. Thus, what is to be done? To my mind, these three protagonist forces should break the shell of cocoon of their self-righteous assertion of their role in the state in favour of making a breakthrough in the deadlock. This requires a thorough review of previous positions taken by the three contending parties in order to assess correctly the present situation and move from the past to the future. If their positions are unbridgeable the ensuing deadlock can be freed temporarily to clear the mess with voluntary compliance. Within the framework of voluntary compliance the three contending parties can agree to discard mutual acrimony and build confidence. Trust that requires to be built should not be at the cost of sacrificing their important values. But while attempting for mending fences neither should be overzealous in preserving and protecting one's value at the cost of others.

First of all, the contending parties have, thus, to recognize that the tradition of statecraft practised in Nepal is a failure and reverting back to the prior process for retaining the status quo would be horrendous for the national future. Second, violence, both from above and below, is neither a substitute nor a remedy for all-pervasive social ills. Third, the need of a retooling of the state should thus be recognized as a priority concern of all. The beginning can be made by the monarchy with sensitising the national scene through its avid commitment to nation building process as a partner not as a proprietor of the Nepali state. The monarchy should convene a meeting of the national human rights groups; involving credible members of the civil society and the political parties in order to evolve a political consensus with the Maoists leading to the announcement of a truce as a standstill agreement for at least six months with strictly abiding to the code of conduct. The responsibility for monitoring the code of conduct impartially should be given to the SAARC Secretariat by activating the interests and stakes of member states in establishing peace and stability in a co-member state. It should also be ensured that none of the major powers interested particularly on domestic conflict in Nepal should be permitted to promote partisan interests.

Step two should be the priority vested on political parties and multiparty democracy by drawing all-party consensus for the formation of a national government for elections. The elected government will initiate negotiations with the Maoists on core issues of national restructuring. Through negotiations and bipartisan consensus arrived at by the government and the Maoists they can either opt for drafting a new constitution or decide for the

elections to the constituent assembly for drafting and adopting a new constitution. Step three would be the national elections for the tenured government in accordance with the consensual constitution.

Perhaps these measures could be a painful process towards building peace in Nepal. But they are worth considering against the uncertainty of continuing violence and national devastation. A win-win situation for all leading to self-implementing rather than enforced agreement in resolving domestic conflict is the best choice.

*This paper is prepared for a Research Study on "Causes of Internal Conflicts and Means to Resolve Them: Case Study of Nepal" – a Project undertaken by the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, Switzerland, and presented at the International Workshop on 22-23 February 2004.*

### Notes

1. See among others, Blaikie, et al. Nepal in Crisis, 1980.
2. There is massive literature on the Maoists insurgency in Nepal based on journalistic and mushrooming conflict resolution experts' accounts. A majority of literature produced so far is recycled materials rather than serious endeavour in understanding the subject. The value of these materials, however, is in their use in developing general perspectives on ensuing conflict in Nepal.
3. According to Quincy Wright, "War in the sense of a legal situation equally permitting groups to expand wealth and power by violence began with civilization.... Only among civilized people has war been an institution serving political and economic interests of the community, defined by a body of law which states the circumstances justifying its use, the procedures whereby it is begun and ended, and the methods by which it is conducted." See his monumental work, *A Study of War*, p. 39. The state system, in fact, is the war system. "The state system has evolved into a specific type of world order in which war plays a central role." War is still fought in the name of preserving the world order as glaringly exemplified by the case of Afghanistan and Iraq. For the latter citation see, Falk and Kim, eds., *The War System*, 1980: 11. Resistance is a phenomenon, which is, however, called violence and therefore illegitimate.
4. After the disintegration of the Soviet empire, the Balkan tragedy has been mostly explained under the premise of the ancient ethnic hatred subsisting amongst the Serbs, Croats and Muslims, particularly in Bosnia, dehumanising bloodshed in Sarajevo and the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, ignoring the fact that these ethnic people have coexisted for centuries even to the extent of maintaining marital bonds and celebrating interethnic harmony. The conclusion therefore is obvious: ethnicism cannot be contextualized as a single explanatory tool for eruption of violent conflict in the case of Nepal. Had the ethnopolitics been the crucial element in the violent conflict, the people of Tarai would have been naturally pitted against the Hill people of the country whose exclusion from the national mainstream has been pronounced even by the former Deputy Prime Minister Badri Prasad Mandal as denial of the citizenship rights to some 4 million Madeshi people (inhabitants of Tarai) immediately after he was appointed by



King Gyanendra as a member of the Chand Cabinet (November 2002 - May 2003).

5. This theory based on the relationships between the population group and conflict is fairly advanced recently by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC. Based on the study of the world's 25 most youthful countries, the Centre has identified that 16 of them are undergoing major violent conflict since 1995. The most notable exception, however, is the case of Croatia where the median age of population is 38.8 years old. Correlating youthfulness and violence, the study asserts that China's median age during the Cultural Revolution was 19; Iran's median age when the Shah was deposed was 17; Palestine's is 17 and Yemen has 15 years of median age. Iraq, Syria and Pakistan all have median age of less than 19. Liberia has 16.6 years as the median age. In Sierra Leone it is 17.9. All these countries have undergone and experienced violent conflicts and some are still in the vortex of conflict. Contrarily, the median age of the most pacifist countries like Japan is 41.3. Europe is another example of the pacifist countries where demographic change caused by ageing has created another sorts of problem. The study also suggests that all of the youthful countries are not necessarily embroiled in violent conflict. Perhaps democratic stability and the provision for social security are insurance against violence in some countries younger than Nepal in the median age of population. But the absence of violence in some youthful liberal democracies and economically well endowed countries cannot be made a case to refute the correlations between youthfulness and violence as a perceptible research agenda, particularly, in the case of Nepal.
6. The average population growth per annum in Nepal is 2.24 per cent. The youthfulness of the population is an indicator of the higher fertility rate. According to the 1991 census data, the median age for marriage for male was 22.4 and female was 18.1 which has slightly improved in 2001 with 22.9 for male and 19.5 for female median age for marriage (MoPE 2002:31). 1996 is the year denoting a 5 years gap between 1991 and 2001 census record.
7. Citing the statement an UNICEF official, a newspaper reports " some 235 youngsters die everyday in Nepal from largely preventable diseases, while more than 40 per cent suffer from malnutrition and less than 40 per cent complete a basic five year education.... At least 30,000 children have been separated from their families and forced into labour. And the problem was getting worse." See The Himalayan Times, October 18, 2003:1. Human poverty in rural area is almost double than the urban area of Nepal. The Human Poverty Index (HPI) for urban area is 23.9 and for rural area is 41.4. The HPI for Nepal is 39.2, which is among the worst in South Asia. See, UNDP, 2002. Nepal Human Development Report 2001: 20-21. Some 300,000 people join the labour market every year of which some 80 per cent remain unemployed.
8. Actually the army pulled the trigger for the Maoists resumption of the armed conflict on the day the third round of negotiations begun by brutally killing 19 unarmed Maoists in Doramba, Ramechhap district signalling their defiance of the truce.
9. There are 18-point programme that the agitating political parties have mutually publicised to implement whenever state power would be restored through

- parliamentary means. Prominent among these are the confining of the title of Sri 5 to the three members of the Royal family only – the king, the queen and the crown prince. They have also advocated for making the royal family abiding to the law of the land as well as bringing the Royal Nepal Army under the firm control of the parliament. For details see, NC, 2060 (2003).
10. For a fresh controversy over the king's dictates to change the recommendation of the Constitutional Committee in accordance to his wishes see the disclosure of the speaker of the defunct House of Representatives, Tara Nath Ranabhat made at the Central Committee meeting of the Nepali Congress Party on November 26, 2003. *Rajdhani Daily*, November 27, 2003:1. See also, Harihar Birahi, "Kahilesamma Chalachha Yo Nautanki?," (How Long will this Drama Continue?), *Saptahik Bimarsha*, November 28-December 4, 2003:1 and 23. The planned enlistment of 8,000 recruits for the army and diversion of Rs.1.70 billion for the defence purpose again is the fresh indication of the government's resolve to suppress the Maoists through the use of force. See *Kathmandu Post*, November 22, 2003:1.
  11. Personal conversations with the people in different districts of Nepal that I have occasioned to visit between 1997 and 2003 point out numerous factors as being responsible for the Maoist insurgency that can be broadly divided into political and economic causes. The political causes are: (i) the active role of monarchy in government decision making; (ii) increasing corruption and criminalization of politics; (iii) challenges to free and fair elections; (iv) minimum representation of women and Janajatis; (v) privatisation of education; (vi) human rights abuses; (vii) dual ownership of land and the absence of scientific land reform programme; and (viii) lack of political commitment and misgovernance. Similarly, the economic causes are: (i) growing unemployment; (ii) increasing social inequalities leading to widening gap between the "haves" and the "have nots"; (iii) unbalanced growth causing rural-urban division; (iv) politicization of rural development programmes; (v) neglect of agricultural sectors; and (vi) growing corruption with predominance of commission agents in economic decision making promoting external interests. The causes of conflict described by the people are mostly related to their everyday life and are closely linked with the questions of their survival.
  12. As a matter of fact, opposition politics in Nepal begun as an underground social movement against the hereditary Rana regime in the early 1930s leading to the birth of Prachanda Gorkha in 1931 and Praja Parishad in 1935 in Nepal. Though the ultimate goal of these parties was to overthrow the Rana oligarchy, their open advocacy was social and religious reforms. Ethnic revolts were also episodically sporadic ever since the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1769. For example see Gurung (2003b: 14; Bhattachan 2000:140).
  13. The *Muluki Ain* 1854 asserting the hierarchical mode in the society has categorised the people following the Hindu social code into five distinct groups to impart a sense of distinction between the rulers and the ruled defining caste and outcasts. For details see, Sharma, 1977; Adhikari, 1984; Bista, 1991; and Stiller 1968.
  14. The way the proclamation of the constitution was made by King Birendra in November 1990 was itself a tricky affair. King Birendra pulled out the document

from his pocket, instead of the one presented to him by the Interim prime minister. This behaviour of the king signifies the retention of the state authority by monarchy in Nepal. See the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990:1. Controversy over sovereignty however remains. But in the Nepali case, Carl Schmitt's dictum on sovereignty appears more relevant than legal interpretations. According to Schmitt, "sovereign is he who decides on the exception.... [I]t is precisely the exception that make relevant the subject of sovereignty, that is, the whole question of sovereignty." (Gross 2000: 1831). In the case of Nepal the emergency power is vested on the king. Although the emergency power is an exception, the decision of the monarch, however, remains supreme. His entitlement to use Article 127 of the Constitution is not questioned despite his direct intervention in national polity under the façade of the same constitutional provision remains controversial.

15. Here it would be of interest to note how crucial decisions are being made. According to the former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, he was being advised by the incumbent Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa to postpone elections for the House of Representatives scheduled for November 2002. The presently incumbent Minister for Communication Kamal Thapa drafted the letter he had submitted to the king requesting for the postponement of elections. See his interview in *Dristi Weekly*, 18-24 November 2003:5. Both of these politicians belong to the rival Rastriya Prajatantra Party not the party led by Deuba after his split with the Nepali Congress Party that elected him.
16. The intra-party rivalries within the ruling Nepali Congress Party was caused by the party's decision against the extension and endorsement of the national emergency for further three months by the parliament. Apparently, the Nepali Congress along with other parliamentary parties had opened the back channel negotiations with the Maoists to ease the violent situation through consensus building for a progressive amendment of the constitution leading to political reform. The parliamentary parties had reached a consensus towards this end to table the constitution amendment bill with the opening of the parliamentary session. Unfortunately, the parliament was suddenly dissolved with the executive feat of the prime minister. Sher Bahadur Deuba, who was then instrumental in dissolving the parliament as the prime minister, has, in a recent interview, said that "In fact, there is a constant tussle [for power] between monarchy and the political parties ever since 1951. How long will the country bear this situation? This is the core of the problem...." *Dristi Weekly*, 18-24, 2003: 5.
17. Although the total votes cast during the three General Elections were over 60 per cent on average, analyses of the ways elections were conducted in the five districts show a majority of voters had never seen the ballot paper but votes are cast in their names. Elections, in fact, were synonymous to the use of money and muscle power. For details see, Dhruba Kumar, "Social Structure and Voting Behaviour," pp. 205-06 and 223-26.
18. The notion of 'protection racketry' and 'organized crime' has been borrowed from Charles Tilly, 1985: 69-71. For the latter remark see the self-confession of Prime Minister Girija P. Koirala's in the parliament. *Kathmandu Post*, August 12, 2000.

19. Citing Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, Bam Dev Gautam, a newspaper stated, "The Maoists and the UML are friendly forces although their path differs." See *Jana Astha Weekly*, May 7, 1997. The CPN (UML) had donated Rs. 800,000 to the Maoists when it was an influential coalition partner of the RPP-CPN (UML) government in 1997. For details see *Deshantar Weekly*, July 13, 1997. According to Padma Ratna Tuladhar, an MP of the CPN (UML), "The Maoists people's War is the product of the Marxist philosophy, therefore, the CPN (UML) and the Maoists are not different in principle." He was clear in his view in suggesting, "communists cannot be monarchists. The UML has the long-term goal of establishing a republican state in Nepal. As the present situation is not favourable, the party had to play a dual role. After it increases its strength, there will be another revolution in Nepal, which will abolish monarchy and adopt a presidential system...." See his interview given to the *Saptahik Bimarsha*, May 16, 1997. In fact, the CPN (UML) and the CPN (Maoists) had drawn their inspirations from the Naxalite movement in India. The former Maoists who had wrecked havoc through Jhapali movement in early 1970s today largely constitute the CPN (UML) leadership.
20. *Himalaya Times*, May 15, 1997, *Kathmandu Post*, May 15, 1997. Subsequently, a member of the ruling coalition government and the spokesperson of the RPP, Kamal Thapa also endorsed the views expressed by Koirala. *Himalaya Times*, May 16, 1997. The General –Secretary of the RPP, Pashupati Shumsher Rana also deplored the violence and anti-social activities being supported by political parties, by indirectly pointing his fingers towards the CPN (UML). *Kathmandu Post*, May 16, 1997.
21. Bam Dev Gautam, as the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of the CPN (UML)- RPP-Sadbhavana coalition government had accused the Maoists as being terrorists, which was immediately contradicted by his party colleagues like Tulsi Lal Amatya (deceased) and Padma Ratna Tuladhar. For the latter's view see note 19.
22. The National Emergency was declared on November 26, 2001 for three months period to be endorsed and renewal by the parliament. The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Act was promulgated on the same day through an Ordinance, which was passed for two years by the parliament in April 2002. Under Section 20 of TADA, the members of security forces are provided immunity from prosecution or "any other person" for "any act or work performed or attempted to be performed by him in good faith under the Act" (Informal 2002).
23. There are 18-point programme that the five agitating political parties have mutually publicised to implement whenever the state power would be restored through parliamentary means. Prominent among these are the confining of the title of Sri 5 to the king, queen and the crown prince. They have also advocated making the Royal family responsible to the law of the land as well as bringing the Royal Nepal Army under the firm control of the parliament (NC 2003).
24. While addressing a meeting of the government secretaries on 22 October 2003, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa has disclosed his decision to militarily defeat the Maoists for resumption of peace in the country (*Himal Khabarpatrika* 2-16 November 2003:39). Accordingly, on 4 November, the government

- announced its action plan prioritising peace and security under a “unified command” to be led by the Royal Nepal Army (Rising Nepal 5 November 2003). The action plan has emphasised on the civil-military campaigns as a means to tackle the Maoists problem (Kathmandu Post 5 November 2003). On the other hand, the resolution adopted at the conclusion of the Politburo meeting of the CPN (Maoist) on 20 October 2003, has shown determination for a centralized offensive against the enemy despite making certain tactical changes in programme affecting the common people (Maoist Information Bulletin No.6, 25 October 2003).
25. Under the contract of the British firm Global Risks Strategies, the Americans have already deployed some of the ex-British Gurkhas in the Iraqi theatre on guard and patrolling duties. See Krane, 2003.
  26. The US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has designated the Maoists as a terrorist group through a notice published in the Federal Register (Himalayan Times, 1 November 2003). For a non-official but important American perspective on Nepal see also the Executive Memorandum # 862 prepared by Dana Robert Dillon of the Heritage Foundation, Washington D. C., entitled “Preventing the Maoist overthrow of Nepal,” and another piece on “Nepal’s Maoist Insurgency” by Steven C. Baker of the Centre for Security Policy, Washington D.C., posted on FrontPage Magazine. Com on 25 July 2003.
  27. The Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Shyam Saran, has repeatedly reiterated that the terrorist activities of the Maoists have also impinged on the security sensitivities of India. [Thus] there is no question of India being unhelpful on this particular issue. For instance, see his interview to the Rajdhani Daily, 26 January 2003:5.

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**Simple Sketch on Proximate Causes of Conflict**

