The past few days have seen GP Koirala intensifying his meetings with diplomats as his rating in their minds plummets. Diplomats may not find Koirala’s key message very convincing when he declared, “I can hold election on the new schedule and I can get Maoists around to do it.”

But Koirala faced a lot of queries and doubts from the diplomats, mainly regarding his government’s failure to maintain the law and order situation and the government’s loss of face due to repeated postponement of elections. Despite their insistence for an early election, the diplomats were candid that no free and fair election could be conducted in the prevailing law and order situation.

British Ambassador, Andrew Hall, current Chair of the European Union embassies in Kathmandu, shared EU members’ concern over increasing violence in Terai by the emerging armed groups, continued abductions and the uninterrupted extortions by the Maoists.

Koirala’s meeting with the diplomats, the first after his rise in power, comes at a time when credibility and legitimacy of his government is being questioned. For a change, he did not meet the Indian Ambassador this time as he clearly understands India’s attitude and message - the last one which delivered by Shyam Sharan, on behalf of Indian Prime Minister, Man Mohan Singh. But interestingly, Koirala met Chinese Ambassador, Zheng Xianglin twice within a week, first at his daughter Sujata Koirala’s residence in Mandikatar, and the second time at the PM’s residence in Baluwatar. While China has officially stated that election should take place at the earliest, of late, it has given a clear message of its distaste over the increasing ‘meddling’ of India and the United States in Nepal.

Both Ambassador Xianglin and Prof Wang Rhonghe, a Chinese expert on South Asian affairs currently in Nepal, have been encouraging Nepalis to take independent initiative to solve their own problems without depending on outside forces. China, sources in the PMO say, has left it to the people of Nepal to decide on the fate of monarchy, but with a subtle warning that the issue needs careful consideration, and that a hasty declaration of ‘republican Nepal’ could be detrimental to the national interest. Caution was the word that Chinese used while advising Maoist leaders as well.

The meeting and discussion over ‘Republican agenda’ with the Chinese diplomat followed ‘unofficial messages’ from the South that India would have no problem if Nepal’s parliament chose to go republic now. But the official stand conveyed by Shyam Sharan was different who said it is for the people of Nepal to decide, implying that only an elected Constituent Assembly should be doing that. Apart from the British Ambassador Hall, it is believed, German Ambassador Franz Ring and US Ambassador Nancy Powell have warned against any hasty steps on deciding the fate of monarchy. They all said it is for the people to decide and a peaceful situation must exist so that people can express their mandate based on their political belief. Koirala assured all the diplomats that he is keen to hold elections at the earliest, and if everything goes well, he can do it by March end.
The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) is clearly seeking, not only an extended tenure but also an enlarged role for itself. This was made evident by UNMIN Chief and UN Secretary General’s special representative Ian Martin at New York on October 26. “Expectations among Nepalis are high as to what UNMIN can do,” he said, “I do my best to encourage the parties to keep the overall process on track and offer UNMIN’s advice as requested, we do feel constrained by an expectation that we should interpret our mandate narrowly and we ask ourselves – as concerned Member States ask us – whether Nepal is making full use of the supportive capacity of the United Nations.”

Despite these indications, there are hardly any indications about UNMIN being given the enlarged role if the mood of the ruling coalition partners is any indication. “We are certainly in no mood of the ruling coalition partners being given the enlarged role if the request from the government if such a formal request is made,” Martin disclosed.

Martin’s suggestion for a review of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is also being seen as part of its demand for an enlarged role. He repeated a call in the Secretary-General’s report for the parties to take stock of the CPA and its implementation with a view to strengthening it. He quoted PM Koirala as having endorsed the idea of a review of the CPA.

Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, in his latest report on Nepal says the country is at crossroads. Mr. Martin explained that the immediate cause was demands by the Maoists that Nepal’s legislature— not the Constituent Assembly— be elected immediately declare the country a republic, and that the electoral system be fully proportional, both in contradiction of previous agreements.

“This crisis is not just the consequence of those two demands but also stems from growing mistrust amongst the parties to the peace agreement that we have seen in recent weeks,” he said, blaming failures on both sides to make good on commitments and agreements that have been made in the peace process.

Martin made it clear that the UNMIN also felt handicapped by the absence of exit strategy. The current cantonment of Maoists and restriction of army to their barracks was intended to be temporary measures of army to their barracks were some 11 months with no end in sight.

A prolonged stay in cantonments of army to their barracks were being seen as having endorsed the idea of UNMIN’s extended tenure in Nepal, but needs the formal request of the host government for it. Martin told media representatives in New York the government and the leaders of the seven parties, including the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), have indicated their support for an extension of UNMIN. "Security Council members in discussion yesterday made very clear that they would give sympathetic consideration to a request from the government if such a formal request is made,” Martin dishearted.

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Notwithstanding the GP Koirala led government’s hostility and indifference towards royal security, King Gyanendra strictly maintained the traditions and rituals of the King as in previous years sans fanfare. He visited Shaktipeeth in and around Kathmandu on the Maha-Asthami day besides receiving the Prasad from Gorkha palace, the ancestral house of the Shah dynasty in Gorkha, on the Phulpati day.

But all through, he avoided a confrontation attitude with the government in general and PM Koirala in particular who of late has been acting like the King even on religious matters. In a brief address to the nation on Vijays Dashami day, King Gyanendra invoked Goddess Durga, the symbol of Shakti, “To inspire us all to forge ahead on the strength of national unity and reconciliation through the establishment of sustainable peace in the country.” He also extended best wishes to all the Nepalis and Hindus living in the country and abroad for happiness and prosperity. The message which came at a time when political parties are inching towards a republican line, however, did not provoke any hostile response from the political parties as in the past. King Gyanendra also offered Tika to all those who chose to pay respect to him in Narayanhiti palace.

The ceremony in the palace went off without the traditional security arrangements by the government. While none of the politicians affiliated with the current regime, senior officials from the security agencies and bureaucracy went to the palace, former Prime Ministers Surya Bahadur Thapa, Kirinshik Bista, Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Marichman Singh were among the senior politicians paying their respect to the King. Ex-army, civil and police officials and a large number of youths also joined the ceremony in the palace.

"We told the King that his role is not yet over. The country is facing a big crisis because of increasing interference of the external forces and current political parties surrendering to them,” a college teacher from Kathmandu who went to the palace said.
Strange bed-fellows

Politics makes strange bedfellows. Look at Congress leader, Shekhar Koirala and the Maoists. Shekhar now proposes that the government headed by his uncle K.P. Koirala should be ready to go to the polls even without Maoists participating in it.

Shekhar, who was a key negotiator along with Home Minister K P Sharma Sitaula, is clearly deceived with the Maoists after they insisted on a proportional representation model of electoral system in place of the mixed system agreed earlier.

Sitaula who continues as the Home Minister largely because Maoists wanted him apart from some invisible reasons despite his failure to maintain the law and order situation in the country is however, silent on the Maoists’ demands. That would mean that Shekhar and Sitaula might part company as for Sitaula there are more important quarters to turn to when the time comes.

Maoists are anticipating that the government is also contemplating the option of using force against the Maoists in case they decide to launch another movement and disruptive activities.

More friendly

It seems Maoists honeymoon with the Congress is over. It is inching much closer to its new tactical ally, the CPN- UML. While the Maoist top two, Prachanda and Baburam were absent from the tea-party organised by both Nepal Congress and the UML on October 26 and 27, the number of attendants from the Maoist party in the UML reception was more, and politically significant.

KB Maharaj, the high-profile Maoist leader chose to go only for the UML hosted reception. Pampala Bhushal, Dev Gurung and Hishita Yami also attended it. No senior leaders except Khimilal Devkota, a Maoist parliamentarian, attended the Congress hosted reception.

As Maoists and the UML are trying to forge a kind of unity among the leftists in favour of proportional representation system during the parliament session, Maoists’ greater presence in Balikhu Durbar was understandable. But one just shudders, in days of very short-lived political equation, how long will the two go together?

Long queues

The hike in petrol price is no respite for fuel consumers. Petrol pumps still have notices saying there is no petrol. During the supply hours, there are still long queues of vehicles. Gas agencies continue to take more than a week to deliver the gas cylinders at home.

The reason being in spite of the fuel deposits and the government with monopoly over distribution of fuels, hiking the price, it has not been able to pay the arrears to the Indian Oil Corporation; the amount of which has now crossed Rs 6 billion record level.

51 Crores spent

A whopping Rs. 51 crore was spent for the election campaign that proved to be a non-event during the past 16 months. Altogether Rs. 28 crore was spent this year against Rs 23 crore last year, according to the election commission sources. The EC compiled the data and made it public after the election were indefinitely put off for the second time early this month. The donor community provided equipment and other logistics in the form of assistance for the election purposes through the commission worth Rs. 54 crore during the period.

Season of festivals

The Bluebird organised various events with theme, Season of Festivals. The occasion marked the 1st anniversary of Bluebird Mall and 23rd Anniversary of Bluebird department store. The month long event which began October 10 covers the major festival months.

On 18th October, Bluebird Mall organised a fun filled event – food festival with live concert where artists: Nima Rumba, Nalina Chitrakar, Preeti Kaur, Dharmendra Sewan & Ciney Gurung performed. The magic show, balloon artist and face painting were enjoyed by the children and adults alike.

Price hike fuels crisis

After almost six months of disrupted and inadequate supply, the government has finally raised the price of petrolum products from 6 to 22 percent drawing protests from the student wings of political parties aligned with the coalition government.

The price hike which the government has called black was carried out as the nation was celebrating Dashain. The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has raised the wholesale price of petrol by Rs.6 per litre, bringing its current rate to Rs. 73 per litre while kerosene price has been increased by three Nepources. Similarly, diesel price has been increased by Rs.300, and cooking gas (LPG) by Rs. 200 per cylinder. With the latest decision, the price of petrol at Kathmandu stands at Rs. 95, Kerosene at Rs. 51 and LPG cylinder Rs. 1100. NOC says the increase in the price is a natural fall out of the increase of the fuel in the international market.

The NOC has accused a loss of Rs. 11 billion for the company during the past five years. And with arrears to the Indian Oil Corporation running to over six billion rupees, it was unable to pay its dues.

Because of this, NOC was not able to provide fuel to its consumers,” NOC chief Digambar Ojha told newsmfront, adding, “We know it was an unpleasant decision.”

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), says the soaring prices are threatening the prospects of millions of Asia’s poor and forcing them further into poverty. A report released in Bangkok on October 25 says, “As oil prices climb, the impact on the poor may presage worse to come.” The report - Overcoming Vulnerability to Rising Oil Prices: Options and the Pacific, said that oil prices have tripled over the last four years with the price approaching US dollar 90 per barrel.

“This has meant that the Asia and pacific region has had to pay an additional bill of almost 400 billion dollars for imports compared to the amount spent in 2003. This is 20 times the annual aid flow to the region,” said Helfa Puako, UNDP Regional Director for Asia and Pacific at the launch of the report.

Joint front of the student organisations in Nepal going for the movement however blame corruption and mismanagement in NOC for the current mess and said the price hike was unjustified. Although the students wing of the ruling coalition and their allies have asked the government to roll back the price, or face a mass-protest, the government is insisting that the decision was taken after due consultation with the political parties including the Maoists.

“The decision to hike the price had the consent of all the parties in the government and their allies,” said Purusottam Ojha, Chairman of NOC and Secretary in the ministry of supplies. According to Ojha, the parliamentary committee was also apprised of the decision beforehand. Maoist leader Dinanath Sharma has warned that Young Communist League (YCL) cadre would be mobilised to put pressure on the government to annul the price hike decision. They also hope that in case there is a protest movement, the left parties would be joining it.
License to kill

Journalist Birendra Saha’s whereabouts is not known for nearly a month now. Fingers are pointed towards Maoists for the crime. But there has been no word from the government as well as the Maoists as yet about Saha’s face. The federation of Nepali journalists (FNU) has been routinely raising the issue, but it is clearly lacking in zeal and motivation in pressing for his release.

During his meeting with the FNU representatives, Prime Minister G P Koirala reiterated that his government would not make any compromises on the issue of press freedom. Is FNU satisfied with what Koirala said? Just because this abduction has taken place under a ‘democratic regime’ does not make it a lesser crime. Koirala got away with his assurances and nobody in this country hopes that P K Sitala as Home Minister will ever act against the criminals.

It is a shame that the civil society did not find an issue worth sitting on Dharma for a couple of hours. For the individuals who are known as civil society leaders in the country today, the issue of kidnapping of a journalist does not quite merit spending a couple of hours on Dharma. They appear equitably reluctant to demand Saha’s release and warn the Maoist leaders to put pressure on their cadres.

Maoist’s commitment to press freedom and democracy while claiming the credit for success of the movement against ‘Royal authoritarianism’ is increasingly appearing more tactical in nature. Same may be said about the civil society if it condones, through its silence, the heinous crime. It is also a challenge to the FNU that what they are doing in this case is not enough, and the seriousness of their concern does not match the intensity during the previous occasions, especially in the post 2002 October period, against similar or other crimes.

Maoist’s part is clearly lacking in zeal and motivation in pressing for his release. It appears he was justified not only for believing in a ‘peaceful solution’ to the Maoist’s movement. Even if the monarchy is thrown out, and a republic declared, we can be sure now that the Maoists will not stop until they get all they ask for. It’s about time for the SPA to make a hard decision. Are they going to continue to play to the Maoists’ tune, or are they going to tune them up? Their promise to the people was to mainstream the Maoists, not Mao-ism! The SPA has given up more than enough to provide the Maoists a ‘safe-landing’, and we have had enough excuses in the name of ‘transition period’. Now we want a legitimate peace process based firmly on truth and justice. Let the Maoists leave parliament if they want to. Brave Nepalis should not cower down in front of threats from unscrupulous and deceitful power-mongers!

Human rights ignored

Uday Pariyar’s article that addresses issues of oppressed Dalits was a classic analysis of the existing disparity, exploitation and rampant Brahminism. It is very important for us to have policies to address those problems. Otherwise, empowering neo-Brahmins will hardly solve the problem that has been plaguing this society for centuries.

Pariyar is also rightly critical of the NGOs, local government and other human rights groups for maintaining total silence when a couple was discarded by their families and the society, for having an inter-caste marriage. This must be an eye opener for the donor communities since the NGOs and their officials group prefer to poke their nose in for political causes, but ignore human right issues when it involves Dalits and those in the lower rungs of the society.

Media responsibility

“The terai problem and the media” by Chandira Khishore Jha (newfront Oct 1-7) was a very balanced and objective piece. While the author warns about the growing fascist separative and divisive tendencies visible in the Nepali society, he also cautions media that it has a role to not encourage those trends. As we watch the media trend in the country today, vastly divided along communal and ethnic lines, Jha suggests that the media should not be Dalit and Kathmandu.

Koirala King?

Newfront’s interview with Isabel Tree on Kumari festival is so revealing that it speaks volumes about the Kumari tradition and its relevance in the society in a vivid manner more than any good books written on the subject so far.

But it is shocking that while the institution needs to be understood, modernised and continued, dragging the tradition into politics is a shame. The instance of Prime Minister Koirala going to Kumari for a Darshan was a brazen act of politics, as he never bothered to visit there as a PM in the past. What does it mean? Has Koirala turned into a believer now? Or was it just an attempt to establish himself as the King?”

- Ramesh Baidya

Lagankhel, Lalitpur
Thinking past the Nepali ‘post-conflict’

The farce called the conspiated (oops, constitutional) assembly election would not have been more than a lame joke had it not also been a fraud as well, arguably the most brazen since the millennium bug and the Mahakali scam. In the former, technology firms warned the consumers that if they did not buy their latest software and gadgets, the computer systems across the world would go kaput at the stroke of midnight, thereby causing the global economy, defense systems, health networks, transportation and the internet would go haywire to usher in Stone Age II. Thankfully no such pangs accompanied the birth of the 21st century, but the sting operation earned billions for the scam mongers.

The Mahakali caper was of a different ilk, but of the same nature. Left to right, politicians here had gone in overdrive to sell the Mahakali deal. The proposal to sign off the western boundary river to India was touted as the biggest bonanza to ever befall the country that would dominate the political landscape today.

The ongoing constituent assembly (CA) mess is a remix of both these earlier scams. On the one hand, the people were bombarded for a whole year with dire warnings by the political parties, donors, and the willing media that if the CA elections were not held on Nov. 22, the earth would literally crumble and heaven would fall. On the other hand, should the election take place, it would fulfill every wish and every need that Nepalis had ever thought of... so abundant was the promise.

Experts, expertise

The transitional movement was recognized as another money spinner and career booster as international crisis firms and professionals who had made their names and fortunes in Somalia, Afghanistan, Timor or other similar human tragedies descended upon Nepal to set up shop in partnership with local subalterns. The first order of business was to establish the demand that could then be supplied by the expat experts. Using some convenient methodologies, it was first established that Nepalis in general were seriously deficient in their knowledge of the whole constituent assembly phenomena. Such a glaring civilizational gap could only be filled by the superior knowledge embodied by the experts. Thus came the various versions of the voter education programs from donors and INGOs in whose name millions of dollars were raised and millions of Nepues dispursed, thousands of educators, TOTs and trainers mobilized to teach the ignorant masses how to do election come Nov. 22.

The ignorant masses perhaps might just want to ask the experts why suddenly there is no constituent election after all this education and awareness raising? That is, if they have not already left the scene post-haste in their favorite getaways: the formidable fleet of satellite-hooked 4 by 4s and shiny helicopters. The sovereign people might also want to know why so much resources and effort was poured into a half-baked project whose completion was not ascertained or even intended. Talk of teaching accountability.

The ‘post-conflict’ industry in Nepal has temporarily been thrown off gear by the cancellation of the elections. All those contracts, projects, budgets streams, networks, and careers are in disarray. But not for long, we can be sure that the resilience and resourcefulness of this highly adaptive industry will soon come up with another inspiring sales banner to continue its good work as has been the case for the last fifty years.

More than anything, the present election fiasco is an inevitable failure of a faulty paradigm whose basic premise starts not with the innate intelligence of the people but their ignorance. Many of the assumptions that inform the intervention in Nepal are politically chic, but analytically dubious. The continued substitution of objective assessment and adherence to rational policy implications by normative homilies is analytically dubious. The continued substitution of objective assessment and adherence to logical policy implications by normative homilies is at the root of the present impasses, whether it be the donors or their recipients. In the absence of critical analysis, the liberal-radical consensus on Nepal appears to have become a victim of its own group think.

King and PR

For example, when the current ruling circle and its external guarantors have already decided in principle to make Nepal a republic after Nov. 22, what substantive difference does it make if the republic is declared by the parliament today to save the country from another likely bloodletting? The sovereign parliament that changed national identity from Hindu kingdom to secular state and confined the King to virtual house arrest in one stroke last year should have no constitutional or legal obstacles in going republican to fulfill the deepest aspirations of the Nepali ‘people’ today. To pose the same question differently, what benefits will the country accrue by keeping the much vilified monarchy another day? Or for the wrangle over the proportional representation system.

An election is an act of selection and representation by the people within an agreed upon framework. To make the democratic election meaningful, the competitors must agree on the fundamental norms of the electoral game. This includes the consensus on the purpose, method, and willingness to accept and abide by the result of the elections. In the context of the CA elections, none of the three criteria were ever met satisfactorily. Whether it was the constituency redrawing controversy or the proportional system, there was a wide divergence of positions on the actual modality of conducting the elections. More seriously, even after the elections dates were fixed, some of the contestants continued to state that they would not be obliged to abide by the result if it was not to their liking. The experts refused to take into account this danger signal and continued to send back/bury reports to New York in order to keep the game going. Is the UN too worried about the complications here? Perhaps not. More mess in the Third World means more business, budget and jobs. A cursory glance back at history shows that wherever UN has stepped in, it tends to stick around for a decade or longer. Last but not least, there was lack of sincere agreement on the purpose of the election itself.

For some, CA election was intended to be a rubber stamp to legitimise the 2006 regime change. For others, the CA result would have been the measure by which to take stake their claim on state power and resources.

Power to the parties

None of the players in the game had actually wanted the people to exercise their ‘sovereign’ reason to express what they really wanted. In a preemptory move, the parties had already decided what the new Nepal would be: federal, republic, and pseudo secular. The CA was gammed to extract popular consent, not open up informed choices. Thus, even if the CA election were to be held as scheduled, it would not have been more than a costly dual because the most important substance had already been preordained through an untested process. That is why the sky did not actually fall when the election was finally cancelled and except for some perfumatory tears in some quarters, nobody is ruling the day.

Contrary to claims, the CA elections and the rest of the political process is not intended to empower the people through reason and information. It is, on the contrary, designed to infantilise them by playing upon their worst fears and emotions. The rule of law is being substituted by fear where insecurity, suspicion, and violent populism have become the primary ruling instruments.

The nation is literally being made to live from minute to minute in baited breath as it awaits its fate outside the gates of Baluwatar and Singha Durbar while those inside are wheeling and dealing, day and night, in perpetually extending sessions. The emotional blackmail serves two functions: buy time for the regime while reducing popular expectations of the political process to abysmal nil. The sum total? National destabilisation and social demoralisation.

(Shah is Program Coordinator for ConFlict, Peace and Development Studies, TU.)
Dr. Thomas A. Marks has recently seen his latest book, Maoist People’s War in Post-Vietnam War Asia, published in Bangkok (White Lotus Press). Here, he responds to questions forwarded by the Nepal Perspectives Group. This is an abridged version of the complete interview.

Do you think Nepal is at a point where the Maoists have overwhelmed the system?

The Maoists have not yet overwhelmed the system, but they remain committed to doing so.

Let us first be gloomy. The monarchy has been marginalized, leaving the context a SPAH affair, with only the “M” (Maoists) understanding armed politics. Maoist thugs run rampant, yet NA has been banished to the barracks by the simple expedient of the CPN(M) packing the regroupment camps with under-age fillers and training cadre, even as the Maoist hardcore leads the “Young” Communist League (YCL) in the streets.

The police are the front line but deploy according to the whims of the highly controversial Home Minister, as does the police reaction force, AFIF. SPAH itself, torn by factionalism, with the legal left as bereft of leadership as NC. No effort has been made to mobilize the people against their tormentors. International actors, though forming a brake of sorts on the Maoists, are as much a part of the problem as the solution, having colluded in the negation of the state’s capacity to enforce law and order.

Now, the “bright” side: The illusion of Maoist strength results from state ineptitude (and haplessness). In reasonably fair and transparent elections, the Maoists stand to lose badly. They know this but use nefarious schemes at work, not least by the UN! The security forces, whatever their flaws, remain intact, and the Maoists have failed in their central aim of incapacitating them. The political class, its lackluster leadership notwithstanding, includes younger elements who could add much were they to break through their cultural straitjacket and cease functioning as lapdogs. The Nepali people are now on the verge of open rebellion against their Maoist tormentors and demand leadership.

What are some of the dimensions the Maoists are using to undermine the state? Are you able to draw parallels with what the Maoists are doing in Nepal and what, for example, Sendero Luminoso did in Peru?

In the first five years (1996-2001) of their people’s war, the Maoists aped Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). Thus they empha-
sized violence, with terror and guerrilla war eliminating the human and institutional rallying points of the system — stripping away the human glue that held the system together. They went to war after 2001, mimic-
ing in structure the forces of the state. The state, bowing to foreign voices, refused to mobilize local forces and thus ceded control of the countryside.

There, a counter-state was built with new economic, social, and political forms (necessarily proto-fascist, to include school prayers to the martyrs of the revolution). Fellow travelers were mobilized into ethnic and “student” bodies. Agit-prop was central to fortifying new cultural norms — hence revolutionary will — through song, dance, and new vocabulary. Internationally, the Maoists simply emphasized a different line of operation as appropriate to the strategic situation in 2006 (as they would put it, to the new correlation of forces). For its part, SPAH inability to see past its struggle with the monarchy to the larger strategic peril in which it was placing itself is now quite on display.

Many of Nepal’s “ultra liberal democrats” belatedly seem to have realized the Maoists cannot be trusted and should not be appeased. The Maoist-orchestrated postponement of CA elections drives the last nail in the coffin for Maoist apologists. Do you have any reactions to this?

The question goes to the heart of the challenge faced by Nepali democracy. The Maoists have never wavered in their goal or their strategy for achieving it. Their goal, as they have stated repeatedly, is a people’s republic. Their strategy, they have trumpeted, is people’s war. Their means, they do not keep secret, are embodied in the mobilization of a mass base to overwhelm the state. Only the operational art of their strategy has been altered to respond to situational realities.

That is, they have emphasized whatever approach is appropriate to time and place. Though too many in the Nepali political class remain ignorant of these fundamental Maoist war fighting realities — of armed politics, which is what insurgency is — many in fact have seen the light. Where they have continued to come up short is in turning understanding into a weapon by mobilizing the Nepali populace for its own defense.

What are your thoughts on the Maoists playing the nationalist card to counter Indian influence in Nepal? Do you see an imminent change in Indian foreign policy given India’s own interim polls on the horizon and also that the whole world has borne witness to the failure of India’s Nepal policy? Could you please expand your response to touch on India’s bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC?

No Nepali government has implemented even the basics of the successful strategy followed elsewhere against Maoism. Perhaps most embarrassing, the Nepali security forces actually claim they secured a victory of sorts by “forcing” the Maoists to negotiate. This is inaccurate. The Maoists simply emphasized a different line of operation as appropriate to the strategic situation in 2006 (as they would put it, to the new correlation of forces). For its part, SPAH inability to see past its struggle with the monarchy to the larger strategic peril in which it was placing itself is now quite on display.

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The UNSC bid is not particularly relevant to the immediate issues. Neither is India concerned about what the world thinks of the retrograde “Great Game” elements of its national security strategy. Much of the Indian political class lives in
Confrontation indeed is inevitable. If the battle previously was between the forces of autocracy and democracy, it is now between parliamentary democracy and people’s democracy. The first form of democracy is reasonably authentic; the second is a façade behind which lurks tyranny. Confrontation indeed is inevitable. If the battle previously was between the forces of autocracy and democracy, it is now between parliamentary democracy and people’s democracy. The first form of democracy is reasonably authentic; the second is a façade behind which lurks tyranny.

What is at issue is not, as the UN seems to think, a matter of, “What are the Maoists thinking?” This grants them the capacity to act outside their doctrinal matrix. Rather, we face: “How are the Maoists thinking?” In the answer one finds the inversion of categories that turns opponents into categories, justifies crimes as necessities of war, and claims that immediate, brutal, personal, terrorist murder is only self-defense against the flaws of the state (as reflected in poverty and any other category one chooses to measure in Nepal). Yet we witness no diquicks in UNMIN ranks as the Maoist populace daily suffers from the thugs and as the Maoists pay homage to icons representing the greatest mass murderers of all history. One shudders to consider if the same negligence would accompany the adding of Hitler’s image to those of Mao, Stalin et al. Or Pol Pot perhaps?

Indian strategy towards Nepal has repeated the mistakes of New Delhi’s Sri Lankan gambit, a cock-up from start to finish for which Indian forces paid the price in casualties.印度的策略已经重复了它在斯里兰卡的错误，从开始到结束都是个错误，印度军队为此付出了代价。印度的战略在尼泊尔是一个失败的模式。

What in your opinion of the UN role in Nepal?

UN activity has moved Nepal to the point that elections of sorts could be held. Unfortunately, the UN appears not to take seriously Maoist revolutionary aspirations. Nepal Maoism is led by individuals who have committed themselves to a revolutionary enterprise and thus see the world in the hackneyed, dangerous categories of Maoist-Leninism. In particular, they are after ideological anti-US posturing. Indian Marxism is incapable of fighting and incapable of practicing democratic politics.

What do you anticipate the Maoists will do next? It appears they are incapable of fighting and incapable of practicing democratic politics. The Maoists are not debating goals or strategy but the implementation of their strategy (i.e., operational art). They have exposed themselves to the world. On the one hand, it can be argued this is significant. They have been revealed for what they are, would-be fascists. On the other hand, it could also be irrelevant. It is, after all, facts on the ground that will determine the outcome. To the extent that Maoist democracy continues to ring its hands and expect the international cavalry to come to its rescue, the Maoists will have a free hand.

Are there any parallels between the Maoist movement in Nepal and the Khmer Rouge movement in Cambodia? The Maoist movement in Nepal shares many structural and ideological parallels with the Pol Pot case.

Ultimately, Maoist violence will only be swamped by a wave of outraged humanity. Confrontation indeed is inevitable. If the battle previously was between the forces of autocracy and democracy, it is now between parliamentary democracy and people’s democracy. The first form of democracy is reasonably authentic; the second is a façade behind which lurks tyranny. Confrontation indeed is inevitable. If the battle previously was between the forces of autocracy and democracy, it is now between parliamentary democracy and people’s democracy. The first form of democracy is reasonably authentic; the second is a façade behind which lurks tyranny.
GREAT LEADER
irrelevant politician

It is very difficult for me to write about Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. It is so because I like him. It is said that when a journalist starts liking a politician it becomes very difficult for him to remain objective. Text books have prescribed many dos and don’ts for journalists. I never cared for a majority of them. Most of the failed journalists however become good professors of journalism. In any case ours is a country of preachers not doers. People know how to do much of their job. Having spent two decades as Nepal’s most watched television talk show host I know for sure that journalism has got nothing much to do with truth! Journalism at its best can get closer to “facts” not to the truth.

Fact is only a small component of truth.

The amusing thing about ‘truth’ is - it exists either in mathematicians or in Nirvana only. Many argue even mathematics can be manipulated. My relationship with Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the only living founder of Nepali Congress, started much before I joined journalism. KP used to live in same area I grew up in. Many people in the locality and elsewhere would hesitate to talk with him as he was declared and national element during Panchayat regime. He was jailed for almost 14 years. His crime was his unfailing belief in democracy.

I was attracted to him because of his innocent smile. He would sometimes give me a candy. Later in life I liberally consumed his whiskies. Once he told me - politicians are like a woman in blanket. What they revel is tempting but what they hide is vital. I took this as a mantra and found very useful in my career.

KP never married but never claimed that he lacked the ‘experience’. He loved to exaggerate the details of his encounters but I am sure most of those are imaginary. During April 1996 he told me, “I will give you a scoop but do not use it for at least 10 years. People talk about my relationships with women even these at this age of mine. Journalists of this city are basically idiots who always try to play in politics.

If he fails, KP might have the last laugh about his friend. Even then, KP will not have much role to play in politics.

Vijay Kumar

If he fails, KP might have the last laugh about his friend. Even then, KP will not have much role to play in politics.
Are we a democracy?

Political mudslinging in our country appears to be the rule rather than an exception.

In Nepal, political leaders instead of expounding on their own principles and platforms, spend more time indulging in mudslinging. Many leaders attack not only each other’s issues, but also each other at very personal levels. Worse, at times political mudslinging includes a leader’s personal life and his/her family. Such mudslinging or character assassination can become so ugly that it can cause the victims to be isolated from public activities. The dejected and humiliated ones may then have no choice but to distance themselves from their political parties.

In recent times, Nepal has been pivoting around politically charged disputes over abolishing monarchy and replacing it with a federal republican mechanism and keeping a ceremonial monarchy. Political leaders are clearly divided over the issue of whether to continue the monarchy or abolish it once and for all. With all the hyperbolic rhetoric coming from pro- and anti-republicanism, this debate has poisoned recent politics and has polarised Nepalis into two opposite extremes.

Character assassination, a particularly repugnant political tactics, has been employed extensively throughout the history of Nepali politics. Among many other prominent political leaders, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai has become the victim of this attack in contemporary Nepali political history. Many anti-republicanism leaders including Bhattarai have been condemned for their pro-monarchial views by other leaders who are advocating and campaigning for a federal republican set-up. The campaigning against him has now degenerated from an earnest critique of his views to a pathetic attempt at character assassination. Defaming Bhattarai may have given some people a despicable popularity among the public. If they think he neither possesses any power nor any ability to change the direction of the current political wind, why are they so afraid of his remarks? So what if he favors constitutional monarchy? If we are so ready to abolish monarchy, why not do it? Bhattarai (and anyone else for that matter) has the right to have a different opinion. If we cannot respect other’s views, we are authoritarian and hypocritical.

Unfortunately, political mudslinging in our country appears to be the rule rather than an exception. It really is not an effective way to sway today’s savvy voters, many of whom are very concerned about the direction this country is heading to.

In any democracy, freedom of speech and expression is vital. Democracies offer space to many voices expressing different or contrary ideas and opinion. Democracy also allows any citizen to publicly criticise unethical or tyrannical opinion of public figures or policies of authorities; and people have the liberty to express what they think and how they feel. In a democratic society, people have right to accept or reject. Why do the rulers in Nepal occasionally tend to stoop down so and play dirty, instead of politely and logically rejecting their opponents’ views? Is democracy here only a convenient term used just for vested interests?

In any democracy, freedom of speech and expression is vital. Democracies offer space to many voices expressing different or contrary ideas and opinion.

(Writer is Ph.D, Executive Member, Nepali Janasamparka Samiti (NJS), USA and Coordinator, Policy and Research Department, NJS-USA)

Basic Operating Guidelines agreed to by Undersigned Agencies in Nepal

The Basic Operating Guidelines were signed by our agencies in 2003, allowing our impartial development work to continue during conflict. We republish these guidelines committed to respecting them and determined to focus on development activities that include the diverse groups that together constitute Nepali society. We remain impartial in the conflicts present in Nepal and look forward to their resolution through dialogue and understanding between all political and social groups. As Nepal moves towards elections to a Constituent Assembly our work will continue if the safety of our staff and their impartial work is respected by all Nepalis.

Based on principles agreed internationally and in Nepal, we the undersigned have adopted the following Basic Operating Guidelines for all development and, if necessary, humanitarian assistance in Nepal.

1. We are in Nepal to contribute to improvement in the quality of life of the people of Nepal. Our assistance focuses on reducing poverty, meeting basic needs and enabling communities to become self-sufficient.
2. We work through the freely expressed wishes of local communities, and we respect the dignity of people, their culture, religion and customs.
3. We provide assistance to the poor and marginalized people of Nepal, regardless of where they live and who they are. Priorities for assistance are based on need alone, and not on any political, ethnic or religious agenda.
4. We ensure that our assistance is transparent and we involve poor people and their communities in the planning, management and implementation of programmes. We are accountable to those whom we seek to assist and to those providing the resources.
5. We seek to ensure that our assistance tackles discrimination and social exclusion, most notably based on gender, ethnicity, caste and religion.
6. We recruit staff on the basis of suitability and qualification for the job, and not on the basis of political or any other considerations.
7. We do not accept our staff and development partners being subjected to violence, abduction, harassment or intimidation, or being threatened in any manner.
8. We do not work where staff are forced to compromise core values or principles.
9. We do not accept our assistance being used for any military, political or sectarian purposes.
10. We do not make contributions to political parties and do not make any forced contributions in cash or kind.
11. Our equipment, supplies and facilities are not used for purposes other than those stated in our programme objectives. Our vehicles are not used to transport persons or goods that have no direct connection with the development programme. Our vehicles do not carry armed or uniformed personnel.
12. We do not tolerate the theft, diversion or misuse of development or humanitarian supplies. Unhindered access of such supplies is essential.
13. We urge all those concerned to allow full access by development and humanitarian personnel to all people in need of assistance, and to make available, as far as possible, all necessary facilities for their operations, and to promote the safety, security and freedom of movement of such personnel.
14. We expect and encourage all actors concerned to comply strictly with international humanitarian principles and human rights law.
Emotional welcome for Benazir

Thousands of party faithful turned out to give an emotional welcome to former prime minister Benazir Bhutto on Saturday when she set foot on the soil of her ancestral village after eight years. Chanting “Jaiy Bhutto”, the People’s Party supporters cheered and clapped as Ms Bhutto visited the mausoleum of her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh village. Ms Bhutto waved from her bullet-proof vehicle to jubilant crowds, who were prevented from approaching the vehicle by security staff wielding AK-47s. A huge portrait of Mr Bhutto hung from a pylon, and green, red and black PPP flags fluttered as her convoy whipped up a duststorm. Ms Bhutto laid a shawl inscribed with Quranic verses and showered rose petals on her father’s grave. She then sat beside the tomb for almost an hour, reading the holy Quran.

“I feel very sentimental. I was eager to visit the tomb of my father, the Quaid-I-Awam, and offer prayers,” Ms Bhutto told reporters later. She was then driven to her family residence, protected by security officials in jeeps mounted with machineguns. “There is still a threat to my life, but Allah can protect everyone and I am not scared of these people (militants),” the PPP chief asserted. “I now feel better about my security.”

Earlier, Ms Bhutto arrived in Sukkur from Karachi by aeroplane, adds Abbas Jilabi, hundreds of police and paramilitary troops were deployed at the airport for Ms Bhutto’s first busy outside-Karachi since last week’s attack marred her return to Pakistan. Thousands of PPP workers and supporters had started thronging the Sukkur airport hours before the PPP leader’s arrival, although the local party leadership had made no announcements about Ms Bhutto’s schedule. Rumours were in circulation that the announcement of Ms Bhutto’s arrival in Sukkur was a decoy and that she had already reached Garhi Khuda Bakhsh or even that she may take a helicopter from Sukkur air-port. After the plane touched the tarmac, hundreds of vociferous workers gatecrashed into the airport after dismantling three tiers of security cordon thrown by police, the Rangers and the Airport Security Force. Ms Bhutto’s bullet-proof Nish Khuhr-o-driven four wheeler — followed and preceded by identical vehicles and accompanied by 24 police vans, two jeeps carrying police high-ups and two others carrying Rangers — left the airport for Garhi Khuda Bakhsh in a convoy of two to three thousand vehicles. The fleet kept on swelling as more vehicles joined on the road to Larkana. Larkana DIG Muzaffar Shaikh advised Ms Bhutto to change her route because at the beginning of the road leading to Dakhlan from Madjed, at least 5,000 people were waiting for her and the narrow turn was a security risk. Initially she refused but, after a 15-minute persuasion, she agreed to take the Gaheja-Ratodero link road. Benazir Bhutto said that the threat to her life, coupled with “poor security arrangements”, made her for the government could not keep her away from the masses as “I don’t care about my life”. Talking to journalists accompanying her during the Karachi-Sukkur flight, Ms Bhutto said she was extremely happy to be able to return to her ancestral village and her constituency. “When I announced my plan of return, I was told that I was endangering my life. Even President Musharraf advised me on TV that I should defer my homecoming. But I decided to face the threat and take the risk.” She said that when she arrived in Karachi, three million people greeted her. “People want change.” She added that for her, entire Pakistan was Larkana (her home town) and she would visit different parts of the country soon.

Dawn
Reincarnation
Hypnotic trance facilitates revivification of lost memories

Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinoche

Dr. Ian Stevenson has done a lot of research on such children and he has shifted fraudulent from the genuine. And he has come up with four huge volumes of genuine ones which he says cannot be scientifically disproved in any way. His four volumes are: Cases of reincarnation type: India; Cases of reincarnation type: Sri Lanka; Cases of reincarnation type: Lebanon and Turkey; and Cases of reincarnation type: Thailand and Burma. He has also written another book - Twenty cases suggestive of reincarnation.

Then again there is the world famous psychotherapist Helen Wembach, who also used over 20 years of her own clinical work in hypnotherapy. She too claims that even though she herself is a Christian whose beliefs contradict the idea of reincarnation and her training in psychotherapy did not in any way prepare her for this; she cases she dealt with for over 20 years, overwhelmingly pointed rather clearly at cases of former lives.

Hypnotic trance facilitates revivification of lost memories of this life especially those from birth onwards. Everything that the child sees, hears, smells, feels, remembers are stored in the subconscious/unconscious.

These memories can be leaked out into awareness through various methods like 'free association' in Freudian psychoanalysis, active imagination in Jungian analytical psychotherapy and hypnotherapy etc. Helen Wembach used hypnotherapy, which is a powerful tool to bring out lost memories entangled stubbornly in the subconscious, she often found that her patients went further than birth into former lives. She also found that if memories and wounds of former lives were healed the effect was seen in this life’s mental life. These are records that cannot be easily explained away, as actual mental and physical healings had also taken place.

I would like to recount the case of a multi-millennial that Helen had dealt with. One of her patients was a millenar who had suffered from strong pains in his right ribs. Being a millenarian, he had the best doctors and his personal physician made him go through all the possible checkups possible at the time in the States. Since no physical cause was found in spite of repeated tests of various kinds, his personal physician finally suggested that it could be of a psychological origin and he should try a psychotherapist as well. Then he met Helen.

Helen started digging up his subconsciously mind to cut out some experience / event in his childhood which could be the cause of his excruciating pain. Many physical pains and pathologies originate in some traumatic experience in childhood.

The purpose of all forms of psychotherapy, be it Gestalt therapy, psychotherapy, Jungian Analytical psychotherapy, Transactional psychotherapy or hypnotherapy or their combinations etc., is to bring the traumatic experiences hidden in the recesses of the subconscious to conscious awareness.

In both Buddhism and all forms of psychotherapy, awareness is curative. If the root cause (usually traumatic experiences but also sometimes just plain old childhood confusion) is brought clearly in present, he was commanded that he be to be seen by awareness, the process of being cured begins. As long as the root causes are hidden in the dark nooks and crannies of the subconscious mind, there is no chance that we can free ourselves from its grasp and all that it entails. That is why Smriti – Samparajyana (mindfulness and comprehension) is of the utmost importance in the Buddhist path be it Sri Lankan or Mahayana.

Even in the loony bin, a person who has flipped out is getting cured only when he himself flips out. But when he has flipped out. The loony bin is an extreme case where people whose neurotic tendencies have become psychotic; but in society, even amongst those who are considered socially acceptable, some neurotic tendencies found in the psychotic to an uncontrollable level, is to be found in a lesser or greater degree. Just like the lunatic we too can get cured or be freed of our neurotic tendencies, only as and when we become aware of them within us.

Thus awareness is curative and one of the purposes of most therapies is to bring the unconscious into awareness. This is called integrating the unconscious. The unconscious here means all the neurosis and complexes hidden within us. In Buddhist terminology, we can bring the workings of the emotional defilements within us.

Going to the story of the millionaires, while fishing for early memories of childhood, in a hypnotic trance, he suddenly slipped into a dungeon in the Roman period. He started waking and crying, holding his ribs. When asked what was happening he described that he was in a prison in Rome and a Centaurian was torturing over him and kicking him to death. When asked where he was being kicked, he pointed at the same ribs which had been causing him trouble since a long time. When he was brought back to the present, he was commanded that he would remember the incident clearly even after he woke up. After he woke up from the hypnotic trance with full memory of the incident, it was found that he had ‘miraculously’ become free from the pain that had troubled him for such a long time.

(Lest to be continued) (Sridhar Rinoche is a Vajrayana Master)
A football match between Nepal and Yemen at Dasharath Stadium, Kathmandu on Sunday. Nepal lost the second round world cup qualifying match by 0-2.

Life pulses through its intricate map created by nature. Veins of life, indeed are the branches that spread out, soar into the skies and reach out to the unknown. The basic idea of this painting arose at a time when I was trying to gather information on my ancestry. I was fascinated by the fact that my family came from a certain culture and blended in with so many different cultures through marriage, travel, time and migration.

I would have called this painting, roots, but then did a rethink since it would have appeared contradictory. I have used acrylics and texture white yet again and a combination of complementary colours with red being highlighted, representing life.

Batik Design from Ghana, Africa

I have been fascinated with resist techniques like Batik for a long time. This popular resist technique is known to be more than a millennium old and probably originates in ancient Egypt or Sumeria as historical evidence points out. Batik is found in several countries in West Africa such as Nigeria, Mali, Ghana and Cameroon, and in Asia in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Iran, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

(1224 GMT), commemorating the event with a brief ceremony.

“It’s a pleasure to be here in this very beautiful piece of hardware,” Nespoli said of the Italian-built Harmony node which he and his STS-120 crewmates aboard NASA’s shuttle Discovery helped install during a Friday spacewalk.

Neuropol and Whitson wore protective goggles and masks inside the node to guard against any loose debris shaken free during the module delivery to the ISS. They also took air samples after floating into the new orbital room.

Harmony in space

Named by students in a NASA contest, the Harmony node serves as the docking point for European and Japanese laboratories to be installed during future shuttle missions.

“We think Harmony is a very good name for this module because it represents the culmination of a lot of the international partner work,” Whitson said during the node’s christening.

The school bus-sized connecting node was temporarily attached to the Destiny module of the International Space Station in this image from NASA TV October 27, 2007.

At one point, originally in the mission, it was not a requirement for us to go inside,” Discovery’s STS-120 mission commander Pamela Melroy said before the spaceflight. “And the crew said, ‘No way! We want to go inside!’ We were excited about that.”

Melroy presented Whitson with a necklace bearing a Harmony module-shaped charm after the node was opened.

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For Details:
Bhrikutki Publication Pvt. Ltd.
Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Tel: 4443888, Fax: 4411912

Kasthamandep Distribution Pvt. Ltd.
Teku, Kathmandu, Tel: 2010821