Contested Idea of Nation

Madhesi Upsurge in Nepal

KALPANA JHA

T I S S

Research and Development

Tata Institute of Social Sciences

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The end of World War II marked the advent of Ethnic disputes in the world. The explicit wars for territory converted into implicit wars for identity and recognition; perhaps, because a part of the population still felt colonised even after the official end of colonial rule. Ever since, *identity* has been the basis for disenfranchisement of the people and thus the foundation for struggle for greater autonomy.

This text embarks on a study of the underlying factors that resulted in ethnic dispute in one of the newest democracies in South Asia i.e. Nepal with a focus on *"Madhesis" (people from the plains of Nepal).*

The emergence of ethnic demands in the *Terai* (Plains now known as *Madhes*) was initially witnessed in the 1950s. The king's coup in 1960s sabotaged this demand and it was further impaired in 1990 with the restoration of multi-party democracy, when instead of helping to bring greater ethic representation, it actually hampered its progress. However, with the institution of an interim government in 2006, ethnic demands came to the forefront. This is not surprising since it reflected the world political milieu at large, and this demand remains real even today.

What is interesting to observe in case of Nepal is that, the far left parties along with significant support of the donor agencies endorsed the ethno-territorial demands and opposed the attitude of the right-led parties to these demands. The support base that the Maoists garnered for the People's War (1996-2006) which also made them the strongest party in the elections of 2008 was through the mobilisation of ethnic groups. Therefore, to keep their support base intact they recognised that ethnic demands are to be addressed. However, initial efforts failed to materialise into real changes in the ethnic representation and attitudinal changes and acceptance in the political process . This text therefore seeks to explain various dynamics involved in the ensuing systematic Madhesi upsurge. The repeated failure of the Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution that institutionalises the ethnic demands is another focal issue of this text.

In addition, this text discusses the more complex geo-politics linked to the phenomenon of the ethnic upsurge. This work attempts to highlight the major risks and concerns surrounding the unfolding political climate in Nepal. The text also addresses the dynamic interplay between social, economic and political structures vis-à-vis the *Madhes*i movement. The relationship between the donor regime and the state will be unravelled to explain the development of the movement. In addition, the paper delves into the cultural flows across the border vis-à-vis Indo-Nepal relations.

Therefore the issues that propel my analysis are:

- The difference between people's expectations from the field and the questionable direction that the political developments have taken after *Jana Andolaan-II (people's movement- II in 2006)*

- The process of re-defining Nepali identity, the shift in understanding Madhesi identity vis-à-vis the Nepali identity

- The major influential factors that shaped the Madhesi movement and the political trajectory at large in Nepal.

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Until 2005 Nepal was a unitary Hindu Kingdom headed by a constitutional monarch. However, the last few years have seen a paradigm shift in the country's political thought, it has moved towards a more republican and secular ideology that is more in sync with prevalent ideas around the world . This transformation, though gradual, has not been an easy step for Nepal.

For Nepal, finding a way to define its existence through and after the colonial era has been perplexing. Being located between one of the largest democracies and a colossal communist country, has been a constant challenge for Nepal. It has tried to keep itself impervious to immense ideological influences.

India and China have emerged as large post-colonial nations and ethnic politics have been a core political concern for both countries; something that is now reflecting in Nepal's political transition. Post-colonial phenomenon of Ethnic politics, is triggered by the dual trend of industrialization and globalization. However, Nepal, given its geo-political limitations has never seen rampant industrialisation in the country and has never been a direct colony; yet ethnic tension has emerged in Nepal, making it an important and interesting point of study for modern political and social development. The relationship between these factors of industrialisation, modern social empowerment and ethnic conflict is what drives the political changes in Nepal, especially the unrest in the plains now known as "*Madhes*".

Nationalism in Nepal did not entail any common civilisational link ; rather the identity of the nation was defined as per the convenience of the ruling community. The idea of nationalism came into existence in Nepal well before it did in India; it was defined by the spirit of conquest of Prithvi Narayan Shah[1]. This nationalism, had the king as the central character in defining Nepali nationalism and his descendants the carriers of this legacy, and was in its nature exclusionary and suppressive. It is this concept of nationalism that is contested today. The ruling elite of Nepal, that formed the core of this nationalism; which comprised of those confirming and coming from the community that the King favoured. In addition, the idea of nationalism in Nepal has been influenced by the assimilation of varied identities that crossed the borders orchestrated by the ruling elite for their perceived benefit.

CONCEPTUAL MAP

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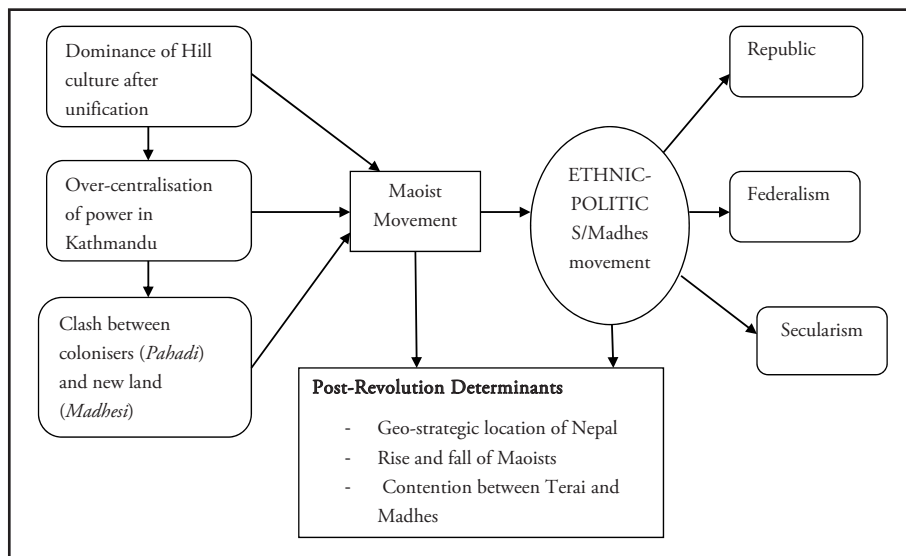
1   The Shah King who unified Nepal.

With the advent of democracy in Nepal, this idea of nation constructed on forced assimilation has been deeply contested, specially by the *Madhesis*. This is the result of three factors- international relations, globalization and economy. The conceptual framework illustrates the inter-relation between these factors in determining the current Madhesi ethnic upsurge in Nepal.

Lines of Enquiry:

- What are the underpinning factors of Madhesi Upsurge in Nepal?

- What are the factors that influence and support ethnic movements to get transformed into political movements?

- What kind of impact will this kind of political movement have on the politics and economy of Nepal as a whole? How is the issue of demand of ethnic autonomy being addressed in the upcoming democratic process (the constitution and the parliament)? Vanhanen, Tatu. *Politics of ethnic nepotism:India as an example.* Patna: Sterling Publishers, 1991.

SECTION II

The Inception of Nepal; Foundation of an Unequal society:

From ancient times, Nepal, to a great extent, has inherently been an unequal society not just in its definition but also in its socio-economic structure. Divided on many planes,often on the basis of complex caste and class system; where certain groups of people/ communities and geographical areas have prospered, while many others have remained disenfranchised of even basic facilities. Major urban cities like Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar etc and the people living in those areas have reaped the benefits of development initiatives where as people from rural mountains and Terai have been deprived from the same.

In the political context, the identity Nepal has earned goes beyond the physical boundaries of unification. It is important to carve out the framework or structure of Nepal to explain the core of present day ethnic rift between the *Madhesi* (terai people) and *Pahadi (hill-dwellers)*. Nepal's geo-strategic location has been the key determining factor to its political trajectory. Location between India and China has largely determined its history and the definition it has earned. One third of the Himalayan fortress is controlled by Nepal on which Asia relies for protection. There were 18 pass areas in the central Himalaya that were used as communication channels between Nepal and Tibet. These were the routes from where the trade flowed and cultures exchanged. This also became a passage for armies at times (Rose 1971). Kathmandu was an entry point into the Himalayas which was perceived as a place of great significance in terms of trade and security. Therefore, the trans-Himalayan border and Kathmandu valley became the focus of Nepal's Identity Hence the identity of Nepal was also defined by powerful external political forces that benefitted from the Himalayan frontier. Because of the historical artefact and political significance to the world rather than to itself, construction of the Nepali identity was in congruence with the Himalayan territory and the Mountain people, with the lower reaches as merely serving lands and people.

Kathmandu being the convenient entry point into the Himalayas developed as not just the capital but also as safe home for all political elites. Therefore, power remained centralised in Kathmandu as per the convenience of the elite in partnership with external development agencies and was controlled entirely by king and his cronies. The ones who did not have access to Kathmandu remained completely out of the political power, as well as economic mainstream. The fact that Nepal was home to 100 plus ethnic groups, many of whom do not share the common hilly or Himalayan origin, was an image that remained blurred in the National consciousness and completely over powered in the larger framework of the 'Idea' that was Nepal.. The people of Terai, felt no identification with the state and it's rulers. Therefore, it is easily traceable that the Madhesis were conquered people destined to be alienated and their cultural difference made it even more profound.

SECTION III

THE NATION-STATES OF NAYA NEPAL

"The term nation state reflects the intimate bonds of people and place" (white 2004).

When one 'identity' dominates over others, it becomes important to analyse the term 'identity' from the perspective of class, caste as well as social construct class . In Nepal, the ruling dynasties defined identities as per their convenience. The caste groups in hills structured their distinctiveness on the basis of labour so as to find service easily. Ascribing the Madhesis the identity of being 'Indians' was also a part of the plan to exploit the abundant resources of their area/land while keeping the people distant from these resources. Moreover, for the powerful, the main source of power is derived from division of society. Only when an identified group is treated as 'outsiders', they can be effectively denied state benefits while the status of the insider remains protected. In other words '*othering*' is the bridle of power. The basis for this 'othering' can be nothing better than identity. This propaganda is spread by the ruling classes who create a social hierarchy which places them in a superior position, and by that same process denying others a social position in the state. This construction of identities has continued since time immemorial.

With the inception of *Naya* Nepal the long discriminated Madhesi community also sought to assert its identity in a new way. By first accepting discriminatory term "*Madise*" as their identity, They asserted themselves politically as the Madhesi people. They now differentiate themselves from the other communities on many fronts; they have focussed on certain physical and cultural parameters to create a new definition of themselves and extended it to become a sense of nationhood. The most commonly held notion that most of the participants of the study identify is, "*We have a different facial appearance, we are red in colour; we, who wear dhoti, and speak Maithili, Bhojpuri, etc. are called Madhesis. Language culture, dress expresses different nations*". These statements profess a sense of national consciousness which has elements of identity and autonomy in this particular group of population. Having a long history of marginalization and sharing common sense of exclusion has led to formation of the common identity as a means of assertion to power. The cultural and lingual commonness as well as the question of appearance is also being stressed strongly. This is the awareness of being a part of a community as opposed to another with clearly different cultural and linguistic parameters has become an important development for people of this region . Here the high status group members have been highly discriminatory and ethnocentric where they saw their legitimate superiority threatened by the low status group, but not their superiority as illegitimate[2] (Ellemers, 1999)(Naomi Ellemers 1999). The supremacy that was founded on discriminatory attitude towards this region is now being challenged by acquiring new identity that is more independent and distinguishable . The division on the basis of dissent also generates a sense of commonness which can be called combative unity i.e. To struggle with the objective of establishing one's identity against a particular community which suppresses both

It can be argued as the growing awareness of the commonality of certain characteristics such as common territory, language and culture. This helps them to mobilize their concept of identity for greater integration. It is this thought, philosophy and emotions that propels unity for political advantages to formation of states[3] (Guha 1984). This is a trend that was observed back in post-colonial years in other parts of the world. But Nepal that remained relatively closed Hindu monarchical kingdom until recently had not developed a concept of nation-state or perhaps suppressed it from being manifested in its socio-economic structure.

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2   Naomi Ellemers, Russel Spears and Bertjan Doosje. *Social Identity*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999.
3   Guha, Amalendu. "Nationalism: Pan-Indian and Regional in a Historical Perspective." *Social Scientist*, 1984: 42-65.

SECTION IV

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS, GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY FORMATION

Democracy in its modern form came into its own during the nineteenth century to describe a system of representative elections, where most male citizens of a state were entitled to vote. The Americans defined their democracy as the government in which the people retain supreme power[4] (Birch 1993).

The colonial past of South Asia formed the intrinsic framework for defining democracy in this region. Independent India was one of the pioneering states in introducing democracy in South Asia; its ideals were largely derived from the British model. This created certain governance issues that harked back to the British method of controlling foreign people and culture, such as the centralised state-structure, the police and security system that rather function to terrorise public, as evident in the north-eastern states and Kashmir[5] (Gupta 2000). In south Asia, the term 'people' needs to be defined differently, as it often refers to fragmented societies or groups in contractual understanding with the state which retains supreme power. However, this notion of state is subject to change with the changing idea of democracy which devolves more power to the people. With the innumerable diverse elements to accommodate, such a centralised model is inadequate, and has left a large part of the population untouched by both democracy and freedom.

The new democracies of South Asia, such as Nepal were overwhelmed by the idea of advanced democracies of the west; they failed to design an indigenous democratic model best suited to its people and culture. Besides, defining democracy in a relatively divided society is a challenging task for any emerging democracy, as it has an additional task of accommodating diversities of various types. The state tends to automatically becomes hegemonic in its power structure, as it attempts to address as well as hold these diversities together. However, within this model, there is space for these diversities to interact and retaliate with the state.

Globalization that developed as a pre-requisite to foster liberal democracy has also contributed to the increasing ethnic conflict. Looking closely, with integration of world trade and the strengthening of financial and diplomatic ties, internal wars and civil conflicts are becoming more important than international wars. The other noticeable aspect of this growing trend, is that none of the countries remain out of the ambit of ethnic wars; even those that are deeply embedded in global trade and diplomatic market have experienced bloody ethnic wars. Globalization produces greater inequality of income in industrialised societies, which affects the less educated and lower skilled manual workers the most. If the latter are predominantly drawn from a specific ethnic group, the situation would progress from merely being one of economic inequality to one that also creates ethnic inequality resulting in social conflict based on ethnic identities. Therefore, these differential privileges that globalization promotes among groups, augments the process of ethnic conflict. Economic globalization, through trade liberalisation, has encouraged migration across national borders. Such migrations can increase levels of ethnic heterogeneity and bring formerly separated groups into contact. Two consequences, as discussed by Ozlak, of these trends are that competition among ethnic groups rises as does the salience of ethnic boundaries. Globalization also spreads information across borders, potentially raising awareness of resource inequalities. In this way, ethnic inequality, whether real or perceived, generates ethnic discon-

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4   Birch, Anthony H. *the concepts and theories of modern democracy*. London: Routledge, 1993.
5   Gupta, Anirudh. "Bulding Democracies in South Asia." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2000: 1071-1074.

tent, which in turn increases the likelihood that violent insurgent movements will become organized along ethnic lines[6] (Olzak 2010).

With the increasing significance of worldwide diasporic social formations, both challengers and incumbents may increasingly seek resources from dispersed trans-border thick kin. And a thickening web of international and nongovernmental organizations has provided greater international legitimacy, visibility, and support to ethnic groups with claims reinforced by strongly individualist human rights language that prevailed in the decades immediately following World War II. These institutional and normative transformations at the level of "world polity" provide further incentive for the ethnic framing of challenges to incumbent regiment[7] (Laitin 1998). The above theory /idea, well explains the role of international agencies in shaping the local level politics vis-à-vis ethnic conflict.

In the context of globalization, as the world is expanding, so is the competition for resources and spaces. Thus the limited resources available in a crowded space become inaccessible to certain groups. Hence, when the time and space is dissolved by the network such as social media, channels of communication, etc creating a larger world beyond control, the social actors aim to shrink it to their size and reach; while doing so they anchor themselves in places, and recall their historic memory[8] (Castells 2010). Taking fabric as the metaphor for a state, we can say that individuality and ethnic identity are the warp and weft of this fabric; globalisation is the force that has stretched this fabric tautly and modern aspiration and resource crunch are pressure points which are tearing the state apart.

The multi-ethnic, multi-cultural contingencies of south Asia has created the landscape of inequality. The modern state formation, based on liberal democracy has produced modern minority. However, the nationalist and ethnic politics are not just the by-product of modern state-formation but also of the modern principles of inclusion that are paradoxically tied to the ethnic and national forms of exclusion. The ideologies of modern nation state, republicanism and nationalism have been organised around the principle of one nation and one people. The nation-states were never homogenous and never wished to be assimilated, which has given rise to the politics of homeland[9] (Manchanda 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that the modern principles of democracy have been formulated on a relatively unequal basis that seeks to homogenise the population resulting in conflicting ethnic and cultural groups demanding recognition of their own unique identities.

The western world encouraged the third world countries to consider democratic frameworks that favoured the global village model with an intention of economic control. The idea of one nation that developed from these systems failed to accommodate diversity giving rise to internal conflicts. This has recently been apparent in countries like Nepal, which occupy buffer areas between two strong and competing regional powers (India and China). In such situation, globalisation enters in the garb of aid agencies and becomes political stake-holders to manipulate the competition between the power groups, where ethnic turmoil becomes a tool to generate unrest within and across borders.

THE VULNERABLE SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty also has to be analysed from the post-cold war perspective as it bears an intrinsic relationship with the post-war developments that shaped the nature of international relations. The politics of interdependence determined the nature of politics of the epoch. The military conquests came to

6   Olzak, Susan. "Does Globalization Breed Ethnic Discontent." *Jounal of Conflict Resolution*, 2010: 3-32.
7   Laitin, Rogers Brubaker and David D. "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1998: 423-452.
8   Castells, Manuel. *The Power of Identity*. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010.
9   Manchanda, Ed. Rita. *States in Conflict with their Minorities*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2010.

an end, demarcation of territories was important and freedom for interdependence had become recognised as the need of the era. The modern definition of the sovereign i.e., supreme authority over a territory emerged in Europe as a result of the peace of Westphalia and spread over the world[10] (Mishra 2008). However, the concept of sovereign in case of weaker polities, becomes an important arena of concern when conflicts begin to break out on religious, ethnic, resource lines.

Nepal came into existence as a result of a saga of treaties that were signed over a period of time with China as well as India. Before this, the boundaries were only blurred and maintained through cultural exchange and marital relationships or at the might of sword. If examined historically, although Nepal has not been a colonial society, it has not been exempted from its impacts. The consolidation of national borders in the post-colonial era has invented new forms of identity[11] (Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999). Nepal was no exception; the Nepali identity evolved as the mechanism of discernment from the dominant cultures and of the protectorate of Nepal.

In the advent of the era of sovereign states, the most carefully designed were states like Nepal, which came into existence in the strategic interest of the neighbouring states. These territories on one hand helped to maintain safe distance with the political adversaries, and on the other, served as a playground to execute plans against the same.

10   Mishra, Atul. "Theorising State Sovereignty." *Economic and political weekly,* 2008: 65-72.
11   Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, Darini Rajasingham-senanayake, Ashish Nandy, EdmundTerence Gomez. *Ethnic futures: The State and Identity Politics in Asia*. California: Sage Publications Inc, 1999.

SECTION IV

POWER, HEGEMONY AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

Ethnic politics and the conflicts that arise from it, being the core concern of this research, it important to understand where the roots of ethnic conflict lie. It developed in the late 19th century, when powerful ethnic nationalism was being encouraged to serve various national and imperial policies. Myths of racial superiority and ethnic identity were increasingly being used by the European governments to carve out colonial empires on other continents. Within Europe itself, diverse ethnic groups, artificially bound into nations, were even more resistive to the idea of being part of a political state with which they did not share ethnic similarities. In this case, the aspect that needs to be discerned is, as author George Simmel argues, that conflict did not originate instinctually but was a social process that needs to be analysed[12] (Wehr 2002). Therefore what is clearly derived is the concept that ethnic conflicts were devised and used to maintain power and authority over territories. Regional politics has become one of the most prominent phenomenon post 20th century, while the 21st century has seen some of the most violent upheavals along this line.

Ethnicity and Power from Foucauldian lens:

Foucault explains a way, which is more empirical and directly related to the present situation, to go further towards a new economy of power relations. It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. He defines various kinds of struggles, all of which finally questions the status and identity of an individual at the very basic level- "Who are we?"; this is the question around which the whole struggle whirls. Quest for individuality and desire to be different from others, yet not to be confined or limited in one's own identity is the most important wisdom that a person can acquire. This identification with difference happens at various levels- national and international, education and knowledge, culture and religion; metaphorically, it consists of using resistance as a catalyst so as to bring to light the ' power' in relationships, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the opposing strategies. This can be derived from Foucault's explanation that a historical awareness of our present circumstance and how we deal with it, shape our conceptualisation of power relations. Therefore, this implies that it is not an attack on a particular class, caste, ethnicity, a particular group or even a particular institution of power, rather it is an attack on a type or a form of power. Foucault further explains the shift in power relations over a period of time using the church as an example; from initial functions of guiding the people towards salvation to later becoming intricately connected with politics and becoming an instrument of state apparatus[13] (Foucault 1982). An analogy from this can be drawn to explain ethnicity; ethnic claims have emerged as an opposition to oppression of a particular caste group over the other. Ethnic groups claim a unique identity in order to be different from others. This results in a profound struggle, which replaces the initial order of power and transforms power-relations. Therefore, it is important here to note that although, power-relations change positions of power in a political system, power, in essence, remains intact; it is the processes of the world and its systems that administer power, that change.

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12   Wehr, Otomar J. Bartos and Paul. *Using Conflict Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
13   Foucault, Michael. "The Subject and Power." *Chicago Journals*, 1982: 777-795.

In fact, ethnic politics from this point of view is not exclusively a struggle to rectify the grievances of minority groups, but it is more generally and fundamentally about the distribution of state power along ethnic lines. The question is, which ethnic group controls which share of executive government and the struggle over state power will pit ethnically defined actors against each other. More than high degrees of diversity, it is ethnic exclusion from state power and competition over the spoils of government that breed ethnic conflict. This holds true in the case of Nepal; more important than ethnic identity or political exclusion along ethnic lines, is the material and organisational incentives to stage a rebellion against government. According to the well-known insurgency model, wars erupt when governments are weak and rebels have ample opportunities to hide from troops while recruiting unemployed young men for varied causes: national liberation, revolutionary progress, the spread of true religion, or rich bounty[14] (Lars-Erik Cederman 2010). Nepalese case holds a strong bearing towards this argument, as there is a situation of a high degree of unemployment and weak government, leading to rebellions being formed. This was the base for the Maoist rebels and the ethnic struggle that followed. However, the appalling state of unemployment cut across all states and not just Madhes, And thus, ethnicity became the binding force and the reason to struggle. Across the states the traits of general ethnic upsurge has been to attain power. For example, the Rwanda genocide was the attempt of the Tutsi's to clear the Hutus and claim power.

ETHNIC CONFLICT - PRODUCT OF CULTURAL HEGEMONY

It is in the period after 1870s that the world system changed due to the colonial expansion of Europe. The national and international relationships of the state became more complex. The formula of "Permanent Revolution" was transcended in political science by the formula of "civil hegemony". The war of movement becomes war of power positions. Gramsci propagates that separation of power between the civil society and the State were the result of perpetual struggle between society and state. This was a particular epoch in history which was characterised by a certain group of intellectuals who were prominent or important state servants and military personnel, who belonged to traditional dominant classes. The three orders –the legislature, judiciary and the executive according to Gramsci becomes the organs of political hegemony. He emphasises that law can be an instrument for promoting and maintaining a particular civilization and culture and elimination of certain attitudes and behaviour, it must essentially be innovatory which it fails to conform to [15] (Gramsci, Selections from The Prison Notebooks 1996).

Although this has been propounded in the era much earlier than modern history of Nepal, an analogy can be drawn in terms of state hegemony that prevails in Nepal and the intellectual deficit that it hosts. Nepal being a new democracy, still has traces of hegemonic prevalence in the form of dominance of the hill-hindu Brahmin, Chhettri over bureaucracy, politics, education and civil services.. The struggle for power is hence the result of the reluctant and highly politicised bureaucracy with intellectuals having faith in the old orthodox system while the state is almost at the brink of collapse, along. Therefore, hegemony has failed to accommodate the general public in terms of its cultural uniqueness and religious differences. It is this failure that has materialised into conflict.

The above argument signifies that state apparatus is structured such that it has power to absorb any self-acclaimed revolutionaries and leaders, leading to the collapse of the revolution. The state thus is defined as "hegemony protected by the armour of coercion". The masses are still under the grip of

14   Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. "Why Groups Rebel." 2010.
15   *Selections from The Prison Notebooks*. Hydrabad: Orient Blackswan, 1996.

a monolithic ruling class. The superstructure therefore cannot be seen as simply at a consciousness shaped by the materials available but a consciousness shaped by every individual participating and contributing to it; also as mentioned above its relation to the base has to be reconsidered. In Gramsci's scheme, as a group or class develops in an economic sphere they find some values more congenial than others, more resonant with its own everyday experience. A group may thus develop its own world view- an ideology that creates what Gramsci calls "historical bloc" possessing both cultural and economic solidarity.

The historical bloc can avoid being hegemonic and the key to success are ideological and economic:, the leaders of a historical bloc must develop a world view that appeals to a wide range of other groups within the society, and they must be able to claim with atleast some plausibility that their particular interests are those of society at large. In contrast to this, the emerging hegemonic culture is not merely a mystification of ideology but also serves the interest of the ruling groups at the expense of subordinate ones.

Therefore, the systems are changing to accommodate the popular demand for political devolution. This pattern has to be understood and acknowledged. Hence the process of hegemony and counter hegemony is also directed towards establishing a new order of power-relation. This is where conflict is encountered. Max Weber also asserted that society is an "arena of conflict and struggle" over resources, between dominant and subordinate groups. Weber argues that there are many "status" groups in a society which possess varying degrees of social power; this was in contrast to ideas of Karl Marx who said that eventually, all groups are polarised in two conflicting groups. Weber believed that power played a role in politics, ethnicity, gender, and religion as well and all these were distinct categories contributing to potential conflict[16] (Sydie 2001). The conflict between ethnic groups in Nepal and otherwise are self-explanatory of the unequal power distribution that exists. economy and social order that exists. The majority of the resources are controlled by a small elite comprising of hill high caste groups as a result of which they also enjoy higher quality of life. Nepal is particularly unique also because this did not limit in terms of material benefits but also fed the sense of identity. Identity was also defined in favour of these groups while other sections that did not fall into this category specially Madhesis lived in statelessness. Therefore identity crisis combined with material deprivation augmented despair giving rise to conflict. Hence, the deprived groups strive towards acquiring equal power-sharing that translates into a struggle to create of a just society for them.

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16   Sydie, Bert N. Adams and R.A. *Sociological Theory*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2001.

SECTION V

FROM HISTORICAL PRETEXT TO CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

The Nepali kingdom limited within the boundary of hills expanded when Prithvi Narayan Shah initiated his conquest venture. His conquest expanded to Sikkim in India and large parts of the Tibetan plateau. The annexation of *Terai* was a part of this venture of Prithvi Narayan Shah. *Terai,* the new territory annexed to Nepal, was treated more like a colony in Prithivi Narayan Shah's rule. When it came to distributing administrative responsibilities', as the 19th century documents suggest, the *zamindari* and minor government posts in *Terai* were preferentially given to hill folks and then to those who were settled in the territory and hailed from families, that were rich and faithful and of respectable ancestry. Only if such individuals are not found could an Indian be appointed, (here the term Indian was used for the *Terai* origin people), hence according to them a second class status in the country[17] (Gaige 2009) therefore, depriving the Madhesis of rights over their own land and any opportunity of respectable employment- a practice that continues until date.. 1950s marks both the beginning of modern era in Nepal and the beginning of Madhesi struggle. The Madhesi struggle first started with the formation of the Terai congress in 2008 B.S. (1950-51). It asserted on three important demands - i) to declare Terai an autonomous region ii) to declare Hindi as official language iii) to ensure proportional representation of the Terai dwellers in Civil Services[18] (Gautam 2008). The 1960 constitution promoted one language, one religion and one culture. The dynamics between the state and the ethnic groups strengthened as the period changed to a Panchayat system of "guided democracy". Between1962 to 1990, the situation started taking new turns with regard to ethnic suppression. The Nepali state encouraged migration from south of the border to Madhes as well as from the hills to the Madhesh since the 1950s. This had served the interest of small hill elites. Land and forest, the two major resources available in abundance in *Madhes* was distributed disproportionately in favour of the hill people. Thus, hill migration was used as one of the instrument for the homogeneous model of *Nepalization* (the notion of one language, one dress, Hindu nation and respect for the king) which has adverse impact in the *Madhes* so far its cultural uniqueness, economic interest and political power structure are concerned. Four major factors – end of malaria, land reform act of 1964, launching of several resettlement projects in the *Madhes*, and construction of the East-West highway, led to flow of hill dwellers into the *Madhes*[19] (Hachhethu 2007). Creating settlements facilitated hill-dwellers in acquiring land and leadership quite quickly in the tribal areas; the hill migrants showed great sharpness of wit to choose places in the tribal areas which were dense malaria infected forests before. These areas showed maximum influx of hill migrants[20] (Gaige 2009). The dissatisfaction grew when the 1990 constitution, which was supposed to be the first democratic constitution of Nepal, formally hedged its bets by dividing its Article 6 into two clauses: 6(1) "The Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the state language (*rashtrabhasha*) of Nepal. The Nepali language shall be the language of the workings of Government." Article 6(2) enshrined, "All languages spoken as mother-tongues in the various parts of Nepal are national languages (*rashtriya bhasha*) of Nepal." Article 18(2) goes rather further, stating: "Every community shall be able to run schools so that education may be provided to children up to the primary level in their mother-tongues." The above articles were probably drafted to appease linguistic

17 Gaige, Fredrich H. *Regionalism and National unity in nepal*. kathmandu: social science baha, 2009.
18 Gautam, Bhaskar. *Madhes Bidroha Ka Nalibeli*. kathmandu: Martin Chautari, 2008.
19 Hachhethu, Krishna. "Madheshi Nationalism and Restructuring the Nepali State." *Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies*. Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, 2007. 1-12.
20 Gaige, Fredrich H. *Regionalism and National unity in nepal*. kathmandu: social science baha, 2009.

and religious minorities. But it is already apparent that groups such as the Nepal Goodwill Party, which had demanded the status of a second national language for Hindi, along with Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim groups, which had demanded a secular state, were far from satisfied. The dissatisfaction of the Christian minority had been compounded by the fact that Article 14 of the 1962 Constitution, that banned conversion, was retained as Article 19[21] (Hutt 1991). Here it is clear that the state has confined the limits of the cultural concerns of their diverse populations to a personal sphere. This has been the cause of repeated threats of conflicts over language politics[22] (Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999). The state has through these policies, provided ample space for ethnic conflict to prosper and language became the major source of contention. Language was not just a means to alienate non-Nepali speaking population who majorly concentrated in Terai but also it was associated with the freedom of expression that was curbed; thus with every democratic wave, language augmented the ethnic cleavage.

This forced acculturation was one of most important contributing factors to the increased ethnic chauvinism amidst the people in the Terai; the influx of culturally different people in the plains, made them conscious of their differences. Besides, the state facilitated increased control of the land as the pahadi migrants settled in the plains, heightening tension between the state and the plains-people. Here, cultural invasion, as explained by Freire, has been the means of transforming the oppressed (Madhesis) into becoming like their oppressor (Pahadis).

The dominant culture of Pahadi people choked that of the Madhesis, frequently leaving them unable to take crucial decisions about their culture and by extension, their lives.

The majority of the wars in contemporary world have been about identity, the pursuit of rejecting domination and instituting ones' own culture as dominant[23] (Freire 1996). The attempts at cultural invasion have hardened areas of ethnic cleavages. Whereas, a more democratic approach by the state, by giving relative autonomy to the plains and a proportionate share in politics and economy would not only have been beneficial to the Madhesis but also to the country as a whole. But the state chose to be repressive instead, which has resulted in a turmoil, which if not handled with sensitivity, can put the country's future in peril.

The rise and fall of Madhes movement was witnessed in every democratic venture made by Nepal. Finally, after travelling an uneven trajectory, the defining moment of the *Madhes* movement came in 2007, which took a strong stand for re-structuring of the state and declaring *Madhes* as an autonomous state. United Democratic *Madhes*i Front (UDMF), and several small *Madhes*i and Janjati outfits including the CPN-M \came together to form a Federal Democratic Republican Alliance (FDRA). The stated aim of the coalition was to strive for 'a constitution with federalism and federalism with identity'[24].

The words Madhes and Madhesi have been included in the constitution and Nepal has been declared a federal republic. However, the scenario has become more complicated in the much ambiguous territory of Madhes as a result of the King's effort and meddling of the foreign agencies. Two schools of thought therefore have come into existence; one that propagates identity as the basis for autonomy and the other that is regional in connotation. The existence of these groups has not only confused the situation but has also rendered the Madhes agenda weak by professing an unclear vision.

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21   Hutt, Michael. "Drafting the Nepal Constitution, 1990." *Asian Survey*, 1991: 1020-1039.
22   Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, Darini Rajasingham-senanayake, Ashish Nandy, EdmundTerence Gomez. *Ethnic futures: The State and Identity Politics in Asia*. California: Sage Publications Inc, 1999.
23   Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.
24   Retrieved from: http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article3775142.ece on 11th September 2012.

The debate between the territoriality and ethnic identity that took centre-stage has had a detrimental effect on the Madhes schema.

REGIONAL VS. SOCIAL IDENTITY; TERAI VS. MADHES

Although there is strong assertion of identity and identity based federalism in Nepal, there is a strong perplexity that shapes the whole argument. The regional identity goes along with the idea of "Terai" flat-lands at the foot of hills, which is barely 15-20 km wide, runs along and stretches across the southern border with India. It covers 23% of the landmass and hosts nearly 50% of the population that includes both *pahadi* (people of hills) and *Madhesi* (people originally from the plains) population consisting of 20 of the 75 districts of Nepal[25]. Those speaking for Social identity hold the view that this territory should be declared as Madhes. The idea of regional and social identity overlapped at times and as thus regional identity went on to giving rise to social identity or vice versa.

For territorial demands social identity is becoming the basis in Nepal. Social identity is constructed through an individual's interaction with the larger society. In this context, the common experience of historical misery and discrimination has constructed the social identity which further gets converted into a political entity and serves as a means to achieve specified ends. Therefore, it is also argued that the conflict between social groups is the result of individual's instrumental concerns[26] (Naomi Ellemers 1999). The core argument that holds centre stage in Madhesi politics is the contention between the regional and social identity. Social identity being much more powerful in its construct has occupied the central concern in all social and political debates in Nepal vis-à-vis Madhesi concerns. However, the social identity is also inextricably linked to the regional identity.

The term Madhes is more of a political term used to distinguish it from the geographical term terai. It has cultural and regional connotation and the "term Madhesis refer to non-pahadis"[27] (Cheah 2008). It is a lingual and cultural space that represents the identity of the people residing in Madhes. However, it cannot be denied that when the first voices were heard on the Madhes issue, there was an innate sense of cultural commonality that triggered demand for a territory.

25   retrieved from: http://www.old.li.suu.edu/library/circulation/Gurung/soc3110sgCulturalFlowsAcrossBlurredBoundarySp13.pdf on 13th January 2013

26   Naomi Ellemers, Russel Spears and Bertjan Doosje. *Social Identity*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999.

27   Cheah, Farah. *Inclusive Democracy for Madhesis : The quest for identity, rights and representation*. Institute of South Asian Studies, 2008.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICS: DIRECTIONS AND DILEMMA

The 2006 movement was born out of a desire for order and justice. However, all the mechanisms that should guarantee representation and justice were missing at that moment with no legislature, a controversial and polarising judiciary, an executive left with little authority, a compromised press which was seen as batting for select communities at decisive moments[28]. The political order that unfolded after 2006 revolution has been plagued due to degeneration of leadership. There was a drastic and moreover, unexpected change in the political discourse of Nepal with the rise of the Maoist party as the largest party in Nepal. However, the ideals of the party proved to be based on fragile grounds and lofty ideals of power acquisition. The Republican ideals and quest for institutionalising democracy turned out to be a distant dream for the revolutionaries who made all the effort to make the People's movement a success.

THE RISE AND FALL OF MAOISTS

The Maoists emphasised the plight of ethnic minorities in their attempt to overthrow what they termed as the discriminatory feudal system, marrying an ideological agenda to an identity component. Prominent among the Maoists' demands were land reform, redistribution, and job quotas for ethnic minorities[29] (Alok K. Bohara 2006). After the government of Nepal signed a peace agreement with the Communist Party of Nepal Maoist in 2006 to end a 10 year civil war, the war officially ended and now Maoists were established mainstream political party in Nepal. During the movements the MJF also strengthened its stands by being affiliated to the Maoist movement[30] (Miklian 2009).

Apparently, in comparison to other urban centred social movements in Nepal, the Maoists have managed to mobilise a large rural population contributing to their political and social awareness. During the People's War, the Madhesis were particularly active on the ethnic front. Many had joined the *Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha* (Madhesi National Liberation Front), an organisation headed by the Maoists, with the hope of achieving greater recognition for their people[31] (Cailmail 2008). However, The Maoist failed to keep their own promises of social and political empowerment for the Madhesis; and this has kept the Maoists trapped in a game that they initiated themselves.

Here an important aspect to be analysed is that unlike Sri-Lanka or India, the origin of the Maoists in Nepal does not lie in the massive suppression by the state but in the political aspiration of the elites. Observing closely, the historical emergence of the Maoists and the approaches they have adopted after their mainstreaming, the equation lucidly illustrates this fact; the revolution was a hollow attempt at coming to power, ensconced in Maoism, that had succeeded by default. The fatalistic crisis, as I would call this, the royal massacre and absolute dislike of the people towards the new King culminated in creating a conducive environment in the favour of the Maoists. There idea of republic made its entry at the right time. In addition, the not so good image of the Nepali Congress and UML further turned the table to their side and not only they were mainstreamed but also became the dominant party.

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28   Retrieved from: http://www.ekantipur.com/2013/01/16/opinion/preserving-the-2006-framework/365672.html on 3rd January 2013
29   Alok K. Bohara, Neil J. Mitchell and Mani Nepal. "Opportunity, Democracy, and the Exchange of Political Violence: A Subnational Analysis of Conflict in Nepal." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2006: 108-128.
30   Miklian, Jason. *Nepal's Terai: Constructing an Ethnic Conflict*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 2009.
31   Cailmail, Benoît. *The Fall of a Hindu Monarchy*: Maoists in Power in Nepal. Paris: Ifri, 2008.

2013 Elections and the fall of Madhesis:

The result of the second CA elections in 2013 has been dramatically against Madhesis. The power that emerged as the most influential regional power in the first CA elections has now lost its hold in the government. The fragmentation syndrome that the Madhesi parties as well as Maoists suffered after 2008 elections were the major reason for their defeat. Now the situation appears such that both Madhesis and Maoists who were advocates of federalism and secularism have lost their grounds in Nepal politics.

While the Madhes-based parties had bagged a total of 83 seats in the previous CA, these regional parties could bag only 52 this time around[32].Also, the representation of Madhesi candidates in the national parties have remained minimal[33]. This has already sent out a message that people have voted against federalism and desire a unitary state to which the winning parties (Nepali Congress and Unified Marxist-Leninists) are symbolic of. As a result, it is a metter of great concern for the Madhesis if their political clout will decrease with lesser representation at the centre. The representation of Madhesis in national parties is important, as it would mean greater participation and inclusiveness in the decision-making process to which they cannot be a part of now and their grievances will go unheard.

FRAGILE LEADERSHIP AND FICKLE IDEOLOGIES

To all the uncertainties that Nepal is subject to; an important determining factor has been the short-sighted, power hungry leadership. The leadership has so far has been engaged in unscrupulous pursuit of power engulfed in corruption   The lofty ideals of equal sharing of power are now translating into power nexus for the fulfilment of common greed. The right things are done for wrong reasons and later the right reasons are dredged up for justification. The people in this context speak of moral principles but act on power principles. The values and reasoning capability is always centred on holding the opposition immoral[34] (Alinsky 1971). This philosophy of Alinsky draws a picture to depict the contour of political leadership of Nepal. The concept of Ethnic federalism, if we look at it in the current context, does not look anything more than the Maoists' agenda to acquire popular support and remain intact in power. The leadership has been overwhelmed by the idea of acquiring power to an extent where, the real desire of the people to attain justice, peace, co-operation, equal and full opportunities for education, employment, health and creation of circumstances where people live life that they value have faded in the background ; all aspects that are keys to realization of democratic dream has been overshadowed in the tyranny of selfish power politics.

One of the most important reasons of the failure of leadership is the fickle ideologies of the leaders and the lack of political commitment. Analysing the leadership trend that developed after establishment of democracy in 1990, we can figure out that politics has never been based on ideologies rather it has always been a struggle only to secure and remain in power.

Perhaps, this historical background is the reason for the current lack in vision and commitment in leadership. Although the system of governance has changed over a period of time and series of revolutions, the emergence of new ideology and leadership has remained weak. The monarch was where the power vested even after the democratic revolutions. With the emergence of Maoists rose hopes that a new system will emerge from new ideology; however it also turned out to be a disappointment in due course of time with the failure of the Constituent Assembly. New leadership has been ousted and

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32   Retrieved from: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=67180 on 19th January 2014

33   Retrieved from   http://election.gov.np/CA2070/CAResults/reportBody.php?selectedMenu=3&rand=1402148595 on 7th April 2014

34   Alinsky, Saul D. *Rules for the Radicals*. toronto: Vintage Books Edition, 1971.

the country has once again slipped back to the traditional power allies with the unfolding yet to be witnessed.

The roots lie in the fact that when Asian colonies were coming to grips with freedom struggle and rebellion during the first half of twentieth century, Nepal's rulers were strengthening their authoritarian regime until the mid-twentieth century. Among other things, inequality and exclusion, which are not favourable for fostering democracy, remained entrenched in the socio-political structure, during the authoritarian rule[35]. The legacy that became inherent in politics and was widespread during the Rana Regime, was one of extreme nepotism and "sycophancy" (*chakaribaad*). All the competing courtiers were removed from the political picture and power was concentrated in the hands of the Rana Family. The situation after this i.e. after 1990 constitution ,when democracy was attained, was nothing very progressive in terms of leadership as the power remained concentrated in the hands of the king and the king favoured those who were near and close to him[36] (Lawoti 2007). Hence the practice of lobbying for king's support and becoming ministers and prime minister became the trend. Alongside the legacy to monopolize power as per their whims and fancies also prospered because of their special relationship with the King. Corruption, power abuse and politicization of bureaucracy became the major trends in politics in Nepal. The ruling parties often appointed, transferred and promoted bureaucrats and police officials as per their personal interest. These practices undermined the democracy in itself as it undermined the autonomy of the bureaucracy, instilled nepotism, eroded meritocracy and effectively punctured the rule of law. This was just not limited to this but the fact to be taken care is that this complete political power was concentrated in Kathmandu-in the hands of high caste Hindu Brahmins and Chhettris which in turn absolutely disenfranchised politically those in other parts of the country. The monarchy was another institution which further consolidated and complimented this practice. The king enjoyed the power to control the army and appointed loyalists as ambassadors, 10 members in the upper house. This system did not favour the people at the periphery. This increased the intensity of centralization and paralysed the leadership quality as the principal focus was on impressing the king in power[37] (Lawoti 2007).

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35 Retrieved from: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1746&context=himalaya&sei-redir=1&referer= http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.co.in%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3DIntroduction%3A%2BEthnicity%252C%2BE xclusion%2Band%2BDemocracy%2Bin%2BNepal%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D1%26cad%3Drja%26ved%3D0CDEQFjA A%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fdigitalcommons.macalester.edu%252Fcgi%252Fviewcontent.cgi%253Farticle%253D 1746%2526context%253Dhimalaya%26ei%3D9mnoUPDVKYLtrAfoh4CYDw%26usg%3DAFQjCNEQ6cD2nyWhVJiDSc kS-24CnQcrEA%26bvm%3Dbv.1355534169%2Cd.bmk#search=%22Introduction%3A%20Ethnicity%2C%20Exclusion%20 Democracy%20Nepal%22 on 3rd November 2012

36 Lawoti, Mahendra. *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Centralization, Multiple Conflicts and Democratic State-Building In Nepal*. Washington: East-West Centre, 2007.

37 Lawoti, Mahendra. *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Centralization, Multiple Conflicts and Democratic State-Building In Nepal*. Washington: East-West Centre, 2007.

SECTION VII

INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS AND ETHNIC UPSURGE IN NEPAL

With the recent changes in international politics, United States and Europe identifying the importance of the strategic location of Nepal as friendly neighbour to India and the common security concerns with the expanding border of China, it is pertinent to look closely into Indo-Nepal relations. Hence, when it comes to talking about international relations, the centrality of the concern always revolves around China and India. An article published in the Kathmandu Post that reads, *"the international community has decided to accept the Indian lead on Nepal, and we will not work at cross-purposes with them. It is their baby"* [38] is a remark enough to bolster the argument that India's role in Nepal is not just in the interest of India but also in the interest of the other international communities.

The influence of India remains more prominent given to the open-border that it shares with Nepal. This has not been recent though; the influence of India was marked profoundly immediately after the 1950 revolution. As the political leaders who were adjusting to the changes that 1950 revolution brought, Indian government that engineered the settlement between the Ranas, the Nepali Congress and the king, exercised considerable influence in Kathmandu through appointment of Ambassador CPN Singh, Govinda Narayan, personal advisor to the king and other Indian officials[39] (Gaige 2009).

It is also interesting to observe, the instrumental role India took in the recent twelve point agreement between the seven party alliance and the Maoists. The Maoist movement that was in one way or the other also directed towards ending India's overwhelming presence not only in Nepal bust also in the south Asia got completely turned. Once the imagination to form people's war group along with the rebels in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri-Lanka (for which they had gone on to supporting the formation of Maoist party of Bhutan, and trained Bhutanese refugees to agitate against the Indian extentialists[40] (sharma 2013) also got defeated over a period of time and India became the prime negotiator between Maoists and the seven party alliance in Nepal, India became sanctuary for the Maoists throughout their guerrilla revolution. At the end they reverted to rather seeking support from India to be mainstreamed rather than executing their grand proposal that was submitted to the Nepal government at the advent of their revolution.

In the context of sovereignty, it cannot be seen in isolation to the significant others who also have strategic interest in Nepal vis-à-vis China and India. The United States and the Great Britain have also been influential in Nepal. Important moves were made by USA during Maoist movement in Nepal. Between 2001 -04, USA's intervention in Nepal was in close coordination with the then BJP government. During this period there was a massive attempt by USA for internal militarization. The evidence of this is the immense US-aided expansion of the security forces that began then. By 2005, the pre-2001 force of approximately 35,000 had increased to above 1,00,000, with a proclaimed goal of 1,50,000 by 2008.. There were massacres and death squads conducted by the USA in Nepal. The Kapilvastu death squad outrage where around 700 houses were put to fire especially in Muslim communities. The USA after having listed the Maoists in its terrorists list played a significant role in sabotaging all attempts of peace talks which prolonged and aggravated the Maoist insurgency. It also seems to have subtly supported the royal coup. However, change in the government in India turned the

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38   Retrieved from: http://www.ekantipur.com/2013/01/09/opinion/the-india-factor/365347.html on 9th January 2012

39   Gaige, Fredrich H. *Regionalism and National unity in nepal*. kathmandu: social science baha, 2009.

40   sharma, sudhir. *prayogshala: nepali sankramand ma delli, durbar ra maobadi*. kathmandu : fineprint, 2013.

table, as the Congress government supported the uprising against royal government. Later India also facilitated the 12 point peace agreement. This was the mark of shift in allegiance from US, India and American allies in Europe towards Nepal and China as well[41] (Mage 2007) .

The organisations like European Union, USAID and DFID (Department for International Development) are the major donors which entered Nepal with specific objectives like reducing poverty, promote social inclusion, enhance good governance, establish basis for lasting peace and promote civil society. However, evidences mark that they have not limited themselves to their stipulated objectives, instead they have made their objectives a base for expanding their role in the political sphere of Nepal. Shah (2008) explains that the West had already sensed that the monarchy could be an obstacle and substantiates by giving example that years before king Gyanendra assumed power, the British Government's DFID had funded discussion around crucial issues like 1) constitution writing, 2) balancing people's sovereignty against constitutional monarchy 3) negotiating a political settlement by assembling large number of local and foreign scholars and civil society activists. He further backs by the argument that the formal rationale has been to separate the state from Hindu religion[42] (Shah 2008). Perhaps this was the reason for their engagement with ethnic group post 2000, as they perceived them as potential vehicle for the change that they desired in Nepal. This process entails the colonial existence of Nepal in various spheres, economic, social, political and religious.

The uncanny circumstances in which the royal massacre was executed at the verge of crucial decision , The King was the negotiating point for the Maoists, before his assassination. He also has a grand plan of certain amount of political consensus with the Maoists and forming a national government through a round-table conference[43] (sharma 2013). Following the *Durbar* massacre, the developments in Nepalese politics were rapid. With the changed circumstances in Nepalese politics, where the king's coup was widely criticised for being undemocratic, a group of key players emerged as decisive in Nepalese politics. This consisted of India, European Union, United States and United Kingdom, United Nations and China. Where all the other key players were against the king's coup, China extended its support to the monarchy. Although India allies with United States and European Union against China in Nepal, it is cautious of the presence of these extra-regional powers in south Asia and its growing tie-up with Pakistan. The Indo-U.S. alliance also has been very new, triggered only after the September 11 attacks on United States and its commitment to counter terrorism[44] (Muni 2012). On the other hand, for China, the changes that were to be initiated in Nepal and its repercussions on China, seemed to make monarchy appeared safer for them as a Nation. However, China's attempts to influence proved fragile in the face of strong internal impulse and resentment of western powers and India at King's attempts of increasing proximity with China.

Here it is also important to establish relation between the changed policies that India manifested in this period. India that had taken a strong position in favour of recognising King Tribhuwan and had warned Great Britain and United States against deposing the monarchy [45] (Rose 1971) now provided every support to get rid of the king.

41 Mage, John. "The Nepali Revolution and International Relations." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2007: 1834-1839.

42 Shah, Saubhagya. *Civil Society in Uncivil Places: Soft State and Regime Change In Nepal*. Washington: East-West Cetre, 2008.

43 sharma, sudhir. *prayogshala: nepali sankramand ma delli, durbar ra maobadi*. kathmandu : fineprint, 2013.

44 Muni, S.D. "bringing the maooists down from the hills:india's role." In *nepal in transition: from people's war to fragile peace*, by david m. malone and suman pradhan editted by:Sebastian von einsiedel, 313-331. new delhi: cambridge unversity press, 2012.

45 Rose, Leo E. *Nepal Strategy for Survival*. london: University of California Press, 1971.

MADHES: THE REPUBLICAN PROP

India feared that Maoists in India would benefit if their Nepalese counterparts came to power but India is also concerned that Chinese influence will grow in Nepal. Therefore, with the Maoists emerging as the strongest party was beyond its own expectation in the elections of 2007, this insecurity became profound. India considers Nepal as crucial to its security; India sees Nepal as a buffer with China and hence any tie between Nepal and China is a malediction for India (Chaturvedy, 2012). The military aid by China in Nepal has increased pertaining to the security of the Tibet border. This has become a topic of major concern for India. In addition, China committed to provide neighbouring Nepal with NRs 1.42 billion (US $ 19.8 million) in military aid[46].

This insecurity translated into a destructive streak after May 2009. It created conditions for the Maoist government's exit, cobbled together an unnatural anti-Maoist coalition, invested political and financial capital in splitting the Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum (MJF) and pressurised the Madhesi parties not to support Prachanda's prime ministerial candidature, which prolonged the stalemate by another year. Delhi even pushed for the dissolution of the CA in May 2010 since they saw the elected house as a source of legitimate strength for the Maoists. At one point, India was willing to have an unstable Nepal, reverting to conflict, rather than accept the fact that the Maoists were the biggest political force of the country, deserving a place in the power structure[47].

India backed the Madhesis with the idea of having two states in Terai; however the Pahadi regions wanted mono-ethnic states in the hills. China took position on not having such re-structuring of the state especially based on ethnic federalism because of its border with the sensitive area of Tibet[48] (sharma 2013). This created contradiction between geographical and ethnic provincial demands which could not be executed. This also directs towards strategic power-play between multiple interest groups that thwart the democratic process of state-restructuring to a profound extent. As a result Nepal's democratic process is in limbo with the absence of the very source of sovereignty i.e. a constitution.

The major concern for India is China's overstepping in Nepal, which has a real and concrete strategic impact on India's Himalayan security. With the already persistent insecurity of the northern neighbour that stemmed from Maoists coming into power and increasing military aid, the increasing scholarly interventions in Terai, with the proliferation of Chinese study centres, has also caught its attention. Kumar (2011) argues that, fundamentally these Chinese agencies are building up anti- India sentiments in Nepal. China is also reaching out to the political parties of Nepal. Therefore, Nepal has become a battleground between India and China. Nepal becomes the focal concern because of its geo-strategic location. Nepal covers the largest area of the Himalayan frontier i.e. 140,797sq.km and 8000 sq miles on the southern plain strip[49] (Kumar 2011). This makes India's concerns in Nepal more profound as at one end lies the great Himalayan frontier that has remained a prime security cutting edge ever since history and on the other hand, the porous border as an emerging security challenge. Therefore, the additional perspective is the relation between growing disputes in the Terai region and the shifting concerns of external actors from the Himalayan frontiers to the porous plains.

This concern has augmented the ambiguity in the Indo-Nepal relations and the major scapegoats have been the Madhesis. As they always paid the price of the open-border and the closer cultural affinity,

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46   Retrieved from http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/Nepal/China-doles-out-19-8-mn-aid-to-Nepal/Article1-677053. aspx on 21st January 2013

47   Retrieved from: http://www.ekantipur.com/2013/01/09/opinion/the-india-factor/365347.html on 9th January 2013

48   sharma, sudhir. *prayogshala: nepali sankramand ma delli, durbar ra maobadi*. kathmandu : fineprint, 2013.

49   Kumar, Satish. "China's Expanding footprints in Nepal: Threat to India." *Journal of Defense Studies*, 2011: 77-89.

now they have turned into a political puppet as well for both sides. This is the reason for triggering the conflict in the Terai region and the cause for political instability in Nepal.

SECTION VIII

DISCUSSION

"The introduction of constitutions and democratic institutions, enshrining human rights, universal franchise, the party system, elected legislature, majority rule and so on, has often resulted in strange malformations that are far removed from the goals of liberty, justice, tolerance, and freedom that were the ideological supports of Western European and North American "liberal-democratic" syntheses. Something has gone gravely awry with the centre-periphery relations throughout the world, and a manifestation of this malaise is the occurrence of widespread ethnic conflict accompanied in many instances by collective violence amongst people who are not aliens but enemies intimately known"[50] (Tambiah 1988).

Some studies analyse the conflict between ethnic groups under conditions of state failure, thus making the absence of the state the very core of the causal argument. Others assume that the state is ethnically neutral and try to relate ethno-demographic diversity measures, such as fractionalization and polarization, to civil war. In contrast to these approaches, Cederman analyses the state as an institution that is captured to different degrees by representatives of particular ethnic communities and thus conceives of ethnic wars as the result of competing ethno-nationalist claims to state power. In modern nation-states, rulers are no longer legitimised by the principles of dynastic succession, God's grace, or civilizational progress but that they are expected to care for their own, ethnically defined people. According to this study, conflict with the government is more likely to erupt when; (1) the more representatives of an ethnic group are excluded from state power, especially if they experienced a loss of power in the recent past, (2) the higher their mobilization capacity is, and (3) the more they have experienced conflict in the past. In view of these findings, we conclude that ethno-nationalist struggles over access to state power are an important part of the dynamics leading to the outbreak of civil wars[51] (Lars-Erik Cederman 2010).

Smith argues, nationalism remains one of the most powerful social and political forces in the modern world. It continues to shape the relation between nation states and exert self-assertion and collective protest against the existing distribution of power within and between states. Nationalism thus at the same time ensures humanity against imperial tyrannies, while lending its name and sometimes its power to the creation of local tyrannies. However, it is explained as the sole source of political power and the loyalty to the nation overrides all other loyalties. Further he mentions that real freedom for individuals can only be realised in and through the nation and in addition, global peace and security can only be based on the spirit of free nation[52] (Smith 1999).

Vanhanen' theory of ethnic nepotism can be used here as a crosscutting and supplementing theory to see. During his research, Vanhanen hypothesized the following assumptions:

1. All geographically discrete ethnic groups try to establish their own political units

2. The more ethnically divided a society or a political unit within the country is, the more political parties tend to become organised along ethnic lines.

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50   Tambiah, Stanley J. "Ethnic Conflict in the Third World." 1988.
51   Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. "Why Groups Rebel." 2010.
52   Smith, Anthony D. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

3. The more ethnic groups differ genetically from each other, the higher is the probability that conflicts between them lead to violence[53] (Vanhanen 1991). This theory best explains the current situation of Nepal. Madhes has been a geographically discrete group, therefore, they are looking for a separate political unit. The ethnic awareness is bringing more ethnically informed political parties into existence like in Madhes. Although the idea of genetic violence is of lesser significance, it has somewhere motivated the conflict and this is proved when people stress the idea that they differ in features from the ruling community and that is what discrimination is based on.

As argued by Anderson, nationality, in his view of that word's multiple connotations, is a cultural artefact. It is an imagined political community that is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each, lives the image of their communion. Finally, it is imagined as a *community,* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. It is this comradeship that has for past centuries made it possible for people willing to sacrifice their lives masqueraded under which comes the killing of millions all around the world well justified in the name of sacrifice for the clan *"we belong".* Further, he argues that also the modern-style education system promoted by colonial state, private religious and secular organizations that developed after enlightenment era as major propagators of nationalism. He further adds that the intelligentsia thus produced were central to the rise of Nationalism. In addition, Anderson also asserts the role of print-languages in giving rise to these communities. These print-languages, according to him, founded a base for national consciousness as it created a unified field of communication and exchange of ideas beyond Latin and spoken vernaculars and gave constancy to language, helping to build an image of antiquity. Further they also created language of power which was different from the older administrative vernaculars. This created one language of communication and people did not need to learn other language to communicate[54] (Anderson 2006) 1983).

Today's nation-states are formed on the basis of same imagination that had initially brought about the existence of the state defeating the colonial powers. The will to belong backed by the power of imagination could not be curbed by the attempts of homogenisation by the ruling elites. Therefore, the idea of states is subject to the process of re-definition vis-à-vis nations. In the contemporary political scenario this most often defines the political trajectory. The nations are uniting together against the monolithic state. The common identity has become a basis for claiming power and control of resources. As identity was the basis for disenfranchising people from power, the same is converted into strength to claim power.

The manifest function of these rudimentary nationalist ideas is to gain control of power and resources. This function is supreme as the politics of the present is economy driven that confirms positions of power. However, it cannot be denied that these communities are volatile entities subject to change in their form and nature, based on the interests and changes in the global power-dynamics. Therefore, there is also a possibility of newer identities being formed in the future for different endeavours powered by different imaginations.

53   Vanhanen, Tatu. *Politics of ethnic nepotism:India as an example.* Patna: Sterling Publishers, 1991
54   Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities.* London: Verso , 2006.

SECTION IX

CONCLUSION

"Political culture and social structure are empirically related to political stability. When the Political culture is deeply fragmented-the pressures toward moderate middle-of-the –road attitudes are absent. In the long run a complex society may experience revolution, degeneration and decay"[55] (Lijphart 1969)

This statement of Lijphart is apt in explaining the current instability of Nepal. The political and social culture has remained inherently fragmented in Nepal. The moderate views have never found space to balance this fragmentation. The sheer fragmentation can be witnessed after it was declared a republic. The major parties like the Maoists is divided into Maoist Party of Nepal led by Mohan Baidya and the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda)[56]. Further, the Nepali Congress and Madhesi parties are fragmented into atomic structures. This fragmentation is more a result of personality clashes and craving for power than ideological differences. Therefore, this attitude that has been historically rooted in the Nepalese society has resulted into current ethnic polarization of Nepal. This acute fragmentation of the political culture in Nepal is the reason for the failure of democracy to institutionalise itself in Nepal.

The major concern for Nepal in this case is also the declining democratic values. With already an upper-hand of external forces in Nepal, a peaceful democratic future is unimaginable. In addition, as Kumar argues, intense anti-Indian propaganda was directed by China in Nepal[57] (Kumar 2011). This entails the fickle and guided nationalism that is fostered by external interests. This kind of propaganda creates bi-polar ideas that obstruct the nation-building process, pro-longing the transitional phase. This can be a threat to the democratic future of the country.

Further, all the intellectual debates and nation-building ideas are confined within Kathmandu and have not moved to the local areas yet. In addition, it is also important to note that it is fenced within the cosy environ of Non-Governmental or International Non-Governmental Organizations which have also prevented the devolution. The debates from communism to Capitalism, Feminism to Chauvinism, and internal politics to international-relations which is ideally supposed to flourish in free and fair academic spaces like universities are now manoeuvred by the foreign aid agencies. Therefore, the multiple political players' interests that overpower the internal political impulse, backed by failed leadership and its geo-strategic location are the reasons for Nepal's political instability and ethnic polarization. With Madhesis not ready to renounce their demands and unpreparedness of the state to deal with vexed issues like federalism and ethnic differences, the future of Nepal is in peril.

55   Lijphart, Arend. "Consociational Democracy." *World Politics*, 1969: 207-225.
56   Retrieved from: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=36596 on 7th February 2013
57   Kumar, Satish. "China's Expanding footprints in Nepal: Threat to India." *Journal of Defense Studies*, 2011: 77-89.

APPENDIX-I

Milestones in the Ethnic Upsurge in Nepal

Unification of Nepal by Prithvi Narayan Shah: the unification can be called the roots of ethnic conflict/tension in Nepal. It was unification by the power of sword and not people's demand (Gellner, et.al.). The unique culture and traditions of each princely state was demolished in the name of unification. Madhesis were termed Indians.

The Rana regime- The 1854 civil code which classified the people into 3 broader categories: 1. Tagadhari (sacred thread wearing castes), 2. Matwali (alcohol consuming castes and ethnic groups) in the middle, 3. a. Sudra (impure but touchable), b. Acchut (Untouchables and impure) which in the name of sorting out the cultural diversity rather laid foundation for the ethnic conflict today, as the code was highly discriminatory on the basis of caste hierarchy. This was favourable for those who fell in the higher strata of the caste system and those in the lower, remained underprivileged (222 CNAS Journal, Vol. 30, No. 2, July 2003).

Overthrow of Rana regime marked the onset of Madhesi assertion for autonomy. Terai Congress was formed.

Next came, **the party-less panchayat system (1960-1990)** with absolute monarchy, where the shift happened to legal abolition of caste system though it was never translated into practice. Some laws like declaring Nepali as the official language and Nepali as the medium of education in schools and also the centralization of politics and administration as medium of national integration were steps that evinced that the state had failed to take people's opinion in consideration. Also some major changes like introduction of 5 development regions, 75 districts and 14 zones helped only to centralise power and did not help in decentralization.

After the **1990 revolution** when democracy was restored, ethnic politics has been a permanent fixture when almost all the ethnic groups had some kind of association or party. But then moving to the Terai, it had an entirely different facet of politics. A party called Sadhbhawana Party was formed which is termed as the anti-pahadi party (Gellner, et.al., 1997).

Maoists capitalised on the Ethnic agenda for popular support. Though it aimed at gaining mass support, it did serve to give voices to the people long suppressed by the over-centralised Kathmandu dominated governance structure.

Then the **2006 revolution**, the overthrow of the king and the establishment of republic which totally triggered a flood of ethnic tension and conflict with every ethnic group asking for its autonomous region. Especially the Terai violent ethnic upsurge came into existence.

2012 Dissolution of the CA-I- this was another land-mark event when the people's elected parliament dissolved on the grounds of having not fulfilled popular demands of the people.
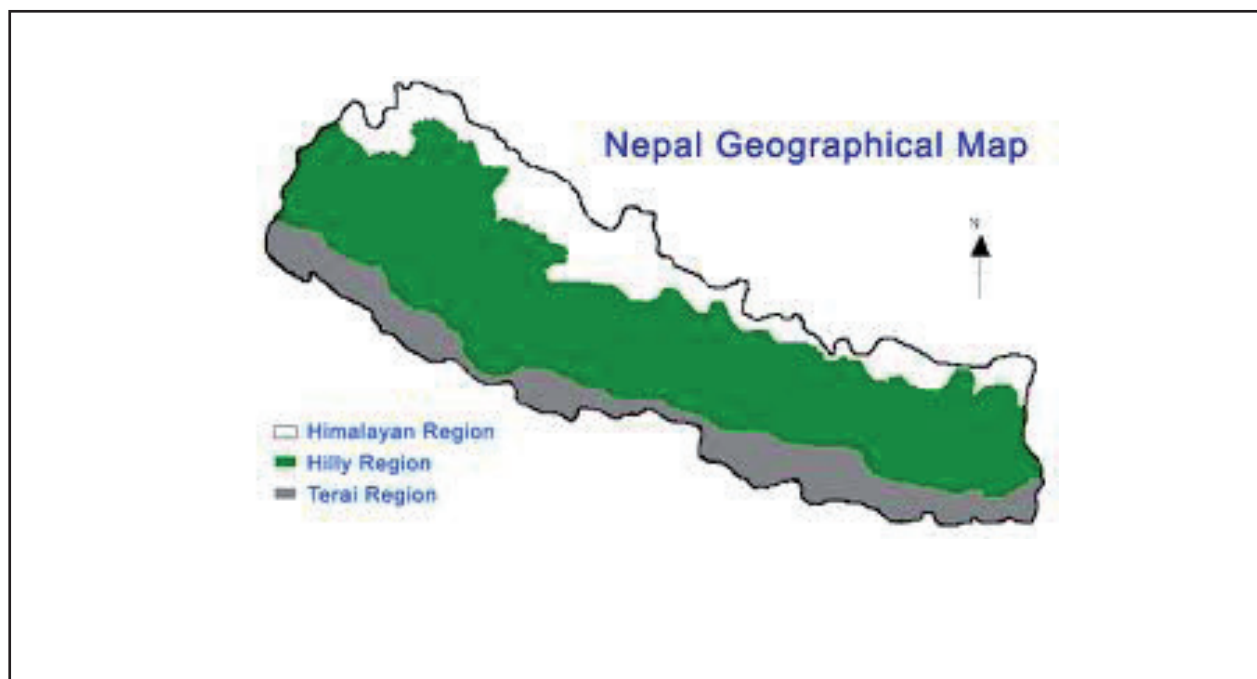
2013 Election of CA-II, the election that marked the defeat of the Madhesi as well as all regional forces that were spear-headed after 2006. The re-institution of the Nepali Congress as the ruling party.

APPENDIX-II

FIGURE 1:
Geo-Strategic Location of Nepal

FIGURE 1.1
Geographical Division of Nepal

APPENDIX-III

IMAGE 1
Madhes Andolaan

IMAGE 2
Pressure Rally for Constitution Building in Kathmandu

Endnote: The geo-strategic and geographical map of Nepal were obtained from google maps and the photographs were taken between April and May 2012

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