Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: An Overview

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This plan of initiation of the people's war would be based on the principle that everything is an illusion except state power. While remaining firm on the principle aim of the armed struggle as to capture political power for the people, the Party expresses its firm commitment to wage relentless struggle against all forms of deviationist thoughts and trends including economism, reformism and anarchism.

*From "Plan for the Historic Initiation of the People's War" adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in September 1995.*

Universal democratic and civil rights including multiparty competition, periodic elections, universal suffrage, rule of law, freedom of speech and press, fundamental and human rights etc. should be guaranteed.

*From forward looking new state system and a new constitution submitted by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) during the negotiation in April 2003.*

**Introduction**

On 13 February 2005, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is going to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the 'people war'. Within this short span of time, the insurgency, according to the Maoists, has reached to the stage of 'strategic offensive'. The advanced of insurgency passing through 'strategic defensive' and 'strategic balance' has followed with the increase of its military capacity and war economy. Its People's Liberation Army (PLA) is now consists of 3 Division, 9 Brigades, and 29 Battalion. There is no way to verify whether the Maoist's armed construction (Division, Brigade and Battalion) is in according to international standard or not and estimation, therefore, varies on the actual number of the Maoist's armed force. An expert, however, assumes the Maoist's armed strength as 'one of the largest non-state military formation in the world'.1 The Maoists are collecting money through forced donation, bank looting and taxation. Reportedly, it is one of the richest 'terrorist' organizations having accumulated between US $ 64 million and 124 million.2 Parallel to the increase of the military strength is the formation and expansion of the Maoist own administrative areas. The insurgency spread all over the country, except two (Manang and Mustang) out of 75 districts of the country that remained untouched from the direct armed confrontation between the state security forces and the Maoist guerrillas. In line with the party's policy of protracted people's war and to suit best with its pursuance of base areas, the Maoist has started forming its own government at village level by late 1998. Now, the Maoist has its four tiers of governments: central (United Revolutionary People’s Council led by Babu Ram Bhattarai), regional (nine autonomous regional governments), district, and village/city.3 The Maoist has claimed of capturing rural parts of the country cutting the space of the 'old regime' (state) into the capital and headquarters of districts.4
The Maoist insurgency is a case of rapid development and many factors contributed to the escalation of violent conflicts and expansion of its influence all over the country. The blueprint of the insurgency⁵ that designed a year before its implementation showed the Maoists' confidence on following accounts:

- The geographical situation (of Nepal) is the most favorable for waging guerrilla war with direct links with the people.
- A good mass base for guerrilla war can be created from the struggle against the national oppression on the majority of nationalities (ethnic groups).
- There is no condition of direct military collision among the enemies for political power, from which the armed forces of the people could take advantage to seize a definite area.
- There is possibility of initiating and developing guerrilla wars in different parts of the country by taking peasant revolution as the backbone, by centralizing activities in the rural areas and by relying on and uniting with the poor peasants.
- The people's support will go on increasing if the right revisionists are thoroughly exposed and the tactics of armed struggle is pursued carefully.
- The pace of development of armed struggle to establish people's alternative revolutionary power would be faster and inspires us to undertake bold tactics to achieve the same.
- Nepalis working in foreign countries - mainly those working in India - would be mobilized by conducting political work amongst them and using the area for supply of various logistics for success of the armed struggle in Nepal.

Such a well thought and well planned blueprint of the Maoist insurgency indicates the possibility of the advancement of the armed struggles by careful utilization of the Nepal's topographical location, its geographical proximity with India, mobilization of the peasant and the excluded ethnic groups, and guerrilla tactics. Besides, analysts found out several factors, i.e. social injustice, unemployment, underdevelopment, problems of exclusion, lack of good governance etc. contributing to the escalation of the Maoists armed activities.⁶ Of course, the Maoist insurgency has its own multi-dynamics, but analysts differ in identification of the major and minor factors that led to successful intensification of insurgency. Divergent of views follows mainly in line with disciplinary background of analysts.

Developmentalists share an argument that the Maoist movement “is basically a social and economic issue and is produced and sustained by failed development”.⁷ "The Maoist insurgency is mainly fueled by poverty".⁸ It is worthwhile to mention that the Maoist armed activity was started from the Mid-West hills – the heartland of insurgency – and hill districts of this region (i.e. Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Dailekh, Jajgarkot and Dailekh districts) fall into the category of the 18 lowest rank districts in human development index of Nepal.⁹ The influence of the Maoists is the strongest in the economically and socially deprived Northern and Western parts of the country.
Sociologists and ethnic activists see the Maoist insurgency mainly from ethnic angle. The hill high caste Hindus, Brahmin and Chhetri, and Newar (an urban ethnic group) – with their combined strength of 35 per cent in total population of the country – have long been in dominant position in the power structure of the country. Others, i.e. hill ethnic groups, tarai caste and tribal groups, and dalit are generally considered as the excluded and marginalized groups. The restoration of democracy in 1990 has witnessed the emergence of ethnic activism. About the link between ethnic rising and the Maoist insurgency, one argues that “People’s war … has blended class-based and caste/ethnic based insurgency in the country”. The hill ethnic groups had always been in forefront in battle grounds irrespective of ideological content, be it in the time of unification of Nepal in 1768 or in the 1950-51 anti-Rana revolution or in several small-scale armed protest movements in the post-1960 period. Additional part is the involvement of some other marginalized groups i.e. Tharus of tarai, dalits and women in the recent insurgency of the Maoist party.

Political scientists analyze the failed governance as the main reason behind the constant weakening of the state and strengthening of the Maoists. The post-1990 politics has been characterized by ambiguity of Constitution, King’s assertion for power against the spirit of constitutional monarchy, lack of effective leadership, power centric intra-party and inter-party factions and conflicts, political instability, lack of institutionalization of party and parliament, pervasive corruption etc. They all have impeded the task of democratic consolidation in Nepal

The Maoist insurgency has its own dynamics and factors like poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, exclusion, corruption, bad governance etc. contributed to enlarge the canvas of the insurgency. These are, however, supplementary factors that are not sufficient to explain why the Maoist has opted the course of armed struggle, not other options, despite the advent of democracy in 1990 has broadened the space for expression of discontent and non-violent protest. The political and ideological aspects could give a convincing answer to the question about why the Maoist took the path of armed struggle. Class struggle in the form of armed revolution is the core of communist philosophy. The primacy of political and ideological factor is evident by an avowed goal of the Maoist insurgency: overthrow of the present polity based on multiparty parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy through armed revolution and its replacement with a new political system known as new people's democracy. The Maoist's key agendas – round table conference, interim government, and constituent assembly – put forth during the last two negotiations with the government in August-November 2001 and April-August 2003 - further show the crux of the issue. Of course, the Maoist insurgency has its own multi-dynamics, including social, ethnic and economic, it is basically an ideological and political offence against the present political system of the country.

In retrospect, the Maoist insurgency has been expanding and escalating on three major grounds. First, the left or progressive ideology and identity - monopolized by communist parties of Nepal - is popular among the people of Nepal. To be left or communist, in Nepali understanding, means to speak for "gans, bas, kapas" (food, shelter and cloth) for
poor, to advocate for radical and revolutionary change, and above all to stand for absolute economic equality even at the cost of political liberty. Second, restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 synchronized with the ethnic revival and among the competing forces running to cash on the post-1990 ethnic uprising, the Maoist seems more successful both in mobilizing the ethnic capital and in giving a political framework for ethnic demands - autonomy and federalism. Third, the internal conflicts and contradictions among the state actors have reduced the state's power and capacity which obviously placed the Maoist in an advantageous position.

**Primacy of Ideology**

The primacy of ideology of the present insurgency can be seen in the origin and evolution of the communist movement in Nepal in general and the CPN (Maoist) in particular. Three different timeframes can be traced to the origin of ideology, strategy and organization of the Maoist party. The Maoist party’s proclaimed goal is to establish a ‘new people’s democracy’, a prototype of the Mao's China model. This conforms to the objective of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) – a parent organization of all communist parties of Nepal – set at the time of its formation in 1949. In addition to the adaptation of core components of communist ideology i.e. class struggle, armed revolution, dictatorship of proletariat etc, the communist movement of Nepal has its own native contents, i.e. republican, nationalism based on anti-India and anti-West, and non-conformist against the Westminster system. The Maoist party upholds both theoretical and native contents of communism in Nepal.

On adoption of strategy suitable to proclaimed goal, differences among the Nepali communists had glaringly appeared since the early 1960s which led to split the party one after another and consequently the emergence of several communist parties. Each of the splinter groups at the time of its inception appeared radical vis-à-vis monarchy, liberal democracy and India. But overtime most of them turned into moderate groups, including the CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist or UML) which was originated in the early 1970s as a Naxalite group professing the line “annihilation of class enemy” but later in the post-1990 period, it has turned into a defender of the system of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. To be moderate left meant to involve in broader democratic movement and process in alliance with the NC. Opposing this line of thinking, the CPN (Fourth Convention) came into existence since the early 1970s and most of the senior leaders of the present Maoist party have started their carrier from this party. The United National People’s Movement (UNPM, a joint front of five Maoist splinter groups) kept itself in distance with other left parties despite its participation in the 1990 mass movement, launched jointly by the NC and the United Left Front (ULF, consisted of seven communist splinter groups). The UNPM differed with the ULF’s approach of considering multiparty system at least as an interim arrangement between dismantled partyless panchayat system and the proposed system of new people’s democracy. Realignement among leftist forces in the post-1990 period led to form the CPN (Unity Centre) – consisting of several splinter groups of the parent organization, the CPN (Fourth Convention). The CPN (Unity Centre) – through its political wing, United People’s Front (UPF) – contested the 1991 parliamentary election and the 1992 local
election as a strategy to ‘expose the sham of parliamentary democracy’. The newly formed CPN (Unity Centre) under the leadership of General Secretary Pushpa Kamal Dahal (popularly known as Prachanda) upheld the faith in armed revolution against the prevailing system of monarchy and democracy.

The question of translating the idea of armed struggle into action led to the formation of the organization of the present Maoist party as a separate group. Only in February 1995, the CPN (Maoist) was established formally, as a consequence of the split of the leaders and workers of the CPN (Unity Centre). Those who stood for continuous involvement in parliamentary process inherited the name of the party CPN (Unity Centre) and others advocating for the implementation of the armed revolution gained new name, the CPN (Maoist).

The Maoist group’s (led by Prachanda) non-conformist stand to the post-1990 political setup and its contentious adherence to ideology of class war is evident by its stands taken in recent political developments from the 1990.

- The UNPM - the Prachanda faction with its then formal name as the Masal is a partner - pleaded to advance the 1990 jan andolan to the point of achieving a new people’s democracy unlike the ULF’s stand for the restoration of multiparty system.
- The Masal (Prachanda) demanded for the election of constituent assembly against the drafting of a new constitution by Constitution Drafting Commission in 1990.
- The CPN (Unity Centre) with the Prachanda faction as a partner condemned the new constitution - which provides a system based on parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy - as ‘a reactionary constitution’.
- The political report adopted by the Unity Congress of the CPN (Unity Centre) in December 1991 states, "Our political strategy is to establish a new democratic republic of Nepal with a people's democratic dictatorship against feudalism and imperialism and on the basis of an alliance of peasants and workers under the leadership of the proletariat. …For this, it is a must to adopt the line of protracted people's war with a strategy of encirclement of the city from the countryside". This Unity Congress elected Prachanda as the General Secretary of the CPN (Unity Centre).
- The Prachanda faction of the CPN (Unity Centre) boycotted the 1994 parliamentary elections and it adopted a new name the CPN (Maoist) in February 1995. The third expanded meeting of the central committee of the party held in March 1995 decided to launch the protracted people's war.
- Since February 1996, the Maoist party has formally taken the actions of protracted people’s war and it has gained rapidly in expanding territories under its control.

The increase of popularity of left and progressive ideology in Nepali is clearly evident by a fact that the CPN gained only 4 out of 109 seats in parliament in 1959 whereas the combined strength of different communist parties in the post-1990 period was 82-95 out of 205 members of the House of Representatives. The popular vote of communist parties
was around 40 per cent in all the three parliamentary elections held after the restoration of democracy. Among those competing for the increase of left popularity, three different courses have taken place. One is the adaptation to the parliamentary system. The CPN (UML) made a considerable strength placing itself as the major communist party of the country through this course. The second course is involvement in electoral process but retaining a non-conformist ideology vis-à-vis bourgeois democracy. The CPN (Unity Centre-Mashal) and the NWPP stand this line. The third course is armed insurgency resorting by the CPN (Maoist) since the last nine years.

In the present situation marred by a combination of political/constitutional impasse in the mainstream politics and intensification of the Maoist's insurgency, it is generally believed that the balance sheet of political power and influence is changing at faster pace. The following paragraph illustrates a case to explain how the situation is heading towards in favour of the Maoist.

From one perspective, the Maoist insurgency in its mid-western stronghold areas can be seen as a renewal of an old confrontation between the Thakuri Raj and the radical left. The Thakuris (descendants of the rulers of the old principalities) and their clients had long dominated this area, and the nature of their rule at local level was repressive. This was in accord with the authoritarian regime at the centre during the partyless Panchayat system (1962-1990). Even after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the former Panchas survived, reviving their power base with a new political trademark by responding to the Nepali Congress’s policy of incorporating the traditional social and political elites in its scheme of party building during the early 1990s. However, the sense of popular empowerment that spread after the successful 1990 *jan andolan* introduced a new power equation against the traditional forces. Both the CPN (UML) and the CPN (Maoist, formerly the UPF) emerged as the most influential left forces in the people’s fight against various forms of the Thakuri Raj in this region. The equation among the left forces has changed in favour of the CPN (Maoist) as a consequence of the UML’s move from the left towards the centre, while the Congress party is constantly heading towards the right from the centre in the political spectrum of the country. The local Thakuri-centrist alliance in the mainstream parties has never been strong under the democratic set-up, and it deteriorated during the period of hung parliament (November 1994-May 1999). Because politics was concentrated at the centre in the game of government making and unmaking, the parliamentary parties grossly ignored the need for party building at local level. This was the most appropriate time for the CPN (Maoist) to create its own space and territory for a long ‘People’s War’.

Of several concerted efforts made for creating and expanding its own territory, cleansing opponents is one of the main strategies exerted by the Maoists. They killed the civilians considered to be ‘enemies of people’, such as party workers, elected persons, landlords, businessmen, moneylenders, exploiters, and police informants. Looking it from class perspective, one foreign anthropologist observed, “People with large houses, guns, money and gold are more at risk than poorer less well-resourced people”.

13 While launching the people's war in the most organized way, the Maoists have adopted a uniform plan of action in different places: first disarm the local people by seizing their
weapon and then kill some persons (whom they accused as ‘anti-people’) in inhuman and cruel way in day light. As one explains the brutality of actions, “People have been killed while eating, dragged out of their house into the courtyard and killed in the presence of the family members, thrown off, tied to trees, hacked and shot in various parts of bodies to let them die of utmost pain”.\textsuperscript{14} The strategy seems to create a fear and terror situation rather than to take lives of many people. Consequently, people's representatives at local elected bodies and parties' local cadres fled to district headquarters for their security. The eviction of parties' cadres was synchronized with withdrawal of other state machineries.\textsuperscript{15} The Maoist's monopoly in several parts of the country would have definite impact on popular bases of parties and it will be surfaced when competitive politics will be tracked back in the future.

For the leadership of the CPN (Maoist), the armed struggle is their conscious choice and motivated to achieve the ideological goal. Babu Ram Bhattarai stated clearly that "People's war was initiated with a proclaimed aim of establishing a new democratic socio-economic system and state by overthrowing the present socio-economic structure and state …. The people's war is the inevitable instrument for overcoming the oppressive situation in the process of the historic new democratic revolutionary transformation".\textsuperscript{16} What would have its meaning to the supporters and cadres of the CPN (Maoist)? The party has invariably contextualized the ideology of class struggle with poverty, injustice and exploitation. One foreign anthropologist observed in Dhorpatan of Baglung district, “People hear that communism is about the redistribution of wealth, and as most people in the area are extremely poor, this notion is very appealing, especially to disillusioned youth who turn to Maoism because it promises to better their living conditions.\textsuperscript{17} The ICG report could be a good reference of contextualizing the class ideology in the local milieu.

The Maoists have quite successfully appealed to what are widely viewed as deep injustice within Nepal, including abuses by the security services. Much of their attraction has stemmed not from the resonance of Maoist theory among poor and often illiterate villagers, but from the frequently inescapable logic of a general population that feels at best poorly served by their government and at worst preyed on by officials. Early Maoist attacks were effective in capturing the public's imagination because they targeted some of the most obvious signs of inequality in the form of local upper caste politicians, police posts, the judiciary, rural banks and land revenue offices.\textsuperscript{18}

Besides, prompt delivery of justice, though at gunpoint, against all sorts of exploitation and social aberrations (i.e. gambling, alcohol, sexual assault etc.) by the Maoists’ ‘people’s court’ has been widely appreciated.

\textbf{Ethnicization of Insurgency}

The CPN (Maois) has made concerted efforts in cashing the post-1990 ethnic upsurge in Nepal. The ethnic groups along with Madheshia (original inhabitants of tarai) and dalit has been marginalized as a consequence of historical process of the state' designed nation building scheme.
Since the time of unification of Nepal in 1768, the rulers – Shahs, Ranas and Panchas – had tried to develop Nepal as a homogeneous, monolithic and unitary state providing protection to one language (Nepali), one caste group (hill Bahun-Chhetri), and one religion (Hindu), ignoring the reality of diversified and pluralistic character of the Nepali society. Besides, the state-designed ‘Nepalization’ process – through Hinduisation, spread of the parbatiya’s culture, institutionalization of caste system converting separate identity of ethnic groups into caste structures, and centralization of politics and administration – had led to increase disparity among different social groups. The hill high caste Brahmin-Chhetri and Newar have long been in privileged position. Other groups, i.e. janajati, madheshya and dalit are generally marginalized. The legacy of history is well reflected in unequal distribution of socio-economic resources and in representation of political power structure of the country.

### Human Development by Caste and Ethnicity, 1996

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<tr>
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<th>Dominant Groups</th>
<th>Marginal Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bahun chhetri</td>
<td>Newar Madhesi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Life Expectancy</td>
<td>60.8 56.03 62.2</td>
<td>58.4 53.0 50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adult Literacy rate %</td>
<td>58.00 42.00 54.80</td>
<td>27.50 35.20 23.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Means years of schooling</td>
<td>4.4647 2.786 4.370</td>
<td>1.700 2.021 1.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Per capita income Nrs</td>
<td>9921 7744 11953</td>
<td>6911 6607 4940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Per capita PPP income US$</td>
<td>1533 1197 1848</td>
<td>1068 1021 764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Life Expectancy Index</td>
<td>0.957 0.522 0.620</td>
<td>0.557 0.467 0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Educational Attainment index</td>
<td>0.490 0.342 0.462</td>
<td>0.221 0.280 0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Income index</td>
<td>0.237 0.181 0.289</td>
<td>0.160 0.152 0.110</td>
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<td>9 Human development index</td>
<td>0.441 0.348 0.457</td>
<td>0.313 0.299 0.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Ration to HDI Nepal = 100</td>
<td>135.87 107.31 140.73</td>
<td>96.28 92.21 73.62</td>
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### Integrated National Index of Governance, 1999

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<th></th>
<th>Dominant Groups</th>
<th>Marginalized Groups</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bahun Chhetri</td>
<td>Newar Madhesi Janajati Dalit Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Court</td>
<td>77.0 13.6 7.6 1.7 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Constitutional Bodies</td>
<td>56.0 24.0 12.0 2.8 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Cabinet</td>
<td>62.5 9.4 15.6 12.5 0 0</td>
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<td>4 Parliament</td>
<td>60.0 7.6 17.4 13.6 1.5 0 0 265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Public Administration</td>
<td>77.6 17.6 3.7 1.2 0 0 245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Party Leadership</td>
<td>58.8 10.9 15.8 15.2 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Leadership: local elected bodies</td>
<td>55.5 15.7 16.2 12.0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Leadership: Commerce and Industry</td>
<td>16.7 47.6 35.7 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Leadership: Educational arena</td>
<td>77.3 11.3 7.2 2.1 1 1 97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Leadership: cultural arena</td>
<td>69.1 17.9 0 4.9 0 0 123</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Science/technology</td>
<td>58.1 29.0 9.7 3.2 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Civil society leadership</td>
<td>75.9 14.8 7.4 1.9 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66.5 15.2 11.2 7.1 0.3 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population %</td>
<td>31.6 5.6 30.9 22.2 8.7 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference with population %</td>
<td>+34.9 +9.6 -19.7 -15.1 -8.4 -1</td>
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Discontent against the domination of hill high caste is central issue of the emerging minority movements in Nepal. The unequal power distribution among the caste/ethnic groups can not be changed in the existing structures of Nepali state: monarchical rule, Hindu state, unitary form of government, primacy of one language (Nepali), domination of hill Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar, centrality of Kathmandu, centralized administration, feudalism and patron-client based authoritarian culture. With a project of state restructuring, the minority groups have asserted for their inclusion. The agenda of state restructuring has several interrelated components: i.e. secular state, republican system, federal form of government, regional and ethnic autonomy, proportional electoral system, devolution of power to local government, equal treatment for all languages, equitable sharing of state resources, positive discrimination/reservation for minorities, and representation of different groups in the public positions.

The ethnic concerns are well addressed by the CPN (Maoist). One famous sentence that has been used since the inception of insurgency is, “To maintain the hegemony of one religion (Hinduism), language (Nepali), and nationality (Khas), this state has for centuries exercised discrimination, exploitation and oppression against other religions, languages and nationalities and has conspired to fragment the forces of national unity that is vital for proper development and security of the country.” The Maoist proposal of state restructuring converges the ethnic demands. Some key points of the Maoist's scheme of state restructuring that have direct bearing with ethnic and minority rights are:

- Declaration of Nepal as a secular state
- Equal treatment to all languages of Nepal
- Ethnic and regional based autonomy and right to self determination
- End of caste, ethnic, regional and gender based discrimination
- Special policy for the promotion of interest of dalit and women

The CPN (Maoist) concerted efforts to blending ethnic rights and class war is evident by the formation of ethnic and regional based frontier organizations. Between 1998 and 2000, the Maoist formed seven ethnic based and two regional based front organizations, namely Magarat National Liberation Front, Tamang National Liberation Front, Tamuwan National Liberation Front, Limbuwan National Liberation Front, Nepal Dalit Liberation Front, Tharuwan National Liberation Front, Thami Liberation Front, Majhi National Liberation Front, Newa Khala (ethnic based), Madhesh National Liberation Front and Karnali Regional Liberation Front. The Maoists could penetrate in and expand their armed activities in the eastern hills and tarai region only after the party's ethnic and regional based front organizations began to work. Furthermore, based on ethnicity and regionalism, the CPN (Maoist) adopted a federal structure with its nine autonomous regional governments. These are: 1) Kirat Autonomous Region, 2) Tamang Salling Autonomous Region, 3) Tamuwan Autonomous Region, 4) Newar Autonomous Region (yet to be announced), 5) Magarat Autonomous Region, 6) Tharuwan Autonomous Region, 7) Madhesh Autonomous Region, 8) Bheri-Karnali Autonomous Region, and 9) Seti-Mahakali Autonomous Region.
The ethnicization of class ideology rendered help tremendously in strengthening the insurgency. The Maoist acclaimed that "New and young party members from poor peasant, women, depressed communities, oppressed nations and nationalities and backward regions rapidly came out of the crucible of the people's war in an unimaginable number". To see it in another perspective, the CPN (Maoist) has internal imperatives in ethnicizing the insurgency since the people from ethnic groups have considerable influence in the party organization. They are indeed dominant in the armed wing of the party. By appointing the party leaders from different ethnic groups as head of the related regional government, the CPN (Maoist) has maintained caste-ethnic balance in internal power equation of the party and this can be considered as preventive measures against the possibility of internal rebel by a certain group of the people within the party. Strategically speaking, the inserting ethnic contents in insurgency served the party's interest in appealing and mobilizing the people of the excluded groups. Though the Maoist ‘people war’ is political, the insurgency has a greater ethnic content in terms of composition of its PLA and militias.

**Internal Contradiction of State**

The institution of monarchy has always been in central position throughout the history of Nepal. But the survival of such a central institution is now in question. Gyanendra reached to the throne in the background of the royal massacre of June 2001 in which King Birendra along with his all family members and ten other royalties were killed. The report of probe committee found the then Crown Prince Dipendra as culprit of the royal massacre it was but not bought by the mass and they, rather, suspected a conspiracy behind this great tragedy. This event has brought a change in relations between the monarchy and the people. The parliamentary parties consciously ignored the mass psychology but the CPN (Maoist) which is championing for republic capitalized it for obvious reason. Unlike his predecessors, new King Gyanendra has some sort of legitimacy problem. His popularity further declined by his ambition to become 'constructive monarch'. The royal take over of power that started since October 2002 invited a confrontation with the major political parties, like the NC and the UML, which are faithful to the principle of constitutional monarchy. The palace's move of taking back power is backed by the international regime which thought that it would help to integrate the state's political and military power under the command of the king. The RNA, which did not feel comfort in working with parties leaders - is traditionally loyal to the institution of monarchy. But unlike to this anticipation, distance between the king and parties increased. This limited the palace's maneuverability that was manifested during the second negotiation between the king's nominated government and the Maoist in April-August 2003. The major parliamentary parties, NC and UML, took a non-cooperative line resemble to the palace and the military's position in the first negotiation between the elected government and the Maoist in August-November 2001. The division between military power commanded by the monarchy and the popular force represented by the parties has always been the advantage of the Maoist for both the pre- and the post-October 2002 times.
The Maoists have constantly gained the strength exploiting the weakness of its opponent, the state. The post-1990 politics is characterized by anarchy that reflected in the major events occurred in the past twelve years, such as parliamentary elections called four times; recommendations for dissolution of the House of Representatives (HOR) made six times; special sessions of the HOR summoned seven times; and the government changed thirteen times. All these events happened because politics was excessively concentrated on power game. Besides, the political instability, frequent change of government, politicization and division in police, erosion of ideology, decline in the credibility of political parties and their leaders, all these count for weakening the state’s crisis management capacity vis-à-vis the Maoist. Since politics concentrated at the centre in the game of government making and unmaking, parliamentary parties grossly ignored the need of party building at the local level. This helped the Maoist in creating its own space and territory for its ‘long protracted people's war’. The Maoist insurgency was started at the time when the state was heading towards instability, anarchy and crisis owing to the unholy alliances, both in nature and purposes, among the parliamentary parties.

The state’s capacity to deal with the crisis had been severely constrained by a division of the mainstream parties in their perception and strategy vis-à-vis the Maoist in initial phase of the insurgency. Two different reports, prepared by members of parliament (MP) after their visit to Rolpa district during the Romio operation period, had clearly indicated such division. The NC MPs interpreted the Rolpa incident as "terrorist activities", where as the left MPs called it as "political confrontation between the NC and the UPF" (political wing of the Maoist party). Worst of all, the mainstream parties wanted to use the Maoist insurgency for their own petty interest against other parliamentary parties. For the NC, the rise of the Maoist could become emergence of a countervailing force against the dominant position of another communist party, UML. The UML also tried to cultivate the Maoist issue to cut the size of its immediate electoral rival, the NC, as the Maoist made the NC workers the main target of its safaya (cleansing) actions. Such a misunderstanding and wrong strategy naturally misled them unless they realized a common threat perception, particularly after the UML’s interest was directly affected by the formation of the Maoist people’s government at different levels. Of 25 districts where the Maoist formed its district level government, 21 districts were the UML’s stronghold areas in terms of the result of the 1997 local election and the composition of the District Development Committees (DDC). The change of the UML’s role was clearly reflected in its (and also by other parliamentary communist parties) rejection of the Maoist proposal – put forth on the eve of the first truce and during negotiation with the state in August-November, 2001 – to have a loose left coalition on agendas of republic system and election of constituent assembly. The UML indeed endorsed the policy of armed mobilization for counter insurgency and the declaration of emergency (in November 2001) and its extension (February, 2002). The changing role of the UML and other left parties contributed to building a common approach and action plan against the Maoist. It was too late and by that time the Maoist gained innumerable strength, which demanded the use of the state armed capacity to resist insurgency.

The consensus among the parliamentary parties vis-à-vis the Maoist insurgency is, however, recently overshadowed by their division in relations to monarchy after King
Gyanendra took over power since October 2002. Four parties including the UML are now in the King's nominated government led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. Other four parties led by the NC have continuously taken street in opposing the royal 'regressive' steps. The UML changed the camp recently from five parties' alliance opposing the regression to the palace camp in reacting to non-cooperation of allies on its ambition to lead the proposed all party government. For the leadership of the NC, the ongoing protest movement is still a pressure tactics to reach in power. Pointing out the root cause of conflicts among the leadership of parliamentary parties, the then US Ambassador Michael Malinowski stated, "Nepal's house is on fire and the politicians are arguing about who gets to sleep in the master bedroom". Contrary to leadership's quest for the King's favour for power, the leaders of many political parties, including the NC and the UML, have been under tremendous pressured by the workers of their respective parties to go for republic and constituent assembly. This is another contradiction facing by most parliamentary parties.

The state’s capacity to use armed forces was/is limited by the fact that the army is not under the control of civilian government. The party-military hostility is compounded by the factors of historical legacy, constitutional ambiguity, and non-cooperation. Exchange of heated words between civilian leaders and military officials accusing one against another for the escalation of the Maoist crisis surfaced publicly several times. The government-military relation was further complicated by the palace’s separate dealing with the Maoist. Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Babu Ram Bhattarai claimed of having their aghosit karyagat yaketa (undeclared alliance) with late King Birendra and they said that Birendra was not in favour of the government's plan to mobilize the army against the people's war. The army had deliberately and consciously kept itself in distance from the elected government and multiparty parliamentary democracy as if its primary duty is only to protect the palace.

The Maoist has cultivated internal contradictions and crisis among the state actors – particularly conflicts among political parties, and confrontation between the palace/army and political parties – to enhancing its strength and capacity. The possibility of take over by the Maoist through armed insurgency is, however, least likely.

**Concluding Remarks**

People's war stared from the remote areas of the Mid-west hills in February 1996 by a few dozens ideologically motivated hardcore Maoists has been in headway expanding its impact all over the country. It is through contextualizing the ideology of class war with poverty, injustice and exploitation and through ethnicizing the insurgency, the CPN (Maoist) has strengthened its capacity of popular mobilization and ability of armed fighting.

Moreover, the CPN (Maoist) acquires power more through taking advantages of weakness and internal contradictions of its opponent, the state, than the strength it gained through its own concerted efforts. Taking back the executive power by King Gyanendrana on October 4, 2002 heightened the conflict between the palace and the parliamentary
parties. The failure of the post-1990 democratic governments to address the long-standing socio-economic problems of the country, i.e. poverty, unemployment, deprivation and discrimination against the minorities (dalit, ethnic groups, and women in particular) etc. helped to enhancing the Maoist’s strength, power and influence. People’s apathy towards the leadership of mainstream parties and internal crisis, conflict and contradiction among the state actors and institutions (i.e., palace, parties, parliament etc.) paved the way for escalating the Maoist’s insurgency.

Negotiations held between the Maoist insurgent and the state twice in the past failed to bring out peaceful solution of armed conflict. Its resumption however can not be ruled out. Despite the CPN (Maoist)'s claims of advancing the insurgency to the stage of strategic offensive, the state backed by international regime is still heavy weight in military strength in terms of arms, ammunition and manpower. The state's military supremacy is confronting with the Maoists' talent and motivation to rebelling. The hope of negotiation is based on a fact that, “This war (between the Maoist and state) is militarily unwinnable” for either side.

Another pertinent question related to explore the possible way out of the problems of insurgency is ideological goal of the CPN (Maoist). Whether the Maoist is stick to its ideological goal or is it willing to be flexible for amicable solution of the problem? With a declared objective to achieve new people democracy, the CPN (Maoist) has started ‘people’s war from 13 February 1996. It is distinct from other left parties of Nepal mainly because of its rejection of the system of monarchy and parliamentary democracy. It is indeed different from other parties because it has applied Mao’s dictum “power grows out of the barrel of a gun” into action. If the CPN (Maoist) is stick to its ideological goal, the possibility of peaceful settlement is unlikely. As one argues, "The case of Nepal is intrastate in which the stakes of both warring parties are high that relates to the survival of the insurgency and its success, one the one hand, and the survival of monarchical regime on the other. If the Maoists win, monarchy will be eliminated, republicanism established; if the state wins, the revolutionaries would be eliminated."31

The CPN (Maoist) has time and again shown a green signal for ideological flexibility. Its threefold demand - round table conference, interim government and constituent assembly - does not include republic. It has postponed its republican agenda though its demand for the election of constituent assembly may pave the way to achieve it in future. The election of constituent assembly is the bottom line of the Maoist party which itself is a reconciliatory agenda, taking into consideration of its ideological position for the republican state that is not included in agendas of negotiation. Furthermore, the party has reaffirmed to accept multiparty system if the problem is settled in negotiation table. The CPN (Maoist) position is well reflected in Babu Ram Bhattarai's response to ICG's question - Would the CPN(M) leadership be willing to accept a constituent assembly with precondition that multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy be guaranteed ? - "... if the particular historical condition and the prevailing balance of forces so demand, there can be common understanding on certain issues during and after the election, but not certainly in the very beginning or right now and on fundamental questions of democracy. On our part, we are committed to multi-party democracy and other
prerequisites of basic political, economic, social and cultural transformation, which we have outlined in the political agenda submitted during the recent peace negotiations." It seems that the questions whether the CPN (Maoist) will stick to its original stand for republican and one party communist system or will it pursue a revision for the continuity of multiparty system and 'tactical understanding' for the retention of monarchy will depend on how the issue will be settled, through war or through negotiation.

To see the case from other parts of the coin, the minimum condition for the peaceful settlement of the insurgency problem is that the King should give up its ambition to become powerful monarchy. Of several factors that led to the failure of the recent past negotiation between the state and the CPN (Maoist), three major things were the King's unwillingness to give up power, vested interest of army generals and exclusion of parliamentary parties in negotiation.

Resumption of negotiation can not be ruled out. One should not also ignore that there are three contending parties that need to be involved. The essential rule of negotiation is to make a compromise based on give and take among the contending parties. To see from optimistic points of view, the problems of the nine year old armed conflicts could be settled in making agreement on following three points.

1. Revival of the pre-October 4 constitutional position, for temporary period, to form an interim government of all parties (including Maoist), separation of military from the palace, absorption of the Maoist’ armed guerillas in employment and job market before the election of constituent assembly.

2. A tacit understanding among the political forces for the retention of kingship in the form of full-fledged constitutional monarchy by the new constitution.

3. A provision of amendment in constitution providing options to change anything of the constitution through referendum.

Notes


2 Cited in Dhruba Kumar, "Consequences of the Militarized Conflict and the Cost of Violence in Nepal", Contributions to Nepalese Studies, July 2003, p. 184.

3 About the way how the Maoists are running the parallel administration, one states, "Outside the Kathmandu Valley and district headquarters, they have maintained a tight control over the movement of people, transport of goods and delivery of services. Through a short electronic message, they can bring the nation to a complete standstill, because of the fear they have been able to create over years". (Mukunda Raj Katel, "Negotiating the Maoist Conflict: Problems and Possibilities", Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies, IV:2, September 2004, p. 38.) Another elaborates, "They have also started practice of governance by establishing rules and regulations as well as developing textbooks for teaching at schools by banning the bourgeois subjects and Sanskrit teaching. By issuing a separate budget, introducing a visa system for visitors to the Maoist infested areas, taxing the inhabitants, charging levies on commercial, tourist, or trekking transactions and extracting commissions from sale of timber and herbs like yarshagumba, the Maoists have registered the semblance of independence by creating a state within the state. (Dhruba, Op. Cit, p. 14)
Such a claim has ground to believe in the case of the hill districts of the Mid-West region – the epicenter of insurgency. But in other parts of the country, the vast areas are buffer zones between the Maoist controlled area in remote parts and the state controlled area in district headquarters. The presence of both forces is felt in such buffer zones by patrolling of the police and army in daytime and by the Maoist guerrillas at night. (This statement is based on observation of 79 investigators who made a month long field work in August 2004 as enumerators of a survey on State of Democracy in Nepal) “Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal” (Document adopted by the Third Expanded meeting of the Central Committee of the CPN (Maoist) in March 1995.)


Some reports indicating the state withdrawal in 1999-2000 are: Among the 43 VDCs in Rukum, only six have chairpersons residing in their respective village. (Kathmandu Post, March 10, 2000) Among the 26 police posts in Rukum, only 11 have been retained. (Kathmandu Post, March 11, 2000) The number of cases registered in the Rolpa District Court for nine months (from July 1998 to April 1999) was only 28 against its previous record of having court case at least 30-35 per month. (Himal Khabar Patrika, April 15-30, 1999)

The 2001 census of Nepal recorded 101 caste and ethnic groups and 91 languages and dialects. Based on caste, ethnic, regional, cultural and linguistic cleavages, Nepali population can be broadly classified into three major groups: Parbatiya (hill people) and Medhesia (plain people); jat (caste groups) and janjati (ethnic/tribal groups); and high caste and low caste Hindus.


The army was used by late king Mahendra to stage coup in 1960 against the NC government and multiparty system. The army had also been used time and against to suppress movements against the partyless panchayat system (1960-90).

The 1990 constitution has a separate provision for military mobilization, the Security Council (consisting of the Prime Minister, Defence minister and Chief of the Army Staff) which can only recommend it and the king takes the final decision.

Non-cooperation by the army was felt widely, particularly during the Maoist’s captured of Dunai, headquarter of Dolpa district in September 2000. The then Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala resigned obviously because of the army’s betrayal on Holeri incident. The army disobeyed the government decision to counter the Maoist guerrillas after they kept 76 police in hostage on July 12, 2001 at Holeri in Rolpa district.


Text of Babu Ram Bhattachari’s letter to ICG, 26 September 2003.