

A Decade of Armed Conflict and Livelihood Insecurity in Nepal

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1 The Context

Nepal, previously recognised as a peaceful country, is midst of violent conflict since 1996. The ongoing armed conflict has taken more than 1300 lives and cost billions of rupees worth of damage to property and infrastructure. Nevertheless, it has challenged the centuries' old feudal socio-cultural and political systems and brought tremendous opportunities for the renat

ion, corruption and mal-governance are root causes of the armed conflict and source of persistent livelihood insecurity of poor p

ood security and durable peace in the country.

2. Causes of conflict

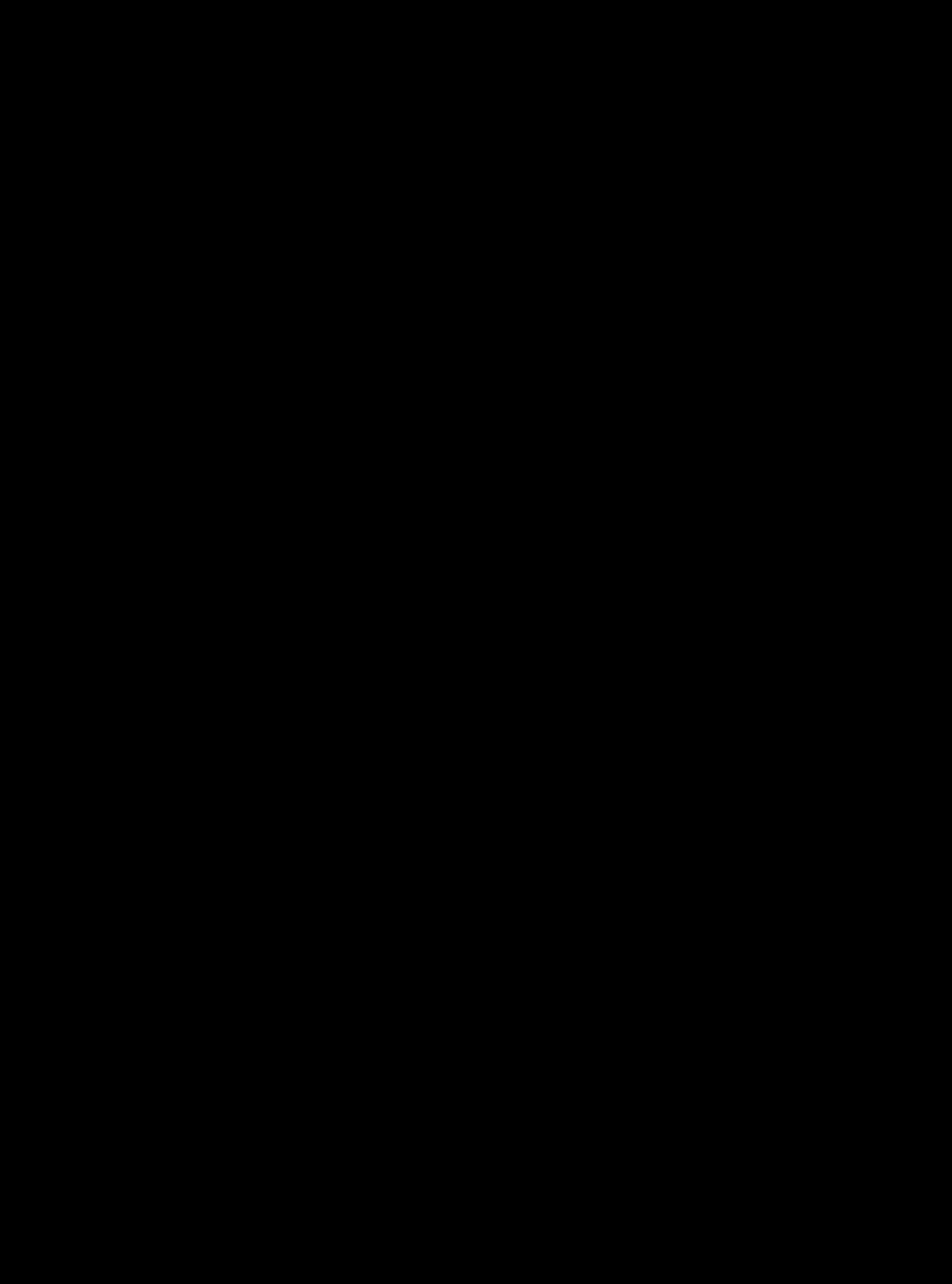
The armed conflict of Nepal is the cumulative effect of structural causes, proximate causes, changing international security dimensions, psychological aspects, failure of leadership and geo-political specificity. Hence, the Maoist insurgency is not the sole product of the failure of multiparty democracy. Rather, it is the refle

State nurtured caste-, class, gender- and religion- based discriminations became one of the main causes of the conflict. State's structures themselves are exclusionary, such as declaring state as 'Hindu state', excluding employment of Madeshi people in military, not issuing citizenship certificate from the name of mother, preventing 'untouchability', denying access of landless people to land, etc.

Deep rooted social cleavages in terms of caste, ethnicity, gender and regional, cultural, linguistic and religious forms of discrimination are characteristics of Nepalese society and structural basis of conflict. People had great expectation of addressing these cleavages by the political change of 1990. However, poor performance of the successive governments developed disillusionment on Nepalese people towards po

Table 1, Land distribution situation in Nepal

S.N.	Category of people	% of total population
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citizens. Public participation was ignored and the process and the in peace process neither transparent nor accountable. The main reason of such exclusionary and non-transparent process was to protect vested interests of elite in the negotiation (Upreti, 2006; Raj, 2004, Seddon, 2005).

2.1.4 Geographical isolation:

Geographical i

strong left support since 1950s. ...Mobilising not only party cadre, but local and regional civil administration and the police force as available and the necessary, the Girija government started a trend of committing and compromising state resources to undermine opposition parties to win local and national election. ...If free and fair elections are to be regarded as forming the most inviolable aspects of democracy, then the trend initiated by the Nepali Congress government under Koirala in the Maoist hinterland and beyond can be taken as the beginning of a series of egregious and systematic violence of democracy from within the state in post 1990 period (Pahari, 2003:7).

2.2.2 Absence of a vibrant civil society:

Since long time, there was an absence of civil society sector to closely watch the political, economic and social process and warn the government and political actors if they

responsible for attacking enemies and d

The collective political psyche in Nepal especially in the context of the armed conflict is largely reflected in denial, coercion and revenge. Politicians and bureaucrats often preferred to ignore or deny the reality of exclusion, discrimination, hunger, violation of civil rights, rather than to accept these challenges as an opportunity to reform the state and society (Upreti, 2004c). All major actors of society used denial as a powerful mechanism. They deny the seriousness of the country's situation, afraid to admit that their weakness

deep-rooted oppression and the feudalistic mode of production relations, unequal power structures and the capitalistic system are the problems (Upreti, 2006; Bhattarai, 2005; Sharma, 2003). In contrast, the government and the parliamentary parties advocated for capitalist political system and constitutional monarchy. Consequently, the two seemingly opposite ideologies provided the mutual basis for shaping their behaviour and action leading to ideological conflict. The CPN (Maoist) found their theoretical orientation called *Prachin path* and said that it is the pathway to address new challenges of 21st century. The Maoist geared their proletarian revolution combining a Chinese strategy of protracted people's war (starting from villages to towns and cities), Russian strategy of armed insurrection and discontentment of Nepalese people towards the state (Upreti, 2006; Sharma, 2003). Parliamentary parties and their successive government were confused or unwilling to realise the strong ideological dimension of the Maoist insurgency (Nicholson, 2003; Karki and Seddon, 2003). Further, the state systematically underestimated and trivialised the United People's Front - the political wing of the CPN (Maoist) led by Baburam Bhattarai. This can be reflected by the stat

and Seven Party Alliance (SPA) together and reached 12-point understanding between these two political forces of Nepal⁸.

Though, China was close to the palace in the past but remained indifferent about the armed conflict saying that it is an 'internal problem' and therefore China does not want to engage in internal politics of Nepal. However, it was very closely watching the development and used the silent diplomacy. In contrary to specula

water that often lead to severe conflict) and frequently changing priority and ultimately leading to development failure (Pandey, 1999; Shrestha, 1997).

It is worth stating one

Table 3: Comparative Expenditure in Nepal (Million rupees/Year) between 1996-2004

Fiscal Year	Total	Royal Nepal Army	Police	Palace	General	Development
1996/97	57566 (100)	2425 (4.21)	2235 (3.88)	70 (0.12)	24984 (43.40)	32581 (56.60)
			2521 (4.06)	73 (0.12)		
			2922 (4.19)	83 (0.12)		
			3324 (4.30)	88 (0.11)		
			5271 (5.75)	93 (0.10)		
2001/02						

exploitation by village moneylenders to poor people and small farmers has decreased in villages. All these changes have contributed to address livelihood insecurity. The armed conflict has forced the government to start some reform programmes such as redefining land ceiling and women's property rights, regulation for sale and consumption of liquor, formulation of anti-corruption act. Further, the Maoists introduced various community decision-making mechanisms to deal on land issues, domestic violence, alcoholism, polygamy, etc. that have given a voice to socially excluded people, poor and rural women. Maoists' raised legitimate questions to the performance and benefit of development projects in terms of volume of budget spent and types of pe

people fled due to relatively better state of accessibility (open border; similar religion, culture and language, relatives working there) etc.

Health facility is one of the important components of secured livelihoods. However, due to the damage of ambulances, health posts and other health related infrastructures, restriction of supply of medicines in the Maoist influence areas by the security forces in the suspicion of use of medicines by insurgents, increased unwillingness of medical professionals to go to remote areas for work and subsequent deficiency in health services, reduction of investment in the health sector by the state, rapid brain drain from health sector (qualified doctors and nurses leaving country) and frequent disruption of water supply and blockade of water source have created serious problems in the health sector and people's access to health facilities has been seriously disturbed.

Access to quality education is another important element of secured livelihood. The armed conflict has created anarchy in the education sector and used it a and uh and u and u and u and u and u and u and u and u and u and u a

In the central level, the Maoists had instituted United Revolutionary People's Council, a parallel central government of the Maoists, which had developed 75 points common minimum policy and programme. The aim of this policy and programme is to guide the struggle to complete the New Democratic People's Revolution and to guide the state after the revolution. They have also establishe932 659.2812 Tm(lut.10.98 0 0 10.98 384o 0 0

Box 1 Maoist's policy in natural resource management (extracted from the Common Minimum Policy and Programme of the United People's Council)

Point 8: ...In order to continue transforming the

4.2 Conflict a

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vegetables due to the prolonged *bandhs* and blockades and they have thrown their commodities on the highway as a protest.

Table 6 Feeling security situation by respondents

No	Feeling of the respondents	f	%
1	Highly insecure	13	17.56
2	Insecure	20	27.02
3	Relatively secure	26	35.13
4	Secure		13.51

negative towards ADB loan and they have damaged several branches of the Bank and destroyed documents in the past. For example, all branches of ADB in Chitwan were moved from rural areas to the district headquarters.

Both farmers and staff of the ADB share that many farmers are not able to pay back the bank loan due loss

products. The representatives of the milk producers²³ expressed their deep frustration. They shared their suffering from the conflict and crisis as well as the milk holidays declared by the Dairy Development Corporation. In 2003-4 (2060 BS), they suffer 14 days from blockade and 35 days from 'milk holidays'. In 2004- 5 (2061 BS), they suffer 21 days from blockade and 38 days from 'milk holidays' and in 2005-6 (since Marawan 2062) they suffer 37 days from 'milk holidays' and 4 days blockades. During these days they were not able to sell their milk. Consequently, all three catego

increased intensity of conflict. For example, approximately 24000 people of 3500 households of Rajapur areas of Bardiya District alone left their village and entered Baharaich and Bachhya areas of India²⁵.

A report of the Inter-Agency Internal Displacement Division (IDD) Mission to Nepal (11-22 April 2005)²⁶, concludes that '*Nepal faces a very serious political, security and humanitarian situation in which preventive measures are urgently required to prevent further deterioration.*' It further states, '*While the full magnitude of population displacement is unknown, best reliable estimates su 634j10.98 0 10.98 83Tm08 c 0.11369 Tw 10.9cl0.98 0 10.9*

and training and better nutrition and health; supportive and cohesive social environment; secure ac

violence, to restore peace, to control corruption and improve the deteriorating economic situation of the country. In all his speeches, public comments and interviews, the king vehemently expressed his dismay with political parties as, *"Nepal's bitter experiences over the past few years tend to show that democracy and progress contradict one another. Multiparty democracy was discredited by focusing solely on power politics. Parliament witnessed many aberrations in the name of retaining and ousting governments. Not a single House of Representatives was allowed to complete its tenure. Continuous confusion and disorder resulted in the obstruction of the democratic process."*³³ He further said at the time of the royal takeover in the 1st February, addressing the Nation, *'...today we have once again reached a juncture, where in keeping with popular aspirations, a historic decision must be taken to defend multiparty democracy by restoring peace for the nation and people. Even when bloodshed, violence and devastation has pushed the country on the brink of destruction, those engaged in politics in the name of country and people continue to shut their eyes to their welfare. Tussle for power, abuse on gaining authority on gaining power and unhealthy competition in fulfilling personal and communal interests at the expense of the nation and citizenry contributed further to deterioration in the situation. ...It is now time to bring to an end the ongoing act of terrorist violence and pledge, in earnest, to fulfil the people's aspirations with the restoration of peace and security in the country.... As it is our responsibility to preserve our nationalism, national unity and sovereignty, as well s to maintain peace and security in the country and ensure that the state of the nation does not deteriorate any further, we have, by virtue of the State Authority as exercised by us and in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, taking into consideration Article 27*

acknowledge their past mistakes and promise for not to repeat the mistakes (points 6 and 7), promised to work together to resolve 10 years armed conflict, establish peace and implementing the concept of absolute democracy in the country, people came to street and started to challenge the royal regime. Non-violent people's movement of April was precisely the outcome of this realization.

5.1 People's Power (6-24 April) and political change:

SPA called a nationwide general strike (*Nepal band*) for 4 days (6-9 April). In response, hundreds of thousands of people came to streets across the country because they were convinced from the 12-point understanding reflected as an outcome of the collaboration between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist). On 5th April, CPN (Maoist) declared a ceasefire to support the general strike. The SPA was saying that the general strike will be peaceful but the royal government was saying that the infiltration of CPN (Maoist) will make the general strike violent and at that time the government will take all necessary measures to protect people and property. The government asked the SPA to called-off the general strike and threatened to suppress it by use of force if the organizers do not obey the government. Despite the continuous pressure and threat from the government and Nepal army (who was leading the unified command-police, armed police, military and intelligence), SPA decided to continue the protest.

One the first day of the general strike on 6th April, protesters organized mass rallies all over the country and in some areas protestors had started to dismantle the statues of the Shah Kings. This was further expanded in following days. Even before the start of people's movement, the royal government mobilized unified command to prevent people coming to the street and political leaders and activists were arrested either from their residence or at the first encounter in the demonstration. People appeared in different parts of the town and district headquarters and organized demonstrations all over the country. The king's government took very repressive measures and frequent and excessive baton charges and gun fires became routine. On the 1st day of the general strike, CPN (Maoist) fiercely attacked in Sarlahi district and defeated the unified command that had severely demoralized the security forces. Consequently, the security force discharged their anger to peaceful demonstrators in different parts of the country. Mass in the streets in Kathmandu valley and other many parts of the country were

helicopters, ground forces opened fire at the demonstrations in different parts of the Kathmandu. Commanders of security forces gave order to their commanding officers to prevent gathering of protesters and to shoot them. The Home Minister himself was working at the Army Headquarters for coordinating with the Military Chief and Valley Command Force to suppress the people's movement. The government attempted to justify its suppression saying that it found Maoists infiltrated in the demonstrations and therefore the government has to take stringent measures. So, during the 19 days of peaceful

rejected the offer of the king as well as the suggestions of a group of foreign diplomats. People's peaceful movement continued with more strengths and wider support. By the 23rd April more than half of country's population f

On the other side, Maoists were concentrating to strengthen their power, weaken political parties instead of meaningfully engage with political parties to change the feudalistic political system. They used the palace and regressive forces against political parties and vice-versa. However, their magic expansion and success in managing 'people's war' was able to control 80 percent of the territory of the country but not able to capture the state. Therefore, the armed conflict reached to a situation of strategic stalemate. The CPN (Maoist) defeated the Nepal army in many individual fi

commitment to support the struggle of political parties to restore democracy. Senior leaders of CPN (Maoist) and SPA visited in New Delhi

conflict. The state restructuring and establishing republican state are the two major agenda of negotiation. They reached a historic 8 point agreement (see annex 2) in this proc

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2. Aditya, A, Upreti, B. R. and Adhikari, P. K (2006), Countries in Conflict and Processing of Peace: Lessons for Nepal. Kathmandu: Friends for Peace.
3. AI, (2005a), *Nepal: A Long Ignored Human Rights Crisis now on the Brink of Catastrophe*. 18 February 2005, ASA 31/022/2005. London: Amnesty International.

25. Nickson, R. A. (2003). Democratisation and Growth of Communism in Nepal. In: Thapa, D (Ed.), *Understanding the Maoist Movement in Nepal*. Kathmandu: MartinChautari. Pp. 2-33.
26. Onesto, L, (2005),

49. Upre

the rule of law, fundamental rights etc, the CPN (Maoist) has expressed commitment to move forward its activities accordingly.

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