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## **Maoist Insurgency in Nepal**

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## ABSTRACT

Nepal is experiencing significant political conflicts and may relapse into civil conflict if long-standing political difficulties are not handled. The paper provides a historical context for political conflicts and a lack of democratic consensus in Nepal and a connection between these factors and the country's present centralized political economy, inequality, and unequal distribution of resources. According to the facts, Nepal's conflict and political instability are caused by the country's egalitarian and centralized political economy. Conflict and political instability are likely to endure in Nepal until significant and radical socioeconomic structures are made. It also attempts to emphasize that democracy cannot thrive and sustain itself without equality and a fair allocation of resources.

**Key Words:** Nepal, Political conflicts, Civil war, Electoral violence, Community rights

## Introduction

The link between political economics and democracy has been the spotlight of both intellectual and political disputes. It is well acknowledged that resource inequality and unequal distribution may lead to complex disputes and represent severe threats to a peaceful democratic process. Conflict is inevitable when the state holds extensive formal powers and ignores the aspirations of the people (Gurung, 2003). The democratic process's existence and viability are primarily reliant on achieving equality and fair distribution of power and resources. In unequal societies, democracy is more likely to be threatened. Where resources are concentrated in a few hands, they will not work or deliver. According to Hachhethu, conflicts are basically related to the intra-elite struggle for power, status and resources. (Hachhethu, 2002). This is likely to cause dissatisfaction among the public, and democracy's narrative may be marginalized. Inequality and unequal distribution of resources pose the greatest threat to the democratic process. In any culture, it necessitates broader structural reforms. This dynamic is mainly responsible for the fragile and poor democratic condition in third-world nations. Nepal has been dealing with significant problems in terms of political growth. Political unrest has a long history in the country.

It has been involved in South Asia's most brutal conflict in Nepal. The Maoists' goal was to end the multi-party rule and constitutional monarchy in Nepal. Their purpose could not be achieved unless both political forces were defeated. Since it was impossible to weaken the two political forces through peaceful



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and non-violent movement, he chose the path of armed struggle. "Conflict is a struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals" (Horowitz 2000). It continues to search for a constitution, democracy, and peace. Nepal's centralized political economy and concentrated socio-economic systems are substantially to blame for the country's civil war, turmoil, and lack of democratic culture.

### **Maoist insurgency**

The Himalayan State of Nepal has many political conflicts, which are listed below:

### **Republican v/s Pro-Monarchy Forces**

Over the years, fighting between Republican and Pro-Monarchy factions has been one of Nepal's most serious concerns. Since the dissolution of the monarchy and the republic's formation, Nepal has seen a struggle between two hostile parties over whether or not the monarchy should be restored. Amitabh Chandra elucidates the rapid political changes witnessed by Nepal during the last two decades.

Until 1990, Nepal was a Monarchy running under the executive control of the king. Faced with a communist movement against the absolute Monarchy, King Birendra in 1990, agreed to large scale political reforms by creating a parliamentary monarchy with the King as the Head of the state, and a prime minister as the Head of the Government. Nepal has also been noted for its recent speed of development, such as being one of the few countries in Asia to abolish the death penalty and the first country in Asia to rule in favour of same-sex marriages. In recent past, Nepal has witnessed a great upheaval and great change. (Chandra 2010)

Prodemocratic forces pressed the last king of Nepal to resurrect the parliament and proclaim the Interim Constitution of 2007 after organizing a people's movement in 2006 to abolish the monarchy and turn Nepal into a democratic republic. As a result, in April 2008, the CA elections were held, and the monarchy was abolished. Despite the tremendous resistance of pro-monarchy forces, pro-Republican forces were able to prevail. Even though the days of monarchy are long gone, the royal family continues to have a significant impact on Nepali politics. King Gyanendra was said to be considering forming a political party to run in the CA elections.



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That, however, was not possible to achieve. If one examines the polling results of political parties in the two consecutive CA elections, one can see how voters have favoured pro-Monarchical parties. For example, the RPP (N), a pro-monarchy party, received four seats in the CA-I elections and, much to everyone's astonishment, 24 seats in the CA-II elections. Gyanendra has supported the RPP (N) on various constitutional issues after failing to form a political party. Some political experts attribute the RPP (N) 's success to people's growing dependence on the monarchy rather than the politicians and political parties that started the movement in 2006. Nepal has failed to select a national emblem to replace the monarch, according to many. It will continue to be a topic of discussion in Nepali politics.

### Issue of Proper Representation in National Legislature

To legitimize the political system under public and national interests, democratic administration requires a democratically elected and appropriately representative body. Before the founding of the CA, Nepal's national legislature was built based on royal command, allowing the monarchy to implement policies that preserved and supported historic patterns. At the same time, allowing the monarchy to alter the government and even the constitution regularly to further royal interests while ignoring the democratic opinions and interests of the people. As a result, under the monarchy, Nepal's national legislature did not regulate and stabilize democratic authority. The two democratic movements opened the ground for forming a new people's elected body, and the desire for such a body became a reality in 2008. In this context, Nepal has had two elections since 2008. Still, it has remained a problematic effort to include and secure adequate representation for all groups and interests in the CA, i.e., Parliament. In this respect, constitutional adjustments have been made to ensure that all parts of the population have equal representation.

The CA has been created twice as a temporary parliament, consisting of 601 members, 240 of whom were elected in single-seat districts and 335 by proportional representation. For the first time, political leaders agreed on making the national assembly more representative by using proportional representation to include individuals with diverse interests in the CA. It has been a source of concern that, in Nepal's history, a handful of prominent industrialists have been elected to the CA through the proportional representation system to represent the private sector. 3 Though measures and preparations for the CA's proper representational character have been appreciable in changing the legislature's pattern to a more democratic body to suit democratic requirements and expectations of the people. Despite the government's efforts to cultivate a culture of political legitimacy, determining an unjustifiable benchmark for fair representation of



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women, Dalits, and marginalized people in the CA has been a contentious problem in Nepal that requires a good solution.

### Demand for Change in the Interim Constitution

Following the formation of the CA, major steps were taken to remove various roadblocks to the constitution-making process. Problems such as power-sharing, presidential elections, vice presidential elections, prime ministerial elections, proclaiming the nation the genuine Federal Democratic Republic, the polity's inclusive nature, language concerns in official realms, and others necessitated adjustments, as stated in the interim constitution of 2007. As a result, beginning with the CA's first meeting on May 28, 2008, attempts were undertaken to change specific parts of the previous constitutions to address various issues. Fourth and fifth amendments to the interim constitution's preamble, as well as Articles 1, 4, 38, 45, 46, 138, 158, and 159, were proposed. Political parties have supported amending the constitution to give the prime minister more authority as the head of state. The NC and the UML each put out their proposal for amending the interim constitution. Both supported replacing the two-thirds majority requirement for forming and removing governments with a simple majority requirement. Changes to past constitutions were made to prepare the ground for the creation of a new one. The Interim Constitution of Nepal declares that a federal government that is inclusive can solve all kinds of problems. By the first amendment, this has been inserted into the Interim Constitution. The problem of federalism arises in the aftermath of the state's restoration,' writes Lok Raj Baral,

Albeit many issues surrounding are not made apparent by the political parties.

The timeline of federalism, on the other hand, has now become a national commitment agenda, with all parties and forces in Nepal pledging to transform Nepal into a federal state. (Baral 2009)

However, amending numerous elements of the Interim Constitution, such as citizenship, judicial structure, judicial appointments and judicial procedures, election laws, governance system, has proven to be a complex problem for the current legislators to resolve by consensual revisions. As a result, the provision in the 2007 Interim Constitution that all contested topics be decided on this basis has been a significant roadblock for the administration to finish the new constitution's final draft. The problem of achieving agreement has remained a key concern in Nepal, with the ruling and opposition parties arguing over whether to resolve complicated matters by consensus or majority vote.



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## Form of Government and Power-Sharing Between two Heads

Another crucial problem in Nepal is determining the government's shape. This problem has sparked debate in power-sharing between the 'Head of the State' and the 'Head of the Government.' There was a conflict between the Kings and the Prime Ministers before and after the formation of the parliamentary system in that nation. However, once the nation was declared a Republic and the President was appointed as the Head of State, additional disagreement emerged in power-sharing between the Head of State and the Head of the Government. The nature of the type of government, whether presidential, as in the United States, or parliamentary, as in the United Kingdom and India, has remained a problematic job for CA members to resolve. In this context, although the UCPN (Maoist) has advocated a 'Presidential form of Government,' with the directed elected President serving as both the Heads of State and Government, the UCPN and the CPN-UML have recommended a 'Reformed Parliamentary form of Government,' with the President serving as the Head of State and the Prime Minister as the Head of Government. While the CA has yet to proclaim government and the distribution of powers between the two heads has yet to take shape, resolving such problems will continue to be a struggle for the CA.



## Maoist Issue

The term "Maoists" is vaguely and generally connected with war, violence, aggressiveness, assault, and revolution. The developmentalist accept that "the Maoist movement is basically a social and economic issue and is produced and sustained by failed development" (Pandey 1999). Over the years, the root of Nepali Maoism, which is related to Chinese Maoism, has been a source of both struggle and transformation in Nepal. For years, the Maoists' aggressive and violent dealings with the government and the people have wreaked chaos and fear in Nepal. However, when conditions changed, the Maoists emerged as a new force in Nepal, receiving incremental support from individuals belonging to the Dalits, impoverished, and marginalized groups. This Maoist splinter group founded the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as an insurgent organization and began an armed campaign that led to the seizure of lands, the murders of citizens and police, and the paralysis of local administrations. The political goal of the Maoists is therefore very clear, viz., to capture power in the name of establishing 'new democracy' (Muni, 2004). The Maoists' significant insurgency actions altered the security situation and transformed Nepali politics into a "failed state syndrome," as Srikant Kondapalli correctly noted in his paper published in World Focus. The Maoists used violent measures against the government after emerging as a new political movement with a pressure



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group. Maoists generally operate in large groups consisting of more than 1000 cadres equipped with arms (Soren 2007). Unheard of was their 40 demands, which led to the "first people's war" in 1996 and "the second people's war" in 2006, uprooting monarchy and feudalism. Between 2006 and 2009, Nepal had a series of political experiments to integrate Maoists into mainstream politics and bring them from the forest to the halls of power. The CPA, which was signed under UNMIN supervision, ushered in a new phase in Nepalese Maoist history by reincarnating the Maoists to play a constructive role in nation-building. From a guerilla warfare outfit to a crucial democratizing force in Nepali politics, the Maoist Political Party has undergone many significant shifts. The Maoist Chairman Prachanda and Vice-Chairman Bhattarai served as the country's prime ministers after laying down their guns and embracing mainstream politics.

After winning a popular vote in the election, the Maoist party established its administration during the first constituent assembly period and faced several problems from the start. Prachanda's dispute with Army Chief Ruk Manga Katawal in 2009 forced him to quit as Prime Minister, resulting in political instability in the nation. When the country required compromise, the military commander and militant leader's hard attitude disrupted the peace process and slowed the constitution-making process. Disappointing the people and lowering their expectations, Maoist leaders failed to bring about change in the social, cultural, and economic spheres, unable to initiate reforms in the state apparatus, leading to changes in the bureaucracy, army, and judiciary and the police. They were unable to demonstrate that they were qualitatively different in their morals. The Maoist leaders' uncompromising position and anti-India position prevented them from enlisting the support of an all-weather friend (India) to address their national issues, and they also failed to provide the country with a new constitution. Major political groups such as the UCPN (Maoist), the CPN (UML), and the NCP were the reason for the dissolution of the first constituent assembly in May 2012, forcing the nation to hold a new election the second constituent assembly. The Maoists' politics in Nepal were heated and volatile due to factional warfare among Maoist leaders, notably CPN (Maoist) Chairman Mohan Baidya's depiction of UCPN leaders Prachanda and Bhattarai as "storied of foreign powers" and condemnation of their betrayal of the revolution's objective. Against this backdrop of Maoist politics in the nation and their loss in the second constituent assembly elections resulted from an enraged populace who had not seen their expectations realized. Although the Maoists have established themselves as a new political force in Nepal, the demands of the CPN (Maoist) faction leaders to pursue a policy of people's rebellion, once again in the name of a new democratic revolution, may put the country's political and economic situation under pressure.

On the other hand, the UCPN (Maoist) leader Prachanda's recent proposal with an ideological



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movement away from the objective of a "new democratic revolution" and toward a "Nepali revolution" has highlighted the contentious and confronting character of the Maoists' changing ideas and methods more in line with their projected aim in regaining and revitalizing lost popular support. All of the Maoist faction's revolutionary ideals seem to be more self-centred than nation-centric. As a result, it may be possible to deceive the people of the nation.

### Political Instability

Over the years, Nepal's political environment has been very unpredictable and in a state of upheaval. Immature democratic experience, leadership crises, inter-party and intra-party squabbles, political reservations, weak coalitions, a weak central administration, and various other issues have all contributed to the country's political instability. Nepal is in its adolescence in terms of democracy, which is a perplexing phase given its lack of experience and maturity. Nepal's democratic way of life has been misdirected due to the lack of a people's constitution. In an environment of accommodation, understanding, and mutual adjustment, which is missing in that nation, democracy can flourish or endure. Political parties and bureaucracies are being criminalized, public corruption is on the rise, and democratic procedures are diverted. After the demise of the monarchy, no leader has been deemed to have national appeal. Political parties have shaky leadership. During the last two decades, a dozen Prime Ministers have changed, causing political instability and transformation. In this context, Dhruba Kumar's statement that "leadership is the most horrible phrase among Nepalese people nowadays" appears accurate. Quarrels between political parties over who has the most political clout with the public and who have the most government seats have bred animosity, and political instability has resulted.

Inter-party and intra-party feuds have prevented the state from achieving political stability and developing political agreement on the country's essential ideals to democratize politics and draft a new constitution. In Nepal, party politics and political culture seem juvenile and transitory, with administrations created via coalitions. On the other hand, mixed and weak administrations have been so flexible and unpredictable that once a government is constituted, individuals begin to make plans for what comes next. Given the "fractured mandate" in the 601-member constituent Assembly in 2008, forming a government to expedite the constitution-making process was challenging. Though a government headed by Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) was possible after four months of discussions among political parties with power-sharing, it only lasted a few months till May 2009. Then, on 23 May 2009, a 22-party coalition





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headed by Madav Kumar Nepal was created, but it was quickly disbanded on 30 June 2010, and the drama of the Prime-Minister election lasted until 3 February 2011, when Jhalanath Khanal of the CPN-UML was elected after 17 rounds of futile elections. However, in the middle of inter-and intra-party intrigues, he was unable to establish his complete cabinet.

The political impasse lasted until Dr Baburara Bhattarai was chosen Prime Minister on August 29, 2011. Hardliners also opposed the current Prime Minister within his party, such as UCPN (Maoist) Vice Chairman Mohan Baidhya and Secretary C.P. Gajurel, who caused inter-party strife and failed to pass a new constitution, resulting in the first Constituent Assembly's dissolution in May 2012. In such conditions, the second Constituent Assembly elections were conducted in November 2013, and no party was able to achieve an absolute majority to create a majority administration. The Nepali Congress Party, which won the most votes in the Constituent Assembly election, established a coalition government with the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), led by Sushil Koirala, a Nepal member's most illustrious political dynasties. 36 Both parties have agreed to a seven-point deal that includes adopting a new constitution and the continuation of the current president and vice president in office until then. Many people anticipate a reasonably stable political scenario, as well as the prospect of a constitution being published within a specific time frame. The Maoists' approach, on the other hand, will be crucial to the whole process. Because political discourse evolves daily, it is still too early to determine what the Maoists would accept. On the other side, many are sceptical about how far the coalition will go this time to provide a democratic constitution, given the ongoing inter-party and intra-party squabbles over sensitive subjects and power-seeking activities, especially given the prior history of uncertainty and instability. Stable political systems are those systems that have been capable of managing their conflicts either through a systematic use of coercion or by persuasion, accommodation, and bargaining (Conn, (1975). Extreme political volatility and the change of multiple administrations and Prime Ministers during the first seven years of the CA period have posed a significant challenge in drafting the new constitution. As a result, the country's political instability has created problems in various areas, both public and private.

## Conclusion

The most severe risks to Nepalese democracy are a centralized and conservative political economy and inequality. Nepal has a lengthy history of political unrest and civil conflict, which directly impacts the country's socioeconomic structures and political economy. For political stability, peace, and the democratic



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process in Nepal, substantial reforms in socioeconomic systems are required. Without addressing poverty, inequality, and disadvantaged groups in society, Nepalese democracy may not be able to thrive, posing a severe threat to Nepal and its society. For Nepal's democracy to be restored and functioning, substantial reforms in socioeconomic systems must be made, ensuring that all sectors have an equitable amount of power and involvement.

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