



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**WHY DO RADICAL INSURGENTS JOIN MAINSTREAM  
POLITICS? A CASE STUDY OF THE MAOIST  
INSURGENCY OF NEPAL**

by

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December 2020

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STUDY OF THE MAOIST INSURGENCY OF NEPAL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Maoist insurgency of Nepal, which lasted from 1996 to 2006, was a major communist armed insurrection that cost more than 13,000 lives and brought a significant change to Nepal's historical political structure. This insurgency ended after the Maoists entered the mainstream politics of the country in 2006, but questions remain on why they decided to join democratic politics. Understanding this outcome is important because it provides insights into how insurgencies are resolved. Using a qualitative method, this thesis analyzes the roles of Nepal's domestic political parties, its monarch, and the international community in bringing the Maoist into mainstream politics. This investigation reveals that as a result of the changing domestic and international political scenario surrounding the insurgency, Maoists were forced to modify their strategy and join mainstream politics. Nepal's Maoist insurgency reveals the importance of pursuing a counterinsurgency approach that combines political and military measures, rather than excessive use of force that benefits the rebels as demonstrated in the earlier period of the insurrection. The state's acknowledgement of the Maoists' agendas and its willingness to engage in power sharing and constitutional amendment were keys that guided the insurgents toward mainstream politics.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CPA	comprehensive peace agreement
CPN	Communist Party of Nepal
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist
ISDP	integrated security and development program
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
RIM	Revolutionary International Movement
RNA	Royal Nepal Army
SAARC	South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation
SPA	Seven Party Alliance
TADO	Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance
ULF	United Left Front
UNPM	United National People's Movement

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Maoist insurgency of Nepal from 1996 to 2006 cost the lives of more than 13,000 people and attempted to turn the country into a communist state. This armed struggle, which ended in a political compromise, only partially succeeded in achieving its objectives. Although it did not transform Nepal into a communist state, the insurgency did serve as the catalyst that led to the abolishment of the monarchy, the eradication of feudalism in Nepal, and the inclusion of marginalized people, who comprised a majority of the population, into Nepal's democratic political process. Moreover, the peaceful end to the conflict also enabled the conversion of the insurgents into a legitimate political party for participation in Nepal's political sphere. This thesis explains why the Maoists decided to abandon a decade-long violent insurgency in favor of joining mainstream politics to advance their agenda. This research highlights various aspects of the insurgency and the state and the external response to the insurgency, and analyzes the methods of peaceful solution of an insurgency.

In exploring the Nepalese Maoist insurgency as a single case study, this thesis analyzes scholarly research on insurgencies and conflict resolution in general, as well as academic, government, and media reports on the Maoist insurgency in Nepal in particular. Using a qualitative method based on secondary sources such as books, scholarly articles, journals, and official documents, this thesis examines the insurgency in the context of changing domestic and international politics, ideological rifts within the Maoist movement as well the pivot in its strategies, and the government response to the insurgency. The analysis also considers maneuvers by the palace to secure political power and the activities of Nepal's political parties against this backdrop. Finally, it assesses the role of external actors and influences on the outcome of the insurgency. Among the factors that contributed to the Maoists' eventual entry into mainstream politics were the Maoists' willingness to adopt a modified strategy, encouragement from legitimate domestic political parties banned by King Gyanendra, and the international community's active assistance. The intra-party ideological conflicts also contributed to the Maoists abandoning the armed insurgency and engaging in national politics.

The analysis finds that the state's initial response to the insurgency was counterproductive. Government suppression of the Maoists resulted in massive destruction, death, rape, and numerous arrests of the local population, which pushed people even further into the Maoist fold. Moreover, the successive governments in the 1990s did not attempt to identify or address the deep-rooted causes of the insurgency and instead adopted insufficient short-term policies to counter the uprising. Although it did not address the root causes of the insurgency, the government maintained its determination to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table, and after a series of efforts, it succeeded in doing so. That first step helped the Maoists to enter into mainstream politics. Within the political arena, the new government of Nepal eventually accepted the main demands of the Maoists. After restructuring Nepal as a republic, the new government abolished the monarchy, guaranteed the proper representation of the marginalized community, and created the conditions for the Maoists to join national politics.

In addition, findings from the analysis show that the support of international communist organizations, especially in India, were ideologically crucial in driving the Maoists toward more hostile activities, and Indian territory was a sanctuary for their training and operational planning. At the same time, the support of India and the United States, along with other countries, for Nepal's government efforts to counter the insurgency were also significant. The identification of the Maoist insurgents as a terrorist group following the 9/11 attacks on the United States left the group with few options for international support, and coupled with violence that often impacted the general population of Nepal, put pressure on the Maoists to seek a political solution to the conflict. Ultimately, these factors led to the peace agreements that brought the Maoists from violence into the peaceful political mainstream.

The Maoist insurgency presents valuable lessons that can help government leaders of developing states facing social, political, and economic challenges similar to those of Nepal to politically and effectively counter insurgent movements and offer a path to peacefully settle ongoing or possible future insurgencies. For Nepal, in particular, these lessons can help the government formulate future policies to prevent or avert a potential insurgency by the Maoist splinter group led by Biplov. Nepal needs to establish a clear and

effective strategy while the insurgent group remains relatively small and before it can gain traction. Because, as this analysis illustrated, once an insurgency has erupted, the state is more likely to engage militarily, which can be counterproductive. Nepal should be careful to use proportional force that will not escalate the conflict. The Biplov faction must be dealt with politically to prevent any further escalation of the conflict. The issues raised by Biplov can be incorporated into the political process, where those Maoists can find a way to achieve their objectives peacefully. Internationally, Nepal should maintain harmonious relations with Indian authorities and concentrate on not allowing the Biplov group to use Indian territory as their sanctuary, a move that can deter them from waging armed conflict. Additionally, Nepal must make sure that India does not have incentives to side with the Biplov and leverage that relationship against the government of Nepal.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Maoist insurgency, which began in February 1996 and lasted until November 2006, was the deadliest internal armed conflict in the modern history of Nepal. The conflict lasted for a decade, cost the lives of more than 13,000 people, and changed the political system of Nepal, helping to oust the monarchy in May 2008 and establish the federal republic of Nepal. These events represented a significant shift in the democratic consolidation of Nepal. Although it was a communist revolutionary movement, the insurgency was the catalyst that led to the eradication feudalism in Nepal and brought marginalized people into Nepal's democratic political process.

The causes of this insurgency were complex and wide-ranging. The underlying causes of the insurgency included poverty, political instability, ethnic discrimination and marginalization, and the unequal distribution of natural resources.<sup>1</sup> At the onset of the insurgency, the Maoists wanted to abolish the monarchy and challenge the democratic parties, but after a long and violent struggle, the Maoists surrendered their arms in 2008. The insurgency's end was secured by a 12-point agreement and the historical Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006 between the Maoists and the interim government of Nepal. It was also a landmark for the Maoists' entry into mainstream politics. Since then, Maoists have ruled Nepal and shared political power through electoral victories.

The leaders of the Maoist Party frequently state that they did not abandon their agenda but merely used a different approach to achieve their goals using established political means.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it remains unclear why, after a bloody ten-year conflict, a majority of the Maoists decided to drastically change their strategy and join the existing political system rather than pursue a Maoist state framework. The political participation of the former insurgents in the democratic institutions has raised questions, not only among central cadres of the Maoist party who still have doubts about why they joined politics but

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Lockyer, "Civil War and Insurgency in Asia," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 13, no. 2 (May 4, 2018): 142–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2018.1478115>.

<sup>2</sup> Aditya Adhikari, "Nepal: The Discontents after the Revolution," *Economic and Political Weekly* 48, no. 7 (2013): 27–29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23391302>.

also among other political leaders who seek to implement economic and social policy.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, this inquiry serves as the focus of this research.

#### **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

The thesis aims to answer the following research question: Why did the Maoist insurgents join mainstream politics in Nepal?

#### **B. SIGNIFICANCE**

Today, Nepal still has several sources of insecurity such as poverty, inequality, and injustice that make the country vulnerable to insurgencies. A new hardline splinter group of the former Maoist insurgents in Nepal, now led by Netra Bikram Chand “Biplov,” claims to be reinitiating the armed insurgency. This group blames the former Maoists for corruption and abandoning the communist ideology and objectives by joining mainstream politics.<sup>4</sup> This research assesses the successes and failures of Nepal’s experience with the decade-long Maoist insurgency that ended in 2006 so that the country can learn from its failures and formulate future policies based on the subsequent successes to counter a possible future insurgency.

In addition, the case of the Maoists in Nepal offers a model of political resolution for other states facing insurgencies. Since many insurgencies around the globe, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (FARC) in Colombia, are engaged in the process of peace deals and negotiations with state governments, the example of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal provides a framework for political settlement of insurgency for the international community. In the realm of theory, this thesis contributes to the literature on how insurgencies end in order to combat instability in future.

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<sup>3</sup> Adhikari.

<sup>4</sup> Adhikari.

## C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Determining why the Maoists ended their insurgency and joined mainstream politics requires an understanding of how insurgencies emerge as well as how and why they end. This literature review analyzes the scholarly debates related to the approaches to ending insurgencies. It mainly focuses on the measures that provide an opportunity to the insurgent groups to change their course of action and participate in mainstream politics. This research also highlights the factors that trigger insurgencies. It explores the relevant internal political dynamics and prevalent socio-economic conditions, investigates the factors that mobilize people to join an insurgency, and analyzes the reasons behind former insurgents' participation in mainstream politics.

Before turning to the literature, it is useful to define what an insurgency is. Scholars offer various definitions of insurgency but broadly agree that it is an extended “political and military” struggle aimed at replacing the existing government and controlling the population, resources, and territories.<sup>5</sup> Bard O’Neill defines insurgency as “a struggle between non-ruling groups and ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.”<sup>6</sup> According to William H. Miller, there are two primary models of insurgencies: urban insurrection and rural guerrilla warfare. Urban insurrection is mainly focused on the rapid capture of power from the elites in major population centers, whereas rural guerrilla warfare, as framed by Mao, focuses on using the general population to challenge the central government at its weakest point.<sup>7</sup> Based on these definitions, the next section recounts the scholarly explanations for what causes insurgencies and what factors lead insurgencies to reach an end.

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<sup>5</sup> Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism*, 2nd ed. (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc, 2005), chaps. 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> O’Neill, 15.

<sup>7</sup> William H. Miller, “Insurgency Theory and the Conflict in Algeria: A Theoretical Analysis,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 60–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550008427550>.

## 1. How Insurgencies Start

Scholars identify various reasons for the emergence of insurgencies. To understand the nature of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, we must understand the framework presented by the theories regarding the origins of insurgencies. Depending on the geography and structure of the nation, there might be several reasons causing insurgencies to arise. Existing theories mainly point to social, political, and economic reasons for the rise of insurgencies; this review assesses those that help to understand the context of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

Some scholars suggest that social causes are at the root of insurgencies. Jonathan Joseph, a proponent of social theory, argues that every society has different interests and also has uncertainty, diversity, and fragmentation as major components.<sup>8</sup> He asserts that society itself generates conflict since it is composed of diverse groups that are not well integrated and not well integrated, which creates social disorder, making a state vulnerable to insurgencies. Similarly, William Niskanen believes that “political, economic, and social conditions” play an essential role and that the population is critical in the insurgency.<sup>9</sup> According to Kevin Quinn, caste and ethnicity can be another leading cause of an insurgency.<sup>10</sup> As Sharma points out, the dominance of a minority over the majority of a population can bring rivalry and can lead to the eruption of insurgency.<sup>11</sup> Developing countries, in particular, tend to be more prone to insurgencies due to factors such as the exclusion of lower castes from state resources, as Deptima Shukla notes, and from the mainstream of society and governmental services.<sup>12</sup> In a broad sense, Fearon and Laitin

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Joseph, “Introduction: The Norms of Sociology,” in *Social Theory: Conflict, Cohesion and Consent* (Edinberg, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.3366/j.ctvxcrx3c.4>.

<sup>9</sup> William A. Niskanen, “The Economics of Insurgency,” ed. Nathan Leites, Charles Wolf, and Robert Sansom, *Public Choice* 9 (1970): 85–92, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30022625>.

<sup>10</sup> Kevin Quinn, Michael Hechter, and Erik Wibbels, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War Revisited,” *Paper Presented at the 7th Meeting of the Laboratory in Comparative Ethnic Processes, Yale University, New Haven, CT, May 9–11, 2003*.

<sup>11</sup> Sourabh Jyoti Sharma, “Ethnicity And Insurgency In Myanmar: Profiling of Non-State Insurgent Groups,” *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 18, no. 3 (2014): 150–68, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48505114>.

<sup>12</sup> Deeptima Shukla, “Insurgency in Nepal and Role of State,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 1/2 (2003): 66, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41855770>.

alleges that countries experience insurgencies due to conditions of state weakness, poverty, large populations, and social instability.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that these authors do not blame a single variable for the emergence of conflict.

Similarly, some scholars believe that insurgencies are caused by political forces. According to Smruti Pattanaik, another crucial factor behind the rise of insurgency is political instability that affects the development and stability of governments.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as Manas Chatterjee and B. M. Jain posit, rapid changes in governments and elected officials mishandling of domestic problems can destabilize the political structure in any nation.<sup>15</sup> Following this line of thought, Nabiha Gul notes that insurgencies in such countries might arise as repercussions of instability in the government.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the human needs theory explains that every citizen has basic needs and the state has to provide those needs through the proper policy measures. If the state fails to fulfill its citizens' basic needs, the population tends to threaten the existing system through violent resistance or may join insurgencies.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, some other scholars point to economic issues as the source of grievances driving insurgencies. Along this line, Edward N. Muller and Mitchell A. Seligson, the discontent theorists, posit that rapid population growth and the unequal distribution of land fuels the emergence of insurgencies.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Muller, a relative deprivation theorist, claims that when people find prevailing conditions intolerable, they tend to harbor anti-

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<sup>13</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3118222>.

<sup>14</sup> Smruti S. Pattanaik, "Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Examining Socio-economic Grievances and Political Implications," *Strategic Analysis* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 118–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160208450028>.

<sup>15</sup> Manas Chatterji and B. M. Jain, *Conflict and Peace in South Asia: Conflict and Peace in South Asia* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2008), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=453246>.

<sup>16</sup> Nabiha Gul, "Question of Nepal: Political Instability and Maoist Insurgency," *Pakistan Horizon* 55, no. 3 (2002): 27–40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41394409>.

<sup>17</sup> Gulshan Majjeed, "Human Needs Theory: A Significant Approach to Manage Ethnic Conflicts in Pakistan - ProQuest," *Journal of Political Studies* 24, no. 1 (2017): 1–17, [http://search.proquest.com/docview/1927102264?rfr\\_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprim0](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1927102264?rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprim0).

<sup>18</sup> Edward N. Muller and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Inequality and Insurgency," *The American Political Science Review* 81, no. 2 (1987): 425–51, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1961960>.

government sentiments and develop a greater willingness to take part in aggressive activities that might lead to insurgencies.<sup>19</sup> Mahendra Lawoti and Anup Kumar Pahari argue that economic inequality and poverty are the key elements that contribute to the initiation and growth of insurgencies.<sup>20</sup> In their view, a lack of economic development and sustainable growth provides fertile ground for the discontented citizen to engage in insurgencies and seek alternatives to the current government. Likewise, in Quy-Toan Do and Lakshmi Iyer's view, developing countries with economic stagnation and deprivation create a higher volume of grievances against the state and therefore are more prone to conflict.<sup>21</sup>

There are various causes for the emergence of insurgencies, and each insurgency unfolds according to a country's social, political, and economic system. The strength of the government to deal with the prevalent domestic issues determines whether an insurgency emerges or not. As analyzed earlier, insurgencies are often a political phenomenon as was the Maoists' insurgency in Nepal.

## **2. How Insurgencies End**

Scholars recommend various methods to counter and end insurgencies. Since this issue is core to the thesis question, it is essential to look at the explanations for how and why insurgencies end in response to specific government-directed measures; this could help us to understand better how the Maoist insurgency in Nepal came to an end and how the Maoists joined mainstream politics. Based on the explanations provided by scholars, there are two primary approaches to ending insurgencies—military and political. Government actions, operations, and counterinsurgency measures are classified in the military category, whereas negotiation, diplomacy, agreement, and peace deals fall in the political category. In some cases, scholars have proposed combining the two categories of

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<sup>19</sup> Edward N. Muller, "Frustration-Aggression Theory," in *Aggressive Political Participation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 121–82, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt13x14rb.8>.

<sup>20</sup> Mahendra Lawoti and Anup Kumar Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-First Century* (London, UK: Routledge, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203869390>.

<sup>21</sup> Quy-Toan Do and Lakshmi Iyer, "Geography, Poverty and Conflict in Nepal," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (November 1, 2010): 735–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343310386175>.



approaches to address insurgency. This combined method applies the military and political measures simultaneously along with the involvement of national and international actors. The combined method has proved to be useful in countering and ending insurgencies.

In a framework similar to the combined method, Russel Croy provides “Logistic” and “Military Centric” explanations for ending an insurgency. Those two explanations have five significant variables: internal and external political support, lack of organization, conflict duration, death of an insurgent leader, and formal military intervention to resolve an insurgency.<sup>22</sup> Croy also claims that security scholars have failed to offer any generalizable theories on ending the insurgency. Bard E. O’Neill also argues that an insurgency is a political and military phenomenon that can be defeated if a “competent and capable government administration dispenses services...and effectively co-ordinates a multitude of political, economic, and security policies.”<sup>23</sup>

In addition, some scholars have sought to define a solution to insurgency through a broader approach, arguing that an insurgency is primarily a political problem. Scholars like Bhuwan Chandra Upreti believe that insurgencies tend to take advantage of political opportunity if provided with proper legitimacy. According to him, the agreement, peace deal, and various layers of negotiation are the components of this approach. Upreti has highlighted the importance of a political solution to insurgency and its fruitful outcome in his book *Maoists in Nepal*.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Alexandra Phelan claims that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (FARC) conflict in Colombia was resolved through a peace agreement that allowed the insurgent group to participate in politics and society after the Colombian government addressed the group’s grievances through a specific mechanism.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Russell Croy, “How Do Insurgencies End,” Small War Journal, October 11, 2014, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/how-do-insurgencies-end>.

<sup>23</sup> Bard E O’Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism- From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd Ed (Virginia: Potomac Books Inc, 2005), 191.

<sup>24</sup> Bhuwan Chandra Upreti, *Maoist in Nepal: From Insurgency to Political Mainstream*, 1st ed. (Delhi, India: Kalpaz Publications, 2008), chap. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Alexandra Phelan, “Engaging Insurgency: The Impact of the 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement on FARC’s Political Participation,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 9 (September 2, 2019): 836–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1432027>.

The state plays a significant role in dealing with the underlying issues of insurgencies. To put it differently, the success or failure of an insurgency depends on the democratic strength of a state. A study by Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki claim that pseudo-democracies do not succeed against armed insurgent conflict.<sup>26</sup> This study further argues that if an insurgency stems from persistent underlying causes, and the government is weak, the chances are high that the insurgency will win. The research further claims that insurgencies can end in one of four ways.<sup>27</sup> First, an insurgency may end when a government is overthrown, a territory annexed, or minority rights are recognized. Second, governments achieve a victory over insurgencies by destroying or using political channels to end them. Third, some insurgencies can be ended through negotiated settlements. The last type of ending is inconclusive, meaning the insurgency continues for but at a lower level of hostility or is dormant, which cannot be detected until it re-emerges.

Based on the various analyses and scholarly explanations, it is possible to conclude the following are some of the methods that might help to bring an end to an insurgency. The first method is to employ military power and tactical operations. Most insurgencies early in their existence meet with government forces on the battlefield and face subsequent defeat. Spyridon Plakoudas argues that the state has military superiority over insurgents in most cases.<sup>28</sup> In this case, Connable and Libicki also support that military measures are one of the main tools to bring insurgencies to an end and highlight the use of such means that garnered significant defeats of insurgent movements in world history.<sup>29</sup> According to them, victory can be partial or complete depending on whether one of the warring parties attains only some or all of its objectives. Also, the victory can be either temporary or sufficient, depending on the type of insurgency.<sup>30</sup> David Brewster, in the *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, states that the destruction of the Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of

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<sup>26</sup> Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), xiv, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG965.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Connable and Libicki, 13–20.

<sup>28</sup> Spyridon Plakoudas, “How Insurgencies End,” *Revista Científica General José María Córdova* 17, no. 28 (October 1, 2019): 152, <https://doi.org/10.21830/19006586.523>.

<sup>29</sup> Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Plakoudas, “How Insurgencies End.”

Tamil Eelam (LLTE) in 2009 was a well-organized military solution that had no post-conflict violence, an example of a sufficient solution for other nations to end insurgencies and bring peace.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, another set of scholars advocate political methods to address insurgencies, pointing to negotiation as a peaceful solution to an insurgency. Plakoudas argues that the opinion of the population is a decisive factor in an insurgency as those armed conflicts are not shaped by military actions, but by the population's desire for "social, economic, and political change."<sup>32</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, in *How Terrorism Ends*, agrees that negotiation is a critical tool to end terrorism as it leads to a gradual demise of terrorist violence while other measures bring an end only to the terror.<sup>33</sup> According to Cronin, insurgencies are terrorist activities, and they need to be handled with caution, making negotiation the most effective tool to end the insurgency. She claims that conflict cannot be ended through military measures. Similarly, Connable and Libicki support the use of negotiation, as results of their analysis indicates that one-third of modern civil wars have concluded through negotiation.<sup>34</sup> John Newsinger reinforces this view, point to the Irish Republican Movement in the United Kingdom that was settled through negotiation and subsequent political power-sharing.<sup>35</sup> The British were able to settle the conflict through negotiation and succeeded in disarming the insurgents and establishing constitutional reforms that addressed the IRA's grievances.<sup>36</sup> A robust and well-planned negotiation can thus bring terrorism and insurgency to a peaceful settlement.

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<sup>31</sup> David Brewster, "Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers: The Rare Victory of Sri Lanka's Long War," *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 9, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 247–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2013.847556>.

<sup>32</sup> Plakoudas, "How Insurgencies End," 152–54 .

<sup>33</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Negotiations: Transition towards a Legitimate Political Process," in *How Terrorism Ends*, STU-Student edition (Princeton University Press, 2009), 35–72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7rjbs.7>.

<sup>34</sup> Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica, United States: RAND Corporation, The, 2010), 18, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=557170>.

<sup>35</sup> John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 191–94, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230504554>.

<sup>36</sup> Newsinger, 200–205.

On the other hand, Edwin Bakker offers a holistic and comprehensive approach to end an insurgency in his book *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*. Bakker defines the holistic approach as a wide range of approaches, including preventive, repressive, soft, and hard measures. He argues that this multifaceted method can de-radicalize insurgents.<sup>37</sup> Bakker acknowledges, though, such a whole-of-government approach is costly and challenging to implement. He does not, however, offer evidence of how this method might motivate insurgents to join in the political sphere after the conflict has ended.

Scholars have subsequently highlighted the importance of international players in either sustaining or ending insurgencies. A study of insurgencies in modern times shows that they do not limit themselves to a specific territory. Christiantus Oke notes that it might be challenging to defeat insurgencies if they have trans-border links for cooperation, logistics and arms supplies, training, and fundraising.<sup>38</sup> The worldwide campaign of “The War on Terror” against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda gives a picture of the transnational organizational structure of insurgencies. As Rabindra Mishra posits, the geographical situation and security interests related to these insurgent movements invite international actors to play roles in insurgencies.<sup>39</sup> In Daniel Bayman’s view, immigrants overseas tend to support the insurgencies in their homelands, and external actors seek to have some control over an insurgency if they have provided political, economic, and logistical support to the insurgency.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, Connable and Libicki mention “the need for external support to the government at some point along the conflict timeline” to conclude the insurgency.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, they confirm that insurgents also need some

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<sup>37</sup> Edwin Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies: Comparing Theory and Practice* (Leiden, Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2015), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=3433519>.

<sup>38</sup> Christiantus Oke, “The Role of the International Actors in the Resolution of Insurgencies in West Africa,” ResearchGate, 2018, 843–44, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337733244\\_The\\_Role\\_of\\_the\\_International\\_Actors\\_in\\_the\\_Resolution\\_of\\_Insurgencies\\_in\\_West\\_Africa](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337733244_The_Role_of_the_International_Actors_in_the_Resolution_of_Insurgencies_in_West_Africa).

<sup>39</sup> Rabindra Mishra, “India’s Role in Nepal’s Maoist Insurgency,” *Asian Survey* 44, no. 5 (October 1, 2004): 627–46, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.5.627>.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Byman et al., “Assessing the Impact of External Support,” in *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 1st ed. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), 95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mr1405oti.14>.

<sup>41</sup> Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 2010, 51.

kind of external sanctuary and support to survive and succeed. Thus, there is multidimensional evidence for the need of external support either to sustain an insurgency or to bring an end to it. The expansion of insurgencies into the global arena ideally demands the involvement of international actors to play their role to end the insurgency. Various diplomatic negotiations, agreements, and legal and economic sanctions can help in concluding such conflicts.

In light of the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that insurgencies tend to survive until the affected state addresses the conflict's root causes. As Thomas Mockaitis argues, "government can win if it can address the root causes of social and economic unrest on which the insurgency feeds,"<sup>42</sup> it is the government that has to address the underlying grievances and set up an effective mechanism to deal with them. Since most insurgencies are politically motivated, governments can best deal with them through a political approach. Based on the analysis of the various methods just described as they relate to the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, a combined holistic approach, along with international support, most likely led the insurgents engaging in mainstream of politics at the end of the insurgency. The ideas and measures inherent in the holistic approach seem most helpful to understand the Maoist insurgency because they emphasize the effort of a combined approach to address the conflict's root causes.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

Various factors shaped the Maoists' journey from an armed struggle to their participation in the democratic political sphere after the declaration of the Republic of Nepal in 2008. Although there are numerous explanations for the Maoists' turn to mainstream politics, this thesis focuses on two variables that played a significant role in ending the group's insurgency and making their political participation possible:

- H1: The turbulent domestic political situation, including the Maoists' well planned strategy, the government's weak counterinsurgency measures, the Maoists' internal conflict, and ensuing peace agreements, created an

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas R. Mockaitis, "Resolving Insurgencies" (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), 61, JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11635>.

opportunity and the necessity for the Maoists to change course and brought them into the mainstream political sphere.

The Maoists' decision to join mainstream politics took place amid numerous political upheavals in Nepal. Once the insurgency started in 1996, the political system of Nepal began to crumble, and the inability of the political parties coupled with weak democratic practices eroded the security situation, providing a space for the palace to intervene in the politics. After the Maoists' attack on the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), the king initiated his move into national politics seeking executive power in 2001, and in 2005, the king finally took the power into his hands and banned all the political parties in the country. This royal takeover of Nepal's government changed Nepal's political structure and brought the Nepalese political parties and Maoists into one camp to fight against the monarchy. During this period, a political opening emerged for the Maoists. Similarly, the Maoists adopted the democratic multiparty system and agreed to join hands with other political parties. The shift in the extreme Maoist agenda "from a revolutionary ... to a democratic one"<sup>43</sup> became apparent after the two groups agreed to an alliance. This thesis assesses the actions of the monarchy, the changed status of the political parties, and the power-sharing agreements between Maoists and other parties in the post-2005 period.

- H2: Post-9/11 international pressure forced the Maoists to adopt a more political, less violent approach.

Another possible explanation for the Maoists' laying down their arms and joining the political sphere is the international support provided to the government of Nepal during the post-9/11 global "War on Terror." The increasing military capabilities of government forces and the deteriorating condition of the insurgency further explain the political journey of the Maoists in Nepal, as these conditions forced the Maoists to acknowledge that they were not capable of overrunning the state. Moreover, pressure from the international

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<sup>43</sup> Nihar Nayak, "The Maoist Movement in Nepal and Its Tactical Digressions: A Study of Strategic Revolutionary Phases, and Future Implications," *Strategic Analysis* 31, no. 6 (December 24, 2007): 915–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160701740488>.

community, especially from India, convinced Nepal's other parties to include the Maoists in the political sphere. This thesis also tests this hypothesis.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis adopts the single case-study method to analyze successful conflict resolution as illustrated in the Nepalese context and the political journey of Nepal's Maoist insurgents. Framed by the literature related to ending insurgencies, this research analyzes the political conditions over the course of the insurgency through the study of statements and documents of the political parties of Nepal and the Maoists. It also considers the impact of diplomatic pressure, and examines news, official reports, and political parties' agreements with the Maoists to fight jointly against monarchial rule.

Then, to analyze the effect of international pressure on Maoists, this thesis assesses the international sanctions and bans on the Maoists' activities, including the international community's labeling of the Maoists as a terrorist group, international assistance to the government of Nepal as military aid, and diplomatic pressure on the Maoists to lay down their weapons. The Maoist response to international pressure, as well as scholarly literature on external support, government reports, and materials gathered by journalists are assessed in detail.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis contains five chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter II elaborates briefly on the political history of Nepal, focusing specifically on its democratization and communist movements. The chapter also identifies the major splits and factions within the communist party throughout the king's rule, their political relations with other parties, and the expansion of extremism within the party. The history of communism in Nepal from 1950 to the onset of the Maoist insurgency in 1996 is analyzed to explore the communist extremism underpinning the insurgency. The rise and trajectory of discontent among the political parties after the royal takeover of the Nepalese government is also covered in Chapter II.

Chapter III tests the hypothesis that the Maoists abandoned the conflict and turned to the democratic political sphere primarily due to the opportunities presented by a turbulent domestic political scenario, including the chance to pursue their well-planned Maoist strategy peacefully, to exploit the government's weak counterinsurgency measures, to avoid further internal conflict within the insurgent movement, and to secure legitimacy for their views through participation in peace agreements. Chapter III examines the Maoists' entry into mainstream politics in terms of their cooperation with the existing political parties, the coercive counterinsurgency strategy of the monarchy, and the civil pressure put on the Maoists, which brought them into negotiation.

Chapter IV examines the second hypothesis: the role played by international support for the government of Nepal and external pressure placed on the Maoists to participate in the political arena.

Chapter V presents conclusions and recommendations for future policies and strategies that governments can employ to address radical groups and prevent the outbreak of insurgencies.



## **II. ORIGINS OF THE MAOISTS—PRIORITIES AND CONDITIONS FOR THE INSURGENCY**

To understand why the Nepalese Maoists joined mainstream politics in Nepal after 10 years of armed insurgency, it is necessary to know who the Maoists are, what the conditions were that produced the insurgency, and what their priorities were in waging the insurgency based on the history of communism in Nepal after 1950. To that end, this chapter first outlines the communist history that brought the Maoists to the forefront of Nepalese politics. This section focuses on the important developments and features of communism throughout its history in Nepal. The discussion explains the growth of extremism within the Communist Party of Nepal—in particular, why a faction of the party longed for armed insurrection. The next section examines the prevalent conditions that the Maoists leveraged to gain support for their insurgency, which included social, political, ethnic, linguistic, and economic aspects of the society. Finally, this chapter examines the political scenario in Nepal after the restoration of democracy in 1990 and analyzes the turbulence that prompted the Maoists' initiation of the insurgency, including the policies and strategies of the governments, and their impact on the public, which provided the Maoists an opportunity to initiate the insurgency based on political discontent. The demands of the Maoists to the then-government and the priorities of the Maoists provide a framework to comprehend the insurgency. This chapter then discusses the actions and reactions of the Maoists to the exclusionary behavior of the state prior to the insurgency.

In sum, this chapter offers insight into the origins of the Maoists' insurgency. It demonstrates that the Maoist party formed out of the existing Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) when the CPN was not able to implement the ideological agenda that it endorsed when the party was established. As this chapter describes, the Maoists were radicalized in phases in response to the insensitivity of successive governments to the people's needs, leading them to demand the complete eradication of feudal mechanisms and the monarchy itself in order to turn the country into a republican state. Ultimately, the insurgency began when the demands of the Maoist' party were not met and the political situation of the country was favorable to their cause and objectives.

## A. THE ORIGINS OF MAOISM IN NEPAL

The history of communism in Nepal can be divided into three phases of internal ideological struggle within the CPN: the establishment phase of the CPN; the conflict among party leadership on ideological grounds during the 1980s, when the CPN produced a number of splinter groups that adopted hardliner extremism; and the post-1990 democratic phase. The Maoist movement in Nepal can be traced back to 1949, when the CPN was established under the leadership of Pushpa Lal Shrestha with the assistance of Indian communists.<sup>44</sup> As Shukla notes, the CPN also joined the Nepali Congress's insurrection in 1950 to oust the autocratic Rana regime that had been in power for 104 years.<sup>45</sup> When founded, the CPN—the root institution of all the Nepalese communist parties—proclaimed its main objective was to establish a “New People’s Democracy,” a model derived from Mao Tse Tung that advocated for a political system of proletariats following the core concepts of Marxist and Leninist ideologies, i.e., armed revolution and class struggle.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1950s, the CPN’s demand for a constitutional election was not honored by the king, which created a conflict within the political parties, causing a rift among various groups. Instead of allowing elections, the monarch encouraged the Nepali Congress (NC) and CPN leaders to join the government. This royal action brought a split in the CPN: a faction led by Keshar Jung Rayamajhi joined the royal regime, while another faction pursued the ideological dream of a republican Nepal. Before this split, in 1958, as Upreti posits, the CPN had vied for seats in the local and parliamentary elections but performed poorly.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, the republican faction of the CPN expanded and formed alliances with groups sharing similar ideological views but remained out of power as Nepal remained a kingdom.

The next important development in the history of the Maoist party was the armed uprising of 1971, which laid an important precedent for Maoist insurgency. In April 1971, CPN leaders launched an uprising in Jhapa district, which met with harsh measures by the

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<sup>44</sup> Shukla, “Insurgency in Nepal and Role of State,” 61.

<sup>45</sup> Shukla, 61.

<sup>46</sup> Shukla, 61–61.

<sup>47</sup> Upreti, *Maoist in Nepal*, 16.

regime, leaving the party leaders and members either killed or jailed.<sup>48</sup> As Upreti claims, this uprising generated “the seeds of extremist Maoism” in Nepal, and the republican wing of the CPN decided to pay more attention to conditions in Nepal to envisage new action plans and strategies and to work with the peasant population to strengthen its base.<sup>49</sup> In 1978, a CPN faction formed the party known as CPN (Marxist-Leninist), or CPN (ML), headed by Manmohan Adhikari. This new party, after severe state repression, gave up the aspiration of a people’s war against the monarch and followed the political road to socialism, struggling for change through a democratic process of mass revolution in coordination with other democratic political parties.

Although the CPN already followed the democratic system, the republican idea was later taken up by CPN Masal in 1974.<sup>50</sup> The hardliner republican CPN group that supported the armed uprising of 1971 organized the fourth convention of the CPN in 1974 under the command of Mohan Bikram Singh and Nirmal Lama and re-endorsed the people’s war as a future strategy, emerging as a radical wing.<sup>51</sup> This group adopted the strategy of “training guerrillas, proletarianizing party cadre, creating separate base areas, taking action against local cheats, and initiating an agrarian uprising.”<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, the group further split on ideological grounds such that CPN (Masal) was formed, and again, this Masal group also splintered into two groups. In 1984, the Masal group joined the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), a worldwide organization of Maoist parties. In 1989, the other faction of Masal, led by Mohan Baidhya, initiated an urban insurrection; many of the group’s leaders got arrested and jailed after the government took strict measures to suppress it.<sup>53</sup> The party’s central committee widely condemned this action of insurrection, and Mohan Baidhya was replaced

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<sup>48</sup> Arjun Bahadur Ayadi, “Dilemma and Factionalism in the Maoist Politics of Nepal,” *Journal of Political Science* 18 (2018): 6.

<sup>49</sup> Upreti, *Maoist in Nepal*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Ayadi, “Dilemma and Factionalism in the Maoist Politics of Nepal,” 7.

<sup>51</sup> Deepak Thapa, “Radicalism and the Emergence of the Maoists,” in *Himalyan’s People’s War - Nepal’s Maoist Rebellion Edited by Micheal Hutt* (Blomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 21–38.

<sup>52</sup> Thapa, 31.

<sup>53</sup> Ayadi, “Dilemma and Factionalism in the Maoist Politics of Nepal,” 8.

as general secretary of the party by Pushpa Kamal Dahal “prachanda,” who later became the supreme leader of the Maoist Party.

The 1990s marked a profound change in the political world order following the dissolution of the Soviet Union that witnessed the rapid growth of democratic transformation. Nepal was not untouched by those world affairs, which led to another important change among the Maoists. All the communist parties in Nepal also divided along which direction to take—one path led to the multiparty system and another path towards the republican agenda. In 1990, the communist parties showed a unified face to fight against the Panchayat system. As Andrew Nikson argues, “a remarkable ideological unity” was displayed among all the communist parties of Nepal, who were pro-Chinese, pro-Soviet, and pro-Maoist, and they came together to fight against the monarchical rule.<sup>54</sup> When the Nepali Congress (NC) leadership led a people’s movement to establish democracy in the country in February 1990, the two new communist parties formed of all the communist parties of the Nepal-United Left Front (ULF) and the United National People’s Movement (UNPM) were ready to assist the democratic movement. The ULF, along with a faction of UNPM-Masal, supported the movement, and democracy was re-established in the country on April 8, 1990.<sup>55</sup>

Thereafter, a new democratic constitution was promulgated on November 9, 1990, but the communist parties’ demands for the election of the constitutional assembly and complete abolition of the monarchy were not met. As a result, several radical communist parties then merged and formed the CPN Unity Centre (CPN-UC) in November 1990 and Prachanda became the general secretary of the party.<sup>56</sup> The CPN-UC party demanded the establishment of a republican Nepal and rejected the constitution promulgated after 1990. In 1991, the CPN-UC denounced the parliamentary system under its new ideological framework of “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” and relaunched the “People’s War” against the existing political system with the Chinese model as its guiding path. In 1994, this party split into two factions, but the

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<sup>54</sup> R. Andrew Nickson, “Democratisation and the Growth of Communism in Nepal: A Peruvian Scenario in the Making?,” *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 30, no. 3 (November 1, 1992): 358–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662049208447640>.

<sup>55</sup> Ayadi, “Dilemma and Factionalism in the Maoist Politics of Nepal,” 8.

<sup>56</sup> Ayadi, 9.

election commission of Nepal did not recognize the Prachanda faction, which pushed the party to boycott the election and toward more radical politics.<sup>57</sup> In 1995, Prachanda named his party CPN Maoist (CPN-M) and initiated an armed insurrection against the state of Nepal, which was led by a democratic party at the time (the NC).<sup>58</sup> The party led various demonstrations to raise awareness among the people about the misdeeds of the government, and in response, the Maoists faced suppression by the government's counterinsurgency measures. After two years of ideological and organizational growth, the CPN-M party ideologue Baburam Bhattarai submitted the party's 40-point demands on various issues related to national development, representation, and livelihood to the government with an ultimatum that the government must fulfill them within two weeks or face an armed insurgency.<sup>59</sup> (The 40-point demands are included in the appendix.)

## **B. MAOISTS' DEMANDS AND THE ROAD TO INSURGENCY**

The CPN-M party submitted its 40-point demands to the government on February 4, 1996, with a deadline of two weeks.<sup>60</sup> Those 40-point demands were a list of grievances under the liberal democratic framework, which were previously included in the party's election manifesto of 1991. The demands mostly focused on three key issues—representative government, independent economy, and nationalism—which remain a central debate in the country. Those demands were consistent with demands made in 1992, relating to nationalism, livelihood, and democracy. The demands included the abrogation of unequal and discriminatory treaties between Nepal and India, the promulgation of a new constitution by the people's representatives, land reforms stating that the land must belong to the tenants. The land of the feudalists was to be distributed among the landless people. The demands also focused on lower caste groups and women. In a way, the Maoists wanted to include all the

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<sup>57</sup> Ayadi, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Anand Swaroop Verma and Gautam Navlakha, "People's War in Nepal: Genesis and Development," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 20 (2007): 1841, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4419604>.

classes of society in their protracted revolution against the government.<sup>61</sup> Overall, the demands of the Maoists consisted of policy tools and goals that included—

- Economic issues such as a minimum wage, unemployment compensation, low inflation, and infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity etc.;
- Ethnic and social issues such as language rights, property rights for daughters, corruption control, and an end to caste discrimination;
- Human rights and media issues such as press autonomy, freedom for political detainees;
- Personal freedom issues such ending enforcement of social conformity and cultural policing through restrictions on the individual's right to enjoy certain kinds of music and movies;
- Governance issues such as the need to establish ideological and institutional goals through international negotiations and treaties, constitutional demands; and
- Policy issues related to setting up tools such as macroeconomic policy, addressing a closed economy and protectionism, imposing a system of work permits for foreign workers, devolution of central authority, ending occupational discrimination, etc. Except for the aforementioned constitutional demands, many of these issues were raised by other political parties and elements of civil society.<sup>62</sup>

Politically, the Maoists wanted an end of special privileges for the royal family. They also wanted to end social and political inequalities, ethnic and caste disparities, and discrimination against marginalized groups. In the economic sphere, the Maoists demanded

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<sup>61</sup> Verma and Navlakha, 1841.

<sup>62</sup> Dhurba Rizal, "Maoist Violence and Elusive Peace in Nepal," *Peace Research* 36, no. 1 (2004): 68–69, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23607727>.

land reforms, and land re-distribution among the landless agricultural population. In regard to foreign relations, the call for redefining and abrogating of all the existing unequal treaties and halting the recruitment of Nepalese citizens to serve in the foreign military, a demand focused on the anti-Indian sentiments among the Nepalese people and India's frequent intrusion into Nepal's political affairs.

The issues raised were of grave concern, and they bolstered the rapid expansion of Maoist popularity across the country. Rather than address the demands, however, the government responded harshly. Finally, the Maoists, who drew support by identifying the various shortcomings of the government, declared an insurgency, leading to a decade of violence in the country. The Maoists justified the start of the insurgency by pointing to government negligence and considered it as one of the prime causes for the initiation of the insurgency. The insurgency was officially launched following the Maoists' armed attacks on February 13, 1996.<sup>63</sup>

### **C. CONDITIONS FUELING NEPAL'S MAOIST INSURGENCY**

The Maoist insurgency was a reaction to the failures of state institutions to meet the needs of the Nepali people. The state failed to make a timely intervention and did not adopt reform measures, and thus laid the groundwork for the Maoist insurgency. As Chapter I notes, poverty, inequality, political instability, and widespread injustice are the significant causes for any insurgency to begin.<sup>64</sup> The Nepalese government's failures and miscalculations to understand the socio-economic condition of the conflict led to the serious social, economic, and political underpinnings of the insurgency, and the state likewise failed in addressing the wide range of grievances in the ethnic, social, economic, and political sectors. The severe economic, political, and social conditions endured by Nepal's rural population remained abysmal: throughout 104 years of the Rana regime that ended in 1950, nine years of the multiparty system from 1950 to 1959, and 30 years of

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<sup>63</sup> International Crisis Group, "Nepal's Maoists: Their Aims, Structure and Strategy," Working Paper, October 27, 2005, 40, <https://doi.org/10/226869>.

<sup>64</sup> Mahendra Lawoti, "Evolution and Growth of Maoist Insurgency in Nepal," in *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-First Century*, Edited by Mahendra Lawoti and Anup Kumar Pahari (London: Routledge, 2009), 1–28, <http://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203869390>.

party-less Panchayat rule from 1960 to 1990, and again in the post-1990s, the democratic constitutional monarchy system did not transform the social and economic condition of the Nepalese citizens. As Anand Swaroop Verma and Gautam Navlakha argue, the Maoist insurgency “did not emerge in a vacuum or out of simply exploiting opportunities ... it emerged after long years of political work amongst the people, debating the failings of earlier struggle.”<sup>65</sup> Several factors, therefore, were instrumental in the eruption of the insurgency including widespread corruption, poverty, ill governance, social inequality, and many others, which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### **1. Political Economy**

The continuous economic decline in Nepal after 1990 played a critical role in the rise of the insurgency. For several generations, underlying extreme poverty festered in Nepal, and economic inequality became a major and robust source of support for the insurgency.<sup>66</sup> The economic conditions of the country and the people are always of paramount importance in the rise of grievances that lead to political violence like the Maoist insurgency.<sup>67</sup> Scholars point to poverty as a significant determinant of insurgency and relate it to the various strata of society. Poverty materializes from geographic circumstances, social inequality, and educational opportunity. As Do and Iyer argue, poor societies tend to produce insurgencies more often, because without any hope of economic change and driven by their frustration with government, the population tends to join insurgencies with less hesitation.<sup>68</sup>

These conditions were present in Nepal at the time of the post-1990s democratic movement, when Nepal remained in extreme poverty and fell into the list of the poorest countries in the world. At the time, Nepal had the second-lowest gross national income in

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<sup>65</sup> Verma and Navlakha, “People’s War in Nepal.”

<sup>66</sup> Mani Nepal, Alok K. Bohara, and Kishore Gawande, “More Inequality, More Killings: The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal,” *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 4 (2011): 902–3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23025126>.

<sup>67</sup> Winne Gobyin, “From War to Peace: The Nepalese Maoists’s Strategic and Ideological Thinking,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 5 (May 1, 2009): 420–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100902831578>.

<sup>68</sup> Do and Iyer, “Geography, Poverty and Conflict in Nepal.”



South Asia.<sup>69</sup> Poverty impacted a large portion of the population, and was exacerbated by decreased land productivity that affected the people's daily basic needs. The number of poor kept rising, with 40 percent of the population falling below the poverty line.<sup>70</sup> The agriculture and the social development sectors deteriorated dramatically after 1990 due to the government's poor policies and their inadequate implementation. Though the national economic indicators were improving, economic inequality was rapidly growing in the country.<sup>71</sup> According to one study, 71 percent of the wealth was in the hands of 12 percent of the population.<sup>72</sup> The number of poor who could not access basic needs increased in this period, and the development benefits after the reinstatement of democracy reached only the elites in the urban areas. Poverty brought a terrifying sign of social conflict that might lead to the emergence of an insurgency. As Do and Iyer posit, "the lack of economic opportunities ... is significantly and robustly correlated with a higher intensity of violence,"<sup>73</sup> and the rapid escalation of the Maoist insurgency can be viewed as the result of the generations of poverty in Nepal. Maoists took up the issue of extensive poverty and urged the people to join them to fight against the regime. Consequently, Nepalese citizens who remained under the poverty line for an extended period and who were denied any governmental reforms readily participated in the Maoist insurgency.<sup>74</sup>

In particular, the disparity in the distribution of land resources in Nepal, where the majority of the population relies on agriculture for day to day survival, was a prime cause of the Maoist insurgency. A census in 1991 showed that around 88 percent of Nepal's population was living in a rural area, drawing their main income from agriculture.<sup>75</sup> Yet, the diverse class structure of Nepal was constructed on a semi-feudal mechanism that primarily distributed most to the elite class. This unequal land distribution among the

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<sup>69</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 6–8.

<sup>70</sup> Rizal, "Maoist Violence and Elusive Peace in Nepal," 71.

<sup>71</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Rizal, "Maoist Violence and Elusive Peace in Nepal."

<sup>73</sup> Do and Iyer, "Geography, Poverty and Conflict in Nepal," 736.

<sup>74</sup> Do and Iyer, 743–45.

<sup>75</sup> Arjun Karki and David Seddon, *The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives* (New Delhi, India: Adroit Publishers Distributors, Akhil Book Distributors, 2003), 162.

villagers who relied heavily on agriculture created considerable economic disparities. Though a few earlier attempts at land reform were made in Nepal, those efforts did not favor the general population. The transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy in 1990 created expectations among the population for the betterment of the country, but the successive government administrations failed in delivering services because the elites controlled the resources of the country, which hampered the state's effort to change the lives of the general public.

As land ownership was mostly concentrated among a small group of elites, the majority of peasants sought redistribution of land. Baburam Bhattarai, the political ideologue of the Maoist party, claimed various reasons for the rise of the Maoist insurgency, noting that "70 percent of the population [was] under absolute poverty, half of the national income in the hands of 10 percent, 60 percent of the population illiterate, 90 percent ... living on agriculture, 81 percent of the labor force engaged in poor agriculture occupations, and 60 percent of the population under-employed."<sup>76</sup> The major portion of the population remained deprived of land and so harbored anti-government sentiments.

The Maoists addressed these sentiments and mobilized lower and middle-class peasants to support the insurgency. Maoists formulated a strategy to drive out the landowners from their areas and promised to redistribute the land among the landless and cancel their debts.<sup>77</sup> As Madhav Joshi and David Mason argue, the root of the Maoist insurgency was based on the concentration of land ownership; the Maoists successfully used the issue of land inequality to encourage violent political conflicts. Moreover, they knew that the solution to this inequality was the re-distribution of land, which served their ideological objectives ultimately.

Poverty in Nepal also diminished the state's ability to control the Maoist insurgency. Studies show that "the poorer the state, the weaker the state," and therefore,

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<sup>76</sup> Baburam Bhattarai, "The Political Economy of People's War," in *The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives* (New Delhi, India: Adroit Publishers Distributors, Akhil Book Distributors, 2003), 119–64.

<sup>77</sup> Madhav Joshi and T. David Mason, "Land Tenure, Democracy, and Patterns of Violence During the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal, 1996–2005," *Social Science Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (2010): 989, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42956444>.

Nepal was unable to fight and counter the insurgency.<sup>78</sup> The poverty and scarcity of resources in governmental forces and logistically poor forces were not able to handle the conflict in time. The government failed in strengthening the capacity of the armed forces, which hindered the counterinsurgency operations.

Thus, the poverty caused by landlessness, underdevelopment, inefficient governmental policies, illiteracy, and the unequal distribution of resources led the deprived people of Nepal to join the Maoist insurgency and fight for their demands. Maoists leveraged those shortcomings of the government and were successful in mobilizing the people.

## **2. Ethnic Dimension Behind the Insurgency—Identity Politics**

Nepal's Maoist insurgency also benefited from the government's lack of attempts to address the grievances of ethnic minorities who repeatedly demanded their equal access to resources and participation in the political process. According to the World Fact Book, Nepal is home to 125 caste/ethnic groups and 123 languages, and ethnicity plays a vital role in Nepal.<sup>79</sup> The top-most ranks in Nepal are occupied by a Bahin and Chhetri group who account for only 28.8 percent of the population while other caste and ethnic groups are excluded from political and economic participation. Those groups forming a majority of the population were marginalized and held only a few minor positions, and thus, this exclusion fueled frustration and humiliation that developed into deeply rooted grievances in the long run. Identity issues play a major role in national politics, though this issue remained silent during the Rana and Panchayat rule as those regimes curtailed ethnic political expression. Various ethnic movements and their calls for equal participation and inclusion in the political system contributed to the democratization of 1990 and dominated political discourse, creating awareness about ethnic issues. Nepal's ethnic organizations after 1990 demanded the political and cultural rights of national inclusion for the

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<sup>78</sup> Lauren C. Griffin, "A Close Look at the Relationship between Poverty and Political Violence in Nepal," *Global Tides* 9, no. 4 (2015).

<sup>79</sup> "Central Intelligence Agency. South Asia: Nepal — The World Fact Book," accessed August 19, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html#people-and-society-category-section-anchor>.

marginalized and asked for their equal representation. Nevertheless, their demands were not met.

Nepal did not allow ethnic parties to operate freely, and as a Hindu state, it banned the expansion of other religions. This limitation imposed on ethnic parties and the lack of religious freedom formed vital issues that ignited a revolt in the form of the Maoist insurgency against the existing political structure. Maoists were able to leverage the sentiments of those marginalized ethnic groups who were not satisfied with the constitution of 1990.<sup>80</sup> The Maoists offered these groups with an avenue to make their demands political. Many of those groups joined the Maoists because the Maoists promised them equality and addressed their grievances. The Maoists started forming the fronts of ethnic liberation and included the voices of those dissent groups.<sup>81</sup>

### **3. Political Instability**

The political instability, factionalism, and inability in the political parties to run a stable government after 1990 also contributed to the rise of the Maoist insurgency.<sup>82</sup> After the democratic movement of 1990, Nepal remained politically unstable as the democratic elite tried to consolidate power. The frequent change in government and the uncertainty of the political system in Nepal worsened due to the continuous rivalry between ruling and opposition parties. The politics of Nepal remained unchanged as the Panchayat regime leaders held major positions in the newly formed governments.<sup>83</sup> Smruti S. Pattanaik notes that the frequent fluctuations in successive government administrations provide political parties less time to address economic and social issues, and consequently, those parties shift their focus from policy debates to coalition building.<sup>84</sup> The parties in Nepal split and factionalized reflected Pattanaik's assertion as they were more concerned about forming

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<sup>80</sup> Susan Hangen, "Creating a 'New Nepal': The Ethnic Dimension," *Policy Studies; Washington*, no. 34 (2007): 6–9, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1707091404/abstract/E66ABF5A304C4AAFPQ/1>.

<sup>81</sup> Hangen, 43.

<sup>82</sup> Joshi and Mason, "Land Tenure, Democracy, and Patterns of Violence During the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal, 1996–2005," 408.

<sup>83</sup> Pattanaik, "Maoist Insurgency in Nepal."

<sup>84</sup> Pattanaik.

governments than bringing about social transformation in the lives of the people, and no government administration paid attention to establishing development plans and policies that could bring a fundamental change in the lives of the citizens.<sup>85</sup> As Mohan G. Francis posits, the “the centralized policy making and planning, frequent changes in governments and leaders at the central government ... created non-continuity in developmental programs and policies with adverse effects on poverty and inequality, particularly in the distant regions of the country,” and the Maoists played on the worsened economy resulting from the “ill-economic reforms” that involved “de-licensing, privatization and foreign participation.”<sup>86</sup>

The instability in politics had an adverse impact on Nepal’s overall development, and the lack of accurate policy and planning halted development projects, leaving most of the rural areas untouched by the central government. That instability was triggered by 12 changes in government between 1991 and 2002.<sup>87</sup> The political crisis deepened and was accompanied by illicit interest, which contributed to public dissatisfaction. The performance of the successive governments got so ineffective that people lost their hope of improvements from the state. The political parties failed in forming full-term governments and ended up in coalitions with other parties. Correspondingly, the people’s mass grievances grew due to the widespread corruption and poor performance of the state in policy implementation. Meanwhile, Maoist-affiliated student unions and trade organizations took this opportunity and organized a massive anti-government demonstration and expanded their organizations.<sup>88</sup>

The failure of the government to formulate long-term plans to counter the insurgency and the inadequacy of the plans that were made helped the Maoists to expand

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<sup>85</sup> Rizal, “Maoist Violence and Elusive Peace in Nepal.”

<sup>86</sup> Mohan G Francis, “Nepal’s Woes: Instability, Inequality, Insurgency,” Global Policy Forum, Global Policy Forum, October 2002, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/209/43014.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati, *A Kingdom Under Seize- Nepal’s Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2003*, 1st ed. (Kathmandu, Nepal: The Printhouse, 2003), 87.

<sup>88</sup> Purna Khatri, “An Analysis of Nepalese Government’s Counter Insurgency Operations (1996-2006)” (Quantico VA, United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2008), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a491389.pdf>.

the insurgency.<sup>89</sup> The poor-performing government, corruption, and indifferent attitude of authorities toward the socio-economic condition of the population contributed to the rise of the Maoists. Maoists were successful in capitalizing on these grievances and articulating the aspirations of the people. They promised to establish a “People’s Government” in areas where they held influence, which they did in 2001 after the initiation of the insurgency, and the Maoist’s ideology of an equal society fascinated the people in those areas.<sup>90</sup> Backed by the hardcore principle, Maoists maintained their status by rejecting government presence in backward areas of Nepal.

#### **4. Regional Politics and the Emergence of the Maoists**

The Maoists in Nepal were also aided by the international context of that period. When the world was rapidly heading towards liberal democracy and the Soviet Union was collapsing, Maoism in Nepal was getting a firm foothold. The Maoists’ rise was in strong contrast to contemporary trends in world politics. The reactions of neighboring countries to the burgeoning communist movement within Nepal raised nationalist sentiments in Nepal, and when those sentiments came to the surface the Maoists were able to leverage them.

Historically, Nepal has been highly dependent on India for its international trade and business. Since Nepal is a landlocked country surrounded by India on three sides, and the two countries share a porous open border, India is a major and longstanding political actor in Nepal’s internal and external affairs. Notably, India aided the overthrow of the Rana regime and the establishment of democracy in the country in the 1950s. It also helped negotiate a Delhi Agreement among the Rana rulers, the king, and the NC, which was signed on Indian soil.<sup>91</sup> Yet Nepalese citizens are always of a notion that India applies political pressure on various political forces in Nepal to advance New Delhi’s ideas and

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<sup>89</sup> Dil B. Subba, “Government’s Strategy Against the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal” (KS: Army Command and General Staff College Fort Levenworth, June 11, 2010), 86–87, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA524135>.

<sup>90</sup> Paul K. Davis et al., “Public Support for the Maoists in Nepal,” in *Understanding and Influencing Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012), 119–50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1122osd.13>.

<sup>91</sup> Li Onesto, *Dispatches from the People’s War in Nepal* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2005), 1–12.

political agenda. Specifically, Nepalese believe that after the success of the Chinese revolution in 1949, India compelled Nepal to sign a treaty that prevents friendly relations between Nepal and China and stipulates Kathmandu purchase any necessary arms only from India.<sup>92</sup> India is a dominant factor not only in the political sphere but also in Nepal's economic sector as Nepal relies on India for most of its trade. Additionally, as Nepal has lacked any development in its industrial sector, India is an employment hub for Nepal's population, and many Nepalese have migrated to India for their economic survival. Thus, India also often gets accused of exploiting the Nepalese peasants who work across the open border. The Maoists were able to use such anti-India sentiment to gain support from the population.<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore, the mutual interests of Indian and Nepalese Maoists formed another catalyst for the insurgency. As Li Onesto argues, the Maoists who raised sentiments for a people's war while they were sheltered in India had a close link with Indian Maoists waging armed insurrection against the Indian state.<sup>94</sup> CPN Masal led by Mohan Baidhya was a member of RIM, which bore an Indian Maoist influence, and later on, when Prachanda became the leader of that faction, as Cailmail Benoît argues, RIM played an important role in convincing the party to launch the armed insurgency after a detailed analysis of world communist events.<sup>95</sup>

The Maoists were also assisted by developments in China during that period. Although the Maoists accepted the influence of the Chinese revolution, they initially denounced the Chinese government and labeled it 'revisionist'—socialist in name but capitalistic in nature.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, the leaders of Nepal's Maoist party repeatedly stated that the cultural revolution in China had a tremendous impact and influence on the insurgency in Nepal, and they borrowed many lessons from it to inspire the Nepalese

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<sup>92</sup> Onesto, 4.

<sup>93</sup> Onesto, 1–12.

<sup>94</sup> Onesto, 21.

<sup>95</sup> Cailmail Benoît, "A History of Nepalese Maoism since Its Foundation by Mohan Bikram Singh," *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 33 (2008): 30.

<sup>96</sup> Onesto, *Dispatches from the People's War in Nepal*, 4.

people. Maoists used Mao's term "New Democratic Revolution" that aimed to topple existing regimes in order to establish a socialist state.<sup>97</sup> The theory propounded by Mao holds the notion of an insurrection unfolding in two phases: the first is a new democratic revolution by the peasants to destabilize the imperialistic structure and to transform the feudal and capitalistic economy, and the second establishes the socialistic state.

Such specific international historical context focused on political trends and events laid the groundwork for the eruption of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and the state had to then address it within this larger context.

#### **D. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE MAOIST INSURGENCY**

After 1990, the democratically led Nepalese state adopted harsh and suppressive measures to deal with the Maoist insurgency, causing further marginalization among its discontented citizens. Patrick M. Regan and Daniel Norton argue, "As the state increases repression, more people will mobilize around the rebel cause to avoid the abuse at the hands of the state," and thus, the majority of marginalized and oppressed people in Nepal, who were victimized by the brutality the state, became Maoist sympathizers and came to rely on the insurgents for protection.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the post-democratic situation, created a favorable environment for the Maoists due to the state's abuse of power abuses and repression. Similarly, the exclusionary constitution and the poor performance of the state provided Maoists an opportunity to expand their cause to the broader population. Meanwhile, however, the new constitution guaranteed fundamental political, human, and civil rights. Moreover, in a democratic system that had provisions promoted by international organizations and freedom of the press, the state could not openly suppress the insurgency as it did during 1971 when the "Jhapa Insurgency" occurred. While those constitutional and civil rights were set in writing, in practice the state still used the available local police to arrest, imprison, and torture members of the party, and thus, Maoists suffered under the harsh behavior of the state.

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<sup>97</sup> Onesto, 6.

<sup>98</sup> Patrick M. Regan and Daniel Norton, "Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization in Civil Wars," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 3 (2005): 319–36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30045117>.



In fact, the ruling party, the Nepali Congress, used all of the institutional power of government to subdue the conflict. Their approach was to use force rather than win the hearts and minds of the population. Prior to the insurgency, the state launched the ironically named “Operation Romeo” in 1995 to curb the expanding movements of the Maoist organization, and after the initiation of insurgency, the state launched “Kilo-Sierra-Two,” which caused massive destruction, death, rape, and arrests of the local population in the mid-western region of Nepal. These brutal and oppressive measures undertaken by the democratic government had the opposite effect; rather than quash the nascent insurgency, it pushed the people further into the Maoist fold.<sup>99</sup> To justify its targeting of the movement, the state ensured the election commission refused to recognize the Maoist party.

Despite its brutal measures, the state could not contain the insurgency and lost control in the insurgent base areas. Scholars often blame states for their inappropriate strategies in dealing with such insurgencies.<sup>100</sup> And this was the case in Nepal, where the traditional police force was unable to divide the insurgency and the government could not mobilize the army since the king, who was constitutionally empowered as the supreme commander, refused to authorize the mobilization, which further complicated the situation for the government.

As the insurgency dragged on and the political leaders could not control it, the king seized power and suspended the political parties. Finally, he sought to eliminate the Maoists through military measures. His actions triggered a reversal of democracy that created an environment for the Maoists to enter the political field. As civilian authorities had been undermined by the king, a power vacuum was created. These conditions allowed for previously unthinkable alliances and cooperation between the alienated political parties and the Maoists. After years of political struggle, the Maoists, together with other political

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<sup>99</sup> Lawoti, “Evolution and Growth of Maoist Insurgency in Nepal,” 19.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas A. Marks and David Scott Palmer, “Radical Maoist Insurgents and Terrorist Tactics: Comparing Peru and Nepal,” *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* 13, no. 2 (September 2005): 91–116, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662840500347280>.

parties, were able to launch the mass movement of 2006 that changed the political structure of the country, abolished the monarchy, and turned Nepal into a republican state.<sup>101</sup>

#### **E. THE END OF THE INSURGENCY AND THE MAOISTS' ENTRY INTO MAINSTREAM POLITICS**

The Maoists ended their insurgency and promised to advance their agenda peacefully by joining in mainstream politics on January 7, 2007, when they formally signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the deadliest insurgency in Nepal.<sup>102</sup> After several layers of efforts made by national and international actors in different periods and contexts, and through various previous agreements and written understandings between the Maoists and the political parties of Nepal, Maoists finally agreed to put down their arms and adopt the multiparty democratic system in Nepal.<sup>103</sup> Maoists' entry into mainstream politics confirmed the peaceful abolition of the 240-year-old monarchy, the eradication of feudalism, and the participation of marginalized people in national politics, through the election of the Constitutional Assembly that established the Federal Republic of Nepal. The Constitutional Assembly guaranteed marginalized communities participation in the political system through a fixed percentage allotted to them, which was a remarkable achievement brought about by the Maoists' struggle, along with many other triumphs. Thus, the Maoist 10-year-long armed insurgency proved instrumental in changing the political structure of the country.

#### **F. CONCLUSION**

The Maoist Party emerged from the first communist party established in Calcutta in 1949 and which later splintered after the party's fourth convention in 1974, clearly marking the factions within the CPN who supported the democratic ideology and the hardliners. Radicalism within the party remained intact following Rana rule, 30 years of

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<sup>101</sup> Lawoti, "Evolution and Growth of Maoist Insurgency in Nepal," 23.

<sup>102</sup> Uddhab Pyakurel and Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, "Nepal's Politics:: After the Peace Agreement," Peace Audit Nepal (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2013), JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09410.5>.

<sup>103</sup> Pyakurel and Studies.

Panchayat rule, and also after the democratic transformation of 1990. The Maoists gained the people's support because the government failed to adequately address the prolonged conditions of poverty, inequality, and widespread social and political injustice in Nepalese society. In 1994, after the election commission refused to recognize their party's legitimacy, the Maoists openly challenged the state by launching an armed insurgency that would last a decade. The state tried to curb the Maoists through military and suppressive measures, but the population's overwhelming support for the insurgency forced the state to compromise with the Maoists. The Maoists also came to a compromise after the royal coup amid the changed political scenario. These conditions also drew all the political parties that had been deprived of their political rights to consider some of the Maoists' demands. Through a series of agreements and understandings, Maoists finally surrendered and started their peaceful political journey after they signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2007 that formally declared their entry into mainstream politics. The end of the Maoist insurgency resulted in the dissolution of the 240-year-old monarchy, the eradication of feudalism from the country, and the guarantee of participation by marginalized groups in the political sphere. Thus, the country witnessed a radical change from constitutional monarchy to republican state, which resulted from the Maoist violent decade-long insurgency. What remains unclear, however, is what drove the Maoists to drop their arms, come to the negotiating table, and ultimately join mainstream politics, which is the subject of next two chapters.

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### **III. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE INSURGENCY: A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL**

The Maoists' strategic shift toward democratic behavior after the royal intervention in politics in 2005 changed their political journey and also brought the long, violent insurgency to an end. To understand of why the Maoist party leadership decided to lay down their arms and participate in mainstream politics requires further examination of the Maoists' military-political actions and reactions in the larger context of mainstream political developments. How did the shift in mainstream politics influence the Maoists' decision? What openings were created for them by the royal coup and the king's banning of all political parties? This chapter investigates the turbulent political scenario surrounding the insurgency. It examines the role that domestic political opportunity played for the Maoists in pursuing their aims through mainstream politics, including the government's policy and strategy in dealing with the conflict.

This chapter begins by analyzing the strategies of the Maoists and how they were successful in implementing their plan to achieve their aims, which incorporated a turn to politics. This analysis is followed by an account of the succeeding governments' counterinsurgency measures; this section examines the effectiveness of the measures adopted by the government and why those approaches failed in countering the insurgency and drove the Maoists to seek legitimacy through politics. The chapter also analyzes the rise of the monarch in 2001, the role of the king in escalating the internal rifts among the Maoists, his use of Nepal's constitutional provisions to maintain his authority over the political parties as the head of state, and how Nepal's political parties were thereby kept out of state affairs and willing to align themselves with the Maoists. The chapter also examines the internal ideological conflict within the Maoist party, as its leadership also had to reach a consensus in order to join mainstream politics. The chapter then explores the agreements between the Maoists and the other political parties that led the Maoists to enter mainstream politics.

## A. MAOIST STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

In the long run, the Maoists were successful in implementing their strategies to achieve their political aims in a way favored by the changing political scenario during the insurgency. Bard E. O'Neill argues that developing nations lack national integration and economic development because of societal divisions rooted in economic and political differences.<sup>104</sup> Nepal presented such conditions that fueled the insurgency; the Maoists' insurgency emerged from the country's underdevelopment and the failure of national integration, which then allowed them to successfully spread their agenda and organization across the country. Their success in convincing the masses presented them with an opportunity to enter mainstream politics from a powerful position.

The adoption of a well-planned strategy helped the Maoists achieve their aim. The Maoists followed Mao's doctrine of the people's war, which has three phases—"strategic defense, strategic stalemate or equilibrium, and strategic offensive."<sup>105</sup> During the insurgency, the Maoists in Nepal were able to modify Mao's revolutionary strategies to fit the existing internal conditions. Specifically, they changed their strategy from strategic offensive to political maneuvering. As a result, they were able to expand their covert and overt operations and turn the public opinion against the state.<sup>106</sup>

To formalize their strategy for the insurgency, in March 1995, the Maoists held an organization-wide planning meeting that identified their advantages.<sup>107</sup> As Mika Kerttunen observes, despite their lack of outside support, the insurgents capitalized on domestic factors such as the mountainous geography of Nepal that favored the Maoists,

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<sup>104</sup> Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism*, First ed. (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc, 2005), 3–5.

<sup>105</sup> Winne Gobyn, "From War to Peace: The Nepalese Maoists' Strategic and Ideological Thinking," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 5 (May 1, 2009): 420–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100902831578>.

<sup>106</sup> "One Year of People's War in Nepal: A Review," *The Worker*, no. 3 (February 1997), <http://www.bannedthought.net/Nepal/Worker/Worker-03/OneYearOfPW-Review-W03.htm>.

<sup>107</sup> Mika Kerttunen, "A Transformed Insurgency: The Strategy of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in the Light of Communist Insurgency Theories and a Modified Beaufrean Exterior/Interior Framework," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 78–118, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.546583>.

and the support of the majority of the population for their cause.<sup>108</sup> Further, the insurgents had been successful in seizing certain areas without any major warfare, which helped to gain broader support as per their strategy. Furthermore, they sought the Nepalese diaspora's support for the insurgency.<sup>109</sup> After the Maoists initiated their insurgency on February 13, 1996, they undertook a six-phase strategic plan:

- February to October 1996–'March along the path of people's war to smash the reactionary state and establish a new democratic state': hit-and-run attacks against police stations and other governmental institutions with the aim of expelling the state institutions.
- October 1996 to August 1997–'Planned development of guerrilla warfare to prepare grounds to convert specific areas into guerrilla zones in the near future': continuation of hit-and-run attacks together with killing and mutilating selected individuals. The purpose was to seize weaponry and to paralyze possible local opposition and political adversaries.
- August 1997 to autumn 1998–'Develop guerrilla warfare to new heights': a transitional phase where the village development committees, local administration, were to be wiped out.
- Autumn 1998 to October 1999–'Advance in the great direction of creating base area': formal establishment of base areas and restructuring of the guerrilla force into main, secondary, and base forces.
- October 1999 to June 2000–Concentrate on ambushes, sabotage, and coordinated attacks against the police as well as information operations (propaganda). Company size units were introduced in the People's Liberation Army.
- June 2000 to February 2001–Focus on consolidating the base areas. The establishment of an administrative structure for the base areas. Two major shows of force by storming Dunai, the district headquarters in Dolpa (in September 2000) and the police stations in Rukum and Dolakha (in April 2001).<sup>110</sup>

The most important elements of the Maoists' initial strategy were drawing national and international attention to their cause and convincing the general population of their objectives. Thus, during their first phase of strategic defense from 1996 to 2001, the Maoists successfully carried out guerilla warfare in numerous areas, upgraded the fighting

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<sup>108</sup> Kerttunen.

<sup>109</sup> Kerttunen.

<sup>110</sup> Kerttunen.

capabilities of their armed wings, and planned how to achieve their envisaged roles in various parts of the country.<sup>111</sup> Militarily, they relied on tactics such as attacking the police and avoiding the army, because they did not want to challenge the army in the initial phase due to the army's superior capabilities. A prominent early example of this strategy was their attack on "seven strategic locations"<sup>112</sup> such as security posts and financial institutions in various districts of Nepal. The Maoists claimed that they selected those widespread targets, including banks and military installations, for their "geophysical and socioeconomic significance" and to restrict the state from concentrating its armed forces in one place.<sup>113</sup> With their further severe armed attacks on police posts and commercial banks in Pyuthan, Dolpa, Lamjung, and Ramechhap, the Maoists were able to draw national and international attention. The Maoists' killings of class enemy-groups like police informers, local tyrants, and other ideological opponents created a sense of fear among the population. Politically, the insurgents also organized general strikes in the capital and throughout the country. To win the hearts and minds of the local population, the Maoists started village development and cooperative programs through their political bodies, which mobilized the masses through open and legal activities. In addition, the Maoists issued thousands of leaflets and posters conveying political messages as part of their initiation of the armed struggle. For three weeks after the start of the insurgency, the Maoists performed 5,000 actions, mainly distributing propaganda to all the corners of the country to spread the message that the insurgency was firmly established.

In addition to creating and carrying out an effective strategy, the Maoists, according to their documents published in books and newspapers, were also prompt in analyzing their early errors and in evaluating their relationship to the masses.<sup>114</sup> As a result, during the initial two years of insurgency, the Maoists successfully recruited militias, acquired arms, created a climate of fear, and banished government officials from their major areas of

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<sup>111</sup> Karki and Seddon, *The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives*, 204–5.

<sup>112</sup> Kerttunen, "A Transformed Insurgency."

<sup>113</sup> "One Year of People's War in Nepal: A Review."

<sup>114</sup> Karki and Seddon, *The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives*, 210–11.



influence.<sup>115</sup> The Maoist party was then able to wage a protracted war. Due to the geographical situation, their strategy of encircling the cities from the rural areas in Nepal allowed them to attack the state quite successfully.<sup>116</sup>

After years of conflict, the Maoists started their “Strategic Equilibrium” phase in February 2001 after holding a national conference, which opened up the possibility of political participation while continuing their armed resistance.<sup>117</sup> This conference stressed the need for combined actions of the military and political wings of the party. The Maoists established a new guideline named “Prachandapath,” similar to the Shining Path of Peru, that combined Leninist traits with the strategies of Mao and demanded their combined action in urban and rural areas. In the following months, the country witnessed a direct confrontation between the army and the Maoists in various parts of the country. The state labeled the Maoists “terrorists” and imposed a state of emergency in the country.<sup>118</sup> The fatalities on both sides increased drastically during this period.

The Maoists during this stage also initiated their political engagement, albeit mostly for the purpose of enhancing their military capabilities and gaining time to regroup their militias. They demanded peace talks six times and asked the government to address their demands for a constitutional assembly, formation of an interim government, and promulgation of a new constitution.<sup>119</sup> The government, at that point stronger and more confident than the Maoists, rejected their demands for peace talks and continued using coercive measures. Nevertheless, the Maoists and the government conducted negotiations two times, and both sides tried to prove that their political demands were in the interests of the people as well as that they were driven to achieve a political solution. Meanwhile, the Maoists, using the negotiating period for reorganizing and upgrading their capabilities, carried out multiple attacks on major strategic locations, proving their military capability to fight against the state.

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<sup>115</sup> Kerttunen, “A Transformed Insurgency.”

<sup>116</sup> Karki and Seddon, *The People’s War in Nepal: Left Perspectives*, 210.

<sup>117</sup> Kerttunen, “A Transformed Insurgency,” 95.

<sup>118</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 181.

<sup>119</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, 181.

In the final stage of strategic offense, which started after 2004, the Maoists continued their political engagement as well as armed attacks on selected army members, political leaders, and government servicemen but avoided large-scale attacks to gain political legitimacy. The Maoists did not, as Mao's offensive phase demands, carry out large-scale warfare against the state during this phase. Yet, they continued their operations; they attacked around half a dozen places, causing massive fatalities to the government side.<sup>120</sup> In response, they ended up facing hard counter-strategies, as the government forces were well-fortified and trained by this time, and the Maoists lost many guerillas in the attacks. The Maoists could neither hold any areas nor successfully capture or control the urban areas, so the final stage of the "people's war" doctrine actually did not happen.<sup>121</sup>

Nevertheless, during the severe counterinsurgency operations, the Maoists were presented with an opening that allowed them to shift their strategy to mainstream politics, which they saw as an opportunity to achieve their objectives. Due to the changing political scenario after the royal takeover of the government and the political response from Nepal's other political parties, the Maoists were able to lay down their arms and join hands with other parties and so evade a direct and large-scale military confrontation with the army. Mao's doctrine of adjustment allowed this change in the strategy. Theoretically, Mao's people's-war strategy consists of methodical progress in three phases, but insurgents may realize their victory at any stage if the state loses spirit.<sup>122</sup> If one form of victory is rendered impossible, the leadership needs to assess its strategy and make adjustments, which the Maoists did in the case of Nepal. The changing political situation of Nepal favored the Maoists, allowing them to achieve political supremacy more effectively through political maneuvering and cooperation with other political parties than by continuing the insurgency. Their entry into the political arena at this time led to the dethroning of the monarch, after which they gained 83 seats out of 330 seats in the legislature of the interim government.

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<sup>120</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, 182.

<sup>121</sup> Lawoti and Pahari.

<sup>122</sup> O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism*, 53.

In summary, the Maoists had a clear vision and plan during their insurgency that gained them popular support; however, what ultimately made their movement successful was their ability and willingness to modify their strategy to achieve victory. The Maoists in Nepal experienced battlefield setbacks and harsh state countermeasures, which forced them to modify their strategy.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, insurgencies achieve victory “small, secretive, disciplined, and tightly organized” groups, which the Maoists already had, and through winning over “the urban centers, especially the country’s capital city where political and economic power is concentrated.”<sup>124</sup> The Maoists accomplished that goal as well by changing their strategies and joining the other political parties—proving themselves a powerful political force in Nepal. The Maoists were able to capitalize on the opportunity they were offered and thereby successfully managed to join mainstream politics in Nepal. Thus, the Maoists’ entry into Nepalese politics is the result of their well-planned strategy and timely flexibility.

## **B. GOVERNMENT COUNTERINSURGENCY MEASURES**

Several weaknesses in the Nepalese government’s early attempts at counterinsurgency also contributed to the Maoists’ eventual decision to join mainstream politics. Joint Publication 3-24 of the United States defines the counterinsurgency measures of the state as “the combination of measures undertaken by a government ... to defeat an insurgency.”<sup>125</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-24, counterinsurgency measures should have a political strategy as their core, should respond to changes in the strategy, tactics, and operations of the insurgents, and must focus on the causes, motives, and the means of the population involved in the conflict. When the government fails in gaining the support of the population and loses legitimacy, it cannot effectively counter an insurgency. The Nepali government’s weak responses to the political and social issues confronting the population produced and helped sustain the Maoists’ insurgency. Instead of taking a broad

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<sup>123</sup> O’Neill, 49.

<sup>124</sup> O’Neill, 46.

<sup>125</sup> United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Joint Publication 3 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2009), x.

approach, the state relied only on police and military measures, neglecting political and socioeconomic efforts to deal with the insurgency.<sup>126</sup> Though the government was not fully successful in containing the insurgency, the counterinsurgency measures forced the Maoists to opt for the alternative of mainstream politics after they experienced some setbacks on the battlefield.

The government neglected the Maoists' demands from the very beginning and instead sought to solve the insurgency by force. After the Maoists submitted their 40-point demands in February 1996, the government, led by the democratic Nepali Congress, failed to look into the issues raised by the Maoists.<sup>127</sup> The government displayed confusion and differences of opinion on how to respond to the insurgency. As Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sinjapati write, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was willing to settle the conflict through a political approach, but the then home minister, Khum Bahadur Khadka, strongly urged a military solution to the problem.<sup>128</sup> Some other members of the government also rejected out of hand the Maoists' demands that contradicted the existing constitution.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the government also was not serious about capitalizing on the consensus among the other political parties that wanted to address the Maoists' insurgency.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, the government did make some efforts toward political solutions and to address the Maoist insurgency. In April 1997, the government formed the Working Committee for the Study of Maoist Activities and Finding Solutions, under Prem Singh Dhimi, a member of the parliament, who provided detailed instructions to the government about how to address the Maoist insurgency and the causes behind it. It offered a comprehensive analysis of the Maoist insurgency, including its growth, organizational plans, and strategies. This commission also recommended socioeconomic reforms,

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<sup>126</sup> Timothy R. Kreuttner, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal, 1996–2001: Implicating for U.S. Counterinsurgency Doctrine," 2008, 9, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA505200>.

<sup>127</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, *A Kingdom Under Seize- Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2003*, 85.

<sup>128</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, 83–96.

<sup>129</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, 92–97.

<sup>130</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, 86.

admitted the government's shortcomings with regard to the dealing with the Maoists' insurgency, and declared the necessity to bring the Maoists into a constitutional frame.

The repeated change in governments during this time, however, hampered the implementation of those recommendations.<sup>131</sup> As a result, the insurgency continued. During the initial phase of the insurgency, each successive government focused merely on its own political survival rather than on resolving the insurgency. Furthermore, the government's responding force, the Nepal Police, was not able to effectively counter the Maoists who were well prepared in their strategies. Indeed, the police force was underequipped and was not trained to counter the insurgency. Instead the use of police created a state of agitation and fear among the citizens. The police operations adopted the strategy of "encircling and killing," which resulted in the killings of more innocent civilians than actual Maoist guerrillas. The government further responded to the Maoist attacks through the "Kilo Sierra Two" operation in 1998, which used extreme measures that resulted in killing the Maoists along with innocent civilians in the Maoists-held areas, while other civilians were raped, tortured, and jailed for no reason.<sup>132</sup> The government actions to contain the Maoists through police operations thus resulted in numerous extrajudicial killings.

The use of police force against the motivated Maoists failed as the atrocities of the police operations undermined the objectives of the government to bring the Maoist insurgency to a lawful resolution. Some reports suggest that police killed more civilians than Maoists in their anti-Maoist operations.<sup>133</sup> The rural population most frequently became the victim of severe governmental actions, causing those people to embrace the Maoists' way as the only way forward. The police brutality thus fueled the insurgency: as Thapa and Sijapati note, in a nationwide poll, 30 percent of the participants believed that "police violence was to blame for the increase of Maoists' activities."<sup>134</sup> Prakash Adhikari

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<sup>131</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, 88–90.

<sup>132</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, 92–93.

<sup>133</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, *A Kingdom Under Seize- Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2003*, 88–90.

<sup>134</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, *A Kingdom Under Seige*, 92.

and Steven Samford also confirm that the Maoist insurgency spread “as a response to a surge of indiscriminate violence committed by the state.”<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the government failed to provide services in the hardest-hit conflict areas, where Maoists had huge support that emerged from the various underlying causes of the insurgency.<sup>136</sup> And, therefore, the Maoists were successful not only in their strategic planning, but also profited from the coercive measures of the state.

The government’s missteps during its initial response allowed the Maoists to maintain their momentum. In 1999, the Nepali Congress-led government tried to address the insurgency through the formation of the “High Level Committee to Provide Suggestions to Solve the Maoist Problem” under Sher Bahadur Deuba, authorizing peace talks with the Maoists.<sup>137</sup> This committee recommended the continued use of the police and asked the government to seek peace talks, a latter recommendation that was neglected by the then-Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. Moreover, studies at the time showed that the government could not expand its administrative reach out of district headquarters into the 32 districts, and by 2001, this number reached 68, essentially decreasing the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the populace.<sup>138</sup>

During the second phase of the insurgency from 2001 to 2004, the government deployed severe counterinsurgency measures against the Maoists, but the Maoists benefited in gaining more popular support because of the coercive measures of the state that victimized the population and alienated them from the state. King Gyanendra imposed even more severe measures and declared a state of emergency, and mobilized the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) against the Maoist insurgency. The army’s strategies were ineffective against the Maoists who were politically motivated guerilla fighters whereas the army fought in a traditional way; instead, their coercive actions produced incentives for

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<sup>135</sup> Prakash Adhikari and Steven Samford, “The Nepali State and the Dynamics of the Maoist Insurgency,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 48, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 457–81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-012-9125-4>.

<sup>136</sup> Adhikari and Samford.

<sup>137</sup> Thapa and Sijapati, *A Kingdom Under Siege*, 95.

<sup>138</sup> Chitra Tiwari, “Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Internal Dimensions,” accessed September 3, 2020, /paper187.

the population to move toward the Maoists.<sup>139</sup> As Lawoti et al. argue, the Army earned a reputation for “indiscriminate killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and disappearances” and presented the civilians no option but to support the Maoist insurgency, either for safety or for revenge.<sup>140</sup> Lawoti and Pahari claim that the public inclination toward the Maoists was due to army’s suspicions of the villagers’ support for the Maoists, whereas the Maoists convinced the population that they could provide a strong alternative national identity, which attracted many moderates.

King Gyanendra’s repressive legal measures further alienated the population after he suspended the people’s fundamental rights in the government’s promulgation of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance (TADO) in November 2001. His moves, which enabled the government forces to make formerly illegal arrests and detentions, created a state of fear throughout the country.<sup>141</sup> Due to the failure and paucity of available options, the government then launched the Integrated Security and Development Program (ISDP) and started conducting operations under the unified command of the RNA along with the formation of a paramilitary fighting force, the National Armed Police Force, to fight against the Maoists, but this combined effort also failed to contain the Maoists’ movements and actions.<sup>142</sup> The ISDP finally tried to incorporate political campaigns and development programs under the RNA to counter the insurgency. The RNA’s historical linkage to the monarchy, however, undermined its political influence, and it could not win popular support; the legitimacy of this deployment of the RNA was not widely accepted by the population. As a result, even if there was a portion of the population that supported the government’s actions, the state could not safeguard those supporters who were eventually coerced and silenced by the Maoists.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies,” June 18, 2010, 296, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG964z1.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 38.

<sup>141</sup> Adhikari and Samford, “The Nepali State and the Dynamics of the Maoist Insurgency.”

<sup>142</sup> Kerttunen, “A Transformed Insurgency,” 104.

<sup>143</sup> Kreuttner, “The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal, 1996–2001,” 32.

Overall, the state failed to demonstrate the will, means, or ability to win against the Maoists by over relying on armed response to the insurgency. As Connable and Libicki argue, military means can defeat only some insurgencies.<sup>144</sup> However, the government of Nepal focused only on military measures to address the Maoists' insurgency and failed to adopt a holistic and comprehensive approach, which would have included all the possible political, social, and economic measures, as well as the military ones to end the insurgency.<sup>145</sup> By the time the insurgency reached its peak, the state was also unable to provide the resources that could contain or defeat the threat. As a result, the Maoists' people's governments in the Maoist-controlled areas became more legitimate compared to the government's administration. As Timothy R. Kreuttner posits, despite the peacekeeping and operational experience of the RNA, the state failed in formulating a comprehensive counterinsurgency framework and influencing the population, and the use of military force alone was ineffective in the long run.<sup>146</sup> As the JP 3-24 states, if an insurgency persists for long, "the government succumbs to the pressure over time and the insurgents favorably negotiate an end,"<sup>147</sup> and the Maoists were able to negotiate a favorable conclusion for their insurgency when the government of Nepal failed in containing the conflict.

Yet, regardless of the government's initial inability to contain the insurgency fully, it was still able to deny the Maoists any permanent base areas, which compelled the Maoists to look for other options to achieve their agenda in the long run. The option that presented itself was entering into mainstream politics. During the latter phases of the insurgency, the government successfully decreased the Maoists' fighting capabilities through a series of victories against the insurgents' attacks on military camps.<sup>148</sup> During this phase, the armed

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<sup>144</sup> Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*.

<sup>145</sup> Edwin Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies: Comparing Theory and Practice* (Leiden, Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2015), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=3433519>.

<sup>146</sup> Kreuttner, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal, 1996–2001," 36.

<sup>147</sup> United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, xii.

<sup>148</sup> Sudheer Sharma, *The Nepal Nexus -An Inside Account of the Maoists, the Durbaar and New Delhi*, 1st ed. (Delhi, India: Penguin Viking, 2019), 196–97.



forces of Nepal were able to develop their military capabilities, and their strong fortification of the security camps stopped the Maoists' insurgency from gaining further geographic momentum. At the same time, the government of Nepal classified the Maoists as "terrorists," and the state received sufficient external assistance during the "War on Terror" campaign after Al-Qaeda attacked the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. At the local level, the Maoists were unable to hold any areas for a lengthy duration, and were losing popular support due to their coercive and terror tactics. Likewise, they were losing support at the international level. Now classified as terrorists, the Maoists were denied any activities abroad, and this denial greatly limited their freedom to operate and make strategic decisions. This political development was a major setback for the Maoists; it increased their need for legitimacy. Consequently, the Maoists were pushed towards political participation in the democratic system.

In addition, the state's continued inability to address the underlying issues of the insurgency impacted the country's political setting, essentially giving Maoists the window to join politics and influence the legal political process as the government managed to slow the insurgency. The state's inability to effectively control the insurgency also allowed the king to intervene in the nation's political affairs by stepping into national politics in 2001. The monarch's active interest in politics and gradual sidelining of existing political parties further worsened the situation.

### **C. RISE OF THE PALACE AND DISSOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES**

An additional factor that led the Maoists into mainstream politics was the increasing influence of the monarch in internal politics, especially the king's dissolution of Nepal's political parties in 2005. These developments drove the Maoists to fight alongside the other parties against the authoritarian royal regime and thereby legitimize themselves. In particular, the royal coup created a convergence of interests among the Maoists and the other parties, all of which wanted to establish a republican state, leading them to work together and bringing the Maoists into mainstream politics.

The rise of the political power of the royalty in Nepal during the insurgency must be seen in the context of the country's political instability after 1990: four parliamentary elections, six governmental recommendations for the dissolution of the House of Representatives, and 13 changes of government.<sup>149</sup> Once the country's internal security situation started deteriorating and Nepal became politically destabilized, the monarch seized political power and banned all political activities. The royal supporters and the discontented population at first remained optimistic while the national political parties and international community urged the king to reinstate the democracy.

The monarch's behavior during this period was suspicious in the eyes of Maoist leaders, as some of the leaders from the Maoist party claimed that the king wanted to create a void between the political parties and the Maoists that would weaken the political system and so invite the palace to intervene in politics.<sup>150</sup> At the same time, some scholars argue that the Maoists were able to alienate the political parties from the palace so that the monarch and the political parties would not come together and the Maoists would not have to fight against them at the same time.<sup>151</sup>

The monarchy had been inactive in politics for about a decade until June 1, 2001, when the family of King Birendra was killed in a royal massacre. The Maoists openly declared that the essence of the monarchy had vanished after the death of King Birendra.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, after the royal massacre, King Gyanendra, who ascended to the throne, strictly warned the political parties that he was not going to remain a ceremonial figure. Essentially, the king wanted to resume an active role in the national polity, which former kings enjoyed prior to 1990.<sup>153</sup> To take this role, the king would need to change the

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<sup>149</sup> Krishna Hachhethu, "Legitimacy Crisis of Nepali Monarchy," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 20 (2007): 1828–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4419602>.

<sup>150</sup> Karki and Seddon, *The People's War in Nepal : Left Perspectives*, 320–24.

<sup>151</sup> Sharma, *The Nepal Nexus -An Inside Account of the Maoists, the Durbaar and New Delhi*, 39.

<sup>152</sup> Kiyoko Ogura, *Seeking State Power: The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)*, Berghof Transitions Series 3 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008), 15–16.

<sup>153</sup> Hari Roka, "Militarisation and Democratic Rule in Nepal," *Himal Southasian*, November 1, 2003, <https://www.himalmag.com/militarisation-and-democratic-rule-in-nepal/>.

political structure of the country. In fact, as Sudheer Sharma argues, the Maoists and the monarch had “different objectives, but their target was the same,”<sup>154</sup> to amend the constitution. The Maoists had denounced the 1990 constitution for its vested monarchical power, and the monarch himself was dissatisfied with this constitution, which turned the palace into a mere rubber stamp.

Ultimately, King Gyanendra started intervening in the politics of Nepal in 2001.<sup>155</sup> The failures of the elected governments to conduct timely elections, the dissolution of local bodies, rising Maoist conflict, and the decision of Nepal’s political parties to postpone the general elections out of fear of insurgents’ violence provided opportunities for the king to intervene.<sup>156</sup> The king eventually dissolved the House of Representatives in May 2002, and delayed the elections that were to be held in the same year, essentially allowing the king to seize political power. Subsequently, he formed three governments himself, radicalizing the political parties opposing his repression.<sup>157</sup> Meanwhile, the state conflict with the Maoists intensified. After the Maoists defeated the police force, they attacked the RNA in 2001, and in response, the king mobilized the army against the Maoists and declared a state of emergency throughout the country.<sup>158</sup> The RNA intensified its countermeasures against the Maoists, and the Maoists, in return, strengthened their attacks on the government forces.

The monarch’s intervention in politics did not stop after seizing political power and reached its climax when the king seized executive power and finally launched a military coup using the RNA on February 1, 2005.<sup>159</sup> The coup resulted in political leaders’ mass arrests, the shutdown of internet and communication systems, and press censorship. The

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<sup>154</sup> Sharma, *The Nepal Nexus -An Inside Account of the Maoists, the Durbaar and New Delhi*, 39.

<sup>155</sup> Hachhethu, “Legitimacy Crisis of Nepali Monarchy,” 1830–31.

<sup>156</sup> Nihar Nayak, “The Maoist Movement in Nepal and Its Tactical Digressions: A Study of Strategic Revolutionary Phases, and Future Implications,” *Strategic Analysis* 31, no. 6 (December 24, 2007): 920, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160701740488>.

<sup>157</sup> Michael Hutt, “King Gyanendra’s Coup and Its Implications for Nepal’s Future,” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2005): 112, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24590670>.

<sup>158</sup> Nayak, “The Maoist Movement in Nepal and Its Tactical Digressions,” 924–25.

<sup>159</sup> Hutt, “King Gyanendra’s Coup and Its Implications for Nepal’s Future,” 112–13.

king tried to convince the people that monarchical rule could address their growing grievances and made his best effort to curb the insurgency, but during the king's takeover from 2002 to 2005, the Maoists increased their presence from fewer than 15 districts to all 75 districts. In response to the royal takeover, the Maoists started declaring their revolutionary shadow governments that, to some extent, restricted the government's presence in the stronghold areas of the Maoists.<sup>160</sup> Nepal's other political parties along with the Maoists were furious about the dismissal of the elected government and became more aggressive in their denunciation of the monarch, which increased the popular demonstrations and Maoist attacks, and fueled a political crisis.

The king's authoritarian actions came under heavy scrutiny and criticism internationally. Instead of focusing on the Maoist insurgency in rural areas, the monarch mobilized the army against the political parties in urban areas and acted against the politicians, human rights activists, academics, and journalists and started arresting, censoring, and harassing them, and forbidding them to leave the country.<sup>161</sup> The royal rule functioned more like an authoritarian regime than an attempt to control the insurgency. The International Crisis Group even demanded immediate action against the royal regime, citing the disappearance of people and the extrajudicial killings, as well as the RNA's violent suppression of political figures and activists throughout the country.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, its report demanded the suspension of all budgetary and military assistance to Nepal's royal regime from all international stakeholders.

The monarch's increasingly autocratic regime eventually pushed the mainstream political parties toward the Maoists' line. In response, the political parties acknowledged the republican idea, whereas the Maoists pledged to join the democratic multiparty system, forming an alliance against the king's autocratic rule. The dissolved political parties had to join the Maoists, as they had armed guerillas to counter the regime's security forces, and this armed power provided the Maoists an opportunity to join politics to further legitimize

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<sup>160</sup> Kreuttner, "The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal, 1996–2001."

<sup>161</sup> Hutt, "King Gyanendra's Coup and Its Implications for Nepal's Future," 119.

<sup>162</sup> International Crisis Group, "Nepal: Responding to the Royal Coup," 2005, 1, <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/226883>.

their cause and a stage for political participation. The Maoists welcomed the alliance, as they were experiencing their own crisis of legitimacy due to their coercive operations: inflicting fatalities on innocent civilians, violating human rights, being classified as a terrorist organization at the national and international level, and facing decreased fighting capabilities and losses to government forces. The dissolution of the political parties and the army's nationwide control declared by the king proved to be a mistake, as the Maoists and the political parties started dramatically de-establishing the state. Lawoti and Pahari also agree that the coup supported by RNA brought "the parliamentary political parties, media, human rights groups, [and] intelligence ... against the state and the military,"<sup>163</sup> and the Maoists had an unimagined opportunity to bring all those actors together to fight against the royal coup.

At first, the political parties formed the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and officially called on the Maoists to relinquish their violent activities and join in peaceful demonstration against the king, which was an important turn for the Maoists. In response, the Maoists agreed to the demands of the political parties to join hands to reinstate democracy in the country.<sup>164</sup> It was an opportunity for the Maoists to use the political parties to achieve their long-standing goals. While the Maoists expected a fight against a unified monarch and political parties in the long run, the king's actions provided the opportunity for the Maoists to join the political parties, and through this alliance, they were able to join mainstream politics.

#### **D. LEADERSHIP AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE MAOIST PARTY**

An additional important factor that helped to bring the Maoists into mainstream politics was the internal ideological conflict among the leaders of the Maoist party and the resulting decision by the party to bring a meaningful end to the insurgency. The Maoists had long been going through internal ideological conflict about how to continue the insurgency. There were two clear factions in the Maoist party: the hardline and the

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<sup>163</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 185.

<sup>164</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 338.

moderate line. The hardliners believed in the core communist principle of a people's war to change the state into a republic, while the moderate wing believed that they could achieve their objectives through peaceful means. The party adopted a democratic internal power structure due to the continuous ideological disagreements. Within the changed political scenario of the royal coup, the moderate wing was able to use the democratic structure of the Maoist party to guide it towards mainstream politics.

In addition, the two factions comprised two main groups in the Maoist party. The Kiran-led group was the hardliner faction, and the group headed by Baburam Bhattarai was the moderate wing. Baburam Bhattarai had a vision of establishing the republic of Nepal through a peaceful transformation of the insurgency by convening the election of a constitutional assembly, whereas Kiran, who was the party secretary, strictly advocated for communist armed revolution.<sup>165</sup> Prachanda's approach in response was to adopt a middle line of tactical flexibility and keep the door open for a constitutional assembly election. Ideologically, he was close to the Kiran group, and tactically, because of his association with the Indians, he was closer to Baburam. The Indian intelligence sector had had a long-term relationship with the Maoists, since the start of the insurgency; as Sharma posits, the Indians' effort was focused on sidelining the revolutionary wing and supporting the democratic wing. Thus, Baburam received the support of the Indians, which helped him to establish his moderate ideology in the party.<sup>166</sup>

The leadership conflict within the Maoist party was the result of various other ideological dilemmas, which they had to solve during their insurgency. The rising ideological conflict and its solution eventually helped the Maoists to come into mainstream politics. For one, the possible loss of popular support posed a serious challenge and undermined the hardliner ideology, while increasing the credibility of the moderate faction, which led the Maoists to join national polity. Some scholars argue that the Maoists' armed insurgency did not follow the doctrine of people's war, which strictly advocates gaining the people's support as of paramount importance. The Maoist leadership was therefore

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<sup>165</sup> Sharma, *The Nepal Nexus -An Inside Account of the Maoists, the Durbaar and New Delhi*, 163.

<sup>166</sup> Sharma, 163.

serious about their continued loss of popular support among the citizens as they carried out their operations, during which many innocent civilians were killed and their properties were damaged. The loss of public support and the broadening of their base areas through hit-and-run guerrilla actions, assaults, propaganda, and sabotage made the Maoists look like a terrorist group rather than a revolutionary movement.<sup>167</sup>

After the Maoists' secret relations with the monarch were revealed, people started to doubt the Maoist agenda, which led to a greater loss of public support. At this point, the hardline faction was forced to soften their agenda. By the time the Maoists came for the second round of talks with the government in January–August 2003, the Maoists withdrew their main demand of holding a constitutional assembly and only demanded an interim constitution, interim government, and round-table conferences of the political parties instead of republican state that could settle the disputed issues.<sup>168</sup> Such various disruptions within the party led the moderate factions to demand a reliable settlement, ultimately forging a way to enter peacefully into politics.

The Maoists also faced the issue of identifying their prime enemy of the insurgency, which was a crucial issue between the two wings in the party. The moderate wing succeeded in identifying the Maoists' prime enemy, which provided the moderates credibility to establish their cause within the party. In 2004, the Maoists had a strong debate regarding the primary enemy of the insurgency: the moderate Baburam Faction believed the monarchy to be the primary enemy,<sup>169</sup> while the radical faction identified India as the main enemy because of its assistance to the monarch and its opposition to the Maoist party. India started sanctioning the Maoists' activities, and the Maoists' central committee leaders were arrested in India,<sup>170</sup> which was a major setback to the Maoists, as they had their headquarters in India and all of their prominent leaders could face legal action if India so chose. In 2004, the leadership conflict within the Maoist party came to the fore in Nepal's

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<sup>167</sup> Arjun Bahadur Ayadi, "Dilemma and Factionalism in the Maoist Politics of Nepal," *Journal of Political Science* 18 (2018): 11.

<sup>168</sup> Ayadi, 12.

<sup>169</sup> Ayadi, 13.

<sup>170</sup> Sharma, *The Nepal Nexus -An Inside Account of the Maoists, the Durbaar and New Delhi*, 156.

national media and created a sharp existential debate among the top leadership. This conflict almost split the party—Baburam labeled Prachanda an “agent of the palace,” while Prachanda’s supporters labeled Baburam an “agent of India.” Later, in 2005, the Maoists’ politburo meeting decided to take punitive actions against the moderate faction leaders—Baburam Bhattarai, Hisila Yami, and Dinanath Sharma—dismissing them from all their responsibilities in the party.<sup>171</sup> However, King Gyanendra’s military coup two days after the party’s decision to punish Baburam proved Baburam right in his logic that the monarch was the prime enemy of the Maoists; so, the hardliners reversed this decision to maintain unity in the party.<sup>172</sup> Baburam’s accurate assessment of the prime enemy created further room for moderate voices in the party.

A third important issue raised by the moderate wing was the democratization of the Maoist party itself for decentralizing the internal chain of command and the resulting decentralization of power within the party, which allowed for debates within the party about their future strategy on how to pursue their objectives and find a proper resolution of the insurgency. The Maoist party’s decision in 2003 to democratize the party’s internal structure and to decentralize power-sharing remained unrealized until the end of the insurgency. Since the beginning of the insurgency, Prachanda had been the overall leader of the Maoist party, and he later assumed overall leadership of the Maoists’ military wing along with their newly formed people’s government, but the moderate wing wanted decentralization of power and democratization within the party.<sup>173</sup> To diversify their strategy and produce more ideas about how to conduct their insurgency, the Maoist party adopted democratization in the party in 2005 and legitimized the moderate wing’s demands, signaling victory for the moderate wing.

Therefore, under this new structure, the clash between the hardline and moderate wings was settled through a series of meetings and debates—core democratic processes that helped the Maoists enter mainstream politics. Due to the debates within the party and

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<sup>171</sup> Ogura, 21.

<sup>172</sup> Ogura, 21.

<sup>173</sup> Ogura, 20.



expanding government actions against the Maoist party, the party's Chungwang meeting in October 2005 decided that the forceful capture and communist transformation of the state was unattainable under the circumstances and reached a conclusion to agree to the multiparty democratic-republican agenda with Nepal's other political parties. Thus, the moderate wing successfully established its cause, arguing that the Maoists could fight for their cause within mainstream politics and attain their agenda through the democratic process. The Kiran faction had no other option; they would almost certainly have lost to the government forces if they had not chosen a political solution, and the moderate wing's modified version of entering into the politic arena for the peaceful settlement of the insurgency was acceptable to the hardliners. The hardliner Maoists were therefore forced to adopt the middle path to join mainstream politics.<sup>174</sup> This change was an ideological shift in the Maoist party and the party's moderate wing's practical victory. As a result, the Maoists came together with other political parties, signing the 12-point agreement with the other political parties that formed the basis for the public uprising of 2006.

In summary, the leadership conflict and the debate over the strategy of the Maoist party finally helped to provide them an avenue to enter into mainstream politics. Regardless of the personality clashes among the leadership and the strategic dilemma that resulted in a series of splits and mergers, the Maoists finally chose the pragmatic approach of adopting the democratic-republican agenda in place of a communist state system. The Maoists' revision of their political objective of forming a communist state to the acceptance of a democratic approach was a key factor in bringing the Maoists into mainstream politics.

## **E. NEGOTIATIONS AND AGREEMENTS**

While the royal coup, weak counterinsurgency measures of the government, and the success of the moderate wing in convincing the party to undertake democratic political participation created the conditions for the Maoists to enter into national politics, the Maoists were politically guided to the negotiation process with other parties and participated in various agreements. The peace agreements, negotiations, and the other

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<sup>174</sup> Sudheer Sharma, *The Nepal Nexus - An Inside Account of the Maoists, the Durbar and New Delhi*, 2019th ed. (Delhi India: Penguin Random House India, 2019), 165–80.

political parties played instrumental roles in paving the way for Maoists to enter the political mainstream. Hence, those negotiations and agreements must be taken into account when analyzing the Maoists' entry into Nepalese politics. The first two sets of peace talks did not bring the Maoists into mainstream politics due to the lack of proper acknowledgment of the Maoists' agenda and poor preparation of government as well as due to the rigidity of the Maoists, but the third set of peace talks happened after serious upheavals, which resulted in the achievement of the Maoists' objectives.

The first set of peace talks did not bring the Maoists into mainstream politics since they were not clear on their demands and the government was not ready to compromise on the constitutional monarchy. This peace talk between the Maoists and the government took place after the royal massacre, from August 2001 onwards.<sup>175</sup> During the first round of peace talks, the Maoists had no specific agenda, but they demonstrated their political will for peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Maoists also used this time to extend their political relations with other communist parties within the country. In August, Maoist leader Prachanda held a meeting of left-wing parties and sought their support for his agenda in the peace talks, but the leading parliamentary communist party, CPN-UML, declined the proposal.<sup>176</sup>

Before the second round of peace talks scheduled to take place on September 13–14 of 2001, the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened in the United States, which changed international dynamics and affected the political conflict in Nepal as well. During the subsequent worldwide anti-terror campaign, the Maoists were placed on the terrorist group list by the United States of America and India.<sup>177</sup> India banned Maoist sister organizations in its territory and took up strict control measures along its border. Nevertheless, the second round of peace talks were marked by 31-point demands from the Maoists mainly focused on institutionalizing the republican system in the country, promulgating a new constitution, and forming a new government, and securing the release of a few Maoist prisoners held by

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<sup>175</sup> B. C. Upreti, *Maoist in Nepal -From Insurgency to Political Mainstream*, 1st ed. (Delhi, India: Kalpaz Publications, 2008), 115–16.

<sup>176</sup> Upreti, 116.

<sup>177</sup> Ogura, *Seeking State Power*, 22.

the government. Here, the Maoists came up with their idea of a Constitutional Assembly election, abandoning their previous agenda to call for a republican state. During the third round of the 2001 peace talks, the government outright denied the Maoists' demands, compelling the Maoists to return to armed attacks. As B. C. Upreti notes, the government lacked negotiation skills and had a preconceived notion not to accept any demands from the Maoists, and the Maoists, too, remained inflexible in their demands but did succeed in communicating their objectives to the public.<sup>178</sup> The Maoists simultaneously carried out the negotiations with the other political parties while holding the peace talks with the government of Nepal, expressing their desire to work with CPN-UML and Nepali Congress to achieve their political agendas in 2001 and 2002, respectively.

The Maoists and the government had a second set of peace talks in three rounds from April to August 2003, but the period from the first set of peace talks to the second set of peace talks had seen a massive change in Nepalese politics. The trustworthiness of the monarchy had been shaken by the royal massacre of June 2001, and the royal move of dissolving parliament in 2002 had detrimental effects on the political spectrum. The political parties were kept out of the national polity, and the palace wanted to solve the insurgency itself. All of these actions by the monarch provided more leverage to the Maoists to garner support for their side. The second set of peace talks dealt mainly with procedural issues as the Maoists tried to limit the RNA to a radius of five kilometers from the barracks and the government released some of the Maoist leaders.<sup>179</sup> During this peace talk, the Maoists tried to maneuver politically and strongly reiterated their agenda of establishing a republican state through a constitutional assembly. The Maoists were using the peace talks as part of their strategy of increasing their strength and reorganizing and enhancing their military capabilities. The Maoists were rigid in their attitude, while the government also insisted on reforming the current government rather than addressing the main demands of the Maoists.<sup>180</sup> Since the government did not accept any of the Maoists'

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<sup>178</sup> Upreti, *Maoists in Nepal*, 117–18; Ogura, *Seeking State Power*, 23.

<sup>179</sup> Upreti, *Maoists in Nepal*, 122.

<sup>180</sup> Upreti, 123.

demands, the ceasefire broke down on August 29, 2003, after the government attacked and killed Maoists in Doramba, Nepal.

By 2004, the Maoists had expanded their influence to 80 percent of the country and had a strong presence in almost all the districts, and through this expansion of their influence, they were able to change their course toward mainstream politics.<sup>181</sup> They were successful in their mission of expansion, as Ulrike Joras argues, employing “disruptive strikes, intensified violence, excessive use of force and a high number of human rights violations.”<sup>182</sup> But after the royal takeover in 2005, the Seven Party Alliance was formed, and they agreed on a six-point guideline to carry out their struggle against the king. Then, undermined by the king, the SPA and Maoists agreed to struggle together and came up with a 12-point agreement, which strategized a way to revolt against the monarchy holistically and started the process of ending the violence of the people’s war, dethroning the 240-year-long monarchy, and restructuring the Nepalese state.<sup>183</sup> On the basis of this agreement, the Maoists and the political parties started 19 days of nationwide mass protests that compelled the king to revive the House of Representatives before stepping down. The political parties then formed the interim government, which announced its commitment to the constitutional assembly’s election and invited the Maoists for peace talks.

During the third set of peace talks, in May 2006, the Maoists and the political parties had settled most of the demands of the Maoists through the 12-point agreement, which eased the Maoists’ entry into national politics. The interim government declared various historical changes such as abolishing the monarchy, turning the RNA into the Nepali Army, and declaring the country a secular state. Subsequently, the Maoists and the government entered into an eight-point agreement to further strengthen their cooperation.<sup>184</sup> Taking

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<sup>181</sup> Ulrike Joras, “Financial Peacebuilding”- Impacts of the Nepalese Conflict on the Financial Sector and Its Potential for Peacebuilding, Working Paper 3 (Basel, Switzerland: Swisspeace, November 1, 2008), 19–20, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11087.7>.

<sup>182</sup> Ulrike Joras, “‘Financial Peacebuilding’- Impacts of the Nepalese Conflict on the Financial Sector and Its Potential for Peacebuilding,” Working Paper (Basel, Switzerland: Swisspeace, November 1, 2008), 20, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11087.7>.

<sup>183</sup> Rita Manchanda, “Making of a ‘New Nepal,’” *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 49 (2006): 5034–36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4418996>.

<sup>184</sup> Ogura, *Seeking State Power*, 31.

into account the previous agreements and the basis of the mass uprising, the government also invited the Maoists to join the interim government as they held 73 seats out of 330 seats in the legislature.<sup>185</sup> Another six-point agreement in November laid the foundation for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the interim government and the Maoists, which was signed on the November 21, 2001. The signing was observed by diplomats, the media, and national and international dignitaries. This finally ended the decade-long armed insurgency in Nepal and brought the Maoists into mainstream politics.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

This chapter illustrates how the Maoists entered into mainstream politics of Nepal. The failure of the political institutions alienated not only the marginalized communities but also the broader population, and the government's ineffective counter-insurgency strategies combined with the political upheaval among the country's political elite created a space for negotiations and agreements that laid the foundations for Maoists journey into mainstream politics and legitimized their agenda in Nepal's political spectrum. The Maoists also illustrated a flexibility in strategy. Their initial preplanned strategy was modified to achieve their objectives and address their mistakes. By contrast, the government lacked a firm and comprehensive counterinsurgency plan. The Maoists, therefore, reached Mao's phase of strategic equilibrium, from which they could assert their demands strongly. Likewise, the political parties' continuous failures to govern the state democratically allowed the Maoists to rise and invited the palace to step into politics. The monarchy's draconian measures such as banning the political parties, however, created a platform for the Maoists and the political parties to form alliances to fight against the king while promoting the Maoists' agenda. Thus, the Maoists were highly successful in capitalizing on the monarch's mistakes and creating a space for their political participation in mainstream politics. Consequently, even though the government was partially successful in limiting and decreasing the Maoists' capabilities and denied them any permanent base area, the Maoists worked politically with the banned political parties to legitimize their cause in the changed political setting.

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<sup>185</sup> Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 163.

Additionally, the Maoists' internal factions and debate regarding their strategy and democratization process also forced them to seek a political solution instead of continuing an armed struggle for their cause. The Maoists were going through a continuous internal transformation, and they modified their strategy to accept the democratic agenda rather than continuing to push for a communist state after the political parties agreed to their republican demands. Thus, through a series of transformations and numerous agreements, the Maoists successfully ousted the king and finally became part of the body politic.

That being said, international actors also played crucial roles in resolving the insurgency. While domestic factors were important in bringing the Maoists into the political arena, the global context of the War on Terror after the 9/11 attacks in the United States also played a significant role. The next chapter analyzes the international support for Nepal's government and the international pressure on the Maoists to bring their insurgency to a peaceful end.

## **IV. THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE MAOIST INSURGENCY**

The Maoist insurgency in Nepal, which lasted from 1996 to 2006, occurred in the broader international context of the fall of the Soviet Union and the international War on Terror. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the world saw an increase in the adoption of the democratic process globally. The Maoists' rise in Nepal posed a challenge to this world order, especially in South Asia. Strategically, Nepal lies between the rising powers communist China and democratic India, once again making Nepal a “yam” between the rocks of two powerful states. The Maoist insurgency threatened to change the political status quo in the region and thus prompted these powers to get involved in Nepal to pursue their various “strategic, political and economic interests.”<sup>186</sup> In addition, the United States of America's campaign against terror following 9/11 was another important international factor impacting Nepal's Maoist insurgency, and Nepal's government leveraged this campaign to secure its interests against the Maoists by declaring them terrorists.

This chapter therefore analyzes the diplomatic and assistive roles of China, India, and the United States of America in supporting the government of Nepal and restricting the Maoists' activities using their international platforms. This chapter examines how those international stakeholders mobilized their strategies, particularly focusing on India as the major power in the region. It finds that the Maoists' entry into mainstream politics was a result of the continuous military and diplomatic pressures on the Maoists and the support provided to the Nepalese authorities. The key international actors played a vital role in bringing the Maoists to the negotiation table with the government, helping pave a way toward political participation and a peaceful solution.

### **A. CHINA'S ROLE IN THE MAOIST INSURGENCY**

The Maoist insurgency had ideological connections to China. Still, this insurgency was based on Mao's people's war strategy and may have eventually brought Nepal closer

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<sup>186</sup> Byasadeb Behera, “Sino-Nepalese Relations during 1990s - ProQuest,” 2007, viii, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/1716404609>.

to the Chinese communist party, but there was no direct Chinese involvement in the Maoist insurgency as China refused to recognize the Maoists, calling them “anti-government forces.”<sup>187</sup> The Chinese government therefore offered no support to the Maoists in Nepal, whereas the Maoists blamed the Chinese government for compromising Mao’s ideals and sought no support from China.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, the perceived threat of Nepal’s potential alignment with China led other states, particularly India, to get involved in ways that ultimately drove the Maoists toward mainstream politics.

China had historically seen Nepal as important to its security and political interests. After its annexation of Tibet in 1950, China considered its border with Nepal important to its security and rejected any global influence in Nepal against China.<sup>189</sup> China’s engagement with Nepal since 1955 had been security-focused, based on using Nepal as a buffer against India. China used various policies, agreements, and regular assistance to maintain its relations with Nepal. Like India, China also maintained its relationship with Nepal through agreements such as the bilateral Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1960 and continued to focus on curbing what it saw as anti-Chinese activities by Tibetan refugees in Nepal, where more than 20,000 Tibetan refugees had made their homes.<sup>190</sup> As Manish Dabhade and Harsh V. Pant argue, Chinese policy with respect to Nepal relied on promoting Nepal’s independence and neutrality to reduce Indian and Western influence, aiming to prohibit Western countries from using Nepal’s land against China.

Continuing these principles of peaceful coexistence, in the name of regional stability, China cautiously maintained its supportive role before and during the insurgency for all the governments in Nepal. Indeed, China supported the Nepali government despite

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<sup>187</sup> Chandra Bhatta and Bhagirath Yogi, “Country in Chaos,” *The World Today* 60, no. 8/9 (2004): 40, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40477287>.

<sup>188</sup> Drew Cottle and Angela Keys, “The Maoist Conflict in Nepal: A Himalayan Perdition?,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 173, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710701358337>.

<sup>189</sup> Manish Dabhade and Harsh V. Pant, “Coping with Challenges to Sovereignty: Sino-Indian Rivalry and Nepal’s Foreign Policy,” *Contemporary South Asia* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): 159, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0958493042000242945>.

<sup>190</sup> Arun Kumar Sahu, “Future of India–Nepal Relations: Is China a Factor?,” *Strategic Analysis* 39, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 201, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2014.1000670>.



international criticism of King Gyanendra's 2005 royal coup. The Chinese government provided convoys of trucks supplying small arms and assured its continuous support to the royal regime even when all other countries halted their support to King Gyanendra.<sup>191</sup> After the start of U.S. involvement in Nepal through its military assistance to fight against the Maoists after 9/11, however, China labeled the Maoists "terrorists" and continued offering regular assistance to the governments of Nepal.<sup>192</sup> As John Mage puts it, China did not want to "antagonize ... [the] U.S. regime,"<sup>193</sup> and so ostensibly supported the U.S. policy on combating terrorism. Hence, China's role with respect to Nepal's insurgency remained neutral despite its geographic proximity.

Nevertheless, although, there is no evidence of any Chinese connection to the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, other states were worried that the communist ideology of the Maoists would give China greater influence in Nepalese politics. India in particular, which historically has supported the Nepali Congress Party, was worried that a Maoist victory could marginalize Indian influence and challenge the Indian security strategy. So, while China did not play a role in bringing the Maoists into mainstream politics, the perception that a Maoist victory would potentially empower China caused other actors to get involved in the conflict, and their actions ultimately drove the Maoists toward mainstream politics.

## **B. INDIA'S ROLE IN THE MAOISTS' PIVOT TO MAINSTREAM POLITICS**

India played a paramount role in the trajectory of Nepal's Maoist insurgency due to its long history of influencing Nepal's affairs and its perception that Nepal was vital for securing its interests. As Indian Diplomat S. D. Muni asserts, after the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950, the importance of Nepal to India became central when China started using Nepal's land to the "disadvantage of India."<sup>194</sup> India interpreted any kind of Chinese

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<sup>191</sup> Gilles Boquérat, "Nepal: Back to Future," *Strategic Studies, Islamabad* 26, no. 2 (2006): 45, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45242346>.

<sup>192</sup> John Mage, "The Nepali Revolution and International Relations," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 20 (2007): 1836, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419603>.

<sup>193</sup> Mage, 1836.

<sup>194</sup> S. D. Muni, *India's Nepal Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan, vol. 1 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198743538.013.29>.

influence in Nepal as a threat to its national security due to its porous border with Nepal. India's strategy with respect to Nepal during the period of the insurgency was led by its policy of securing India's northern frontier, i.e., Nepal, against China and preventing the possible expansion of communist ideology in Nepal, which could align Nepal with China and could spill over into Indian territory. Yet, it was when King Gyanendra turned to China for military assistance after the international embargo on Nepal following his power grab that India adopted the strategy of bringing the Maoists and the Nepalese political parties together to fight against the monarch, which paved the way for the Maoists to enter mainstream politics.<sup>195</sup>

India's involvement in the Maoist insurgency occurred in the larger context of bilateral and strategic relations between India and Nepal. India considers Nepal's mountainous region its defense frontier and emphasizes its strategic value.<sup>196</sup> To confirm the role of Nepal in protecting Indian sovereignty, in 1950, India and Nepal signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, clearly stating that both nations would not tolerate any foreign aggression against each other and must consult each other to "devise effective countermeasures."<sup>197</sup> India has also historically denied Nepal's proposal to be considered a zone of peace, interpreting this proposal as an attempt to "extricate Nepal's obligations to India" under the 1950 treaty.<sup>198</sup> Similarly, through such treaties, India has compelled Nepal to remain within the Indian sphere of influence. Therefore, even before the insurgency, India and Nepal were bound, requiring consultation and mutual understanding on "defense-related matters".<sup>199</sup>

The Maoists' insurgency in Nepal produced serious concerns in India due to their physical and political ties to Indian territory, especially their connections to left-wing

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<sup>195</sup> Boquérat, "Nepal: Back to Future"; Muni, *India's Nepal Policy*; Rajan Bhattarai, "The Geopolitics of Nepal" (Kathmandu, Nepal: Friends for Peace, January 2005).

<sup>196</sup> John W. Garver, "China-India Rivalry in Nepal: The Clash over Chinese Arms Sales," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 10 (1991): 956, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645066>.

<sup>197</sup> Garver, 956.

<sup>198</sup> Garver, 958.

<sup>199</sup> Garver, 972.

Indian extremist political parties, which India believed would inspire its growing Naxalite movements.<sup>200</sup> The Maoist insurgency was thus of immense concern to India from the beginning, but it compelled India to adopt a serious course of action only after the escalation of disagreements between the Indian authorities and Nepal's royal regime following the royal coup of 2005. Initially, India remained almost a silent observer and carried out regular diplomatic exchanges of views with Nepal on bilateral issues. India's response to Nepal's insurgency remained confused most of the time, as it applied a "two pillars"<sup>201</sup> policy toward Nepal—support for both the constitutional monarchy and the multiparty system, which were at odds with each other. The political parties and the Maoists criticized India's support for the monarchy, as the monarchy was a main hindrance in the politics of Nepal.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, India supported the Nepalese government's effort to contain and eliminate the insurgency and so provided military assistance to the RNA to fight against the insurgency to limit the Maoists' influence within Nepal. India asked Nepal to settle the insurgency internally, otherwise refraining from any direct involvement in the matter.

While India urged the Maoists to resolve their grievances peacefully in the political arena, however, it did not stop the Maoists from using Indian territory for their activities, which was an attempt to moderate India's influence in Nepal's affairs.<sup>203</sup> Indian border states like Bihar, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh provided the Maoists a safe place to recruit and conduct their activities. In those territories, the India-based People's War Group and Maoist Coordination Centre provided armed training to the Maoists. The Maoists along with other extremist communist parties of India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh also established the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia and found Indian soil to be their sanctuary in the region since the start of the insurgency.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Nihar Nayak, "Maoists in Nepal and India: Tactical Alliances and Ideological Differences," *Strategic Analysis* 32, no. 3 (May 16, 2008): 470, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160802063434>.

<sup>201</sup> Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," 639.

<sup>202</sup> Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency."

<sup>203</sup> Bhattarai, "The Geopolitics of Nepal," 33.

<sup>204</sup> Bhattarai, 33.

As Rabindra Sharma, a famous journalist and a leader of Nepal's Sajha party, put it, even though the Indian authorities continuously denied that they were supporting the Maoist movement, the Maoist leaders operated "without restriction" in the Indian capital, Delhi, and continued expressing their ideological views in major international media from Indian territory and received security from Indian intelligence services.<sup>205</sup>

Indian policy towards Nepal's insurgency long remained bifurcated, supporting Nepal's government while allowing Nepal's Maoists to use Indian land. Only after the Maoist insurgency reached the six-year mark did India label the Maoists a terrorist organization, in 2001, when the worldwide "War on Terror" broke out. The king, using the "War on Terror" campaign, was extending his authoritarian rule through the help of foreign military assistance in his fight against the insurgency, all in the name of combating terrorism. Still, during an international forum in Paris in 2002, in an effort to maintain its influence in Nepal, India continued to insist that other states not provide Nepal any extended support.<sup>206</sup>

Yet the connection of Nepalese Maoists to Indian extremist organizations eventually forced India to act against the Maoists. As the Maoist insurgency dragged on and politics in Nepal deteriorated, the consequences for India's internal security in states bordering Nepal further embroiled India in the conflict. From 2001 to 2005, 12 states out of 28 states in India were affected by left-wing extremism, and India suffered a huge loss—669 deaths—to the Naxalite movement, which was a threatening alarm to the Indian security forces, as the Naxalites and the Maoists shared common tactics and inspirations.<sup>207</sup> From a security point of view, India was thus compelled to treat the Maoist insurgency as a matter of international concern.

Politically, Nepal–India relations were on edge at this point due to the unwillingness of the king to engage in India's desired policy. When King Gyanendra took over executive power in 2005 and dismissed all the political parties, India was compelled

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<sup>205</sup> Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," 638.

<sup>206</sup> Bhattarai, "The Geopolitics of Nepal," 34–35.

<sup>207</sup> Boquérat, "Nepal: Back to Future," 48.

to review its approach to the Maoist insurgency. New Delhi feared the possible political crisis and threat generated by the royal coup, which it strictly condemned, declaring the suspension of military aid. King Gyanendra, instead of walking back his seizure of power, sought China's support to curb the insurgency, and China, in response, was ready to help Nepal, citing that the insurgency was Nepal's internal affair and Chinese support upheld continued bilateral cooperation. Diplomatically, India then started boycotting Nepal in international forums, refusing to attend the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in February 2005, as it refused to share the stage with Nepal. In response, the king, during the SAARC summit in Dhaka in November 2005, proposed China as a new member of SAARC to counter Indian supremacy.

King Gyanendra's actions challenged the Indian regime and led to changes in India's perspective on the monarchy and its adoption of a new course of action. As a result, after 2005, India adopted a strategy that would help bring the Maoists into mainstream politics: bringing the political parties and the Maoists together to fight against the monarchy.<sup>208</sup> When the king received Chinese military support in contravention of treaties signed with India, India understood this action as a serious challenge by Nepal and was determined to oppose the king. India moved to mobilize the political parties of Nepal's republican line and politically and diplomatically supported those parties in their alliance. After May 2005, India officially invited the Maoists and other political leaders to India to consult each other and to sign the 12-point agreement, which laid a foundation for the historic people's movement of 2006, through which the Maoists formally entered mainstream politics.<sup>209</sup>

In sum, India has historically attempted to assuage Chinese influence in Nepal for the sake of its own security concerns. The possible victory of the Maoists could have aligned Nepal with China, thereby endangering Indian security. However, it was the actions of the king that eventually posed a greater threat in that regard: when the king sought Chinese assistance against the treaty of 1950, India had to adopt a revised strategy to secure

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<sup>208</sup> Boquérat, 45.

<sup>209</sup> Boquérat, 49.

its influence in Nepal—helping bring the Maoists and the political parties together against the monarch. This Indian strategy ultimately availed the Maoists an opportunity to enter into mainstream politics.

### **C. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN FIGHTING AGAINST THE MAOISTS**

After 9/11, the United States became an ally and supporter of Nepal's campaign against the Maoist insurgency that, from the beginning of the insurgency, provided various resources to Nepal. Like India, the United States supported the constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy, seeking to maintain stability in Nepal.<sup>210</sup> The U.S. policy objectives with respect to Nepal mainly focused on providing support for “democratic institutions and economic liberalization, promoting peace and security ... territorial integrity and alleviating poverty.”<sup>211</sup> The United States believed that a military offensive could bring the Maoists to the negotiation table and supported Nepal through military assistance. The U.S. strategy of supplying military assistance subsequently helped drive the Maoists into mainstream politics and as did U.S. diplomatic opposition to the Maoists' legitimacy; however, the Maoists joined mainstream politics despite the U.S. diplomatic opposition and military assistance.

The United States had a clear policy in handling the Maoist insurgency: The Maoists were among the terrorist groups the United States was fighting against, so the United States viewed the Maoists as politically illegitimate. The United States mainly feared the expansion of radical communism in Nepal and understood the strategic value of Nepal, situated between the rising powers India and China.<sup>212</sup> Strategically, the U.S. approach toward Nepal was largely based on its desire to stop the spread of Chinese influence in South Asia through Nepal. As such, another core interest of the United States was to stop

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<sup>210</sup> Bruce Vaughn, “Congressional Document,” February 2006, 17, <https://congressional-proquest-com.libproxy.nps.edu/congressional/result/congressional/congdocumentview?accountid=12702&groupid=100340&parmId=1740913AC82>.

<sup>211</sup> Vaughn, 17.

<sup>212</sup> Bishnu Raj Upreti, “External Engagement in Nepal's Armed Conflict,” in *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-First Century* (London, Routledge, 2019), 227.

Nepal from collapsing and becoming a failed state, which could then be used by other states and non-state actors such as terrorist organizations.<sup>213</sup> The officials of the U.S. embassy in Nepal stated that the United States did not want Nepal becoming a haven for any terror groups pursued by the U.S. anti-terrorism campaign. Since the United States was the closest ally of Nepal and encouraged Nepal to eliminate the Maoists, it did not want the Maoists to benefit politically in any way, and rejected any collaboration between the Nepalese government or political parties and the Maoists. Rather, the United States firmly believed in defeating the Maoists through counterinsurgency measures.

The United States therefore provided various kinds of assistance to Nepal to enhance its fighting capabilities against the insurgency. After the escalation of the conflict in 2001, the United States supported Nepal as a part of its “War on Terror” campaign; as Winne Gobyin states, after 2002, several American military and diplomatic delegates visited Nepal, and the U.S. administration provided arms and ammunition, training, and equipment worth more than \$29 million.<sup>214</sup> Support of the U.S. military through sophisticated weaponry and training increased the strength of the Nepalese armed forces’ capabilities, which proved a challenge to the Maoist insurgents. Consequentially, the Maoists began losing battles and suffering significant losses. Moreover, taking the insurgency seriously, the U.S. administration placed the Maoists on a list of “Other Terrorist Groups” and froze the financial assets of the Maoists in the United States—branding the Maoists as an illegitimate entity internationally.<sup>215</sup> As a result, many states categorized the Maoists as terrorists, creating a crisis of legitimacy for the Maoists. In addition, the United States also supported the Nepalese effort to resolve its internal political crisis caused by underdevelopment and encouraged the Nepalese authorities through frequent high-level visits: the U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, along with Christina

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<sup>213</sup> Nihar Nayak, “Involvement of Major Powers in Nepal Since the 1990s: Implications for India,” *Strategic Analysis* 33, no. 1 (December 29, 2008): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160802518551>.

<sup>214</sup> Gobyin, “From War to Peace,” 424.

<sup>215</sup> Gobyin, 424–25.

Rocca and many other high-level military officials, visited Nepal and assured their support against the Maoists, reinforcing Nepal's campaign against the insurgency.<sup>216</sup>

To counter the U.S. involvement in Nepal's campaign against the insurgency, the Maoists tried to draw international attention to their cause by intensely criticizing the U.S. efforts in Nepal, frequently calling the United States an imperialist power. Accordingly, in an attempt to reframe the insurgency, Prachanda called the insurgency a war against imperial forces and called Nepal's government a puppet of the United States.<sup>217</sup> Still, Washington's cooperation with India and the arrests of Maoist leaders in India further put the Maoists at a disadvantage, forcing the Maoists to change their headquarters from India to Nepal. Then, after Maoists killed two security guards at the U.S. embassy in Nepal and declared that they would take actions against any U.S.-funded agencies and their members, tension between the United States and the Maoists further increased.<sup>218</sup>

Washington's military and diplomatic support for Nepal's government placed the Maoists in a vulnerable situation militarily and politically. Their avenues of international support for their cause diminished after the United States proclaimed diplomatic support for Nepal's government. Because of this lack of international support, the Maoists acknowledged that even if they succeeded in creating a communist state, it would not be sustainable in the long run because it would be isolated from the international community. The Maoists' leadership blamed the United States for obstructing their military progress and finally came to realize their inability to win over the state, essentially forcing the Maoists to reevaluate their strategy and pressuring them to pursue alternative means to achieve their objectives: joining mainstream politics.<sup>219</sup>

At the same time, the United States' opposition to the Maoists continued to be not only military but political, and when the Maoists pivoted from a military to a political strategy, the United States tried unsuccessfully to prevent them from joining mainstream

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<sup>216</sup> Mage, "The Nepali Revolution and International Relations," 1836.

<sup>217</sup> Gobyn, "From War to Peace," 431.

<sup>218</sup> Vaughn, "Congressional Document."

<sup>219</sup> Gobyn, "From War to Peace," 427.



politics. When the king seized executive power in 2005, however, U.S. support to Nepal's government came to a halt. The United States strongly demanded the assurance of democracy and guarantee of basic human rights as the conditions for continuing its support of the state.<sup>220</sup> The king's consolidation of power caused the United States to reevaluate its strategy in supporting Nepal, and Washington began to call for a democratic solution to the crisis. At the same time, as Bishnu Raj Upreti notes, the United States favored the monarch over a Maoist political victory and did not want the Maoists allied with other political parties against the monarchy. The U.S. diplomats in Nepal, therefore, tried to stop the collaboration between the SPA and the insurgents, including their signing the 12-point agreement.<sup>221</sup> However, India's strategy to bring the Maoists and the political parties together had advanced too far to stop, and the citizenry of Nepal wanted the Maoists to adopt peaceful politics; hence, the Maoists were able to form a coalition with the political parties and ended up joining the national polity.

The U.S. effort to contain the Maoists from the beginning to the end of the insurgency was successful insofar as it compelled the Maoists to pursue a peaceful resolution and negotiate for political participation. At the same time, the United States also opposed the Maoists' political participation in any form. Nevertheless, with the support of India and the population of Nepal, the Maoists were able to enter mainstream politics.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

International involvement in Nepal's insurgency was initially prompted by the fear of possible Chinese influence over Nepal and by the possible endangerment of India's security. Further, U.S. involvement as Washington waged its global "War on Terror" campaign bolstered the fighting capacity of the Nepalese armed forces and compelled the Maoists to seek the alternative approach of a political solution to the conflict. The United States, however, continued to deny the political legitimacy of the Maoists and attempted to prevent their alliance with other political parties in Nepal due to their use of terror tactics

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<sup>220</sup> Harsh V. Pant, "Trouble in Paradise: Nepal's Tryst with Insurgency and Despotism," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (2006): 127, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43133668>.

<sup>221</sup> Bishnu Raj Upreti, "External Engagement in Nepal's Armed Conflict," 226.

during the insurgency. The U.S. stance was largely checked by India's influence in leading the Maoists into the political arena after the king tried to breach Nepal's bilateral agreement with India. In the end, the political journey of the Maoists was a result of international support rendered to the government of Nepal and the resulting pressure against the Maoists.

## V. CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

Nepal's Maoist insurgency, which started in February 1996 and ended in 2006, marked a significant political change in Nepal, producing a drastic shift in the country's political structure. This radical group pursued its ideological goal of establishing a republican communist state and new people's democracy largely through launching an insurgency. Nevertheless, the Maoist insurgency in Nepal ultimately provides an example of political settlement of radicalism due to the combined efforts of national and international actors. This case supports the logic of a holistic approach to conflict resolution that includes political and military approaches to bring insurgents off the battlefield and into the political arena.

### A. SUMMARIZING THE MAIN POINTS

This thesis analyzes the Nepalese Maoists journey from an armed insurgent group to a legitimate political party that is now deeply engaged in the democratic process. This insurgency is described in the preceding chapters, which summarize the rise and fall of the Maoists, examine the successes of their strategies in partially achieving their objectives, and then analyze the factors that brought them into the democratic process. The failures and the successes of the relationship between the Nepalese state and the Maoists yield recommendations for policymakers. The recommendations offered here can help government leaders of developing states with social, political, and economic challenges similar to those of Nepal to politically and effectively counter insurgent movements and offer a path to peacefully settle ongoing or possible future insurgencies. In particular, these lessons and recommendations can help to address the reemerging Biplov Maoists, a splinter group of the previous Maoist group, now engaged in violent activities in Nepal.<sup>222</sup>

The Maoist insurgency emerged out of various underlying economic, political, and social conditions that prevailed in Nepal, including widespread corruption, poverty, ill governance, social inequality, and many other factors. Being a agriculture-based economy

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<sup>222</sup> Thomas A. Marks, "Terrorism as Method in Nepali Maoist Insurgency, 1996–2016," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1265820>.

and with 88 percent of the population living in rural areas, the country's diverse class structure and inequitable land distribution created extensive social and economic disparities. Economically, 40 percent of the population fell below the poverty line. At the outset of the insurgency, a majority of the people had little access to economic opportunity, as 12 percent of the population controlled 71 percent of the wealth.<sup>223</sup> These chronic conditions of economic and social injustice led a majority of the population to harbor anti-government sentiments. The Maoists successfully leveraged these sentiments to encourage violent political conflict and promised to redistribute the land, which ultimately served their ideological objectives. Thus, the poverty caused by landlessness, underdevelopment, inefficient government policies, and the unequal distribution of resources led the deprived people of Nepal to join the Maoist insurgency and fight for their cause.

Another condition that favored the Maoists was ethnic grievances. In a country with more than 125 ethnic groups and more than 123 languages, the Maoists appealed to those divergent groups, clearing a path to make their demands political, promising them equality, and addressing their grievances through the formation of fronts for ethnic liberation that included the voices of those dissenting groups. In addition, political instability also fueled the insurgency since none of Nepal's several successive governments during the 1990s implemented development plans and policies that could bring a fundamental change in the lives of the citizens. The ineffectual government, its corruption, and indifferent attitude toward socio-economic improvement, contributed to the rise of the Maoists, who were successful in capitalizing on these grievances and articulating the aspirations of the people.

The state's inability to effectively control the insurgency led the king to intervene in the nation's political affairs by stepping into national politics in 2001. The rise of royal power during the insurgency turned Nepal's politics toward authoritarian rule and resulted in the banning of the existing political parties. The monarch's active interest in politics and gradual sidelining of the political parties worsened the situation by giving the Maoists momentum in their fight against the autocratic royal regime. The king eventually seized

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<sup>223</sup> Rizal, "Maoist Violence and Elusive Peace in Nepal"; Lawoti and Pahari, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*, 8–9.

executive power in 2005, which created a state of political crisis in the country, and this led to the formation of the alliance between the banned political parties and the Maoists, which led the Maoists to pursue their political journey.

The international community, especially India and the United States, also played a vital role in the resolution of the Maoist insurgency. After the royal takeover, the international community strongly demanded the restoration of democracy and halted their military aid to Nepal, which posed a challenge to the royal regime. After the 9/11 terror attacks, India, the United States, and European countries labeled the Maoists a terrorist organization, creating a crisis of legitimacy for the Maoists. The political crisis in Nepal further deteriorated when the king sought help from China and adopted an anti-Indian policy in dealing with the Maoists. In the context of their shared exclusion from the political sphere, the formerly legitimate political parties and the Maoists, assisted by India, came together under a republican agenda to fight against the monarch. India played a major role in uniting the Maoists and other political parties in this campaign, which ousted the 240-year-long monarchy through the historic people's movement of 2006. So the Maoist's entry into mainstream politics was also the result of the continuous effort of the international community.

The eventual success of the Maoists' insurgency was due to their well-planned strategy and timely modification of that strategy in due course of fighting. Throughout the insurgency, the Maoists proved a militarily and politically robust force, forcing the state to compromise and accede to at least some of the group's demands. Militarily, the Maoists were able to compete with the state, and politically, the state's continued inability to address the underlying issues of the insurgency gave the Maoists political leverage, and so they benefited from their alliance with the political parties, essentially opening the door for the Maoists to enter the political sphere and influence the legal political process. The Maoists had a clear vision and plan during their insurgency that gained them popular support; however, what ultimately made their movement successful was their ability and willingness to modify their strategy to achieve victory. The Maoists were successful in capitalizing on the changing political context after the royal takeover and realized their political objectives.

## **B. LESSONS LEARNED: FAILURES AND SUCCESSES OF THE MAOIST INSURGENCY**

The origins and political resolution of Nepal's Maoist insurgency in the context of state response and international involvement offer some lessons about how to achieve a political resolution to an insurgency. These lessons, which could help Nepal and other countries in formulating policies to prevent armed insurrection, are described in the following paragraphs.

First of all, excessive use of force against an insurgency during its initial stages tends to secure public support for the insurgents. This approach also escalates the conflict such that the insurgents are less willing to pursue political resolution. Any state that experiences an insurgency must be careful to handle the insurgency proportionally to avoid escalating the conflict, which may result from the use of severe repression and massive force against the rebelling party. When the Maoists declared their intent to adopt the path of armed insurgency in 1996, the government of Nepal tried to control the Maoists' initial political campaign through brutal police operations, which eventually provided a stage for the Maoists to garner popular support and created a state of hatred against the regime among the population. The state suppression of the Maoists that followed resulted in massive destruction, death, rape, and arrests of the local population and pushed the people further into the Maoist fold. Simply put, when a state commits indiscriminate violence against its people, the insurgents benefit.<sup>224</sup> As Adhikari and Samford put it, the discontent and hatred of the government created by state violence motivates people to take up arms against the state, and the popular support of the people for the Maoists supports this idea.<sup>225</sup> Thus, during the early stage of the insurgency, the proportionate use of force and pursuit of a political response is more likely to result in a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Another important lesson from the case of the Nepalese Maoists is that if a state fails to address the political cause of the insurgency, it fails in countering the insurgency.

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<sup>224</sup> Prakash Adhikari and Steven Samford, "The Nepali State and the Dynamics of the Maoist Insurgency," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 48, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 458, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-012-9125-4>.

<sup>225</sup> Adhikari and Samford, 458–59.

Grievances among the general population generated by state discrimination create support for the insurgents. People tend to mobilize against a state in which they have historically been marginalized and dominated by a minority group.<sup>226</sup> The Nepalese people remained controlled by a small group of elites and experienced long-term political, economic, and social disparities, which created a favorable condition for the Maoists. The successive governments of the 1990s failed to acknowledge or address the deep-rooted causes of the populace's discontent and adopted short-term and insufficient policies to counter the insurgency.

That said, the case of the Maoists in Nepal also illustrates various successful approaches for the peaceful resolution of an insurgency. This case demonstrates that insurgencies can be addressed with strategically combined political and military measures. The government's counterinsurgency measures limited the Maoists from achieving their objective to turn Nepal into communist state and forced them to reevaluate their strategies. In addition, although it did not address the root causes of the insurgency, the government's continuous political determination to bring the Maoists to the negotiation table succeeded after a series of efforts that helped the Maoists to enter into mainstream politics. The political parties at first tried to control the Maoists by denying them access to the political system, but later they acknowledged the popularity of the Maoists' republican agenda and were successful in convincing the Maoists to abandon violent tactics and pursue their demands within the democratic system. These events show that insurgencies can come to a peaceful end if the state adopts a combined political and military approach.

Another lesson in successfully resolving an insurgency from the Nepalese Maoist case is that if a state is ready for political power sharing and adopts a policy of inclusiveness, insurgencies tend to settle peacefully. As Caroline A. Hartzell argues, civil wars end peacefully once the state guarantees to "a degree of representation within a governing institution," and such representation can be achieved through electoral, administrative, and executive participation.<sup>227</sup> The new government of Nepal eventually

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<sup>226</sup> Adhikari and Samford, 462.

<sup>227</sup> Caroline A. Hartzell, "Negotiated Peace: Power Sharing in Peace Agreements," in *TD Mason & SM Mitchell, What Do We Know About Civil Wars?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield., 2016), 127.

accepted the main demands of the Maoists and guaranteed the proper representation of the marginalized community, restructured itself into a republican state, and abolished the monarchy, which created the conditions for the Maoists to join national politics. The willingness of Nepal to engage in a major constitutional amendment and Nepal's readiness for structural change were successful in bringing the Maoists into mainstream politics.

The final important lesson in success from Nepal's counterinsurgency effort is that international involvement can help in bringing an armed insurgency to a peaceful end. Once an insurgency breaks out, it may not be limited to an internal matter of a state due to the globalized world order, and such conditions demand international involvement in an insurgency. The support of international communist organizations, especially in India, was ideologically crucial in driving the Maoists toward more hostile activities, and Indian territory was a sanctuary for their training and operational planning. For Nepal's government, the role of India was equally important. Similarly, the United States, along with other countries, through their support for the government's efforts to counter the insurgency pressured the Maoists to consider a political solution to the conflict, which finally led to the peace agreements that brought the Maoists from violence into the peaceful political mainstream.

### **C. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this research, Nepal needs to address the Biplov Maoist issue as soon as possible. Nepal needs to establish a clear and effective strategy while the insurgent group remains relatively small, as the longer it continues, the more likely it is that the state might need to engage militarily, which can be counterproductive. Once an insurgency breaks out, the use of force against the insurgents becomes compulsory. In that case, Nepal should be careful to use proportional force that will not escalate the conflict. It is important to consider that the initial use of force always carries a relatively high risk of being excessive, which favors the insurgents, who can leverage the government's excessive use of force in garnering popular support. If a full-on armed insurgency emerges, the state could be obligated to use significant force against it, potentially worsening the situation. So, the sooner the state addresses the issue politically, the easier it will be to handle it.



With that goal in mind, the Biplav faction must be dealt with politically to prevent any further escalation of the conflict. This group advocates for the establishment of a communist state and is threatening to wage an armed insurrection. It is currently undergoing the preparatory phases of training and institutional buildup, which poses a serious threat to Nepal. So, Nepal should ensure that its demands are politically addressed and the situation remains under control. To that end, the issues raised by Biplav can be incorporated into the political process, where those Maoists can find a way to achieve their objectives peacefully. Nepal should provide them access to national politics and a share of the political power, so that they can pursue their agenda politically.

In this effort, political parties and democratic conditions must be included. The state must adopt the democratic approach and hold the political parties accountable and responsible to negotiate with the rebel group. The conflict analyzed in this thesis escalated when the king banned the political parties and confronted the insurgency autocratically. By contrast, the political parties in Nepal are the main actors who convinced the Maoists to join the political process. The democratic system and the role of political parties in dealing with the insurgency provides an optimistic environment for peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Internationally, Nepal should maintain harmonious relations with Indian authorities and concentrate on not allowing the Biplav group to use Indian territory as their sanctuary, which can deter them from waging armed conflict. Additionally, Nepal must make sure that India does not have incentives to side with the Biplav and leverage that relationship against the government of Nepal.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

In summary, the Maoist insurgency of Nepal was a political problem that ended after the state politically addressed the Maoists' demands. The success of the Maoists' strategy, the government's approach toward the Maoists, and the involvement of the international community as a whole were significant in concluding the insurgency peacefully. The Maoists were adept at modifying their strategy after the national and international scenarios changed and the international community came together to fight

against terror activities throughout the world. The insurgents' anticipation of international support vanished when India, the United States, and other countries imposed an embargo on them and they experienced a crisis of political legitimacy. As a result, the Maoists seized the opportunity to legitimize their cause by entering mainstream politics. This strategy modification rewarded the Maoists with an opportunity to align with other political parties in opposition to the royal regime. Thus, the Maoist insurgency and its peaceful solution was the result of combined national and international efforts, which settled a decade-long brutal armed struggle in Nepal.

## APPENDIX

### **The 40-Point Demands**

1. All discriminatory treaties, including the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty, should be abrogated.
2. The so-called Integrated Mahakali Treaty concluded on 29 January, 1996 should be repealed immediately, as it is designed to conceal the disastrous Tanakpur Treaty and allows an Indian imperialist monopoly over Nepal's water resources.
3. The open border between Nepal and India should be regulated, controlled and systematized. All vehicles with Indian license plates should be banned from Nepal.
4. The Gurkha/Gorkha Recruitment Centers should be closed. Nepali citizens should be provided dignified employment in the country.
5. Nepali workers should be given priority in different sectors. A 'work permit' system should be strictly implemented if foreign workers are required in the country.
6. The domination of foreign capital in Nepali industries, business and finance should be stopped.
7. An appropriate customs policy should be devised and implemented so that economic development helps the nation become self-reliant.
8. The invasion of imperialist and colonial culture should be banned. Vulgar Hindi films, videos and magazines should be immediately outlawed.
9. The invasion of colonial and imperial elements in the name of NGOs and INGOs should be stopped.
10. A new constitution should be drafted by representatives elected for the establishment of a people's democratic system.
11. All special privileges of the king and the royal family should be abolished.
12. The army, the police and the bureaucracy should be completely under people's control.
13. All repressive acts, including the Security Act, should be repealed.
14. Everyone arrested extra-judicially for political reasons or revenge in Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Gorkha, Kabhre, Sindhupalchowk, Sindhuli, Dhanusa, Ramechhap, and so on, should be immediately released. All false cases should be immediately withdrawn.
15. The operation of armed police, repression and state-sponsored terror should be immediately stopped.
16. The whereabouts of citizens who disappeared while in police custody at different times, namely Dilip Chaudhary, Bhuwan Thapa Magar, Prabhakar Subedi and others, should be investigated and those responsible brought to justice. The families of victims should be duly compensated.

17. All those killed during the People's Movement should be declared martyrs. The families of the martyrs and those injured and deformed should be duly compensated, and the murderers brought to justice.
18. Nepal should be declared a secular nation.
19. Patriarchal exploitation and discrimination against women should be stopped. Daughters should be allowed access to paternal property.
20. All racial exploitation and suppression should be stopped. Where ethnic communities are in the majority, they should be allowed to form their own autonomous governments.
21. Discrimination against downtrodden and backward people should be stopped. The system of untouchability should be eliminated.
22. All languages and dialects should be given equal opportunities to prosper. The right to education in the mother tongue up to higher levels should be guaranteed.
23. The right to expression and freedom of press and publication should be guaranteed. The government mass media should be completely autonomous.
24. Academic and professional freedom of scholars, writers, artists and cultural workers should be guaranteed.
25. Regional discrimination between the hills and the tarai should be eliminated. Backward areas should be given regional autonomy. Rural and urban areas should be treated at par.
26. Local bodies should be empowered and appropriately equipped.
27. Land should belong to 'tenants.' Land under the control of the feudal system should be confiscated and distributed to the landless and the homeless.
28. The property of middlemen and comprador capitalists should be confiscated and nationalized. Capital lying unproductive should be invested to promote industrialization.
29. Employment should be guaranteed for all. Until such time as employment can be arranged, an unemployment allowance should be provided.
30. A minimum wage for workers in industries, agriculture and so on should be fixed and strictly implemented.
31. The homeless should be rehabilitated. No one should be relocated until alternative infrastructure is guaranteed.
32. Poor farmers should be exempt from loan repayments. Loans taken by small farmers from the Agricultural Development Bank should be written off. Appropriate provisions should be made to provide loans for small farmers.
33. Fertilizer and seeds should be easily available and at a cheap rate. Farmers should be provided with appropriate prices and markets for their produce.
34. People in flood and drought-affected areas should be provided with appropriate relief materials.

35. Free and scientific health services and education should be available to all. The commercialization of education should be stopped.
36. Inflation should be checked. Wages should be increased proportionate to inflation. Essential goods should be cheaply and easily available to everyone.
37. Drinking water, roads and electricity should be provided to all villagers.
38. Domestic and cottage industries should be protected and promoted.
39. Corruption, smuggling, black marketing, bribery, and the practices of middlemen and so on should be eliminated.
40. Orphans, the disabled, the elderly and children should be duly honored and protected.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Khatri, “An Analysis of Nepalese Government’s Counter Insurgency Operations (1996-2006),” chap. Appendix; Deepak Thapa, *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Chautari, 2003).

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