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**From Politicization of Grievances to Political  
Violence:  
An Analysis of the Maoist Movement in Nepal**

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## Introduction:

The year 1996 marked the launch of the ‘People’s War’ against the Nepali state. The impetus behind the war was to fundamentally alter the ‘historical relations of oppression’ in Nepal. To what extent this is a ‘People’s War’ as opposed to a coercive ‘insurgency’ on the people remains a deeply contentious issue in Nepal and worldwide. Nevertheless, the outcome, in 2006 (after ten years since the war) has been control over 90% of the rural areas by the ‘People’s Government’ formed by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M from henceforth) party. In the early stages of the Maoist movement, the government had termed the movement as ‘an insurgency’, condemned the CPN-M as ‘terrorists’, and reacted with brutal force to suppress the movement. At the moment and as this paper is being written, the government and the international community at large have come to realize that the Maoist movement is a force to reckon with. As the country has embarked on the process of redefining itself, CPN-M has gained an unprecedented political recognition. For instance, one of their central demands for electing a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution has been accepted by all the major political players in Nepali politics. Given this current scenario, it is crucial to understand why the Maoist movement started in 1996 and escalated since then. This has ramifications not only for understanding a powerful social movement in contemporary South Asia, but also in inferring how the current initiative for state-building is going to unfold.

The question of why the Maoist movement began in 1996 when Nepal was a democratic country has plagued a number of academics and policy makers alike, working in Nepal or around Nepali issues. This is especially perplexing given Nepal enjoyed unprecedented level of economic and political freedom (during this period). The standard explanation does not seem to differ from what the Maoists claimed as their *raison d’etre* for launching the movement in the first place. It has been variously argued that ‘inequality’, in its different manifestations (relative poverty, landlessness, unemployment etc.), was the primary causal factor in the emergence of the Maoist movement. However, if one turns to the pages of the history of Modern Nepal, one will observe that these forms of inequality or grievances have been omnipresent, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. These causal explanations shed little light on neither why the insurgency began in 1996 (and not in an earlier period) nor how these inequalities translated into political violence.

In this paper, I will examine the conditions and processes through which economic and political grievances translated and escalated into conflict from 1996 to 2006. In doing so, I will argue that the conditions for violence were present throughout the history of Nepal. Rather, the issue raised here needs to be addressed in light of the emergence of the CPN-Maoist party in 1990, its distinct political mandate (the use of violence), and its strategy of politicizing grievances and transforming them into a collective force.

In order to make my case, I will divide this paper into six main sections. The first two sections will be dedicated to the literature review, (situating this study in the broader theoretical literature on political conflict), and on the methodology. This will be followed by the following: I will examine the economic conditions—the sources and spaces—of

grievances within which the movement emerged. Fourth, I will conduct an overview of Nepal's modern history as to situate the movement within the process of the country's historical, political development. Fifth and most importantly, I will analyze how the CPN-M was able to politicize latent grievances and transform them into a collective force. Finally, I will conclude the paper with a summary and implications of my research.

## Literature Review & Research Methodology:

### ▪ **Review of Literature on Conflict & Nepal:**

Any attempt of analysis of the civil war in Nepal, aimed at deciphering its complex causal mechanism, must invariably start with the critical examination of arguments forwarded by the CPN-M. As the torch bearers of the 'rebellion', it is imperative to first analyze their reasoning, before one branches out into answering one's question.

Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon's book called *Nepal in Crisis* (1977) was one of the first prophetic alarms of the coming of the crisis in Nepal. While conducting research in the West-Central Nepal from 1974-77, they observed that the structural contradictions, stemming from 'semi-colonial experience' and 'forced stagnation in production and productivity', were pushing the country towards crisis. Echoing similar structural arguments for the causes of underdevelopment in Nepal, Babu Ram Bhattarai's (CPN-M ideologue and second in command) *The Nature of Underdevelopment and Regional Structure of Nepal – A Marxist Analysis* in 1985/2003<sup>1</sup> was a political and economic manifesto for the 'people's war' in Nepal. Prachanda (Chairman, CPN-M) stated that Bhattarai's work formed the 'politico-economic rationale of the people's war' in Nepal. Bhattarai's main argument is:

The glaring disparity in the share of labour force and GDP in primary production sector, i.e. agriculture sector, throughout is a sure sign of the pathetic and deteriorating condition of rural economy. This has resulted in the increasing poverty unemployment and inequality in society in general... This should adequately explain the material basis for raging rebellion of the poor peasant masses over the years (Bhattarai 1985/2003, pp.i)

The above statement of Bhattarai posits that the *structural contradictions* or inequality in Nepal, exacerbated further by worsening of the rural economy, as the *prima facie* for the 'rebellion'.

The wider literature on conflict in Nepal also agrees with the inequality hypothesis posited by Bhattarai. With varying levels of depth and sophistication in arguments, there

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<sup>1</sup> This was Bhattarai's PhD thesis at Jawarhalal Nehru University, Delhi, India. It was completed in 1985, but it was not published until 2003.

seems to be a common consensus in the plethora of literature on inequality being the key driver to conflict in Nepal. For instance, Sharma (2006) states that development policy in 1980s of ‘urban-based import substitution industrialization’ led to increase in inequality. This in turn: “...forced youth particularly from rural and remote areas to join radical left wing forces (Maoist) to fight against the political system and economic policy” (Sharma 2006, pp.553) I would argue this is a very simplistic economic determinacy argument that fails to make a sufficient causal link between inequality arising from import-substitution policy, on one hand, and youth ‘forcefully’ joining the Maoists, on the other.

Other scholars have provided more sophisticated explanations. Deraniyagala (2005, pp.53) states that “...persistent economic deprivation’ is the ‘key factor that explains why the mid and far western regions provided a fertile breeding ground for rebellion”. While, for Murshed & Gates (2003), spatial and caste dimension to horizontal inequality/deprivations is central to explaining the genesis of civil war in Nepal. This is in line with the general hypothesis proposed by Stewart (2000a, 2000b) that ‘horizontal inequality’ (inequality between social groups such as ethnic groups) provides a better explanation of causal factors of civil war than ‘vertical inequality’ (based on Gini coefficient). Similarly, Mancours (2006), in investigating the relationship between relative deprivation and conflict through an extensive statistical analysis, arrive at the conclusion that increase in inequality (measured by access to land) has significant correlation with Maoist recruitment. In other words, “...relative deprivation of the (near) landless has contributed to salient support for – or at least lack of resistance against – the insurgency” (Mancours, 2006, pp.17). Notwithstanding the levels of sophistication in argument, there seems to be a common consensus that Nepal’s conflict can be adequately explained by relative inequality.

For some authors, ‘poverty’ is the key driving force. But given they are also concerned with relative poverty, we can place them under the broader ‘inequality’ umbrella (See studies by: Thapa and Sijapati 2003; Munni 2004; Raj 2004; Shrestha 2004, Lakshmi and Do 2006; Mancours 2006; Sharma 2006).

I would argue that there are fundamental limitations with such inequality-conflict hypothesis on the following grounds:

‘Inequality’ seems to be a much over-used explanation for the various political changes that have occurred in the history of Modern Nepal. Most notably, scholars have argued that ‘inequality’ was the main causal explanation behind the democratic political uprising in both 1951 and 1990 (Brown 1996, Mahat 2005). And in extending the same line of explanation for the case of the Maoist uprising as well, the currency of ‘inequality’ has been devalued.

These explanations do not say much about the timing of the conflict. Why did the Maoist insurgency not begin until 1996 when acute poverty and inequality were omnipresent in Nepal? A historical analysis of the myriad forms and sources of inequality seems to be lacking in consideration.

Further, the historical, political and economic processes through which *inequality* translates into conflict is not given much attention. It seems the authors are merely re-stating (in different ways) an explanation that was already given to us by Bhattarai. And in their pre-occupation with reiterating causal linkages, scholars have not paid much attention to the processes through which this manifesto actually came to reality. Furthermore, if one were to look at the 'Human Development Index' levels across district in Nepal (UNDP 1998) and superimpose the districts that are conflict affected, one would see an overlap of the two. Hence, analysis that focus primarily on inequality-conflict hypothesis fail to reveal to us, what is glaring revealed by merely drawing parallel between the HDI levels across districts and conflict affected district.

Returning to Bhattarai (1985/2003), and on the conditions of the Maoist movement, there is another dimension to his argument for why the 'people's war' was launched in Nepal—conditions of the rural economy. This is particularly important given the Maoist movement is predominantly a rural phenomenon. While most of the literature on conflict in Nepal recognize the rural conditions for the insurgency (such as those of landlessness, agriculture stagnation), they fail to explain the processes through which these conditions in turn fuelled into the conflict.

To illustrate the problems of failing to examine the processes, let me give an example from my own experience. While I was working in Nepal (for the World Vision as a Program Officer in 2003-05), I observed that the existence of 'grievances' did not necessarily correlate with Maoist presence. Let me briefly substantiate this argument with two case studies—Sunsari and Kaski districts. The two villages where I worked in Sunsari, District incidence of poverty, landlessness and political marginalization by the dominant caste vis-à-vis the 'Musars' (an ethnic group in the Tarai region of Nepal) was one of the gravest I had observed in all of my work. In comparison to conditions in Sunsari, in World Vision working villages of Kaski district, there were higher levels of income, lower levels of landlessness, more equal access to health and other developmental facilities. Contrary to my expectations, Kaski was a hot bed of Maoist operation while the two villages in Sunsari remained largely unaffected. Given this paradox, I question the tendency to equate Maoist movement with grievances, alone.

Given these shortcomings, this research paper will start from the premise that direct causal linkages and the over-used 'inequality' must be complimented with a more in-depth study of the social, economic and political circumstances and processes through which the Maoist movement emerged and escalated. Because of these inadequacies in current literature, I will examine the broader theoretical literature on conflict to see what theoretical insights can inform my analysis for the emergence and escalation of the Maoist movement amidst a democratic state.

▪ ***Situating this study in the Broader Literature on Conflict:***

Research on the causes of conflict has oscillated between 'greed' vs. 'grievance' debate. The greed hypothesis views "...rebellion as an industry that generates profits from looting" (Collier 2001, pp. 1). Considerable focus is rendered to 'war entrepreneurs' and

‘war economies’ (Keen, 1998; Berdal and Malone 2000). For instance, based on an extensive statistical analysis of civil wars over the period of 1960-99, Collier (2001) found that ‘opportunities for rebellion’ (such as the availability of finance and cost of rebellion) were more significant in explaining the outbreak of civil war than political factors. However, fixation of greed hypothesis on ‘resource based wars’ does not facilitate a conceptual framework to analyze Nepal’s civil war, because Nepal’s case is not based on a resource war (Bray, Lunde et al 2003). This also explains why much of the existing literature on Nepal’s conflict gravitates towards the grievance hypotheses as opposed to the ‘greed’ one.

The grievance hypothesis, on the other hand, postulates that grievances generated by poverty and social exclusions cause violent conflict (Rothschild, 1981; Poe, Tate and Keith, 1999; Goodhand 2003) Scholars working on Nepal’s conflict (such as Murshed & Gates 2005; Deraniyagal 2005; Bray, Lunde et al 2003) have made their case within the broader ‘grievance’ framework. However, as discussed above, these works fail to explain to us the historical persistence of grievances and the emergence of conflict in 1996. They lack to explain us the process – transmission mechanism- through which grievances translate into conflict.

Some scholars have made a convincing case for moving beyond the dichotomy between greed and grievance to understand conflicts (see Ballentine & Sherman 2003 for a collection of articles). In this spirit, I will also argue in favor of probing deeper into the literature to find a suitable conceptual framework in explicating the timing and process of conflict in Nepal.

By analyzing the commonalities between the social revolution in France, Russia and China, Skocpol (1979, pp.115, with my own emphasis) argues:

...peasants always have grounds for rebellion against landlords, state agents, and merchants who exploit them. What is at issue is not so much the objective potential for revolts on grounds of justifiable grievances. It is rather the degree to which grievances that are always at least implicitly present can be **collectively perceived and acted upon**...the really important question is **what transforms** the peasantry, if only at local levels, into a **collective force capable** of striking out against its oppressors.

Along similar lines, Ted Gurr (1971) contends that the process through which political violence manifests can be traced from development of discontent, politicization of discontent, to its actualization in the form of political violence. Both of these theories argue that the ‘breeding ground for conflict’ or ‘grievance’ does not automatically translate into conflict.

There are three main issues to be considered in their arguments. First, as Gurr points out, even in cases of intense politicization of discontent, as long as the political regime exercises monopoly over coercive control and institutional support, these discontents will

not result in violence. Second, as Skocpol suggests, in spite of widespread grievances, lack of collectively perceived grievance prevents a unified peasant action. For instance, each peasant has multiple identities (based on ethnic, class, gender differences) (Sundar 2000). Instead of assuming that there is a unified identity (or grievance) amongst peasants, what is a more pertinent question is how these identities (or grievances) get constructed into a common one. Third, Gurr suggests that the ‘weakening of the state and the development of a dissident organization’ are imperative to explaining how violence actualizes. Along similar lines, North argues that ‘disorder can result from the changes which lead to a reduction of coercive enforcement of rules or from the weakening of norms of cooperation, which induces organizations to attempt radical changes in the rules of the game’ (North, 2006. pp. 106) .

Similarly, authors have suggested that democracy does not necessarily address the problems of development, and this may include conflict. The diverging, normative understandings of and expectations from democracy (Chandoke 2002); the extent to which democracy challenges existing power imbalances (Reusmayer et al. 1992); and the extent to which democracy in turn leads to factional politics (Mansfield 2006) are some of the factors that needs to be accounted.

By informing my analysis with these theoretical insights, I will argue that the conditions for violence were present throughout the history of Nepal. The main reasons why the something similar to ‘people’s war’ did not occur until 1996 was because (1) the state, during various political configurations, exercised the monopoly over coercive power, (2) there was a lack of a ‘dissident organization’ and (3) there was a lack of unified voice in the rural area. In other words, emergence and escalation of violence needs to be understood in the context of (1) weakening of the democratic state, (2) the development of the Maoist organization (the dissident organization) and (3) the latter’s role in unifying voice in the rural area. The Maoist organization was able to first, create a collective grievance amongst the diverse population in Nepal, and second, translate unified grievances into a collective force. A collective force was in turn result of CPN-M’s construction of parallel structures of government in Maoist operated areas & its mandate for violence to uphold these structures.

▪ ***Research Methodology:***

In order to understand the emergence and escalation of the Maoist movement in Nepal, I will employ the following resources: extensive academic literature on Nepal’s history, economy, politics, society, Maoist Movement; analysis of quantitative data pertaining to macro-level GDP, HDI, Poverty Incidence, Land ownership & poverty, Nepal Living standard; analyses of the Maoist publications; and pool in personal observations of having worked in Nepal for two years as a Program Officer for World-Vision International, Nepal. My chosen method comes directly from my dissatisfaction with the current approach to studying the conflict in Nepal. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed to establish causal linkages between inequality and the conflict by much of the important studies. While these have their own benefits and insights to add, they do not explicate the complex processes through which the movement emerged and

escalated. Furthermore, these studies do not situate the conflict in the larger modern history of Nepal, of which the conflict is a product. I will therefore spend considerable effort in situating the conflict within the larger historical changes that Nepal has undergone. But before going onto this, one must begin with the conditions in the rural areas from where the Maoist movement began.

## Tracing the Economic Sources and Spaces of Grievances:

I will begin my analysis of the Maoist movement from the point where many of the other scholarships on the conflict in Nepal derive their conclusion –grievances. I will do so by outlining the major macro-economic picture of Nepal and compliment it with Human Development Index (HDI) figures to draw linkages between macro-economic trend and poverty. The purpose of this section then is to provide a snapshot of the sources and spaces (location) of grievances. In the following section, and departing from what most scholars on conflict in Nepal have done, I will situate these grievances in a broader historical context.

The tables are listed in [Appendix I](#).

### Refer to Table 1-3:

While the national economy is historically based on agriculture, it has been undergoing significant structural changes as observed in the tables below.

*Table 1* show that the share of agriculture to GDP had reduced from 46.5% in 1990/91 to 38.9% in 2002/03. The share of industry to GDP has increased from 19.4% in 1990/91 to 22.5% in 2002/03. The share of services to GDP has also increased from 34.2% in 1990/91 to 38.3% 2002/03.

Similarly, *Table 2* shows: in 1971 while 94.4% of the economically active population was embedded in agriculture, by 2001 it was only 65.7%. The same figures for industry increased from 1.2% in 1971 to 13.4% in 2001, and for services the increase was from 4.4% in 1971 to 2001.

*Table 3* tracks the disaggregated growth of GDP. Nepal recorded real GDP growth of 5% during 1991 – 2000. However, while non-agricultural sector grew at 8.1% (1991-95) and 6.0% (1996 – 2000), keeping line with the dynamics noted above, the agriculture sector displayed lukewarm growth.

The following can be inferred in assessing the broader macro-economic picture of Nepal.

- 1) The growth of industrial and service sector reflects the changing structure of Nepal's economy from the dominance of agriculture to the growing contribution of non-agricultural sector. This contributed to the shift in employment pattern with gradual increase in employment in industry and service sector. It must, however, be noted that the growth of non-agricultural sector is not significant

- enough to absorb huge amount of labor from agricultural sector in order to drastically change the distribution pattern of labor in the economy. Large amount of labor continue to be embedded in agricultural sector as observed in *Table 2*.
- 2) Much of the growth recorded in non-agriculture sector (industry and services) was urban based (Sharma 2006). Drawing from the above, a loose connection can be established between the changing economic structure, and consequent pattern of increasing urbanization. This is further corroborated by Gurung (1984) who estimates that the increase in urban population was 4.1% in 1952/54-1961, 24% in 1961-71, and 129.6% in 1971-81. Though this is natural in the early stages of industrialization and economic transformation<sup>2</sup>, unlike other examples of industrialization, here the structural changes were occurring with the backdrop of lukewarm agricultural growth where the vast population is still embedded.
  - 3) In assessing the agricultural sector, one finds that the performance has been historically poor. Though agricultural growth improved to 5% in 1980s, it has been declining since. As vast number of population (91.2% in 1981, 81.2% in 1991 and 65.7% in 2001, see *Table 2*) depends on agriculture, weak agricultural growth, coupled with average annual growth of 2% (Gurung 1984, Blaikie et al. 1980) had direct bearing on rural poverty.

#### ***Refer to Table 4***

Notwithstanding the debate within the Human Development Index (HDI) (see Streeten 1994; Srinivasan 1994; Anand and Sen 2000), the HDI does provide a composite set of three indicators to measure development progress. These can therefore be used to assess the multi-dimensional aspect of poverty, which as I will demonstrate in the proceeding discussion is particularly important for understanding the spaces and sources of grievances. The HDI ranks Nepal 137<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries (UNDP 2006). If poverty is the sole cause of conflict in Nepal, than one is required to ask as to why we do not see similar armed rebellion in all the other 33 countries that are below Nepal in HDI ranking? The conditions and processes that fostered armed rebellion will be explicated in the following section.

The average annual change of overall HDI value, 1960 – 1990, is 2.95%, while the figure for 1992 – 1996 is 5.5% (calculation based on table 4). It illustrates that HDI was improving at a better rate in 1992-96 than anytime in the past three decades. However, much of the improvement in HDI during this period was due to improvements in life expectancy and education. The average annual improvement in life expectancy, 1992 – 1996, is 5%, education is 21% and income is 2% (calculation based on table 4). Furthermore, in 1992 there is a negative change in ‘Income Index’, resulting in negative annual change of HDI (-3.20).

As the result, we can infer the following: (1) improvements in HDI was better during 1992-96 than in the past three decades, and (2) improvements were mainly in ‘life expectancy’ and ‘education’, with only marginal improvements in ‘income’ (UNDP 1998).

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<sup>2</sup> This has been argued by classical economists such as Marx and W.A Lewis. Also see Shrestha (2001).

The 'Nepal Living Standards Survey' of 1996 estimated high incidence of income poverty with some 40% of the total population living in poverty. This corroborates the above HDI finding of marginal improvements of income index.

The analysis of macro-economic data and HDI data, reveals the following: (1) worsening of rural economy (mainly agriculture), and (2) prevalence of income poverty.

**Refer to Table 5:**

The 'Living Standard Survey' of 1996 (the year people's war began) shows that the incidence of poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon. About 44% of the rural population is below the poverty line, which is almost double the number of urban poor. The *table 5* allows us to further trace the highest incidence of poverty to 'rural mid and far western hills/mountains' where 72% of the population is below the poverty line. This answers our above question as 'income poverty' is not only a rural phenomena, but most acute in 'rural mid and far western hills/mountain' region.

Having identified that 'income poverty' is a rural phenomena, we need to shift for focus to deciphering the relationship between 'worsening rural economy' and 'income poverty'. From the *table 5*, and also as argued by Shrestha (2001) and Deraniyagal (2005), stagnating agricultural growth, all else being equal, may have been the primary factor in worsening of rural economy. While remittances from out-migration had helped alleviate bare subsistence and starvation in the rural economy (Blaike 1980), much of the remittance is now channeled to urban areas thereby further constricting the capital scare rural economy. There is also a growing phenomenon of 'landlessness' and 'near-landlessness' (see *table 6*) in the rural economy (Shrestha, 2001).

## The Unfolding of Nepal's Modern History:

*The method of historical materialism should form the core of a scientific enquiry into a social phenomenon, for it goads one to see a phenomenon in its totality and in relation with all its surroundings, a phenomenon in constant motion and transformation of quantity into quality.*

Babu Ram Bhattarai

In the previous section, I analyzed the sources and spaces of grievances namely to be 'income poverty' stemming from worsening of rural economy and its presence in acute levels in 'rural far and mid-western hill/mountain'. Given the scope of this paper, presenting a detailed analysis of more than two centuries of Nepal's modern history is an insurmountable and yet imperative task that I have humbly undertaken. However, in the spirit of the quote above, we must turn to history to contextualize and probe deeper into the roots of the sources and spaces of grievances, the tentacles of which extend into the early stages of modern history of Nepal. The discussion on history begins with: the formation of power imbalances, the major political changes and its consequence on the changing nature of the state, and leads to the launch of the Maoist movement.

In broadly analyzing the political history of Nepal, since its formation, I have traced and identified the main actor(s), its agency, and the conditions under which it exercised its agency in bringing about political changes. It is important to note here that the same framework will be employed to more explicitly elucidate how the Maoist movement emerged and escalated in the following section.

### ▪ **Formation of Nepal [1743 – 1846]**

Prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, much of present Nepal consisted of "...petty states and principalities, dotting its hills from east to west, each ruled by a King of its own" (Sharma 2004, pp.10). The process of political unification began under the banner of the 'House of Gorkha', led by Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1743. By 1768-9, Shah succeeded in occupying Kathmandu valley and establishing his rule. At the time of his death in 1775, he had expanded his territory to much of eastern Nepal and Sikkim (Whelpton 1997).

The expansionary policies of (new) Nepal continued albeit at varying degrees. The establishment of Shah Dynasty in Kathmandu valley and its elevation as the epicentre of Shah Kingdom was an important development. Kathmandu emerged as the centre of power, with all other areas existing as satellites.

The centre of power was effectively monopolized by a select few social groups of the upper Hindu caste known as the *bharadars*<sup>3</sup> that formed the royal court of the 'House of Gorkha'. They not only monopolized socio-political, but also economic resources.

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<sup>3</sup> Thapa, Pandey, Rana were some of the families that formed the '*bhardars*'. See Shaha (1990), Bista

The ‘plurality of different Nepalese society was conceived of within a uniform socio-political framework: diverse castes and ethnic categories were incorporated into a holistic framework of a “national caste hierarchy”. And this caste hierarchy was codified and legally enforced by the “Mulki Ain”, which restricted any form of inter-caste intermingling (such as marriage, commensality etc.). This was to ensure political power did not go outside the hands of the *bharadars* (Hofer 1979).

Beyond the monopolization of power by the *bharadars*, the state resources and in particular land was also accumulated by these select groups for personal enrichment. Land has historically been the most valuable resource in agrarian economies of South Asia, including Nepal (Agarwal 1994). The land allocation under the *Birta* and *Jagir* system illustrates the early monopolization of land.

Land tenures such as *Jagir* and *Birta* were given to the nobility as well as the civil and military employees as their emoluments for services rendered to the State (Regmi 1971). The Brahmins, Chettri and Thakuri formed the dominant beneficiaries of the above policy as these groups were favoured for political reasons by the House of Gorkha. And other groups such as Gurungs, Magars, Limbus and Tamangs suffered gradual depletion of or encroachment on their lands (Regmi 1971; Caplan 2000).

Land falling within the *Jagir* and *Birta* system, with the exception of few small landholdings, was cultivated by tenant labours referred to as *mohi*. The land owners under the *Birta* and *Jagir* system were obliged to the state in the form of: (1) payment of occasional levies to finance special expenditures at the royal palace and (2) supply troops and weapons in times of war (Regmi 1971). In return, they enjoyed the privileges of collecting revenue, dispensing justice and exacting un-paid labour, making them the sole *rentier* class in the country. With no direct relationship to the state, the peasants, on the other hand, subsisting on such lands was essentially subjugated to these landowners.

At the same time, because the final ownership of land remained with the State, the *Birta* and *Jagir* landowners derived their power and authority over their land at the behest of the state. The State regularly exercised the right to change the composition of the *Birta* and *Jagir* landowning classes without changing the tenure system, thereby, never allowing them to garner social bonds or strength to challenge the central authority. High levels of power negotiations and in-fighting amongst these privileged social groups existed within this period.

Therefore, this period marks the beginning of unequal power imbalance in the country whereby control over land and political power was monopolized by a fragmented elite, centralized by the state.

### ▪ **Rana Oligarchy [1846 – 1950]**

In 1846, following the ‘*Kot Parba*’<sup>4</sup>, Jung Bahadur Rana (belonging to one of the *bharadars*) usurped power and established ‘*Rana Oligarchy*’ that would govern Nepal for the next century. The power contestation between *bharadars* that had characterised the power struggle within the royal court was replaced by the monopolization of power at the apex by the ‘*Rana Oligarchy*’. Moreover, the palace was marginalized and the successive Kings were relegated to mere figureheads. Jung Bahadur Rana elevated himself as the ‘Prime Minister’, Commander-in-Chief of the army and made the post of prime minister hereditary.

The *Rana Oligarchy* that lasted till 1950 was marked by unprecedented level of self-enrichment by the Ranas and their cohorts. Anywhere, between 25 to 50% of total state revenue was appropriated by Rana Prime Ministers (Kumar1967) The agrarian relationship went through a period of further ‘feudalisation’ (Karki 2002). For instance, the three leading Rana families accumulated a total of 227,105 acres (42.5% of total cultivated *Birta* land in the Tarai) by 1950 (Regmi, 1971).

The period was also marked by cordial relationship between the *Rana Oligarchy* and British-India. This in turn ushered in increased trade and huge surpluses in the state revenue. The extension of Indian railway system, from 1890 – 1905, into the *Tarai* regions of Nepal bordering India facilitated export growth in agricultural products and timber. But, with the opening of alternative trade routes to Tibet such as Gangtok, Sikkim (1902) by British-India, Nepal soon lost its geo-strategic prominence in the trans-Himalayan trade. The porous border made control over imports from India extremely difficult. Consequently, the increasing competition from cheaper goods made in India curtailed the growth of cottage industries in Nepal (Whelpton 1997, Mahat 2005). These factors together curtailed the process of industrialization . And the exhaustion of primitive available agricultural technology led to gradual decrease in agricultural growth (Lohani, 1973).

Constraints on industrialization, decreasing agricultural growth and ‘feudalisation’ of agrarian relationship marked the beginning of economic stagnation. Furthermore, there was a lack of concern by the Ranas over the early signs of economic stagnation.

### ▪ **Democratic Movement – I [1950 – 1960]**

The demise of the British regime in India coincided with the downfall of the Rana’s in Nepal. In 1947, India gained independence and on the 7th of February 1951, the 104 years of *Rana Oligarchy* ended through the agreement known as ‘Delhi Compromise’. The British Empire had proved crucial for the sustenance of political authority of *Rana*

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<sup>4</sup> This is referred to the massacre that took place where different governing elites (the Bhardars) were killed by Juna Bahadur Rana and his thirteen brothers.

*Oligarchy* in Nepal. But, the politicians that led the democratic movement against the Rana Oligarchy were closely associated with the leaders of the independence struggle in India. Hence, the new democratic government in India sympathized with the leaders of the democratic movement and aided in speeding the process of bringing down the *Rana Oligarchy*.

The anti-Rana movement in Nepal can be traced to 1940s when politically exiled Nepali's formed the 'All India Nepali National Congress' and 'All India Gorkha Congress' (Mahat 2005). In April 1947 (the year India achieved independence), the two Congress party united under one banner with the objective to establish democracy in Nepal under a constitutional monarch through non-violent movement. Though the new party avowed to use non-violent means, it had secretly recruited a 'fighting force' called the '*JanaMukti Sena*' (People's Independence Army).

King Tribhuvan Shah, who had remained imprisoned within the palace by the Ranas, sought political asylum with the Indian embassy and actively supported the Congress Party of Nepal in 1950. He was accompanied by his son (Mahendra) and grandson (Birendra). (Both of them would later become Kings of Nepal). The Ranas had derived their authority by overpowering the monarchy and ruling on their behalf. The Rana prime minister at that time, scrambling to retain legitimacy of Rana Oligarchy, on 7<sup>th</sup> November proclaimed the 4-year old Tribhuvan's second grandson (Gyanendra) the King. However, New Delhi swiftly declined to recognize Gyanendra as the King.

Meanwhile, the Nepali Congress had unleashed its military might – *JanaMukti Sena* – on the Rana regime. In a series of armed attack they were able to capture seven major cities in the eastern part of Nepal (Whelpton 1997; Mahat 2005). The Indian railway network that reached till the border of Nepal was strategically used by Nepali Congress to ferry men and weapons, while India turned a blind eye. Furthermore, the democratic movement of this period marked the beginning of politicization of grievances and mobilization of mass support. Not only did the political parties begin investing in political awareness against the state, but also mobilized a collective force. The *JanaMukti Sena*, was composed of people of all backgrounds. For the first time, there was significant participation of people from women and minority ethnic groups such as *Dalits*, *Gurungs* and *Tamang* (Tamang 2000). As we will see later, this underground revolutionary army acts almost as a precursor to the CPN-M led 'People's Army'.

On February 7, 1951 the Rana regime officially came to an end with the 'Delhi Compromise'. It was agreed among all political actors that a new democratic constitution would be drafted through the constituent assembly and subsequently democracy would be established. However, what ensued was a short period of democratic experiment marred with political instability. In 1960, King Mahendra (son of Tribhuvan) assumed executive authority through a *palace coup* and established a partyless *panchayat* system.

- ***Panchayat Era [1960 – 1990]***

The short-lived democratically elected government of Nepali Congress headed by B.P. Koirala in 1959 had vigorously initiated development programs aimed at addressing some of the deep structural problems confronting the nation. Some of the major ones included: (1) extensive land reform (such as abolition of *Birta* system and ceiling on land holding) and (2) rapid industrialization (Mahat 2005). This period also marked the beginning of planned development as manifested in the first 'Five Year Plan' of 1956 (Poudyal 1982). Furthermore, there was a massive influx of foreign aid targeted at the government's developmental goals (Pant 1991).

From 1960 till 1990, King Mahendra (son of Tribhuvan) in a royal coup, established direct rule under the party-less '*Panchayat System*'. "The justification for the Panchayat system, touted as a partyless democracy, was made on the grounds that the country was not ready for multiparty politics and that the new system was suited to the "climate and soil" of the country" (Thapa 2003, pp.18).

The Panchayat system consisted of a national legislature elected indirectly by the people through three tiers of village, district and zonal assemblies. The mechanism of accountability of the national legislature was to the King and not to the people.

In the early years of Panchayat system, rebels belonging to the Nepali Congress, with covert support from India, were able to exert pressure on the government. However, with Indo-China war in October 1962, India withdrew its support to the rebel group as it was not willing to antagonize Nepal – an important buffer state. As the result, King Mahendra was able to assert and consolidate the executive political authority of the monarchy.

The *panchayat* years ushered in a process of 'modernisation' and 'nation-state building'. The 'Five Year Annual plan's' were oriented towards 'increase in overall production, employment, reduction of social and economic inequalities' (Poudyal 1983) During this period Nepal's economy recorded an average growth rate of 3.9 per cent (Mahat 2005). Minor progress was recorded in the field of health and education. Notwithstanding these progresses, the state of overall poverty remained unchanged in rural areas (ILO 1984). The process of modernisation and nation building was done under the aegis of an existing cultural and social hierarchy, and these merely re-enforced the social hierarchy. As the result, 'the panchayat era is characterized by the cultural traits of those in power, i.e. of high-caste Parbatiya [people from the hills] Hindus (Paff-Czarnecka 1997). Many members of the minority group felt forcefully incorporated into the process albeit with little opportunities of economic and political power and representation (Paff-Czarnecka 1997).

- ***Democratic Movement- II [1990-]***

There were 5 main events that marked the transition from Panchayat to democracy:

1. In 1985, the Congress party launched a massive 'satyagraha' (non-violent protest) against the *panchayat* system.
2. Like history repeating itself, the decisive blow came to the *panchayat* system in 1988 with the blockade (trade embargo) of 19 out of 21 trade routes by India. India unofficially supported the movement in Nepal for various reasons beyond the scope of the paper.
3. By 1990, the democratic movement had swelled to unprecedented levels with massive participation of people mobilized by the major political parties such as Congress and Communist.
4. On April 19, 1990 the King relinquished and appointed Krishna Prasad Bhattarai (one of the prominent leaders of the movement) as the interim prime minister.
5. On May 12, 1991, through the general election to the 'House of Representative', Girja Prasad Koirala (leader of the Congress Party which had won 110 seats out of 205) was elected as the first prime minister of a democratically elected government.

Once democracy was established, the country underwent steady improvements in various sectors such as banking, tourism, infrastructure, health, education, etc. (Mahat 2005) these improvements were overshadowed by recurrent political instability. No government was able to stay in power for its entire tenure of 5 years. The period was marked by various configuration of coalition led government. In the 10 years of democracy, there were 14 different governments formed. The leading parties, communist and congress alike, experienced inter and intra party factionalism. In light with the arguments presented by Mansfield (2006), Chandoke (2000) and Reuschmeyer et al. (1992), this period was marked by political factionalism to the extent of destabilizing democratic institutions. Marred with these factionalisms, the nascent democracy and institutions was by and large unable to address diverging aspirations and expectations of the populace, and in particular, the plight of rural poor.

In this historical backdrop, the CPN-M launched its "People's War" on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1996. While the roots of the party extend well back into 1947<sup>5</sup>, it was not until the 1990 democratic movement (through numerous fragmentations in the larger Communist party) that finally led to the formation of Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist. The general view is that the CPN-M went underground to launch the Maoist movement because on the February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1996, the prime minister refused to accept their 40-point charter demands. These demands broadly entailed the restructuring of the state including drafting of a new constitution through the election of the constituent assembly. The constitution of the time was largely written by the political parties without electing an assembly. At that time, when CPN-M went underground, they held minuscule seats in the parliament (4 out of 205). This reflects the level of representation enjoyed by the party in mainstream Nepali politics. However, by 2000, they will have varying levels of control over 90% of the rural areas.

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<sup>5</sup> also see Thapa (2003), Karki & Seddon (2003)

## From Politicization of Grievances to Political Violence:

- ***The Actor***

‘Theoretical Premises for the Historic Initiation of the People’s War’ is an official statement of the CPN-M with regards to their plans for their “People’s War”. In particular, the two points listed below shed light on the political mandate of the party.

- 1) “This plan of ours would be based on the lessons of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism regarding revolutionary violence...that will unfold as protracted people’s war based on the strategy of encircling the city from the countryside according to the specificities of our country, the Party once again reiterates its eternal commitment to the theory of people’s war developed by Mao as the universal and invincible Marxist theory of war” (The Worker, No 2. 1996)
- 2) “...Our armed struggle will be conducted by taking agrarian revolution as the axis and by relying on the laboring masses, particularly the poor peasants...” (The Worker, No 2. 1996)

As discussed in the previous sections, pervasive grievances cannot be the sole factor in accounting for the Maoist movement. The presence of an actor—CPN-M—with a mandate for: (1) ‘mobilizing poor peasants’ and (2) political violence is imperative.

I will argue that the presence of a political organization (‘dissident organization’) with such a mandate is imperative in transforming grievances into a ‘collectively perceived’ phenomenon and in mobilizing a ‘collective force’. Turning it on its head, in the absence of such a political organization, grievances, no matter how acute, would not form into a collectively perceived phenomenon, which in turn, would not transform into a collective force. Therefore, in analyzing the linkages between grievances and conflict (the outcome), both the presence/absence of actor(s) and their role (agency) are critical.

- ***Its Agency***

I would argue that there are three main strategies that the Maoists employed to both transform grievances into a collectively perceived phenomenon and accordingly, mobilize a collective force.

- Ideological construction of the ‘oppressor’ and the ‘oppressed’:  
Babu Ram Bhattra in “Politico-economic rationale for the People’s War” articulates the following:

The oppressed regions within the country are primarily the regions inhabited by the indigenous people since time immemorial. These indigenous people dominated regions that were independent tribal states prior to the formation of the centralised state in the later half of the eighteenth century, have been reduced to the present most backward and oppressed condition due to the internal feudal

exploitation and the external semi-colonial oppression... They have been left behind the historical development process because of blockade of their path of independent development and imposition of socio-cultural along with economic oppression upon them with the backing of the state by those forces who had come from outside.

The above statement shows the construction of a political reality by the Maoists based on dichotomy between the ‘oppressor’—the state (dominated by upper caste) and the ‘oppressed’ (indigenous people of Nepal). As discussed in the historical section, we can see that the overall balance of power remained highly unequal throughout history. The formation of the state was dominated by certain groups, and the political contestations that followed were also led by certain, elite factions of society. Others also corroborate this (Shah 1990, Brown 1996, Whelpton 1997). But to what extent can Nepal’s history and its population be divided into this oppressor and oppressed dichotomy?

I would argue that this strict dichotomy is highly problematic. First, the plethora of ethnographic work on Nepal since the 1960s shows the high levels of socio-cultural and linguistic diversity inter and intra ethnic groups of Nepal (to name a few, see Holmberg 1989 for Tamangs; Messerschmidt 1976 for Gurungs; Gellner 1997 for Newars etc.). These works together would suggest that these diverse populations cannot be reduced to an ‘indigenous group’ or ‘oppressed group’ as argued by Bhattarai. Second, the ethnographic research in Nepal also demonstrates the different (direct and often indirect) coping mechanisms that ethnic groups have adapted in the course of history and in their negotiation with the state. For instance, ‘ethnicity’ has been a very fluid and relational concept. To give some examples: Sharma (2004) shows how ‘Chettris’ (one of the dominant caste) have come to form the largest group in the country. Holmberg (1989) points out that ‘Tamangs’ were a category invented by the State to categorize a diverse set of groups not yet incorporated in the state’s official caste hierarchy. These groups, in turn, favoured this move because without it, they would have been perceived as a lower caste and as a result, have lower scope for negotiation with the state. Third, as Bista (1991) suggests, even the dominant caste (such as the Shahs and Ranas) re-created themselves and their superior ethnic identity in the process of state-making.

Notwithstanding this diversity, the CPN-M has not only constructed this dichotomy, but has also politicized to an unprecedented level to garner support and sympathy for their cause. How?

- Politicization of these Ideological Constructions for a Collective Perception of Grievance

By the mid twentieth century, different political parties had been using some variation of the oppressor and oppressed rhetoric to garner support and mobilize people throughout the country for the two democratic movements (Hoftun 1999). In 1950, the oppressor was the ‘*Rana Oligarchy*’ and the oppressed were the remaining who had no voice in the system. In 1980, while the basic rhetoric remained same (i.e. oppressor and oppressed), the oppressor was the ‘*Panchayat system*’. The intensity with which this rhetoric was in turn used to mobilize the population had increased dramatically. Scholars and politicians

have argued that while the 1950s remained an 'elite-led' political contestation, the 1990 movement was much more inclusive (Mahat 2005). This is why the latter is often referred as the 'People's movement'. This movement sparked and popularized the concept of 'citizenship' within a diverse community. In comparison, the concept of 'citizenship' within the *Panchayat system* was very rigid and lacked the acknowledgement of diverse groups; as "One nation, One identity" was championed (Brown 1997, Gellner 1997).

But, on establishing democracy, on one hand, the period was marked by high levels of political infighting and instability. On the other hand, the political parties did little to represent the aspirations of the populace. For example, a handful of political organizations were formed in 1991 to advocate the rights of hill minorities such as 'National Mongol Organization', 'Nepal Ratriya Janajati' (National Ethnic Communities), 'Limbuwan Liberation Front', but were barred by the election commission as the 1990 Constitution prohibited recognizing ethnic or regional parties. The political parties (either pre-occupied with surviving or bringing down the government) rarely intervened in their behalf (Whelpton 1997). There was a growing perception that democracy failed to address the issues (grievances) raised and promised by the political parties during the People's movement of 1990.

In the midst of the political vacuum created by these democratic instabilities, the CPN-M strategically manipulated the circumstances. Unlike the other political parties, CPN-M not only employed their 'oppressor-oppressed' dichotomy to create a 'collectively perceived grievance' spanning beyond ethnic and geographical divides, but they also, through their subsequent actions, gave a perception of addressing this grievance.

Scholars point out that there are many different motives for joining or sympathizing with the CPN-M (on both an individual and group level). At an individual level, these span from those relating to ideology, to those seeking revenge and to those forced in co-opting. This pool ranges from school teachers, to local politicians, to ordinary villagers (Thapa and Sijapati 2003, Thapa 2005). On a group level, it has been argued that previous familiarity with the Marxist rhetoric aided in relating to the CPN-M's political agenda. For instance, DeSales (2000) argues that the Maoists were able to garner support and operate in the Kham Magar (ethnic group in the mid/far west) because the communist party had been working in this area since the first democratic movement in 1951. But what is common amongst this group is that there are no commonalities in background, but a common perception of grievance constructed by the CPN-M. To illustrate:

In 2053 v.s. [1996/97], we heard that Maoists were starting to break into the houses of wealthy people, tax collector and moneylenders, stealing their money and property and distributing it to the poor. What amazing news, we had never heard anything like that before! I was also happy when I heard this rumour, but I was afraid that this struggle might end badly. But I put those thoughts aside when I heard the wonderful news about sharing out the wealth of the rich landowners. The Maoist had even burnt all the papers and accounts kept in some banks... We heard that the Maoist were breaking the arms and legs of moneylenders and tax collectors in the west of the country and were taking control of villages. How amazing!'  
(Shneiderman and Turin 2003, pp. 89)

The above quotation was noted by two anthropologists during their field work in Dolakha. CPN-M had not yet begun its operation during the time of this interview. But since 1998, Dolakha has become one of the more heavily affected areas. The quote illustrates that the CPN-M “people’s war” was appealing to those who would come to be involved in the Maoist movement for three interrelated reasons. First, despite their localized situations and grievances from thereof, they were able to relate to themselves as the ‘oppressed’. Second, the perception of being oppressed was not confined to their particular circumstances, but extended into a ‘collectively perceived’ phenomenon. Someone of Thangmi ethnic identity in central Nepal could relate to and dialogue with Kham Magars in western part. Third, these perceptions were further bolstered by the CPN-M actions which in turn, were politicized in the ‘oppressed-oppressor’ dichotomy.

Unlike the other political parties, the Maoists gave the perception that they were directly addressing to change the structural imbalance in Nepal. For instance, to mark the day for the initiation of their ‘People’s War’ on Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1996, CPN-M carried out ransacking of several government offices as propaganda for attacking the ‘oppressor’ itself. *The Worker* reports that at 3:45 pm the ‘Small Farmer’s Development Programme’ of the Agricultural Development Bank in Gorkha district was targeted where loan papers and land registration certificates were looted. While the land registration certificate were returned to the respective land owners, a huge bon-fire was made out of the loan papers worth millions in front of the gathered crowd. Also, a brief speech was given by one of the armed youth, exposing to the general public, the mechanism of *peasant exploitation* and the *need for the peasant uprising*. There were also swift attacks on the same day across the nation on all the targets of ‘peasant exploitation’ such as police station, banks, alcohol factory and multi-national corporation (Pepsi) (*The Worker*. No2. 1997). Since then their strategy has entailed propaganda on the one hand, and targeting structures of “peasant exploitation”, one the other. The question that follows is: how did the CPN-M transform these ‘collectively perceived grievances’ into a collective political force?

- Translating Collective Grievance into a Collective Force:

The structure of the CPN-M organization and how it operates in the rural areas elucidates how the party was able to mobilize collective perception into a collective force.

The political organization of CPN-Maoist (see *table 7*) is divided into three core divisions within the structure of the organization. Each division has specific roles and responsibilities. The ‘People’s Party’s role is to increase awareness for the Maoist cause. And as I have shown earlier, it is the one responsible for constructing a ‘collectively perceived grievance’ in rural areas. The ‘People’s Army’ constitutes anywhere of 10,000 to 20,000 carders dispersed throughout the country, and is largely responsible for violently targeting the ‘oppressor’ (i.e. state apparatus). The two working in conjunction have been the driving force for the Maoist movement. While the former was raising awareness, the latter was giving the platform for those involved to take an active role in ameliorating one’s perceived grievances. The active role exclusively entailed political violence. This has to be understood within the CPN-M’s explicit mandate for ‘armed

struggle'. But there is another dimension of the 'collective force' that needs to be reckoned with.

The CPN-M were not only constructing collectively perceived grievances, giving means to address them, but also establishing a parallel government structure in most of the areas they were operating in—the 'People's Government', United Front. These units (see *table 7*) were devolved to the lowest administrative unit of the country—from the central level (Kathmandu) to the ward. Its operations were similar to that of the state of Nepal in that it had a judiciary unit responsible for arbitration, administrative unit for tax collection and provision of services etc. The armed unit in turn was used for protecting the integrity of this government. This relates to the previous discussion about the backgrounds of the Maoist sympathizers and supporters. Through these parallel structures, these supporters were able to govern their respective areas both by consent and coercion (there have been numerous media coverage on CPN-M coercion). As a result, 90% of rural Nepal—with various levels of intensity—is governed by these parallel structures.

Historically, the state of Nepal has been very centralized and has politically expanded outwards from Kathmandu, the centre. This was discussed in the historical section as well. Even the recent movement towards decentralization (political devolution of responsibilities and resources from the centre to the local levels) has been criticized for remaining centralized and lacking administrative abilities (Adhikari 2006). In accordance to their strategy and in direct contrast to the state, the Maoist movement began in the rural areas and moved towards the centre—Kathmandu. In spite of CPN-M party being extremely centralized, because of this strategy, the presence of the Maoists in the areas they operate is much more pronounced than the state has ever been. The major decisions about the party are made by its core members, but more micro issues are addressed, to a large extent, directly by the administrative unit responsible. This strategy has in turn, allowed them to govern with high levels of effectiveness.

Peter Evans' (1996) concept of 'embedded autonomous' can be applied to explicate the governing process. Evans postulated that for the bureaucracy to be effective and efficient, it must be 'embedded' within the system as to understand its intricate details. At the same time, it needs to be 'autonomous' from the powerful interests within the system. Similarly, we can observe the CPN-M party employing this strategy to their advantage. While the United Front is much embedded (it is constituted by members within the community), the Army and the Political Party is relatively autonomous. For instance, the Army is highly mobile (any given unit of 13 people is responsible for approximately 13 different VDCs)<sup>6</sup> and deployment is especially done outside of one's area of origin. The impact is that the United Front is able to bring out locally specific issues, and the army is able to ensure that non-partisan decisions are made.

Lets take an example of the CPN-M's 'embedded autonomy'. The editorial of '*The Worker*' (No. 9, 2004) states:

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<sup>6</sup> Personal communication with the armed wing of Maoists in Sindhupalchowk District.

On January 9, Magarat Autonomous Region [the region inhabited by Kham Magar] People's Government was declared amidst a huge mass meeting of over 75 thousand people in the historic Thawang village in Rolpa district. The Autonomous People's Government was formed under the leadership of Com. Santosh Budha Magar [from the Kham Magar tribe], in which members from various other nationalities and classes and masses are represented. As may be recollected, this is the main base area of the revolution and is inhabited by the most oppressed Kham Magar nationality'.

In the same year, '*Tharuwan Autonomous Region People's Government*', '*Tamuwan Autonomous Region People's Government*', '*Tamang Saling Autonomous Region People's Government*', '*Kirat Autonomous Region People's Government*', '*Madhesh Autonomous Region People's Government*' were established (The Worker 2004). These are ethnically marginalized groups along which the boundaries of these parallel structures are drawn. In this respect, in giving political authority to these social groups (or individuals within these groups), the CPN-M party is 'embedded' within the local power relations. It is able to recognize how these relations are organized and from thereof, decipher who needs political support. At the same time, because much of the areas that are governed by these units are possibly heterogeneous territories, the CPN-M is also maintaining its self-autonomy by selecting who gets political authority and who does not. Furthermore, and going back to my previous argument, this important in rallying support for the Maoist cause in that the 'oppressed' are now perceived as having major decision-making possibilities, for the first time. To what extent this is an inclusive as opposed to a coercive process (where the oppressed have turned into oppressors), once again, can be hugely debated. The fact that some of these regional governments have withdrawn its support to CPN-M as the parental party is perhaps evidence of the contradictions within the organization. Nevertheless, what this discussion does reflect is that the Maoists, through its organizational structure, were able to transform grievances, by constructing a 'collective perceived grievance' and based on it mobilizing a 'collective force'.

## **Conclusion & Implications of Study:**

This research set out to examine why and how the Maoist movement emerged & escalated since 1996 while Nepal was a democratic country. The problems with the explanations provided by the current literature on the causes for the Maoist movement were identified. It was argued that the 'inequality' hypothesis proposed by this literature needed to be complemented with more 'process-oriented' understanding of conflict in the broader conflict literature.

The section on the 'tracing the economic grievances' largely agreed with the 'inequality' hypothesis. There is an observable deterioration of the agricultural sector and the rural economy at large. A careful study of history, however, revealed that while these conditions were a result of omnipresent power imbalances, the binary vision within which Nepal's state and society was viewed by the Maoists—as the oppressor and oppressed—is highly problematic. History is filled with political contestations and reconfiguration of political authority within the state. Similarly, society is filled with diversity and various coping mechanisms. Nevertheless, this ideological construction

would prove to be powerful in mobilizing support and sympathy for the Maoist movement. These supports and sympathies would in turn be strategically employed by the party to create a collective force and govern (with various levels of intensities) unprecedented levels of rural areas. And hence, what this study has shown that while the conditions for violence (in the form of grievances) were present throughout history, it is the role of the CPN-M party—the actor and its strategies—the agency that need to be attended to in understanding the processes leading to the emergence of the Maoist movement and its escalation.

With regards to the implications of my work, as latter part of this study has attempted to demonstrate, given the unprecedented level of politicization of grievances and collective force that the CPN-M has been able to mobilize since 1996, it is imperative that the party is allowed to play an integral role in the current process to restructure the state of Nepal. If the party is denied such a role, there is an eminent danger of political turmoil and chaos in the country. The outcome of its role in the process could be favorable if the CPN-M party is able to politicize the following achievements to be in line with its ideological and political mandate. The emphasis on history in this study also suggests that the CPN-M (despite its massive political base) is merely one of the players in the historical process of political contestations. The story of the CPN-M is after all significant only within this historical juncture, as Nepal's modern history continues to unfold.

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## Appendix I:

Tables from the Section on ‘Tracing the Grievances’:

- **Table 1: Structure of GDP in % (1991-2003)**

	<b>1990/91</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>
Agriculture	46.5	38.9
Industry	19.4	22.5
Services	34.2	38.3

(Sources: Mahat 2005)

- **Table 2: Distribution of Economically Active Population by Industry by per centage**

	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>
Agriculture	94.4	91.2	81.2	65.7
Industry	1.2	0.5	2.7	13.4
Services	4.4	8.3	16.1	20.9

(Source: Mahat 2005)

- **Table 3: Real Growth of gross domestic product(at 1985 prices)**

<i>Average Growth Rates</i>	<b>1966-70</b>	<b>1971-75</b>	<b>1976-80</b>	<b>1981-85</b>	<b>1986-90</b>	<b>1991-95</b>	<b>1996-2000</b>	<b>2001-2002</b>
Real GDP	2.7	1.8	2.4	5.0	4.8	5.0	5.0	2.7
Agriculture	2.9	1.7	-1.3	5.2	4.1	1.5	3.6	2.9
Non-Agriculture	2.6	2.2	7.5	4.9	5.5	8.1	6.0	2.6

(Source: Deraniyagala 2005)

- **Table 4: Trends in Human Development (1960 – 1996)**

<b>Year</b>	<b><u>Life Expectancy</u></b>	<b><u>Education Index</u></b>	<b><u>Income Index</u></b>	<b><u>HDI Value</u></b>	<b><u>Annual % Change</u></b>
1960				0.128	-
1970				0.162	2.65
1980				0.209	2.90

1990				0.278	3.30
1992*	0.462	0.227	0.179	0.289	-
1992	0.475	0.354	0.200	0.343	11.69
1993	0.480	0.365	0.152	0.332	-3.20
1994	0.505	0.363	0.171	0.347	4.52
1996	0.555	0.455	0.183	0.378	9.22

\* HDI based on 1991 income

(Source: Nepal Human Development Report 1998)

▪ **Table 5: Regional Disparities in the incidence of poverty**

<b>Region/Sector</b>	<b>% of population below the poverty line</b>
Nepal	44
Urban	23
Rural	44
Plains	42
Hills	41
Mountains	56
Rural eastern hills/mountains	28
Rural central hills/mountains	67
Rural western hills/mountains	40
Rural mid and far western hills/mountains	72

(Source: Nepal Living Standard (1996) in Deraniyagala, S. (2005))

▪ **Table 6: Linkages between landownership and poverty<sup>a</sup>**

	<b>Marginal%</b>	<b>Small%</b>	<b>Medium/Large%</b>	<b>Total%</b>
Mountain Region				
<i>Poor</i>	77	58	24	62
<i>Non-Poor</i>	23	42	76	38
Hill Regions				
<i>Poor</i>	70	60	43	62
<i>Non-Poor</i>	30	40	57	38
Terai Regions				
<i>Poor</i>	40	30	18	32
<i>Non-Poor</i>	60	70	82	68

<sup>a</sup> The categories 'poor' and 'non poor' are defined using an income based poverty line.

(Source: Deraniyagala 2005)

▪ **Table 7: Organization Structure of CPN-Maoist**

Party	People's Army	United Front
Standing committee   Politburo   Central committee   Regional bureaus (five in total)   Sub-regional bureaus   District committees   Area committees   Cell committees	Central military commission   Regional commissions military   Sub-regional commissions military   District commissions military	Joint people's district committees   Joint people's area committees   Joint people's village committees   Joint people's ward committees   <i>Since 2004, central level people's government has been established.</i>
	Included in this are; Brigade   Battalion   Companies   Platoons   Squads	

(Source: Adapted from Sharma 2003)