



## **“Strategic Firmness – Tactical Flexibility”**

Why Did the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Decide To Join the  
Peace Process?

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## Abstract

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Why did the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) decide to join the peace process?

This paper looks into the reasons for the Nepali Maoists’ decision to join the peace process. Nepal, a country of 27 million inhabitants and squeezed in between India and China, was engulfed in a civil war between 1996 and 2006, that cost the lives of over 13000 people. In 2005 King Gyanendra assumed full power in a coup, and vowed to restore peace. The response was an alliance between the Maoists and the political parties that along with popular protests in April 2006 forced Gyanendra to step down and restore parliament. I look into the developments in the civil war that made this alliance and the following peace process possible. I argue that several interconnected factors made the alliance possible. The change in ideology on the part of the Maoists made possible a compromise with the political parties. Something that earlier would have been seen as revisionism. The term “strategic firmness, tactical flexibility” was used to explain these actions within the Maoist ideological framework.

Other factors were also important in bringing together the Maoists and the political parties against the King. The increase of the power of the Palace in relation to the political parties made the politicians look to the Maoists for an alliance. After the royal coup of February 2005 India also changed their stance from support for a solution including the King and the parties, to support for a solution that included the Maoists and the parties. I will argue that the processes that lead to the peace process are best understood by using a dialectical view on the course of events, with a focus on how the actions of the different actors are interconnected. This as opposed to a view where the decisions are taken in a vacuum isolated from the conflict and Nepali society. I conclude that the royal coup in 2005 was decisive in bringing together the Maoists, the parties and India in the view that the King was the main obstacle to a peaceful and stable Nepal.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Aims and Objectives .....	2
1.2 Contribution to Academia and Peace Studies.....	3
1.3 Context of the Paper.....	3
1.4 Structure of the Thesis .....	3
<b>Chapter 2: Methodology.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 How did I end up asking this question? .....	5
2.2 Researching Maoists from a Leftist Point of View.....	6
2.3 The Relevancy to Peace Studies .....	7
2.4 Interviews as a Source.....	7
2.5 Ethics.....	9
2.5.1 Paying informants.....	11
2.6 Documents.....	12
2.7 Acquisition of Documents.....	14
2.8 Some Notes on an Epistemological Basis .....	16
2.9 History versus Peace Studies? .....	20
2.10 Literature .....	20
2.11 Summary and Conclusion.....	22
<b>Chapter 3: An Overview of the Political History of Nepal.....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 An Interest in Status Quo?.....	23
3.2 Formation of the Modern Nepali State.....	24
3.3 Panchayat Years.....	26
3.4 The People’s Movement of 1990.....	27
3.5 Democracy Years, 1990-1996 .....	30
3.6 The Maoists at the Start of the People’s War .....	32
3.7 Conclusion and Summary .....	33
<b>Chapter 4: The Civil War, 1996-2006.....</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1 The Maoist Party.....	34
4.2 Gradual Escalation, 1996-2001 .....	36
4.3 A Three-Player Game; the King, the Parties and the Maoists.....	37
4.5 The Royal Massacre.....	38
4.6 Who’s Army? .....	39

4.7 Development of the War and Emergencies .....	40
4.8 The Royal Coup and the Alliance between Parties and Maoists .....	43
4.9 The International Situation .....	45
4.10 Summary and Conclusion.....	48
<b>Chapter 5: The Ideological Development of the Communist Party of Nepal</b>	
<b>(Maoist) .....</b>	<b>50</b>
5.1 Why Ideology?.....	50
5.2 Towards an Understanding of Ideology? .....	51
5.3 The Maoist Political Program at the Beginning of the Insurgency.....	52
5.4 The Military Doctrine of the Maoists .....	54
5.5 Important Changes in Maoist Ideology.....	55
5.6 The Maoist’s Relations to Other Actors.....	58
5.7 Why Change? .....	59
5.8 Summary and Conclusion .....	61
<b>Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion.....</b>	<b>63</b>
6.1 A Change in Ideology .....	64
6.2 Consciousness Follows From Being.....	66
6.3 Leadership Struggle and Political Struggle .....	68
6.4 The Royal Coup – Paving the Way for Peace? .....	70
6.5 The Indian Connection, the Communist Party of India (CPI) (Marxist) .....	72
6.6 Conclusion – Why Did the Maoists Join the Peace Process?.....	72
<b>Chapter 7: Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>75</b>
7.1 What Was Attempted? .....	75
7.2 What Was Learned? .....	75
7.3 What are the Limitations of my Study? .....	76
7.4 What Could Have Been Done Differently?.....	77
7.5 What New Questions Have Been Raised? .....	78
7.6 Supporting the Maoists?.....	79
<b>Literature .....</b>	<b>81</b>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

My first encounter with the civil war in Nepal took place in the fall of 2003. A friend of mine and myself were hiking along the Annapurna Circuit, which is a famous hiking route in Nepal, crowded with western tourists and their Nepali guides and porters. Over 14 days of trekking, we had seen porters in flip-flops carrying crates of beer up the mountain for sale to thirsty western trekkers. We had visited remote communities lacking both motorable roads and electricity, and we had seen rice-fields and small houses clinging to steep hillsides. We had also learned to like the Nepali national dish Dhaal Baat, which consists of rice, vegetable curry and lentil soup. Something our guide Bishnu would eat for both lunch and dinner. After 14 days of walking we had crossed the mountain pass Thorong La, and had reached the mountain community of Jomson, from where we were supposed to fly out the next day. But before flying down to the lowlands and all the facilities available there, we wanted to go out with the other trekkers we had gotten to know during the trip. Before we left our hotel to meet the others, we were told to be back by ten o'clock, as that was when the curfew started. Due to a combination of recklessness and the good mood among our trekking-friends and us, we did not leave for our hotel before midnight. When we tried the front door it was locked, and no matter how hard we knocked or how loud we yelled, no one came to let us in. After a while we decided that the best solution would be for my friend to walk back to the hotel where our friends stayed to ask if we could stay there, while I would continue to try and wake up someone at our hotel. Halfway back to the other hotel however, my friend was blinded by a powerful searchlight, and ordered to: "Freeze, put your hands above your head!" Shortly after, a soldier from the Royal Nepali Army came up to him and wondered what he was doing out during curfew hours. My friend tried to explain that he was only an innocent tourist who could not get into his hotel, and the soldier followed him back to our hotel. Here he lectured us a bit on the need to obey the curfew and stay inside during the night, as there was dangerous Maoists roaming the countryside. We agreed as convincingly as we could, and after we had promised never to break the curfew again, the soldier managed to wake up our lodge staff by banging his machinegun at the door, and we eventually got some hours of sleep before flying to Pokhara the next morning.

When I returned to Nepal in June 2006 much had changed, both in my own situation and in Nepal. King Gyanendra had been forced to step down and restore the parliament of 1999 after massive street demonstrations in April of 2006, and the political parties and the Maoists had formed an alliance against the King. There was a widespread sense of optimism amongst the people I met, and many believed that peace would finally return to Nepal. I was in Nepal to conduct my fieldwork for my master thesis in Peace studies, and had plans to interview politicians, Maoists and grassroots organizations in Nepal. I stayed in Nepal for two months, and gathered data for this thesis, which asks the question: Why did the Maoists in Nepal decide to join the peace process? This thesis will answer my research question over the course of seven chapters.

### **1.1 Aims and Objectives**

At a general level, the aim of science is to ask and answer questions (Kjeldstadli 1999). But an answer can take many different forms, and different answers might have different aims. In this thesis my aim is to construct what Philip Abrams (1984) calls objects of explanation. This aim takes into account the view expressed by Weber, that historical events are constructed, not observed (as quoted in Abrams 1984: 193-194). Historical events are constructed rather than observed because the historian has to choose what he sees as significant details among a multitude of available details. This selection makes it possible to construct a meaningful representation of past events. This meaningful representation must include a chronology in order to allow us to say something about causation. When a chronology is established, one can start to discuss how events affected each other, and in which contexts actors acted. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to say something about why the Maoists in Nepal decided to join the peace process. In other words, to construct objects of explanation by highlighting the decisions of actors in the civil war, and to establish how these affected each other. To do this it has been necessary to establish a chronology of events in the civil war. The chronology has allowed me to explore relations between actors in the conflict, and how the actions of these actors affected the decisions of each other. I have used both qualitative interviews and document analysis to achieve this, and I have also drawn on a large collection of literature about Nepal, the conflict and the Maoists. A more thorough discussion of the epistemological assumptions of the thesis can be found in the methodology

chapter. The overriding aim of this thesis is to construct objects of explanation that can provide the basis for further studies into the peace process in Nepal. It is important to note that the aim is not to say something about peace processes in general, or insurgency groups in general. Rather, it is to say something about events that took place within a specific period of time, in a society with unique characteristics. And to relate these events to each other in a way that increases our understanding of them, and the relation between them.

## **1.2 Contribution to Academia and Peace Studies**

The contribution of this work to peace studies and academia in general is first and foremost to give insights into recent events, and provide a basis for further studies on the peace process in Nepal. Generalizations on peace processes in general, or insurgency groups in general, are both outside the scope of this work. Rather, this work can inform a discussion on these issues, by giving an account of the peace process in Nepal and key developments in it. By constructing events and explanations of the peace process in Nepal, this work aims to contribute to an increased understanding of the dynamics of the peace process in Nepal.

## **1.3 Context of the Paper**

Much has been written on Nepal and the civil war, and the works of John Whelpton (2005) and Deepak Thapa (2003) can provide scholars with an interest in Nepal with excellent overviews. However, since the peace process has taken place relatively recent in time, not much has been written about it. As the literature overview in the methodology chapter will show, much literature exists on Nepal and the conflict, but work on the peace process and the events of the last years are not easy to find. Therefore it has been necessary to draw on a wide array of sources from the Internet. My research question has allowed me to explore the events of the civil war, and contribute to an increased understanding of the peace process.

## **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

In chapter two I will elaborate on my methodology, and explain where and how I got my data, as well as how I approached it. I will also discuss some ethical questions that arose during my fieldwork. I will give an overview of existing literature about



Nepal, and also say something about my epistemological point of departure. Chapter three will give an overview of the history of the modern Nepali state, in order to put the Maoist demand of a constituent assembly into context, and to show that revolutionary communist ideology is not new to Nepal. Chapter four will discuss key developments of the civil war, with a focus on the period from 2001 to 2006. The dynamics between the Maoists, the political parties and the King will be elaborated on, in order to allow an in-depth discussion. In chapter five I will discuss changes in the ideology of the Maoists that took place during the civil war, and argue that the Second National Conference in February of 2001 can be seen as a starting point in this process. The change in ideology resulted in the demands from the Maoists in the negotiations of 2003.

In chapter six I will discuss why the Maoists joined the peace process, and argue that several processes were at work, and influenced each other dialectically. The decision-making of the different actors in the civil war should not be seen as taking place within a vacuum, rather I focus on the interconnectedness of the decisions. I will argue that the peace process was made possible by several developments, but that the King's coup in February of 2005 was decisive in making the Maoists, the parties and India conclude together that the King was the main obstacle for peace in Nepal. The thesis will end with some concluding remarks in chapter seven

The thesis is structured so that the methodological issues will be presented first, in order to clarify on what assumptions and methods this work rests. The next part consists of data such as the history of Nepal, the civil war, and a discussion of the ideological change in the Maoist party. After that I will answer the research question based on the data presented, within the framework set up in the methodology chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

During the summer of 2006 I travelled to Nepal for two months to conduct my fieldwork. In Nepal I changed my initial research question, and interviewed politicians, Maoists, researchers and others I thought might be interesting to talk to. I also picked up a large amount of literature on the conflict that was not readily available in Europe. After I came back from Nepal I shifted focus from interviews as the main source of data, towards documents as the main source of data. All these developments will be discussed in this chapter. I will also discuss strengths and weaknesses of the sources I have used, and I will go on to explain how Internet resources, such as Google and Wikipedia, became very useful in my research. The potential problems arising from the use of these resources will be discussed, but I will argue that it is possible to use them critically and in doing so, it can be an extremely efficient way of finding information. But first of all, I will discuss what brought about my research in the first place, namely my research question.

### **2.1 How did I end up asking this question?**

Several factors drew my attention towards Nepal. I have earlier travelled both in India and Nepal, and visited both countries in 2003. That was also the first time I heard about the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, as it had a direct effect on our vacation in the form of curfews and a large military presence. Furthermore, I wanted to come up with a topic that could potentially make it easier to get a relevant job in the future. I therefore calculated that Nepal, squeezed between the growing powers of India and China, at some point was destined to step onto the stage of international politics. I also believed that knowledge about Nepal would be a commodity in less supply than for example knowledge about the Israel-Palestine conflict, thus making me a medium sized fish in a small pond, rather than a tiny fish in an ocean. But more important than all these things was a question I was very curious about myself: “Is the Maoist movement of Nepal a movement that people concerned with international solidarity should support, or is it a violent group fighting for a one party state?” My background from solidarity work and interest in revolutionary movements made me feel that this question needed an answer. The next step would now be to try to formulate a research question. Quite early in the process, I landed on the question: “Why did the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) decide to take up arms in 1996?”

As I saw it, this question would shed light on numerous aspects of the situation in Nepal, as well as give me an opportunity to judge if the CPN (M) was a movement that deserved international solidarity.

Upon arrival in Nepal however, some problems with this approach became evident to me. As I got a hold of and read all the literature I could about the subject, it appeared to me that this question already had been focused upon in a lot of studies. I soon became disillusioned about what my contribution to the extensive body on the topic of research would be. Furthermore, I arrived in Nepal on the 13th of June 2006. This was a time where the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) recently had forced the King to step down. On the 27th of April, and the SPA and the Maoists declared ceasefires, as well as declaring the intended formation of an interim government, which in turn was to hold a constituent assembly to rewrite the Nepali constitution. These new developments were talked about everywhere, and people were more than happy to share their views on this new situation. In general, I got a feeling that there was a widespread sense of optimism, and that I happened to be present at a crucial juncture in Nepali history. All these events led me to think that doing research on these events could be both much more interesting and personally rewarding than working with events ten years back in time. In the course of two days, I came up with a new vision for my fieldwork and a new question: “Why did the CPN (M) decide to join the peace process?” I immediately felt that this question was more interesting, as well as better in terms of academic precision.

## **2.2 Researching Maoists from a Leftist Point of View**

A question that could be raised is whether I, as a leftist, could be able to answer the question about the Maoist guerrilla in an “objective” way. Would my political views make me biased towards the communists in Nepal? Galtung (2003:15) gives an interesting argument in this respect: “Objectivity is inter-subjectivity; the condition for inter-subjectivity is explicitness”. A scientist whether on the left, right or somewhere else, will have presumptions about a Maoist movement, which in turn can affect the research process. If one puts one’s presumptions out in the open at the start of the project, it will be easier for others to apply constructive criticism. In addition, by making my political standpoint explicit from the start, it becomes a topic in itself, which, if dealt with properly, could be more of an asset than a liability. Potential pitfalls are more likely to be avoided if one is conscious about one’s own

political viewpoints. According to Silverman (2006: 327), “inevitably, your personal biography will be involved in topic selection”. Mason furthermore argues that, “the best way to handle personal motives in choosing a research topic is to be open about them” (Mason 1996, as quoted in Silverman 2006:327). This approach takes into account the fact that knowledge is situated, and that the interpretation of what is observed is dependant on the observer. Researchers will come with different baggage, and might therefore choose different approaches to the same problem. This is not a weakness in itself as I see it, but it makes it all the more important to be clear about on what epistemological assumptions one is working. This chapter is an attempt to be explicit about my assumptions and methods, and thus follow Galtung’s line of thought, that explicitness is a condition for objectivity.

### **2.3 The Relevancy to Peace Studies**

Another argument for the change in research question is that the new question is very focused on understanding the change from war to peace, as opposed to the first one, which focused on the change from peace to war. The new question could potentially bring forth new knowledge about why armed actors in conflicts lay down their arms. Furthermore, it is clearly in accordance with Galtung’s (1996: 9) definition of peace studies: “Peace work is work to reduce violence by peaceful means. A Peace study is the study of the conditions of peace work.” Why the CPN (M) put down their arms is indeed a study of the conditions of peace work. The change could also be understood by using Galtung’s (1996: 1-40) comparison of peace studies with medicine. A study of the Maoist decision to take up arms could be said to be a study of the conditions that make disease break out. A study of the decision to lay down the arms could be said to be a study of what made the patient well again (Galtung 1996: 1-40). In other words, a study of the conditions for the cure, rather than a study of the conditions for the disease, keeping in mind the connection between the two.

### **2.4 Interviews as a Source**

My interview strategy was to get the respondent to talk about their views on the Maoists and the political situation. The interviews were unstructured and answers open ended, and it often took form of a conversation rather than a formal interview. This was a conscious choice on my part, having to do with the kind of information I

was after. When interviewing politicians such as Krishna Mahara from the Maoist party, or D. K. Khanal from the Unified Marxist Leninist party in Kathmandu, I looked for information on official party views, and clues to what might have shaped party politics during the conflict. I also tried to get English versions of party programmes and statements. The same could be said for my interviews in the Norwegian and British embassies. An advantage of this way of doing interviews was that I was able to quickly find important information about my topic, by going straight to the source. The unstructured nature of the interviews also allowed informants to talk about things they felt were interesting or important. A weakness of the unstructured nature of the interviews is that it doesn't leave much room for comparison between the various informants, as I talked about different topics in different interviews. Comparison has not however, been the aim of the interviews. The overriding aim in interviewing politicians or embassies was to get an idea about official stance of the respective organization, as well as access to some written sources on this. When interviewing the Unified Marxist Leninist party, I got English editions of the party's political platform, while the embassies provided me with documents with statements regarding the royal coup in February 2005. In other words, I was interested in deriving knowledge about factual reality from the respondent's accounts of the world. It was not the accounts of individuals in themselves that I was after; it was rather clues to other places to find information about the research question. Not because the individuals I interviewed were not important, but because what I was out to do was to find out something about the decision-making at the top of political organizations. If I had access to interview the members of the Central Committee of the Maoists extensively, the accounts would have been much more useful in answering my research question. But I only had one chance to speak with a member of the Maoist leadership, and that was a 45-minute interview with Krishna Mahara where I had to compete with TV-teams and newspapers for his attention. In retrospect I have also realized that I did not have the insight at the time of fieldwork to ask the right questions. If I had gone back to Nepal at the time of writing this, interviews could perhaps have been more useful as a source on its own, but then again, I might not have gotten the chance to interview the Maoist leadership. Thus, my interviews served rather as a method of getting clues for written sources, than as a decisive source on its own. Kjeldstadli (1999:191-207) points out that doing interviews are often fruitful simply because they often give

important leads to written sources. And it is this function the interviews for the most part have had in my research.

On the other hand, one should not overlook the role my encounters with people in Nepal played in forming my view of the situation. My view of the conflict and Nepali society was without doubt influenced, although indirectly, by interviews with people from different places in Nepal. The researcher however, experiences these encounters subjectively, and it is therefore difficult to trace a link between such an experience and its impact on my work. Whereas with a written source, it is easier to point to the information I gained from it, and how I used it. Because of this, it is easy to underestimate the role the interview part of my research played in shaping my approach to the other sources. My experiences from interviewing people, and the views of these people on the conflict, without doubt contributed to my own views on the conflict, the formation of my research question, and the research process itself.

## 2.5 Ethics<sup>1</sup>

When doing fieldwork and gathering qualitative data, perhaps more so in a developing country, a number of complex social situations might arise, where deciding what is the ethical thing to do becomes difficult. This was also the case in my fieldwork in Nepal. I would like to bring some episodes to the attention of the reader that are interesting because I felt insecure about what was the right thing to do. One topic that came to my mind several times during my fieldwork was the one of gaining informed consent. Anne Ryen defines informed consent this way:

*“Informed consent ... means that research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time ... In general, deception is only acceptable if discomfort is believed to vanish by itself or removed by a debriefing process after the study”* (as quoted in Silverman 2006:324).

In Nepal, I travelled in the countryside with an interpreter, introducing myself as a journalist. Pretending to be a journalist was not a conscious strategy on my part to get more information, but was done because I at the time wrote an article for the Norwegian paper *Aftenposten* about the Maoist movement, which I hoped would be

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<sup>1</sup> This issue formed the basis of a paper I presented at the conference *Methodologies in Peace Research* at the Center for Peace Studies in Tromsø. The paper will be published in IRINI, a journal published by the peace students at the University of Oslo. URL: [http://www.uio.no/english/student\\_life/societies/media/e\\_irini.html](http://www.uio.no/english/student_life/societies/media/e_irini.html)

published. After advice from an Indian journalist I made myself a set of press cards, saying that I was a freelance journalist and Asia correspondent. I believe these cards convinced the Maoists I showed them to that I was a journalist out to make a good story on their movement (which was in fact the truth at the time). This opened some doors to me in the district of Dhading, where I travelled to meet a troop from the Maoists People's Liberation Army. When arriving in the district headquarter of Dhading (bearing the same name as the district itself), and explaining my journalistic motives, the Maoists agreed to let me accompany them for two days on their "public awareness program". This was a campaign where the Maoists soldiers travelled around the countryside and helped the farmers in the work during the day, while trying to promote their political views and explain the need to make Nepal a republic. I doubt that the Maoist cadres would have gone through the trouble of having me and my interpreter with them for two days, providing for our food and lodging during the whole time, if I had presented myself as a master student. When I presented myself as a journalist on the other hand, it was something in the meeting for the Maoists as well, namely publicity. I got to meet and talk to a 30 strong troop of the PLA, as well as discuss the political situation for several hours with Siber, a member of the regional bureau, and Lama, the political commissar of the troop. This was an interesting experience, and different from the other interviews I did during my fieldwork.

The article never got published however, as *Aftenposten* decided not to buy it after all. Still, I felt that the information from the interviews might be useful in my research work. But using this information in my research can be discussed, as I didn't get informed consents from the participants. What I did get was consent to talking with me for the purposes of a newspaper article. If the Maoists had known that the only publicity they would have received was in a research paper in Tromsø, they might not have been as forthcoming as they were when believing this story was going into a large Norwegian newspaper. Did I break the rules of ethical conduct during research by deciding to use the data in my research? An intuitive answer would be yes, I did break ethical guidelines, as the respondents were not thoroughly informed about what they were participating in. However, my intention at the time of the interview was to write an article to a newspaper, so in this respect I do have a clear conscience. I do not think that not using the data will provide any good results, perhaps except making me able to claim that I followed rigid ethical rules during my

fieldwork. One could also discuss the possibilities of informed consent as a concept. If I had told the Maoists about my research that would not necessarily have meant that they had understood it fully. At the time of research or writing, even I cannot tell where this information might end up. Thus, explaining what participation in my research can mean to the respondent becomes difficult. Therefore, I choose to focus on the intentions I had when conducting the research. My aim at the time was to find out more about specific political developments in Nepal, and hoping to contribute to our understanding of peace processes, and thus improving the conditions of peace work. My intention in interviewing the Maoists as a journalist was not to deliberately deceive them, but to inform them about what I was going to use the information for. This is not to say that I claim to have reached an unattackable answer to the question of my lack of gaining informed consent, but it is an attempt to justify using the data gained in my research.

“It may appear to be unfortunate that there are no hard and fast solutions to such dilemmas [concerning informed consent]. However, it reminds us that the very act of being alert to such potential issues is a hallmark of the ethical researcher” (Silverman 2006:330).

### **2.5.1 Paying informants**

Other ethical questions arose in situations where I ended up lending or giving informants money after the interview. One example of this is my interview with the cycle rickshaw driver KC. I interviewed KC in my rented apartment in the tourist quarter of Kathmandu, Thamel. I had seen KC before, as well as talked to him during his working hours. Out of curiosity about his view on the Maoists and the political situation, I invited him to my apartment for a more formal interview. The interview lasted around half an hour, and afterwards KC asked me to lend him 500 rupees, to help pay his children’s school fee. I felt a little uneasy about this, as there was something about paying for information that didn't feel right. But I did not feel like I was in a position to refuse, and lent KC the 500 rupees. KC never repaid the loan, and I never tried to get him to. In retrospect, I think that this course of action was justifiable. I didn't promise KC payment for his participation beforehand, nor was it my intention to pay him. But when being asked to contribute the equivalent of 50 Norwegian kroner to pay for his children’s school fee, I did, out of a lack of any good arguments not to. When living in a country where my stipend for the research would



perhaps equal several years of wages for KC, I don't think it would have been possible for many researchers to turn his request down. Furthermore, I had already gotten my data, and saying no to his request would not have made them more valid than complying would. It also seems fair to compensate KC for his potential loss of revenue, as the interview was conducted during his working hours.

The thing to keep in mind as I see it is that there is a wide gap between ethical principles for good research on paper, and what happens on the ground in field situations.

## **2.6 Documents**

During the course of my research, I realised that interviews would not be as important as I had believed from the start of my work. Along with this came the realisation that documents could be very fruitful in helping me answer my research question. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has a webpage where a lot of their public statements and other documents connected to their ideology can be found. In addition to this I joined Maoist discussion groups on the Internet, and soon discovered the large amount of web pages, blogs and discussion boards where the conflict in Nepal was discussed. This way of gathering data soon became much more rewarding than the interviews, especially since it was much more practical and time saving in terms of what information one can gain access to. This was a departure from the romantic image I had before going on fieldwork of the daring researcher gathering data among the guerrillas in the mountains of Nepal, only armed with pen and paper. Rather, I gathered my most important data in the comfort of my room, in front of my computer with coffee and other luxuries readily available. A fact I perhaps overlooked a bit at the beginning of my research is that it is not the hardships that you go through to get your data that makes it important. Rather, it is the questions you ask your data and how you treat it that will decide whether the data is useful or not. When using text as sources, I found Knut Kjeldstadli's (1999) book on historical research *Fortida er ikke hva den en gang var* very useful. Kjeldstadli puts forth four questions that the researcher needs to ask his written sources. The first question is what kind of sources we have available. I focused on texts published by the Maoists themselves, newspaper articles, published interviews with Maoist leaders and also interviews with Indian Maoists to shed light on why the Maoists decided to join the peace process.

The second question is concerned with what is referred to as “ytre kildekritikk”, and stresses the need to take into account the circumstances the sources were made under. The texts I have from the Maoists are for the most part from their publications *The Worker* and the *Maoist Information Bullentin*, but also interviews published in books and on websites. What characterizes these sources are that they are part of what Eagleton (1991) calls «ideological discourse». “[Ideological discourse is] A complex network of empirical and normative elements, within which the nature and organization of the former is ultimately determined by the requirements of the latter” (Eagleton 1991: 23). In other words, the information in these written sources are put there for a purpose, to achieve some normative element. This is important to remember when analysing the texts, as one cannot take the information at face value. These texts are produced in the context of an armed political struggle, as a means to achieve certain ends. But at the same time, the texts can tell the researcher something about the worldview of the actors in this struggle, and give insights into what rationale is behind the decisions of the Maoists. Another source that falls into the text category is published interviews of Maoist commanders, notably Prachanda and Bhattarai. These are interesting as they might tell us something about the viewpoints of the Maoist leadership, as well as how they try to present themselves in the public sphere, both nationally and internationally. If Prachanda agrees to be interviewed by the BBC, it is not to give a detailed account of how the war effort goes, but to strengthen the Maoist cause by winning sympathy internationally. This does not mean that the sources are less useful because they are «biased», rather, it makes it important that the sources are treated as statements made with a specific purpose, rather than just «neutral» accounts of the world.

Kjeldstadli's third question is about the actual content of the sources, and how to interpret them. To try to derive meaning from a text, we have to interpret it. When doing this, it's important to keep in mind the social context the text is a product of. Kjeldstadli's fourth question is about the relevance of the sources for our research question. For me this has been very important to keep in mind for purposes of narrowing down my data search. For my part the sources that can tell me something about how the Maoists viewed the situation in Nepal and why they decided to join the peace process, are the most relevant. But, sources that can tell me something about the circumstances that led to this view of the situation on behalf of the Maoists are naturally also very important. In addition to this, reading comments by political

analysts, or a polemic against the CPN (M) from the Maoist party of India, often gave valuable insights to issues left untouched in Maoist publications.

## **2.7 Acquisition of Documents**

Another question that is important is how and where I got these documents. As my fieldwork progressed, I realised the opportunities for finding written sources presented by the Internet. By a quick search on Google or Wikipedia, several interesting written sources would be within my grasp. Be it newspaper articles, party documents or interviews. There is worldwide interest in the Nepal-conflict, both from news/agencies and from radical political organizations. This has led to a multitude of discussion boards, e-mail lists and other forums where the conflict is discussed and written about. These have proven to be a great place to find clues to news stories and other sources. However, the large amount of information available on the Internet should not make one blind to the methodological implications raised by this kind of data gathering. Although gathering data from the Internet is a relatively new way of acquiring data, some guides and articles about the practice have been written. These are, of course, available on the Internet itself.

One of the first things that one should be aware of when reading a newspaper source on the Internet is the fact that unlike a printed newspaper, the contents of a paper on the Internet can be changed after it has been published. The same goes for web pages of organizations, and perhaps even more so. I have used the web page of the CPN (M) extensively in my data gathering, as it has a large collection of documents published by the Maoists. However, it is possible for the Maoists to change the contents of these documents without me knowing it. In theory, a document from 1995 that explains the rationale for the armed struggle could be changed in 2005 to better fit into the new Maoist ideology. Something that could have a ruining effect on my research. To guard oneself against such eventualities one should heed the principle of triangulation, in the sense that one cross checks the information against other sources. This is even more important when one is using Internet sources compared to other sources, as the validity of the Internet source can be harder to establish. An Internet source is not necessarily permanent in the same way as a newspaper that is unalterable once it is published. In the case of the homepage of the CPN (M) I think the fact that many people use it can function as a means of «keeping the publishers honest», as trying to change older information, if

detected, would effectively ruin the credibility of both the homepage and to some degree the Maoists themselves.

What I used the most to find documents and interviews on the Internet was the search engine Google. It is the most popular search engine on the web and to use it has become a verb in its own right; googling. The advantage in using it is that it can be very time saving. Instead of going through newspapers at the University in Kathmandu for clues about the peace process, I can type in keywords in Google and search the different newspapers' web pages. In this way, finding relevant information can be done relatively quick, compared to reading printed newspapers. It is also much easier to find documents published by the Maoists themselves. This became clear to me when I tried to find an English edition of their magazine *The Worker*. This proved to be very difficult, and the only number of the Worker that I have managed to get I had to order from a bookshop in London. On the Internet on the other hand, most issues of the magazine are readily available on the Maoist homepage. The web page also contains a wide array of other documents such as public statements and party documents. Through Google it has also been possible to find the minutes of Central Committee meetings of the CPN (M).

The Harvard College Library explains on their homepage how Google works (A scholarly guide to Google 2007). Google works by sorting pages after relevancy to your search. It uses what Google calls a PageRank system to determine this relevancy. It examines the contents of a given webpage using text-matching techniques. The relevancy of the page is determined by taking into account both the number of links to the page from other sites, as well as the «importance» of the sites making the link». When using Google it is important to remember the rules of source critique put forth by Kjeldstadli (1999:183-191), and ask who has written the document, for what purpose and in what context. This is even more important when dealing with sources on the Internet, as there are extreme amounts of information available, and the validity of the sources can be harder to establish.

Wikipedia has been another important way to find information. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia where anyone can edit or write new articles. Theoretically, I could edit the Nepal article and change the information to whatever I wanted, and it would remain that way until someone changed it again. This mechanism has both advantages and pitfalls for the researcher. The advantage is that it is often very good on current events. And it is also very good on many topics that are not covered

elsewhere. The big drawback is of course that you cannot trust the information you get there. But to use Wikipedia as a way of finding clues to other information sources has been fruitful for my thesis. The articles that I have used all come from the Norwegian version of Wikipedia, and are written by Tron Øgrim. I got to meet and discuss Nepal with Tron Øgrim in March of 2007, and therefore had the opportunity to discuss the information in his articles. Rather than quoting Wikipedia, I have sought to find the original sources through Google or other means such as discussion boards on the Internet. When I have quoted Wikipedia, I have done it to credit Tron Øgrim's views, and after having discussed the matter with him. A critique of Wikipedia as an academic source can be found both on Wikipedia itself<sup>2</sup>, and on the homepages of several universities, of whom the Carleton College Gould Library page proved the most useful to me (Using Wikipedia 2007).

## **2.8 Some Notes on an Epistemological Basis**

Clarifying every word and argument in a master thesis will make for boring reading, and a lack of focus on the main arguments. None the less, it is important to say something about on what assumptions my thesis builds, and why I have focused on the topic I have. In other words, it is important to say something about my theoretical and epistemological basis. I will do this by showing how I view other theories such as positivism and hermeneutics, and from there go on to argue that rational choice theory is not a sound way of approaching my research question. Instead, I will explain my approach in terms of what Kjeldstadli calls a critical Marxist approach (1999: 125-129).

My research question is as mentioned earlier: “Why did the CPN (M) decide to join the peace process in Nepal?” As Kåre Tønneson points out, it is not the world itself, but the worldview of actors that make them act (2000). A positivist would perhaps argue that these actions follow specific laws, and the more a social science explanation looks like an explanation from the natural sciences, the better. Carl Hempel argues that to explain a phenomenon in history, we need to find the law that makes it take place (Kjeldstadli 1999: 121). The historian’s role is therefore to observe history to look for general laws. A critique against this way of reasoning in history has been that humans are much more complex, and therefore that the same

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<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching\\_with\\_Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching_with_Wikipedia)

rules that apply to natural sciences cannot be used in history. Man has a certain degree of freedom in his actions, and every situation is therefore in itself unique (Kjeldstadli 1999: 119-122).

An alternative to the positivist view is hermeneutics, which emphasizes the need to understand human actions rather than explain their causes. This is based on the reasoning that human activity has both an outside and an inside, what we can observe, and what thoughts the actor has in connection with a given action (Kjeldstadli 1999: 122). We should try to find out about the intentions of the actors in history, the meaning they ascribed to their actions (Kjeldstadli 1999). At first glance, this view seems to fit my project of taking a closer look on Maoist ideology perfectly. Am I not trying to understand the meaning the Maoists ascribed to their actions? Although I am interested in finding out about the meaning the Maoists ascribed to their actions, I am also interested in finding out what formed these meanings. I seek to point out the connection between Maoist experiences in the civil war, and the meaning behind their actions. In other words, I seek to point out that the meaning the Maoists ascribe to their actions do not exist in a vacuum, rather it is formed through interaction with the world itself. Thus, also the hermeneutic viewpoint has some limitations when it comes to understanding and explaining the events in the civil war in Nepal. It is fruitful in that it focuses on the meaning behind the decision of actors, but this meaning alone cannot explain complex social processes. We need to have a broader view than just the meaning behind the decisions of one of the actors in a process.

To explain the events in Nepal it is necessary to clarify a view on the concepts of actors and on the choices of these actors. Positivism wants to ascribe choices to general laws, while hermeneutics seek to explain choices by understanding their meaning in the heads of the actors. Rational choice theory argues that actors choose between different actions in a rational way, meaning that they have “well-formed preferences which they can perceive, rank and compare easily”(Dunleavy 1991: 3). Actors furthermore seek to maximize their benefits while at the same time keeping their costs down. Dunleavy (1991: 4) points out that the rational choice model rests on several assumptions, out of which one is that collective entities (organizations, parties) can be treated as unitary actors. In the case of the civil war of Nepal, the different actors’ decisions should not be understood as decisions coming from a consensus in the various organizations. That the CPN (M)

decided to follow a specific course of action does not mean that it was a unanimous decision. Most likely, there were disagreements and discussions within the party, about what course of action would be most fruitful. At the same time, these discussions were influenced by the reality on the ground in the civil war.

Kjeldstadli (1999: 125) quotes the German historian Jörn Rüsen, who says that the method of the historian is to explain a series of events, how and why something changed from one state to another. And this is the aim of my research question, namely to explain narratively, why the Maoists decided to join the peace process in Nepal. In order to say something about how events had an effect on each other, it is important to establish the chronology of events (Kjeldstadli 1999: 209-229). If we get the chronology right, we might be able to say something about how past decisions influenced more recent ones. But, as I will discuss in chapter six also, events should not be understood as a one way causation process. In the case of the peace process of Nepal, it is not advisable to establish a causal chain of events that starts at one end, and runs in a straight line to the other. Rather, I have focused on the interconnectedness of the events. The decisions of one actor influence the decisions of other actors, while at the same time being influenced by the reality one is acting upon. In other words; a dialectic relationship, where causation runs both ways. A affects B, but B also affect A, who then affects B and so on. An important point in this respect is that events may take place over some period of time. Therefore I found it more fruitful to talk about processes than events when seeking to understand the peace process in Nepal. In this view, the decision of the Maoists to join the peace process is not an event that happened at a fixed point in time, and was the direct cause of the peace process. Rather, several ongoing processes affected each other dialectically.

Another important aspect of my approach is what Howard J. Sherman (1995) calls the historical relational approach. He argues that relations between groups are important. For my thesis it was fruitful to look on the different actors in the peace process as complex entities, where different groups inside the actors pulled in different directions. This acknowledges the fact that within an organization such as the Maoists or the Seven Party Alliance, there are different groups that try to get their views or interests through. This is in contrast to rational choice theory, which would look upon actors as single entities. Rather, I have treated the actors as consisting of different groups and interests. That the political parties of Nepal signed an alliance

against the king does not mean that one can treat this alliance as one actor with one interest. Instead, the organizations that were the main actors in the peace process were expressions of different groups and interests, sometimes pulling in different directions, and sometimes pulling in the same direction.

To sum up these notes on a theoretical basis, I would say that my aim with the paper is to say something about why the Maoists joined the peace process. To say something about this I have sought to understand the intentions of the actors, while at the same time trying to understand the context the intentions arose out of. The relationship between the different actors in the conflict is dialectical, in the sense that causation goes both ways. The decision-making in organizations take place over periods of time, and should be understood as processes rather than single events<sup>3</sup>. In the decision-making a Central Committee meeting of the Maoists may be the decision-making event, but if we only focus on the meeting, we overlook the processes that made the decision-making at the meeting possible. Because these processes take place over time, there is room for other processes to affect the outcome of these processes. These processes may change the relations between the actors, which in turn changes the decision-making. If the Maoists and the parties go from enemies to allies, this changes the rationale behind their decision-making. It is the aim of my thesis to say something about the changes in these relations, and point to the processes that made the changes possible.

When doing so, I am in practice constructing what Abrams (1984: 194) calls “objects of explanation”. I am pointing to certain processes and events that I see as important for understanding why the Maoists in Nepal joined the peace process. I use the term “construct” because that is my understanding of what I do, constructing a narrative about changes in Nepali society, by selecting certain aspects of the totality of Nepali society. To say something about all aspects of Nepali society would be impossible. Even to say something about all aspects of the Nepali peace process would be a daring endeavour at best. Rather, I have narrowed my focus down to saying something about the Maoists in relation to the peace process. And even in this seemingly narrow narrative, an almost infinite amount of details are left out. Thus, I have constructed a simplified narrative about why the Maoists in Nepal joined the peace process by selecting some details over other details. I have focused on the

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<sup>3</sup> To use an example from mathematics, one could say that the event in my view is like a point, while a process is more like a line.



massacre on the royal family in 2001, while I largely have left out accounts of murders committed by the Royal Nepali Army. This is not to say the latter is not important also in understanding the conflict, but the massacre on the royal family is a more decisive event, which had a bigger impact on the conflict. Choices like these are taken all the time by the researcher, and are what makes this narrative into a simplification. The advantage is that it makes for an account of decisive developments in the conflict in Nepal comprehensible to the reader, the downside is that a lot of events are overlooked. And in the continuation of that, many people are made invisible in this narrative. But to see some things clearer, it is often necessary to block other things out. Spotting the birches in a mixed forest is difficult, but if we overlook the pine trees, we have a fair chance. Weber has compared the historical researcher with a judge:

*“[...] History is exclusively concerned with the causal explanation of those elements and aspects of the events in question which are of general significance and hence of historical interest from general standpoints, exactly in the same way as the judge’s deliberations take into account not the total individualised course of the events of the case but rather those components of the events which are pertinent for subsumption under the legal norms”* (As quoted in Abrams 1984: 193-194”).

## **2.9 History versus Peace Studies?**

I discuss the role of the historian because my thesis deals with the history of the peace process in Nepal, how the peace process was formed over the course of time. This does not mean that I am not viewing myself as doing peace studies. Rather, it is acknowledging that my background as a bachelor in history has played an integral part in forming my approach to the subject. This does not mean however, that doing historical research and doing peace studies mutually exclude each other. Both history and peace studies draw on methods that are often viewed as belonging to other disciplines. And in my view it is not the discipline one is within that should decide the choice of methods, rather it is the nature of the phenomena one is studying.

## **2.10 Literature**

After I arrived in Nepal for my fieldwork I realized that there was a large body of literature available on contemporary Nepali society, and several of these titles dealt specifically with the conflict. Much of the literature asks the question of why the

Maoists started the insurgency, and seeks to explain reasons for the Maoist uprising and its success. *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal* edited by Deepak Thapa is one example (2003), along with the *Himalayan People's War* edited by Michael Hutt (2004). These are collections of papers and articles that shed light on the conflict from different angles. Some works, like the two mentioned above, seek to analyse the Maoists from a neutral position. Other books, like *Dispatches from the People's War in Nepal* by Li Onesto (2005), and *The People's War in Nepal – Left Perspectives* edited by Arjun Karki and David Seddon (2003), openly choose to see the conflict from the Maoist perspective. In addition to this, there are several books about contemporary Nepali history, with *The History of Nepal* by John Whelpton (2005) being the most comprehensive.

My impression of the already existing literature is that the approaches chosen by the authors are different, and thus shed light on different sides of the conflict. Whelpton's book has a very detailed account of what took place in the parliament during the latter years of the conflict, while the anthology edited by Hutt focuses on the Maoists themselves. There are also many articles about the ethnic dimension of the conflict, the significance of caste and of the situation after the first People's Movement in 1990.

My work strives to draw on all these accounts to build a framework around the subject of my thesis, namely why the Maoists joined the peace process. This has meant that several interesting approaches and sides of the conflict has only been mentioned briefly, or left out altogether. This has been necessary to fruitfully analyse the research question without drowning in information. With that said, I do regret that I have not had room to focus on other important aspects of the conflict such as: contradictions between different regions, caste, religion and class. Instead, my focus has been on decision making on the top level of the Maoist structure. This issue in relation to the peace process has not been a focal point in any scholarly work that I am aware of. Whelpton (2005) however, has dealt briefly with Maoist decision-making at the start of the war. All in all, the biggest advantage with my thesis as I see it, is that it deals with events that have taken place recently and thus have not been studied in great detail. My thesis can therefore contribute to a basis for a discussion on the peace process in Nepal, a topic that should be very interesting to researchers concerned with peaceful solutions to conflict.

## **2.11 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter has explained how I ended up asking my research question, and has discussed some issues regarding the question itself. It has discussed the relevancy to peace studies, and also the fact that my political sympathies might have an influence on my work. Furthermore, I have touched the issue of ethics in doing field research, and discussed some situations during my fieldwork where it was difficult to come up with clear answers. My data collection process has been discussed, and I have explained why documents became my most important source of data. I have, with a basis in Kjeldstadli's (1999) book on methodology in history discussed how I have treated my sources. Since the Internet has provided me with my most important data, I have discussed some aspects of using Google and Wikipedia for research. It is my view that Google as a tool in research has a big potential, as it allows for quick searches over hundreds of thousands of newspaper articles on the Internet. I have furthermore cautioned against using Wikipedia as anything more than a collection of clues to sources. I have also elaborated on what my epistemological assumptions have been, and explained how I found a critical Marxist approach the most useful for my work. I have stressed the advantages of focusing on relations between agents, and the problems with treating actors as uniform entities. Rather, I have explained my focus on the actors in the peace process as both forming the peace process, while at the same time being formed by it. I have argued for a dialectical view on causation, where processes affect each other, instead of only thinking about causation as a one-way process. I have also said something about the literature that exists in the field, and placed my work in relation to it. All in all, this chapter have hopefully made it clearer to the reader what I am saying with my paper, why I am saying it, why I think I can say something about it, and what others are saying about my research topic. With these issues settled, it becomes possible for the reader to also say something about the quality of the arguments of this paper, a prerequisite for fruitful academic discussion.

### **Chapter 3: An Overview of the Political History of Nepal**

This chapter will give an overview of the modern political history of Nepal until the start of the civil war. The focus will be on changes in the Nepali state, and resistance against the state. The chapter is built up chronologically, and will deal with how the left in Nepal has reacted and related to the state in Nepal, and the actors dominating it. Be it the King or the political parties, as it was after the People's Movement of 1990. The aim of this chapter is to put the Maoist movement of the civil war into context, and show how it is connected to specific traditions on the Nepali left, and also to show the historical context in which the decisions of the Maoists are taken. It is important also to have an overview over modern Nepali history, in order to understand the context of the Maoist demands, such as the demand for a new constitution.

#### **3.1 An Interest in Status Quo?**

The landowning classes have traditionally dominated Nepal, with the King and his advisors as their political representatives (Mikesell 1999: 13-70). Until 1950 all of the land in Nepal was viewed as the property of the state, which was controlled by the king. The state partitioned out land to government officials and other allied individuals and groups. This had the advantage of both securing political allies, and increasing tax income for the state. This class of large landowners has traditionally opposed attempts at land reform, and changes in the power structure of Nepal. Hinduism has legitimised the rule of the king, and in Nepal he has been seen as the incarnation of the God Vishnu, which is the protector of the world. Hinduism also preaches that people are divided in castes. At the top of the caste-hierarchy are the priests, which in Hinduism are called the Brahmins. They have enjoyed a privileged position in Nepali society, and most political leaders and business people belong to either the priest or warrior caste. They are also over-represented in the state administration. Since 1951 there has been several attempts to challenge the hegemony of the King and the landowning class. In this chapter I will elaborate on the most significant of these attempts, namely the people's movement in 1990. I will also discuss why it failed to solve fundamental problems in Nepali society, such as the lack of state access for oppressed groups. Holding a constituent assembly has

been seen, for the most part by the left<sup>4</sup>, as one way of solving this problem, and as an opportunity to curb the influence of the monarchy and its supporters. During the negotiations between the Maoists and the parties in 2003, the demand for a constituent assembly was the main demand of the CPN (M). For the landowning classes, an election to a new constitution could mean a loss of power, both in terms of reduced influence on the state, and resulting from this, land reform.

### **3.2 Formation of the Modern Nepali State**

The modern Nepali state was formed in 1768, when Prithvi Narayan Shah from the state of Gorkha conquered the other smaller states in the Kathmandu valley, and claimed the throne of Nepal for the Shah family and their descendants. Tension within the royal family grew however, and in 1846 a military leader named Jang Bahadur challenged the Shah family's hold on power. The Shah Queen Rajendralakshmi plotted to remove Bahadur, but the plot was discovered and there was a clash between followers of the queen and military personnel. This event has later been known as "the Kot massacre"<sup>5</sup>. The result was that the post of Prime Minister became the most powerful position in the country, with the King as a titular figure. The Prime Minister post was made hereditary and monopolized by the Rana family. These events marked a change of leadership of the power structure in Nepal, but did not bring about substantial change in Nepali society.

This lasted until 1950, when King Tribhuvan (of the Shah family) fled to India. This marked the start of a series of armed attacks from Nepali Congress sympathizers on Indian soil into Nepal (Whelpton 2005: 65-79). India's motivation for giving moderate support for the rebellion must be seen in the light of the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950. India wanted a stable Nepal, in order to secure their northern border and make Nepal more resistant to Chinese influence. The last years of Rana rule had been characterized by factionalism and infighting within the Rana family, as well as the growth of a democratic opposition movement. The period after world war two had also seen the establishment of both the Nepali Congress (NC) party in 1947 and Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) in 1949. The British however, were content with Rana rule in Nepal, and supported a policy of keeping King Gyanendra in power as a figurehead for Rana rule, while setting up a constituent

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<sup>4</sup> Nepali Congress demanded a constituent assembly in the late fifties.

<sup>5</sup> The Kot was the armory in the palace where the fighting broke out

assembly. This plan failed, and King Tribhuvan came back from India to again be the King of Nepal, while a cabinet was set up consisting of Ranas and “representatives of the people” (Whelpton 2005:72). Thus, the NC and Shah King had managed, with Indian support, to break the Rana monopoly on state power. These gains were secured in the interim constitution of 1951, which was to function until a constituent assembly could be held. Meanwhile, it guaranteed the sovereignty of the King.

In effect, three political actors controlled the Nepali state after the 1951 agreement: The king, the Congress Party and the Ranas, with the King at the top of the power structure. (Mikesell 1999: 94). The Communist Party denounced what came to be known as the “Delhi agreement”, and called it a betrayal by the NC. This also marked the start of strong scepticism towards the NC on the Nepali left, and a tendency to view NC as an Indian pawn in Nepali politics (Mikesell 1999: 87-117).

King Tribhuvan announced in February 1951 that, “The governance of the nation shall be in pursuance to a democratic constitution as framed by the constituent assembly elected by the people.”(As quoted in Nickson 1992:2). The constituent assembly however, never came into being. But in 1954 the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) held its first convention and agreed on elections to a constituent assembly and a republic set-up as their most important goals (Nickson 1992). Only two years later, the CPN leadership accepted constitutional monarchy in order to get political recognition from the palace. The question of the monarchy would create divisions on the Nepali left until the events of 2006, when leftists again were able to agree on a republican agenda. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1958 King Mahendra<sup>6</sup> announced general elections to parliament. Both the NC and the CPN protested and held that any elections should be to a constituent assembly. Elections to parliament were held, with both parties participating, but with severe tension inside the CPN, due to disagreements concerning whether one should boycott the elections or not (Thapa 2004: 26-27). The NC won a majority in the election, and the CPN performed far below all expectations. In 1960 King Mahendra used the emergency powers given to him in the constitution of 1951 to dismiss parliament and assumed supreme powers for himself. At the same time, the communist movement was divided between those who wanted to work within the new regime to change it from the top, and those who wanted to uphold the demands for a constituent assembly and a

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<sup>6</sup> King Tribhuvan died in 1955

republic (Thapa 2004: 24-30). Communists were also divided on how they should relate to the Congress Party. One side wanted to view the NC as a potential ally, while the other wanted to see it as a pawn for Indian expansionism.

### **3.3 Panchayat Years**

King Mahendra gave the country a new constitution in 1959, and although it was not made by a constituent assembly, as was written in the interim constitution from 1951, it guaranteed a multiparty system of governance in Nepal. This constitution only lasted until 1962 when Mahendra decided that Nepal was not ready for democracy, and made a new constitution. The fourth constitution in eleven years made the King the undisputed head of state, as the leader of both the cabinet and parliament. Parties were forbidden, and partyless councils were to be the form of government from village level up to the national assembly. In Nepali the national assembly was named the Rastriya Panchayat, which translates to national council. The system of governance introduced by the 1962 constitution is often referred to as the Panchayat system, which in practice resembled a one-party state, with the king and his circle of advisors as the ruling party. Representatives to the national assembly were elected indirectly, with the people voting for representatives to the local councils, which then elected representatives to the national assembly. Nepal was declared a Hindu kingdom, and Nepali the official language. “One nation, one language” became the motto for national unity (Thapa 2003: 76). In a country with over 60 ethnic and caste groups, wide ranging linguistic diversity as well as several big religions, the thought of “one nation, one language” was more a representation of what elites wanted than a representation of social realities. Ethnic diversity was later to become an important aspect of Maoist rhetoric and mobilization.

The seventies saw the first communist uprising in Nepal, in the eastern district of Jhapa. The regional bureau of the CPN in Jhapa took up arms against the state on their own initiative, but was soon crushed by state forces. The uprising was inspired by the Naxalite<sup>7</sup> movement in India, as well as the Cultural Revolution in China. The failure of the rebellion would lead to a strengthened distrust towards imported political dogmas, as well as an emphasis on the need to construct a unique Nepali way to socialism (Nickson 1992).

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<sup>7</sup> The Naxalite movement was a peasant rebellion in the district of Naxalbari in India inspired by Mao and the political rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution.

Another significant event on the Nepali left in the seventies was the formation of a new communist party, named the Forth Convention, after the forth convention of the CPN, where it emerged from. The new party argued for an armed uprising based on Maoist principles of rural focus, as well as left unity. These plans were never realized, probably as a result of the King's announcement of a referendum to be held in 1980 over the question of multiparty democracy in Nepal (Thapa 2004: 30-32). The referendum resulted in a majority for the continuation of the Panchayat system, although in a slightly reformed<sup>8</sup> version. It was still viewed as a moral victory for the opposition that wanted a lift on the ban on parties and democracy. The biggest change in the system was that the majority of the candidates to the Rastriya Panchayat now could be elected directly by the people, where they earlier were elected indirectly.

In 1983 the Fourth Convention split after disagreements regarding how to relate to the new system. One faction wanted to participate in elections to the Rastriya Panchayat to try and change the system from within, while others wanted to follow a confrontational line and demand a constituent assembly. The latter formed the CPN (Masal), led by Mohan B. Singh. One year later representatives of Masal were present in London on a conference where the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement<sup>9</sup> was founded (Thapa 2003: 27-30). Another party present at the conference was the Shining Path Maoists from Peru, which waged a war against the Peruvian state. Masal expressed strong support for the political line of the Shining Path (Nickson 1992). In 1985 CPN (Masal) split into two parties, Masal and Mashal. In the leadership of the latter was Prachanda, who would later become the chairman of the CPN (M).

### **3.4 The People's Movement of 1990**

During the course of the eighties, political tension in Nepal was rising, and opposition against the Panchayat regime became more outspoken. The Nepali Congress Party and the Marxist Leninists had always viewed each other with suspicion, but in 1989 they managed to find together and present King Birendra with

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<sup>8</sup> One of the practical effects of the referendum was that the ban on political parties was not enforced with the same zeal as earlier. Political parties could operate more openly, but were still illegal (Whelpton 2005: 107-113).

<sup>9</sup> The RIM is an international organization consisting of Maoist parties from many different countries. It has been in existence since 1984 and wants to establish a new communist International.



an ultimatum; if he had not lifted the ban on political parties by 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1990, a peaceful movement with the goal of toppling the Panchayat regime would be initiated (Hoftun et al.1999: 115-140). The crisis was heightened by an Indian trade embargo of Nepal, due to nervousness in India over a Nepali purchase of arms from China. The King did not respond to the ultimatum from the parties, and during the first months of 1990, massive protests took place in Kathmandu and other urban centres in Nepal. The parties initiating the movement were the Nepali Congress Party, and a coalition of communist parties called the United Left Front, where the dominant force was the Marxist Leninist party (in Nepal usually referred to as MaLe). Also organising protests, though independently, was the United National People's Front (UNPF), consisting of several smaller Maoist parties.

The movement reached its climax between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1990, when the UNPF called a nationwide bandh<sup>10</sup>. The King was forced to negotiate with the politicians, and Birendra promised that the Panchayat system would be removed, and the people's movement was called off. The UNPF criticised the agreement with the King the following day, and wanted to push for an interim government and a constituent assembly. During May, an interim government came into place, but as there was no interim constitution, the interim government were still working under the old Panchayat constitution. In June the Indian embargo ended when the interim government signed a treaty with India where they promised to consult India before making decisions in matters of national security (Nickson 1992).

The interim government faced a number of problems concerning the political situation and balance of power in the country. First of all, the army was still loyal to the King (Mehta 2005: 31-76). And although sections of the police were loyal to the interim government, the situation was still that the King had control over the largest force in the country (Hoftun et al.1999: 291-307). This meant that the politicians would have to trust the King, and there was a sense of fear among leading politicians as to how the King might react to the actions of the interim government. The Prime Minister; Krishna Prasad Bhattarai said in an interview with the BBC that:

*“The King cannot be tied with a scrap of paper, for he has a 35000 man army and the police behind him. Blood will be shed if we try to do so in the present situation. We can tie the king only by framing a constitution and holding elections*

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<sup>10</sup> Bandh is a word used in Nepal signifying a general strike.

*immediately after. We should also try to change the king's heart by reminding him of the factors that have now compelled him to hand over power to the people"* (As quoted in Hoftun et al. 1999: 295).

The People's Movement, which had forced the King to the negotiation table by mobilizing the masses, now had to hope for the King's cooperation in curtailing his powers. The main reason for this was that the politicians by demobilizing the masses had given up their one source of power (Mikesell 1999: 128). With the people off the streets, they had no force by which to back up their demands to the King. The composition of the interim government furthermore illustrated the lack of popular involvement in the democratisation process. Instead of including the various classes and groups in Nepali society, the Constitutional Commission was filled with persons (men) from the already privileged groups in Nepali society. There were no representatives from the countryside, no people from the unprivileged castes, no landless people and no one representing any of the suppressed ethnic minorities of Nepal. Instead, it consisted of representatives from the Nepali Congress Party, The United Left Front, Royal Nominees and Independents. Out of these there were no women, neither were all the parties represented that had taken part in the protests against the King. The majority of the interim government were older, Kathmandu based Brahmins, and thus one failed to include people with interests different from the leaders of the old regime (Mikesell 1999: 191-213). Furthermore, since there was no interim constitution, there could be no elections to parliament, and thus the politicians sitting in the interim government had no democratic mandate to build democracy in Nepal. There was no parliament that could vote for or against the constitution drafts made by the constitutional recommendation committee. Deepak Thapa (2003:33) states that: "Instead of attempting to accommodate these grievances [representation of marginalized groups in government], the interim government and the constitutional commission perceived them as a threat to national unity and dismissed them". The committee was to draw up recommendations for a new constitution, and was made up of three members of the NC, three members of the United Left Front and two royal nominees. The result was a constitution that left the monarchy with the constitutional right to dissolve the House of Representatives on

the recommendation on the Prime Minister, and also the opportunity to declare a “state of emergency”<sup>11</sup>.

In 1991 elections were held, and for a while there had been tensions in the alliance between the NC and the ULF. In January of 1991 the NC declared that it would contest elections alone<sup>12</sup>, and in response to this, the parties forming the ULF merged and formed the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) (UML). The Maoist parties on the left had earlier, in November of 1990 merged and formed the Unity Centre, with the United People’s Front as their electoral front. They still held that elections should be to a constituent assembly, but contested them to “expose” bourgeois democracy (Thapa 2004: 36). The result of the elections was a clear majority for NC with 53% of the total seats, while the UML became the second biggest party in parliament. The electoral front of the smaller Maoist parties, the United National People’s Front, became the third largest party.

### **3.5 Democracy Years, 1990-1996**

The years of multiparty democracy in Nepal were characterized by the Congress Party holding power, except for a nine-month period with the CPN (UML) in cabinet in 1994-95. The Congress Party followed neo-liberal policies recommended by aid-donors and the World Bank, which led to a rise in prices from 1991 (Thapa 2003: 55-64; Whelpton 2005: 189). Other major issues in the first term of government was the Makhali river treaty signed with India, which drew a lot of criticism for favouring Indian interests over Nepali interests (Whelpton 2005: 189). In December 1991 a trade and transit agreement was signed with India, which made the flow of goods and capital between the two countries easier. In 1994 the UML formed a minority government that was to last for nine months. They were unable to bring about major change, although they halted NC’s privatisation campaign and commissioned inquiries into the issue of land reform (Whelpton 2005: 193). They also initiated the “Build your village yourself” program, which gave local authorities funding for development projects. NC viewed this as an attempt to bypass the now NC

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<sup>11</sup> Gyanendra claimed to use article 127 of the 1990 constitution, which granted him powers to “remove obstacles in the functioning of the constitution, when he assumed full executive powers on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005 (Raj 2006).

<sup>12</sup> According to Andrew Nickson, the NC leadership held the view that continued support from the US was contingent on a break with the communists. This was made clear during a meeting between Ganesh Man Singh of NC, president George Bush of the US and the pressure group National Endowment for Democracy (Nickson 1992)

dominated local authorities, by setting up new committees to administer the grants (Whelpton 2005: 193). In June 1995 the UML reign was brought down by a vote of no confidence by NC and other centrist parties.

In many ways, the nineties could say to represent continuity with the panchayat system rather than a break with it. Former panchas joined the NC in large numbers, and in this way kept their power (Mikesell 1999: 191-213; Thapa 2003: 39). Perhaps the best example of this is Surya Bahadur Thapa, who was the prime minister of Nepal from 1963 to 1964, 1965 to 1969, 1979 to 1983, 1997 to 1998 and 2003 to 2004. Thus he remained at the top of the political hierarchy in spite of political change and turmoil. Stephen Mikesell (1999: 126-132) argues that multiparty democracy in Nepal was characterized by a lack of popular participation and a monopolization of, rather than an increasing access to, state machinery. This becomes even more evident if one takes a look at statistics for ethnic composition of the legislature in Nepal. In 1991, the two most dominant ethnic/caste groups in Nepal, the Bahuns and the Chettris<sup>13</sup> who make up 29% of the total population, had 55% of the representatives (Thapa 2003: 74-81). After eight years of democracy, this percentage had risen to 63. Another example where this development is even clearer is the statistics from the passing of the civil servant exam<sup>14</sup>. In 1985, under Panchayat rule, 69% of candidates to pass were of Bahun or Chettri origin. In 2001 this percentage had raised to 98, in other words, a near monopolization of access to civil servant jobs (Thapa 2003: 74-81).

The establishing of democracy did not make the radical left give up their rhetoric in favour of an armed uprising. Quite the contrary, they increased agitation in rural areas, and in February 1992 police raided a guerrilla training camp in Baghtar, in the Nawal Parasi district and arrested 60 Maoist activists (Nickson 1992). After the election in 1991, the CPN (Unity Centre)<sup>15</sup> made a resolution where they made it clear that the NC and the King were the main enemies of the “People”. The main international enemy was now US imperialism, whereas earlier it had been both US and Soviet imperialism. The party also viewed China’s leadership as “counter-revolutionary” and revisionist, and thus the main international influence on Unity Centre was the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). The RIM was an

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<sup>13</sup> Bahuns and Chettris are ethnic and caste groups in the Kathmandu valley who traditionally have had better access to political influence and resources than other ethnic and caste groups.

<sup>14</sup> An exam needed to work in the state bureaucracy

<sup>15</sup> At the time it was the strongest force to the left of the newly formed CPN (UML)

international network of Maoist organizations, which agitated for armed uprising based on Maoist principles. Among its member organizations, the most famous have been the Shining Path guerrillas of Peru, and the CPN (M) in Nepal. In 1994 the Unity Centre split again, with one faction led by Prachanda. The electoral front, the UNPF also split, with one faction led by Bhattarai, who followed Prachanda's faction. One year later this new group held a plenum where they changed name to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and decided not to participate in elections. They also adopted the document *Plan for the historic initiation of the People's War*. This document outlined the strategy and reasons for an armed uprising in Nepal, with the aim of establishing "New People's Democracy". On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1996 the CPN (M) launched their guerrilla campaign in six districts in Nepal, which marked the start of eleven years of civil war in Nepal.

### **3.6 The Maoists at the Start of the People's War**

At the start of the people's war on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1996, the Maoists possessed very few weapons. Their military arsenal was limited to a few Lee Enfield .303 rifles<sup>16</sup>, along with homemade socket bombs. On the other hand, the Maoists had a strong organizational base after many years of political activism in the Nepali countryside. They had especially strong support in Mid-Western Nepal, in the districts of Rukum and Rolpa. Over the course of the next eleven years, this modest starting point would evolve into a guerrilla movement controlling 80% of the Nepali countryside. One of the reasons for Maoist success was the widespread frustration among people in Nepal with the regional and national elites. Politicians were seen as corrupt and only interested in protecting their own privileges (Hoftun 1999: 187-257). At the same time, people in the countryside experienced inequality and repression based on ethnicity, religion and caste. Whelpton (2005: 206) points to the fact that the Maoists were able to "tap into a reservoir of frustration", while people at the same time were used to foreign authority imposed with force. In other words, people were frustrated with the government, while they were used to obey authority that was established by force. People in the Maoist strongholds of Rolpa and Rukum had also been brutalized by the state in several anti-terror campaigns. In November

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<sup>16</sup> A rifle common among British troops during the second world war, and common in former British colonies. Obsolete by military standards in most NATO countries due to the fact that it is a bolt-action rifle, and one thus has to reload between each shot.

of 1995 the police launched an operation with the codename Romeo in Rolpa district. The official reason for the operation was to fight criminal activity, but the government in reality sought to reduce Maoist activity in the area. Hundreds of members of leftist parties were arrested, executed or “disappeared”(Human Rights Watch October 2004). This created fear of the state apparatus, and probably increased Maoist support, as it naturally strengthened the Maoists’ arguments that the state was a tool of repression. Whelpton (2005: 204) argues that Operation Romeo helped the Maoists greatly in building support for their cause, while discrediting the government at the same time. The Mid-West of Nepal has since the fifties been a stronghold for the communists, and in the elections for parliament in 1991 both seats from Rolpa were won by the Maoist electoral front, the United People’s Front Nepal (Hoftun 1999: 183)

### **3.7 Conclusion and Summary**

This chapter has given an overview of political developments in Nepal since 1951, with a focus on developments on the Nepali left and constitutional changes. I have shown how the demand for a new constitution has roots back to the fifties, and how popular pressure has brought about constitutional changes, as in the People’s Movement of 1990. I have also shown how the left has been divided over the question of working within the system, or fighting it from the outside. I have furthermore shown that the Maoists stand in a tradition of resistance to the state of Nepal, with a focus on struggle rather than compromise. This line was inspired by both the Cultural Revolution in China, as well as the Naxalite uprising in India. To understand the civil war in Nepal that started in 1996, it is necessary to have some insight into the political history of Nepal, to see that the ideas behind the struggle of the Maoists are not new to Nepal. This also makes it possible to understand the reasoning behind Maoist decision-making. Only with knowledge of past events in Nepal is it possible to grasp the tension and struggle between different classes and groups in Nepal that the civil war is an expression of. The disappointment with democracy in Nepal should not be underestimated as a factor either. High hopes for change were created during the People’s Movement of 1990, while democracy in reality held few changes for people in Nepal, except perhaps for the Kathmandu Valley based upper middle class who got an increased access to influence and resources.

## **Chapter 4: The Civil War, 1996-2006**

In this chapter I will give an outline of the events of the civil war in Nepal. I will discuss reasons for the initial success of the Maoist movement and armed campaign, as well as some of the problems that faced the Maoists in the latter part of the war. This is done to show how the ideology and rhetoric of the CPN (M) is connected to direct experiences from the war effort. I will go on to argue that 2001 was a turning point in the war, in the respect that a lot of the events that took place in 2001 would have a decisive effect on the development of the civil war. These were: The massacre of the royal family, the deployment of the Royal Nepali Army and the Second National Conference of the CPN (M). These will be elaborated on in the latter half of this chapter. But to understand 2001, we first need to understand the gradual escalation of the war, and the initial success of the Maoist movement from 1996 to 2001.

### **4.1 The Maoist Party**

The history and formation of the CPN (M) has already been elaborated on in chapter II, but some information on the support for the Maoists among the rural populace is still necessary to understand the success of the Maoist war effort. The insurgency started in the Mid-western hills of Nepal, which is characterized both by economic inequality and several ethnic minorities. The Maoist demands of land reform and rights for ethnic minorities have gained them a large amount of support, and they have also benefited from a history of communist activism in the area. In Nepal the divide between urban centres and countryside are significant in terms of economic opportunities and infrastructure (Hoftun et al. 1999: 311-340). With the Maoists' focus on the peasantry and campaign against landowners, the countryside has become their natural base area in Nepal. The Maoists have also been fighting religious discrimination, which is often intertwined with the ownership to land. Women's rights, rights for ethnic minorities and an end to the caste system have also been demands put on the agenda by the Maoists. All in all, their tactics have been to fight for the rights of groups that are not represented in the parliament or among the political elite in Kathmandu. Lack of political representation for large parts of the population is the most likely explanation as to why the Maoists still have a strong support base on the Nepali countryside. In addition to a sense of disappointment with

the democracy, which saw political parties competing for resources in the centre rather than trying to create development in Nepal (Whelpton 2005: 189-205)

It should also be noted however, that along with campaigning for the rights of the oppressed of Nepal, the Maoists have used intimidation and fear to control the countryside. It is not necessary to win over an entire village population, as long as the sceptics and opposition can be intimidated into acquiescence (Whelpton 2005: 189-225). However, the human rights record of the police and army is not very good either, and state brutality has probably created a lot of support and sympathy for the Maoists. Thapa (2003: 48) argues that the police operations in 1995 in the areas of Rolpa and Rukum in Mid-Western Nepal played a huge role in creating frustration with the state among the population and strengthened the Maoists. In my own experience from staying two months in Kathmandu the summer of 2006, most people were sympathetic towards the demands of the Maoists, and disillusioned with the politicians. Still there were many people that were apprehensive towards the methods of the Maoists (Bragtvedt 2006 [field diary])

The Maoists have been compared with the Shining Path guerrilla in Peru, which were active in the eighties. Interestingly enough, the scholar Andrew Nickson wrote an article in 1992 where he warned that Nepal might be the next country where a Maoist rebellion started. Nickson showed that Peru had several similarities with Nepal; both countries had a diverse geography, repression of ethnic minorities was severe in both countries, the process of economic development were extremely centralized in both countries, and the presence of state institutions were limited in the rural areas of both countries (Nickson 1992). Peru and Nepal did share one positive development in social indicators as well; both countries had seen a huge increase in educational enrolment (Nickson 1992). So there existed a mass of educated youth in both countries, lacking in opportunities. Furthermore, discrimination limited the access of educated minority groups to relevant employment. Another scholar focusing on Nepal, Stephen Mikesell, reached similar conclusions in an analysis from the early nineties (Mikesell 1993). The points of Nickson and Mikesell in my view serves to explain to a large extent some of the structural features and reasons for success of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. This success can be clearly seen in the first phase of the war, which one could call a successful, but still gradual escalation of the conflict.



## 4.2 Gradual Escalation, 1996-2001

*“It [the Maoist rebellion] is basically an ideological and political offensive against the present political system of the country”* (Krishna Hachhetu 2004: 59).

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1996 the Maoists launched their people’s war in Nepal. The official reason was the governments failure to meet the demands expressed by the CPN (M) in the 40-point demand list (see appendix). But, as Krishna Hachhetu (2004: 58-78) points out, the demands were not a real basis for negotiations with the government. Rather, the demand list should be seen as a tool to mobilize rural dwellers and oppressed groups in Nepal to fight for the Maoist goal of “New People’s Democracy”<sup>17</sup>. It has become apparent during the negotiations between the Maoists and the state in the later stages of the war that the crucial demands for the Maoists were the ones relating to the constitution and the formation of a constituent assembly, as well as the demand for a republic. At the beginning of the civil war, the politicians treated it as a law and order problem, and left the police to deal with it. Over the course of the first five years however, it became apparent that the police were not able to deal with the guerrillas. The police lacked training in military style operations, as well as adequate equipment. In addition to this, the political parties could not agree on a common approach to the Maoist problem. The pattern was that the parties in opposition called for negotiations and a political solution, while the party in power wanted to use force to get rid of the Maoists. A telling example is the CPN (UML), who argued in favour of a political solution to the problem prior to the 1997 elections. After they got into power in 1997 however, they decided that a “firm stance” was necessary (Hachhetu 2004: 58-78).

The Maoists on the other hand, were well organized, had highly motivated cadres, and also had a focused plan on how to reach their objectives. They viewed the war as divided into three stages: Strategic defensive, strategic stalemate and strategic offensive. The three stages were meant to reflect the relation of force between the state and the Maoists. From using guerrilla tactics and agitation during the strategic defensive, the “People’s Liberation Army” (PLA) would in the last stage be able to challenge and defeat the state forces in conventional battles, and conquer

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<sup>17</sup> New People’s Democracy is a concept developed by Mao Tse Tung, where society develops under the alliance of the classes on the way to communism.

Kathmandu. The first stage lasted from 1996 until the Second National Conference of the CPN (M) in February 2001. The first stage was divided into six plans, which all in some way or another had to do with expanding the struggle. In the first and second plan the Maoists carried out agitation and killings of specific individuals that the Maoists saw as “class enemies” (Sharma 2004: 38-57). This achieved two important effects; it created support for the Maoist project among people that felt oppressed or exploited by the “class enemies”, while on the other side it created an atmosphere of fear amongst people critical of the Maoist goals. The third and fourth plan saw the withdrawal of the state machinery from the countryside, as the Maoists forced political representatives to abandon their posts, and destroyed symbols of state presence such as agricultural development banks and government offices. At the same time they created base areas in the districts where they were strongest, which meant that “People’s Governments” were set up to take over state functions in the countryside (Sharma 2004: 38-57). Under the third plan, in 1998, they also established a central military commission. The fifth and sixth plan saw an increase in Maoist base areas, and an increase in military activity, of which the pinnacle was the attack on Dunai, the district centre of Dolpa, in 2000. It was the Dunai incident that convinced the politicians that the Maoist rebellion was beyond the police, and that the army should be deployed. Thus, Dunai marks the start of what proved to be an escalation of the conflict, which would lead to drastic changes in the power balance in the Nepali society.

### **4.3 A Three-Player Game; the King, the Parties and the Maoists**

From 2001 and onwards, the dynamics of the conflict in Nepal became more visible. The King and the politicians seemingly had a mutual interest in defeating the Maoists, but the conflict also represented an opportunity for the King to increase his power vis-à-vis the politicians. There were also speculations of secret contacts between the Maoists and king Birendra prior to June 2001<sup>18</sup>. The politicians had spent a lot of time blaming the Maoist problem on each other since the start of the emergency, but they now became in danger of being squeezed between the Maoists and the King. While the Maoists attacked activists from the political parties in the

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<sup>18</sup> In a letter published shortly after the massacre on the royal family, Baburam Bhattarai hints at the fact that Birendra had to die because there existed an “informal alliance” between the king and the Maoists (Bhattarai 2001).

countryside, the King challenged the power of the politicians in Kathmandu. At first, the politicians stood firmly with king Gyanendra in the fight against the Maoists, but as will be shown, this was to change in 2005.

#### **4.4 The Second National Conference of the CPN (M)**

In February of 2001 the CPN (M) held their second national conference, where Prachanda became the chairman of the Party. The Prachanda Path also became the guiding ideological principle of the party, making Prachanda the undisputed authority on Maoism in Nepal (Thapa 2003: 113-115). They also released a press statement where they expressed the need for dialogue among all concerned sections of society, and a conference of; “all political parties, organizations and representatives of mass organisations in the country, election of an interim government by such a conference and guarantee of people’s constitution under the leadership of the interim government” (As quoted in Thapa 2002: 72). This could be seen as a more modest stance from the Maoists, as the earlier demand of holding elections to a constituent assembly is not made explicit. In comparison the stance adopted by the Maoists in 1995, stated that giving up the insurgency would be “sinning against the people“ (Strategy and Tactics 1995: 23). This change in ideology was justified by a new analysis of what the Maoists saw as the objective conditions for successful communist revolution in the world. “Due to [the global situation] it will be very difficult for any single country of this region to successfully complete the new national democratic revolution and even if it succeeds following the distinct contradictions, it will be almost impossible for it to survive” (CPN (M) 2001: 65). The world had changed, therefore the Maoist strategy must change, seemed to be the credo. For a more detailed discussion of this change, see chapter five which goes into greater detail on the ideological change of the Maoists. Fundamental changes however, were not going to take place in the Maoist camp alone in 2001.

#### **4.5 The Royal Massacre**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2001 King Birendra, the Queen, and seven of their relatives were massacred by their own son, crown prince Dipendra. Dipendra shot himself afterwards and died three days later at the hospital. The result of this was that Birendras brother, Gyanendra, became the new King. Gyanendra’s wife and son

were both present at the site of the massacre, but escaped unharmed. The official explanation was that Dipendra had had an argument with his mother concerning his choice of girlfriend, and therefore had gotten high on cocaine and whisky, before shooting nine of his family members with a machine gun, before shooting himself in the left temple. A lot of Nepalis were sceptical of the official version, and many felt that Gyanendra had something to do with the massacre. Demonstrations broke out, and several demonstrators were shot dead. No one knows whether the massacre was merely a family tragedy, or a precisely orchestrated political assassination. But the Maoists were soon out with a condemnation of what they saw as a plot to kill Birendra because he was “soft on the Maoist issue”. They encouraged the army to join the people and bring down the King. Whether this was an attempt to gain support by using people’s frustration over the death of a popular King, or an expression of political views is however, difficult to judge. Gyanendra promised a harder stance in dealing with the Maoists issue, and would soon bring in the army, which increased both the intensity of the conflict and its political effects in Nepal.

#### **4.6 Who’s Army?**

“A Hindu king can not be under a constitution. He is a part of God”  
Bharat Keshar Simha, retired general, Royal Nepal Army (As quoted in Raj 2006:1).

The Royal Nepali Army’s (RNA) loyalty has always been with the King and the palace. The army sided with the king against the democratic forces both in 1960 and 1990. According to Ashok K. Mehta (2005:36), a former Indian officer and now a political analyst; “any challenge to the monarchy is regarded as a threat to the RNA itself”. The RNA has traditionally been sceptic to being under civilian control, and the army was not mobilized in Nepal before the end of 2001. Army generals were unwilling to mobilize the army before there was a political consensus, and King Birendra claimed that he would not use the army against his own people. Another explanation might be that the king saw the Maoist rebellion as a useful tool for discrediting democracy (Thapa 2003: 83-111; Whelpton 2005: 208-225). The politicians, on the other hand, saw it necessary to make an armed police force to fight the insurgency, as the police were neither sufficiently trained or equipped for fighting

the Maoists. In October 2001 the Armed Police Force Nepal was founded under the motto “any task, any time, any place” (Armed Police Force 2007).

In July 2001 the Maoists took 69 police officers hostage in Holleri in mid-western Nepal. Prime minister Koirala from the Congress party ordered the army to attack the Maoists. The army chief refused to act with the explanation that losses would be too high. This led to Koirala’s resignation, which had been a demand of the Maoists as well as the left parties in parliament for months. Succeeding Koirala was Sher Bahadur Deuba, also from the Nepali Congress party. Peace talks between the Maoists and the government ensued, and lasted from August until November. In retrospect, several events suggest that the Maoists were not ready to join the political mainstream without securing their demand of a constituent assembly. The CPN (M) restructured the people’s army and renamed it the People’s Liberation Army in September, and also established a central government for the areas under their control, the United People’s Revolutionary Council of Nepal (Thapa 2003: 83-111). A shipment of several hundred assault rifles was seized by the police in Burma, and it was speculated that it was ordered by the Maoists in Nepal (Thapa 2003: 124). All these developments seems to suggest that the Maoists had not at all given up the armed struggle, but merely showed “tactical flexibility<sup>19</sup>”. In the negotiations they were not willing to give up the demand for elections to a constituent assembly and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November the Maoists attacked the army for the first time in the war. The attack caught most observers by surprise, and three days later, the first national emergency since 1960 was proclaimed by Prime Minister Deuba. This would mark the start of a gradual deterioration of democracy in Nepal in favour of increased powers for the King, as well as an increasing spiral of violence.

#### **4.7 Development of the War and Emergencies**

After the end of the peace talks in November 2001, Prime Minister Deuba felt that he had been betrayed by the Maoists, and stated that there would be no further peace talks before the Maoists were disarmed. The Maoist attack had created a feeling of urgency among politicians, and a realization that the Maoists were not to be taken lightly (Whelpton 2005: 208-225). Illustrative of this is the fact that even the CPN (UML) sided with the Congress Party and the King, and thus in February 2002 the

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<sup>19</sup> Tactical flexibility is a concept used by the Maoists in their rhetoric to justify the need to cooperate and negotiate with parliamentary forces that not necessarily adhere to the Maoist view.

state of emergency was ratified by a 2/3 majority in parliament (Whelpton 2005: 219). The only opposition to the emergency came from the smaller left wing parties such as the Nepali Workers and Peasants Party and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre-Masal). During the emergency, tension grew both between Deuba and the Congress Party, as well as between the political parties and the army. This was in part due to the fact that the army because of the emergency could operate outside civilian control, and also due to a feeling on the army's side that it was not getting cooperation from the parties. A secret meeting between the Maoist chairman Prachanda and the leader of the Nepali Congress Party in Delhi in March 2002 did not make the climate better between the army and the politicians (Whelpton 2005: 219). In May the emergency was up for extension in parliament. Deuba wanted to extend it for six months, and John Whelpton (2005: 219) speculates that this was done on the insistence of the palace and the security forces. Since there was not a majority in the parliament for extending the emergency, Deuba dissolved parliament and called for new elections, which were to take place in November. By doing this Deuba was going against his own party, and the result was that Congress split into two parties, headed by Koirala and Deuba. CPN (UML) therefore went along with the plan of holding new elections, as they saw this as an opportunity to defeat a weakened Congress (Whelpton 2005: 221).

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2002 Deuba met with the king to recommend that the elections be postponed for a year due to high Maoist activity in the countryside. September had seen two major Maoist attacks in the district of Sindhuli, and in Sandhikharka, district headquarter of Arghakhanchi (Thapa 2003: 129). On the 4<sup>th</sup> the king dismissed Deuba for his failure to hold elections and assumed full executive authority himself. The king claimed to act in accordance with article 127 of the constitution, which gave the king the right to remove obstacles to the functioning of the constitution<sup>20</sup>. The King picked Lokendra Bahadur Chand from the National Democratic Party<sup>21</sup> as the prime minister of the provisional government, as the other parties failed to agree on a candidate (Whelpton 2005: 221). Multiparty democracy was at this point effectively suspended.

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<sup>20</sup> Article 127 Power to Remove Difficulties.

If any difficulty arises in connection with the implementation of this Constitution, His Majesty may issue necessary Orders to remove such difficulty and such Orders shall be laid before Parliament. (Nepal's Constitution, English Translation)

<sup>21</sup> The National Democratic Party is a party consisting of former ministers and supporters of the Panchayat system. They have traditionally been explicit pro-monarchy.

In January of 2003 another ceasefire was signed, which lasted until August, when it again broke down over the Maoist demand for a constituent assembly. In May the “five party alliance” was formed, when Nepal’s Workers and Peasant Party<sup>22</sup>, the People’s Front<sup>23</sup> and Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandi Devi)<sup>24</sup> joined NC and CPN (UML) in criticising the royal takeover and calling for a restoration of democracy. Unable to solve the crisis, Chand resigned, and the parties nominated Madhav Kumar Nepal from the CPN (UML) as the new prime minister. According to Whelpton (2005: 224), the King rejected this because M. K. Nepal was “unacceptable to one or more foreign powers”. Instead, another member of the King’s inner circle was chosen, namely Surya Bahadur Thapa, also from the National Democratic Party.

In addition to the finding together of the political parties in the years under emergency rule, other developments also took place. The Maoists gradually shifted their rhetoric from being anti-India, towards criticizing US imperialism (Whelpton 2005: 223). They also became more reluctant to attack fortified army positions. In March and April 2004 they launched a series of attacks in Bhojpur, Beni and Pashupatnagar, but suffered heavy losses. The tactics changed from attempts to engage the army, to guerrilla raids against police posts, and a stronger focus on urban activity, such as demonstrations and bandhs<sup>25</sup>. An example of this is the weeklong blockade of Kathmandu in August of 2004. The civil war after 2001 indeed developed into something of a stalemate, with the Maoists unable or unwilling to hold district headquarters and smaller cities. An example of this is the attack on Dunai of November 2000, where the Maoists overran the town, but pulled out afterwards. A likely explanation is that the Maoists held the view that they would not be able to hold fortified positions under bombardment from the army, and thus were unwilling to meet the army in conventional warfare. The Maoists controlled large parts of Nepal’s countryside and population, but were still unable to take the state administrative centres and challenge the state influence at a higher level.

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<sup>22</sup> A small Maoist party based in Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu valley.

<sup>23</sup> A union of smaller Maoist groups which did not join the armed uprising in 1996.

<sup>24</sup> A break away faction of the Nepal Sadbhawana Party led by Anandi Devi, which traditionally fights for the rights of the Madhesi minority in Nepal. The Madhesis live in the southern part of Nepal, known as the Terai, and have historically migrated in from India.

<sup>25</sup> A bandh is a Nepali expression for a general strike. The Maoist would often state that a bandh would be held, and at the same time make sure that everyone would respect it by using both coercion and intimidation.

In the same period lower party cadres of the NC and CPN (UML) started to consider the thought of holding a constituent assembly as a solution to the Maoist problem (Whelpton 2005: 222). This should be seen as a sign of scepticism to the increase in royal power in relation to the politicians. In April 2004 demonstrations took place in Kathmandu where slogans against the monarchy and pro-democracy were at the forefront.

#### **4.8 The Royal Coup and the Alliance between Parties and Maoists**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005 King Gyanendra dismissed Prime Minister Deuba<sup>26</sup> for the second time in four years, and formed a cabinet under his own leadership. Gyanendra vowed to re-establish democracy within three years, and had Deuba arrested under charges of corruption. In practice, the king had had firm control over the reins of power under the earlier emergencies, but after the 1<sup>st</sup> of February even the illusion that the King shared power with the parties was gone. Gyanendra filled his cabinet with ministers from the Panchayat years, and other people loyal to the monarchy. The coup brought the biggest political parties together under a realization of common interests, and out of the earlier five-party alliance a seven-party alliance developed, with the addition of a small leftist group called the United Left Front, and the Deuba-led splinter group from Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress (Democratic).

While Gyanendra on one side threatened the political parties by taking power for himself, the Maoists, on the other side, had for several years hoped for an alliance with the mainstream parties under the slogan of a constituent assembly election. During the summer of 2005 secret talks took place between the parties and the Maoists (BBC 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2005; BBC 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2005) and in September the Maoists declared a ceasefire for the purpose of having official negotiations with the parties. The King and the RNA dismissed it as a Maoist ploy however, and continued attacks on the Maoists. (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies September 2005). The negotiations between politicians and Maoist leaders ended with the signing of a twelve-point agreement in Delhi in November. The Twelve-point agreement should be seen as the expressions of processes having taken place in the Maoist leadership, the political parties and also in the government of India. The reasoning of the politicians for joining the Maoists should be understood

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<sup>26</sup> Deuba took over after Surya Bahadur Thapa again in June 2004.



as an effect of the King's takeover. Within the Maoist camp the alliance with the political parties marked the supremacy of the political line that held the King as the main enemy of the revolution in Nepal. The other main line in the party had been the one that viewed India as the main enemy. In earlier interviews with Prachanda, he has mentioned that the revolution in Nepal at some point will have to face the Indian army (Revolutionary Worker Online 2000).

Quite on the contrary, India was to become an important mediator between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance. After the CPN (M) decided to send a delegation including the two Central Committee members Baburam Bhattarai and Krishna Mahara to India to "learn the position of the Indian parties, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) became a link between the Indian government and the Maoists in Nepal (CPN (M) Press Release 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). India had since the royal takeover of February 2005 been sceptic towards the King, and eventually decided to support the politicians and the Maoists in Nepal. This policy was also the result of the victory of one political line over another within the Indian administration. One political line favoured by what Prakash Raj (2006: 61-70) terms the "South Block" in Indian politics, held that there could not be a political solution in Nepal without including the Maoists. They further held that this even could have a moderating effect on India's Maoist rebels, by showing that it was possible for Maoist guerrillas to join mainstream politics. The opposing view was held within the Indian army and the defence council. It stated that India should focus on supporting King Gyanendra as he was the only focal point of national unity in Nepal, and that a loss of the royal hegemony would have a destabilizing effect on Nepal (Raj 2006: 61-70).

When the twelve-point agreement was signed by the Maoists and the SPA in November 2005, it was agreed that the King was the main obstacle to a peaceful and stable Nepal, and that parliament should be restored, with the purpose of forming an interim government that should prepare elections to a constituent assembly. In addition, the Maoists committed themselves to multiparty democracy, and took self-criticism for "errors" committed during the course of the insurgency (12-Point Agreement). The Maoists also promised not to hinder activists from the other parties in campaigning in the countryside.

The King condemned the agreement and went ahead with preparations for local elections in February. These elections could contribute to give the King's rule

some legitimacy, but at the same time sent a signal to the parties that the King was ready to continue without them, and build up new parties in the process (Øgrim 2007a). On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2006 the Maoists ended the unilateral ceasefire, and fighting started again. At the same time, the parties were mobilizing people to boycott the February elections. These simultaneous campaigns were successful, and turnout were down to 20% when elections were held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February. This gave the movement for democracy more momentum, and in March new negotiations between the SPA and the Maoists took place in Delhi. Here it was agreed that they should start demonstrations on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, with a four-day strike and a mass meeting in Kathmandu on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April. This movement was to become known as the Jana Andolan II, or “The Second People’s Movement”. I will not go into detail about the movement here, as it has already been done by news agencies and writers, but give a brief overview of the events<sup>27</sup>.

After nearly two weeks of protests, King Gyanendra stepped down on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, and during the course of the next days, the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) formed a cabinet with G. P. Koirala as Prime Minister. There were tensions between the Maoists and the SPA, but after the SPA declared that they would do all in their power to hold elections to a constituent assembly, the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Koirala was officially inaugurated as Prime Minister. Also present, as a guest, at the session was Sitaram Yechuri from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (Øgrim 2007b; India Daily 29.apr. 2006). The civil war ended in November 2006, when the Maoists and the SPA signed a formal peace treaty. Another factor that should be mentioned to understand the context of this process is the international one. Namely the views and responses from India, China and the US to the developments between 2001 and 2006.

#### **4.9 The International Situation**

“Nepal is like a yam between two boulders<sup>28</sup>”  
Narayan Bikram Shah

The view held by Narayan Bikram Shah, the founder of Nepal, is illustrative of the situation in Nepal today. India to the South and China to the North both have a huge

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<sup>27</sup> For a description of the Jana Andolan II and the period afterwards, a good resource is the BBC's Nepal section at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/country\\_profiles/1166502.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1166502.stm)

<sup>28</sup> A Yam is a vegetable similar to a sweet-potato.

impact on Nepali politics. India dominates Nepal's economy, as well as surrounds it on three sides. China has traditionally been seen as a balancing factor to keep the influence of India in check. This happened in 1962 when the King took power and the war between India and China made it too risky for India to intervene (Whelpton 2005: 99). From a geopolitical point of view, Nepal would prefer to border a mighty China, instead of Tibet, as China could potentially be a counter-weight to Indian influence in Nepal. Agitation for a free Tibet has traditionally been restricted in Kathmandu. It is no doubt however, that India plays a much bigger role in Nepal than China.

The view on Nepal in India has been discussed already, but India's interests in Nepal should be mentioned briefly. India has first and foremost an interest in a stable Nepal. A stable Nepal gives predictability in the region, as well as potential markets. India sees instability in Nepal as opportunities for its rival, Pakistan, to increase its influence through its Inter-Services Intelligence (Mate 2006 [conversation]). After the 9/11 attacks in the US, and the war on terror, India stated that with regards to Indian assistance to Nepal in countering the Maoist insurgency; "the sky is the limit" (As quoted in Pandey 2005: 96). This view were to changed after the royal takeover on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005. While stability could be said to be a strategic interest, India also has economic interests in Nepal in the form of hydroelectricity. India is together with China a fast growing economy, which needs supplies of energy. Nepal has a vast hydroelectric potential, and could in the future become an important supplier of electricity for India.

China also has an interest in a stable Nepal, and wants to avoid instability in the regions bordering China, such as Dolpa (Pandey 2005: 157). China could also be suspicious of increasing US troop presence in its backyard. China would not like to see increased foreign influence in Nepal as a result of third country mediation or intervention in the conflict. Furthermore, China has also seen the monarchy in Nepal as a stabilizing and unifying factor. Something that became apparent after the royal coup in 2005, when China was the only major power to continue military support to the regime. It also declared that the coup was an "internal matter" (BBC 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2005). China has been sceptical towards the Maoist movement, and has never accepted them as "Maoist". The Maoists on the other hand, have sought to make use of China as a balancing factor to limit Indian influence or prevent intervention of Indian troops in the conflict. In their analysis of the geopolitical situation, the

Maoists claim that US support for the regime in Nepal is part of a plan to encircle China (Bhattarai September 2002). Although China is denounced as revisionist in Maoist rhetoric, the Maoists have come out much harder against India and the US. China's interest in Nepal is like India's, first and foremost of a strategic nature, namely a stable Nepal. Economic interests are for the most part in terms of market access, as China seeks to increase its trade with India through Nepal. China finished a railway to Lhasa in Tibet in 2006, and is planning to construct more railways in the area (BBC 10<sup>th</sup> of Aug. 2006). This could make trade between India and China through Nepal easier. All in all, it could be said that China acknowledges India's superior position in Nepal.

The US involvement in Nepal took a different course after the 9/11 attacks. American interest increased, and again the goal seems to be a stable Nepal. Colin Powell visited Nepal in the summer of 2002 and stated; "the US fully acknowledge Nepal's right to protect its citizens and institutions from terrorist attacks" (As quoted in Pandey 2005:95). Shortly after 9/11 the US stepped up the support of military hardware to Nepal from 0,2 to 29,5 million dollars. They also put the Maoists on their list of terror groups, even before the Maoists were listed as terrorists in Nepal. The US is probably the foreign power that has been the most sceptic towards the Maoists. Michael Malinowski, former US envoy to Nepal, compared the Maoists to the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia (Pandey 2005: 97), while the current ambassador, James Moriarty several times has stated that the US will not remove the terrorist tag put on the Maoists (Truthout 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2006).

The UK has had a more moderate approach than the US in tackling the Maoists, and has acknowledged that there is a social side to the rebellion (Fielddiary 1<sup>st</sup> of Aug 2006). But still, the UK stance has been that a Maoist takeover in Nepal is not acceptable. Under-Secretary of State, Mike O'Brien visited Nepal in 2002 and stated that:

"The terrorists must get this lesson very clearly that the international community will not allow them to win. It is not possible for them to win. No matter how much they kill people, murder people, victimize people, infringe their human rights, the international community will not let terrorism overtake Nepal" (Kathmandu Post 12 Oct. 2002, as quoted in Pandey 2005: 97-98)

What India, the US, China and the UK have in common is an interest in a stable Nepal. But there are differences in what kind of stability this should be. China

has supported the King. The UK and India have supported the process of getting the Maoists into the mainstream, while the US has opted for restoration of democracy, but rather with a constitutional monarchy than a strong Maoist party. After the royal coup in 2005, India and the UK condemned the king's action, while the US waited and after a while recommended the King to step down and reconcile with the political parties (BBC 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2005). China continued military support for Gyanendra's regime after the coup.

The interests of regional and global powers have been, and will probably continue to be, an important factor in Nepali politics. To go back to the quote from Narayan B. Shah, one could say that Nepal is still a yam between the two boulders India and China, but at the same time, far away boulders such as the US also has interests in Nepal.

#### **4.10 Summary and Conclusion**

The main point of this chapter has been to trace the development of the civil war in Nepal, and discuss reasons for why the Maoists were so successful in the first years of the insurgency. The lack of state presence in remote districts, the high motivation of the Maoists and the lack of ability of the police to deal with the guerrillas have been the most important factors, along with the reluctance of the king and politicians to bring in the army. After the phase that the Maoists named the "strategic defensive", where they built their strength by raiding remote police posts and agitated in the countryside, the civil war turned more into a stalemate. The Maoists were unable to hold district headquarters and larger cities, but gradually built their strength in the countryside. The entrance of the army into the conflict was an important factor in this. The civil war turned into a situation where the army was not able to defeat the Maoists decisively, due to the fact that the Maoist insurgency is not only a problem of "terrorists" trying to take over the state, but is connected with inequality and discrimination in Nepali society. The Maoists are strong in rural Nepal, where the large support from the people, as well as the rugged terrain and lack of infrastructure such as motorable roads gives them favourable conditions for fighting the police and army from a position of relative strength.

The Maoists did not have sufficient resources to go on the offensive against the army, but the participation of the RNA in the conflict led to increased political tension between politicians and the palace over control of the armed forces. After the

royal massacre in June 2001 the new King, Gyanendra, gradually gained more power at the expense of the politicians through emergency powers that the King justified by referring to article 127 of the constitution. This process culminated in the royal coup in February 2005. Thus, in the situation of stalemate between state and Maoist forces, the King's stronger grip on power made the political parties seek an alliance with the Maoists to restore democracy. This alliance was formed between the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists during the summer and fall of 2005, and is in my view a key event in an understanding of the peace process. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) played a role in the facilitation between Maoists and politicians in Nepal. This was connected to a change in India's policy towards Nepal after the royal takeover of 2005. India decided that the Maoists had to be included in the mainstream of Nepali politics to create a stable Nepal, which is India's main strategic interest in the country. And it was this specific alliance that brought about the peace process of Nepal, as the King was forced to step down in April 2006.

Other international powers have also been involved in the conflict in addition to India, most notably the US and China. The US increased their involvement after the attacks of 9/11. They have been sceptic towards the development of an alliance between parties and Maoists, and urged the King to reconcile with the parties. China on the other hand has supported the King all the way, even after the royal takeover. The support of military hardware and training personnel from India and the US to the state has increased the capability of the state to deal with the insurgency, and has contributed to the state effort to keep the insurgents in check. After the royal coup, only China continued with military support. The Maoists have claimed that without foreign support, they would have been able to capture Kathmandu. In my view however, this is only part of the explanation, and other factors will be discussed in chapter five and six.

This chapter has provided an outline of how the Maoists joined the process leading to the end of hostilities between state and insurgents that took place after the king stepped down on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2006. In the next two chapters I will discuss the question of why this course of action became the one favoured by the Maoists. It is my view that the decision of the Maoists to seek an alliance with the political parties is a key factor in understanding why Maoists joined the peace process. Along with King Gyanendra's coup in 2005, which pushed the politicians towards the Maoists. It is the Maoist ideology that will be the main focus of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5: The Ideological Development of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)**

This chapter will explain and discuss important aspects of the ideology of the CPN (M). It is written with the understanding that there was a change in the ideology between the start of the civil war and the peace process of 2006. I will argue that this change for the most part took place between the second national conference of the CPN (M) in 2001, and the peace negotiations in 2003. I will also explain the military doctrine of the Maoists as inspired by the writings of Mao Zedong. I shall also discuss the way the CPN (M) has viewed and related to other significant actors in the conflict, such as the King and the political parties, and argue that the Maoist slogan of “strategic firmness and tactical flexibility” is key to understanding these relations. First of all, I will argue that studying the Maoist ideology is necessary, and say something about how I treat the concept of ideology.

### **5.1 Why Ideology?**

To answer the research question, it is necessary to say something about the way the decision-makers in the CPN (M) view the world. After all, it is the worldview of actors that make them act, not reality in itself (Tønneson: 2000). To get inside the head of the CPN (M) leadership is not possible, but it is possible to make an outline of their ideology, so that we can say something about the way they think about, and act in the world. The interesting part in relation to the research question is then to see if there has been any significant changes in the ideology of the CPN (M), and if we can say something about the origins of this change.

However, it could be held that what the CPN (M) publishes in the form of statements and party documents is just what they want the public to see. And thus it does not give total insight into their reasoning. “You only show the front side of your house”, as a Norwegian Maoist told me in a discussion (Andresen 2006 [conversation]). This argument is important to keep in mind, but I do think that studying the ideological development of the CPN (M) can tell us something about their reasoning and the way they view reality. To suspect that all their publications and published documents were merely propaganda and not saying anything about their worldview would be overly sceptic in my view. Even though the Maoist publications are made to create goodwill and support for the CPN (M), it still reveals

information for us. If the CPN (M) wants to get support, they will have to produce statements and publications that state truths that people can relate to and find plausible. Thus, the publications tell us something about how the Maoists view the world, because they portray a world that the Maoists think that people can find plausible and relate to. With the need for studying Nepali Maoist ideology established, I will now go on and elaborate on how I view the concept of ideology.

## **5.2 Towards an Understanding of Ideology?**

Before discussing the ideology of the CPN (M) and its development, it is only fair to elaborate on how I understand the concept of ideology itself. I will not however, provide a strict definition of what ideology is or is not. Such definitions can in my view often confuse more than they clarify, by making rigid rules about what can be called an ideology. An example of the wide array of more or less useful definitions can be found in Terry Eagleton's book about ideologies (Eagleton 1991:1).

First of all, I will understand the concept of ideology as a system of thoughts and beliefs. This often has to do with a will to achieve something, a goal. And to achieve this goal, there is a method or strategy. Eagleton furthermore writes that ideological discourse is: "A complex network of empirical and normative elements, within which the nature and organization of the former is ultimately determined by the requirements of the latter" (Eagleton 1991: 23). In other words, the empirical elements in an ideology are constructed partly to justify the normative elements, what one seeks to achieve. An example from contemporary Norwegian political discourse could be the argument that we need to limit the immigration of Muslims, or else they will be a majority in 2050. This is not necessarily the motivating factor for some people's wish to limit Muslim immigration. But it is an empirical element supporting the goal. The validity of the empirical elements does not necessarily have to be true either. The important thing is that the empirical elements in an ideology, true or not, can be representations of the worldview of the actor we seek to study, it tells us something about how they interpret reality. These empirical elements are then organized into a rhetoric system, by which one seeks to achieve one's normative element, or goal (Eagleton 1991: 28-31). To sum it up, ideology is about normative elements, something which one seeks to achieve. And it is about empirical elements, which can both explain one's wish to achieve the goals, or support the strategy one seeks to employ to achieve them. Along with this is often a worldview that justifies



the methods and the goal. This worldview is often explained by empirical information that may or may not correspond with factual reality. An empirical fact is not necessarily ideological in itself. It is when it is used to achieve a certain goal we can talk about it being ideological. The empirical observation that 76 percent of the Nepali labour force is employed in agriculture is not necessarily ideological (CIA World Factbook 2006). But when this observation is put into a rhetoric or context where one implies that this is a sign of backwardness and needs to be remedied, it becomes ideological, because it is linked to something we want to achieve. To again use the words of Eagleton, we can say that; “Ideology is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context”(Eagleton 1991: 29). And it is the development of the ideology of the CPN (M) since the initiation of the “People’s War” that will be the focus of this chapter.

### **5.3 The Maoist Political Program at the Beginning of the Insurgency**

The Maoists political program was distributed in a 40-point demand list prior to the start of the insurgency in February 1996. The demand list, along with other lengthier documents published in the Maoist organ *The Worker*, gives an overview of what the Maoists goals are. The Maoists view Nepal as a country in a semi-feudal state. The large landowners and the king rule the country, along with bureaucrat capitalists and a comprador bourgeoisie. In other words, the capitalists in Nepal are in a privileged position because they are agents of the imperialism of other countries. The ruling classes in Nepal have an interest in maintaining Nepal in the feudal state to preserve their own dominant position (Strategy and Tactics 1995). The Nepali Congress party is merely a “stooge” for US and Indian imperialism, while the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) is a revisionist party claiming to represent the people while they in reality cooperate with the King and the reactionary forces. The reactionary forces hold over parliament is, in the Maoist rhetoric, too strong to be broken, and armed struggle against the reactionaries is thus the only way to solve Nepal’s problems.

The demands in the 40-point list were centred on constitutional reform, welfare policies, and the relationship with India. In a document adopted by the Third Expanded Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPN (M) in March 1995, it is stated that

*“The aim of the struggle is to solve the basic contradictions between feudalism and the Nepalese people, imperialism – mainly the Indian expansionism – and the Nepalese people, comprador and bureaucratic capitalism and the Nepalese people, and in the immediate term the contradiction between domestic reaction which is made up of a combination of feudal and comprador and bureaucratic capitalist classes and backed by Indian expansionism and the Nepalese people”* (Strategy and Tactics 1995).

In other words, the Maoists are looking to end feudal relations in Nepal. In the extension of this it lies that the Maoists seek to change the ownership structure to land. The Maoists seek to change it according to the principle of land to the tiller. In practice this would mean to confiscate unused land, and distribute it among small-farmers and landless (Bhattarai 1998). The focus on land reform has been fundamental for garnering support for the Maoists in Nepal, where 76% percent of the labour force is employed in agriculture. In addition, they want to end what they see as Indian expansionism. This is expressed in the 40-point demand list, where several demands are about nullification of treaties made with India<sup>29</sup>.

It is interesting to note that socialism or communism is not mentioned in the 40-point demand list. According to themselves, the Maoists do not seek to establish socialism in Nepal in the short term. Rather, they seek to bring about what they term the “New Democratic Revolution”. A concept developed by Mao Zedong during the Chinese revolution. In the Marxist view, society develops in stages, feudal-bourgeoisie-socialist-communist. Mao argued that one could, by an alliance of the classes, merge the bourgeoisie and socialist stage into one, and thus leave out the need to have a bourgeoisie stage before socialism. At the outset of the conflict, the goal of the Maoists was thus to transform Nepali society into something in between the capitalist (bourgeoisie) stage and the socialist state. A new democratic revolution in chairman Mao’s terminology. As we shall see, this perspective changed during the conflict. In the same document cited above, we also find that,

*“According to the theoretical directives of M-L-M (Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) and the general specificities of the Nepalese society our party has formulated a political strategy of completing New Democratic revolution with a people’s democratic dictatorship under the leadership of proletariat based on the unity of*

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<sup>29</sup> Explicitly mentioned: The 1950 Delhi compromise, Tanakpur Treaty and Makhali Treaty.

*workers and peasants against feudalism and imperialism”* (Strategy and Tactics 1995).

Feudalism and imperialism are thus the main targets of the revolution, and will be overcome by an alliance of workers and peasants who will bring about the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat.

The demand that has been raised by the Maoists in the 40-point demand list and in all negotiations with the state is the demand for a new constitution. This is a demand with roots back to 1951, when King Tribhuvan promised to hold elections to a constituent assembly with the task of writing a new constitution for Nepal (Whelpton 2005: 87-99). The demand was held by all the large parties in Nepal under the People’s Movement in 1990, but were given up after a compromise between king Birendra and the political parties. Instead, the King and the parties formed a new constitution. To get an understanding of how the Maoists were going to achieve these goals, we need to take a closer look at their strategy.

#### **5.4 The Military Doctrine of the Maoists**

To achieve the goals mentioned above the Maoists would employ the strategy of “Protracted People’s War”. This strategy follows the teachings of Mao Zedong on guerrilla warfare, and draws on the experiences from the revolution in China (Thapa 2003: 97-111). In short this strategy is based on taking control of the rural areas, and encircle the city from the countryside (Strategy and Tactics 1995). The Maoists concluded that Nepal was a favourable country for waging guerrilla war, and that the state most likely would withdraw from areas where it was weakly represented, thus leaving the guerrillas with areas in which they could exercise control. They pictured the struggle to expand gradually, and take place in three stages: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate and strategic offensive. The first stage would be the start of the war, where guerrilla tactics of hit and run are the most important. The enemy being forced to defend urban centres would characterize the second stage and the Maoists would ideally have control over large parts of the countryside. In the third stage, the Maoists would be strong enough to wage a conventional war against the enemy, and attack fortified urban centres (Thapa 2003: 97-111). A premise for this kind of strategy is the support of the peasant population, that can serve as a recruiting base for the Maoists, and support them in other ways, such as providing information, shelter, food and so on. This support would be gained by linking the war effort to

questions important for the farmers in the district areas, such as the question of land reform. This kind of demand is what makes the war into a “People’s War”, by linking it with the interest of the people (Øgrim 2007a).

According to the Strategy and tactics document, it is fully possible to defeat the Maoists enemies by developing the struggle along the lines mentioned above. It is also stated that “lowering the banner of rebellion” before the end will be sinning against the people and their ideology (Strategy and Tactics 1995). They also emphasize the fact that it is necessary to be clear on this question to avoid reformism. This is important to keep in mind when analysing the changes in Maoist ideology later in the war, as we shall see that the Maoists go away from it completely.

### **5.5 Important Changes in Maoist Ideology**

Between 1996 and 2006 there was a fundamental change in the goal and strategy of the Maoists. This becomes apparent when one compares the differences between the ideology expressed in the document *Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal* from 1995 and what was expressed in the tenth issue of the Maoist organ *The Worker*, in May of 2006. The term “New Democratic Revolution” has been substituted with the concept “Multiparty Democratic Republic” (Prachanda 2006: 27). Instead of “raising the flag of rebellion”, the Maoists in 2005 signed a twelve-point agreement with the political parties that stated that the King was the main obstacle to peace in Nepal. The agreement also committed the Maoists to a multiparty system of government. How was this possible from the Maoist side, remembering the fierce tone of the beginning of the war where compromise with the state was denounced as revisionism (Strategy and Tactics 1995)?

Early indicators of a change in Maoist ideology can be seen in 2001, both in the documents from the Second National Conference in February, as well as in the statements published after the royal massacre in June. In the documents from the conference in February, the changes in ideology are explained by the Maoists as a consequence of new developments in global capitalism, and they emphasize the need to update the views of Lenin and Mao on imperialism. Mao’s idea of “three worlds”<sup>30</sup> is not held to be valid anymore; instead US imperialism has developed into a global state. This has implications for the proletarian revolution in Nepal. Because

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<sup>30</sup> A division of the world in three used by Mao, where the US is one part, the revisionist USSR another, and the third part is the one led by China which is fighting for the world proletariat.

of the will and ability of the US to intervene militarily all over the world, especially after 9/11, victory for the proletarian revolution is no longer possible in one country alone. Instead it is necessary to focus on the world revolution, and aim for transforming society in Nepal in negotiation with regional and global powers (The US and India). Furthermore, the Maoists express a willingness to negotiate with the state as a way to end the war:

*“For the solution of the present crisis faced by the country an all party conference of the representatives of political forces of the coalition of present constitution, political parties, institutions and mass organisations is proposed. This would elect an interim government and this government would guarantee the formation of new people’s constitution, as a tactical alternative”* (The Second National Conference; Karki and Seddon 2003: 257-258)

The formation of a new constitution thus became the most important demand of the Maoists, as a way to get power to change Nepal. This represents rhetoric where it is tactically necessary to negotiate for gains such as interim government and a new constitution, as opposed to the rhetoric from 1995 and the goal of “New Democracy”. In the documents from the conference however, “New Democracy” is still a long-term goal, but the Maoists acknowledge the need to show tactical flexibility in order to get power in the short term. We see how the Maoist strategy change, in that a political solution to the civil war is allowed for by changes in the analysis of capitalism. The new view on capitalism thus, to use the concepts of Eagleton, serves as a “descriptive element”, that justifies the “normative element”, which is power to change Nepali society. The international situation has changed; therefore it is necessary for the Maoists to change their strategy and goal. But in light of the new view on Maoism this is not revisionism, rather it is showing what they call “tactical flexibility”.

Another important feature of the 2001 conference was the analysis of the errors of earlier attempts of communism, and why they failed. The Maoists also acknowledged that the People's Movement of 1990 had achieved important gains in the struggle for democracy, and vowed to defend these achievements (International Crisis Group Report 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2007)

Another important event in 2001 was the massacre on the royal family. Shortly after the massacre took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, a letter signed by the Maoist central

committee member Baburam Bhattarai was published in *Kantipur Daily*, a newspaper in Nepal.

According to the letter, the massacre was a conspiracy by “regressive”<sup>31</sup> forces against King Birendra. And furthermore stated that the King had to die because he was “soft on the Maoists” “a liberal” and “a patriot” (Bhattarai 2001). The letter even speaks of an understanding between the CPN (M) and Birendra, and “an informal alliance between us”. One should of course keep in mind that this could be an attempt to get political advantages by denouncing the new King as a murderer and being of a pro-Indian mindset. But in light of later statements from the Maoists where king Gyanendra is seen as the main obstacle to peace in Nepal, it is my view that the royal massacre had an important effect on the way the Maoists viewed the Monarchy. After the massacre, the CPN (M) in its rhetoric much more actively calls out to “all pro-democratic forces” to join them in their struggle against the King (Maoist Information Bulletin 2, no date<sup>32</sup>).

The process of ideological change seems to be more or less completed by April 2003, when the Maoists published a document that dealt with their demands for the peace negotiations. Here the Maoists state that the civil war is in a state of “strategic equilibrium” and that it is therefore necessary, considering Nepal's “distinct geopolitical situation”, to look for a “forward looking” peaceful solution (An Executive Summary 2003). Here we can clearly see how the tone has changed since 1995, when the Maoists swore to keep fighting to the bitter end. Instead, in 2003, the Maoists were ready to negotiate with the state, and to compromise on some areas to achieve gains in others. All in all, the document titled *An Executive Summary of the Proposal Put Forward by the CPN (Maoist) for the Negotiations*, should be seen as an expression of the fact that the Maoist ideology has changed. In 2003, thanks to the process of ideological change, which started at the *Second National Conference* in 2001, it was now justifiable to negotiate with the state for limited gains. There has been a change both in the goals and strategy of the Maoists. The concept of “New Democratic Revolution” is not mentioned in 2003. Instead, the key demand of the Maoists are the formation of an interim government, with the task of holding elections to a constituent assembly to write a new constitution for Nepal.

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<sup>31</sup> I understand this as a variation over the concept “reactionary”

<sup>32</sup> The document has no date, but judging from the dates and issues dealt with in the first and third Maoist Information Bullentins, it seems to be published between January and March 2002.

According to the Maoists themselves, the question of a new constitution is the key to all their other demands. “Since the question of state power or the political question is key to all other problems, the main agenda of the negotiation must be political and all the focus has to be placed on this” (An Executive Summary 2003).

The Maoists do include however, a minimum content of a new constitution, which has a lot of similarities with the 40-point demand list from 1996. The demand for land reform on the principle of land to the tiller is put forward as a necessary element in a new constitution. What is interesting to note is that the issue of the monarchy is left out of the minimum content of the new constitution. Instead, the Maoists state that “[...] *Different political forces can go to the people with their own views on monarchy and other progressive issues and the final verdict of the people would be acceptable to everybody concerned*” (An Executive Summary 2003). This is a contrast to the 40-point demand list where it was demanded that all royal privileges should be abolished. This should be interpreted as a sign of Maoist willingness to negotiate and reach a political solution to the conflict.

To sum up the changes in Maoist ideology, we can conclude that the ideology of the Maoist changed during the course of the civil war, and this process did for the most part take place between 2001 and 2003. The changes in ideology justified negotiations with the state to reach a political solution to the civil war, something that would have been denounced as revisionism under the expressed Maoist ideology of 1996. The change in ideology affected the CPN (M)'s relation to the other actors in the conflict, and was followed by disagreements of who was the main enemy of the Maoists out of the King and the political parties. We shall therefore go on to explore the Maoists relations to the other actors in the civil war, seen in relation with the change in ideology.

## **5.6 The Maoist's Relations to Other Actors**

The changed ideology of the Maoists, which allowed for compromises with the state made another ideological question even more important. Namely who were the main enemies of the revolution in Nepal, the palace or the political parties? And how would India view the Maoists? The Maoists had traditionally viewed an Indian intervention as inevitable if they were to threaten to overrun Kathmandu. As late as August 2004 the CPN (M) was preparing for a showdown against the Indian army on Nepali territory (Press Statement 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2004). Baburam Bhattarai, the

Maoist leader held to be second in command after Prachanda, had argued for a change of approach, were the King was the main enemy of the Maoists. Such an approach would make it possible, from the Maoist point of view, with an alliance between the Maoists and the political parties against the King. Bhattarai thought this could win the support of India, which most of all wanted a stable Nepal (International Crisis Group Report 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2007). However, Bhattarai's political line lost at the meeting of the Central Committee meeting in August 2004, and the CPN (M) instead decided to open up for an understanding with “patriotic forces” against Indian intervention. The press statement furthermore stressed that this also included the “patriotic” elements within the Royal Nepali Army (Press Statement 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2004). These political disagreements led to the exclusion of Bhattarai in January of 2005.

The royal coup on the first of February 2005 totally changed the political line of the Maoists. Bhattarai was reinstated in the party, and the Maoists started to communicate with India and the political parties for an alliance against the King, in line with Bhattarai's earlier suggestions. At a central committee meeting in Chunbang in Rolpa district of October of 2005 the CPN (M) made this strategy official (International Crisis Group Report 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2007). At the same meeting Bhattarai was officially back in the leadership of the CPN (M).

What this chapter has described could be characterized as something of a u-turn in Maoist ideology, from armed struggle for “New Democratic Revolution” to political struggle for multiparty democracy. I shall now go on to discuss some reasons for the ideological change of the Maoists.

### **5.7 Why Change?**

The change in the ideology and strategy of the Maoists should be understood in the light of several factors. One was their own analysis of the mistakes of earlier communist movements, which was made public in the document *On the Experiences of History and Development of Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2004). Here they conclude that it is necessary that the people have some means of replacing the party if it fails to revolutionize itself. In other words, democracy is a necessary tool to keep the party from becoming counter-revolutionary, as happened in the Soviet Union and China.



Perhaps even more important however, were the experiences of the Maoists from the civil war, and a realization that an outright military victory would be impossible or extremely difficult. The state had foreign backing, the army was loyal to the King, and both India and China were sceptical to a Maoist takeover in Nepal. India because they thought it could encourage the Maoists in India<sup>33</sup>, and China because they above all wanted a stable Nepal. The Maoists themselves emphasized the increased US support for the state after the attacks of 9/11, but one should not overestimate the role of US intervention either. As I see it, US interference in the conflict is a more acceptable reason for Maoist failure in their own eyes, than some of the other factors that could have contributed to the realization that a military victory would be impossible. One of these is the simple fact that there were not enough resources for the Maoists to build an army capable of challenging the Royal Nepali Army in conventional warfare. The Maoists had to finance their war effort by drawing on the resources of an already impoverished countryside. Extracting these resources too forcefully could jeopardize the popular support for their cause, and Prachanda acknowledged in an interview that public support was falling in some areas (The Worker #10 2006: 10-12).

In the first phase of the civil war, between 1996 and 2001, the Maoists were very successful in driving the state out of the countryside and establishing control (Hachhethu 2004). After 2001 and the entrance of the army into the conflict however, the conflict turned into something of a stalemate, where the Maoists held the countryside, but were unable to capture district centres, or face the army in conventional warfare. Prachanda has stated that they believed they could conquer Kathmandu, but when countries as India, UK and the US started to support the Royal Nepali Army; “it became difficult” (As quoted in National Crisis Group Report 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2007:2). Rather, it seems possible that the Maoists have underestimated the loyalty and strength of the Royal Nepali Army. Furthermore, the Maoists were unable to penetrate Kathmandu sufficiently to pose the threat of an urban uprising, and were thus confined to the countryside (International Crisis Group Report 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2007). It is also possible to speculate that the Maoists wanted to change their achievements from the civil war, such as control over the countryside and a strong organizational basis, into more tangible assets, such as power through a place in

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<sup>33</sup> Although this view was to change, as I will discuss in chapter 6.

mainstream politics in Kathmandu, but at the present time it is difficult to find sources to support such an argument. What is clear is that the changes in ideology must be understood in light of the developments in, and the Maoists experiences of, the civil war.

## **5.8 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the ideology and strategy of the Maoists in Nepal changed, and argued that the most important aspects of this change took place between February 2001 and April 2003. The change gave the Maoists larger room for political manoeuvring, and justified the politics of negotiations in the context of their Maoist ideology. The ideology went from a focus on the need for an armed uprising and describing compromising with the reactionary classes as revisionism, to an ideology where the nature of imperialism had changed, and that this change made it necessary to compromise with reformist forces in Nepal to achieve some of their goals. The change in ideology justified a more pragmatic course of action, and would later serve as a justification of the compromise with the Seven Party Alliance. The Maoists themselves consider their new strategy as being flexible in the short run, while at the same time keeping an eye on their long-term goals. Thus, it referred to as mixing strategic firmness with tactical flexibility.

The ideological change consisted of an update of Lenin and Mao's theories of imperialism, which held that the US global hegemony would make a revolution in one country extremely difficult or impossible. Because of this it is necessary to negotiate with the state in order to achieve limited gains. This would have been seen as revisionism under the Maoist ideology of 1996. The ideological change was a deep process, which also brought about a change in goals of the Maoists. The demand for a new constitution became even more important, and the Maoists insisted from 2003 that this constitution should be written by a constituent assembly elected by the people rather than formed by the politicians and the Maoists. They were also willing to leave the question of monarchy to the constituent assembly. The goal of a "New Democratic Revolution" was also toned down, and replaced by a demand for multiparty democracy. The new ideology of the Maoists changed their relations to the other actors in the civil war such as the King, the political parties and India. Already at the negotiations in 2003 the Maoists were ready to compromise with the King and the political parties. After the increased power of the King that

culminated in the coup of February 2005, the Maoists followed the political line advocated by Bhattarai, which held that the King was the main enemy, and that the political parties could be an ally in the struggle against the King. It was also held that such an alliance could get Indian approval, as it did after the royal coup. The change was brought about by several factors, where the inability of the Maoists to capture Kathmandu is the most important. The Maoists analysis of the international situation as hostile was also important. Falling support from a war weary rural population should not be underestimated either.

As we shall see in the last chapter, the change in the ideology of the Maoists is important to understand in order to grasp the room for political manoeuvring the Maoists had in the conflict, and the reasoning behind the decision to join the peace process.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter will discuss and highlight developments that led to the current peace process in Nepal. Based on the other chapters, I will explain what made the peace process possible. By the peace process I understand the ceasefires signed between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance, which made possible the popular triumph over the King in April 2006, and converted into the peace agreement of November 2006. The alliance between the political parties and the Maoists were crucial, and I will discuss why and how the two found together. I will argue that the Maoists willingness to join with the parties has to do with their new analysis of the “objective conditions” for their struggle for power in Nepal. The political parties joined the Maoists to fight the king, which by increasing his power in relation to the democratic system was a threat to the privileged position of the parties. I will go on to argue that the royal coup of February 2005 was decisive in bringing together the Maoists and the political parties, but also for India’s view on the conflict as well. The coup also made the political line in the Maoist party win forth that argued for an alliance with the politicians against the King. Furthermore, the international situation also played a significant role, and the policy towards Nepal of powers like India, the US, China and the UK should not be overlooked in understanding the developments in Nepali politics during the civil war.

This chapter is an attempt to highlight processes that opened up opportunities for peace in Nepal. When one is writing about the past one is forced to make choices about what to include and what to overlook. I have chosen to focus on the processes that I see as important creating opportunities for peace in Nepal. These included: The ideological change in the Maoist camp, the King’s undermining of the power of the parliament and the politicians response to this, which was to join with the Maoists. Even though the process of ideological change in the ideology of the Maoists came before the other two, the change alone cannot explain the Maoist participation in the peace process. In addition to these processes taking place within Nepal, the role of India was also important, and especially the change of policy that followed the royal coup of February 2005. All these processes were important in shaping the conflict and its end, but these processes were at the same time products of the conflict. One must keep in mind that none of these processes took place within a vacuum; rather, there was a dialectical relationship between the actors in the conflict and the conflict

itself. The conflict was also a result of the actors' actions. To put it short, one could say that the actors acted on the conflict, but at the same time, the conflict influenced the actors. The rest of this chapter will explain these processes in more detail, and make clear to the reader why the Maoists joined the peace process. I will argue that there were both push and pull factors that led to the alliance between parties and Maoists, as well as pragmatism on the Maoists side that grew out of their inability to win the civil war. These events and the decisions on the Maoist side that led to them did not take place isolated. Rather they were formed by the decisions of the other actors and the conflict. I will therefore briefly discuss the main points about the political parties, the King and India. This is done to better understand the relationship between the Maoists and these actors, and its impact on Maoist decision-making.

### **6.1 A Change in Ideology**

The ideological change has already been discussed in the chapter on ideology, but I will recapitulate the main points here. First of all, the Maoists said that the analysis of Lenin on imperialism was outdated, and that capitalism today is in another phase, with other characteristics than the ones Lenin wrote about in the book from 1916. The main point of the new view on imperialism is that in this stage of global capitalism, it is almost impossible for the revolution to win in one country. And if it should win, it will be extremely difficult to build socialism due to hostility from imperialist powers. Because of this, it is necessary for the communists in Nepal to build broad alliances and fight for a bourgeoisie democracy instead of a "New Democratic Republic", which was the stated goal at the outset. The Maoists have stressed the importance of goals and tactics specific to Nepal, and states that different countries will need different roads to socialism. The Nepali path to socialism is called the Prachanda Path, after the leader of the party. It is my view that this process of ideological change started on the second national conference of the CPN (M) in February of 2001. Here it was stated that a coming together of political forces was necessary for ending the civil war, and that these political forces should draft a new constitution. This was seen at the time as a tactical alternative (The Second National Conference 2001; 2003: 257-258). This is not to say that the Maoists were ready to give up the armed struggle for a new constitution in 2001. They still had other demands such as the establishing of a New People's Democracy, and a republic in Nepal. None the less, the conference of 2001 should be seen as the seed from which

more fundamental changes in Maoist ideology and strategy developed. It developed in a certain way not because it was planned that way by the leadership of the party from the beginning, but rather the development of ideology was affected by events that pulled it in different directions. The political line of the CPN (M) should be understood as a struggle between different groups in the party leadership, rather than the expression of a plan that was ready from the beginning of the war. The different ideas and political lines within the party were all affected by events outside of party control, but the process of forming a new Maoist policy based on a new ideology and worldview was to a large extent completed before the peace negotiations with the state in 2003.

In the negotiations between the Maoists and the state, the Maoists demands were a constituent assembly and an interim government. There were also several other demands listed as a “minimum programme” that included cancellation of unequal treaties with India and a call for ownership structures to land to be changed after the principle of “land to the tiller” (An Executive Summary 2003). However, what is important are the questions regarding issues of the state, and the Maoists in the document also makes this clear. Here the demands of an interim government and a constituent assembly are the most important and should be seen as the main demand of the Maoists. But what is important to note in the document about the negotiations, is the sentence: “[...] different political forces can go to the people with their own views on monarchy” (An Executive Summary 2003). In other words, the Maoists are willing to leave the demand for a republic. This shows that the Maoists at the time were willing to, and even hoped to, reach a negotiated settlement. In other words, quite a change from the militant rhetoric of 1996, when it was promised that the Maoists would never let the struggle become a way to achieve limited concessions from the reactionaries (Strategy and Tactics 1995).

The question thus becomes, what made the Maoists change their ideology, or, what made the political line that argued for compromise win forth within the party? In this respect it is useful to recap what Eagleton said about ideological discourse in the chapter on ideology: “[Ideological discourse is] A complex network of empirical and normative elements, within which the nature and organization of the former is ultimately determined by the requirements of the latter” (Eagleton 1991: 23). In other words, the normative requirements of the Maoists required a change in the “nature and organization” of their ideology. To not make it too complicated, we can explain

the normative requirements of the Maoists as their wish to make changes in Nepali society. To change Nepali society, the Maoists need to get people on a grand scale to carry out their plans. In other words, the Maoists need power and they need control of, or influence over, the state. The civil war had seen the Maoists trying to get power by using violent means. But the situation of the civil war in its second phase, from 2001 and to 2005, was quite different from the first phase, which was characterized by rapid Maoist advance at the expense of state control, and growing support for the Maoist cause. After 2001, the situation changed into a stalemate, where the Maoists were unable to defeat the army, or hold district centres and cities. On the other hand, the army was not able to defeat the Maoists due to their support in rural Nepal (Mehta 76-80). Thus, in order to achieve their goal of power to change Nepal, the Maoists found it necessary to use other means to achieve their goals. This meant to open up for a negotiated settlement with the state, where the Maoists would lay down arms in exchange for elections to a constituent assembly tasked with writing a new constitution for Nepal. This is not to say however, that the Maoists by opening up for a negotiated settlement gave up the armed struggle entirely. The peace talks were seen as a “tactical alternative” by the Maoists, to complement the armed strategy, rather than replacing it. The change in ideology justified negotiations with the state within the Maoist ideological framework by explaining it as necessary due to the change in imperialism, and also due to the specificities of Nepal. Locked in between India and China, the Maoists acknowledged that the solution to the conflict had to be acceptable to both of the neighbours. But they also had to explain in some way the change from the strategy and rhetoric of the early part of the civil war. This change in strategy was understood as showing tactical flexibility, in order to achieve long-term goals. In the Maoist rhetoric they had not given up the struggle, they had just adapted to a changing situation by showing political flexibility. We have seen that the Maoists changed their ideology to justify negotiations with the state, while they at the same time did not leave the armed struggle. What we now need to ask is why the Maoists changed their ideology in this way? What was it that made it advisable to also work for a negotiated settlement with the state?

## **6.2 Consciousness Follows From Being**

To better understand the link between the war effort of the Maoists and the change in ideology it is fruitful at this point to use the words of Karl Marx. The heading on this

section implies that the thoughts of people are formed by the reality they live, and what they do, an idea formulated by Karl Marx in *The German Ideology* (Online Version 2007). The change in ideology of the Maoists was not brought about by independent development in their ideology department. Rather, it was a product of experiences from, and a changing understanding of the conditions for, the armed struggle against the state in Nepal. I will now go through some of the experiences that I see as crucial for the Maoists ideological change and their “tactical flexibility”.

The most important aspect of the civil war for the Maoists was the fact that they were not winning it. During the first phase they had success, and drove the state and the police out of large parts of the countryside in Nepal. After 2001 and the army's entrance into the conflict the war developed more towards a stalemate. The Maoists controlled the countryside, while the army controlled cities and district headquarters, with neither side being able to beat the other decisively. The Maoists had strong rural support and a terrain favourable to guerrilla tactics, while the army were superior in weapons and technology. This should be seen in connection with the fact that the army could rely on the state for financing the war effort; while the Maoists had to rely on what resources they could squeeze out of an already impoverished countryside. Nepal also started to receive large amounts of military aid to fight the Maoists, especially after 9/11 and the beginning of the war on terror. Large amounts of military hardware came from India, The US and the UK<sup>34</sup>.

The Maoists were left with bank robbing and taxation as their main ways of acquiring their funding (Magar 2004: 99). A problem inherent in taxing the rural population, as the Maoists have done to a large degree, is that it may lead to falling support. In a time when the movement has success, as was the situation in the first part of the war, support may be high among the people. But when the war turns into a stalemate, and the people has to finance the stalemate by paying tax to the Maoists, it is natural that the support falls. This falling support was acknowledged by the Maoist leader Prachanda in an interview in 2006 (*The Worker* #10 2006: 10-12). Global and regional powers were also sceptical towards the Maoists, and the Indian view on supporting the Nepali state against the Maoists was, as we saw in the chapter on the civil war, formulated as “the sky is the limit”(As quoted in Pandey 2005: 96). I believe that all these factors were essential in shaping Maoist perception and

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<sup>34</sup> See the chapter on the civil war for more on this issue.



experiences of the civil war in Nepal, and important for understanding the change in ideology that opened up for a negotiated settlement.

Another consideration is whether the cost of the war in terms of human suffering played a part in the Maoist calculations. Since 1996 over 13000 people have been killed, and countless others been internally displaced. In addition comes lower food productions as a cause of the war, and all kinds of disruptions of normal life that makes it harder to get by for common people. It is my viewpoint that such considerations have not been the basis for the Maoist strategy. Simply because when one goes to war, one perceives oneself to be in the right, and the enemy in the wrong, and therefore the enemy is the one responsible for the horrors of the war. Even though it is impossible for the researcher to understand the full extent of the destruction and suffering the civil war has brought upon Nepal, he should still strive to reflect on it. If not for anything else than remembering that researching civil war is not only about the validity of sources and research method, it is also about the fates of human beings.

### **6.3 Leadership Struggle and Political Struggle**

During 2004 and 2005 a struggle between the two leading figures of the Maoists took place. The party made some of the details of it public on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2005. The struggle started after Baburam Bhattarai, second in command after Prachanda, criticized the party leadership for centralizing power in their own hands, and that the concept of Prachanda Path was an expression of a cult of personality around Prachanda. The party leadership answered by expelling Bhattarai and his closest circle. What are really interesting are the political disagreements that are hinted at in the documents<sup>35</sup> released by the CPN (M). It appears that the fundamental political disagreement between the two is whether the main contradiction is between the people and the Monarchy, or between the people and the Indian ruling classes. Bhattarai was of the view that the contradiction between the people and the King is the more important one, which in turn implies that Bhattarai saw the King as the main enemy of the Maoists (Bhattarai 2004). Prachanda on the other hand, was of the view that the main enemy of the people would be the Indian ruling classes, and that the Maoists should prepare for an Indian invasion. In the case of an Indian invasion,

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<sup>35</sup> The debate was made public by the party and was published in Monthly Review.

the King could potentially be a tactical ally for the Maoists (CPN (M) press statement 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2004). An expression of this political line is the fact that Maoists built trenches along the Indian border as late as 2004 (Prachanda September 2005). It seems likely that this political line was the dominant within the party until the royal takeover on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005. During a plenum meeting of the Central Committee of the CPN (M) it was stated that Indian expansionism was the main external obstacle to a peaceful solution in Nepal (Press Statement 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2004). Furthermore it was stated at the meeting that:

“The independence of Nepal and the Nepalese people can be preserved by turning the whole country into a war front, by militarising all people, and by raising the war strategy to a new height against military interventions of imperialism and expansionism”(Press Statement 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2004). Military intervention would in the Maoist view come from India.

This view had consequences for what tactical alliances the Maoists could commit themselves to inside Nepal as well. If India were the main enemy, it would not be advisable to seek an alliance with the parties, since the biggest political party, Nepali Congress, traditionally have had strong links to India. This is especially interesting when we take into account the calls for peace talks from the Maoists since 2001, when they had called for a united front against the King, who they saw as regressive, as opposite of progressive. In my view this is an expression of political struggle within the CPN (M), where external circumstances would affect the outcome. My interpretation of the leadership struggle within the party in 2004 and 2005 is that it was an expression of struggle between two political lines within the party. The line expressed by Bhattarai held that the King was the main enemy, and that in order to defeat the King, a tactical alliance with the political parties was the right course of action. Such an alliance would need the approval of India of some sort, which was why the Maoists sent two of their leaders to India in the spring of 2005 to find out the positions of the Indian parties of an alliance between Maoists and parties in Nepal. It was no coincidence that Bhattarai was one of the participants in the delegation.

The other political line was expressed by Prachanda and viewed India as the main enemy. Furthermore it saw an Indian intervention as very likely if the conflict in Nepal would continue, and the Maoists get the upper hand. With invasion from India, it could be possible to seek alliances within what the Maoists view as the

feudal class of Nepal, namely the King and the army (Raman 2005). This leadership struggle was resolved in the spring of 2005 when Bhattarai was reinstated in the party<sup>36</sup>. In a note dated 27<sup>th</sup> of May, published in Monthly Review it is stated that the Maoists are participating in the movement against the feudal aristocracy (CPN (M) Press Statement 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). It is also stated that the CPN (M) comrades in India are merely “building support for the movement”. In my view, what can be read from this is the following; the line that advocated that the King was the main enemy had won forth in the party. And furthermore, that one wanted to find out where India stood in the Nepali conflict. Events outside of Maoist control played a large role in making the political line viewing the King as the main enemy win forth within the party. The most important was without doubt King Gyanendra’s coup.

#### **6.4 The Royal Coup – Paving the Way for Peace?**

The event that more than anything else opened up for an alliance between the Maoists and the political parties in Nepal was King Gyanendra’s coup on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005. This brought Maoists and parties together on a common political platform against the King. India reacted to the coup by stopping their military aid to Nepal. It is my view that the royal coup was important in making the ideas of the “South Block” become dominant within the Indian government. This set of ideas argued for an inclusion of the Maoists in the political mainstream, and that this could have a moderating effect on the Maoist movements in India. In May of 2005 the Maoist leaders Baburam Bhattarai and Krishna B. Mahara travelled to India to learn the positions of the Indian political establishment on the situation in Nepal and as Prachanda put it; “building support for the democratic movement.”(CPN (M) Press Statement 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). The initiatives taken in the spring led to the signing of a twelve-point agreement in November of 2005. The agreement was possible only after negotiations between the Maoists and the political parties in India, facilitated by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). This coming together was made possible by the royal coup. Gyanendra’s coup made the political line holding that the King and feudalism was the main enemy win forth within the Maoist party. It contributed to the dominance of the “South Bloc” ideas within the Indian government (Power and Interest News Report 2005, September 27<sup>th</sup>). And it made the political parties

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<sup>36</sup> Bhattarai was officially reinstated in the party leadership at a meeting of the Central Committee in Chunbang, Rolpa district in October of 2005.

cooperate against the King and form the Seven Party Alliance, which in turn signed the twelve-point agreement with the Maoists. Without the alliance between the Maoists and the parties, with Indian blessing, it is doubtful whether the people's movement of April 2006 would have taken place, and thus, whether there would have been a peace treaty in Nepal. When Gyanendra took power in the coup, he vowed to restore democracy within three years, and one could perhaps say that he did just that. Not in the way pictured by himself perhaps, but he certainly contributed to the formation of the alliance between the Maoists and the parties that brought peace to Nepal.

It is difficult to tell what kind of calculations were behind the King's coup, and why he thought it would succeed. On the other hand, it is easy to judge it as a tactical error on the part of the King in retrospect. It seems plausible that Gyanendra at the time counted on Indian support for the coup. If China had assured him of continued Chinese support<sup>37</sup>, he might have calculated that India did not dare to stop their support, for fear of losing influence in Nepal. Instead, India changed course and supported the parties and the Maoists against the King. This was also quite a change from the earlier stance where “the sky was the limit” for support for the King against the Maoists. Gyanendra could also have overestimated the support for the Monarchy in Nepal. Isolation from the majority of the population, along with the fact that the King was surrounded by his advisers may have led him to believe that support for the Monarchy was strong, when it in reality was very low. The Indian journalist Ritu Raj Mate who covered the Nepali peace process for Reuters held this view, and pointed to the fact that the King hardly ever met with the common people of Nepal, but instead based his image of Nepal on what basically were staged meetings with royalist supporters (Mate 2006 [conversation]). This is not an explanation of why Gyanendra and the palace calculated as they did, but it is pointing to something important in the relation between the King and Nepali society, namely the isolation of the King from the people and the possible misconceptions about reality that could have developed from it.

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<sup>37</sup> In this respect it is interesting to note that the Tibetan refugee office in Kathmandu was closed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2005 on orders from the Nepali Home Ministry (World Tibet Network News 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2005).

### **6.5 The Indian Connection, the Communist Party of India (CPI) (Marxist)**

As has been discussed earlier in this thesis, India has always been an important factor in Nepali politics. This was also the case in the peace process, where the CPI (Marxist) played an important role in bringing together the Maoists and the parties. Sitaram Yechuri, a member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI (Marxist) was important in the peace process, and was contributed to the formation of the twelve-point agreement. Interestingly enough, he studied at the Jawaharlal Nehru University along with the Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai in his youth. In contrast to the Maoist parties in India that the Nepali Maoists are close to politically, the CPI (Marxist) is a reformist party working through parliament and existing political channels rather than armed struggle. After the 2004 election in India the CPI (Marxist) became influential in Delhi after the Congress Party won with the support of the CPI (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India. They took over after a coalition led by the Indian People's Party (BJP), which sees itself as standing for Hindutva, which is explained as Hindu nationalism (Bharatiya Janata Party 2007). They have been critical of Nepal losing its status as a Hindu nation, and are closer politically to the ideas that argue for a solution in Nepal that includes the King. The Maoists perceive the BJP to be close to the King, and it seems likely that if the BJP had won the elections in India in 2004, scepticism would have been far greater among the Nepali Maoists. It is also interesting to note that the CPI (Marxist) holds power in the state of West-Bengal in India, which borders Nepal and has a Maoist problem on its own. It could therefore be held that West-Bengal and the CPI (Marxist) has a special interest in a peaceful Nepal, as it might both restrain the Maoist guerrillas of West Bengal and also cooperation between the Nepali and Indian Maoists.

### **6.6 Conclusion – Why Did the Maoists Join the Peace Process?**

In this chapter I have discussed why the Maoists joined the peace process, and showed that the decision must be understood in light of several other developments in the civil war.

There was a change in Maoist ideology that first can be seen in the documents from the Second National Conference in 2001. Before the peace negotiations in the spring of 2003 this change was more or less complete. It consisted of a new view on imperialism, that in turn had consequences for the Maoist strategy in Nepal. The most important was that it justified peace negotiations with the state in terms of

Maoist ideology. But the debate still continued within the party on whether the King or the Indian ruling classes should be viewed as the main enemy. After the Royal coup of 2005, the Maoists joined the political parties in an alliance against the King, with the approval of India. The political parties saw their position being threatened by the increasing power of the King, and after the coup they managed to put their quarrels aside and formed the Seven Party Alliance, which in turn signed the twelve-point agreement and allied themselves with the Maoists. India played an important role in bringing the parties together, and especially the CPI (Marxist) was important. This must be seen in connection with the Royal coup in 2005, but also the Indian general elections of 2004. There were two main political lines in the Indian government, one arguing for a stable Nepal with the parties and the King, while the other emphasized the need to include the Maoists in the political mainstream. After February 2005 Indian policy was carried out on basis of the latter view, and King Gyanendra became more or less isolated internationally. The Maoists decision to join the peace process should not be seen as a decision taken by an entity. Rather, events outside of Maoist control affected the struggle between different political views inside the party. With that said, it is important to also emphasize that the Maoists themselves were an important element in the calculations of the other parties in the conflict. It is impossible to isolate one particular decision or event and say that it was the sole reason for peace. Rather, one must look upon it as a process that influenced the decisions of all participating parties, but at the same time the process was formed by their decisions. The ideological change of the Maoists must be understood in light of the development of the civil war, while the outcome of the civil war must be understood in light of the ideological change, as well as the actions of the King, the parties and India.

Another way of answering the question of why the Maoists joined the peace process is to see it in terms of push and pull factors. The Maoists were pushed towards compromise by the fact that they were not able to defeat the state militarily. At the same time, opportunities for power opened up in the centre with the willingness of the Seven Party Alliance to join the Maoists against the King, and thus worked as a pull factor. The changing policy of India with regard to the Maoists was important in creating opportunities for power in the centre, and should also be seen as a pull factor. Whether one chooses to use concepts as push and pull factors or processes within organizations that were actors in the conflict, the main point is that

the events are connected to each other, and should be understood together, not isolated. And it is these connections, or relations, that I have sought to highlight in this paper.

## **Chapter 7: Concluding Remarks**

This chapter will provide some concluding remarks on my thesis, and say something about how I view my work in retrospect. It will explain what I attempted to do from the beginning, what I learned during the process, and also point out some limitations of my work, as well as reflections on what could have been done differently.

Towards the end, I will briefly mention some of the reflections I have done with regard to the issue of international solidarity during the research process.

### **7.1 What Was Attempted?**

This paper has attempted to explain why the Maoists in Nepal joined the peace process. To find out more about this, I travelled to Nepal to conduct qualitative interviews with civil society, politicians, Maoists and others. During this process I realised that qualitative interviews were not enough to answer my research question in a satisfying way. This realization led to me to explore the large amount of written sources about the conflict. These took the form of newspaper articles, interviews with Maoist leaders and other documents published by the Maoists. The Internet proved to be a convenient and efficient way of acquiring these sources. In short, one could say that what was attempted was to say something about the decision-making processes of the main actors of the civil war in Nepal, with a focus on the Maoists. This “something” would be said on the basis of written and oral sources from the civil war in Nepal, interpreted in light of what I had learned from reading the work on Nepal of other scholars, and also my own fieldwork in the country.

### **7.2 What Was Learned?**

Besides the conclusions spelled out in the previous chapter, the research process also brought several other insights. First of all, I realised the futility of viewing historical happenings as isolated events. Rather, I developed an understanding of the need to view events as interconnected. Through the work with the thesis, I learned the importance of having some sort of epistemological framework, to be able to express one’s findings in a precise way. I furthermore learned, that what is attempted at the start of the research process, is not necessarily what one is attempting to do at the end of it. In other words, what is attempted changes through the process itself, and the research process is not a straight line from A to B, but rather a process where new



insights raise new questions, which point forward to new insights and new questions again. My research process led me to the conclusion that my goal, and thus what I attempted, was to construct what Abrams calls objects of explanation (Abrams 1984: 193-193). My goal has been to construct explanations of why the Maoists joined the peace process in Nepal. This was achieved by doing several things. The most important was without doubt the establishing of a chronology of events. Based on this chronology, I was able to say something about how the actors influenced the situation in Nepal, while they at the same time were formed by it. I was also able to highlight the processes that were decisive in bringing about the peace process, and the Maoist decision to take part in it. A quality of my thesis is that it gives an overview over recent events in Nepal that not much has been written about yet. It also presents some insights into these events, and the processes that were at work in bringing about the peace process.

### **7.3 What are the Limitations of my Study?**

There are also some limitations in my approach to the subject. The most obvious is the narrow focus of my take on the conflict. I have studied the dynamics of the conflict with a focus on the political leadership of the Maoists, and the other organizations. This has meant that grassroots perspectives and the voices of activists to a large degree have been left out. It would be naïve to believe that the Maoist leadership is the basis of the Maoist movement; rather it is the lower level cadres and the soldiers in the Maoist army that has fought the war. The bottom-up perspective would, however, have been a far grander undertaking than my master thesis allows for. There has also been a need to balance the focus and detail of the thesis along the way. On one side it should be comprehensible to people not familiar with the political situation in Nepal, and on the other side it should have a level of detail sufficient for an in depth analysis. The thesis could be said to be a compromise between these two factors

Another issue that has been largely left out of my thesis due to my focus on the political leadership is the issue of Maoist support. I have not been able to say much about how and why the Maoists have gotten support. Rather, I have worked on the assumption that they have had a great deal of popular support, instead of trying to analyze its causes. Other issues that could be mentioned that I would have liked to pay more attention to are: the question of class in the conflict, the question of ethnic

identity in the conflict, and the question of gender and the Maoist movement. All these questions have been consciously left out in order to achieve a degree of preciseness in the thesis. But I am the first to admit that all these issues are important for understanding the conflict, and increased attention to them would have strengthened my argument. However, due to restraints in both time and space, I had to keep my focus narrow, in order to be able to answer the research question with the necessary precision.

Another issue that might be seen as a limitation by some scholars, while cherished as a strength by others, is the lack of generalizing claims. For the political scientist the conflict in Nepal would be a good scenario to use theories on civil war such as the ones advocated by David Keen under the label Greed theory (Berdal & Malone 2000). However, with a background in history, I have chosen to focus on the conflict in Nepal as a unique case, rather than as a conflict falling into a category defined on the basis of an entirely other conflict. In my view the conflict in Nepal is a conflict that has arisen under specific historical circumstances, as well as in a specific international environment. Nepal's position between India and China, as well as the 9/11 attacks on the US make the international environment unique for the conflict. Furthermore, the Maoist movement in Nepal has had the experiences of former Maoist movements to draw on, and formed their own unique analysis of the situation. One movement that has been compared with the Maoists in Nepal by several scholars (Mikesell: 1993; Nickson: 1992) is the Shining Path guerillas of Peru. It is my view that the CPN (M)'s analysis of the Shining Path played an important role in forming their strategy, and thus one must keep in mind that the two are not identical, nor the same. But then again, this is the view of the historian, not the political scientist. This is not the same as saying that generalization from the case of Nepal is impossible, but generalization is far beyond the scope of this master thesis.

#### **7.4 What Could Have Been Done Differently?**

After a data gathering process on a subject one is not very familiar with, one can always point out things one should have done differently in retrospect. For my part, the thing I would like to point out that could have had an impact on the data gathering process, is the preparation before fieldwork. A few more months for literature study and data collection on the Internet before departure would have made

for a much more fruitful fieldwork in Nepal, and also allowed me to dig deeper into the subject matter. Furthermore, I think it would have been useful to establish contact with the university of Tribhuvan in Kathmandu before departure from Norway. A co-supervisor or contact person during my stay in Kathmandu would definitely have allowed for more efficient use of my time on fieldwork, and spared me for a lot of worries while in Nepal. I contacted Tribhuvan University after arrival, but I got the impression that an official contact established via the Center for Peace Studies or the University of Tromsø would have been more successful in securing support or advice from Tribhuvan.

I also regret that I have not had more contact with other researchers writing about the conflict in Nepal. An academic forum to discuss views on the civil war and the Maoists could have been a great asset to my research. With that said, I must also add that there have been other good possibilities to discuss Nepal, both with people in solidarity movements and on the Norwegian left.

### **7.5 What New Questions Have Been Raised?**

My thesis has dealt with the dynamics and decision making in the CPN (M), and focused on the relations between the actors in the conflict, interpreted as the Maoists, the King, the political parties, and to some extent India and the global environment. During my work I have realized that a different approach also would have been very interesting to take, namely to look closer into the dynamics within the Maoist organization. Such a study could focus on the relationship between the grassroots of the CPN (M) and the central committee and politburo. This could give insights into how decisions were being made in the organization, and the role of the party leadership versus the lower level cadres.

Another question is that of Maoist mobilization on the countryside in Nepal. A study with a focus on the relationship between the Maoist organization and those outside it could give insights into why people joined the Maoist movement, and what strategies the Maoists employ to raise support for their cause. Differences in Maoist approaches between the rural areas and the urban areas would also have made for an important investigation in my view.

All in all, I feel that the conflict in Nepal is of great interest to social scientists in general, and peace researchers in particular. I believe that the coming years will see an increasing amount of work done on the conflict and peace process in Nepal.

## 7.6 Supporting the Maoists?

Throughout the whole research process, I have struggled with the question whether the Maoists were in the right or not in launching an armed campaign against the state. There is not room for recapitulating all the arguments for and against here, but my personal dilemma was as follow. The demands of the Maoists as listed in the 40-point demand list are just, and the majority of the people in Nepal agree to this. The civil war has cost the lives of over 13000 people, a fact impossible to understand fully for an outsider. Nepal before the civil war was characterized by severe structural repression and exploitation. The conflict is between one side fighting for change, and one fighting for status quo. Not choosing sides will be the same as indirectly supporting the stronger side, and therefore defending the status quo over changes that I believe would be for the better (as expressed in the 40-point demand list). But would not solidarity with the Maoists mean acceptance of 13000 dead? In other words, I was not able to find any hard and fast solution to the question of which side to choose in the conflict, or what would be the morally right thing to do. On the other hand, I realized that the civil war is, at present, over. So any eventual support from me, moral or material for any of the sides, would be of a hypothetical nature only. What I can have a practical effect on is the situation today. I then realized that the important question is what do I want to contribute to by any eventual solidarity in practice? My answer to this question is that I want to contribute to processes in Nepal that increase the role of the majority of the people in forming their own future. In other words, I want to contribute to developments that make the majority of the population in Nepal into political subjects, rather than being objects acted upon by well-meaning political leaders. It is my view at present, that the agenda of the Maoists in Nepal is the agenda that most likely will contribute to the majority in Nepal becoming political subjects rather than objects. I am not saying that it will like this for a long time, or that the Maoists are the genuine expression of the political will of people in Nepal. Rather, I base this assumption on the fact that at the time being, the Maoists are the ones putting demands of equal rights for women, dalits and other suppressed groups strongest on the agenda. This situation might change, and other actors might prove to be more genuinely fighting for positive change. But for the time being it seems to me that the Maoists are the ones right now raising the important demands in Nepali society. This answer was not what was important for me personally in reflecting about international solidarity. Rather, the

process of getting to it taught me that people concerned with international solidarity should at all times ask the question; “What are the implications of this for the situation of common people?” The important thing is not what banner is flying over the parliament; the important thing is the everyday life of common people, and their influence over their own lives.

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