

Media's Role in Nation-Building¹ in Nepal

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Introduction

Nation-building has assumed uppermost priority in many post-conflict societies. The need to belong to a common national life has gone a sea change with the onset of modernization and democratization processes. Citizens are seeking new rationalist values, life-styles, communication and positivist spirits for both adaptation and progress. "People define themselves in terms of ancestry: religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and at the broadest level civilizations" (Huntington, 1997:21). A nation is largely homogenous entity based on the consent of people while the state is based on the Weberian legitimate monopoly of power. The state has the ability to stand above the dominant interests of society, capacity to implement laws, policies and development programs and embed itself in the general will of citizens. Nation is a cultural construct while the state is legal and political one. Nationhood is based on certain exclusion of political rights to non-natives while the statehood rests on resources, recognition and separate identity in the community of nation-states. The state is based on a dynamic alliance between government and the governed and inclusive of all citizens. Both, however, utilize national memory and make a distinction between insiders and outsiders of the well-defined political space—*lebensraum*, hold their own *weltanschauung*, the worldview rooted into national consciousness and continuously nurse the national sentiment of co-nationals.

Nepali state is territorial but its citizens are spread over 127 countries of the world. They are retaining Nepali identity. Unlike other people, Nepali diasporas, therefore, are asserting Nepali identity and claiming double citizenship. "Through the determined and diligent efforts of the Nepali diasporas, especially in different parts of India, the language and its literary foundation became strengthened, thus allowing the narrative of Nepali nationalism to find a wider voice and appeal in the form of Nepal's national identity at home and abroad" (Shrestha and Dahal, 2008: 1807). This falsifies the belief that globalization homogenizes the cultures and fosters cultural assimilation. Obviously, global values and Nepal's historical heritage find a fusion in opposing cultural racism, fundamentalism and xenophobia, a sort of recourse to cultural relativism.

Nepali nation-state has survived as the group of people. Nepali citizens maintained their historical memory through constant communication and interaction across various generations of people for the creation of a more inclusive political system and engaged in economic reconstruction, social reconciliation and development. The ideology of the nation—nationalism-- has a powerful communicative effect: it has liberated many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America from feudalism, colonialism and imperial control. Some of the liberated nations, however, used nationalism to oppress their own people which incubated a strong sentiment for sub-nationalism. The sub-nationalism of Yugoslavia with its primordial affinity to Serbs, Croats and Slovenes caused civil wars and state split. The notion of the nation at times values group rights over personal rights and fosters community life of the people. To affirm its peculiar destiny the United States has accepted the indivisibility of one nation despite the enormous diversity of people.

Nation-building is hobbled if the state cannot fulfill the rights of citizens for equal membership of democratic community and remains deeply penetrated by global system networks. Nepali media's advocacy role continuously highlights this contradiction and supports the social struggle of people for justice, reconciliation and peace. They accord primacy of law-based rights than customary code. This, however, requires a shift away from adversarial approaches toward cooperative solutions. The practice of our daily living together rests on communication. Communication constructs ethical discourse as democratic principles are applied in their articulation in the process of shaping universal citizenship and human being and facilitates the transformation of nations into the nation-states.

¹ This is updated version of the Keynote address made by the author on "Media and Nation-Building in Nepal" organized by FES for senior journalists and Chief editors of various newspapers, TV and radios of Nepal on August 8-9, 2014 at Nagarkot.

Situating the Concept

The traditional concept of a nation defined by common ancestry, language and religion has been shifted to the multi-culturalization of the nation-states caused by migration, cross-cultural marriage, modernization, democracy and the spread of global values. It continues to standardize food, music, dress, symbols, language of communication, film and entertainment and contributed to the intermixture of cultures. Karl Deutsch, Lucian W. Pye, Ernest Renan, Charles Tilly, Reinhard Bendix and Daniel Lerner use the concept “nation-building” to describe the process of national consolidation leading to the formation of modern constitutional state which is distinct from feudal, dynastic, theocratic, praetorian and predatory states. Successful nation-building offers incentives for the people to redefine their relationship with the nation-state and muster their allegiance to it, instead of towards particular leader, civil society, pre-political solidarity organization, NGO, region or religion. Modern nation-states assume “instrumental value premises” of modernization² but face a situation where technology and economy are overrunning national politics.

What makes a viable nation in troubled places? Is it religion? Certainly not, Nepalese, Indians and Americans practice many religions. Does common language? Certainly not. Israelis, Pakistanis and Nepalese speak many languages? Pakistan was split from the Indian sub-continent in the name of Islam but Bangladesh splintered from Pakistan in the name of language. Does common history make a nation? Certainly not, for Africans, Israelis and Arabs have multicolored histories. Does ethnicity or common race make a nation? Certainly not. People of same ethnicity have fought wars in Europe, Japan, Korea, China, Mongolia and Indo-China. Ethiopia and Somalia have set recent examples of ethnic strife in Africa. Germans and Austrians belong to the same race but are separate nation-states. Does common territory make a nation? Certainly not. Palestinians are scattered in many countries. These factors suggest that no criterion clearly defines the nation and each of them divides the humanity.

Samuel P. Huntington says that most of nation-states of the world and their civilizations are formed on the basis of religion and language (1997:59). This raises a question as to whether “Western political forms and ideals are appropriate or even relevant” (Pye, 1962:2) for nation-building in developing countries including Nepal with different values, cultures, languages and multi-layered contexts. It requires giving people of different culture a vision to create its own nation-state rather than only emulate advanced countries which is not owned by the people. Nepalese scholars, statespersons and ordinary persons organized consensus-oriented *Shastrartha* (critical discourse) as a mode of socialization and knowledge-building had triumphed across separate cultural lines and contributed to national communication and rationalization of society as per the *zeitgeist*, the Spirit of the Age. Of course, many of these factors have contributed to reinforce national memory in one way or the other and new technologies of mass communication transmitted messages from top-down, outside-in and capital to rural areas where sub-culture of peasantry subsisted untouched. The penumbra of “collective memory” of Nepali people nurtured by images of national heroes and builders, martyrs, museums, monuments, statutes, artists, poets, teachers, historians, etc and daily communication to the people by media nursed the endurance of civil society with the enlightenment potential of modernity. Democratic media as a means of political socialization transform people into citizen and link them to national political culture. Parochial media, however, interact in multi-centric ways and report group-differentiated rights, stoke partisanization of society and removed the boundary between political and non-political spheres thereby increasing costs for nation-building.

Two critical challenges Nepalese media face are: how to bridge the gaps of cultural fragmentation between the urban and Westernized elites whose members are alienated from national values and institutions and rural masses who stay with native values and tradition (Coleman, 1971:544) and between the netizens whose membership is defined by the participation in the virtual world of internet and citizens who have legendary bond with the land and culture and participate in the real life-world. This duality has

² These value premises are: “rationality, development and development planning, rise of productivity, rise of the level of living, social and economic equalization, improved institutions and attitudes, national consolidation, national independence, democracy at the grassroots level and social discipline” (Myrdal, 1971:23-28).

diffused the loyalty of Nepali citizens to many domains of power affecting a cohesive nation-building process. Democratization and modernization processes are, however, transforming formal tribal states into modern constitutional system and limited-access order to a state based on open-access order. The *right to information* embedded in the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 has entailed the governance processes transparent. At the same time, communication of grievances has exposed various forms of social struggles including those of women who demand redefined status, opportunity, access to power and authority and recognition of their identity. As a result of their struggle, Nepali state has also enlarged the domain of women's rights in various areas—*reproduction rights, equal parental property and authority, right against exploitation, non-discrimination, social inclusion and affirmative action or positive discrimination* in education, health, income-generation, security and peace-promotion activities. These are essential preconditions to enable Nepal become a gender-neutral nation-state. The Nepali nation-state now, however, faces the crisis of demand overload and, consequently, several dysfunctions and entropy are causing information uncertainty and system disorder.

Model of Communication and Control

Noted political scientist Karl Deutsch argues that “politics and government appear in essence as *processes steering and coordinating* human efforts toward the attainment of some set of goals” (Young, 1968:50). His book, *The Nerves of Government* (1963) systematically applies the cybernetic analysis of governance. He says that political system is like information-receiving and processing human brain. Problems of steering begin not with the lack of power but due to problems of communication flows and multiple feedback channels. The *entire functions of democracy*—political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule making, rule application and rule adjudication are performed by the means of communication (Almond, 1971:43). “Adaptation takes place in the economy and in the areas of scientific and technological change” (Pfaltzgraff, 1972:91). Technology of communication has standardized the functional efficiency of the system and supported a balance between the supply and demand of market forces and visibilized the powerless through the educational efforts and collective action of civil society. The cohesiveness of the political system rests on effective communication and social integration. “Communication is the cement that makes organizations. Communication alone enables a group to think together, to see together and to act together. All sociology requires the understanding of communication” (Deutsch, 1964: 77). The capacity of a political system to “respond to inputs or demands as represented by information contained in messages provides an important indicator of its ability to endure under condition of stress” (Pfaltzgraff, 1972:93).

The *density of communication* by satellite, TV, radio, internet, telephone, film and social media carries information, ideas, sounds and images. This has changed the binary code of politics played on the dialectics of friend and foe, representative democracy into participatory democracy, transactional leaders into transformational leaders, exclusive national interest into shared interests, class-based party system into catch-all parties and new social stratification. The information and knowledge-based society is also changing its cultural transmission and political culture. Nepalese media have increasingly exposed the contradiction of society inviting policy intervention appropriate for cultural learning, code of ethics, conflict sensitivity and nation-building. Efficient communication by professional journalists can contribute to the creation of a cohesive community. In this context, public ownership of media and their autonomy from the interest groups of society are important for the messages they convey to ordinary citizens and seek their loyalty to the nation. In developing countries argues Lucian W, Pye, “the source of dynamic change often resides largely within the formal structures of government, which do not represent *the institutionalization of indigenous cultural patterns but rather foreign importations*” (1962:4). Such blind importation of alien ideas regardless of contextual relevance ignores the communication of “the inner world of abstract thought, concept, belief, mental images, intentions and self-awareness” (Capra, 2004:47) marking barriers to behavioral coordination of various actors. Social and cultural structures and personality factors determine the important aspects of preferential attention of media in Nepal. Many of these problems in Nepal have created authority, rationality and legitimacy deficits.

Cognizance of the mediatization of society, *Nepal's political leaders have begun to communicate more to media than among themselves for political ends, use power equation analysis and seek to alter the rules of the game based on feedback they receive from their supporters.* Feedback from the popular expectation and action is, however, more important for the attainment of the national consolidation goals of society (Myrdal,1971: 40)³ and secure democracy's appropriate functioning. It informs the risks associated with the decay of political system or "instabilities relevant for possible innovation" (Deutsch, 1970:217) and change. Media are the *learning institutions for problem solving and coordinating with various actors*—state, market, local institutions and civil society. These institutions are the providers of public goods and services. External information is important for internal adjustments to change occurring at the societal and political levels. Nepali media persons are engaging with international media to bring an end to impunity, improve journalists' safety and security, implement media laws and enhance their career prospect so as to rationalize both society and the state and use humanitarian norms as a reference points to generate meaning and value of truth.

Means of media are *political barometers*. They report about the condition of society, articulate and communicate the demands (educational, health, technological, ecological, political, social, economic, etc) of people, generate support for democracy and improve the visibility of people to the government and government to the people to maintain a sort of *self-regulating dynamic equilibrium—homeostasis*, the ability of democracy to maintain separation, checks, balance and decentralization of power even while undergoing post-conflict transition to stable peace. Democratic government is considered not only as a nexus of parliament, administration and adjudication branches but also shapers of civic culture of citizens and their channels of communications with the national and international systems. Leaders and citizens are tied by constant feedback of communication so as to prevent the performance crisis of polity. The operationalization of media within the recognizable limits of constitution can produce *democratic stability*, notwithstanding diverse nature of media in Nepal. In so doing, media bring the attention of government and non-government agencies to address demands of society, create common ground for conflict resolution, increase the security outreach of the state, build state-society interface and promote social peace. The fulfillment of the demand of Nepalese journalists for a democratic media environment is essential to strengthen the *national integrity system* of governing institutions.

As a part of cultural industry, media, educational institutions and civil society are *critical masses* of society. They reflect human condition of Nepali citizens, serve as connectors of the private and the public spheres and engines of peaceful change of society from *Gemeinschaft* (natural will) to *Gesellschaft* (rational will) embodying the primacy of law and social contract over the sanity of tradition, culture and religion. The ability of media to cut across social divisions and party politics may eventually modify "a physical relationship into in affective relationship" (Weinstein, 1964:570). If media, intellectuals and civil society have no cultural memory then they have no identity either (Heller, 2001: 140). Nation-building is closely connected with the national *acculturation process*, a process that seeks to balance the "inherent conflict between need for order and the need for continuing change" (Pye, 1962:35). Conflict becomes destructive when timely change is clogged. In this context, media provide useful inputs for problem-solving by supporting democratic process and increase the cost for those who do not comply with both contents and processes. It also becomes risky when media competition for news generates sensesalism, advertisement rate determines news circulation, media monopolize public opinion and partisan journalism weakens both the opposition and the voice of conscience expressed through public intellectuals and minorities. These tendencies undermine democratic nation-building. This is the reason Juergen Habermas has stressed the need for *communicative action*, an action oriented toward reaching understanding between various actors, resolving problems and maintaining social peace (1996:18). Nation-building in a post-conflict setting like Nepal requires normative communication completely free of domination of vested interest groups. "The

³ "Ideally, national consolidation means a national system of government, courts and administration that is effective, cohesive and internally united in purpose and action, with unchallenged authority over all regions and groups within the boundaries of the state" (Myrdal, 1971:40). The empirical divides of South Asia, however, pose problems in national consolidation as loyalties over particular identities override national loyalty of citizens.

cultural subsystems, which include mass communications, religion and education, fulfill the *integrative function*” (Pfaltzgraff, 1972: 91) necessary for system survival in a variety of circumstances. The social communication and social mobilization, migration pattern, circulation of goods and services and market exchange in Nepal require a separate study on three zones of communication—the capital city, Kathmandu, district headquarters and link towns and the vast rural periphery. The Constituent Assembly of Nepal is precisely set up to rebuild this nation from below by communicating people’s rights, needs and aspirations but suffered at the hand of professional politicians who left them without much role except to consume the tantalizing talk of a new constitution.

Building National Identity

The process by which small groups and identities are transformed into a national community is called building national identity. This requires strengthening national institutions that treat all citizens on an equitable and equal basis. National identity is based on trust, solidarity and mutual acceptance of shared future. Civic education tends to make stronger communities’ interests, let alone the national interests and the feeling of national loyalty and identity. Nepal did not encourage origin-based identity and resorted to the instrumentalization of caste, class, religion, region, age, gender, occupational differences, etc which are of recent origin started by pre-modern and post-modern discourse. Both encouraged subsystem loyalty, provoked *geopolitically centrifugal tendencies and discouraged a sense of common Nepali identity built on self-chosen course*. No single book can narrate in detail for national identity of Nepalese with roots as deep and ancient as the *Atharva parisista*, formed as it was from diverse experiences among scattered population of the Himalayas, mountains and Tarai, the southern flatlands, in the face of all outer barriers. *Nepal Mahatme, Dibya Upadesh*, Babu Ram Acharya’s *Nepal’s Cultural Tradition* and Richard Burghart’s “The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal,” represent seminal works as they use primary resources for the narration of the evolution of Nepal’s identity but they fail to trace its epigenetically varied genealogy and infinitely complex roots to *Himabat Khanda* and how its knowledge and culture managed to survive, radiate and communicate.

National identity of Nepalese is constructed by sages, seers, leaders, poets and native settlers on the basis of historical experience, culture, languages and public education spread out by teachers through informal face-to-face communication and formal discourses (Shaha,1970). Nepal’s tale of early settlers – Gopal, Mahispal, Kirants, Lichhivis, Mallas and Shahas is unfolding requiring archeologists, anthropologists and historians’ parsimonious explanations. Landlocked geography protected Nepal’s independent status and provided biodiversity, hydropower and tourism potential but it has also imposed cross-cultural communication and transportation barriers to national integration and progress. In his book *Nationalism and Social Communication* (1953) Karl Deutsch viewed nationalism as a “form of relations between people or between an individual and a large community—the social group of the nation” (Hroch, 2012: 1116).

Nation-building can be linked to the dissemination of information for “social communication” and “social mobility” through several key measures—sustainable economy, education, conscious participation in the public sphere and political and civic engagement based on freedom from multi-dimensional tutelages and formation of a common national identity based on “we feeling.” Social communication and movements continue to politicize identities in Nepal linking them to wider dimensions of regional and international spheres. The culture of human rights, democracy and social justice is redefining the identities of Nepalese inspiring them to negotiate a new social contract that can fulfill their longings of dignified life. It is deconstructing the social life based on caste hierarchy and patriarchy and conforming the standards “common to the international community” (Pye, 962:30). Since nation-building is a mission-oriented job, Nepal’s post-conflict context too requires *mission-oriented journalism that is capable of bringing together the connectors of society for drafting constitution, accelerating development and stable peace*. Communication of common interest and expectation of mutual payoffs can drive towards consensual approach to system integration (Pfaltzgraff, 1972:105-6). No government can “harness the energies of the people unless there is genuine communication between the decision-makers and the population” (Pye, 1962:40) for social solidarity, a solidarity which provides the basis for the fair

redistribution of benefits to weaker members within a political community, the state. National integration in modern society rests on law-mediated solidarity with the state to cope with both globalization and post-national challenges which has increasingly partisanized the society and exposed to infotainment, not enlightenment.

Demos, Not Ethnos

The members of a *demos* “acknowledge each other as autonomous individuals, each with a right to personal self-fulfillment” (Zuern, 1998:12). The concept of Nepal, however is organic, ancient and deeply rooted into the intellectual heritage of the concept of *motherland*. Nepali nation-state’s enlightenment traditions stemming from Veda, Videha Janak and Buddha favored a much transcendental, value-based approach to nation-building than the one based on tribalism, ethnicity and native religious competition. These traditions saw human being, not isolated fragments from other species, but a cosmic web of life and articulated justice at *ecological, social, gender and intergenerational levels* (Dahal, 2012). Nepali media and intellectuals have yet to communicate the interconnections of these values in an integrated manner because “much of its early history is shrouded in the absence of records” (Shrestha and Bhattarai, 2004:16; Bajracharya, 1970) about national growth and decay but not dissolution. The basis of democracy is equal *demos*, not unequal *ethnos*; the other peoples. The former fosters inclusive civic nationalism while the latter exclusive ethnocentrism. A democracy “can only release the potential for political integration following successful political stabilization and institutional consolidation” (Wimmer and Schetter, 2002:3). Democratization of nations through the forces of modernization has brought the fusion of nation and state, rather than the one maintaining exclusive identity at the cost of other. In this context, Nepali media played crucial functions in the political socialization and transformation of people into citizens and then deliberative public.

Many multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-racial countries have, therefore, adopted democratic values, institutions and processes to hold their societies together. Both social integration and system integration have been pursued through the ideology of nationalism which helped to emancipate citizens from subsidiary identity politics, culture of silence, political apathy and marginalization and projected them into visible public sphere. In election, public opinion, education and social communication, Nepali media have played a vital role and harnessed democratic legitimacy of authority and an erosion of the special privilege of elites based on lineage, tradition, patronage and charisma. *Ethnicization of the nation-state undermines civic culture associated with the value of active citizenship while maximizes the ties with co-ethnics across the borders*. The latter trend has, however, produced a tension between irredentist social forces and anti-irredentist state vitiating international relations like the politics of Macedonia. Therefore, there is an important role for media to foster the value of civic virtues, nationality, conscription of natives and immigration control for defining opportunities for citizens. Nepal’s historical heritage of middle path, endorsement to civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, adoption of three-pillar economic policy and a balanced foreign relations offer it the prospect for welfare state and redistributive regime. The national heritage and tradition of *dana* (giving to the needy), *subha labha* (ethical business practices) and *niskam karma* (selfless service) as the basis of civil society are grounded on creating a virtuous order.

Salad Bowl, Not Melting Pot

Nepali state is born out of indigenous knowledge sustained by adaptation and re-adaptation, conflict and change, not a transplant of Westphalian notion. The founder of modern Nepal P. N. Shah in 1767 adopted the metaphor of Nepal a “garden of 4 castes and 36 colors” thus maintaining salad bowl approach to nation-building. He advocated that the “treasury of the state lies on the wellbeing of people.” In no way Nepal was xenophobic as it upheld the maxim “not to kill the asylum seekers,” which facilitated the assimilation of immigrants and communication through cross-cultural engagements. “Go to Gorkha if justice is denied,” describes the condition of justice in those days. He was mercantilist in orientation as far as national values and policies are concerned and defined the role of *rajdharna* (statecraft) in security, protection and wellbeing of people. The family oligarchy of Rana rule inaugurated in 1856 blurred the boundary between the public and the private sphere, oppressed dissident forces of all sorts and the notion of public service was burdened by family-style leadership. Still, the regime provided cultural autonomy to various groups of

people. In case of a clash between *Muluki Ain* (National Code) and local culture the latter had the primacy in adjudication. This offered opportunities for many tribes to survive, maintain their own identities and evolve attitude and orientation toward central political authority. The Ranas were, however, conscious of the nation's culture, languages and religions and utilized them for national independence.

The brief interlude of democracy in the 1950s as a result of the success of political and social movements replaced narrow-based Rana oligarchy by a broad-based competitive party system and increased the level of social communication between people and the public institutions. The successive governments' stress on reforms, nationalization, constitutionalization of political authority, modern education and party activities have gradually replaced the existing communication structures of agrarian society of Nepal. But, there was poor boundary maintenance between the society and political system. And the personalization of leadership strengthened internecine rivalry and finally the restoration of the reasons of state over the rights of citizens in December 1960. The innovation of Panchayat regime in 1962 sought to foster *Nepalization* and *Sanskritization* processes through the standardization of Nepali language, culture, religion and unitary polity attuned to the "end of ideology" project. It restricted the ferocity of capitalism and communism, fostered mixed economy, nonalignment and diversification of international relations to neutralize the undue influence of neighbors and global powers. The opposition forces largely socialized in the tenets of nationalism, democracy and socialism found some form of convergence in nation-building but continued to support the aspiration of middle class for political opening aiming multiparty democracy. The communication revolution of 1980s had contributed to the operation of political parties and civil society and opened the closed political process of Nepal since the political agitation of 1990. It has also constitutionalized the monarchy. But within a short span of time Nepalese leaders returned to power politics and challenged the integrity of public institutions and economic base of the nation celebrating the "end of history" with the rise of liberal democracy and market economy.

Nepal hosts 125 ethnic and caste and 123 linguistic groups where Nepali serves as a *lingua franca*. Cultural diversity is a positive advantage for the Nepali society but the use of *multiculturalism* as an ideology for ethnic separation has strengthened "barriers to upward social mobility" and corrupted the "democratic ideas of equality (Birch, 2001:26). The political cleavages of society have imposed barriers to national integration. Liberal government, therefore, does not practice politics of negation rather tolerate the minority culture (Huntington, 1997:21). The existence of this diversity in Nepal indicates that its rulers in various historical periods adopted salad bowl approach for social and national integration. This diversity has provided the resilience of its culture of toleration, reconciliation and national independence but also demands media pluralism to address the asymmetric communication patterns of Nepali society. Nepal is a country of minority where no group is more than 18 percent in its 28 million population. This diversity requires pluralistic consensus for national initiatives—federalism, governance, electoral and judicial reforms, representation and distributional outcome.

There are overlapping values among the Hindus, Buddhists and animists producing a *syncretic culture*. Social and political understanding of these facts is important for the success of any government and its strategy of coordination of various groups, organizations, federations, societies and conscious direction of educational and communication messages. *Education, culture, media and religions are cultural industries*. They constitute soft power which provided historic vision for nation-building without being prejudiced to the modern spirit carried by technology and ideology-driven communication, such as human rights, democracy and justice. One can, however, also find vested interest of educated elites in "maintaining the cleft between them and the masses" (Myrdal, 1972: 414) which kept Nepal in a state of perpetual economic backwardness. In the absence of infrastructural preconditions, media of communication is unevenly distributed like per capita income across classes and regions and unequal access of citizens in nation-building processes.

Modern nation-building is the artifact of *national self-determination* in matters of *politics, laws and development policies*. National self-determination, however, requires "full expression of self-respect for all that is *distinctive in one's own heritage*" (Pye, 1962:45) without being prejudiced to world cultures. While Nepalese citizens are demanding personal security and good governance from the state, economic elites demand for business friendly environment. Intellectuals and politicians are now fixed with the state to cope

with the challenges of globalization. Now, Nepali state is losing its normative capacity to organize the society, tackle state-related and post-state problems and implement all the rights of citizens. As a result, it has to share policy and decision-making power with the public institutions, civil society, market institutions and international regimes based on various information flows. Centrifugal pressure of political leaders has put Nepal's nation-building in the tenuous state despite favorable neighborhood geopolitical support for it. At this historical juncture, the role of Nepali mass media is critical especially for our understanding of the relationship between social trust and the political pressure (Patterson, 1999:191) for national construction.

Public Sphere

New technology-driven media far from becoming the sole democratic space are disconnected with the rural life and became vulnerable to various international intelligence agencies' maneuver to control data, information and knowledge. *Public sphere requires protection from the commercialization, commodification and undemocratic control.* "Public spirit can be transformed into public discourse if most of the members affected by the decision have a capacity to communicate publicly" (Zuern, 1998"13). Despite the tall claims of modernity that "the irrational attachment to the local and particular, to tradition and roots, to national myths and "imagined communities," would gradually be replaced by more rational and universalistic identities" (Hall, 2000:122) civil society and public intellectuals in media are countering this fact arguing that international regime is both less transparent and less democratic. Only a robust and democratic media environment can foster the arteries of communication and can *rationaly regulate the government as a watchdog agency*—the regulator of power, resource, identity and ideology in society. Public sphere is a sphere of informed deliberation, public opinion, will-information and agenda-setting which defines the universe of democracy, development and peace.

Nepal's mainstream parties have multi-versal approaches to these values as well as constitutional issues which have left the media and the nation polarizing. Democratic nation-building can be sustained by a "political public sphere in which every citizen can freely obtain information and freely express opinion" (Meyer, 2002: 36). But Nepali media also require self-control though public morality, professional ethics, constitutional duties and international humanitarian obligations. While conventional media have created a real public sphere of interactive citizens the social media have expanded this domain at the universal sphere enabling Nepali citizens to know and exercise post-national rights and detonate critical debates for policy awareness and peaceful social change. "Autonomy of media of communication makes possible a free flow of information from the society to the polity and, in the polity, from political structure to political structure. It also makes possible an open feedback from output to input again" (Almond, 1971). Autonomy is conceptualized in relation to embeddedness in shared forms of life (McCarthy,1992: xi) while editorial freedom demands corresponding accountability.

Certain pre-modern social forces of Nepal are struggling to re-tribalize Nepali society while post-modernists are struggling to deconstruct national identity seeking to accelerate mini histories. In Nepal, it is essential to make a content analysis of media, both conventional and digital, as to how far their news, views, opinions and editorials contribute to nation-building or on varying degrees provoke the cleavages of Nepali society for its unraveling succumbing to the exogenous process of social engineering. A cursory look at media culture unfolds that there are many challenges to their autonomy in Nepal: heavy base of revenue of media through advertisement has curtailed their freedom of expression; ownership of media by interest groups of society, political parties and business tycoons has eroded the efficacy of media to defend human rights of the public and propelled thought-control; insecurity of journalists from non-state armed actors, party dons, criminals, security agencies etc which enforce their self-censorship lacking freedom to properly communicate; job insecurity of media persons, financial instability and lack of career prospects also hamper their professionalism; and financial temptation of journalists especially paid news, incentivized articles, partisan reporting and lack of boundary between fair journalism and indoctrination have eroded the credibility of many journalists. This has raised a question as to whether they can serve political communication functions between system and the life-world essential for democracy consolidation or act as democracy-disruptive forces. To be sure, Habermas says that emancipation "takes place whenever people are able to overcome past restrictions that resulted from distorted communication" (Capra, 2004:69).

Culture Matters

A new sense of collective identity of people is emerging in the world in general and Asia in particular based on indigenous cultures. Nepal's neighborhood, many Asian states and Europe mark the resurgence of cultural nationalism entailing geo-strategic shift. *This cultural pattern, however, comes into disharmony between territorial nation-state and de-territorialized societies, between forces of nationalism and cosmopolitanism defined by human rights, international law and globalization of communication through technological innovation and between seclusion and social reaction.* Nation-building will remain weak so long as political parties of Nepal continue to organize society along class, caste, ethnic, regional, religious and other parochial lines, foster group-based identity politics at the cost of individual and human rights and cannot foster *intra-group bonding social capital*. Communication across these empirical *inter-group solidarity lines* is crucial for strengthening *bridge-building social capital*. There is a risk associated with the politics of negation of certain political forces in Nepal which might turn them either into a culture of silence or assertive sub-nationalism of class and religion. The nation-builders since the fifties, however, did not consider the utility of cultural norms like their predecessor did. They have adopted alchemy of modernization ideals of the Western forms and "models" of capitalism and communism rather than maintaining reflective consciousness of national human condition, their source of knowledge and struggle for reforms. As a result, they did not help much to address the national needs of Nepali society and, therefore, could not bring substantive change in the life of ordinary public who fought for democracy, human rights, social justice and peace. Nepali media have exposed their catch-all character helping them to adopt perspective transformation. "Innovation is a factor common among vibrant cultures" (Lamb, 2000:275). Culture matters for both democracy and development.

One can see Nepal's community resilience is bearing the burden of sustaining the state and became able to overcome both *creative destruction policy* that began in 1989 and *destructive creation* following the People's War in 1996 in favor of *coordinated reconstruction*, reconciliation and peacebuilding after the signing of peace accord in 2006. The last approach has a positive bearing on nation-building. Media can play a role if they speak truth to power, help to rectify past policy mistakes rather than follow power pattern and consent manufacturing. The social learning capacity of power elites, however, remains very weak in Nepal as many of them and their intellectual cohorts are conditioned by external knowledge, incentives and geopolitical rivalry. "Unless there is a viable system of intra-elite role relationships that can provide a genuine basis of unity, the attempt to bring about a new system of relationships on the part of the masses is likely to create divisions within the elite and thus destroy the very basis of national unity" (Pye, 1962: 19). Here again media persons need to do soul-searching analysis of how far the declaration of Nepal secular, federal democratic republic has strengthened the post-metaphysical, modernizing and democratizing impacts on bureaucratic-business elites, media moguls and political leaders and made them more accountable than pre-democratic era of Nepal's history or are they habitually prone to extinguish the unifying role of tradition without alternative means for financing nation-building and transitional justice to conflict victims for their emotional satisfaction.. One irony is evident in the inertia of the intra-elite system to adapt to the fast changing aspiration of people ignited by enlightenment energy of information revolution and democratic aspirations. The other is a conflict between universal values and native social evolution" (Pye, 1962: 24) as a consequence of contacts with other cultures, norms, policies and institutions.

Conclusion

The universal consciousness of modernity fostered by communication revolution has provided Nepali citizens and leaders opportunities in a corresponding manner to maintain Nepali identity. Nation-building requires the liberation of human energies to make a leap into modernity through the use of analytic, discursive and problem-solving approaches furnished by Nepali media. Nation-building cannot be stable if it does not reflect the historical potential of its culture, social capital and practices and acquire an ability to conduct diplomacy at multi-polar fronts. The globalization of grassroots citizens through the revolution of communication, human rights, democracy, popular sovereignty, social inclusion and principle of affected

defines the mode of nation-building as horizontal, bottom-up and lateral processes. These principles are also crucial for boundary condition of inclusion of nation-adherent and its foes. But the exclusion of opposition, minorities and system-critical forces erodes the dynamism of the nation and its ability to foster social cohesion instilling awareness for building democratic community rooted into accountable, transparent and trustworthy governance.

The informational revolution has unleashed the aspiration of participatory democracy and development in Nepal that stresses on citizens participation in public life, improved governance steering, coordination and collective action in the delivery of public goods and services, civic renewal and citizenship building, judicious role of non-state actors and justice-promoting development measures. Attainment of these goals is essential to build public trust on national system and jolt Nepali politics out of unending uncertainty. Media's autonomy from the government, commerce and geostrategic interests is fundamental to increase public access, participation, ownership and influence and contribute to democratization of political culture and viable nation-building.

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