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**Civil Society Groups in Nepal**  
**Their Roles in Conflict and Peace-building**

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## Preface

The roles of civil society groups in peace building have not been adequately discussed in both academic writings and policy analysis in Nepal. The scant attention is partly due to “confusion” associated with the nature and functions of civil society, partly due to overexcited expectations attached to them by political leaders, NGOs and rights-based activists considering that they alone are capable of resolving the entire problems of society and partly due to more aspirations and less payoffs that civil society discourses have yielded. This study cautiously illustrates various activities these groups have performed and aims to analyze their roles in a number of areas including peace building. Peace building as a practical area involves a set of goals, policies and strategies which aim to prevent the occurrence of armed conflicts, avoid structural and direct violence and seek to establish a legitimate framework for all the stakeholders to peacefully participate in social, economic and political life of the nation. Creating a web of civic interests and procedures for peace building is certainly a lofty goal to cope with a complex combination of sources of conflict—creed, needs deficit and greed.

Peace building provides a keyhole for an analysis of the root causes of conflict and for an examination of the transformation of troublesome links between structural injustice and cycles of violence and counter violence setting a downward spiral of democratic and development processes. The responsibilities of civil society groups are growing with the ongoing violence in Nepal, which has transformed the functions of the state, market institutions, civil society and international community and has entailed them to restart searching common ground for conflict mediation and peace. Practical measures are needed to transform the taproots of current conflict and establish stakeholders’ solutions so that peace building can become a common practice of all the drivers, actors and stakeholders of the conflict system. An underlying community of interests for peace building has to overcome the subsidiary contests among civil society groups and combine common national action with respect for diverse approaches to the central problem of deadly conflict.

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## Introduction

Nepal's ritualized civic ideology, institutions and tradition have coexisted with the state. Historically, civic groups, duty-bound charity organizations and social movements were driven by their missions, but the underlying political education they imparted was not lost on anyone. Most Hindu-Buddhist treatises make the political dimension all too obvious. They also helped the social reforms and the rekindling of individual interest in the public sphere. But, the amplified use of the term *nagrik samaj* (civil society) dates back to the collapse of Panchayat regime in 1990, promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal the same year and Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) 1999. Modern, urban and rights-based civil society received an additional boost from the Western aid regime with its democracy promotion agenda. This was buttressed by the ballooning of public expectations regarding a distributive state and rights-based development. Civil society is today taken as a conduit for democratization, leadership change, economic liberalization, good governance and peace building. This idea assumes civil society to be a "purely instrumental process whose parameters were decided by donors and which turned many NGOs, indigenous people's institutions and social organizations into projects" (Pearce: 2005:47). Its rationality thus comprised allocation and application of various forms of resources to some well defined ends of societies for a transformation of political parties and overcome the state and market deficits in stimulating citizens' participation involving concepts such as "joint ownership, mutual accountability and the power to shape policy agenda" (Quinn, 2002:3). So obvious became the political nature of the emerging civil society that it was only a matter of time before they found themselves grappling with the partisan politics and spoils regime that governance institutions were already mired in.

Many civil society groups registered with Social Welfare Council (SWC), however, are given the mandate to work on relief, charity, environment protection, economic project and social development rather than on political education and conflict resolution. The citizenry needs to gain basic political knowledge of the modalities of participation in democratic politics and find a satisfying role in the political system. This is conducive to party building from below, and democratization from above. The roots of civic competence lie in learning the experience of participatory politics and building one's own present and future. Unlike NGOs which defined themselves in non-political terms, civil society is overtly public and political because it influences state actions and political processes, acts as a buffer between itself and the state, mediates the general and particular interests of society, functions within the bounds of state-defined public sphere, holds the political leadership accountable to rule of law and seeks the rationalization of power relationship in society. Civil society groups and their networks strengthen the freedom of expression, association and assembly in ways that open up the political space for citizens.

When the People's War started in Nepal on February 13, 1996 the government did not realize the need for assistance from the civil society for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Insufficient attention during the early stage of this class war on factors like rural poverty, economic disparity, exclusion, multiple marginalization and the systematic orientation of corruption had paralyzed governance exacerbating the violence against the state with geopolitical consequences. The then political classes were reluctant to lose their monopoly on power and patronage and often thought civil society activism as a locomotive of opposition politics. No doubt, the fragile coalitions and the frequent government changes meant that just a small breeze was enough to sway the balance in anyone's favor. And the civil society did play its part in derailing the democratic process (Bhatta, 2006:4). But, these conditions also demonstrated a basis for enhanced action by civil society in underpinning the cessation of armed hostilities and contribution to peace building. The unabashed indulgence of state leaders in grand corruption, criminalization and scandals had infected nearly all public institutions and fostered the rise of authoritarianism in urban areas. The rent-seeking nature of privatization embedded the state into the market and disarmed its welfare functions thus making rural areas fertile ground for left radicalism. These trends have undermined the aim of modernizing the relationship between the state and society. An escalation of the insurgency in 1999 eroded the state's monopoly on power, opened the need for civic contact across the conflict divides and the urgency of civil society involvement in communication and facilitation in the peace process.

A number of factors, however, limited the role of civil society in Nepal. The retreat of state institutions from rural areas produced a security and authority vacuum there. This removed one element of the equation of public sphere between the state and its citizens. Civil society groups stepped into the void left open by state withdrawal. The patrimonial leadership, patriarchy, ascriptively based, diffused and particularistic institution of caste, domination by the non-productive class in politics and economics and the very nature of society of which civil society is an intrinsic part. As the impact of patrimonial culture remained strong in the Nepalese public life, it eroded the distinction between the public and the private spheres, encouraged cronyism and undermined neutrality of public service. The growth of individual capital based on lineage, group membership, friendship and networks militated against any prospects for a conducive growth of any robust civil society in state building and put a brake on removing discretionary authority of the holders of power. Rampant poverty in the country meant that indigenous civil society was neither geared towards meeting the needs of a modern era nor could it quickly adapt to the fast paced post-1990s developments. It lacked the necessary capacity to generate internal resources necessary for such a huge task of peace building. In the new context, only massive foreign aid would be able to

provide a sound basis for the promotion of social integration, state capacity and national identity. But, again, modern entrepreneurship is the key here, especially regarding the knowledge of sources of funding and the methodologies required to receive it. Local sources for funding, stimulation of local associational life in public debate and non-violent action for change become secondary in a competitive enterprise that the civil society was developing.

It was no surprise then that the Parliament's Public Account Committee and the government questioned the aims and motives of resource rich externally-dependent civil society. They were blamed for running a "parallel government." The meaning of this opposition became clear when the civil society's proposal to form a National Peace Commission, where a powerful role for the civil society was envisioned got thwarted (Upreti, 2004:3). There was justification in the accusation that these groups were facing a growing loss of self-rationality and accountability to both political parties and the society. They were justifiably blamed for exclusively providing benefits to only their members, not the general public and were not communicating the matters of broader national concern. Governments also co-opted some articulate civil society actors to pacify them through lucrative projects from the donors, foreign travel grants and other perks and benefits. Representatives of the civil society do respond by saying that "political parties in the country are always after powerful countries" (Pradhan, 2004:1; Panday, 2001:97; Upreti, 2004:3) to hang on to power and are cowed down by their undue geopolitical influence. Indeed, the geopolitical equation is not limited to hard politics of the state but reaches deep into the social fabric and the mutual exclusiveness of their common identities and perception of each other as rivals contributed to conflict formation. In such a condition, appeals to national identity have fallen on deaf ears.

International support efforts and contextual understanding were also less forthcoming as donors were focusing more on conventional quantity of activities on "democracy, human rights, good governance, decentralization, empowerment of women and the market economy," rather than a qualitative discourse, encompassing the transformation of certain dominant ideas of the hierarchical caste, class and gender relations, for a rational reconstruction of the social and political order. Donors, however, found civil society organizations "unable to effectively sway national policy; many are still nascent and political party linkages and personal interest often influence how the organizations themselves articulate their special and collective interests" (USAID, 2005:1).<sup>1</sup> There is an element of truth here. The persistence of columnized characteristics in Nepalese politics where each political party has its own trade union, student group, media, Dalits association, human rights organization, women's wing, etc has fragmented the civil society and made them appear as an extended arm of the political parties. This clientelistically organized civil society groups imposed a new line of inclusion and exclusion in the distribution of opportunities. Personal conflict between key individuals has also divided many civil society groups and weakened their capacity to present cooperative action.

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<sup>1</sup> Violent conflict has forced many elite-based urban civil society groups to either change their course, disappear, or become irrelevant for rural people. It has created an opportunity for real civic institutions to bubble up from grassroots organizations. Only the resiliency of rural life has enabled the conflict affected grassroots leaders, youth, children, women and self-help groups to associate for common goods. And this has happened in startling ways. Even at present, humanitarian organizations have the capacity to develop partnership for peace building. Donor approach to civil society in peace building is, however, not coherent. For example, the UNDP is collaborating with donors to set up a Support for Peace and Development Initiative (SPDI) aiming at *mitigating conflict and continuing support to peace building by involving civil society, the media and local stakeholders*. To cope with the problem of exclusion it has included affirmative action for Dalits, indigenous people and women in highly conflict-affected areas aiming to increase their ability to meet their own needs. The UN approach to conflict transformation in Nepal is systemic as it is utilizing all the tracks. The USAID program focuses on conflict mitigation and peace through *improved governance and incomes in targeted areas, expanded support for the victims of conflict, increased national capacity to transition to peace and strengthened community capacity for peace*. The UK policy strategy lays stress on three strands of activities: a) supporting political efforts to promote an inclusive peace process based on the principles of multi-party democracy, human rights and constitutional monarchy; b) *building up the democratic 'middle ground' and the role of civil society by strengthening democratic institutions and working to improve human rights performance by both security forces and the Maoists*; and c) improving professionalism with the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), assisting them to counter the armed Maoist threat and thereby maintain engagement with them." The Swiss have made "Conflict Sensitive Program Management (CSPM)" as an integral part of the project cycle management and also using governance to promote human rights, rights of civil society such as users groups, citizens groups, women and the socially excluded. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) has been organizing political dialogues, meetings among civil society representatives on democracy and peace building, civil-military relations, trainings for peace communicators, research and formulating various options for the state, political parties and civil society on crisis prevention and conflict resolution in Nepal. The EU has a "Preventive Conflict Mitigation Strategy" to support conflict mitigation and consolidation of democracy through judicial sector reforms and promotion of human rights, reduce social unrest and to *strengthen the role of civil society*. Its Rapid Reaction Mechanism is aimed at providing a voice to rural constituencies in the future national process of peace building, addressing current issues facing local people and informing future donor strategy.

Currently situated within different and conflicting institutional logic, many civil society groups are personalized, centrally-controlled and also subjected to the subsidy and direction of neo-liberal policies. Thus, they are far removed from the stark social realities of the causes and effects of the deadly conflict. Neo-liberalism contradicts with conflict-reducing responsibilities of civil society projects in war-torn societies such as coping with deprivation of children and adults, exclusion, unemployment, inequality, illiteracy, social tensions and finding constructive and principled response to acts of violence and armed conflict. In Nepal, it also broke the linkage of development with security and did little to give conflict victims any say in economic reconstruction. On the one hand, this structural crisis has eroded democracy's potential as a system of peaceful resolution of conflicts while on the other hand it did not generate the expected economic and political reforms. Ultimately, this left little room for the political parties to gain any transformative influence over governance in Nepal. Many civil society groups thus remained as an arena of social, political and ethnic differentiation rather than an arena for public opinion formation, social integration and mediation from which the state can be strengthened and constructive state-society relations built.

The Maoist insurgency posed a serious challenge to the columnized civil society groups and forced a Hobson's choice: either face a dismal failure or forge a coalition for action. Still, this uneasy choice did not help to bridge the political divides existing within civil society and articulate a common vision of justice, peace and shared democratic future. As increasing costs of the armed conflict diminished the space for development, donors set their focus on the role of civil society in crisis prevention and conflict resolution. After the Royal takeover on October 4, 2003, some donors like India, the UK and the USA supplied arms, ammunition and military equipment to the government to crush the insurgency while others particularly the European Union and the United Nations applied softer means such as diplomacy, dialogue, conflict mitigation, democratization and peaceful transformation of the conflict. It was only with February 1, 2005 when the King assumed executive powers that many donors and INGOs came together to shift their priorities and using the civil society as a vehicle for greater democracy and human rights rather than solely focusing on peace building. In fact, the new situation has sharply polarized the political forces.

Donors are also shifting their approaches of do-no-harm, building local capacities for peace building, risk assessment, peace and conflict impact assessment (which supports the execution of development work sensitive to the conflict environment) and monitoring and neutral humanitarian supplies to a wide range of political interventions (Pearce, 2005:43; IA,2005:4). Improvements in human rights have become a precondition for aid even for the financial institutions--Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund who were once more interested to manipulate the economic conditions of the country without anticipating its consequences for democracy. Peace building activities "are inherently political and are implemented in highly politicized environments," and the "selection, design and implementation of programs cannot be approached from a truly technical perspective" (Ball and Halevy, 1996:48). Conflict-sensitive assistance of many donors including the UN is designed to contribute to conflict de-escalation and enable the civil society to manage conflict in non-violent ways. Encouraging the peace supporters within the state and its rivals is a key element. But, in Nepal, the capacity and leverage of civil society to mediate between the government and the Maoists has drastically declined. "A real problem for the civil society is the perception that they are donor driven, motivated not by a social cause but the opportunity to engage in one's occupation with resources made available by the donors and by sacrificing as little of their material interest as possible" (Panday, 2003:9).

Moreover, the 12-point political understanding between the seven-party alliance (SPA)<sup>2</sup> and CPN (Maoist) on November 22, 2005 that took place in New Delhi, India with the help of Indian mediation placed serious constraints on the role of civil society as a mediator of conflicts. In the geopolitical game, they found themselves pushed to the political opposition side, just as several global and regional players have been. This was a dynamics of confrontation with the government that the civil society groups found themselves in today, not one of mediation and compromise. Since civil society actors did not enjoy strategic points of access, contact and coordination to key governmental actors and hold any immediate possibility for a dialogue, the conflict remained far from

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<sup>2</sup> SPA consists of Nepali Congress (NC), Nepali Congress (Democratic), Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP-Anand Devi), Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party (NeWPP), United People's Front (UPF) and United Left Front. The political understanding with the CPN (Maoist) was reaffirmed on March 19, 2006 which reiterated commitment to implement its provisions, such as *loktantra* (democratic republic), peace, prosperity, progressive thinking and national independence through political movement. There is, however, a lack of sufficient level of consensus among the dissidents within the SPA and with the CPN (Maoist) on both the ends and means of understanding. The central grievance of external intervention has not been resolved. Similarly, SPA continues to demand restoration of dissolved House of Representatives through political agitation, formation of an all-party government, peace talks with CPN (Maoist) and a new constitution through elections to the Constituent Assembly (CA) while CPN (Maoist) has demanded a national political conference of all democratic forces, formation of an interim government and election to the CA. After the King's pronouncement on April 24, 2006 the political process is moving along the SPA line. But, civil society groups are exerting pressure on the political leadership to free people from the domination of feudal constraints and enable them to act politically to execute social transformation.

transformation. Following the success of political movements the King on April 24 acknowledged the people as the source of state power and sovereignty, restored the parliament and asked the SPA to form the government. This opened the possibilities for civil society and political parties to engage in democracy and peace. Both the 12-point pact and the civil society have called for a UN's role in protecting civilians in the armed conflict and in facilitating Constituent Assembly election by monitoring the activities warring sides. All these are seen to be undermining the security agenda of a soft state in a volatile geopolitical region. The current circumstance requires that state building and the support for genuine civil society should be promoted simultaneously. A long-term focus of international support to building legitimate, effective and resilient state would enable it to gain its legitimate monopoly on power and perform its key state functions—security, justice, economic development and service delivery (DFID,2005:2). Similarly, to promote effective humanitarian action a new understanding between state sovereignty and protection of human rights is necessary. Comparative research shows that pushing “democratization in conditions of weak civil societies and institutional capacity for conflict resolution can lead to a sharpening and escalation of conflict” (Wimmer and Schetter, 2002:18).

Victims need a sustained commitment to end the cycles of violence and entitlement to humanitarian assistance from the state and the international community. Their cooperation with grassroots civil society groups can facilitate the network, sharing and allocating resources strategically and undertaking multi-track activities. The only option left for the civil society at Track I level is to generate a broad-based public awareness on the dimensions and costs of conflict, socialization of citizens into democratic life and long-term encouragement in conflict transformation, structural reforms and a cohesive peace movement for negotiation. At Track II level, monitoring human rights violations, capacity enhancement of civil society and confidence building are still important and the relationship nurtured through these measures can serve as a base for moving into a process of political negotiation at the macro level. Donors usually support civil society groups at the community level for social development and national civil societies for democratization. There is lack of clear channels of communication and coordination between the two initiatives. Linkages must be built at the district level intermediary civil society groups so that problems of coherence, coordination and collective action are managed. At Track III, the civil society's involvement in relief, rehabilitation, peace building, expansion of the political space for humanitarian support and engagement with diverse society for mediation, reconciliation and communication need strengthening. The links between the state and civil society have to be developed in improving the delivery of public and collective services. Government can become more effective if it listens to civil society and business community and work in partnership with them in policy making and policy implementation. An integrated peace building effort obviously requires generous commitment, cooperation and partnership of the international community with grassroots civil society groups that are working under harsh conditions and acting as engines of peaceful change in spite of the adversity.

## Origin of Civil Society

**Ancient Period:** The German concept *Bürgerlicher Gessellschaft*, (bourgeois society) is commonly interpreted in English as civil society, a concept connected with the freedom to speak and associate without fear. The ancient Greek thinkers--Socrates, Plato and Aristotle— have intimately fused society and the state into a political community, *polis*. Freedom for them meant freedom to participate in the *polis*, to speak the truth to power, form political opinion, breed self-confidence, live in dignity in opposition to the conformity perpetrated by the regime and endorse a commonweal. Socrates believed that good life could be achieved though rational debate about divergent views on individual and social needs rather than a cycle of deadly conflict. The culture of dialogue, free of domination, constituted the bedrock of democratic practice. Pursuit of a good polity helped to define the civic responsibilities of citizens in the political conception of civil society. Greek democracy was, however, bourgeois in nature. It excluded women and slaves from the public sphere. There is, however, a historically specific great tradition of political thinking from Socrates to Jurgen Habermas and the roots of civil society could be detected in this tradition.

The Roman orator, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) had discussed about *civilis societas*, to refer to civil society. He argued that *civilis societas* should guide political affairs through philosophical persuasion rather than violence and defended the rational autonomy of citizens. He asserts, “Justice is one; it binds all society, and is based on one law.” The Romans were mainly interested in defining peace as the absence of armed conflict against external enemies. In the Middle Ages, Saint Augustine (345-430 A. D.) and Thomas Aquinas regarded civil society as a natural part of human life. They spoke clearly about *virtutes civiles*, civic virtues of citizens, the role of the state and the church to relieve the hardships of people, nourish a common sense of justice, serve citizens equally in a civil manner regardless of their rank, religion and birth and preserve peace. Martin Luther and John Calvin equally contributed to the idea of civil society. Critical of the feudal domination of society based on class, rank and status they argued that citizens should be free to choose their own religion while extending charity and service to the community. Centralized civil rule was developed in Europe since 16<sup>th</sup> century. From this century onward, the reformation movement began to fuse the legalistic culture of Romans and the Greek instinct for freedom.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) started off the age of reason, absolutist state and freedom from superstition. This helped to erode traditional immunities and privileges given to certain groups of society and marked a shift of society based on inherited status to renewable social contracts. Hobbes claimed that in the state of nature, citizens considered themselves equal to all others and, in competing for scarce resources, lived in a society of eternal fear, insecurity and conflict. He believed that life without an effective state to preserve public order would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." To achieve peace and the right to life he suggested a social contract whereby citizens would seek a new basis for state in which civic virtues derived from natural laws would be sufficient to curb excessive opportunistic behaviors and lethal ways of expressing grievances. The state, which Hobbes called the Leviathan, once created by popular consent, would allow no threat to the peace of society but link individuals to each other by way of their relation to a common authority. The Peace of Westphalia codified in 1648 ended religious wars, granted sovereignty to the state and moderated the norms of an anarchical international system. John Locke is the prime mover of representative democracy that conferred the legitimacy to the natural equality of men, equal subjection to law and majority rule and believed that civil society exists in a condition when all members of society are governed by a constitution. His theory of social contract has set limits to the state's power by giving basic constitutional rights (liberty and property) to the citizens and through distribution of the state powers. Locke defended individuals' rights to assemble, establish associations, enter into relations of their choice in religious matters and rational pursuit of self-interest but excluded the poor and women from the rights of citizenship. He, however, perceived the need for an international social contract to overcome essentially anarchistic system of competing states, war and tyranny where statesmen are driven to promote national security.

**Enlightenment Period:** A more specific narration on civil society emerged at the beginning of the development of liberal democracy in the eighteenth century. It opposed absolutism, articulated modernity and tried to set well-defined links of citizens with the state. The philosophical discourse was on political life, informed and rational communication, contestation about particular histories of diverse societies and general interest of the nation-state. Civil society grew out of intellectual efforts to occupy a public space within which modern and traditional types of associations could engage the rational public in the formation of public opinion without any recourse to violent conflict. The emergence of the public sphere symbolized for many as an ethical social order that mediated the transition from feudalism to capitalism and individual interest to social good and contributed to a value of democratic political culture, such as self-discipline, toleration and a passion for compromise.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau inaugurated the age of Enlightenment in the mid 1700s and tried to create a new social order where civil society would provide a condition of equality and freedom for all regardless of position, wealth and power. "The passing from the state of nature to the civil society produces a remarkable change in man; it puts justice as a rule of conduct in the place of instinct, and gives actions the moral quality they previously lacked" (Rousseau, 2000:45). If citizens would make the common good their top priority, the social contract can make mutual protection and peace possible. He sought a balance between individual pursuit of happiness and the community's right for collective well-being and believed that the state is the arena for defining the nature of the common good. He saw the civil society emerging when all citizens were willing to abide by the general will. Rousseau's book *The Social Contract* became a source of inspiration for the American and French revolutions as it popularized liberty, equality and fraternity as inalienable and universal rights of human beings and sought to transform arbitrary authority into rational authority subject to the general will of citizens. These elements questioned the ideology of ruling class in the name of mankind as a whole and defined the core values of the modern civil society.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish Enlightenment thinkers-- David Hume, Thomas Paine, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith-- analyzed the realities of their period, such as expansion of property rights, science and communication, industrial development, freedom of commerce, education and demand of the bourgeoisie for public space against the sovereignty of the state. Growth of formal institutions, constitutionalism, impersonal bonds of self-interest, unfettered rationality, secular ideology and economic and legal interdependence contributed to a new powerful social formation that we call the civil society. This civil society was different from the pre-modern tribal society glued by family values, kin, blood, lineage, tradition and ritualized ideology as it shared political power with the state on policy matters. Enlightenment thinkers made a clear analytical distinction between the state and civil society and thought that power of segmentary, ritual-based tribal society to generate large association for political action is weak because it is usually based on a strategic balance of exclusion, inequality and conflict. They, therefore, stretched out the boundaries of civil society beyond the state to capture the emerging internalization of economy, technology and ideas and minimized the potential for conflict. Adam Smith believed that moral sentiment and sympathy rather than self-interest united individuals to act together under the institutional arrangements and provided the real basis for the well being of all. Smith believed in the bourgeois wisdom and virtues of honesty, industriousness and prudence and felt that this social shorthand was the most efficient way of preserving "the peace and order of society" (1966:332).

Enlightened reason is the basis of Immanuel Kant's *civil union* or civil society. He believes that civil society is the representative symbol of a cosmopolitan citizenry, the membership of which is determined by their free wills. Kant's version of civil society overrides state sovereignty based on rigid bureaucratic organization of industrial society. His vision for *perpetual peace* (1795) entails a world parliament of free states, bound together



by a covenant renouncing wars and through which citizens and states would negotiate to co-exist non-violently, create democracy, economic interdependence and their pacifying effect on inter-state relations. He argues, "The civil constitution of every state shall be republican, and war shall not be declared except by a plebiscite of all the citizens." Hence Kant conceptualized the notion of "democratic peace," as a condition to bring harmony among human beings, the state and the international system. Georg Hegel conceives civil society as a sphere between the family and the state. The nature of this sphere is self-constituted, self-defined and self-sustained by the citizens and, therefore, exists independently of the state. Industrial production, expanding commerce and social capacity for wealth enable the formation of identity. His narration of civil society is dualistic in nature: as the isolation of citizens from one another into competing business, religious groups, clubs, work groups and institutions and as a space where the tradition and ethics of a society are produced and reshaped. The statist propensity in Hegel's analysis is unequivocal. He argues that civil society must subsume the ultimate demands of the state because it mediates the competing interests and claims of civil society and prevents violent conflicts.

French sociologist Alexis de Toqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835-40) offered a modern analysis of American society and argued that Americans based their actions on two prime concepts: individualism and equality. Individualism is important to nourish creativity while equality is a tool for negotiating social differences and challenge hereditary privileges. He felt that it is through a feeling of being equal to others that allows citizens the mutual respect needed to stimulate beneficial participation in political life. The desire of citizenry to form informal institutions, groups and voluntary associations for open public debate can counter atomization and alienation of individuals engendered by modernity and cultivate the habits, opinions, norms and capacities of citizens to set up democratic governance. Informal cooperation between individuals had the traditional moral virtues of truthfulness, keeping of promises, reciprocity and carrying out of social duties. It radiates the level of trust in society for cooperation and contributes to a stable peace.

Karl Marx claims to liberate human being from religion and oppression of all kinds. He notes that the universal pretension of the bureaucratic state often conceals the particularistic interest of bourgeois civil society and its hunt for individual profits, impersonal laws and de-politicization of society. What is important for him is *who participates in the determination of civil society's sovereignty over the state and political process*. Marx clearly pointed the need for freedom from want but ignored the incongruity between the state and relatively autonomous civil society under capitalism that marked the birth of citizenship, liberal economy and modern nation-state. Similarly, civil society has generated universal norms to redefine state-society relations. In the nineteenth century civil society was characterized by citizenship, social contract and ethical choice governed by a system of rights, rule of law and universal reason. Egalitarian and self-chosen social associations were considered to be more efficient in generating trust and loyalty for strategic action than the instrumental rationality of the system that barred rational discourse in everyday life. In most of the democratic movements until late 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, "popular sovereignty was basically a male preserve" (Eley, 1994:314). The famous work of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) has outlined an agenda of education, civil rights, access to occupations and political rights and persuaded women to acquire mental and physical power. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty and the Subjection of Women* (1879) and the writings of Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir formed much of the critical arguments for latter social theorists and civil rights movements, which eventually re-envisioned the representation of women and historically disadvantaged groups into civil society.

***Rebirth of Civil society in Modern Era:*** The twentieth century thinkers rediscovered civil society to temperate the destabilizing currents of popular nationalism, balance the power of hyperactive socialist and welfare state and moderate the appetite of rulers. The renewed vision enabled the capacity of civil society to generate values, ideas, symbols, identity and alliance and execute democratization and progress. Antonio Gramsci's conceptualization of civil society as an independent political space to contest and end hegemony maintained by ruling elites through education and culture inspired citizens in the 1970s to incubate free societies so far constrained by traditions of legal institutionalism, Cold War and Marxism. The rebirth of civil society in the Soviet Union, Hungary, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Estonia, Latvia and Moldova during this period can be attributed to the development of a "third way" between reforms of the Communist system from above and peaceful opposition from below by mobilizing what Vaclav Havel calls "the power of the powerless" (1990:125-214). Regaining the freedom of social, economic, religious and political life against the all-encompassing totalitarian system through "negotiated, peaceful self-revolution" (Michnik, 1999:3) and the construction of citizenship were the main concerns of Eastern European intellectuals and activists.

Gyorgy Kukacs, Leszek Kollokowski, Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik emphasized the self-organization of society and the self-limiting character of their velvet revolution. The prime movers of social movements tried to recover the suppressed aspirations of citizens, redefined the links between the state and society based on immediate concrete situation and aspired to overcome state strategies that sought to demoralize state organizations by cultivating cynicism of citizens. The patterns of civil society developments in Eastern Europe have, therefore, limited universal significance to only those countries where society is either suppressed by party-mindedness of political leaders, or polity or even the state. Vaclav Havel and Gyorgy Konrad invented anti-politics as a free space where individuals declined to work for the communist regime assuming that a communist system cannot be reformed in a rational way. Konrad's civil society appears "as an alternative to the state, which he assumes to be

unchangeable and irredeemably hostile” (Walzer, 1995:21). Sustained underground political education and social energy, such as unity, coherence and action of citizens’ power led the breakdown of totalitarian, praetorian, authoritarian and oligarchic regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the 1980s.

This great political transformation set off by the civil society boom liberated the states from regime control, shifted sovereignty from the state to citizens and built vibrant intermediary institutions to socialize citizens into democratic norms, habits, participation and leadership training. The social democratization at the grassroots had a bigger impact on the party-builders in many cases. But, it also led to disenchantment with the democratic arrangement because post-democratic leaderships failed to respond to legitimate aspirations of citizens. Civil wars in Balkan, Czech, Slav and Chechen lands provoked a velvet divorce. Like in Eastern Europe where civil society emerged against party-controlled polity and the state, the enthusiasts of civil society in Latin America and Asia especially led by human rights NGOs and professional associations tried to transplant civil society against political parties, political systems and states, articulated the contamination of politics by political leadership, assumed to be the genuine representatives of citizens and sought to substitute functions of political parties and the state. As a result, growing civil society activism against the state disembodied from particular historical and cultural settings has sapped the necessary energies of the state to create public order, social justice and peace, eroded the ideological base of political parties and fostered the cult of a small group of hyper mobile individuals freed from national responsibilities. This was especially stark in the case of underdeveloped and weak states unwittingly caught in the crossfire of the global political games. In short, a general lack of social interest made such civil society incapable of becoming a mediating force between individuals, groups and the state.

A similar development had emerged against the social democratic states in France and Germany in the 1970s. The French Socialist Party and the German Green Party asserted the need for the reconstruction of the political society to link the citizens with the state through the concept of common security, ecologically sustainable growth and greater responsiveness to gender equality. Political society represents an arena where public demands are addressed by political parties, the political system, the state and social movements directly engaged in defending civil society, expressing dissent and offering alternative public choices for the representation of social diversity into decision-making. The neo-liberal and conservative theorists embracing the “public choice” theory made sharp critique of “rent-seeking” tendencies of the political class controlling the state and envisioned voluntary associations to replace some welfare functions of the state. The U.S. and the British conservatives thus rediscovered civil society in 1989 to control the rent-seeking tendency of the governing class and preferred a minimalist state. Liberals were, however, chiefly troubled by the injustice of rational choice built on the purposive rationality of individuals because it shattered the confidence of the mediating structures of society and weakened the government’s political commitment to social justice for the poor, excluded and marginalized. Inequality in access to social justice has deconstructed the notion of citizenship equality and devalued the purpose of public politics. A world of growing markets and receding states means more conflicts and less problem solving resources within the state. Pluralists, therefore, insist on the autonomy of politics from the social and economic interest groups of society assuming that political will and public opinion are continuously shaped in this arena, political processes serve as a representative link between society and the state and policies and decisions are legitimized.

***The Post-Modern Version of Civil Society:*** The new pluralism that flourished in the late 1970s in Eastern Europe underlined the representation of society’s all legitimate groups, positions and identities to address the deficiency of state and market power, cope with rapid change induced by the information revolution and carry out the vision of a participatory democracy. The transformed shape of the civil society articulates the emancipatory narratives of political pluralism by offering space to groups with diverse interests and worldviews for cultural contestation, communication, networks, initiatives, social movements and the formation of a civic public sphere beyond the classical nation-state. Globalization is creating the possibility of a post-national solidarity of civil society built on a system of global rule governed by the principles of human rights, public international law, international morality, international organizations and non-violent strategies of conflict management which demand the inclusion of others. The new pluralists are very intimate to neo-Tocquevillians identified with Robert Putnam, R. Inglehart, G. A. Almond, Sydney Verba and Francis Fukuyama’s writings. Emphasizing on the irreducible plurality of civil society, they presumed that social conflict could best be mitigated at the level of locality, place of work and community rather than the state. They also found that social capital plays a key role in driving social, economic and political outcome and established a connection between citizenship, democracy, human rights, development and peaceful resolution of conflict.

The neo-Tocquevillians favored the principles of subsidiarity and defended a political framework suitable to achieve the devolution of public power at the grassroots level. They also stressed on democracy through citizenship equality, participation, deliberation as well as building transnational networks. The realization of human rights requires a global civil society to overcome the state of nature that exists in international arena and a balance between the political sphere, which thrives on absolute equality, and the private sphere, which makes it difficult to realize. But globalism is a term with more hype than substance. Those that thrive on globalization are economic and financial entities as they have the wherewithal to do so, enabled by their autonomy from social or political responsibilities. The semblance of a political superstructure that the United Nations and its affiliates provide too cannot be a good model for the global civil society. The UN system has proved itself to be unable to

meet even its basic Charter's commitment of people's sovereignty, in spite of the overwhelming support it receives from all round the globe. The basic problem is state-centeredness of the UN. In this context, the global dimension of the civil society is fraught with insurmountable hurdles. Global operation will be a virtual impossibility given the fact that they cannot acquire the autonomy available to financial networks to expand outwards. Neither can global political consensus be easy to come by for their agendas, as is apparent for the UN, especially at a time when civil societies are pursuing specialist agendas which are not always politically neutral. Most of those that do operate globally are closely linked to financial or political entities of states and acting at their behest which have gone some way towards moderating the security dilemma. They cannot be said to be embedded into the society they are working for. Hence, the idea of globalism for civil society is more of a utopia than anything rooted in the ground realities at present.

A central consequence of the rights-based civil society movement in poor countries like Nepal is that it has radically devalued local knowledge, authority and social capital and made citizens entirely dependent on outside knowledge, skills and resources. Even the impositions of 'universal' or good values lose their universality if the society is foreign to the ideals that come with it. It has a disruptive consequence as local societies have lost the connection with the national institutions and organized sector has dominated the life of unorganized and informal sectors of society. One can gauge the extent of the disruption if it is understood that underdeveloped countries are underdeveloped because large swathes of the society remain unorganized. This has led some donors to shift civil society's autonomous role from "democracy, human rights and development" towards "partnership and cooperation" with grassroots organizations and the political society including the state.

Civil society's contribution to democracy can only be guaranteed when its diverse interests do not become a source of conflict. Those who pit the civil society against the state, political system and political parties are essentially anti-political. They cannot become an instrument of collective action on behalf of the diverse citizens and cope with the effects of globalization. The confrontational, pre-political, anti-political and de-politicized nature of civil society has actively opposed party politics and weakened the ability of the state to create and enforce rules that govern everyday business. Competition for scarce resources among civil society organizations has nourished a mentality of "we" and "they," restricted their own potential to generate impersonalized trust and eroded the ability to act as a bridge across social, economic, cultural and political divides. Especially in fragile states civil society has tended to fragment the political community, deepened the already existing cleavages and stirred tensions. The absence of a sense of community defied the functional requirement of large-scale cooperation. We mentality is essential to maintain communication and conflict resolution. "The concept of humanity obliges us to take up the "we" perspective from which we perceive one another as members of an *inclusive* community no person is excluded from" (Habermas, 2003:56) and establishing a framework of justice at every level of society. "Bringing social justice to global markets requires global institutions to regulate global business, but these institutions are dominated by elites who oppose social justice" (Faux, 2006:24) and tend to escape democratic constraints on their wealth and power.

Regulation of conflicting interests within the civil society is a major policy challenge. Social movements, advocacy groups and even traditional nonprofit associations limit themselves to social action, have failed to increase the society's productive potential and resolve the dilemma of a larger collective action across various disciplinary boundaries. Neo-Tocquevilains are correct in submitting the theory that a stable democracy entails a web of common interest and functional rationality of national community—the state. Since civil society alone cannot produce social cohesion and system integration, political parties and the state have a tendency to distrust them, restrict their operation and keep them under clientelist control.

The demise of the Cold War in the 1990s stirred a ray of hope that inter-state wars would recede, a global peace dividend would moderate intra-state conflicts and the ideas of peace and human rights would bring a new understanding of citizenship and of civil society (Kaldor, 1999:3). The post-Cold War era would mark "no mere adjustment among states but a novel redistribution of power among states, markets and civil society" (Mathews, 2000:534). In this redistributed regime, the entire international development establishment has made civil society assistance a program priority (Encarnacion, 2003:2).

Donors are particularly obsessed with the use of civil society for the promotion of the market economy, democratic transitions, political distribution and institution-building by weaving the democratic pressures of developing societies into a stable civic life. They are financing the civil society to push for policy reforms, humanitarian aid, post-conflict reconstruction and good governance which they define as the capacity of a state to "protect democracy, function of its politics and its developmental determination" (Leftwich, 1996:17). Four main political reasons prompted the West's preoccupation with good governance and democracy: "the legitimization of conditionality (or leverage) as an instrument of policy; the ascendancy of neo-conservative or neo-liberal political economic theories and ideologies in the West; the collapse of the Soviet Union and its client states; and the growth of democratic pressures in some developing countries" (Leftwich, 1996:11). Ironically, many donors have falsely equated NGOs with civil society. Civil society has a broader concern and organizational complexity, such as trade unions, business chambers, producers associations, federations and coalition of various groups and social movements, elements that are missing in the NGO equation.

The increasing NGOization of civil society has atomized mass-based social movements, sapped the civility of society to cooperate even without financial incentives, killed its charity work, enforced external perception of

reality and fomented distributional and rights-based conflicts in society. As a result, NGOs and other sections of civil society are seen competing with one another for aid outlay to fulfill donor criteria to acquire projects. "Aid providers often imagine the advocacy NGO sector to be a pristine domain, free of the murky ties and tensions of ethnicity, class, clan and political partisanship that make the political fabric so messy and difficult to deal with" (Carothers, 1999:217). Only a radical reclaiming of the political potential of civil society can be expected to unleash conflict transformation. But, "a robust civil society can develop only in the context of a liberal political culture and the corresponding patterns of socialization, and on the basis of an integral private sphere; it can blossom only in an already rationalized life-world" (Habermas, 1997:371). Jurgen Habermas argues that in the context of new social formation where technological diffusion, transnational corporations, global market, media power, ecological issues, human rights, international law and terrorism challenge both the state and civil society, what is required is "communicative action" so that the system can conform the life-world and civic virtues such as reciprocity, cooperation and collective action, to foster democratic development and peaceful resolution of conflict. The explosive growth of transnational voluntary associations, anti-globalization, environment and women's rights movements, widespread respect for human rights, flow of remittances, effective communication, advent of global civil society, proliferation of cross-cultural dialogues and transnational rise of citizenship suggest that "some social or communal bonds, a sense of identity and loyalty, are beginning to be formed across national borders" (Etzioni, 2005:131). International civil society groups increasingly feel that there are international public goods like foreign aid, world peace, global environment, etc which can only be secured through international collective action.

## Civil Society, Community and Social Capital

Modern society has three basic actors: the state, the market and the citizens with all their informal and formal institutions, networks and movements known as the civil society (Galtung, 1996:36). The diffusion of power away from the state, however, requires complementary norms, values and interests of these actors to generate social capital and resolve distributional conflicts. Each of these actors creates its own realm of social life based on a different ordering principle: "the state is built upon coercion, the market upon competition and civil society upon voluntary cooperation" (Skidmore, 2001:3). Situated between the family and the state, civil society is a multitude of autonomous informal and formal human associations, identities, networks and movements forged for the sake of protecting themselves and others from the arbitrary and unjust decisions of the holders of power and wealth and promoting their rational self-interest (Dahal, 2001:10) The state and market failures in addressing the problem of the society gave increased donors' interest in societal variables such as the civil society, community and social capital<sup>3</sup> to shape a strong sense of common identity and purpose and a greater willingness to invest in public goods. These soft institutions constituted by citizens themselves matter in defining collaboration between the state and the market, putting human interests prior to institutional interests and determining political and economic performance. They also strengthen the social base of democracy, development and peace. One of the rationales of public debate is to accept the legitimacy of alternative opinions and viewpoints and strengthen social control over the leaders of society. And, the notion of social capital expunges the narrow ends of development as mere wealth creation.

Strong public institutions of the state, vibrant political parties and a set of voluntary informal associations and relationships capable of moderating the ferociousness of the market's competing interests are essential to realize the common vision of good governance-- security, law and order, voice, participation, public welfare and conflict resolution. Markets can work well if they are embedded in society and politics because they define and enforce the economic rules including efficient property rights (Williamson, 2001: 93; Halperin, 2004:264). Market failure produces bad governance, drains social trust, breaks economic transaction and information and even generates social conflicts. The impact of market failure--scarcity of public goods and services, slumps, unemployment, recessions and misery --can be easily detected on political institutions, individual's quality of life, social cohesion and economic growth. Civic connections of a myriad of communities, informal institutions and networks with the formal institutions of the state assist in the social coordination of the market forces and moderate their negative impacts. Peace building requires civil society to carry out a wide range of social responsibilities, link the benevolence of individuals, groups and communities and revitalize the centrality of dialogue necessary to resolve conflict non-violently.

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<sup>3</sup> Patterson elaborates four kinds of social capital or trust: a) *affective trust* based on one-on-one relations between persons and reinforced by norms with strong sanction; b) *intermediary trust*, which relies on personal characteristics, for estimating the costs and benefits of trusting but works at a distance through intermediaries; c) *collective trust*, involving situations in which persons have direct, but impersonal, contact with familiar strangers within their midst or humanistic in nature; and d) *delegated trust*, which depends on third party, institutional guarantees available in modern societies. (1999: 154-157).

Robert D. Putnam defines social capital as “features of social life—networks, norms and trust—that enable the participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (1995:665). It is informal relationships that encourage cooperation among diverse individuals, groups, communities and nation-states, strengthen group cohesiveness and provide critical resources and legitimacy for combating violent conflicts (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988, Fukuyama, 1999). “Social capital is important to the efficient functioning of modern economies and is the *sine qua non* of stable liberal democracy” (Fukuyama, 1999:1). Several series of horizontal networks and organizations provide individuals connective tissues, which can be extended to other worthwhile social causes for vertical relations with the state, market and civil society. In this sense, social capital refers to the “concern for one’s own associates, a willingness to live by the norms of one’s own community and to punish those who do not” (Bowles and Gintis, 2002:1). Community often generates a consensus of opinion disapproving fraud, deception and free-riding. Conflict transformation, reconstruction and rehabilitation require new forms of social capital that is inclusive and crosscutting across sub-groups of society. So it is through a set of complimentary interests, values and relationships among the state, the market and civil society that the synergy of social capital is generated for larger public action. Voluntary groups in the community can serve as a check against the market and the state and act upon the common interest of members.

The associational participation of various communities in civil society shapes collective choice, boosts collective efficacy in participation and institutionalization of public life and increases the leverage of citizens in public policy matters. The liberal state as a representative of the entire society is, therefore, committed to supporting voluntary approaches of the civil society. Their trust and tolerance embodied in voluntary practices underpin a popular control over the governing elites. A liberal state does not take away those things, which citizens can and want to do for their commonweal. Withdrawal of citizens from civic engagements drains the social capital necessary to address some common state and market failures. Unmediated by strong civil societies and active states, markets produce growing inequality, social polarization and political instability” (Skidmore, 2001:9). Social capital is, therefore, instrumental in buffering the unfair outcome of market competition that can easily breed social conflict.

Free individuals need a community, “which backs them up against encroachment by the state and sustains morality by drawing on the gently prodding of kin, friends, neighbors, and other community members, rather than building on government controls or fear of authorities” (Etzioni,1993:15). In rural areas, however, the basic defining features of a community has been the existence of shared collective spaces, used for multiple forms of social, economic and cultural contacts, communication and exchange on everyday basis. A community in this sense is a social entity of citizens, integrated more by duties than by rights and bound by shared origin, language, history, a common set of norms, shared affection and non-self-regarding ties. It is organized for supporting general purpose and interest of the community. Community members are accountable for their action. But, in conflict zones incorporation of individuals in new domains at various levels of scale—national, regional and global—through push factors such as poverty, unemployment, economic migration, forced dislocation, new forms of dependency and support from the state agencies and identity-based forms of membership, etc have undermined these multiple basic community functions except in the cases of dense settlement, locality and proximity.

The strengthening of social bonds, virtues, well-established values and cohesiveness have therefore become important for the effectiveness of collective action. The boundary of a community is overlapping but its members enforce norms through mutual monitoring and evaluation. This helps to overcome the free-rider problem. Social life of a modern community consists of basic needs fulfillment, mutual support and socialization. A community’s supply of social capital increases the scope and level of group interaction within, sustains the generalized trust outside the community, facilitates information flows and reduces transaction cost for peace and justice in everyday life. “Generalized trust is a key dimension of the political capacities of civil society, which in turn reflect the capacities of individuals and groups to act for common ends as well as to represent their interests to the state” (Warren,1999:12).

A tolerant community inspires its members the habits of cooperation, solidarity and public spiritedness, which, in turn, contribute to the accumulation of social, financial and political capital. It also allows the articulation of dissenting views of various groups and sub-cultures and let social and political minorities live in peace and security within an overall framework of the state. Where does the habit of trust, solidarity and cooperation come from? Social capital is a public good, it cannot be personalized and privatized. It is derived from ascriptive primary institutions, such as families, tradition, religion, culture, social networks, shared historical experience of exchange among various communities, *esprit de corps* of the society in resolving conflicts and managing the common pool resources that lie outside the state system. It is also derived from the secondary type of self-organized rational institutions like the civil society, NGOs, markets, political associations and their socially legitimate collective action.

A well-off economy is strongly embedded in society. It provides institutional incentives for citizens to build relationships that promote confidence and trust among them and those institutions that lie outside the writ of economic division of labor. Many micro enterprises, credit organizations and stable social institutions placed between the state and families frame public demands, monitor the activities of economic societies and foster overlapping benefits across the lines of conflict. Primarily, political society is an arena of institutionalized competition and conflict for political power, rule and authority while the role of labor-intensive, agro-based, eco-

friendly and intermediary micro enterprises is marked by service, voluntarism and class mediation. A society that has a strong tradition of transparent and accountable associations is likely to have a higher level of coordinated action across communities, which can be used to build confidence in impersonal public institutions and conflict resolution and engage in a higher degree of innovation and risk taking.

Development is about wealth creation without destroying the base of the ecology and economic and social justice. Today, mounting societal discontent and conflict have increased concerns about the impact of poverty, inequality and denial on social capital and the relationship between social capital and social justice. An improved citizen and government understanding of their respective rights and responsibilities within civic structures, broad community participation in public decision-making, joint identification of local problems, support for the civil society's positive role in community improvement, reduction of dependency on external actors and resolution of the structural injustices and conflicts of society can foster a well-functioning pluralistic democracy.

## Public Service in Asia Patrimonial and Soft States

The Asian identity mirrors a rainbow civilization, both with respect to its internal diversity and cultural particularity. It is, therefore, difficult to weave different sets of identifications of Asians into a common geographical consciousness. The most common pattern of similarity in Asia is its political culture. Despite the manifestation of various modes of governance-- traditional, democratic, praetorian and totalitarian-- cultural attitudes play a cardinal role in human conduct and political institutions have had to adjust themselves to cultural boundaries. Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Islamic and Christian civilizations shape this attitude. All these civilizations give primacy on group interests over private ideas of individual rights. Much of "philanthropic giving traces its roots to religious concepts of merit-making, alms-giving and performing charitable acts" (Quebral and Terol, 2002:7). Hindu Vedic scriptures elaborate four different types of human conduct: a) *bad conduct* hurts others and inflicts anguish and pain to them; b) *normal conduct* is meant to regulate personal and family lives without hurting others; c) *virtuous conduct* is designed to help others by means of promoting voluntary services, such as establishing resting places, inns, schools, hospitals, digging well, constructing water spouts, and uplifting the poor and powerless sections of society; and d) *supreme conduct* is attained by performing *Yagna*, protecting the earth, heavens and the cosmos for tranquility and peace. Several reformist movements of various sects of Hindus have defended the cause of voluntarism and donation to charity works.

It is socially obligatory for the adherents of Islam to donate 2.5 percent of their net earning each year to religious and social organizations, which is distributed, to the needy citizens. They call this practice *Zakat* (alms). "In practice Muslim polities are pervaded by clientelism. There is government-by-network. The formal institutional arrangements matter far less than do the informal connections of mutual trust based on past personal services, on exchange of protection from above for support from below" (Gellner, 1994:26). Buddhism helps stop the root of violence within every individual through self-abnegation so that better relationships with family, neighbors, community and nation-state can be built. Peace building in society requires developing compassion within self and giving support to the needy *thamtaan*. In both Hindu-Buddhist traditions, property obliges the citizens to perform deeper goals of *paropakar*, charity work and social service (Yadma and Messerschmidt, 2005: 2). Confucian thought like Hindu culture confers respect to authority, morality, unity and a sense of duty to serve citizens within the familial, social and political institutions. The highest ethical standard of Confucian tenet is *jen* which means affective concern for the well-being of humanity. Confucianism, like Buddhism, is pacifist and attaches importance to the notion of *datong*, implying that the whole world is a big family. It is akin to the ancient wisdom of Hindus—*Basudaiba Kuttumbakam*—the brotherhood of humanity. The current Chinese society is assuming that Confucianism should fill its religious and ideological void and compete against Western individualism, consumerism and pop culture as well as create a harmonious society. China has unleashed the *Sinicization* of the world as a response to a one-sided Westernization of China. The base of harmony in state-civil society relations is precisely the familial and lineage values of interdependence which has restricted the autonomous self-organization of civil society. In Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan, "officialdom monopolizes the public realm while the citizens, the masses, are permitted the pursuit of private gain, personal welfare, and individual happiness insofar as these things lie within the legal and political frameworks dictated by the government" (Makoto, 1999:51).

The Christian practice of philanthropy is more institutionalized as every devout Christian is obliged to give 10 percent of his or her income to the Church (Quebral and Terol, 2002:22) which is spent on public welfare. The Confucian doctrine and the family-oriented Hindu-Buddhist values also oblige people to help relatives in crisis times. Asian businesspersons appreciate the values of these religious traditions and undertake corporate social responsibilities by establishing trusts, charity organizations and foundations to sponsor relief projects and social development programs. The birth of various non-profit associations in Asia has contributed to the development of specific laws, regulations and several codes of conduct to govern philanthropy, non-profit making NGOs, foundations, and civil society organizations (Sidel and Zaman, 2004) to fulfill diverse needs of citizens and strengthen civil society's engagement in social responsibility and social initiatives. Despite the persistence of high

religions embedded within the institutions often lending legitimacy to state authority and in the religious practices of everyday life of citizens, even in the modernizing countries like Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia fast-track capitalism is pervading every sphere of public and private life and rapidly individualizing citizens. This is wearing away the power of society to effect public action.

Throughout “Asia *exchange bonds* determine power, status, authority relations, and the citizen’s role in society. These exchanges constitute rewards and values, which one person provides for another in exchange for like benefits” (Neher, 1994:950). As a result, even in modern nation-states leaders arbitrate the application of rules so that interpersonal relations can run easily, unhindered by laws and constitution. This has made the growth of strong institutions problematic. Those who occupy the state institutions and served by them remain satisfied with weak institutions and fear the depersonalized laws, processes and institutions. And when leaders fail to perform institutional duties citizens replace the personalities rather than transforming the rules of the game, institutions and institutional processes. It is the strength of personal and professional ties that enable the accumulation of social capital, trust and moderation of conflict. The general Asian family values make the change process elite-driven and trickle-down. In Asia social change is incremental overlapping tradition and modernity. On the one hand citizens are loyal to authority, order and hierarchy on the other hand there is progressive erosion of this culture thus marking a paradigm shift from ritualized, clan-based, rural and customary *gemeinschaft* (traditional society) to detribalized, de-ruralized, class-based and urban *gesellschaft* (modern society) required by rapidly changing economic fundamentals, rationality, political transformation and modernization. This shift has been propelled by information, education and science, growth of modern industrial hubs and cities and globalization. As a result, one can see a new public sphere in the making entrenched in the democratic processes.

A basic tension, however, exists between consensus and conflict in the operation of Asian politics. Educated citizens are mobile, skilled and cosmopolitan and exercise more choices in personal and public life. The emerging international regime is exposing the Asian public not only into each other’s culture but also to world cultures. Enlightened leaders have, therefore, a general willingness to accommodate sub-societal groups in a common bond of the nation-state. Another tension persists between the worlds of the elites and masses. Many of the Asian leaders’ style can be characterized by the term patrimonial. Highly personalized leadership coexists with impersonal laws and political institutions. It is the legacy of the traditional political system in which government is personalized and public administration is the extension of the ruler’s patronage system. In such a polity, a powerful leader controls the political and economic life of the state, economy and society, and the personal relationships with leaders play a crucial role in increasing citizens’ personal fortune, access to power, authority and status.

Both patrimonial and soft-state characteristics signify that there is a lack of strong social discipline—where cultural norms allow the breaking of rules, infringing laws and indulging in corruption-- thus a culture of impunity. Patrimonialism also reflects the problem of the institutionalization of political parties and civil society. The social and cultural context shapes the performance of political institutions. The competition over institutions among various political groups is more about power sharing than reshaping legitimate institutions. In the weak and poor states of Asia a terminal gap exists in the social and political order. Decaying democratic institutions have provoked public disengagement from politics, cross-cutting bonds of solidarity are tearing apart the political institution with new forms of identity-related ideological, ethnic, regional and communal conflicts and even melting down the civility of society. Still, another constant source of problem is the gender gap in public and political life of Asian societies. Here, the works of civil society have proved vital in the transformation of politics based on freedom, gender equality, identity and social justice and exonerating modern politics from primordial clutches.

In Asia, the tradition of public service differs sharply from one society to another depending on the level of modernization and the level of reconciliation between authoritarian and modernist ways to adopt the aspirations of diverse citizens. The Asian style democracy is largely characterized by patron-client relationships, predominance of communitarian culture, personalized leadership, veneration of authority, existence of a dominant political party and a strong state system (Neher, 1994: 949-958). In the better-developed states like Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, a basic harmony exists between the capacity of civil society to generate public interests and the ability of political institutions to fulfill them. In contrast, in developing parts of Asia, political institutions are far behind in social, economic and technological change and political commitments of leaders outstrip the state’s capacity to deliver. This has caused atrophy in the system. In South Asia, argumentative cultures have sustained a pluralistic tradition, values and worldviews which have animated civic life despite gross inequality.

In China, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Thailand a large part of society is still under the influence of *geminschaft*. The smallest surviving tribe of Nepal and India, Raute, for example, is living in a stateless segmentary structure. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the state formation process has evoked an ethno-cultural identity. Traditional societies are composed of a large number of very similar, self-contained social units like extended families, villages, tribes and communities. The masses of citizens are group-oriented and respectful of authority, while their leaders are more concerned with personal dignity and collective national pride. Modern societies, by contrast, consist of a large number of overlapping social groups that permit multiple memberships and identities (Fukuyama, 1999) and have a sufficient level of trust and cooperation.

As culture decides the course of political development, Asian societies, confronted with the task of setting up modern nation-states, respond to this by shaping patrimonial forms of power that please their deep mental longing for security, stability and status. This new patrimonialism may seem authoritarian to Western social scientists, but it is a legitimate response to the citizens' needs as it ensures community solidarity, strong group loyalties and public service orientation. One can, however, also see emerging from Asia's accelerating transformation some new version of civic culture that may avoid many of the forms of class conflict common to the Western civilization. The impact of modernity in Asian politics is that the centrality of bureaucracy, dominant party system and traditional politics are eroding and giving birth to coalition politics where diverse societal interests are represented in political power and mobility of class, caste and gender is supported by the state and non-state civil society organizations. Japan and India generally symbolize this trend. Asian classics treasure within them valuable ideas for conserving civilized life, liberty and identity and building constructive contact among groups. Its classical tradition offers liberal thought on learning, leadership, virtue, just and unjust wars, civility, nobility and common good. Civic coalitions are emerging in South Korea, the Philippines and Japan and many countries to prevent the declining egalitarian culture of South East and East Asian states while in South Asia urban civil society groups "appear as the closed association of modern elite groups, sequestered from wider public life of the communities, walled up within enclaves of civic freedoms and rational law" (Chatterjee, 2004:4) while their rural counterparts are fighting neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism which have made their politics and economy winner-takes-all, callously clientelist and confrontational.

In Chinese parts of Southeast Asia and much of Latin America, social capital resides largely in families and rather a narrow circle of personal friends (Fukuyama, 1997). This virtue is transmitted from one generation to the next through a process of socialization and political acculturation. Social webs have created several inner circles and hierarchies where trusts circulate within inner circles while public sphere, political parties and the state remain outside the circles of trust. In the formation of social capital religions have also played a role. The Buddhist concept of *Sangha* (institutions building) and Hindu system of *Shastrartha* (public philosophical discourse) played their role in the creation of social capital like the art of association articulated by Tocqueville. Each civilization has produced a distinctive pattern of relations between the state and society and tied citizens' compliance to order, authority and discipline. In some countries nationalism is still the dominant force at the elite level, in others tribal instinct is challenging the writ of the state, still in others secular separatist movements are exposing the fragility of the state and society. The denial of democratic rights to sub-groups of society has compelled citizens to resort to distributional, identity and rights-based conflicts. The reason for all these is the persistence of weak mediating structures in society what Buddha calls "golden mean" whose core elements involve the satisfaction of basic needs, high level of individual freedom both in thought, speech and action, formation of decentralized society with smaller units, avoidance of a complete separation of the sacred and secular of religion and ordinary life and articulation of development in social space in a green direction (Galtung, 1993:28-31). Asian civil society groups require a clear articulation of the "golden mean" in every sphere of life to establish the condition of habitable middle ground between liberalism and relativism, globalism and localism and cosmopolitan citizenship and nationalism.

## **The Impact of Conflict on Civil Society**

To know the complex and multiple roles of civil society in peace building, it is very essential to examine their strengths and weaknesses and their relationship with the state and market institutions. Protracted conflict erodes the monopoly of state's power and undermines its basic functions—preservation of human rights, law and order, voice, visibility, justice, education and health. It also transforms social capital of pluralistic, multiethnic and multi-cultural societies and undermines the capacity of communities to engage in peace building. Opposing pressures of conflict actors alter the basic functions of civil society and community and sometimes tear apart their critical support base. The state, which defines the legal framework of civil society functions, may become strict in disciplining and controlling the organs of civil society, such as the media, NGOs, trade unions, human rights groups and professional associations thereby changing the institutional framework and reducing their freedom of action to address the multi-dimensionality of violence and their vicious tendencies. State authorities often cast doubt over civil society's ability to transcend urban, partisan, paternalistic and class bias and believe that they are competing with existing structures of political power backed by the financial resource of the international aid community and demanding the restructuring, federalizing, democratizing and decentralizing of the state. The lack of monopoly of state power and inability to create autonomous structures of civil society for designing peace-building give reason to fear that the massive aid package will produce unintended negative effects for conflict resolution. As a result, peace building under the leadership of civil society carries the danger of political instability. "A democracy can only release the potential for political integration following successful political stabilization and institutional consolidation" (Wimmer and Schetter, 2002:3).

The relationship of the civil society with market institutions also undergoes substantial change with the growth of illegal proliferation of arms trade, economy of violence, money laundering, growth of the black economy, breakdown of agriculture, capital flight, extortion, theft, fraud, corruption, human and drug trafficking and providers of information to armed groups rather than providers of basic public goods and services. Violent



conflict divides citizens along the faultlines of the polity especially between the forces of change and beneficiaries of the status quo, between demands for a power equation and structural transformation, between unfair control of the economy and social justice, and between the absolutization of identity based on religion, ethnicity, class, regional and religious groupings and an identity based on citizenship. Conflicts along these faultlines weaken their social cohesion and harmony thus stripping the citizens of power, access to resources, status and identity. Conflict polarizes civil society sometimes making them uncivil, partisan and spoilers of peace, divides communities and destroys development infrastructures thus leaving the poor, women, disabled and children vulnerable to a deepening humanitarian crisis. As state protection becomes fragile, powerful actors rely on force to achieve their political goals and armed actors seek societal control through kidnapping the citizens of rival groups, killings, threats, coercion, rape and violence. Sometimes vigilante groups spontaneously emerge with a sense of revenge and act at their own will. Theft, deception, graft and dacoit have become endemic to gain opportunities to plunder and loot. The victims of “violence and theft lose not only what is taken from them but also the incentive to produce any goods that would be taken by others. There is accordingly little or no production in the absence of a peaceful order” (Olson, 2001: 119-120). Criminal groupings in rural areas have become government-free, enriched themselves and became susceptible to increasing lawlessness. Very often, victims have to depend on informal local and family-based institutions, religious organizations and traditional groups in securing individual survival, security and livelihood and seeking conflict transformation into peace.

Human rights groups document communication of school teachers, community organizations and local citizens where rival groups are demanding that they abandon their posts under threat of death. Such action evacuates the democratic and development space. Deadly conflicts transform the nature, role and capacity of civil society, thus increasing individual mistrust of one another. But, it also opens up new forms of social capital and internal coping mechanisms that provide relief, welfare and social protection. New associations of conflict-victims-- widows, children, disabled, youth, orphans, mutual aid groups, charity-based institutions, etc.-- in the form of civil society establish networks with local, regional and international organizations seeking critical support for their causes. Deadly conflicts also trigger peace movements, such as civil rights, human rights, women’s rights and environmental rights and empower civil society, mobilize public opinion and create alternative structures strong enough to make actors of conflict listen to their concern, voice and action.

In a conflict zone, there is no conflict monitoring and specific law enforcement office that can handle the investigation, protection and sanctioning of human rights violations within the community. Many conflict related cases go uninvestigated unless there is a legal request demanding further research. Leaving hate crimes and intolerance largely undocumented and uninvestigated undermines the justice system in the future. Due to a combination of societal pressures, however, many women and children victims of conflict and violence hesitate to file an official complaint that would expose them to public scrutiny. As a result of funding gaps, the state system is unable to meet the accelerating demand for relief, education, social protection and rehabilitation so needed by conflict affected citizens. Their only hope lies in non-state, civil society and humanitarian organizations as they are expected to allow the citizens to participate in the society according to their abilities. Victims’ pressure for conflict transformation into a peace process is genuine and they learn to act as part of the global civil society. Protracted conflict has also forced citizens to invent new coping mechanisms at formal and informal institutions levels. In the case of Nepal, National Human Rights Commission of Nepal (NHRC), UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)-Nepal, other human rights groups and peace groups and the media have a special responsibility to minimize the violation of human rights, ensuring protection for staff and civil society activists, maintaining communication along conflict lines and contributing to peace building.

Members of a civil society require vigorous protection by state institutions as well as monitoring by non-governmental and international organizations to ensure the preservation of their social, political, economic and social rights even as they appeal to the state and its rivals to respect humanitarian laws and Basic Operating Guidelines (BOG) for humanitarian supplies in times of complex emergency. Strengthening the community against violence requires development of the connectors of society, bonding with local authority figures and mobilizing their interpersonal trust, communication and cooperation for conflict mediation. In Nepal, media persons have identified their own role in reporting objectively, facilitating communication among local groups, offering solution-orientated news, discouraging anti-women news and articulating a collective voice of victim for social transformation, reconciliation and social justice. Armed forces employ discriminatory methods to secure their own strongholds. Through these actions, they violate the freedom from arbitrary interference in an individual’s private life, as protected in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Constitutional law. Reporting from conflict zone is especially difficult and journalists often face threat from rival groups.

## **Civil Society and Peace Building**

Peace researchers often believe that the use of reason and functioning democracy can build the architecture of peace. Historical awareness about human condition, human nature, nature of society and the nature of international system, moral norms and institutions became a critical part of peace research. During Cold War peace researchers visualized to create harmonious order in society by providing opportunity for nation-states to reduce military spending and reap dividends of peace. The UN invented provisions for the pacific settlement of conflict by

negotiation, mediation, enquiry, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional arrangements or agencies, or peaceful means of their own choice. It also applied preventive diplomacy to manage conflicts at an early stage before they escalate into war. Since the end of the Cold War, the civil society has been increasingly accepted as a partner in peace building. The concept “peace-building” was popularized by former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 to identify and support structures of peace in order to avoid a descent into civil wars and seeks to stabilize the political situation. Peace building is a process which aims towards long-term structural transformation of deadly conflict into ceasefires, peaceful relationships among the stakeholders, building democracy, social justice and enhancing cooperation. Effective peace building requires establishing a “strategic framework of objectives for international assistance; a privileging within this framework of conflict resolution over other goals; and in relationship to that objective, setting priorities among international efforts” (Cousens, 2001:10).

There are two approaches to peace building—*reconstructive peace building* which has been brought to use by the UN especially in monitoring a truce, disarming and demobilizing an army, providing humanitarian assistance, strengthening participatory governance, protecting human rights and rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation and *transformative peace building*—which seeks to address the root causes of conflict and satisfies the basic needs of the community in post-conflict societies (Evans-Kent, 2001: 2) such as security, order, identity and development. Transformative peace building contributes to the growth of transformative leadership.

Peace-building activities are not simply about peace-keeping by military force and enforcing peace (peace-making) but also rebuilding lives and societies after periods of deadly conflicts. It is also about managing the contradictions at the root of conflict formation (Galtung, 1996:103) and structural violence such as domination, exploitation, repression, deprivation and humiliation. Peace building requires the formulation of rational steps towards positive transformation so that individuals and groups can address the crisis produced by protracted conflict, devise quick response mechanisms and initiate political reconciliation for a peace system. “Peace system is characterized by just and interdependent relationships with the capacity to find nonviolent mechanisms for expressing and handling conflict” (Lederach, 2004:84). UN Security Council Resolution 1366 calls for “the supporting role of civil society in national level conflict prevention and peace building.”

Addressing a two-day dialogue between the UN and civil society Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the Security Council that “both local and international civil society groups had a role to play in the deliberative processes of the UN, including the Security Council, where civil conflict and complex emergencies had taken center-stage in recent years” (UN, 2004:1). The Secretary-General’s March 2005 report “*In Larger Freedom*” endorsed the High Level Panel’s recommendations for the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission within the Secretariat and establishing a standing fund for it of at least \$250 million to finance peace building. In December the same year, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the Security Council (UNSC) announced the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission. As a part of UNGA and UNSC this Commission will, according to Resolution 1645, generate resources to “advise and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery, focusing attention of reconstruction, institution building and sustainable development in countries emerging from conflict.”<sup>4</sup>

Until November 2005 the UN political and peace building missions were deployed in several parts of the world, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Great Lakes Region, Guinea-Bissau, Middle East, Somalia, Tajikistan, West Africa, Limor-Liste, Bougainville, etc. The majority of the international agencies involved in these missions, chiefly the most leading agencies, have supported the transformation of war-shattered states into liberal market democracies (Paris, 2002:639) and ignored the existing local alternatives. Most of the UN initiatives are still top-down. The “Global Action Agenda” of Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) has enlarged the domain of civil society in strengthening efforts to prevent violent conflict and peace building. The European Center for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) as a part of regional initiative has organized a series of meetings on the “Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflicts in South Asia” and has prepared an action plan to be implemented at three levels: global, nation-state and civil society. The UN and these regional initiatives are, however, particularly careful about enlisting the participation of local citizens in immediate, short and long-term conflict solving approaches rather than imposing models from outside.

Peace building not only means the stable arrangement of power but also implies a “comprehensive learning process” (Paffenholz, 2001: 535). During a protracted insurgency it requires actors at the level of civil society like eminent persons, religious figures, political foundations, NGOs, community organizations, academics, research institutes, village elders, etc to adopt several operational strategies: respond to humanitarian crisis, organize problem solving workshops at the local level by involving rival groups to familiarize them with the root causes of conflict, improve communication among them for establishing a rule-making regime, provide orientation on peace education and promote sustainable peace-building activities based on the congruent interests of all the actors.

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<sup>4</sup> The proposed integrated strategies for post-conflict peace building and recovery help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and sustained financial investment over the medium- to longer-term, extend the period of attention by the international community to post-conflict recovery; and develop best practices on issues that require extensive collaboration among political, military, humanitarian and development actors.

With the broadening perception on security, a collective approach of various groups within civil society has emerged for the prevention, de-escalation and mediation of various types of conflict.

The level of social development of a state determines the efficacy of civil society to foster human aspirations of peacefulness and community. In Nepal, for example, formal civil society groups are unevenly distributed just like the per capita income while the conflict actors and the drivers of conflict have marginalized informal ones. In remote areas, there is absence of public administration and citizens are deprived of basic social goods. In urban areas and Kathmandu, civil society groups have sound transnational linkages and are competent interlocutors to communicate with funders. This means most urban civil society groups are not immune from donors' strategic, political and economic interests. Removal of partisan approaches of dominant civil society actors, rectification of exclusionary policies and building national consensus on the design of post-conflict policies, structures and projects can overcome the civic deficit and put civil society on a firmer traction.

Engaging civil society in rural areas is not an end in itself it is important to enlist their role in the development of a virtuous and effective state with which citizens can fully identify, comply with its rules and build allegiance to it. It is, therefore, important to respect the autonomy of civil society from donors, the state, political parties and the market institutions so that they can become free from the culture of clientelism and support the general needs of citizens. Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurr offer seven functions of civil society in peace building—protection against attacks from all armed groups and security, monitoring of citizens rights and providing information for early warning, advocacy and public communication in setting agenda and public participation in peace process, socialization and culture of peace, community building and encouraging civic engagement and intermediation and facilitation between all kinds of actors (2006:36). Civil society groups have, *inter alia*, contributed to following peace-building activities:

- ***Humanitarian Assistance, Protection and Rehabilitation:*** One of the remarkable roles of International Press Institute-Nepal Chapter is that it made efforts to rehabilitate journalists victimized by the conflict in Nepal. Similarly, Women For Human Rights (WHR) is trying to integrate conflict victim widows into the society and providing them training on psychosocial healing and institutional linkages with national and international organizations which help to bind a conflict-torn society. Women's Rehabilitation Center (WRC) in Nepal provides social and psychological support, trauma healing and counseling services to conflict-victims women. A coalition of human rights NGOs in Biratnagar works closely with the UN to coordinate assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs). It is important to articulate the full range of voices of journalists in order to make decision-making conflict sensitive, transparent and accountable. Still, training of journalists on human rights principles, common ground reporting and engaging them in peace education is important to spread a culture of peace and tolerance.
- ***Monitoring of Human Rights Violation and Conflict Analysis:*** National Human Rights Commission of Nepal (NHRC) is continuously monitoring human rights situations and suggesting to various actors the necessary courses of action. Informal Sector Service (INSEC) brings out regular reports about the human rights situation in Nepal and circulates the opinions of experts, voiceless and conflict victims. Human rights groups, media and civil society have also played roles in the release of security personnel from CPN (Maoist) and detainees from government custody. The links of national civil society with the global civil society, such as Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Amnesty International (AI), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), International Red Cross Society (IRCS), etc have increased their strength and leverage in public sphere.
- ***Early Warning System:*** Grass roots civil society organizations have provided early warnings about the potentials of conflict thus enabling the state and international community to intervene. In Sri Lanka, Foundation for Coexistence (FCE) has deployed some of its members to gather information for indicators of human rights violation. Daily newspapers are monitored and reports are bought out periodically. Based on the report, conflict is monitored and multiple interventions carried out. This has helped peace indicators to climb. FCE operates at village, regional and national levels and feeds the information to Track II and Track I levels. Early warning by civil society actors is crucial for conflict prevention. Pressure from civil society in Nepal forced the government to withdraw Village Self-Defense Force (VDSF).
- ***Tension De-escalation:*** Sri Lankan churches organize periodic meeting with the security forces on issues like barbed wire lanes at check points, body searching of women and reduction of curfew hours, etc thus helping to reduce tension. In Nepal, human rights organizations and civil society have mediated a conflict between the Maoist-affiliated trade union and student union and the government for the reopening of industries and educational institutions. Journalists of Northeast India (Assam, Nagaland and Manipur) have formed a group in Delhi to broker the ceasefire. Civil society actors have played a crucial role in Sierra Leone's transition from praetorian regime to democratic governance. All these efforts have helped to deescalate the level of tension.

- ***Uplifting the Marginalized and Women:*** Until recently conflict discourse has been a male prerogative. The 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women provided the spur for women's involvement in peace building. Similarly, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" supports local women's struggle in building sustainable peace and indigenous processes based on equitable distribution of social, economic and political power between men and women. Now, the peace building approach also includes those potential and left-out actors of society like women, Dalits, indigenous people and ethnic groups. A climate of respect for various opinions is the bedrock of civil society participation in peace building. Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and transformation can consolidate post-conflict peace building and help build a shattered society. In India, Naga Mother's Association (NMA) formed in 1984 expanded its role from health services to electoral politics, conflict prevention, inter-community reconciliation and resolution of conflict. By mobilizing mothers from rival groups it forestalled the outbreak and escalation of violent conflict.
- ***Family Constellation and Community Mediation:*** In Nepal, LSGA, provides scope for community mediation in local conflicts. Case studies point out that so far 1300 community mediators have been trained by civil society and NGO actors which settled 74 percent of cases out of 689 cases from eleven districts (Khadka, 2004:49; Rijal, 2006:35-41). Another study reveals that the UNDP-sponsored SPDI has strengthened the capacity of some 800 community-based civil society organizations in conflict transformation and peace building in Nepal (Neupane, K.C, and Dhakal, 2005:25). In East Timor, the Commission on Reception, Truth and Reconciliation has successfully involved local civil society and community leaders and used their traditional knowledge and skills for community reconciliation to mitigate conflict. Active engagement of local communities and their leaders in trauma healing, generating confidence and trust have alleviated the sufferings of citizens. Reconciliation becomes successful when it is "home-grown indigenous process, which includes as key instruments-- justice, truth, healing and reparation" and may take a long time and only painfully slowly ensures genuine coexistence, trust, democracy and restorative justice (Bleie, 2006: 6).
- ***Bridge Building:*** In Nepal civil society and human rights organizations have acted as catalysts in two rounds of negotiations between the government and Maoist rebels. Media and Human rights organizations also acted as watchdogs and agents of social protection of vulnerable sections of society. Recently, through conflict reporting and peace education, the media has acted to defuse conflict. Women's movement in India against communal conflicts (Babri Masjid controversy and Gujrat events) helped to form informed public opinion to mitigate conflict. Somali Peace Line (SPL) created a joint forum of leaders of various parties and consolidated a broad-based peace constituency. Bridge building function of civil society groups is central to creating a community. In this context, "democratic citizenship could form the focal point of societal ties of mutual responsibility" (Habermas, 2001:117).
- ***Advocacy, Public Communication and Education:*** Nepalese civil societies are campaigning to ban landmines and advocating children and educational institutions to be treated as a zone of peace. Five major political parties made public their commitment to value children as zones of peace. A coordination committee on Children in Conflict has been formed under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. Similarly, a national Coalition for Children as a Zone of Peace (CZOP) has been set up. Changing collective mindsets about violent conflict requires a higher collective awareness about rights and responsibilities of civil society in a peace agenda, peace education and peace movement.
- ***Peace Process and Peace movements:*** In Northern Ireland civil society groups had played a vital role in "generating energy into the campaigns to endorse the Good Friday Agreement" (Darby and Ginty, 2003:264). *Nagrik Awaz* (Citizens' Voice) has been continuously raising public awareness, organizing public debates and peace rallies and providing relief to victims. National Business Initiative (NBI) for peace in Nepal has been regularly organizing peace rallies thus putting pressures on conflicting parties for non-violent choices, such as ceasefire, dialogue and resolution of conflict. A recent study of civil society's role in peace building in Sri Lanka suggests that top-down approach of reaching rural areas from the capital city is necessary but not sufficient. Rather than fragmented projects, dynamic mass-based peace movements from bottom-up need strengthening. This requires a "new paradigm of reconstruction as well as a structural adjustment of the international peace and reconstruction industry in the global South" (Senanayake, 2005:111). Another study in Guatemala found that even "well-intentioned donors had often taken a very technical and instrumental approach to the ideal of civil society" (Pearce, 2005:47) in peace building, which portends an ultimate lackluster result.

- **Service Delivery:** Conflict damages the supply chains and service delivery at the grassroots level. There is a need to build a new relationship between the state, civil society and local communities to provide service to the needy, feed the hungry, care for the sick, protection for homeless citizens and orphans and give life to economic development. This requires sustained communication, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the agencies working at the field level. In a number of areas, it is important to revive the local cooperatives run by communities and mobile services providing delivery of public goods. Local ownership of projects has greater chance of sustainability than those externally-induced. Eradication of poverty, inequality, exclusion, generation of employment, restoration of infrastructure and renewal of social communication are critical areas to address the root causes of conflict and provide the majority a stake in and hope for their shared future.
- **Cohesive Strategic action:** Cohesive, comprehensive and integrated action by civil society and international community is central to prevent the recurrence of violence and conflict and exert pressure for conflict transformation. Nepal Development Forum (NDF), London Meet and Brussels meet of mainstream donors have focused on the role of civil society in a democracy, non-violent strategic action and peace movements in Nepal. The “Group of Friends,” an organization of “countries supporting the Guatemalan peace process, played a critical role in that country’s conflict resolution” (WB and CC,1997:5). Peace implementation largely rests on three key economic factors: “sufficiently rapid economic revival to generate confidence in the peace process; adequate funding to implement key aspects of the peace agreement; and, for a sustainable peace, there must be sufficient funding to enable the establishment of government institutions and the transition to peace-time economy” (Woodward,2002:2).

## Civil Society in Nepal

Civil society in Nepal is so variegated and disparate in terms of size, nature, function, character and identity that it is difficult to develop a precise definition. Historians trace its genealogy with the birth of civility, public spiritedness, community building and norm-governed associational life which liberated the Nepalese citizens from the state of nature. Associational life in Nepal had flourished with the *vedic* age (2000 BC) when *dharma* (institutional duties), *shastras* (moral and legal treatises) and *shastrartha* (philosophical discourses) shaped the knowledge and habits of the subjects and monarchs, rationalized the governing norms of the polity according to *barnashram dharma* (social division of labor), *rajdharma* (statecraft) and *sanatan dharma* (cosmological ordering) and oriented them towards living together and act collectively for peace, public welfare and social harmony. The ties of the scholarship of *rishis* and *munies* (sages and ascetics) and public life were indissoluble and independent of state discipline and punishment.

The Hindu treatise *Bhagawad Gita* states that those who are actively engaged in the welfare of all beings, attain *mokchha*, emancipation. Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* argues for the mutual obligations of states and people. In the West knowledge is power while in Vedic-Buddhist culture it is a means for the self-realization of all. In the West duty is the derivative of individual rights while in the Vedic tradition the *dharma*-mediated ethical system embedded individual identity in a web of moral and social duties and relationships. Philosophical discourse framed enlightenment for all, built human connections and helped to resolve various conflicts. A duty-based society naturally lays down rules governing the discourse, challenge status quo and seeks what Gandhi called *ashimsa*, non-violent resolution of social conflict. This essence of *dharma* was followed in all the ancient *nitishastra* (public policy treatises) that were written as a guide to public policy. Codes of social, political and economic behavior were laid down with the central *dharma* theme in mind, rather than political or economic expeditiousness. Legal systems were based on the treatises and their remnants are still found in today’s laws and public policy.

The Buddha’s teaching of *Panch Sheela* that evolved around 2,500 years ago laid down five rules of life—refrain from killing, stealing, adultery, alcohol drinking and lies—which corresponds to the great five sins of Hindus. The Hindu-Buddhist religions emphasized the need to dissolve personal ego for emancipation, Buddhist by *nirvana* and Hindu by attaining *mokchha* and set the vicious cycle into reverse. Nepalese civic life also draws legacy from scholarly king Janak of Mithila who freed power from its repressive role and fostered a culture of enlightened discourse and coexistence. Discourse performed in his palace was a rational process of deflating dogmas and reaching mutual understanding and consensus among all the concerned participants, mediation of radical disagreements and application of reason and various perspectives for conflict resolution. Discourse made self-righteousness difficult and self-criticism quite easy. This had facilitated the non-violent resolution of conflict and enabled citizens to become peaceful members of the community. In the economic and social modernization of Tarai, the charity works of private sector have played a great role in minimizing the rationality of conflict.

Lumbini in the southern part and Gandak region and Kathmandu valley in the north are often regarded as the pinnacle of Nepalese civilization where Buddhist *bihars* (monasteries) and *sangha* (mass organization), Hindu temples, *gurukuls* (voluntary schools run by community) and *panchali pratha* (local arbitration system) were the

springs of public sphere for education and rational contestation of ideas. Buddha also founded *sangha* for women. As these factors were embedded in the sociology of knowledge, the political acculturation process was natural. The *guthis* (trust) of today demonstrates the resiliency of *gosthis* of the Lichchhvi state and resonates the continuity of cultural consciousness and associational life. By definition, *guthi* is a group of people founded as a community based on extended families, clans and lineage groups for the promotion of their social, cultural and economic interests. It is also an endowment of land for philanthropic purposes to thicken individual's connections with the society and the state. The Buddhist *suttas* situates individuals into historical and social context and links their fate to the fate of community. Accordingly, "peace has to be understood in nature space, human space, social space and world space" (Galtung, 1998:2). Over ritualization, however, diluted the rational potential of Hinduism and Buddhism and they began to impose their own taboos on the public domain, conflict avoidance strategies and lack of contestation of ideas for enlightenment. Still, as faith both will outlast contemporary ideologies.

Jayasthiti Malla (1380 AD) codified, strengthened and enforced a stable social life based on the caste system. The Malla kings reared literary societies, constructed roads, arts and aesthetics, temples, *pati pauwas*, (resting places), irrigation works, public *dharas* (water sprouts), temples, preservation of *gampa* land, etc. to enrich spiritual, social and culture life and cherish the connection between knowledge and human solidarity. They evolved *panch kachhahari* (council of five elders) for the peaceful resolution of conflicts on local matters (Shrestha and Bhattarai, 2004:81-82). After Prithvi Narayan Shaha unified the country into a modern nation-state Nepal, in 1769, he articulated the pluralist social space of the nation. Land grants to different sets of citizens, economic mercantilism and Hindu caste universe then underlined the state's strength to integrate society and organize social capital to acquire state-society synergy.

The dawn of the Rana regime in September 1846 too did not roll over the autonomy of local social and cultural spaces constituted by the people themselves. Tribal heads having their own claim to local resources and their own system of rights ran village units. Ranas, however, made the state captive of the aristocracy, crushed dissension and fostered a political culture of clientelism as they treated the citizens as *raitis*-- the subjects, not the public. They enacted the *Muluki Ain* (the Civil Code) in 1854 and amended in 1910, to dispense justice on the basis of caste ordering. Ranas also commenced social engineering--*Sanskritization* of non-*Sanskritic* communities, introduced reforms in the governing institutions, encouraged the process of *Nepalization* of language and culture, applied modernity, executed social reforms such as abolition of the slavery system, custom of *sati pratha* (self-immolation by widow), etc and secured the sovereignty of the nation. Like the Greeks, they inherited a system of governance based on the exclusion of Dalits, Women and tribes from the public realm. In the 1940s, the then civil society formed in Nepal and by the Nepalese in India set up an associational arena for participatory politics.

The pluralistic Hindu-Buddhist society provided a rich ground for a liberal regime. During the anti-Rana movement, *Arya Samaj* (civic society or a society of noble citizens) was set up in 1909 to free the Nepalese and to abolish discrimination against women, child labor, child marriage, legitimize widow marriage, initiate social reforms and direct the society on a rational course. Subsequently, a *Malami Guthi* (trust) was established. In 1926, a public trust called *Kamadhenu Charkha Pracharak Mahaguthi* emerged as a modern form of social organization. In 1937, *Nepal Nagrik Adhikar Samiti* (Committee on Citizens' Rights) began to inspire the public through the narration of *Geeta* and liberate the oppressed. Prem Bahadur Kansakar and his friends established *Prajatantra Sangh* (Democratic Association), Daya Bir Singh Kansakar set up the *Paropakar Sansthan* (Charity Association) and several literary societies had been formed for the renewal of the commoners' interest in public life. The Sanskrit school of Kathmandu in the name of *Jayatu Sanskritam* waved anti-Rana flags in 1947. They wanted to modernize the syllabus of Sanskrit teaching by including social science and animate the spirit of ethical life, political modernization, nationalism and public welfare. Likewise, in 1947, a workers' strike broke out in Biratnagar with professional demands. These organizations and activities were seeking emancipation of people from feudalism and dynasticism through the establishment of a political state. Greater social energy for political freedom brought the collapse of more than a century old rule of Rana oligarchy in 1950 and the establishment of multi-party polity. This opened Nepal into international political discourse.

In the 1950s, there was a faint vision of modernity derived from European Enlightenment to pull the public to a new realm of promise based not only on self-interest but also compassion. An Interim Constitution was promulgated in 1951 reflecting power sharing among the King, the Ranas and the political parties. Yet, personalized form of leadership and erosion of civic institutions, including the inability of political parties to reach out to remote areas, owing to their fierce power struggle, undermined the legitimacy of the system. The leadership failed to create democratic citizenship and civic culture as they dissociated themselves from the populace and began to tie up with the aristocratic classes leaving the people on the edge of despair. In February 1959 a new Constitution was introduced. Yet, a constitutional culture did not evolve which could hold the loyalty of the public to democratic institutions and see the fiery dawn of human freedom.

This factor provoked the King to invoke tradition, order and nationalism and invent a partyless Panchayat system under the Constitution of 1962. The Panchayat polity banned political parties, but allowed the opening of class-based organizations, enlarged the elite base of the system and initiated the process of social mobilization of citizens at the grassroots level through local government institutions and Back to Village National Campaign. After the referendum of 1980, it opened the space for several demand-articulating civil society organizations, a

representative parliament and professional groupings. The global wave of democratization and the growth of a critical mass in the civil society of urban areas weakened the levers of feudal power in rural areas and helped the revival of political parties. After the success of the People's Movement in 1990 multi-party democracy, constitutional monarchy, sovereignty of people and human rights of citizens became the sources for defining state-civil society ties on the basis of universally sharable democratic values and resolution of social conflicts "without the need to resort to mutual violence (head are counted, not severed)" (Bobbio,2000:84).

## **Institutional Environment**

Institutional environment is defined "jointly by the *rules of the game* (the formal constraints: constitution, laws, property rights) and the *conditions of embeddedness* (the informal constraints: sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, code of conduct)" (Williamson, 2001:97). The Society Registration Act 1960 legitimized the role of the private sector in development under the state's patronage. In 1977, this Act was amended and renamed the Association Registration Act, which included clubs, public libraries, literary societies, self-help groups, NGOs and cultural groupings. The Chief District Officer was given authority to register, guide, direct, control and supervise them. The demand for the autonomy of civil society lent support to human rights and popular sovereignty under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990. The Social Welfare Council, an offspring of Social Service National Coordination Council (SSNCC), was reconstituted and the Social Welfare Act 1992 was promulgated with the mandate to facilitate, promote, mobilize and coordinate the activities of social organizations including civil society. Due to a lack of coherent Civil Society Act and confusion of the government regarding its nature and functions, civil society organizations of Nepal are being treated as NGOs and many civil society groups are being left un-institutionalized.

But, unlike NGOs and INGOs whose legitimate operation in Nepal requires their registration with Social Welfare Council, civil societies operate under a diffused mandate and many of them work as informal institutions with no registration at all. For example, trade unions are registered with the Department of Labor, teachers and student unions with the university, private research and consulting firms under the Department of Industry, a few civic organizations with Social Welfare Council, etc. There were 131 International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and 19,200 NGOs registered with the Social Welfare Council and other ministries until February 2006. But, there are far more NGOs and civil society groups operating in the country thickening the associational life of citizens.

The Ninth Five-Year Plan Document (1997-2002) encouraged the involvement of NGOs, civil society, private sector and locally elected bodies in social mobilization to enable citizens to shape policy decisions, enhancing a sense of political efficacy, developing opportunities to enforce their claims, getting benefits and developing their interests in local governance. These processes generated competitive conflict as a necessary precondition to achieving empowerment. LSGA encourages the formation of NGOs and civil societies with the approval of Village Development Committee (VDC) and municipality and involve them in local development projects by allowing them to "identify, formulate, execute, maintain and evaluate," those projects. The "Priority Reform Actions" of the government articulates the "strengthening of links with civil society organizations representing their autonomy and enhancing accountability of civil society to increase development effectiveness." A civil society boom is considered to be a factor for democratic consolidation. But, the relationship between civil society and the state is marked by distrust and a general lack of collaborative action. After the political change of February 1, 2005 the government had introduced a new Code of Conduct for Social Organizations and Institutions (COC) stipulating that people working in NGOs should not participate in party politics, cannot head any organization for more than two terms, publicize their audited financial and yearly progress reports and submit to the District Administration Office and District Development Committee (DDC), should not receive monthly salaries and get prior permission from SWC while receiving foreign assistance. Rights-based NGOs stood against these provisions and had launched their own protest movement by showing solidarity with the agitation of the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) for political change. NGO Federation and Association of INGOs in Nepal had also put pressure on the government to roll back the code.

While the government questions their transparency, accountability and performance, despite the Rs 10 billion they bring in annually, the leaders of these organizations argue that the government is trying to weaken civil society. The media, NGO and civil society movement is gaining strength but they are urban-based, partisan, projectized and interest-based and, therefore, their ability to undertake charity work and public action is limited. Representatives of these groups claim that they are trying to help the parties to become inclusive and decisive in the movement. Still, political authoritarianism of parties and the state is less likely to tolerate the social potential for the emergence of an autonomous civil society capable of holding the leaders accountable for their actions. In the field of media, the government has announced a one-window policy to hand out government advertisements to the private sector media. On October 9, it issued a Press Ordinance aimed at bringing the media under regulation. Its provisions are: increment on the fine on libel materials and also those deemed "helpful for terrorists" and limiting the FM stations to information oriented programs. Through the ordinance, it branded activities disrupting security, peace and order in the country as criminal and declared a fine of up to Rs. 100,000 for editor or publisher

violating the Ordinance. Journalists allying themselves with the agitating SPA have opposed the moves, although most of the laws are based on the recommendations they themselves made while their parties were in power.

The increased level of violence has severely limited the delivery of basic services to the conflict affected citizens, squeezed the development space and increased risks for the security of staff. International development agencies' work in Nepal is governed by the Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs), a set of principles on non-interference by government and CPN (Maoist) in development and humanitarian work. There is a need for more systematic training on and dissemination of BOG to field level workers to help limit the ability of parties in the conflict to act opportunistically. The government and the aid agencies are, however, tied into a problematic relationship where potential conflict threatens to spoil opportunities to realize mutual gains and communicate confidence. Donors new policy strategy of reducing aid to Nepal now is eroding each other's credibility rather than sustaining overarching strategy of contributing towards ending the deep roots of conflict and transform them. With the political change in April 2006 all the ordinances promulgated by the royal government have been negated.

## Modern Civil Society Groups

Nepal is a culturally diverse unitary Hindu state based on a divine kingship. The legitimacy of Nepalese state, therefore, rests on its entrenchment in societal interests and various conditions including channels of communication that connect the public sphere to a civil society in which citizens set their agenda for the political system. The Constitution limits the action of government, provides fundamental rights to citizens and marks a transformation of the society from status orientation to social contract, duties to rights and mechanic to organic solidarity. It is also subjected to judicial processes, parliamentary reviews, scrutiny by the press and the entire public organized into a set of institutions and relationships called the civil society. Nepal's rulers have tapped international legitimacy through foreign aid and the development discourse in vogue and adapted themselves under dramatically changing circumstances (Bleie, 2003: 1-3). The NGOs and civil society boom, and the disunity among them, reflect the country's social asymmetry in caste, class, ethnicity, gender and regions. These intermediary bodies are unevenly distributed in society. In a country with enormous diversity, the issue of representativeness of change agents in governance is highly significant. Recent experience shows that civil society in Nepal confronts a variety of conflicts—direct, structural, perceptual and latent and trying to address the complexity of democratic, development and peace building functions. A set of formal and informal institutions working in the civic space of the Nepalese public can be categorized as such:

- **Human Rights and Peace Institutions:** Nepal Maoists' Victims Association (NMVA), Association of Sufferers of Maoists' Atrocities (ASMAN), Society of Citizens Disappeared by the State (SCDS), National Network of Peace Communicators (NNPC), Human Rights and Peace Society (HRPS), Professional Alliance for Peace and Democracy (PAPAD), Women Network for Peace (WNP), Friends for Peace (FFP), *Nagrik Awaz* (Citizens Voice), Indigenous Nationalities Peace Commission Nepal (INPCN), Collective Campaign For Peace (COCAP), National Peace Campaign (NPC), Civic Peace Commission (CPC), Citizens Movement for Democracy and Peace (CPDP), Civil Society for Peace and Development (CSPD), Civic Solidarity for Peace (CSP), Women's Rehabilitation Center (WRC), Institute for Conflict Management, Peace and Development (ICPD), Volunteers Mediators Group for Peace (VMGP), etc.
- **Civic Groups:** National Human Rights Commission of Nepal (NHRC), Advocacy Forum (AF), Human Right Organizations (such as, Informal Sector Service (INSEC), Human Right Organization of Nepal (HURON), Amnesty International-Nepal Chapter, INHURED International, Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN), Kamaya Concerned Group, etc), Election Observation Group, Transparency International (TI), Nepal Law Society (NLS), Nepal Bar Association (NBA), Sociological and Anthropological Association of Nepal, Intellectual Councils, Society for the Promotion of Civic Education in Nepal (SPCE), etc.
- **Social and Cultural Associations:** Guthi, *Mithila Samaj*, *Manka Khala*, *Newa Khala*, *Nepal Tamang Ghedung*, Tharu Welfare Society, Thakali Welfare Committee, *Kirant Yakthung Chumlung*, Depressed People's Upliftment Platform, Rodhi, etc.
- **Educational and Informational Institutions:** Autonomous research institutions and universities, academies, Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS), Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), Women Communicator's Group (WCG), Nepal Environmental Journalists Association, Editor's Guild, Nepal Press Institute (NPI), Nepal Institute of Mass Communication (NIMC), Nepal South Asia Center (NESAC), Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS), International Press Institute-Nepal Chapter, Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), etc
- **Promotional and Protective Interest Groups:** Federation of Community Forestry User's Group (FECOFUN), Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC), Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions (DECONT), NGO Federation of Nepal, General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT), Student Unions, Nepal Teachers' Association and organization, National Association of



- Village Development Committee of Nepal (NAVIN), Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN), Association of District Development Committee of Nepal (ADDCN), Nepal Medical Association, etc
- **Relief and Development Associations:** NGOs, Self-help Groups, Maiti Nepal, Nepal Red Cross Society, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Anti-T. B. Association, Family Planning Association of Nepal, Netra Jyoti Sangh, etc
  - **Advocacy Groups:** Nepal Federation of Ethnic Groups and Nationalities, Nepal Dalit Association, Women's Pressure Group, Indigenous societies, Legal Aid and Consultancy Center, Paribartan Nepal, TEWA, Media Alliance against Caste Discrimination, etc.
  - **Public Trusts and Private Philanthropic Associations:** Pashupati Area Development Trusts, King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, Lumbini Development Trust, Madan-Ashrit Memorial Trust, Mana Mohan Memorial Foundation, Ganeshman Foundation, B. P. Koirala Foundation, Tank Prasad Acharya Memorial Trust, Bhupal Man Singh Foundation, Buddha-Gandhi Foundation, Madan Puraskar Guthi, etc.
  - **Economic Society:** Federation of the Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Nepal Chamber of Commerce, *Dhikuties*, Private Business Houses, Cooperatives, Petty Traders' Association, Financial Institutions, bi-national Chambers, Consumer and Users Groups, Association of Economic Writers, Association of Bankers, Management Association of Nepal, Hotel Association of Nepal, Nepal Advertisement Agency Association, Nepal Overseas Exporters' Association, etc

Are these civil society groups involved in reasoned discourse, building cohesive position, providing a strong social foundation of peace and enabling diverse citizens' adequate representation in the polity? Or, they are merely providing resistance to the strengthening of national authority and national identity? Do they support ordinary citizens' affection for peace or specializing in power game devoid of all moral criteria? Whose regime of truth do they articulate—donors, their own or citizens for which they are constituted? Are these groups historically embedded in the social and political life of rural society or alienated from them? How do these groups negotiate modern rationality into peace building when contemporary politics seems to be free from reflection and feeling? How can they become a part of peace discourse which itself has become a locus of struggle between power, opposition and resistance?

Further research in these areas is needed to make a clear distinction whether many of civil society groups are ritual or rational, primordial or civic and parochial or cosmopolitan. It is essential to foster autonomy of civil society from interest groups and seek a common ground for donor-state-civil society cooperation. Critic, however, puts a note of caution in the conventional form of donors-civil society collaboration for obvious reasons. "First, there is apprehension that in the absence of proper professional and ethical foundation, the framework of cooperation between donors and civil society may degenerate into a negative process of cooption. Second, even without such cooption, civil society movement in Nepal that is almost wholly dependent upon financial assistance from external sources arouses suspicion (often mixed with a dose of jealousy) in the larger society that is difficult to handle without some ethical foundation as a defense" (Panday, 2001:124). There is a grain of truth, indeed. As foreign aid to urban civil society groups has mostly gone to the salaries, overheads, travel and training costs of elites, not the local people, breaking conflict trap has become difficult since conflict producing causes such as bad governance, corruption and unaccountable leadership have been left uncontrolled.

## Civil Society and Conflict in Nepal

Violent conflict in Nepal is the outgrowth of a complex combination of factors rather than just needs deprivation, private greed and identity. Horizontal and spatial inequality, degeneration of the system of redistribution, domination of decision making by a small group of elite and continued development failure have fuelled discontent and provided space for radical politics based on the universal ideology of communism. One can find four types of conflict in Nepal layered at different systemic levels: *violent conflict* between the state and CPN (Maoist) for structural transformation, *manifest conflict* between the state and various political parties struggling for democracy and sharing of political power, *perceptual conflict* among the leaders of various political parties and groups on social, economic and personality oriented issues and *latent or structural conflict* between the state and societal forces including civil society demanding freedom, entitlements and social opportunities articulated in the constitution. The balance of conflict between the different systemic levels is constantly transforming. It is the violent insurgency that exposed the inequality in the distribution of social, economic, cultural and political opportunities among various identity groups, weak governance, unequal distribution of political power, marginality and the lack of effective civil society mechanism for non-violent conflict transformation. This study recapitulates a brief commentary of Maoist insurgency in Nepal in the present.

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was set up on 22 April 1949 in Calcutta, India, by a group of Nepalese aiming to establish a communist regime by mobilizing the animosities of the suppressed people. In 1952 it was banned for its challenge to the structural condition through violence which is justified by its ideology. In the 1959 general elections, it scored four out of the 109 seats in the Lower House of Parliament. Newly elected Prime Minister B. P. Koirala utilized nationalism to nullify communist challenge from within and capitalist challenge

from outside. After the Royal takeover of 1960 the CPN suffered a split into Keshar Jung Rayamajhi and Puspa Lall Shrestha factions. The Third Congress of the party, in 1961 endorsed the view of Puspa Lall and removed Rayamajhi from the party.

Inspired by the Naxalite radicalism in India, and Cultural Revolution in China, Nepalese Naxalites started to liquidate their "class enemies" in the eastern part of the country in 1972. However, the same group in the 1980s formed the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) and adopted a peaceful course. The CPN (Marxist) led by Man Mohan Adhikari and CPN-Marxist-Leninist led by Madan Bhandari merged on January 6-8, 1991 to create the CPN-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) with a new vision of people's multi-party democracy.

Another group led by Mohan Bikram Singh and Nirmal Lama had established the CPN (Fourth Convention) in 1974 and advocated the need for radical change. In 1983, this group also suffered a split. Singh along with Dr. Baburam Bhattarai formed the CPN (Masal). In 1985, Masal cracked again - Masal led by Singh and Mashal led by Mohan Vaidya (presently Maoist leadership). The present Chairman of CPN (Maoist) Puspa Kamal Dahal (nicknamed Comrade Prachanda was a leader of Mashal) later became its General Secretary. In 1990, both groups along with other minor left factions formed the United National People's Movement (UNPM) to fight against the Panchayat system. The radical left faction rejected the new constitution and pressed for the election of a Constitution Assembly.

In November 1990 the Fourth Convention of Lama, CPN-Mashal of Prachanda, Proletarian Laborers Organization (PLO) of Rup Lal Bishwokarma and CPN-Masal of Dr. Bhattarai, espousing radical views, formed the CPN (Unity Centre) with Prachanda as its General-Secretary. In its 1991 general convention it endorsed the proposal of Prachanda-- to wage a protracted People's War. The CPN (Unity Center) also established its semi-underground political wing-- United People's Front (UPF) --to contest the general elections of 1991. With nine seats, UPF emerged as the third largest parliamentary party. In 1994 mid-term elections, the CPN (Unity Center) suffered a division between Nirmal Lama and Dr. Bhattarai factions. Both the groups approached the Election Commission (EC) for recognition. When the EC recognized Nirmal Lama's group, Dr. Bhattarai's faction boycotted the elections.

On December 31, 1994, the United People's Front (UPF) led by Dr. Bhattarai put forth 38 demands to the CPN-UML government. After the fall of this government, it again presented the demands, adding two more to its original list, to another coalition government led by premier Sher Bahadur Deuba who agreed to positively consider the demands except those related with *constitutional monarchy, multiparty democracy, sovereignty of people, and human rights*. In 1995 Prachanda's Unity Center held its Third Plenum, sacked Lama, took up arms, and changed the party's name to CPN (Maoist). The CPN (Maoist) gave the government the ultimatum of February 17, 1996 to fulfill its 40 demands, but started its violent activities in Rukum and Rolpa on February 13. The Maoists' major demands, *inter alia*, involve general public welfare, nationalism, Constituent Assembly, establishment of a secular and republican state, and abrogation of all unequal treaties, including the 1950 Peace and Friendship and the 1996 Integrated Mahakali River treaties signed between Nepal and India. The successive governments' tendency to handle political crisis through ill-defined authoritarian means of seeking unilateral victory and imposition of its terms on the other rather than discursive practices explicitly undermined the functional basis of negotiation.

The Second Convention of the CPN (Maoist) in February 2001 in Dang abolished the post of General Secretary and elected Prachanda as its Chairman. It declared the Party's activities under Prachanda at par with the glorious traditions of Marx, Lenin, and Mao and decided to call the path that the Party's activities were taking as "Prachanda Path." In the beginning, People's War was virtually ignored by the establishment, as it was a localized low-intensity conflict, with engagements taking place mainly between CPN (Maoist) and the police. Later, it spread throughout the nation and became one of the high-intensity conflicts involving CPN (Maoist) and the Unified Command of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), which includes the Armed Police Force (APF) and the police. The recent commitments shown by CPN (Maoist) for democracy, human rights and competitive elections following their understanding with the SPA open the prospects for the civil society to engage in democratic dialogue and peace building.

## **Impact of Conflict on Civil Society in Nepal**

The decade of deadly conflict in Nepal has led to the breakdown of the community, transformed social relationships and trust and forced the political leadership to examine the structural problems of inequality, exclusion, poor governance and development failure. Mainstream parties are completely isolated from rural areas and the government is limited to the capital city and district headquarters. Erosion of the monopoly of state's power left citizens bereft of even a handful of classic public goods—security, law and order, protection of property rights and welfare functions. The CPN (Maoist)'s initial reform programs appealed to the disenfranchised. But, as technology and ideology of violence became more complex, the costs of conflict increased. Insurgency and counter insurgency operations caused the death of 15,000 persons, displacement of 270,000 and forced the migration of 1.5 million youths to various countries for security, safety and livelihoods. It increased cases of the violation of human rights. The exodus of youth and educated citizens left rural areas devoid of critical change agents and the productive power of the rural economy. In order to respond to the insurgency, the

government began adopting hardball tactics as the insurgency gained momentum. The army got involved after its barracks were attacked in Dang in 2001, and democratization and economic reform processes have been stalled. Growing militarization of the society has meant that leaders rely on the use of guns to achieve their objectives.

Several rounds of peace talks have yielded nothing from the Maoists in spite of government readiness to provide concessions on many fronts. Believing that the Maoists would not give up their armed struggle until their key demands were met, and which the government says it cannot do citing constitutional limitations, it has taken the whole insurgency as a security problem and responding to it in a like manner. This has led to curbs in the operation of civil society organizations, such as media, trade union, human rights groups and NGOs particularly where it finds issues of convergence among them. Nepal's domestic labor market has weakened causing displacement of workers and industrial shutdown resulting in the decline of trade union membership and their ability to inspire new members. The informal sector in the country is growing due to a decline in industrial and commercial sector activities, but there is a lack of political attention. It is also a difficult area for the workers to unionize. The contribution of civil society groups helped the unions to enter into this area and give voice and visibility to unorganized workers. The total volume of remittances Nepali workers bring annually from abroad amounts to \$1.5 billion, which has given life to the rural economy.

Conflict has also destroyed public and private property, development infrastructure, communication, hydropower stations, government offices, industries and national economy costing some \$2 billion. The impact of the conflict on the rural population is intense particularly among the weaker sections of society, such as the poor, women, youth, children and elderly and disabled and their institutions. Common effects on women are rape, widowhood, illness and disease, multiple burden of family and reversal of role from private to public life. There is a vicious circle of high poverty, unemployment, low economic growth and conflict which are mutually reinforcing. But, the conflict has also given women a certain confidence, brought them into leadership positions, legitimized widow marriages, provided opportunities to join in the army and police and helped articulate the collective voice of women for reconciliation and social justice. There is a decline in agricultural production, tourism, nutritional status and market access. In the far-western hills, food crisis is growing with serious constraints to food access for many mountain regions. In rebel controlled areas, the entire market system has changed as rebels do not allow sale of village products to district markets where prices are better. Regular blockades by them and restriction on the movement of citizens have directly affected crop production, denied villagers access to agricultural inputs and profitable local businesses like exports of forestry products and taken over trades in particular medicinal herbs—like *Yarsa Gumba* which has a high demand in India.

The impact of the conflict on education system remains devastating. Many school children in rural areas are recruited as child soldiers while others are fleeing their villages due to fear of abduction and indoctrination. The rebels use school children to dig trenches and work as informers while security forces have also used them to spy against rebel movements. As a result, drop-outs are high and many schools are forced to close. Many government-run health clinics are in tatters. There is a shortage of medicine, nurses and doctors and fear is forcing them to leave the villages.

Nepal has “ceased to be a country in development, as the conflict has undermined the sustainable achievement of economic and social progresses” (Frieden, 2004: 1). But, the conflict has also forced political parties, media persons, trade unions, student unions, professional groups, etc to come closer and enter into dialogue to regain credibility for the creation of democratic conditions. National and international voice against discrimination and eradication of social and economic injustice is increasing. Still, it has rapidly paralyzed important structures of civil society in conflict zone, weakened the basis of cooperation and contributed to narrow bonding of groups. War economy has perpetuated the violence of vigilante groups and contributed to lawlessness, intimidation, rape, extortion and destruction. The price paid by women and Dalits for their little empowerment remained heavy.

Divisive leaders have emphasized differences among ethnic, religious, caste, gender and regional groups and articulated demands that play on those differences such as restructuring of the state, federalization, ethnic autonomy, self-determination, etc. The conflict has also spurred the growth of self-consciously organized indigenous associational life which engages and contests over societal, political, economic and state norms and protects their existence, way of life and interests. Yet, they are not properly institutionalized into a political community, which is the precondition for democratic governance. Where they are, they benefit either the Maoists or the government, thus aggravating the conflict even further.

## **Civil Society's Roles in Conflict Transformation**

The response of Nepalese civil society to conflict is pro-active rather than reactive, as they have been consistently arguing for the structural transformation of the public political sphere. Many activities of the civil society are geared to advocacy and means for restoring and sustaining democracy, peace and social justice and transforming unjust relationships. The multiple institutional arrangements offered by them in Nepal have helped citizens to organize into associational life, seek a balance between governmental power and its responsiveness appropriate for democratic governance and muster political will for conflict transformation aimed at redefining and rearranging “key parties and their coalitions, issues, rules and interests in a manner that the conflict becomes less violent and

destructive” (Vayrynen, 1999:151). However, they do not provide an answer to the immediate security situation except to call for an elusive peace that can only result if the conflicts are resolved. It is in this chicken-and-egg situation that both the government and Maoists are moving ahead, fighting for their disparate agendas. In the midst of all this the political parties are trying to carve a niche for themselves. The irony of it all is that everyone is justifying their actions in the name of democracy, but no attempts has ever been made by the civil society or anyone else to find the common ground among the conflicting parties and opening access of public to the negotiations where real peace initiatives could be started.

Indeed, transformation of the political culture requires addressing the root causes of conflict, continuous socialization of the dynamic forces of society into a culture of peace, mobilization of peace constituencies and acculturation of civil society actors and citizens into democratic norms, institutions and processes. Some key indicators of this transformation are the level of concepts, language and symbols used in the discourse, proliferation of new institutions and their articulation in the mass media and public political sphere. The peace-oriented NGOs and civil society are seeking a structural transformation of public sphere<sup>5</sup> in a less conflict inducing direction which is not excessively costly in terms of human suffering, political fragmentation and destruction of society’s infrastructure. Their peace education, civic solidarity, training, lobbying, capacity building and civic action aim to minimize the main conflict producing causes at different levels of scale, different institutional practices and envisioning a peaceful democratic future. But these long-term issues have now been resolved, at least at the commitment level, by the conflicting parties. The Maoists legitimize their armed struggle against the backdrop of economic, social and political inequality, hence are committed to work for that goal. Successive governments too have said that they are ready to work towards filling such gaps. The issues that still remain and fuel the conflict are more lofty—a new constitution and the mode of its drafting rather than anything already laid down in the constitution and the process of their effective implementation. And most organizations in the civil society too appear to be taking sides in the continuation of the conflict, including some powerful international voices, rather than coming out of the conflict rut to point out the common grounds necessary for a resolution.

Several human rights NGOs of Nepal continue to promote human rights, campaign for international human rights and humanitarian laws, conduct research and publication, organize regular public demonstration, lobby for the signing of Human Rights and Peace Accord and repel the legislation and measures that are in contradiction with Nepal’s human rights obligations. They are also involved in fact-finding about disappearance and extra-judicial killing and organizing activities against the wanton violation of human rights by political parties, the state machinery and Maoists. There has been inadequate institutionalization of Constitutional and human rights despite the promulgation of the Human Rights Commission Act 1995, and the formation of the National Human Rights Commission in May 2000 due to lack of resources and an implementation mechanism through the institutions of governance. The defenders of human rights have succeeded in alerting the international community to a deteriorating peace, security and human rights conditions in the country. Those who suffer human rights violations are often the powerless members of society and their last resort to redress the cycles of victimization are human right organizations.

Dalit federations and organizations, once subordinated to unwritten rules of caste, are continuously entering into a process of self-organization. They are seeking for equal treatment, abolition of the social practice of untouchable, clamoring against the violation of their human rights and seeking to conceptualize the state in the culturally neutral language of space so that inclusive policies can reduce the intensity of conflict. The most effective civic organizations, such as human rights organizations, bar associations, student unions, teacher unions, trade unions, federations of elected bodies, etc. have established local chapters, broadened the base of their organizations, increased the participation of their members in public debate on policies and garnered social capital by drawing citizens together in civic relations, cooperative action and peace building. Peace building has also provided them a vantage point for the examination of root causes of conflict, their major linkages with social, cultural, economic and political system and adoption of practical means by which donors, actors and stakeholders play complementary roles in support of conflict transformation and peace building. The Nepalese trade unions are struggling for social rights, a number of welfare schemes and union building. The Federation of Nepalese Journalists is mobilizing, informing and empowering its members, thus giving them a voice to be heard and heeded to in the public matters including their professional rights, democracy and peace. The most significant one is the growth of informed population capable of making the correct choices based on support for democratic peace and sustaining communication across the lines of conflict. This has made humanitarian engagement possible.

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<sup>5</sup> Transformative nature of peace entails a number of considerations. “First, *behavior* of actors must be altered from the application of violence to more peaceful forms of dispute settlement; second, a transition from a wartime to a peace *mentality* needs to occur; third, *system of risks and rewards* should encourage peaceful pursuit of livelihoods, rather than intimidation, violence and rent-seeking; fourth, *adversaries* must come to view each other as members of the same society, working toward a common goal—a peaceful and prosperous future; and fifth, *structures and institutions* must be amended at all levels of the society to support these new peaceful transformation” (WB and CC, 1997:3-4).

Still, a lot still requires to be done especially with regard to the inclusion of *all* the voices in the spectrum within this associational revolution and overcome winner-takes-all solution that failed to stabilize democratic politics in 1950s, 1980s, 1990s and even now. The fact that journalists often found themselves siding with the agitating parties meant that the voice representing the state or the elected government in power was utterly lacking in this great democratic movement. This resulted in biased reporting in the media even when the elected government laid out legitimate state concerns about collective needs, formulation of citizen charters and even reform measures. The government was prompted to challenge the mainstream civil society organizations by allowing formation of rival organizations with alternative opinions. Had the original democratic organizations been inclusive enough, such hard-ball tactics by the government might not have been necessary in the first place. Similar is the case with other professional organizations which have sprouted in recent days promising to work 'purely' for the professional interest. Indeed, any organization finds it mandatory to indulge itself in politics to the extent necessitated by its existential problems, because nothing that exists can remain entirely apolitical. However, overt political alliances make them rather a part of the political society than the broader civil variety.

Nepal Law Society and Nepal Bar Association have been debating on changing constitutional norms based on popular sovereignty and human rights, internal relation between democracy and rule of law, judicial fairness, good ties between the bar and the bench and legal reforms for the consolidation of democracy. The 10<sup>th</sup> All Nepal Lawyers National Conference stressed protection and promotion of human rights, rule of law, inclusive democracy and conflict resolution as their prime agenda. Due to the violent conflict women face widowhood, the financial burden of the family, changed gender roles, sexual exploitation, trauma, displacement and being used as a tool for rival factions. Reporting their issues has become problematic due to local censorship by conflict parties. Women's associations have been calling for the break up of the patriarchal order of life, establishment of inheritance rights, abolition of *deuki pratha* (girls offered to temples), strict curb on girl trafficking, including gender equality and empowerment, and are seeking for their representation in political power and peace process. Women's groups have become powerful promoters of peace constituencies and even demanding their representation in the future peace negotiation. The moves towards gender equality in politics, economy and society and equal outcome are cardinal principles of positive peace. The boom in philanthropic organizations, private trusts and economic societies are also facilitating this process. But, there is a lack of long-term vision for peace building, countrywide approach and unity among civil society groups. As a result, they have undertaken a more issue-based rather than process-oriented initiatives (Paffenholz, 1994:13-14).

The bulk of members of civil society represent sectoral interests, not propagating a system of civic education for a shared sense of national identity and arresting the continued development failure (Panday, 1999). Although these developments can be deemed positive for the society that is being built through modernization, very few organizations have tried to understand the local cultures and traditions and presented them in a favourable light. Role models chosen usually symbolize an antipathy towards traditions. This could lead to further conflict down the line, as people become more aware of their identities and the need to protect them. One pointer to this lacuna is that in spite of the thousands of organizations that have come into existence, there is hardly any working to make people aware about the richness of their traditions and the positive impacts on the society they brought about throughout Nepal's history. This clearly speaks for the need for donors to be sensitive towards the local traditions even while pushing the civil society with their own agenda. In conflict transformation processes, Nepalese civil society groups have clearly demonstrated their limited leverage in sustaining the negotiation process.

The dependence of civil society on markets, the Northern donors and the government have indeed weakened their autonomous capacity to push for the self-generating notion of citizens' self-development, prevent organizational fragmentation and deliver common goods for peace building. Critic of civil society lists other weaknesses as well: over-concentration of civil societies and NGOs in urban areas, extremely partisan, highly elitist, shortage of dedicated volunteers, poor membership base, overlapping activities and senseless competition for clients and patrons (Dahal, 2001:42-43). Radical left political parties criticize civil society and NGOs for creating a "petty bourgeoisie class as a neutralizer of people's war" rather than an enabler of the Nepalese society as a very heterogeneous citizenry to start acting as subjects in an unfolding history.

## **Communities for Peace**

Essentially, peace building is rooted in the sense of peace community formation:<sup>6</sup> in the appreciation of the preservation of human rights; in the high regard to promotion of human values and reciprocity which turn peace into a common good. Idealists see "security as a consequence of peace: a lasting peace would provide security for

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<sup>6</sup> In response to the call of the World Council of Churches to focus on Asian experiences of conflict and of mitigating violence through community resilience, the Asian churches have expressed their commitment to involve in the task of overcoming violence under the overarching theme "Building Communities of Peace for All." This was also the theme of the 12th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia in April 2005. Recently, the Everest Peace Project team has been formed in Nepal which consists of climbers from many different cultures, nationalities and faiths to promote a global community of peace and teamwork.

all” (Buzan, 1991:2). Real peace, however, can be achieved “where the fundamental rights of all citizens of a state including members of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities are guaranteed and respected” (Baechler, 1997:314) and opportunities for the people are increased to address conflict-producing causes. Real peace requires rebuilding new relationships in society. Because of the realities of human nature, real peace requires balanced human interests, increasing awareness about more costs of the conflict than long-term benefits and confidence for a peaceful change. In pluralist peace communities, each civil society unit retains its autonomy but develops a sense of community and institutes mutual responsiveness for a rational and peaceful change. The focus on common identities and norms created by social interaction makes them endogenous to the state and emphasizes the harmony in social relations (Vayrynen, 2000:174). While *negative peace* requires freedom of citizens from threats and coercion of every kind, the *positive peace* requires creating safe public spaces, synergy of values, rules and interests within the society and peaceful inter-group relations. There are three approaches to this:

**Mobilization:** Political mobilization of various constituencies for peace by civil society can modify the behavior of conflict actors through persuasion, dialogue, rational arguments, compromise at various degrees and even threat of non-violent civil disobedience with respect to the goal of peace. Buddha and Gandhi believed that mobilization of communities must be peaceful for a peaceful transformation of conflict. Since conflict escalates horizontally and vertically, peace-building traditions have favored mobilization of citizens of various walks of life from the central leadership to the grassroots level to be able to make a dent on the conflict system through their resources, skills, commitments and ties. The principal organizational umbrella supplied by the UN as well as the Hague Appeal for Peace and Justice for the Twenty-First Century, “reflect this organizational philosophy, which involved intensive consultation with and within hundreds of civil society and peace movement organizations” (Barash and Webel, 2002:47-48). The intensity of mobilization depends on the level of grievances, aspirations, incentives and opportunities.

Actors of peace movements form a common sense of identity during their movement through socialization, adaptation of behavioral rules, social learning, protection of members and orientation towards achieving a common goal of peace. In October 2005, a Traveling Peace Concert, *Sunder Shant Nepal* (Beautiful and Peaceful Nepal), was organized in various parts of the country, such as Jhapa, Hetaunda, Dang, Kailali, Palpa, Damauli, Dolkha and Bhaktapur, with the message about peace and brotherhood. It drew more than a million people from all over the country to raise public awareness about peace. On November 12, 2005 around 10,000 citizens surrounded the Regional Administration Office in Dipayal demanding sustainable peace in the country. Similar initiatives were organized by the citizens of Darchula, Baitadi, Doti, Kaski and Bhaktapur to put pressure on the government to reciprocate the Maoist ceasefire and start the peace process. On February 3, 2006 Women’s Campaign for Peace (WCP) hooked up 18 civil society groups to rally for peace in Kathmandu aiming to give the message to the public that peace building requires not only ending physical violence but also ending violent ideas and tolerating other’s ideas, ideals and feelings.

**Protection:** Obviously, the idea of making peace rests on protecting the development space, agents of peace and ordinary public caught in conflict even while articulating the vision, voice and visibility of peace. The UN Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2005/78 focused on a number of areas requiring action where Nepalese civil society groups have special responsibility. It involves specific human rights violations, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, torture, sexual violence, forced displacement, mass abduction, extortion, forced recruitment and forced labor, arbitrary arrests, censorship, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of association. Similarly, concerns were shown with regard to civilians such as women and children, political leaders and activists, human rights defenders, internally displaced persons, refugees and journalists, as well as access of humanitarian organizations to those in need of assistance.

Nepalese communities for peace have been trying to address these concerns by carrying the vision of interconnectedness of human life and creating alternative spaces for citizens based on the principles of peace, tolerance and non-violence. Protection of civil society groups is essential to enable them function as a watchdog of society and support “security related interventions such as demining, demobilization, disarmament or reintegration of ex-combatants” (Paffenholz, 2006:31). Inclusion of civil society has created possibilities for “potentially more effective action, especially in areas of confidence building, preventive and early-warning strategies and peace building” (Shaw and Maclean, 1999:291).

**Articulation:** A manifest articulation of vision for peace building requires explicit formulation of claim by civil society actors. In Nepal, articulation of interest for peace by the civil society is increasing through a) informal civil society actors such as individuals, families, communities, etc, b) formal civil society actors such as professional groups, religious groups, unions, associations and federations, and c) spontaneous type of civic groups such as the undifferentiated mass of citizens who impulsively join peace rallies, demonstrations and movements out of their sheer interest for peace. Civil society groups also came up with the *Butwal Declaration for Democracy and Peace* which, *inter alia*, focuses on democracy, peace talks, rule of law, formulation of a common agenda and acceptance of the UN’s mediation in a peaceful transformation of the armed conflict. Those whose relatives have been disappeared by the state and Maoists have started a signature campaign, which has been participated by ordinary

public. On September 2, 2005 over 60 NGOs and civil society groups submitted to the UN to mediate in Nepal's conflict for speedy resolution of the armed conflict. Similarly, on November 10, thirty pilgrims embarked on a 500-km march from Namoboudha to Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha for peace. Each articulation reflects the specific conditions of the public's social, economic and political life, short-term interests of stakeholders with a long-term vision of the society for articulation of peace where violent attitude recedes, behavior moderates and non-violent conflict reducing mechanism is made effective.

Despite numerous efforts made by civil society groups for peace they have not been able to become cohesive enough to mobilize sufficient number of citizens and institutions to constitute a viable critical mass necessary for conflict transformation. Their success lies in creating rational public opinion for the non-violent resolution of conflict and highlighting structural reforms for an inclusive governance. Care also needs to be taken while carrying out peace tasks that their actions do not contribute to the entrenching the conflict further. The nature of peace building, its timing and the actors involved could sway the peace movement in such a manner as to buttress the conflict actors—meaning deepening the conflict. This is especially the case where the roots of the conflict are intricate, deep and replete with geopolitical nuances where even the best of intentions can result in the worst possible scenario if the full implications of acting in a conflict zone are not thought through.

## **Negotiation with Conflict Actors**

Negotiation does not mean imposition of particular interest of a group. It aims the accommodation, reciprocity and mutual benefits of diverse interest groups of society—actual, potential and left out. In Nepal, civil society groups have drawn their own "road maps" for the conflict resolution, which have induced similar initiatives at the diplomatic and political levels. The CPN-UML prepared a "road map" after its leader's meetings with both the King and CPN (Maoist) top leaders to communicate to the masses their "middle ground" --a referendum on a constituent assembly. All the road maps have argued that the CPN (Maoist) could be brought to mainstream politics only through dialogue, negotiation and a round table conference. But a convincing way to induce a radical switch in psychology and behavior and to make them lay down their arms still eludes those recommendations.

Human rights organizations and civil society groups successfully initiated a dialogue between the government and pro-Maoist All Nepal National Independent Students' Union, Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) in May 2004 thus ending the month-long closure of schools. On September 15, the same year, the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF-Revolutionary) withdrew the indefinite shutting down of factories it had imposed, after the negotiation of interests and signing of an agreement between the government, employers' organization and ANTUF-R. The signing of the agreement was facilitated by human rights organizations. On the pressure from the media, civil society and human rights organizations, the CPN (Maoist) and government observed a truce in October in 2004 for the Dasain festival. On the request of human rights and civil society organizations, the CPN (Maoist) has frequently released several abducted citizens and security personnel.

On September 1, 2005 due to successful mediation by a business group, trade unions and human rights organizations, the ANTUF-R called off its indefinite strike in Uniliver Nepal Limited. It was through unofficial communication by human rights organizations and civil society groups that the government and CPN (Maoist) got engaged in the previous two rounds of peace talks in August 2001 and January 2003 at the Track 1 level where members of civil society had also acted as facilitators. Due to constructive talks with political parties and civil society, CPN (Maoist) announced a unilateral ceasefire for four months beginning from September 3, 2005 to express what it calls its commitment for democratic set up, encourage political power and the UN to initiate new moves and allow the citizens to observe the Dasain and Tihar festivals (Dahal, 2005: 20-24). But this ceasefire is also said to have arguably enforced the Maoist agenda of opposing the constitution as it was able to wean away a sizeable chunk of the constitutional force- the seven parties who until then believed in the constitution- to their side of the conflict. On February 18, 2006 human rights and media persons facilitated the signing of an understanding between the Surya Nepal Private Ltd and ANTUF-Revolutionary for the release of three officials of the Surya Nepal Private Ltd.

While the mainstream parties are interested in the power-mediation approach, grassroots organizations have resorted to problem-solving approach and are addressing the humanitarian crisis with local means such as reconciliation, mediation among the connectors of society, village elders, women and eminent persons and creating a public space for dialogue. Delivery of services has become possible due to effective negotiation between the conflicting parties at the local level. Local public pressure for peace is increasing. A national conference on "Role of the Private Sector in Peace Building, Reconciliation and Development" organized by the private sector in July, 2003 set up a new initiative called the National Business Initiative (NBI) for peace, with a mandate to engage in peace building activities.

In Nepal, Track II civil society dialogue is significant for its contribution to add democratic values such as inclusion, transformation, justice and participatory governance to Track I's concern for power sharing. This is essential because the state is the major employer and can even provide power, resource and position to citizens of various political affiliations. Reaching a sustainable peace requires a long-term effort by grassroots organizations to address diverse concerns, help citizens take leadership roles and transform their institutions and communities. It is here that the sources of conflict are embedded and it becomes easy to identify their problems, articulate their

concerns, needs and priority and influence the policy at the higher levels. But, without international humanitarian support in the short and medium-run, this goal is unlikely to be attained, a difficult task given the security situation on the ground.

Local citizens have no choice but to engage with CPN (Maoist) either because it controls the local population, territory or services or because local leaders feel compelled to seek out options for minimizing the impact of the conflict. In November 2004, women of Dailekh defied the threats of Maoists and started to rally against them for abducting their children for indoctrination, training and recruitment. Resistance against the Maoists soon spread to Baglung, Pyuthan, Terhathum, Butwal and Rupandehi Districts. In Janakpur, the local police chief applied the concept of community police and created several clubs for youths and 150 communities to build linkages between the ordinary citizens and the police force to improve the interface between the state and society for developing trust, cooperation and peace building (Shrestha, 2004:438-461).

Insecurity in rural areas remains high for civil society, NGOs, INGOs and development workers. Sometimes, the conflicting forces harass relief workers. And the rebels hijack trucks delivering Food for Work and relief materials. It is important to give practical support to the local civic groups that are actually doing something on the ground. Broad-based support to the conflict transformation requires the ownership by and constructive engagement of all functional groups of society in relief-oriented development initiatives.

## **Pressure for Social Change**

The deadly conflict has caused differential growth in the power of various actors causing a fundamental redistribution of equation in the system. It has unleashed contradictory forces and initiated “persistent change” in traditional social relationships and institutions built on continuity, stability, order and hierarchy. But, this change is uneven and conflict-prone as it has diverse effects on social classes. Enabling agents of change to engage constructively with key actors is essential to exert impact on the key issues within the conflict system. The government is facing a new pressure from below and international community from outside to democratize and involve in a negotiated solution of the armed conflict. Part of the pressure for change comes from identity groups for inclusive governance and part of them comes from post-modern civil society groups seeking a new identity, role, resource and correction of political power. There are three patterns of political pressure. Radical left parties such as CPN (Maoist), Jana Morcha Nepal, United Left Front, CPN-UML and their civil society groups are demanding for a substantive change in the political structure and political culture and, consequently, seeking to negotiate a new social contract. Moderate parties like Nepali Congress (NC), Nepali Congress (Democratic), Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) and their civil societies are seeking moderate reforms in the institutions of governance such as reactivation of constitution, constitutional monarchy, civilian control of the army and revival of parliament while small political parties in the establishment prefer glacial change and even accommodation of political and social diversity in the institutions of governance. Cultivation of long-term authentic relationship is crucial for “sustaining a change process that is moving from deadly expression of conflict to increased justice and peace in relationship” (Lederach, 2003:34).

The reformist agenda of all the parties indicate that pressure for the transformation of conflict is mounting. But, the critical question is: Does Nepal’s fragile democracy have the adaptive capacity to survive and develop these pressures for change when the growing connectivity of Nepalese state, market and civil society to changing security and global geopolitical priorities have already complicated the ability of the state institutions to generate national consensus on authority and legitimacy to govern, provided considerable space for maneuvering to the regime and severely constrained the ability of other key actors to effectively get real breakthrough for their transformative agenda? The nation needs to address security, governance, development and reconciliation issues to achieve sustainable conflict transformation with the consent and participation of all those affected by it. A collective national sobriety is a must to lift the nation from its cesspool of conflict governed by insecurity and divided by violence. A failure to respond to pressure for inclusive transformation in the long-run can damage the working relationship among the drivers, actors and stakeholders of peace. A careful management of the dynamics of change enables the state to put societies back together again and maintain desired level of internal cohesion and external adaptation. In sum, positive response to the pressure for change requires effective performance of the protection, peace education, articulation, mobilization and decision making functions of the institutions of governance. Preservation of peace also requires commitment to the general interests of the community as a whole and developing a farsighted vision of building a democratic society.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Pitting democracy versus the state, human rights against security responsibilities, professionalism versus political alliance, tradition versus modernity, men versus women and one class, caste, ethnic group or race against the other will not resolve the conflict in Nepal, ever. The very fact that attempts surface from time to time to show the conflict in this light means that there are active interests which see the conflict as an opportunity rather than a challenge to be resolved. These are issues that need to be carefully worked out to produce the right balance.



Inclusion, tolerance, co-existence and continuity to lasting values and institutions should be the fulcrum on which any change is devised. There is no other way. The civil society cannot therefore remain satisfied with mere preaching of the right word, but should engage itself meaningfully and constructively to follow it with the right deed so that conflict is not allowed overtaking peace-building mission.

### ***The State and Civil Society in Nepal***

During the partyless Panchayat regime (1962-1990) civil society organizations emerged mostly as primordial identities, politically mobilized society, as an alternative and sometimes in opposition to patrimonial state which maintained active presence in the economy and ameliorated the worst effects of market. After the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, as the patrimonial state was transformed into a neo-liberal one, the policy regime freed the economy and enterprise from government control and allowed them to foster their self-organization, mobilization and articulation. The global policy discourses, funding and networking that have been the driving force behind the emergence and proliferation of civil society organizations and movements, also changed the boundaries between the state and civil society in Nepal. The state was pulled into a coordinating role of civil society activities, enforcing property rights, contracts, currencies and a medium of exchange. Similarly, powerful civil society groups reinvented governance and shaped state action to suit their own ideology, interests and priorities. But their own transparency, accountability and responsiveness to the grassroots community remained very poor. Local civil society institutions—both formal and informal—lack requisite funding and hardly find themselves as stakeholders in policy dialogue with aid organizations and the government.

The neo-liberal winner-takes-all politics and economics eroded the constitutional base of democracy, social contract and public politics in its wake and unleashed distributional, identity related and deadly ideological conflicts instead. The collaboration of modern, rights-based and urban civil society with political parties, market institutions and donors is very strong but they are far removed from the state's imperative to provide security, order and public goods which are no less significant. The traditional, rural, duty-based and charity oriented civil society, meanwhile works within the society with or without state support. The neo-liberal bias of the market which set the freedom of capital above the interests of society and modern civil society was instrumental in weakening the power of state to create hierarchy, order, authority and legitimacy. Its ability to employ the legitimate use of force to seek loyalty of citizens to its rules, laws and institutions has been severely jeopardized. The rollback of the state from its social responsibilities has equally undermined the state capacity for governance, its autonomy from powerful interest groups and embeddedness in society for development synergy. And civil society groups have entered into the arena of policy community, co-production of public goods, education, exchange, collective action and counter-hegemonic mobilization.

The intensification of CPN (Maoist) insurgency in rural areas, daily agitation of the SPA and its civil society affiliates in urban areas and the evolving global neo-conservative regime has stalled the democratization process. After September 9/11 and specifically following the Royal takeover in October 2003 the Nepali state was forced to adopt an ideology of neo-conservatism. Now, the relationship of post-modern civil society and the state is marked by distrust, cynicism and lack of general interest in collaborative approaches to conflict transformation. The transformation of the urban civil society into a political society and neo-conservative state ideology backed by domestic and international market institutions have weakened the autonomy of the real civil society to constitute a public sphere. Civil society cannot exist independent of state but excessive reasons of state suffocate the ability of the civil society to articulate the public life of society, mediate democratic differences and creatively transform the deadly conflict. Now, the boundaries of the state, the economy and the civil society in Nepal remain highly contested. The sense of civic nationhood is hamstrung and most citizens lack a sense of national identity.

In rural areas, the retreat of the social functions of the state has been followed by a strategic approach and program execution of field-level projects by civil society, community organizations and NGOs. Now, civil society groups remain a reliable basis for peace building. Partnership in projects has broadened from the initial very close collaboration in policy debate with the central government to an increasing involvement of civil society and private enterprise in development. The state still defines the mandate, sets policy frameworks, coordinates, plans and monitors the overall development of civil society. Accountability of grassroots civil society is thus three-fold: downward to grassroots organizations where they work, upward to the state institutions, which in turn provide them with the mandate and legitimacy, and horizontally to donors, which provide resources, knowledge, skills and technology. These grassroots formal and informal institutions are involved in peace building through five important services: public communication, mediation, advocacy on issues of public interest, humanitarian relief (food for work) and service delivery to the needy and strengthening the representation of communities at the local level to demand and receive support services.

The changing attitude of state institutions and the decentralization of governmental functions require an increasing emphasis on the collaborative effort of donors, government, local government bodies, civil society and the private sector for peace building. Many projects have direct working relationships with district and local level bodies. These projects operate under umbrella agreements with the Social Welfare Council (SWC) which ensure coordination with central level bodies of the government. This allows a decentralized implementation of peace building efforts. District and local level institutions are program partners in the implementation of poverty

alleviation, social inclusion, health, education, communication, rural infrastructure, agricultural extension, forest management and small enterprise development.

Participatory planning, public audit, ownership of projects and stakeholder workshops provide room for the emergence of transparent, accountable and conflict-sensitive local governance. The development of district and VDC level-monitoring mechanisms is essential, which also reflects the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and provides disaggregated data on social inclusion. The accountability of local governance rests largely on its ability to develop its capacity and authority to allocate and manage financial resources for priority projects. Due to grassroots works of UNDP, GTZ, SDC and some INGOs there has been tremendous “increase in capacity building efforts aimed at civil society organizations through education and training on peaceful conflict transformation, human rights, good governance and research on causes and consequences of conflict in Nepal” (Neupane, K.C., and Dhakal, 2005:22). The development of research capacity of civil society groups is essential to shape the spectrum of policy debates and political choices for important decisions.

### ***Meaningful engagement in conflict transformation***

The protracted political and constitutional deadlock at Track I level has entailed the political engagement of the civil society at Track II and Track III levels. These efforts aim for short-term reduction of human rights violations and increasing access of conflict victim to long-term transformation into a peaceful society. General public in various districts of the country are expecting a strong presence by the civil society in conflict transformation. In a complex situation, engendered by crosscutting preferences of high leverage actors of conflict, the transformation approach appears to be the most alluring option in Nepal because it “aims at promotion of a more peaceful reality embodying new social relations, institutions and visions” (Vayrynen, 1999:151). The transformation approach also tries to tackle the context that breeds the taproot of conflicts by conflict-mapping and analysis, building scenarios and reorganizing the key actors and their supporters, structure of relationship, issues, rules, interests, attitudes and orientations for accomplishing the goal of peace. Constituted by a critical mass of change agents, Nepalese civil society groups from the early days of insurgency were pro-actively articulating the reformist agenda to make a dent on the conflict system through a structural transformation of the public sphere.

Working in conflict zones requires a more strategic and systemic approach to address the multitude of emergencies. The civil society also requires conflict-sensitive development. Joint commitments of the drivers, actors and stakeholders of the conflict on human rights can provide a “common ground” and establish “an infrastructure across the levels of a society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources for reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside” (Lederach, 1997: xvi). Similarly, dissemination of BOG at the micro and macro-level and sufficient targeting of the poorest and unprivileged, women and children at the conflict-hit areas by the civil society can produce quick impact of emergency aid and enhance the image and relevance of the civil society.

To maximize effectiveness, civil society groups in cooperation with the UN and other sensible donors can provide a) humanitarian support to conflict victims and save their lives, b) support meaningful dialogues at various levels especially at Track II and Track III levels with a myriad of stakeholders for integrative relations, legal aid, and conflict transformation training to local opinion makers and staff in charge of operation, c) enable the government to protect human rights, sustainable livelihoods, rule of law and provide incentives for peace work at the grassroots levels focusing on poverty, employment and protecting vulnerable populations, such as widows, the orphaned and displaced, d) urgent lending adjustment through micro-credit, compulsory public planning, auditing and monitoring at the local level, and e) capacity building of the emergent local civil institutions and enabling them to work across various issues at different communities and generate social capital for conflict transformation. “The bottom-up approach is one that sees improved interpersonal relations among community members as the primary area for reconciliation work. Local, homegrown reconciliation and grassroots initiatives are viewed as the key success” (Huyse, 2003:24).

## **Barriers to Success**

Given the nature of deadly conflict and changing menu of conflict actors, peace building faces several challenges: the regional and global drivers of conflict supplying arms, ideas and incentives to conflict actors, short-term relief rather than long-term peace-building approach of donors, lack of comprehensive view and contexts of people with produces the causes of conflict and inability of the leadership at all levels of civil society to de-link minor conflict fuelling the macro conflict. Civil society groups thus face a shift in institutional environment, encounter structural and organizational barriers in assuming lead role in conflict mitigation and peace and lack inter-movement solidarity for effective collective action.

***Structural Barriers:*** Although the international community has tailored its support for conflict-sensitive programs, its approach and interests are not cohesive, as aid follows the political interest and priorities of individual countries. In many cases, what some donors call civil society groups are actually their traditional partners—consultancy firms, NGOs based on poor membership and clients. Donors exclusively working with such groups are confined only in urban areas. Those working with local formal and informal institutions, communities and

Village Development Committee (VDC) have to negotiate with the government, beneficiaries of the projects and the rebels as the latter “still control large parts of the country, especially in the mountainous regions where they have succeeded in imposing their own administrative structures” (Kobec and Thapa, 2005:2). The BOG signed by ten donor agencies and recognized by the government and rebels has only ensured the safety of project staff and implementers but has not helped to stop disruptive activities, taxation and financing insurgency. The government is trying to control them. There is also a lack of trust between the government and donors including their funding to civil society groups. On September 13, 2005 the regional front of CPN (Maoist) Karnali-Bheri Region passed its own guidelines mandating only those donors and civil society to work in their areas if they have either taken permission from them or registered with local Maoist organizations. It also barred activities near army camps and district headquarters. It prohibited activities by Israeli and American organizations, but welcomed the support of humanitarian work of the UN and other donors. The international community can “support civil participation by “creating spaces” for civil society to realize its full potential—both as a peacemaker and peacekeeper” (WB and CC,1997:5).

***Institutional Barriers:*** Distributional conflict largely imposes institutional barrier for civil society’s engagements in peace building. Institutions are true-life measures that provide incentives, options and even set constraints to actors who are involved in certain role performance. The government thinks that urban civil society groups are party-oriented, clientelist, family controlled, agitational and not accountable to the larger public. Considering that the state alone is capable of undertaking the larger national interest and public action the government has introduced the Code of Conduct for Social Organizations and Institutions 2005 with binding capabilities. As the code limits civil society groups and NGOs to the “non-political” public domain, the NGO Federation of Nepal and Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN) opposed this and instead prepared their own codes. Along with some donors they are asking the government to roll back its decision assuming that “code-based politics tend toward rigidity and lose the subtle possibilities, efficiencies, and flexibilities inherent in inexplicit, trust-based modes of social regulation” (Warren,1999:16). The absence of trust between the state and INGOs/NGOs/ civil society has paralyzed collective action. These barriers have inhibited the expectations of public from civil society in conflict transformation and peace building. International support must take into account the constraints civil society groups face and help facilitate their dialogue projects into official measures. For this social learning among the donors is specially challenging as it involves right choice of partners, trainees and groups who are to get access to the program resources and the choice of learning approaches in the capacity building, which should encourage self-reflection and ability to set new standards in the society and provide effective leadership in the peace process. Building peace requires paying attention to the spatial, social and cultural dimension (as these are connected to political, economic and historical aspects) of peace construction as a national project.

## **Quest for a viable Peace**

### **Recommendations for International Community**

When the imperative of peace is competing with other values, such as basic needs, power, liberation, social justice and identity how can the passionate desire for peace in Nepal be cultivated as a public good? How can the international community instill liberal norms in a highly conflict-prone politics and balance the need of the state for security and political parties and civil society for democracy? What are the practical measures to redefine the payoffs for the actors in conflict and enable them to seek conflict transformation into peace? Some essential points are underlined below:

- Devise reconstruction of the shattered lives of the people and the development infrastructure so that it can seamlessly be dovetailed with the five year plans, rather than pushing the scarce resources into a zero-sum game of either pursuing the strategic plan or abandon it for more immediate relief and reconstruction.
- An assessment of relevant humanitarian and development aid following the signing of BOG has become essential. Publicly seek the commitment of conflicting parties to the work of NGOs, community organizations and civil society in peace building. Building the state especially addressing triple crises—statehood, capacity and legitimacy-- and strengthening rural civil society should be simultaneously promoted.
- Collaborate with local informal groups to promote greater collective understanding of the context, more detailed and sophisticated analysis of conflict and greater resource sharing with functional local informal institutions ensuring their operation community oriented, conflict-sensitive and participatory.
- Planning of various conflict scenarios (political liberalization, government of parliamentary parties, interim government of all political parties, management of ceasefire, constituent assembly elections, or

prolonged conflict, national elections, etc). These planning of scenarios<sup>7</sup> should involve the broadening awareness about the changing nature of the bargaining environment for all actors, their interest constellation and shift from antagonist positions to identifying common enlightened interests for shared gains.

- For the negotiated settlement and post-conflict situation, it is important to bring comparative lessons of peace building knowledge, research, experience and resources possessed by the international community to support local capacity for peace building, relationship-building and linking civil society to grassroots concerns of citizens. The interface between international community and local civil society can provide the latter considerable protection, smooth funding and even coordination with the government and rebels for peace building efforts.
- Use good offices to support a peace process in Nepal that includes the participation of civil society and establish programs that seek to reduce violence through peace education, training and infrastructure development for income-generating activities.

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<sup>7</sup> The basic interest in building scenario is three-fold. "First is to widen the user or the participants' horizon by making them aware of things likely to influence their concerns. Second is to give them advice, clues and information as to how to relate those future developments to their present actions. Finally, and most important of all, is to pry out of the reader, user or recipient of the futures work an awareness of their assumptions about the future so that those assumptions can be examined, questioned, challenged, and perhaps changed" (Coates, 1996:8).

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## Abbreviations

ANNISU®	All Nepal National Independent Student's Union-Revolutionary
ANTUF ®	All Nepal Trade Union Federation-Revolutionary
BOG	Basic Operating Guidelines
CA	Constituent Assembly
CC	The Carter Center
CPN (Maoist)	Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist
DDC	District Development Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
ECCP	European Center for Conflict Prevention
EU	European Union
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
GTZ	German Society for Technical Cooperation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LSGA	Local Self-Governance Act
NC	Nepali Congress Party
NC (D)	Nepali Congress Party (Democratic)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission of Nepal
NSP (A)	Nepal Sadbhavana Party-Anandi Devi
OHCHR	Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights
RJP	Rastriya Janashakti Party
RPP	Rastriya Prajatantra Party
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SPA	Seven-Party Alliance
SPDI	Support for Peace and Development Initiative
SWC	Social Welfare Council
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPF	United People's Front
USAID	US Agency for International Development

VDC

Village Development Committee

WB

The World Bank