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469A Bukit Timah Road
#07-01, Tower Block, Singapore 259770
Tel: 6516 6179 / 6516 4239
Fax: 6776 7505 / 6314 5447
Email: isasijie@nus.edu.sg
Website: www.isas.nus.edu.sg



Nepal's Shaky Peace Process: One Year On

Nishchal N. Pandey¹

21 November 2007 marked the first anniversary of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government and the Maoist rebels in Nepal. The signing of the CPA was followed, on 28 November 2006, by another important agreement – that of monitoring the management of arms of both the Nepal Army and the People's Liberation Army (PLA), with the United Nations taking on the responsibility of ensuring that the Maoist combatants remain inside designated cantonments while the Nepal Army stays in its barracks. The principal objective of the CPA and efforts of the United Nations were to bring the Maoist guerrillas into the political mainstream. This was to be achieved through the election of a Constituent Assembly. The end goal was sustainable peace in Nepal.

However, several unfortunate events occurred in the course of 2007 which not only hindered the peace process and made peace elusive, but also left the people bewildered and frustrated with the state of affairs in the country. At least 234 people were killed during the last year,¹ law and order have become even bigger problems today than during the time of the insurgency – extortion, abduction and looting by various groups and gangs are common sights in the country. Despite being initially heralded as the “beginning of a new chapter of peaceful democratic interaction by ending the armed conflict”, the political situation has been marked by chaos, inter-clan fighting, random banditry, internecine warfare and recurrent fighting between the state and numerous armed militia groups based on caste, region and ethnicity – all these surfacing in the last one year alone. The government seems to function only in the capital. In the rest of the country, especially in the terai, there is total anarchy. The main highways leading to Kathmandu are regularly besieged by strikes and *bandhs* called by one group or another. There is also an acute shortage of gas, kerosene and petrol in Kathmandu.

The situation took a turn for the worse when the Maoists decided to resign *en masse* from the Koirala government on 18 September 2007. This decision set the clock back for Nepal's fragile democracy and brought the Young Communist League (YCL)² into direct confrontation, together with some of the armed groups fighting in the terai, with the state's security. The Maoists have vowed to launch a street agitation if a republic and a fully proportional electoral system are not announced prior to deciding on the new dates for the Constituent Assembly polls. The physically ailing political leadership has further

¹ Mr Nishchal N. Pandey is an Honorary Fellow and Consultant at the Institute of South Asian Studies, an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. He can be reached at nina@ntc.net.np.

compounded the situation by taking confusing and often even self-defeating steps on major national issues.

This paper will examine the causes and consequences of the current stalemate and the repeated use of the people's movement of April 2006 as a defense against the intolerable anxiety created by political uncertainty and constitutional illegitimacy. It will, at the same time, explore the course of Nepali politics in the months ahead with or without the elections to a Constituent Assembly.

Examining the Peace Process: How It Went Wrong

The present House was first elected in 1999, dissolved by the then Prime Minister in 2002 and then suddenly resurrected after a large-scale people's movement in April 2006. It "dissolved itself" again on 15 January 2007. It then turned itself into an "interim parliament", comprising also nominated members of parliament from the Maoist party.

Nepal's interim Constitution was promulgated on the same day, annulling the 1990 Constitution which was based on the twin pillars of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. As soon as it came into effect, constitutional experts began voicing their discontent with some of its provisions and in the manner with which the Constitution based itself on the oligarchic doctrine that institutionalised political power in the hands of just eight parties that constitute the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists (SPAM). Analysts began raising the question, "On what legal, moral, or political grounds can the flawed assumption be justified that the 25 million plus people of Nepal are 'represented' only by SPAM?"³ Furthermore, new provisions made the judiciary answerable to the parliament and the executive,⁴ thus enacting a strange prerequisite for the Chief Justice of the country to take his oath from the Prime Minister [but] ironically neither the legislature nor the executive were elected by the sovereign people. By submitting a written memo asking for amendment, the full bench of the supreme court stated that some of the provisions were "insufficient for ensuring judicial independence" while some prominent lawyers from the Bar Council further added that the interim statute has "wrecked havoc on a cardinal and sacrosanct principle of democratic governance – that of the balance and separation of powers".

The parliament which itself was not elected, has not been able to hold Constituent Assembly elections. The most recent polls were scheduled to be held on 22 November 2007 but they were deferred at the eleventh hour.

The key issue on the mind of the Nepali government at the time of the CPA appeared to be acceding to the plethora of Maoist demands in the hope of bringing lasting peace to the country ravaged by a decade of senseless war. However, in a hurry to lock the Maoist weapons and keep their cadres within cantonment sites, the Koirala government accepted almost all the Maoist demands, including declaring Nepal a secular state instead of it being the world's only Hindu kingdom, and changing the court of arms of the state and the national anthem. The Maoists also vowed to nationalise the King's property. On top of their demands, the Nepal government also provided three thousand Rupees monthly perk to each of the registered Maoist cadre from the state coffers. Even the Prime Minister has stated that, "Had we [simply] amended the 1990 Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal by scrapping powers and privileges of the King, we could have held the election a long time ago and would not have to face the political crisis like the current one."⁵ Former Chief Justice and Chairman of the drafting committee of the 1990 Constitution, Biswonath Upadhyaya, has likewise commented

that, everyone, including the Prime Minister, Speaker, and the members of parliaments have violated the interim Constitution.⁶ Therefore, today's deadlock can only be attributed to the weakness of the peace process, in that it was non-inclusive and non-participatory from the very beginning and it was hastily done. It was also "elite-driven" in a way that only senior party brass of the Nepal Congress Party (NCP), the Communist Party of Nepal [CPN] (United Marxist Leninist) and the CPN (Maoist) had a say over what was written in the interim Constitution. There was no ownership on the part of the ethnic groups because none of the major agitating identity units such as the Limbus, Gurungs, Magars and Madhesi really had any say over what was included in final draft.

Road to Federalism

In these circumstances, it was almost inevitable that, soon after the promulgation of the interim Constitution, there emerged a campaign to amend several of its articles – the most critical being the need to immediately opt for a federal set-up for the country. A violent agitation initiated by a little known Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) in January 2007 to get the longstanding grievances of the terai people addressed, drew massive public support in the major industrial terai towns of Biratnagar, Lahan, Mahottari, Janakpur and Inarua. After days of curfew, merciless killing of 20 people, baton-charging and devastation of government infrastructure; Prime Minister Koirala appealed to the Madhesi people to shun violence and assured them that the "Constituent Assembly due to be held in June (2007) would take care of the demands of the groups." But these assurances failed to quell the protest and he had to hastily make another public address (the second in a week) on 8 February 2007 in which he promised to increase electoral seats for the terai in the Constituent Assembly elections. Subsequently, Madhesi leaders called off transport and business strikes in the restive southern plains.⁷ On 30 August 2007, an agreement, signed by the Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, Ram Chandra Poudel, and MJF leader, Upendra Yadav, officially brought to an end the eight-month long agitation in the terai. However, this was only the beginning.

In between these eight months, nearly a dozen outfits with all sorts of names had already emerged, championing the cause of the terai people whom they said "had been victimised by decades of exploitation and mistreatment by the hill people". As soon as Upendra Yadav calmed down, others took up arms "demanding autonomous federal regions and greater representation in parliament." Taking cue from the MJF and the Maoists who were able to successfully coerce a deal with the state, they began killing, extorting, abducting and announcing incessant strikes or blockades. Whereas some of these newly formed parties were splinters of the MJF and the CPN (Maoists), others are thought to be purely criminal squads led by people with iniquitous backgrounds, including connections with nefarious elements in the neighbouring Indian state of Bihar. Maoist Chairman Prachanda however, blamed the Bharatiya Janata Party, Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other right-wing Hindu groups from North India especially Gorakhpur, claiming that they had infiltrated into Nepal's terai to create disturbance.⁸ The Nepal Sadhvabhawana Party (NSP) with its splinter faction, the NSP (A), likewise feeling left out in the MJF-government agreement, brought out a list of its own set of demands. Other parties such as the Jantantrik Terai Mukti Morcha [JTMM] (Jwala Singh), Cobra Group, JTMM (Goit), Nagraj, Biswas Group, Pawan Group and the Tiger Group have been actively engaging in criminal acts such as abduction of prominent businessmen and killing of innocents so as to further the cause of the Madhesi people.

The terai, which is the main agricultural area, constitutes 17 percent of Nepal's total territory, and shares the country's open border with the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. People from the terai, accounting for 48 percent⁹ of the total population, share cultural, linguistic and social ties with people across the border. They have faced problems of identity and citizenship and have had limited access to government jobs. The terai is also the only reliable access of the Kathmandu valley to the nearest sea-port. Almost all daily essentials required by major towns such as Kathmandu, Pokhara and Chitwan have to come via the terai. Therefore, any disturbance in the area bears disastrous consequences to the country at large.

Apart from the terai, the demand for a federal structure in the country has also been raised by other ethnic groups, triggering fear that Nepal will go back to being 22 different tiny principalities.¹⁰ Traditionally, marginalised groups seeking social justice and equality have been given legitimate outlets. In this instance, debate on the proposed federal arrangement based on linguistic and ethnic lines should be allowed. Also, it would be best if a newly elected Constituent Assembly decides on the future model rather than an interim government haphazardly determining future administrative, political and legal structures.¹¹ If all the fundamental issues are to be decided by the present interim parliament and a lame-duck government, the question arises as to what would then be the rationale for holding the Constituent Assembly polls?

International Reaction

With the indefinite postponement of Constituent Assembly elections scheduled for 22 November 2007, Nepal's fragile peace process has been fast sinking into a constitutional vacuum, political bickering and total lawlessness and there are strong chances of a resumption of the armed conflict. Following the deferral of the Constituent Assembly elections twice in a row,¹² the current government has eroded its credibility and legitimacy locally and internationally. Even if new dates are announced by the government, the Election Commission has categorically said that it needs at least three months to prepare for the polls. Besides, there is no guarantee that the government can hold the polls again on the stipulated date since it has already mobilised the Armed Police Force to quell the rising militancy in the terai, sensing a deterioration of law and order situation there.

The concerns of the international community are evident by a series of recent statements on the situation in Nepal. The United Nations' Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, voiced disappointment at the decision to postpone Constituent Assembly elections. An official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs of India stated, "India is disappointed at the repeated postponement of elections that erodes credibility and affects the process of democratic transformation and legitimisation in Nepal." The United States, in the same tune, advised that the "period between now and the Constituent Assembly election should be used to show the people that the interim government is responsive to and can meet its commitments to make a better life for the people of this country." Special Representative of the United Nations' Secretary-General to Nepal, Ian Martin, also said, "What is important now is that the political parties maintain their alliance and go forward to agree on how to create the conditions for the Constituent Assembly election, and on how to sustain and deepen the peace process and its implementation". In the same pitch, the European Union said, "Setting out a clear plan for what will need to happen to enable free and fair elections to go ahead in the future will be an important part of building trust and confidence in the peace process. An agreed roadmap will be vital." At the conclusion of his visit to Nepal, Special

Envoy of the Prime Minister of India and former Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Shyam Saran, stated that, "Repeated postponement of elections will raise the questions of credibility and legitimacy of the government." During meetings with Nepalese political party leaders in Kathmandu on 1 December 2007, the Chinese Minister for International Development Wang Ziarui is also learnt to have raised China's concern over the deepening political crisis in Nepal.¹³ It is evident from these statements and visits that the international community now wants a clear roadmap of how the present government will strengthen law and order situation to ensure timely Constituent Assembly elections.

Adverse Law and Order Situation

There is little contestation now that the terai has become a free-for-all, almost a hunting ground, for the region's armed opposition forces, the Maoists, government's police and armed police force, and armed bandits – some of them come from north Bihar to kidnap and loot in local villages. The armed opposition forces belonging to the terai such as the JTMM (Goit faction, Jwala Singh faction, etc.) kill civilians who do not support them through donations or refuse to join them while the state security personnel kill civilians they accuse of colluding with the armed groups. The criminal groups burn down entire villages and massacre locals during reprisal attacks. Examples of such attacks include the Kapilvastu riots in the third week of September 2007 and the Gaur massacre on 21 March 2007. Civilians who survive attacks by government forces or armed opposition forces are attacked by bandits who kidnap for ransom and loot property. The government has clearly failed in its duty to protect civilians, especially the Pahadis in the area who have fled to safer areas in order to escape militant Madhesi groups. To pressurise the government, even civil servants, judges of district courts and officials working in local bodies belonging to the hills have either left the area or have resigned from their respective posts.¹⁴ In total, some 900 government officials have vacated their offices in the terai's 11 districts as insecurity grips the bureaucracy.¹⁵ The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has, likewise, expressed serious concerns over the continued abduction, looting, extortions and insecurity and has urged the concerned authorities to act to end the situation immediately. In a statement issued after the executive committee meeting on 1 December 2007, the FNCCI said that, "Growing insecurity in the terai has hit production, while inadequate supply of petroleum products, frequent strikes and other instabilities have put industrial activities to a halt and severely affected normal life."¹⁶

Even in Kathmandu, the YCL stepped up the ante in September 2007 by organising protest programmes at the private residences of former royal government ministers. Despite criticism of their high-handedness and Chairman Prachanda's directives, local units of the Maoist party continue to kill journalists, abduct teachers and businessmen and demand "donations" not only from business houses but also from tourists in mountain trails. The civil society has expressed its strong concern over the worsening law and order and the negligence of the government in assuaging the anxiety and apprehension prevailing in the minds of the public in the wake of a series of abductions of school children and killings of innocents, including women, as well as frequent attacks in public places, despite high security deployment. Lawmakers of almost all the political parties [barring the CPN (Maoists)] together with the Prime Minister's own daughter, Ms Sujata Koirala, have repeatedly demanded the resignation of the Home Minister for his ineffective handling of internal security. To further hound Kathmanduites, a series of bomb blasts rocked the capital on 2 September 2007. According to the official version from the Home Ministry, the main mastermind behind the attacks is thought to have drowned in a river. On 26 November 2007, a gang of 10 people looted 21

million Rupees from the Bank of Kathmandu in the heart of the city but the police recovered only 2.3 million Rupees. It seems that the state's security forces – the police and the armed police force – are demoralised, corrupt and stretched beyond their capacity to manage the worsening situation. Yet, the government feels that the deployment of the Nepal Army is not suitable at the moment due its past record of having helped the monarchy usurp executive authority.

UNMIN's Role in Nepal

The United Nations Mission (UNMIN) in Nepal is a political mission established by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1740 to support the peace process. It officially commenced work on 23 January 2007 with three basic objectives: i) monitor the management of arms and the armies on both sides; ii) assist the parties through a joint monitoring coordinating committee in implementing the agreement on the management of arms and armed personnel; and iii) provide technical assistance to the Election Commission of Nepal. The Maoists had earlier in the year deposited a little more than 3,000 weapons and registered over 30 thousand fighters to the UNMIN, much to the dismay of security experts who were surprised at the vast discrepancy between the combatants and their weapons. However, despite hurdles, a second stage verification of Maoist combatants began at the PLA's 4th Division in Nawalparasi district in November 2007. The UNMIN has already completed second stage verification at the PLA cantonments in Ilam, Sindhuli and Kailali Districts. It only "monitors" ceasefire agreements but maintains a 24-hour presence at each of the seven main cantonment sites of the Maoist army in Ilam, Sindhuli, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Rolpa, Surkhet and Kailali districts and the Nepal Army barracks at Chauni, Kathmandu.

Although critics feel that it could do more, the UNMIN has been successful in at least ensuring that a full-fledged combat does not surface again during these volatile times. Barring a few incidents, the Maoist combatants inside the camps have not ventured out and the weapon storage system has, more or less, been "safe". The UNSC has permitted the UNMIN's presence in Nepal for only a year, with both India and China cautious at the beginning. Even now, Nepal's two giant neighbours, with porous borders, certainly would not want the UNMIN to expand its activities in the bordering areas and expand its role in a markedly complex political crisis which could very well lead the country towards unprecedented and intensified identity-based conflict. The UNMIN was set up with the view that the nature of the conflict is an "ideological" one. However, Nepal's conflict dynamic has changed within the last one year, and is increasingly leaning towards regionalism, ethnicity and language. With a limited mandate, the UNMIN has only been submitting strongly worded reports when the ceasefire agreement is violated by either side. As the Brussels based International Crisis Group said, "The United Nations mission has ridden out criticism from both the Maoists and their opponents but faces challenges in fulfilling its mandate as well as calls to extend its involvement in the political process. Even if the elections take place on schedule, it will almost certainly be extended, not least to continue the arms and armies monitoring role that no other body can perform."¹⁷ In fact, if the Constituent Assembly elections are not held for a considerable length of time, the presence of the UNMIN becomes all the more important.

The Nepal government is likely to request for the UNMIN's extension when its term expires in January next year. However, how it will produce concrete outcomes for the sake of peace and democracy is still to be seen if it is authorised to operate with the same limited mandate as that of the current year. Hinting at the possibility of an extended presence in the country

the Head of the UNMIN in Nepal, Ian Martin, said, “The UNMIN doesn’t have an exit strategy till a long-lasting solution is found for the Maoist combatants. However, the proposal of merging the PLA with the Nepali Army, to which the Koirala government agreed to get the Maoists sign a truce, is one of the biggest obstacles to the peace process. The army has reservations about such a merger and the government too has not been sincere in finding a quick solution.”¹⁸

Future Course

After King Gyanendra receded power back to the people in April 2006, there was much optimism that the Maoists would shun violence, constitutional checks and balances would guarantee political pluralism, there would be protection of ethnic, religious, and political minorities, human rights and individual freedom would be respected at all times, there would be an independent and effective judiciary and Nepal would finally enter into a new era of peace, democracy and development. There was also hope that the mainstream political parties would mend their ways and carry out inter-party democracy, discontinue corrupt practices and focus on delivering good governance to the people who were tired of seeing 15 governments in 15 years. But 20 months down the road, they have got neither peace nor any election to choose their representatives and write their own Constitution. The Constituent Assembly election which was promised to them has turned out to be nothing but a mirage – the nearer it seems, the further it gets. Obviously, “another spell of political anarchy can destroy whatever is left of Nepal’s economy and erode people's trust in democracy.”¹⁹

But the Maoists who are yet to adjust themselves in a competitive multi-party system with the support of the CPN (United Marxist Leninist) have recently passed a political resolution inside the interim parliament to go for a fully proportional system and declaring the country a federal republic ahead of the Constituent Assembly polls. This technically means that Prime Minister Koirala is in a deep quagmire as he no longer commands the support of the majority of the members of the interim parliament. The Prime Minister’s NCP has refuted the demands, arguing that the Maoists are deviating from all earlier agreements and their new demands have come about with the intention to delay or jeopardise the election itself. But Ram Bahadur Thapa “Badal”, an influential leader of the Maoists, counter argued that the “failure to implement the House’s directives on the part of the government is to lose the legitimacy to rule. The NCP leaders are claiming that they are not obliged to follow the legislature direction as it was not backed by two-third majority – [do] they mean that the minority should rule the country by disregarding the voices of the majority? If the NCP is single-mindedly focused towards ruling without receiving the people’s mandate, it will purely be a dictatorial way of governing the nation and, that sort of government must have to be disbanded.”²⁰ To provide a face-saving option to both the NCP and the Maoists, some centrist leaders within the interim parliament are working on amending the interim Constitution by this week and inserting a clause on a joint commitment to go for a republican set-up for the country which will come into being once the Constituent Assembly is elected. But this is not all. Prachanda’s recent appeal for all the “nationalist” forces to come together has frightened the NCP and emboldened the rightist forces, starting a new wave of polarisation of Nepali politics.

It is clear from his developments that the political game has once again moved to forming and dismantling governments. Naturally, the future seems to hold not only more confusion and chances of violence but the current stalemate may lead the looming crisis bursting out into the open. The scaffold on which the current government, interim legislature and the interim

Constitution were made to stand until now has been strongly contested. The crisis lurks behind the unnatural, artificial and the hasty arrangements and procedures that were adopted simply to appease the insurgents for the time being without going deeply into the real question of power sharing. The end result is a disillusioned electorate, disheartened administration, demoralised security forces, annoyed international community and an uncertain future for the country. If the House directives are implemented, the Maoists may simply walk their way to power without having to face the electorate and, if it is not, they could well go to the streets to forcibly oust Koirala from his chair.

In order to arrest this situation from deteriorating further and to stop Nepal sliding at an alarming speed into anarchy and chaos, it has become pivotal now for the eight-party alliance to either set a new date for the Constituent Assembly polls immediately or form another government that has the mettle to improve the security situation in the country. The leaders also need to immediately start a just peace process truly based on reconciliation, not a *fait accompli* by brute power. People from diverse ethnic groups need to be brought together in a single platform so that all Nepalese across the political spectrum begin “owning” the present interim phase.

The situation in the terai, on the other hand, demands a multi-prong approach and simply announcing a fresh poll date may not suffice. The decision on 10 December 2007 by Minister for Science and Technology, Mahanta Thakur, along with a few members of parliament belonging to all the major political parties to quit the parliament and their parties “in response to the state's apathy towards solving the problems dogging the Terai people” clearly shows that federalism is likely to weaken the national level parties. The fact that politicians belonging to the terai across the political spectrum are slowly coming together also means that Nepal's southern plains will be at the centre-stage for political contests in the days to come.

During the past one-year alone looting, arson, murder, rape and genocide have taken place in the terai. None of the judicial commissions formed have been able to specifically identify the real perpetrators behind the violence. The most tragic victim in this entire rueful drama has proven to be the national security system. It is sinking so rapidly that its recovery remains a doubt. The government, as recently as 2 December 2007, has announced the deployment of a special security force in the Kathmandu valley and eight other terai districts of Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, Siraha and Saptari “to improve the deteriorating security situation in these places.” If this mobilisation repeats the same mistakes as that of “Operation Romeo” and “Kilo Sierra Two” conducted to eliminate the Maoists from the mid-western region in 1997-99, then the terai miscreants too are well on their way to becoming a potent force to reckon with. It will be an ominous sign if the armed police force, with its automatic weapons, fails to tame the terai insurgents, clever and mobile as they are to crisscross the open border at their will. Comprehending the threat of a potent security force coming in to haunt them down, “Goit [has begun] talking to the Jwala and Biswas; and the Jwala and Upendra faction with the Pawan and the Maoists. There is [now] a case to case collaboration between district level units.”²¹ If the armed police fail like it did in 2001, then the only viable option is that of mobilising the Nepal Army but this is fraught with tremendous risks as it does not have enough number of Madhesi personnel in its rank and file. In such a scenario, it will be a cheese-walk for the insurgent groups in the terai to call the Nepal Army an anti-Madhesi force which is filled by people from the hills.

The moot question, therefore, is what is needed for the world to take more resolute action to knock some common sense into the warring political parties. There is an urgent need for a new framework. Politically, there is no solution short of allowing the people to democratically determine their fate. The anchor of true and lasting unity is free choice rather than intimidation. Exercise of freedom allows people to move past their differences and come together to resolve common problems. But how is this to be achieved in Nepal? In the final analysis, it seems, nothing short of an all-inclusive dialogue to address all the stakeholders concerns will do to pave the way for a lasting solution to Nepal's problems.

Endnotes

- 1 "234 people killed in the past one year", *Kantipur*, Nov. 22, 2007.
- 2 Note: YCL is a much maligned youth wing of the CPN (Maoists) which regularly conducts unlawful activities such as arresting black-listed businessmen.
- 3 MR Josse, "Nepal's Interim Constitution: Democratic it is Not", *People's Review* Jan. 19, 2007.
- 4 Bhimarjun Acharya, "Nepal's Interim Constitution Draft Incomplete say Constitutional law Experts", *ANI*, Sep. 1, 2006. >[www. http://in.news.yahoo.com/060901/139/676g8.html](http://in.news.yahoo.com/060901/139/676g8.html)<
- 5 "It was a Political Mistake to Replace the 1990 Constitution with the present Interim Constitution: Prime Minister G.P. Koirala", *Spotlight* Nov. 26, 2007.
- 6 Biswonath Upadhaya as quoted by *Nepal weekly*, Dec. 1, 2007.
- 7 Gopal Sharma, "Protestors end Strike as Nepal PM Concedes Demands", *Reuters News Agency* ><http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSB326873><
- 8 Note: Even Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has reportedly sought help from Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to rein in the RSS and VHP from stoking the Madhesi movement.
- 9 Note: 48 percent of the total population of Nepal lives in the terai but both Madhesis and people of the hills known as Pahadis live in the terai.
- 10 Note: Nepal which has 60 recognised major ethnic groups was united as a single country from 22 different principalities by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1768.
- 11 Note: Major languages of Nepal (percent spoken as mother tongue) are Nepali (49%), Maithili (12%), Bhojpuri (8%), Tharu (6%), Tamang (5%), Newari/Nepal Bhasa (4%), Magar (3%), Awadhi (2%), Bantawa Rai (2%), Limbu (1%), and Bajjika (1%). The remaining 81 languages are each spoken as mother tongue by less than one percent of the population. Likewise, the major caste/ethnic groups identified by the 2001 census are Chetri (15.8%), Hill Brahmin (12.7%), Magar (7.1%), Tharu (6.8%), Tamang (5.6%), Newar (5.5%), Muslim (4.3%), Kami (3.9%), Rai (2.7%), Gurung (2.5%), and Damai/Dholi (2.4%). The remaining caste/ethnic groups including Sherpas each constitute less than 2 % of the population.
- 12 Note: The election was originally planned for June 20, 2007 but was deferred citing a lack of adequate preparations.
- 13 "Chinese Delegation Busy Meeting Political Leaders", ><http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2007/dec/dec02/news06.php><
- 14 Prashant Kumar Pradhan, "*The Terai in Turmoil*", >http://www.ocnus.net/artman2/publish/International_3/The_Terai_in_Turmoil.shtml<
- 15 See The Kathmandu Post Aug. 5th 2007.
- 16 "FNCCI asks govt. to end insecurity, instability", *The Himalayan Times* online Dec. 2, 2007><http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=6a1Qa4qco2am8&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20071203><
- 17 International Crisis Group Policy briefing of September 28, 2007.
- 18 Sudeshna Sarkar, "Maoists Oppose Greater UN Role in Nepal's Peace Process", *IANS News*. Nov. 12, 2007.
- 19 "Nepal's Naysayers", *The Times of India*, Sep. 22, 2007.
- 20 (Badal 2007).
- 21 Prashant Jha, "Promises Unkept", *Nepali Times*, 30 Nov. – 6 Dec. 2007.