

Nationalism and militarization in Nepal



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Discussion Paper

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Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research

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Nationalism and militarization in Nepal

1. Setting the context

Nepal was a centralized, hierarchical and exclusionary state for centuries before the political system was changed in 1990 by popular people's movement. When multiparty democracy in Nepal was restored in 1990, the nationalism debate started. The 1990 Constitution of Nepal had opened opportunities for Nepali citizens to entertain their rights and freedom of expression. From the 1990 popular movement, Nepali people came from a closed hierarchical society to an open society. This 1990 movement also raised very high expectations of the ethnic groups¹ where the political parties in the early 1990s promised unrealistic commitments on the ethnic rights (language, cultural rights etc) to win the election but at the same time, the state failed to address their concerns and to meet their expectations. The Nepali people in general and the ethnic groups in specific become more aware and empowered by exercising the openness brought by the multiparty democracy. They were organised to raise their voices against injustice, poverty, discrimination and social exclusion. The multiparty democracy gave ample opportunities for people to organise and fight for their rights. After 1990, huge numbers of INGOs enter to Nepal and supported the right-based and identity movement in the framework of empowerment of the marginalised groups in line with ILO 169 and several identity-based organisations were appeared.

Before the political change of 1990, the centralized, feudalistic, monarchical autocratic governing system and political control of the state by certain groups for a long time had systematically excluded poor, marginalised and powerless people. Regrettably, the democratic forces ruling the country after the political change of the 1990 not only failed to address the issues of caste-, class-, gender-, and geographical exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination but also failed to governed the country. The nation building debate in a multi-ethnic population composition is complex (Sharma 1997; Uprety 1992) and its politicisation caused the further complications after the emergence of Maoist.

¹ *There are officially recognized 59 ethnic groups in Nepal which constitute 37 percent of the total population.*

Using this situation some of the disgruntled radical communist groups assembled in the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (M)] and waged armed conflict against the state with the aim of establishing communist state. The CPN (M) tactfully capitalised this situation to win favour of ethnic groups, marginalised communities (Upreti 2006a; 2009). As a result two parallel social characters strengthened: a) the ethnic nationalism and b) militarization. This paper examines casual sources of these two societal characters of Nepal from the conflict management perspective. In this paper the ethnicism and militarization are discussed as dependent variables, and the sources of them are presented as the independent variables.

2. Ethnic debate

The writings about the ethnicity and nationalism in Nepal, especially after 1990, fall in the different categories.

The first category of analysis focuses on more anthropological analysis (Bista 1991; de Sales 2003; Fisher 1993; Gellner 2001; 2003; 1997; Gellner et al. 1997). Generalisation of this category is mainly based on specific observations in a specific context and time, effects of religion, social structures. This group of analysis is weak in examining the holistic perspective and complex and interconnected social relations between different groups of Nepali society. Most of the writing about the ethnicity in Nepal falls under this category.

Another category of analysis is largely influenced from the certain ethno-political ideology and guided by certain personal/communal interests. They are often one-sided, blaming to past and to certain race, and oriented toward radical reversal of the past trend (Lawoti and Hangen 2012; Lawoti 2010; Bhattachan 2000; 2003 and 1999). This category of analysis often misinterpret the past with certain biases (examining the past reality by using the present indicators or comparing the past reality with the present context). This analysis is therefore conflict insensitive and contributes to promote ethnic tensions and communal hatred. This category of analysis does not see the value of communal harmony, co-existence and mutual respects in a plural Nepali society. It often blames non-ethnic or people of different caste groups as invaders of ethnic culture and language and not ready to accept the contribution of spontaneous social and technological changes in society as result of globalisation process (e.g., English language is globally dominating any national/local languages but this category of analysis blames for non-ethnic people). Nepali radical ethnic analysts however are paradoxical, as they are socially, economically and educationally from very high class; they do not enrol their children in local language teaching schools, they are very high paid and often strongly connected with the international community but ask other ethnic people to practice what they preach. By implication, this category of analysis is directly and or indirectly promoting inequality within ethnic groups

and communal hatred, revenge, retaliation and violence. This group of analysis often sees the reversal of past problem as solution at present.

Another categories of analysis focuses on the ethnicity and identity from the political perspective (Baral 1998; Chauhan 1989; Sharma 1987), where they bring various dimension of the political aspects of ethnic relations. The category analysis is pragmatic to address ethnic, caste and class exploitation and find the mid-way political solution of the Nepal's highly complex ethnic-caste-class problems.

Next group of analysis of Nepal's ethnicity and identity comes from conflict perspective (Deraniyagala 2005; Upreti 2004; 2006b; 2009). This analysis mainly focuses on root causes of conflict and addressing them through the cooperative and collaborative approach instead of denying one group while promoting another group. Hence, the main focus is in collaborative model and holistic approach. However, this group of analysis is less acknowledged in Nepal because the political decision makers are influenced from the analysis of ethno-political ideology and guided by certain personal/communal interests and or they are lacking comprehensive understanding of the complex social composition and plurality of the Nepali society. While authors like Dahal 1995; 2000; Pradhan 2003 writes from sociological perspective that complements conflict management perspective as it focuses on understanding the social relations.

2.1 Ethnic identity debate

Ethnicisation of politics (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999) became dominant since the political change of 1990 in Nepal. Control of political and social process by certain groups (e.g. close allies and supporters of the power centres including royal palace and political parties irrespective of specific caste and ethnicity) in social and political sectors sharply promoted the feeling of injustice and attitude of revenge among exploited people. The Maoists tactically utilised this feeling (Sharma 2003) to expand their insurrection and became quite successful. In parallel, from the sponsorship of the international actors a neo-elite group emerged and advanced in the name of ethnic identity and exploited the feeling of injustice of the marginalised groups. This group (who wanted to be obtain broad recognition and high social status, wider financial opportunities and external exposure) largely sponsored by international community vehemently raise the issue of ethnic rights and aligned with the CPN (M). Hence, the 3 forces [the international community promoting ethnic radicalism, the neo-elite group radicalising ethnic sentiments for their vested interests and the CPN (M) wholeheartedly using ethnic sentiments to capture the state power and resources], came together for their own interests that has promoted 'ethnic nationalism' (in literatures ethnic nationalism is also referred as exclusive ethnicity), single ethnic identity, social tension and conflict in society. While examining the analysis of these 3 groups (in fact international community

interests are disguised/merged mainly within the neo-elite groups² and therefore distinctly formed 2 groups), the cause of problems are largely acceptable by all who want to promote inclusive and democratic Nepal. However, the solutions of the problems they propose are problematic, as they want to exclude other groups while ruling the country. Consequently the state restructuring agenda did not move ahead in the Constituent Assembly (CA). Instead, the CA was demised largely due to the contestation on the ethnic issues (single identity based provinces v/s multi-identity provisions while designing the provinces at the time of writing constitution). The ethnic debate in the post peace agreement Nepal not only became contested, but also politicised at the time of the federalisation of the unitary state (Mishra and Gurung 2012) and shifted from discussing the principles, core values and criteria of functioning of the provisions.

It became easy for the ethnic elites to manipulate the marginalised ethnic people's sentiments when they were suffering from the predatory nature of state: centralised, and ignores regional imbalance, skewed distribution of state resources and power, elite control of natural and other productive resources. The hegemonic influence of traditional Hindu values and culture (discrimination against women and dalits) also became an important cause of exclusion and discrimination. The rulers even after the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990 failed to address these issues, neo-elites and radicals got space for manipulations.

The governments formed under the multi-party political system, was not able to demonstrate full commitments to reduce poverty, combat corruption and irregularities, prevent exploitation of the disadvantaged communities, space for radicalisation of nationalism and militarism widened. Sentiments of the semi-educated, left-out and unemployed frustrated youths from ethnic and marginalised groups become tools for radicalisation in Nepal (Upreti 2004).

² *Neo-elites are those people emerged from within the a particular ethnic group and engaged in radically advocating for the sensational but pertinent issues (e.g., caste-based discrimination, ethnic marginalisation and gender-based discrimination), in a way that the excluded, marginalised and discriminated groups felt that they (neo-elites) are liberators but they are not experienced exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination themselves as they are highly educated, from medium to high economic class, revolving always in the power centres. They are radically advocating these issues for their personal benefits but tactfully presenting as if they are the only liberators; radicalising the excluded, marginalised and discriminated groups and threatening for the violent actions if not addressed these issues. In the face value, they seem committed on the issue and intension is fair but going bit deeper they are either staying aboard, or working with or for donors in very high payment basis or revolving around the political power centres and bargaining for high ranking political appointments. However, these characters are dominant the Nepali politics, civil movements, and media and therefore it is becoming a regular and socially accepted phenomenon.*

From the conflict management perspective, ideology of exclusive ethnicity and identity based movements are relevant only if they do not introduce communal conflict and tension and disintegrate society. Hence, the logics, arguments and analysis in this paper are guided from this perspective.

2.2 Contested understanding of the nationalism and ideology of exclusive ethnicity

In the recent past the relationship between state and society is becoming more contested (Gurung 1997) and concentrated on the nationalism debate (Gurung 2001). However, the nationalism debate in Nepal is largely misleading and vested interest-based, politically manipulative and socially confusing. When a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious country is attempted to define in a framework of single ethnic identity based on the historical legacies and sentimental idealism, the nation suffers from what Nepal is currently facing today.

There is often the confusing and contested relationship between the ethnicity and nationality. The confusion is also created in the word 'nation' and 'nationalism'. Often the term nation stresses on a homogenous group of people within a specific geographical territory with a common language, a common faith, a shared culture and common ethnic ancestors. This is also interpreted as ethnicity. In this perspective, the nationalism is defined as having common language, common culture and common ancestors' means ideology of exclusive ethnicity. The ideology of exclusive ethnicity defines nation in terms of a shared culture, common language, common value, faith, and common ancestry. Therefore, the basis of membership of a nation is heredity and by nature it is restrictive, narrow and exclusionary.

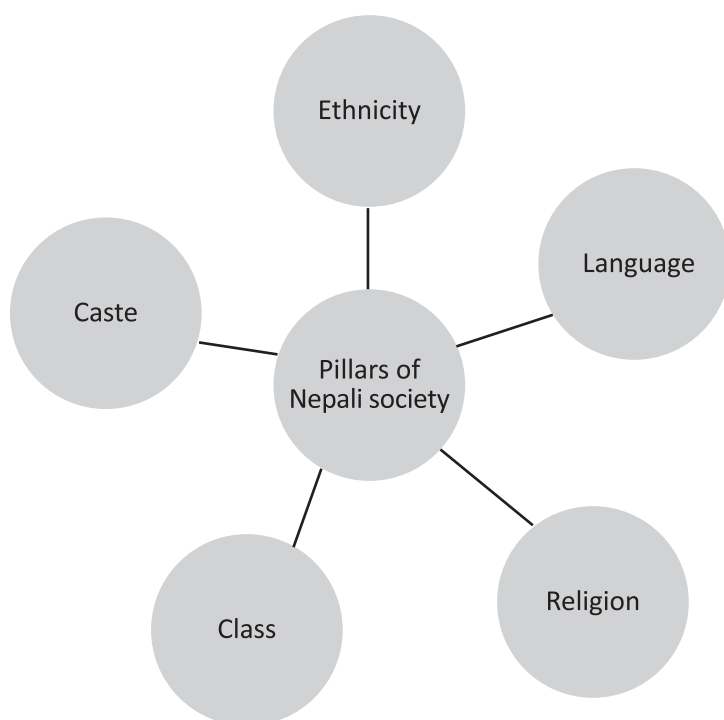
While analyzing the Nepali nationalism debate I am using the concept of civic or territorial nationalism (Eriksen 2002) because the ideology of exclusive ethnicity perspective cannot capture the complexity of highly complex, massively plural (existence of more than 120 caste and ethnic groups, more than 100 languages and several religious groups) Nepali society. When nation is defined from the ethnicity perspective, civic nationalism shatters if there are not proper protection mechanisms. Writings of some authors (e.g., Bhattachan 2000; 2003 and 1999; Lawoti and Hangen 2012; Lawoti 2010) are directly and or indirectly contributing to weaken the existing social relations and communal harmony as they are arguing for mobilization and violent activities to address political and economic inequality.

From the civic or territorial nationalism perspective, a nation is defined as an association of people with equal and shared political rights, and an allegiance to similar political procedures and therefore the nation is an inclusive and liberal political entity (Eriksen 2002). The civic nationalism is the relationship between people and the state, going beyond the cultural boundaries. In the

civic or territorial nationalism the government does not operate base on shared history, ethnicity, language and genealogy but based on equal rights and laws that treats all citizens equally. As the ideology of exclusive ethnicity advocates only for a particular race or group based on ethnicity, language and genealogy, other citizens feel excluded, and it becomes ultimately a source of conflict and social tension.

The main pillars of Nepali society are ethnicity, caste, language, religion and class (see the figure 1 below). However, the debate of nationalism is reduced to ideology of exclusive ethnicity and the other pillars of the Nepali society are not getting enough attention in the political and social discourses. Hence, the pluralism existed in Nepal is severely undermined, particularly after the peace agreement with Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). When the country is moving towards redefining nation and nationality, identity, role of the state and political system, the dominating national debate and discourses by ideology of exclusive ethnicity is not only severely undermining the plural social co-existence, but also implanted the social tension and severely undermine the state restructuring in an inclusive, peaceful and democratic process.

Figure 1 Pillars of Nepali Society



Source: Author

Nationalism in Nepal was interpreted by one group as synonymous to ethnic identity and further argued that ignorance of the ethnic identity will lead to conflict.

The activities of the identity movement in Nepal are limited the identity of ethnic groups by ignoring other multiple identities such as religions, caste (e.g., Dalits, Brahmin, Chhetri, etc.), geography, etc and consequently it is largely understood as ethnic identity movement. The political decision makers and the government are either heavily influenced or are under severe pressure from ethnic leaders. The example of such pressure is that they had erased identity of Brahmin and Chhetri caste groups by labeling them as “others” while promulgating the Interim Constitution (IC). Consequently, the ethnic leaders of political parties and neo-elites from different ethnic groups severely undermined the identity of Brahmin and Chhetri caste groups. As a result, strong reactive responses started from Brahmin and Chhetri caste groups as they formed ‘*Chhetri Samaaj*’ (Chhetri Society), and ‘*Brahmin Samaaj*’ (Brahmin Society). Hence, the whole country divided between ethnic and caste groups. Such divide undermined the plural character of Nepali society and became the main reason for the failure the Constituent Assembly (CA) to bring new constitution. The neo-elite ethnic leaders and members of the CA exerted huge pressure to political parties to go for single identity ethnic federal state, they asked to name the proposed provinces by single ethnic group (e.g., Tamsaling Province in the name of Tamang ethnic group, Limbuwan Province in the name of Limbu ethnic group, Magarat Province in the name of Magar ethnic group, etc). Then spontaneous opposition emerged from within the ethnic groups (who had no provinces in their ethnic name) and people from other geographical areas such as ‘*Akhanda Sudur Paschim*’ (Integrated Far West Nepal). *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* movement was supported by non-ethnic leaders of all political parties. Hence, conflict mounted. It became more evident from these resistance and oppositions that there should be recognition of plurality and multiple identities, inclusive political process to thrive democracy in Nepal. Any form of exclusion, either the pre-1990’s exclusion of poor, marginalized and disadvantaged groups (Dalit, women, some ethnic groups, etc) or the post-2006 exclusion of Brahmin and Chhetri groups is not going to solve the problem of Nepal and need more collaborative approach where co-existence all caste-ethnic groups in a mutual respect and harmonious social relations are respected and promoted.

2.3 Use of ethnic sentiments for advancing armed conflict

The ethnic dimension was very strong in the decade long (1996-2006) armed conflict waged by the CPN (M) (Upreti 2004; Sharma 2003). The ethnic engagement in the decade long insurgency has been amply analysed by Mishra (2004); Onesto (2005), Karki and Seddon (2003), Upreti (2006a and 2009); Hutt (2004), Kumar (2000 and 2005), and Sharma (2006). The main

synthesis of these analyses is the exploitation of the ethnic sentiments by the CPN (M) for their military advancements and accessing to the power and resources. The CPN (M), with the aim of advancing their insurgency, brought the ethnic identity issue within the framework of 'right to self determination'. The ethnic movement started since 1990s' political change was mainly focused on social change and ethnic rights. However, once the CPN (M) started armed insurrection, it had first divided the ethnic movement into pro-Maoists and non-Maoist lines (Sharma 2003).

The pro-Maoist ethnic movement focused on rights to self-determination whereas the non-Maoist ethnic movement focused on establishing rights and ethnic autonomy at local level. However, this distinction gradually faded and radicalisation sharpened and the focus also shifted to radical³ ethnic identity. The ethnic federalism with right to self-determination and anti-caste radicalism became a powerful tool for CPN (M) to win the heart and mind of ethnic

population (which is 37 per cent of the total population). Then CPN (M), with the aim of capturing state by armed insurgency and under the influence of neo-elite ethnic leaders, placed ethnic identity in any political negotiation with other parties and prevailed. However, at the later stage the ethnic identity movement went beyond the CPN (M) interests (developed as the ethnic militarism) and started challenging the CPN (M), it became too late and CPN (M) has to crawl behind the ethnic radicalism.

Example: The ethnic states proposed by the CPN (M)

1. Limbuwan (based on Limbu ethnic group)
2. Kirat (based on Rai ethnic group)
3. Tamsaling (based on Tamang ethnic group)
4. Newa (based on Newar ethnic group)
5. Tamuwan (based on Gurung ethnic group)
6. Magarat (based on Magar ethnic group)
7. Tharuwan (based on Tharu ethnic group)

See map proposing federalism based on ethnicity in Annex 1

2.4 Interpretation of ethnicity for vested interests

In Nepal, long standing social harmony and coexistence are now torn apart and the friction between the resistant elites (who resistance meaningful change) and the neo-elites (the new actors emerged by using the ethnic sentiments and grasping power and resource in the name of marginalised and excluded ethnic group) is mounting. The logic and arguments of the neo-elite is that all people belongs to ethnic groups are excluded and marginalised and all people belong to Chhetri and Brahmin caste groups are exploiters. They do not acknowledge or even recognise the class as determinants of the power but assign responsibility to race.

³ The term 'radical' in this paper indicates the ideology, interests and behaviour of people preferring abrupt, sudden revolutionary change in the existing social relations and political process and it is not limited to the behaviour and actions of the militant people.

2.5 Implications of the development of the ethnic radicalism

The communal harmony was disturbed and people started forming their identity groups to counter the other groups. For example, when the ethnic groups like '*Limbuwan Rastriya Mukti Morcha*', the different ethnic sister organisations of the CPN (M) and other ethnic groups advocate for the exclusive ethnic states the associations like '*Khas Chhetri Samaaj*'; '*Brahmin Samaaj*', '*Khas Chhetri Ekata Samaaj*'; '*Akhanda Sudhur Pashim*' etc were formed and started protesting the idea across the country. That led to divide the nation into two line ethnic groups v/s non-ethnic groups and the peaceful, harmonious relations and coexistence between the ethnic and non-ethnic groups ruined, and revelry mounted.

3. Societal militarization in Nepal and implications

Here the term 'militarization' is defined as a social process of engagement in militant activities, use of threat of violence, creation of fear in society, carrying out the activities that are prevented by law, systematic denial or obstruction of basic rights of other people to fulfil own vested interests and abuse of political power and resources to gain personal benefits (Luitel et al. 2010). Contrary to what many scholars on militarization do, the term 'militarization' is defined from the societal perspective rather than from the military one.

The concept of militarization is often used to refer to the military use by the states, not much focused on the non-state or civilian sphere. Militarization from the state-led perspective is a step-by-step process by which either all the state and the societal institutions are under the gradual control of military or the wellbeing of people are believed to be shaped from militaristic behaviour. Militarization is a discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organisation of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tribute used to pay for them (Lutz 2007). However, in this paper I am looking for non-state led social militarization process. In the context of Nepal, a country just emerging from decade long insurgency, societal militarization is fatal for the process of achieving security, justice and enabling state because militarization causes impunity, violates rule of law and implants societal fear and nervousness.

When the debate in establishing the rights of individual groups started especially after the post-1990, the use of coercion by the protesters (trade unions, sister organizations of political forces etc.) became a major means of pressuring the government to fulfill their demand. Hence, mobilization for agitation and protests became normal and common practice in Nepal. In this way the militancy approach was widely accepted by society and the state. For example, if one group calls a general strike, there is no protest from the society as well as by the state. Rather it is always accepted. If any particular groups organize the protest on any personal issue, state provides money for

them as compensation. Hence this is becoming a lucrative business for the unemployed youth and militant groups.

Political parties have massively mobilized the youth in Nepal in a militant way to achieve their vested political and personal interests. Increasing militant activities across the country is the net output of such mobilization which created a vicious cycle of confrontation and consequently contributed to the militarization (Upreti et. al. 2010).

It is realised that much has been written on the state militarism but the social militarization is less obvious. For example, Geyer (1989, p 79) defines militarization as "the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organises itself for the production of violence". Scholars like Kumar (2006) has defined militarism as a situation in which the propensity to use military power, or the threat of it, for political settlement is prevalent. These definitions are more focused on state militarization (use of official armed forces).

The militancy psyche was deeply implanted by the decade long armed conflict as kidnapping, abduction, forceful donation, coercion, capturing of the private property, physical attack were their day to day activities. Such activities were prohibited by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006. However, these activities continued in another form (earlier it was in the pretext of insurgency and later as part of strategy of all political parties).

3.1 Militarization of the youths

The term 'militarization of the youths' in Nepali context as a process of radicalisation of the youths and using them for illegitimate actions (which could defy the existing norms, the values of the democracy and the state laws) by certain groups or political parties to gain power and resources. The use (or threat of the use) of coercion, violence and abuses of power under political protection are often used by the youths as tools to fulfill the desires of parental parties or organisations.

On the one side, large numbers of youth are unemployed, under-employed and ultimately being mobilised for militant activities. On the other side, the state is weak and not able to fairly implement the rule of law and contain the militarization process. No society and nation dreams of youth groups getting involved in militant act, destruction and weakening the state thereby creating fear and insecurity in the society. In a situation of crisis and transition, the youth should have been involved in constructive works and become the agents of peace, harmony and collaboration. In contrary to it, majority of youth in Nepal has been abused by the political forces by engaging them in confrontation, fights and violence. Consequently, the youth groups are divided along the line of coercion camps created by political forces and they are divided on the basis ethnicity, geography and political ideology.

Together with the armed conflict waged by the then CPN (M) militarised youth groups started to merge and they grew up rapidly after signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006. If we take account of the present context, the re-activation (it was dormant during war time) of the fighting cadres of Maoists into Young Communist League (YCL) once it signed the CPA started the opening of the militarised youth wings of political parties. Many other political parties have created their militarised youth wings in the past seven years. The major motive behind the establishment of such outfits is to strengthen their role and influence at the grass root level and also to counterattack other youth groups. The considerable number of youth population, constant rise in unemployment rate, sugar-coated slogans and incentives gained by tying up with such groups and exclusion from the state's overall development process are some of the reasons for involvement of youth in militarised activities. Further, different ethnic organisations and caste and religious groups have formed militarised groups to fulfil their demands through use of force. The major reasons given by the militant youth groups for their need in society as follows:

- Organising youth movement, youth awareness, and youth initiative to ensure of the rights of the youth and to solve all the ideological, political and cultural problems including the problems of employment, education, sports, etc.
- Conducting political and legal actions against corruption, hooliganism, deformity and distortion with people's consent and huge participation.
- Conducting awareness campaign to keep youths away from the addiction including that of the consumption of narcotics and to stop the source, supply and the demand and also launch a campaign to transform these youths.
- Assisting and supporting the national liberation movement, democratic and socialist movements initiated by the toiling masses and oppressed people of the world and to developed fraternal relation with all the revolutionary forces.

However, they are implemented in either inappropriate or illegal ways that lead to clashes among different militarised youth groups. Threats, abduction and coercion have been a regular practice. More to it, their activities are politically protected and therefore are increasing impunity and cresting insecurity. These all have been weakening the system of rule of law and gravely challenging the state building process. The following table highlights the militant youth groups formed by different political parties:

Table 1 Militant groups formed by the political parties

S. N.	Youth Organisations	Mother Organisations	Geographical Influence
1.	YCL (Young Communist League)	UCPN (Maoist)	All over the county
2.	YF (Youth Force)	CPN (UML)	All over the county
3.	Madhesi Youth Force	Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum (MJF)	Eastern, Central and Mid Western Terai regions
4.	Chure Bhawar Shanti Sena	Chure Bhawar Ekta Samaj Party	Central and Mid Western regions
5.	Security Brigade (Rakshya Bahini)	Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Rajendra Mahato)	Central and Mid Western regions
6.	Madhesi Commando	Nepal Sadbhawana Party	Central and Mid Western regions
7.	Terai Madhes Sewa Surakshya Sangh	Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party	Mid Western and Western regions
8.	All Nepal Democratic Youth Organisation	Rastriya Janamorcha Party	Mid Western and Western regions
9.	Tharu Sena	Tharuhat Swayatta Parishad	Certain Districts of Mid Western and Western regions (for e.g., Dang, Kapilbastu and Bardiya)
10.	OBC Regiment	Pichhada Barga Mahasangh	Central Terai region
11.	Limbuwan Volunteers and Limbuwan Liberation Army	Sanghiya Loktantrik Rastriya Manch/Limbuwan Rajya Parishad	Eastern region
12.	Kirat Limbuwan Volunteers	Pallo Kirat Limbuwan Rastriya Manch	Eastern region
13.	Janasurakshya Bal	CPN-Maoists	Some districts
14.	Madhesi Raksha Bahini	Sadbhawana Party	Some of the Terai districts
15.	Khas society group	Khas-Chhetri Unity Society	

Source: Luitel et al. (2010)

It is often said that militarised youths are used for political crime. According to Hagan (1997), political crime is a crime committed for ideological purpose rather than being motivated by private greed or passion. The offenders believe they are following a higher conscience or morality that supersedes present society and law. This is the justification often given by the militarised youths when they commit political crimes. The act of criminalisation of politics in Nepal slightly contradicts the statement made by Hagan (1997) because politicians' or political cadres' activities supersede the ideological purpose by their private greed and passion. Supporting youth political cadres by turning deaf ear to their unlawful activities also encourage more criminalisation in

politics.

According to News published on Nagarik National Daily, Khas Chhetri group has also established its militarised youth wing with claimed 1,200 active members. Akin to this, the YCL claims that their group has 500,000 members among which 450,000 are general members, 50,000 are expected to be actively functioning and 6 to 7 thousands are working as whole-timers. Youth force claims to have 600,000 members and their regional expansion is also at an increasing trend.⁴

According to the statistics presented in Nepal Human Rights Yearbook 2010 (INSEC 2010), there was no improvement in security situation in the Terai owing to the activities of the armed groups. According to the publication, 240 people were killed in 15 Terai districts in 2009 alone. Among them, 27 persons were killed by the state, 22 by armed groups, 89 by unidentified groups and one person each killed by the YCL and other youth groups. Many militant youth wings of political parties and other mushrooming underground armed groups has been adding fuel on the already fragile peace in Nepal.

The open border to India, small arms are easily available to the armed groups. The illicit trade and use of small arms is not only adding already prevalent insecurity but also severely hindering the implementation of the provisions of the peace agreement. Upreti (2006a) claims that a militarized society is one in which the military has taken ascendancy over a civilian institutions. It is predominantly and visibly relied upon to police to regulate civilian movement, solve political problems and defend or expand boundaries in the name of national security.

3.2 Reasons behind militarization

Youths in Nepal have been misused and mishandled time and again by the political parties and other interests groups. They are always mobilised during protests and obstruction which has given youth a negative crown in the society. Here this paper is making attempt to find out and analyse the reasons behind such engagements. In doing so, psychological, socio-economic and political dimensions of youth militarization are discussed as the main reasons in the following sections.

3.2.1 Psychological reasons

Youth is the stage where a person becomes productive and responsible thus nurturing a different psychology? This is the process of individualisation when a person starts to identify themselves with different ideologies and orientation. Recognition becomes a key factor in their lives at this time. They

⁴ For detail see; <http://www.nagariknews.com/opinions/98-opinion/12533-2010-04-20-05-30-55.html>

intend to challenge the traditional values deep-rooted in the society and get affiliated with those who have the courage to defy such social systems. They are less analytical for the implication and more action-oriented. So, they could be easily mobilised with attractive slogans for anyone's interests.

In societies where there are more youth population, there are imbalances between the education and the employment system. It results in larger number of unemployed youths. Thus, the youths have more leisure. Thus, they get time to be engaged in different groups for either constructive or destructive purpose. As at this stage they do not have more inclination towards constructive activities, majority of them involve in destructive ones. During this stage, they tend to listen to more to their peer groups. Because of the peer pressure, they get involved in activities they would not have been if their friends were not participating (Tipplet 2004). This youth population accounts the change seekers, reactive people, and is easily agitated ones with unstable mindsets. Due to these factors, youths tend to incline towards destructive activities, which is why, in riots and strikes, youth are seen most active in pelting stones, burning tyres and at times using explosives and small arms.

3.2.2 Socio-economic reasons

It is reported in insurgencies and civil war situation that there is a close relationship between youth population and civil war (Upreti 2009). The excess youth is regarded as the perfect storm to blow up the whole nation as there is a huge number of a youth population with no access to resources. In other words, there are cases of youths joining paramilitary or military groups to acquire some power which in the absence of resources is null both at familial, societal and national level. Staveteig (2005) argues that the relationship between large youth cohorts and civil war appears to have held throughout history. Similarly, Moller (1968) suggests that wars in pre-modern and present day Europe, including the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, corresponded with surges in the proportion of young men in the population (Staveteig 2005).

In the context of Nepal, youth population constitutes 38.8 per cent of the total population, thus the reason behind youths getting militarised is quite obvious that unemployment is the prime cause. Thapa (2006) argues that the majority of youth population that comprises nearly half of the nation's total has been left behind in the entire process. Further, the role of youth are not properly visualised by political parties and if they are not mobilised properly, they are likely to emerge as a severe threat. The continued neglect of youth could be counterproductive for state building in post-conflict phase with its twin challenges of violence prevention/accord maintenance and social reconciliation and reconstruction. Tipplet (2004) also argues that the post-adolescent phase, where a person begins to find his/her political and intellectual orientation, while still continuing to develop and not enjoying economic independence yet, has strong repercussions with respect to the ways in which young people map

out their lives. Youth violence is also related with the family problem. Kristof and WuDunn (2009) opine that the inability of a young man to settle down in a family may increase the likelihood of his drifting toward violence.

The increasing number of rape, abduction and participation in violent activities by the youth groups is the result of socio-economic dimensions that governs youth. On one hand, they are looked down upon by the society in the absence of jobs, and on the other hand, their physical needs are not met. Thus, due to this dimension, youths are not only getting into militarised activities but are equally vulnerable to get amputation, disability or infection of sexually transmitting diseases.

Youth bulge, i.e. irregular swelling of the youth population is one of the main reasons behind youths resorting into criminal activities. The attribution goes to bad governance, unemployment, weak law and order and political instability.

3.2.3 Political reasons

Suppressed and ideologically guided youths form different militarised group to achieve their aim through the use of coercion. Due to why there have been different militarised youth groups present in Nepal currently demanding ethnic, geographic and political recognition. Moreover, the zero tolerance level shown by each youth group has further excluded one group from others and clashes among them are not uncontrollable. The youth groups not only get recognition while tying up with militarised groups, it gives them power and recognition. Thus, they enjoy terrorising the citizens. It is often observed that the exclusion of a large section of the population from the decision-making process denies members of the excluded group the opportunity to play an active political role, to learn the rules of the game, and to accept the responsibilities of civic participation.

Entering politics or getting affiliation to militarised group is not hard as neither any qualifications nor experience is required. Similarly, association to any groups give them power and these groups do have interest to regulate youth groups to fulfil their political aim. The recent high politicisation of the issues of socio-economic marginalisation has also created ample space for the youths to group themselves in militarised form.

The past political process has been exclusive and vast majority of the youths suffered from such exclusions (Aditya 2007) and became reservoir of coercion. The emergence of youth organisations in military and para-military forms has further attracted the large group of youths into the conflict zone. Further, the affiliation to these organisations has given youth the sense of being powerful hence clinging them to these groups and their ideologies.

3.3 Implications of youth militarization to peace and state building

In Nepal, one of the most malicious results of the armed conflict and post-peace agreement period has been the militarization of youths, which has serious negative implication for restoring peace, state building and democratic stability. In Nepal, the following are the major three challenges:

- Use of youths in militant action rather than in constructive works,
- Failure of the state to address the aspiration of young people,
- Politicisation and criminalisation of the youths.

Whatever could be the reasons for establishment of such militarised youth wings by political parties and interests groups, the consequence that can possibly emerge is always the same: violence, conflict and weakened democracy ultimately leading to the state failure. The presence of youth militarization has different short and long term impacts on youth, the state and society itself. The impact on youth due to militarization appears in their lack of holistic understanding, missed educational opportunities, waste of energy and intelligence etc. They are physically and mentally more stressed and consequently prone to be engaged in grave crimes and violence. At societal level, militarization of youths has the following impacts:

- Increased impunity, fear and insecurity
- Increased incidence of threats, coercion and criminal activities like rape and abduction
- Negative social image and mistrust
- Waste of human resource leading to retardation of development and economic growth
- Increased dependent population, and
- Dysfunctional law and order.

The growing youth militancy can move into risky direction if not handled properly. In the nation with higher youth population, the dynamics can be even more unpredictable. Youth are the ones who get highly motivated or demotivated only with the blink of eye so handling them is much more difficult. With the youths coming out from the criminal psychology, it can be even more difficult to divert them to constructive and productive works. If mishandled the militarised youth groups, they can result in destruction. Segregation of youth groups on the basis of their region, caste, culture and ethnicity has not only been creating problem today but also been constituting a great threat to divide the country into parts thus hampering the overall development. The authorities seemed content with the activities carried out by their youth wings. They do not take responsibility of the irresponsible behaviour of their

youth outfits. This is not only hampering the state building, but also impeding the peace process and democratic stability.

Violation of the human rights to a greater extent posing the threat of further conflicting situations across ethnicity, geography, caste and culture is rampant. But at the same time, these youth groups have done certain commendable jobs like acting against corruption and smuggling. But their main motive seems ultimately to encourage violent activities. Thus, these youth groups are functioning more as a militarised group and hindering the post-conflict stability and success.

Youth's diversion to the criminal activities at present is not only increasing insecurity, but also negatively affecting the social psyche. With the introduction of various militarized youth groups, rising impunity, security threats and youth migration has further hampered the process of nation building. Most of the youth has migrated in search of employment and has been placed in 3D (dirty, dingy and dangerous) work which has further increased the amputation of youth body parts thus increasing more idle and dependent population.

4. Relationship between exclusive ethnicism and societal militarism

While observing the political process in the past two and half decade in Nepal and the strategies and approaches taken by the main political forces in Nepal the two phenomena: 'exclusive ethnicism' and 'societal militarism' are inherently interlined and mutually contributing to strengthen each others. Significant portion of the youth from different ethnic groups are mobilized to advance the ethnic movement for the exclusive ethnicism. This has consequently contributed to advance the societal militarism and once the youth militants engaged in militant activities in fulfilling the ethnic demands it has societal effects and vice versa.

5. Conclusions

Exclusive ethnicism and societal militarism in Nepal are inherently interlinked and they are going beyond temporary phenomena with lasting long term effects in shaping the social relationship and communal harmony in Nepali society if the CPN(M) does not change its political approach is use ethnic groups and youths for its political benefits.

Decades long social exclusion, acute inequalities, absolute poverty, lack of access to resources, deep-rooted social cleavages in terms of caste, ethnicity, gender and regional, cultural, linguistic and religious forms of discrimination and failure of political structures to address these issues made the Nepali people highly frustrated and the Nepali society largely accepted the violence imposed by CPN (M) and the CPN (M) sponsored radicalism, militarism and

ethnic division of society, which not only divided the society but also provided perennial source of conflict, social tension and ethnic divide. However, observing the current activities of the CPN (M) it became clear that the CPN (M) was using ethnic sentiments during the war time was more tactical and less for establishing the rights of ethnic groups.

Ideology of exclusive ethnicity is not suitable for Nepal as it advocates only for a particular race or group based on ethnicity, language and genealogy against the existence of more than 120 caste and ethnic groups, more than hundred language and multiple religions existed in the country. Consequently, other citizens of the highly plural feel excluded which ultimately is becoming a perennial source of conflict and social tension. Instead, the civic or territorial nationalism is the most suitable concept for Nepal as it focuses on equal or shared political rights of all people.

The mobilisation of youth in militant activities has militarised the youths and radicalised the society. As youths are psychologically and physically dynamic and energetic groups, this dynamism and energy has been often misused by political and other power centres to strengthen their position and fulfil vested interests

Political parties have created youth wings as reactive responses and engaged them in the militant activities. This phenomenon is widely prevalent in all political parties. It is going beyond and organized into criminal gangs protected by the political leaders and other power centers. Youth wings of political parties are also not only guided by political ideologies, defined principles and procedures of their respective organisations, but also engaged in illegal activities and coercion. Youth engagement in destructive activities is not only developed militant image but also created complication to implement the peace agreement and achieve peace and stability in the country.

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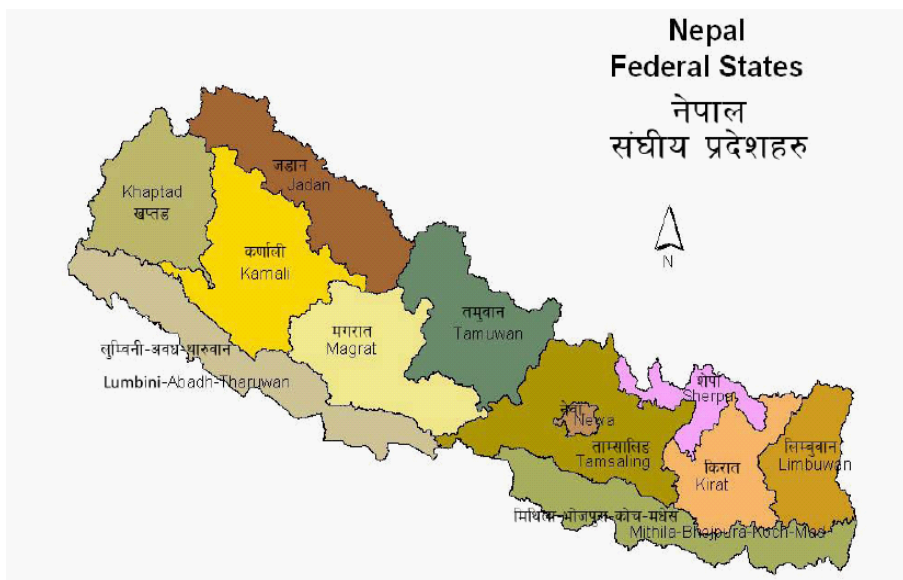
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Annex

Annex 1 Proposed map of federal structure based on ethnicity



Proposed federal structure by United CPN (Maoist)

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About the discussion paper

This paper examines the evolution process of the ethnic identity and its relation with the youth of Nepal. It outlines how the radicalisation of youth affects the security, constitution making process and daily affects social harmony and mutual respects and trusts. The paper also highlights the complications from ethnic radicalisation and youth militarisation in the constitution making process and cause of the failures of the first Constituent Assembly.

