This study has presented the case that human security has never been the primacy goal of politics and the priority of governments in Nepal. Politics in Nepal has, moreover, been influenced by the incessant struggle for state power that has led to institutional atrophy. The political struggle has categorically been defined as one between autocratic and democratic forces. But, in either case, the forces governing the state remain thoroughly conservative and undemocratic. Evidences thus amplify that bad governance—lack of rule of law, a flawed justice system, corruption, human rights abuses, poor accountability and transparency, disparaging of minority rights and denial of democracy—are important contributing factors for violent conflicts and human insecurity in Nepal. Governance is the functional aspect of the state. Bad governance is a reflection of the excessive centralisation of power of the state with deprivation of the core functions for providing welfare, representation and security to the citizenry—concepts usually tied to the institutional and functional roles of the state. The state is the pivot around which human security or insecurity revolves. It has, therefore, been argued that the role of the state, the leadership representing the state and governance are the critical ingredients to be examined in understanding the context of human security in Nepal. The critical appraisal of the state both in its absolute and modern forms has indicated that the state has functioned as an apparatus of routinised control and discipline in a hierarchical mode of institutionalised social order, any disruption of which has been seen as a threat to political order. The goal that the state invariably has is the consolidation of power, making it always take steps to suppress the citizenry in maintaining its control.

This orientation of the state has hardly been compromised both under autocratic and democratic political dispensations in Nepal. The vicissitudes of historical processes shaping the sovereignty and
territorial integrity of the Nepali state in its present form have never led it to inculcate the idea of human security as an imperative of the state. Governance has always been rhetorically based on the concept of jana chahana (popular will) asserted both by the traditional monarchy as well as by the political parties but viewed entirely from their self-serving perspectives. This notion of governance makes one think of what Mahbub ul Haq had once suggested “every governing institution, every political actions should be judged by one critical test: how does it meet the genuine aspirations of people” (HDC, 1999:29). Ignoring popular aspirations for democracy and the fact that human development is the core issue of the perpetual political struggle accompanying the process of governance in Nepal, successive governments have, ironically, promoted dependent development in a way that has absolved leaderships from their accountability to the citizenry of the state.

One of the commonly observed tendencies of dependent development is that the coalition of interests that the state leadership forges with external interests underwrites the development process both to sustain the leadership in power as well as to bail it out from resolving the crisis of development. The effect of this process is to distract the leadership from internal governance and the creation of a productive resource environment domestically to securing the patronage of international financial institutions for the uninterrupted flow of resources on which they must have first claim. The leadership role thereby subsists with a degree of internal policing and control in preserving their interest to retain power and dominance. Within this paradigm the core function of the state becomes the maintenance of control, domination and rule by the powerful. Unfortunately, control, domination and rule are interpreted as peace, stability and order necessary for a system requiring endurable environment for development and progress. Under the rubric of this elitist paradigm, state-society relationships are geared towards the development of a planned society through adoption of numerous laws, rules and regulations manipulated conveniently to suit the interests of the elites. Rulemaking becomes the process of legitimising the power of the elites and delegitimising opposition to their domain. The preference of the elites remains supreme in determining the role of the state and rules are tailored accordingly for their unending control of the state. This leads to the creation of a host of accessory agencies in organising the state through mutually dependent relationships co-opting social demands and channelling societal resources to entrench the elites’ hold on power.
Governance in Nepal has been influenced by private compulsion and the personalised approach of the leadership in the exercise of national integration and state building. Whatever policies and programmes emanated from the state, particularly during the decades of the monarchical panchayat regime, were motivated by the urge to prove the indispensability of the political system introduced by King Mahendra after the coup in 1960 to perpetuate the absolute power of the monarchy since politics was controlled and guided by the Royal Palace. Loyalty was ensured through measures ranging from cooption to coercion. Nepotism and sycophancy were the finest qualifications for the personal aggrandisement of the power aspirants at the expense of the national coffers. The panchayat system was obviously characterised by the reassertion of motive for the personalisation of the power of a monarchy that had been violently ended in 1846 by rendering the institution of monarchy irrelevant and by establishing the hereditary Rana prime ministership. Monarchy was restored to its rightful place by the popular upheaval over the century-old Rana rule in 1951. The political system in the post-1960 period was, therefore, the consequence of the monarchical desire of personal rulership based on patrimonialism, breeding sheer opportunism and corruption in a society devoid of human rights and social justice.

The social formation of the Nepali state, which is moreover characterised by stress on the purity of caste and religious supremacy, is normatively elitist, prohibiting non-caste or lower caste people from claims to power and social equity. The Muluki Ain 1854 codified rules governing the state in a manner that has perpetuated social exclusion and social inequity among the people and has led to the creation of high-low castes and classification of touchable and untouchable human species by prohibiting the low caste and untouchables from participation in the state where they must live as subjects and not as citizens. The concept of citizenship and rules regarding citizen's rights are also of recent origin. Only after the Citizenship Act was adopted in 1964 have people living within the territory been identified as Nepali citizens following the lineage of the male parenthood. Hence the concept commonly understood as the rights and entitlement of the citizens has been traditionally alien to the practice of the statecraft in Nepal. The historical role of the state has been to maintain internal security and to appropriate surplus and extract revenue for the prosperity of the ruling class. As Nepal was ruled by a militocracy of the Rana oligarchy till 1951, the interests of
the rulers were preponderant to that of the subjects “who had only duties to perform but no rights to enjoy” (Adhikari, 1984:50).

Five decades ago, the Nepali state was imbued with a policy of extractions through different taxation measures and revenue collection to sustain the need of the government’s regular expenditure and prop up regime stability crippled by political instability. Despite the untiring rhetoric of democracy and development neither process has worked to “meet the genuine aspirations of people” and has only been providing a semblance of legitimacy to the rulers. Ever since the overthrow of the Rana oligarchy in February 1951, Nepal adopted a tradition of celebrating the anniversary of democracy day with fanfare, irrespective of the types of regimes the country had thus making a mockery of the concept of democracy which has been transformed it into kleptocracy. Nepali history is witness to the problem of power elites’ aborting democracy to make democracy work through the exclusion of the political rights of the citizenry. King Mahendra’s “Panchayat Democracy” introduced after the 1960 coup, and King Gyanendra’s continued commitment to “democracy” after derailing the multiparty system in 2002 exemplify the definitional imprecision of democracy having to coexist with traditionally sacred monarchical rule whose power of inheritance remains intact although sovereignty has constitutionally been shifted to the people. However, the contest for sovereignty remains the crucial undercurrent of the power struggle between the monarchy and elected authority governed by the 1990 Constitution with an unhappy ending of the representative system in recent years “by virtue of the state authority as exercised” by monarchy.

Likewise, development has been presented as a case of the achievements of Vikas (development) in the country. Notwithstanding the stark realities of the challenges facing democracy and development because of the rising number of deprived and destitute in the country, the government of the period thrives on propaganda, disinformation and persuasion, distilling manufactured truth for public consumption. Government propaganda has continued to flow either in the form of constant reiteration of its policy of raising the living standards of the people to Asian Standards while launching the Seventh Five Year Plan in 1985. However, it has not been able to meet even the “Basic Needs” of the people. Indeed, under the Tenth Five Year Plan absolute poverty and destitution have been aggravated with a further deterioration of the socio-economic situation evident since 2002.
Actually the information that the government publicises has little value as it does not convince the target citizens; the government agency that publish the "fact as such" has no idea exactly who needed such facts and why. The information, however, serves to satisfy the two agencies involved in the development process—the government and the donors who need to conceive that their efforts have not gone wasted. Governments in Nepal have set priorities about the recruitments of western-educated persons in the development bureaucracy, making the channel conducive for maintaining the westernised link, reflecting donors' pursuit and choice for development projects in Nepal. The role of the policy elites is to play as dalal by becoming an agent of the donors to the recipient government. Policy choices and priorities decided elsewhere are replicated in the national context with the stamp of authority on them but without an awareness of the relevance as well as the absorbing capacity of the programmes introduced in the local condition. The failure of leadership as a result is reflected in the ensuing violence and development.

The Nepal Human Development Report, published in December 2004, has conspicuously revealed state failures in development pursuits (UNDP, 2004). The report has identified that both the policies and institutions of the government—a prerequisite for empowerment and poverty reduction—are hardly inclusive and pro-poor. By categorically stating that macroeconomic policies have been largely ineffective in promoting pro-poor growth, the report has pointed out that the "top-down" development paradigm moulded by the elites in the absence of devolution of power has found itself overwhelmed by narrowly-based growth policies, widened income disparities and increased conflict. The report suggests that "Legal, policy-related and institutional discriminations persisted, limiting both institutional access and opportunities to the poor and disadvantaged in all three dimensions of empowerment: the political, the social and the economic (UNDP, 2004:6). Extreme disparities are found both in human poverty and in the human empowerment index that indicate the "low level of income, limited access to productive assets and lack of gainful employment opportunities" (UNDP, 2004:21) constricting the space for building human capability.

Massive economic dislocations caused by escalating violence leading to price spiral, productivity losses and income contraction amidst the rising international oil prices (EIU, 2004:8-9) and inflationary trends are featured by continuous migration of people from rural to urban
areas for subsistence and security. On top of it “massive destruction of physical infrastructure, slackness in private sector investment and development expenditure, banks and cooperatives heading towards closure or merger caused by conflict and unfavourable security situation” (MoF, 2004:16) have led the economy towards the brink. The annual economic survey for fiscal year 2004/05 has further noted that economic growth has declined to 2.0 per cent as against 3.3 per cent of the previous year (MoF, 2005:8). Notwithstanding all this, the government has declared a tremendous increase in the living standards of Nepali people, seeing remarkable achievements in the areas of poverty alleviation and infrastructure development between 1995/96 and 2003/04 (Table 6.1) (CBS, 2004:29).

Table 6.1: Living Standards Survey 2003/2004

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Nominal Average Household Income in Nominal NRs.</td>
<td>43,732</td>
<td>80,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal Average Per Capita Income in Nominal NRs.</td>
<td>7,690</td>
<td>15,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Nepal</td>
<td>43,732</td>
<td>80,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorest 20 per cent of population</td>
<td>2,020</td>
<td>4,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richest 20 per cent of population</td>
<td>19,325</td>
<td>40,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of farm income in household income (in per cent)</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-farm income</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
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According to the survey, the average household income increased by more than 80 per cent between 1995/96 and 2003/04 with nearly doubling of the per capita income from Rs. 7,690 to Rs. 15,162 during the same period. The growth rate for the poorest 20 per cent of the population was 98 per cent while that for the richest 20 per cent was 110 per cent. The report also noted some significant changes in farm and non-farm income of the people, suggesting the diversified sources of income of the people. Notable decrease in the percentage of people dependent on agriculture from 83 per cent in 1995/96 to 78 per cent in 2003/04 correspondingly led to a most significant decline in people
living below poverty line from 38 per cent to 30 per cent or even less in the same period. When compared with the target set by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)—the core document of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)—that aimed at reducing poverty to 30 per cent by 2007, the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) has already documented the achievement of the target years ahead of the completion of the plan period. Perhaps this is the first quantified positive result concerning the people of Nepal throughout its history of development planning. It denotes that Nepalis are getting richer amidst violent conflict and economic contraction.

The period reviewed by the NLSS has some interesting facets on record. This was the period when the national economy began to asunder in comparison to the promising start made in the first half of the 1990s. Significant political anomalies developed correspondingly to the intraparty and interparty factionalism at the power centre with subsequent seating and unseating of various forms of governments after the commencement of the mid-term polls in late 1994. Economic agendas were valued less than populist programmes adopted through discouraging the investment environment (as was displayed by the World Bank’s pulling out of its commitment from the $1.2 billion ARUN III hydropower project in August 1995). The base year for the NLSS 1995/96 was also the year of Maoist rumbling in the western hills of Nepal and the beginning of the violent insurgency that forced the state to take unidimensional countervailing measures through militarisation. Between 1995/96 and 2002/03, the unofficially recorded cost of economic disruption, destruction, productivity and income losses caused by insurgency had been Rs. 219.46 billion at current prices, a figure comprising both direct and indirect costs of the conflict amounting to 49.04 per cent of GDP of Rs. 446.18 billion for the year 2002/03 (Kumar, 2003:206-207). Downswings in merchandise exports—carpets and garments—and upswings in unemployment against the shrinking job market at the rate of increasing work forces of officially documented 400,000 persons per annum (MoF, 2005) have had a terminal impact on the economic situation. And when tourists stay away from Nepal and capital flights begin the country is led to face multiplicity of problems on the economic front. Finally, the period when the yearlong survey with the nationwide sample of 3,912 households was completed was the most violent phase of the insurgency as well as economic slump with a negative growth of -0.5 per cent in 2001/02.
The moot question therefore is if poverty of the people can be drastically reduced in a “wartime” situation why was not it possible during “peacetime” when nine consecutive five-year plans were implemented by different governments in Nepal beginning in 1956 and ending in 2002? The first five year plan 1956 was based on 8.4 million population recorded in the 1952-54 census that reached 23.4 million in 2001, against which the tenth five year plan was drafted and adopted in 2002. The first five-year plan had the goal to “raise production, employment and standards of living ... thus opening out to the people opportunities for a richer and more satisfying life.” The main objective of the Tenth Plan is focused on poverty reduction by “extending economic opportunities and opening new ones enlarging employment opportunities” to disadvantaged people. By recording the dwindling economic growth in the second half of the ninth plan (1997-2002), the tenth plan document has noted that the “absolute number of people living under poverty line is estimated to have increased” (NPC, 2002:29) from over 38 per cent target level of the previous plan period. Between 1990 and 2002, the plan documents record that the people living under the poverty line have decreased from 42 per cent to 38 per cent, a mere reduction by 4 per cent of the then total population of nearly 24 million. The drastic reduction by 8 per cent of the people living below poverty line, when almost all economic indicators are unfavourably disposed against the current NLSS claim, thus, is inexplicable. If this is not a miracle this is perhaps a proof of the national resilience potential to keep the economy growing even if the worst happens. But why was this not the case before?

An explanation of this favourable trend in the economic function of the state, not exactly based on domestic investment, production and redistribution of resources, can, however, be found in the remittances flow from outside that cushions the living standards of the people inside. This means it is not the state but market forces that have largely determined the functioning of the Nepali economy. Failing to grow with the enhanced capability of a state by tapping regional, global stock or bond markets and attracting multinationals to invest for profit sharing or producing goods and services for sale in the competitive trading system, Nepal has donned the cap of a cheap labour-exporting country to substantially ease domestic pressure for employment in the service of external needs for surplus labour. This way, Nepal can not only manage the challenges of a numerically growing and unemployed
labour force but also escape from the responsibility of job creation at home. Remittances entering the country through official channels have also been a lucrative source of foreign exchange earning for the state. Nepal has traditionally been following the practice of selling its able bodied manpower to foreign armies, a practice that is now being gradually replaced and substituted by non-military contractual works in different countries. Perhaps this is the reason why Nepal is now being branded as a “remittance economy” rather than “agri economy” (Seddon, Adhikari and Gurung, 2001:12).

Notwithstanding this fact, the Living Standards Survey 2003/04 also reports an ever-widening and dangerous gap of income inequality between the poorest 20 per cent and the richest 20 per cent of the people. This is caused no doubt by the state’s failure in nationalising the anti-poverty agenda relative to social justice. Elite attitudes towards poverty and destitution are not different than what others commonly think. Even salaried officials of the government in the higher echelon are relatively poor and feel the pinch of poverty in relations to the price spiral in the markets and their status relative to the standards of living in the national capital (Nepal has the lowest paid salaried officials in South Asia). Those who live on fixed incomes see no better future awaiting them in any comparison with their national compatriots. They honestly worry about the grinding poverty but feel poverty is an inheritance that cannot be wished away so easily. Children born to poor and uneducated parents at the margins of the state will always be discriminated and disadvantaged. Their status inheritance would inevitably lead them to a life of poverty in comparison to those already maintaining accesses to state facilities. The concern of the elites therefore is that the access to state facilities should not be taken away from their families and siblings. Social relationships are therefore carved and cast with the flow of patronage and circulation of elites is strictly limited to the confines of the afno manchhe. Patronage politics has expanded under democracy, as politicians have become powerful persons able to influence the state decision-making process and make it complicit to the electoral process. Democracy has reproduced patrimonialism with reciprocal assimilation of recycled elites by personalisation of power, privatisation of the state, and businessification of politics, reflecting a pattern common to autocratic states.

The national political and power elites are composed of homogeneous social groups. The interpersonal relationships they have established
are coherent and devoid of any serious social cleavages. A majority of Nepali-speaking elites of the dominant caste groups are concentrated in Kathmandu—the cultural core and the power centre of the state. Members of this elite group straddle different economic and social sectors ranging from NGOs, media to consultancy businesses besides their traditional occupational sectors in the government. This way, the elites are united, unified and dominant in class terms. Differences in their ideological moorings, however, are projected for public consumption necessitated by electoral politics under a democratic system as political party business. But political elites even with ideological infatuation towards communism have demonstrated that they are no less conservative and status quoist than liberal democratic parties whenever in power. Driven by greed and grandeur for power, the political elites have been gesturing at popular representation and acted as the entrepreneurs of corruption.

A show of empathy towards the poor and concern for social justice and discourses on suffrage and need for inclusion are features constantly appearing in the election manifestoes of political parties' social sector programmes but are pursued with lukewarm commitment and negligence, exposing inadequacy as well as distortion at the implementation level. The consequence therefore has been a rapid erosion of public trust in political parties and decline in legitimacy of the governments formed under democracy. It is the polarisation between the governments' unwillingness to carry out its constitutional obligations for institutionalisation of the democratic process, neither through addressing the problems of individual rights nor through expressing sensitivity in providing collective welfare benefits to citizenry, and a people caught in the vortex of intraparty conflicts not knowing what to do that has led to the setting of the stage for an unveiling of the finale with rising incidences of violence and destruction, injustice, dissension and trampling of democracy in Nepal. When queried about the possibility of such a tragic end of democracy, people, as their common sense prescribed, stress that the responsibility lies with political parties. Prior to democracy, the subject people had to labour and produce to serve the needs of the masters. Under democracy, the people are transformed into the role of voters to elect their own masters who are out to rule and not govern them. The situation thus continues to be tragic.

This historical narrative of manufacturing political order has resulted in the manufacturing of political disorder as is poignantly demonstrated
by the recurring political violence and unending power struggle in Nepal. Creeping contradictions between mass-based aspirations of political freedom, human rights, expanded and inclusive representations and a continuing legacy of misrule through elite domination behind the façade of governance framed by a democratic constitution have exposed the deepening chasm in state-society relationships culminating in violent upheavals and putting the state in crisis. The Nepali state has proved to be both unable to address the challenges posed, particularly to the demand of social justice in response to poverty and denial of human rights. The tendency to resist change is the premise of those whose power and privileges are likely to be threatened by such change using force, thus, becomes a catalyst to conflict, undermining the process of democratisation. The absence of any vision involving a consensual authority to govern the state, even through the electoral process in institutionalising democracy, has, thus, led to the conclusion that the state, the government and the leadership have failed the people. The high cost of this failure is the erosion of democracy and the consolidation monarchy. The Figure 6.1 illustrates the crises of insecurity and the predicament of the people of Nepal.

The narrative of historical transformation of Nepal from autocracy to democracy in the 1990s (Figure 6.1) thus amounts to the sad story of democratic transition torn apart by misrule and political violence, causing institutional decay, and leading to the dismantling of democracy. Contrary to commonly observable trend in world politics of decreasing military coups and military regimes being replaced by elections, Nepal under democracy has been forced to gradually resurrect military power by opening political space to the armed forces because of the violence caused by non-state forces. Although Nepal has yet to experience direct rule by a military government, it has a government led by monarchy whose source of origin is in military leadership. The monarchy's claim to the mantle of political leadership and authority is based on the kind of military power that has become one of the crucial structural impediments for the democratisation of the state.

The growing awareness among people, particularly about the failure of the democratic process, the misdeeds of political parties, inefficacy of the leadership and distortion of development criteria, failure of land reform a policy of social exclusion have generated discourses about the merits and demerits of the polity structured on the centralised power controlled by a few, irrespective of democracy or
dictatorship. The elites hold on power did not change although the political elites under democracy are supposed to be opposed to monopoly. Tragically, when the political elites controlled the state apparatuses through elections, they also internalised the experiences of despotic regimes and went on practising a patrimonial mode of relationship between the state and society. The crony syndrome as well as the spread of patronisation politics has engulfed the country. The establishment of such a relationship between the state and society has transformed Nepal into a politico-economic abyss as a consequence of
resource mobilisation from both internal and external sources without any meaningful contribution to socio-economic change.

In terms of resources mobilisation, Nepal was viewed as one of the least indebted countries with $947 million debts in 1987 from around $2 million in 1970. By 1994, Nepal's indebtedness increased to around $2 billion (Kumar, 1996: 293), and amounted to $4 billion by early 2004 in current dollar-rupee exchange rate (MoF, 2004: 26-28). The ratio of net outstanding loans to total GDP hover around 50 per cent. Despite this high ratio of foreign loan to GDP and the government's decision to join the club of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (MoF, 2005: 35), there has hardly been any change in the plight of the people. What, however, has already changed is the status of the political leadership and its coteries who have become rich overnight. This stark reality negates any sensitivity to the unfolding of human tragedy in the country. Irrespective of the regime shift from partyless to a multiparty system in the post-1990 period, successive regimes have failed to establish any meaningful relationship between politics and people besides taking recourse to the electoral process for seeking legitimacy to majoritarian rule. Political mobilisation becomes the gathering of crowds and crowds are gathered as a function of the democratic process of popular participation of people who never come to know why they have been assembled except to see some Thulo-manchhe (big-man) or big Neta (leader) and listen to monotonous speeches promising Vikas, sukkha and samridhi (development, happiness and prosperity) in their vote-catching pursuits. Electorates thus are transformed to the political category of "people" by the leadership whose role amounts to exploitation and suppression of people.

Elements of political democracy such as constitutions, elections, and legislatures are formalised as processes but misrepresented at its core because the vast majority of people are again excluded from the reliance on these institutionalised processes by their own representatives. Although voting rights on the basis of adult franchise has been one of the markers of citizenship in democracy and elections are both a ritual and a symbol of democracy, elections have become a form of legitimating power to a group of people short of democratic ideals. Elections have been transformed to a vote-catching mechanism for state capture. The Nepali people who have struggled for political democracy wanted to assert the rights to elect their own representatives and were energised by the assumption of upholding human rights, the rule of law and
distributive justice. Democratic movements in Nepal have been fuelled by these aspirations. Once elected, their leaders, however, seemed to be living in a different planet and appeared to be estranged from everyday reality. Parliament was transformed to a business house and not the House of Representatives and a place of bargaining for consensual governance of a democratic state. Parliamentary business was obstructive for development of a responsive institution as the House of Representatives was transformed into a forum for making and unmaking of governments. This business, according to a former minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Narahari Acharya, perhaps has become more dangerous and expensive than formal periodic elections. The monetary expense incurring in such exercises could expose the extent of corruption and criminalisation of politics in Nepal (Kumar, 2000:29). As the former prime minister of the Nepali Congress Party, Girija P. Koirala has observed, parliament has, in fact, been "invaded by smugglers" (Kathmandu Post, 12 August 2000). Elite disunity at the top has therefore produced a series of unstable governments within the decade of parliamentary democracy. In the absence of elite consensus, the House of Representatives was dissolved six times with the special session of the House of Representatives called seven times leading to a change in the government for twelve times.

Thus democracy flourishes in unusual places such as villages and the cities, at teashops and bus stand, coffee houses and college venues but not inside parliament. Though colleges and universities have been continuously declared apolitical places, they were/are venues of political dissent and a public political space. Colleges became avenues for seeking alternative democracy as students hold referendum on pertinent issues such as constitutional monarchy/multiparty parliamentary system versus republican/federal system and end up with results favouring the second option. These are the reflections of the public mood expressed by young people who will shape the future of the state. Notwithstanding risks of political persecution, political discourses have led to reviewing, re-examining and rearguing the merits and demerits of Westminsteral democratic system in comparative terms against the models of functioning democracies in the world. Discourses have developed attempting to explain the inadequacies of parliamentary democracy in which representation has becomes elusive as parties and governments are dominated by corrupt people who have transformed parliament into a smugglers' den. Such burgeoning exercises and discourses against the
existing political system are also consequences of the people's antipathy towards the monarchy's reluctance to reconcile with the constitutional process. On the other hand, discourses on federalism have emanated from the desire of making power holders accountable to the electorates rather than to central authority. As the political system under parliamentary democracy has failed to address the extensive social suffering caused by gender inequality, ethnic and religious discriminations, poverty and individual liberty the system of electoral majoritarian democracy has also undergone critical scrutiny. The majoritarian rule from the centre, ultimately designed for consolidation of power of the unitary state system has led to dissociation of the people from the state.

The creeping sense of frustration among the people is reflected in the way some sections of the people have been taking up arms and resorting to violence. In other instances, the growing demands for self-determination and regional autonomy have influenced the thinking mind to search for alternatives to the structural ambiguity of the state. The acute need of political reform cannot be ignored at this critical juncture, considering the violent challenges facing the state with the dismantling of multiparty democracy. Amidst democratic reversal and in the ensuing uncertainty political discourses have turned to alternatives to the state. Public debates are focused on the problems of the leadership and the state, particularly in the context of societal demands for inclusive policy and identity politics. Gleaning through the discourse, it can easily be concluded that the core of the advocacy remains dissatisfaction with a state structure that has erected fences and carved boundaries to the participation and representation of people. In fact, the unitary state with its system of exclusiveness has become a concept to be opposed, as it is the inheritor of a centralised monarchical system and command, the allegiance of the people. Politics in such a system is centralised, as the objectives of political parties are articulated to capture power and retain control of the state exchequer and decision-making processes. It has therefore been observed that decentralisation of power as such is antithetical to the champions of the unitary state. Thus it would be illogical to anticipate power sharing from upholders of a state structure designed basically to extend control and command its citizenry.

Discourses in Nepal have raised several sensitive questions in relations to the monarchy, the state and the political parties, along with their institutional and functional ambience. From a survey of the
existing literature on the burgeoning discourses the following three perspectives have emerged which are of crucial relevance in determining the national future and prospects for human security in Nepal. The policy propositions developed on the basis of ongoing debates, however, are incomplete. Because of their imprecision any consensus on these areas is yet to arrive. But these issues are discussed here with the anticipation that such a conscientious discourse may contribute to set the national future on a cause that will be better than the ones evidenced throughout the political history of Nepal.

Reforming the State: Why should be the state reformed? There are both societal and political reasons for reforming the state. First, at the societal level, the state has thrived on the basis of social exclusion and according to policies that have continued to impoverish and deprive the masses since its formation in 1769. The feudalistic systems that permeate social and economic relationships persist. High Hindu caste groups dominate political, military and economic decision making at all levels. Second, at the political level, the unresponsive nature of the political system underlies numerous problems. The national elite, never responsive to the people, dominates the policies and the institutions of government. And the country now has neither representative nor participatory democratic process nor a legitimate government. There is neither rule of law nor fundamental rights for the people for these have been hijacked by the provision of impunity provided to the security forces and the power of discretion wielded by the king. The country is ruled through ordinances promulgated by the king designed to build an absolute monarchy with military support; such rule has indeed enfeebled the power structure, eroding the authority of the state and plunging it into crisis.

Third, the attempt at homogenisation of the religious-cultural identity of the state by declaring Nepal a Hindu state has provoked the process of alienation of the multicultural and multiethnic people from the Nepali state than drawing them together to evolve a consensual identity. Such an endeavour of the state has encouraged ethnopolitics to emerge and led to growing demands for self-determination as well as regional autonomy no doubt because of the government's failure to recognise and accommodate cultural diversity. Pursuit of both state and nation buildings seen as the centralisation of authority has increasingly been challenged and claims of national integration are disputed. Fourth, the centre-periphery relations that the unitary state
system has forged have presumably become a persistent problem for both democracy and development because under such a system nothing is under local control. Hence it has been increasingly recognised by the people that the multiparty democratic system fundamentally remains exclusive against their expectation of being inclusive.

The critical chasm between popular perception and the state orientation in the pursuit of democracy therefore remains constitutional disregard for protecting minority rights while practicing governance with electoral majority. Derecognising of minority rights is the destruction of the essence of human rights. This imposed cultural hegemony of the state has even led mainstream political parties like Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Tarai based) to put the national constitution on fire when its demand for repealing the discriminatory citizenship law was not entertained by the government. In the opinion of most ruling elites, minority issue does not even exist in Nepal. According to them, the state cannot tolerate attempts to disrupt the harmony subsisting between the multicultural and multireligious people of Nepal created by “unity in diversity.” The reality, however, is that there is no mechanism in the state system for the accountability of the majority to the minority that can be expressed through the psychosis of the “Hindu State”. In short, the majoritarian model of democracy has failed to protect the rights of minorities in Nepal. And, when a democracy ignores minority rights, it fails in its definitional qualification of ensuring a representative form of government.

Related to state reform are the demands raised from the civil and political sectors for elections to the constituent assembly and for a proportional representative system, and for reservation, autonomy and transformation of the state from a unitary to a federal system by making it a republican state. Discourses on the state striving for systemic change have accelerated since 4 October 2002. After King Gyanendra’s double coup against his own appointed government on 1st February 2005, the monarchy has become increasingly the focus of the state restructuring process in public debates. The country at the moment is ruled at the discretion of monarchy rather than by a constitutional authority with an assembly of publicly discarded people in the king’s cabinet convicted for homicide and with criminal as well as bank defaulter records. Political appointments of regional and zonal administrators to control the national bureaucracy, making them responsible to none but the king, has created mayhem in the national administrative system by
humiliating honest personnel, leading in one case to one of the government secretaries to even commit suicide. The characteristics of the persons surrounding the king and his chosen confidents prove the long-held suspicion that the king was the leader of the “bhumigat giroha” (underground group) during the heyday of the erstwhile panchayat system constituting the Mandalee—a group of notorious people, to be blunt. Monarchy thus stands condemned, as the experience of the experimentation on the system of constitutional monarchy in Nepal has become untenable or even “impossible” (Acharya, 2005:12). Thus, the political system designed on the Westminsterial framework has failed thoroughly in the case of Nepal to enliven popular expectations. The monarchy’s seizure of the state and marginalisation of the people’s ownership and citizen’s claim on the state has weakened and fragmented the institutional framework by turning the state into a brutal machinery leading Nepalis to an unpredictable future. The state is ruled with the aid of the specialists of violence; to recall Sorel it is indeed “triumphing by the hands of executioner” (Sorel, 1941:121).

What should, then, be the priority agenda in reforming the state? Is a republic an alternative to monarchy? Would the process of state reform be contingent with reform of the bureaucracy? This can be one of the crucial agendas of a comprehensive state reform package that should be political and not technical. Arguments in favour of reforming the state have essentially been developed with the decline of popular faith both in the institutions of monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The rationale for reforming the state has been provided with arguments that the institutional arrangement of the state both under monarchy and parliamentary democracy has been exclusivist, rigid, inflexible and illiberal. Therefore the case for making democracy inclusive and consensual rather than exclusive and majoritarian and misrepresentational has been argued with vigour (Khanal, 2004:17-22). Distinct choice is made in favour of a proportional representative system instead of the “first-past-the-post system” to make the polity more inclusive. It has also been argued that the National Assembly (Upper House) of the bi-cameral parliamentary system should be rectified and transformed it into the Houses of Minorities. Similarly, arguments favouring federal or quasi-federal system to make democracy more inclusive are also taking their stead (Acharya, 2004:12-15, 44-45; Khanal, 2004:15; Lawoti, 2005).

Some samples of discourses represented here have largely resurrected discussion on the inadequacy of the constitution 1990 that
has failed to instill a sense of the ownership of the state by the people. Critics like Harka Gurung have thoroughly condemned the 1990 Constitution in its present form with constructive suggestions to remove the persistent discrimination and improve the chances of its acceptability (Gurung, 2003:36-37). Bhattachan has listed constitutional discriminations against the indigenous/ethnic and written about people, about their demands and suggested way outs to resolve the challenges through inclusion (Bhattachan, 2004:18). Lawoti has termed the constitution both as “racist and sexiest” and a source of exclusion (Lawoti, 2005:113-153). Championing of identity politics and the rights of the oppressed to be inclusive, as a political expression, has yet to cross the threshold of the socio-political space defined within the current political discourse. But the possibility of the more aggressive expressions cannot be denied if the search for secular identity and social justice continues to be blocked.

Pertaining to the 1990 Constitution, Khanal has offered a more stringent argument, suggesting that there is no room for any improvement on the present constitution as it has outlived its utility. To reform the state, Khanal argues in favour of opting for elections to constituent assembly that will make people their own masters to decide on the political system of their choice by collective self-determination (Khanal, 2003:10). Mainstreaming the debates taking place on the constituent assembly elections, he has emphasised five factors—to provide ownership of democracy to the people; for restructuring the state; for legitimising [new] monarchy; for evolving consociational democracy; and for providing rights to self-determination to ethnic minorities with equal representation in the constitution-making process (Khanal, 2003:9-11). Despite conceptual as well as practical hurdles, an election to form a constituent assembly for drafting of a new constitution has been suggested by many as a way-out from the systemic impasse prevailing in the country (Acharya, 2005:3; Basyal, 2004:24-29; Maharjan, 2004). The long festering debate on constituent assembly elections ever since it was promised by the monarchy on 18 February 1951 (Devkota, 1960:49-52) has been resurrected in the country because of the monarchy’s undermining of subsequent democratic constitutions and popular alienation against the system of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The issue for holding elections to the constituent assembly has also been made a bone of contention by Maoists as a consensual measure for the peaceful
transformation of the state system from monarchy to republicanism. The deadlock therefore persists.

Mainstream political parties, like the Nepali Congress, are confronted with two crucial questions on the agenda for reforming the state: is it necessary to remove the phrase “constitutional monarchy” from the party’s constitution or remain silent on the controversial issue, should they pursue a “status quo” policy or opt for a democratic republican system? The CPN (UML), another major political party, is yet undecided, though, as the most influential communist party it should be the principal claimant to republicanism. Although the 9th Central Committee meetings of the CPN (UML) that concluded on 28th August 2005 decided to move towards a “democratic republic” while intensifying their agitation for restoration of parliamentary democracy, this seems merely a ploy for assuaging popular pressure rather than restructuring the state without the framework of monarchy. The 11th General Convention of the Nepali Congress party made history by amending Clause 2 of its constitution replacing constitutional monarchy with state restructuring and inclusive democracy with virtual unanimity (Political Resolution, 2005; Kantipur, 1 September 2005). This, for sure, represents a major policy change in the approach of the Nepali Congress party towards the monarchy since its inception in 1947. Notwithstanding their waning commitment to the constitutional monarchical system, however, political parties remain opaque on this crucial issue. An unwavering commitment to rethink this situation, however, can chart a new course for the future of Nepali politics.

Such a possibility has now emerged because of the inflexibility of the king and his rigid adherence to the polity he is trying to evolve after 1st February by accusing political parties for creating a mess, as pronounced in his 13th SAARC Summit speech in Dhaka: “The February First step in Nepal was necessitated by ground realities, mainly the failure of successive governments to contain ever-emboldening terrorists and maintain law and order” (Rising Nepal, 13 November 2005). But in delivering the speech he did not take account of the fact that the three governments he had appointed after 4 October 2002 was by asserting the executive power of the state, and only explained what caused him to undertake the 1st February decision against his own appointed government. The overlooked political parties and the prosecuted Maoists are coming together to evolve a converging point on the agenda of a constituent assembly and are about to form an alliance to pursue the
issue based on the condition that the Maoists should give up violence. Such an alliance between these two political forces could intensify the peaceful political movement with the objective of restructuring the state through the active participation of the Maoists in democratising the state. If and when this triangular conflict polarise into a duel between the monarchy and popular forces, the persistent political structure could crumble, opening more avenues for reforming the state. In this context, the 12-point understanding that the seven parties' political alliance has struck with the Maoists against the autocratic monarchy for the establishment of democracy through elections to the constituent assembly could become a positive development in the complicated political mosaic of Nepal (Press Statement, 2005).

The understanding reached between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists on 22 November for initiating peaceful agitation against autocratic monarchy has, at least, given a jolt to the status quo in Nepal (Kantipur, Kathmandu Post, Himalayan Times, 23 November 2005). Although the political parties-Maoist understanding has clearly spelt out monarchy as the major impediment to the democratisation of the country, and suggested elections to the constituent assembly as the only practical way out of the current political impasse (Bhattarai, 2005:6-9), they need to further clarify whether an end to “autocratic monarchy” is an end to the monarchical system itself or whether accommodation with the monarchy is still a possibility. (Kumar, 2005:12-14). Apparently, the Royal government has not been affected by the changing dynamics of the situation. It has neither reciprocated to the unilateral ceasefire announced by the Maoists on 3rd September (Himalayan Times, 4 September 2005) nor shown any signs of reconciliation with the agitating political parties. Instead, the government is hardening its position against both the Maoists and the legitimate political parties. The political diatribe cabinet members have unleashed recently is designed to incite the Maoists to resume violence and bring the political parties back in the monarchical fold. Indeed, they have been warned to face any eventuality (Kathmandu Post 15 December 2005:1; Rising Nepal, 21 December 2005:1; Kathmandu Post, 21 December 2005:1). Hence, the Nepali politics is rapidly moving towards a zero-sum game.

Reforming Political Parties: But whatever conceptual alternatives and practical suggestions to the systemic transformation of the state to make it more liberal and egalitarian are made in discourses, such
efforts cannot make any headway unless the political parties commit themselves to reform. The desire of political parties to be in power has undermined the process of development and people-oriented policy agendas despite their rhetoric of pro-poor governance. Populism thrives under democracy but it cannot be a substitute to principled action. Since when populism overshadows accountability the promise of development is reduced to bare rhetoric. The crisis of democracy in Nepal is moreover tied to the unaccountability of political parties, their chief goal being electoral politics, fund raising for elections through different means, and winning elections not through the power of persuasion but through the use of money and muscle power such a scenario has led to a self-defeating process of delegitimising the parliamentary system in which popular representation has become a mirage. As noted above, parliament becomes a place for horse-trading, reflecting the ugly face of democracy with a consensual and collective agenda to steal from the state purse but dramatising divergence and defiance in the national agenda. The corrosive cycle of electoral politics deficient of ideology have made the politicians self-seeking individuals rather than true representative of the people, a situation caused by the uncertainty of their tenure either in parliament or government or opposition benches. Haunted by the possibility of facing the next election soon, parliamentarians spend most of their time accumulating resources for the next election campaigns than holding serious deliberations on national issue. The experiences of the three elected parliaments between 1991 and 1999 conform to a pattern of politics influenced considerably by the interests of party leaderships. The fact that parliament has simply become a conglomerate of camp followers has been a major disappointment for the people of Nepal.

Although the political parties are the wheels of democracy, they are poorly organised, better suited to be oppositional and movement forces against the political regimes of the period in question; most of them have functioned mostly as illegal and disbanded groups and some even as underground organisations. Political parties came to the surface only in the post-1990 period after the success of Jana Andolan. The Jana Andolan was launched with the single agenda to overturn the panchayat system and establish multiparty democracy, draft a new constitution, hold multiparty elections and form government along with treasury and opposition benches in the parliament. However, political parties viewed the government as too routine an affair. They are
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fragmented and disunified. Intraparty factionalism, more than anything, has impaired the functional dimension of the party. In the absence of intraparty cohesion, oligarchic tendencies have thrived within the parties, encouraging factional fighting and attempts by one group to subordinate other groups and expel weak groups from party networks. On the other hand, interparty relations are characterised by envious behaviour rather than healthy political competition. The oppositional forces have choreographed parliamentary sessions as "sadak dekhi sadan samma" (from the streets to the parliament) and have battled with the government on issues they never even addressed when in the treasury bench. The strategy of the political opposition remains pulling down the government formed by majoritarian votes even to the extent of manipulating the personal dissatisfaction of the legislatures of the ruling party. The irony of the kind of legitimate opposition that democracy recognises is that the political parties in opposition had themselves repealed the legitimacy of elections as a systemic measure to achieve a commonly acceptable political authority in the country.

One of the serious lacunae in the functioning of the political parties is the absence of intraparty democracy. Party discipline is a prerequisite for a party to function properly but not regimentation. Political parties in Nepal are regimented rather than disciplined. Nowhere has their internal disarray been more evident than in the agitational demands for the resignation of their own prime minister the ruling party stalwarts led by the officiating president of the party who jointly petitioned the Royal Palace in unison with the president of the opposition party to avert the executive decision of the prime minister for calling of mid-term polls in 1994, and demanded the sacking of the prime minister by the king. The frugality of party organisation dominated by the personality of party leader has hardly provided any stabilising core for any party to emerge from below. Elections to party posts, though democratic in appearance, have hardly made any difference in the composition of the party hierarchy. Powerful segments of the party have distorted, redefined and misinterpreted the party's constitutional norms to suit their monopolistic designs.

Although the party constitution has made it binding to the party high command to remain in office for two terms, the 11th General Convention elected Girija P. Koirala for the third term as the Nepali Congress president on 1st September 2005. He also retains the rights to nominate 50 per cent of the central committee members comprising
37 persons. All of his cronies who were defeated and discarded as corrupt persons along with his family members have currently been nominated by Koirala to constitute the Central Working Committee (CWC) of the Nepali Congress Party. Despite demands for amending this provision and making it more inclusive, it remains a problem area for the party leadership since it is afraid of losing its majority in the political equation existing inside the party. If the composition of the central committee members of the Nepali Congress party constituted on 23 January 2001 is any guide clan politics has been triumphant. The post-11th convention CWC has followed suit without any face-lift. The family members and \textit{afno manchhe} of the party president dominate the central committee. Out of 30-member working committee 20 (66.67\%) are of High Caste group followed by 4 (13.33\%) Janajati, 3 (10\%) Women, 2 (6.67\%) Madhesi, 1(3.33\%) Muslim, and 0 (0.0\%) Dalit, indicating the supremacy of the high caste group in policy pursuits. Fortunately at least one a Dalit comprises an elected member of the new central committee of the NC. Likewise, the high caste group in the party hierarchy overcrowds the CPN (UML), which is mostly dominated by Brahmins. Yet both of these mainstream political parties are exclusivist rather than inclusive. Although the Nepali Congress in its currently reconstituted Central Committee has a Dalit, and some janajati people in its composition through nomination, the Koirala clan dominates the party central committee and directs their monopolist urges. Thus the possibility of the emergence of leadership within the political parties is obstructed by the already established leader(s) who have been monopolising power and overshadowing others’ roles unless favoured and conceded by the leader.

Also, the political parties have yet to become transparent and accountable in using party funds. In addition to governmental financial assistance to the political parties on the basis of the ratio of the votes received by a particular party, political parties are mostly funded by different sources, the most prominent among which are contributions from the business and industrial sectors. The amount, unfortunately, remain undisclosed. This creates the problem of maintaining financial discipline and managing funds scrupulously within a party. Neither the code of conduct of political parties nor acts related to it have addressed this problem. Such a situation had led to controversies as people close to the highest party leaderships have amassed funds for personal use in the name of the parties. Hence there is an acute need of
transparency in the collection and use of the party funds. This should be an important agenda for party reform.

The tragedy, so far the political parties are concerned, is however the greed demonstrated in grabbing state power whether by fair or foul means. The five agitating political parties has stooped to the extent of registering of a joint petition to the king for nominating a prime minister of their choice after the sacking of the parliamentary government on 4 October 2002, displaying their hunger for power rather than commitment to democracy. The anticlimax in the history of democratic struggle reached its nadir when the king reappointed the very person as his prime minister on 2 June 2004 whom he had previously dismissed as thoroughly “incompetent.” The cabinet was formed with the participation of the CPN (UML), the largest oppositional party that comprised the core of the five-agitating parties fighting against political regression on the streets till the other day. With the defection of the CPN (UML), the forces of anti-monarchist agitations weakened to its core as the joint leadership was destroyed. The Royal proclamation of 1st February 2005 brought all the political parties together again in the scramble for power, unfortunately, from the streets where they had been raising anti-regression slogans demanding restoration of democracy. The irony, however, is that the primary agenda of the political parties remains to be seated and accommodated in power by the monarchy and not democratising the social sphere and development of the country with humanly possible measures.

Therefore, if democracy has to work and development is to be made an agenda for the future political parties must reform themselves and should operate on a consensual framework, upholding transparency in internal party actors and displaying commitment to social justice and the rule of law as the governing principles of the state. The challenges to the parties remain engaging the people they claim to have led as their voters and supporters rather than trying to convince the king about their honest commitment to democracy and constitutional monarchy. Despite their long and arduous struggle for democracy and social justice, political parties have succumbed to the lure of power recognising the monarchy and not the people as the fountainhead of power, begging for their inclusion and not fighting for their rights to power. In the process, they have lost their capacity of being a change agent. Until this quality is restored, there is no way they can initiate change in policy directions relative to the needs of the people.
Reforming Security Sector: There are three critical factors that should be reflected upon while discussing the imperatives of security sector reform in Nepal. One very understandable feature for stressing on the need of reforming the security sector is that Nepal has no enemy to fight with. Increasing military profile would also be beyond economic sustainability. In the context of Nepal another of the areas to be focused is on the rule of law as the security sector is primarily geared for internal security with the provision of impunity. The third crucial dimension is the state of civil-military relations, which is constitutionally ambiguous but practically under the firm control of the monarchy. Hence, in the course of reforming the security sector, particularly the armed forces, there is a need of clarifying the positionality of a monarchy that retains the rights to “operate” and “use” the armed forces.

One of the pivotal concerns raised by the security sector, especially, by the armed forces, is the question of it loyalty. Hence the Maoists agenda of bringing the army under the control of the people. The political parties have also declared that the RNA should be transformed into an army with a national character, making it responsible to the state and the people and accountable to the parliament and elected government (NC, 2003:E). The rethinking on the situation actually occurred after 4 October 2002 with the derailing of the democratic process that led even the chairperson and other members of the 1990 Constitution Drafting Committee to publicly accuse the king for overstepping the norms set by the fundamental law of the land. The crucial agenda for the future therefore would be delinking monarchy from the armed forces of the country in pursuit of security sector reform.

Until democracy is restored and the fundamental question of defining the role of the monarchy is not settled by streamlining the civil-military relationships, the prospect of reform in the security sector can only be hypothetical. A fundamental issue in security sector reform is the need on the part of the political leaderships to bridge the gap in the civil-military relationships that has remained for so long. The need to maintain civilian supremacy came to a head only when the army refused to be mobilised. The political leaderships have never questioned the behaviour of the army as well as the adjunct security forces on the grounds of their performance once they were mobilised in counter-insurgency operations with the Royal assent and because of the declaration of national emergency. Reforming the security sector does not mean shifting of the “subjective control” of the army from the king
to the prime minister or the parliament; it basically means the army's compliance with the laws of the land and responsibility to the people. Reforming the security sector means the army should reflect on the sensitive security needs of the people and not on the question of who controls the army.

Political parties have shown no clear inclination towards reforming the security sector in their policy agendas except by asserting that the army should be under parliamentary control. Point 3 of the 18-point common programme of the five political parties reflects this view. The political resolution adopted by the Central Working Committee of the Nepali Congress party on the eve of the 11th General Convention has stated that the army would be oriented and provided with a new direction and developed further according to the changed environment to suit a democratic dispensation by making it responsible to the state, people and democratic institution, not the person (Political Resolution, 29 August 2005). The crux of the problem, thus, remains.

Therefore, the role of ever-expanding security sector comprising the military, the paramilitary and the police forces requires serious deliberation. The national reality suggests there should be immediate stop to expansion of the security forces that could not only be a burden economically but would also be a waste of able-bodied manpower. Since the sovereignty of the Nepali state and its territorial integrity is not threatened by any external powers and its national security policy remains opaque and the perception of threat remains restricted to internal factors, the size of the statutory security forces should be drastically reduced and its military expansion programme cancelled. It is advisable to trim the security forces numerically but make them smart, disciplined and duty bound, well-equipped and mobile to meet any future contingencies. Stress should be on making them into assault forces with commando training rather than raising more military divisions and expanding command structures. The requirement is not for garrison forces but for an efficient military that can rise to the occasion. The military may be thin, lean and small in size but should be strong and smart in operational efficiency. Deficiencies in intelligence services and alertness of the armed forces can be improved with training and discipline, not by making them undisciplined murderous hoards. It can also be reasonably argued that if the APF (paramilitaries) were to be retained to fight internal insurgencies, the size of the military should be reduced to pre-2001 level, i.e., 50,000. This could be
done in the course of demobilisation if Maoists agreed to negotiate and demob guerrilla forces. Otherwise, Nepal would be forced to sustain its regular coercive forces with trend setting allocations of over 35 per cent of the regular budget and by cutting down investment in the social sectors. Maintaining a huge security sector requires a huge expenditure in procuring arms, which a country with dependent militarisation will have to pay a price for because of the types of arms it acquires. The inexorably increased military expenditures in procuring and maintaining arms and weapons systems and their replenishment without transparency and accountability would be another challenge in reforming the security sector.

The need to restore citizens’ confidence to the armed forces in order for them to be an effective institution cannot be either ignored or undermined. The government should rescind the culture of immunity and impunity promptly in order to bridge the widening gap of distrust between citizens and soldiers. Bringing in culprits to the book could be a judicious way of diffusing persistent tensions by recognising the fact that no one should be above the law. The ever-deepening perception of the widespread violations of human rights and human dignity by security forces, as demonstrated by the Nagarkot massacre on 14 December 2005 when a soldier gunned down 12 worshippers and seriously injured 19 more innocent people (Shrestha and Dhungel, 2005:1), should be rectified urgently to regain army receptivity the society. Unregulated violence is the function of state failure in internal pacification. Such acts invite counter-violence. It has, thus, been suggested that, “the function of a modern, professional military is to protect the rights and security of the people, not the privileges of a dictator who has squandered the moral authority of his office” (Leahy, 2005:4).

There is also a need to clearly define the location of authority. The constitution either in its present form, is perhaps too untenable to be retained, whether in an amended version or through a constitution adopted through elections to the constituent assembly and laws, the constitution must establish a clear division of authority between the head of the state and government under democratic dispensation. The law should be clear for peacetime authority (e.g., who commands and controls the military and promotes military officers), and for crisis (e.g., emergency powers) and transition from conflicts, both internal and external. Since the strengthening of the democratic control of the military depends on creation of informed experts outside the
government, it should do more to promote military expertise among various non-governmental organisations such as the media, the academics and NGOs. Informed inputs from these organisations into defence and foreign policy decision-making would enhance civilian control over the military. That way, civilian leaders would not be solely dependent on the military, as they would have independent assessments and recommendations from non-military institutions. The National Defence Council, which is constitutionally military oriented, is now filled with security personnel; in reality it has become a major impediment to policymaking. The NDC should be reconstituted with civilian experts to make its policies people-relevant. Within the democratic dispensation, parliament must oversee the security forces by exercising control of the defence/security budget, planning and procurement of arms and armament, etc. Its role must be clear in deploying the armed forces during an emergency and in wartime. The security forces should be accountable to parliament. Workings of an oversight agency like that of the Auditor General should also be made transparent.

This is a sort of wish list that should be considered while reforming the security sector. Civilian supremacy over the armed force should be maintained constitutionally by making it responsible to parliament with reforming the characteristics of governance. Governance is identified with the character of leadership. Any government deficient in leadership would be least concerned with the reform agenda, would be risk-averse, and therefore would go on doing business as usual.

But reforming these sectors is an imperative if the Nepali state is to strive for the agendas of human security in the future. There are heavy risks in reforming both the state and security sector although reforming the security sector means reforming the state in a holistic sense. Adopting these measures may be painstaking as well as time consuming but these have become a necessity because a return to the status quo ante is no more possible in Nepal. None of the forces evolving as pivotal to the political future in Nepal—the Monarchy, the Maoists and the political parties—are trusted by the people. People are full of disgust and their dilemma can be seen nowhere distinctly than in the love-hate relationship existing between the monarchy and political parties, a situation exploited to the hilt by the Maoists. The people have realised that neither of these as protagonists can be forces of change as they are traditional, conservative and orthodox in ideology. The credibility gap has become too large to be bridged any more.
Whether Nepal should wait for a more grievous political upheaval than what it has currently been undergoing for reforming the state-society relationships in which power sharing and distributive justice would be the crucial framework for the new architecture of the Nepali state with human face is the crucial question for now.

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Postscript

This book was completed before the handover of sovereignty to the people by King Gyanendra on 24 April 2006 with restoration of the parliament. This was the singular instance of monarchy ever conceding sovereignty to the people that, in the final analysis, are the illustration of the collapse of the old regime in Nepal. Though the people have yet to demand to “cut off the king’s head” in Foucadian way (1984:63-65), the die is already cast by the declaration of the parliament on 18 May (HOR 2006). The parliament has taken three crucial decisions in relations to the future architecture of the country. This concern primarily with the location of the state power and authority in defining the role of monarchy, the control and function of the armed forces and elections to a constituent assembly for an inclusive democracy. These decisions vindicate what have been argued in the foregoing chapters of the book about the need of restructuring the state, reforming the security sector and democratising the Nepali society to comprehensively address the issues comprising the question of human security.

Following the parliamentary declaration, the Comprehensive Peace Accord signed on 21 November 2006 between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) government (formed after the success of Jana Andolan II [people’s movement] on 27 April 2006) and the CPN (Maoist) insurgents, formally ending over a decade of the People’s War, has moved the country forward by denying any role to the king in the affairs of the state till the elections to the constituent assembly, as stipulated, would be held in May 2007. The Accord specifies that the first meeting of the constituent assembly will ultimately decide the fate of monarchy with the simple majority vote (CPA, 21 November 2006). Along with this, the High-Level Investigation Commission has indicted King Gyanendra as “primarily responsible” for the “killings and suppression” of the peaceful demonstrators during the Jana Andolan II and recommended to take actions accordingly. This is the further testimony to the validity of the originally argued position that the irremediable violation of the constitution should be corrected to end the culture of impunity.
These decisions, thus, reflect the popular rejection of monarchy by the people earlier culminating into Jana Andolan II. The credibility of monarchy was on trial since the palace massacre on 1 June 2001. The direct rule further damaged its integrity. A nationwide poll published in March has determined that 65 per cent of the people were against the direct rule of the monarchy (Sharma 2006:30-36). Another public opinion survey published in November has demolished the concept behind the king being the symbol of national unity. The poll results show that a majority of the people living in the hills (44%) and mountains (37.7%) are against the institution of monarchy in comparison to the people living in the Nepal Tarai region (34 %), which is conventionally unthinkable. Some 87 per cent of the people polled have doubted the popularity of the monarchy. Sixty-six per cent of the educated class, though a minority in the population structure albeit being influential in opinion and decision making process, have rejected the imperative of monarchy (Pathak 2006:22-27).

These developments and findings are particularly significant in the context of Nepali politics heading towards yet uncharted course. Crucial to the development taking place in Nepal is the obscurity of monarchy coincided with accrediting to the republicanism with the legalised entry of the Maoists in the political mainstream to determine the future of the country whose agendas were severely contested by the democratic forces till the other day. The Maoists are becoming a dominant force in the composition of the interim government with an interim constitution that has put monarchy on void. The repealing of monarchy from the Draft Interim Constitution even as the Head of the State (Interim Constitution 2006:60-61) indicates about setting of a radical political agenda for the future.

State restructuring therefore has become an imperative. It no longer remains academic since the 1990 Constitution governing the state has been repealed and replaced by the new arrangement made under the present political dispensation. A symbolic step towards a more inclusive state to emerge has already been taken by the removal of the tag of “Hindu State” from Nepal formally declaring it a secular state. The new Citizenship Law (2006) has also indicated the state’s obligation to provide citizenship to nationals who were discriminated against previously, and ensuring rights to acquire citizenship through a mother as well. The state, in addressing the crucial agendas of social exclusion, is preparing itself to pacifying the consternation caused by
the ethnic grievances. But the real challenge for restructuring the state remains. The challenge relates to transforming the monarchical plus unitary state into a proposed federal state system. Though political parties are committed to realise a federal structure for the country to govern with their élan of democratic republic along with electoral reform by adopting a mixed system—the first-past-the-post and the proportional representative system—the country waits for the elections to the constituent assembly and the drafting of a new constitution after the convening of the assembly to take a decisive direction to form the state structure. Until then the skeletons are all in the cupboard.

Some meaningful measures have also been taken in relations to the armed forces through the parliamentary declaration of 18 May 2006. Towards the daunting task of instituting effective civilian control of the armed forces ensuring a process of stable civil-military relations, following decisions are taken by the parliament to change the identity of the army traditionally loyal to the monarchy.

- Abolished the rank of the supreme-commander-in-chief of the armed forces privy to the king;
- The letter and the spirit of the oath of office changed from unflinching loyalty to the crown to the parliament to be taken by the Chief of Army Staff during the swearing-in ceremony;
- The National Defence Council revamped by expanding members and their roles in defence decision-making;
- The National Defence Council headed by the prime minister shall control, use and mobilise the army;
- The designation of the armed forces changed from “Royal Nepal Army” to Nepal Army.

These momentous changes are initiated with the view of maintaining civilian supremacy over the armed forces. The new Military Act 2006 has stipulated that the Government of Nepal shall control, mobilise and use the Nepal Army on the recommendation of the National Defence Council. Through this Act, the king is dissuaded from any claim on the armed forces of the country. These measures are identical to the expected role of the military in a democratic setting within the constitutional framework. Yet the constitution has to adopt a clear guideline both on the military and other security agencies such as police, armed police, immigration, custom, secret services, civil and military intelligence units. All these agencies require to be
professionalised within the larger reform framework targeted at transforming the entire state and society. Such an endeavour have become a necessity given the changing contours and meanings of security, including non-military dimensions comprising human rights, gender balance, environmental protection and broader context of human security. Yet defence review has to occur and national security policy determined.

In the absence of policy formulation in relations to these critical social issues, the reform of the security sector alone may not yield desired results. Reforming security sector with reference to the socio-political and economic perspectives is essential in the Nepali context because security challenges are moreover internal than external. With the absence of even the violent insurgency of the Maoists type to engage the security sector in the anticipated future, there is a need to create new roles to keep them busy. Maintaining civilian supremacy and stable civil-military relations does not mean that the armed forces should obey the civilian order imprudently. It means the development of a code of conduct for the security forces. The substance of the code should be “dos and don’t” defining the relationships of the armed forces to the civil society. Such a code of conduct can be enhanced with the presence of oversight agencies in the parliament raising the awareness and respect for democratic values and related institutions constituting human rights.

All said, but unless political parties pursue the agendas of reform sincerely one cannot, however, be assured of any meaningful change. Democratising the state by reforming institutional base requires attitudinal change in the organisational and functional mores of the political parties to perform as change agents. The simple but a pertinent question is how far the political parties are prepared to change their intra-party and inter-party relationships to accomplish the demands of the sweeping political change brought about by the Jana Andolan II? Already, the question of intra-party democracy has become a widely debated issue both within and without the political parties. Parties though thrive on representation are indeed non-representative in their organisational structure (Acharya 2006). Authoritarianism hinges at the core of political parties. This tendency is not attuned to re-imagining of the Nepali state into federalism. The hallmark of federal state is the constitutional division of power and transparency in distribution of finance. Authority is decentralised in
essence in a federal state. Political leadership with secretive and centralising tendency, thus, could impede rather than expand the prospect of state restructuring process. These challenges are yet to be met.

Moreover, the predicament for the people relates to the task of nation building through the ownership of the state by the elections to the constituent assembly. They are already past the 238-year old monarchical history and over a decade old war ravaged economy. They are presently making waves for the future by trying to consolidate the nascent democracy achieved through Jana Andolan II. Though the plan for shaping a future is still at an embryonic stage, the inspiration behind the change is alive and alert among the toiling mass. Perhaps there is no room for complacency until the elections to constituent assembly are held.

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