

Working Together for Peace

Interactions on Conflict Transformation and Peace Processes

Conclusions and Recommendations



Friends for Peace

FFP Publications

Series 008

FRIENDS FOR PEACE

Friends for Peace (FFP) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act 1977. It was established in May 2004 with a view to facilitate research in the field of conflict transformation and to contribute to future peace processes in Nepal. It works with local and international specialists on specific issues of concern in Nepal, convenes workshops for the sharing of experiences on peace processes from around the world and endeavours to be a leading research organisation providing a central source of information for a range of actors on conflict-related issues. It also aims to build the capacity of Nepalese and other researchers to develop these strategies. In a post-conflict environment, it remains a public resource to be drawn upon for relevant information and expertise on post conflict transformation.

The main objective of FFP is to establish a credible knowledge-base that provides technical expertise on issues of concern in future peace negotiations and wider peace processes, and facilitates greater participation of civil society organisations and individuals in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the Maoist insurgency.

Based on a range of consultations, FFP is conducting research on various issues thought to be of concern in the current conflict context. Initial areas of research identified are comparative peace processes, security sector reform and international relations specific to conflict. 'Discourses on Constituent Assembly: An Analysis' and 'Security Sector Reform Challenges and Opportunities' which have just been published, constitute FFP's two significant contributions in the field of research on conflict transformation and peace building.

In addition to the above, FFP has been holding regular discussions and debates on conflict and peace issues with a view to generate a wider knowledge and information base for the use of various stakeholders of the conflict. This booklet incorporates the conclusions of three of such interactions, namely 'International Experiences on Conflict Transformation: Lessons for Nepal', 'Regional Security Concern in the Context of Growing Maoist Insurgency in South Asia' and 'The Role of Religious Communities in Conflict Transformation in Nepal'. FFP hopes that these papers will provide new insights and inputs for the people working in the field of conflict transformation and peace building.

Interactions on Conflict Transformation and Peace Processes

Conclusions and Recommendations

Editor

NARAD BHARADWAJ

Friends for Peace (FFP)

117/36, Puja Pratisthan Marg

Purano Baneshwor

Kathmandu, Nepal

September 2005

© Friends for Peace

2005

No part of this book can be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means without prior consent of FFP. However, this restriction shall not apply for non-commercial use.

First edition: 500 copies

The views and opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of FFP.

ISBN: 99946-945-7-X

Design and Layout

The Printhouse

Naya Baneshwor, Kathmandu

Phone: +977 1 4476871

Email: printhouse@wlink.com.np

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE PUBLICATION of this booklet has become possible because of the collective effort of a number of people closely working together with Friends for Peace (FFP). We would like to express our gratitude to all the institutions and individuals who provided their inputs in the discussions.

Similarly, we would like to express our thanks to the European Union and International Alert for their help in providing financial and human resource necessary to organise these interactions.

Our thanks are also due to many senior politicians, facilitators, researchers, academics and leaders of different ethnic and religious communities, who gave time for these interactions despite their busy schedule.

Finally, we would also like to thank Umesh Khatiwada of The Printhouse for designing the layout of this booklet.

Friends for Peace (FFP)

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTORY NOTE	1
2. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES ON CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: LESSONS FOR NEPAL	7
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Presentation by Dan Smith	9
2.3 Question/Answer Session	15
2.4 Name and Affiliation of the Participants	18
3. REGIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS IN THE CONTEXT OF GROWING MAOIST INSURGENCY IN SOUTH ASIA	19
3.1 Introduction	21
3.2 Keynote Address by S D Muni	22
3.2.1 Origin of the Maoist Movement	23
3.2.2 Arms Transaction	24
3.2.3 Approaches to Address Insurgency	25
3.3 Question/Answer Session	26
3.4 Concluding Remarks	34
3.5 Name and Affiliation of the Participants	35
4. THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACE BUILDING IN NEPAL	37
4.1 Introduction	39
4.2 Diwakar Chand - World Hindu Federation (International)	40

4.3	Prem Bahadur Shakya - International Peace Centre	41
4.4	Krishna P Khatiwada - Shree Krishna Pranami Pratisthan	41
4.5	Hamid Ansari - Nepal Muslim Ittehad Sangathan	42
4.6	Deepak P Baskota - Maharshi Mahesh Yogi Ved Bigyan tatha Prabidhi Sansthan	43
4.7	Dinesh K Naulakha - Nepal Jain Parishad	45
4.8	Jayanta Acharya - Valmiki Campus	46
4.9	Bala Ram Thapa - World Hindu Federation (Nepal National Committee)	47
4.10	K B Rokaya - CEPJAR	47
4.11	Jaya Prakash Agrawal - Nepal Manab Dharma Sewa Samiti	48
4.12	Brahma Kumari Kusum - Brahma Kumari Rajyog Sewa Kendra	49
4.13	Achyut Raj Regmi - Shree Bindhyavasini Aadhyatmik Sangh	49
4.14	Conclusion and Recommendations	50
4.15	Name and Affiliation of the Participants	51

1

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

NEPAL HAS been passing through a difficult historical period characterised by a violent conflict being unleashed by the Maoist insurgents and the government security forces for the last nine years. During the years of insurgency, the human suffering, civilian casualties and displacement of the population have remained principal manifestations of the impact of conflict. With the intensification of conflict, more widespread and deeper affects have begun to surface in the form of dwindling production, unemployment, damage of the economic infrastructure and environment. The presence of government security is limited to the capital and district headquarters, whereas the vast countryside changes hands between the government security forces and the Maoist militants. These areas have been under the threat of being turned into a virtual killing field reminiscent of Cambodia in the 1970s.

Parallel to the worsening conflict situation in the country, the government of Nepal is evincing more and more authoritarian tendencies. King Gyanendra's usurpation of executive power on 1 February 2005, constitutes a serious reversal in the democratic process of Nepalese politics. Today, both the camps, armed to the teeth, are spilling blood of ever greater numbers of innocent people to prove their prowess. With the dismissal of the elected democratic government and the start of a direct rule by the King, the otherwise bi-polar conflict between the constitutional and extra-constitutional forces (the Maoists) has suddenly changed into a tri-polar conflict involving the parliamentary parties, the King and the Maoists. This has not only widened the canvas of conflict, but has also dimmed the prospect for a negotiated settlement of the crisis.

In the past few years, two rounds of peace talks were held between the CPN (Maoist) and the government under pressure from civil society, peace related organisations and the international community. But the negotiations failed to bring peace due to the lack of commitment of both the belligerents towards peace. When the second peace negotiation was passing through a critical stage, the government security forces killed 22 unarmed Maoists in cold blood on 17 August 2003. This gave an excuse for the Maoist

negotiators to withdraw from the negotiations. Since then, the violence is escalating exponentially. The voices for peace and negotiated settlement have been muffled by the sound of guns and explosions resulting in the death of unarmed civilians.

In this situation, various efforts are being made by civil society, peace organisations, the international community and the UN to bring about an end to the conflict and establish a durable peace in the country. In this context, Friends for Peace (FFP), a research and resource organisation, is also actively engaged in the area of research on conflict transformation and peace building. It has carried out research on various thematic areas such as comparative peace processes, security sector reform, and international relations in specificity of conflict and collection of peace initiatives at local levels. The goal of these research projects is to advance the practices and theory of conflict resolution by using the methods of social science to examine the effectiveness of various approaches used for preventing, managing and resolving internal conflict in other countries and to draw lessons that may be helpful for solving the ongoing conflict in Nepal.

The research works published so far have been well received by researchers, academics, policy makers and the conflicting parties. In addition to this, FFP has also been offering forums for discussion on the current issues of conflict to generate debate on varied topics covering peace negotiation, conflict transformation and post conflict management.

During the last one and a half years, FFP held a dozen consultation workshops and interactions to initiate debate on the options and mechanisms for the resolution of the ten-year conflict in Nepal. These discussions, which included conflict stakeholders and international experts, were very productive and informative.

In June 2004, FFP organised an interaction on 'Future Peace Negotiation: Possibility and Challenges'. It was the first such function organised by Friends for Peace. It not only announced to the public the opening of an organisation dedicated to conflict transformation and peace building, it also started a process of providing a forum for the discussion of the issue of conflict so that a necessary

information and knowledge base could be created to help the facilitators, mediators and the leaders of the conflicting parties in their attempt to find a way for a peaceful resolution of conflict.

Friends for Peace also organised another interaction of Nepalese politicians, academics, researchers and students with Dr Paikiasothi Saravanamuttu, Director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, Colombo. During his presentation Dr Saravanamuttu shed light on the experiences of the resolution of conflict in Sri Lanka and the lessons that may be relevant for the resolution of the Maoist conflict in Nepal. The purpose of the discussion was to help former facilitators, mediators, negotiators and the leaders of the conflicting parties understand conflict issues and draw relevant lessons for Nepal.

On the basis of the experience of the above two initial interactions, FFP decided to give continuity to the process of consultation and debate on the issues of concern with a view to discourage the militarist thinking rapidly growing in the country and to advocate a peaceful resolution to the conflict by bringing the belligerents to the negotiation table.

Friends for Peace has always tried to ensure representation of various sectors of society in the discussions and debates in order to explore different approaches and options for conflict transformation and peace building in Nepal. It has organised interactions among the representatives of various ethnic communities, indigenous people, dalits and women to help peace negotiations reflect the true perspective of Nepalese society.

Last year, it organised a trip to South Africa and Mozambique for a group of distinguished people including former facilitators, civil society leaders and persons considered close to the government and the Maoists. The experience they gained during this visit and the lessons they learnt there are useful for future peace negotiation between the government and the Maoist insurgents.

In light of the experience of other countries where religious communities have played considerable roles in bringing together the conflicting parties, FFP organised an interaction on 11 August 2004 among the representatives of various religious groups to discuss

ways in which religious communities could help in bringing the conflicting parties to the negotiation table.

The present volume incorporates the reports of three consultations organised by FFP as its contribution towards creating a research and resource base for peaceful settlement of the conflict in Nepal.

The first report contains the experiences of Dan Smith, Director General of International Alert on the peace processes of various African and Latin American countries. In this chapter, Dan Smith has described the complex processes through which peace can be achieved. He examines how and why peace negotiations failed in Sierra Leone, Angola and Liberia and how the lessons of other countries could benefit conflict ridden countries if they were ready to learn from these experiences.

In the second chapter, S D Muni Professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, has discussed the possibility and complexity involved in the external mediation for the solution of the Maoist conflict in Nepal. At the same time, he has also discussed India's position *vis a vis* the Maoist insurgency and the feasibility of UN intervention. He further assesses India's potential role in the solution of the on going conflict in Nepal.

The third chapter highlights the views of the leaders of various religious groups on the present day conflict and their perspectives on a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We have presented these reports to the public hoping that they will serve as a basis for broader discussion and debate around other issues of concern contributing to the resolution of the present day conflict.

2

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES ON CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: LESSONS FOR NEPAL

**REPORT ON THE CONSULTATION MEETING BETWEEN
DAN SMITH AND POLITICAL LEADERS OF NEPAL
28 JULY 2004**

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As a part of its on going activity for sharing international experiences, Friends for Peace (FFP) organized a consultation meeting between Mr Dan Smith, Secretary General of International Alert¹, and some prominent political leaders of Nepal on 28 July 2004.

Introducing the organization and the objectives of the meeting, Dr Bishnu Raj Upreti, the then Director of FFP, familiarised the participants with the terminologies and concepts related to conflict and said that professionalization of conflict expertise was happening within political parties in this country.

The objective of the consultation was to share ideas with Dan Smith, who has twenty-five years of experience in conflict transformation so that lessons could be learnt to help address the issue of conflict transformation in Nepal. In the interaction, Dan Smith shared his experiences and answered queries from the participants. The excerpts of his discourse are as follows:

2.2 PRESENTATION BY DAN SMITH

I thank FFP for inviting me to this meeting. My trip here to Nepal is partly familiarization for me, and partly to consider the next phase of our work for our strategic planning. The idea of sharing experiences from other countries, I think, is very important. I have been researching on armed conflicts and peace processes for about twenty-five years. And one of the basic lessons that I have learnt about armed conflict is that no armed conflict is exactly like another, and no armed conflict is completely unique. As you go searching for comparative study around the world, looking at different armed conflicts, you will always find factors in common between one conflict and another. But you can say that they are arranged in different ways in each armed conflict and similar causes

¹ International Alert is an international non-governmental organization (INGO) based in London and is operating in fifteen countries around the world, including Nepal. It is completely focused on conflict transformation and peace building. It also works to generate policy ideas that are taken to international actors, governments, European Union, United Nations, multilateral institutions and international financial institutions such as the World Bank.

are present in twenty or thirty armed conflicts but not in the other twenty. So, there is a lot to learn from other armed conflicts and peace processes.

There are a couple of things about armed conflicts today. First of all, most armed conflicts (there are about forty going on at the moment) are internal in one way or the other. That is to say, they are not wars between two states, but they constitute war within one state. About 90 per cent of the armed conflicts in the last fifteen years have been internal rather than external—about 110 out of 120. About half of today's armed conflicts are armed conflicts which people thought had come to an end with a peace agreement. So, about half of today's armed conflicts are failed peace agreements. And about half of all peace agreements fail within five years of having been signed.

In Nepal you are now looking at the problem of how a peace process can begin. Once you, or the system in your country, has solved that problem, which it must do at some point because this is one of those wars in which there is no victory, the war will come to an end through an agreement. There must be negotiations at some point. Once you solve the problem of starting negotiations, then you have the problem of the negotiation itself. It is a huge political challenge and can take many years. Don't be worried if it takes four to five years. It is not unusual. But once you have achieved that, i.e. when you have the agreement, then you have the problem of implementation and durability of the agreement.

Why do peace agreements fail? In my view there are five categories of reasons. The first is the one which most people think of immediately but it is actually rather rare. It is where one side or sometimes both, were completely dishonest. They sat down to sign the agreement, but as the leader's pen was on the paper, he did not believe a word of it. One of the cruellest rebel forces anywhere in the world was the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone. The RUF was typical of this kind of cause of failure of peace agreement. The reason was that the RUF was primarily a diamond smuggling organization. For it, diamonds were the primary goal and controlling the country was just a means to an

end. They hardly cared for the agreement at all and this was a very brutal armed force. One of their spokespersons once said that they were being criticized for using child soldiers. He said that the RUF did not use child soldiers because “they are useless when they are four or five years old. We wait till they are nine or ten”. That was the public relations defence of the RUF. They didn’t use child soldiers because they only started with them at nine or ten. They used horrible tactics of terror in a way that makes your blood run cold.

The second reason why peace agreements fail looks to many people like the first one, but it is very different. I call it the ‘hidden agenda’. Sometimes, you could call it the secret condition. I will give you an example of what I mean. In Angola—where thankfully the war is over now, in 1992/93, there was an extended peace process. They had peace talks under UN supervision, they had a ceasefire that was monitored by the UN, and the two sides withdrew. The rebel forces were moved into cantonments from where they would not be rampaging around the country. They had elections, and this is where the problems emerged. The leader of the rebel group expected to win the election, but he did not. So, instead of being the President of Angola, the position available to him was that of the vice-president. This wasn’t what he had been fighting for and this wasn’t why he had gone in for the peace talks. From his point of view, the point of the peace talks was that he would become president. Why else would he do it? From his point of view, there is nothing dishonest in returning to war when your strategy fails. He always made it clear that he expected to be the president at the end of the day. When he didn’t become the president, the war started.

A few years later, in Liberia, another country completely torn apart by a very brutal conflict, I think it was at the thirteenth attempt that finally a peace agreement was actually implemented for long enough to hold elections. The leader of the most powerful military group in the country, Charles Taylor, was one of the candidates. The main candidate standing against him was a very civilized, outstanding leader, a woman who had been in New

York working for the UN for most of the war years. She came back to Liberia and stood for election. I think she would have been a very civilized president of Liberia had she won the election. She ran campaigns in which she would show pictures of some of the worst things that had happened during the wars. These pictures depicted images of the dead bodies on the road or of a child soldier wearing a David Beckham shirt carrying a rifle and a bottle of vodka. Or you would see the picture of a burning village or some other atrocities. Charles Taylor's nickname in Liberia was Chucky and underneath each of these awful pictures, it would say 'Chucky did it'. So, you would have pictures of war crimes that said, 'Chucky did it', and vote for the other candidate. The people watching the campaign looking at these pictures realized something very clearly, which was that Chucky did do it and if we don't make him president, he will do it again. So Charles Taylor won the election with about 76-77 per cent of the votes in what was by and large a free and fair election. People genuinely decided that Charles Taylor's agenda was not to have peace. They understood that his agenda was to control the country and if he couldn't gain control over the country through peace and agreement, then he would go for a war. So they preferred just to give him the country. It was a reasonable decision for a very large majority of Liberians to make and it provided them with about three years of complete peace. There was oppressive rule, arbitrary and authoritarian rule, no socioeconomic development during the period, true, but they didn't have a war. Then war started in the north-western corner of the country and two and a half years later Charles Taylor was finally thrown out of power. He is now in exile and won't be able to come back. People understood the second reason why the peace agreement had failed: Charles Taylor's agenda was not peace. His agenda was power. So, they tried to get peace by giving him power.

The third reason why peace talks fail is what can be termed as 'fragmentation' or 'division'. The real problem in a peace process is not between the different sides of the table. The real problem lies on one side of the table and on the other. It is disagreement

amongst those who are allies during the war. Think of Israel and the Oslo Back Channel Agreement and the peace process which came out of that. Why did the peace process break down? Look at what happened both on the Palestinian and on the Israeli side. The beginning of the problem doesn't lie between the Israelis and Palestinians. It lies amongst the Israelis and amongst the Palestinians. Both the sides were fragmented. On the Israeli side, so severe was the fragmentation that the prime minister was assassinated. In fact, in the weeks and months before the prime minister was assassinated, the political language which was being used by the Israeli opposition (who are now in power) was so violent that the prime minister's widow afterwards was seriously talking about trying to prosecute the opposition for having provoked the murder.

On the Palestinian side, as the peace agreement happened, divisions grew among them and the Islamic Jihad and Hamas began to emerge much more strongly. Those people who felt that they would not be making major gains through the peace process started to take their loyalty away from Arafat and the PLO to Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.

There are interesting games to be played. It has to do with power. When I visited Chechnya in 1995, it was peacetime. I met with the mayor of the capital, we shook hands, I said, 'I am Dan Smith, peace researcher'. He said, 'pleased to meet you, I am Ruslan Gautemero, the fighter.' He did not say 'I am the mayor' but chose to say 'the fighter'. This is a translation of power. Somebody like Gautemero did not want peace.

Each of the above three reasons for the failures of peace processes reflect the behaviour of one party over the other. The fourth reason has to do with the consequences of the war itself, e.g Sierra Leone, Liberia, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Central Africa countries. The physical destruction of the war is so great that no peace mediation is possible. When we were in the research field trying to identify the countries with a high risk of entering conflict, we found that once you have experienced the horrors of war, the inhibition to go back to it is lower than normal. The general reaction

is, 'Well, we have been bombed before. It is not that bad!' I can't imagine Tony Blair saying that of London. Hence, there is a higher chance of countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, etc entering into conflict than the UK. In Sarajevo, everything is for the minute. One never knows if one will be there next week. So if they have to go to a bar, they do it that very day and not plan for the following week. One cannot think of the future. It is not worth thinking of the future because there is nothing but disappointment. This is what I have learnt from my three years of experience in Sarajevo. One of the consequences of war is in people's minds. They can't think of restructuring.

The fifth reason lies in the root causes not being addressed in the agreement. War doesn't just happen because of irresponsible behaviour of the leaders. War also happens because of the political exclusion and neglect of ethnic groups. If the root cause is not addressed, then it comes back to haunt you. For example, in Bosnia, billions of dollars came in. Most believed that if international figures leave, the country will go back to war because in the past nine years the root cause was not addressed, but only the symptoms. Hence, the approaches to a peace agreement have to be comprehensive. They should not address just one aspect of the problem or issue but should take a holistic approach. For example, in Nepal constitutional change is not the sole problem. Addressing this issue alone will not solve the current problems. There are deep-seated socioeconomic issues which must be addressed. If the youths are being mobilized to fight, then disarming alone is not the solution. There has to be proper rehabilitation, reintegration into society, construction/reconstruction of health and education facilities, appropriate job opportunities, etc. Only disarming will create other problems. You must have a mechanism so that every part of the problem is addressed. There are four sides to it: security, socioeconomic justice, democratic governance and reconciliation/healing. Democratic governance includes parliament, free and independent media and healthy civil society. Reconciliation comes socio-psychological healing of the horrors created by war. How can you have laws without the parliament to pass them? How do people stop treating each other

as enemies unless there is reconciliation? These are issues that must be addressed. There are different models to choose from.

As for the role of the international community, there is more than one international community in Nepal: India, the USA and the usual suspects. The usual suspects are comprised of the EU, Britain, Canada, Netherlands, Germany, etc. The usual suspects fund a lot of development and peace-building processes. We must see the international community as a custodian of the peace process. The international community finds it difficult to play a role before the peace agreement is signed. Once that is achieved, it throws a lot of money into the country immediately. It is not easy to absorb so much money so early. Hence, the money goes to waste. The World Bank has conducted a study and found that a lot of money comes in the first four years and then it tails out. The first four years is too early to absorb the money. It is after this time when the country actually starts needing money. International Alert, which works on such policy, has come up with a technical solution: It is suggesting that concerned organizations or countries spend the money at an economically viable pace, store the money of the first four years and use it when needed. International Alert has been lobbying with the EU and UN and has been getting recognition for this policy.

2.3 QUESTION/ANSWER SESSION

Q. Does Nepal need a custodian?

A. In Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE agreed that it needs a facilitator and the Norwegians are there. It is what Sri Lanka chooses to do. If there is an agreement in Nepal, then 'yes', but if the talks proceed then it is only a pragmatic situation.

Q. How to deal with the problem of the usual suspects?

A. I don't think they are the problem but they are the part of solution. The usual suspects are the allies of countries who want peaceful solutions. What they would not do is to take the lead for such movements.

Q. How to manage the spoilers?

A. If you have unlimited spoilers, then you have a problem. I am no supporter of armed conflict, but in Sierra Leone, when the British used arms, it was a decisive action, it was the right thing to do. It saved many lives. The best possible situation is to bring the spoilers to the table and enable them to enter mainstream politics.

Q. What about external spoilers?

A. For that, especially you need international peacemakers who could have economic and political influence. If the external spoiler was a regional power, then it would prefer instability in the country.

Q. The four points you mentioned earlier for why peace agreements fail are: One side being completely dishonest, hidden agenda, fragmentation, and root causes not being addressed. What if these four points cannot be fulfilled?

A. The situation here in Nepal does not mean that it can't build accountable institutions. There are political parties. Conflict is about power, it is always political and the solution has to be political as well. If it is a peace agreement, it will be political. If one cannot see that, one cannot see the peace process. There has to be an agreement on the system of power.

Q. The experience of state mechanisms in Nepal is that they can not reach the interior. In such a situation, how do you deliver services? How good is the UN and what are its strengths?

A. Delivering social services in extreme cases, in Angola, Bosnia, etc is almost entirely in the hands of the UNHCR, Red Cross and major NGOs. It is all through humanitarian development aid. The delivery of basic social services in Nepal is still hindered by geographical considerations.

As to the UN role in negotiations, where the UN has done quite well is El Salvador, Guatemala and Angola. Regarding the issue of negotiating high-profile conflicts, the UN not only votes

for action but also for the resources: financial or human. When the Norwegians were facilitating in Sri Lanka, they did not want to finance or provide human resources because monitoring and financing should be separate.

The negotiation effort will always be headed by special representatives. For example, the special representative Avaro Desoto is knowledgeable of all the issues. He facilitated talks in El Salvador, Argentina and Cyprus. He is an international civil servant—very charming, listens patiently, extremely intelligent, perceptive and smooth.

Q. Regarding the conflict situation in Nepal, two peace talks have already failed badly and we are expecting and hoping for the third one. Do you have any suggestions concerning Nepal's situation, and what would be the proper way to go forward?

A. In Sri Lanka, the ceasefire started in 1994, they had several peace talks, but the war got worse. However, when Colombo airport blew up, the business community woke up. There must be an alliance between those who can say 'look, this cannot go on.' The war is not worthwhile if it destroys everything. One thing which is required is to bring more and more constituencies to Nepal. The war cannot be won and will not be won by this or that side. It comes to an end, by negotiation, if not now, then after twenty years, or at least after sometime. There is a dilemma as far as Nepal is concerned: The Government must give up power but it has to decide how much power to give up.

Q. There are Maoists and terrorists in India. When India cannot control its own terrorists, how can it control ours? Nepal is a buffer state between India and China. India swallowed Sikkim and China swallowed Tibet. In 1984, Indians had the role of mediator for the Sri Lankan peace process but they failed. Later the Norwegians played this role. Here in Nepal also, if India intervenes, China will also come up. There is another

superpower, the USA, and as you said, the UK and EU. So, let us not invite the UN first, but let the conflicting parties start negotiations. Once the agreement is reached, invite the third party to implement it.

- A. If it works without international facilitation or chair that is fine. It is good if you don't need it. You can have low level organizations or a party alliance to facilitate. For me, these are pragmatic questions. If it doesn't work then you need an alternative solution.

2.4 NAME AND AFFILIATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

S.N.	Name	Organisational affiliation
1.	Arjun Narshingh KC	Nepali Congress
2.	Arjun Thapa	Nepali Congress (Democratic)
3.	Bishnu Raj Upreti	Friends for Peace
4.	Feyzi Ismail	International Alert
5.	Jhalanath Khanal	Communist Party of Nepal (UML)
6.	Keshav Prasad Badal	Communist Party of Nepal (UML)
7.	Laxman Prasad Aryal	Friends for Peace
8.	Minendra Rijal	Nepali Congress (Democratic)
9.	Sarita Giri	Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi)
10.	Shankar Pokhrel	Communist Party of Nepal (UML)
11.	Swanam	Leftist leader
12.	Tirtha Narayan Subedi	Communist Party of Nepal (UML)

3

REGIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS IN THE CONTEXT OF GROWING MAOIST INSURGENCY IN SOUTH ASIA

**REPORT ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN S D MUNI
AND CONFLICT STAKEHOLDERS IN NEPAL
21 NOVEMBER 2004**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A half-day interaction program was organized by Friends for Peace (FFP) on 'Regional Security Concerns in the Context of Growing Maoist Insurgency in South Asia' on 21 November 2004 in Kathmandu. S D Muni, professor at Jawahar Lal Nehru University and a Nepal expert who has a long experience on conflict research in this region was the guest speaker. Mr Daman Nath Dhungana, former speaker of the House of Representatives was the commentator while Mr Gauri Pradhan, General Secretary of FFP facilitated the program. FFP chairperson and former justice of the Supreme Court Mr Laxman Prasad Aryal chaired the function.

Speaking at the programme Dr Muni expressed his view that the Maoists of Nepal must be credited for raising international concerns about the threats of insurgency with their strong organizational capabilities. However, he also strongly opined that military might was not the solution to this problem which had its roots in the socioeconomic trends of Nepal.

He pointed out that Maoist groups in Nepal and India may have ideological similarities but there are structural differences. He also said that if the Maoists in Nepal had been given some space earlier, the current problem would not have come this far. He said that the Maoists of Nepal were not even taken as a major security problem until the 11 September attack in the USA. Even after the attacks they were directly labeled as terrorists which Dr Muni believes 'is only a way of ignoring the problem rather than addressing it properly'.

Dwelling on the issue of third party involvement, which was discussed at length in this program, Dr Muni clearly expressed that he was not in favour of such action. He supported his argument with concrete examples of failure of third party involvement in other conflict ridden countries. However, he hastened to say that this was an internal matter for Nepal and that the Nepalese people must decide about this issue themselves.

At the beginning, Mr Pradhan welcomed the participants of the interaction program and introduced the guest speaker as a renowned scholar who had to his credit a lot of high level missions representing

the Government of the Republic of India. After the introduction, the guest speaker was handed over the floor and was asked to speak on the topic.

3.2 KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY S D MUNI

People residing in Nepal know best about the reality of the current situation of the conflict. Means of communication can help us form opinions and perspectives about the situation but the ground reality can only be known by people here. Nepalese Maoists must be given the credit for bringing the issue of the growing Maoist movement in South Asia into the lime light.

India has had Naxalism since the late 1960s. However, even when this movement was at its strongest, India looked at it as a minor problem and not a big threat to the security situation. This is how the problem started. In the beginning, the Maoist movement was taken as a law and order problem and not as an ideological challenge. This perspective has been revised and that is mainly because of the strong presence and activities of the Nepalese Maoists.

This problem has serious and deep social roots. It is a political power struggle. The socioeconomic constituencies the Maoists represent are landless labourers and people who are marginalized and exploited in terms of either caste or religious hierarchies. People in these constituencies feel that they are not being accepted by the current system and thus, have been mobilized by the Maoist leadership.

If you look at Nepal, Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand or anywhere else there is a resistance to the social and economic order which has been perpetuated by the political system. The Maoists are essentially working against this system. The ideological Maoist problem lies only in Nepal and India. In other South Asian countries, the major ideological thrust is not present. Even within the Maoist problem of Nepal and India, there is a significant difference. One group of Maoists in Nepal is agitating against a system, which has connotations and relics of a feudal order. Whereas in India, they are agitating against the feudal order at grass roots level but they have more political space. This is a very subtle difference which we must keep

in mind because this difference, to some extent, facilitates the spread of Maoism in Nepal.

3.2.1 Origins of the Maoist Movement

There have been other revolts in Nepal prior to the Maoist insurgency. The Jhapa revolt is one of them. But this type of movement is of a different nature to the Maoist Insurgency.

In India there are forces like the People's War Group (PWG), but they have not emerged as a major threat to the whole Indian system. India is too big but in no state did such groups appear to take over the government as is the case in Nepal. This is a major difference between the two Maoist groups.

The leadership in a sub-continental context must lie with the Nepalese Maoists because they have been far more organized and far more coherent compared to the Indian Maoists. The Indian Maoists have been fragmented and even within the Maoists in India there are parallel groups contesting with each other on an individual leadership basis such as the PWG and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). The Maoists of Nepal may have differences in opinions but they have organized themselves solely under one leadership.

Similarly, the Nepalese Maoists have connected themselves better with the international movement as compared to other Maoist groups in this region. In comparison to its other South Asian counterparts, the Nepalese and Indian Maoists especially have a social base and grass roots support and this is where they differ from others. Nepalese Maoists are leading in this field. The credit for establishing the ideological links between the Maoists in this region must be given to the Nepalese Maoists.

When we look at the South Asian links of these insurgents, we can find two important patterns. One is the ideological link between these groups which is based upon the transformation of political order. They profess to be fighting for new democracy though there are variations in the structure of the new democracy that each one envisions. Following the ideological links we have two major groups - Nepalese Maoists and the Indian Maoists (PWG and MCC have now merged into one). On the other hand, there is another link

between all the insurgents which is not ideologically based. The insurgents of North East India have no ideological sympathy with Maoism or Marxism but they are still connected to the Maoist groups. The logistical support of this link is provided by the LTTE of Sri Lanka.

The structural, logistical and ideological characteristics have one prominent factor in common and that is one of seeking support, shelter and logistical links for the supply of weapons, medicine and money. These are very practical links which have been established largely by other insurgent groups in India and not motivated by ideology. In all these links, there is one disturbing grey area, i.e. all these insurgents are disturbing the status quo in Nepal and India. Thus, there are other parties also involved with a view to create chaos in these two countries. These forces want to benefit both politically and commercially from these transactions.

3.2.2 Arms Transaction

The arms that are being supplied to these groups, that is, the insurgents in North East India, the Nepali Maoists and the Indian Maoists must be coming from two sources. One is through Bangladesh. Two major ports in Bangladesh are Chittagong and Cox Bazaar. Other transactions are taking place through the arms underworld from South East Asia. Some of the arms used in the Vietnam War and Cambodian conflict have come through this route. The other place is Yunan which is a Chinese province bordering Myanmar. It is notorious both in terms of the drug and weapons trade. This weapons market is completely non-ideological and is a global underworld phenomenon.

After November 2000, India was one of the first countries in this region to tag the Maoists as terrorists even before HMG had done so. This was done not because India took this problem seriously but it was done simply to send a message to the international community, particularly the USA that 'we are with you in your fight against terrorism'. The problem, however, was not taken as a regional security issue.

The regional security issue is now deteriorating and the network is no longer confined to groups with the same ideological opinions.

It has expanded to other insurgents for logistical support. This has raised additional problems.

One of the major problems is that the Nepalese government does what it thinks is best and in this way, it resorts to military methods. Unfortunately military methods only escalate the problems instead of resolving them. Some of the activities carried out by party governments from 1996 to 2001 were too harsh and this actually helped the Maoists in gathering and consolidating grass roots level support.

Until the change of government in India, the attitude was to shuffle and weaken these parties on the negotiation table and thus the use of military force was justified. What the Indians haven't realized is that if military action was the solution, then the problem of the North East India insurgency would have been solved a long time ago. You may remove one group but another group pops up. This is not a solution to the problem. Therefore if military action cannot solve the problem then we need to find ways to erode the strength of these groups. We have to address the grassroots level constituencies which are being mobilized by them. And the grassroots constituencies cannot be addressed by military methods.

3.2.3 Approaches to Address Insurgency

There has to be a political approach to address the issue of insurgency. To this end, there has been a change of position in regard to this issue in the Indian government. There are negotiations going on with the PWG and MCC. The state government of India has now set up a mechanism where all states affected by the Maoist challenge should coordinate their activities and talk to these groups. That is why in spite of the differences in Andhra Pradesh, the government is talking to the insurgents.

There is another issue that becomes equally relevant in the case of India and Nepal. Firstly, within India, there are differences of opinions in different states. West Bengal CPN (M) has one view; Lalu's government in Bihar has another view; and in Andhra the new government has yet another view. So the union government hasn't been able to coordinate itself well with one view and approach

to this problem. Whereas in the case of the Maoists, they have coordinated themselves very well. The states which are responding to them are jittery. They have not been able to respond at all. What I see in the Indian context is equally relevant to Nepal. The two countries have not been able to see if there can be a consulted opinion.

Overall state policies have lacked cohesiveness in regard to border control and intelligence sharing. This has hindered a well-coordinated state policy to addressing insurgency.

Military action is definitely not the solution to the problem in Nepal. This would only strengthen the undemocratic forces and further complicate the political situation. There has been a slight shift in the central government's position over the last few months. One indication of that was the suggestion given to Mr Deuba when he visited Delhi that the Nepalese government could not seek solutions only through military means. These are signals of a slight shift in India's position of total military support because the consequences of such support are very serious.

3.3 QUESTION/ANSWER SESSION

The moderator of the session, Mr Gauri Pradhan, thanked the speaker for his insightful analysis of the Maoist movement in Nepal as well as in South Asia. He summarized Dr Muni's speech and clearly outlined his recommendations to the Government of Nepal and India that military action is not the solution and that there has to be a wider political approach. He then mentioned some major steps taken by civil society in this area such as creating pressure on both sides to sit at the negotiation table for peace talks. He pointed out the issue of third party involvement (especially the involvement of the UN) in the peace talks and asked for India's role or stand on this issue. He then requested the Chairperson Laxman Prasad Aryal to deliver his remarks and open the floor for discussion. In his brief remarks the Chairperson revealed that two Maoist factions in India, the People's War Group and the MCC had unified themselves at the advice of Nepal's Maoist leader Prachanda. After his remarks, the Chairperson opened the floor for discussion.

India's role

Why do you think India does not want any third party, or for that matter, even the UN, to play a role in the mediation of the Maoist conflict?

There may be people in India who are itching to play the role. But if the government of India or somebody comes to ask me I would say please don't. What kind of a role will you play? Are you going to play a role against the wishes of the people? There are powerful vested interests and it is the question of diluting those interests and forcing people to make compromises. Anybody who is forced to make compromises will revolt against them. This happened in 1950/51. Some sections of the Ranas have not forgiven India even today. So there is no point in India getting involved directly. India can play a role by suggesting, nudging and providing all kinds of assistance but not necessarily military help. As I have said, if India goes on providing military weapons it would only strengthen undemocratic forces. If you could bring a solution by armies, as I told you, the North East of India would not still be burning with insurgency.

I'm sympathetic to India's situation on this. Firstly, having studied different conflicts, third party mediation has not always delivered a solution, especially in South Asia. Kashmir was one example. It was not exactly taken to a third party but the UN was there. When the UN gets involved, world politics gets involved.

Second, you can look into the Sri Lankan issue. If you go to Sri Lanka you would see tremendous distrust of the Norwegians and the way they are playing this role. There are open accusations from the government, including President Chandrika Kumaratunga, that the Norwegians have been more sympathetic to the Tamil Tigers largely because they are highly populated in Norway. There have been reports that the Tamil tigers put lots of money into Norwegian banks. The fact remains that the Norwegian facilitators are stuck today. There is little hope that a final solution will come about even though the Norwegians have been playing this role for four years. I have no example to cite to evince that the third party would be able to deliver a successful peace package.

The UN has aided reconstruction in East Timor. This shows that there is always a post conflict role for a third party. India played

the role of the third party in Sri Lanka but it did not succeed. I know that the Maoists are demanding third party mediation. It is very clear that the failure of the last two talks has eroded the confidence between the Maoists and the state. The Maoists rightly or wrongly have the perception that the Government does not mean what it says. So they want somebody to intervene and guarantee that what the Government accepts should some day be delivered. The answer to this would be to invite a third party or to restore the confidence between the two sides. Why are we not looking to the latter case as an option? Unless mutual understanding between the two sides is restored there will be no solution. Therefore, we have to look deeply into this matter. Sometimes, we get excited by a fancy solution. In Kashmir, why don't we have a SAARC² solution? There will not be a SAARC solution because nobody would accept that. Not only the UN but the US and UK got directly involved in 1962/63 but no solution was found. My firm opinion is that third party opinion won't help. If you think there is a broad national consensus that a third party would help, then go ahead. All I am saying is I have my doubts. India accepted Norway's role in Sri Lanka, the UN in Jammu and Kashmir, and the US and UK in Kashmir. Nepal can do many things whether India likes it or not.

Political Framework

Is there any common political framework with Nepal and India for the solution of the problems posed by the Maoists?

There is a serious difference between democratic frameworks in India and Nepal. Democracy provides a political space in which you can engage in a variety of activities. When democratic space is curtailed, there will be discontent. In India also, the democratic space is encroached upon at the social level, because of the feudal order at places, and the social hierarchy that operates between the castes. Even in India, there are protests by dalits, orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). If you don't have such kinds of political space, then there would certainly be a problem.

² SAARC stands for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

The Issue of corruption

How far do you agree that the rampant corruption among political party leaders was responsible for bringing about such a situation in Nepal?

Democracy provides space but it also creates aspirations. If those aspirations are not met in time, it creates a potential for revolt. This is what happened with the Maoists. In ten years of democracy the political parties were blamed unnecessarily as corrupt, as if they are not corrupt in India. I see no contrast between Mulayam Singh, Mayawati and Lalu Prasad and the political parties in the way they are functioning here. Which country is free from corruption including the USA? What political party is free from corruption? Please recall 1984, when Surya Bahadur Thapa was removed. The charge on him was that he was corrupt. Every time a person is removed, the charge on him is that he is corrupt. Corruption exists but are the people who remove political parties and discredit them not also corrupt? Is this the criteria? I don't believe it. There may be lack of efficiency, lack of vision, but the blame which is going on around Nepal is irresponsible and irrelevant. How many years have you given to political parties? It is hardly 10 years if you take 1996 as the rise of the Maoists movement. And in 1996 when the Maoist movement rose, it had patronage from the monarchy. So the political parties were aligning against it. These are the facts because Baburam has gone to town saying that they had patronage of the king. So I have a very solid footnote and I am not relying on gossip. It is amazing the way this campaign of discrediting political parties has gone because it is actually hitting the potential of democracy in Nepal. You cannot have democracy until you have functioning political parties. If you are discrediting political parties as an institution, you are digging the grave of democracy and I am very unhappy about it. But it is for your country and you to decide how you want to be governed.

The consolidation of a political centre

Why do you think the Maoists insist on having talks with the palace under UN mediation?

It is because the centre for making political decisions is totally diffused in Nepal and it has been kept so deliberately. That's why I

sympathise so much with the Maoist view that they want to talk to somebody who has the authority to deliver. There is no point in talking to someone who can't deliver. So yes, if real constitutional monarchy has to be on play, then the government should be powerful enough to negotiate with everybody else. You can't blame the Maoists for not talking to Deuba's government. Finally, the consolidation of a political centre is absolutely necessary.

Women's involvement

Do you think there would be some changes if there were some women members in the negotiation team?

I sympathize with the gender issue but this is not the prevailing power structure. We have had women ruling in India. We had Indira Gandhi who imposed an emergency. Power has its own character and is not necessarily gender biased. Margaret Thatcher was a very strong leader but how many would like that sort of governance? I am not very sure. Goldamire was a very strong leader. Benajir Bhutto utterly failed in Pakistan. Bangladesh's example is known to everybody. So, simply this is good rhetoric. Why women, why not dalits? Why not the downtrodden? You can go on talking about the ideal structure of a peace committee and ways to enhance social and gender representation.

When democracy provided space, the Maoists today were members of parliament. They were the third largest group. The power structure in democracy ruthlessly marginalized them. This is a fact of life. At that time, both the Nepali congress and the UML agreed that this group was marginalized. Then came the 1994 elections, and in the elections I know the Maoists had planned their strategies in advance. They also had a technical excuse that they were not allowed to contest the elections. The technical excuse of the Maoists is that "the system does not accept us therefore we want change". Political leadership failure is more important, rather than corruption. Unless you can encompass all groups, then democracy has its own failures. The principle of democracy is that you should carry people together. If you cannot carry people together, it's a failure. If democracy fails, revolts arise.

Third party mediation

From your speech, I came to understand that you are against third party mediation. In my view the need of third party mediation has become all too clear by now. When the second round of peace talks were going on in Hapure, the government security forces killed 22 people in Doramba. This is an example of a crisis of confidence. Don't you think third party involvement could help avert such a situation?

Coming back to third party mediation, you have not tried the third party but we have tried. Look at the Nagas of North East India. The Nagas want to talk only to the Prime Minister. They have been taking shelter in Thailand and want international recognition. If they accept UN mediation, they are accepting it because it will give them a greater projection internationally as a legitimate party.

Secondly you said that killing took place even at the time of negotiation, hence the need for a third party. Should I give you a dozen examples where the role of a third party continues but a ceasefire is violated? Look at Sri Lanka. The Norwegian facilitation is continuing and the killings are continuing. The Norwegians are utterly helpless in stopping the violation of the ceasefire which has been signed between the two sides. Here there are only statements which say they are on ceasefire. So a third party can't stop violations. There are also various other things that are happening. There is a problem of command structure, the top has agreed, the district leadership has its own opinion, they indulge in violence and say sorry afterwards. There are different kinds of complex situations and developments. Please don't mix them up with the broader objectives behind the solution of the problems. After 10 years you will see that you will not succeed and we will then compare our notes. If you think it will help then go ahead because it is your country and your problem.

Merchants of instability

You talked about the merchants of instability. If you ask the people of Nepal how they perceive the role of India in the Maoist problem, they will unhesitatingly answer that India is a merchant of instability. Why do you think a large part of the population believes in this?

It pleases people to bash India sometimes in this country. I am being very blunt and talking straight in this manner. If you think India is a merchant of instability, I can't agree. However, no one can deny that Nepal is India locked, too. India didn't do that, God or the British rulers did. You are equally China locked. You don't accept that. Now here is a proposal, India is asking for a transit route to Tibet. Why don't you grant that? For the last 40 years, Nepali nationalism was built on an anti-Indian diet. Yet when we sit down at home, we find so many commonalities. You have seen the Hritik Roshan event³, you have seen various other examples here of cultural similarities. You have Shankaracharya coming here. I have seen posters saying "Hindutwa Nai Rastriyata Ho" (Hinduism is nationalism). I don't think India is a merchant of instability. When I was talking of merchants of instability I was talking of the underworld and arms trading. India is a *status quo* power in South Asia. Stability is in India's interest. India is seeking stability not because Sri Lanka is unstable, but because it is in India's interest that neighbouring countries are stable. Today, because of your instability, there are many experts in India saying that India has lost its strategic space in Nepal because other powers have come in between. You have always welcomed international intervention because you think that can contain India. I tell you because it has not and will not help Nepal and India. You can build a nationalism which is anti-something and it will not help you at all. You need a more constructive approach.

The other question was what the government should do about the lack of education, poverty and unemployment. This is the thing we have discussed in other seminars. The aspirations of the people is growing very fast. Ten years earlier, someone did not think he

³ In January 2001, there were widespread cases of riot and arson in the major cities of Nepal against Indian film star Hritik Roshan, who was rumoured to have made pejorative comments against Nepal and the Nepalese people.

should have a car and a television but today he thinks he should own them. He wants a good road whereas ten years earlier he could go along a muddy road. The aspirations are increasing and so is the pressure on the government. The government cannot necessarily satisfy all aspirations yet if it seems to be working to satisfy these aspirations people will not revolt. If your government is not seen to be working for the people then there will be a revolt and if it is seen working for the people, though not satisfying all the requirements, people will still tolerate it.

An Internal solution

Do you think the Maoist problem can be solved internally by the Nepalese government?

You have to throw away the confrontationist approach. India has a role as a neighbour and I very much agree to that. But how could India play a role on which there is no consensus in Nepal? There is one section which says India should provide military equipment which India is doing, whereas another section says India should play a mediatory role.

Democracy should be strengthened in Nepal but it must evolve from society. If political solutions are exported, they cannot survive. If they survive then you will need the military presence of India. I will give you an example of the Japanese constitution which was changed after the 2nd world war but after that 45,000 American troops remained in Japan. That's not a real solution. Political solutions should emerge internally and I think India should do, if at all, something that strengthens democracy even at the cost of displeasing very powerful sections in this country.

Peace talks are possible. The question being raised here is that of the constituent assembly. This government has been formed by the King and it hasn't been able to give a clear standpoint on the issue of a constituent assembly. From this what we can understand is that the king is not in favour of the constituent assembly. The government has to take a clear standpoint on all issues and has to build its willpower strong enough to firmly call the Maoists to the peace talks.

3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Damannath Dhungana

The violence in Nepal has been very costly to us. The international community has started calling us a failed state. This speaks much about how delicate our problem has become. But why is it so delicate? Why is it becoming so complicated year by year? We have to answer this question. This is a Nepalese concern. As one of the facilitators in the last two rounds of talks, I can tell you for sure that the Maoist delegation was expecting much from the government. It wanted to see if the government was in a position to deliver. The Maoists gave an agenda and the government also had a duty to deliver an agenda. In peace talks it is natural that there are some points for agreement and some points for disagreement. If the government is not in a position to agree or disagree on anything, the talks cannot continue. The government must be in a position to say yes or no during the talks and that was not the case last time.

Let me draw your attention to the fact that until last year the Maoists never demanded third party mediation. Today they are demanding third party mediation. This is the evidence of things becoming complicated. So first of all I think the government must be able to give confidence to them that it has the power or authority to say yes or no to something at the negotiations.

Gauri Pradhan

After winding up the floor discussion, the moderator of the programme, Mr Gauri Pradhan summed up the discussions by laying out 5 points. They are as follows:

- The Maoist issue is a political issue and cannot be resolved through military means.
- Nepal is in crisis because democracy is in crisis.
- Our relations with India should act upon the principles of transparency and accountability towards the people.
- Nepal and India are neighbours with strong cultural ties. They can join hands to solve this problem because we have so many other commonalities.

3.5 NAME AND AFFILIATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

S.N.	Name	Oranisationl affiliation
1.	Aditya Adhikari	Journalist Nation Weekly
2.	Amin Khadka	Nepal Students' Union
3.	B R Nikku	Wageningen Agricultural University (WAU)
4.	Basanta Thapa	Himal Association
5.	Bikash Ghimire	Padma Kanya Campus
6.	Bryan Newman	Volunteer, COCAP
7.	Chattra Pradhan	Independent Researcher
8.	Daman Nath Dhungana	Adviser, FFP
9.	Dawn Peebles	Himalyan Light Foundation
10.	Dikshya Thapa	SAWTEE
11.	Dwarika Nath Dhungel	IIDS
12.	Gagan Thapa	Nepal Students' Union
13.	Gauri Pradhan	FFP
14.	Geja Sharma Wagle	Nepali Congress
15.	Ghanashyam B K	FFP
16.	Govinda Bartaman	Mulyankan Weekly
17.	Hamid Ansari	INSEC
18.	Harsha	Martin Chautrai
19.	Ishwar Chandra Shivakoti	Independent Researcher
20.	K B Rokaya	CEPJAR
21.	Kalpana Acharya	Everest Environmental Academy
22.	Kalyan Kumar Gurung	Nepal Students Union
23.	Keshab Chaulagain	Religious Interfaith Committee Nepal
24.	Laxman Prasad Aryal	FFP
25.	Maiya Karki	FFP
26.	Mira Gurung	Danish Embassy
27.	Nabin Rawal	Lecturer, T U
28.	Narad Bharadwaj	FFP
29.	Nirmala Dahal	T U
30.	Om Prakash Aryal	-
31.	P Dhungana	Help Nepal

32.	Padma Lal Bishwakarma	FFP
33.	Prakash Basnet	Nepal Students' Union
34.	Prasansha Gadtaula	SAWTEE
35.	Prashant Aryal	Nepal Weekly Magazine
36.	R N Bhattarai	Lecturer T U
37.	Rajan Bhattarai	CPN-UML
38.	Rajeev Karna	Time Weekly
39.	Rekha Bhandari	Everest Environmental Academy
40.	Rudra Sharma	FPSD
41.	S D Muni	J N U, Delhi
42.	Sabitra Bhusal	CPN (UML)
43.	Samjhana Bhattarai	WTO Mission Nepal
44.	Santosh Bhattarai	Law Forum
45.	Shiva Kumar Dhungana	FFP
46.	Sujata Thapa	FFP
47.	Suman Rimal	Nagarik Awaj
48.	Tirtha Gyawali	SAP-Nepal
49.	Vidya Bhandari	All Nepal Women's Association
50.	Yam B Kishan	LRPS-Nepal-Oxfam Nepal
51.	Yashmin Taj	-

4

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACE BUILDING IN NEPAL

**REPORT ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS
LEADERS AND PEACE RESEARCHERS
11 AUGUST 2004**

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A half-day interaction programme was organized in Kathmandu on 11 August, 2004 on the “Role of Religious Communities in Conflict Transformation in Nepal”. Religious/spiritual leaders from various religious backgrounds attended the programme. The program served as a common platform for religious leaders with varied knowledge and beliefs. They exchanged ideas and experiences in order to help each other to better understand the present conflict situation in Nepal. They also formulated an agenda of necessary actions to bring the country out of the present turmoil.

This interaction programme was organized as part of a continuous research and consultation programme with intellectuals and leaders from different fields. This was a step towards learning from the experiences of spiritual/religious communities in transforming conflict in Nepal.

Twenty-two participants, mostly spiritual/religious community leaders, participated in the programme. Dr Bishnu Raj Upreti, the then Director of FFP and Laxman P Aryal, Chairperson of FFP facilitated the interaction. The workshop was structured into two sessions. In the first session, Bishnu Raj Upreti welcomed the participants on behalf of the organizers and gave a brief introduction to the programme and its significance, relating it to the overall objectives of Friends for Peace (FFP). In the second session, the speakers focused on how the religious/spiritual community could contribute to conflict transformation and the overall peace process in Nepal.

While the religious and spiritual leaders represented a broad spectrum of faiths, they unanimously articulated some clear lessons for establishing peace in Nepal. The first of these lessons is that peace must be found within individuals before society can change. To this end, all religious communities can offer support and guidance to achieving personal peace. The second lesson is that peace must be approached through a united “interfaith peace package”. Finally, it was advocated that all religious creeds can play a very positive role in disseminating the message of peace across the nation and in peace education for children. The participants have expressed their views in more detail in the following sections.

4.2 MR DIWAKAR CHAND - WORLD HINDU FEDERATION (INTERNATIONAL)

Peace should not be defined as an isolated term, but it should be integrated with other concepts too. We need an “interfaith peace package”. This is a concept on which UNICEF has come up with various programs. “Interfaith” means all the religious organizations are first of all humanitarian organizations. Religion is a mechanism to bring happiness to people’s lives. So the need of an interfaith-based peace package is vital.

The peace package includes:

- Peace education should be introduced from pre-primary to advanced level students. Though we have moral science education in the curricula at present, it should be embedded with peace instruction.
- We should disseminate the teachings of Lord Buddha in a more attractive way using information technologies that can attract the younger generation.
- Emphasis should be given to conservation and proper management of religious monuments from where the message of peace can be radiated to all people.
- The definition of peace should be made more precise. “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” (All the world is a family) is a very vague definition of peace. We should define it as it applies in our day-to-day life.

An “International Convention on Peace” is being organized in New York on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the World Hindu Federation. We are also planning to gather saints and religious devotees from all over the world. We are planning to mobilize the business community and promote peace with the help of their financial assistance. At present, we are planning to organize a “*Shanti Kalash Yatra*”(global peace march) starting from London.

4.3 MR PREM BAHADUR SHAKYA - INTERNATIONAL PEACE CENTRE

The UN General Assembly has passed a resolution declaring Lumbini as the fountain of world peace. They considered this because Buddhism is not a religion, but a medium of peace. Buddhists are very rich in peace, we take pride in it. But what is the situation at present? About 400 to 500 (may be more) youths are migrating daily to the Gulf region in the Middle East. They are forced to leave the country to earn a living, and more than that, to escape the effects of the conflict between the state and the Maoists. On the other hand, the sons and daughters of the bureaucrats and elite are leaving the country to live a better life in Europe and the US.

I have been travelling all over the world to open “International Peace Centres”. We got a very good response wherever we went. Taking Lumbini as the headquarters, we are opening peace centres in many countries. As the convener of the International Peace Centre we are asking the UN to endorse our project. It is a very difficult job, but we are trying our best to get it approved.

4.4 KRISHNA P KHATIWADA - SHREE KRISHNA PRANAMI PRATISTHAN

We are frequently conducting various religious programmes. However, these activities have not imparted any effective message to the public. Due to various reasons, it is found that people use these programmes only as a tool to attain religious blessings.

On the occasion of the Nepalese new year, a “Biswo Shanti Gyan Maha Yagya” (Special Vedic Peace Performance) was organized. I myself was involved in the coordination of the event. Tens of thousands of people came and listened to the religious speeches. The primary objective of “Biswo Shanti Gyan Maha Yagya” was to support the peace process. Various other religious organizations are also carrying out numerous programmes like this, giving speeches and preaching religious beliefs. However, these organisations are playing no role to make a positive impact on the practical aspects of human life.

The situation in Nepal today is very uncertain. We are not sure

what will happen from hour to hour. We have very little personal security. After we organized the programme a few days ago, some people have been threatening us over the phone asking for a share in the proceeds.

Now the main issue is how we can disseminate our message to the public effectively and take our programmes to them. The main concern of all the people, including religious organizations, should be to strive to bring peace to mankind now; peace after death has no meaning in this context. All the people say that they are longing for salvation but no one is concerned about peace when they are alive. Without peace we can achieve nothing; neither religious happiness nor a good social life or salvation.

The 'Vedas' always exhort us to unite for improvement. The main obstacle to peace is our nature itself. We just see things happen saying that it is not my concern until it directly affects us. Whose fault is this? The fault is not of a single person but of us all. We only preach our ideologies and theories. We cannot reveal the practical aspects of religious ideologies. In this current awful situation, we should be able to join our efforts together.

4.5 HAMID ANSARI - NEPAL MUSLIM ITTEHAD SANGHATHAN

I was educated under the guardianship of Tanka P. Acharya. He had opened a school in our community, where we got our basic education. He also sent me to China for further studies. During my studies in China, Mao-tse Tung visited our college. He met all the students there. In my turn, he said, "I have heard a lot about Nepal. You return to your country after your studies, and make it a better place".

Later on, we took charge of the school that he had opened and managed it as 'Madrasa'. Since then, we have been trying to register this pure educational institution under the law. "Nepal Muslim Ittehad Sangathan" has been struggling for this cause since its establishment. Ittehad means unity, which defines the objectives of our organization. The specific goals of our organizations are:

- To foster religious and social tolerance.
- To involve the Muslim population in democracy and development.

Muslims constitute around 4% of the total population of Nepal. The most important things for any Muslims are:

- a) Madrasa
- b) Masjid (Mosque)
- c) Grave

Our concerns are about the availability of these things only. We have no other demands on the government. Our organization is truly a social organization but there remains the influence of Islam. We are always committed to the overall development of Nepal.

In our country, when people are born they are not born as free individuals. This is not the case in Islam. When a baby is born he/she is free. Only after certain rituals does he/she become a Muslim. After becoming a Muslim one has to complete the following duties:

- a) Has to keep faith with “Allah”.
- b) Has to read ‘Namaj’ five times daily.
- c) If one can afford, one should go for ‘Haj’, at least once in a lifetime.
- d) One should give ‘Jakart’, 10% of the income to the poor.

Religion is the faith of the people who live in the country, yet the country itself has no religion. Making Nepal a religion-less country will help unite different religions. There shouldn't be any conflict in the name of religion.

4.6 DEEPAK P BASKOTA - MAHARSHI MAHESH YOGI VED BIGYAN TATHA PRABIDHI SANSTHAN

I'm involved in the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). Every year we celebrate the International Cooperative Day on the first Saturday of July. Last year's slogan was “Peace for Cooperation”. This year's slogan is, “Cooperation for Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunity for All”. Every year the president of the ICA and the Secretary General of the UN give a joint statement.

As the founding president of ‘Maharshi Mahesh Yogi Ved Bigyan tatha Prabidhi Sansthan, Nepal’, I believe my experiences are worth sharing. Maharshi carried out research on Vedas with the help of

around 700 to 800 scientists from Europe, for about 40 years. He found that all the sciences are represented in the Vedas. From my experience, what I can say about Maharshi is, “He is not interested in increasing the number of his disciples only, but he is keen to create heaven on earth”. For this, networking at different levels is being carried out throughout the world. The first step towards creating heaven on earth is to establish peace, lasting world peace.

When did the peace process start? Research on peace processes over the last 1000 years shows that there have been around 10,000 revolutions in the world. Around 8,000 treaties and negotiations were made during the same period. After these 8,000 treaties and negotiations, the ‘League of Nations’ was founded on a common understanding that there should be no more wars. But, again between the First and the Second World War, 3,000 battles were fought. After this, the United Nations was established. Despite all these efforts, war, violence and conflict—in the name of terrorism, borders, territory, religion, and ethnicity still exist.

Scientists have said, “The existing political system has failed to establish lasting world peace”. Now the question arises, what are the means to achieve lasting world peace? Research has identified Vedic knowledge and technology as an alternative mechanism for lasting world peace. A lot of research has been carried out in this area and it is determined that there are two main mechanisms to establish peace:

- a) Yagya, and
- b) Meditation.

Today ‘Yagyas’ are very rare and they are not performed in accordance with strict rituality. Due to this, people now neither believe in the ‘Yagya’ nor in the doctrine behind it or the persons performing it. Meditation is another effective way of gaining eternal peace. There are various kinds of meditations. Transcendental meditation is one of them.

How can peace - the ‘Ram Rajya’- be established not only in Nepal and India but also in the whole world? Research on how and where the Ram Rajya was and how it operated has been already

been conducted. Today, there are more than 5000 Vedic universities/institutions around the world. The Vedas have been translated into many different languages and widely publicized. However, we have kept Vedas as sacred things to be prayed on and did not care much to interpret and publicize them.

In 2000 A.D. Maharshi started a mission to create an alliance for lasting world peace. Around 5,000 scientists from Russia collaborated. Maharshi coalesced a team of 22 people including scientists from Russia. At first, the team came to India and then finally to Nepal. In Nepal, I organized a conference where they demonstrated 30 out of 40 aspects of the Vedas. We visited 15 countries in Asia. When I was in other countries, only then did I come to know the importance of Nepal, the power of Pashupatinath, Buddha and the Vedas.

In Thailand, the Vedas have been translated into Thai and a university has been established. There are Vedic universities in countries such as Japan, China, Indonesia, Russia, Malaysia, and Germany. In Indonesia, my Muslim friends were learning the Vedas. They were reciting the 'Gayatri Mantra' (Sacred incantation). So, Maharshi has defined Vedas as science but not religion.

In 2000, Maharshi launched the "Global Movement for World Peace". We went to different countries with the message of peace. We encouraged them to receive the message that through meditation of Vedic rituals, society can find lasting peace.

In addition to the peace centre in Nepal, there are 3,000 peace centres being built around the world. The structures of these centres conform to the Vedic architectural design. Through 'Yagya' and Meditation, the message of peace will be spread out from these centres to every corner of the world.

4.7 DINESH K NAULAKHA - NEPAL JAIN PARISHAD

The foremost thing that needs to be addressed is to find out the root cause of the present conflict. Until the root cause is identified, a sustainable solution to the conflict cannot be achieved.

The present conflict may have roots in a lack of opportunities, discrimination at various levels and vast disparity among the people,

which is prevalent in every aspect of society. This situation has arisen due to the present system and lack of accountability of the people leading it. Corruption has led the country down the path of disorder and disparity. In the last 12 years leaders have failed to follow public oriented politics. They were confined to trivial matters; either monetary gains or other unlawful benefits. It was a very good example of rudderless politics.

Now, whose duty is it to get this country out of this awful situation? We, the intellectuals are only thinking about it when it is time for action. We should also think and discuss about it, but presently action is more important. We are focusing only on seminars and meetings. A number of seminars and meetings like this have already been conducted. We desperately need action now.

Our Guru, 'Acharya Maha Pragyā' says, "To bring peace, we have to change our behavior first." If individuals change, then the country changes itself. We should devise ways through which we can combat this problem jointly. The people in the jungle are also our brothers. So, this meeting should be able to put pressure on all the stakeholders who are concerned about a peace dialogue.

4.8 JAYANTA ACHARYA - VALMIKI CAMPUS

I want to relate a story from "Upanishad" here. Once, violence broke out among the Gods, demons and mankind. All went to 'Brahmaji' for the solution. 'Brahmaji' gave a clue to peace building to each of the groups. He said, "Da" to every group. Some understood it as 'Daya' (Kindness) and some as 'Daan' (Donation), and finally there was peace everywhere.

The moral lies in implementing the good behaviour and nature that resides in all of us rather than bringing out the evil nature. Though it may take a long time, we should start imparting this feeling to our children from today. There will certainly be peace in this country one day.

4.9 BALA RAM THAPA - WORLD HINDU FEDERATION (NEPAL NATIONAL COMMITTEE)

I'm a regular practitioner of Bipashana (a kind of meditation). Yoga makes us man from devil. I'm a son of a soldier. Before, I used to go hunting with my father's gun. However, after I went to Bipashana, I can't even kill a mosquito that may bite me.

Spiritualism can bring about sustainable peace and we need peace very urgently. For this, we need help and cooperation from the political parties as well as the palace. We should pressurize both the state and the rebels. The Maoists have asked for an Interim Government, roundtable talks and a constituent assembly. The state should clarify why they can't give these. If they can't share power, then how can there be a solution? The lack of feeling of sacrifice among the people in power, has also contributed to the present crisis. His Majesty should think seriously about this matter.

People are flattering the King in the name of religion. This is really very bad. His Majesty's lust for power is another obstacle in the way towards a peaceful settlement. When the feeling of religion and spiritualism develops in the leaders in power, this problem will be solved automatically. There will be no obstacles in the peace process at all.

4.10 DR K B ROKAYA - CHRISTIAN EFFORT FOR JUSTIC, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION (CEPJAR)

It is estimated that there are seven to eight hundred thousand Christians in Nepal. The drawbacks of the Christian organizations of Nepal are:

- They focus on converting the people into Christianity.
- Their activities are confined to the periphery of the church.

On 28 October 2003, the National Christian Council of Nepal organized an interaction program where we raised our voice and came to a consensus that the responsibility of peace mediation should be given to religious organizations.

At present, the key to conflict transformation is slowly shifting to the hands of foreign forces. There are many aspects of foreign

interest in Nepal. There are the weapons mafia and other external powers taking advantage of the conflict. At present, there is a large section of the people that is keen in lengthening the present crisis only for the sake of their livelihood.

Religion can not only transform conflict, it can also initiate and foster it. If religion takes the side of justice and positive trends in society, then can peace be imagined. Otherwise it will lead us to conflict. Peace and justice are complementary to each other. There will be no peace until there is justice. So, we should address the present situation of injustice prevailing in Nepalese society.

In Sri Lanka, religious organizations are playing their role in conflict resolution. The Inter-Religious Peace Commission has done a lot for peace there. But, in Nepal, the religious communities are indifferent towards the present crisis.

4.11 DR JAYA PRAKASH AGRAWAL - NEPAL MANAB DHARMA SEWA SAMITI

“War begins in men’s minds”. So, the defence should also be built in men’s minds. Religion is the science of man’s soul. Unless we prove our ‘Sanatan Dharma’ (Traditional Religion) as scientific, no youths will be attracted. Unless youths are involved in religion, there will be no peace.

As students of science, we should prove the theories practically before believing them. We should be able to address the practical aspects of our religions according to the exigencies of time.

We tend to convince people through lectures and sermons. If we don’t convince people through practical example, the students will be restless. When the mind becomes restless, evils come out of it. So, the foremost thing is to bring our being under control. It is found that there are different kinds of waves in our brain. The brain of a child is very peaceful due to the presence of the ‘delta’ wave. Through meditation the delta wave can be developed in all of us leading us to a peaceful state. Emphasis should be given to involve more youths so that they can spread the message of peace.

4.12 BRAHMA KUMARI KUSUM - BRAHMA KUMARI RAJYOG SEWA KENDRA

Where does peace come from? It comes from the mind. The fountain of knowledge and wisdom is spiritualism which is all about understanding ourselves. We should always remember that besides our body there is a soul. The soul is that conscious power which drives our life. To cultivate this conscious power in us, Yoga and Meditation are two effective means. Though, this will take time and regular practice, it is everlasting.

When a person is thirsty, he goes to the source of water. His thirst is quenched. Likewise, the source of peace, knowledge and wisdom is the 'Super Soul'. We should make ourselves stronger from within to reach there. The entire religion believes in the one and the only shapeless God in the form of a bright beam of light. When we all have the same God, then we should also be able to build solidarity and universal brotherhood. If we are able to foster this feeling of brotherhood, then certainly there will be peace on earth.

4.13 ACHYUT RAJ REGMI - SHREE BINDHYAVASINI AADHYATMIK SANGH

The mind makes a person free and it is the same mind which binds him into different desires. Once 'Sage Bashistha' told 'Ram' that it was easy to bring a wild elephant under control but very difficult to control one's own mind. Performing religious rituals and offering prayers are some of the ways to control our mind by concentrating on a fixed object. It is very difficult to control our mind and meditate. If someone is able to meditate for a single minute, he will be successful in everything.

At present, the government has an important responsibility of carrying out the peace dialogue. The UN is ready to mediate. The Maoists are ready to accept UN mediation. If all are ready, then why not the government and the King? Now, it is high time we got united from this table itself and went to the government in a delegation. We should pressurize the government to be flexible and come to the negotiation table.

4.14 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A vast disparity in economic conditions, educational attainment and health status has created hardships and dissatisfaction among a large section of people in Nepal. The main causes of these disparities are unequal distribution of resources and lack of access for all social groups in the political process. These, in turn, are leading to growing conflicts in society, including the current armed conflict.

This situation has arisen due to the lack of pro-public politics and unaccountability of the Government. Corruption has led the country to injustice, civil disorder and disparity. Peace and justice go hand in hand, so long as there is injustice in the society, peace can't be imagined. Religion cannot only initiate and foster conflict, but can also transform society to peace. If religion favours justice and positive aspects of society in accordance with the need of time, only then can we all envision a peaceful and prosperous society.

To change the present situation, we have to change our behaviour first. If individuals change, then the country will also change itself. Spiritualism can bring sustainable peace in the long run. At present, we urgently need peace and harmony. There should be coordination and cooperation among the concerned groups: the political parties, the Maoists and the Government including His Majesty the King. The Maoists have asked for an interim government, a roundtable conference and a constituent assembly. The state should think about this matter seriously and if it can't fulfil these demands, it should clarify why. If these factions can't cultivate a feeling of spiritualism, sacrifice and share power, the peace process will remain a distant dream. So, they need to be pro-public in their action to gain social dignity as well as spiritual enrichment.

The present government has been formed in such a situation, that demands an urgent peace dialogue. The UN is ready to mediate the peace process. The Maoists are ready to accept the UN mediations. If all others are ready, why not the government and the King? It is high time we got united to pressurize the government to create an enabling environment for the peace process through dialogue.

The interaction concluded that the religious communities can

play a very important role in conflict transformation and in the overall peace process. In a country like Nepal, where religion is deep-rooted in society, the peace process may have a strong religious dimension. Though we have different religious customs and rituals, we all keep faith on a single super power- the God. Our diversity is our greatest strength to reach every community and citizen with the message of peace. For this, all the religious organizations put their differences aside and unite together in a constructive programme for peace. We should not confine ourselves to our temples, churches, mosques and monasteries but should also come out of them and address the problems of the people and society. Religious communities can play a pivotal role in conflict transformation and establishing peace in the country. Though we all have different religious ideologies, we will always be guided in the right direction, the direction of peace and prosperity, no matter which ideology we follow.

4.15 NAME AND AFFILIATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

S.N.	Name	Organizational affiliation
1.	Achyut Raj Regmi	Shree Bindhyavasini Aadhyatmik Sangh.
2.	Bala Ram Thapa	World Hindu Federation (Nepal National Committee)
3.	Bina Mainali	Lions Club (Metro)
4.	Brahmma Kumari Kusum	Brahmma Kumari Raj Yog Sewa Kendra
5.	Deepak P Baskota	Maharshi Mahesh Yogi Bed Bigyan Tatha Prabidhi Pratisthan, Nepal
6.	Dinesh K Naulakha	Nepal Jain Parishad
7.	Diwakar Chand	World Hindu Federation (International)
8.	Bishnu Raj Upreti	Friends for Peace
9.	Jaya Prakash Agrawal	Nepal Manab Dharma Sewa Samiti
10.	K B Rokaya	CEPJAR
11.	Gokul P Pokhrel	Nepal Arya Samaj
12.	Hamid Ansari	Nepal Muslim Ittehad Sanghathan

13.	Jayanata Acharya	Valmiki Campus
14.	Keshav P Chaulagain	Lions Club International
15.	Krishna P Khatiwada	Shree Krishna Pranami Pratisthan
16.	Laxman P Aryal	Friends for Peace
17.	Prem Bahdur Shakya	International Peace Centre
18.	Parshu Ram Pandey	CEPJAR
19.	R C Acharya	CEPJAR
20.	Sadhu Ram Tamang	Bahai Rastriya Adhyatmik Samudaya
21.	Saran K Gurung	Nepal Manab Dharma Sewa Samiti
22.	Shiva Kumar Adhikari	Reyukai



Friends for Peace

117/36, Puja Pratisthan Marg, Purano Baneshwor

GPO Box No. 11033 Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel : +977-1-4480406

Fax : +977-1-4472798

E-mail : info@ffp.org.np

Website : www.friendsforpeace.org.np

ISBN 99946-945-7-X

