

## **CONSEQUENCES OF APRIL 2006 REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN NEPAL: CONTINUATION OF NEPALESE DILEMMA**

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*Millions of people came to the streets throughout the country and supported successfully and univocally the call for protests against the absolute King made by the coalition of alliance of seven political parties and the Maoists and international community as a whole ultimately to terminate the absolute monarchy for a fundamental transformation and peace and prosperity of political economy in Nepal. Subsequent progress on realising those goals of reform has remained not only slow but also waning the confidence people had put on politicians. Given the depth of poverty and lack of commitment mechanism in the political process whether the equilibrium emerging from these events will be stable and bring Nepal to the rapid path of economic growth like her giant neighbours China and India is questionable. The speedy economic growth can only be a mantra of the political economy that can satisfy people and modernise the economy to fulfil the more realistic aspirations of people.*

**Keywords:** *conflict, growth, Nepal*

**JEL classification:** *D8, H1, O5*

### **BACKGROUND**

Millions of Nepalese people came to the streets all over the country demanding abolition of absolute monarchy and reinstatement of the multiparty system and absolute democracy continuously for 19 days, from April 6 to April 25th and did not stop until King relinquished all powers that he had snatched away from them a year earlier by reinstating the House of Representatives (HOR) on the eve of 20th day of protest on April 25. At least 21 of pro-democracy protestors died and thousands became injured from bullets and buttons of army and police in various parts of country. This peaceful revolution effectively has eliminated the role of the King in Nepalese politics and has brought the united political forces, alliance of seven political parties (SPA) and the CPN-Maoists as their allies in the movement at the forefront of running the national affairs of Nepal.

### **CONSEQUENCES**

Many events of historic importance are unfolding dramatically since the reinstatement of the HOR. Nepal had never seen such a rapid change in political circumstances. The

HOR immediately terminated all executive, judicial and legislative powers vested in the King by a popular proclamation on May 19, 2006, annulled all acts or ordinances that were introduced to suppress people's movement and to raise King's absolute power or to punish and terminate rebels who were declared as the terrorists in his regime. This move brought the King completely out of the parliament and transferred all those powers to the House of Representatives, which is in process of forming a constituent assembly to draft a new people centred constitution. A special enquiry commission, effectively a people's court, was constituted to punish all guilty people who tried to crush the popular movement. The SPA welcomed Maoists formally to enter into the main-stream of Nepalese politics by removing the "terrorist" label put on them by the previous government. It then initiated a dialogue with the Maoists to solve the decade old conflict by accepting the 25 point code of conduct on May 26 that basically focused on creating mutual trusts between the SPA and Maoists on the principle of peaceful coexistence to create a conflict free environment in Nepal. These codes of conduct made room for eight point agreement at a formal summit meeting between the Prime Minister Koirala and Maoist leader Prachanda on June 16 which basically is reinstatement of 12 point agreement between the SPA and the Maoists concluded in New Delhi on November 22, 2005. It was aimed to end the conflict and restore the peace and order in Nepal through some very historic steps including the dissolution of the reinstated parliament and forming an all party interim government including the Maoists in good spirit of conducting a free and fair election of the constituent assembly that will draft a new constitution reflecting the ambitions and desires of all Nepalese people as expressed in the people's movement within a year, putting armies of both sides under control and preferably subjecting them to supervision and monitoring by a commonly agreed international agency such as the UN. This constitution is to be for the Republic of Nepal and many think that it will terminate the royal institution altogether including the ceremonial role for the King.

Despite such movements and national agreements there is still a long way to bring Nepal into a stable and functional democracy that is focused on developing all round potentials of Nepalese people and that brings higher rate of economic growth as achieved by China and India, two of her economically, geographically and demographically giant neighbours. Political mind set is still struggling to resolve the armed conflict and has not yet been able to grasp the importance of economic factors for success of a modern Nepal but rather concentrated in political front. Neither the revolution nor the parties have yet truly addressed the age old weaknesses of the Nepalese society such as the mentality of corruption, distrust, conspiracy for short term gains and uncritical acceptance of earnings acquired through corrupted means at the social level, individualism rather than institutionalism. All political parties have enough of the mutual distrusts, lack of sufficient homework and over concentration on negative criticism to disrupt any good initiative.

The constitution is important but the main agenda and the urgent priority of Nepal is elimination of poverty and economic development. It may be called by different names such as removal of capitalist class or rule of proletariat or elimination of traitors or counter-revolutionaries. All essentially aim for provision of "Dal-Bhat\_Duku (bread and butter)" for common people to be realistic to Nepalese situation. Wasting too much time

just to frame a constitution forgetting economic realities will be an imprudent use of resources. Nepal has already seen five different constitutions (1947, 1951, 1960, 1961 and 1990). None of these had set economic growth as the major national objective. If the power comes from people why should that take so long time to accept in letter and spirit that people are sovereign and they are the sources of all power? In fact the basis of agreement between the Maoists and the SPA was “democracy, peace, prosperity, social advancement and a free and sovereign Nepal is the chief wish of all Nepalese”.

#### Similarities and Differences between the SPA and the Maoists

##### Seven Party Alliance (SPA)

1. An alliance of all major political forces, leftists, centrists and rightists, which have been in power in several occasions. They speak different languages of ideology about democracy, equality and nationalism and about the redistribution and on economic and individual freedom but are essentially same in practice.
2. Terminate absolute monarchy – though leaves to constituent assembly whether to keep a ceremonial king
3. They accept role of market to allocate resources, adopt socialist policies by spending on education and health and leaving industries for the private sectors.
4. They are accepted by the international community as true representatives of the Nepalese society.
5. Has developed internal democracy in the party to some extent but have not done enough to punish the corrupt officials.
6. Not efficient for implementing ideas in practice and mobilising masses for achieving economic and social objectives.
7. No clear focus on economic growth.
8. Each of them has been inefficient in the past in implementing ideas in practice when they had a chance.
9. This is a loose association of seven parties each with ambition to power.

##### Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists)

1. A party that believes in armed struggle to achieve political means. It has used terrorism and violence and threats to fight against the parliamentary system. Motivated by the revisions of Mao of Marxist-Leninist ideas of class struggle, supremacy of the proletariat, mass participation, and strict party discipline.
2. It aims to create a Republic of Nepal by terminating monarchy.
3. It has a very vague idea on how to operate economic policies. Accepts role of market for allocating resources but does not focus on central planning as found in many communist societies motivated by some obscure ideas of self-sufficiency and industrialisation. Its economic statements are contradictory and not well thought out. Yet to come up with a model.
4. It does not have widespread support from the international community until they relinquish arms, violent means to achieve political objectives.
5. Very little known about the internal democracy of the party but has supported by committed party members.
6. Efficient in running the gorilla wars but whether it will be efficient in running the economy is questionable.
7. Speaks the communist language to express ideas on economics and politics.

As they delay on delivering the promises it is natural to ask about the motives of these political parties based on their characteristics and differences with each other and identify whether the emerging equilibrium is stable or not. Looking at the above points of similarities and difference it becomes clear that there would be little difference between the SPA and Maoists once the latter renounce arms and relinquish violence and threat as the means of achieving political objective. They all want political power. In the feudal culture of Nepal disability to deal with corruption had been a major problem for all other parties in the SPA. There is not enough evidence to state effectively whether Maoists will be able to terminate corruption and create free and fair society after they enter into the main stream.

### **AMBITION FOR GROWTH**

It is more urgent to revive the faith of entrepreneurs, investors and business communities by sweeping reforms of the education system, labour and financial markets, mobilisation of water or other natural resources, creation of physical and economic infrastructure, removing red-tape and making the private sector an active partner in the process of economic growth. Making reward for productivity and raising the opportunity cost of time for more than 50 percent of unemployed is vital step for economic growth. These cannot happen unless the economic growth is the major focus of the constitution and all political forces in the country.

Why cannot Nepal start a really free school system up to the high schools? Why it cannot institute student loans to college and university level students? Why cannot it establish world class universities in mountains and hills using rapid changes in communication technology? Why cannot it focus on manpower development policies that let opportunities for all to develop their full potentials and creative abilities? Why should not it create environments for talented individuals, both the Nepalese and foreigners, to work in Nepal with appropriate reforms in the labour market? Why should not it develop tourism more systematically by making Nepalese Himalayas topmost international standard in holiday destinations? Why should not it focus on developing vast potential hydro electricity for running industries? Why should not it promote the environment for transfer of technology from more advanced neighbours and other developed countries? Why should not it make rules and regulations clearly so that people start thinking that it is the original ideas and thoughts that count most in developing their prospects rather than copying foreign and obsolete ideas? Why should not it start developing financial and other sectors in which Nepal has comparative advantages? Focus on economic growth and creating employment. These are the real concerns that took millions of people to the street. Delivering them efficiently will make the peaceful revolution and transition of April 2006 memorable and long lasting one.

### **REASONS FOR ROYAL PLIGHT**

Kings were always suspicious of popular freedom that was no exception to Gyanendra who came to power after Royal massacre in 2001. Imposing direct rule and being obstinate to continue it by promoting sycophantism and coteries of royalists, King made people angrier and became bitter enemy of political parties as well as of the Maoists. His feudal characteristics and attempts to eliminate true political forces by military forces in effect created an appropriate background for talk and understanding and alliance between the political parties with popular support and the Maoists with armed guerrillas and militias all over the country. Political parties had mass support and Maoists had Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), combination of these two was enough to counter Kings' forces and other state machinery under his control. Understandably an agreement was struck taking best out of two forces to fight against and terminate the autocrat monarch and bring democracy, peace and advancement in the country. This initiative formally known as the 12 point agreement was signed between the SPA and Maoists on Nov 22, 2005, mainly aimed to bring permanent peace and advancement by replacing the absolute monarchy by absolute democracy and ending the armed conflicts from Maoists. This agreement in some sense made parties and Maoist to re-evaluate their strengths and

weakness in a realistic manner and form a working relation for the cause of absolute democracy by a “storm of nationwide protests” with a strong commitment to basic human rights and freedoms for people and commitment to multiparty democracy with reinstatement of the parliament.

People wholeheartedly supported the movements initiated by the SPA. They were convinced that the King did not have had good intentions for the Nepalese people on February 1, 2005 when he dissolved the existing parliament and took over the direct control of the government and. They thought that his initial justification of take-over of power due to disability of political parties to solve the insurgency problem and appeal for international cooperation to solve the armed conflicts was simply an illusion and deceitful means to keep him in power for long. His promises to restore multiparty democracy after uprooting the Maoists using military force was simply ill intentioned and ill motivated and less than one year of his direct rule only angered all political forces. As the time went by many people as well as all international community that supported good cause for Nepalese people also became convinced that Kings' only intention was to strengthen the absolute monarchy. Peace, law and order situation became worse, public became frustrated and angered and went totally to protest against him. Kings supporter could not even find candidates for the election of local bodies that was boycotted by major political parties.

With mines and bombs planted by rebels and sabotages and curfews and tear gases, bullets and buttons used to control demonstrations called by parties becoming a daily routine in all parts of the country, people could not have peace of mind and normal life, they were not able to use their personal and economic freedom and were terrified even to do their daily businesses. It was not safe to go from one part of the country to another. Economy was crippled by recurrent strikes, fights and violence and demonstrations. It brought widespread frustration nationwide economy was paralysed and the country was in crisis.

The incident of conspiracy and distrust as seen in the royal massacre of 2001 had reduced the respect and dignity of King among people. He neither had real direct experience on the acuteness of the problem of massive poverty and toils and troubles of millions of people nor a tactic to manage the state affairs efficiently. He could not imagine that people could come into street in millions all over the country as he did not have true respect for their opinions. He simply wasted the opportunity of reforming Nepal that historical circumstances had given to him and failed to create an environment for peace and growth. He was compelled to give all his powers to people due to his ego-centric selfish handling of state affairs and by isolating himself from the people by relying on regressive and incompetent royalist forces that had proved incapable and inefficient in 1960s and 1990s.

### **PEOPLES' CONSTITUTION**

Constitution essentially is a contract between the citizen and state. It is an arrangement by which people rule themselves by means of elected representatives who make rules and regulations that establish rights and duties in several matters for a smooth functioning of society. The United Kingdom has an unwritten constitution that is built upon the historic documents of people right such as the Magna Carta (1215 AD). In

recent years written constitution started with American Declaration of Independence (1776) which basically adopted the principle of no taxation without representation. Then comes the French Revolution (1789), which established a republic based of liberty, equality and fraternity. The socialist constitution goes back to the October revolution (1917) in which Russian Bolshevik party tried to form a state of proletariats based on Marxist-Leninists ideology of elimination of bourgeoisie and success of workers party that was followed in China by the Chinese communist party which was later revised by the Mao-Tse Tung. Decolonisation of many Asian and African and Latin American countries 1940 and 1950s has given further importance to the system of written constitution based on adult suffrage and fundamental human rights and clear statement of the aims and objectives of the political and economic system of a nation (see Acemoglu (2001), Chih-Mai Chen (1947), Gangal S.C. (1962) Gooch Robert K. (1947) Haggard Stephen and Chung-In Moon (1990), Hoar Roger Sherman (1917) Houn Franklin W. (1954) Hein Laura E. (1994) Kawai Kazuo (1955) Lutz Donald S. (1994) Packenham Robert A. (1964) Peacock Alan T and Charles E Rowley (1972) Tideman Nicolaus (1994) Valensise Marina (1988) Wallace D.D. (1951) Weisskopf Thomas E. (1975) Walder Andrew G. (1987) ). The major aspect of any constitution is its preamble that sets the aims and objectives of a nation, formal procedure of representation in legislature, formation of executive body such as the councils of ministers and arrangement of a supreme court, statement of procedures of how each of these shall work in practice and provision for exceptional circumstances. A good constitution along does not provide a true democracy as Haun (1954) states Chinese constitution is the most democratic in the world but in practice China has very limited democracy, every representative basically rubber-stamps the decision of the party. The United Kingdom does not have a written constitution but it is one of the most democratic countries in the world. A long constitution does not necessarily mean that it is good one rather than a short one. American constitution is the shortest but the most complete and thriving constitution in the world, despite being the longest one the Indian constitution is not free of constitutional problems from time to time. The major point is a democratic culture, an institution that teaches citizens to respect each other and learn from each other and that makes them active energetic and result oriented performers in already very competitive global economy.

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