Chapter VI

Madhesi Identity and Its Impact on Nation-Building Process

VI.1 Madhesi Identity and its Recognition

The hill people or Pahadis generally treat Madheshis as outsiders and, therefore, as second-grade citizens of Nepal. Madheshis take offence to being called outsiders and see themselves as people who have always lived in the region (ICG 2007). Some argue that the hill migrants settled in Tarai should be labelled as Madheshis as well but most plains people do not treat them as such, no matter how long they have resided in Tarai. The term is often distorted as Madise and used pejoratively for any plainspeople not considered “true Nepalese”. Madheshis have only recently sought to reclaim the term; one slogan of the movement, which also appeared in Maithili-language wall-painting in Kathmandu and elsewhere, was “Say with pride, we are Madheshis”.

The Tarai encompasses great linguistic and social diversity. Madheshis speak Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi and Hindi, some languages also spoken across the border, while ethnic groups such as Tharus have their own languages (Gurung ed. 2003). Among Hindus, Brahmans and Kshatriya groups, primarily Thakurs and Rajputs are at the top of the caste hierarchy, while the untouchables, Dalits, are considered impure (Jha 2003; ActionAid 1999). There is also a substantial presence of the middle castes like the Yadavs, who are otherwise at the bottom of the caste structure but rank above Dalits. Caste divisions govern social relations, play a significant role in forming political choices and often shape economic stratification.

Modern Nepali nationalism, largely conceived and institutionalized in the latter half of the twentieth century, was shaped around the monarchy, Hinduism and the Nepali language. This restrictive concept has always excluded Madheshis, whose distinct cultures and cross-border links have led hill Nepalese to view them with suspicion and
derision. The psychological distance between Madheshis and the Nepali state, as well as other citizens, was aggravated by discriminatory policies adopted by the state. Some of this distance is centuries old but much reflects the more deliberate constructs of Rana and Panchayat policies (ICG 2005). Few older Madheshis will forget the harsh insistence on conforming to Pahadi cultural norms embodied in the Panchayat slogan “Ek Desh, Ek Bhesh, Ek Bhasa” (One country, one dress, one language”). Even moderate Madheshi intellectuals describe its cumulative effect as a form of “internal colonisation” and say that the overall goal of their movement is to achieve “emancipation from slavery” (ICG 2007).

Most Madheshis are losing their identity since they are treated as less Nepali or non-Nepali by the Pahadis. A chief reason is their socio-cultural, linguistic and physical affinity with the communities living immediately on the other side of the border in India, which historically was a part of Madhesh. Culture, tradition, practices and language always exercise great influence on the identity of a person. Nepali- or hill language-speaking people from Darjeeling or Sikkim, who have been living there for generations, are readily accepted in Nepal as Nepalese and they enjoy all the socio-political benefits. A Madheshi who does not speak Nepali or any other hill language and who does not follow hill tradition and practices is not easily accepted as Nepali by the Pahadis.

There has been a systematic process of discrimination, deprivation and marginalization of the Madheshi nationalities during the last two and a half centuries of the authoritarian rule perpetuated by the Shah kings, their Rana usurpers and the ruling hill elites of Nepal.

The first step after the annexation of Tarai to Gorkhali rule was to abolish the land rights of the Madheshi nationalities. The strategy was to force them into slavery, indenture them as unpaid labourers, conscript them to military service and buy their unconditional loyalty. No wonder a vast number of the population fled across to the British Indian territories in search of safety and survival. This desertion, in the first place, resulted in the loss of their belongingness to the soil, followed by the loss of self-respect when they were reduced to being refugees in their own ancient land.


4 The Ranas ruled Nepal under a hereditary premiership from 1846 to 1951; the partyless Panchayat system, in effect direct royal rule, was instituted by King Mahendra two years after his 1960 palace coup dismissed Nepal’s first elected government.
The second step of the despotic government was to deprive Madheshis of their Nepali identity. This abuse was further consolidated during the Rana period whereby Madheshis were treated as aliens and were even required to obtain entry permits to visit Kathmandu. Such draconian regulations resulted in further loss of identity and self-esteem of Madheshis.

The third strategy was to grant legal entitlements to selected Madheshis of Tarai itself who were able to prove their loyalty to the ruling elites, were able to work as law administrators and pay land tax and help maintain law and order in their designated Mauzas, that is, the landed properties granted to them. Such a policy, however, created visible divides between the minority but potent landed gentry and the majority of landless peasants. This led to clashes of culture between the rulers and the ruled at different levels, from the centre in Kathmandu to the villages. The landless peasants were unable to obtain either land rights or citizenship certificates of their own. The loss of legal identity forced a great number of peasants to migrate to India in search of livelihood and opportunities.

The fourth policy was to abolish the zamindari (landholding) system and encourage Nepalis from the hills to migrate to Madhesh and “capture” the surplus land. The large-scale migration from the hills resulted in massive deforestation in Madhesh. The greatest losers were the ethnic nationalities of Madhesh who lost their endemic rights on the natural trinity of their sacrosanct jal, jangal and jamin (water, forest and land) heritage and, in turn, were turned into bonded labourers in their own land by the usurping and ruling elites who swooped down from the hills of Nepal.

The fifth design, in force since as early as 1950, has been to deprive Madheshis of access to development resources and services as well as to alienate them from the decision-making power in the governance process, and also to restrict their entry into government services such as the bureaucracy, judiciary, legislature, the police and the army.

VI.2 The Term Tarai or Madhesh: Taraibasi or Madheshi?
Tarai stands for “a strip of undulating former marshland that stretches from the Yamuna River in west to the Brahmaputra River in the east” (Encyclopedia Britannica). It is used to refer to the region of marshy grasslands, savannas, and forests at the base of the Himalaya range, in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.
Etymologically, the word Tarai is presumed to be derived from Persian, meaning “damp”, and various Hindi and Urdu dictionaries also define it as the land at the foothills of mountains, often damp and swampy (Gaige 1975). Encyclopedia Britannica also implies the meaning of “Tarai” as “moist land”. From Tharu language point of view, as put forward by some authors, it is assumed to be derived from “Tar” meaning “low”, thus rendering the meaning of “Tarai” as “low-lands”, though the transnational, trans-ethnic and trans-lingual usage of the word Tarai may put this etymology into question. Whichever may be true, all the existing etymologies of Tarai define it in terms of terrain features and have geographic connotation.

Madhesh refers to the Tarai region specific to Nepal, approximately 25 to 35 km wide broad belt of alluvial and fertile land stretching from Mahakali River in the west to Mechi River in the east between the Indian border in the south and Sivalik/Chure Range in the north. Etymologically, Madhesh has been claimed to be derived from the word Madhyadesh (mid-country) or Matsyadesh (fish country) whose capital is said to be in Biratnagar. With the evolution along time, along with its historical values and usages, the word Madhesh has acquired cultural aspects into it that today it represents a way of life and different aspects of lifestyles of people living specifically in the region. Whether it is Madheshi-Haat or Madheshi-colour, Madheshi cuisine or Madheshi Boli-Byabahar, the word has integrated different cultural aspects into it, and thus stands with the following cultural connotation:

(a) Historical significance,
(b) Historical usages,
(c) Cultural and better representative connotation,
(d) Representation of specific national locality, and
(e) Freedom from colonized connotation.

These are some of the reasons why some historians and organizations have been advocating the preference of the word Madhesh over Tarai. The word Tarai lacks all of those characteristics: its historical relevance and usage is modern; it refers to terrain features rather than cultural space and does not represent any aspect of people living there; it is used in India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh in addition to Nepal to refer to regions in those countries as well and thus is not specific to any particular country; and its usage was popularized by the state’s policy of what some intellectuals
call internal colonization and thus carries derogatory colonial connotation. The use of the word Tarai has been considered to be a symbol of the colonial mindset, resulting from what Fredrick Gaige referred as a process of Nepalization of Madhesh.

From the time of the formation of New Nepal there have been literally uncountable usages of Madhesh, both authoritative and general. Whether it is an authoritative document like Prithvi Narayan Shah’s letter to Bhagavanta Nath (published in Purushartha, December 1949) writing, “The boundaries have been extended to the Kankai river in the Madhesh and the Hasabharyakhola and the Tamor river in the hills” or administrative establishments like Madhesh Bandobast Adda or Madhesh Report Niksari or Kumarichok Madhesh Pahila Phant, there are virtually innumerable usages of Madhesh. In fact, before 1950 the word Madhesh was always preferred in authoritative and legal documents, as seen from the numerous historical papers.

Further, some Tharu and Pahadi authors try hard to throw the existence of Madhesh to some part of India near Narbada River, Vindhyachal, Prayag, Ambala or Kurukshetra. So what about all those legal codes, regulations and taxation systems formulated in the name of Madhesh that were part of the Nepalese government structure? It would strain logic to say that they were established by the Nepalese government for those Indian regions and operating in those central Indian territories near Kurukhetra, Prayag or Ambala. In terms of analogy, the proposition made by these seekers of controversy is equivalent to a person changing his name in midlife just because one day he finds someone else in another remote village also has a similar name.

Secondly, their claim of Nepal being divided into three regions called Himal, Pahad and Tarai is ahistorical. These words were popularized by school textbooks with the introduction of a new education system; earlier those regions were referred as Bhot, Parbat and Madhesh (see different Birta Confiscation acts); according to another similar classification they were referred to as Hyundes, Pahardes and Madhyadesh or Mades (Bhagat 1984). Even after the state has sought to popularize the word Tarai, usage of the word Madhesh remains in the textbooks and often appears in parentheses or on its own, synonymously. C.K. Lal asserts that the term Madhesh refers to the cultural space where Madheshis reside. He said he preferred the term Madhesi to Tarai-Basi because the word Tarai carries the connotation of internal colonization.
When it comes to referring people of the region, Tarai-basi is seldom colloquially used, Madheshi (and sometimes its derogatory variants like Madise or Desi) being preferred.

Third, basing themselves on the argument that because a couple of writers like Tony Hegon or Prakash A. Raj in “A Nepalese Discovers His Country” used the word Tarai, or some organization for its geological survey used the word Tarai, those authors have expressed the following opinion: “This amply clarifies that Madhesh is as such a part of Nepal is completely wrong, ill-intentioned and also a deception of the real facts as well. Tarai is not Madhesh. Thus, it would be an injustice to call Tarai a Madhesh.”

What about looking for Malgudi, the town that R.K. Narayan created in his fiction? Mention of the word Tarai in a couple of novels a decade ago is not ample evidence for the high claim made by them. Neither do the findings in current Nepal Parichaya books or some other school texts justify it. In Nepal, the curriculum changes with change of government. When King Gyanendra took over, he planned for a completely different educational system. Currently, Nepal has tons of correction sheets sent by the curriculum development centre (texts changed so rapidly that they did not even get much time and resource to change the whole book). So these contemporary class textbooks should not be produced as historical evidence, for justifying the use of Tarai.

Lastly, Tarai is not derived from or equivalent to Tirhut. Tirhut did not cover the whole region of Madhesh as of now, from Mechi to Mahakali, and a large part of current Indian territory was also included in it, thus mapping Tirhut roughly to the area of the ancient Hindu kingdom of Mithila. Also, in 1908 four Indian districts of Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Saran and Champaran were officially named as Tirhut, as revival of the historical presence of Tirhut. Tirhut is currently an administrative geographic unit of the Bihar state of India.

VI.3 Tharus/Madheshis

Madheshis, including Tharus, are residents of Madhesh sharing the correlated regional, cultural and lingual space of Madhesh. Tharus have significant settlements in Naini Tal and Champaran area of India as well. Tharus are one of the aborigine
Madhesi communities, said to have inhabited the region for centuries. Other aborigine groups such as Rajbansi, Jhangad, Satar, Dhimal, Meche, Mushahar, Danuwar, Dhanuk, etc. have also inhabited the region since ancient times. At times, the word Tharu was used to collectively represent all people living in Tarai, regardless of their ethnicity or origin, “as status summation for the various peripheral aboriginal groups that occupied Tarai” (Krauskopf 1990). Therefore, any claim of sole occupation of Tarai by Tharus is inaccurate. As regards migration, every community at some point of history consists of immigrants, including Tharus. Ghimire states that Tharus migrated from India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and thus are of Indian origin, as many other communities of Madhesh and Bahun-Chettris of hills, including the king’s dynasty, are (Ghimire 1992). Tharus have been inhabiting Madhesh, intermingled with other ethnic groups in geographic and cultural spaces as inseparable communities, and they have been living together for centuries, facing the same problems.

The above discussion may be summarized in the following points:

1. Madhesh and Tarai refer to the same geographic region in the present context of Nepal. However, Tarai region is also found in India, Bangladesh and Bhutan, and Tarai refers to their respective regions when used in their contexts.

2. Madhesh and Tarai both have been used interchangeably and synonymously in the general context in present-day Nepal.

3. Madhesh indicates a connotation of identity and culture of the people living in that region, whereas Tarai refers basically to geographic features or terrain characteristics of the region.

4. Tarai, popularized by enforcing the policy of Nepalization and lingual cleansing process, carries the connotation of internal colonization.

5. Madhesis are residents of Madhesh sharing the correlated regional, cultural and lingual space.

6. The Tharu community living in Madhesh and sharing the regional, cultural and lingual space is a subset of the Madhesi community.

VI.4 Madhesi Movement during 1770–1990

VI.4a OVERTHROW OF THE RANA REGIME
Madheshi people also contributed to the nationwide protests and campaigns to have the despotic Rana regime overthrown and to establish democracy in the country. To this end was born the Nepal Praja Parishad on 4 June 1936. Many were arrested following the formation of this party; many were hanged, exiled or deprived of their properties.

Under the leadership of Pandit Ramakant Jha twenty-two Madheshi youths took an oath in Janakpur to end the Rana rule by signing their pledge in their blood. Jha formed a Service Committee with the aid of Kanwar Jha, Ramanand Thakur and Pandit Surya Kant Jha. In his poetic work, *Sudama Charitra*, he depicted the public as Sudama. The anthology was recited in villages to arouse the people against the Ranas. Ramakant Jha was also founder member of the Nepali Rastriya Congress. He was imprisoned in 1949 and released in 1951. He thereafter became president of the Nepali Congress in Mahottari district.

Panchanand innovated handmade grenades and tractors combined to resemble tank-like armoured vehicles, which helped defeat the Rana Royal Force in Biratnagar. Many became martyrs in Biratnagar during the rebellion.

When the Nepali Congress decided to launch an armed struggle against the Ranas and the Mukti Sena was formed after the meeting at Bairganiya, a border town in India, Matrika Prashad Koirala became commander-in-chief of the armed movement. In this struggle, many Madheshis were his associates and supporters. Kashi Prashad Srivastava was given the responsibility for the procurement of arms and ammunition from India. Under the leadership of Kulpati Mishra and Yamuna Devi, a Revolutionary Force of men and women was organized. Laxmi Narayan Adhikari, Vashudev Tripathi, Premchand Agrawal and Bhagyanath Dubey formed the Krishak Sena in Kathmandu. On 17 November 1950, the Mukti Sena captured Rangeli Bazaar and Bara and Rautahat districts.

It was a year of mass movements that gradually turned into general armed struggles. As a result, on 8 January 1951, under the mediation of the Indian government, Prime Minister Mohan Shamsher signed an agreement in New Delhi for ushering democracy in Nepal (Yadav 2004; Yadav 2003). Madheshis were also active in the labour movement and Satyagraha to overthrow the Ranas. On 4 March 1894, the labourers of the Biratnagar Jute Mill and Morang Cotton Mill in the south-east started their labour agitation, the first of its kind in Nepali history. Madheshi leaders such as Dinesh Dubey, Munnilal Chaudhari,
Panchanand Das and Puran Singh were at the forefront of the movement. Many Madheshi youths of Biratnagar, Birgunj, Kathmandu and Lumbini intensified the movement.

**VI.4b OVERTHROW OF THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM**

King Mahendra took over the reins of government after his “royal” coup in 1960. On 15 December 1960, eminent leaders of Nepal’s political parties were arrested and imprisoned, and Parliament was dissolved. On 5 January 1961, the political parties were declared illegal and banned.

The Madheshi people then launched their agitation and denounced the king’s arbitrary rule. The revolutionary people of Saptari, Dhanusa, Mahottari and Sarlahi districts were organized and mobilized by leaders such as Rameshwar Prashad Singh, Sukhdev Singh, Saroj Koirala, etc. In 1962 Sukhadev Singh was killed in a military barrack. In Rautahat, Bara and Parsa districts, the Mukti Sena was headed by Seikh Idrish, Tej Bahadur Amatya and Bhagwat Prasad Yadav. Accused of leading the Mukti Sena, Nepali Congress leader Vishwanath Prasad Yadav was shot at in Raxaul and was seriously injured.

On 22 January 1962, a student leader, Durgananda Jha, lobbed a grenade at King Mahendra in Janakpur. He was later sentenced to death. In the same incident, another youth Arbinda Thakur was arrested and was released after spending sixteen years in jail. A similar incident took place in Birgunj, in which Dukhi Sahani, Kapleshwar Jha, Dilip Thapa Magar and Kapleshwar Lal were implicated and given life sentences. Many Madheshi leaders were killed or exiled in connection with citizenship and land reform issues. Students such as Shiva Chandra Mishra and leaders such as Rambilas Ray Yadav, Suleman Miyan and Bhola Jha, who were involved in the armed struggle led by the Nepali Congress for the restoration of democracy, were either killed by the Royal Nepal Army at different places or were imprisoned. The final aftermath of this people’s movement was the restoration of democracy in 1990, some thirty years later (ibid.).

**VI.5 OTHER BACKGROUND EVENTS LEADING TO THE MADHESHI MOVEMENT**

**VI.5a Nepal Tarai Congress.** The Nepal Tarai Congress was established by Baldev Das Yadav and Kulananda Jha in 1951, with a three-point agenda: to establish an
autonomous Tarai state; to have Hindi recognized as a second national language of Tarai; and to have greater representation of Madheshis in government services and the formation of a Tarai regiment in the (then Royal) Nepal Army. The party, in a short span of time, was able to make itself a regional party of Tarai. It strongly condemned the government for its discriminatory policies against Madheshis, which not only exploited them and denied them entry to government services and the armed forces but even denied them fundamental civic and human rights for eligibility and enablement to enter the mainstream of the national life.

Some 90 per cent of the lands of Tarai were in the hands of zamindars and Birtawals who lived in Kathmandu. The atrocities of the zamindars, revenue collectors and Rana aristocrats increased on the unemployed and famine/drought-prone Tarai Madheshis. As a result of these factors, the Madheshis' living conditions deteriorated. Therefore, the agenda of Tarai as an autonomous state within Nepal, Hindi as a second language of the region, and Madheshis' employment in the government services was widespread among the Madheshis.

By 1953, two years after its establishment, the membership of the Nepal Tarai Congress increased to more than 60,000. Non-Madheshi Nepalese looked down upon the party as a conservative, orthodox, communal, secessionist party.

In 1953, Bedanand Jha raised the demand of representation of Madheshis in the Advisory Assembly. The party held its third convention on 29 November 1957, which passed the agenda of Regional Autonomy of the Tarai (Joshi and Rose 1996). The party also demanded elections for representatives to the Constituent Assembly before the general elections. However, through his Royal Proclamation in 1958, the king declared general elections in the country, making the Constituent Assembly issue redundant.

The party received only 36,107 votes (20 per cent) and no seats in the general elections. The reason for this poor electoral performance was that the party could not establish itself in an organized way among the public. Also, Bedanand Jha did not interact more with the people to mobilize them in an organized way. Later, following the coup of King Mahendra, Bedanand Jha surrendered to the monarch and became a member of the Tulsi Giri-led Council of Ministers on 2 April 1963. The party general secretary Ram Janam Tiwari decided to align himself with the Nepali Congress through the offices of Subarna Shamsher for the restoration of democracy in Nepal. In
this way, while one faction of the Nepal Tarai Congress joined the Panchayat system, the other opted for the Nepali Congress.

VI.5b Tarai Liberation Front. After the virtual disappearance of the Nepal Tarai Congress from the political scene, its leftist faction established the Tarai Liberation Front (TLF) and opted for armed struggle for the settlement of pending issues. The TLF was inspired by the leftist movements in India. In eastern Tarai, the Naxalite movement started while in western Nepal, the party initiated armed struggles. However, its leaders, namely, Ramji Mishra, Raghunath Ray and Saniwaschar Chaudhari, the latter with his wife, and many others were killed by the police and the army at different places in Tarai. In addition, organizational weakness, lack of clear vision and military expertise were drawbacks that ended this movement (ibid.).

VI.5c Madhesh Mukti Andolan: Madhesi Krantikari Dal. Raghunath Thakur established the party in 1958. His manifesto was similar to those of the Nepal Tarai Congress and the TLF. During the 1960s, in broad daylight, he lit a “petromax” gas lamp, and placing it on his head, walked around the Indian Parliament several times. When the parliamentarians asked him about what he was doing, he replied, “Justice is lost or vanished from India and Nepal. I am searching for it.”

He was a supporter of the socialist ideology in the Nepalese democratic context. He was also a follower of non-violence and peaceful movement against the existing discrimination, impunity, atrocities and political exploitation suffered by Madheshis. He was of the view that the Madheshis’ political, economic, educational and cultural development was possible only by holding a referendum for Tarai carried out under UN auspices, as per Article 11, Section 73(e) of the UN Charter. Among his literary works were Dependent Madhesh and its Culture (1958/59) and Madhesi Movement Agenda and its Explanation (ibid). Thakur was killed in a conspiracy on 21 June 1981.

VI.5d Nepal Sadbhawana Parishad. The Nepal Sadbhawana Parishad was established after Madhesi leaders such as Gajendra Narayan Singh, Ram Janam Tiwari, Rashbihari Ray Yadav, Chaitu Chaudhari and others in the Nepali Congress concluded that the party was indifferent towards Madhesi issues. The issue became more acute when B.P. Koirala succeeded Subarna Shamsher as NC leader. The Madheshi resentment became even more explosive after the submission of Harka
Gurung’s Report (1983) on migration during the Lokendra Bahadur Chand government, which caused alarm and insecurity among the Madheshis. The Gurung Report was taken as an outcome of the Panchayat system’s anti-Madheshi policies and practices. The Nepal Sadbhawana Parishad, established in 1983, was not a political party per se. Rather, it was organized to denounce the Gurung Report and the government’s citizenship policy (Yadav 2004).

VI.5e Nepal Sadbhawana Party. The Nepal Sadbhawana Parishad was reconstituted as Nepal Sadbhawana Party at a meeting held on 15–16 April 1990 at Gajendra Narayan Singh’s residence in Kathmandu. The credit for the establishment of the party also goes to the business tycoon Sankarlal Kedia. The party’s preliminary convention was held in Janakpur on 30 June 1990, where Gajendra Narayan Singh was unanimously elected as party president. The party’s main agenda was similar to the earlier Madheshi parties.

However, instead of bequeathing party leadership to intellectuals and dynamic youths, the party’s stewardship came in the hands of opportunist persons. As a result, the party got derailed from its manifesto. Remarkably, after the 1994 elections, it involved itself in the process of forming governments and overthrowing them by lobbying with other political parties when their vested interests were not fulfilled.

Despite being the only so-called Madheshi party, the Nepal Sadbhawana Party has always received relatively low percentage of votes in the general elections held after 1990. This was because the party was lacking in vision, policy and programmes for the marginalized Madheshis. Ironically, the party formed for the rights of the Madheshis has always favoured the monarchical system which has consistently victimized the Madheshis. The party also stated that the 1991 Constitution of Nepal was the best in the world. Although the party has been advocating federalism, Hindi as a second national language, citizenship issues, and proportional representation based on population and reservation quotas for Madheshis, it is silent over such issues as human rights, autonomous governance and self-determination rights of Madheshis. The party is also not specific on the issue of federalism with or without adequate amendments in the present Interim Constitution (ibid.).

VI.5f Madheshi Rastriya Mukti Morcha (MRMM). In the initial phase of their “People’s War”, the Maoists, lacking roots in Tarai, were not very effective in
influencing the government in Kathmandu. The Maoists, therefore, tried to tap the sentiments of the Madheshis and were successful in opening their Tarai wing, the MRMM.

In addition to the genuine demands of Madheshis, which were incorporated in the Maoist agenda, two other dimensions were added to the manifesto. The first was class struggle; and the second, Indian imperialism and expansionism with relevance to Tarai. However, in the aftermath of the very recent Madhesh Movement in 2007, Maoist influences have been diminishing in Tarai (ibid.).

VI.5g Madheshi Jana Adhikar Forum (MJF). The MJF is sometimes referred to in Nepal’s English-language media as MPRF, reflecting a translation of its Nepali name (Madheshi People’s Rights Forum). The MJF was established in 1997 and was initially registered as an NGO. Its founding leaders say that the Maoists supported its creation (ibid.). It developed as a cross-party intellectual forum to discuss and promote Madheshi concerns, publishing several research papers and books. Other activities included seminars and training programmes to spread awareness, building an organization and reaching out to Indian leaders (ICG 2007). The MJF emerged as a leading force in the Madheshi movement and in April 2007 applied to the Election Commission for registration as a political party. Its two main leaders were Jai Prakash Prasad Gupta and Upendra Yadav. Gupta was a Koirala protégé and former NC minister from Saptari who adopted the Madheshi cause after falling out of favour with the party leadership; Yadav was a UML candidate in the 1991 elections from Sunsari who had briefly joined the Maoists but left them in 2004 (Conflict Study Center 2007). Gupta quit the MJF in June 2007. Although this party seeks to build up a Madhesh base, most of its leaders come from eastern Tarai, and its central committee consists largely of upper and intermediate caste Hindus, with a predominance of Yadavs (ibid.).

The MJF identifies internal colonization as well as regional and racial discrimination against Madhesh as its key concerns. Its demands include declaration of a federal democratic republic with an undivided, autonomous Madhesh, secularism, a proportional electoral system, citizenship certificates for all Madheshis, inclusion of Madheshis in all state organs, special schemes for Dalits and other oppressed Madheshi castes, local promotion and use of Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi languages, recognition of Hindi as a lingua franca, an end to internal migration of Pahadis to Madhesh, investment in Madhesh of a substantial portion of taxes raised in the region, an end of discrimination against
Nepali Muslims, and official recognition for Madrasas (MJF 2007). MJF has also tried to tie up Madheshi politics to larger national developments. It opposed the king’s rule and Maoist violence and called for elections to the Constituent Assembly based on equitable population representation under UN supervision (Madhesh Mulyankan 2006).

VI.5h Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (JTMM). The JTMM is an armed Madheshi militant group which has split into three factions. Former MRMM leader Jai Krishna Goit broke from the Maoists to set up this organization in July 2004. He was unhappy with Pahadi domination in party leadership positions in Madhesh and discrimination against Madheshis in the People’s Liberation Army. He also resented Matrika Yadav’s appointment as head of MRMM while he was shifted to the position of senior adviser (ibid.). In August 2006, he expelled the group’s eastern commander, Nagendra Paswan (Jwala Singh). Goit said that he had acted against Singh for indiscipline. Singh, who complained of Goit’s dictatorial tendencies and casteist attitudes, established his own JTMM group. Both factions endorse and perpetrate violence. Goit was a political activist with the UML before joining the Maoists, and Singh comes from the journalism background. In late June 2007, JTMM (Goit (G)) split up again, with eight rebels, led by Bisfot Singh, forming a splinter faction (Kathmandu Post 2007).

The Jwala Singh faction claims to have an organization modelled on the Maoists, with a central committee, central and district level Tarai governments, a Tarai Liberation Army and district committees across the region (ICG 2007). Goit has a central committee, East and West Tarai Regional Bureaus, village, ward and cell committees, and a parallel military organization. For both factions, it is hard to confirm how their claims would be realized, although they have certainly recruited considerable number of members and expanded significantly.

Goit’s faction identifies the Tarai issue as one of colonialism and has demanded independence. He refuses to call himself a Nepali citizen and believes that Nepal has no legal claim to Tarai (ibid.). Goit has also demanded that all administrative posts in Tarai be filled by Madheshis and the government must return the tax revenues raised from the region back to the people. Jwala Singh also questions Nepal’s historical claim to Tarai (ibid.). He identifies three main issues: the authoritarian Pahadi state and its colonial exploitation of Madhesh and Madheshis, class differences and caste differences (INSEC 2007). He believes that the Madheshi movement has failed until now because its leaders have not picked up guns. In his words, “First, the colonial problem needs to be solved through an
armed struggle – our main aim is independence. Once we are free from pahadi rule, we can solve the other problems” (ICG 2007). However, JTMM (Jwala Singh (JS)) sympathizers say this is a bargaining position; Singh recognizes that independence may not be feasible and would be satisfied with a unified Madhesh province within Nepal (ibid.). He has also asked for a fair electoral system, a fresh census conducted in Madhesh by Madheshis, appointment of only Madheshis in citizenship distribution teams, an end to Maoist fundraising and the return of seized property, as well as for all revenue collected from Tarai to be spent in the region (ibid.).

VI.6 The Recent Madheshi Movement, 2006/07

Madheshi discontent has been rising ever since it became apparent. The April 2006 people’s movement could not lead to a rapid addressing of their grievances. Federalism emerged as a key demand of all Madheshi groups; armed outfits increased their activities; and Maoist-Madheshi tensions escalated, in some cases violently. The parties, happy to be back in power and concentrating on talks with the Maoists, paid little attention to Madheshi issues or political dynamics (Nepali Times 2006). When the draft Interim Constitution – prepared by the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Maoists, without broad consultation (ibid.) became public in December 2006, it prompted protests. Madheshi groups, as well as Madheshi MPs across party lines, objected to silence on federalism and what they saw as an unfair electoral system.

The first flashpoint was in Nepalgunj, where the Nepal Sadbhavana Party had called a strike. The administration tried to block the march; at the same time, Pahadis attacked Madheshi-owned shops in the heart of the town. There were reports of retaliation by Madheshis but Pahadi violence and police complicity were captured on camera. A DVD showing the anti-Madheshi rampage was widely circulated, fuelling anger and raising tensions (ICG 2007).

The promulgation of the Interim Constitution spurred twenty-one days of protests in January–February 2007. On 16 January, MJF leaders were arrested while burning copies of the constitutional document in Kathmandu. Three days later, MJF activists protesting the arrest of their cadres in Lahan and Siraha districts, clashed with Maoists, who shot dead Ramesh Kumar Mahato, a young MJF activist. On 20 January, as the MJF demanded action against the perpetrator and compensation, the Maoist cadres seized his body and cremated it. The MJF stepped up protests against both the government for
inaction, and the Maoists, whose leaders grudgingly and belatedly apologized. The escalation of tensions surprised even those who led the movement. "Everyone, including Madheshi leaders, failed to read the intensity of [popular sentiment]," commented an Indian diplomat who followed the events closely. "Even when Upendra Yadav and his colleagues burned the Interim Constitution, they did not quite realize what they were doing – and when the NSP called a Bandh [strike], its own leaders were amazed at its success" (ibid.).

Mahato’s killing was the spark for a prolonged agitation. Madheshi activists called for a general strike in Tarai and organized widespread protests. The government responded with curfew and an increased police presence. On 25 January, the MJF announced it would continue the protests indefinitely until the Interim Constitution was amended. Activists looted government offices, police posts, banks, mainstream parties’ district offices and media offices; in a move reminiscent of the Maoists' anti-monarchy actions during the April 2006 movement, they vandalized statues of Pahadi political leaders. The blocking of Kathmandu’s key supply routes had a more direct impact, leading to travel disruption, price rises and a petrol shortage. Although there were sporadic attacks on Tarai-based Pahadis, communalism was not a defining feature of the unrest. The state response was harsh: police shot dead more than 30 persons and wounded 800 (ibid.).

The protests initially centred around Lahan and Janakpur but soon spread to all major Tarai towns. The MJF organized some demonstrations but others were spontaneous or organized by local groups (ibid.). These mobilized people provided support to the injured and helped coordinate protests. Some important Tarai towns like Malangwa, Birgunj, Lahan and Biratnagar saw major clashes. In some cases, the agitators turned their ire on journalists, blaming them for not covering the movement sufficiently.5 The MJF emerged as the movement’s leading group but the protests lacked clear planning. "It was Lahan that created Upendra, not the other way around", commented one observer (ICG 2007). Caught off guard by its sudden prominence,

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5 For example, protestors vandalised the Birgunj FM station and the Federation of Nepalese Journalists’ office; reporters covering demonstrations in Biratnagar, Birgunj, Inaruwa, Lahan, Bara and Saptari were threatened. Journalists say they covered the movement consistently but sometimes missed information about activities in villages where there were no reporters. Crisis Group interview, journalist, Biratnagar, 25 May 2007. See also “IFJ Outraged Over Violence Against Journalists During Demonstrations in Nepal”, 30 January 2007, and “Journalists Attacked and Work Destroyed in Nepal”, 28 February 2007, International Federation of Journalists press releases.
the MJF was not prepared to make the most of the public support. A district-level leader admitted:

We didn’t know how to handle the movement. We had four to six leaders and about 20 to 30 activists in each district, who had to suddenly deal with thousands of protestors. We had neither the organization nor the leadership to channel this energy for the benefit of our party or to keep in touch with people who might have turned into long-term supporters. (ibid.)

Participation in the protests cut across political divides; activists of other groups, from NC and UML to both JTMM factions, played a major role. Madheshis’ longstanding grievances, aggravated by exclusion from the peace process, even spurred CPN (M) cadres to join in, despite the anti-Maoist theme of many protests (ibid.).

VI.6a GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The intensity and duration of the protests took the government by surprise. It had ignored similar demands by some Madheshi MPs across the party lines and did not deem it essential to negotiate with Madheshi groups in the beginning when trouble had started brewing. Instead, it treated the protests as a law and order problem, arresting leaders, imposing curfew and authorizing the police to shoot violent protestors. Many mainstream politicians were happy to see a militant Tarai force emerging to challenge the Maoists (ibid.). Only when they themselves became targets and the unrest showed no signs of abating did SPA (Seven-Party Alliance) leaders start looking for a political solution. The Maoists dismissed the MJF and JTMM as criminals, claiming that it was some royalists and Hindu fundamentalists from India who were driving the movement. They urged the government not to grant it legitimacy through negotiations and consistently argued that the newly prominent activists were “irresponsible” and lacked the “moral authority” to represent Madheshis (ibid.).

After a week of protests, Prime Minister Koirala, in a 31 January televised address, invited the protesting groups for negotiations, promised to increase electoral seats in Tarai and announced a commitment to federalism (Rising Nepal 2007). On 2 February, the government set up a ministerial-level talk team. However, Koirala misjudged the popular mood. MJF-led protestors rejected the offer and complained that he did not empathize with their movement. Many Madheshis felt that the speech was high-handed and unilateral and
did not recognize Madhesi demands as rights that were overdue to them. A week later, as the situation deteriorated further, Koirala made a second address, recognizing the contribution of Madheshis to strengthening democracy, expressing regret over the loss of lives (Rising Nepal, February 2007) and promising electoral representation and inclusion of marginalized groups in state bodies on a proportional basis.

The MJF cautiously welcomed this announcement, suspending its agitation for ten days to allow the government to implement its promises but also setting preconditions for talks: the Home Minister's resignation, action against those responsible for the killings and setting up of a judicial commission to examine the governmental conduct. The JTMM (JS) conditionally agreed to talks but the JTMM (Goit) (then the much stronger faction) rejected the offer. The government prevaricated. It delayed amending the constitution, backed the Home Minister and did not even address uncontroversial demands such as compensating the victims. The promised judicial commission – which, given the tradition of such enquiries in Nepal, would probably have been a painless way of deferring judgement on tricky issues – was formed months later. Even so, it was dominated by establishment figures, including the police chief, whose own force's actions were under investigation. There were no talks with the JTMM (JS) (ICG 2007).

The movement prompted mixed reactions outside Tarai, including in Pahadi-dominated civil society. Although the need for a more inclusive state is now a rhetorical commonplace, Madheshi militancy prompted fears and resentment, often reinforcing old prejudices. Despite concern about a backlash from other communities feeling threatened by Madheshi strength, most marginalized communities expressed support and emphasized that they shared the demand for federalism and proportional representation. Civil society groups visited the troubled districts, agreed that the agitation was mostly spontaneous and urged the government to address legitimate demands (http://insn.org/?p=4144). Media attention was finally drawn to Madheshi concerns,

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6 It was headed by NC's Mahant Thakur; the other members were NC(D)'s Gyanendra Bahadur Karki and UML's Rajendra Pande.

7 The cabinet formed the commission on 25 May 2007, with Supreme Court Justice Khilraj Regmi as its head; other members were the eastern regional police chief, Rabindra Pratap Shah; Deputy Attorney General Rajnarayan Pathak; National Investigation Department deputy head Sukhchandra Jha and Siraha district court judge Sahadev Bastola.

8 The JTMM(JS) had declared a ceasefire and set up a talks committee after the Prime Minister's address but said that the government did not reciprocate. Jwala Singh said: "It did not respond to our efforts and instead continued with their strategy of using force. They filed cases against our activists and did not try to engage with us."
prompting some sympathetic reporting. However, much Pahadi reaction mirrored the party response. While some human rights organizations accused the government of excessive force, some Madheshi commentators charged the Pahadi-dominated human rights groups and the media with bias (*American Chronicle*, 12 March 2007). Many Kathmandu residents vociferously opposed the movement, believing it had been stirred up by “regressive elements” or else was an Indian conspiracy to undermine Nepal’s sovereignty (ICG 2007).

There was also a cross-border dimension. Indian political and social groups, especially in Jogbani and Raxaul, organized camps to give shelter and medical care to the injured (ibid.). Many politicians were quietly supportive, with some border legislators making public statements in favour of Madheshi people’s rights and others organizing rallies on the Indian side (ibid.). Some Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) were reported to have told district administrators not to lean too heavily on Madheshi activists, both armed and unarmed (ibid.).

Maoist-MJF tensions continued to increase and turned violent in Gaur on 21 March, when the MRMM organized a mass meeting at the same time and venue as had been done by the MJF. MJF activists allegedly destroyed the MRMM stage, provoking a similar response (www.nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/English/reports/IR/Year2007/Gaur.pdf). After initially fleeing, MJF partisans attacked the outnumbered Maoists, killing 27 of them. Some human rights activists alleged that five women were raped and mutilated and accused the MJF of hiring professional killers (www.ekantipur.com, 25 March 2007). Other assessments, including a UN report, said that there were no incidents of rape and blamed the police for not enforcing order, the Maoists for provocation and the MJF for preparing for and resorting to violence. Several victims were summarily executed. There may have been a caste component to the clash, for Gaur has got sizeable Rajput and Yadav populations. Angry with the Maoists for mobilizing the lower castes, they used this as an opportunity to assert local dominance (ICG 2007). The massacre has left the MJF with a legitimacy crisis and encouraged the Maoists to build a more organized militant force in Tarai.

**VI.7 Potential of the Madheshi Movement**

The movement forced the political class, civil society and the international community to pay attention to Madheshi grievances. Mainstream actors, including the Maoists, could
have used this opportunity to make the peace process more inclusive by fulfilling some minimum preconditions laid down by the agitating groups and creating an open environment for talks. Instead, the eight parties calculated that conceding some substantive demands unilaterally could obviate the need for negotiations. Koirala's second address aimed to defuse the situation and undercut the Madheshi agenda but Madheshi groups claimed that the parties were not sincere about a negotiated settlement and resumed agitation (ibid.). Continuing protests, international pressure and stalemate in March and April forced a rethink and more openness to talks but the underlying attitudes hardly shifted.

Party leaders have realized that Madheshi identity politics is there to stay but it lacks a coherent message and yet they are unwilling to address real issues of inclusion. Although they have organized mass rallies in some Tarai towns, their district units have been inactive, failing even to communicate their achievements. Party leaders have not been listening to their own Madheshi colleagues. The emergence of new political actors threatens their support base: Madheshi central- and district-level leaders are yet to desert their mother parties in significant numbers but discontent is brewing; they know their parties will lose out if they do not articulate Madheshi concerns (ibid.). NC and UML activists participated in the Madheshi movement; their parties reined them in only after Koirala's second address (ibid.).

Still, Madheshi activists now have greater bargaining power and better prospects for promotion. "If the party leaders don’t listen to us, we will move on to other groups and they will lose out. The days of imposing a Pahadi agenda are gone", an NC activist said (ibid.). Dealing with assertive identity politics requires new political strategies, for example, promoting local and national Madheshi leaders, offering a regional agenda and explaining why, despite being in power for so long, the bigger parties did not address Madheshi grievances. Unless the established parties innovate, the politics may follow the pattern of neighbouring Indian states, whose experience suggests that national parties find it hard to cater for identity-based aspirations and lose ground to local groups (Chandra 2004; Hasan 2004).

9 District-level Madheshi activists had warned that the interim constitution needed revisions. Crisis Group interviews, Rajbiraj, 27 May 2007. NC(D)'s Bijay Kumar Gachhedar, for example, made a speech in the first sitting of the interim legislature articulating Madheshi objections.

10 NC activists say it is largely leftists who have joined the JTMM and MJF (although a few NC members have joined the latter); they feel less threatened by possible defections.
Although the Constituent Assembly is meant to have the final say, the government has already declared its intent to introduce federalism. Many groups, including Janjati representatives, call for federalism but have different understandings. The stronger Madheshi demand for “self-determination” does not go down well with hill groups or Tarai Janjatis (Jana Astha 2007). There has been little discussion of fiscal implications such as division of local tax revenues and sharing of development investment or of the degree of devolution.

The Madheshi call for a single Madhesh government is a powerful rallying cry and is gaining increasing acceptance as a political slogan but is highly unlikely to be acceptable to the Kathmandu establishment. The demand may be diluted but there is consensus among Madheshis, across party lines, that federal units should not be carved out north-south, with in-built hill dominance (as in the Panchayat-designed development regions). This demand will be hard for the government to deny. The possibility of secession features frequently in conversation among Madheshis (even those in mainstream national parties and the NSP). Several Madheshi groups, including MJF and JTMM (JS), reportedly held a meeting in Patna (Bihar) in May 2007 and requested Ram Raja Prasad Singh, a veteran republican leader from Madhesh, to assume leadership of a struggle for complete independence. Singh claims he rejected the offer (Nepal Weekly 2007). This reflects an effort by Madheshi groups to forge a common front as well as a gradual radicalization of the mood. Yet, few perceive independence as more than an aspiration or initial bargaining position. Madheshi elite with serious economic interests in Kathmandu would oppose it; the demand is completely unacceptable to India; and it would be a recipe for communal violence.

While the government and several analysts say that the shape of the federal structure should be left to the Constituent Assembly, Madheshi groups are demanding some guarantees on the basic principles of that structure, even if the specific contours and implementation are postponed (ICG 2007). Federalism is a complex issue, and it might be best to leave it to the elected Assembly. For now, in order to show serious intent, the government could consider setting up a purely technical commission to

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11 In the words of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities president, Pasang Sherpa, “our friends in the Madheshi movement call for ‘one Madhes, one province’ but we disagree. The Madhes’s various Janajatis have a different identity ... [Madheshi activists]’ interpretation of self-determination and our interpretation are also different”. Sherpa also stressed that Janjatis had stuck to peaceful protests, unlike many Madheshi groups.

12 He recalled that in India, Jawaharlal Nehru presented an Objectives Resolution laying out basic principles, which guided discussions in its Constituent Assembly.
develop data and information for future discussions; parties, for their part, could set up internal committees to begin homework on the issue.

The government has committed in principle to include Madheshis in the various state institutions but an activist said: “We have heard these promises several times. What is needed is action” (ibid.). The government can bridge this trust deficit by immediately appointing one third Madheshis to important bodies like the National Human Rights Commission and National Planning Commission; making special provisions for their recruitment in police and bureaucracy; reserving a percentage of local posts in Tarai for them; organizing training so that they can compete at the national level; and appointing deserving Madheshi bureaucrats to important positions both nationally and in Tarai towns. These steps should also be specifically targeted to women and other marginalized communities like Muslims and Dalits. Other decisions could include infrastructure development programmes such as road expansion and irrigation. The government must be sensitive not to appear to be buying off people with economic packages without addressing their political concerns, but these steps taken together would address the demands of Madheshis, reduce the visible dominance of Pahadis in all spheres and create an environment for talks with still protesting groups.

VI.8 Challenges to the Madheshis’ National Integration in Nepal

Madhesh as a region is not only a geographic entity but also the industrial, agricultural and economic heartland of Nepal. It contributes more than two-thirds of the country’s GDP. Most of the outlet lies in Madhesh and is highly populated. Despite its huge contribution to the national economy, Madheshis have been suffering from identity problems similar to those of people who have emerged from colonial experiences. Neither the history of Nepal nor its Nepali hill culture satisfies their individual community identity needs, simply because they have not been associated with either. National symbols with which they could easily identify themselves are missing from their ethos. Madheshis have cultural affinity and blood relation (marriage, kinship and other social relations) with the people of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the northern largest states of India. Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, to name but a few, and many other languages are the mother-tongues of the Madheshi population at large, according to the regions where they live (the eastern, central, mid-western, western or far western Tarai); these languages are also the mother-tongues of Uttar
Pradesh and Bihar. Hindi is the lingua franca of Madhesh as a whole. The people on either sides of the international border have both social relations and emotional bonds with one another.

Several violent and non-violent organizations have been growing up in Madhesh voicing the problems of Madhesh and Madheshi people. At present they are demanding only proportional representation in all sectors of the state as well as in the federal system, but none in the state authority is giving attention to their demands. In future, if the level of discontent increases among Madheshis, stronger organizations may arise. This is bound to disrupt the economic, agricultural and industrial activities of Madhesh. It may also lead to chaos. In addition, the situation may turn Madheshi movements into a secessionist movement.

Ever since the democratic system was established in Nepal in 1990, many deprived and marginalized groups of Nepal have raised questions on the non-accommodative nature of the system. This people’s discontent was manifested in the form of many conflicts which have emerged in the form of the Maoist insurgency. The main issues that centred around this debate related to representation, sharing of power, role of monarchy, control of army, language, citizenship, religion, culture, identity, etc. Later on some more issues of the minorities like linguistic, ethnic, regional and religious issues were also focused on.

Till date, the democratic system has proved incapable of fulfilling the aspirations of all the communities and has shown inherent problems in handling regional and ethnic issues. Many scholars and social activists such as Krishna Bhattachan, Govinda Neupane, and Mahendra Lowati have raised the issues of the minorities and advocated for the need for a structural change to resolve the problems of Nepal. Several scholars, social activists, political parties, and Maoists have suggested various alternative structures for the country that would be acceptable to all the communities without weakening the unity of the nation. All of these proposals stress the need for a more accommodative and decentralized model of governance. While some emphasize decentralized regional autonomy, others emphasize the need for a federal structure. However, they fail to adequately address the problems of Madheshis. The proposed models of federal structure, so far, are an attempt to thrash out the Madheshi problems through restructuring of the Nepali state. Madheshis seek a model based on practical ground realities in terms of commonalities, history and differences. In their view, there is a need for a new Constitution, regional autonomy
or federal system and a change in electoral system, as that would ensure local control over their resources. Besides, this fulfils a much-needed political devolution.

To this end, a Constituent Assembly comprising all the diverse ethnic and regional groups, elected through proportional representation, should be formed to draft a new constitution. This constitution should be based on a federal structure with a two-tier system – the centre and provinces. It should declare Nepal as a secular state. It must also be democratic and people-oriented. It should guarantee, protect and promote the rights of the various ethnic and regional groups that have hitherto been marginalized. Third, it should proclaim a new Citizenship Act, which is non-discriminatory and is able to solve the problems of millions of stateless people. Fourth, under the new constitution, all the powers and functions must be vested in the elected government and parliament. Fifth, the national anthem of Nepal must be changed to reflect the people’s sovereignty over the nation in the real sense of the term. Finally, the new constitution should be based on the provision for a referendum for the people to decide any amendment to the constitution. This would ensure the rights and participation of the people as sovereign people in choosing the laws that govern them.

Federalism, which is defined as “a political organization in which the activities of government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions”, is the second crucial change sought by Madheshis. Since federalism provides autonomy and power to different groups, most plural democracies such as the United States, Germany, India, Australia, Canada, etc. have a federal system of government. However, the degree of federalism or decentralization of power differs from country to country. Power distribution varies from centralized federalism or decentralized federalism to semi- or quasi-federalism. Despite huge diversity in terms of language, culture, religion, geography, etc., Nepal has remained unitary and centralized. In the past few years, political parties such as Nepal Sadbhawana Party, Rastriya Jannukti Party and even some scholars have argued for federalism in Nepal. Autonomy and equality have been the major bases of their argumentation. Lawoti goes a step further to suggest that federalism “reduces the level of ethnic conflicts”.

It has been argued that there is an urgent need for restructuring of the Nepali state. The present unitary structure has neither fulfilled the people’s social, cultural, linguistic and regional aspirations nor has it provided them proper representation and
participation in the political processes of the country. This has resulted in a serious crisis of governance because the minority groups are now aware of their rights and want the state to rectify the wrongs of the past. The government is still unable to resolve the Maoist problem. Unless the issues of discrimination are resolved, many more problems are waiting to explode.