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**PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT
TRANSFORMATION: A CASE STUDY OF
JANA ANDOLAN II IN NEPAL**

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*Rise from every village, rise from every settlement
To change the face of this country, rise
Those who have a pen in hand, bring your pen and rise
Those who can play an instrument, bring your instrument and rise
Those who have a tool in hand, bring your tool and rise
Those who have nothing at all, bring your voice and rise.*¹

I. INTRODUCTION

In April 2006, there was a country-wide people's movement in Nepal, popularly known as the *Jana Andolan II*,² against King Gyanendra's direct rule³ following a 12-point understanding reached between the Seven Party Alliance⁴ and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which was leading a communist insurgency against the state. The 19-day-long *Jana Andolan II*⁵ (People's Movement II) ended direct rule by Gyanendra, forced him to return power to the reinstated parliament, and created a conducive environment for the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government and the rebel Maoists in November 2006. The success of *Jana Andolan II* in thus ending the decade-long conflict that had affected all parts of the country has thus been hailed by many as being exemplary of the ways in which engaged citizenry and communities at the local level can have an impact on the resolution and transformation of violent conflict at the national level.

By using literature on social movements, peace building and conflict transformation, this paper seeks to provide an understanding of how communities and citizen groups at multiple levels (local, regional and national) were mobilized across class, caste, ethnic and religious divides to effectively topple the royal regime and help bring an end to 10 years of violence. More specifically, the paper shows how *Jana Andolan II* was able

¹ Translation of well-known Nepali "progressive" song, "Gau, Gau bata utha," played by radio stations throughout the country during the April 2006 *Jana Andolan II*.

² *Jana Andolan I* being the people's movement against the three-decade-long Panchayat regime led by the king.

³ King Gyanendra had dismissed the civilian government on February 1, 2005, enforced what in effect was martial law after declaring a national emergency, curtailed all human, civic and political rights, and formed a government led by himself.

⁴ The Seven Party Alliance (SPA) comprised of the Nepali Congress, the mainstream Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and a number of other smaller parties, mainly leftist, including People's Front Nepal (PFN), Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), Nepal Sadbhawana Party- (NSP-A) and United Left Front (ULF) led by CP Mainali.

⁵ *Jana Andolan I* being the popular movement against the present king's brother's absolute rule in 1990.

to influence the political structure of the Nepali state, its policies, its party mechanisms, as well as its dominant culture and how, in turn, the movement and its goals, were shaped by these forces. It will be argued that it was the interplay between the movement initiated by political parties but then advanced by civil society, internal forces such as the structure of the state and the institution of the monarchy, and the mechanism of political parties along with their relationship with each other and external influences that made the signing of the peace agreement possible.

The study is based on research conducted at two levels: (i) a desk study that included a literature review of Nepal-specific issues such as the Maoist conflict; the role of the monarchy; social, political and economic issues; popular protests and movements from the past; and role of civil society. In addition, media research (Nepali and English) was also conducted on political developments prior to, during and after *Jana Andolan II* with a focus on events from October 2002, when King Gyanendra dismissed the democratically elected government, up to March 2007 when the Madhesh Andolan—the regional agitation in the southern Tarai plain ended; and (ii) a micro-level in-depth study conducted in Chitwan district to study local-level dynamics that were at play in the period around *Jana Andolan II*. The selection of Chitwan district as a research site is based on the fact that during *Jana Andolan II*, Chitwan was in the forefront in many ways—high levels of women's participation, the coming together of various issue-based community organizations, strong rural and urban linkages, and a vibrant local press, which covered the movement extensively. The micro-level study included 60 in-depth interviews with individuals who participated in *Jana Andolan II* in Chitwan in various capacities. Furthermore, 10 key-informant interviews was also conducted in Kathmandu with prominent personalities from civil society, government and political parties to get a national perspective on people's participation and the impact of *Jana Andolan II*.

The paper is divided into three main sections. The first discusses the nature and the course of the conflict, which led the way to the royal takeover and subsequently the movement for the restoration of democracy and sustainable peace. The second discusses the nature of *Jana Andolan II* in terms of key actors, groups and communities involved in the movement; the individual as well as collective incentives for participation; the ways in which partnerships were forged among communities, governments and external actors; and the contextual factors that influenced as well as created the environment for popular participation. The third section focuses on the impact of *Jana Andolan II* in terms of how it was able to bring an end to the royal regime and pave the way for the signing of the peace agreement.

II. DESCRIPTION, NATURE AND COURSE OF THE MAOIST CONFLICT

The Maoist insurgency began on 13 February 1996 when the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), hereafter CPN (M), launched its *Jana Yudhha*, or People's War, after presenting a 40-point charter of demands to the then Nepali Congress-led government. Initially, the government dismissed the issue as a law-and-order problem, but the Maoists were soon able to demonstrate their strength in May 1997 when they boycotted the local elections, which prevented polls from being conducted in 87 village development committees. After the success of the 1997 boycott, the Maoists gradually embarked on taking control of government functions. The state responded in May 1998 by launching the infamous 'Kilo Sierra Two', a 'search and kill' operation, in all the Maoist-affected areas resulting in the deaths of 500 people, including Maoist rebels, their supporters and innocent civilians. Instead of quelling the movement, police brutality during the operation fuelled the insurgency even further. In fact, in an early 2001 nation-wide opinion poll, 30 percent of the respondents indicated that police violence was responsible for the increase in Maoist activity.⁶

In 1999, the government formed a "High-Level Committee to Provide Suggestions to Solve the Maoist Problem", which, instead of addressing the root causes of the problem, attributed the conflict to "weaknesses in the management and administration of the state as well as to the frequent changes in government." It further added that, "rather than a growth in the people's support for the Maoists it [was] the inability of the state machinery to assert itself forcefully."⁷ Amidst attacks and counter-attacks between the police and the Maoists, in early 2001 the latter announced that their guiding principle would henceforth be '*Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Prachanda Path*'. The principle behind *Prachanda Path* was essentially to move towards building a "central people's government" while reiterating the importance of further consolidating the united fronts "in order to play the role of people's power at the central level with a view to consolidate and expand local people's power and base areas."⁸ The propagation of

⁶ Deepak Thapa with Bandita Sijapati. *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency 1996-2004*, Zed Books, London, 2005.

⁷ Ibid., p. 73

⁸ The "United People's Front," later called "Revolutionary United Front" were created during the course of the people's war to mobilize broad-based mass support among workers, peasants, and people of different castes and ethnic groups. To name a few, these included: ethnic fronts such as the Tharuwan Liberation Front, the Limbuwan National Liberation Front, Nepal Dalit Liberation Front; region-based fronts like the Karnali Regional Liberation Front, Madheshi National Liberation Front; and class based organizations like All Nepal National Free Students' Union (Revolutionary), All Nepal Women's Organization

Prachanda Path was a clear indication that the Maoists were ready to extend their activities to the capital, Kathmandu, which until then had not experienced any major rebel activities.

In June 2001, after the royal massacre in which King Birendra and his family were killed, his brother, Gyanendra, ascended the throne. In October 2002, the king dismissed the government led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress and began a process of nominating successive governments. On 1 February 2005, claiming that civilian leaders had failed to contain the Maoist insurgency, Gyanendra took direct control of the state by naming himself Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The royal takeover of early 2005 also resulted in the suspension of civil liberties: high-profile political and civil society leaders were detained, telephone lines were disconnected, and freedom of speech was significantly curtailed, especially after soldiers were sent to monitor the newsrooms in all media outlets. A few of the political party leaders fled to India and, working together with their counterparts still in Nepal, regrouped to form a broad alliance against the royal takeover. Known as the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), this grouping represented about 90 percent of the seats of the parliament dissolved in 2002.

In November 2005, with the tacit support of India, the SPA signed a 12-point agreement with the Maoists in New Delhi.⁹ This agreement committed the Maoists to multiparty democracy and freedom of speech while the SPA heeded the Maoist demand for elections to a constituent assembly. Subsequent to the agreement, the political parties in the SPA, which had intermittently conducted anti-government protests, sometimes individually and at other times collectively since October 2002, intensified their agitation around the country in the beginning of 2006.

The royal government responded with a wave of arrests. Amidst serious questions about the legitimacy of the royal regime, King Gyanendra decided to proceed with local elections on 8 February 2006. Bolstered by intense opposition at home and abroad, nearly all the political parties boycotted the

(Revolutionary). See International Crisis Group. "Nepal's Maoists: Their Aims, Structure and Strategy," Asia Report N°104, 27 October 2005; and Deepak Thapa with Bandita Sijapati. *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency 1996-2004*, Zed Books, London, 2005.

⁹ The main highlights of the 12-point agreement includes: agreement that peace and prosperity of the country is quite impossible without bringing an end to autocratic monarchy and establishing democracy; SPA's acceptance to form an all-party government with full executive power, enter into dialogue with the Maoists and hold election to the constituent assembly; commitment by the Maoists to multi-party democracy. See "Unofficial English translation of the 12-point agreement between the Seven Parties and the Maoists" www.nepalresearch.org.

elections while the Maoists attacked several candidates and forced many others to withdraw their candidacy. The results from the municipal elections, which saw only a 20 percent voter turnout, was criticized as being illegitimate, flawed and unrepresentative by many Nepalis and major donors like the United States, the European Union and Japan.

Subsequently, in late March 2006, the SPA and the Maoists reaffirmed their 12-point understanding and prepared for a round of protests in April. The SPA initially called for a four-day nationwide general strike for 6-9 April, and the Maoists declared a ceasefire in Kathmandu but continued with their activities elsewhere in the country.¹⁰

Jana Andolan II received the support of people from all quarters including caste, communal, ethnic and religious groups. The protests drew many from the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and *janjati* (indigenous nationalities) communities and those from rich as well as poor backgrounds. The movement was further supported by professional civil society groups, including workers, peasants, students, civil servants, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and bank officials.

As the protests continued, an increasing number of people began joining the demonstrations. Informal estimates suggest that in Kathmandu alone 100,000 to 500,000 people, which is more than 10 percent of the city's population, participated in the movement. The royal regime responded with a curfew on 8 April with orders to shoot protestors on sight. Although small in number and much more disorganized, the protests continued. On 9 April, the SPA announced an indefinite round of protests and also called for a tax boycott. For its part, the government made an announcement that since the protests were being infiltrated by the Maoists, it would increase its enforcement mechanisms, especially the curfews. The excessive force and brutality with which the royal government attempted to quell the protests led to the deaths of 18 people and injuries to some 4,000 people, including a number of children, during the course of the 19-day movement.

Those 19 days of protests paralyzed the country's economic and political life and ultimately forced the king to concede defeat. It began with the king's address to the nation on 21 April 2006, calling on the SPA to

¹⁰ To cite few examples, on 1 April 2006, the Maoists shot two policemen in Guar in Rautahat district which lies in central Tarai region. Similarly, on 6 April 2006, the first day of mass people's movement, the rebels launched simultaneous attacks on all security installations and government offices in Malangwa, the district headquarters of Sarlahi district in the Tarai. The attacks resulted in the deaths of least sixteen security personnel, two civilians and five Maoist rebels. In addition, the Nepal Army's helicopter, Mi-17 was also shot down by the rebels. Source: *eKantipur.com*, 1 April 2006 and 6 April 2006.

recommend a name for the post of prime minister, only to be rejected by the leaders of the SPA after significant pressures from civil society and the general public. Then on 24 April 2006, the king heeded to some of the demands made by the SPA and reinstated the previous House of Representatives and also asked the SPA to “bear the responsibility of taking the nation on the path to national unity and prosperity, while ensuring permanent peace and safeguarding multiparty democracy.”

Following the restitution of the Parliament, the SPA declared that Girija Prasad Koirala would lead the new government and also announced that elections to a constituent assembly would be held at a later date. This move by the SPA was rejected by the Maoists who warned that they would continue fighting against the government forces. They argued that simply restoring the parliament would not help solve the country's problems and instead demanded that abolition of the monarchy and election of a constituent assembly be held first.

On 2 May 2006, after a series of negotiations with the Maoists, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala announced the formation of a new cabinet which included the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) or CPN (UML), the Nepali Congress (Democratic) and the United Left Front. This was followed by the 12 May 2006 arrest of four ministers from the ousted royalist government and investigations into alleged human rights violations by the army during the April movement. In the meantime, the Maoists responded by announcing a unilateral three-month ceasefire in Nepal, which helped lead to the 21 November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the 8 December 2006 Agreement on Monitoring the Management of Arms and Armies, thus ending the decade-long civil war.

FACTORS THAT LED TO THE CONFLICT

In the beginning of the people's war in 1996, the Maoists claimed that it had become necessary to introduce a ‘new democratic system’ through a ‘protracted people's war’ because “all other attempts to carry out reforms within the old ‘semi-feudal’ and ‘semi-colonial’ system had failed.”¹¹ In this regard, the spread of the insurgency can be attributed to a large extent as being a by-product of Nepal's deep-rooted socio-economic and political order.

¹¹ Deepak Thapa with Bandita Sijapati. *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency 1996-2004*, Zed Books, London, 2005.

Historically speaking, the modern-nation state of Nepal was created in the second half of the eighteenth century when Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered small states and principalities that dotted the region that is today's Nepal and merged them into his own territory of Gorkha. The military conquest of the Shah kings ended in 1816 after a standoff with the expanding English East India Company. After a series of battles and negotiations with the Company, the international boundary of Nepal as it exists today was fixed in 1860. The powers of the Shah kings, however, was usurped by the oligarchic Ranas in 1846 who ruled the country for 104 years under a system of hereditary prime ministership, and transformed the king into a figurehead. As pointed out by Michael Hutt (2004, p. 2), "...[During] the Rana regime...the extractive nature of the Nepali state remained very ingrained, and the ruling elite continued to regard the mass population as revenue producing subjects rather than citizens with rights."¹²

Among other things, the Ranas pursued a program of Hinduization and introduced a civil code called the *Mulki Ain* in 1854, which systematically codified the diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious groups of Nepal within the Hindu caste order with the Chhetris and Bahuns (Brahmins) at the top of the hierarchy. To date, these two upper-caste groups, comprising just over 30 percent of the population, have remained economically and politically dominant while other socio-cultural groups like the *janjatis* (indigenous people), Madheshis (people whose origins lie in the southern Tarai plains), and *dalits* (the 'untouchable's in the Hindu caste system) have been denied access to the state apparatus. The Rana regime was overthrown in 1951 by an alliance of the Shah king, Tribhuvan, the Nepali Congress and a fledgling communist movement. Following a decade of political instability, in 1959, the first democratic government was elected with the Nepali Congress forming a majority government. However, in December 1960, King Mahendra used emergency powers to dismiss the Nepali Congress-led government, arguing that it had "failed to maintain law and order and was endangering the sovereignty of Nepal." He further argued that the system of parliamentary democracy was alien to Nepal and instead introduced a concept of grassroots democracy and instituted what was called the partyless Panchayat system. Under the Panchayat regime, the monarchy retained absolute powers while political party activities were outlawed.

The Panchayat regime embarked on a nation-building project which sought to bring the diverse groups of Nepal into its political fold by homogenizing its populace and developing a form of Nepali nationalism that was based on

¹² Michael Hutt. "Introduction: Monarchy, Democracy and Maoism in Nepal" in Michael Hutt (ed.), *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, Indiana University Press, 2004.

the culture and traditions of the hill elite. This was mainly accomplished by imposing a “one nation, one language, one costume” policy, i.e., the Nepali nation, Nepali language and the *daura-suruwal-topi* dress code; an education system which focused on teaching in Nepali at the expense of other languages; imposition of hill cultural symbols and relics especially in the Tarai; and the requirement of oral and written Nepali skills for those wishing to obtain Nepali citizenship through naturalization.¹³

Even though political parties were outlawed by the Panchayat regime, they continued to operate underground and in April 1990, the first people's movement (now popularly known as *Jana Andolan I*)¹⁴ led by the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front overthrew the Panchayat regime and restored multiparty democracy and relegated the monarchy to a constitutional role. The re-establishment of democracy had engendered hopes that the political parties would finally be able to deliver tangible benefits to the people while reinstating democracy, human rights and rule of law in the country. However, the parties that were responsible for the restoration of democracy in the post-1990 era were preoccupied “convert[ing] politics into a lucrative business of contract commissions and appointments.” Allegations of corruption, politicization of bureaucracy, nepotism, etc., at the hands of the political parties were ripe which not only discredited political party leaders but also contributed to the “decline in the legitimacy of the system [multiparty democracy] as a whole.”¹⁵

Furthermore, in the democratic era there were high expectations amongst the marginalized groups that they would receive constitutional recognition of their languages, religions, cultures as well as have equal representation in the state organs. But the democratic years saw little change in their status. For instance, in the two elected Panchayat legislatures (of the 1980s), the share of Bahuns and Chhetris was at 50 percent but in the democratic years it increased to 53, 63 and 63 percent respectively in the 1991, 1994 and 1999 parliaments.

In addition to the issues of ethnic and caste groups, the dismal economic condition of Nepal is another factor that precipitated the insurgency. In the

¹³ John Whelpton. “Political Identity in Nepal: State, Nation, and Community” in David N. Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton (eds), *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, 1997.

¹⁴ The first people's movement or *Jana Andolan I*, was initiated in February 1990 against the backdrop of deteriorating economic conditions that had resulted from a trade and transit dispute between the government of India and Nepal.

¹⁵ Dipak Gyawali. “Reflecting on Contemporary Nepali Angst.” Deepak Thapa (ed.). *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal*. Martin Chautari, Kathmandu, Nepal.

face of deepening economic problems, the then government had lost much credibility, thus leading to the first mass uprising in 1990. However, the democratic governments of the subsequent years could not deliver on their promise of advancing development and democracy in Nepal. While the early years of 1993/94 did experience some promising results with a record 7.9 percent increase in GDP, the success was short-lived and growth rates decelerated rapidly due to political instability, bad governance, and rampant corruption among party politicians. As a result, the standard of living of many Nepalis went down relative to during the Panchayat era. Official statistics during the time of the conflict indicated that 42.5 percent of Nepal's population lived below the poverty line. Similarly, the annual per capita income was only US\$ 220, ranking Nepal 142nd on the UNDP's Human Development Index. The average annual growth rate of approximately 4 percent since 1998 was unable to absorb the estimated 500,000 youths who joined the labor force each year. There were also stark differences between regions—in the Maoist stronghold of Rolpa, for instance, per capita income registered at less than US\$ 100 while average life expectancy was only half of that in Kathmandu. In fact, the neo-Marxist analysis of Nepal's political economy indicated that the country was moving towards a classic case of center and periphery where the Nepali state's national strategy for economic planning had resulted in the 'center', Kathmandu and other urban areas, appropriating surplus from the 'periphery', the rural areas, to reinforce its control and maintain domination and dependency, leading to uneven development in the country.

Another factor of the post-1990 democratic era was the political space created for the growth of autonomous organizations under the rubric of civil society. This is not to say that civil society in Nepal never had an existence. On the contrary, during the Panchayat era, when political parties were banned, a number of government-approved organizations, such as for women, youth, workers, and peasants, were allowed to function. Then there were others like the teachers' organizations and, in particular, the student groups, which were where new generations were trained for political activism. As pointed out by Dahal, "The increasing resilience of the social and civic institutions and activities, such as literary societies, underground publications, students unions, teachers unions, human rights organizations and social and cultural associations of citizens revived the power of the public to a rich associational life."¹⁶ However, as Tamang (2002) has argued, in the post-1990 era, the growth of civil society organizations in Nepal was further nurtured by foreign assistance which at that time and still

¹⁶ Dev Raj Dahal. *Civil Society in Nepal: Opening the Ground for Questions*. Centre for Development and Governance, Kathmandu, July 2001.

continues to be channeled for the “construction of civil society.”¹⁷ Notwithstanding the strength and achievements of these civil society organizations, especially the donor-driven NGOs and INGOs in the field of development, Kathmandu-based civil society members had initially taken a lackadaisical approach to the events in the hinterland of western Nepal where the Maoist insurgency had begun and a brutal counter-insurgency campaign launched by the government. Not long after the insurgency had begun, Rishikesh Shaha argued, “It is just possible the insurgency would never have acquired the intensity it did over the years if these elite categories had been more active when the situation was getting out of hand in the hills of the mid-west.”¹⁸

In the backdrop of such developments or the lack thereof, it is but understandable that a not-so-insignificant proportion of Nepalis would be affected by the Maoists’ rhetoric—a rhetoric that spoke to the experience of extreme poverty, inequality, ethnic discontent and socio-political marginalization that was felt by the poor and often illiterate villagers. In a leaflet distributed at the beginning of the people’s war in 1996, the Maoists declared:

“To maintain the hegemony of one religion (i.e., Hinduism), language (i.e., Nepali) and nationality (i.e., Khas), this state has for centuries exercised discrimination, exploitation and oppression against other religions, languages and nationalities and has conspired to fragment the forces of national unity that is vital for proper development and security of the country.”¹⁹

Furthermore, in the 40-point charter of demands that the Maoists presented, the issues of Nepali nationalism vis-à-vis India, people’s democratic rights including issues of royal privileges, secularism, discrimination against women, *dalits*, ethnic groups, regional discrimination, land reform, employment, corruption and development were all included. Their strategy was based on the “three magic instruments of the New Democratic Revolution”—the party, the revolutionary United Front and the People’s Army. The concept of the united front “amongst the workers, peasants, different nationalities, oppressed castes and the people of the oppressed regions,” in particular was important in strengthening support for the

¹⁷ Seira Tamang. “Civilizing civil society: donors and democratic space.” *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2002, pp. 309-353.

¹⁸ Deepak Thapa with Bandita Sijapati. *A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal’s Maoist Insurgency 1996-2004*, Zed Books, London, 2005, p. 94

¹⁹ *The Worker*, No. 2, June 1996.

Maoists. It is hence no surprise that the Maoist insurgency was to grow and sustain itself over a period of 10 years, to the extent of at times severely challenging the existence of the Nepali state itself.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO *JANA ANDOLAN II*

On the first day of the pro-democracy demonstrations, on 6 April 2006, over 450 protesters were arrested in Kathmandu alone while many political activists and academics were placed under house arrest. The actions of both the king and the Maoists that day are notable. When the SPA had announced their protest program in the beginning of April, the Maoists had followed up by issuing a statement that upon receiving requests from the political parties and civil society leaders, the party had decided to halt their military actions in Kathmandu during the planned agitation.²⁰ That the Maoists had not extended their offer to the rest of the country is indicative of Maoists' wish to lend support to the pro-democracy movement in line with the 12-point agreement but it also shows that the Maoists' were not yet ready to fully renounce the war in light of the uncertainty that prevailed then, especially in the relations between the political parties and the king. In fact, on the first day of *Jana Andolan II*, the Maoists carried out a major attack in the town of Malangwa in the central Tarai district of Sarlahi. In the meantime, despite warnings issued by the political parties and their affiliates, King Gyanendra took a rather lackadaisical attitude to the planned agitation and was instead busy inaugurating the World Hindu Convention in Birgunj, Parsa district, also in the central Tarai region.

From the second day onwards, protests rippled throughout the country, and roads were blocked and buildings vandalized. Retaliation against the demonstrators heightened with the announcement of a curfew in Kathmandu on 8 April, followed by arrests of those who defied the curfew orders. The 8th also saw another major clash between the security forces and the Maoists in Kapilbastu and Rupandehi districts in the western Tarai that resulted in the deaths of 25 people. In the meantime, one pro-democracy protester was shot dead in Chitwan. Starting 9th April, 12-hour curfews became routine with the Maoists blocking all the major highways.²¹

With the movement having taken a momentum of its own, the protests continued beyond the SPA's original call for a four-day strike. On 10 April 2006, professionals and civil servants joined *Jana Andolan II* in defiance of

²⁰ "Maoists halt 'military actions' in Kathmandu Valley" *eKantipur.com*, 3 April 2006.

²¹ One pro-democracy protester was killed in Banepa, Kavre district—an adjoining district of Kathmandu on 9 April 2006.

government warnings. Following the death of a woman who had been injured during police firing in Chitwan, demonstrations spread nation-wide. On 11 April 2006, curfew hours were reduced but a peaceful rally in Gongabu in Kathmandu turned violent. In the meantime, tourists also joined the pro-democracy movement and dozens of them were arrested in Thamel.²² On 12 April 2006, daytime curfew was lifted but security forces continued to crack down on the agitators and over 500 journalists, lawyers, human rights observers and professionals were arrested.²³ Protests intensified in the following days with development workers, civil servants and students joining the protests, and the security forces continuing to respond in a heavy-handed manner. On 14 April 2006, on the occasion of the Nepali New Year 2063, the king addressed the nation calling on the parties for a dialogue. He said:

“Democracy demands restraint and consensus as all forms of extremism are incompatible with democracy...Aware of our traditions and sensitivities, as well as the self-respect and self-confidence of the Nepalese people who have always remained independent throughout history, dialogue must form the basis for the resolution of all problems. We, therefore, call upon all political parties to join in a dialogue, which we have always advocated, to bear the responsibility of and contribute towards activating the multiparty democratic polity.”²⁴

Rejecting this demand for talks, the Maoists and the other political parties maintained that the protests would continue. And, indeed, pro-democracy demonstrations were held across the country on the ninth consecutive day of the indefinite nationwide general strike called by the seven-party alliance. The brutality of the police was once again evident in the arrest of 14 NGO activists who had organized a peaceful demonstration in the capital. By 16 April 2006, businesses had remained closed for the 11th consecutive day, leading to severe shortages of daily household items, especially in the capital. The government continued to intensify its violence against the protestors—journalists were arrested and protests flared up all along the Ring Road, the circular road that encircles Kathmandu. Meanwhile, King Gyanendra met with ambassadors from the US, India and China.

²² On 11 April, two protesters get killed when police fires gunshot during a mass rally in Pokhara, Kaski district.

²³ Protester shot dead in Nawalparasi on 12 April 2006.

²⁴ The full text of the King's message to the nation on the occasion of the New Year's Day 2063 is available at eKantipur.com, 14 April 2006.

Tensions between the pro-democracy protestors and security forces escalated outside of Kathmandu with curfews imposed in areas like the tourist town of Pokhara. Meanwhile, civil servants, including those from the Home Ministry, joined the protests and several of them were arrested. Succumbing somewhat to international pressure and the situation at home, King Gyanendra met with political party leaders on 18 April. Following the meeting, the government released CPN (UML) General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, Nepali Congress General Secretary Ramchandra Poudel, and other senior leaders. The release of the leaders was regarded as a conciliatory step by the royal regime but the security forces nevertheless continued to intensify their actions against the protestors, leading to the death of four protestors and injuries to more than 200 people when Nepal Army soldiers indiscriminately opened fire at a huge pro-democracy demonstration in Jhapa district in eastern Nepal.²⁵

Failing to subdue the demonstrations, on 20 April 2006, the government announced a 25-hour curfew. While defying curfew orders, three protestors were killed in Kalanki in Kathmandu. The same day, the government also denied curfew passes to the media and the UN by closing down the police stations that had been distributing curfew passes. The UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which had been very critical of the government's repressive attitude and the manner in which it had handled the peaceful demonstrations, issued a statement indicating that the failure of the government to allow human rights monitoring teams to be deployed during the curfew violated the agreement it had with the government.²⁶ Seemingly, in an effort to assuage the demonstrators and portray himself as being "democratic," on 20 April the king offered to nominate two-time former prime minister, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai of the Nepali Congress, as the new prime minister but the latter refused the offer.²⁷

On 21 April 2006 protests and demonstrations peaked with the Ring Road filled with over 500,000 protestors. In the ensuing clashes the police fired bullets, tear gas and led baton charges, killing several individuals and injuring hundreds of others. The same evening, in a broadcast over state television, King Gyanendra announced, "We return the executive power of the country to the people. We request the seven-party alliance to recommend a name for the post of prime minister who will have the responsibility to run the government." The public and the civil society sent clear signals to political parties and the international community that the offer from the king

²⁵ "4 killed, over 200 injured in army firing in Jhapa" *eKantipur.com*, 20 April 2006.

²⁶ "Three dead in Kalanki." *Nepali Times*, Issue #295, 21 April 2006 - 27 April 2006.

²⁷ "BhatTarai rejects premiership offer." *Nepali Times*, Issue #295, 21 April 2006 - 27 April 2006.

was not sufficient,²⁸ and warned the party leaders that, “The royal proclamation is a farce, leaders beware.” For their part, the opposition parties argued that the royal offer did not address the issues raised by them and vowed to continue with the movement until all their demands were met. They maintained that the king’s offer was a conspiracy and an attempt by the king “to diffuse the ongoing people’s movement.” Similarly, the Maoists also rejected the royal offer, arguing that the royal address “has no significance because those who are participating in the movement have asked for a republic.”²⁹

The leaders of the SPA had no choice but to reject the royal offer. On the one hand, the strength of the movement thus far had been propelled by the participation of civil society and the general public who, more than anything else, were driven by the hope for lasting peace as the epilogue to the movement. Thus, the party leaders were also aware that it was essential that they placate the Maoists. The next day, on 22 April, rejecting calls for any compromise with the King, the leaders instead presented their list of three core demands, namely, reinstatement of the old parliament; formation of an all-party government; and elections to a constituent assembly that would draft a new constitution. Nepali Congress spokesperson Krishna Situala added, “If the king does not address the agenda put forward by the seven-party alliance within 24 hours, we will be compelled to form a parallel government and move ahead.”

On 22 April 2006, thousands of protesters defied the prohibitory curfew orders, broke through security cordons and marched towards the palace. But a combination of thunderstorms and heavy rains as well as the violent attacks on the protestors by the security forces dispersed the hordes. On 23 April 2006, with an 11-hour curfew and shoot-at-sight orders on in Kathmandu, the SPA leaders announced a “mammoth Ring Road rally” for 25 April. In the absence of any response from King Gyanendra to the ultimatum given to him, the leaders of the agitating parties announced that they would join the pro-democracy demonstrations starting 25 April and that senior leaders would lead the demonstrations.³⁰ In the meantime, on the 23rd

²⁸ For example, when the international community quickly issued statements welcoming the King’s address, civil society members who were in custody during that time wrote a note addressed to the international community saying, “We are pained by the support given to King Gyanendra’s address by some members of the international community. This indicates a grave misunderstanding of the power and inclusiveness of the ongoing peaceful people’s movement. We strongly urge that the international community display complete sensitivity to the will of the Nepali people and support their clearly expressed desire for a constituent assembly, on the road to democracy and peace.” “Civil Society Statement from Duwakot.” *Nepali Times*, Issue #295, 21 April 2006 - 27 April 2006.

²⁹ “Protests move into city” *Nepali Times*, Issue #295, 21 April 2006 - 27 April 2006.

³⁰ “Seven party leaders vow to take to the streets” *Nepali Times*, Issue #295, 21 April 2006 - 27 April 2006.

itself protests continued in urban centres across the country. Even small district centers such as Pokhara, Chitwan, Nepalgunj, Biratnagar, Birtamod and Damak saw massive rallies. According to media reports, an estimated 20,000 protesters came out in Dang calling for total democracy while over 30,000 people reportedly participated in a peaceful march at Mahendranagar.³¹ On 24 April 2006, the king addressed the nation near midnight and reinstated the dissolved parliament, an announcement that was greeted with jubilation on the streets.

II. MASS MOBILIZATION DURING *JANA ANDOLAN II*

As mentioned earlier, the 19 days of protests in what became known as *Jana Andolan II* was initiated by the SPA call for a general strike on 6-9 April and later extended for an indefinite period. Before the start of *Jana Andolan II*, there were three main actors in the conflict—the king, the Maoists and the parliamentary parties but by the time the movement began, the contestation had become two-way, between the king and the alliance between the Maoists and the SPA. It is an article of faith, however, that *Jana Andolan II* and the subsequent signing of the peace agreement would not have succeeded without the support from civil society members.³² By employing literature on social movements, this section of the paper seeks to dissect the events leading up to the success of *Jana Andolan II*, especially the manner in which the compact that was agreed upon between the SPA, the rebel forces and civil society, facilitated mass mobilization to end the monarchy, reinstate the parliament and, eventually, reach a peace agreement.

LEGACY OF COLLECTIVE ACTION IN NEPAL

In describing *Jana Andolan II*, Chaitanya Mishra, a sociologist, argued that the “political transition that is unfolding before our eyes now is only the last in a series that goes back at least three quarters of a century right from the

³¹ During the course of fieldwork in Chitwan, media personnel conceded that they had exaggerated these figures but that it was for a “good cause.” One member of a local radio station said that if there were 2,000 participants, radio stations used to report that there were 10,000. He further argued that the inflated numbers in of itself provided an impetus for many people to participate in the movement.

³² Civil society groups had already started protesting against the royal regime before the start of the *Jana Andolan II*. For instance, Citizens Movement for Democracy and Peace had called for a 10-hour hunger strike on 19 December 2005 in Kathmandu to appeal for a ceasefire between the conflicting parties and to press for the establishment of democracy (*loktantra*) through the development of a constituent assembly. The hunger-strike was joined by hundreds of participants from different backgrounds, such as political activists, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, professionals and civil society members.

days of the formation of the Gorkha Parishad and the Praja Parishad³³ in the 1930s.”³⁴ In fact, Nepal has witnessed several political movements like *Jana Andolan II* including the anti-Rana revolt of 1950-51; mass protests, primarily led by students against the Panchayat regime in the late 1970s which resulted in a national referendum to decide on the fate of the panchayat system;³⁵ and the 1990 movement, *Jana Andolan I*, for the restoration of democracy.

The fact that subsequent political movements in Nepal have been building upon previous ones is not unique to Nepal. Social movement scholars like Charles Tilly have analyzed political transformations using the concept of “repertoires of contention” meaning that collective actions are often routinized and at any particular point in history, there are only a limited set of routines that people learn, share and act out when they seek to act collectively.³⁶ In the aforementioned political movements of Nepal, including *Jana Andolan II*, the “repertoires of contention” have almost exclusively been “extra-systemic” wherein the movements have focused less on changing the policies of the government but have instead opposed the very political structure on which the government has based its legitimacy on.³⁷ As Mishra has further pointed out, “the principal constitutive theme of all of these political struggles was an end to hereditary autocracy and the promotion of popular sovereignty, democracy and the rule of law.”³⁸

There are however, notable differences between *Jana Andolan II* and the ones preceding it. First, the majority of participants in *Jana Andolan II* were

³³ The Praja Parishad or “People’s Council” was formed in 1935 as a secret society that aimed to overthrow the oligarchic Rana rule and introduce a democratic political system in Nepal. On the other hand, the Gorkha Parishad, a reincarnation of the banned Gorkha Dal was formed in the early 1950s under the leadership of the Ranas as a conservative, nationalistic outfit with a strong anti-Indian posture. For more details on these Parishads, see Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo Rose. 2004. *Democreative Innovations in Nepal: A Case Study of Political Acculturation*. Mandala Publications, Kathmandu, Nepal, Reprint of the 1966 edition by University of California Press; Martin Hoftun, William Raeper and John Whelpton. 1999. *People, Politics and Ideology: Democracy and Social Change in Nepal*. Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, Nepal.

³⁴ Chaitanya Mishra. 2007. “Political Transition in Nepal: Toward an Analytical Framework” in *Essays on the Sociology of Nepal*. FinePrint Books, Kathmandu, p. 26.

³⁵ The results of the referendum which took place in May 1980, 2.4 million people voted to retain the panchayat system with suitable reforms while another 2 million voted for multi-party system. See Martin Hoftun, William Raeper and John Whelpton. 1999. *People, Politics and Ideology: Democracy and Social Change in Nepal*. Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, Nepal.

³⁶ Charles Tilly. 1995. “Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758-1834” in Mark Traugott (ed) *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, Duke University press, Durham, NC.

³⁷ Lok Raj Baral. 2006. *Oppositional Politics in Nepal*. Himal Books, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2nd edition.

³⁸ Chaitanya Mishra. 2007. “Political Transition in Nepal: Toward an Analytical Framework” in *Essays on the Sociology of Nepal*. FinePrint Books, Kathmandu, p. 27.

not party activists but mostly representatives of a cross-section of Nepali society which made the movement qualitatively different from the previous revolts including the 1990 *Jana Andolan I* which was participated in mainly by political party activists. Second, the previous movements were based in urban areas and had a narrow support-base—it was mostly the middle class and the bourgeoisie who had participated in the movements. These differences between *Jana Andolan II* and the previous movements can be ascribed to the broad socio-political changes that Nepal has undergone in the post-1990 democratic era. On the one hand, after 1990, there was an increased rural-urban interactions in Nepal that was largely facilitated by the expansion and intensification of capitalism with agriculture playing a lesser role in the country's economic output, and increased decentralization and devolution of power and authority from the center to local and regional levels. The rural-urban linkages which aided in the participation of people from the rural areas in *Jana Andolan II* is also a manifestation of the ongoing armed struggle waged by CPN (M) against the remnants of feudal structures that had started to initiate the process of shifting the locus of power politics from the urban areas, mostly the center, Kathmandu, to the rural hinterland.³⁹

The post-1990 democratic era also saw the expansion of the democratic space to hitherto silenced groups like women, *dalits* and *janjatis* and also the multiplication of civil society organizations, including development and empowerment NGOs and human rights associations at the local, regional and national levels. Finally, the expansion of education had also created greater awareness, especially among the youth about liberal values and their participation in the movement echoes their questioning the legitimacy of traditional structures and values, including that of the monarchy.⁴⁰

PUBLIC DISCOURSES AND COLLECTIVE MEANINGS

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the most important defining features of the *Jana Andolan II* was the way in which the general public of Nepal, mobilized by the political parties, the Maoists and civil society, converged into an “unprecedented confluence of popular energy to challenge and defeat the 237 years of entrenched royal power.”⁴¹ But how did the movement organizers and participants collectively as well as

³⁹ Chaitanya Mishra. 2007. “Political Transition in Nepal: Toward an Analytical Framework” in *Essays on the Sociology of Nepal*. FinePrint Books, Kathmandu.

⁴⁰ Chaitanya Mishra. 2007. “Political Transition in Nepal: Toward an Analytical Framework” in *Essays on the Sociology of Nepal*. FinePrint Books, Kathmandu.

⁴¹ Ambika Prasad Adhikari. “Jana-Andolan II and New National Agenda” *eKantipur*, 24 May 2006.

individually interpret their grievances against the royal regime to then legitimize their participation in *Jana Andolan II*? As will be discussed below, *Jana Andolan II* did not happen spontaneously; rather, during the course of the movement, political parties and civil society groups used various means to interpret events and experiences to encourage and negotiate people's participation in the movement. To understand this process of interpretations and negotiations, this section will employ the concept of frame-alignment defined as "the linkage or conjunction of individual and social movement organizer's interpretive frameworks"⁴² to discuss the people's individual as well as collective rationale and incentives for participation.

When *Jana Andolan II* was initiated, there were three processes that were underway. First, people were disillusioned with the democratic exercise, particularly with the failure of mainstream political parties to bring about any meaningful change in the socio-political realities of the general public. At the most, since 1990 political parties had only provided lip service during elections and in the parliament, causing many to lose faith in Nepal's parliamentary process. But on the other hand, the conflict which had engulfed the country for ten years had brought untold suffering to the people through deaths, disappearances, displacement, destruction of infrastructure, stunted economic growth, and so on. Second, in the aftermath of the royal takeover, some sections of Nepali society had thought that perhaps the long-standing institution of the monarchy would be able to end the conflict and bring about socio-economic changes that people had hoped for and which the political parties had failed miserably to ensure. As one political commentator has pointed out,

"In effect, King Gyanendra had asked the people of Nepal to give him three years to restore both peace and democracy. Given that he had the full backing of the army, the people did not actually have a choice—at least not initially. On the other hand, if the king had gambled on the international community going along with his decision simply because the alternative presented was a Maoist takeover, he found himself quite deluded."⁴³

⁴² Social movement literature suggests four types of frame alignment processes: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. See: David Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Steven Worden and Robert Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review*, Vol 51.

⁴³ Deepak Thapa, "Reconstructing Nepal, One Step at a Time", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 2006

In the months following the royal takeover, it was clear that the King, too, was only interested in consolidating his own power by denying people their basic human rights instead of delivering tangible benefits or seeking an end to the Maoist conflict. In fact, political pundits have time and again talked about King Gyanendra's consistent refusal to seize opportunities for peace.⁴⁴

Third, the signing of the 12-point agreement between the Maoists and the SPA with the former agreeing to end the violence and accept multi-party democracy was a breakthrough that could protect democracy and human rights in the country. The movement organizers, political parties as well as civil society leader who had been organizing protests and demonstrations intermittently, were then left with the challenge of framing their objectives and aligning the goals of their movement with each other and also with the general populace. The hope for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through the 12-point agreement amidst the failure of the royal regime to improve the situation in the country provided the opportunity to encourage mass mobilization in what later became *Jana Andolan II*.

INTERPRETIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

When *Jana Andolan II* began, the SPA's strategy was focused on "frame bridging," that is, linking the goals of the movement with what social movement theorists have called "unmobilized sentiment pools" comprising of people who share common grievances but do not have the organizational base to express them.⁴⁵ With the goal of connecting people's grievances with the goals of the movement the SPA focused on outreach and information diffusion. The 12-point agreement between the SPA and the Maoists had already set the stage for the possibility of change. The SPA's "theory of change" evidently was that since the Maoists had agreed to end the violence and resort to multi-party democracy, mass support for the agreement would compel the King to heed to the demands of the people.

As a result, the SPA organized a motorcycle rally in the capital to publicize their campaign of general strike and political showdown. In other parts of the country, the message was delivered to political party cadres at the

⁴⁴ See International Crisis Group. "Nepal's Crisis: Mobilizing International Influence." *Policy Briefing*, Asia Briefing No. 49, Kathmandu/Brussels, 19 April 2006.

⁴⁵ See John McCarthy. 1986. "Profile and Prochoice Movement Mobilization: Infrastructure Deficits and New Technologies." In Mayer N. Zald and John McCarthy (ed.) *Social Movements and Resource Mobilization in Organizational Society: Collected Essays*. Transaction Books, New Brunswick, NJ; and David Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Steven Worden and Robert Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review*, Vol 51.

district and regional level mostly via telephone and circulars. According to the organizers interviewed in Chitwan, the political parties had given clear directives to all its cadres at the district levels to “do anything and everything within their reach” to organize people and hold rallies and demonstrations. Following the instructions from the central level, the district party organizations sent representatives to the SPA meetings held at the district level where they discussed strategies for mobilization. However, oftentimes, it was the sister organizations of the political parties, such as students’ unions, trade unions and peasants’ unions, that were given the responsibility of organizing demonstrations, sit-ins, etc. These activists highlighted the need to make the SPA’s general strike a success and urged the people to participate.

To garner support for the movement, the SPA used an anti-monarchy frame and spoke of the misuse of power and privileges by the monarchy. In the rallies organized in various areas around the country, political party activists chanted slogans against autocracy and demanded the restoration of democracy in the country. One of the popular slogans was the call to “Hang Paras from a tree.” Gyanendra’s son, Paras, was notorious and vehemently disliked by many Nepalis for alleged murders but who was immune from any legal action. The slogans that were used were deeply cultural in their content. For instance, one slogan that was often used was, “What does Aryaghat [the main Hindu cremation grounds in Kathmandu] want?” with the crowds responding with, “Aryaghat wants Gyanendra.” These slogans resonated with the masses and aided not only in increasing the numbers of participants but also made the campaign increasingly antagonistic and militant. Evidently formulated to warn the king of the possibility of being ousted altogether if democracy was not restored, slogans like “Act now for democracy!” and “Delay and we will demand a republic!” also charted the possible future of the country. As a result, some protestors indicated that during the course of the demonstrations, they had begun to organize in favor of a “republican form of government” which they acknowledged as being a more “modern form of government” in contrast to the existing “feudal autocracy”.

To coordinate between the political parties at the central and local levels during the course of the movement, a “*Jana Andolan* Organizing Committee” had been set up at all the district headquarters and in Kathmandu, comprising of representatives of the SPA. However, the formality of the organization was soon dismantled when members of civil society including journalists, doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, etc, too joined the movement. Thereafter, the movement rapidly gained its own momentum and each day, organizers, both from the political parties as well

as civil society, would meet informally and one or two groups would announce that they would lead the movement in one particular area and the others would join them. The meeting point for the demonstration and protests planned for the next day would be broadcast by local radio stations and all those wanting to participate would meet at a predetermined location and take the protests forward.

INTERPRETIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

As mentioned previously, the democratic years had seen the proliferation of civil society groups, including NGOs and citizens groups at the local level like women's groups, forest user's groups, etc. Unlike political party actors, these civil society organizations enjoyed a fair degree of popular support for their past roles in advocating democratic governance, social, political and human rights, civil liberty, etc. There was general consensus among these citizens' groups that if they did not actively participate in the movement, the SPA would negotiate with the monarchy, leading to an unfavorable outcome for the people. Thus, civil society groups' initial "theory of change" was that mass mobilization in support of the movement would not only lend credibility to the general strikes called by the SPA but would also serve as a check on the political parties in the future.

To encourage people's participation in a movement initially called for by the discredited political parties, civil society organizations were required to get involved not only in "frame-bridging" but also in "frame extension"⁴⁶ in order to reframe the goals of the movement as being beyond the parochial self-interests of the political parties. The following quote from one of the civil society members serves as an example of people's frustration with the politics in Nepal and why citizens groups thought it necessary to participate.

"It suddenly dawned on us that the royal takeover of February 2005 became possible mostly because of the failure of political parties to do anything and if the citizen groups also did not do anything then the country would be in shambles."

⁴⁶ Frame extension refers to "amplification of ideational elements" such that values and beliefs that might not be readily apparent or have relevance to potential constituents and supporters are made apparent by clarifying or amplifying the linkages between personal or group interests and support for the social movement organization. David Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Steven Worden and Robert Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review*, Vol 51, p. 472.

With this in mind, like-minded civil society leaders at the centre formed a loose network of civil society actors who had previously worked as human rights defenders, media personnel, development workers, social activists, etc. This network acted in close concert with the larger political movement to initiate what became known as *nagarik andolan*, or citizen's movement, to mark the involvement of citizens' groups as well as civil society members in *Jana Andolan II*. As pointed out by one of the organizers, during the planning phase, members of this network initially informed about 100-150 people they knew about launching a citizen's movement in close collaboration with party members. In the beginning, discussions were held on how to mobilize people, how to conduct mass gatherings, stage demonstrations, how to inform people about why *Jana Andolan II* was essential, what the goals of the protest programs would be, and more importantly, the crucial role that civil society could play in establishing democracy and sustainable peace in the country. At the conclusion of the meeting, each individual or group took up the responsibility to further mobilize people and organize events during the protest programs. These individuals, in turn, informed their own contacts and members of their individual groups, and from one person to another, through telephone calls, text messages and word of mouth, the rationale for the movement was legitimized and allowed it to take the momentous turn it did.

The formulation of the movement called by the SPA as *nagarik andolan* symbolically helped to garner support for *Jana Andolan II*. But civil society organizations still faced the challenge of having to galvanize the support of the people who were disillusioned and discontented with the political process in Nepal. As a result, civil society groups even while working closely with the political parties had to extend the "anti-monarchy" rhetoric used by the parties and frame their mobilization appeals with something more. This was done by framing the goals of the *nagarik andolan* with a call for change, combined with the cherished principles of peace, democracy and rights.

As one of the civil society organizers in Chitwan mentioned, the main reason for his participation was to "Free people from the shackles of two guns [that of the Maoists and the king] since the mainstream parliamentary parties had proved themselves as being incapable of doing so." Another often cited reason for participation was that *Jana Andolan II* served as a platform where individuals who were previously marginalized from politics and mainstream society, could participate and also voice their demands. For instance, Bhoj Raj Shrestha, President of the Independent Living Center, an organization that has been engaged in advocacy and promoting the rights of people with disabilities in Nepal, mentioned,

“During the course of the movement, people from all quarters were participating and we too felt that we needed to participate on behalf of our organization. In a way, we needed to tell people that despite our disabilities, we too were citizens of this country who were equally concerned about its future. And we thought that we needed to tell the world that even though we have been the most marginalized segment of the Nepali society, our call for peace and lasting democracy in the country is the same as that of the others... We basically viewed the protests as an opportunity for us to reclaim our citizenship.”

At the local level, as the movement evolved, it almost became a norm or rather a necessity for people to participate. As one individual in Chitwan recounted,

“Just witnessing the others, including women, children, peasants, workers, etc, come to the streets was a reason sufficient enough for many of us to join the movement too. In the beginning, I had not participated in the protests because of the fear of reprisals from the royal government. However, as the days passed, I saw all my neighbors and community members take part in the movement one by one. And people began to regard those of us who had not yet joined the movement as social outcasts. So I, too, began to participate.”

But these were not the only reasons. At the local level in particular, the fear of the Maoists who sought to mobilize people from the villages also was another factor that led people to participate in the *Andolan*. As one participant mentioned, “When the Maoists came and knocked on my door, I knew that I had little choice but to participate.” He further added that he did not “regret” his participation because the movement finally led the way to the signing of the peace accord and the end of the autocratic monarchy. However, it is implicit that had it not been for the fear of reprisal from the Maoists at that time, he perhaps would not have joined the movement.

In addition, *Jana Andolan II* was also aided by the vibrant media that had developed considerably in the post-1990 democratic era. The extensive network of media regularly provided up-to-date information on the protests and demonstrations across the country. The awareness of parallel efforts across the country only helped boost the spirit of the people who were engaged in the movement.

MOBILIZING THE EXCLUDED GROUPS

In a highly diverse society like Nepal where social exclusion, discrimination and marginalization along caste, ethnic and regional lines penetrate the core of society, one of the main challenges for the movement organizers was to bring together and mobilize these different groups of peoples. As evinced by the case of Chitwan, this was done primarily at two levels. The movement organizers decided to accentuate issues of class, profession, organizational affiliation, etc, that cut across caste and ethnic boundaries. This, they had hoped, would automatically reduce the significance of caste and ethnic differences. The organizers explicitly urged people to rise above their ethnic, caste differences and come together as Nepalis to work towards reinstating democracy in Nepal. In effect, as one member of civil society mentioned, the institution of monarchy had affected the lives of many people across caste, ethnic, or regional groups and the goal of “removing the institution of monarchy became a rallying point around which people from these groups were able to come together and participate in the movement.” Describing the situation in Chitwan during *Jana Andolan II*, one resident said, “People from various caste and ethnic groups came together as students, as members of organizations rather than as caste groups and ethnic groups, and participated in the movement. This I thought was the beauty of the *Andolan*.”

Another tactic that movement organizers used to secure the participation of people from marginalized groups was to explicitly discuss the rights of these groups which they argued could never be incorporated in the feudal institution that the monarchy represented. As one member of the National Dalit Federation said, “We mobilized people [primarily *dalits*] by telling them that the liberation of the *dalits* and the institution of monarchy are antithetical to each other—that the *dalits* cannot be liberated unless the monarchy which derives its legitimacy from the Hindu caste order itself is dismantled and terminated.” By drawing on connections between the monarchy and people’s experiences of marginalization and exclusion, the organizers were able to bridge the differences between various groups. Furthermore, there was an implicit understanding that once multi-party democracy was re-established, these groups would receive constitutional recognition of their languages, religions, cultures as well as have equal representation in the state organs. More specifically as *janjati* leaders

argued, the monarchy represented the very exclusionary socio-economic and cultural structures that had been primarily responsible for their marginalization within the Nepali state and society and once the institution of monarchy itself was disbanded, the state would find the space to heed to the demands of the excluded. Also important to recognize is the fact that leading members of these marginalized groups, such as from the National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, National Dalit Federation, Tharu Welfare Society, among others, had also participated in the *Andolan*, thus providing the incentive for others from the same groups to also follow suit. When individuals from these different groups came out and participated in the movement in their ethnic costumes and/or carrying their cultural relics, many were reminded of the “truly multicultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious nature of Nepal which the monarchy had always tried to homogenize.”

Even though the movement was concentrated mainly in the urban centers, people from the rural areas comprised a significant proportion of the mass. The movement organizers were adept in recognizing the sacrifices that people had to make in order to participate in the movement. To aid individuals from all quarters to participate in the movement, people were shipped back and forth from the rural areas in trucks and buses with the result that at times protestors outnumbered the residents of the smaller towns.⁴⁷ The organizers also set up a “Jana Andolan Victims’ Fund” to assist people who were injured while participating in the movement. At the local level, political party leaders, in particular the Maoists, who were “officially underground” at that time went to people’s houses and assured them that they would look after their cattle and houses if they participated in the movement.

Soon, the movement took its own course when people from walks of life, including families of security personnel, unexpectedly started to support the movement.⁴⁸ In fact, one of the main features of *Jana Andolan II* was that instead of being led by party leaders,⁴⁹ low-level cadres, members of civil society, professional associations, youth groups and community groups were at the forefront of most of the protests and demonstrations. The participation

⁴⁷ For instance, in Nepalgunj with an estimated population of 60,000, the demonstrations saw the participation of 60,000-100,000. Michael Cohen. “Nepal: Witnessing the People’s Movement” *Monthly Review*, 7 July 2006. Website: <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org>

⁴⁸ On 18 April, the Home Ministry which is responsible for the Nepal Police announced the arrest of 25 of its civil servants, including four senior officials, for demonstrating against the king inside the ministry. According to the BBC, even though civil servants had been joining the protests, this was the first time that they were arrested. See “Officials held in Nepal protest,” BBC News, 18 April 2006.

⁴⁹ Most of the senior party leaders were either detained, were in house arrest or had fled the country.

of these groups added further legitimacy to the goals of the movement and encouraged more people to participate in it. As mentioned by one interviewee in Chitwan, in a way the movement became an “opportunity for everyday citizens to assert their citizenship and practice their democratic right.” To signify their participation, these people came out on the streets beating cooking utensils, playing drums and singing pro-democracy songs.

RENEGOTIATIONS AND REASSESSMENTS

In the course of the preparations and also during the movement, the rationale to continue participating was punctuated by frequent reassessments and renegotiations between and among movement organizers and the participants. Before *Jana Andolan II* even began, there were apprehensions among the movement organizers about its success. In contrast to the 1990 movement, the timing of the second *Andolan* was significantly different. First, the external environment had changed significantly. The economic pressures experienced before the *Andolan* were not as stringent as they were in 1990 with the economic blockade imposed by India. Second, the movement of 1990 took place at a time when there was a strong wave of post-Cold War democratization taking place elsewhere. On the contrary, *Jana Andolan II* was slated at a time when there was a global fear of terrorism which the King could easily use to his advantage.

Third, in 1990, after almost three decades of the Panchayat era, there were high hopes for democracy amongst the populace. But, in 2006, Nepal was emerging from 16 years of democratic experience where political parties had failed to deliver, making it unlikely that public support for politicians would be as whole-hearted as it was in 1990.⁵⁰ In fact, as civil society members, local organizations, professional groups, and community groups started to join the protests called for initially by the SPA, there was already visible apprehension about the SPA. During interviews conducted with civil society members, they indicated that there was serious concern among the protestors that the SPA would compromise with the monarchy. At one level, civil society leaders maintained that it was only by supporting political parties, the main actors in any vibrant democracy, that democracy and sustainable peace could be instituted in the country. In this regard, the rhetoric of a “democratic middle ground” became quite common among civil society actors who argued that the monarchy and the Maoists embodied two polar extremes in Nepal’s political apparatus. And it was only the political parties and the civil society—the “democratic middle ground”—

⁵⁰ International Crisis Group. “Nepal’s Crisis: Mobilizing International Influence.” *Policy Briefing*, Asia Briefing No. 49, Kathmandu/Brussels, 19 April 2006.

that could institute as well as preserve sustainable peace, democracy, human rights and rule of law in the country. Failing that, some members of civil society also started to prepare themselves for another round of protests if the SPA failed to guarantee a constituent assembly—one of the main demands of the Maoists and also one of the clauses of the 12-point agreement.

Another source of tension that arose during the course of the movement was on the use of violent tactics. Initially, the movement was conceived of as being a “peaceful” one which, in many ways, helped to garner popular support among the populace that had already tired of violence at the hands of the Maoists and the government security forces. But, there were signs that the movement might turn violent. On 4 April 2006, students and youth leaders associated with the SPA warned that if the government clamped down with violence, they, too, would take measures accordingly. For instance, the Nepali Congress-affiliated Nepal Students’ Union president, Mahendra Sharma, said, “Students will not remain mere spectators if the government provokes protestors with draconian measures.”⁵¹ Others warned, “Those involved in taking harsh measures against demonstrators should be ready for retribution after the restoration of democracy.”⁵²

It is notable that the course of the movement was determined largely by the movement organizers. In some cases, protestors met the violence of the security forces with their own violence such as overrunning security cordons, forcibly entering restricted zones, defying curfew orders, and targeting symbols that represented the monarchy, including statues of kings. In other instances, especially in the movements organized by civil society members, the demonstrations were carried out peacefully. To cite an example, in a protest program organized in the town of Kirtipur near Kathmandu about a week into the movement, approximately 2,500 demonstrators comprising of students, farmers, housewives, young boys and social workers from the capital peacefully listened to poems and satires. Given the nature of the protest program organized there, local residents of Kirtipur, who had initially hidden in their rooms and watched the demonstrations clandestinely, joined the anti-king rally. As reported, the residents of the area conceived of the rally as an instance when a part of their history was being played out, especially since Kirtipur had resisted Prithvi Narayan Shah when he had laid siege to parts of Kathmandu in 1768. The peaceful nature of the Kirtipur demonstration rested largely on the role played by political science professor Krishna Khanal from the nearby Tribhuvan University. When security forces arrived at the site where the

⁵¹ *eKantipur*, 3 April 2006.

⁵² *Ibid.*

rally was being held and the young men in the rally armed themselves with bricks, the professor told the demonstrators, “No stones my friends, let’s do it peacefully.” Afterwards, when the army’s armored personnel carrier moved in to disperse the crowd that was out in defiance of the curfew, the demonstrators lay down on the road in “true Tiananmen fashion”, thus showing how the “moral might of a peaceful rally can overpower repressive state forces.”⁵³

However, the security forces were indiscriminate in their use of force. It was quite clear that police brutality had obviously spurred the protestors towards a more radical line. In fact, OHCHR, which had been monitoring the protests, issued a statement that said, “While it seems that violence has abated in many places, by both demonstrators and the police, OHCHR-Nepal remains concerned at the unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by police.”⁵⁴

III. FROM PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT TO PEACE AGREEMENT

The positive impact of *Jana Andolan II* especially in terms of its outcome—the end of the royal regime and the signing of a peace agreement with the Maoists—was facilitated by several factors, crucial amongst which are (a) the convergence of agendas through the 12-point agreement; (b) insider-outsider dynamics; (c) the role of special people and special events; and (d) broad socio-economic processes during the royal regime.

CONVERGENCE OF AGENDAS

Political analysts in Nepal have argued that if it were not for the 12-point agreement between the SPA and the Maoists, *Jana Andolan II* could not have taken off and by extension, a peace agreement between the government and the rebel forces would not have materialized. Undoubtedly, there is some truth in that view because the period preceding *Jana Andolan II* had witnessed a triangular contest between the King who had dissolved the democratically elected parliament and severely curtailed the activities of political parties; the Maoists who continued to wage an insurgency against the state with questionable successes, especially after the deployment of Nepal Army; and the parliamentary parties that was struggling to reinstate the dissolved parliament and return to power.

⁵³ Naresh Newar. “A tale of two demonstrations: Will Nepal go the way of Kirtipur or Gongabu?” *Nepali Times*, Issue #294, 14 April 2006 – 20 April 2006.

⁵⁴ “Curfew lifted; protests continue.” *Nepali Times*, Issue #293, 7 April 2006 - 13 April 2006.

With all the three principal actors staunchly opposed to one another, the political impasse the country was experiencing was only understandable. Describing the situation, Anup Pahari points out,

“Most known internal conflicts involve two parties—typically the state and armed rebels. In Nepal’s case it is no longer a two-way (state versus Maoists) but a three-way contest—political parties versus the Maoists versus the monarchy. If unilateral victories are hard to come by in a protracted two-way contests, there are near impossibilities in three-way conflicts. There is no ‘solution’ other than to seek a resolution.”⁵⁵

It was apparent only an understanding between any two would have been able to move things forward. An alliance between the royal regime and the Maoists was not possible because only on 2 January 2006, the Maoists had ended a unilateral, three-month ceasefire claiming that the government had not reciprocated and hence was not “serious” about initiating a dialogue with the Maoists. But more fundamentally, the institution of the monarchy epitomized the feudal structure that the Maoist insurgency sought to dismantle, making such an alliance quite spurious even had it happened.

An alliance between the mainstream parties and the king was more likely with some form of constitutional monarchy with multiparty democracy, as was the case after the 1990 *Jana Andolan*. But the king at that time did nothing to encourage reconciliation between the royal regime and the mainstream parties but instead continued to act unconstitutionally. The result, as pointed out in an International Crisis Group report was,

...Party leaders, who are more keenly aware than ever that an unprincipled short-term deal would endanger their legitimacy and control were offered nothing to bridge the gulf of mistrust that separates them from the palace... The monarchy could probably still survive with a constitutionally circumscribed role in an early political settlement. The longer the king stays stubbornly on his course, however, the more likely it becomes that even a vestigial royal institution will no longer be acceptable to many Nepalis.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Anup Pahari. 2003. “Negotiating an End to Internal War in Nepal.” in Deepak Thapa (ed.), *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal*. Martin Chautari, Kathmandu, Nepal, p. 338-339.

⁵⁶ International Crisis Group. “Nepal’s Crisis: Mobilizing International Influence.” *Policy Briefing*, Asia Briefing No. 49, Kathmandu/Brussels, 19 April 2006, p. 3.

In the absence of any prospects for a genuine alliance between the mainstream parties and the king or the Maoists and the king, some kind of understanding between the political parties and the Maoists seemed to be the only way towards peace and restoration of democracy in the country and the 12-point agreement did just that. On the one hand, political parties had lost touch with its mass support base and limited its activities to urban areas alone. Their credibility as well as legitimacy had further eroded in the eyes of the public with factional infighting, driven by partisan interests and power plays. As a result, the reinstatement of the parliament seemed to be the only way to regain their institutional power.

That the alliance between the SPA and the Maoists happened only in 2005 and not earlier begs the question why the Maoists heeded the call to end the violence and join multi-party politics then. A plausible reason advanced by Chaitanya Mishra (2007) is the contradiction that arose within the party mechanism when in 2003 the CPN (M) announced that they had changed their political program from a “protracted people’s war” to “completion of bourgeois democracy,” essentially the establishment of a “people-based democratic program suited to the 21st century.” This transition within the CPN (M), he argues, “prepared the ground for a series of agreements—as well as the currently ongoing [*Jana Andolan II*] cooperation—between the parliamentary parties and the CPN (Maoist).” In addition to the change in their strategy, the insurgency itself had reached a stalemate in many regards—in the face of attacks and counterattacks against the Maoists by the state security forces, an absolute military victory for the Maoists was not possible; the realization that the urban insurrection called for by Prachandapath was not possible because of the Maoists’ failure to infiltrate Kathmandu; internal tensions within the party apparatus—especially among the leadership as well as command and control problems in the rank and file.⁵⁷ Thus the Maoists’ imperative to form an alliance with the mainstream parties have been aptly described by an International Crisis Group report as follows:

“The Maoists cannot take Kathmandu militarily, strangle it into economic collapse or hold it with their current troop strength even if they were to achieve a surprise victory...For this the Maoists need the mainstream political parties. Within their theoretical framework, they have to pursue united front tactics, which logically means aiming to complete the bourgeois

⁵⁷ International Crisis Group. *Nepal’s New Alliance: The Mainstream Parties and the Maoists*. Asia Report No. 106, 28 November 2005.

democratic revolution against the palace in alliance with the political parties.”⁵⁸

Thus, through the 12-point agreement, by the time of *Jana Andolan II*, the triangular contest had become a two-way fight, between pro-royal and anti-royal forces, i.e., between the king against the alliance of the Maoists and the SPA. The agreement in essence gave the Maoists the legitimacy they were seeking for their “revolution”.⁵⁹

At the time of *Jana Andolan II*, the CPN (M) outfit was still outlawed but the Maoists played a significant role in ensuring the success of *Jana Andolan II*. First, the threats that the Maoists issued during the February 2006 municipal polls was central in delegitimizing the royal regime. Analysts have argued that in the absence of violent threats from the Maoists, voter turnout would have easily exceeded 51 percent, which would have meant the “total rejection of the political parties’ call for a boycott of the elections” which, in turn, would seem to have been a referendum on the political parties themselves.⁶⁰

Second, despite the 12-point agreement and the announcement of a ceasefire in Kathmandu during the course of the general strikes called for by the SPA, the Maoists continued with their activities elsewhere in the country. As pointed out above, on the first day of the movement itself, the Maoists launched attacks on all security installations and government offices in Malangwa, the district headquarters of Sarlahi district, resulting in the deaths of least 16 security personnel, two civilians and five Maoist rebels. Even though the mainstream political parties insisted that the people’s movement was not a joint undertaking with the Maoists, analysts have pointed out that the attacks carried out by the Maoists were “deliberate.”⁶¹ In fact, the continued military campaign by the Maoists helped to increase pressure on the palace to heed to the demands of the SPA-led movement.

Despite the success of the *Jana Andolan II*, it is important to note here that since the alliance was based not on shared goals or shared analysis but on the Maoists and the mainstream parties’ individual self-interest, primarily the belief that they could use the other to achieve what each wanted. In this

⁵⁸ International Crisis Group. *Nepal’s New Alliance: The Mainstream Parties and the Maoists*. Asia Report No. 106, 28 November 2005, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Rajendra Dahal. “Deal on Again,” *Nepali Times*, Issue #290, 17 March 2006 - 23 March 2006.

⁶⁰ Bihari K. Shrestha, “The 7-party quagmire,” *Nepali Times*, Issue #289, 10 March 2006 - 16 March 2006.

⁶¹ International Crisis Group. “Nepal’s Crisis: Mobilizing International Influence.” *Policy Briefing*, Asia Briefing No. 49, Kathmandu/Brussels, 19 April 2006.

sense, the alliance was vulnerable from the very beginning and has had repercussions on the future course of Nepal's political developments.

INSIDER-OUTSIDER DYNAMICS

The international community, which has always played an important role in the social, political and economic life of Nepal particularly because of Nepal's dependence on foreign aid, also played a crucial role during the course of *Jana Andolan II*, sometimes in support of it and sometimes against. As has already been established, one of the defining features of *Jana Andolan II* and the subsequent peace agreement was the alliance between the democratic forces and the rebel group. Hence, it is important to analyze the insider-outsider dynamics from the time the 12-point agreement was signed.

This agreement and their subsequent albeit indirect participation in the people's movement provided the Maoists with the legitimacy for their "revolution."⁶² The SPA leadership, however, had to placate their cadre who were apprehensive about the Maoists as well as warnings issued by the royal regime. Home Minister Kamal Thapa had issued a strong statement warning parties not to join hands with the Maoists, otherwise they, too, would be treated like criminals.⁶³ But at the same time, the political parties were also aware that any compromise with the king would not be acceptable to the people. In fact, reputed civil society members had already started to question the legitimacy of the king's regime even before *Jana Andolan II* had started. For example, on the occasion of its 10th conference, the Nepal Bar Association, declared its "commitment to constitutional supremacy and rule of law, called for the dissolution of the present government and demanded elections for a constituent assembly." These stipulations in their demands were interpreted by many as a "polite way of saying 'republic'."⁶⁴ Another indication that the demand of the time was for a republican form of government were the student elections held in March 2006 in approximately 200 colleges all over the country in which almost everyone campaigning on a republican platform was elected. In contrast, student organizations affiliated with royalist parties failed to receive even minimal support. The results from the elections was a clear indication of the future to come and epitomized the mood of the public during the post-royal takeover period.⁶⁵

⁶² Rajendra Dahal. "Deal on Again," *Nepali Times*, Issue #290, 17 March 2006 - 23 March 2006.

⁶³ *Nepali Times*, Issue #290, 17 March 2006 - 23 March 2006.

⁶⁴ C.K. Lal. "A Future Foretold." *Nepali Times*, Issue #289, 10 March 2006 - 16 March 2006.

⁶⁵ C.K. Lal. "A Future Foretold." *Nepali Times*, Issue #289, 10 March 2006 - 16 March 2006.

In the same manner, external forces, especially the international community expressed divergent views about the mainstream parties' alliance with the Maoists. For instance, while the Indians called on the parties to implement the 12-point agreement, the US envoy warned parties to rethink their pact with the Maoists.⁶⁶ The fact that India's views at that time differed from almost all the others in the international community requires further elaboration. The geopolitical reality of Nepal, especially the open border with India, is such that among the various international actors, India has the greatest leverage over Nepal. Owing to age-old traditional relations, the open border and economic, social, political and cultural relations subsisting between the two countries, Nepal is often compelled to accept direct and indirect infringements of its sovereignty by India. According to political scientist Hari Roka, "India looks at the activities in Nepal from its own security point of view," and India has mostly interfered when its security concerns are threatened.⁶⁷ Nationalists in Nepal often claim that the Indian ambassadors in Kathmandu are the real rulers of Nepal. Starting from the Delhi Compromise signed in 1951 between the Rana oligarchy, Nepali Congress and the then King Tribhuvan, India has been playing Big Brother and time and again brokered negotiations between agitating groups and the government of Nepal. India, through a seven-member political delegation,⁶⁸ also helped forge an alliance between the Maoists and the SPA when it became clear that the activities of Maoists in Nepal were also threatening India.⁶⁹ Back in 2004, the then Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, had indicated that "India should be worried about the growing Maoist insurgency as the alliance of the Nepali and Indian Maoists had put the 6 states from Bihar to Andhra Pradesh at risk."⁷⁰ The move to assist in the alliance especially against the royal regime was also aided by the fact that the royal takeover had negatively affected Indian business and political interests. In fact, the Indian Foreign Minister said, "We have in a fraternal spirit called for the early restoration of multiparty democracy, immediate release of political leaders and lifting of restrictions on their constitutional rights and removal of media censorship," and added, "Indian television news channels are not being carried by Nepali cable service providers. M/s United Telecom Ltd, an Indian joint venture company providing telephone

⁶⁶ Bihari K. Shrestha, "The 7-party quagmire," *Nepali Times*, Issue #289, 10 March 2006 - 16 March 2006.

⁶⁷ Hari Roka. "Nepal-India Border Regulation in the Context of Present Conflict." In Shiva K. Dhungana (ed.). *The Maoist Insurgency and Nepal-India Relations*. Friends for Peace, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 2006.

⁶⁸ The seven-member political delegation included Congress MP Chandrasekhar Sahu, CPI national secretary D. Raja, Janata Dal (Secular) leader Surendra Mohan, Samajwadi Party MLA Suneelam, Socialist Front leader Anil Mishra and National Congress Party general secretary D.P. Tripathi.

⁶⁹ "Struggle for democracy in Nepal will intensify," *The Hindu*, Oct 02, 2005.

⁷⁰ Hari Roka. "Nepal-India Border Regulation in the Context off Present Conflict."

services has not been allowed to operate since the imposition of the emergency.”⁷¹

On the other hand, from the time the 12-point agreement was signed, the US in particular, had opposed the idea of mainstream parties forming a pact with the Maoist rebels without the former first renouncing violence.⁷² Meanwhile, Beijing insisted on “unity between constitutional forces”, meaning between the political parties and the king, which put further pressure on the parties. However, considering the public mood once the movement had begun, the international community too began to change their stance and put pressure on the royal regime which helped establish the credibility of the movement participants to a large extent while delegitimizing the royal regime at the same time. For instance, in view of the public sentiments expressed during the movement, on 15 April 2006, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the king to take the necessary steps to resolve the crisis which had intensified over the course of the movement.

Similarly, at the height of *Jana Andolan II*, India’s special envoy to Nepal, Karan Singh, gave a clear indication of Delhi’s concerns over the deteriorating situation in Nepal. He said, “It is not our intention to interfere in the internal affairs of another country but the last thing that we would want is for Nepal to dissolve into chaos.”⁷³ Furthermore, India also sent a clear message that in the absence of a substantive transfer of power from the king to an all-party government, neither the protestors would be satisfied nor the king’s regime gain international acceptance.⁷⁴

In what was evidently a major policy shift of the USA toward the monarchy in Nepal, in an interview with the CNN, the American ambassador to Nepal said that “Nepal’s monarch could face a messy abdication if he further delays returning power to the people.” The American government’s position at that time helped to further encourage the political parties.⁷⁵ In addition, the office of the UN OHCHR, which had set up office in Kathmandu in April 2005, had also been monitoring *Jana Andolan II* and widely publicized the excess use of force by security forces on the demonstrators

⁷¹ Suo Moto Statement by External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh in the Rajya Sabha on the developments in Nepal, 4 March 2005. Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi.

⁷² Rajendra Dahal. “Deal on Again,” *Nepali Times*, Issue #290, 17 March 2006 - 23 March 2006.

⁷³ “Officials held in Nepal protest” 18 April 2006. Downloaded from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

⁷⁴ International Crisis Group. “Nepal’s Crisis: Mobilizing International Influence.” *Policy Briefing*, Asia Briefing No. 49, Kathmandu/Brussels, 19 April 2006.

⁷⁵ Subsequent to the interview, the US Ambassador James Moriarty was later summoned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *eKantipur.com*, 19 April 2006.

which further delegitimized rule by the king, especially among international actors.

In addition, on 19 April, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists jointly issued a statement urging the UN Security Council to put the human rights crisis in Nepal on its agenda and asked the international community to impose targeted sanctions on King Gyanendra, his deputy in the council of ministers, Tulsi Giri, three ministers and the heads of the security agencies, including prohibiting the entry of these individuals to other countries, freeze their personal assets for their role in “setting or implementing abusive policies.” During an international meeting in Geneva convened by the government of Switzerland to review Nepal’s human rights record, Amnesty International’s Secretary General, Irene Khan added,

“The human cost of the conflict in Nepal has been catastrophic: people have been killed or ‘disappeared’, women attacked and raped, children abducted to fight as soldiers, and critics of the regime have been locked up...King Gyanendra’s government seems impervious to the suffering of the people. The international community must now apply pressure through targeted sanctions that will have a direct impact on the King and his cohorts.”

Such strong messages from the international human rights community gave further boost to the protests and dissent in the country. It also helped to establish, at least in international circles, that the king’s assurances of eventually handing power back to the people and instituting multiparty democracy in the country were disingenuous.⁷⁶

However, after the royal proclamation of 21 April 2006, when the king announced that he would return power to the people and asked the parties to recommend a name for the post of prime minister, the international community was quick to welcome the king’s statement and urged the political parties to initiate the process of power transfer. On April 22, Kofi Annan issued a statement, saying, “It is up to the parties to work out the modalities for the transfer of power in a timely, orderly and responsible manner.”⁷⁷ Similarly, urging the SPA to work together and refrain from violence, other countries like the US, India, the UK and Canada were also swift to issue statements “welcoming” the King’s announcement. For

⁷⁶ *eKantipur.com*, 18 April 2006.

⁷⁷ “UN, Canada welcome king’s address” *eKantipur.com*, 22 April 2006.

example, India's special envoy, Karan Singh said, "I think it is the right thing to defuse the situation... Now the political parties have to shoulder the responsibility and take the process forward. The sooner that can happen the better it will be." Similarly, US Department of State spokesperson said, "We are pleased that King Gyanendra's message today made clear that sovereignty resides with the people" and further urged the seven parties to "refrain from violence to allow the restoration of democracy to take place swiftly and peacefully" by nominating a prime minister and a cabinet.⁷⁸

The fact that the SPA convened a closed-door meeting amidst international pressure is indicative of the fact that the SPA probably would have compromised with the royal regime if it were not for pressure from the public and civil society. The public sent out clear signals to the political parties that the offer from the king was insufficient while civil society members strongly urged the international community not to compel the political parties' leaders to compromise with the King since the "will of the Nepali people" was for "a constituent assembly, on the road to democracy and peace."⁷⁹

In sum, *Jana Andolan II* probably would not have received the legitimacy that it did without the international spotlight because the movement, after all, had its roots in an agreement that was signed between the highly discredited political party leaders and a political outfit that was "outlawed" and even labeled "terrorist." But it is also important to note that the internal-external dynamics, especially the leverage that external forces can have on internal issues can, in the absence of a thorough understanding of the issue at hand, can work to delegitimize popular will.

SPECIAL EVENT(S) AND SPECIAL PEOPLE(S)

Literature on peace building and conflict transformation is about the role played by special people and/or special events.⁸⁰ In that regard, in the aftermath of *Jana Andolan II*, many quarters began to hail the octogenarian president of the Nepali Congress, Girija Prasad Koirala, as the main driving force behind the 12-point agreement between the SPA and the Maoists, and also behind the subsequent peace agreements. However, the nature of *Jana Andolan II* and the mass support that it received is indicative of the fact that

⁷⁸ "India, US welcome King's step" *nepalnews.com*, 22 April 2006.

⁷⁹ "Civil Society Statement from Duwakot." *Nepali Times*, Issue #295, 21 April 2006 - 27 April 2006.

⁸⁰ CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. "Emerging Lenses for Exploring Reflection on Peace Practice (RPP) Cumulative Case Studies." RPP Consultation on Understanding Cumulative Impacts, 15-16 December 2008.

it was not one leader or one event that led to the success of the movement. Koirala had long lost his credibility with allegations of corruption and nepotism in the years that he had led successive governments. That Koirala “consistently adopted a law and order approach to the insurgency and attempted to crush it through police action,”⁸¹ also means that he did not command the total trust of the Maoists and so to imply that he engineered the whole peace process as well as the movement would be fallacious.

In that sense, the success of *Jana Andolan II* cannot be attributed to any one person or any particular group. Even though the general strikes that later evolved into a mass movement had been called by the SPA, it was not the senior party leaders that were at the forefront of the movement. In fact, during the course of the movement, most of the senior leaders were either detained, under house arrest, or outside the country. From the side of the political parties, it was the “little leaders” including mid- to low-level political party cadres mobilizing people at the local level, student leaders who were in the forefront of demonstrations, and women activists who came out chanting slogans, that formed the vanguard of the movement.

Similarly, the active participation of respected civil society members in the movement was also one of the major factors that led to its success. Since most of the political leaders involved in the movement were of questionable reputation, the active engagement of well-known civil society members, including leading human rights activists, peace activists, academics and journalists, was essential in providing legitimacy to the movement. Because of the level of respect they commanded, they were easily able to mobilize the masses.

There were also several “special events” that were of crucial significance in launching the *Jana Andolan II* and also in propelling it forward. There were far too many of them to be mentioned here, but the two key events stand out: the 12-point Agreement, and the rejection of the reconciliatory step offered by the king in his 21 April announcement to the political parties. First, as has been mentioned several times in the paper, the 12-point agreement signed between the political parties and the Maoists led to *Jana Andolan II* and the successive events. Second, when some international organizations and foreign governments sought to pressure the SPA into accepting the king’s first offer of 21 April in which he had asked parties to nominate a prime minister, civil society members released a widely-circulated open letter to Kathmandu-based ambassadors from their detention

⁸¹ International Crisis Group. *Nepal’s New Alliance: The Mainstream Parties and the Maoists*. Asia Report No. 106, 28 November 2005.

center, urging the international community not to compel the political parties' leaders into compromising with the king. In the letter addressed to the international community they wrote,

“We are pained by the support given to King Gyanendra's address by some members of the international community. This indicates a grave misunderstanding of the power and inclusiveness of the ongoing peaceful people's movement. We strongly urge that the international community display complete sensitivity to the will of the Nepali people and support their clearly expressed desire for a constituent assembly, on the road to democracy and peace.”⁸²

Along with the letter, there was also significant pressure on the political parties from the public urging them not to compromise with the king. Counterfactuals are hard to ascertain in cases like this but it is nevertheless safe to assume that had the parties compromised with the king then, Nepal would have experienced another re-run of the post-1990 era and settled again for some form of a closed-door agreement between the king, the mainstream political parties and some factions of the left, and the Maoist insurgency in all likelihood would have continued.

BROAD SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The royal takeover by King Gyanendra was interpreted by many analysts in Kathmandu as paralleling the move by Gyanendra's father, Mahendra, who had dismissed the Nepali Congress-led government in December 1960 to institute the Panchayat regime. However, because of the changed socio-political situation in Nepal and abroad, it was apparent that Gyanendra would not reach the same degree of success that his father had in the early 1960s. For one, the people of Nepal had always been aware and cautious of the dictatorial tendencies of Gyanendra, especially after he made statements like, “Unlike my brother [King Birendra], I will not keep quiet.”⁸³

Second, the political, economic and social conditions in 2006 were vastly different than that of the early 1960s. In the most basic terms, literacy had gone up significantly since then and a whole generation of Nepali had come of age in the post-1990 democratic years. In 1960, Mahendra had the support across a cross-section of society. The Nepali Congress government (1959-1960) had outlawed *birta* system of tax-free land tenure, leading to

⁸² “Civil Society Statement from Duwakot.” *Nepali Times*, Issue #295, 21 April 2006 - 27 April 2006.

⁸³ “Pratigaman ko ta Dhoka Nai Banda Cha.” *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-31 Kartik 2059

the creation of a significant pool of disgruntled elites who supported Mahendra. Furthermore, the king also had support from section of the left. On the contrary, most of Gyanendra's supporters were discredited leaders from the Panchayat era and a few others who had benefited during the Panchayat regime. With a more educated population, the experience with multiparty democracy and freedom of speech for more than a decade, the likelihood of Gyanendra receiving the kind of support that his father had was almost nil.⁸⁴

The timing of the royal takeover was not the most propitious either. The country's economy which was on a downward spiral was further strained by the royal regime's imperative to fulfill the needs of the palace, the army and the police even as international aid was being rapidly withdrawn or withheld. As a result, the country was enduring double-digit inflation, revenue shortfalls and a disbursement crisis. The level of economic problems that citizens faced was becoming more and more stark.⁸⁵

When King Gyanendra took over, he had presented a roadmap which was supposed to usher in "meaningful democracy" in the country. But senior democratic leaders like Madhav Kumar Nepal, Narhari Acharya and Ram Chandra Poudel as well as civil society members and peace activists like Krishna Pahari, Devendra Raj Panday and journalist Shyam Shrestha, all of whom supported non-violent struggle, continued to remain in custody.⁸⁶ The prolonged detention of these leaders served to undermine the king's words and failed to convince the mainstream parties that his calls for dialogue during the course of the movement were sincere. In fact, many believed that the king was only interested in denying the people of Nepal the "democratic space they needed to decide their future and to resolve the conflict peacefully."⁸⁷

Despite the claims made by some of his supporters, the king never enjoyed popular support for his experiment. In the face of failures to deliver public services and satisfy the economic needs of the people, the only hope that the king had for securing his autocratic rule was the "force of arms and the lack of an overwhelmingly popular alternative [i.e., mainly the people's dissatisfaction with political parties]."⁸⁸ In fact, on 3 April, just before the

⁸⁴ "Eklai Hinderi Kahi Pugindaina." *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-31 Kartik 2059 and "Pratigaman ko ta Dhoka Nai Banda Cha." *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-31 Kartik 2059

⁸⁵ C.K. Lal. "A Future Foretold." *Nepali Times*, Issue #289, 10 March 2006 - 16 March 2006.

⁸⁶ C.K. Lal. "An April Uprising." *Nepali Times*, Issue #292, 31 March 2006 - 06 April 2006.

⁸⁷ *eKantipur.com*, 18 April 2006.

⁸⁸ International Crisis Group. "Nepal's Crisis: Mobilizing International Influence." *Policy Briefing*, Asia Briefing No. 49, Kathmandu/Brussels, 19 April 2006.

start of *Jana Andolan II*, following the appeal from SPA leaders, including the former prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, to civil servants to come to the streets and support the general strike, the Chief Secretary, Lok Man Singh Karki, had issued orders to government secretaries to ensure that no civil servant took part in the strike.⁸⁹ At the same time, major trade unions had already asked their members to take part in the parties' rallies, placing civil servants in a quandary. In the end, civil servants, including senior Home Ministry and Supreme Court officials, joined the movement. The demonstrations were joined by key workers from government banks, telecommunications, education and health sectors.

In the post-February 2005 period, public discontent started to rise with the apparent failure on the part of the royal government to serve the needs of the people and Gyanendra's failure to seize opportunities for peace talks, especially with the Maoists. The lack of support from bureaucrats in the government sector provided further evidence that the royal rule lacked any legitimacy. This helped boost the morale of the people who were leading and also participating in the movement. Second, when the civil servants joined the movement en masse, it basically removed one of the two crucial constituencies that the king's regime had hinged on, leaving the king with only the support from the army. Third, the support of the civil servants combined with that of other professional groups like doctors, development workers, teachers, etc, and the business community raised serious doubts about the government's ability to function.

IV. CONCLUSION: IMPACT AND LESSONS OF *JANA ANDOLAN II*

Jana Andolan II exemplified the power of people's participation in not only challenging and defeating the centuries-old institution of monarchy but also bringing an end to a conflict that had engulfed the country for a decade. The fact that almost all the agreements signed, policies proposed as well as implemented, bills passed, commissions set up, and more importantly, the constituent assembly elections held, make reference to the mandate given by the *Jana Andolan* is emblematic of the significance and the legitimacy that the movement holds in the context of Nepal's contemporary political history.

In terms of impact, as has been already mentioned, one of the most important achievements of *Jana Andolan II* was that it ended the direct rule

⁸⁹ *eKantipur.com*, 3 April 2006.

of King Gyanendra (and eventually the institution of the monarchy as well) and helped reinstate the parliament. It also created a conducive environment for the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, ending the decade-long conflict of Nepal. The interim government formed on 1 April 2007 also included representatives from the Maoists and fixed the date for the election to the constituent assembly for June 2007 though the elections were not held until April 2008.

In addition to ending the conflict, there were other achievements as well. Following the reinstatement of the parliament, the government enacted the most dramatic Act of 18 May 2006 which was passed unanimously by the parliament. This Act did away with all royal privileges and powers of the monarchy, including removing the king as commander-in-chief of the army and putting the 90,000 troops under parliamentary control; imposing taxes on the royal family and its assets; conferring only ceremonial authority to the monarchy; dissolving the Raj Parishad, the royal advisory council; removing references to royalty from the army and government titles; and declaring Nepal a secular state instead of its previous status as a Hindu kingdom. The Act, which was drafted in the spirit of the *Jana Andolan II*, superseded the 1990 Constitution and has been hailed as the “Nepali Magna Carta,” which, according to Prime Minister Koirala, “represents the feelings of all the people.”

The constituent assembly election of April 2008 has been considered historic in the sense that it is the first time in Nepal's history that the people were provided with the opportunity to craft their own constitution. In earlier instances, it was commissions set up by the king that drafted the constitution.

But the gains seemed short-lived after Nepal's indigenous communities started to protest against their lack of representation in the interim constitution-making body. And, soon, unrest broke out in Nepal's main economic region, the Tarai. There was also much delay in moving the peace process forward. In characteristic fashion, political parties started bickering with each trying to claim a larger share in whatever governance structure or mechanism was instituted. The internal party structures of the mainstream parties remain non-inclusive and unrepresentative and their decision-making processes are still non-democratic. Even after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in December 2006, the Maoists did not

fully renounce violence and embrace political pluralism—killings, abductions and forced extortions continued.⁹⁰

On the whole, civil society, which was thought of as being the driver of the political transition in Nepal, has remained silent. Quite clearly, civil society members had become united during the April movement focused on the common goal of ending royal rule and ushering democracy into the country. However, in the aftermath of the April movement, group and individual interests have diverged. Some civil society members began adopting a radical stance and pushed for a republic; others were drawn into the fringes of the government, for example, by appointments to the Rayamajhi Commission formed to investigate the excesses by the previous government during *Jana Andolan II* and to the Ceasefire Code of Conduct National Monitoring Committee. But perhaps more important, political parties have used patronage to reward their civil society supporters by giving them seats in the constituent assembly. The politicization of civil society members left a vacuum when the country was faced with a major crisis such as in the agitation in the Tarai in early 2007.

But despite these pitfalls, the outpouring of popular sentiment during *Jana Andolan II* serves as a check on the political parties and their leaders. After all, even though there was massive turnout during the anti-king movement, which the leaders themselves had not expected, political party leaders are also aware that the mass outpouring of people against the king cannot be equated to support for the political parties or their leaders. Hence, as pointed out by analysts, “Political leaders are probably aware that they lack a clear mandate to conclude back-room deals on the people’s behalf.”⁹¹

There are also key lessons learnt during the course of the movement that require special mention. First, notwithstanding the unprecedented level of people’s participation, the movement would not have been successful without the active involvement of the political parties, the civil society and the Maoists. In this regard, it is clear that while *Jana Andolan II* was able to influence the political structure of the Nepali state, its policies, its party mechanism, as well as its dominant culture, the movement itself and its goals were shaped by the interplay between internal forces—the structure of the state, the institution of the monarchy, the mechanism of political parties and their relationship with each other, plus external influences.

⁹⁰ International Crisis Group. *Nepal’s Peace Agreement: Making it Work*. Asia Briefing No. 126, Kathmandu/Brussels, 15 December 2006.

⁹¹ International Crisis Group. “Nepal’s Crisis: Mobilizing International Influence.” *Policy Briefing*, Asia Briefing No. 49, Kathmandu/Brussels, 19 April 2006.

Second, the case of *Jana Andolan II* is a classic example of how social movements are effective in mass mobilization for the short-term but their impact on bringing about lasting change is questionable. In the case of *Jana Andolan II*, one could argue that the movement contributed to sustainable peace, i.e., Peace Writ Large, since it has aided in dismantling the feudal monarchy and drafting of a new constitution by a constituent assembly which among other things will deliberate on a new state structure. But the ongoing agitation by marginalized groups, especially the unrest in the Tarai; continued violence at the hand of the Maoists' Young Communist League; the highly contested and unsettled issue of reintegration of the ex-combatants; the unresolved issue of return of captured land or of the internally displaced persons; etc, does indicate that Nepal has a long way to go before there is sustained peace.

Third, while the outpouring of public sentiments in the form of demonstrations, protests, etc, was key to toppling the royal government, ushering democracy and leading the way to a comprehensive peace accord, *Jana Andolan II* further legitimized "street politics" in Nepal. Judging from the events that followed, rather than utilizing formal institutions, people have been engaging in "direct action" such as sit-ins, shutdowns, demonstrations, etc, to raise any kind of demands such as opposition to increase in petroleum prices, seeking compensation for vehicle accidents, etc. The government, too, has unwittingly legitimized this culture by addressing only those issues which create public disturbances or which have been taken to the streets.

Finally, on the issue of whether the lessons learnt from *Jana Andolan II* can be utilized in other contexts, it is important to recognize that there were several contextual factors such as international cooperation, erosion of the traditional support base of the monarchy, experience from *Jana Andolan I*, etc, that were key to the success of the people's movement of April 2006. But having said that, *Jana Andolan II* does point to the power and strength of a primarily non-violent popular uprising to establish democracy and create an atmosphere for peace. Also, the popular support during *Jana Andolan II* has proved wrong the myth that in countries beset by extreme poverty, democratic ideals and civil liberties would not be "attractive" to the people. As pointed out by one commentator, "This myth has been laid upside down, as the citizens of one of the least developed countries decisively freed themselves from the shackles of autocracy and unequivocally opted for democracy for a third time."⁹²

⁹² Ambika Prasad Adhikari. "Jana-Andolan II and New National Agenda" *eKantipur*, 24 May 2006.