Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nepal

Identities and Mobilization after 1990

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9 Dynamics of mobilization

Varied trajectories of Dalit, indigenous nationalities and Madhesi movements[1]

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Increasing mobilization and conflict

Nepal has seen an increase in identity mobilization, including violent activities. Activities that often began as cultural promotion undertakings in the 1980s became more assertive after 1990, with ethnic organizations demanding socio-political rights, autonomy and even secession after the turn of the century. At the time of writing this chapter in early 2011, many organizations are engaged in peaceful protest activities while others are active in armed conflict. A Limbu outfit declared independence in 2008 while some armed Madhesi organizations demand secession.

A major reason for the mobilization of the traditionally excluded groups like the Dalit, indigenous nationalities and Madhesi is their perception that without mobilization their problems would not be addressed by the state under the control of the dominant group, caste hill Hindu elite (CHHE). The events in the past two decades and Nepali history in general are the basis of their largely correct perception. The state began to address the marginalized groups major problems and grievances only when the groups began to mobilize. Prior to their mobilization, the state controlled by the CHHE had in fact adopted laws and policies that discriminated against them (Hofer 2004; Lawoti 2010b; Levine 1987).

The Nepali experience is not much different than the history of empowerment of marginalized groups around the world. Groups that mobilized have been able to receive some concessions, especially in open electoral democracies. However, mobilization is not easy, as the collective action problem attests. Mobilization takes time and resources, and there are risks of sanctions and threats. For a rational human being, it is more beneficial if others engage in the costly collective actions because they can generally access the benefits when public concessions are obtained. Hence many people are unwilling to participate in collective actions and as a result collective actions are difficult to launch and sustain (Olson 1971).

How have the Dalit, indigenous nationalities and Madhesi overcome the collective action challenges? What factors contributed in overcoming the mobilization challenges? Why have these different groups mobilized in different ways

and to different extents? What have been the outcomes of the varied forms of mobilization and why have the outcomes been different? These are the questions this chapter attempts to answer.

Comparative approach

The collective action paradox has been solved to varying degrees by the Dalit, indigenous nationalities and Madhesi. I will compare the three aggregate groups to unravel factors that contributed to the different extent of mobilization for each group. In addition, I will also discuss the Limbuwan movement, an outlier, because it is the most mobilized groups among the indigenous nationalities. This will allow for a discussion of a national/ethnic group in a more nuanced manner as well as increasing cases for comparison. I am not going to analyze the mobilization of Muslims due to the recent public mobilization of the group as well as a dearth of literature on the movement, with a few notable exceptions (including Dastider 2000, 2007 and chapters by Adamson-Sijapati and Dastider in this volume).

A comparative approach is more robust in validating findings and increasing the generalizability of findings. An intensive study of a group can yield useful information and nuanced findings but one can never know for sure whether what has been found is right and generalizable unless the variable exists and helps to explain a phenomena in other cases as well (Landman 2000; Lijphart 1971).

Comparison becomes more fruitful if the cases are similar as well as different. The findings will be more robust in explaining mobilization if the variable explaining extensive mobilization does not exist in a less mobilized case. If the variable exists both in more and less extensive cases of mobilization, then that variable does not meet both the necessary and sufficient conditions to explain extensive mobilization (King, Keohane and Verba 1994). However, a variable found in similar cases will meet the necessary conditions in studies with a small number of cases (Dion 1998). Likewise, if a variable contributes to the mobilization of a movement but is absent in another mobilized case, such a variable may not be a necessary condition for mobilization.

Comparison is usually conducted cross-nationally (Gurr 1993, 2000; Lijphart 1971; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996b) but the unique context of Nepal permits a robust comparative analysis of the mobilization of various excluded identity groups within a single country. First, the political characteristics of Nepal are the same with regard to all the excluded groups. The country has always been a unitary state. Even though the Interim Constitution has committed to establish federalism, the country remains a unitary state until a new federal Constitution is promulgated. Nepal has also always been a centralized state despite a number of decentralization policies introduced. For example, the police and internal security administration and major policy making authority has always rested in the executive at the center (Lawoti 2007b). If Nepal had been a federal and effectively decentralized country, various

groups' mobilization would have been affected by the varied political characteristics and policies adopted by different provincial and local governments. In such a scenario, it would be more challenging to isolate the influence of different variables on the phenomena under scrutiny.

Second, the dominant ethnic group, CHHE, is the same with respect to all the marginalized groups, even though it may interact with it in different ways. Third, the mobilization of different groups began at around the same time, at the middle of twentieth century when the autocratic Rana Regime began to be challenged and was eventually overthrown. The same dominant group, political characteristics of the country and time frame act as constants so that we can test whether other variables, such as territorial concentration and group heterogeneity, affected mobilization. Finally, Nepal has groups that mobilized to different extents allowing an analysis of factors that contributed to the varied outcomes.

This study will contribute to establishing a tradition of comparing cases within a country when the environment is appropriate. Further, this study will show that conducting a comparison within a country can yield highly rewarding results. The literature on social movements and ethnic mobilization has often identified contributing factors without considering the effect of the temporal dimension on the analyzed variables. This chapter will identify variables that contribute to earlier mobilization among groups existing in a similar socio-political and temporal context.

Comparing the extent of mobilization (1990–2010): indicators and performances

This section will evaluate the mobilization level of different identity groups. I employ five criteria developed from the literature on social and ethnic movements and Nepal's particular context to evaluate mobilization: movement capability, the existence of extreme factions and demands, votes received by ethnic parties, representation in governance and concessions obtained by groups. After assessing each group based on each criterion, I will present a joint assessment of the mobilization of the groups based on the five criteria at the end of the section. Using five different criteria that directly or indirectly measure different aspects of mobilization will help reach a more holistic assessment. This approach will compensate the shortcomings of any particular criterion to measure the mobilization of a group in any aspect by measuring other aspects of mobilization with other criteria.

Movement capability: frequency and length of bandhs

A number of factors demonstrate the capability of the movements, including the types of organizations, networks, and leadership, and their ability to launch activities that force the government to concede to demands. *Bandhs*, when streets, highways, transportation, schools, shops, and offices are closed

down, often forcefully, are a very good indicator of the capability of movements in Nepal. *Bandhs* are difficult to enforce but have been one of the most effective forms of political action for pressuring the government to concede to demands. The government and its agencies usually ignore less disruptive kinds of pressure tactics and activities and groups and organizations resort to *bandhs* if they have the capability when other forms of pressures do not work. Movements have usually been able get more concessions through *bandhs* because they directly affect people's everyday lives and governments feel direct pressure as a result (S. Thapa 2010). Major concessions and political reforms, including regime changes from authoritarian to democratic systems, have resulted from movements that have relied on sustained *bandhs*.[2] As *bandhs* disrupt public life and economic activities, they have become unpopular among the masses but groups with grievances often feel that they have no other alternative than to resort to *bandhs* to make their grievances heard by the government (Lakier 2007; Lawoti 2007c; S. Thapa 2010).

Except for major parties with a vast organization and numerous cadres, *bandhs*, especially long ones and covering large spaces, are difficult to organize and implement, especially for organizations of identity groups that often lack a strong country wide organization and cadre base. The organizing groups must have the capability to force the closure of public commercial spaces, stop vehicular traffic and counter the police, other state agencies, and sometimes people who become restless after a couple of days of *bandhs*. Beyond the occasional popularity of the cause that leads to widespread support, the frequency and length of *bandhs* often indicate the organizational strength of identity movements' and their ability to mobilize supporters.

Compared with other identity movements, the Madhesi have organized the most *bandhs*. The nearly month long Madhesi *bandh* and related activities in January and February of 2007 has been the longest organized by an identity movement. According to the UN Nepal Information Platform (UNNIP) (2011), various Madhesi organizations called *bandhs* for 188 days in 2007, the highest among identity movements in any year during 2007–9.[3]

The Limbu movement is the second most active among those compared in this chapter. They have frequently called strikes in eastern Nepal and an indefinite strike called in February 2, 2008 lasted for two weeks.[4] The various Limbuwan organizations called 17, 12 and 13 days of *bandhs* in 2007, 2008, and 2009. The indigenous nationalities as an aggregate category have not been as active in calling *bandhs*. Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) called *bandhs* for five days and Rastriya Jana Mukti Party (National People's Liberation Party, NPLP) for one day in 2007 but neither called *bandhs* in 2008 and 2009. In 2009, the Tharus, with support from a few other indigenous groups and Muslims, called *bandhs* quite frequently, including two weeks long *bandhs* twice[5] but they were not collectively called by the Indigenous nationalities. The Dalit are the least mobilized based on this indicator. The Dalit Janajati Party (Dalit Nationalities Party, DNP) and Federation called *bandhs* for 10 days in 2007.[6] The Dalit have called a

Kathmandu *bandh* only once through 2010[7] and have never called and enforced a country-wide Nepal *bandh*.

Existence of extreme faction: armed groups and extreme demands

The existence of extreme factions, such as armed groups, means that some members have taken grave and riskier steps in the mobilization of their groups. Establishing armed groups and launching an insurgency is more difficult and riskier than organizing peaceful protests. It requires more mobilization skills, determination, efforts, and expenses. Usually such extreme factions also make extreme demands. The existence of such extreme factions could benefit moderate factions of the movement. When extreme factions emerge, the state generally negotiates with moderate ones and the state often yields more concessions than the moderate factions may have expected to get (McAdam, McCarthy and& Zald 1996a).

Madhesis have more armed groups than indigenous nationalities or Dalits. More than three dozen armed groups operated in the Tarai in 2008 and 2009. The Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Tarai People's Liberation Front) Goit and Jwala Singh TPLF-G and TPLF-J) factions are the active and well known (Pathak and Uprety 2009).[8] These organizations have demanded secession.

After 2006 several Limbu political parties and factions maintained armies and army camps (Pun 2008). The Limbu organizations at present do not claim to have armies but volunteer forces that provide security during public meetings. A Limbu organization, the Pallo Kirat Limbuwan Rastriya Manch (Pallo Kirat Limbuwan National Forum, PKLNF) declared Limbuwan as an independent state on March 23, 2008 arguing that with the end of monarchy, the treaty the Limbus had with King Prithvi Narayan Shah to remain as part of the House of Gorkha became void.[9] These armed groups make the Limbus the second most mobilized group in this indicator as well. The indigenous nationalities as a category fall lower than the Limbus. Some indigenous groups like the Tharu, Tamang, and Khambu/Rai have demonstrated armies to the media and Kirat Workers Party (KWP), a Khambu/Rai organization, is engaged in an underground armed movement. However, such groups are mostly working in the name of individual indigenous groups and not as representatives of the entire indigenous nationalities. The Dalits again fall last on this criterion. Dalits did engage in the rhetoric of armed rebellion in public forums as early as 2000[10] but this has not resulted in extreme demands or an armed movement.

Ethnic party formation and votes received

Many of the demands of the marginalized identity groups are political in nature. They can be more effectively attained by political movements and safeguarded by political parties than by socio-cultural organizations and

movements that might arise occasionally but lose steam as enthusiasm dwindles or people get distracted by everyday responsibilities and other priorities. The establishment of ethnic political parties and the votes such parties receive in elections demonstrate the ability of these parties to mobilize constituent community members in their favor.

While the Nepal Tarai Congress (NTC), a Madhesi party, was the only ethnic party to contest the first general election in 1959, a few ethnic political parties of the indigenous nationalities, like the NPLP and Mongol National Organization (MNO), and Madhesi parties, like the Nepal Sadbhavana Party, or Nepal Goodwill Party (NGP), competed in the three general elections in the 1990s. A Dalit party Nepal Dalit Shramik Morcha (Nepal Dalit Labour Front, NDLF) fielded a candidate in the 1999 election (Kisan 2005: 107–8). Only the Madhesi party, NGP, was able to elect representatives to the Parliament. Limbuwan Mukti Morcha (Limbuwan Liberation Front, LLF) was established on December 20, 1986 but it did not contest elections. By 2008 not only the number of Madhesi political parties winning seats had increased but even a few indigenous nationalities parties and a party each of Dalit and hill groups in the Tarai had won seats. Nine ethnically named parties were able to elect representatives to the Constituent Assembly in 2008 (Hangen 2010; Lawoti 2005, 2010a).

The Madhesi again are the most mobilized based on the earlier formation of ethnic political party and the highest vote received. The Madhesi political parties collectively as well as individually received the highest votes among ethnic parties till date. They obtained 11.52 percent of popular votes in 2008, followed by parties of the indigenous nationalities who got 1.52 percent votes and a lone Dalit Party, DNP, received 0.52 percent votes. The Sanghiya Limbuwan Rajya Parishad (Federal Limbuwan State Council, FLSC) of the Limbus did not contest the election separately but one faction competed under the banner of FDNF (Federal Democratic National Forum). As the leading force and the most active constituent member of the FDNF, the Limbu Party most probably contributed the most votes the FDNF received (0.67 percent) in 2008. If we consider that the Limbu faction contributed half of the FDNF votes, then it received around 0.33 percent, a substantial portion for a group with 1.58 percent population.

Representation in governance

Representation in governance also indicates the extent of mobilization of the excluded groups. Representation in state agencies could increase in two ways. First, the more groups mobilize, the more pressure they can put upon the state and polity, leading to higher levels of nomination of these groups in various organs of the state. If their mobilization is less extensive, the state and dominant group could ignore them or co-opt them at lower levels and in less numbers. Second, people from the marginalized communities could become mobilized and vote for members of their own communities to elected offices.

The Madhesi are again doing better than Dalit and indigenous nationalities, especially in the political sectors like the Constituent Assembly and cabinet where they are over-represented after the 2008 Constituent Assembly election. The Madhesis are under-represented in the non-political sectors like the bureaucracy, judiciary and the security forces but other groups are also generally excluded in those sectors. The Limbu are doing better than the Madhesi in this criterion. Like Madhesi, they are also over-represented in the Constituent Assembly and cabinet[11] and under-represented in the judiciary and bureaucracy but have reasonable presence in the security forces. The indigenous nationalities, even when the Limbus are included, are collectively slightly under-represented in the Constituent Assembly, under-represented in the cabinet, and highly excluded in the bureaucracy and judiciary. The representation of indigenous groups has been higher than the Dalit in the executive and Parliament but their representation in the executive has declined compared to 1990–2002 and 2002–6 regimes (Lawoti 2012). The Dalit representation in the Constituent Assembly (8.3 percent) and MK Nepal cabinet (2009–11) (6.97 percent) increased considerably but they are still under-represented, as they are in the judiciary, bureaucracy and the security forces, making them the most under-represented.

Concessions: public policies and political reforms

The extent of concessions obtained by respective groups from the state also indicates their varied levels of mobilization. Excluded groups have made a number of demands upon the state to address their grievances. As mentioned earlier, the Nepali state usually responded and provided concessions only when mobilized groups forced it to.

The Madhesi have received the most concessions, including a commitment towards federalism, increase in electoral constituencies, electoral method reform, reservation, public holidays on festivals and distribution of citizenship. To meet the Madhesi demands two and half million citizenship certificates were distributed to Madhesi as well as others throughout Nepal by mobile teams in 2007.[12] The state finally yielded to the major demands when it could no longer resist the pressure of the Madhesi movements in 2007 and 2008 (see Sijapati, chapter 7). The demand for one Madhes province for Madhesis remains unfulfilled but groups like Tharu and hill origin residents of Tarai vehemently object to this demand.

The indigenous nationalities including the Limbus, have received more or less the same concessions: the declaration of a secular state, reservations, declaration of some indigenous personalities as heroes by the state, establishment of National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN), public holidays during indigenous festivals, electoral method reform, and commitment towards federalism. Only the first five concessions were yielded primarily due to pressure of the indigenous movement, including Limbus. The indigenous nationalities movement contributed toward pressuring

for federalism and electoral method reform but these concessions were largely granted due to the pressure of the 2007 and 2008 Madhesi movement.

A major demand of the indigenous nationalities is federalism with ethnic autonomy. The Constituent Assembly's thematic committee on State Restructuring and State Power Distribution has approved a model along this line but strong opposition to it from the dominant group as well as top CHHE leadership of major political parties like the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal – United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) has kept this issue unsettled. The government signed the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (number 169) that protects the rights of the groups over natural resources but it has not been implemented sincerely. The Limbu fare slightly better than the indigenous nationalities in this indicator as well because they have received an additional concession in term of Mahaguru Falgunanda, a Limbu, being declared as national hero in 2009, one out of 16 heroes declared by the State.

The concessions obtained by the Dalit movement since 1990 include reservations, a Dalit commission and the declaration of secular state. The first two concessions were obtained by the pressure and lobbying of the Dalits while the third demand was largely due to the indigenous nationalities pressure and maneuvering. The Dalit's major demand is ending untouchability. The 1963 new Country Code ended caste based laws and the 1990 Constitution declared untouchability illegal but the practice continues widely (Kisan 2005; Lawoti and Pahari 2010; the World Bank and DFID 2006). Despite some decline, largely due to Dalit mobilization and Maoists dictates, untouchability is still practiced even in urban areas like Kathmandu (Kharel 2007). The recurrent practice of untouchability not only shows the neglect by the state but also the weakness of the Dalit mobilization. The Dalits again emerge as the least mobilized along this criterion followed by indigenous nationalities, Limbu, and Madhesi.

Collective assessment of mobilization

Table 9.1 summarizes the four identity groups across the five criteria examined. The Dalits have mobilized the least (last ranked in all five criteria) whereas the indigenous nationalities mobilized at a moderate level (third ranked in all five criteria). The argument is not that the Dalit have not increased their mobilization over the years like the indigenous nationalities and Madhesi but that it has been less than that of the other groups compared here. The Limbu mobilization is second ranked overall (second ranked in four criteria and first in one criterion) while the Madhesi mobilized the most extensively (first ranked in four criteria and second ranked in one criterion).

Some may argue that the "sudden" mobilization of Madhesi in 2007 and 2008 means that they are not the most mobilized. If the Madhesi had been the most mobilized, then the media, common people, academia and government should have been aware of them earlier, the argument goes. The

indigenous nationalities were thought to be the most mobilized in the 1990s. I will demonstrate later on, while discussing the history of ethno-political actions, that the Madhesi were more mobilized (Lawoti 2005, 67–74) than the indigenous nationalities and Dalit during the 1990s and earlier. I have argued elsewhere that Madhesi mobilization was not "seen" because not only the

Table 9.1 Mobilization indicators and performances up to 2010

	Madhesi	*Limbu*	*Indigenous nationalities*	*Dalit*
Movement capability: strikes' length and frequency	Very high: sustained long *bandhs* in 2007 and 2008	High: frequent *bandhs* in their region, including long ones	Moderate: Occasional Nepal/ valley *bandhs*, Tharu led 2 weeks *bandhs* but many IN groups not involved;	Low: no Nepal wide *bandhs*; rare *bandhs* in Kathmandu
Extreme faction: existence of armed groups and extreme demands	Very high (1st rank): large number of armed groups active; some groups have demanded secession	Very high (2nd rank): a few Limbu organizations maintained armed militias for some time after 2006. PKLNF declared independence in 2008	Moderate: Khambus launched insurgency in 1999 – major faction joined Maoists; Tharu, Tamang displayed army to media; no pan IN armed group or demand for secession	Low: No armed movement; armed groups claims to exist but public activities not observed; no demand for secession
Ethnic party formation & highest vote received by ethnic parties collectively	Very high: 11.52 % votes in 2008; TNC formed in 1951	High: Limbu party has not contested election but FDNF received 0.67 %; LLM formed in 1986	Moderate: 1.52 % (includes vote received by FDNF) in 2008; parties formed around 1990	Low: 0.38 % votes in 2008; first party formed in 1996
Representation in governance	High: over representation in CA , C; under-represented in J and B & highly excluded in SF	Very high: over representation in CA & C, under-represented in B & J	Moderate: Slightly under-represented in CA; decrease in representation in C, & under-represented in B	Low: under-represented in CA, C & highly excluded in J & B
Concessions received by the group in comparison to major demands	Very high: citizenship; mixed PR method; federalism; increase in constituencies; R	High: secular state; mixed PR method; R; federalism; Falgunanda declared hero	Moderate: secular state; mixed PR method; R; federalism	Low: R in politics, education & administration; secular state

Note: The table does not measure variables' evolution along various indicators. B=bureaucracy, J=judiciary, SF=security forces, CA=Constituent Assembly, C=cabinet, IN=indigenous nationalities, R=reservation, PR = proportional representative method, PKLNF = Pallo Kirat Limbuwan National Forum, LLM = Limbuwan Liberation Front, NTC = Nepal Tarai Congress.

government but also the CHHE dominated media, academia, and donor agencies largely ignored them (Lawoti 2009: 111–14). Many scholars, such as Lawoti (2000, 2003, 2005), Neupane (2000), Bhattachan (1999), Thapa and Mainali (2006), Yadav (1997), and Jha (1993), had discussed the Madhesi as a separate mobilized group prior to the 2007 Madhesi mobilization but such works were largely ignored and Madhesi continued to be not recognized as a separate group by "mainstream" academia and media, including by well-funded and "objective" publications such as the UNDP's Nepal Human Development Reports of 1998, 2004, and 2009 and DFID and the World Bank's (2006) report *Unequal Citizenship*, whose objective was to investigate and analyze social exclusion!

Factors facilitating mobilization

To understand why some marginalized groups have mobilized to a greater extent than others, I examine various variables that facilitate mobilization. The variables include movement characteristics such as political opportunities, the type and history of ethno-political actions, state attitude, and movement cohesion; group characteristics such as the extent of discrimination, cultural differences and identity formation, territorial distribution and the history of autonomy, and education and political awareness, and international factors. These variables have been identified in social movement and ethnic mobilization literature and appear to affect the marginalized groups in Nepal in various ways. Examining these factors across cases will show which factors appear to be the most salient in facilitating earlier and extensive mobilization.

Movement characteristics

Political opportunities

The proximate cause for the mobilization of identity groups was the political opportunity available. The introduction to this volume has discussed how the various groups utilized the political spaces that became available in the 1950s, during limited periods in the 1980s, during the 1990s and after the regime change in 2006. In addition to the discussion in the introduction, I want to point out three aspects of political opportunity that facilitated the different extent of mobilization of different groups. First, different levels of political opportunities facilitated different degrees of mobilizations. The extensive mobilization of Madhesi and Limbus after 2006 became possible with the higher degree of political opportunity that became available then. Compared to the right to dissent, organize and mobilize that became available in the 1950s and 1990s, the old order was much more weakened by the fundamental challenges posed by the Maoist rebellion, the transition that ensued after 2006 regime change and deeper cleavages within the elite ethnic groups.[13]

Second, political opportunities that became available earlier facilitated activities that were pre-requisites for the extensive mobilization of later period, such as the spread of education and emergence of community activists and leaders, identity formation and early ethno-political actions.

Third, by the turn of the century, the capability of movements had increased and the interactions between the higher degree of opportunities and more capable movements resulted in a higher degree of mobilization. This leads us to an important question that will be addressed in the rest of this section. Political opportunities are important for ethno-political groups to emerge, develop, and mobilize but why were the Madhesis able to exploit the available political opportunities better than other groups, to launch the most extensive movement by identity groups?

History and mode of mobilization

All of the four groups analyzed here had some history of mobilization, though of different lengths and types. Groups with a history of prior mobilization would have created awareness and organizations. Previous experience, memories and organizations could help to build further momentum and launch extensive movements later on (Gurr 2000).

Along with a history of mobilization, the mode of mobilization also appears to affect the ability to mobilize people extensively. The groups established and primarily relied on different types of organizations to mobilize, such as ethnic associations (indigenous nationalities), social organizations and NGOs (Dalit), and political parties (Madhesi) during the 1990s. The Nepali experience suggests that independent political movements, such as through political parties, are more effective in mass mobilization. Political parties operate directly with the people, continuously engage in activities with full time members, and ensure higher commitments of members dedicated to the cause/ideology and through the reward structure of upward mobility in the party organization and the possibility of appointments to public offices when the party reaches power.

The Limbus had been engaged in some form of mass mobilization from the time of conquest in the eighteenth century when some of them either rebelled against the Gorkhalis or supported the Tibetans during the Nepal-Tibet war (Lawoti 2007a; Regmi 1995). During the Rana period and later also, they relied on traditional *chumlungs*, a gathering of Limbu leaders to discuss important issues facing their community, such as encroachment in their *Kipat* (communal landownership and self-governance) and to develop strategies for protecting it (Caplan 2000, revised edition). Falgunanda, a Limbu ascetic and reformer, also relied on *chumlungs* to approve his proposals for protecting and saving the Limbu script and culture and introducing social reforms in the community in the first half of twentieth century (Gaenszle 2009). The Limbus were also engaged in anti-Bahun activities during the 1951 regime transformation.

During 1980, the Limbus established organizations like the Kirat Dharma tatha Sahitya Uthan Sangh (Kirat Religion and Literature Development

Association) and the Satya Hangma reformist movement of Falgunanda also revived. Kirat Yakthung Chumlung (KYC) was established in September 2, 1989 and operated as a representative organization of the community thereafter. These organizations were not explicitly political in nature and did not aim at mass mobilization but they created cultural awareness and contributed to forming a cohesive identity.

Bir Nembang established the Limbuwan Liberation Front (LLF), a political organization, in 1986. Many Limbus were active in ethnic parties like the Mongol National Organization (MNO) and National People's Liberation Party (NPLP), or Rastriya Janamukti Party, during the 1990s. Many leaders of the Federal State Limbuwan Council (FSLC) factions, which were established after the 2006 regime change, previously were active in the NPLP but quit the party after it supported the Royal regime of 2002–6.[14]

Political parties of the Limbus formally emerged and registered only after the 2006 regime change. Compared to the years led by the KYC, the Limbu movement became more visible and vociferous with the emergence of political parties, which were more forceful in demanding autonomy by organizing *bandhs*, recruiting militias and army, administering justice, and collecting taxes for some time. The parties, FDNF/FSLC and FSLC-Palungwa, forced the government to sign treaties with them on March 1 and March 19, 2008 respectively.[15] The Limbu's case shows that ethnic political parties are more effective in mobilizing and getting concessions from the state.

The long history of Limbu mobilization is well documented but many may be surprised to hear that Madhesi movement had a long and eventful history of political mobilization as well. As mentioned earlier, the Madhesis were ignored and refused recognition as a group, and hence their history also often became invisible. As the introduction points out, the Madhesis have a recorded history of mobilization from the 1940s to 1950s, during 1980s and continuously after that. The Madhesis from early on have been more political in their approach with formation of socio-political organizations and political parties. The anti-Rana democratic movement in the Tarai in the 1940s, establishment of the Nepali Tarai Congress (NTC) in 1951, movement against imposition of *Khas-Nepali* in 1956–57, activities of Rama Raja Prasad Singh and Gajendra Narayan in seventies and eighties, electoral participation of NGP in the 1990s and MPRF's formation[16] and success in the 2007 and 2008 Madhesi movements (see Introduction) were all political in nature or aimed to mobilize the masses.

Even though the NTC did not win a single seat in the 1959 general election based on the FPTP electoral method, it received 2.1 percent of the popular vote. Half a dozen indigenous nationalities and Dalit parties together received less percent of votes even in the 2008 Constituent Assembly election. If popular votes received were to be considered the only indicator of mobilization, then the indigenous nationalities and Dalit were not as politically mobilized in 2008 as the Madhesi were in 1959, a half century ago.

Socio-political organizations such as the Maithali language promotion organizations operated to some extent in the 1990s to promote particular

Madhesi interests. However, it was the NGP that vociferously raised the Madhesi voice during the 1990s. It consistently elected some representatives to the House of Representatives in the 1990s. The fact that the indigenous and Dalit parties did not elect a single representative during the 1990s makes it clear that Madhesi were the most mobilized during that period.

The indigenous group as a category has a less extensive history of collective political mobilization compared to the Madhesi and Limbu. The indigenous nationalities were in leadership position of armed wings during the 1950–51 anti-Rana movement. They also began to establish ethnic associations after the polity opened in 1951 but they did not establish a political party. Groups like the Tamangs were involved in violent rioting in 1960–61 against the Bahuns (Holmberg 2006; Holmberg, March and Tamang 1999). Indigenous parties like the NPLP and MNO operated during the 1990s but they were not the major medium of expression of indigenous nationalities problems and aspirations. Some of their objectives, such as rejection of ethnic federalism, were not congruent with the aspirations of indigenous groups. They received around 1 percent of votes in all the three general elections in the 1990s and never elected a representative to the Parliament.

Indigenous groups raised their issues in the 1990s largely through ethnic associations and formed an umbrella organization, the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN), in 1991.[17] The government recognized NEFEN as a representative organization and it was successful in getting media and academic attention as well. Even though many of NEFEN's demands were political in nature, as a formal socio-cultural association with largely voluntary efforts and not directly accountable to individual members, it was not a full-fledged political movement.

The Dalits also began forming organizations in the late 1940s. They continued to operate during the Panchayat period, unlike the Madhesi and indigenous groups, whose activities were banned, even during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when restrictions on socio-political mobilization were higher.

The Dalits have largely been mobilized through social organizations, NGOs and fronts affiliated with political parties. Social organizations were relatively independent but by their nature they cannot sustain extensive activities over a long period of time. Further, the operations of Dalit social organizations during the earlier phase of Panchayat years suggest their complicity with, or at least lack of independence from, the regime. On the other hand, NGOs' reliance on donors and political fronts' loyalty to mother political parties lessened these entities' autonomy. Such types of organizations have contributed to the rise in awareness but extending rights to Dalits and have been less effective in mobilizing the community compared to the Madhesi and Limbu's political organizations. A Dalit party, Rastriya Dalit Shramik Morcha, or National Dalit Labor Front (NDLF), contested the election for the first time in 1999 but it was only in 2008 that DNP elected one seat in the Constituent Assembly through the proportional representative method. The absence of an explicitly Dalit only political party for a long time and the

ineffectiveness of Dalit mobilization through NGOs and partisan fronts also supports the thesis that independent political movement is more effective in mobilization. All movements are political in nature but here I use the term independent political movement to distinguish relatively more autonomous movements (Madhesi and Limbu), such as ethnic party or independent organizations dominated movements, from those others that are influenced to some degree by non-ethnic parties (through political fronts), donors or other external organizations and actors.

State attitude and incorporation of marginalized group issues and individuals

Non-state groups' mobilization is affected by the attitude and behavior of the state, more so if their struggle is aimed at influencing the state. Whether the state discriminates against or recognizes identities and incorporates individuals and issues of marginalized groups generates different responses from the affected communities. The incorporation of members and symbols and issues of the struggling groups by the state and dominant community can distract or undermine movements by taking out steam from the discontent. Van Cott (2005) has argued that the indigenous movements in some South American countries like Peru did not reach a height because some issues and symbols of the groups were incorporated by the state and dominant society. It deprived the indigenous groups of cultural symbols and issues on which to base effective mobilization. On the other hand, in countries such as Bolivia where issues and symbols of the indigenous groups were not incorporated, the indigenous movements capitalized on their distinct symbols and issues for rallying their communities. Likewise, the decline of the left parties, which had incorporated indigenous issues and members (Van Cott 2005) contributed in the rise of indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador. Similarly Chandra (2004) found that the Dalit's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in India could not expand in provinces like Karnataka where the Dalit leadership had been incorporated into the mainstream parties, while the BSP expanded in Utter Pradesh where the major parties had not incorporated the emergent Dalit activists.

The Nepali state incorporated different groups at different levels at different times with differential effects on mobilization of the groups. The incorporation of some of the indigenous nationalities in the administration and security forces has a very long history. The Magars and Gurungs took part in Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of Nepal even though they were sidelined from higher levels in subsequent decades and centuries. Some indigenous nationalities have reached high offices in security forces after the Rana regime.

The Panchayat regime incorporated ethnic leaders and this affected the movements negatively. Leaders like Bedananda Jha and Khagendra Jung Gurung, who were involved in the Madhesi and indigenous movements respectively in the 1950s, were incorporated into the Panchayat system and it disrupted the fledgling movements. Many other Madhesi and indigenous nationalities leaders were appointed to public positions. Likewise King

Gyanendra made Badri Prasad Mandal (Madhesi indigenous nationalities and NGP leader) a deputy prime minister, a first time for a Madhesi, and Gore Bahadur Khapangi (indigenous nationalities and NPLP leader) a minister in 2002, a first time for a leader of hill ethnic party, after he dismissed the elected government. The ethnic parties associated with both leaders subsequently split.

The incorporation of individuals affected the ethnic movements by depriving them of capable leaders and disrupting the momentum of the movements, but the incorporation of issues compared to individuals was more effective in undermining growth of movement organizations and subsequently extensive mobilization of the group. Policies have the potential to affect ordinary members, unlike nomination of individual elite. On the other hand, less or late incorporation and/or non-recognition of groups and their grievances provided reverse incentives for mobilization. The lesser mobilization of the Dalits, moderate mobilization of indigenous nationalities and extensive mobilization of Madhesis show that higher and earlier incorporation of issues through policies is more effective for undermining the mobilization of the marginalized groups. The greater effect of non-incorporation of issues become even more clear with the case of highly mobilized Limbu, who have received higher representation in the Parliament and cabinet for decades but whose group specific issues and grievances were not addressed.

The Dalit's major demand of reservations in political, administrative and educational institutions has been met formally. Caste based laws were eliminated in the 1960s while untouchability was declared illegal by the 1990 Constitution. Even though untouchability continues in practice, the formal policy level incorporation has deprived the Dalit movement of rallying symbolic issue for struggles to change the laws and demand major policy changes unlike the Madhesi, indigenous nationalities, and Limbu, who used the formal discrimination, prevalent till much later, to rally their communities.

Compared to the Madhesis, the state tolerated, recognized and addressed some grievances of the indigenous nationalities and Dalit issues earlier. Development committees for the Dalits and indigenous nationalities were established in 1997. A commission for the Dalit and a foundation for the indigenous nationalities in place of Nationalities Development Committee was formed after the turn of the century. Likewise, the government instituted a reservation policy for the Dalit and indigenous nationalities in 2003. There were no such policies for the Madhesi during the period. Overall, the Madhesi were probably the least incorporated till 2007 if both policy and individual co-optations are taken into account. This ironically contributed to the higher success of the Madhesi movement, which finally was able to get the most concessions from the state till date, by providing rallying issues for mobilization. On the other hand, the higher incorporation of issues of Dalits and indigenous nationalities by the state probably took out some steam from their movements.

The negative attitude of the state and the dominant group, along with other hill people contributed to forging a common Madhesi identity, during, and at

least until the 2007 and 2008 movements when many Madhesi Dalit, Muslims, indigenous nationalities, "high" and "middle" caste took active part in the mobilization.[18] As discussed earlier, the state and hill community often refused to recognize the Madhesi as equal citizens of the country and their loyalty to the state was questioned because they share culture with north Indians. Discrimination manifested in various ways, from the outright denial of citizenship certificates to delays in acquiring them (Burkert 1997), negligible hiring in the security sector, mistreatment in everyday life encounters with the hill dominated administration and hill people, ignoring Madhesi settlements for development works, distributing Tarai land to mostly hill people during land reforms, denigrating the Madhesi people in literature and media, and so on (Premarshi 2006; B. Shah 2008; S. G. Shah 2006; Uprety 2006; R. Yadav 2006). Whether one was "high"-caste, "low"-caste, Muslim, or indigenous nationalities, everyone from the Tarai was termed a "Madhise."[19] Identity is also influenced and formed based on how others recognize or refuse to recognize a group (Taylor 1994) and the mistreatment of different looking people from the Tarai as Madhesi contributed in unifying the disparate people in the struggle against the oppression.

Cohesiveness of movements

The extent of mobilization is affected by whether the movements are cohesive or fragmented. Indicators of cohesiveness of a movement are fewer factions and leaders, a dense network of communication and interactions, the acceptance of common beliefs, an established social order and traditional leaders, among other things (Gurr 1993, 2000 and Harff and Gurr 2004).

Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate this variable thoroughly, field observations and interactions with Dalit activists and discussions with movement observers point to a very high degree of factionalism within the Dalit movement. I have myself seen unproductive competition over positions such as chairing or coordinating committees. Many Dalit leaders are also unwilling to accept other Dalit as leaders. They were divided into various partisan factions from relatively early on as well.

Factionalism and partisanship exists among indigenous nationalities and Madhesi as well but it appears to be less than among the Dalits. For example, during the lifetime of Gajendra Narayan Singh, Madeshis of all hues and cries recognized him as a leader. Even Madhesis who were critical of the Madhesi movement at the turn of century spoke of him with reverence and admired his dedication and sacrifice for the Madhesi cause.[20] Like most political parties in Nepal, the NGP also split multiple times as the MPRF split after 2008 Constituent Assembly election but the NGP factions have come together a number of times while the MPRF brought together ideologically disparate individuals to compete in the 2008 Constituent Assembly election. The same cannot be said of Dalits, whose senior leaders have not come together to form and work for a Dalit political party.

The indigenous movement is also factionalized but less so than the Dalit movement. For the entire decade of the 1990s, the NPLP was led jointly by Gore Bahadur Khapangi and M. S. Thapa. Furthermore, NEFEN was run without much partisanship during the 1990s, largely due to the willingness of the indigenous leadership affiliated to different political parties to maintain some level of autonomy of NEFEN/NEFIN. After the turn of the century, partisan influence and meddling have increased but the movement still has influential non-partisan leaders like Krishna Bhattachan who is respected by a wide spectrum of activists and members.

The Limbuwan movement has also suffered from multiple splits of the flag bearing political party, FSLC. However, the ethnic association of the group, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, has acted as a symbol of unity and a model for leading a joint struggle for autonomy. It frequently brings together leaders of different political parties as well as leaders of Limbu party factions to identify common issues and strategies. It coordinated all political parties represented in the Constituent Assembly to establish a multiparty struggle committee for the autonomy of Limbuwan, which became a model for many other indigenous groups.

Community characteristics

Degrees of groups' discrimination: breadth and depth of exclusion

Grievances resulting from discrimination and inequality have been identified as a basis for mobilization. Groups unsatisfied with their socio-cultural, economic and political conditions have incentives to engage in collective protests (Gurr 1993, 2000; Horowitz 1985). As Gurr argues, "People who have lost ground relative to what they had in the past are said to experience decremental deprivation and are motivated to seek redress for what was lost" (Gurr 2000: 69). Often times, it is the perception of being "relatively deprived" or not getting what a group thinks is due that spurs mobilization (Gurr 1968).

Data of the 1990s and thereafter show that economically the Dalit were the most deprived, followed by the indigenous nationalities and Madhesi.[21] Dalits also have less access to land, an important resource in an agricultural society (M. M. Cameron 1998; UNDP 2004).[22] Socio-culturally the Dalit face untouchability but they share language and many religious and cultural traditions with the dominant CHHE group, unlike the indigenous nationalities, Madhesi and Limbu whose various cultural elements were discriminated.

Politically the Dalit are the most excluded group in the entire Nepali history. The Madhesi and indigenous nationalities were also excluded from important state sectors but less so than the Dalit (Neupane 2000; Subba *et al.* 2002; R. P. Yadav 2005). For 1999, the indigenous nationalities were slightly more excluded than the Madhesi in 12 important state and societal sectors like the Parliament, cabinet, judiciary, administration, and security sectors and leadership of political parties, local government, industry, and educational, cultural and civil society organizations (Lawoti 2005: 104–5; Neupane 2000).[23]

The comparison points that the depths of exclusion in socio-economic and political spheres do not contribute to the higher mobilization of a group. The Dalits are the most excluded economically, socially (untouchability), and politically but they are the least mobilized groups. In fact, extreme exclusion in socio-economic-political spheres may have hindered Dalits' mobilization. Without a critical mass of socio-economically well off and independent members, extensive mobilization of communities against the dominant social norms, values, and group may be very challenging, especially in a patronage based society like Nepal.

The breadth of exclusion, on the other hand, appears to correlate with mobilization. In addition to exclusion from accessing economic and political resources, the Limbus, indigenous nationalities, and Madhesis are discriminated against in terms of religion, language, culture and/or citizenship as well. The state and hill people suspect the loyalty of the Madhesi toward the Nepali state. The indigenous nationalities like the Limbu, on the other hand, perceive that they have been deprived of their self-governance rights (K. B. Bhattachan 1999; Lawoti 2005; U. Yadav 1997). The more extensive mobilization of Madhesi, Limbus and indigenous groups compared to Dalits suggests that groups that face a wide range and forms of discrimination (lack of access to resources as well as cultural discrimination) mobilize sooner because discrimination in wider realms increases the group's perception of grievances while cultural discrimination also provides symbolic tools for mobilization. The question then is how did cultural differentials contribute to the earlier mobilization of some groups in Nepal?

Culture differentials and identity formation

Cultural differentials can facilitate or hinder identity formation, which is often a prerequisite for mobilization. The case of Dalit shows that difficulties in identity formation, due to fewer cultural differences with the dominant group (Folmar, chapter 4), resulted into less extensive mobilization than other groups. The Dalits are faced with the challenge of whether to assimilate with the dominant group or form separate identity (Ahuti 2010). The absence of major cultural differentials and sharing of surnames with the dominant group resulted into many Dalits frequently engaging in the politics of anonymity passing off as "higher" castes), which undermined collective assertions for rights (Folmar, chapter 4).

Among various cultural markers, language appears as an important factor because it facilitates a separate identity by smoothening communication and interactions among speakers of the same language. A common language facilitated the identity formation and mobilization of Limbus and Madhesis, who despite having different mother tongue speakers share Hindi as a lingua franca.

On the other hand if a group speaks multiple languages and dialects like the Rai/Khambu, it can create competition among various linguistic constituents and can hinder building a common identity. The Kirat Rai Yayokha, an ethnic association of Rai, is facing challenges against its attempt to continue with a common and larger Rai identity. However, occasionally a group can overcome challenges of its members speaking multiple languages and still forge a common identity like the Tharu (Guneratne 2002).

The role of language in facilitating identity formation becomes more apparent by comparing the indigenous nationalities and Madhesis, both with multiple language speakers. The hill indigenous people use *Khas-Nepali*, the language of the dominant group, to communicate with other indigenous people, lessening the cleavages with CHHE and probably undermining emergence of a strong pan indigenous identity. The Madhesis on the other hand have a separate lingua franca that facilitated communication and interaction among themselves (Mishra 2009; Y. P. Yadav 2006) and served to establish a separate identity as Madhesi through a contrast with hill people.

Religion may be used for creating and sustaining a separate identity, as some excluded groups have done. NEFEN defined indigenous nationalities as those not belonging to the four fold Hindu caste system. Limbu, Rai, Yakkha and Sunuwar also began to identify as Kirati after 1990, forcing the census department to include the category of Kirati religion in 2001. However, when it comes to mobilization, the excluded groups have generally not employed religious cleavages overtly. In fact communities with distinct religious cleavages like the Muslims have chosen to project themselves as a cultural community rather than a religious group.[24] The relatively low reliance on religion explicitly for collective action could be due to at least three factors. One, the religious syncretism that exists to some extent among the Hindus, Buddhists, and Kiratis and other indigenous traditions could make religious rhetoric less attractive among common people who practice traditions and rituals associated with multiple faiths. Two, except for the Muslims, members of other religious groups can be mobilized along ethnic/caste cleavages, which better capture the major basis of discrimination and differences. Third and probably strategically more important, mobilizing along religious lines could become problematic as Hindus form a dominant category of 80 percent. Minorities would probably prefer not to highlight a cleavage that projects the dominant group as an overwhelming majority. In fact, fundamentalists among the CHHE tend to highlight their religious majority status when defending the status quo to maintain their privileges and domination.

The language and religious differentials raise issues of heterogeneity/homogeneity and mobilization. It is difficult to foster a common understanding and identity among people with varying characteristics, needs, aspirations and interests, and subsequently mobilize the groups. We discussed earlier that it was easier for the political entrepreneurs to organize and mobilize Limbu, who speak the same language and share a common religion. The case of indigenous nationalities as an aggregate category also supports this thesis in a reverse way. They have mobilized less effectively as an aggregate category compared to Limbus due to differences in language, ethnicity and religion (Buddhist, Kirati, Hindus, animist).

The examples of the Dalit and Madhesi, however, do not support the thesis. The Dalit are the least heterogeneous. They all belong to Hindu religion. Even though subdivided into sub castes, they all belong to the "untouchable" caste group. They are divided into hill and Madhesi Dalits and speak either *Khas-Nepali* or one of several Tarai languages but even these differences are probably less salient than they appear: hill and Tarai Dalit activists attempting to form a common identity show more antagonism towards CHHE and "high" caste Madhesis respectively due to local conflicts and oppressions. The Madhesis, on the other hand, are the most varied group, divided into Hindus, Muslims and animists in terms of religion, into different levels of caste and sub-caste groups, and ethnically as Indo Aryans and indigenous groups. The groups speak 19 different languages (Y. P. Yadav 2006). Among the three aggregate categories, the Madhesi are the most diverse but they still managed to overcome the heterogeneity to form a common identity (see Dastider, chapter 8) and launch the most extensive movement till date by an identity group.

This discussion suggests that relative homogeneity could be helpful but not necessary for extensive mobilization. The question could be rather whether the concerned elite were able to invent common symbols, traditions, and rituals to overcome heterogeneity and form an "imagined" community (Anderson 1991; Guneratne 2002; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and mobilize their target groups.

History of autonomy and territoriality

Territoriality could affect mobilization in at least three ways. First, a group can develop a strong attachment to their place of origin. The association with land is strong for ethno-nationalist groups and more so for indigenous nationalities (Gurr 1993). Indigenous people's identities, livelihoods, cultures, lifestyles and worldviews are closely associated with their traditional lands and hence they often fiercely defend them. Second, a history of autonomy, which is possible for groups that are concentrated territorially, can facilitate mobilization. Gurr (2000) found that a more recent and greater loss of autonomy often created more incentives for ethnopolitical action because the groups have fresh memories self-rule and autonomous institutions and hence yearn for self-government on matters that affect them. Third, territorial concentration facilitates easier communication, organization building and mobilization of people, including for strikes and electoral successes. It is more costly and difficult to mobilize people when the target group is dispersed (Gurr 1993; Van Cott 2005).

The heightened mobilization of Limbus, despite their smaller population (359,379 in 2001), became possible largely because all the three factors are working in their favor. As indigenous people who are primarily traditional cultivators and nature worshippers, the Limbu identity, lifestyle and wellbeing is closely associated with their native land. The group has recent memories of

autonomy. Till the mid-1960s, *Kipat* existed, based on which they governed communal land, collected taxes and administered justice in Limbuwan. *Kipat* helped them maintain close association with land, perhaps much more than other indigenous groups. The Limbus are also perhaps the most territorially concentrated among larger ethnic and caste groups in Nepal. Collective public protests of the Limbus, such as strikes and *bandhs,* have largely occurred in the region of their concentration, such as in the far eastern districts where Limbus are more densely concentrated. Even Limbu leaders belonging to the "mainstream" political parties are championing the autonomy cause, either because they empathize with the issue or at least feel strong pressure from their community, despite risks to their careers from top CHHE party leadership who are mostly averse to ethnic autonomy.

The different level of mobilization among the indigenous nationalities is partly a reflection of varied levels of association with land, historical memories of autonomy and territorial concentration. The Magars and Gurungs are relatively dispersed from their native land to other parts of country while others like the Tamangs, Limbus, and Rais are more concentrated in regions of their ancestral land. Exposure to new cultures and lifestyles through migration has probably relatively lessened the association of Magars and Gurungs with their native land. The Magar and Gurungs, whose power and land were encroached upon by the Hindu immigrants before the conquest of Nepal (Lecomte-Tilouine 2009), also have a more distant memory of autonomy. They have not as strongly demanded autonomy, which has been an issue that has galvanized indigenous groups and Madhesi towards mobilization. For example, the Magar dominated NPLP demanded federalism but not ethnic autonomy. The varied settlement patterns, varied memories of autonomy and varied association with land, especially of major groups like Magar, have probably hindered effective pan indigenous nationalities' mobilization.

The relative lack of extensive mobilization of Dalits till date also supports the territoriality and history of autonomy thesis in a reverse way. Dalits lack an association with an ancestral homeland, have been socialized primarily as Hindus whose religious and social attachment to land is less than indigenous people, lack memories of past self-governance[25] and are territorially dispersed. The Dalit movement, unlike the movements of some indigenous nationalities and Madhesi, has not demanded territorial autonomy,[26] which facilitated the mobilization of indigenous groups and Madhesi. The Dalit probably lacked a potent incentive for mobilization.

The strategic territorial location of the groups, on the other hand, can contribute toward making the mobilization more effective in yielding concessions. *Bandhs* that throttle the capital appear to be an effective tool that the government cannot ignore. Because of the critical importance of the Tarai to the economic infrastructure of Nepal, the Madhesi were able to obstruct supply of daily goods like petroleum and food to the Kathmandu Valley during the Madhes *bandhs.* On the other hand, the Limbu have been less successful in getting substantial additional demands fulfilled beyond what the

indigenous nationalities movement has obtained despite their heightened mobilization because their *bandhs* in the far eastern region have not directly and immediately affected the government at the center.

Even if past and recent autonomy may have facilitated the mobilization of indigenous groups like the Limbus, the case of Madhesis, however, shows that prior autonomy may not be a necessary condition for extensive and earlier mobilization. The Madhesis do not have a history of self-governance but are territorially concentrated. This suggests that as long as groups are territorially concentrated, recent memories of autonomy could be useful for earlier and extensive mobilization but is not a necessary condition.

Education, activists, and supporters

Being discriminated against and disadvantaged is not enough for identity formation and subsequent mobilization. Someone has to mobilize the group against discrimination and oppression. Usually educated elites within the groups take up this task (Chandra 2004; Gellner 1983; Smith 1998). The level of education indicates whether there is a large enough pool of people within communities to become leaders, activists, and supporters of the group movement. The more widely educated a group is, the higher the chances of activist formation and mobilization of respective groups.

As people in the community get educated and become aware of their group's plights, some may begin to mobilize their communities while others may support such initiatives. Educated people often seek opportunities for employment and public offices and when they are blocked or face difficulties in accessing them, they may support a community movement (Chandra 2004). More literate communities have a higher capacity to respond to elites working on behalf of the communities, if everything else were constant. Literate people can become conscious through reading, listening and analyzing issues, including through materials produced by community rights advocates.

Madhesis have a higher education level and not surprisingly, they have engaged in the most extensive mobilization. On the other hand, the Dalits had the lowest percentage of educated members in 2006.[27] The Limbu and indigenous nationalities fall between the Dalits and Madhesi with Limbu faring slightly better than hill indigenous nationalities category.[28] Literacy data from 1991 point to the same trend.[29] We can infer from the available time series data that lower capacity due to lower literacy and education among the Dalits constrained their mobilization.

International factors

International factors, such as external political and material support; global doctrines of nationalism, indigenous rights, and minority rights; regional and global networks of ethnic kindred and co-religionists; and the diffusion and contagion of ethno-political conflict among similar groups, could help

shape the aspirations, opportunities, and strategies of ethno-political groups (Brown 2001; Gurr 2000). The international context and factors have encouraged and influenced the marginalized groups in Nepal in launching collective actions, but it is less clear whether their role to date has been substantial.

International discourse and transnational network

The urban and middle class Nepalis and politicians believe that the Madhesi movement succeeded largely because of Indian support. However, empirical investigations have revealed that such support is often limited to the fertile imagination of hill Nepalis. The International Crisis Group (2007) reports that very few Indian leaders and administrators bother about what happens in Nepal. That attitude was not much different with regard to the Madhesi movements despite the Madhesi leaders' attempts to court the Indian establishment. Except for occasional rallies in solidarity of the Madhesi movement in a few border areas, support for the Madhesi cause was wanting even in the bordering Indian states' capitals.

The Dalit movement has benefited from exposure to the Indian Dalit movement. The term Dalit began to be used in Nepal after Ambedkar, who most Nepali Dalit activists consider a hero and the main Constitution writer in India, visited Kathmandu in the 1950s (see M. Cameron 2010). Two of the first Dalit organizations, Vishwa Sarvajan Sangh in Baglung and Tailor's Union in Kathmandu, were established in 1947 respectively by Sarbajit Biswakarma and Saharshanath Kapali, both of whom had been trained and educated in India (Kisan 2005). The Nepali Dalit leaders have attempted to create an international solidarity network, including with Indian Dalits during the 1990s and thereafter. Apart from utilizing discourse and learning from Indian experience, such network has not led to the significant mobilization of Dalits in Nepal.

The indigenous nationalities movement has benefitted from the global indigenous people's discourse. They regularly attend the annual United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples Forum and other international meetings. They have used the ILO (International Labour Organization) Convention 169 On the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the UN declaration on Indigenous Peoples' right to advocate and protect their rights (K. B. Bhattachan 2008). The significance of the international discourse on indigenous peoples can perhaps be gauged by the fact that the indigenous nationalities' umbrella organization was renamed from NEFEN to NEFIN by adding "Indigenous." Beyond the influence of indigenous discourse and exposure to successes of indigenous movements around the world and legitimation of the movement by showing people in Nepal that it has international validity, the international context has not directly contributed to the substantial increase in the mobilization of indigenous groups. Likewise, as an individual indigenous group, beyond some minimal funding support and

useful indigenous discourse, the international context and factors did not contribute significantly to the mobilizations of Limbus.[30]

Donor support

Organizations involved in the movements analyzed here have received funding from international donors but to different extent and period of time. The less extensive mobilization of Dalits, despite receiving higher and much earlier funding than others (since the 1980s), and the most extensive mobilization of Madhesi, despite later and less funding, indicates the limited role of donor funding in generating extensive mobilization. In fact, attention and accountability toward the donors instead of the community, the prioritization of donor agendas and restrictions by donors on certain activities, could become obstacles to extensive mobilization. The UK's Department for International Development threatened to end and finally halted funding committed to NEFIN in mid-May, 2011 when NEFIN called a *bandh,* showing how donors can constrain mobilization of marginalized groups. Further research is however necessary to reach a more definitive conclusion on the role of donors.

DISCUSSION

The pathway towards extensive mobilization in Nepal has been identity formation and previous ethno-political actions, particularly a lengthy, relatively cohesive and independent political movement, as shown in Figure 9.1.[31] A common identity is necessary to mobilize groups because it is easier to mobilize people who identify as members of a community and recognize

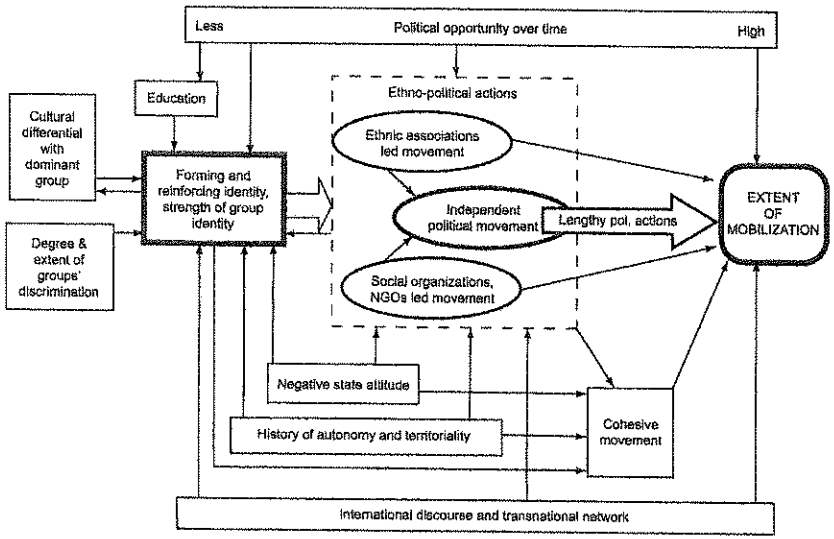

Figure 9.1 Modeling ethno-political mobilization in Nepal.

common problems. The higher the strength of group identity, the easier it becomes for political activists to mobilize their groups. Cultural differentials with the dominant group, higher literate population, deeper and wider degree of group discrimination, history of autonomy and territorial concentration, negative state attitude and favorable international context tend to contribute towards formation of stronger identities.

Since strengthening collective group identity, especially as a self-defining community, is a political process, political opportunity in terms of political rights and civil liberty is necessary for it. If there is no political space, even if people are aware of cultural differences and group discrimination and oppression, and are territorially concentrated, the cost of challenging the powerful might be too high and the risks involved may prevent many people from engaging in overt collective identity forming and reinforcing activities. In Nepal, the regime change from autocracy to democracy in 1951 first provided political opportunities for initiating overt identity forming and reinforcing and early ethno-political activities. Subsequent regime changes and progressive political reforms at different epochs (see introduction) provided more political opportunities for strengthening group identities and engaging in more extensive ethno-political activities.

Despite political opportunities becoming available to all groups at the same time, ethno-political actions of different groups have taken various forms and emerged to different extents in Nepal. Ethnic associations, social organizations and NGOs, and political parties primarily led the movements of the indigenous nationalities, Dalits and Madhesis respectively. Indigenous nationalities and Dalits have also formed political parties but they emerged later than that of the Madhesi. Various forms of mobilization directly or indirectly contributed to subsequent emergence of independent political movement.

The question is why some groups followed the path of independent political movements earlier while others first followed the ethnic association or NGOs and social organization led movement paths. It appears that a territorial concentration, higher level of negative attitude of the state, higher literacy rate, stronger group identity, and relatively cohesive movement contributed to the Madhesis taking an independent political movement path earlier while a weaker group identity, lower literacy and less cohesiveness, lesser negative attitude of the state and the lack of territorial concentration hindered the Dalits from charting an earlier independent political movement. Indigenous nationalities fall between the Dalits and Madhesis with regard to territorial concentration, literacy level, attitude of the state, and group identity strength and fall between the Madhesis and Dalits as well in the length and strength of the independent political movement. The Limbu's long history of group movement, higher literacy level and political awareness, territorial concentration and a recent history of autonomy, and strong group identity appears to have contributed to their charting an independent political movement earlier compared to Dalit and pan indigenous groups movements as well as other individual indigenous groups. Ethnic associations and NGOs/social organizations also

appear to contribute towards mobilization but less so than independent political movements. They often prepared conditions for independent political movement to appear and once it did, acted as supplementary forces to the movement for attaining extensive mobilization.

The contribution of various variables to earlier and more extensive mobilization becomes clearer and more definitive with a discussion of the four cases and comparing similarities and differences among them. The high degree of mobilization of the Madhesi can be explained by the long history of their independent political movement; the relative cohesiveness of the movement at least at critical junctions; the cultural and political forms of discrimination against them and the failure of the state to recognize them as a group and address their grievances until recently; a favorable international context; the existence of linguistic and other cultural differences from the dominant group; and the relatively high degree of education among the Madhesis that served as the basis of a stronger Madhesi identity.

The higher degree of mobilization of the Limbus relative to other indigenous nationalities group and Dalit can be explained by the group's long history of mobilization against the dominant group, beginning at the time of the conquest in the eighteenth century; their recent memories of autonomy, territorial concentration, and strong attachment to territory in far eastern Nepal; the discrimination the group faced and the neglect of the group's issues and grievances by the state; a favourable international context; a higher level of education and political awareness; the relative cultural and linguistic homogeneity of Limbus when compared with other groups; and the resulting stronger group identity and relatively cohesive movement.

For the indigenous nationalities collectively, extensive discrimination, a favorable international context, some level of cultural differentials from the dominant group and an emerging identity as indigenous nationalities contributed towards joint mobilization. But linguistic variations among constituent groups, sharing lingua franca with the dominant group, the existence of varied group identities, the varied territorial concentration of different groups and the varied attitude of the state towards constituent groups has resulted in a weaker pan indigenous identity, the relatively late ignition of political mobilization, and a less cohesive movement and less extensive mobilization than the Madhesi and Limbus.

The factors that have contributed in Dalit mobilization are the depth of the exclusion of the group, the continuing prevalence of untouchability despite its juridical end, and the international context and transnational networks. On the other hand, the Dalits have lacked cultural differences from the dominant group that could serve as the basis of developing a distinct identity; sufficient levels of education to produce a large pool of potential leaders and supporters; a long history of political mobilization; a history of autonomy and territorial concentration; and cohesiveness within their movement. The Dalit could increase their mobilization by developing a stronger group identity, increasing their education, the lack of substantive policies to address inequality and the practice of untouchability, and engaging in a more direct and independent political movement. However, it may take some time for them to produce extensive mobilization, as in the case of Madhesi and Limbu.

Based on the comparison of differently performing movements, we can conclude that several variables exist in the more mobilized groups that were absent or less prominent in the less mobilized groups. These variables thus contribute towards earlier and more extensive mobilization: territorial concentration; cultural differences (especially a separate lingua franca) from the dominant group; higher levels of education and political awareness; a longer history of political mobilization and a strong group identity. Other variables' contribution to extensive mobilization is less certain than the five mentioned above but if variables either exist in the Madhesi (the most extensive) or Dalit (the least extensive) movements and not in the other three, such variables also contribute to some degree in either extensive or less mobilization. The breadth of discrimination and cohesiveness of movement were relevant for the Madhesis, Limbus and indigenous nationalities but not for Dalits. On the other hand, the negative attitude of the state was highly relevant for Madhesis but not equally so for Limbus, indigenous nationalities, and Dalit. International discourse and transnational networks were relevant to all four movements and hence may aid but is not sufficient to generate extensive mobilization, while donor funding appears to have either negative or at the least an ambivalent role. The Limbus had a recent history of autonomy but the Madhesis did not, demonstrating that autonomy could facilitate but is not necessary for extensive mobilization. Overall, the Nepali experience suggests that movements can gain enough strength to force the state to concede to their major demands if groups have a relatively cohesive and long history of independent political mobilization.

Notes

1 The paper has benefitted from very helpful feedback from Susan Hangen and from participants during presentations at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris, University of Vienna, University of Bielefeld in Germany, Nepa School in Kathmandu and Martin Chautari in Kathmandu, all in October and November, 2010. I thank D. B. Angbuhang and J. B. Biswokarma for providing and verifying data.

2 Like other collective actions, *bandhs* are difficult to stage in rural areas and among rural residents because it is difficult to mobilize people living in thinly populated settlements and there are fewer commercial and public spaces that can be blocked (Bates 1984; Hangen 2010). Because fewer people are affected and media also often neglect activities organized in the rural areas, rural protest activities pose less of a threat to the government compared to those organized in urban areas. Hence the government can often afford to ignore them, and perceiving that, people are also less prone to organize protests in rural areas.

3 All the data on *bandhs* are from UNNIP, unless otherwise stated. The cumulative data for 2010 was not released by January 10, 2011.

4 Personal communication with Mr. D. B. Angbuhang, Secretary of Information, Federal Democratic National Forum (FDNF), or Sanghiya Loktantrik Rastriya Manch, November 2010.
5 The *bandhs* were called from March 2–14, 2009 and April 22–May 3, 2009 (OCHA Nepal, 2009a, 2009b). Tamang organizations called three, three and four days of *bandhs* in 2007, 2008, and 2009 respectively. Nepal Loktantrik Rajbansi Samaj (Nepal Democratic Rajbansi Community) also called for two days *bandhs* in 2007.
6 This data appears to be the total for the DNP and a federation of Madhesi Dalits.
7 According to J.B. Biswokarma of the Samata Foundation, the *bandh* was called by Sanyukta Ganatantrik Dalit Morcha (Joint Republican Dalit Front) on August 22, 2007 for not fulfilling their ten points demands submitted to the government on July 25, 2007. The organization had called for Chitwan *bandh* on August 18, 2007.
8 Pathak and Uprety (2009) provide a list of 74 armed and semi armed groups. It contains political organizations like the FDNF and MPRF (Madhesi People's Rights Forum, or Madhesi Janadhikar Forum) that are represented in the Constituent Assembly as well as hill and ideologically based armed groups.
9 A pamphlet titled "Pallo Kirat Limbuwan Swatantra Rastra Raheko Eitehasik Ghosanapatra."
10 I heard such rhetoric by several Dalit speakers at Dalit conferences and workshops I attended during my dissertation field work in 2000–1. Dalit Mukti Sena' (Dalit Liberation Army) was established in 2063 v.s. (2006/7) but its activities have not been public.
11 Limbus (population 1.58 percent) constituted 2.33 percent of Constituent Assembly members. Seven Limbu were elected from FPTP and seven from proportional representative method. The Limbu had 4.65 percent representation in the Madhav Kumar Nepal government of May 2009–February 2011.
12 Home Ministry's record.
13 The Maoist party headed by male Bahuns supported many demands of the marginalized groups.
14 The FDNF (established on December 11–12, 2005) is composed of several ethnic parties such as the FLSC (established on March 2–4, 2007). The activists previously associated with NPLP believed that a pan-ethnic party was not able to capture the aspirations of particular indigenous groups and hence individual group focused parties were formed with coordination at the center under FDNF. Interviews with FLSC leaders, summer 2008 and 2010.
15 The Election Commission also signed a treaty with FDNF/FLSC on May 27, 2011 after the party obstructed the collection of names for the voters' list.
16 Though registered as an NGO initially, the MPRF was political in nature.
17 NEFEN's name was changed to NEFIN (Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities) in 2001.
18 As the common mistreatments faced by Madhesis are addressed, the basis for remaining united as Madhesi may no longer remain strong. The 2009 Tharu movement contested their group being identified as Madhesi by the state, which called all non-hill origin residents of Tarai as Madhesi following settlements with the Madhesi organizations (August 30, 2007 with MPRF Nepal and February 28, 2008 with the United Democratic Madhesi Front).
19 Madhise is derogative form of Madhesi.
20 Interviews, 2001.
21 Poverty incidence for Dalits was 57.8 in 1995/96 and 45.5 in 2003/04, the highest among different groups in both decades. The second highest poverty incidence was for Tarai indigenous nationalities in 1995/96 (53.4) and Hill indigenous nationalities (Newar not included in indigenous count) in 2003/04 (44.0). For Tarai middle caste it was 28.7 and 21.3 in 1995/96 and 2003/04 respectively (Table 2.5, UNDP 2009: 46). Average per capita income for Dalits was NRs. 10,000 in 2003/04, the lowest among different groups. The following numbers inside brackets are average per capita income for other groups: indigenous nationalities excluding Newar (13,300), Newar (26,100), CHHE (16,200), Madhesi Brhamin/Chhetri (23,900), Tarai middle castes (11,300) and Muslim (10,200) (Table 2.6, UNDP 2009: 46). Separate data for Limbu was not provided.

22 Even though landlessness among hill Dalit was only 15.32 percent (lower than many hill and Tarai indigenous groups and comparable to groups like Limbu, Magar, and Tamang), the group had the highest distribution in semi-landless (< 0.20 acres) (15.24 percent) and marginal cultivator categories (0.21–1.00 acres) (44.55 percent). Tarai Dalit had a high landlessness (43.98 percent) and reasonable distribution for semi-landlessness (9.89 percent) and marginal cultivator categories (26.19 percent) (Table 11, 176, UNDP 2004). The table does not contain data on "high" and "middle" caste groups.
23 The ratio of representation to population was 0.36, 0.32 and 0.03 for Madhesi, indigenous nationalities, and Dalit respectively, smaller ratio indicating higher exclusion. Following Neupane (2000), the Madhesi count in this data included Tarai Dalit and indigenous nationalities.
24 Several rounds of interactions with Muslim activists and leaders in Kathmandu, January and February 2011.
25 A rare case of Dalit rule is that of King Sahalesh, a Dusadh who ruled Mithila (Premarshi 2006 140–41).
26 Some Dalits have begun to demand territorial provinces but not as autonomous units where the Dalits will form a plurality that could facilitate self-governance.
27 Education level for secondary school and higher level was 11.8 and 23.3 percent for Dalit women and men respectively in 2006. Women from Madhesi Other Castes (24.2 percent) and Muslim (26.5 percent) had lower literacy rate then Dalit women. The literacy rate of Dalit men was also the lowest at 59.9 percent (Table 2.7, 47 UNDP 2009).
28 For 2001, literacy rate (inside parenthesis) was as follows in percentage (UNDP 2004, Table 9, p. 175): Tarai Upper Castes (73.92), Limbu (59.64), Hill Dalits (41.93) and Tarai Dalits (21.06). The Limbu literacy rate is higher than larger indigenous groups except Newar (72.18).
29 The literacy rate (percentage inside parenthesis) for different groups for 1991 was as follows: Tarai groups – Brahman (61.8), Rajput (51.7), Rajput (51.7), Yadav (26.3), Muslim (22); hill indigenous nationalities (43.1), Tarai indigenous nationalities (28.1), Limbu (46.8); Dalit – Damai (27.9), Kami (26), Chamar (10.1) (Gurung 1998 Table 41, p. 115 and Appendix O, p.127–28).
30 Limbu leaders accept that they have received some financial support from Limbus working abroad but they say that it is very minimal. Interviews with leaders of FSLC and KYC, November, 2010.
31 Arrows point to the direction of causality and thicker double arrows indicate stronger relationships between variables and bold lined shapes (boxes and ovals) indicate important variables/outcomes.

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